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Totally Devoted: Developing a Holistic Spiritual Formation Course for Western Christian College

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ABSTRACT

This thesis reports research results from a learning community composed of faculty, support staff, ministry leaders, and students who collaborated in a professor's development of a new course proposal in Christian spiritual formation at Western Christian College in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada. The professor used qualitative research methods in the analysis and evaluation of the data produced by the group. The outcome of the project was ethnographic data that informed the creation of the course proposal that included new course application, course syllabus with course schedule, planned activities, bibliography, initial classroom assignments, and initial assessment tools.

TOTALLY DEVOTED: DEVELOPING A HOLISTIC SPIRITUAL
FORMATION COURSE FOR WESTERN CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School

Abilene Christian University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

by

Stanley N. Helton

May 1, 2009

This thesis, directed and approved by the candidate's committee, has been accepted by the Graduate Council of Abilene Christian University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Ministry

Dean of the Graduate School

Date

Thesis committee

Chair

To Pat and Rachel

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This doctor of ministry thesis reports how a learning community composed of faculty, support staff, ministry leaders, and potential students collaborated in the development of a new course in Christian spiritual formation at Western Christian College (WCC) in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada.¹ Chapter 1 introduces the project, explains the rationale for the title, and offers a model for conceptualizing the practices of Christian spiritual formation. The chapter also offers a brief history of Western Christian College and its development of a spiritual formation initiative called Encounter. Additionally, the chapter describes the importance of the deficiency addressed in this project, details the purpose and the anticipated outcomes, and introduces important definitions, delimitations and assumptions. Chapter 2 addresses the theology, praxis, and literature relevant to this project, then presents the theological principles for assessing the various activities humans may engage in as means of Christian spiritual formation. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology of the project—the shape of it and how to evaluate it—by describing the format of the project, the team sessions, the field methodology used, the selection of the team, and the qualitative methods employed to evaluate this

¹ This research constitutes program development (also product and curriculum development). For this type of project, see Nancy Jean Vyhmeister, *Quality Research Papers: For Students of Religion and Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 163-69.

project. Chapter 4 treats specifically the results, and chapter 5 reports reflections and implications resulting from this intervention.

Title of Project

The title of this project, “Totally Devoted: Developing a Holistic Spiritual Formation Course for Western Christian College,” plays both on students’ overuse of the word “totally” and on the biblical narrator’s critique of Solomon and Jeroboam as not fully, or totally, devoted to God (1 Kgs 11:4 and 15:3).² My quest was to develop a holistic spiritual formation course in which Christian students could find themselves on the journey of becoming fully committed to God.³

In the title, “developing” refers to the collaborative process of the team to create this course proposal. Professors and teachers, including me, have developed many courses in the solitude of their offices with little interference, assistance, or collaboration with their academic deans, colleagues, or students. This project, on the other hand, afforded the opportunity to work alongside colleagues, ministers, and students in developing a course proposal in Christian spiritual formation.

The keyword “holistic” conveys the desire that students who take the course planned in this project will be inspired to love the Lord with the whole self: their hearts, souls, minds, and bodies. This sense of a holistic experience prevails throughout this thesis and will be further developed below.

² The word “wholly,” or “fully,” relates to the Hebrew *shalom*, which denotes peace in the sense of being whole, or complete.

³ See, e.g., Alister E. McGrath, *The Journey: A Pilgrim in the Land of the Spirit* (New York: Doubleday, 2000). To be fully committed to God means not to do the humanly impossible but to move in the direction of full reunion with God. This move toward reunion will also move the disciple to be more like God or more like Christ. In Christian theology, this is not fully possible until the consummation of the ages.

Ministry Setting

The founders of Western Christian College began the school to “teach the Bible,”⁴ and transmitting the meaning of the Bible into the lives of students remains a central focus of the school.⁵ The following brief historical account sets the social and historical context out of which this project originated.

Establishment of the College

According to the school’s published calendar (called a catalogue in the United States), WCC grew out of “summer and winter Bible schools conducted by the Churches of Christ in southern Saskatchewan in the early 1930s.”⁶ The school began in 1945 in Radville, Saskatchewan, under the name Radville Christian College.⁷ The following year the formal high school program began. Twelve years later, the school moved to Weyburn,

⁴ Roger W. Peterson, Dan Wieb and Lillian M. Torkelson, *Western Christian College: Background and Historical Perspective, 1931-1995*, <http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/canada/contents.html> (accessed 21 July 2008).

⁵ Given this focus, one entry point into Christian spiritual formation would be an approach such as that of M. Robert Mulholland Jr., *Shaped by the Word: The Power of Scripture in Spiritual Formation* (Nashville: Upper Room, 2000).

⁶ 2008-2009 Calendar of Western Christian College (Regina, SK: Future Print, 2008), 4.

⁷ The development of Western Christian College belongs to a larger cultural and historical movement known in Canada as the Bible College movement. For those interested in this background, see Robert A. Wright, “The Canadian Protestant Tradition 1914-1945,” in George A. Rawlyk, ed., *The Canadian Protestant Experience, 1760-1990* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1990), 139-97. See especially table 2 (166-67), “Founding of Prairie Bible Schools, 1921-1947.” This table originates with W. E. Mann, *Sect, Cult and Church in Alberta* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1955), 83. In Canada, “college” or “collegiate” can refer to either high school or post-secondary education. Canadians sometimes call high schools colleges or collegiate schools, which further compounds misunderstanding. For this reason, it has become commonplace here to refer to the Bible college as the “college program.” Thus Western Christian College has both a high school program and a college program.

Saskatchewan, to reside in a former military base. The leaders of the school renamed it Western Christian College and added a post-secondary program with the introduction of a junior college program in 1968. Since that time the school has operated under the authority of the Province of Saskatchewan to offer theological degrees up to the bachelor's level (except the time the college was in Manitoba).⁸ In 1989, WCC moved to Dauphin, Manitoba, because a more suitable property became available, but in 2003, when the former campus of Canadian Bible College (associated with the Christian Missionary Alliance) became available, the school relocated to the provincial capital, Regina.⁹ (I joined the college staff when the school moved to Regina).

When the college began in 1968, James Pennington announced the purpose of the program in that year's calendar. He stated that WCC would be "focused in the belief that the Bible is God's revealed will and that it should be the core of the education of man." The program was "designed to prepare [young people] for more complete service in the kingdom of Christ." Pennington stressed several fundamentals for a college offering a "Bible-Centered Education" and concluded that "we are convinced that such a program will be a blessing to Canadian youth, to Canadian congregations, and to Canadian generations, some of which are yet unborn."¹⁰

⁸ BILL 301 of 2003; "An Act to amend an Act to incorporate Radville Christian College." Regina, SK: Queen's Printer, 2003. Available at <http://www.qp.gov.sk.ca/index.cfm?fuseaction=publications.details&p=4460>. This document lists all previous acts related to the school for those interested in the history and the relationship of WCC to higher education and to the provincial government.

⁹ 2008-2009 Calendar of Western Christian College (Regina, SK: Future Print, 2008), 4. The history of WCC is well documented; the most accessible history of the school is Roger W. Peterson, Dan Wieb, and Lilliam M. Torkelson, *Western Christian College*.

¹⁰ Peterson, Wieb, and Torkelson, *Western Christian College*, 78.

Pennington, as one would expect of an educational leader from the Churches of Christ, stressed the role of the “Restoration Principle,” which he defined as “a philosophy that teaches that the original pattern of faith and practice was intended to be passed from generation to generation without alteration.” Pennington emphasized that “Bible instruction would be based on an evangelical scholarship,” which, for him, meant “emphasis will be placed on evangelism rather than intellectual (or pseudo-intellectual) approaches so common in some religious schools.”¹¹ So began the Bible college program at Western Christian.¹²

Now some forty years later, the leaders of the college maintain many of the same concerns. They still seek to serve young people, although today they are concerned about serving as many young people outside the historical boundaries of the Churches of Christ as possible. Canadian culture continues to marginalize Christianity, influencing adversely the recruiting and retention of students.¹³ While still informed by evangelical scholarship,

¹¹ Ibid., 78-79.

¹² Western Christian College is the corporate name of the entire institution, both high school and college level.

¹³ One should not minimize the cultural differences between the United States and Canada. The far more secular culture and the strong sense of ecclesiastical hierarchalism create a very different environment from that which most American Christians and churches face. Several authors have helped me find my social location in Canada. Particularly important is Reginal W. Bibby, sociologist from the University of Lethbridge, AB. He has written several books setting forth his findings on the nature of spirituality and religiosity in Canada. His more important works include *Fragmented Gods: The Poverty and Potential of Religion in Canada* (Toronto: Irwin, 1987); *Unknown Gods: The Ongoing Story of Religion in Canada* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1993); and *Restless Gods: The Renaissance of Religion in Canada* (Toronto: Stoddart, 2002). Also relevant for understanding Canadian teens is his *Canadian Teens: Today, Yesterday, and Tomorrow* (Toronto: Irwin, 2001). For the only study of the difference between American and Canadian evangelicals, see Sam Reimer, *Evangelicals and the Continental Divide: The Conservative Protestant Subculture in Canada and the United States* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003). The definitive study of the

the college concerns itself more today with the holistic maturation and development of our young people as Christians. An internal slogan states that WCC seeks to “Keep Christian kids Christian.” While WCC remains loyal to the history and heritage of the Restoration Movement, today we feel more concern for experiential and ethical restoration of the early church than for the more traditional restoration of church forms and practices.¹⁴ This concern is reflected in the development over the past two years of a Christian spiritual formation initiative called Encounter. The college faculty and staff developed this program out of the need to attract today’s student.

The Development of the Encounter Program

According to my job description, I serve as the “chief academic officer of the college program,” and I am “responsible for the operation and strategic development of the department, including the delivery of an excellent post-secondary academic

difference between the United States and Canada remains Seymour Martin Lipset, *Continental Divide: The Values and Institutions of the United States and Canada* (New York: Routledge, 1990). See also the more recent book by Mark A. Noll, *What Happened to Christian Canada* (Vancouver, BC: Regents College Publishing, 2007). I also add for the general context of Christianity and religions in Canada, Terrence Murphy and Roberto Perin, *A Concise History of Christianity in Canada* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) and Robert Choquette, *Canada’s Religions: A Historical Introduction*, Religions and Beliefs Series, 12 (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2004).

¹⁴ This typology of restorations or primitivisms is detailed in Richard T. Hughes, “Christian Primitivism: From Anabaptists to Pentecostals,” in Stanley M. Burgess, ed., *Reaching Beyond—Chapters in the History of Perfectionism* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1986), 213-55. Interestingly, both experiential and ethical primitivism are more closely akin to spiritual formation than the ecclesiological, which has historically been the domain of the Stone-Campbell movement churches. This will explain, in large part, why Churches of Christ have had such a hard time comprehending and embracing spiritual disciplines as a path to God and why they seem so hungry for them now.

program.”¹⁵ My staff team and I, in collaboration with the president of the college and the marketing department, developed Encounter to meet two basic needs. First, considering the declining enrollment over the last four years, the school needed a program that would attract the newest generation of young people, who tend to value experience over education. Second, based on the nature of students today, my team sensed a need to move pedagogical methods more toward the experiential and away from a heavy, intellectualized learning style. The original proposal for Encounter described it as

a holistic first-year college program that seeks to provide structure and support for college students who have recently left home but who need a transition between parents and living independently. This program extends beyond the normal concerns of college with a focus on how academics integrate into the experiences of the student and how experience informs learning.

The faculty and staff built the model around four values. The team wanted students (1) to discover who they are, (2) to experience God, (3) to be part of a wholesome community, and (4) to explore the world as those on God’s mission. The team dreamed that “Encounter [would combine] quality education and personal spiritual formation with reliable spiritual guidance.”¹⁶

Now in the second year of the program, the faculty has made several modifications and adjustments. In an internal document to other administrators, I explained:

We discovered that some of our plans were more ambitious than the demands of other aspects of school life would allow. For the coming academic year, we have re-scripted some of our basic strategies. The first move is to integrate spiritual formation more intentionally into what is already a large part of students’ lives.

¹⁵ Current job description for college academic dean of Western Christian College, Human Resource Office, Regina, SK: Western Christian College, 2008.

¹⁶ “It’s All About Life: A Proposal for the Encounter Program,” internal document (Regina: Western Christian College, 2006). The goals of the Encounter program and this project line up with WCC’s board policy on “Community Life Statement,” Board Policy 2035, revised Feb. 25, 2008.

We will require that each course contain a spiritual formation objective. Additionally, we are in the process of reformulating the Spiritual Formation course itself. This class traditionally has been taught in a single semester course starting with a retreat at the beginning of the semester. Beginning this next year, the course will be spread through two semesters. This will give our students more time to create habits and disciplines that will serve them for life. This class will hold regular meetings for discussion, prayer and scripture reading.¹⁷

Proposed Programming for the Encounter Program

As Encounter enters its second year, it is time to give focused attention to the centerpiece of the program: a course on spiritual formation itself. Our academic program, deeply influenced by the demands of accreditation, has elevated critical thinking to the highest level of what it means to be educated in a Christian college. In the institutional goals of the college, critical thinking shows up in the sub-area of Christian higher education as one of the outcomes as well under the sub-area of spiritual formation.¹⁸ Amazingly, what critical thinking means is not defined in the calendar or in the last assessment plan seeking to measure such. However, Stevens and Levi offer a clear and concise definition. Critical thinking is “the ability to think, reason, and make judgments based on an independent, accurate accumulation of data and an open-minded approach.”¹⁹ Assessing critical thinking alone, or even primarily, is not holistic as it tends to minimize other facets of what it means to be human. Spiritual formation as defined in this project concerns the education of the heart, soul, and body as well as the mind.

¹⁷ “Encounter Enters Second Year,” internal document (Regina: Western Christian College, 2007).

¹⁸ See the institutional goals for the one-year programs in 2008-09 Course Calendar, 5. See Mulholland’s critique of how critical thinking has impaired the reading of Scripture in *Shaped by the Word*, 19-23.

¹⁹ Dannelle D. Stevens and Antonia J. Levi, *Introduction to Rubrics: An Assessment Tool to Save Grading Time, Convey Effective Feedback and Promote Student Learning* (Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 2005), 21.

Besides, Christian academics have been concerned for some time about the nature of theological education, and a growing consensus maintains that theological education must become more experiential and praxis-oriented to be effective in preparing people for ministry.²⁰ The goal of Christian education should not be just the acquisition of knowledge but also the assistance of students in their journeys toward becoming more like Christ.

Problem: Background and Importance

To understand the need for this project, one must realize WCC's social location in the Churches of Christ and in the cultural context of Canada. WCC's "one-year of Bible study" often provides Canadian members of the Churches of Christ with their only exposure to an intentional preparation in Bible and Christian spiritual formation. Consequently, this course (within the larger Encounter program) is important as it addresses the spiritual formation of the people who will lead and make decisions in the future in Churches of Christ, particularly in Western Canada.²¹

WCC's location—in a much more secular environment than most Christian colleges related to the Churches of Christ in the United States—furnishes it an important role in training young people (and others interested in preparing for Christian ministry) in

²⁰ Robert Banks provides a good place to begin exploring this conversation in *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999). More recently, Charles R. Foster, et al., *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and Pastoral Imagination*, Preparation for the Professions Series (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), addresses this concern.

²¹ "Western Canada" refers to every province west of Ontario, which includes Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. It can also encompass the northern territories, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon, though generally the designation refers to the lower provinces.

the ways of Jesus in a post-denominational and post-Christian context. The cultural attrition of the Christian faith, coupled with a strong Canadian sense of multiculturalism, creates a difficult environment for Christian spiritual formation.²² The school now finds itself in a new social location from the one in which it originated. Therefore, the larger issue relevant to living as believers in Jesus within a Canadian context is the need to keep our Christian young people Christian. For this reason, the lack of adequate attention to Christian spiritual formation in WCC's Encounter (one-year Bible) program merits the attention I have focused on it in this project.

Purpose: Summary of Desired Process and Outcome

I desired through this project to acquire community data that I could use to create a proposal for a course in Christian spiritual formation. Specifically, I planned to lead a team in the development of a new course proposal in Christian spiritual formation for WCC's Encounter program. I used the insights I discovered through this group process to inform the course syllabus, course schedule, planned activities, bibliography, initial classroom assignments, and some initial assessment tools.

A Spiritual Formation Model

Christian spiritual formation does not occur in a vacuum, but in conversation with those who have traveled the path already. Among those helpful on this journey, Urban Holmes offers a heuristic model for conceiving spiritual formation in a holistic fashion. In *A History of Christian Spirituality*, he develops a model comprehensive enough to

²² Noll, *What Happened to Christian Canada*, 30-35.

account for practices of spiritual formation within the whole of the Christian tradition.²³

Holmes's model uses two scales, or continuums, to capture practices of Christian spiritual formation. One scale charts God's involvement, the other human engagement.

The first scale, the horizontal continuum, measures God's role in Christian spiritual transformation. This continuum, then, holds the tension between what Holmes calls the *apophatic* and the *kataphatic* poles.²⁴ These poles are based on how God has (or has not) revealed himself. On one end, God is mysterious (apophatic), yet, on the other, he has made himself knowable (kataphatic).

The second scale, the vertical continuum, charts human engagement. This scale holds in tension the speculative and the affective poles, which capture how humans experience the revelation of God. The process of Christian spiritual formation in this model involves both head and heart.

Accordingly, Holmes observes, Christian spiritual formation must attend to all these poles: the intellectual, the emotional, the apophatic (mystery of God), and the kataphatic (God revealed). In Holmes's model, the speculative (intellectual) and the affective form the y-axis while the apophatic and the kataphatic form the x-axis (see figure 1 below).²⁵

²³ Urban T. Holmes III, *A History of Christian Spirituality: An Analytical Introduction* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 2002). Holmes did not originally design his model in reference to all spiritual disciplines but as a model for a phenomenology of prayer (see pp. 3-5).

²⁴ See Harvey D. Egan, "Christian Apophatic and Kataphatic Mysticism," *Theological Studies* 39 (1978): 399-426, and Verna E. F. Harrison, "The Relationship between Apophatic and Kataphatic Theology," *Pro Ecclesia* 4 (1995): 318-32, for a detailed discussion of these terms.

²⁵ Holmes, *History of Christian Spirituality*, 4.

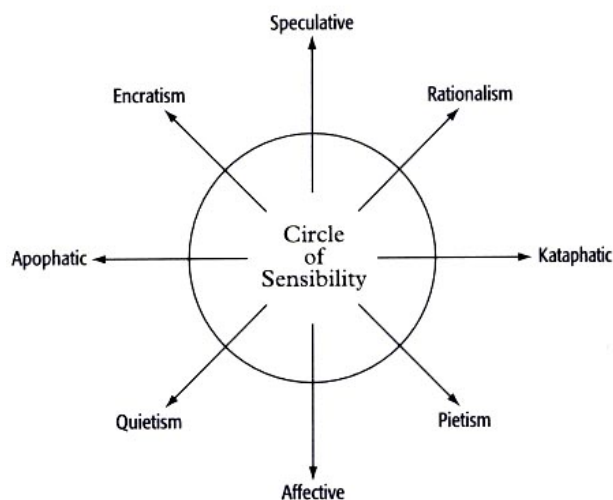


Figure 1. Circle of Sensibility²⁶

This model allows areas between the poles: apophatic/speculative, speculative/kataphatic, kataphatic/affective, and affective/apophatic.²⁷ These quadrants, while all necessary to a holistic model of spiritual formation, are prone to historic excesses (for example, encratism, rationalism, quietism, and pietism). Practices that fall into Holmes’s “circle of sensibility” do not fall into these excesses.²⁸

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ See a similar schema in Skylight Paths, *Who Is My God? An Innovative Guide to Finding Your Spiritual Identity* (Woodstock, VT: Skylight Paths Publishing, 2000), 17. However, this book addresses spirituality in its broadest global expressions.

²⁸ Ibid., 4-5. Holmes notes, “By the use of these two scales it is possible to make comparisons between spiritual masters of the church and to define spiritual practice and its immediate objectives with some clarity—the assumptions being that in all methods the ultimate goal is union with God. We can speak of options without being judgmental.” While this contention is debatable, the model still provides a place where discussions of the merits of spiritual practices can begin.

Allen H. Sager, as well as others, has further refined this model,²⁹ and Kenneth Boa presents a convenient synthesis in his model.³⁰ Boa concurs with Holmes and Sager that the vertical line, or continuum, represents a person's relationship with God and ranges from the emotional to the intellectual extremes. The horizontal line represents an individual's (or group's) preferred way of apprehending the transcendent, or pursuing the spiritual life. The kataphatic pole refers to the *via affirmativa*, or the "way of affirmation," denoting what God has revealed. This pole, according to Boa, is more at home in the West and affirms "the knowledge of God through general and special revelation." On the other hand, the apophatic pole, the *via negativa*, stresses that humans cannot fully know God. This perspective, more at home in the Orthodox tradition, emphasizes that God is transcendent and will ever remain a mystery. Between the poles, where possible extremes can develop, the model creates four quadrants where "actions" of spiritual formation occur (see figure 2 below).³¹

²⁹ Allen H. Sager, *Gospel-Centered Spirituality* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1990), 30-56. Sager credits Holmes and John H. Westerhoff with developing the more detailed model in figure 2 below. Corinne Ware, *Discover Your Spiritual Type: A Guide to Individual and Congregational Growth* (Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 1995), also makes use of this model.

³⁰ Kenneth Boa, *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001). In Boa, see his table A.1 on p. 469, reproduced in figure 2 in this chapter of the thesis.

³¹ Boa, *Conformed to His Image*, 468-69.

TYPES OF CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

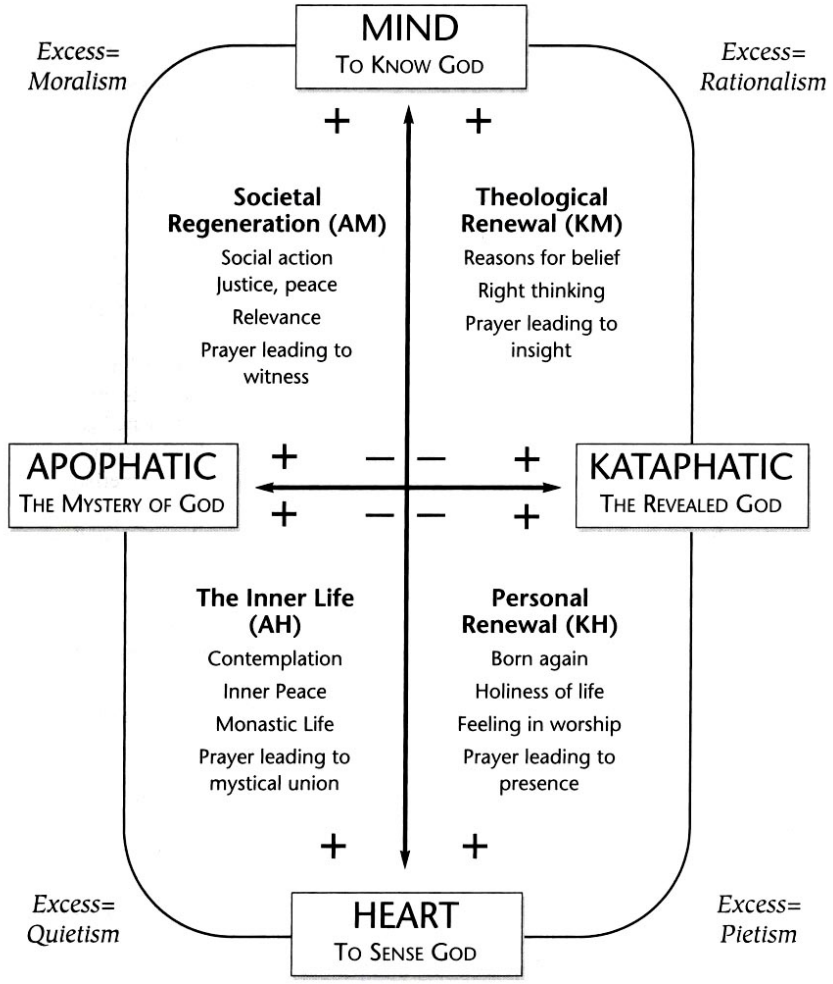


Figure 2. Types of Christian Spirituality³²

Chapter 2 of this thesis links four biblical categories—heart, soul, mind, and strength—to the four quadrants above: personal renewal (heart—emotions), the inner life (soul—inner life), theological renewal (mind—knowledge), and societal regeneration (strength—somatic engagement).³³ Chapter 2 also explores the intersection of praxis and

³² Ibid., 469.

³³ In the case of the fourth area, societal regeneration and strength connect through what believers do with their bodies to make a difference in the world. Of course,

theology introduced in this model. The quadrants represent the four loci of Christian spiritual formation and provide the rationale for structuring this project as set forth in chapter 3.³⁴

Delimitations and Definitions

Since I am creating and designing this course for the Encounter program at WCC, this project took place in the context and under the policies of that school. Important definitions that are useful for this project include “Christian spiritual formation” (as a subset of spirituality), “classroom assessment,” “rubric,” and “curricula framework.”

Understanding Christian spiritual formation requires a larger context since it belongs to the category of Christian spirituality in general. Walter Principe views Christian spirituality at three levels. First, Christian spirituality refers to the academic discipline that studies it. Second, it can refer to the formulation of teaching in the sense that people can describe the dynamics of how to have a relationship with God. Third, Christian spirituality can refer to the practice of the lived relationship one has with God.³⁵ In this project, I consider and address all three.

this is not all that people do with their bodies in the process of Christian spiritual formation.

³⁴ Additionally, see Richard E. Averbeck, “Spirit, Community, and Mission: A Biblical Theology for Spiritual Formation,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 1.1 (2008), 27-53. See also James C. Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation As If the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ through Community* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), for a similar typology. Wilhoit lists receiving, remembering, responding, and relating. See also Peter Adam, *Hearing God’s Words: Exploring Biblical Spirituality*. New Studies in Biblical Theology 16 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004).

³⁵ Walter Principe, “Toward Defining Spirituality,” *Studies in Religion* 12.2 (1983): 127-41. Evan B. Howard, *The Brazos Introduction to Christian Spirituality* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008), 15-36, explores each of these levels at some length.

The variety of essays collected by Kenneth J. Collins in *Exploring Christian Spirituality: An Ecumenical Reader* attests to the difficulty of defining spirituality.³⁶ One factor affecting this difficulty is the fragmented state of Christianity. For example, one can speak of Carmelite, Orthodox, Luther Reformed, Anglican, Methodist, and Evangelical spiritualities.³⁷ Nevertheless, Robert Mulholland offers a good definition for the purposes of this project. He defines Christian spiritual formation as “the process of being conformed to the image of Christ by the gracious working of God’s spirit, for the transformation of the world.”³⁸ Similarly, James C. Wilhoit says that Christian spiritual formation “(1) is intentional; (2) is communal; (3) requires our engagement; (4) is accomplished by the Holy Spirit; (5) is for the glory of God and the service of others; and (6) has as its means and end the imitation of Christ.”³⁹ Willard concurs when he suggests that Christian “spiritual formation in Christ is the process leading to that ideal end, and its result is love of God with all of the heart, soul, mind, and strength, and of the neighbor as

³⁶ Kenneth J. Collins, ed., *Exploring Christian Spirituality: An Ecumenical Reader* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000). See especially the essays by Philip Shelldrake, “What is Spirituality” (21-42) and Walter Principe, “Toward Defining Spirituality” (43-59).

³⁷ Ibid. See the respective essays by Keith Egan, an anonymous monk, Bengt Hoffman, Howard G. Hageman, Harvey H. Guthrie, David Lowes Watson, and Richard F. Lovelace in this volume.

³⁸ Robert Mulholland, *Invitation to a Journey* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 15-17, and Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002), 22. Willard defines Christian spiritual formation as “the Spirit-driven process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being of Christ himself.” For a comprehensive overview of the quest for a definition of spiritual formation, see Bernard McGinn, “The Letter and the Spirit: Spirituality as an Academic Discipline,” *Christian Spirituality Bulletin* 1.2 (Fall 1993): 1-10 and Philip Shelldrake, *Spirituality and History: Questions of Interpretation and Method* (New York: Crossroads, 1992), 32-56.

³⁹ James C. Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation*, 23.

oneself. The human self is then fully integrated under God.”⁴⁰ The nature of Christian spirituality and Christian spiritual formation will be revisited in chapter 2.

Since this project concerns a course proposal for teaching Christian spiritual formation in a classroom context, the field of education provides other useful definitions. Classroom assessment, for instance, is defined by Angelo and Cross as “an approach designed to help teachers find out what students are learning in the classroom and how well they are learning it.”⁴¹ These educators have also collected assessment tools and techniques related to measuring learning in the classroom. Class assessment in this project deals primarily with the achievability of the course’s proposed objectives. Its importance stems from the difficulty of measuring how much a student has gained in spirituality as the result of classroom teaching.

One standard assessment tool used in the educational world today for measuring classroom learning is the assignment rubric. Stevens and Levi define a rubric as “a scoring tool that lays out the specific expectations for an assignment.” These tools “divide an

⁴⁰ Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 31. Correspondingly, Harner defined Christian education as “a reverent attempt to discover the divinely ordained process by which individuals grow in Christlikeness, and to work with that process” in Nevin Harner, *The Educational Work of the Church* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1939), 20, as cited in Klaus Issler, “Theological Foundations of Christian Educations,” in *Introducing Christian Education: Foundations for the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Michael J. Anthony (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 35.

⁴¹ Thomas A. Angelo and K. Patricia Cross, *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993), 4. These authors assert that their assessment models are “learner-centered, teacher-directed, mutually beneficial, formative, context-specific, ongoing and firmly rooted in good practice.” Classroom assessment is a focused subset of institutional or programmatic assessment. For this, see Trudy W. Banta, Jon P. Lund, Karen Black, and Frances W. Oblander, *Assessment in Practice: Putting Principles to Work on College Campuses* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997).

assignment into its component parts and provide a detailed description of what constitutes acceptable or unacceptable levels of performance for each of these parts.”⁴²

Considering education from a wider vantage point, curricula framework, or design refers to the larger educational plan into which a course fits. In the case of this project, it refers to the Encounter program, which then fits within the associate of arts degree or any higher degree offered by WCC (see appendix G). “Curriculum” derives from the Latin *currere*, meaning “to run.” Thus a curriculum is a course of learning through which the student runs to reach anticipated goals. In the educational field, curriculum may refer to all of life, specific experiences under guidance, or the resources used in the processes. In this project, the term curriculum signifies experience under guidance and the resources related to that guidance.⁴³

According to this definition, a curriculum design “describes the parameters within which the curriculum will occur” and “enunciates the essential considerations with which designers must deal.” Within this framework, “a curriculum plan is a detailed blueprint or system for implementing a design.”⁴⁴ The primary result of this project lies in the data compiled—data that will inform such a blueprint, or course proposal.

Basic Assumptions

Because WCC is a small school and many of its processes remain casual and informal, this project adapted the new course application process developed by sister insti-

⁴² Stevens and Levi, *Introduction to Rubrics*.

⁴³ M. K. Smith, “Curriculum Theory and Practice,” in *The Encyclopedia of Informal Education* (1996, 2000), www.infed.org/biblio/b-curric.htm (accessed October 18, 2008).

⁴⁴ Leroy Ford, *A Curriculum Design Manual for Theological Education: A Learning Outcomes Focus* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002).

tution Abilene Christian University (ACU) under the auspices of the Adams Center for Teaching Excellence (see appendix A).⁴⁵

I make the assumption in this project that all theological education contributes to the process of Christian spiritual formation.⁴⁶ Moreover, I assume that this course will be the students' introduction to the study of Christian spiritual formation. Yet even as I presume that the development of the new course will remedy a deficiency in WCC's Encounter program when it comes to spiritual formation, I realize that it cannot meet every need students may have regarding Christian spiritual formation.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the purpose and goal of this thesis as well as explained the rationale behind its title. Specifically, this thesis reports on a ministry/educational intervention designed to address the lack of adequate attention to Christian spiritual formation in WCC's Encounter (one-year Bible) program. The project upon which this thesis is based consisted of leading a team in the development of a new course proposal

⁴⁵ Available for download at www.acu.edu/academics/adamscenter/index.html.

⁴⁶ Robert Banks, in *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models*, 142, struggles with the current state of theological education and proposes a model he calls missional. Banks explains what he means by "missional": "By 'missional,' I mean theological education that is wholly or partly field based, and that involves some measure of doing what is being studied. This may take the form of action-reflection or reflection-action, distinctions that in any case are useful only up to a point, since effective action involves some element of or relationship with reflection, and effective reflection involves some element of or relationship with action." This would not be my use of the word missional; I would connect primarily with the mission of God in the world. Banks does approximate this understanding when he writes, "By mission I mean not just 'mission-oriented,' but an education undertaken with a view to what God is doing in the world, considered from a global perspective."

Additionally I would go so far as to say that Christian education, in all its forms, is a means of spiritual formation as in Charles R. Foster, et al., *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and Pastoral Imagination*.

in Christian spiritual formation for WCC's Encounter program. The following chapter addresses matters related to the theology and praxes, and it reviews literature relevant to the project.

CHAPTER TWO

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS AND SURVEY OF LITERATURE

This chapter presents the theological foundation for the project, beginning with a discussion of the basic nature of Christian spirituality and spiritual formation, followed by an exploration of the biblical tradition regarding what it means to love God with one's full humanity—heart, soul, mind, and body—and an explanation of how the cross of Jesus provides the theological foundation for Christian spiritual formation. Next, the chapter presents theological and practical principles, based on Jesus' teaching, for assessing the various activities in which humans may engage during the process of Christian spiritual formation. The chapter closes with an engagement of the scholarly and devotional literature relevant to the completion of this project.

Introducing Christian Spirituality and Spiritual Formation

Originally, Christian spirituality grew out of the Hebrew tradition of the Old Testament (OT). Later Jesus accepted, transmitted and transformed this tradition of spirituality through his life and teachings, which then became the practices of the early church as recorded in the New Testament (NT). In both testaments, "spirituality" deals with what occurs when the human spirit encounters the divine Spirit, or vice versa.¹

¹ Collins, *Exploring Christian Spirituality*, 10. Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Spirituality*, 2, states that all spiritualities concern "the quest for a fulfilled and authentic religious life, involving the bringing together of the ideas distinctive of that religion and the whole experience of living on the basis of and within the scope of that religion." For other attempts at defining spirituality, see pp. 3-4.

Both testaments consistently portray spirituality as more concerned with the possibility of connecting with God than with enhancing human internal experience, though encounters with the divine often do change people.² Gordon Mursell describes the Hebrew understanding of spirituality as “the process by which God seeks continually to work upon, or address, the raw unstable chaos of our lives and experience, and of our world, drawing forth meaning, identity, order, and purpose.”³ The OT Hebrew tradition, according to Mursell, underscores integration in spirituality, while the Greek tradition of the NT stresses desire.⁴ The practice of Christian spiritual formation, then, seeks to integrate human desires toward God.⁵ Mursell defines such desire as “an insistent longing not only, or even primarily, to leave this world for the next one, but to experience and manifest the next one in the midst of this one, until the whole creation is transformed and made new.”⁶ In this sense, Christian spirituality is about experiencing, and even participating in, the mission of God in converting chaos into order.

² Robert E. Webber, *The Divine Embrace: Recovering the Passionate Spiritual Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), strongly emphasizes this point. Further, it remains true in Christian spirituality until at least the third or fourth century.

³ Gordon Mursell, ed., *The Story of Christian Spirituality: Two Thousand Years from East to West* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 9.

⁴ Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Discipline Handbook: Practices that Transform Us* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 11-21, explores the connection between desire and spiritual disciplines.

⁵ Søren Kierkegaard, *Purity of Heart Is to Will the One Thing* (Wilder Publications, 2008), uses the phrase “to desire the one thing.”

⁶ Mursell, *The Story of Christian Spirituality*, 10. Ronald Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), also sees spirituality primarily in terms of desire or rather what people do with their desire. He notes, “Spirituality is about what we do with the fire inside of us, about how we channel our eros” (11). Earlier, Rolheiser noted, “And what shapes our actions is basically what shapes our desire. ... The habits and disciplines we use to shape our desire form the basis

Mulholland, as noted in chapter 1, defines Christian spiritual formation as “the process of being conformed to the image of Christ by the gracious working of God’s spirit, for the transformation of the world.”⁷ While no definition can cover every aspect of Christian spiritual formation, Mulholland’s definition provides a useful context for this project since he sees spiritual formation as a process (or journey) that results in believers’, and the communities (churches) to which they belong, becoming shaped into the image of Christ. Authentic Christian spiritual formation involves the transformation of the self, participation in a redemptive community, and making a difference in the world. In other words, Christian spiritual formation results in believers’ becoming increasingly like Jesus by participating in the life of God but for the sake of the world.⁸

Consequently, Christian spiritual formation requires living a certain kind of life, a life rooted in the nature of God but exemplified by the life and death of Jesus Christ. Scripture is clear in two regards: the Christian spiritual life can be lived only out of a God-centered, God-focused life; and people can find this life only by following, or imitating Jesus Christ.

for a spirituality, regardless of whether these have an explicit religious dimension to them or even whether they are consciously expressed at all” (7).

⁷ Mulholland, *Invitation to a Journey*, 15-17.

⁸ C. Leonard Allen and Danny Gray Swick, *Participating in God’s Life: Two Crossroads for Churches of Christ* (Orange, CA: New Leaf Books, 2001), 186. McGrath, *Christian Spirituality: An Introduction*, 2, sees Christian spiritual formation as “the quest for a fulfilled and authentic Christian existence, involving the bringing together of the fundamental ideas of Christianity and the whole experience of living on the basis of and within the scope of the Christian faith.”

Theology and Spiritual Formation

The Bible is the “grand narrative” of the mission of God,⁹ and the biblical story provides an important avenue through which Christians access this life. The ancient writers of the OT recorded their experience with a God of covenant love who would risk his very name, if not his nature, for their good. The NT continues the story of this God who sent his only Son to die to demonstrate his love. This narrative of love constitutes the main storyline of the Bible.

Early Christians understood the aim of the Bible to be the formation of those who belong to God.¹⁰ The apostle Paul, for example, notes that through attention to Scripture Timothy could become “thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17 NIV; cf. also Col 1:28-29 and Eph 4:7-16). From this point of view, the Bible serves as the primary text for conceiving and nurturing Christian spiritual formation.

The Bible, therefore, must be a source for any theology that can sustain and support Christian spiritual formation. While no consensus exists among biblical theologians as to the precise theological center of either the Old or the New Testament, Hasel points in the right direction. For him, the biblical revelation centers on God: the OT

⁹ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006).

¹⁰ See this emphasis in M. Robert Mulholland Jr., *Shaped by the Word*. Ellen T. Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), presents a convincing case that the purpose not only of the Bible, but also of Christian doctrine generally, is to foster human dignity, calling people to excellence. Christian doctrine is not just about knowledge but ethics and, I would even add, spiritual formation. She further demonstrates this in Paul’s writings (35-60) and in the Sermon on the Mount (61-83).

is theocentric, while the NT is christocentric.¹¹ Any useful theology of Christian spiritual formation must connect with these theological centers.

The Nature of God as Foundation of Christian Spiritual Formation

The prophet Jonah describes YHWH as a “gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger, and abounding in love, [and] a God who relents from sending calamity” (Jonah 4:2). Other OT witnesses share Jonah’s perception (cf. Exod 34:6-7; 2 Chr 30:9; Neh 9:17; Pss 86:15; 103:8; 111:4; 112:4; 145:8; and Joel 2:13 for other renditions of the credo). Each trait ascribed to God by the biblical writers is relational, thus emotional, in nature. YHWH, as presented in the OT, is a God of relationship. While each item in the list is noteworthy, one characteristic, “abounding in love,” deserves much more attention because of its importance in OT theology.

The Hebrew word translated “love” here is the theologically loaded covenantal word *chesed* (דָּסָה). Brown, Drivers, and Briggs’ lexicon notes the basic meaning of *chesed* to be “goodness” or “kindness.” While the word may describe human relationships, it rarely refers to Israel’s response to God (as in Jer 2:2 and Hos 6:4). Instead, *chesed* predominantly speaks to God’s nature. God is kind and good; he shows loving kindness when he redeems Israel from its enemies and trouble, when he preserves and sustains the nation, when he provides redemption from sin, and especially, when he keeps his covenants with his people. The OT testifies to the abundance of God’s covenant love. God’s

¹¹ Gerhard Hasel, *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 139-40. For an update on the current state of OT theology, see Walter Brueggemann’s, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 61-114; and his *Old Testament Theology: Essays on Structure, Theme, and Text*, ed. Patrick D. Miller (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992).

chesed even counteracts his wrath (as in the credo, he “relents from sending calamity”). This steadfast love, as some translate *chesed*, is enduring, persistent, and even eternal¹²; therefore it plays a significant role in the “inner and communal life of God’s people.” God’s love guides the people to God (Exod 15:13) by “serving a pedagogical function as it is remembered, recounted, and meditated upon” (Pss 40:10 [11], 48:9 [10]; 92:1-4 [2-5]; and 106:7).¹³ The objective of this project is to mirror this guidance.

Baer and Gordon show that *chesed* presupposes mutuality (2 Sam 22:26; 1 Kgs 3:6; Hos 10:12; Pss 18: 25 [26]; 36:10; Hos 6:6; Mic 6:8, et al.). Consequently, God’s love provides the basis for approaching God (as in Num 14:17-19).¹⁴ Likewise, Brueggemann asserts that the term denotes a “tenacious fidelity in a relationship of readiness and resolve to continue to be loyal to those to whom one is bound.”¹⁵ He emphasizes that in the OT God defines Israel but Israel also gives definition to who God is. Israel’s very existence depends upon God’s commitment to the nation. Therefore, the OT commonly expresses Israel’s responsibility to see its existence as contingent on God.

¹² F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1907), s.v., “*dsj*.” Hereinafter abbreviated BDB. See also G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, trans. John T. Willis (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 5.44-64. Hereinafter abbreviated TDOT.

All scholarly abbreviations used in this thesis follow those recommended in Patrick H. Alexander, et al., *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999).

¹³ NIDOTTE, s.v., “*dsj*.” See Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. J. A. Baker (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 1:232-39, for his treatment of this word in relationship to God’s covenant.

¹⁴ NIDOTTE, s.v., “*dsj*.”

¹⁵ Walter Brueggemann, *Old Testament Theology: An Introduction*, Library of Biblical Theology (Nashville: Abingdon, 2008), 217. See fn. 9 for the previous studies on this word on which Brueggemann bases his observations. See Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 1:250-58, on God’s love in general in the OT.

Consistent with his nature, God makes the first move. He loves Israel before the nation comes into being. God's love calls Israel into being (Deut 7:8) and singles it out from all other possible nations; God treats Israel as no other nation (Hos 3:1; 11:1). Even when Israel languishes in exile and it appears that God has no more love to give, the prophets proclaim that God's love is yet available (see Jer 31:3 and Isa 43:3-4).¹⁶

In light of God's love for his people, God expects the people to respond by returning that love.¹⁷ While ancient Israel, according to the OT, never quite meets this expectation, Jesus does meet it through his life, ministry, and death, as shown in the NT.

Jesus as the Way of Christian Spiritual Formation

The NT makes a surprising claim, given the OT's assertions regarding the oneness of God: Jesus is the embodiment of God. Mark, for example, equates Jesus with Yahweh when citing a combined text from Isaiah and Malachi in his introduction (Mark 1:1-3). Other writers are not so veiled. The Pastoral Epistles acknowledge Jesus as the only God (1 Tim 1:17; Tit 3:4; et al.), while the writer of Hebrews cites Ps 45:6-7, a passage originally referring to Yahweh, as a text applying to Christ. Paul claims that the fullness of the deity lives in Jesus in bodily form (Col 1:9) and that Jesus is the "icon" of the invisible God, that all things were created for him and by him, and that he is to have preeminence since all things are held together by him (Col 1:20). In this same text, Paul points out that it pleased God to have all his fullness live in Jesus. In the same vein, the anonymous author of the letter to the Hebrews describes Jesus as the exact representation of God and the very image of God's existence (Heb 1:3).

¹⁶ Brueggemann, *Old Testament Theology: An Introduction*, 414-15.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 414.

Just as the NT writers affirm the deity of Jesus, they equally affirm his full humanity. In addition to the many texts that speak of his human activities, like all humans, Jesus is a body that has temporal and spatial limitations.¹⁸ The most telling biblical testimony to the humanity of Jesus is that he died. Presumably, most theologians would agree that this would not be a possibility for God.¹⁹ The church struggled with the mystery of this dual reality of the God-Man for several centuries, until the councils of Nicea and Constantinople concurred that Jesus is best understood as fully divine and fully human.²⁰

Jesus: The Love of God

Christians believe that Jesus embodies the complete revelation of God and the full realization of what God intends humans to be. Therefore, Jesus, by nature, is the complete demonstration of what it means to love God. Accordingly, Jesus becomes the basic paradigm for Christian spiritual formation. To be a Christian is not merely to acknowledge the truth of the Christian story, but as McGrath says, “it is to enter into it, and accept

¹⁸ “Is a body” is preferred to “has a body” since in the case of the latter it sounds as if the “soul” is a real person without the body. This does not align with the biblical understanding that God created the first human from the dust of the ground and breathed into the dust and it became a living soul (Gen 2:7).

¹⁹ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), explores this theme.

²⁰ See Everett Ferguson, *Church History: From Christ to Pre-Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 255-67, for historical development and Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 351-79, for theological development. See also N. T. Wright’s defense of the divinity of Jesus in Marcus J. Borg and N. T. Wright, *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1998), 157-68.

it as part of our own existence.”²¹ To enter the story is to follow Jesus since Jesus teaches the “way” and is himself the way.²²

Since Jesus fully exemplifies what it means to love God wholly, almost any event from his life qualifies to illustrate what it means to love God completely. However, one event stands out as the essential episode for any theology claiming to be Christian. That event is the death of Jesus, or, in shorthand, the cross. Christ’s giving his life on the cross demonstrates what it means for God to love humanity and what it means for humans to love God. Consequently, for any Christian spiritual formation to be considered truly Christian, it must connect with not just the life of Jesus but particularly with the meaning of the cross: the place where God’s love and human love meet.

Each of the four gospel accounts testifies to the centrality of the cross event in the story of Jesus. Not only does each tell the story of the crucifixion (Matt 27:32-56; Mark 15:21-41; Luke 23:26-49; and John 19:17-30); each gospel, in its own way, climaxes on a note of “it is finished” (John 19:30). The gospels further support the importance of the cross because the cross is the subtext toward which everything before the passion narrative leads. Without the cross, the rest of the story has no meaning beyond biographical information about another good teacher. Jesus calls people to follow him by taking up their own crosses.

As each Synoptic gospel writer tells it, the night before Jesus faces his death, he wrestles with God in prayer.²³ Ultimately, accepting that God wills him to face this sort

²¹ McGrath, *Christian Spirituality*, 119.

²² Eugene H. Peterson, *The Jesus Way: A Conversation on the Ways That Jesus Is the Way* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), esp. 1-41.

²³ John’s gospel features Jesus’ intercessory, or high priestly, prayer in chapter 17. Here Jesus prepares to send his disciples out into the world.

of end, he submits. The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews later reflects that Jesus became “perfect” by what he suffered (Heb 5:8-9). In the temptation story Satan taunts Jesus, urging him to prove that he really is the Son of God (Matt 4:3, 6); in Jesus’ final moments, the crowds taunt him to prove his divinity (Matt 27:40, 43). In both instances, Jesus refuses to satisfy his audience—and perhaps even himself. In obedience, Jesus accepts death on a cross (Phil 2:5-10).

The gospel writers frame the meaning of the cross of Jesus in various ways. Matthew and Mark record Jesus as referring to his life as a ransom for many (Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45; cf. 1 Tim 2:6 and Heb 9:15), and all three Synoptic Gospels recall Jesus’ speaking of the blood of the covenant that is poured out for the forgiveness of sins (Mark 14:24; Matt 26:28; and Luke 20:22). The Gospel of John introduces Jesus as the “Lamb of God” who “takes away the sins of the world” (Jn 1:29), a theme prevalent in the last book of the NT as well (see Rev 5:6, 8, 12-13; 6:1, 3, 5, 7, 16; 7:9-10, 14, 17; 12:11; 13:8, 11; 14:1, 4, 10; 15:3; 17:14; 19:7, 9; 21:9, 14, 22-23; and 22:1, 3). The Johannine author reminds his readers that “We love because [God] first loved us” (1 John 4:19 NIV) and summarizes what that means when he writes:

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. (1 John 4:7-12 NIV)

The apostle Paul, in one of many places, captures the meaning of the love of God as demonstrated in the cross of Jesus when he writes in Rom 5:6-11:

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Perhaps no one comes closer to the meaning of the cross of Jesus as a focus for Christian spiritual formation than the author of 1 Peter:

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that *you should follow in his steps*. "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. (1Pet 2:21-25 NIV; emphasis added)

Ultimately, Jesus' death becomes the focal point for defining Christian spirituality throughout history. In his life and in his death, Jesus gives his all to God: his heart, soul, mind, and body. Therefore, it follows that those committed to being shaped into the image of Jesus would seek, in order to become like Jesus, to give all to God. Jesus demonstrates both God's love for humanity and how humans are to love God. For this reason, Jesus becomes the nexus, the mediator (1Tim 2:5; Heb 8:6, 9:15, and 12:24) between God and humans. Consequently, Christians seek to follow Jesus and to become more like him; they listen carefully to the teachings of Jesus. However, the significance

and authority of Jesus' teachings hang on the meaning of the cross. For this reason, as Allen notes, the church, God's people, live "under the cross."²⁴

The *Shema* according to Jesus

Christians do not consider Jesus just a good or wise teacher, but the teacher extraordinaire.²⁵ Christians accord him this status based not on the profundity of his teaching—though the profound is there—but based on the meaning of his life and, more importantly, the meaning of his death. Jesus' death verifies that he understands God well enough to show others the way to God. His resurrection validates his death as meaningful in ways that those who follow him will ponder until the end.

Jesus taught that the greatest command from the OT was to love God with one's whole heart, soul, mind, and strength.²⁶ According to Luke's gospel (10:25-28), a lawyer of religion, or the Law (nomikov) once asked Jesus about the most important commandment in the OT. The evangelist records this encounter:

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

"What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

He answered: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."²⁷

²⁴ C. Leonard Allen, *The Cruciform Church: Becoming a Cross-Shaped People in a Secular World*, 2nd ed. (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 1990), 113-47.

²⁵ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (San Francisco: Harper, 1998), 271-310, explores the relationship between Jesus' teaching and discipleship.

²⁶ As noted by Brueggemann, *Old Testament Theology: An Introduction*, 121.

²⁷ While the other gospel writers (Mark 12:28-34 and Matt 22:34-40) place this citation of the greatest command in a slightly different context, they agree on linking the love of God with the love of neighbor. This coupling makes explicit that loving God

Luke quotes Jesus as teaching that one should love God with heart, soul, strength, and mind.²⁸ Jesus places this teaching, the *shema* from Deut 6:5-6, as the “greatest command,” or in the Lukan context, as “the path to eternal life.” Since Jesus then centers his teaching here, those who seek to become like him would do well to heed him.

The Shema as Prism for Christian Spiritual Formation

Because the shema was a centerpiece in the faith of Israel and in the teachings of Jesus, I wanted to establish that the shema provides a functional prism through which humans can live out a cross-shaped love for God in its constituent parts, yet without atomizing the whole.²⁹ Those who follow Jesus can express their love for God in response to God’s love demonstrated in the cross through their full humanity: with their hearts, souls, minds, and bodies.

Hear, O Israel

The shema articulated Israel’s expected response to God’s love:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. (Deut 6:5-6)

transcends merely personal self-improvement and should lead believers to connect relationally with others.

²⁸ However, the Synoptic traditions diverge on the exact wording of this particular saying. For example, Mark notes that we should love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, a four-fold demarcation, while Matthew lists heart, soul, and mind. Luke follows Mark more closely in listing four items: heart, soul, strength, and mind, though he transposes the last two (see table 1).

²⁹ Scot McKnight, *The Jesus Creed: Loving God, Loving Others* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2004), uses Jesus’ use of the shema as a launching pad for this popular work on Christian spiritual formation, but exegesis and theological reflection is cursory.

In the first movement, this text summons Israel with the imperative “to hear.” This summons, according to Brueggemann, calls for a “radical obedience to the will and purpose of YHWH.”³⁰ This call to love God hangs on God’s nature, particularly on God’s covenant love, or integrity, that is rooted in God’s essential nature. God’s nature is unified, unfragmented, and whole.³¹ While the exact rendering of the credo in verse 6 cannot be easily explained, the overall point is that there is no other God for them; there is only one God to whom Israel should be loyal.³²

Brueggemann observes that shema’s call to love YHWH “refers to a wholehearted, unreserved loyalty.” He notes that scholars agree that “love,” in covenantal contexts, refers to “adherence to commandments in obedience.”³³ Yet obedience without the

³⁰ Brueggemann, *Old Testament Theology: An Introduction*, 121. On the centrality of the shema to the book of Deuteronomy, see Patrick D. Miller, *Deuteronomy*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox, 1990), 98.

³¹ I do not intend by this to deny the Trinitarian nature of God but to reflect a conscious choice to focus on the unity of God for this project. See Gerhard von Rad, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), 63, on translating the sentence.

³² Brueggemann, *Old Testament Theology: An Introduction*, 122. Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 1:226, calls the statement of God’s oneness “a most valuable and vital element in the sum of human knowledge.” In 2:296, Eichrodt notes that the command to love provides “an inner unity and at the same time that direct impact in pastoral exhortation and education which continually brings men back from all the various forms of externalism to the most inward decision of conscience.”

³³ Brueggemann, *Old Testament Theology: An Introduction*, 122. Barry L. Bandstra, *Reading the Old Testament: Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 4th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2009), 171, also notes, “the command to love YHWH is central to the book of Deuteronomy,” which “is not a theological or philosophical treatise but *an encouragement to Israel to remain in covenant relationship with the God* [emphasis added] who brought them out of Egypt and preserved them through the wilderness.” Furthermore, von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 1:230, notes, “all the commandments are simply a grand explanation of the command to love Jahweh and to cling to him alone (Deut 6:4f.). And this love is Israel’s return of the divine love bestowed upon her.”

affective misses the mark.³⁴ In this context, Brueggemann labels love a “dense term.” It not only includes the more political dimension of accepting the sovereignty of YHWH and being loyal to the covenant, it includes an affective response as well. At the center of Israelite obligation to God is the desire to please YHWH and to be with him (as in Pss 27:4 and 73:25). This obligation also involves a level of joy as Israel lives out its genuine “character and identity.”³⁵ Thus “we may focus the obligation of Israel around a yearning devotion for Yahweh; but with that focus we must recognize that the enactment of that obligation takes many different forms, depending on time, place, circumstances, and perspective.”³⁶

The *shema*, when placed in its larger context, begins with the premise that Yahweh delivered the children of Israel from Egyptian captivity; that is, God loved Israel first. The Torah calls for the people to respond with a love “undivided and total.”³⁷ The meaning of the *shema* is to be the lived-out reality of daily life in Israel. While this may not actually have happened often in the story of Israel, *shema* points to the goal of being loyal to God.

³⁴ Brueggemann, *Old Testament Theology: An Introduction*, 122. He quotes Jacqueline E. Lapsley, “Feeling Our Way: Love for God in Deuteronomy,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 65 (2003): 368, as saying, “Actions devoid of feeling and love, even those that fulfill commandments, are morally suspect.”

³⁵ Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*, 420. Likewise, Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places*, 261, comments, “‘Love’ is the big word in Deuteronomy, the most characteristic word.”

³⁶ Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*, 421. Bandstra, *Reading the Old Testament*, 171, notes that this command “would keep the covenant always in front of each Israelite as a guide for everyday living.”

³⁷ Paul D. Hanson, *The People Called: The Growth of Community in the Bible* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 171.

Love the Lord, Your God

To review briefly, God’s oneness calls for a certain response from God’s people. In this particular text, God’s oneness calls his people to love God wholly—that is, with their hearts, souls, and strength. The following discussion sorts through the various meanings of these words and the bearing they might have on understanding what it means to love God as Jesus did.

Love is an important word in Deuteronomy 6. In Hebrew, the word **bha** covers a semantic range related to the affections, whether pure or impure, whether divine or human. This word can even refer to the appetites or desires of people for such things as food, drink, and sex, though it is used this way less often than other usages. In Hebrew parallelism, it means “yearning to be near someone physically” (as in 1 Sam 18:1) as well as conveying the notion of being faithful to someone (as in Jer 31:3 and Hos 11:4). The authors of the OT use this word to describe Yahweh’s relationship with his people (as Deut 10:12; 11:13, 22; 19:9; 30:6; Josh 22:5; 23:11; and Jer 2:2).³⁸ Because such love is a “complete love which demands all of one’s energies,”³⁹ to love God in this way means “to love God completely, wholeheartedly, without any reservations.”⁴⁰

Furthermore, the word **bha** possesses communal significance. The biblical writer uses this word to describe the way Jonathan feels about David. Because Jonathan “love[s] [David] as his own soul,” Jonathan makes a covenant with him (1 Sam 18:1-4). The love of friendship between these two men forms the basis for a covenant between them. In this

³⁸ BDB, s.v., “**bha**”; TDOT, 1.99-118.

³⁹ TDOT, 1.104.

⁴⁰ Robert G. Bratcher and Howard A. Hatton, *A Handbook on Deuteronomy*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Society, 2000), s.v., “6.1-9.”

context the concept implies not just affection but loyalty and trust.⁴¹ As Patrick D. Miller stresses, the love envisioned in Deuteronomy is not primarily affective, but deeper, yet it touches fear and reverence and results in obedience. In this way, the term comes to express notions of loyalty and service.⁴²

It is no surprise then that the LXX, followed by the NT, translates this Hebrew word with the Greek *ajgapavw*, which means “love (primarily of Christian love); show or prove one’s love; long for, desire,” or “place first in one’s affections.”⁴³ Love, in light of this project, connects with what humans crave or desire. Concomitantly, the text calls for the Israelites to love the Lord with all of their being: heart, soul, and strength. This love, as Miller notes, calls absolutely and resolutely for “a total commitment.”⁴⁴

With All Your Heart, Soul, and Strength

In keeping with the notion that the *shema* functions as prism, breaking a whole love for God into constituent parts, some attention is required to explain what it means to

⁴¹ TDOT, 1.105. Gerhard von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 63, writes, “So far as the demand to love God is concerned, we must bear in mind that the covenant-relationship established by Yahweh had always allowed for a variety of feelings, and not for one alone.” Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 169-70, observes, “The command to love is central because the whole book [of Deuteronomy] is concerned with the renewing of the covenant with God, and although the renewal demanded obedience, that obedience would be possible only when it was a response of love to the God who had brought the people out of Egypt and was leading them into the promised land.”

⁴² Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 102.

⁴³ Barclay M. Newman, Jr., *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), s.v., “*ajgapavw*.” Eugene H. Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 263, notes that the *shema* “provides the unifying focus (God only) and integrating motive (love).” On the LXX’s use of *ajgapavw* rather than other possible Greek words for love, see TDOT, 103, which discusses how carefully the word *bha* was used in the Hebrew Scriptures.

⁴⁴ Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 102.

love God with each human dimension: heart, soul, and might. The broad semantic range of these words overlaps considerably, causing translators much frustration.⁴⁵

In the Hebrew language, heart can denote the “inner man, mind, will,” or “heart.”⁴⁶ Likewise, in Greek, heart covers “the causative source of a person’s psychological life in its various aspects, but with special emphasis upon thoughts — ‘heart, inner self, mind.’”⁴⁷ Bowling concurs when he notes that “heart” can refer to “the three traditional personality functions” of humans: “emotion, thought, and will.”⁴⁸ Sorg asserts, “The meaning of heart as the inner life, the centre of the personality and as the place in which God reveals himself to men is even more clearly expressed in the NT than in the OT.”⁴⁹ Thus in the NT the heart is often the “seat of intellectual and spiritual life.” The biblical writers speak of the condition of the heart as reflecting a person’s “standing before God.” God addresses himself to the heart in a person.⁵⁰

The next word isolating a human dimension is *vpn*. According to standard lexicons, the word refers to “soul, living being, life, self, person, desire, appetite, emotion,

⁴⁵ Bratcher and Hatton, *A Handbook on Deuteronomy*, s.v., “6.1-9,” states, “For the Hebrews the heart generally refers to the activities of the mind rather than to emotions. The soul refers to the emotions (see also 4.29). In some languages, however, the functions of heart and soul will be . . . identical. Might refers to physical strength.”

⁴⁶ BDB, s.v. “**bl**.”

⁴⁷ J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988, 1989), 26.3. Hereinafter abbreviated L&N.

⁴⁸ R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), s.v., “**bl**.” Hereinafter cited as TWOT.

⁴⁹ Colin Brown, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975-1985), s.v., “*kardiva*.” Hereinafter abbreviated NIDNTT.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

and passion,”⁵¹ and its Greek counterpart *yuchv* can mean “the essence of life in terms of thinking, willing, and feeling—‘inner self, mind, thoughts, feelings, heart, being.’”⁵² This word describes what the first human became when God breathed into him the “breath of life” (Gen 2:7) and points to the human’s essential self; it can be translated in the NT as “self,” “life,” or “soul.”

The last Hebrew term, *dam*, can connote “muchness, force, abundance, exceedingly” and when not functioning as an idiom expressing magnitude or degree, can mean “force” or “might.”⁵³ Likewise, the Greek term *duvnamiv*, as used in the gospel tradition, means “the ability to perform a particular activity or to undergo some experience—‘ability, capability.’”⁵⁴ Its synonym *iΔscuvβ* means “exceptional capability, with the probable implication of personal potential—capability, strength.”⁵⁵ This term, while not limited to physical strength alone, does touch upon what people do with their bodies.

In summary, the terms for heart, soul, and strength used in the OT shema, while potentially overlapping in meaning, communicated to ancient Israel that God expected them to return his love by giving of their mind/emotions, their life-energy, and their abilities. Jesus taught his followers to do the same.

⁵¹ BDB, s.v., “*vpn*.”

⁵² L&N, 26.4.

⁵³ BDB, s.v., “*dam*.”

⁵⁴ L&N, 74.1.

⁵⁵ L&N, 74.8.

With All Your Mind

In their references to the shema, all three Synoptic Gospels depart from the original Hebrew by supplying an additional word referring specifically to the mind or thinking, though this may be the writers' attempt to capture in Greek the full meaning of the Hebrew word for "heart," which can include both the thinking and the emotions (as noted above). Louw and Nida understand *dianoiva* to relate to "the psychological faculty of understanding, reasoning, thinking, and deciding—'mind.'"⁵⁶ This is true also for the other word for "thinking" (*suvnesiβ* in Mark 12:33). Again, Louw and Nida define this word to signify "to be able to understand and evaluate—to be able to comprehend, to understand, to be intelligent; insight, intelligence."⁵⁷ In this way, the gospel tradition transmits an additional element specifically related to loving God with the intellect. Table 1 below shows all words used in both the OT and NT versions of the shema and suggests the larger semantic domain that connects with each.

Table 1. Words in the Greatest Commandment

Hebrew	LXX	Mark	Matthew	Luke	Domain
bbl	<i>kardiva</i>	<i>kardiva</i>	<i>kardiva</i>	<i>kardiva</i>	<i>affective</i>
vpn	<i>yuchv</i>	<i>yuchv</i>	<i>yuchv</i>	<i>yuchv</i>	<i>inner life</i>
		<i>dianoiva</i> <i>suvnesiβ</i> ⁵⁸	<i>dianoiva</i>	<i>dianoiva</i>	<i>intellect</i>
dam	<i>duvnamiv</i>	<i>iΔscuvβ</i> ⁵⁹		<i>iΔscuvβ</i>	<i>energy</i>

⁵⁶ L&N, 26.14

⁵⁷ L&N, 32.26.

⁵⁸ In Mark 12:33, the lawyer repeats what Jesus had previously quoted in 12:30.

⁵⁹ Not in the lawyer's quotation in Mark 12:33.

With Your All

Louw and Nida rightly stress that it “is important to note that in a passage such as Mark 12:30 the terms in the series . . . do not refer to completely different parts or aspects of human personality; rather, the four are combined to emphasize the totality of the individual.”⁶⁰ Thus the best way to translate this series in some languages would be “to love him completely with all you feel and all you think.”⁶¹ However, Christensen disagrees slightly, noting that the use of the Hebrew words for heart, soul, and strength “suggests that a distinction of some sort is being made between the mental and emotional energy and activity,” yet “our love for God is to embrace the whole of our mind, both conscious and unconscious.” Thus Christensen continues, “Self-discipline is required, in that we are to love God with all our might as well.”⁶²

Lexical analysis makes it clear that these terms are not precise. They overlap significantly with each other. However, these terms approximate what people see as different parts of themselves, and students can readily relate to these categories pedagogically. Thus “heart” indicates either the intellect or the emotions, “soul” speaks of a person’s essential self, “mind” clearly denotes the intellect, and “strength” refers to what people can do with their bodies.

Based on this reading of the shema in both the OT and the NT, one can discern four “colors” radiating from the metaphorical prism: to love God fully means to love God

⁶⁰ L&N, 74.8.

⁶¹ Ibid. Kaiser concurs in TWOT, s.v. “dam,” that these terms were “chosen to reinforce the absolute singularity of personal devotion to God.”

⁶² Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1:1-21:9*, 2nd ed., Word Biblical Commentary, 6A (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 143.

with heart, soul, mind, and body (or strength). Jesus loved God in precisely this way, and he calls his followers to so love God as well. It is possible, if not dogmatically pressed, to see these four areas as domains, or spheres, through which humans can express and experience spiritual formation. These domains include the affective (how people feel), the inner life (who people are), the intellect (what and how people think), and the energetic (what people do).⁶³ As noted in chapter 1, these domains can find expressions in the various quadrants of Holmes's model. Ultimately any holistic spiritual formation model would have to involve each of these areas.⁶⁴

The Practice of Christian Spiritual Formation

We have examined the theological foundation for Christian spiritual formation centered in the cross of Jesus. But what practical implications and applications arise from reflecting on Jesus' teaching on the greatest command?

The Shema as a Way of Christian Spiritual Formation

For a curriculum of Christian spiritual formation to be truly holistic, involving the whole person, it must seek to engage heart, soul, mind, and body. Additionally, a holistic spiritual formation moves people into the areas of theological renewal, personal renewal, a deepening of the inner life, and societal regeneration. Not only is this truth consistent with God's expectation of his ancient people Israel; Jesus lives his life on its basis and in

⁶³ For a similar approach to holistic Christian spiritual formation, see Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, esp. 27-44. Willard also sees human beings as consisting of six basic aspects: thoughts, feelings, choice, body, social context, and soul (30).

⁶⁴ Boa, *Conformed to His Image*, 31, stresses, "Loving God completely involves our whole personality—our intellect, emotion, and will."

his teaching stresses loving God with heart, soul, mind, and body. The following four axioms capture this.

1. Christian spiritual formation shapes the heart.
2. Christian spiritual formation shapes the soul.
3. Christian spiritual formation shapes the mind.
4. Christian spiritual formation shapes the body.

Each of these statements deserves further elaboration.⁶⁵

Christian Spiritual Formation Shapes the Heart

People are inherently emotional. While emotions can be false guides at times, some of the most significant decisions people make originate from this arena of human personality. Daniel Goldman contends that emotional intelligence may be a more significant factor in success than IQ.⁶⁶ From a theological point of view, the Bible—particularly the OT—presents God as an emotional being. For example, the oft-repeated credo concerning God’s nature asserts that he is gracious, compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in love and one who changes his mind regarding the sending of calamity (Exod 34:6; Neh 9:17; Pss 86:15; 103:8; Joel 2:13; and Jonah 4:2). Since these characteristics are emotional in nature, it follows naturally that his creatures would also be emotional. Therefore, loving God with our emotions involves human desires and affections—the directing of the human heart toward filling that desire. Thus a spiritual formation claiming holism

⁶⁵ Although I formulated these axioms from the preceding investigation into the biblical theology, they do follow a similar model to that of Dallas Willard in *Renovation of the Heart* where he sees “heart” as the comprehensive category. Thus in his work chapters 6-11 deal with transforming a person’s thought life, feelings, will (heart or spirit), body, social dimension, and soul.

⁶⁶ Daniel Goldman, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* (New York: Bantam, 1995).

would need to touch and engage human emotions as it leads them into arenas of personal renewal.

Christian Spiritual Formation Shapes the Soul

Christian theology gives testimony that humans are “soulish” beings, who, by virtue of that fact, have an inner or interior life (as in Mark 7:14-23). Jesus taught that defilement for a person comes from his or her interior life. This lines up well with Paul’s dichotomy between the “inner man” and the “outer man” and his insistence that what takes place in the inner person holds far more significance than what takes place on the outside (for example, Eph 4-5; Col 3). In a rather incidental note at the end of a letter, Paul prays God’s blessing on his readers’ “whole spirit, soul and body” (1 Thess 5:23). While scholars are hard pressed to distinguish with any precision the difference between “spirit” and “soul,” none can deny that human composition includes both the physical (body) and the more ephemeral, whether called “spirit” or “soul.” The author of Hebrews speaks of how the word of God can cut even to the dividing of “soul and spirit, joints and marrow” (Heb 4:12), again showing that humans consist of both body and soul. Christian spiritual formation, accordingly, seeks to deepen the “inner life” of believers.

Christian Spiritual Formation Shapes the Mind

Mark Noll says astutely that the challenge of the Evangelical mind is that there is not much of one.⁶⁷ In his book, Noll points to developing the life of the mind as a worthy enterprise for those who name Jesus as Lord. Scholars of the Restoration Movement have noted the existence of anti-intellectual tendencies within the movement; still, loving God

⁶⁷ Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 3.

with one's mind comprises an important element of Christian spiritual formation. When Christians move toward pietistic extremes, they can easily dismiss the role of intellectual development; even in centers of Christian education, this viewpoint seems to gain currency. Yet Jesus, by his study of Scripture and debates with religious leaders, showed that the dedication of one's mind to God could yield favorable fruit. Thus there is room for richer theological knowledge in the Christian spiritual formation.

Christian Spiritual Formation Shapes the Body

I have often noted that when Christians speak of being holy, which is an inner life issue, what humans do with their bodies lags not far behind in the discussion.⁶⁸ What people do with their bodies indicates to some degree what is going on inside of them. Accordingly, an attempt at spiritual formation that ignores the role of the body in spiritual life is inadequate, for the body provides the means of influencing the outside world. When people live out their spiritual formation, it involves the body since bodily actions serve as good indicators of internal realities. Consequently, through the giving of their bodies, humans transform their circles of influence. Any hope of societal regeneration will come about because those dedicated to God have given their bodies in significant ways, whether in time or effort.

In summary, holistic spiritual formation must involve the whole of what it means to be human. By giving heart, soul, mind, and body, people participate in the mission of

⁶⁸ This topic is explored in Samuel M. Powell and Michael E. Lodahl, eds., *Embodied Holiness: Toward a Corporate Theology of Growth* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999). These essays explore the place of holiness in both the life of the individual and the life of the Christian community. See also Ignacio L. Götz, "Spirituality and the Body," *Religious Education* 96.1 (Winter 2001): 2-19, who seeks to dispel the spirit/body dichotomy.

God. Participation in Christian spiritual formation urges believers into areas of personal renewal, inner life growth, theological knowledge, and societal regeneration.⁶⁹

Survey of Literature

This section engages the scholarly and devotional literature relevant to framing, understanding, and implementing a course proposal in Christian spiritual formation. I have included works of history, theology, practices, and pedagogy. These works have influenced and shaped my understanding of Christian spiritual formation, thus this project, but these works are also important resources for understanding, teaching, and practicing Christian spiritual formation.

For understanding the history of Christian spirituality and spiritual formation, one should consult Urban T. Holmes' *A History of Christian Spirituality*, Robert Webber's *The Divine Embrace*, as well as Mursell's work mentioned previously.⁷⁰ Mursell's book is a comprehensive survey of the history of Christian spirituality. More focused than Mursell, Holmes begins with a phenomenology of prayer, important to the model introduced in chapter 1, then places the development of Christian spirituality in historic periods: early church, medieval, and modern, with a brief foray into Eastern, or Byzantine, spirituality (89-92). Webber, also following a chronological arrangement, includes post-modern developments after the modern period, with a focus on the historic separation of

⁶⁹ Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 31, agrees when he writes, "Spiritual formation in Christ is the process leading to that ideal end, and its result is love of God with all of the heart, soul, mind, and strength, and of the neighbor as oneself. The human self is then fully integrated under God."

⁷⁰ Robert E. Webber, *The Divine Embrace: Recovering the Passionate Spiritual Life*; Urban T. Holmes, III, *A History of Christian Spirituality: An Analytical Introduction*; and Mursell, *The Story of Christian Spirituality*.

spirituality from theology. Then Alister McGrath's introduction to *Christian Spirituality* offers a much more analytical history of the development of Christian spirituality but follows a topical, rather than strictly chronological, arrangement.⁷¹ These books are important in locating oneself in history, for in so doing, the teacher of Christian spiritual formation will know what resources are available from the whole Christian tradition. By exploring other traditions of spiritual formation, one finds other resources for teaching. For example, the Orthodox understanding of *theosis* provides a rich venue for exploring what it means to become like God. Furthermore, locating one's students in history can aid professors in knowing where their students are and assessing where they need to learn and grow.

Additionally, Mark A. McIntosh's *Mystical Theology* helps the scholar and practitioner reconnect spiritual theology with academic study. McIntosh argues that Christians need not separate the mind and the heart and, in addition, attempts to show that classic spiritual texts can serve as sources for theology.⁷² As a practical theologian in the context of a Bible college, I seek to function as if there were no tension between theology and spirituality, but I am deeply conscious that this is not the case in North American culture and in the history of Western Christianity. McIntosh and Webber were especially helpful in helping me see how serious the rift is. To realize that what I am doing in this project can participate in the healing of that rift is humbling.

⁷¹ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Spirituality: An Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1999).

⁷² Mark A. McIntosh, *Mystical Theology: The Integrity of Spirituality and Theology*, Challenges in Contemporary Theology Series (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998).

Evan B. Howard furnishes an all-inclusive reference work on Christian spirituality with his new introduction to the field. Howard draws from a variety of resources, historical and theological, as well as the human sciences, particularly the social sciences. He also seeks to place Christian spirituality into a “single coherent framework” to bring a synthesis to this vast field of study.⁷³ Additionally, Kenneth J. Collins has collected a number of impressive essays on Christian spirituality in *Exploring Christian Spirituality: An Ecumenical Reader*.⁷⁴ Part 4 of Collins’s collection contains essays that discuss specifically the relationship between spirituality and theology. These works contributed to this project and the eventual outcome of this project a framework for understanding the historical development of Christian spiritual formation and for locating oneself in that history. Again, this background is also important for providing the resources and informing practices that have developed in the Christian tradition.

Important texts on the nature of Christian spiritual formation include Dallas Willard’s *The Divine Conspiracy* and his more recent *Renovation of the Heart*.⁷⁵ This first work explores the philosophical issues related to the difficulty of practicing spiritual formation in the modern and postmodern world. Getting a sense of these philosophical issues can educate the teacher of Christian spiritual formation both of the challenges and the opportunities of conveying these practices to the current generation of students. The second book is devotional in nature yet provides a good model for teaching Christian spiritual formation. For the course under development in this project, Kenneth Boa’s

⁷³ Evan B. Howard, *The Brazos Introduction to Christian Spirituality* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008), 10-11.

⁷⁴ (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000).

⁷⁵ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* and *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ*.

*Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation*⁷⁶

received strong consideration. This work breaks Christian spiritual formation into twelve facets: relational, paradigm, disciplined, exchange life, motivated, devotional, holistic, process, Spirit-filled, warfare, nurturing, and corporate. He understands these categories as compatible with Holmes's model, discussed in chapter 1 of this thesis.⁷⁷ While I find some of these categories somewhat artificial, his approach is beneficial from a pedagogical point of view. This well-laid-out textbook offers clear objectives for the book and each chapter, making the complexity of Christian spiritual formation palatable for college-age students.

Likewise, Eugene Peterson's recent four-volume series offers excellent introductions to spiritual theology and the practice thereof. His *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places* introduces his project by establishing the link—broken in modern theology—between theology and spirituality. In this work, he proposes that Christ “plays” in creation, history, and community, thus giving the reader a theological framework for doing spiritual theology. His second volume explores *lectio divina*, or the art of spiritual reading, while his third and fourth volumes conduct “conversations” on how to follow Jesus as the way.⁷⁸ In the third volume, he explores alternative ways to the way of Jesus while the fourth book explores the evocative language of Jesus as found in his prayers and stories. Peterson is a suitable mentor for those who seek to practice spiritual disciplines as

⁷⁶ (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001).

⁷⁷ Boa, *Conformed to his Image*, 21 and 467-70.

⁷⁸ Eugene H. Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005); *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006); *The Jesus Way: A Conversation on the Ways That Jesus Is the Way*; and *Tell it Slant: A Conversation on the Language of Jesus in His Stories and Prayers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

well as those who seek to teach them. His third and fourth volumes are particularly useful for the teacher looking for exemplars of how to move from the biblical text to teaching Christian spiritual formation.

Dallas Willard and Eugene Peterson continually teach me how to transmit spiritual formation to students. What I learned most from them was not only how to do spiritual theology but how to teach students in a way they can comprehend and engage. Peterson demonstrates how to teach the profound with ease.

Karen M. Yust and E. Byron Anderson, *Taught by God: Teaching and Spiritual Formation* and Parker J. Palmer, *To Know as We are Known: Education as a Spiritual Journey*⁷⁹ are among those writing on the relationship between spirituality and teaching. These works guide the teacher/practitioner through the process of being shaped and in shaping others. Palmer's little volume reminded me that being an educator is itself a spiritual journey. His book provided needed spiritual and theological reflection for me as a teacher and caused me to pause to meditate on what God was doing in my life as an educator.

Another significant work concerning the relationship between Christian spiritual formation and the classroom was the Carnegie Foundation's volume *Educating Clergy*, found in their Preparation for the Professions series.⁸⁰ This series is concerned with how

⁷⁹ Karen M. Yust and E. Byron Anderson, *Taught by God: Teaching and Spiritual Formation* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2006) and Parker J. Palmer, *To Know as We are Known: Education as a Spiritual Journey* (NEW YORK: HarperCollins, 1993).

⁸⁰ Charles R. Foster, Lisa E. Dahill, et al., *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and Pastoral Imagination*. See also the thoughtful essay on ministerial education by John P. Wagenhofer, "Spiritual Leadership: A Matrix for Ministerial Education," in Robert J. Wicks, *Handbook of Spirituality for Ministers*, vol. 1 (New York: Paulist Press, 1994), 531-44. I would also add as useful for my particular context, James L. Drexler, ed. *School as Communities: Educational Leadership, Relationships and the Eternal Value of*

various professions train those who practice those professions. The particular volume *Educating Clergy* is concerned with the teaching practices of those who train clergy, but the concern is not just content of that education but how ministerial education forms certain kinds of people who have cultivated “a pastoral, priestly, or rabbinic imagination for clergy work.”⁸¹ In investigating how this cultivation is accomplished, the book examines four classroom pedagogies for forming such an imagination: pedagogies of interpretation, pedagogies of formation, pedagogies of contextualization, and pedagogies of performance. The second of these—pedagogies of formation—is most important to this project. The authors captured my attention when they stated, “At the center of this pedagogy is the idea of formation: the recognition that teaching and learning are about much more than transferring facts or even cognitive tools. Learning in the formative sense is a process by which students become a certain kind of thinking, feeling, and acting being.”⁸² This is exactly the outcome in the lives of students I sought in creating a new course in Christian spiritual formation.

As the preceding literature review shows, the teaching of Christian spiritual formation is a complex exercise. It requires simultaneous cross-disciplinary conversations with history, theology, both theoretical and practical, and educational theory and pedagogy.

Christian Schooling (Colorado Springs: Purposeful Design, 2007), and Stephen T. Beers, ed., *The Soul of the Christian University: A Field Guide for Educators* (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 2008).

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁸² Foster, Dahill, et al., *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and Pastoral Imagination*, 10.

Conclusion

As this chapter presents the theological and practical framework for this project, the theological section articulates a biblical theology to support the concept of being fully devoted to God and explores what it means to seek and to love God with one's full humanity. God demonstrates this kind of love in the cross, the venue through which he reveals both his love for humanity and the possibility of human love returned to him. In addition, I offer practical principles, rooted in loving God with heart, soul, mind, and strength, as a paradigm for the process of Christian spiritual formation. These principles and the supporting scholarly and devotional literature guided the selection and shaping of each session planned for this project, as delineated in chapter 3's consideration of methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The aim of this project was to form a team to support me in the development of a new course proposal in Christian spiritual formation for Western Christian College's Encounter program. In this chapter, I describe the format of the project, the team sessions, the field methodology used, the selection of the team, and the qualitative methods used to evaluate the project.

Format of the Project

The team was not formed to develop the course but to serve as a resource and to function as a sounding board for me. The group experience alternated between an activity/teaching session and a corresponding reflection session. In all, the group experienced three activity sessions while also reading a book as the fourth activity session. Corresponding to each of these were four reflection sessions that took place after each activity session, with the exception of the last session, which responded to the book. The action sessions presented an opportunity to explore the four areas of Christian spirituality as proposed by the Holmes and Sager model and presented by Boa (as outlined in chapter 1).¹ The purpose of each reflection session was to provide a forum for the group to explore the meaning of the previous activity session. The data that resulted

¹ Holmes, *A History of Christian Spirituality*; Sager, *Gospel-Centered Spirituality*; and Boa, *Conformed to His Image*.

from these reflection sessions provided new information, and if appropriate, I incorporated it into the final course proposal.

In preparation for these sessions, I addressed several items of prolegomena. First, since WCC is a small school, many of the school processes are informal, and no formal policy exists regarding how to propose new courses. Therefore, I adapted the course application policy used by WCC's sister institution, Abilene Christian University (see appendix A).² Second, I planned the logistics of the meetings, including inviting guests, arranging locations, setting up the stenographer's computer and peripheral equipment, and aligning schedules of the participants. Invitations were sent to potential participants on August 19, 2008 (see appendix B). Everyone invited accepted. At the first meeting I described the project, stated the ground rules for the meetings, and asked them to sign a human subject waiver as required by Abilene Christian University, which they did (see appendix C).

All of the meetings, except one, occurred in WCC's primary college classroom, known as the Peterson Room. The classroom arrangement features tables in a horseshoe-shape, allowing students to sit around the outside of the tables and the instructor to work from the middle of the classroom. This arrangement accommodated the guest speakers who joined us. Afterward, the group members arranged their chairs to accommodate a small group discussion concerning their experiences in the previous action session. The second reflection meeting took place at a hospitality room of a local church. In this environment, the group sat in a circle in comfortable chairs and sofas.

² ACU's new course applications packets may be downloaded via the Internet from http://www.acu.edu/academics/admscenter/instruct_dev.html.

I invited several people to participate in this project. From the faculty and staff, I invited my administrative assistant, who doubles as the college's registrar, to join. She recently accepted her current job at WCC, but is a graduate of the school and has collectively over four years of missions experience in Brazil and, more recently, India. Because of the role she occupies, her input and participation were important for any initiative I hoped to develop at WCC. Another selected staff member, a mid-forties Bible and ministry professor at WCC, is in his second year of teaching after some twenty years of pastoral ministry and holds the M.Div. degree from Canadian Theological Seminary. He has begun work toward his M.Th. degree at the Wycliffe College at Toronto's School of Theology and has a strong interest in the spiritual formation of students. I also invited a local minister serving a Church of Christ in Regina. He too holds the M.Div. degree from Canadian Theological Seminary. Though still in his late twenties, he shows a depth in spiritual matters not often seen in one his age. He is an engaging preacher, whose topics frequently touch on matters of spiritual formation. In addition, he possesses a deep desire to see young people grow in the Lord.

From the student body, I invited an attentive fourth-year ministry student who cares more about spiritual development than knowledge acquisition. Having grown up in the Mennonite tradition, he brought a different perspective to nearly every discussion we had. Next, I invited a second-year student from Arkansas who has family roots in Canada. He is enthusiastic but scattered in his interests and activities. Finally, I asked a first-year student from British Columbia who has a great desire to become more like Jesus.³

³ An interesting feature of Canadian educational nomenclature is the preference to refer to each level of high school and college by years, such as "a grade nine student," or

Still in her mid-twenties, she has suspended her career in early childhood development to dedicate a year of her life to the concentrated study of Bible and ministry.

Twyla Grieves, Certified Shorthand Reporter (CSR), Official Queen’s Bench Court Reporter, recorded and transcribed each of the reflection sessions. She holds an official certificate as a court reporter. (See her certification stamp and examples of the transcriptions in appendix D).

Description of the Praxis and Reflection Sessions

In my quest for a holistic Christian spiritual formation course, I chose to use the model developed by Holmes and Sager and presented in *Boa*, in conversation with the theological principles enunciated in chapter 2. As noted in that chapter, these scholars see Christian spiritual formation as needing to address four quadrants: societal regeneration, theological renewal, the inner life, and personal renewal. Chapter 2 aligned these categories with heart, soul, mind, and strength from the biblical tradition.

Praxis-Reflection Cycles

Each of the following reflection sessions gave the group time to ponder and discuss the nature of Christian spiritual formation based on the previous experience.⁴ To give some structure to the group’s reflection, the following discussion questions (in appendix E) guided the conversation following each activity:

“a fourth-year college student” rather than freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior. In Canada, seniors refer to the elderly.

⁴ This is similar to what Jackson W. Carroll suggests as the way of ministry in *Ministry as Reflective Practice: A New Look at the Professional Model* (Washington, DC: Alban Institute, 1986). A more complex model of this cycle by Gailyn Van Rheen can be found in his material in Paul E. Engle and Gary L. McIntosh, eds., *Evaluating the Church Growth Movement: Five Views* (Grand Rapid: Zondervan, 2004), 167-89, though Van Rheen begins with theological reflection and assumes praxis.

1. What was familiar (or something you assume should be a part of the Christian life) in this experience?
2. What was unfamiliar or made you uncomfortable about this experience?
3. Where did you sense the presence of God in this experience?
4. What Scriptures came to mind as you engaged in this activity?
5. What other spiritual practices should accompany activities such as this one?
6. Would you recommend this experience for students in a class on spiritual formation?
7. Does this activity connect with heart, soul, mind or body (strength)?⁵

I did not intend these questions to stifle conversation but to keep the conversation moving should the group stall. This never happened, and several times the group wanted to continue the conversation after the “official” time was over. In some cases, I modified questions on the spot to connect more readily with their prior experience. Given the nature of qualitative analysis executed in this project, this alteration should have no appreciable adverse effects on the results. (See questions in appendix E.)

Since the activity sessions form part of the methodology used to set up the reflection sessions, they are described in this chapter. However, the reflection sessions, which are themselves results, yielded the primary data for the project and will be described in the next chapter.

Activity Session 1: The Inner Life

This first praxis-reflection session occurred on 9 October 2008 and explored the apophatic pole of the Holmes-Sager model (dealing with the mystery of God)—without using the word apophatic. I invited a local Orthodox Church priest to discuss the Orthodox notion of union with God, or *theosis*. Before this meeting, I sent participants a link to

⁵ Judith Bell, *Doing Your Own Research Project: A Guide for First Time Researchers in Education, Health, Social Science*, 4th ed. (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2005), 118-33, would label most of these questions as “open questions,” while the last question seeks to find a “category.” See also Vyhmeister, *Quality Research Papers*, 157-61.

a web article on *theosis* to prepare them with a sense of what the term means.⁶ I had never met the priest before this meeting and had originally wanted the group to meet at his church so they could experience the rich art typical of the Orthodox tradition. However, since work crews were remodeling his cathedral, he insisted he would like to come to the college (he had never been there) and assured me the video he was bringing would be a better introduction into Orthodox spirituality than the current state of his church building.

Although the young priest was of Romanian origin and spoke with an accent, his English was quite understandable. Though excited and a bit nervous about the opportunity to share, he clearly enjoyed teaching about his faith. He gave the group a thorough but quick historical survey of the development of the Orthodox Church from Pentecost through the Great Schism to modern times. He spoke of the Orthodox Church's migration to North America through Siberian fur trading immigrants and how this was just the beginning of what became the current "ethnic" divide characteristic among the various branches of the Orthodox Church in North America. Then he showed the group a video called "A Tour of an Orthodox Church," which introduced the layout of an Orthodox Church, icons, the nature of Orthodox faith and worship, and the role of tradition. A priest in the film commented that Orthodox tradition engaged "the whole person" in the church's worship.

In the last twenty minutes of the hour, the priest gave a passionate biblical discourse on *theosis*. He traced the Greek root of "God" to a verb denoting "fire" or, "energy," and explained *theosis* as the union between humans and the divine fire, or

⁶ "Theosis," <http://orthodoxwiki.org/Theosis> (accessed October 2, 2008). This article was chosen because participants had ready access to it via the Internet.

energy.⁷ Next, he distinguished between “likeness” and “image” before discussing *theosis* from the vantage of the Gospel of John, centering on John 1:1-14, 15:4-5, and 17:20-21. He stressed the Johannine “abiding” language and how the believers’ unity with God creates cooperation and synergy with God. Other texts important to his argument included Gal 2:20, 2 Pet 1:4, and Rom 12:1-2. The priest ended with an emphasis on how salvation in biblical terms involves the redemption of the whole world as discussed by Paul (for example, Rom 8).

Activity Session 2: Societal Regeneration

On 16 October 2008, the team joined an urban youth minister, a graduate of WCC, in his “Cross Rox” ministry with a local Church of Christ. The mid-twenties minister sports prominent earrings and tattoos. He helped to found a successful alternative Christian musical group, but left the group because of his responsibility to his new family. In every way, he fits the part of an urban youth minister.

I invited the team to meet at the church’s facility to “hang out” with some urban teens and to observe the ministry.⁸ The team joined young people in their scheduled activities for the evening. As various members of the team arrived, they fought their disorientation to find where they might be helpful. Some of the children were shooting baskets, some talking with one another, and others running through the building chasing one another. Eventually the youth minister corralled the young people into the youth room for the evening’s activity. Once he quieted his group, he reiterated the standards for the

⁷ NIDNTT, s.v., “qeovV,” states, “The etymology of the Greek word has not yet been clarified; the only thing that is certain is that it was originally a title.”

⁸ One member was not able to attend this session. Everyone attended all the sessions except this one.

young people's behavior and then moved the group into the game of the evening, an improvisation game inspired by Drew Carey's "Whose Line Is It?" The team observed the interaction between the youth minister and the young people as well as the young people amongst themselves.

Activity Session 3: Personal Renewal

The third session occurred on 6 November 2008. Its purpose was to explore the role that emotions and feelings play in the process of spiritual formation. I invited a Pentecostal pastor who preaches for a local church. A stocky man with an incessant smile, he exudes energy, passion, and conviction. I had invited him to discuss the role of the Holy Spirit in Christian spiritual transformation; however, he focused his presentation on the role of the Holy Spirit in conversion rather than the long-term work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification. Nonetheless, this substitution did lead to some important insights on the part of the group related to how Churches of Christ tend also to focus on initial conversion and seem to lack much to say about the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.

According to the pastor, the Bible outlines three experiences of the Holy Spirit. First, the Holy Spirit is active in leading a person to conversion in Christ (citing 1 Cor 12:13). Second, the Holy Spirit empowers people, particularly in the act of speaking in tongues (*glossolalia*); and, third, the Holy Spirit works in the lives of believers to make them holy. He primarily discussed the Holy Spirit's role in empowering believers with the gift of tongues. He understands glossolalia as the *sine qua non* evidence of full salvation. In his presentation, the pastor followed the general teaching of the Pentecostal tradition. However, he did make a few points the group had not heard before. For example, he talked of the experience of being baptized into the Holy Spirit as a "saturation by the

Holy Spirit,” that the Holy Spirit would “take control” and that one so blessed would be “soaked in the environment” of the Holy Spirit. Additionally, the pastor tied the warning about the use of the tongue (in James 3:1-12) to glossolalia by suggesting the experience of speaking in tongues involves giving control of the tongue to God.

In the remainder of his presentation, the pastor offered proof-texts from Luke, Acts and the Gospel of John for his understanding of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and he closed with a presentation distinguishing the various Pentecostal movements of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. He wanted us to understand that he stood in the tradition of classic Pentecostalism.

Activity Session 4: Theological Renewal

This final conversation occurred on 12 November 2008. At the beginning of the project, each member of the team began reading the new novel *The Shack*.⁹ The author offers a non-traditional vision of the nature of God as a response to the problem of theodicy.

Young tells the story of Mackenzie Allen Phillips whose youngest child, Missy, goes missing during a family vacation. Though not conclusive, the evidence suggests that someone has brutally murdered Missy in an abandoned shack in the Oregon wilderness. Four years later Mack, still deeply depressed because of the “Great Sadness,” makes his way down the icy driveway to his rural mailbox. There he finds a note claiming to be from God and inviting him to revisit the shack.

⁹ William P Young, *The Shack* (Newbury Park, CA: Wind Blown Media, 2008). For a review of the book, see http://www.challies.com/media/The_Shack.pdf (accessed December 7, 2008).

After Mack arrives at the shack, he enters a world of theophanic visions. God appears to him as a portly African-American woman who goes by the name Papa. Jesus appears more appropriately as a Middle Eastern laborer, while the Holy Spirit, named Sarayu, incarnates as a small Asian woman who moves with ephemeral lightness. Over the rest of the weekend (and the book), Mack converses with the Trinity about the nature of God, the place of suffering in the world, and the necessity of his own suffering.

While engaging, entertaining and somewhat intriguing, the book has some serious theological failings, which most evangelical readers will not catch—as indicated by the wide reception the book has already received. In my opinion, the book does not adequately account for the role of evil in the world. However, for the purposes of this project my interest lay in hearing how the group would process the role of “truth” in Christian spiritual formation.

Methods of Evaluation

Nature of Qualitative Research

This project used a particular type of qualitative research.¹⁰ Corbin and Strauss define qualitative analysis as a “process of examining and interpreting data in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge.”¹¹ Researchers, according to Flick, use qualitative methods when they need “to design methods so open

¹⁰ Thomas W. Lee, *Using Qualitative Methods in Organizational Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1999), 42. Another useful tool is Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, eds., *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2000).

¹¹ Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2008), 1.

that they do justice to the complexity of the object under study.” Thus the primary features of qualitative research are the appropriateness of the methods and theories, the perspectives of the participants and their diversity, the reflexivity of the researcher and the research, and the variety of approaches and methods in qualitative research.¹² “[T]he object under study is the determining factor for choosing a method and not the other way round.” Flick continues, “[T]he validity of the study is assessed with reference to the object under study and does not exclusively follow abstract academic criteria of science as in quantitative research.”¹³ This project utilized a particular type of qualitative method known as program evaluation. Program evaluation “is the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programs to make judgments about the program, improve program effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about future programming.”¹⁴ A primary tool for validating the results of this project involves the triangulation of several perspectives and observers.

Role of Triangulation

The use of triangulation ensured and controlled the validity of this project.¹⁵ Michael Patton describes four forms of triangulation used in qualitative research: methods,

¹² Uwe Flick, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* (London: Sage, 1998), 5.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2002), 10.

¹⁵ See Norman Denzin, *The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods*, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1989), 307: “By combining multiple observers, theories, methods, and data sources, researchers can hope to overcome the intrinsic bias that comes from single-methods, single-observer, and single-theory studies.”

sources, the use of an analyst, and the theory or perspective employed.¹⁶ In this project, the three poles of triangulation included the “participant-as-observer”¹⁷ (me), the data set gleaned from the group process of the team, and outside experts.¹⁸

Because I led the group in this project, I came to it as an “expert.” I bring some twenty years of pastoral experience in addition to five years of teaching and educational administrative experience, as well as previous academic education and training. Ultimately, I was responsible to determine what went into the course proposal created from this project. Thus as “participant-as-observer,” I brought both my gifts and biases to this enterprise. However, in this role, because of the nature of the project, I also served as a spiritual guide for participant members. This reality became clear in the transcripts of each reflection session.

Because of the team’s respect for me and the likelihood that they would want to please and help me, I coached the team on avoiding the Hawthorne effect—the temptation of groups to tell their leader what they believe the leader wants to hear.¹⁹ In the initial session, I attempted to create space where people could speak freely and openly, even if such conversation involved criticism of this project or me.

¹⁶ Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 556.

¹⁷ See Chava Frankfort-Nachmias and David Nachmias, *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*, 5th ed. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 282-85, on my role as “participant-as-observer.” These authors note: “With this method, the field worker gains a deeper appreciation of the group and its way of life and may also gain different levels of insight by actually participating rather than only observing” (285).

¹⁸ See Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 321, on the role of “key informants” in qualitative research.

¹⁹ See Elton Mayo, *Hawthorne and the Western Electric Company: The Social Problems of an Industrial Civilisation* (London: Routledge, 1949); Berkeley Rice, “The Hawthorne defect: Persistence of a flawed theory,” <http://www.cs.unc.edu/~stotts/204/nohawth.html> (accessed June 5, 2008).

Lastly, I employed two independent experts. Calum Mcfarlane, PhD., an experienced professor of Christian spiritual formation at Briercrest Seminary in Caronport, Saskatchewan, evaluated the course proposal for its “holism” as a course in spiritual formation. I also invited Murray Sanders, M.Ed., retired superintendent of the Prairie Valley School System in Saskatchewan to review the syllabus from a pedagogical point of view.

Data Collection

In each of the four reflection sessions, a court stenographer captured verbatim notes of the conversation. These field notes crystallized the data set for this project.

Field Notes Protocol

Field note protocol followed this procedure:²⁰ Grieves, the stenographer, took the field notes as a verbatim transcript from each of the reflection sessions.²¹ As soon as Grieves returned the “dirty notes” (unedited by her), I reviewed the notes and wrote a summary of the meeting (which became the basis for the narrative descriptions in the next chapter). I forwarded the summary to each member of the group by email for

²⁰ According to Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 302-04, field notes can come in many forms; however, they “should contain descriptions of what has been observed,” i.e., “they should contain everything that the observer believes to be worth noting.” Therefore, field notes should be descriptive; they should contain what people say and the “observer’s own feelings, reactions to the experience and reflections about the personal meaning and significance of what has been observed. Lastly, field notes should “include your insights, interpretations, beginning analyses, and working hypotheses about what is happening in the setting and what it means.” However, my methodology departed from this since I was seeking a particular kind of data.

²¹ See Michael Quinn Patton, *How to Use Qualitative Methods in Research*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1988), 70-107, and Bell, *Doing Your Own Research Project*, 184-98.

correction, modification or clarification.²² The final form of the field notes summary, once amended, became the basis for the ethnographic narrative description in the next chapter of this thesis.²³

I coded the transcriptions of the group sessions based on theme words, such as body, soul, heart, and mind. However, here I found a surprise, which I relate in the next chapter. I also looked for themes that surfaced repeatedly in the transcription. I looked for clues to the group's perception of what would constitute a holistic course in spiritual formation. Berg notes that this process is not an "exact science."²⁴ Ethnographic research, according to Berg, uses two main tools: inductive content analysis and ethnographic narrative accounts. I employed both tools in this project, and the process of analysis followed this pattern: My first reading of the transcript yielded the ethnographic narrative account. My subsequent readings of the data used open and selective coding to isolate the main themes that surfaced in the reflection sessions.

Once the themes were isolated, I probed the data for indications as to what the group accorded primary importance regarding spiritual formation. At the same time, I opened my mind to other insights that might arise from the data. I looked for patterns,

²² Carol A. Bailey, *A Guide to Field Research*, 115-16, speaks of sharing the final analysis of the data with the members of the project to "see if it rings true with them."

²³ Bruce L. Berg, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*, 147-48; see also John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, 148-49, for data collection procedures to be followed in this project. Original transcriptions will remain anonymous and will be kept on file until the project is completed.

²⁴ Berg, *Qualitative Research Methods*, 151-53.

themes and any indication of silences²⁵—that is, observations I expected to surface in the group that did not.

Team Questionnaire

In addition to the questions for each reflection session, I presented the team with a concluding questionnaire intended to gather final observations, reflections and suggestions.²⁶ (See appendix E for the questionnaire.)

Conclusion

The purpose of this project was to form a team to inform the development of a new course proposal in Christian spiritual formation. This chapter has described the format of this project, the nature of the team sessions, the field methodology used, the selection and composition of the team, and the methods of evaluation employed in this project. The next chapter describes the results of the project.

²⁵ See Flick, *Introduction to Qualitative Research*, 187-92, where “Thematic Coding,” developed on the background of Anselm L. Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*, is discussed. See a critique of coding in A. Clavarino, J. Najman, and D. Silverman, “Assessing the Quality of Qualitative Data,” 223-42.

²⁶ See Bell, *Doing Your Own Research Project*, 118-133, and William E. Myers, *Research in Ministry: A Primer for the Doctor of Ministry Program*, 3rd ed., Studies in Ministry and Parish Life (Chicago: Exploration Press, 2000), 62-65. See also Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*, 249-78, on “Questionnaire Construction.”

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The sessions described in the previous chapter produced several results. For example, the transcripts for each of the reflection sessions provided the structure for an ethnographic-type narrative account of each of the group meetings. Also, an analysis of the coded data revealed information useful in the formation of a course proposal for Christian spiritual formation. In the end, the independent experts supported the quality of the resulting course proposal with reservations. This chapter closes with a concluding synthesis.

Discerning the Data

The field notes, verbatim by the court stenographer, yielded forty-two pages of transcription from the first reflection session, thirty-two pages from the second, twenty pages from the third, and fifty-three pages from the final session, totaling 147 pages of transcription. (See appendix D for stenographer certificate and excerpted pages of the transcription.) These transcriptions provided the raw data for this project.

To evaluate the outcomes of this project, I employed three basic methods. First, I functioned as a participant-as-observer.¹ In this role, I sought not so much ethnographic information about the participants as the data arising from the conversation of the group as a whole. Second, the learning community that yielded these data functioned

¹ Chava Frankfort-Nachmias and David Nachmias, *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*, 282-85.

secondarily as corrective to the bias of the participant-as-observer. They validated, and if necessary corrected, my interpretation of each reflection section by approving the summaries of each meeting. Since these dated exchanges took place via email, they are saved and available in an electronic file. Their approved summaries form the basis for the ethnographic narrative below. Finally, I sought the proficiency of independent experts to examine the course syllabus I produced in conversation with the data.

In addition to composing the interpretative narrative (below), I also examined the data set for connections to the axioms related to loving God with heart, soul, mind, and body (found in chapter 2). Finally, I sought to bring the results together to create some useful synthesis. I repeatedly asked one driving question during this analysis phase of the project: what belongs in a holistic course in Christian spiritual formation?

Interpretive Narrative

Reflection Session 1: The Inner Life

The first session opened at 8:00 P.M. on Thursday, 9 October 2008, and closed at 9:05 P.M. This session took place in the Peterson room, the major classroom for college instruction. While I invited guest speakers to present from the center of the room, I always took one of the chairs around the table to position myself as a participant.

After the group assembled, I opened the session with prayer and introduced the speaker. In this first meeting I explained (as I had in the previous emails and letters of invitation to each group member) the purpose of the group and stressed again that they could comment freely without concern for how their comments might reflect on me or the process.

In this first reflection session, team members discussed the preceding presentation by the orthodox priest (introduced in the previous chapter). One member noted that the priest started his story of the Orthodox Church with Pentecost and even tied the founding of the Orthodox Church to the story of creation. Another member added that Churches of Christ generally use the same approach. Later, a group member commented on the priest's emphasis on correct worship and noted that Churches of Christ feel the same concern.

The priest's presentation on the topic of *theosis* furnished an engaging starting point for group discussion. The team observed that this notion contains a heightened sense of what salvation means. Normally, the group observed, Churches of Christ (and Protestantism, in general) break salvation into separate components: salvation precedes sanctification rather than sanctification's being a subset or part of the process of salvation. Orthodox believers view salvation as much more holistic and cosmic, as the group noted later in the conversation. The team appreciated the Orthodox tradition of keeping the connection between heaven and earth visible in their church buildings and worship. One member approved their method of remembering the faithful deceased in their services and in the Eucharist.

Several commented that the goal of Christianity, in all its varied forms, should be to seek one thing: the union between God and humanity. Along these same lines, the group observed that Orthodox spirituality involves the spiritual transformation of the whole person, though some in the group modified this assessment when questioned as to whether *theosis* was most concerned about the heart, soul, mind, or body.

One of the female members of the group, who had toured an Orthodox church previously, commented that the wall of icons and the platform in the front of the church that the priest said symbolized access to God actually created a division because Orthodox tradition forbids women from going behind the screen. The tradition, to her, created a sense of distance from God, not union. Several others agreed that this and other developing traditions within the Orthodox faith seem to work against *theosis*.

When asked about where the group experienced God in our journey, a member commented that when one enters an Orthodox church building, one knows that it is time for silence because “[t]his is a quiet place; this is a worship place.” Another person noted the role that candles play in the life of the worshipping church. He said, “But after the people paid for the candles, they would light them . . . and people would cry.” To him, these actions demonstrated humility before God. He asked, “What do we do in our worship that brings us to tears before God?”

Unexpectedly, this conversation about candles may have been the most fruitful part of the discussion related to the nature of Christian spiritual formation. The minister in the group commented that a simple candle could have a profound effect on a person. He wondered how his church could incorporate actions and symbols that are “simple, plain, harmless,” allowing people to become “more involved,” with “hands-on” participation. Another person commented that, culturally, lighting candles serves as a “spiritual symbol to people.” The group agreed their worship experiences tended to be especially passive.

The biblical text the team discussed the most was 2 Peter 1:4 (which contains the phrase “that you may participate in the divine nature”). The minister commented that the

words *theosis* and deification did not help as much as the notion of participating in the divine nature. This biblical language would be more useful to him and the congregation he serves.

When asked whether introducing first-year college students to the concept of *theosis* and to Orthodox tradition and worship seemed a good idea, one person expressed reservation, but the whole group agreed that if a teacher properly prepared the class ahead of time, it would be appropriate. The team concurred that the teacher should guide students into this area by stages because of the unfamiliarity of Protestant students with the Orthodox tradition. For example, the teacher should first introduce the students to the notion of *theosis*, then invite an Orthodox priest to explain it, next show the video, and finally give the students a tour of the Orthodox church building.

This reflection session explored the role of *theosis*, the other-worldliness of Orthodox worship, and how a conversation with the Orthodox tradition might enrich the journey of Christian spiritual formation for others.

Reflection Session 2: Societal Regeneration

The second session opened at 8:00 P.M. on Thursday, 16 October 2008, and closed at 8:50 P.M. The purpose of this meeting was to explore the meaning that societal regeneration might have in Christian spiritual formation. Team members responded specifically based on time spent with the urban youth minister and the children in that ministry.

The group convened in the church's fireside room. While not an optimum setting because of the noise coming from the gym nearby, it provided a more convenient option than returning to the school. I began our time together with a prayer.

One member reflected on a recent book that discusses five “worship languages,” commenting that one of those languages was service. He further observed that service should be a part of everyone’s experience. Others agreed. Another member recalled her service time volunteering for hospice and the impact it had had on her life. Another person acknowledged the spiritually formative effect service had had upon him.

The professor in the group made an important observation about the relationship between service and spiritual formation when he asked, “Does service grow out of our spiritual formation or is service part of our spiritual formation?” The heart of his question dealt with motivation. One member responded that a person should have a mindset characterized by a desire to give. Ministry of this nature (reaching out to urban teens) would require repeated giving and long-term commitment because just doing it infrequently would not make much difference. This kind of ministry, another noted later, centered on changing lives and building relationships—both of which require a heavy time commitment.

Several team members noted how important prayer would be in a ministry such as CrossRox—especially when one considers the possibility that ministry such as this could be thankless and unrewarding at times. This observation led into the question of where the group could see God at work. One team member, who previously had volunteered in this ministry, drew attention to the children who came back every week. In his estimation, the repeat visits indicated that God was “doing something there.” On the other hand, someone countered, the church members’ own children—who attended regularly on Sunday—did not attend. This remark led to another observation that perhaps that is “why our adult people are the way they are and don’t want to be involved [with] non-

church people.” The group noted the risk and the engagement required in working with outsiders (from the church’s perspective). A student in the group reflected that she saw God in the minister because of his willingness to take such risks. She noted how patient and kind he was with the children, while still challenging them to a higher level of living.

When asked which Scriptures came to mind, one person mentioned the fulfilling of the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20) that was taking place in the ministry. Another recalled the parable in which Jesus told the people to go into the highways and byways of their neighborhoods to invite people in (Luke 14:21). One student, who has been dwelling in Luke 10 in college small-group chapel over the past semester, cited Jesus’ telling his disciples that he was sending them out as sheep among wolves. I reminded the group of the time when Jesus called the children to himself and told his disciples not to hinder the children from coming to him (Matt 19:14; Mark 10:14; and Luke 18:16). Another group member brought up Matthew 25, where Jesus promises to separate the sheep from the goats on the Day of Judgment based on their responses to those in need.

Next the group explored what other spiritual disciplines would be needed to sustain a service-based ministry such as CrossRox. Prayer headed the list. In fact, one student mentioned, teaching the children themselves to pray would need to be central. That student then mentioned Bible study. However, as the group conversed, they concluded that Bible study would take a different shape in this context. It would be less analytical and exegetical and more meditative and devotional. I mentioned that times of fasting would also be appropriate in the face of loss, which happens often in urban settings.

In this reflection session, the team explored the importance of ministry and why serving others, especially the poor, belongs within Christian spiritual formation.

Reflection Session 3: Personal Renewal

This meeting took place in the Peterson classroom, opening shortly after 8:00 P.M. on Thursday, 6 November 2008, and closing at 8:50 P.M.² The purpose of this meeting was to explore the role of the Holy Spirit in Christian spiritual formation by reflecting on the presentation from the Pentecostal pastor.

From the beginning of our meeting, one student in the group struggled with the doctrinal implications of what the pastor had shared. I expected that the student would struggle with the speaker's declaration that one could be a Christian before baptism, but what really caught the student's attention was how the pastor had used the same texts he would have used himself to teach someone how to be a Christian. Yet the pastor came to very different conclusions from what the student had reached.

Several in the group shared their disappointment that he had not developed the role of the Holy Spirit in daily Christian living. The pastor instead focused on the initial reception of the Holy Spirit as evidenced by speaking in tongues. Several probable reasons for this surfaced in the discussion. First, this was very important to the Pentecostal tradition that the pastor represented. Second, this gave the preacher an opportunity to share with a group who did not believe what he believed to be essential to Christian faith. Third, because of his denomination's focus on initiation, the pastor and his tradition probably do not spend as much time thinking out the implications of the Holy Spirit for daily living. This latter observation drew attention to a similar pattern found within the Churches of Christ.

² The Pentecostal preacher exceeded his time in the preceding session.

Speaking in tongues as a spiritual phenomenon fell outside the realm of experience for all those in the group. Several group members expressed confusion about some aspects of the pastor's presentation, but as the transcripts reflect, this may also connect with the group's own confusion regarding the work of the Holy Spirit. One member noted that when people deal with the Holy Spirit, they are dealing with a being who is "fairly fuzzy," or later, "a little blurry." He pressed this point further by noting that when people think of spiritual disciplines, they usually think of systematic methods, a recipe one can follow for developing a better relationship with God. However, he implied, that may not be the way of the Spirit of God.

When the group discussed their sense of where God was in what the pastor shared, one member remembered he had encouraged people "not [to] seek after the manifestations, but seek after the giver." Another noted that he passionately communicated a sense of expectation uncommon to the participant's church experience. Another member commented that "waiting" should be a spiritual discipline as well. Someone also connected the pastor's description of "being saturated by the Holy Spirit" or "being soaked in the Holy Spirit" to *theosis* from our first week's conversation. The Pentecostal pastor "seemed to have been completely caught up in the Spirit."

Our reflection session processed what the Pentecostal pastor had shared with us regarding his understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit in spiritual formation. While the group found this session to be the least helpful to them in our subsequent discussion, primarily due to the presenter's focus on conversion, not sanctification, what the students longed to hear did inform my understanding of what belongs in a holistic course in Christian spiritual formation.

Reflection Session 4: Theological Knowledge

This meeting began at 7:00 P.M. on Wednesday, 12 November 2008, and closed shortly after 8:00 P.M., though some members lingered to share refreshments and to visit. The meeting was again held in the Peterson classroom. In this meeting, the group discussed William Young's *The Shack* and the implications for the process of Christian spiritual formation found in gaining theological knowledge. This final meeting proved one of the most engaging.

Young's choice to characterize God as an African-American woman named Papa stirred several comments from the group. For one member, God as a woman reminded him of the Oracle in the movie *The Matrix*. Nevertheless, the team agreed that Young was not trying to make a feminist statement about God but to cast God's character in a way that would jolt the reader to think differently about him. One participant commented that this characterization of God "made God very small." He later clarified that he believed Young treated only one side of God, his nurturing nature.

Another member commented that the driving edge of the book stemmed from the innocuous way in which Young framed theological questions most people have asked. When polled about which theological issues the book touched upon, the group recalled the problem of evil, the nature of God (that is, the nature of the Trinity), and human free will. Other themes noted later were the role of Christian community and the place of forgiveness in the Christian life.

One person summed up the thrust of the book: "Christianity is simply . . . through relationship." After having read the author's web site, one member imparted that Young does not attend any church. While consistent with the author's critique of institutional

religion as not being the way of Jesus, one member astutely noted of this disclosure, “If God is relationship and God [is] inviting us into relations, that seems to me then to flow out [that] we have to have relationship with one another as well.”

The group enjoyed a lengthy conversation about the form of the story as a medium for communicating theology and enriching spiritual formation. Someone noted that [Protestant] Christians do not generally know how to appropriate the arts. Consequently, they do not know how the imagination fits into Christian spiritual formation. The group debated how narrative, metaphor, and story function as “truth” and whether truth needs to be “factual” in nature. One member commented, “I’m not sure you’d have to be right at all to experience God.” Another supported him by pointing out that the goal of spiritual formation is “certainly not higher levels of knowledge,” but “to be formed like him, and there is [a] fair bit of that ‘forming’ that happens apart from [the] ability or inability to grasp all that’s going on.” Comparing to a dance the relationship of the Trinity to each other, one member cited as the goal of Christian spiritual formation being “invited into the dance.”

Several group members reacted to Young’s proposal that one can have an equal relationship with God. One noted that, for him, this “was a new way of viewing God.” Someone else recalled the text from 2 Peter 1:4, where the author invites his readers to participate in the divine nature. Although several people agreed that they would like to have this kind of intimacy with God, this closeness with God, a relationship much like “sitting around the dinner table and chatting with God,” one person countered that this might be too familiar with God.

If Young intended the book to be a serious attempt at offering a theodicy, most of the group believed that it did not resolve the problem of evil. One group member said the book worked out to what felt like “a five-minute” hug at the end of a tragedy and “life doesn’t work that way.” I reminded the group of the line in the book where Papa says to the main character: “We’re not here to justify [the way the world works]; we’re here to redeem it.”³ One student added that while the book made God too small in focusing on one attribute of Deity, the book also made the problem of evil too small.

Perhaps because of the fictional nature of the book, the group could not recall any Scriptures that the experience of reading this book brought to mind, but one member reminded us that “when we make scripture our final authority, we sometimes rule out other ways that God might reveal himself to us.” The fact that the group, composed of faculty and Bible students, did not think of a biblical passage related to the reading suggests to me that fiction that engages the imagination may have a way of disengaging or suspending critical thinking.

When asked about attendant spiritual disciplines that might support the experience of spiritual reading, one person noted the role community could play in discernment. She said, “I think it is helpful to have other people’s input and hear other people’s opinions.” I suggested that a series of readings and discussion groups could easily grow out of this book. One member of the group said he had read the book with his wife (or rather, his wife had read to him), and he had benefited from the discussion that developed between them. The group clearly articulated that there are different ways of reading. They drew

³ Young, *The Shack*, 127: “We’re not justifying it. We are redeeming it.”

the distinction between “reading for spiritual formation” and reading “theologically”—meaning, for the speakers, analytically. This fact was telling.

Observations from Final Questionnaire

All but one of the participants returned answers to the final questionnaire. The non-participant was a student who had left town for personal and family issues. The following analysis synthesizes the five completed questionnaires.

In answering the question regarding what was the most important aspect of the entire experience as a group member, the members most valued the “discussion among the participants.” One person found the questions, replies, and debates “good for formation.” As I look back over the transcripts, I must agree. The discussion added enormously to my own experience of thinking out the nature of Christian spiritual formation and what a course on such formation should include.

Another member found beneficial the exposure to “other faith backgrounds and why they may do the things they do.” She acknowledged that others, who are not like her, might have some things to teach her.

When asked what the group found the least helpful, one member responded that the familiar in the activity sessions actually provided the least help, as she already knew about the familiar activity. Two members commented that the presentation on the Holy Spirit had not met their expectations, one noting especially that understanding more of the role of the Holy Spirit is “of the utmost importance to . . . formation.” One commented that he would have liked to hear more on how the Spirit forms people.

Concerning feeling a sense of God’s presence, one member of the group said that she experienced God most in the discussion after the activity session, “when everyone

was talking about what they had experienced personally.” Another member expressed that he saw the work of God in our group process because “hearts were seeking Him, lives were interacting, minds were open to wondering.” One member commented that he experienced God in different ways. During the discussion of Orthodox spirituality, he sensed the transcendence of God or, as he stated, “Almighty Powerful God of all History,” yet through *The Shack* he encountered the more immanent “buddy, buddy” side of God. Reading this response caused me to reflect again on how apophatic and kataphatic spiritualities see and approach God.

When asked how participating in this project had helped them to become more like Christ, a student on the team answered that participating in this group made her “more aware of the different characteristics of Christ” and thus “how to be like him in different areas” of her life. Another member commented that while he would not remember later the group’s time together as a significant “life-forming” event, the team was nonetheless “part of this stretch of my road, and a good part while [it] lasted.” In like vein, another person appreciated hearing different viewpoints on how people worship.

In responding to the question “Do you love God most with your heart, soul, mind, or strength?” the group predominantly answered with the heart and mind. One participant said he loves God most with his heart and soul but then commented that heart and soul remain for him abstract terms. He also recognized the danger of loving God with one’s mind, as it can be merely academic. However in response to the opposite question, “Do you love God least with your heart, soul, mind, or strength?” the group responded that they had difficulty in loving God with their strength. It occurred to me that throughout

this project, people struggled to see the role the body played in spiritual formation. One member did note that the whole of life relates to what we do and thus is “body-related.”

When asked to explain why they answered the last two questions the way they did, one person expressed that she loved God with her heart because she would sometimes experience an “overwhelmingly strong emotion,” but at the same time, she remained uncertain as to how to demonstrate her “love for God all the time.” Another member confessed that his tradition had wired him to be logical and oriented toward study. In his view, people tend to see loving God with soul and mind as less significant when compared to loving God with one’s heart. He followed this by noting that loving God with our strength “rarely enters our discussion.” Another echoed these sentiments, saying that his decreased involvement in church life indicated that he loved God least with his strength.

When asked the important question regarding what should receive non-negotiable inclusion in a course on Christian spiritual formation, one respondent wrote that the Orthodox insights needed to be incorporated into such a course, but added that this inclusion would be “totally foreign to Western Christians.” One of the students noted that the time the group spent together held the most meaning to her. She found the sessions thought provoking and a “definite learning experience.” For this reason, she stressed that the reflection discussion sessions were a “definite must” in helping people process the activity to discern where God was in it. One of the students in the group considered learning from other denominational traditions important. Another member listed three non-negotiable topics: an exploration of union with God (*theosis*), the role of the Holy Spirit in spiritual formation, and a discussion of *The Shack* or other popular work. Another member agreed

that fiction has formative value and suggested several works that might be useful in this regard, including Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*.

Finally, the professor in the group noted that it would be interesting to explore how hymnody functions in spiritual formation since much time in worship services is given to singing. We did not explore this subject in the project.

Analyzing the Data

Results from Open Coding

My original plan was to analyze the transcript by isolating words such as heart, soul, mind, and body. However, in reviewing the transcripts I found that I was the only one actually using the terms and that the group only touched on these words when responding to the last group question (Does this activity connect with heart, soul, mind, or body [strength]?). While open coding yielded nothing of importance, the answer to this question did. What follows, therefore, is a focused look at how the group answered this particular question in each of the reflection sessions.

Results from Isolating Question 7

In the first reflection session on Orthodox spirituality and *theosis*, the group noticed that Orthodoxy seeks to involve the whole person. One member did object that "it leaves the mind out quite a bit." However, the group countered that the mind functions differently here. While the mind is involved, the group recognized that it is less rational here. This significant insight recognizes that radical rationalism forms one of the barriers toward helping students in Western culture toward Christian spiritual formation. Thus through this first conversation, the group encountered the possibility of more than one

way for the mind to work in seeking to know God. The team acknowledged the experiential nature of Orthodox spirituality and ended the evening wondering what an average Orthodox church member understands about *theosis* and the theology related to it.

When I asked the same question in the second session, this time related to service in an urban setting, another member noticed that the mind was minimized. However, the group again corrected this when they concurred that the mind would function differently here. One member spoke for the group in noting the role of the heart and soul in giving one's life to another because of the emotional investment in this kind of service. The group seemed oblivious to the role of the body in this kind of service. I found this interesting with my background in urban ministry since I remember days I was so tired that I did not think I could take another step.

In the third session, reflecting on the presentation from the Pentecostal minister, one member of the group was quick to respond, "this leaves out the mind almost completely." Similarly, another observed that the experience seems to come before doctrinal formulation: "they have the experience . . . then they have gone back to try to explain, understand, justify the experience." While some members recognized the role of the heart, soul, and body in Pentecostal spirituality, the group really struggled with the non-rational side of Pentecostal experience. One of the group members raised the question, then, if this is not "real," is it of value "if it leads you back to God?" Another framed the question this way: "I [may] totally disagree with your experience, but, in the end, if it make[s] you want to follow God, was it really God?" I brought up that while the Churches of Christ might not be at home with some Pentecostal practices, those within that tradition find them useful in their walk with God. Consequently, a question arose as

to whether something had to be true or real if it connected people with God. This provided a great place to stop as it prepared us for the next conversation.

In the final session, which reflected on *The Shack*, the group agreed that reading the book engages all dimensions of humanity. Obviously, as reading material, it engages the mind, but a group member noted that the storyline targets the heart, the emotions—perhaps as a backdoor into the mind. As mentioned above in the narrative summary, this observation led into a fuller conversation around the relationship of truth, narrative, fiction, and metaphor. It is not surprising, given the backgrounds of the team members, that they struggled most with non-rational uses of the mind. No one commented on the role of the body in spiritual reading. I found this silence worthy of note, as reading requires more effort from the body than people usually acknowledge.

Results from Selective Coding

My second round of coding sought out spiritual disciplines. The most-mentioned spiritual discipline was prayer. The group assumed the centrality of prayer among the spiritual disciplines, and in each reflection session prayer surfaced at least once.

The team also emphasized the role of corporate worship in Christian spiritual formation. They noticed in the Pentecostal perspective a level of expectation in worship that was largely unfamiliar to them. Yet they remembered from their own worship experiences at Bible camp in the summer something of this same expectation—particularly around the campfire. Additional practices of corporate worship mentioned by the group included tithing and singing. Confession was mentioned once as a valuable corporate discipline, even if rarely practiced.

Despite all the concern about the non-rational or supra-rational role of the mind, the group did seem to long wistfully for some mysticism in their lives. They noted the role of silence, reverence, and waiting as spiritual disciplines. Several in the group noted the role that space, architecture, and art could play in the process of Christian spiritual formation. They also observed how far removed they felt from these expressions of spirituality.

The group affirmed the importance of service in Christian spiritual formation, noting that service has the capacity to stretch one's comfort zone. In relationship to the urban service the group witnessed, the team believed that youth activities could be a spiritually formative pathway to God if coupled with relationship and conversation.

As I expected, the group considered the role of the Bible non-negotiable. One particularly interesting moment occurred in our second reflection session. As mentioned previously, when asked about which text came to mind involving service, one member mentioned Luke 10. The student had been reading this text repeatedly for several weeks in small group chapel. This connection underscored the value of *lectio divina* in the student's spiritual formation. Coupled with Bible study, the group noted the importance of meditation, but only in passing.

The group clearly saw the importance of theological reflection that surfaced significantly in the final session on *The Shack*. Here the group acknowledged the role of spiritual reading (other than the Bible) and the role of imagination.

In the second session, as something of a sidebar, I mentioned my own struggle with the relationship of Christian spiritual formation to the context of a classroom structure. I commented that I found the structure of the classroom model artificial. Internally, I

was wrestling with the notion that the Holy Spirit probably does not need a classroom to form people spiritually and that the structure of syllabus, assignments, deadlines, and grades could actually impede spiritual development. One member of the team responded that the value lies in the working together of a group of people. The classroom provides, according to this member, a place of intentionality, where a “conscientious effort” can occur. This same member argued that, “a class can give you tools you need to be able to continue.” Her comment ended my struggle.

Using Foster’s classic list of spiritual disciplines as a norm, the group did not explore simplicity, submission, guidance, or celebration in any complete way.⁴ I was the only one who mentioned fasting and only once in one of the sessions. However, these absences should not be amplified since the particular experiences I selected to explore and the related questions controlled the content of each reflection session. Additionally, the group may have assumed these in other places. For example, corporate worship probably assumes celebration, particularly in the conversation about expectation. The urban youth minister’s role, for example, serves as an example of offering spiritual guidance.

Observation from Independent Experts

Lastly, I employed two independent experts. Calum MacFarlane, Ph.D., is an experienced professor of Christian spiritual formation at Briercrest Seminary, Caronport, Saskatchewan. Macfarlane, an Anglican priest and chaplain of the seminary, evaluated the syllabus as a course in spiritual formation. (see appendix I.) His impression of the

⁴ Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1998). Foster’s list includes meditation, prayer, fasting, study, simplicity, solitude, submission, service, confession, worship, guidance, and celebration.

syllabus was favorable; he concluded that the syllabus is “a well put together syllabus that, when fleshed out in the classroom, will provide students with a great opportunity to learn much about the traditions of spiritual formation within the Church while offering them experiences which will enrich their own journey of faith.”

He did raise a couple of issues. First, the syllabus objectives need measurability, but “not in a quantitative sense.” The course needs to answer the question: “How will this course help students to love the Lord their God with all their heart? What might that look like?” Second, the assignments, according to him, are balanced but would be improved with the assignments that “engaged the students’ creative and aesthetic sensibilities.” Third, the bibliography is well developed but the students would benefit from an asterisk marking the most important works.

Murray Sanders, M.Ed., former superintendent of the Prairie Valley School in Saskatchewan, reviewed the syllabus from a pedagogical point of view. Sanders expressed concern about three issues in the evaluation of the syllabus (see appendix I). In his assessment, Sanders notes the difficulty in evaluating a syllabus. He faults this syllabus, as he would most syllabi, for being too vague. In his opinion, “students need much more than [what is] found in most syllabi.” He further comments that a course on spiritual development will be vague, in some regards, because of the subject matter, though he does recognize that “much thought and planning” went into developing the syllabus. The remainder of his evaluation covers curriculum, assessment, and learning environment.

Under curriculum, Sanders sees the objectives as too vague but did appreciate the objective related to praxis, theological reflection, and articulation. He would like to see the other objectives feature “definite markers” for “measuring success.” I agree and

would seek to become more specific in this area before teaching the class. He raises some concern that the course goal of looking at various religious traditions does not find expression in the rest of the syllabus. This criticism has some merit regarding syllabus design, but those more familiar with Christian spirituality as an academic discipline will probably see the goal attained through class topics, assignments, and projects. Nonetheless, it is fair to criticize its apparent absence in the syllabus. Concomitantly, Sanders would like more clearly defined parameters to clarify the focus of the class. This objective can be accomplished, according to him, by adding more detail to the reading schedule.

Sanders raises one of my concerns when he questions how to assess student learning in a class on spiritual development. He suggests a rubric be used with journaling, which was, in fact, my own answer to the concern. (He did not have access to my assessment tools, just the syllabus—a sample rubric for journaling can be found in appendix L.) Sanders correctly states: “Each objective should have some measurable achievements.” He suggests adding assignments designed to acknowledge that students learn differently. Some of his suggestions include using the fine arts, making a movie, or creating an online blog.

Regarding learning environment, Sanders points out that students most likely to take this class will be in their late teens or early twenties and that students making the transition from high school to college may need directed learning built into the activities. Again, Sanders had access only to the syllabus, but his point is correct. (See appendix K for some potential assignments that will meet his concern.)

Concluding Synthesis

Several key observations came forth from each of the sessions themselves as noted in the narrative at the beginning of this chapter. First, concerning introducing students to *theosis* and the Orthodox tradition, the group noted that, given where students in Western culture are, professors should introduce this new information in stages. The group made the point that, for this topic, students should receive information, participate in conversation, and then share in experiences in order to appreciate the benefits that might come from interaction with other spiritualities, such as Roman Catholicism or Orthodoxy. This idea represents sound pedagogical advice. Additionally, the group resonated with the theme of *theosis* as a notion rich in currency for teaching students about God's continuing work in peoples' lives. They saw the role of service as necessary in any holistic spiritual formation. The disappointment among the group regarding the conversation about the role of the Holy Spirit showed, first, how much the participants wanted to know, and, second, the importance of a good biblical theology of the Holy Spirit as a foundation for Christian spiritual formation. While a theology related to the work of the Holy Spirit is beyond the scope of this thesis, I meet this deficiency in the use of Boa's textbook, especially chapter 9. Lastly, the reading of a provocative work, such as *The Shack*, has great value in helping students explore Christian spiritual formation, even if—particularly if—the work pushes readers out of the mainstream.

Finally, the experts agreed that the course planned was of a good quality; however, they both agreed that objectives needed measurability and that some attention to alternate learning sensibilities would improve the course. The input of both will be important for improving and perfecting the new course proposal.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

This doctor of ministry project sought to meet a deficiency in the Encounter program at Western Christian College by forming a team that, by their participation in a learning community, would provide data useful to the development of a course proposal in Christian spiritual formation. The previous chapter offered a summary of the team process with some of the more important observations noted in the concluding synthesis. This chapter explores my reflections on the project, some implications this project has for future ministry, and the possibility of replicating what I have learned in this project in the church.

Unfortunately, I will not be able to implement the course proposal. After this project had begun, the administration and the board of Western Christian College decided to align the programming of the college with a university in the United States. This decision will make Western Christian College an international extension site, completely under that university's academic regulations, policies, and curriculum. While the realities that gave rise to this project continue to exist, they will not be addressed in that university's curricular framework. In the midst of these changes, I have decided to return to pastoral ministry at the end of the current academic year. These changes call forth reflections somewhat different from those originally envisioned. Still, I would contend, the process of doing this project and the resulting thesis have been beneficial in shaping me as a person, teacher, and minister.

Reflections

I found the process of doing the project and writing this thesis itself an act of spiritual formation. Not only have I become more proficient in the literature related to the academic discipline of Christian spirituality, but also I have discovered more clearly who I am before God. Meditating on the love of God, as modeled in his love for Israel and his expected love from Israel in return, has challenged me to new levels of commitment. Seeing this love demonstrated in the life of Jesus has called me to a new level of devotion. I have examined my life in terms of whether I love God with all my heart, soul, mind, and body. I am more aware that, while I want to be more mystical and engaged in soul and heart, it comes more naturally to me to love the Lord with my mind. Correspondingly, I confess that my heavy investment in the quest for theological knowledge needs more balance in the direction of inner life renewal, societal regeneration, and personal renewal.

While I have taught Christian spiritual formation previously as a course, this project created the space for me to re-conceptualize my approach and understandings. I benefited from the opportunity to think, pray, and reflect on what it means to teach Christian spiritual formation in a classroom setting.

Reflection on Process and Product

The course proposal is now complete with application process, syllabus for the course that includes the course schedule, planned activities, bibliography, and some initial classroom assignments, along with some potential assessment tools that are in the various appendices.

This project involved the convening of a group, to serve as resource and sounding board, that would fund a new course proposal in Christian spiritual formation. The group

was not directly responsible for creating the course or any of the activities or assignments for the course. The process from group input to the development of the course proposal occurred in the following way. As reported earlier in this thesis, the action sessions allowed the group to explore four arenas of Christian spirituality as proposed by the Holmes-Sager model and presented by Boa.¹ The data resulting from these reflection sessions provided new information and insights that I could incorporate into the final course proposal. Each week, and for several weeks following the last session, I analyzed, reflected upon, and evaluated the data from the group sessions. Having weighed the usefulness or applicability of the insights, I began to create and gather materials that would satisfy the needs of this new course proposal.

First, I adapted the course application policy used by Abilene Christian University (see appendix A) to provide some framework in which to place the new course proposal.² This application procedure remains a theoretical construct, given the changes in programming anticipated at WCC. Second, I began to create the syllabus based on the template required by Western Christian College. I have not included that template in the appendices as I followed the structure of the template in the syllabus (in appendix J). Since I chose Boa's textbook as the main text for the course, I followed his outline in framing each of the proposed class meetings. Additional textbooks for the course included the Bible, Foster's *Celebration of Discipline*, and Young's *The Shack*. In creating course objectives, I sought to guide the students toward loving God with heart,

¹ Holmes, *A History of Christian Spirituality*; Sager, *Gospel-Centered Spirituality*; and Boa, *Conformed to His Image*.

² ACU's new course application packets may be downloaded via the Internet from http://www.acu.edu/academics/adamscenter/instruct_dev..html.

soul, mind, and body. However, as the independent experts pointed out, these objectives need more measurability. I also included Boa's objectives from his textbook in the syllabus since the course schedule follows his twelve facets. The course objectives also call for students to explore the pattern of praxis, theological reflection, and articulation in much the same way that the activity and reflection sessions functioned in this project.

Requirements for this course include active participation, required reading, journaling, and reflection essays on *Celebration of Discipline* and two spiritual classics, one each semester. Also included are four experiential components that grow directly out of this project. In the class I have proposed the students should participate in some ministry involving societal regeneration. This can be working with urban youths, feeding the homeless, serving in a soup kitchen, campaigning for the rights of some disenfranchised group, or the like. In the area of theological renewal, I have asked the students to read *The Shack*, as the group in this project did. For inner life transformation, I have chosen to conduct a weekend retreat where I can introduce students to the contemplative life and practices. Finally, for personal renewal, the students will attend an energized worship setting. After each of these activities, the students are to discuss their experience within their groups (to be formed at the beginning of the class). The course schedule lists these activities.

This project has informed the selection and design of these activities in two ways. First, these activities are experiences, not classroom instruction, as were the sessions involving the Orthodox priest and the Pentecostal preacher. To engage heart, soul, mind, and body, activities will be more useful than instruction alone. Second, I have decided to accept the group's recommendation about introducing undergraduate students to the

Orthodox tradition. As the project group noted, it requires several steps: instruction, exposure, and then experience. This will be built into future editions of the syllabus.

The syllabus's bibliography is based on works that were available to the students that were at a level they could comprehend, and that connected with the purpose of the course. Originally, my preliminary bibliography had nine pages, but this I trimmed to three and a half pages based on the criteria previously mentioned.

Two of the initial assignments (in appendix K) are exercises called "Forty Days around the Word" and "Forty Days of Prayer." These assignments give an outline for journaling. The first assignment takes the students through reading the entire NT in forty days while the second guides the student through forty days of biblical prayers. The student will write a half-page journal response to each of these. Also included in this appendix is a reading exam over Boa's textbook to assist students in capturing the big picture.

Appendix L contains some preliminary assessment tools and sample rubrics. Among these are two spirituality type indicators based on the Holmes-Sager model used in this project. Paul D. G. Bramer, associate professor of Christian formation at North Park Theological Seminary, North Park University, in Chicago, designed the first one for his teaching of Christian spiritual formation. The second is similar but has been modified to appeal to a younger audience. These instruments can be used to help students begin to understand who they are in light of the four types of spirituality illustrated in Holmes's model. This appendix also includes two rubrics for journal writing and reading response. Both need further adjustment to be fully applicable to this course on Christian spiritual formation. Finally, appendix M includes course evaluations for both the students and the professor. These are the evaluation forms currently used at WCC.

Toward the Elusive Assessment of Christian Spiritual Formation

The topic of how to assess student learning in the area of Christian spiritual formation continues to challenge teachers and practitioners of Christian spiritual formation. I recently asked Calum McFarlane, who has been involved in spiritual formation of students for the past eighteen years at Briercrest Seminary, Caronport, Saskatchewan, to discuss available methods for assessing students' spiritual growth.³ He acknowledged the difficulty of measuring spiritual growth because of the interiority of that growth. Although he did recommend journaling as well as a few specific instruments that might help students discern where they are (in appendix L), these instruments do not measure growth. In some sense, the class assignments themselves may facilitate evaluation. (WCC has typically used the "Spiritual Well-Being Scale" as students come in and out of their first year of college.⁴ Such an instrument does have the capability of providing some data on spiritual growth). Yet as McFarlane suggested, the only real way to monitor spiritual growth is through observation and reflection by an experienced spiritual guide.

Reconsiderations

If I could do this project over, I would plan for more group sessions and would seek the group's validation of the final course syllabus in order to produce more certainty in the outcome of the project. Because one session did not meet the participants' expectations, I have to ask myself, what would have been the outcomes had this session been a

³ Personal conversation with Calum McFarlane. Briercrest Seminary in Caronport, SK, 20 February 2009.

⁴ For the research on this instrument, see R. K. Bufford, R. F. Paloutzian, and C. W. Ellison, "Norms for the Spiritual Well-Being Scale," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 19.1 (1991): 56-70; and C. W. Ellison, "Spiritual Well-Being: Conceptualization and Measurement," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 11.4 (1983): 330-40.

“good” one? I imagine that the discussion would have sounded much more like that in the other sessions—lively and tending to yield more insights into what makes a quality course in Christian spiritual formation.

In addition, if I were to do this project again, I would frame the action sessions more like actual classes, with more small-group interaction and opportunities to experience some of the spiritual disciplines. In this way, the group would serve as a trial of the actual class. I believe the participants would have found the experience more agreeable and that they would have reported a stronger sense that the experience contributed to spiritual growth. That, however, must remain a conjecture for now. Additionally, the activity sessions needed more activity. For example, in the case of the inner life reflection session, the group would have had a more significant experience if they had visited an Orthodox Church building. Participating in high energy worship settings would have been better than listening to a Pentecostal apology on speaking in tongues. The current syllabus reflects both of these insights.

Some Final Theological Reflections

The use of the Holmes’s model introduced in chapter 1 provided a heuristic starting point for this project. In that model are four types of Christian spirituality: societal regeneration, theological renewal, inner life, and person renewal. These categories framed the activity sessions of the projects. In so doing, however, I risked compartmentalizing these categories. Nonetheless, the model still provides teachers and ministers a useful way to convey a vision of Christian spiritual formation in a more holistic fashion than often happens in a classroom setting.

I sought to overlay the NT version of the shema over Holmes's model so that heart corresponded with personal renewal, soul with inner life, mind with theological renewal, and body with societal regeneration. I acknowledged that this last correspondence did not occur easily since people can use their bodies in spiritual formation apart from societal regeneration. At one level, I find fault in Holmes's model since the other three quadrants deal with personal spiritual development. I can find no reason that the quadrant between mind and apophatic revelation necessarily leads to the betterment of society as opposed to the individual. Beyond this issue, though, my one-for-one correspondence is too simplistic. A more helpful way of viewing this overlay would be for each of the items in the shema to overlay each of the items in the model since heart, soul, mind, and body would be involved in each quadrant.

The dynamic relationship I sought to develop between the shema and the theology of the cross was hard to sustain throughout the project. While the center of my theology was rooted in the cross of Jesus as a demonstration both of God's love for people and of how at least one human, Jesus, showed complete love for God, the practical expression of this love was to be conveyed through enacting the shema in the life of the believers. Thus I did not adequately communicate to my group the centrality of the cross in understanding the shema. None of the questions used in the group or in the final questionnaire touched on the cross or the cruciformity of believers as a precondition for practicing the shema as a means of Christian spiritual formation. I believe it, assumed it, but did not articulate it adequately. Instead, I focused more on discovering the role of heart, soul, mind, and body in the process of formation (as emphasized in the axioms in chapter 3).

Implications

For the Encounter Program

Despite the changes, both in the academic programming at WCC and in my life, I still believe that adding this course in Christian spiritual formation to the Encounter Program would help the college realize the original intent of the program. Encounter began with the objectives for students to examine themselves, experience God, explore the world, and experience community.⁵ As the college faculty restructured Encounter for its second year, they wanted to “give [the] students more time to create habits and disciplines that will serve them for life.”⁶ The plan to make this course a two-semester experience creates the possibility that students would value spiritual disciplines as important in their spiritual growth as studying is to their academic achievement. This course proposal significantly increases the likelihood that students will develop habits that will nurture the eternal life in them for the remainder of their earthly lives.

The course proposed in this thesis represents a move in that direction. However, those who follow me here will need to decide what they will do next to meet the deficiency in adequate attention to Christian spiritual formation. However, as a teacher, I anticipate that I will have the occasion to teach Christian spiritual formation either in the classroom or in the church in the future.

This project has informed my understanding of how one can teach Christian spiritual formation more holistically. While this course alone cannot provide all the students need in their spiritual development, the course does possess the potential of

⁵ “It’s All About Life: A Proposal for the Encounter Program.”

⁶ “Encounter Enters Second Year,” internal document.

assisting students in loving God with their heart, soul, body, and mind. The course can offer students an opportunity to explore what it means to love God with their full humanity. Furthermore, well-chosen spiritual reading assignments would give students occasion to explore the roles of imagination, metaphor, and story as mediums to encounter God.

For Ministry in the Church

Since I am returning to pastoral ministry, the transfer of learning from this thesis into my ministry in the church is imperative. While there are processes in this project that belong in the academic arena, there are several critical insights the church also needs. For example, the participants in the group reported that their church experience to date has been passive and non-participatory. As one possible remedy, Holmes' model provides a way to frame the work of God in the life of the believer in terms of different arenas. For churches, it can provide a model for developing a holistic spiritual formation program in the church's Christian education program that would move people into areas of societal regeneration, inner life, and personal renewal beyond just theological renewal.

In addition, the pulpit provides a locus of Christian spiritual formation. Preaching can guide the church to reflect on the meaning of the cross and to see how the shema provides a way of thinking about spiritual formation. For example, a series of lessons on how God loved his chosen people, Israel, provides a narrative for the church to comprehend that God's love for church is covenantal in nature and, as such, requires a response. Each week as the church remembers Jesus, the preacher can emphasize that Jesus is not only the demonstration of how God loves his people, but also how people should love God, wholly, fully, with heart, soul, mind, and body. Furthermore, the shema provides

language for modeling ways to love God fully. By reflecting on the love of God, believers can see how compartmentalize their love for God can become in the acidic secular culture they engage every day. In a church's education program, theology and praxis can come together in a way that involves the transformation for the whole church.

Even the format of the project has applicability in the life of the church. The alternation between praxis, or activity, and reflection could open the way to reconceptualize what passes for Christian education in the church today. While the older members of the church might be resistant to this, the younger people in the church, who are seeking authenticity and a way to connect their spirituality to the real world, will welcome the opportunity to do anything in the name of Jesus. They will also welcome the opportunity to reflect on what it means to be shaped by the activity into the image of Jesus.

My transition, with this experience behind me, will allow me to explore the move from classroom to the church, which is one of my concerns: the transferability of theological education into actual ministry settings. I look forward to exploring how an intentional approach to Christian spiritual formation might bear fruit in the life of the church.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I shared my personal reflections on the project, some implications for future ministry, and the possibility of replicating what I have learned in this project in the life of the church. The overall project addressed the lack of adequate attention to Christian spiritual formation in WCC's Encounter (one-year Bible) program. This thesis, and the project on which it reports, sought to meet this deficiency by introducing a model for defining loci wherein spiritual formation can take place, by offering a biblical theology growing out of the meaning of the cross but expressed through Jesus' teaching of the

schema, and by forming a learning community (or team) to explore how the schema can inform Christian spiritual formation. The data resulting from the team's interaction provided more insights than I could implement as I created the course syllabus, course schedule, planned activities, bibliography, and initial classroom assignments, and gathered initial assessment tools.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: New Course Application

Western Christian College

Application for a New Course

Instructions:

The pages of this document provide instructions, example competencies, and a syllabus checklist. These four pages are for the course-developer's use, and do not need to be submitted along with the application.

Sequence:

- Consult with the Registrar to obtain course number.
- Consult with the Academic Dean to discuss the degree plan and course number.
- Complete the New Course Application
- Create the course Syllabus – *See the associated Syllabus Checklist*
- Submit paper and electronic versions of Application and Syllabus to the Academic Dean
- Meet with Faculty review team
- Make any necessary changes to application / syllabus
- Obtain the Library Review
- Obtain Preliminary Approval Signatures (Department Chair, Deans)
- Gather all attachments to application
- Submit to College Faculty

The course developer completes this application with supporting documentation (Section IV) and approval signatures of the academic dean (Section V) before any college faculty reviews the new course.

Specific Instructions:

Before assigning a number (ID) for the course, consult the Registrar.

Section I Systems and Catalog Information

Section II. Curriculum

Consult the Academic Dean, who will examine impact of new courses on college-wide programs. Curriculum director's signature on your degree plan attachment is required for confirmation.

1. **Degree Plan**

Explain how this course affects degree requirements. Attach a copy of the degree plan/s in Section IV-C

2. **Justification**

State the justification for adding this course to the current curriculum. Represent the need.

Attach any relevant documentation in Section IV-H (needs assessment, survey results, visiting committee report, market analysis, new government or accrediting body policy, exam scores, programs at other universities, etc.).

Section III Course Design

III-2 - Competencies and Measurements

List the competencies that must be satisfied in order to pass the course, and indicate how each competency will be measured. *List in corresponding columns as indicated below. Add as many rows to the table as necessary. It is recommended that the identical table be presented in the syllabus, but the competencies and measures may be formatted differently in the syllabus as long as all elements are included in both documents. The wording for the competencies and measurements in the application should be identical to the syllabus.*

For **combined undergraduate/graduate** courses, make two tables and label them appropriately

Section IV Supporting Documentation

Section V Preliminary Approvals

Section VI Approvals

VI-5 - College Budget Committee Action: (when applicable)

Any new or extensively revised program proposal (including new or extensively revised courses for the program) must be reviewed by the business office prior to the Application for a New Course being submitted to any academic council. Questions should be addressed to the college dean/director.

WCC - Syllabus Checklist

Course ID _____ Developer _____

NOTE: It is not necessary to submit this checklist with New Course Applications. It is provided to assist the course developer in ensuring that all essential syllabus elements are addressed.

<p>About the College</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> WCC Mission Statement <input type="checkbox"/> College Mission Statement <p>About the Course</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Title <input type="checkbox"/> Course number and Section credit hours <input type="checkbox"/> Semester and Year <input type="checkbox"/> Meeting time and Place <p>About the Teacher</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Name and title or rank <input type="checkbox"/> Office location <input type="checkbox"/> Phone number(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Email addresses <input type="checkbox"/> Office hours / Contact expectations <p>About the Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Characteristics of the students for whom the course is intended <input type="checkbox"/> Prerequisites / Corequisites – include skill sets if necessary. <p>Course Content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Catalog description (exact) <input type="checkbox"/> Course Synopsis <input type="checkbox"/> Outline <input type="checkbox"/> Main topics <p>Teaching/Learning Methods and Format of Class Sessions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Description of the types of activities students should expect in the course <p>Texts, Readings, and Supplements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Required and Optional materials <p>Statement Concerning Christian Perspective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching philosophy <input type="checkbox"/> Policy regarding questionable materials <input type="checkbox"/> Scripture related to course content <input type="checkbox"/> Faith / Learning resource 	<p>Audience and Course Goal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> State the overarching course goal(s) in performance terms. <p>Competencies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Specific competencies stated in measurable terms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appropriate learning level based upon Bloom's or Krathwohl's taxonomy <input type="checkbox"/> Measurement Instrument - State which assignments or instruments will be used to assess the competencies. <input type="checkbox"/> Performance Indicator or Criteria – Give examples of how the competencies will be measured. <i>It is preferred that these three items be developed in the three column model, but developers may wish to integrate all three items into individual statements.</i> <p>Grading Criteria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Weight or point value of all graded elements <input type="checkbox"/> Grading scale with expectations for letter grades <input type="checkbox"/> Specific standards, rubrics, and examples <p>Course Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Clear statement of expectations concerning penalties for non-compliance regarding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Attendance and Tardiness ○ Participation ○ Late assignment policy ○ Late exam policy <input type="checkbox"/> Special needs <input type="checkbox"/> Academic integrity <input type="checkbox"/> Extra credit opportunities (optional) <p>Course Calendar</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Exam dates <input type="checkbox"/> Assignments <input type="checkbox"/> Due dates and other deadlines <input type="checkbox"/> Schedule of readings and topics <input type="checkbox"/> Statement to reserve right to modify the calendar as necessary
--	--

Writing Course Competencies

	Competency	Measurement Instrument	Measurement Standard
	<p><i>Instructions:</i> Competencies should be observable and measurable, and stated in terms of student performance. In some cases it might be valuable to complete the sentence “Students will be able to. . .” If the competencies are primarily cognitive, consider using Bloom’s Taxonomy to evaluate whether the competencies are at an appropriate level for the course. In the more rare instances where affective or psychomotor competencies are used, give careful attention to measurement techniques.</p>	<p><i>Instructions:</i> Detail the instrument that will be used to gather the measurement. Examples might include: written papers, quizzes, tests, verbal presentations, video, audio, portfolio artifacts, demonstrations, performances, etc.</p> <p>This column should indicate where you will look for evidence of the type of student work that you expect. <i>Note that this is distinct from the Measurement Standard which provides some detail about what constitutes valid and acceptable student performance.</i></p>	<p><i>Instructions:</i> This section should detail what criteria will be used to discriminate between poor work and excellent work. Note that it is possible for a single competency to include multiple measurement standards. If the competency is highly qualitative, attempt to give high-level examples of dimensions that will be considered in grading. Many competencies combine both qualitative and quantitative measurement standards, and some combine technical requirements (APA Style requirements for example). If a grading rubric is used refer to the rubric specifically, and where feasible, include it in the syllabus. This is NOT INTENDED to be an exhaustive list.</p>
Ex. 1	Defend dietary goals in light of current research.	Weekly Reading Journal, Research Paper	<p>A: Students will distinguish between primary scientific research and items in the popular media.</p> <p>B: Students will be able to argue for what research is decisive evidence or key issues related to the student’s personal dietary goals</p> <p>C: Students will be able to articulate subtle distinctions or qualify evidence as they quote research.</p>
Ex. 2	Examine personal values, attitudes and expectations to enhance self-awareness for greater effectiveness as a social work professional. . .	Field Instructor Evaluation	<p>A: Remains empathetic when he/she does not approve of client behavior or agrees with client choices.</p> <p>B: Exercises sound professional judgment in the use of self-disclosure.</p>
Ex. 3	Integrate terminology from literary history into writing	Research Paper	<p>A: All literary history terms are used in an appropriate context.</p> <p>B: Terms are used in diverse contexts.</p> <p>C: Terms are not used in overly simplistic ways, or in ways that are superficial or represent common misunderstandings.</p>

Western Christian College

Application for a New Course

Course ID <i>Subject and Number</i>	
Date APPROVED	
Date DENIED	

I. Systems and Catalog Information Complete each item.

1	Course Developer	
2	Course Teacher	
3	Course Title	
4	Course Abbreviation (if title is over 30 characters)	
5	College	
6	Department	
7	Number of Credit Hours	
8	Is the course Fixed Credit or Variable Credit?	
9	Is the course repeatable?	
10	Maximum number of times course may be repeated	
11	Maximum number of hours credit	
12	Explanation for variable credit	
13a	Course contact hours - LEC	
13b	Course contact hours - Lab	
13c	Course contact hours - Practicum	
13d	Course contact hours - Seminar	
13e	Course contact hours - Studio	
13f	Course contact hours - Online	
13g	Course contact hours - Colloquium	
13h	Course contact hours – Field Experience	
13j	Course contact hours - Internship	
13k	Course contact hours - Research	
13m	Course contact hours - Workshop	
13n	Course contact hours – Other (specify)	
14	Instructor Workload	
15	Grade Mode (check all appropriate):	<input type="checkbox"/> Standard <input type="checkbox"/> Credit/No Credit (undergrad only)
16	Maximum Enrollment	
17	Catalog Description (50 words or less)	
18	List any prerequisites (course/s, test scores, class standing, major, etc.)	
19	List any co-requisites	

20	If the course is cross listed, specify the Course ID(s) MUST have signature in Section V off all Department Chairs	
21	Does this course have any special student costs? Yes/No <i>Attach a <u>completed</u> "Request to Add or Change Course Fees" form. Describe in section IV-F.</i>	
22	How often will it be offered? Fall	
23a	How often will it be offered? Spring	
23b	How often will it be offered? Summer	
23c	How often will it be offered? Fall	
24	Frequency?	
25	First semester this course will be offered. <i>New courses may not be taught under their approved course ID until they appear in the catalog, therefore, no earlier than the coming fall.</i>	
26	List course/s that should be deleted, include the last semester for course/s being deleted. <i>A course cannot be deleted when it is a requirement in a degree plan in any department.</i>	
27	Is this course required for a degree/s? Yes/No <i>If "Yes," attach a revised degree plan(s) reflecting the placement of the new course.</i>	
28	Has this course been offered as a Special Topics course? Yes/No <i>If "Yes," specify the Course ID and enrollment for each term it was taught.</i>	
29	List any courses in which content overlaps the proposed course. (Course ID and Name) <i>Attach statement from instructor/dept chair of existing course justifying the new offering in Section IV-D.</i>	

II. Curriculum

1	Degree Plan Explanation of how this course affects degree requirements.	
2	Justification State the justification for adding this course to the current curriculum. Represent the need	

III. Course Design

1. Audience and Course Goal

1	Describe the intended audience, including prerequisite skills.	
2	State the overarching course goal(s) in performance terms.	

2. Competencies and Measurements

	Competency	Measurement Instrument	Measurement Standard
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			

3. Text and Resources

1. Give the full publication information of the textbook/s and other required resources and outside readings.
2. For **combined undergraduate/graduate** courses, make two lists:
 - a. full publication information; label **Undergraduate**.
 - b. full publication information; label **Graduate**. Indicate number of pages required.

IV. Supporting Documentation

Supporting documents must accompany proposal prior to preliminary approval by chair and dean.

1	Library — Submit new course application and syllabus to the Director of the Library. Consult with the director and establish a deadline for completion of the library report. Attach the signed copy of the library director's report.
2	Instructional Design — The application and syllabus must be reviewed by Academic Dean. Attach a copy of the Dean's Letter.
3	Degree Plan — The impact of the course must be reviewed by the Director of Curriculum. Attach degree plan signed by the Director of Curriculum.
4	Content Overlap — Include one document for each course you listed in Section I-I. Attach statement from instructor/dept chair of existing course justifying the new offering.
5	Departmental Resources — List the resources that support the course and are available only through the department, if applicable. Attach the list of the holdings and the location/s.
6	Resources — List resources (other than library or departmental resources) that are needed to support this course (computers, lab equipment, other technology, etc.). Attach a complete list of all items and indicate possible sources or estimated cost of each. List the sources of any needed funds.
7	Expenses — List additional expenses needed to implement this course (full-time or part-time faculty, graduate or lab assistants, student employees, travel, special student costs, room renovation, storage facility, etc.). Attach a complete list of all items, the estimated cost of each and the source of the funds.
8	Justification — Attach all documents referred to in Section II-2
9	Syllabus — Attach the syllabus for the course based upon the anticipated first-semester offering.
10	Provide documentation for all additional attachments here

V. Preliminary Approvals

All supporting documentation has been assembled and attached to this application. I believe this course is ready to be presented to appropriate councils. We have a plan to fund this new course.

Primary Department

Department Chair

Dean of the College

Date

Date

Cross-listing Department *Add more lines if multiple departments are cross-listing*

Department Chair

Registrar of the College

Date

Date

Cross-listing Department *Add more lines if multiple departments are cross-listing*

Department Chair

Registrar of the College

Date

Date

VI.Approvals *Place all approvals on one page.*

A.Course ID: _____

Course Title: _____

1. College Academic Dean Action: (for all courses)

Note: Insert additional lines for College Academic Council action for each college involved in cross-listed courses.

Approved ___ Denied ___ _____
College Dean or Director Date

Approved ___ Denied ___ _____
College Dean or Director Date

2. College Faculty Action:

For undergraduate level courses only

Approved ___ Denied ___ _____
Associate Provost Date

3. College Budget Action: (when applicable)

When applicable – see New Course Application Instructions

Approved ___ Denied ___ _____
Chair, College Budget Committee Date

4. President of the College Action: (for all courses)

Approved ___ Denied ___ _____
President Date

Attach notes, comments, or conditions from appropriate councils:



Stanley N. Helton

Serving God and His People

Appendix B: Invitation Letter

August 19, 2008

Dear Colleague or Student,

I would like to invite you to join me on my educational journey toward my Doctor of Ministry degree. I am in the midst of writing a project thesis. The tentative title of the thesis is

TOTALLY DEVOTED: DEVELOPING A HOLISTIC SPIRITUAL
FORMATION COURSE FOR WESTERN CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

Here is how you can help me. Part of my project is to lead a team composed of faculty, staff, local ministers and students in a small group. This small group will participate in four spiritual formation activities and then meet in a small group following each activity to discuss the experience of the activity. A court stenographer will record these discussion sessions. However, your identity will not be linked to your comments in the final thesis.

If you are willing to join me on this journey, you will be asked to sign a consent form. This is a standard procedure in all projects that involve human subjects. However, there is minimal risk involved in this project.

Please return your response to me by email no later than September 19, 2008. My email address is shelton@westernchristian.ca should you need more information.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Stanley N. Helton, MS, MDiv., DMin. (cand., 2009)

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: **Totally Devoted: Developing a Holistic Spiritual Formation Course for Western Christian College**

Principle Investigator: Stanley N. Helton
Abilene Christian University, Abilene, TX

Advisors: Drs. David Wray (primary) and Rodney Ashlock (secondary)

Introduction: I understand that I have been asked to participate on a team to develop a course in Christian spiritual formation at the Western Christian College.

Purpose: The purpose of this project is to work with a team, consisting of faculty, staff, local ministers and students to develop a proposal for a course in Christian spiritual formation. The project will encompass four experiential units followed by group discussion. The resulting conversation will be transcribed (and audio recorded). These transcriptions will then be analyzed for themes relevant to the formation of this class.

Procedures: This project will invite approximately six members, consisting of faculty, local ministers and students chosen by the academic dean. The project will entail eight, one-hour sessions on days to be chosen, beginning on September, 25, 2008, and ending November 20, 2008. The purpose of this project is to work with a team, consisting of faculty, staff, local ministers and students to develop a proposal for a course in Christian spiritual formation. Upon signing this document, you understand that your opinions may be incorporated into this thesis including the resulting syllabus and class resources.

Potential Risks: There are no identifiable risks to participants in this research study. All published participant quotations will remain anonymous.

Potential Benefits: Your participation may benefit you by: 1) providing space for you to think out your calling before God; 2) enhancing relationships with other members of the team; and 3) assisting Dean Helton in creating a new class for Western Christian College.

Compensation: There is no compensation for your participation in this research.

Rights of Research Participants: I have read the details above. Dean Helton has explained the nature of the group and has answered my questions. He has informed me of the potential risks and benefits of participating in this research.

I understand that I do not have to participate in this research and can withdraw from this research project at any time.

I understand that all of the information I provide will remain confidential.

If I have any questions or concerns, I can contact Dean Helton by telephone at (306) 545-1515 or by email at shelton@westernchristian.ca.

Signature of Participant _____ Date _____

Signature of Principle Investigator Stanley N. Helton

Appendix D: Stenographer's Certificate and Examples of Transcriptions

OFFICIAL QUEEN'S BENCH COURT REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE:

I, TWYLA GRIEVE, CSR, Official Queen's Bench Court Reporter for the Province of Saskatchewan, hereby certify that the foregoing pages contain a true and correct transcription of my shorthand notes taken herein to the best of my knowledge, skill and ability.

TWYLA GRIEVE, CSR

OFFICIAL QUEEN'S BENCH COURT REPORTER

1 ... fact that I always felt like I walked away
2 almost touching Jesus, those kind of -- and so
3 I, you know -- yeah, I think the case is that
4 for a class on spiritual formation, you want
5 to make that Christian service is a form of
6 spiritual formation but I would also think you
7 couldn't get far from saying that one who is
8 spiritually formed does Christian service.

9 And so do you have a theory
10 on which side you want to push?

11 D: No.

12 H: Okay. Very good.

13 D: Well, I mean the reason I
14 was asking, I guess one of the things I would
15 wonder is if we -- like, are we doing service
16 for service sake, to serve? Or are we doing
17 it because it's for spiritual formation?

18 And so if you have a service
19 experience where you don't see Jesus, what do
20 you do? Is there service --

21 H: That's right.

22 D: Okay.

23 H: Was it still worth doing?

24 D: Yeah, I guess that's where I
25 was.

26 H: What do you guys think?

1 P: I think that maybe it gets a
2 little bit twisted if you're serving because I
3 am supposed to get something out of it. I
4 want to be spiritually formed so I'm going to
5 go do this. I think your mindset needs to be
6 I'm going to give. That's what serve is --

7 H: That's right.

8 P: -- is to do something for
9 someone else and not for me. Did you get my
10 hand motions in there? I'm sorry.

11 D: Because I think there are
12 many nights when Blair doesn't see --

13 H: No, no, that's right.

14 P: I agree.

15 S: -- doesn't see anything.

16 H: Exactly.

17 D: And a night when he is
18 struggling just to communicate a very basic
19 fundamental Christian attitude, message and so
20 I think that is probably spiritually forming
21 for him, but I don't think he's saying --

22 D: That's right.

23 D: -- oh, you know, this is
24 good spiritual formation stuff. So we need to
25 be aware of that, that there will be many
26 experiences that are just there to give the ...

Appendix E: Session Discussion Questions

TOTALLY DEVOTED: DEVELOPING A HOLISTIC SPIRITUAL
FORMATION COURSE FOR WESTERN CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

Praxis-Reflection Cycle 1: The Inner Life¹

October 9, 2008

1. What was familiar (or something you assume should be a part of the Christian life) in this experience?
2. What was unfamiliar or made you uncomfortable about this experience?
3. Where did you sense the presence of God in this experience?
4. What Scripture came to mind as you engaged in this activity?
5. What other spiritual practices should accompany activities such as this one?
6. Would you recommend this experience for students in a class on spiritual formation?
7. Does this activity connect with heart, soul, mind or body (strength)?

¹ I used the same questionnaire for each session with only the session name and date changed each time.

Appendix F: Final Group Questionnaire

TOTALLY DEVOTED: DEVELOPING A HOLISTIC SPIRITUAL
FORMATION COURSE FOR WESTERN CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

Final Questionnaire

December 6, 2008

1. Thinking back on all of our activities and discussion, what was the most important aspect to you?
2. What did you find the least helpful?
3. Where did you sense the presence of God?
4. In what ways has this experience help you to become more like Christ?
5. When you think of loving God, do you love God most with your:
 - a. Heart
 - b. Soul
 - c. Mind
 - d. Strength
6. When you think of loving God, do you love God least with your:
 - a. Heart
 - b. Soul
 - c. Mind
 - d. Strength
7. Why do you think you answered question #5 and #6 the way you did?
8. If you were designing a course in Christian Spiritual formation, which features of what we have done together would you consider to be a non-negotiable element to such a class?
9. Do you have other observations or comments you would like to make?

Appendix G: Curricular Framework

Certificate in Biblical Studies - 09-10
 (30 credits)
 Program Outline

Name: _____ ID#: _____

	Semester 1		Semester 2
	<i>TEO 233</i>		<i>Christian Spiritual Formation</i>
	BIB 113 OT Introduction I		BIB 133 OT Introduction II
	BIB 143 NT Introduction I		BIB 153 NT Introduction II
	REL 133 Christian Ministry		TEO 143 Christian Theology I
	Biblical elective (OT or NT textual study)		Biblical elective (OT or NT textual study – option not taken in 1 st semester)
			BIB/TEO/MIS/REL/YFM/LAN elective
	Christian Service unit		Christian Service unit

Please select elective courses for which you have the prerequisite or for which there are no prerequisites.

The Bridge - 09-10

(30 credits)
Program Outline

Name: _____ ID#: _____

	Semester 1		Semester 2
	<i>TEO 233</i>		<i>Christian Spiritual Formation</i>
	BIB 113 OT Introduction I		BIB 133 OT Introduction II
	BIB 143 NT Introduction I		BIB 153 NT Introduction II
	HIS 103 History of Western Civilization		TEO 143 Christian Theology I
	REL 133 Christian Ministry		HIS 223 Church History II
			ENG 103 Lit & Comp I
	Christian Service unit		Christian Service unit

Two Year Degree Program Associate of Arts in Religion

The 60-credit AAR harmonizes general studies classes with a biblical education and practical ministry experiences. After completion of the two-year program, the student will:

1. Demonstrate a foundational knowledge of the Scriptures and the major Christian doctrines.
2. Display foundational skills in Christian service and church leadership.
3. Display an introductory knowledge in several areas of general studies with emphasis on integrating biblical perspectives within those areas.

Requirements:

General Studies	27	Biblical/Theological	24
COM113 – Intro to Communication OR COM213 – Public Speaking	3	BIB113 – OT Introduction I BIB133 – OT Introduction II	3 3
ENG103 – Literature & Composition I	3	BIB143 – NT Introduction I	3
ENG113 – Literature & Composition II	3	BIB153 – NT Introduction II	3
HIS103 – History of Western Civilization	3	TEO143 – Christian Theology I	3
HIS233 – Church History II	3	TEO213 – Hermeneutics	3
PSY113 – Intro to Psychology OR SOC113 – Intro to Sociology	3	OR REL223 – World and Folk Religions	
Math OR Science Elective	3	TEO233 Christian Spiritual Formation	3
General Studies Electives	6	BIB/TEO Electives	3
Professional	3	Fieldwork (4 Units)	
REL133 – Christian Ministry I	3	Christian Service units	[4]
Open Electives	6		
Elective	3		
Elective	3		

Appendix H: Description of Encounter for WCC's Calendar

Programs of Study

Two basic paths lead to all of Western Christian College's advanced programs. Students may take either a one-year Bible Certificate or the one-year Bridge Certificate. Supporting both is a spiritual formation module called *Encounter*. *Encounter* is a regimen stretching across both semesters, and it is designed to help students develop habits, dispositions, and behaviours that will be the core of their entire spiritual lives. *Encounter* is more than just a course; it is a core value, which will give direction and support to all the other courses offered at Western Christian College. We believe spiritual formation needs to be central in the lives of believers today.

Encounter rests on four core needs: examining self, experiencing God, exploring the world, and engaging community. In so doing, this intense personal growth program prepares young people to face life's challenges with the knowledge that their faith is strong and well-grounded. *Encounter* is a community-building plan designed to keep Christian young people Christian as well as helping them be useful in reaching out to the world around them. It is also an essential

Encounter
SELF • COMMUNITY • WORLD • GOD

preparatory step for all graduating high school students who care about faith, helping them transition into the future. Young adults in this program will find what they need to move to additional education, or a career, or marriage, or family, or service in the church, or whatever God has in store!¹

¹ 2008-2009 Calendar of Western Christian College (Regina, SK: Future Print, 2008), 17.

Appendix I: Expert Evaluations

Assessment of Stan Helton's TEO 233: Spiritual Formation Syllabus

The course description summarizes well what follows. The texts chosen for the course are suitable for undergraduate students. Course objectives are clear but would benefit from some further expression of how they might be fulfilled. (I am thinking about measurability here; not in a quantitative sense but certainly some examples might help. I.e.: So, how will the course help a student to love the Lord his God with all his heart? What might that look like?)

The assignments required provide a balanced approach to learning and cover a range of intellectual, affective, and experiential tasks. I might suggest that a further assignment or an element of an already existing assignment be added that engaged the student's creative and aesthetic sensibilities as a way of fostering an even more holistic approach to the spiritual journey.

The course outline looks manageable and very well organized. The inclusion of the assignment column makes it clear to the student where the tasks fit in with the course content.

The bibliography is well developed. Perhaps it may be necessary to take some time to review it with students as a means of pointing out some of the indispensable resources that are there. (You might even want to put an asterisk beside those books that you just can't live without).

This is a well put together syllabus that, when fleshed out in the classroom, will provide students with a great opportunity to learn much about the traditions of spiritual formation within the Church while offering them experiences which will enrich their own journey of faith. I can heartily recommend it.

Revd Dr Calum Macfarlane
Associate Professor of Spiritual Theology
Chaplain of the College
Briercrest College
510 College Drive
Caronport, SK S0H 0S0
(306) 756-3233
Email: cmacfarlane@briercrest.ca

TEO 233: Christian Spiritual Formation

Stan Helton, Project/Thesis for ACU

General Comments

Any time one evaluates a college syllabus, one must recognize that there are some inherent issues in the way such documents are written. They are often extremely general in nature and really do not give a true reflection of what the course actually contains. The vagueness is frustrating, because it is clear that there has been much thought put into the course planning, but it is difficult to read that planning based simply on reading the syllabus. Because of that, it is this author's strong opinion that students need much more than are found in most syllabi, and this particular course outline is no exception.

Secondly, any course on Spiritual Development will always be somewhat vague. After all, how does one reflect that the desire is to have students grow in their spiritual life? Every student is at a different place spiritually, some really needing exposure, while others are looking for a very in-depth, challenging experience. The difference between a sophomore and senior level class can be so different, but it will always start from where a student is spiritually. Every professor will face the issue that student maturity is key here. So when planning a course, one always has to plan for a much broader experience level, vastly different than planning for a historical class or an information based class.

Thus it is important to stress that any comments I make do recognize that the difficulty of designing or writing of a syllabus for this type of class is much more difficult than a normal class. It is clear that there has been much thought and planning put into this syllabus and that many of the issues that I raise likely will be dealt with in the course document and evaluation tools that might go with this syllabus. Having said all that, let me focus on three specific areas: curriculum, assessment, and learning or experience outcomes for the student.

Curriculum

The objectives are extremely vague. To say you want students to love God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength is meaningless. How will you know if you have been successful? How do you know the starting point, let alone whether you have succeeded in intensifying the relationship. What will you do that will move you to achieve this goal? Compare this to your goal of having the student adopt in their own life the values of Praxis, Theological Reflection and Articulation. This objective sets out a direction but gives the student some intriguing hints of where the course will be taking him/her. Unfortunately, of the four stated objectives, really only one set some definite markers for measuring success.

The goal of this course was to introduce students to the holistic understanding of and models for practicing the spiritual disciplines. This would be accomplished by looking at the traditions of Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants and Pentecostal believers. Or at least that is what the reader is left to believe. The only problem was that there were no other places this reader could find that showed how this was to be accomplished. There are

some hints in the bibliography, but the syllabus never actually seems to touch on this goal.

There is an issue of scope that arises as well. Recognizing that the topic itself allows for some degree of latitude, the syllabus does not focus the reader as to what those parameters are. Is this to be a class where one focuses strictly on prayer, study and character development through service? Or will there be a broader coverage that touches areas of worship, philosophies, etc. By not having this clearly spelled out, the professor leaves him or herself open to a very shallow course with no “meat” to it. Students, although they might not admit it at the time, are looking for a course that gives them something to focus on and that gives them some practical, life changing and mentally/spiritually challenging.

Much of the discussion on curriculum could be accomplished by simply giving a little more detail to the section on the reading schedule. While that section certainly is useful on its own, it could have been substantially more informative if the author had simply included each week’s topic and a one or two line description of what the lecture/discussion/experience will focus on. Remember that one of the major functions of a syllabus is to provide students with the “Key Messages” that they need to focus on during the course. Clearly the readings are already setting a tone for the class, so give the student a hint of what might get covered. Tie the readings to the class.

Assessment.

As mentioned before, the methods of assessing levels of achievement for a class on spiritual development by the very nature of the course would be suspect. Does a student “fail” if they don’t pray at least 20% more than they did before? How do you measure love? What does “participating in the life of God” look like? It is not to say that the objectives in themselves are wrong, but how do you get an “A” vs. a “C” in this class? The syllabus does give a grading component, but the difficulty will be in how the projects or journaling are evaluated. Students need some clear direction. There are a number of assessment tools in the research community that can help in this area. For example, you could include a rubric for journaling in the syllabus that gives examples of what different levels of work look like or include. The same could be done for projects. It is well recognized that this type of course has a level of vagueness in the mark achieved, but there needs to be some clear processes spelled out so a student understands how each grade level is determined. Each objective should have some measurable achievements.

Finally, remembering that students often learn in different ways, and recognizing that this is very much an experiential class, consider using some different tools for achieving your goals. For example, students today often have some skills that we never dreamed of, often in the area of fine arts. You use projects and journaling, but what about allowing the students to express themselves in an “alternate format” such as making a movie or creating a blogging site where they can share thoughts with each other. Remember that you want them to use all their skills because it is when they apply their normal skills to a spiritual projects, it applies theory to practice.

Learning Environment

This is hard to comment on due to the vagueness of the syllabus. It is more than likely that a majority of the audience taking a sophomore level class is in their late teens or early twenties. They are still very much in the transition between directed learning that they received in high school (where the teacher will have given them most of the material and told them how to process it) and the adult learning style which is best described as experiential learning (the student compares what is being taught with what he/she has experienced in life). Thus it is important that the course clearly have some directed learning elements built into the activities. The grading seems to indicate that this is happening, but also raises a concern. If we examine the idea of 40 days of prayer for example, an unstructured assignment here will often leave the student not knowing what to look for, or what the experience should be. They have no way to tell if they are making progress. But if, as I suspect the plan is, the 40 days include some very specific thoughts or things to focus on, you meet this group of students very well and they get a significant growth opportunity out of the class. The same could be said for the reading. If the idea is just to give them a specific passage to read each day, they will do that. But if you have them then reflect back what they have heard from God and what they said to God in response, you bring a whole new perspective. If you further have those 40 days being guide to readings of how a particular bible servant grew....well it would add another level of complexity and experience....in other words, putting some meat on the experience.

Overall, it is tough to evaluate this syllabus, because it just doesn't give enough information for the reader to judge it effectively. Indications are that much of what has been discussed is actually in the class material, and many of the thought expressed are hinted at in the syllabus. It is the nature of a syllabus to be general, making the evaluation of the course harder. As long as there is lots of "meat" for the student to chew on and leading experiences to have them confront some of the material, then this class could be extremely successful. I wish the instructor well.

Murray Sanders
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Appendix J: Christian Spiritual Formation Course Syllabus

Western Christian College
TEO 233: Christian Spiritual Formation
Fall and Winter Semester 2009-2010

College Mission Statement

In partnership with the Churches of Christ, WCC exists to equip disciples through Christian higher education, spiritual formation, and ministry experiences to be active Christian servant leaders.

Course Description

This course exposes students to the full range of teaching and practices as contained in the Christian traditions (Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant and Pentecostal). The goal of this course is to introduce students to the holistic understanding of and models for practicing the spiritual disciplines.

Professor's Personal Information

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Textbooks

The Holy Bible (New International Version). The student may use other translations for their reading.

Kenneth Boa, *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001).

Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1998).

William Young, *The Shack* (Newbury Park, CA: Windblown Media, 2007).

Other readings as the professor determines.

Course Objectives

At the end of the course, it is my prayer that you will

- Love the Lord your God
 - With all your heart
 - With all your soul
 - With all your mind
 - With all your strength (body)
- Love your neighbors (and enemies) as you love yourself.
- Experience Christian spiritual formation as something that moves from
 - The individual to
 - The Body of Christ to
 - The World.
- That you will adopt in your own life the values of
 - Praxis
 - Theological Reflection
 - Articulation
- Develop lifelong habits and dispositions that will allow you more readily to participate in the life of God.

Textbook Objectives

In *Confirmed to His Image* (16), Boa sets out these outcomes for his text:

- develop a greater appreciation for the unique way God has made you
- become aware of a wider array of options for your spiritual journey
- get out of a possible spiritual rut
- desire to experiment with other facets of the faith
- appreciate the manifold legacy that has been bequeathed to us by those who have gone before
- expand your horizons and be encouraged to move out of your comfort zone
- have instilled in you a greater passion for Christ and a greater desire to participate in his loving purposes for your life

Class Meeting Times

This class will meet once a week for theological reflection and learning. We will meet on Monday evenings from 6:00 to 7:30. Other times may be required for special opportunities.

Course Work Requirements

1. Participation¹
 - 1.1 Since this is an experiential course, it is very important for you to be engaged in the material. Stay connected to God and the other students throughout.

¹ Some of the language here belongs to Kevin Vance, the president of Western Christian College. Kevin and I team taught an earlier class in Christian spiritual formation.

- 1.2 You may go through spiritual highs and sinful lows, as well as emotionally dry times (deserts), but try to keep an even keel. The spiritual masters advise that fluctuations in emotion and experience are normal. Spirituality is about faithfulness and obedience in all kinds of circumstances. As one person has said, the acid test of the Holy Spirit is not how high he makes you jump, but how straight he makes you walk.
 - 1.3 I would like you to feel comfortable to participate fully in class by describing your experiences and what you have learned. I also want to create an atmosphere where we can share in deeper ways what God is doing in our lives.
 - 1.4 Please note that participation in class does not necessarily equal talking. People can participate without talking (listening attentively, taking notes), and talk without participating (talk without thinking or engaging with God and each other). Speaking is certainly one indication of participation, but not the only.
2. Reading:
 - 2.1 Read the textbook as scheduled below
 - 2.2 Read the book *Celebration of Discipline*. See the course schedule for dates.
 - 2.3 Read two noteworthy Christian Classics related to Christian spiritual formation. (One each semester)
 - 2.3.1 Find possible books at <http://www.ccel.org/index/practical.html>
 - 2.3.2 Another source is Richard Fosters, *Devotional Classics: Selected Readings for Individuals and Groups* (San Francisco: Harper, 1993).
 3. Journaling (See Rubric).
 - 3.1 Forty Days of Prayer (1/2 page each)
 - 3.2 Forty Days in the Word (1/2 page each)
 - 3.3 Responses to “Questions for Personal Application” in Boa
 4. Reflection:
 - 4.1 Each student will write a three-page reflection on each of the following:
 - 4.1.1 *Celebration of Discipline*.
 - 4.1.2 Any two Spiritual Classics approved by the professor (One each semester)
 - 4.1.3 Write a reading note on each. The student will write a reading note on several primary sources. Reading notes are a method of helping you assess what you have read. The format of a reading response is as follows:
 - 4.1.3.1 It is typed and double-spaced on a single page;
 - 4.1.3.2 Provide a title and place your name at the top of the page;
 - 4.1.3.3 Aim for about 250-300 words of text (no more than a typed page);
 - 4.1.3.4 The reading responses identify a specific theme emerging from the documents and critically discusses the theme you have identified. Your emphasis should be upon analysis and not narration or summary;
 - 4.1.3.5 Reading responses are due as scheduled in the syllabus.

4.2 Experiential components (see schedule below)

4.2.1 Societal Regeneration

4.2.1.1 Participate for a day in any social justice ministry of your choosing

4.2.1.2 Share in your discussion group how this affected you

4.2.2 Theological Renewal

4.2.2.1 Read the novel, *The Shack*

4.2.2.2 In your group explore the theology of the novel

4.2.3 Inner Life Transformation

4.2.3.1 Weekend Retreat at St. Michael's in Lumden, SK

4.2.3.2 Journal about what you experience over the weekend

4.2.4 Personal Renewal

4.2.4.1 Attend Worship Event at YC (Edmonton)

4.2.4.2 In your group explore the impact of the worship experience on you

5. Final Project: Pending

Marking

1. Class participation	15%
2. Readings	25%
3. Journaling	20%
4. Reflection Papers	10%
5. Final Project	30%

Schedule

Semester One

Facet	Topic (Boa Reading)	Celebration Reading	Assignment Due
1	Relational Spirituality	Intro	
	Loving God Completely		
	Loving Ourselves Correctly		
2	Paradigm Spirituality	Part One	Societal Regeneration Experience
	Life is a Journey		
	Can We Trust God?		
3	Disciplined Spirituality		Reflection Group on Societal Regeneration
	Dependence and Discipline		
	What are the Spiritual Disciplines?		
4	Exchanged Life Spirituality		
	Grasping Our True Identity		
	God's Plan to Meet our Needs		
5	Motivated Spirituality		Theological Renewal Experience
	Why Do We Do What We Do?		
	Love, Gratitude, and Rewards		
	Identity, Purpose and Hope...		
6	Devotional Spirituality	Part Two	Reflection Group on Theological Renewal
	Our Image of God		
	The Contemplative Way		First Spiritual Classic Due
	The Practice of Sacred Reading		
	Falling in Love with God		

Semester Two

Facet	Topic (Boa Reading)	Celebration Reading	Assignment Due				
7	Holistic Spirituality						
	The Centrality of Christ						
	An Integrated Life						
	Relationships, Work, and Society						
	Stewardship and Purpose						
8	Process Spirituality				Inner Life Transformation Experience		
	Process versus Product						
	Being versus Doing						
	Trust, Gratitude, and Contentment						
9	Spirit-Filled Spirituality						Reflection Group on Inner Life Transformation
	Walking In the Power of the Spirit						
	The Gifts of the Spirit						
	Openness and Discernment: A Balance						
10	Warfare Spirituality						
	Warfare with the Flesh and the World						
	Warfare with the Devil and His Angels						
	The Weapons of Our Warfare						
11	Nurturing Spirituality				Personal Renewal Experience		
	A Philosophy of Discipleship						
	The Process, Product, and Context...						
	A Philosophy of Evangelism						
	Overcoming Barriers to Evangelism						
12	Corporate Spirituality					Part Three	Reflection Group on Personal Renewal
	The Need for Community						
	The Nature and Purpose of the Church						
	Soul Care, Leadership, Accountability, and Renewal						

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Appendix K: Assignments

40 Days around the Word

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Matt 1-7</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Acts 16-20</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Matt 8-12</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Acts 21-16</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Matt 13-18</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Acts 27-Rom 4</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Matt 19-24</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Rom 5-10</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Matt 25-28</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Rom 11-1 Cor 1</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Mark 1-6</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>1 Cor 2-9</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Mark 7-11</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>1 Cor 10-15</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Mark 12-16</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>1 Cor 16- 2 Cor 9</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Luke 1-4</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>2 Cor 10-Gal 4</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Luke 5-9</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Gal 5 - Phil 1</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Luke 10-13</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Phil 2 - 1 Thes 2</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Luke 14-19</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>1 Thes 3 - 1 Tim 5</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Luke 20-24</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>1 Tim 6 - Heb 1</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>John 1-5</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Heb 2 - 10</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>John 6-9</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Heb 11- James 5</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>John 10-14</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>1 Pet 1 -1 John 1</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>John 15-19</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>1 John 2 - Jude</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>John 20 - Acts 4</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Rev 1-7</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Acts 5-9</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Rev 8-15</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Acts 10-15</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Rev 16-22</i> |

40 Days of Prayer

<u>Day</u>	<u>Prayer</u>	<u>Text</u>
1	Abraham's prayer for Sodom	Gen 18.20-33
2	Jacob's prayer for mercy from Esau	Gen 32.6-12
3	Moses' prayer at the burning bush	Ex 3.1-4.18
4	Moses' praise after the Red Sea Crossing	Ex 15.1-18
5	Moses' first prayer for Israel's Sin	Ex 32.7-14
6	Moses' second prayer for Israel's Sin	Ex 32.30-34
7	Moses' prayer for God's presence	Ex 33.12-34.9
8	Moses' prayer for discouragement	Num 11.10-30
9	Moses' prayer after the people rebelled	Num 14.10-20
10	Moses' 40-day prayer	Deut 9.18-20; 9.25-29
11	Joshua's prayer in defeat	Josh 7.3-13
12	Hannah's prayer for a child	1Sam 1.1-20
13	Hannah's' prayer of thanks	1Sam 2.1-10
14	David' prayer of praise for God's kingdom	2Sam 7.18-29
15	David praise for deliverance	2Sam 22.1-51
16	Solomon's prayer for wisdom	1Kings 3.4-15 2Chron 1.5-12
17	Solomon's prayer to dedicate the temple	1Kings 8.22-61
18	Elijah's prayer of self-pity	1Kings 19.9-18
19	Hezekiah's prayer for deliverance	2Kings 19.14-19
20	Hezekiah's prayer for healing	2Kings 20.1-6
21	David's prayer for praise	1Chron 17.16-27
22	David's prayer at the people's generosity	1Chron 29.10-20
23	Jehoshaphat's prayer in a crisis	2Chron 20.1-23
24	Ezra' prayer for the nation's sins	Ezra 9.3-10.4
25	Nehemiah' prayer for Jerusalem's plight	Nehemiah 1.3-11
26	David's prayer at his son's rebellion	Psalm 3
27	David's prayer of praise	Psalm 8
28	David' prayer for a pure heart	Psalm 19
29	David's prayer to His Shepherd	Psalm 23
30	David's prayer for forgiveness	Psalm 51
31	David's prayer for guidance	Psalm 139
32	Isaiah's prayer for mercy	Isaiah 64.1-12
33	Jeremiah's praise of God's wisdom	Jeremiah 32.17-27
34	Daniel' prayer of confession	Daniel 9.4-19
35	Habakkuk's prayer of praise	Hab 3.1-19
36	The Lord's Prayer	Matt 6.9-15
37	Jesus' prayer for his disciples	John 17
38	The church's prayer for boldness	Acts 4.23-31
39	Paul's prayer for the church	Eph 1.15-23; 3.14-21
40	Prayers of worship in Heaven	Rev 11.15-19; 15.1-4; 16.5-7

Western Christian College
TEO 233: Spiritual Formation
First Quiz over *Conformed to His Image*

Terms. After each word, write a brief definition or descriptions:

1. Apophatic

2. Contemplation

3. Exchanged Life

4. Kataphatic

5. *Lectio Divina*

6. Meditation

7. Mysticism

8. Paradigm

9. Spirituality

10. Spiritual discipline

Multiple Choice. In each of the questions below, mark the best answer and then write out the letter of the best answer in the space to the left of the options.

11. Which of the following is not a goal or outcome of Boa's Conformed to His Image?
 - a. get out of a possible spiritual rut
 - b. desire to experiment with other facets of the faith
 - c. appreciate the manifold legacy that has been bequeathed to us by those who have gone before
 - d. develop lifelong habits and dispositions that will allow you more readily to participate in the life of God.
 - e. All of the above
12. Which of Boa's twelve facets is most likely to deal with loving other correctly?
 - a. Relational spirituality
 - b. Paradigm spirituality
 - c. Disciplined spirituality
 - d. Exchanged life spirituality
13. Which of Boa's twelve facets is most likely to deal knowing the difference between the temporal and the eternal?
 - a. Relational spirituality
 - b. Paradigm spirituality
 - c. Disciplined spirituality
 - d. Exchanged life spirituality
14. Which of Boa's twelve facets is most likely to discuss historic spiritual disciplines?
 - a. Relational spirituality
 - b. Paradigm spirituality
 - c. Disciplined spirituality
 - d. Exchanged life spirituality
15. Which of Boa's twelve facets is most likely related to biblical incentives?
 - a. Disciplined spirituality
 - b. Exchanged life spirituality
 - c. Motivated spirituality
 - d. Devotional spirituality
16. Which of Boa's twelve facets is most likely to explore falling in love with God?
 - a. Disciplined spirituality
 - b. Exchanged life spirituality
 - c. Motivated spirituality
 - d. Devotional spirituality
17. Which of Boa's twelve facets is most likely to contrast being with doing?
 - a. Motivated spirituality
 - b. Devotional spirituality
 - c. Holistic spirituality
 - d. Process spirituality
18. Which of Boa's twelve facets is most likely to deal with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit?
 - a. Holistic spirituality
 - b. Process spirituality
 - c. Spirit-filled spirituality
 - d. Warfare spirituality
19. Which of Boa's twelve facets is most likely to deal temptation and the Devil?
 - a. Holistic spirituality
 - b. Process spirituality
 - c. Spirit-filled spirituality
 - d. Warfare spirituality
20. Which of Boa's twelve facets is most likely to treat the need for community?
 - a. Spirit-filled spirituality
 - b. Warfare spirituality
 - c. Nurturing spirituality
 - d. Corporate spirituality
21. Loving God completely involves our whole personality which includes
 - a. Our intellect
 - b. Our emotion
 - c. Our will
 - d. All of the above
22. Citing Gordon McDonald, Boa notes there are five types of people; which of the following can drain the life out of you?
 - a. VRP
 - b. VIP
 - c. VTP
 - d. VNP
 - e. VDP
23. Which of the following items belongs to the temporal paradigm of life?
 - a. Knowing God
 - b. Humility
 - c. Power
 - d. Integrity

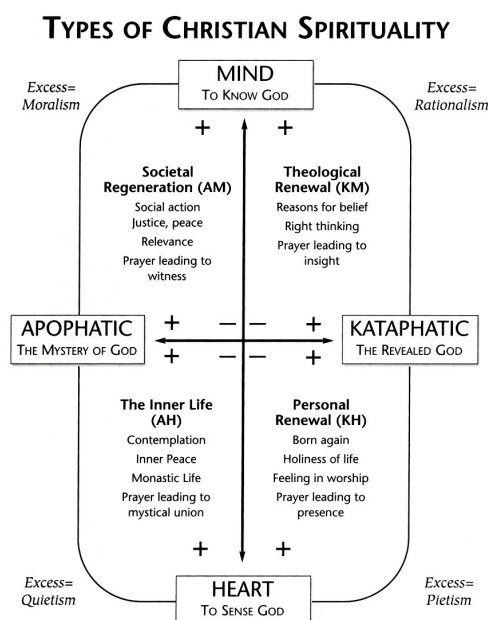
24. Which of the following items belongs to the eternal paradigm of life?
- Pleasure
 - Power
 - Fulfillment
 - Delusion
25. Which of the following disciplines is a discipline of abstinence?
- Witness
 - Service
 - Worship
 - Solitude
26. Which of the following discipline is not a discipline of engagement?
- Study
 - Silence
 - Meditation
 - Prayer
27. Which spiritual discipline is the centerpiece for all the others?
- Study
 - Silence
 - Meditation
 - Prayer
28. Which of the following is not a component of *lectio divina* as discussed by Boa?
- Meditatio*
 - Reflectio*
 - Oratio*
 - Contemplatio*
29. When Boa speaks of “exchanged life” spirituality, he is essentially talking about
- The substitution of Christ’s life for self-life
 - The reality of a new identity through the in-Christ experience
 - Our identification with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus
 - How Christ is the basis of our salvation and our sanctification
 - All of the Above
 - Only a and c above
30. Which of the following is/are one of the seven motivators for following Christ in Scripture?
- Love and gratitude
 - Rewards
 - Longing for God
 - Fear
 - All of the above
 - None of the above
31. Which of the following is/are one of the four areas of rewards.
- Greater responsibility in the kingdom
 - Reflecting the glory and character of God
 - Our relationship with people in heaven
 - Our capacity to know and experience God
 - All of the above
 - None of the above
32. Which of the following is not an enemy of spiritual passion?
- Focused intention
 - Unresolved areas of disobedience
 - Loving truth more than Christ
 - A merely functional relationship
33. Which of the following is not a source of spiritual passion?
- Complacency
 - Sitting at Jesus’ feet
 - Imitating the Master
 - Maturing in trust

True or False

34. T or F Christian spiritual formation is primarily about self-improvement.
 35. T or F Spirituality in New Testament terms is about connecting with the Spirit of God.
 36. T or F The temporal and the eternal perspectives are competing paradigms of life.
 37. T or F Informational reading sees the text as a subject that shapes us.
 38. T or F Formation reading see the text as an object to use.
 39. T or F The “contemplative way” is about knowing ourselves better.
 40. T or F Meditative prayer might be described as “talking to Jesus.”
 41. T or F Contemplative prayer might be described as “entering into the prayer of Jesus.”

Fill-in the Blanks

42. In which quadrant would you find feeding the homeless? _____
 43. In which quadrant would you put taking theology class? _____



44. In which quadrant would you find having a dream in which you talk with Jesus?

45. In which quadrant would you find singing “Light the Fire?” _____
46. In which quadrant would you find freeing slaves in a African country?

47. In which quadrant would you put preparing to teach a Bible study on OT History?

48. In which quadrant would you deal with personal morality? _____
49. In which quadrant would you expect to “experience God.” _____
50. Bonus Point: In which quadrant(s) would you locate prayer? _____

Appendix L: Classroom Assessment Tools and Assignment Rubrics

BRAMER-HOLMES SPIRITUALITY TYPE INDICATOR

This purpose of this exercise is to give you a sense of what spirituality style you personally prefer (according to one model'), and what seems to characterize your church. It is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers.

Instructions: Read each set of four statements in section A. Circle the statement which best describes your own strongest preference. In many cases, you will "like" a number or all of the options, but try to choose your strongest preference. However, you may select none, more than one, or "double" circle one. Do the same for each of the next sets of statements. You do not have to do all the questions.¹

- A. For me, spirituality consists primarily of
1. using my intellect to comprehend what God has revealed.
 2. responding to God and God's Word with my heart.
 3. practicing the presence of God while recognizing the mystery of God.
 4. joining the work of God to restore society.
- B. The kind of prayer I most value is
1. thoughtful prayer, often working out in my mind the kind of God I believe in.
 2. passionate prayer, including adoration, confession of sins, and supplication.
 3. contemplative prayer, letting go of thoughts and just "be-ing" before God.
 4. prayer with social conscience, leading to acts of mercy and justice.

¹ These questions have been designed by Paul D. G. Bramer, based on the typology of Urban T. Holmes III in *A History of Christian Spirituality: An Analytic Introduction* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1980) and influenced by two other indicators based on this typology: Allan H. Sager, *Gospel-Centered Spirituality: An Introduction to Our Spiritual Journey* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1990) and Corinne Ware, *Discover Your Spiritual Type: A Guide to Individual and Congregational Growth* (Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 1995). Special thanks goes to Dr. Calum McFarlane who made me aware of these instruments.

- C. I prefer worship services with an emphasis on
1. reasoned sermons and hymns of substance.
 2. passionate sermons and heartfelt songs and hymns.
 3. silence, and a recognition of the mystery of God.
 4. examples and discussions of how we can help in God's work in the world.
- D. I find valuable for my life the spiritual disciplines of
1. studying the Bible and theological thought and discussion.
 2. abstaining from activities which may compromise my faith, having daily devotions, sharing my faith, and doing good to others.
 3. solitude, fasting, simplicity, and counsel from a spiritual director.
 4. political involvement. social action, reflecting on our political structures and history.
- E. I am drawn to support those organizations which tend mostly to:
1. teach people, promote scholarship, publish Christian literature,
 2. proclaim the gospel through evangelism, missions, radio, etc.
 3. proved places of retreat, spiritual direction,
 4. feed the poor, fight for justice, promote reconciliation.
- F. I am more likely to be criticized for being
1. too intellectual, dogmatic, "dry" and concerned with logically working out my faith.
 2. too concerned with the feeling side of my relationship with God, trying hard to be in good fellowship with God.
 3. waiting for God to do it, not taking enough initiative myself, or not being realistic.
 4. too moralistic or too hard on myself or others in order to help others.
- G. I believe that the way to closeness with God is:
1. through studying and reflecting upon God's message to the world.
 2. through trusting God and obeying his Word.
 3. through being still and knowing God in the mystery and the silence.
 4. through becoming co-creators with God's hidden work to make the world work right.
- H. I am especially motivated by the desire for
1. Truth.
 2. Obedience to God.
 3. Mystical sense of God's presence in me and all things.
 4. Peace and justice for others.

Instructions: Add up all the 1's you have circled (add extra for any times you put a double circle on "1"), On the 'Phenomenology of Prayer' circle, draw spokes from the center to the perimeter within quadrant #1. Do the same for #2, 3, and 4.

**The 2006 Wycliffe Adolescent Spirituality Course
adaptation of the Bramer-Holmes Spirituality type indicator²**

- A. Connecting with God is
1. using my brain to understand what God is all about
 2. feeling God and God's Word in my heart
 3. being with God without seeing God
 4. helping God make the world a better place
- B. When I pray I really like to:
1. think about who God is
 2. talk to God about my problems, speak of my love for God, ask for forgiveness, pour out my feelings to God
 3. sit quietly and listen for God
 4. to do something active for my community and my world
- C. I like Church best when:
1. The sermons make me think and the songs teach me
 2. The sermons challenge and inspire me and the songs move me emotionally
 3. We get to be quiet and feel God's presence
 4. We get to help others in practical ways
- D. What helps me grow most in my walk with God is:
1. Studying the Bible and talking about it with others
 2. Avoiding doing what I know is wrong, reading the bible and telling others about God
 3. Spending time alone with God or with a trusted mentor listening to God
 4. Participating in events and activities that try to improve the lives of others and God's creation
- E. I would be most likely to volunteer for:
1. An organization that promotes the truth of Christianity and gets people thinking
 2. An organization that shares the message of Jesus Christ (through the media and mission work) and invites people to respond
 3. An organization that provides a quiet place for people to reflect on God
 4. An organization that feeds the poor and fights against injustice

² For the syllabus, see [http://www.wycliffecollege.ca/documents/Syllabus%20-%20Adolescent%20Spirituality%20\(WYP2201\).pdf](http://www.wycliffecollege.ca/documents/Syllabus%20-%20Adolescent%20Spirituality%20(WYP2201).pdf) (accessed 20 February 2009).

- F. Friends who know me well would most likely get after me for:
1. Spending too much time 'thinking' about issues in the bible and in the Church
 2. Getting over-excited when I talk about God and wearing my feelings on my shirtsleeve
 3. Waiting too long for God to do stuff and not stepping up myself
 4. Being too critical of those who don't live out their faith in an active way
- G. I am closest to God when:
1. I am studying God's word and thinking about God's message to the world
 2. I am trusting God and obeying the bible
 3. I am sitting quietly in God's presence
 4. I am helping God make the world a better place
- H. I get really excited about:
1. Discovering God's truth
 2. Exploring God's will for my life
 3. Resting in the mystery of God's presence in me and everything around me
 4. Joining with God in bringing his peace and justice to others

Journal Writing Rubric³ (Sample)

CATEGORY	1	2	3	4
Introduction	No attempt was made to catch the reader's attention in the first paragraph.	First paragraph has a weak "grabber".	A catchy beginning was attempted but was confusing rather than catchy.	First paragraph has a "grabber" or catchy beginning.
Organization	Ideas and scenes seem to be randomly arranged.	The journal entry is a little hard to follow. The transitions are sometimes not clear.	The journal entry is pretty well organized. One idea or scene may seem out of place. Clear transitions are used.	The journal entry is very well organized. One idea or scene follows another in a logical sequence with clear transitions.
Requirements	Many requirements were not met.	Most (about 75%) of the written requirements were met, but several were not.	Almost all (about 90%) of the written requirements were met.	All of the written requirements (date, length, effort, salutation, answering questions) were met.
Comprehension	The reader can understand little of what I am trying to communicate.	The reader can understand less than half of what I am trying to communicate.	The reader can understand most of what I am trying to communicate.	The reader can understand all of what I am trying to communicate.

Created by Laurie Gatzke, 2003

³ See sample rubrics at <http://web.rbe.sk.ca/assessment/Rubrics> (accessed 20 February 2009).

Journals are not marked for mechanics, because these are places that the student is practising their language skills. Without a place to practise, risk-taking is inhibited. If a journal entry is polished as a written piece in another context, then the following scale for spelling could apply:

Spelling and Punctuation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are more than ten spelling and punctuation errors • Common spelling patterns are misspelled. • Mechanics interfere with comprehension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are five to ten spelling and punctuation errors. • Common spelling patterns are acceptable. • Mechanics occasionally interrupt the readers' attention on content. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are three to five spelling and punctuation errors. • All but complex or sophisticated spelling patterns are well handled. • Mechanics are not noticed by reader. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are one or two spelling errors or punctuation errors. • Even complex or sophisticated spelling patterns are well handled. • Mechanics enhance comprehension.
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Assessment of Reading Responses Rubric (Sample)

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Personal Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expresses tangential comments or keys from a minor detail or less significant element of text to offer superficial, trivial comments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Minor detail ○ Minor connection ○ Too thin ○ Vague or barely relevant phrase ○ Rambles off the mark 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reaction to text is couched in explicit plot summary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some elaboration of or support for personal response • Restructuring the information within the text into your own words • Superficial, overgeneralized or surface connection between an element of text and personal life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logical connections to personal life • Connections to both personal life and to larger issues such as life of community, peers or other literature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logical, insightful, specific connections to own life, general life of community, peers, and other literature. • Conclusions leading to reflection, action or advocacy
Critical Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expresses tangential comments or keys from a minor detail or less significant element of text to offer superficial, trivial comments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Misinterpretation ○ Minor detail ○ Minor connection ○ Too thin ○ Vague or barely relevant phrase ○ Rambles off the mark 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reaction to text is couched in explicit plot summary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited and perhaps biased judgement about text • Questioning text to identify issues within it • Common viewpoint affirmed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tentative thinking—consideration of multiple possibilities of meaning • (May have hesitant voice) • Questioning of author's intent, moral stance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical distance gives a broader, more objective view • Relatively sophisticated viewpoint attending to significant elements of text such as themes, motifs or symbols
Writer's Craft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doesn't distinguish personal from critical response or from author's intent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple statement of judgement • Keys on one discrete element of text for opinions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows an understanding that author creates text through elements such as language, motifs, organization or characterization, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works closely with features of text, using examples of elements such as language, motifs, or characterization, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attends to multiple aspects of craft • Appreciates value of language, details, organization, characterization, etc. • Critical judgments of aesthetic merit of text

Appendix M: Course Evaluations



Western Christian College

Course Evaluation

Date: _____ Course Title: _____ Professor: _____

To the Student: Your honest, candid evaluation of yourself, the professor, and the course are important elements of Western Christian College's overall academic assessment plan. Your thoughts and comments will help the college evaluate and improve the quality of our academic program. **Please use the numbers provided – no half-number answers.** Each evaluation is reviewed carefully, so please consider each question thoughtfully before you respond. Professors will receive a summary of all the responses and your comments will be typed before being passed on to the professor. Thank you for your time with this important evaluation.

Please circle the appropriate response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. The professor was knowledgeable in the subject matter.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. The professor was well organized.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. The professor stimulated discussion and involvement by the students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. The professor inspired me to want to learn more in this subject area.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. The professor connected the course material to life and ministry.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. The professor clearly compared and connected the class material to biblical principles and Christian faith.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. The professor stimulated me to think on my own.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. I was able to communicate with the professor about the course in the class and outside of the class.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. The professor used a variety of methods to present the material.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. The course exposed me to new ideas and strategies that I feel I will be able to use as lifelong skills.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. The professor used a multiple instructional strategy in presenting material.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. The course objectives (listed in the syllabus) were met.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. The course objectives were clear.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. The textbook and assigned readings helped me to meet the learning outcomes.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. I read the material assigned for this course.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. I diligently invested in my own learning in this course.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. Overall, this course was very effective and helpful to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. I utilized library resources during this course.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. I was able to obtain library resources needed for this course	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. What did you like best about this course?						
21. What was your greatest challenge in this course?						
22. Any other comments?						

Thank you again for your evaluation. Please use the back of this sheet if additional space is needed for feedback.



Western Christian College

Professor's Self-Evaluation Form

Professor: _____ Semester: _____ Course: _____ Date: _____

To the Professor: Your honest, candid evaluation of yourself is essential for continuous improvement and growth both professionally and for the program as a whole, and is an important element of Western Christian College's overall academic assessment plan. Please review the following criteria and circle the response that best conveys your present assessment of yourself. Please fill out Sections III & N as completely as possible. Thank you for your assistance in improving the instruction for and service to Western Christian College students.

Please circle the appropriate response (Key: 1. I need much more improvement here; 2. I need some improvement; 3. I am performing slightly below average; 4. I am performing slightly above average; 5. I am performing quite well; and 6. I am excelling in this area.)

I. INSTRUCTION

Please circle the appropriate response	Much Improv't Needed					Excelling
1. I have a solid grasp/understanding of needs, learning styles, and stages of development of college students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. I am comfortable and adept at using a variety of audio-visual and technical tools in teaching this course.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. I used a variety of audio-visual and technical tools while teaching this course.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. I made myself available for personal consultation about the course after class and during the week.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. I regularly encourage discussion and group interaction among students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. The varied learning styles of students is taken into consideration in the learning activities.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. I used a variety of teaching methods while teaching this course.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. I consistently give clear feedback on student performance and problems in a timely manner through notes, papers, and exams.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. I connect the course material to life and ministry.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. I compare and connect the class material to biblical principles and Christian faith.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. I consistently uphold the best interest of the College and refer students to the academic offices when I am uncertain of an answer.	1	2	3	4	5	6

II. CURRICULUM/COURSE CONTENT

12. I have a personal grasp/understanding of the specific subject area of this course.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. I was thoroughly prepared to teach this course prior to the first class.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. I wrote clear course objectives into my syllabus.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. My teaching was focused on the objectives for the class that I listed in the syllabus.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. I understand and stress the proper/accepted writing formats needed for papers	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. I clearly and consistently explain the method of grading to the students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. The textbook was appropriate for the course.	1	2	3	4	5	6

19. Please note any suggestions for improving teaching and learning in this course the next time it is taught.

III. PERSONAL/PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

20. My greatest challenge in this course as a professor:

21. What I found most fulfilling in this course as a professor

22. Ways I have stayed current in this field (books read, conferences attended, articles read, etc):

23. Please list at least one area in which you would like to improve your teaching effectiveness

VITA

Stanley (Stan) N. Helton serves as the academic dean and professor of Bible at Western Christian College in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada. Before moving to Regina, Stan was the minister of the West Suburban Church of Christ in Berkeley, Illinois, an inner suburb of Chicago, prior to which he served as the senior minister for the Carrollton Avenue Church of Christ in New Orleans (1996-2001). He holds a master of divinity degree (1999) and a master of science degree in doctrinal and historical studies (1992), both from Abilene Christian University. Stan earned his bachelor of arts degree (1988) in biblical studies from Oklahoma Christian University. He began his formal theological studies at the Preston Road School of Preaching (later, the Center for Christian Education) in Dallas, Texas (1983-85). He married Patricia in 1988, and they have one child, Rachel.