

Renovaré Teachings and Practices that Contradict Scripture

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2nd Edition, February 7, 2014

And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (Philippians 1:9-11).

This document demonstrates how the teachings and practices of Renovaré contradict Scripture. These contradictions include:

- an errant view of Scripture, claiming, among other things, that Genesis is prehistoric borrowed mythology, Jesus' claim that He fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy is merely the Church's imagination, Isaiah did not prophesy about Jesus, Daniel is not prophetic, Isaiah and Daniel did not write their respective books, and the morality of homosexuality is up for debate.
- a complete distortion of the true gospel, claiming, among other things, that Adam and Eve's innocence was not virtue but ignorance, God is not our judge, God's wrath is temporary, sin is not normative prior to repentance, God looks at unrepentant sinners with delight, "Jesus forgives the sin of all people for all time" regardless of repentance, and "it is possible for someone who does not know Jesus to be saved" (for example, "very good Buddhists" can be saved without knowing Jesus).
- a works-based "self-transformation" as the only "*means* for receiving God's grace."
- meditation based on the "simple techniques" and "Christian mantras" of a Zen-practicing Catholic monk, in which you repeat a "sacred word" to drive away your own thoughts.
- prayer using meaningless repetitions, in which the claim is made that we become "co-creators with God," "working with God to determine the outcome of things." Contemplative prayer is recommended only for "seasoned veterans" whose "prayers of protection" guard them against the dangers of "supernatural guidance" from "dark and evil spirits" while practicing contemplative prayer.
- a spiritual walk guided by the study of writings of Taoists, Zoroastrians, and Zen-practicing Catholics.
- a "discipline of solitude," in which God is said to take us into darkness, in "absence" from His presence, so that we can "grow up."

All quotations in this document, whether from Scripture or from Renovaré materials, are placed in Helvetica font (like this). All emphasis and quotation marks are from the original material (except where quotation marks are added to inline quotes, by convention). All underlining in Scripture is added by the authors. Greek and Hebrew words are in italics.

Overview

The following table provides a summary of the differences between the Renovaré view and the Scriptural view of the following topics: Scripture, the gospel, and the disciplines of the Christian life. The rest of this document elaborates on each of these comparisons.

Topic	Renovaré view	Scriptural view
SCRIPTURE:		
God's revelation to us Which parts to consider Isaiah 40-66 and Daniel Jesus' references to prophets Adam, Eve, Abel, Noah Genesis 1-11 Moral statements	Scripture is secondary bypass inconsistencies in Scripture not written by Isaiah, Daniel the Church's imagination archetypes prehistoric borrowed mythology homosexuality up for debate	Scripture is primary all Scripture is inspired written by Isaiah, Daniel truth; fulfilled prophecy in Him real people true history homosexuality is still sin
THE GOSPEL:		
Adam and Eve's innocence	ignorance, lack of character; not virtue	virtue, purity
Judgment	God is not our judge	God is our judge and we are guilty of sin; He forgives those who repent
Before conversion Result of sin God's view of sinners Sin Hell God's wrath To be saved	sin not normative only causes harm delight, regardless of actions does not separate us from God on earth, can escape temporary you do not need to know Jesus	we are enslaved to sin also kills unrepentant sin not tolerated separates us from God lake of fire, no escape eternal you must know Jesus
Jesus' forgiveness	given to all, regardless of repentance	given to all who believe and repent, no one else
Rejecting God's love Heaven	God feels pain, nothing more now, on earth	our eternal death not yet, not on earth
SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES:		
Disciplines	<i>means</i> for receiving God's grace.	result of grace
Renewal & transformation	requires our own work first (the spiritual disciplines; exercises we do); self-transformation	a work of God, enabled by faith alone in Christ alone; not earned; not the result of our own work
MEDITATION:		
Meditation	Christian mantras and a repeated sacred word for driving away your own thoughts; imagine new words from God; look inward for revelation	ponder/reflect on all of God's externally revealed law and all of His many works as recorded in Scripture
PRAYER:		
Prayer	repetition without understanding; co-creators with God; warning of supernatural guidance from dark and evil spirits; goal is union with God in which we see nothing; a dark and unknown path of aridity	no meaningless repetition; only God is creator; goal is praise, confession, and petition; the true path is narrow but well-lit by the Word of God.
STUDY:		
For spiritual guidance	study Scripture but also study Taoist, Zoroastrian, and Zen-practicing Catholic authors to guide spiritual walk	Scripture guides our spiritual walk; test other teaching against Scripture
SOLITUDE:		
God's presence	must sometimes be absent to us so we can grow up; God intentionally leads us into darkness	will never leave us
Light and darkness	God has darkness	no darkness in God
Relative importance	solitude is primary; Bible study and prayer have little effect	no Scriptural basis for a solitude of God's absence; Bible study and prayer have great effect

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About this document: This document is online at <http://whateverispure.org>.

Although this document is self-contained when read on paper, the PDF version at whateverispure.org includes many clickable links to web sites for more information. Such links are made only to authoritative web sites. For example, many of the quotes from published Renovaré material can be seen online via Google Book Search. Additional links are made to Renovaré web sites, Dallas Willard’s web site, publishers of Renovaré books, and to published interviews with Renovaré members. Scripture verses are from www.biblegateway.com. The definitions and uses of Greek and Hebrew words are from blueletterbible.org. Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible (NASB) unless otherwise noted.

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1 What is Renovaré?

1.1 Renovaré Purpose Statement

Renovaré is a nonprofit Christian organization headquartered in Englewood, Colorado, and active worldwide. We seek to resource, fuel, model, and advocate more intentional living and spiritual formation among Christians and those wanting a deeper connection with God. A foundational presence in the spiritual formation movement for over 20 years, Renovaré is Christian in commitment, ecumenical in breadth, and international in scope. (www.renovare.us)

The phrase “and those” in the Purpose Statement above indicates that Renovaré seeks spiritual formation not only for Christians, but also for those who are simply “wanting a deeper connection with God.” No mention is ever made of bringing to Christ “those wanting a deeper connection with God.” Renovaré teaches that Christ’s work in an individual’s life can be a renewing work without *necessarily* being a saving work.

1.2 Principal authors and teachers of Renovaré

- Renovaré was founded by Richard J. Foster, a Quaker.
- Its Ministry Team includes Foster, James Bryan Smith, Dallas Willard, and others.
- Smith is on faculty and has served as chaplain at Friends University, an institution with Quaker heritage.
- Smith helped build Renovaré with Foster (*The Good and Beautiful God*, p .11).
- Foster and Smith have a “Paul-and-Timothy-like” relationship (Smith, p. 11).
- Willard was the primary teacher for the first year of the Renovaré Spiritual Formation Institute (2010-2011).
- Foster served as Willard’s pastor in a Quaker church in the 1970’s in Southern California (Christianity Today, Sept. 2008).
- Referring to Foster, Willard, Brennan Manning, and two others, Smith states:

The influence of all of these people ... on me is so strong that I am not sure I have any ideas that were not shaped by theirs. ... This book is a culmination of twenty-five years of learning from these great men. (*The Good and Beautiful God*, Smith, p. 12-13)

1.3 Published Renovaré resources cited in this document

- *Celebration of Discipline*, by Richard J. Foster, 1st Edition (1978; 1985 reprinting), and 3rd Edition (1998).

“*Celebration of Discipline* has quietly asserted itself in the lives of multitudes around the globe, and has taken its place as a guide to the uplands of the spiritual life for the late twentieth century. ... If you wish to know in your self the reality of the gracious life of God seen in the Bible, you may find no better counselor than Richard Foster” – Dallas Willard (*Celebration of Discipline*, Foster, 3rd Ed., pp. 209-210)

- *Richard J. Foster’s Study Guide for Celebration of Discipline*, by Richard J. Foster, 1983.

- *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*, Dallas Willard, 1988.

This book is a companion to Richard Foster's *Celebration of Discipline*. (<http://www.dwillard.org/books>)
 "Essential guidance for spiritual growth." – Richard J. Foster (front cover of the book)

- *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*, Richard J. Foster, 1992.
- *Devotional Classics, Selected Readings for Individuals and Groups*, Edited by Richard J. Foster and James Bryan Smith, 1993.
- *A Spiritual Formation Workbook: Small Group Resources for Nurturing Christian Growth*, by James Bryan Smith and L. J. Graybeal; Foreword by R. J. Foster, 1999.

A Renovaré Resource for Spiritual Renewal (front cover)

This beginning workbook for Spiritual Formation Groups features guidelines for starting a group, study plans for the first nine sessions, and a questionnaire that helps map the way ahead. (back cover)

- *Spiritual Classics: Selected Readings for Individuals and Groups on the Twelve Spiritual Disciplines*, Edited by Richard J. Foster and E. Griffin, 2000.
- *The Renovaré Spiritual Formation Bible*, "spearheaded" by Richard J. Foster and Dallas Willard, 1st Ed., 2005 (Reprinted as *The Life with God Bible*, 2009). From the publisher's website (Harper Collins):

Spearheaded by bestselling authors Richard J. Foster (*Celebration of Discipline*) and Dallas Willard (*The Divine Conspiracy*), *The Renovaré Spiritual Formation Bible* introduces the concept of the "with-God life," a model for seeing the whole of Scripture as the unfolding story of God's plan for our loving relationship with the Creator. This central theme weaves throughout the essays, introductions, notes, and exercises, powerfully revealing how God is present to his people today and throughout history.

The Renovaré Spiritual Formation Bible presents a "different vision of the Christian life," according to an interview with Richard Foster and Dallas Willard.

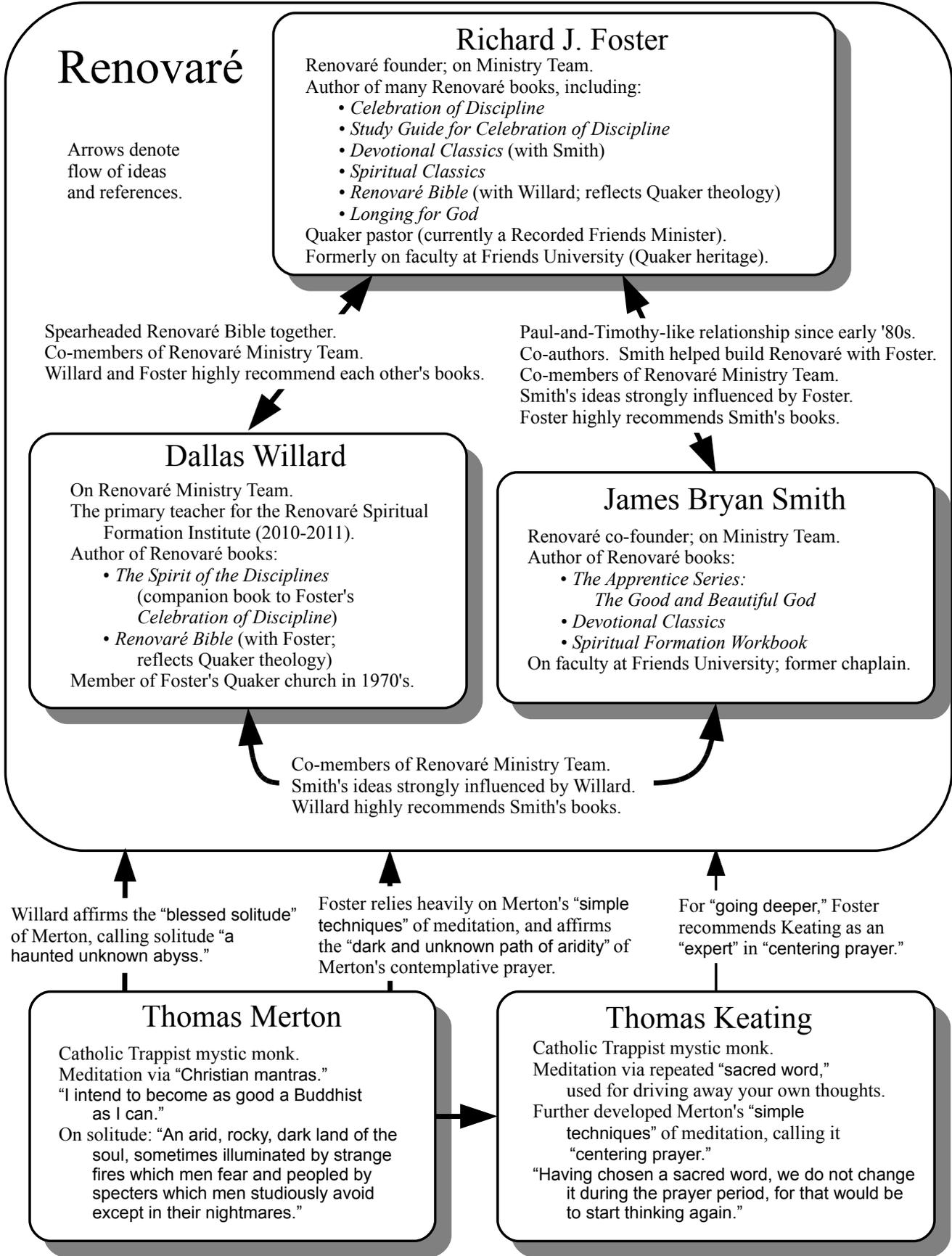
Interviewer: How is *The Renovaré Spiritual Formation Bible* different from, say, a life application Bible? *Dallas Willard:* Fundamentally, a different vision of the Christian life underlies them. (*Not a Hallmark Bible: Richard Foster and Dallas Willard on the newly published Renovaré Spiritual Formation Bible*, in *Christianity Today*, Sept 2005, web-only)

- *Longing for God: Seven Paths of Christian Devotion*, Richard J. Foster, G. D. Beebe, 2009.
- *The Good and Beautiful God: Falling in Love with the God Jesus Knows*, James Bryan Smith, 2009. Book One of the 3-part *Apprentice Series*. Smith's book is an introduction to Renovaré, and an invitation to "come and walk with" them.

You may not immediately recognize it, but the book you have just read is very much a part of what Renovaré is all about – it has the same DNA as Renovaré So I hope you don't stop here Come and walk with us. (back page of the book)

"The best practice I have seen in Christian spiritual formation." – Dallas Willard (front cover of the book).

"I urge you to buy this book immediately! Read it. ... Then live it out in the context of a loving community. You will not regret doing so." – Richard J. Foster (back cover of the book)



2 Scripture

The following table compares the Renovaré view of Scripture with the view Scripture presents of itself. Unless otherwise noted, all quotes in the left column are from *The Renovaré Spiritual Formation Bible*.

Renovaré: Scripture is a secondary source of revelation.	Scripture: Scripture is the primary source of revelation.
<p>In Foster's view of Quaker theology, the "light of Christ within" takes precedence over Scripture. Foster says Scripture is not "an outwardly imposed authority." Rather than Scripture, Foster says it is Christ ("our ever-living Teacher") who continues to teach His people in such a way that "new understandings emerge." Foster's view of Scripture is based on his interpretation of the writings of George Fox (the founder of Quakerism, 1624-1691) and on his views of Quaker theology.</p> <p>The challenge for Fox is to move us beyond the objective text of Scripture to embrace the Spirit of God, which is love. For Fox, this meant that the spirit of Scripture, which is God's love, must be exalted over the text of Scripture. ... <i>The importance of Jesus</i>: This is probably the most significant contribution Fox makes to our life with God. Following the example of Augustine, Fox identifies Christ as the inward Teacher who alone brings insight. In developing this understanding of Christ, Fox uses two phrases interchangeably. One is the "light of Christ within," while the other is "Christ as inward Teacher." ... Scripture is central, not as an outwardly imposed authority but as an inward testimony to the life we have with God. ... our experiences with the inward Christ provide us with new insights as we move through life. This is a frank recognition that Christ, our ever-living Teacher, continues to teach his people. And so, new understandings emerge. (<i>Longing for God</i>, Foster & Beebe, pp. 178-183)</p> <p>Foster states that the Renovaré Bible reflects Quaker theology.</p> <p>During the month of May, <i>The Renovaré Spiritual Formation Bible</i> appeared in bookstores and began to be seen in the hands of people in churches and on the street. For Friends, it was a great month; for the first time a study Bible was released that reflected Quaker theology. "There is a great deal of Quaker thinking in this Bible," stated Richard Foster, Editor. (Quaker Life, June 2005).</p> <p>(continued on next page)</p>	<p>Jesus held a high view of Scripture, and taught that the authority of Scripture cannot be annulled.</p> <p>Scripture cannot be <u>broken</u> (<i>lyō</i>: to annul, deprive of authority, dissolve, overthrow, do away with) (John 10:35b)</p> <p>Jesus quoted the Old Testament Scripture extensively, equating it with the Word of God, and giving it priority over the traditions and precepts of men.</p> <p>But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever I have that would help you has been given to God," he is not to honor his father or his mother.' And by this you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition. You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN. (Matthew 15:5-9, see also Isaiah 29:13)</p> <p>(continued on next page)</p>

<p>Renovaré: Scripture is a secondary source of revelation (continued).</p>	<p>Scripture: Scripture is the primary source of revelation (continued).</p>
<p>Renovaré denigrates the authority of Scripture. The commentary in the Renovaré Bible says Scripture has an “indirect mediating” effect at the same level as culture, cataclysmic events, forms of worship, preaching, and sacraments.</p> <p>God balances his manifest presence and seeming absence through divine mediation by providing appointed figures, forms of worship, social structures, cataclysmic events, Scripture, and other revelations. ... After Jesus’ ascension into the heavens we see God’s all-inclusive people, the “light of the world” and “salt of the earth,” being indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who also personally mediates God’s presence for the formation of Christ’s character in individuals and “all nations.” This direct mediating of God’s presence through the Holy Spirit continues to develop up to the present. Alongside this continues the indirect mediating work of Scripture (the Word of God written), preaching and prophetic utterance (the word of God spoken), and sacraments (the Word of God made visible). (<i>Renovaré Bible</i>, pp. xxxvii-xxxviii)</p> <p>See Section 4.1 on page 23 of this document for a discussion of the Renovaré redefinition of the words <i>mediate</i> and <i>mediation</i>.</p>	<p>Scripture gives us “the exact truth” of the gospel.</p> <p>Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught. (Luke 1:1-4)</p> <p>The word of God is living and active.</p> <p>For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)</p> <p>God’s word will accomplish what He desires.</p> <p>So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it. (Isaiah 55:11)</p> <p>We are to hold fast to what we are taught in Scripture.</p> <p>It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us. (2 Thessalonians 2:14-15)</p>

<p>Renovaré: “bypass” all “inconsistencies” found in Scripture.</p>	<p>Scripture: All Scripture is inspired.</p>
<p>The Renovaré commentators “bypass” Scripture that is inconsistent with their teaching. Foster talks about how they do this in an interview with <i>Quaker Life</i> magazine (http://www.fum.org/QL/issues/0506/foster.htm, June 2005) [<i>sic</i>].</p> <p><i>Interviewer:</i> I noticed that the focus on the with-God life circumnavigates inconsistencies found in Scripture and differing opinions about theology. By looking at how God revealed himself to people throughout Biblical history negates all those arguments.</p> <p><i>Foster:</i> “You bypass it all,” stated Foster. “You put your focus on how God has been with a person and what does that say to me, now? What are their strengths and weaknesses and how does that apply to me?”</p> <p>This practice of bypassing Scripture explains why the Renovaré Bible commentary is silent on many difficult passages. The extensive commentary on Matthew is half the length of Matthew itself, but is essentially silent on the topics of prophecy, judgment, hell, eternal fire, weeping/gnashing of teeth, demons, divorce, and the betrayal and trial of Jesus. The following list shows the 45% of the verses in Matthew that have been bypassed with no commentary at all.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2:1-14 wise men, Bethlehem prophecy 2:16-23 prophecy (Rachel weeping for her children) 3:1-12 Isaiah’s prophecy, John the Baptist, unquenchable fire 4:12-16 Jesus fulfills Isaiah’s prophecy 4:24 casts out demons 8:18-34 stills storms, casts out demons 9:16-34 raises the dead, heals, casts out demons 10:7-8 disciples told to cast out demons 11:1-24 Jesus’ comment about John, woe to cities, Hades 13:24-50 wheat & weeds, fire of hell, weeping/gnashing 15:1-9 Isaiah’s prophecy: teaching human precepts 15:21-31 casts out demons, heals 16:1-12 yeast of Pharisees 17:14-22 casts out demon, foretells death 18:12-20 lost sheep, reproof of sinners 19:1-15 divorce 20:1-27 laborers in vineyard, foretells death 21:12-45 cleanses temple, curses fig tree, parable of killing tenants 22:1-33 expel uninvited guest at banquet in heaven 22:41-46 David’s prophecy 24:1-51 prophecy, weeping/gnashing 25:1-46 ten bridesmaids, talents, rich man trapped in hell 26:6-37 last supper, prophecy 26:47-74 betrayal by Judas, trial of Jesus 27:1-31 Judas’ suicide, Jesus before Pilate, mocked by soldiers 28:11-15 tomb guards bribed <p>The Renovaré commentary on the entire New Testament ignores the reality of hell.</p>	<p>Scripture states that no Scripture can be bypassed. We must pay attention to all of it. Distorting the hard-to-understand parts of Scripture leads to destruction.</p> <p>All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)</p> <p>For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. (Romans 15:4)</p> <p>So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. (2 Peter 1:19)</p> <p>Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. (2 Peter 3:14-16)</p>

Renovaré: denies prophecy.	Scripture: affirms prophecy
<p>The Renovaré commentary states that Isaiah did not write the book of Isaiah, that there is a 160-year gap between chapters 39 and 40, and that Isaiah's prophecy about Jesus is the Church's imagination.</p> <p>Chapters 1-39 ... are closely linked to the 8th century BC prophet Isaiah. ... chapters 40-55, formed well after the time of Isaiah the prophet, Chapters 40-66 articulate <i>hope</i>, the conviction that the deportation of the 6th century BC will end soon It is right to say that the tradition of Isaiah does not "predict" Jesus. Nonetheless, the early Church, in its interpretive imagination under the inspiration of God the Spirit, found the utterances of this tradition especially important for its testimony to Jesus. (<i>Renovaré Bible</i>, pp. 982-983, see also p. 1034 for 160-year gap)</p> <p>Referring to Isaiah 42:1-9, 49:1-7, 50:4-11, and 52:13-53:12, the commentary says Isaiah's prophecy is up to us to fulfill.</p> <p>The Church has taken these poems to refer to Jesus, even though it seems unmistakably clear that the primary reference in these poems is to Israel as God's servant. Nonetheless, it is possible for us as contemporary readers to imagine ourselves, in the middle of these poems of loss and hope, to be the carriers of God's transformative will in the world. Isaiah focuses upon the sovereign capacity of God to make all things new. That future, however, is not simply a divine gift. It is at the same time a human task given to people like us. (<i>Renovaré Bible</i>, p. 984)</p> <p>The New Testament commentary is completely silent on Luke 4:17-21, where Jesus says "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Elsewhere, the commentary says the early Church "understood" Isaiah's prophecy to apply to Jesus, but does not say the prophecy actually does apply to Jesus.</p> <p>A politically powerful African (v 27) reads Isaiah 53, which early Christians understood as prophecy of the Messiah. (<i>Renovaré Bible</i>, p. 1998, on Acts 8:27-35)</p> <p>Isa 53:4 is said to be fulfilled by Jesus' healings, ... (<i>Renovaré Bible</i>, p. 1807, on Matthew 8:17)</p> <p>The commentary on Daniel says it was written in the 2nd century BC, and thus the book of Daniel is not prophetic.</p> <p>We do not know who wrote it or exactly when it was written, although its portrayal of Daniel and his friends as Jewish exiles in Babylon indicates that it was most likely partially written during Antiochus IV Epiphanes' persecution of the Jews in Babylon, which began with the desecration of the Temple in 167 BC. ... So how might we take a meaningful look at this Scripture? For the purpose of this volume, we will treat Daniel as a book of case studies in which people practice their faith while living in a culture that ignores or opposes their beliefs. (<i>Renovaré Bible</i>, p. 1245)</p>	<p>Matthew quotes Isaiah as fulfilled prophecy 10 times (1:22, 2:5, 3:3, 4:14, 8:17, 11:2-6, 12:17, 13:14, 15:7, and 21:4) and refers to Isaiah's prophecy yet to be fulfilled (24:29).</p> <p>This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: (Matthew 4:14, 8:17a, 12:17)</p> <p>Jesus quoted Isaiah 61:1-2 and said He Himself fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy. John quotes Isaiah 53:1 and Isaiah 6:10 as fulfilled prophecy.</p> <p>And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written, "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. ..." And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." (Luke 4:17-21)</p> <p>This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT? AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM OF THE LORD BEEN REVEALED?" ... These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him. (John 12:38,41)</p> <p>Jesus spoke of real prophecy from a real Daniel.</p> <p>Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. (Matthew 24:15-16)</p>

<p>Renovaré: Genesis 1-11 is pre-historic borrowed mythology.</p>	<p>Scripture: Genesis 1-11 is true history.</p>
<p>Renovaré says that Moses did not write the Pentateuch.</p> <p>Over time what began as stories told of the founding families of the People of God were written down and collected together (Gen 12-50), and a prologue (Gen 1-11) was added to affirm the foundation of Israel's beginnings in the larger cosmic order of creation. (<i>Renovaré Bible</i>, p. 13)</p> <p>They call Adam and Eve mere archetypes (characters in a story, not real people).</p> <p>The Genesis narrative of creation is prehistory. The individuals named in these early stories, such as Adam, Eve, Cain, Abel, and Noah, are larger-than-life archetypes representing the complex relationship between humankind and God. Similarly, specific events such as the Garden of Eden, Noah and the flood, and the tower of Babel are broadly representative of God's creative interaction with all of humankind. (<i>Renovaré Bible</i>, p. 14).</p> <p>They call Genesis prehistoric borrowed "Near Eastern mythology."</p> <p>The Genesis narrative of creation is prehistory. ... In literary form they parallel stories of creation, the garden, and the flood found in Near Eastern mythology. However, the authors and editors of Genesis were theologians whose clear intention was the proclamation of God. Borrowing from other creation accounts, these writers express the strong belief that the one God of Israel is the very same God of all creation. (<i>Renovaré Bible</i>, p. 14,15)</p>	<p>Scripture states that Moses wrote the Pentateuch.</p> <p>So Moses wrote this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel. (Deuteronomy 31:9)</p> <p>It came about, when Moses finished writing the words of this law in a book until they were complete, that Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying, "Take this book of the law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may remain there as a witness against you. " (Deuteronomy 31:24-26)</p> <p>Scripture refers to Adam and Eve as real people. Without Adam, the sacrifice for sin that Christ accomplished is meaningless.</p> <p>For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. (1 Corinthians 15:22)</p> <p>So also it is written, "The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. (1 Corinthians 15:45-47)</p> <p>Hebrews 11 states that without faith we cannot please God, and gives examples of the real faith of real people (such as Abel, Enoch, and Noah). If these people are mythical then so is their faith, and so is ours.</p> <p>By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks. By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; AND HE WAS NOT FOUND BECAUSE GOD TOOK HIM UP; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God. And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. (Hebrews 11:4-7)</p> <p>And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect. Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 11:39-40, 12:1-2)</p>

Renovaré: Moral statements in Scripture are open for debate.	Scripture: Moral statements in Scripture do not change with the times.
<p>Homosexuality is open for debate.</p> <p>Paul shares the ancient Jewish condemnation of homosexuality. He bases his argument on God's will in creation (v 16; Gen 1:27, Rom 1:26-27). How binding his opinion should be today has been the source of much contemporary debate, as efforts to determine the nature and cause of sexual orientation and their role in God's creative will have been considered. (<i>Renovaré Bible</i>, p. 2076, footnote to 1 Corinthians 6:9-10)</p>	<p>Jesus is clear that the moral commands of Scripture do not change and are not open for debate. God sets the rules, we do not.</p> <p>Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. (Matthew 5:17-18)</p> <p>Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-10)</p>

3 The Gospel

The table below shows where the Renovaré “gospel” differs from the gospel presented in Scripture. All quotes in the left column are from *The Good and Beautiful God*, by James Bryan Smith, unless otherwise noted.

Renovaré: Innocence is ignorance.	Scripture: Innocence (lack of sin) is purity.
<p>The Renovaré Bible commentary states that prior to sin, Adam and Eve’s innocence was not virtue. Instead, it says Adam and Eve were ignorant and in need of character development that comes only when God is absent. They apply this to us as well, claiming that God must be absent from us to develop our character.</p> <p>Adam and Eve “fell” because, though innocent, they lacked character. Innocence is not virtue. Innocence, for all its beauty, is a form of ignorance and lack of character. ... To develop Adam’s and Eve’s character – and ours too – God has to be “absent” as well as present in human life. Just as our parents care for us around the clock in infancy and early childhood and then gradually withdraw their presence from us as we physically mature, so God is intently present to us at our spiritual infancy and then allows us to be increasingly “on our own” as we spiritually mature. ... God purposely works to establish a <i>balance</i> between his “manifest presence” and his “seeming absence,” so that we will develop character (<i>The Renovaré Spiritual Formation Bible</i>, (2-page overview of the entire Bible presenting their central theme), p. xxxvii, quotations marks in original).</p>	<p>After creating Adam and Eve, “God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). Scripture says innocence is a virtue.</p> <p>Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place? He who has <u>clean</u> (<i>naqiy</i>: clean, innocent, free from guilt) hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood and has not sworn deceitfully. (Psalm 24:3-4)</p> <p>Who can discern his errors? <u>Acquit</u> (<i>naqah</i>: to be pure, innocent, free from guilt) me of hidden faults. Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins; let them not rule over me; then I will be blameless, and I shall be acquitted (<i>naqah</i>) of great transgression. (Psalm 19:12-13)</p> <p>The serpent claimed that Adam and Eve were ignorant and in need of enlightenment, character development, and knowledge (“your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil”). Adam and Eve were absent from God because of their sin, not because God was trying to develop their character through His absence.</p> <p>The serpent said to the woman, “You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, <u>knowing</u> (<i>yada</i>: to know, be acquainted with, know by experience) good and evil.” When the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes and that the tree was desirable to make one <u>wise</u> (<i>sakal</i>: to be prudent, to have insight, to wisely understand, prosper), she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they <u>knew</u> (<i>yada</i>) that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. ... Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?” (Genesis 3:4-7,9)</p>

<p>Renovaré: God is not our judge.</p>	<p>Scripture: God is our judge and we are guilty of sin. God forgives those who repent.</p>
<p>Smith quotes the authors of a book entitled <i>Story Revisions: Narrative Therapy in the Postmodern World</i> as saying "Narrative is the central function ... of the human mind." Smith then says in his own words:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">We turn everything into a story in order to make sense of life. ... And here is the main point: these narratives are running (and often ruining) our lives. That is why it is crucial to get the right narratives. (<i>The Good and Beautiful God</i>, Smith, pp. 24-25)</p> <p>In Smith's mind a false narrative is life-ruining. Smith then calls the following a false narrative:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">If God were our judge, the verdict would be "Guilty as charged." (Smith, p. 78)</p> <p>According to Smith's view, the false narrative that is ruining our lives is this: God is our judge and the verdict is "guilty." Smith makes no distinction between the way God views forgiven Christians versus non-Christians, because in his view, all people are forgiven.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Jesus not only forgives the sin of all people for all time, he broke the power of sin itself. (Smith, p. 153)</p> <p>(continued on next page)</p>	<p>God judges both the believer and the unbeliever.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. (1 Peter 1:17-19)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, (Hebrews 9:27)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment. I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. (John 5:28-30)</p> <p>We are all guilty of sin, having broken the entire law.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. (James 2:10)</p> <p>God will judge the sins of men. God's judgment on sin is an integral part of the gospel. Without it, the reason for Jesus coming to save us has no meaning. Distorting this truth distorts the gospel.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">For there is no partiality with God. For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law; for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified. For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus. (Romans 2:11-16)</p> <p>References to God's wrath and anger appear with equal frequency in the Old and New Testaments. God's characteristics (both His love and His wrath) do not change from the Old to the New Testament.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The God who inflicts wrath is not unrighteous, is He? (I am speaking in human terms.) May it never be! For otherwise, how will God judge the world? (Romans 3:5b-6)</p> <p>(continued on next page)</p>

<p>Renovaré: God is not our judge (continued).</p>	<p>Scripture: God is our judge and we are guilty of sin. God forgives those who repent (continued).</p>
<p>Smith quotes Exodus 20:5 as an example of this false narrative “seemingly found in the Hebrew Bible.” Smith says that God is telling us a life-ruining false narrative when He speaks His word in Exodus 20:5.</p> <p><i>“God is an angry judge. If you do well, you will be blessed; if you sin, you will be punished.”</i> Not only is this narrative found in most primitive religions, it is also seemingly found in the Hebrew Bible. In Exodus 20:5 we read the following warning about idols: “You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parent, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me.” The rabbis in Jesus’ day taught this, and it was the dominant narrative among the people Jesus associated with. ... Though it has ancient Jewish roots, this narrative is also held by modern Christians. (Smith, pp. 40-41)</p> <p>See also 9 of this document for a discussion of how the Renovaré Bible commentary “bypasses” the many verses in the book of Matthew that deal with God’s judgement.</p>	<p>Although we all deserve death, God loves us so much that He provides a way for us to be forgiven, at great cost to Himself.</p> <p>As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:14-16)</p> <p>God is a jealous God, but He is also patient and calls people to turn back from their evil ways.</p> <p>You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, (Exodus 20:5)</p> <p>The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)</p> <p>Say to them, ‘As I live!’ declares the Lord GOD, ‘I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?’ (Ezekiel 33:11)</p> <p>God calls people to repent because He “has fixed a day” when He will judge “all people.”</p> <p>Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead. (Acts 17:30-31)</p> <p>God forgives our guilt if we repent.</p> <p>I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD”; and You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah. (Psalm 32:5)</p> <p>Because of God’s goodness and love, He has provided a way for us so that if we repent and believe in Him, we do not bear the punishment our sin deserves. Those who do not believe in Him oppose His goodness, and the penalty for sin remains on them. See also John 3:17-18, Revelation 14:6-7, Revelation 20:12-13, Romans 2:5-11, and Matthew 25:31-46.</p>

<p>Renovaré: Sin is not normative before conversion.</p>	<p>Scripture: Enslaved to sin before conversion.</p>
<p>Smith claims that sin is not the norm or the standard for the unbeliever.</p> <p>While sin is not actually normative before conversion (even the unregenerate don't say about sin, "Hey, that was really life-enhancing!"), sin <i>after</i> conversion is even more disconcerting. (<i>The Good and Beautiful God</i>, Smith, p. 158, emphasis in original)</p>	<p>Prior to coming to Christ, we are enslaved to sin, and "by nature children of wrath." According to the Scriptures, sin is clearly normative before conversion, because it is our "nature."</p> <p>Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin." (John 8:34)</p> <p>For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. (Titus 3:3)</p> <p>But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. (Romans 6:17-18)</p> <p>And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. (Ephesians 2:1-3).</p>

<p>Renovaré: The only reason God does not want us to sin is because sin harms us.</p>	<p>Scripture: Sin does more than harm us, it kills us.</p>
<p>According to Smith, the "only" consequence of our sin is that it harms us.</p> <p>True, God does not want us to sin, and God does want us to do well. But that is only because sin harms us, and acts of goodness are healing both to us and to the recipients of our goodness. (Smith, p. 77)</p> <p>Smith never says that unrepentant sin leads to eternal death.</p>	<p>The penalty for sin is eternal death:</p> <p>Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. (Matthew 25:41,46)</p> <p>For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23).</p> <p>See also Ezekiel 33:11 on the previous page.</p>

<p>Renovaré: God looks at us with delight regardless of what we have done.</p>	<p>Scripture: God does not look on unrepentant sinners with delight.</p>
<p>Smith quotes a story that describes God looking at us with delight, like a baby staring at people.</p> <p>THE GOD WHO DELIGHTS IN YOU. ... a simple story of discovering God in the face of a child “The baby was staring intently at other people, and as soon as he recognized a human face, ... he would respond with absolute delight. ... I realized that this is how God looks at us, staring into our faces in order to be delighted, to see the creature he made and called good ...” (Smith, pp. 86-87)</p> <p>Smith affirms this “narrative” by asking a rhetorical question.</p> <p>What if God were actually like the one in this narrative, a God who responds to us with “absolute delight” regardless of how we look or feel, or what we have or have not done? (Smith, p. 87)</p> <p>Smith claims that God looks at us “with ‘absolute delight’ regardless” of whether or not we repent. Smith’s view is based on his own interpretation of the parable of the prodigal son (see discussion in the table immediately below). He claims that the father took delight in the prodigal son even when the son was unrepentant.</p>	<p>God hates the wicked (unrepentant sinners).</p> <p>For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; no evil dwells with You. The boastful shall not stand before Your eyes; You hate all who do iniquity. You destroy those who speak falsehood; The LORD abhors the man of bloodshed and deceit. (Psalm 5:4-6)</p> <p>The LORD tests the righteous and the wicked, and the one who loves violence His soul hates. Upon the wicked He will rain snares; fire and brimstone and burning wind will be the portion of their cup. For the LORD is righteous, He loves righteousness; the upright will behold His face. (Psalm 11:5-7)</p> <p>See also Galatians 3:10, Hebrews 1:8-9, Deuteronomy 27:26, Ephesians 2:3, and Psalm 45:6-7.</p> <p>In the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32), the father waited patiently for the son to repent and return. However, the father delighted in the son <i>only</i> when the son turned from his sin. Prior to the son’s repentance, the father felt compassion for his son, but did not take delight in him. Instead, the father said twice that “this son of mine was dead” (v. 24 and v. 32).</p>

<p>Renovaré: Sin does not separate us from God.</p>	<p>Scripture: Sin separates us from God.</p>
<p>Smith says that sin does not separate us from God. He discusses the story of the prodigal son, and then wraps up with his “chief point:”</p> <p>The chief point is that there is only one thing that separates us from God, and it is not our sin. It is our self-righteousness. Our self-righteousness does not turn God from us, but us from God. It is not my sin that moves me away from God, it is my refusal of grace, both for myself and for others. (Smith, p. 102)</p>	<p>Scripture says that sin separates us from God.</p> <p>For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)</p> <p>But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear. (Isaiah 59:1-2)</p>

<p>Renovaré: Hell is on earth, and the doors of hell are locked from the inside.</p>	<p>Scripture: Hell is a lake of fire from which there is no escape.</p>
<p>Smith believes that hell is on earth and can be escaped at any time. He says that “hell is simply isolation from God,” and “a person ... who rejects God is experiencing hell on earth.” He says a person may leave hell at any time by accepting God’s love.</p> <p>Because God is love, hell – a place of separation from God – is necessary. Love does not demand love in return; it is not coercive. God does everything he can to reach out to us, and yet people are free to reject that love. Hell is simply isolation from God. A person – even a person others think of as decent and upright – who rejects God is experiencing hell on earth. God will not violate the choices we make. People may choose to bar God from their life. Thus the doors of hell are locked from the inside. (Smith, p. 125)</p>	<p>Scripture says there is no escape from hell, a place not only of isolation from God, but eternal torment as well.</p> <p>Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:14-15)</p> <p>In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. ... But Abraham said, “... between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.” (Luke 16:23,25a,26)</p> <p>Jesus holds the keys to hell.</p> <p>When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.” (Revelation 1:17-18)</p> <p>Unbelievers will be thrown into the lake of fire and will remain there permanently. No mention in Scripture is ever made of a resurrection from “the second death.” Instead, Jesus says that “nothing unclean ... shall ever come into” heaven.</p> <p>But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. (Revelation 21:8)</p> <p>The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life. (Revelation 21:24-27)</p> <p>See also the next page on the eternal wrath of God.</p>

<p>Renovaré: God's wrath is temporary.</p>	<p>Scripture: God's wrath is eternal.</p>
<p>Since Smith views hell as merely on earth, and escapable, he also sees God's wrath as temporary.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">God's wrath is a <i>temporary and just verdict on sin and evil</i>. (Smith, p. 121, emphasis in the original)</p>	<p>The wrath of God endures forever on those who do not obey the Son.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God <u>abides</u> (<i>menō</i>: remain, abide, continue to be, not to perish, last, endure; remain as one, not become another/different) on him. (John 3:36)</p> <p>The penalty of disobeying the gospel is “eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord.”</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed – for our testimony to you was believed. (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10)</p>

<p>Renovaré: You can be saved without knowing Jesus.</p>	<p>Scripture: You cannot be saved without knowing Jesus.</p>
<p>Willard claims “it is possible for someone who does not know Jesus to be saved.” From his response to the interviewer’s questions, Willard implies that “very good Buddhists” can be saved without knowing Jesus, and that we should not necessarily “condemn them as wrong.”</p> <p><i>Interviewer: We asked Dallas to role-play an evangelistic conversation with a 20 year old girl She decides to see her pastor and says, “I used to believe strongly in the Christian faith, but now I think that there are many ways to see the world, and that, just because they differ, doesn't mean they are right or wrong.” How would you answer her?</i></p> <p><i>Willard: ... You're going to have to bring it down to a practical level with questions like: what do you believe about Jesus?</i></p> <p><i>Interviewer: “Okay,” she says, “I can acknowledge that. You know, I have read the gospels, and I think that Jesus was the greatest teacher there ever was. In fact, I'd like to live my life like him. But it feels like I have to 'buy' an awful lot more.”</i></p> <p><i>Willard: What I would say is this: you don't have to buy anything you don't want. ...</i></p> <p><i>Interviewer: “But I still struggle with how I should view those who have other beliefs. I'm not sure I am ready to condemn them as wrong. I know some very good Buddhists. What is their destiny?”</i></p> <p><i>Willard: I would take her to Romans 2:6-10: “God will give to each person according to what he has done. To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor, and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.”</i></p> <p>What Paul is clearly saying is that if anyone is worthy of being saved, they will be saved. At that point many Christians get very anxious, saying that absolutely no one is worthy of being saved. The implication of that is that a person can be almost totally good, but miss the message about Jesus, and be sent to hell. What kind of a God would do that? I am not going to stand in the way of anyone whom God wants to save. I am not going to say “he can't save them.” I am happy for God to save anyone he wants in any way he can. It is possible for someone who does not know Jesus to be saved. But anyone who is going to be saved is going to be saved by Jesus: “There is no other name given under heaven by which men can be saved.”</p> <p>(http://www.dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?artID=14, Winter 2001, Cutting Edge magazine)</p>	<p>We must believe in Jesus to be saved.</p> <p>But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12)</p> <p>if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. (Romans 10:9-10)</p> <p>All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. (Matthew 11:27)</p> <p>See also 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 on the previous page.</p>

<p>Renovaré: Jesus forgives the sin of all people for all time.</p>	<p>Scripture: Jesus forgives the sin of all who repent (and no one else).</p>
<p>Smith states the universalist* position that all sin is forgiven for all people for all time.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Jesus not only forgives the sin of all people for all time, he broke the power of sin itself. This does not mean everyone is saved. Only those who call upon his name experience that forgiveness. (Smith, p. 153)</p> <p>Smith states that all are forgiven, but not all are saved. In doing so, Smith redefines the word <i>saved</i>. According to Smith, being “saved” means experiencing the forgiveness that everyone already has, regardless of repentance. In Smith’s view, everyone is forgiven of all their sin, but not everyone knows, feels, or experiences that forgiveness.</p> <p>*universalism: “a theological doctrine that all people will eventually be saved.” (Webster’s Dictionary).</p>	<p>Scripture says that forgiveness is available to all, but given to only those who believe in Him (and to no one else). Those who do not believe are not forgiven.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)</p> <p>Jesus says there is a sin that shall not be forgiven.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. (Matthew 12:31). See also Mark 3:29 and Hebrews 10:26-31.</p> <p>Believers cannot commit this sin, since it is the Holy Spirit who enables us to repent and believe.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. (John 10:27-28)</p> <p>Referring to the Holy Spirit, Jesus says.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; (John 16:8-9, see also John 16:14-26)</p> <p>The sin which cannot be forgiven (blasphemy against the Holy Spirit) is to reject the Holy Spirit’s enabling of repentance and belief, because forgiveness only comes to those who repent. Those who harden their hearts against the Holy Spirit will not enter His rest.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, “TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME, AS IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS, WHERE YOUR FATHERS TRIED Me BY TESTING Me, AND SAW MY WORKS FOR FORTY YEARS.” ... And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief. (Hebrews 3:7-9,18-19)</p>

<p>Renovaré: The only result of rejecting God’s love is that God feels pain.</p>	<p>Scripture: The result of rejecting God’s love is eternal death.</p>
<p>Smith asks a question.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">What would happen if humans rejected his love? (Smith, p. 139)</p> <p>He then answers it on the same page. The only thing that happens is that God feels pain.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">God experienced the pain of unrequited love. (ibid.)</p> <p>No mention is made of any other consequence. The above statement is Smith’s entire answer to his question: “What would happen if humans rejected his love?”</p>	<p>If we reject God, we suffer eternal destruction.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. (John 5:24)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and “the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.” Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, “vengeance is mine, I will repay.” And again, “the LORD will judge His people.” It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Hebrews 10:26-31. See also Isaiah 26:11 and Deuteronomy 32:35-36).</p>

<p>Renovaré: We can experience heaven now, on this earth.</p>	<p>Scripture: We are not yet in Heaven because Heaven is not on this earth.</p>
<p>Just like his notion of hell (on earth), Smith also says we can experience heaven on earth.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">As a Christ-follower ... you are a completely new person who is able to experience heaven now and will be fully glorified on your final breath in this life. (Smith, p. 156)</p>	<p>Jesus goes to prepare a place for us in Heaven. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. (John 14:1-3)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. (1 Corinthians 15:50-53)</p> <p>See also 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.</p>

4 The Spiritual Disciplines

The Renovaré materials teach that the “spiritual disciplines” must be practiced in a specific way to receive God’s grace and find the true path to spiritual growth.

The function of the Spiritual Disciplines is now clear. They are the *means* for receiving God’s grace. (*Study Guide for Celebration of Discipline*, p. 6, emphasis in original)

Richard J. Foster shows that it is only by and through these practices that we can find the true path to spiritual growth. (book jacket of *Celebration of Discipline*, 3rd Ed., Foster)

The name of the Renovaré organization is from the Latin word for renewal (*renovare*, from which we get the English word *renovate*). Thus, a proper Scriptural understanding of transformation, renewal, and work is essential to an examination of Renovaré teaching and practice. Section 4.1, below, provides an overview of Renovaré’s theological foundation for self-transformation and renewal. This is followed by a comparison of Renovaré teachings and Scriptural teachings on the role of God’s work and human work in transformation and renewal (Section 4.2). Next, Section 4.3 considers how transformation and renewal are discussed in all of Scripture. Finally, four specific Renovaré “spiritual exercises” are discussed in Sections 4.4 through 4.7: meditation, study, prayer, and solitude.

4.1 Renovaré’s Theological Foundation for Spiritual Transformation

The Renovaré discussion of the “central theme” of the Bible is presented on pages xxxvii-xxxviii of the *Renovaré Spiritual Formation Bible*. The essay is entitled *The With-God Life: A Panoramic View of God’s Purpose in History*. It gives Renovaré’s overview of the entire Bible and outlines Renovaré’s theological foundation for their theory and practice of spiritual transformation. A step-by-step outline of the essay appears below, with a discussion and interpretation as to the meaning of each portion of the essay.

- **Introduction to the essay:** Renovaré presents two themes that show the “unity of the Bible:” “*human character transformation*” and “*divine mediation*.”

From the beginning and into the unlimited future of God with humanity we can see the unity of the Bible in the interplay of two aspects of the with-God life: *human character transformation* and *divine mediation* – that is, God’s ways of arranging to be *with us*. Every interaction in the biblical records shows this interplay. (*Renovaré Spiritual Formation Bible*, p. xxxvii)

- **In the Garden:** Renovaré claims God had to leave Adam and Eve “ ‘on their own’ ” (their quotes) to develop their character. Prior to the Fall, Renovaré says Adam and Eve’s innocence was ignorance and a lack of character, rather than virtue or strength of character. There is no mention at all of *sin* in their overview of the Bible. Renovaré’s discussion of how Adam and Eve “ ‘fell’ ” (their quotes) minimizes their sin of eating from the tree by merely calling their sin “what they did.”

Adam and Eve “fell” because, though innocent, they lacked character. Innocence is not virtue. Innocence, for all its beauty, is a form of ignorance and lack of character. God certainly could have stood over Adam and Eve (“been in their faces,” as we sometimes say) and prevented them from succumbing to Satan’s clever appeals. Instead, God arranged for them to be “on their own,” and the result was then expressed in what they did. (ibid.)

- **God must be “ ‘absent’: ”** Renovaré applies their idea (that God had to be “ ‘absent’ ” from Adam and Eve) to all of us, claiming that God must balance between His “ ‘manifest presence’ ” and “ ‘seeming absence’ ” (their quotes) so that we will develop character and become “spiritually mature.”

This allowing us to be “on our own” in order to develop character within us is an arrangement God still abides by and respects. To develop Adam’s and Eve’s character – and ours too – God has to be “absent” as well as present in human life. Just as our parents care for us around the clock in infancy and early childhood and then gradually withdraw their presence from us as we physically mature, so God is intently present to us at our spiritual infancy and then allows us to be increasingly “on our own” as we spiritually mature. Through the ages God purposely works to establish a *balance* between his “manifest presence” and his “seeming absence,” so that we will develop character: (ibid.)

- **Redefinition of *mediate*:** To understand the theology of Renovaré it is necessary to understand what they mean by the words *mediate/mediation*. When they talk about *mediation* or *mediate*, they are not referring to the standard definition (mediation between God and man in a judicial sense) but to a “mediation” that implies God *regulates* His presence and absence in our lives.

As in the garden of Eden, God balances his manifest presence and seeming absence through divine mediation by providing appointed figures, forms of worship, social structures, cataclysmic events, Scripture, and other revelations. (ibid.)

Renovaré uses the word “mediation” for their notion that God regulates or moderates His presence, claiming that God is sometimes present and sometimes seemingly absent. That is, they say God “balances” His presence and “seeming absence” through “mediation.” This usage of the word *mediation* is not the same as standard usage, which refers to *mediation* as intervention between two parties in a dispute. The Greek word for *mediator* is *mesitēs*, which means “(1) one who intervenes between two, either in order to make or restore peace and friendship, or form a compact, or for ratifying a covenant; (2) a medium of communication, arbitrator.” Similarly, the Hebrew word for *mediate* is *palal*, which means “to intervene, interpose, pray; to mediate, judge; to intercede; to pray.” None of these words include the meanings *to regulate* or *to moderate*.

- **God’s absence/presence, from Adam to Jesus:** Finally, Renovaré traces the supposed history of this “balance” of God’s presence/absence, from the “archetypes” Adam and Eve, through Abraham, to the monarchy, to the Church, and finally to the new creation. They assert that when God is “ ‘absent’,” we should remember “that he is ‘about’ and ‘will be back’.”

At the outset of human history – from Adam to Abraham – God works directly with individuals: When God is “absent” to them, his presence is mediated only by the knowledge that he is “about” and “will be back.” Beginning with Abraham, by contrast, God begins working indirectly, mediating his presence through the social structure of the family unit: From Abraham through the monarchy, God’s presence – and absence – is mediated through Scripture, traditions, and rituals of the religion of Israel: During the intertestamental period, new possibilities of character development and relationship to God develop within the framework of the ethnic Israelite culture. (ibid., p. xxxviii)

- **Jesus “mediates the presence of God”:** In their overview of the Bible, Renovaré completely ignores Jesus as our Savior from sin, and merely claims that “Jesus breaks open the ethnic vessel within which the treasure of God’s presence had developed.”

Then, into this Greco-Roman, Mediterranean world Jesus, the Incarnate Word, who personally mediates the presence of God, is born. By the means of his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus breaks open the ethnic vessel within which the treasure of God's presence had developed. The entire history of God-with-his-people now becomes, through Jesus Christ, the treasure of all peoples and fulfills the ancient promise to Abraham: "In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Now "there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human" (1 Tim 2:5). (ibid.)

- **God's absence/presence in the Church:** At this point in the Renovaré overview of the Bible, the commentators quote 1 Timothy 2:5 (above), in which the word *mediator* (Greek: *mesitēs*) refers to one who intervenes between two parties. However, in the remainder of the essay, they return to using the word *mediate* in their peculiar sense of "God mediating His presence/absence." More precisely, they are claiming that God *moderates* or *regulates* His presence/absence.

After Jesus' ascension into the heavens we see God's all-inclusive people, the "light of the world" and "salt of the earth," being indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who also personally mediates God's presence for the formation of Christ's character in individuals and "all nations." This direct mediating of God's presence through the Holy Spirit continues to develop up to the present. Alongside this continues the indirect mediating work of Scripture (the Word of God written), preaching and prophetic utterance (the word of God spoken), and sacraments (the Word of God made visible). Ahead lies an eternity beyond human history, There character formation and transformation will no longer require the mediation of God's presence and absence to us, for Christ will fully dwell in us and we in him. (ibid.)

Summary: According to Renovaré, God must balance His "absence/presence" so that we become spiritually mature. Understanding what they mean by God's "absence" and "presence" is difficult, because the authors place many words or phrases in quotes, even when they are not quotations of other material. Sometimes these same phrases are *not* in quotes. All of the words or phrases put in quotes relate to God's absence or presence, except for the word "fell'." These words are summarized in the following table. Phrases that appear multiple times are followed by the number of times they appear.

	Terms that mean God is absent	Terms that mean God is present (or will be)
in quotes	"on their own" (2); "on our own"; "about"; "absent"; "absent" to them; "seeming absence"	"manifest presence" "will be back"; "been in their faces"
not in quotes	absence to us; absence to them; seeming absence	manifest presence (2); presence (11); present; present to us; with-God (2); God-with-his-people; omnipresence; to be with us

Placing these terms in quotation marks renders the meaning ambiguous. Do they mean these terms literally, or figuratively? If the meaning is literal, then Renovaré claims that God must *actually* be absent as we become spiritually mature.

On the other hand, Renovaré may intend the words in quotes to be taken figuratively. A figurative meaning is consistent with their use of the word "to" in the phrases " 'absent' to them," "present to us," and "God's presence and absence to us." They appear to say that God is not *actually* absent, but that His "absence" is only "seeming" to us. They seem to claim God is managing our *perception* of His "absence" and "presence." Since the term *manifest* means *clear to the eye or mind*, the phrase "manifest presence" means a clear *perception* of God's presence. Thus, Renovaré appears to claim that both God's presence and His absence are perceptions in our own mind, not *necessarily* in reality.

Either interpretation (literal or figurative) contradicts Scripture, since God states He will never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5-6, Matthew 28:19-20). If the interpretation is figurative, Renovaré is calling God a deceiver by claiming He makes us believe He is absent from us, when in reality He promises never to leave us.

4.2 Transformation/Renewal: Our Work or God's?

The table below compares Renovaré teachings on the role of human work in our transformation and renewal with the Scriptural view of the topic.

Renovaré: We must work to be transformed / renewed.	Scripture: God transforms / renews us, not on the basis of our own works.
<p>Foster states that the “spiritual disciplines” are work we must first do before we can receive God’s grace and be transformed.</p> <p>The function of the Spiritual Disciplines is now clear. They are the <i>means</i> for receiving God’s grace. ... Our work – our only work – is to place ourselves in the way of Christ and invite Him to work on our lives, individually and collectively. The Spiritual Disciplines are merely an attempt to describe how we can accomplish that work. (<i>Study Guide for Celebration of Discipline</i>, Foster, p. 6, emphasis in the original)</p> <p>God has given us the Disciplines of the spiritual life as a means of receiving his grace. The Disciplines allow us to place ourselves before God so that he can transform us. (<i>Celebration of Discipline</i>, 3rd Ed., Foster, p. 7)</p> <p>Richard J. Foster shows that it is only by and through these practices that we can find the true path to spiritual growth. (<i>ibid.</i>, book jacket)</p> <p>Willard advocates a works-based “self-transformation” that “resides in the practice of the spiritual disciplines.” He claims that Renovaré-style solitude and silence (see page 43 of this document), prayer (see page 37), and meditation (see page 29) are at “the heart of the gospel.”</p> <p>He reveals how the key to self-transformation resides in the practice of the spiritual disciplines, and how their practice affirms human life to the fullest. (<i>The Spirit of the Disciplines</i>, Willard, back cover of the book, written in the 3rd person).</p> <p><i>The Spirit of the Disciplines</i> presents a way of living that enables ordinary men and women to join with God and realize their highest aspirations of well-being and -doing. The key to this self-transformation resides in the practice of the spiritual disciplines. Readers will learn why the disciplines work and how their practice affirms human life to the fullest. <i>The Spirit of the Disciplines</i> places solitude and silence, prayer, simple and sacrificial living, meditation upon God’s word and ways, and service to others at the heart of the gospel. (http://www.dwillard.org/books/SpDisciplines.asp)</p>	<p>Scripture clearly teaches we do absolutely no work of our own to bring about our transformation/renewal.</p> <p>God insists that we <i>be</i> transformed/renewed, but God does the transformation, not us. Jesus was asked, “What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?” Jesus did not tell them to work. Instead, He told them to believe.</p> <p>Therefore they said to Him, “What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?” Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.” (John 6:28-29)</p> <p>Even our belief is enabled by God.</p> <p>No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. (John 6:44)</p> <p>God’s work is not accomplished by our works, but by our faith.</p> <p>So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and <u>works</u> (<i>energeō</i>: to work on someone’s behalf) miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? ... Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, “THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.” (Galatians 3:5,11)</p>
<p>(continued on next page)</p>	<p>(continued on next page)</p>

Renovaré: We must work to be transformed / renewed (continued).	Scripture: God transforms/renews us, not on the basis of our own works (continued).
<p>Smith asks Renovaré Spiritual Formation Groups to make a Covenant that they will seek renewal <i>through</i> their own works. He instructs group members to read the Covenant aloud and in unison at each meeting.</p> <p>COVENANT. In utter dependence upon Jesus Christ as my ever-living Savior, Teacher, Lord, and Friend, I will seek continual renewal through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spiritual exercises • Spiritual gifts • Acts of service. <p><i>As a group, read the Covenant aloud and in unison. (A Spiritual Formation Workbook, Smith, p. 99)</i></p> <p>Renovaré clearly states that human work is required for our “self-transformation.”</p>	<p>God does it <i>all</i>. God is at work in us, and the result is our work. Our work does not <i>bring about</i> grace or renewal, but must <i>follow from</i> true grace and true renewal, as the <i>necessary result</i> of our <i>already being</i> transformed by God’s own work.</p> <p>LORD, You will establish peace for us, since You have also performed (<i>pa’al</i>: work) for us all our works. (Isaiah 26:12)</p> <p>For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10)</p> <p>So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at <u>work</u> (<i>en-ergeō</i>: to work on someone’s behalf) in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. (Philippians 2:12-13)</p>

4.3 Transformation/Renewal in All of Scripture

The Hebrew and Greek words for transform/renew are *chalaph*, *chadash*, *anakainizō*, *anakainoō*, *ananeoō*, *anakainōsis*, *metamorphoō*, and *metaschematizō*. All uses of these words in Scripture (excluding physical uses, figures of speech, and Jesus’ transfiguration) are listed below. The underlined words are the English translation for these Greek and Hebrew words.

- **There are cases where renewal is impossible.**

For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew (*anakainizō*) them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame. (Hebrews 6:4-6).

- **We can appeal to God to renew us.**

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew (*chadash*) a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit. (Psalm 51:10-12).

Restore us to You, O LORD, that we may be restored; Renew (*chadash*) our days as of old. (Lamentations 5:21).

- **We can wait for God to renew us.**

Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new (*chalaph*) strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary. (Isaiah 40:29-31).

- **God does the renewing and transforming. We do not renew or transform ourselves.** All of the Greek verbs underlined below are in the passive voice, which means that the action is done to us. The noun *anakainōsis* (meaning *renewal*) in Romans 12:2 is used in a passive phrase. The only other place this noun appears in the New Testament is Titus 3:5, where it is clear that the renewal is done by God alone.

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed (*metamorphōō*) by the renewing (*anakainōsis*) of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2).

But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing (*anakainōsis*) by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:4-7).

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed (*metamorphōō*) into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed (*anakainōō*) to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him (Colossians 3:9-10).

that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed (*ananeōō*) in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. (Ephesians 4:22-24).

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed (*anakainōō*) day by day. (2 Corinthians 4:16).

Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits; who pardons all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases; who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion; who satisfies your years with good things, so that your youth is renewed (*chadash*) like the eagle. (Psalm 103:2-5).

- **God will one day transform us physically.**

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform (*metaschēmatizō*) the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. (Philippians 3:20-21).

- **The only self-transformation described in Scripture refers to the servants of Satan.** In 2 Corinthians 11:13-15, the word *metaschēmatizō* is used in a reflexive sense (the Greek middle voice) to mean a self-transformation. In this passage, deceitful workers who are servants of Satan use self-transformation to disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Since this is the only place in Scripture where people transform themselves, it is clear that there is no righteous self-transformation in all of Scripture. Yet Willard advocates a “self-transformation” based upon works (“the key to this self-transformation resides in the practice of the spiritual disciplines”); see page 26.

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising (*metaschēmatizō*) themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan disguises (*metaschēmatizō*) himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise (*metaschēmatizō*) themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds. (2 Corinthians 11:13-15)

4.4 Meditation

What is meditation?	
According to Renovaré	In Scripture
<p>Foster calls meditation one of the “inward disciplines,” whose purpose is to “explore the inner regions” and the “inner reality of the spiritual world” (<i>Celebration of Discipline</i>, 3rd Ed., pp. 21,23). His meditation can be summarized as follows (see pp. 34-35 of this document for details):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enter a vividly-experienced mental state via your imagination, using a repeated word or phrase. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> take a single event, or a parable, or a few verses, or even a single word and allow it to take root in you. (ibid., p. 29) 2. “Live the experience” and “<i>actually</i> encounter” Jesus. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek to live the experience, And, by your imagination, that moment you are one of Christ’s disciples on the spot, and are at His feet. (ibid., p. 29, 31) Hence, you can <i>actually</i> encounter the living Christ in the event, be addressed by His voice and be touched by His healing power. It can be more than an exercise of the imagination; it can be a genuine confrontation. Jesus Christ will actually come to you. (1st Ed., p. 26, emphasis in original) 3. Release your concerns. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> just say “palms down.” Release it. You may even feel a certain sense of release in your hands. (3rd Ed., p. 31) 4. Listen and wait to hear spiritual instruction. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> turn your palms up as a symbol of your desire to receive from the Lord. ... Whatever you need, you say, “palms up.” ... Having centered down, spend the remaining moments in complete silence. (3rd Ed., p. 31) 5. Having “centered down,” receive your instructions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If some words do come to you, you take them with utmost seriousness. More often than not, they will be some utterly practical instruction about seemingly trivial matters, And I have often found them to be wonderful words of life. (<i>Study Guide</i>, p. 20) It is wonderful when a particular meditation leads to ecstasy, but it is far more common to be given guidance in dealing with ordinary human problems. (3rd Ed., p. 22) <p>See page 38 of this document for Foster’s warning of “supernatural guidance” from “dark and evil spirits” while practicing “contemplation,” and his recommendation to “preface a time of contemplation” with “prayers of protection.” Foster does not give this warning in <i>Celebration of Discipline</i> where “guidance” obtained in “meditation” is discussed. Foster says the terms “meditation” and “contemplation” are interchangeable (see next page).</p>	<p>The Old Testament gives us examples of meditation on God’s written revealed Word. The New Testament makes no mention of the practice of meditation. The words <i>meditation</i> and <i>meditate</i> in the Old Testament are most frequently found in the Psalms. The two basic concepts are <i>hagah</i>:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">to moan, growl, utter, muse, mutter, meditate, devise, plot, speak; to roar, growl, groan; to utter, speak; to meditate, devise, muse, imagine; to utter; to mutter. (<i>Blue Letter Bible Lexicon, Strong’s H1897</i>)</p> <p>and <i>siyach</i>:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">to put forth, meditate, muse, commune, speak, complain, ponder, sing; to complain; to muse, meditate upon, study, ponder; to talk, sing, speak; to meditate, consider, put forth thoughts. (<i>Blue Letter Bible Lexicon, Strong’s H7878</i>)</p> <p>Psalm 77:12 and Psalm 143:5 connect <i>hagah</i> and <i>siyach</i> together as synonyms.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">I shall remember the deeds of the LORD; surely I will remember Your wonders of old. I will <u>meditate</u> (<i>hagah</i>) on <u>all</u> (<i>kol</i>: all, the whole, each, every, totality) Your work and <u>muse</u> (<i>siyach</i>) on Your deeds. (Psalm 77:11-12)</p> <p>The Psalmist meditates on and remembers all the specific deeds of God in Psalm 77. (continued on next page)</p>

What is meditation? (continued)

According to Renovaré	In Scripture
<p>To explain the details of his method, Foster does not quote Scripture but instead quotes extensively from Thomas Merton (1915-1968), a contemplative Catholic Trappist monk who wrote extensively about Zen meditation (<i>Mystics and Zen Masters</i>, 1967; <i>Zen and the Birds of Appetite</i>, 1968). Foster affirmatively quotes or cites Merton far more than any other author. Foster cites Merton ten times in his 18-page chapter on meditation, including a quotation from Merton that Foster uses to preface his chapter. Foster borrows heavily from Merton’s “simple techniques” of meditation.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Thomas Merton writes, “Meditation is really very simple and there is not much need of elaborate techniques to teach us how to go about it.” (<i>Celebration of Discipline</i>, Foster, 3rd Ed., p. 21)</p> <p>Foster favorably cites Merton’s mastery of Zen, and says “Merton’s main hope is to make the gift of contemplation more accessible to all of us” (also note that Foster says the terms “meditation” and “contemplation” are not precise and can be used interchangeably).</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Thomas Merton has perhaps done more than any other twentieth-century figure to make the life of prayer widely known and understood. ... His interest in contemplation led him to investigate prayer forms in Eastern religion. Zen masters from Asia regarded him as the preeminent authority on their kind of prayer in the United States. ... Do not be concerned, as you read the following selection on contemplation, about arriving at precise definitions of “meditation” and “contemplation.” Recognize that different teachers and writers define these terms in different ways. Our concern here is not to study prayer, but to practice it. And Merton’s main hope is to make the gift of contemplation more accessible to all of us. (<i>Spiritual Classics</i>, Foster & Griffin, p. 17)</p> <p>Foster relies heavily on Merton’s techniques. To understand Foster’s “discipline of meditation,” it is thus important to consider Merton’s “simple techniques” of meditation and their Zen-Buddhist, Sufi, and Hindi connections. A letter Merton wrote to a Muslim in January 1966 elaborates on Merton’s techniques of meditation. Merton’s mention of “the Prophet” is a reference to Muhammad. Merton said his meditation is very similar to <i>fanā</i>, a meditation practiced by the mystical Sufists of Islam, in which individuality is annihilated in its merger with God. Merton’s biographer notes that Merton is “squarely within the mystical tradition.”</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">“One might say this gives my meditation the character described by the Prophet [<i>Muhammad</i>] as ‘being before God as if you saw Him.’ ... My prayer tends very much toward what you call <i>fanā</i>.” ... This is an extraordinary reply that places Merton squarely within the mystical tradition. (<i>Thomas Merton and Thich Nhat Hanh: Engaged Spirituality in an Age of Globalization</i>, R. H. King, p. 143)</p> <p>(continued on next page)</p>	<p>Rather than quiet contemplation, the Old Testament view of meditation involves active speaking, thinking, and remembering.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">I remember the days of old; I <u>meditate</u> (<i>hagah</i>) on all Your doings; I <u>muse</u> (<i>siyach</i>) on the work of Your hands. (Psalm 143:5)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The mouth of the righteous <u>utters</u> (<i>hagah</i>) wisdom, and his tongue speaks justice. (Psalm 37:30)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Sing to Him, sing praises to Him; <u>speak</u> (<i>siyach</i>) of all His wonders. (1 Chronicles 16:9)</p> <p>Psalm 1 gives an example of how we are to <i>hagah</i> (utter, meditate, speak, muse) on the concrete, tangible, written, and revealed law of God in his Word.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he <u>meditates</u> (<i>hagah</i>) day and night. (Psalm 1:1-2)</p> <p>(continued on next page)</p>

What is meditation? (continued)

According to Renovaré	In Scripture
<p>Merton saw “no contradiction between Buddhism and Christianity,” and stated his agreement with Hinduism, in a conversation with a fellow monk, Steindl-Rast. This conversation occurred just before Merton’s trip to Bangkok to meet with Buddhists.</p> <p><i>Steindl-Rast:</i> There were so many points of contact with Zen Buddhist teaching in all this that I couldn’t help asking whether he thought he could have come to these insights if he had never come across Zen.</p> <p><i>Merton:</i> “I’m not sure,” he answered pensively, “but I don’t think so. I see no contradiction between Buddhism and Christianity. The future of Zen is in the West. I intend to become as good a Buddhist as I can.” ...</p> <p><i>Steindl-Rast:</i> “But isn’t there still an implicit dualism in all this?” I asked.</p> <p><i>Merton:</i> His answer was, “Really there isn’t, and yet there is. You have to see your will and God’s will dualistically for a long time. You have to experience duality for a long time until you see it’s not there. In this respect I am a Hindu. Ramakrishna has the solution. Don’t consider dualistic prayer on a lower level. The lower is higher. There are no levels. Any moment you can break through to the underlying unity which is God’s gift in Christ. In the end, Praise praises. Thanksgiving gives thanks. Jesus prays. Openness is all.”</p> <p><i>Steindl-Rast:</i> He was ready to go to Bangkok. <i>(Recollection of Thomas Merton’s Last Days in the West, D. Steindl-Rast, Monastic Studies, 7:10, 1969)</i></p> <p>Foster’s instruction to use a repeated word or phrase is similar to Merton’s notion of “Christian mantras.” A mantra is a repeated word or phrase used for mystical meditation.</p> <p><i>mantra:</i> A sacred verbal formula repeated in prayer, meditation, or incantation, such as an invocation of a god, a magic spell, or a syllable or portion of scripture containing mystical potentialities. (http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/mantra)</p> <p>Merton wrote about his “Christian mantras.” Merton’s biographer reports an excerpt from Merton’s journal, written on his 1968 flight to Bangkok to meet with Buddhists. The biographer concludes that this writing clearly shows that Merton was increasingly engaged with Buddhism and other religions.</p> <p>“The moment of take-off was ecstatic. The dewy wing was suddenly covered with rivers of cold sweat running backward. The window wept jagged shining courses of tears. Joy. We left the ground – I with Christian mantras and a great sense of destiny, of being at last on my true way after years of waiting and wondering and fooling around.” As this passage indicates, Merton was clearly prepared to take his engagement with other religions, and Buddhism in particular, to a new level. (King, p. 112)</p> <p>(continued on next page)</p>	<p>Psalms 119 is a lengthy and thoughtful meditation on all of God’s law. It uses <i>siyach</i> and <i>siychah</i> exclusively, in 8 verses (15, 23, 27, 48, 78, 97, 99, and 148).</p> <p>All meditation discussed in Scripture is over a lengthy body of text, rather than mere fragments. Scripture never teaches prayer or meditation using a phrase that is repeated over and over. Two negative examples of the useless repetitive prayers of the unrighteous Gentiles, and Jesus’ condemnation of the practice, are discussed in Section 4.5 on prayer (page 37 of this document).</p> <p>(continued on next page)</p>

What is meditation? (continued)

According to Renovaré	In Scripture
<p>Merton felt a “real spiritual bond” with the Dalai Lama, who he met on his trip to Bangkok.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Foremost among the Buddhists Merton met on this trip was the Dalai Lama Merton noted that a “real spiritual bond” had formed between them. (King, p. 22)</p> <p>In a talk given to the Buddhists in Bangkok, Merton spoke of the unity he felt with Buddhists.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">“We discover an older unity. My dear brothers, we are already one. But we imagine that we are not. And what we have to recover is our original unity. What we have to be is what we are.” (King, p. 114)</p> <p>Merton died on this trip. After Merton’s death, his techniques of meditation were further developed by Thomas Keating, Merton’s fellow Trappist monk. Keating refers to these methods as “centering prayer.”</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">he [Merton] did not offer much practical advice to his readers, That task was taken up in the 1970’s, several years after Merton’s death, by the Trappist monks of St. Joseph’s Abbey in Spencer, Massachusetts. With the encouragement of their abbot, Thomas Keating, they devised a form of contemplative practice They called it centering prayer. (King, pp. 143-144)</p> <p>Not only does Foster recommend Merton’s techniques of meditation, he also recommends Keating as an “expert” in “centering prayer.”</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">In the United States, Cistercians Basil Pennington and Thomas Keating are well known as teachers of centering prayer. (<i>Spiritual Classics</i>, Foster & Griffin, p. 31)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">GOING DEEPER: <i>Centering Prayer in Daily Life and Ministry</i>, This book contains a series of essays by such experts as Trappists Thomas Keating and Basil Pennington (ibid., p. 36)</p> <p>(continued on next page)</p>	<p>Believers can have no unity or brotherhood with non-believers, in any spiritual practice.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? (2 Corinthians 6:14-15)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. (1 Corinthians 10:20-21)</p> <p>(continued on next page)</p>

What is meditation? (continued)

According to Renovaré	In Scripture
<p>In his practice of “centering prayer,” Keating drives away his own thoughts by repeating “the sacred word,” or what Merton called a “Christian mantra.” Below is Keating’s description of his method.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The sacred word is only a gesture, an expression of your intent; it has no meaning other than your intent. You should choose your word as a simple expression of that intent, not as a source of meaning or emotional attraction. The less the word means to you, the better off you are. (<i>Open Mind, Open Heart</i>, Keating, p. 49)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God’s presence and action within. ... Having chosen a sacred word, we do not change it during the prayer period, for that would be to start thinking again. A simple inward gaze upon God may be more suitable for some persons than the sacred word. In this case, one consents to God’s presence and action by turning inwardly toward God as if gazing upon him. ... Sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, settle briefly and silently introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God’s presence and action within. ... When you become aware of thoughts, return ever-so-gently to the sacred word. “ ‘Thoughts’ is an umbrella term for every perception including sense perceptions, feelings, images, memories, reflections, and commentaries. ... During the course of our prayer, the sacred word may become vague or even disappear. ... At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for two or three minutes. ... The additional two or three minutes give the psyche time to readjust to the external senses and enable us to bring the atmosphere of silence into daily life. (ibid., pp. 139-141)</p> <p>Merton’s biographer notes the “close fit between the practice of centering prayer, as Keating describes it, and Merton’s method of meditation.” See also Foster’s comment on page 30 of this document, where Foster states that the terms “meditation” and “contemplation” are often used interchangeably.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The object is to quiet the mind and direct attention inward. ... The sacred word, according the Keating, “is a simple thought that you are thinking at ever deeper levels of perception.” Eventually you should be able to pass beyond it to “pure awareness.” When this happens, the “interiorization” process is complete. ... There is a close fit between the practice of centering prayer, as Keating describes it, and Merton’s method of meditation. (King, p. 144)</p> <p>Merton never rejected Catholicism, but embraced syncretism by sharing a brotherhood with Buddhists, considering his meditation the same as the mystical Sufists of Islam, and stating his agreement with Hinduism. After his death, Merton’s work was continued by his fellow monk, Keating. Foster relies heavily on Merton’s techniques of meditation, and favorably cites Keating as an expert in “centering prayer.”</p>	<p>Joshua meditates on “all the law which Moses My servant commanded you” and “all that is written in it,” (referring to the entire Pentateuch). Joshua does not meditate on a mere handful of phrases or a single “sacred word.” Joshua must think clearly on the entire book of the law, so he can remember it and do what it says.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall <u>meditate</u> (<i>hagah</i>) on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to <u>all</u> (<i>kol</i>: all, the whole, each, every, totality) that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. (Joshua 1:7-8)</p>

The Method of Meditation in *Celebration of Discipline*

The list below compares three versions of Foster’s instructions for meditation, from two editions of *Celebration of Discipline* and the study guide for the book. The purpose of this list is to present the details of Foster’s technique of meditation, and to demonstrate the similarity of his three versions. In Foster’s first edition (1978), he tells his readers

In your imagination allow your spiritual body, shining with light, to rise out of your physical body. ... Go deeper and deeper into outer space until there is nothing except the warm presence of the eternal Creator. (p. 27)

In later editions, this section is changed because Foster received questions asking if he endorses astral-travel or astral projection. The destination is now Galilee in the current edition. However, the method of meditation remains the same, with the addition of a new step. In the tables below, each column is a passage from one of the books. The passages appear in the order in which they appear in the books, except where specifically indicated.

1. Enter a vividly-experienced mental state via your imagination, using a repeated word or phrase. Foster begins with a word or phrase repeated over and over. Foster uses all five senses (touch, see, hear, taste, smell) in this step.

1st Edition, pp. 27-28	Study Guide, p. 20	3rd Edition pp. 29-31
<p>A fourth form of meditation has as its objective to bring you into a deep inner communion with the Father where you look at Him and He looks at you. In your imagination, picture yourself walking along a lovely forest path. ... When you are able to experience the scene with all your senses, Enjoy the sights and smells.</p>	<p>The story is a familiar one – Jesus’ feeding of the five thousand. ... Following the counsel of Ignatius of Loyola, attempt to use all of your senses as you slowly read the passage. ... Try to see the story hear feel the story Finally, try to feel with your emotions At first this approach may necessitate several readings of the text.</p>	<p>my suggestion is that you take a single event, or a parable, or a few verses, or even a single word and allow it to take root in you. Seek to live the experience, remembering the encouragement of Ignatius of Loyola to apply all our senses to the task. ... Smell the sea. Hear the lap of water See Feel the sun Taste the salt in the air. Touch the hem of his garment.</p>

2. See Jesus in your imagination. Note that in the 1st Edition (p. 26), Foster further adds this meditation “can be more than an exercise of the imagination. ... Jesus Christ will actually come to you.” (see page 29 of this document).

<p>In your imagination allow your spiritual body, shining with light, to rise out of your physical body. Look back so that you can see yourself lying in the grass and reassure your body that you will return momentarily. Imagine your spiritual self, alive and vibrant, rising up through the clouds and into the stratosphere. Observe your physical body, the knoll, and the forest shrink as you leave the earth. Go deeper and deeper into outer space until there is nothing except the warm presence of the eternal Creator. Rest in His presence.</p>	<p>Then, in your imagination, watch the crowd leave and Jesus go up into the hills. You are left alone. You sit on a rock overlooking the water and re-experience the events of the day. You become quiet, and after a little while, Jesus returns and sits on a nearby rock. For a time, you are both silent, looking out over the water perhaps and enjoying one another’s presence.</p>	<p>In this regard Alexander Whyte counsels us, “... the truly Christian imagination never lets Jesus Christ out of her sight. ... You open your New Testament. ... And, by your imagination, that moment you are one of Christ’s disciples on the spot, and are at His feet.”</p>
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3. Release your concerns. Foster calls this “palms down.” Foster experiences this step physically, as well. The step does not appear in the 1st Edition.

	<p>After a bit, the Lord turns to you and asks this question, “What may I do for you?” Then you tell Him what is in your heart – your needs, your fears, your hopes. If weeping or other emotions come, do not hinder them.</p>	<p>Whatever it is that weighs on your mind or is a concern to you, just say “palms down.” Release it. You may even feel a certain sense of release in your hands.</p>
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4. Listen and wait to hear spiritual instruction. Foster says “palms up,” places his palms up, then waits to hear and receive spiritual instruction. Foster is now “centered down.”

<p>Listen quietly, anticipating the unanticipated.</p>	<p>When you have finished, you become quiet for a little while. Then you turn to the Lord and ask, “What may I do for you?” And you listen with the heart quietly, prayerfully.</p>	<p>turn your palms up as a symbol of your desire to receive from the Lord. ... Whatever you need, you say, “palms up.” Having centered down, spend the remaining moments in complete silence.</p>
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5. Having “centered down,” receive your instructions. If instruction comes, Foster notes it might be mundane and practical or it might be ecstatic. He tells the reader to take whatever is said with “utmost seriousness.” Foster assures the reader that “with time and experience you will be able to distinguish readily between mere human thought ... and the True Spirit which inwardly moves upon the heart.”

<p>Note carefully any instruction given. With time and experience you will be able to distinguish readily between mere human thought that may bubble up to the conscious mind and the True Spirit which inwardly moves upon the heart. Do not be surprised if the instruction is terribly practical and not in the least what you thought of as “spiritual.” Do not be disappointed if no words come; like good friends, you are silently enjoying the company of each other.</p>	<p>No instruction needs to come, If some words do come to you, you take them with utmost seriousness. More often than not, they will be some utterly practical instruction about seemingly trivial matters, ... for God wants us to live out our spirituality in the ordinary events of our days. And I have often found them to be wonderful words of life.</p>	<p>If impressions or directions come, fine; if not, fine. (p. 22): Often meditation will yield insights that are deeply practical, almost mundane. Instruction will come on how to relate to your wife or husband, or how to deal with this sensitive problem or that business situation. It is wonderful when a particular meditation leads to ecstasy, but it is far more common to be given guidance in dealing with ordinary human problems.</p>
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6. A retraction. Foster states that he does not endorse astro-travel or astral projection. The retraction does not appear in the 3rd Edition.

<p>(footnote, p. 28): Over the years since the publication of <i>Celebration</i> some have asked if I am endorsing astro-travel or astral projection in this meditation exercise. My answer is, “No, decidedly not!” This meditation is only an aid for our centering down, nothing more.</p>	<p>(p. 19, emphasis in the original): Since some have asked, I might just as well come clean and tell you that I have <i>no</i> interest at all, nor experience, in astro-travel or any of the rather exotic forms of meditation.</p>	
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Does new revelation from God come via man's imagination during meditation?	
According to Renovaré: yes	According to Scripture: no
<p>Foster says that "God can sanctify and utilize the imagination" for the purpose of meditation because God "enfleshes himself into our world."</p> <p>We can descend with the mind into the heart most easily through the imagination To believe that God can sanctify and utilize the imagination is simply to take seriously the Christian idea of incarnation. God so accommodates, so enfleshes himself into our world that he uses the images we know and understand to teach us about the unseen world of which we know so little and which we find so difficult to understand. (<i>Celebration of Discipline</i>, 3rd Ed., Foster, pp. 25-26)</p> <p>The following quote gives some of the details of Foster's method of meditation. Foster says we can use our "sanctified imagination" to see Jesus face to face and to hear new words from God that God has not spoken in Scripture. Foster says nothing about testing these "words" or "instructions" against Scripture.</p> <p>Then, in your imagination, watch the crowd leave and Jesus go up into the hills. ... You become quiet, and after a little while, Jesus returns and sits on a nearby rock. ... After a bit, the Lord turns to you and asks this question, "What may I do for you?" Then you tell Him what is in your heart – your needs, your fears, your hopes. If weeping or other emotions come, do not hinder them. ... Then you turn to the Lord and ask, "What may I do for you?" And you listen with the heart quietly, prayerfully. No instruction needs to come, for you are just glad to be in Christ's presence. If some words do come to you, you take them with utmost seriousness. More often than not, they will be some utterly practical instruction about seemingly trivial matters, for God wants us to live out our spirituality in the ordinary events of our days. And I have often found them to be wonderful words of life. (<i>Study Guide</i>, p. 20)</p> <p>Foster says it takes experience to distinguish between the words of the "the True Spirit" and human thought. He says nothing about distinguishing between the words of "the True Spirit" and other spirits.</p> <p>Note carefully any instruction given. With time and experience you will be able to distinguish readily between mere human thought that may bubble up to the conscious mind and the True Spirit which inwardly moves upon the heart. Do not be surprised if the instruction is terribly practical and not in the least what you thought of as "spiritual." (<i>Celebration of Discipline</i>, Foster, 1st Ed., p. 28)</p>	<p>Revelation from God comes only from Scripture, not from sanctified imagination. In Scripture, there is no mention of any meditation on the inner thoughts to obtain new words from God. Not even the prophets did this.</p> <p>Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who prophesy, and say to those who prophesy from their own inspiration (<i>leb</i>: inner man, mind, will, heart, and understanding), "Listen to the word of the LORD!" Thus says the Lord GOD, "Woe to the foolish prophets who are following their own spirit and have seen nothing." (Ezekiel 13:2-3)</p> <p>Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar. (Proverbs 30:5-6)</p> <p>Only true prophets got the Word of the LORD, and it did not come through their "inner man" or their own wisdom, but from specific external revelation from God Himself. Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar that the interpretation for the dream did not come because of Daniel's own wisdom.</p> <p>But as for me, this mystery has not been revealed to me for any wisdom residing in me more than in any other living man, but for the purpose of making the interpretation known to the king, and that you may understand the thoughts of your mind. (Daniel 2:30)</p> <p>Peter makes it clear that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of personal interpretation or an act of human will.</p> <p>So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. (2 Peter 1:19-21)</p>

4.5 Prayer

<p>Renovaré: pray using repetition without understanding.</p>	<p>Scripture: do not pray using meaningless repetition.</p>
<p>Smith recommends “hesychastic prayer” in the “contemplative tradition,” which is “repeating a simple prayer over and over,” “the same prayer for ten minutes each day.”</p> <p>PRACTICING THE CONTEMPLATIVE TRADITION: <i>Pray the same prayer for ten minutes each day.</i> There is a tradition in the Eastern Church called “hesychasm,” which is the practice of repeating a simple prayer over and over. The idea is to focus our thoughts on God so that God can enter our heart. You might like to try the “hesychastic” prayer “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me,” or use a verse from a psalm – perhaps “Create in me a clean heart, O God” (Ps. 51:10). (<i>Spiritual Formation Workbook</i>, Smith & Graybeal, p. 36)</p> <p>Foster also recommends the “hesychastic tradition” of repeating a short phrase in prayer. The phrase is short enough so that it can be spoken in a single breath.</p> <p>BREATH PRAYER: As Christians over the centuries have sought to follow the biblical injunction to “pray without ceasing,” they have developed two fundamental expressions of Unceasing Prayer. The one is more formal and liturgical; the other is more conversational and spontaneous. The first has its origin in the Eastern Christian hesychastic tradition and is usually called aspiratory prayer or breath prayer. The idea has its roots in the Psalms, where a repeated phrase reminds us an entire Psalm, for example, “O LORD, you have searched me and known me” (Ps. 139:1). As a result, the concept arose of a short, simple prayer of petition that can be spoken in one breath, hence the name “breath prayer.” ... The most famous of the breath prayers is the Jesus Prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” (<i>Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home</i>, Foster, p. 122)</p> <p>Foster recommends we create our own short phrase to use in prayer, and pray this “breath prayer as often as possible.”</p> <p>But the Jesus Prayer is only one example. It is also possible to discover your own individual breath prayer. ... Here are a few “O Lord, baptize me with love”; “Teach me gentleness, Father”;... . Notice the brevity of each of the prayers – seldom more than seven or eight syllables. ... Begin praying your breath prayer as often as possible. (<i>Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home</i>, Foster, p. 123)</p> <p>(continued on next page)</p>	<p>When Jesus was asked how we should pray, He replied that we are not to use “meaningless repetition” or “many words.”</p> <p>And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition (<i>battalogo</i>) as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. (Matthew 6:7-8)</p> <p>The Greek word translated as the phrase “meaningless repetition” is <i>battalogo</i>. This word appears only once in the New Testament and means either repetition of sensible words, or repetition of nonsense words. In the context of Matthew 6:7-8, Jesus is clearly prohibiting the “meaningless repetition” of “many words.”</p> <p>Scripture provides two examples of the repetitive prayers of ungodly Gentiles:</p> <p>(1) When the Ephesians “recognized that he (Paul) was a Jew, a single outcry arose from them all as they shouted for about two hours, ‘Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!’ ” (Acts 19:34). The religious phrase they chanted has very specific meaning, and was said over and over again (for two hours in unison).</p> <p>(continued on next page)</p>

<p>Renovaré: pray using repetition without understanding (continued).</p>	<p>Scripture: do not pray using meaningless repetition (cont.).</p>
<p>Foster recommends repetition in both prayer and study, saying that “sheer repetition without even understanding what is being repeated does affect the inner mind.” He says the repetitive prayers of the Catholic rosary and the Tibetan prayer wheel have the same objective.</p> <p>The purpose of this instruction is to direct the mind repeatedly and regularly toward certain modes of thought about God and human relationships. A rosary or prayer wheel has the same objective. ... Repetition regularly channels the mind in a specific direction, thus ingraining habits of thought. ... sheer repetition without even understanding what is being repeated does affect the inner mind. (<i>Celebration of Discipline</i>, 3rd. Ed., Foster, p. 64)</p> <p>The Buddhist Tibetan prayer wheel and the Catholic rosary are methods of prayer that tediously repeat a phrase over and over again.</p>	<p>(2) Likewise, the prophets of Baal danced to the repetitive nature of their religious chant “from morning until noon saying, ‘O Baal, answer us’ ” (1 Kings 18:26-29). The chant was “according to their custom.”</p> <p>The chants of the ungodly Ephesians and the prophets of Baal were repetitions of a short and specific meaningful prayer. Both groups thought they would be heard by their gods for their “many words.” The critique of hesychastic repetitive prayer comes from Jesus himself, who commands us not to pray that way.</p>

<p>Renovaré: warning given against “supernatural guidance” from “dark and evil spirits” while practicing contemplative prayer</p>	<p>Scripture: no warning for any form of prayer</p>
<p>Foster cautions that contemplative prayer is only for “seasoned veterans” since “there is such a thing as supernatural guidance that is not divine guidance,” which comes from “dark and evil spirits.” Foster encourages us to “preface a time of contemplation” with “prayers of protection.”</p> <p>At the outset I need to give a word of warning, a little like the warning labels on medicine bottles. Contemplative Prayer is not for the novice. I do not say this about any other form of prayer. ... In the silent contemplation of God we are entering deeply into the spiritual realm, and there is such a thing as a supernatural guidance that is not divine guidance. While the Bible does not give us a lot of information on the nature of the spiritual world, we do know enough to recognize that there are various orders of spiritual beings, and some of them are definitely not in cooperation with God and his way! I say these things not to make you fearful but to make you knowledgeable. ... But for now I want to encourage you to learn and practice prayers of protection. ... My own approach is to preface a time of contemplation by speaking this simple prayer: “... All dark and evil spirits must now leave. No influence is allowed to come near to me but that it is first filtered through the light of Jesus Christ, in whose name I pray. Amen.” ... Remember, Contemplative Prayer is for seasoned veterans in the life of faith. (<i>Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home</i>, Foster, pp. 156-159)</p>	<p>Nowhere in Scripture does God warn against demonic attack during prayer. No distinction is made between novice prayer and seasoned prayer. Even “little children” in the faith overcome “he who is in the world.”</p> <p>Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. ... You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. (1 John 4:1,4)</p>

<p>Renovaré: use your imagination as co-creator with God.</p>	<p>Scripture: pray that God’s will be done, not ours.</p>
<p>Foster tells us to use our imagination in prayer, and says we get more authority in prayer as we get better at it.</p> <p>Attuning ourselves to divine breathings is spiritual work. ... In physical matters we always tend to pray for the most difficult situations first: terminal cancer or multiple sclerosis. But when we listen, we will learn the importance of beginning with smaller things like colds or headaches. Success in the small corners of life gives us authority in the larger matters. ... As with meditation, the imagination is a powerful tool in the work of prayer. (<i>Celebration of Discipline</i>, 3rd Ed., Foster, pp. 39-41)</p> <p>Foster says that when we pray, we are “co-creators with God,” “working with God to determine the outcome of things.”</p> <p>We are working with God to determine the outcome of things. It needs to be said reverently, but it does need to be said: we are co-creators with God in advancing His kingdom upon the earth. (<i>Study Guide for Celebration of Discipline</i>, Foster, p. 25)</p>	<p>Jesus taught us to pray simply and directly that the Father’s will be done. We are not to pray out of our will or imagination. We do not get more authority as we get better at prayer. What we ask will be done if we pray according to God’s will.</p> <p>Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:10a)</p> <p>Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it. If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. (John 14:13-15)</p> <p>All our prayers should be according to God’s will and under His authority. When Jesus prayed his prayer for His disciples, He clearly stated that everything He did and said was under the Father’s authority.</p> <p>Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me. ... I have given them Your word; (John 17:7,8,14a)</p> <p>Only false prophets prophesy on their own inspiration and authority.</p> <p>An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land: The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule on their own authority; and My people love it so! But what will you do at the end of it? (Jeremiah 5:30-31)</p> <p>No person is a co-creator with God. God has created all things, and His sovereignty rules over all.</p> <p>For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created through Him and for Him. (Colossians 1:16)</p> <p>The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all. (Psalm 103:19)</p>

<p>Renovaré: goal of prayer is “union with God” in which we “see nothing.”</p>	<p>Scripture: the goal of prayer is praise, confession, and petition.</p>
<p>Foster says the goal of Contemplative Prayer is “union with God” in which we “see nothing.”</p> <p>What is the goal of Contemplative Prayer? To this question the old writers answer with one voice: union with God Bonaventure, a follower of Saint Francis, says that our final goal is “union with God,” which is a pure relationship where we see “nothing.” (<i>Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home</i>, Foster, p. 159)</p>	<p>The goal of prayer is to give God praise, glory, and honor, to confess to Him, and to make requests. Jesus gives us a model of prayer in Matthew 6:9-13, outlined below:</p> <p>Praise: Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name.</p> <p>For His glory: Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.</p> <p>Petition: Give us this day our daily bread.</p> <p>Confession: And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.</p> <p>Petition: And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.</p> <p>Praise: [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]</p>

<p>Renovaré: prayer is a “dark and unknown path of aridity”</p>	<p>Scripture: The true path is narrow, but well-lit.</p>
<p>Foster thinks <i>Contemplative Prayer</i> is Merton’s best book and calls it “A must book.”</p> <p>Merton, Thomas. <i>Contemplative Prayer</i>. ... I think this is Merton’s best book. (<i>Devotional Classics</i>, Foster & Smith, p. 67)</p> <p><i>Suggested Books for Further Study ...</i> . Merton, Thomas. <i>Contemplative Prayer</i>. ... (A powerful analysis of the central nature of contemplative prayer. A must book.) (<i>Study Guide for Celebration of Discipline</i>, Foster, p. 22)</p> <p>Foster affirmatively quotes Merton from this book, where Merton states that contemplative prayer is a “dark and unknown path of aridity” that should be sought “in preference to every other way.”</p> <p>THOUGHTS FOR CONTEMPLATION. Reflect on the following quotations to stimulate and inform your practice of meditation. “... One has begun to know the meaning of contemplation when he intuitively and spontaneously seeks the dark and unknown path of aridity in preference to every other way.” – Thomas Merton (<i>Celebrating the Disciplines: A Journal Workbook to Accompany “Celebration of Discipline”</i>, Foster & Yanni, p. 87)</p>	<p>Our path is neither dark, nor unknown, nor arid. It is well-lit by the Word of God, well-known to the few who find it, and “a well of water springing up to eternal life.”</p> <p>I have kept my feet from every evil path so that I might obey your word. ... Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. (Psalm 119:101,105)</p> <p>Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it. (Matthew 7:13-14)</p> <p>whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life. (John 4:14b)</p> <p>I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst. (John 6:35b)</p> <p>Someone who sees nothing is blind. Jesus warns that those who follow a blind guide will themselves fall into a pit. Instead, we are to walk with Him in the Light.</p> <p>Then the disciples came and said to Him, “Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?” But He answered and said, “Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted. Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit.” (Matthew 15:12-14)</p> <p>Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.” (John 8:12)</p>

4.6 Study

<p>Renovaré: Allow Taoists, Zoroastrians, and Zen-practicing Catholics to guide spiritual walk.</p>	<p>Scripture: Scripture guides our walk.</p>
<p>Foster presents his “Discipline of Study” in Chapter 5 of <i>Celebration of Discipline</i>. Out of 14 pages, only 1½ pages discuss the study of Scripture. Foster suggests that Christians should study Taoists, Zoroastrians, and Catholics who practice Zen. Not only do we study them, says Foster, but we are to allow them to “guide us in our spiritual walk.”</p> <p>What should you study? ... In addition to studying the Bible, Nor should we forget the great body of literature by men and women from many walks of life. Many of these thinkers have unusual perception into the human predicament. Writers like Lao-tse of China and Zarathustra of Persia, These writings have been listed to help you see the excellent amount of literature at our disposal to guide us in our spiritual walk. (<i>Celebration of Discipline</i>, 3rd Ed., Foster, pp. 71-72)</p> <p>Foster says we should study the writings of Lao-Tse, who is revered as a Taoist god, and Zarathustra, who founded the religion of Zoroastrianism.</p> <p>(continued on next page)</p>	<p>Scripture is our source for spiritual guidance: wisdom, salvation, faith, teaching, reproof, correction, and training.</p> <p>You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:14-17)</p> <p>We can follow only one master. We cannot follow both Jesus and other spiritual leaders such as Lao-Tse and Zarathustra.</p> <p>No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other (Matthew 6:24a)</p> <p>The Bereans tested what they learned against Scripture.</p> <p>The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. (Acts 17:10-11)</p> <p>Paul was well-versed in the literature of his day. Although he quoted the <i>Phaenomena</i> of Aratus in his dialog with the Greek philosophers, Paul neither accepted nor practiced pagan Greek idolatry.</p> <p>for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, “For we also are His children.” (Acts 17:28)</p> <p>(continued on next page)</p>

<p>Renovaré: Allow Taoists, Zen-practicing Catholics, and Zoroastrians to guide spiritual walk (continued).</p>	<p>Scripture: Scripture guides our walk (continued).</p>
<p>Foster includes readings on meditation from the Zen-practicing Catholic Merton in two of his books: <i>Devotional Classics</i> and <i>Spiritual Classics</i>. These essays are entitled <i>Ways of Meditation</i> and <i>The Gift of Contemplation</i>, respectively. Foster and Smith broadly define a “devotional classic” as a “kind of writing ... that seeks to form the soul before God.”</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">When these two words are brought together – devotional classic – they describe a kind of writing that has stood the test of time and that seeks to form the soul before God (<i>Devotional Classics</i>, Foster & Smith, p. 1)</p> <p>Foster is asking us to read Merton and practice what Merton says, “to form the soul before God.”</p>	<p>We cannot study false teachings with the intent to use them as a guide for our spiritual walk.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. (1 Timothy 6:3-5)</p> <p>See also Galatians 1:6-9.</p>

4.7 Solitude

<p>Renovaré: God must sometimes be “absent to us.”</p>	<p>Scripture: God will never leave us.</p>
<p>Renovaré teaching states that God allows us to feel as if He is absent. The purpose of God’s “seeming absence” from time to time is “so that we will develop character.”</p> <p>To develop Adam’s and Eve’s character – and ours too – God has to be “absent” as well as present in human life. ... God purposely works to establish a <i>balance</i> between his “manifest presence” and his “seeming absence,” so that we will develop character (<i>Renovaré Bible</i>, pp. xxxvii-xxxviii).</p> <p>The practical application of the Renovaré notion of “God’s absence” is what they call the “discipline of solitude.” Foster claims the “dark night of the soul” is a essential part of “solitude,” which is “a sense of dryness, aloneness, even lostness.”</p> <p>To take seriously the Discipline of solitude will mean that at some point or points along the pilgrimage we will enter what St. John of the Cross vividly describes as “the dark night of the soul.” ... We may have a sense of dryness, aloneness, even lostness. ... When God lovingly draws us into a dark night of the soul, there is often a temptation to seek release from it and to blame everyone and everything for our inner dullness. (<i>Celebration of Discipline</i>, 3rd Ed., Foster, pp. 102-103)</p> <p>In his book <i>Devotional Classics</i>, Foster includes a writing by St. John of the Cross on the “dark night of the soul.”</p> <p>(continued on next page)</p>	<p>God never leaves us. We never grow up enough to be separated from God. Our union with Christ is never broken.</p> <p>Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:19-20)</p> <p>Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, “I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,” so that we confidently say, “THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?” (Hebrews 13:5-6)</p> <p>Darkness and separation from God are reserved only for those “marked out for condemnation, ... for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.”</p> <p>For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, But these men revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed. Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. These men are those who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever. (Jude 1:4a,10-13)</p> <p>These will “pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord” (2 Thessalonians 1:9a).</p> <p>(continued on next page)</p>

<p>Renovaré: God must sometimes be “absent to us” (continued).</p>	<p>Scripture: God will never leave us (continued).</p>
<p>St. John of the Cross tells us that in the more advanced stages of our spiritual journey, God will draw us into “dry times and inward darkness” so we will “grow up.” He says “a soul will never grow until it is able to let go of the tight grasp it has on God. ... No soul will ever grow deep in the spiritual life unless God works passively in that soul by means of the dark night.”</p> <p>To Purify the Soul. At a certain point in the spiritual journey God will draw a person from the beginning stage to a more advanced stage. At this stage the person will begin to engage in religious exercises and grow deeper in the spiritual life. Such souls will likely experience what is called ‘the dark night of the soul.’ The ‘dark night’ is when those persons lose all the pleasure that they once experienced in their devotional life. This happens because God wants to purify them and move them on to greater heights. ... For a soul will never grow until it is able to let go of the tight grasp it has on God. ... Let it suffice to say, then, that God perceives the imperfections within us, and because of his love for us, urges us to grow up. His love is not content to leave us in our weakness, and for this reason he takes us into a dark night. He weans us from all of the pleasures by giving us dry times and inward darkness. ... No soul will ever grow deep in the spiritual life unless God works passively in that soul by means of the dark night. (St. John of the Cross, in <i>Devotional Classics</i>, Foster & Smith, pp. 33-36)</p> <p>Like Foster, Willard also says we will never become spiritually mature unless God is “absent to us” in the “discipline of solitude.” Willard vividly describes Thomas Merton’s “blessed solitude” as a “haunted unknown abyss.”</p> <p>Thomas Merton writes: “...<i>O beata solitudo!</i>” But solitude, like all of the disciplines of the spirit, carries its risks. ... “It opens out to us the unknown abyss that we all carry within us ... [and] discloses the fact that these abysses are haunted.” (<i>The Spirit of the Disciplines</i>, Willard, p. 161)</p> <p>Willard heavily relies on Thomas Merton’s notion of “solitude.” Thus, the “<i>beata solitudo</i>” (“blessed solitude”) of Merton that Willard discusses must be considered when evaluating the Renovaré notion of the “discipline of solitude.”</p> <p>Merton’s biographer writes that</p> <p>Merton felt particularly drawn to a life of solitude, (King, p. 42)</p> <p>In this “solitude,” Merton wrote that he remained in God’s “darkness” and slept in His “silence.”</p> <p>“Resting in God, sleeping, so to speak, in His silence, remaining in His darkness, has fed me and made me grow for seven years.” (ibid., p. 43)</p> <p>(continued on next page)</p>	<p>“There is no darkness at all” in God. Those who say they “have fellowship with Him and yet walk in darkness,” “lie and do not practice the truth.”</p> <p>This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. (1 John 1:5-7, see also Ephesians 5:6-16)</p> <p>The light of Christ shines on us.</p> <p>For this reason it says, “Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” (Ephesians 5:14)</p> <p>“We are not of night nor of darkness,” and we are not to sleep in the dark.</p> <p>We are not of night nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. (1 Thessalonians 5:5b-8)</p> <p>(continued on next page)</p>

<p>Renovaré: God must sometimes be “absent to us” (continued).</p>	<p>Scripture: God will never leave us (continued).</p>
<p>In 1967, Pope Paul VI requested Dom Decroix to ask Merton to compose a “message of contemplatives to the world.”</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Dom Francis Decroix, abbot of the Cistercian monastery of Frattocchie, near Rome, received a request from Paul VI for a “message of contemplatives to the world.” The pope suggested that Thomas Merton might compose the message. (Echoing Silence: Thomas Merton on the Vocation of Writing, Merton; Edited by Inchausti, p. 66)</i></p> <p>In his August 1967 reply to Decroix, Merton vividly calls solitude “an arid, rocky, dark land of the soul, sometimes illuminated by strange fires which men fear and peopled by specters which men studiously avoid except in their nightmares.”</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">But as I grow old in the monastic life and advance further into solitude, I become aware that I have only begun to seek the questions. ... My brother, perhaps in my solitude I have become as it were an explorer for you, a searcher in realms which you are not able to visit – except perhaps in the company of your psychiatrist. I have been summoned to explore a desert area of man’s heart in which explanations no longer suffice, and in which one learns that only experience counts. An arid, rocky, dark land of the soul, sometimes illuminated by strange fires which men fear and peopled by specters which men studiously avoid except in their nightmares. (ibid., pp. 66-67)</p> <p>In recommending Merton’s notion of the “blessed solitude,” Willard leads us into a “haunted unknown abyss,” “an arid, rocky, dark land,” ... “illuminated” not by the Holy Spirit, but “by strange fires which men fear,” where we are not with God but with “specters which men studiously avoid except in their nightmares.”</p> <p>Renovaré teaches that our union with Christ is sometimes broken, and our illumination by the Holy Spirit is sometimes darkened during times of “dryness,” “inward darkness,” “aloneness,” and “even lostness.” They say that God intentionally leads a person into this “dark night of the soul,” which is required for our spiritual growth. They say during these times, God seems “absent to us” so we can “grow up.” They teach that we will not become spiritually mature unless we are increasingly “on our own.”</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">God ... allows us to be increasingly “on our own” as we spiritually mature. (<i>Renovaré Bible</i>, p. xxxvii)</p>	<p>Hades is the only place discussed in Scripture that is arid, lit by eternal tormenting fire, and forever cut off from the presence of God.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said, “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.” (Luke 16:23-24)</p> <p>The “lake of fire” is reserved only for the unbelieving and unrepentant.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Then He said to me, “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” (Revelation 21:6-8)</p>

<p>Renovaré: Solitude and silence are placed above Bible study and prayer.</p>	<p>Scripture: Bible study and prayer have great effect.</p>
<p>Willard claims that “solitude and silence are powerful means to grace.” He says “Bible study, prayer and church attendance” “have little effect for soul transformation, as is obvious to any observer.”</p> <p>Solitude and silence are primary means for correcting the distortions of our embodied social existence. ... Indeed, solitude and silence are powerful means to grace. Bible study, prayer and church attendance, among the most commonly prescribed activities in Christian circles, generally have little effect for soul transformation, as is obvious to any observer. (<i>Spiritual Disciplines, Spiritual Formation and the Restoration of the Soul</i>, Willard, J. of Psychology and Theology, Spring 1998, vol. 26, no. 1, pp. 101-109, also in <i>The Great Omission</i>, Willard)</p>	<p>According to the Scriptures, Bible study, prayer, and “our assembling together” have a great effect on our lives.</p> <p>The Word of God is vital. We cannot survive without it.</p> <p>But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.’ ” (Matthew 4:4)</p> <p>Prayer has great effect.</p> <p>The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. (James 5:16b)</p> <p>Jesus Himself prayed for the spiritual condition of His disciples, that they would be sanctified in God’s word.</p> <p>But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves. ... Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. (John 17:13,17)</p> <p>We are not to forsake “assembling together”, since it is a vital part of “encouraging one another” and stimulating “one another to love and good deeds.”</p> <p>Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. (Hebrews 10:23-25)</p>

Renovaré hell and “solitude,” compared with Scripture:

The table below compares and contrasts the Renovaré notions of hell and “solitude,” and the Scriptural view of hell. Renovaré “solitude” is very similar to the Scriptural view of hell.

	Renovaré hell	Renovaré “solitude”	Hell in Scripture
Description	<p>Simply isolation from God Because God is love, hell – a place of separation from God – is necessary. ... Hell is simply isolation from God. ... A person – even a person others think of as decent and upright – who rejects God is experiencing hell on earth. (<i>The Good and Beautiful God</i>, Smith, p. 125)</p>	<p>Arid, darkness, fire, specters Thomas Merton writes: “...<i>O beata solitudo!</i>” But solitude, like all of the disciplines of the spirit, carries its risks. ... “It opens out to us the unknown abyss that we all carry within us ... [and] discloses the fact that these abysses are haunted.” (<i>The Spirit of the Disciplines</i>, Willard, p. 161) My brother, perhaps in my solitude I have become as it were an explorer for you, a searcher in realms which you are not able to visit – except perhaps in the company of your psychiatrist. ... An arid, rocky, dark land of the soul, sometimes illuminated by strange fires which men fear and peopled by specters which men studiously avoid except in their nightmares. (<i>Echoing Silence</i>, Merton, pp. 66-67)</p>	<p>Thirst, eternal fire, demons In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said, “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.” (Luke 16:23,24) Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. (Rev. 20:14) the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; (Matthew 25:41b)</p>
For who?	<p>The unbeliever Love does not demand love in return; it is not coercive. God does everything he can to reach out to us, and yet people are free to reject that love. ... A person – even a person others think of as decent and upright – who rejects God is experiencing hell on earth. (ibid.)</p>	<p>The mature believer At a certain point in the spiritual journey God will draw a person from the beginning stage to a more advanced stage. At this stage the person will begin to engage in religious exercises and grow deeper in the spiritual life. Such souls will likely experience what is called ‘the dark night of the soul.’ (St. John of the Cross, in <i>Devotional Classics</i>, Foster & Smith, pp. 33-36)</p>	<p>The unbeliever But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. (Revelation 21:8)</p>
Go there when ...	<p>You bar God from your life God will not violate the choices we make. People may choose to bar God from their life. (ibid.)</p>	<p>God takes you into it We may have a sense of dryness, aloneness, even lostness. ... When God lovingly draws us into a dark night of the soul, there is often a temptation to seek release from it and to blame everyone and everything for our inner dullness. (<i>Celebration of Discipline</i>, 3rd Ed., Foster, p. 104) For a soul will never grow until it is able to let go of the tight grasp it has on God. ... he takes us into a dark night. (St. John of the Cross, in <i>Devotional Classics</i>, Foster & Smith, pp. 33-36)</p>	<p>God sends the unbeliever Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire (Matthew 25:41a) fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. (Matthew 10:28b)</p>
Duration, Purpose	<p>Temporary; just verdict Thus the doors of hell are locked from the inside. (ibid.) God’s wrath is a <i>temporary and just verdict on sin and evil</i>. (ibid., p. 121, emphasis in the original)</p>	<p>Temporary; for character development God purposely works to establish a <i>balance</i> between his “manifest presence” and his “seeming absence,” so that we will develop character (<i>Renovaré Bible</i>, pp. xxxvii, emphasis and quotation marks in the original).</p>	<p>Eternal punishment These will go away into eternal punishment (Matthew 25:46a) He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. (John 3:36)</p>

5 Strategy for the Church

Renovaré strategy for getting their teachings into the church.	Scriptural strategy for getting false teachings out of the church.
<p>In an article posted on his web site Dallas Willard explains their strategy for introducing Renovaré practices into the local church. Questions in bold are from the interviewer.</p> <p>Leadership Journal interviewed Dr. Willard and Dieter Zander about the growing interest in spiritual formation and the attempts to practice it in the local congregation. ...</p> <p>What is the pastor's function in spiritual formation?</p> <p>Willard: The pastor is the teacher. If you're going to pursue spiritual formation, the preacher must be committed to it – you cannot plow around the pulpit. Time after time you'll see one or two members of a church get very involved in spiritual formation, but if the guy who does the preaching isn't sold on it, it doesn't take root in the congregation.</p> <p>I can tell you that spiritual formation will flourish in any congregation where the pastor takes the lead, understands the gospel of the kingdom of the heavens, preaches it, and then coaches people in their spiritual lives.</p> <p>Zander: This poses a huge landmine for pastors. If they do what Dallas suggests, some in the congregation will think they've become heretical. There will be an emotional reaction because we are turning what we've always preached upside down.</p> <p>The gospel isn't just about forgiveness so we can go to heaven. And that needs to be done very wisely.</p> <p>So, how does a pastor introduce these ideas without being tagged as a heretic?</p> <p>Zander: I would start with your staff and elders first. The gospel is like a seed. It gets planted and it grows slowly. We need to take our time and be patient.</p> <p>Willard: A pastor needs to find other pastors to talk to honestly about this work. And he should focus his preaching on the Gospels. One should begin preaching what Jesus preached. I would plan to spend two years just preaching from the Gospels.</p> <p>(http://www.dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?artID=112 and http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/2005/summer/2.20.html) (continued on next page)</p>	<p>Paul directed Titus to appoint elders who hold “fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching” and who are “able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.”</p> <p>For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. (Titus 1:5,7-9)</p> <p>Likewise, deacons must hold “to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.”</p> <p>Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. (1 Timothy 3:8-9)</p> <p>Paul urged Timothy to remain at Ephesus to “instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, nor to pay attention to myths.”</p> <p>As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith. But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions. (1 Timothy 1:3-7)</p> <p>(continued on next page)</p>

<p>Renovaré strategy for getting their teachings into the church (cont.).</p>	<p>Scriptural strategy for getting false teachings out of the church (continued).</p>
<p>The strategy for introducing Renovaré teachings and practices into the church can be summarized as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make sure the pastor is “sold on it.” 2. “start with your staff and elders first.” 3. Do it “very wisely” so that “it grows slowly.” 4. If the pastor is “tagged as a heretic,” just consider it an “emotional reaction.” 5. “find other pastors to talk honestly about this work.” No mention is made of talking honestly with the congregation. 6. “spend two years just preaching from the Gospels.” 	<p>Paul commanded Timothy to avoid / twist out / turn off (<i>ektrepō</i>) “empty chatter” and “what is falsely called ‘knowledge.’ ”</p> <p>O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, <u>avoiding</u> (<i>ektrepō</i>: turn or twist out, in a medical sense used of dislocated limbs, lest it be wrenched out of place; turn off or aside; turn away from; shun a thing) worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called “knowledge” – which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith. (1 Timothy 6:20-21a)</p> <p>Just like elders and deacons, we <i>all</i> must contend for the faith. Jude appeals to us to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.”</p> <p>Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. (Jude 1:3)</p> <p>Jude warned against “certain persons” who “have crept in unnoticed” and “deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.” However, Jude then urges us to “have mercy on some,” and “save others, snatching them out of the fire.”</p> <p>For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. (Jude 1:4)</p> <p>And have mercy on some, who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh. (Jude 1:22-23)</p> <p>Paul firmly warned the Galatians about following a different gospel. Like Jude, Paul asks us to gently restore those “caught” by false teaching. The context of Galatians 6:1 is Galatians 5 and 1:6-9, where Paul warns against false teaching that had crept into the church.</p> <p>I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed! (Galatians 1:6-9)</p> <p>Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. (Galatians 6:1)</p>

6 Conclusion

The teachings and practices of Renovaré (namely, those of Foster, Smith and Willard) discussed in this document contradict Scripture and must therefore be totally rejected. Their teachings and practices are impure, and clearly distort the gospel. By stark contrast, the teachings of Jesus and the Apostles are clear, plain, and undistorted.

Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. (2 Corinthians 4:1-2, NIV)

His disciples said, "Lo, now You are speaking plainly and are not using a figure of speech. Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this we believe that You came from God." (John 16:29-30)

Renovaré includes many half-truths in its teachings. However, Jesus does not give us permission to glean fragments of truth from false teaching. We cannot glean "grapes from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles." The distorted gospel from Renovaré is clearly bad fruit, since the true gospel is the only way we can be saved. After distorting the gospel so severely, how can they, according to Jesus, "speak what is good?" Thus, Renovaré (and in particular, Foster, Smith, and Willard) cannot be trusted as a source for *any* teachings.

Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits. (Matthew 7:15-20)

Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil. But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned. (Matthew 12:33-37)

Paul warns the Thessalonians not to be deceived by false teaching. He urges them to "stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us." These are the traditions we have in Scripture.

Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. ... For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness. But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word. (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4,11-17)

Annotated Bibliography

Below is an annotated bibliography of all books and documents (other than Scripture) referenced, along with a short version of the cited quotes. Page numbers in left column of the tables refer to pages in this document where the quote appears (if viewing the PDF, click on them to go to that page). Page number(s) in the original source follow each quote.

- **Cutting Edge Magazine**, <http://www.dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?artID=14>, Winter 2001, retrieved February 2010. An interview with Willard.

page	quotation
20	Willard: a person can be almost totally good, but miss the message about Jesus, and be sent to hell. What kind of a God would do that? ... It is possible for someone who does not know Jesus to be saved.

- **Edwards-Konic, Trish**, *The With God Life, An Interview with Richard Foster*, <http://www.fum.org/QL/issues/0506/foster.htm>, Quaker Life, Friends United Meeting, June 2005, retrieved February 2012.

page	quotation
7	"There is a great deal of Quaker thinking in this Bible," stated Richard Foster, Editor.
9	Interviewer: I noticed that the focus on the with-God life circumnavigates inconsistencies found in Scripture and differing opinions about theology. By looking at how God revealed himself to people throughout Biblical history negates all those arguments. Foster: "You bypass it all," stated Foster.

- **Foster, Richard J.**, *Celebration of Discipline*, Harper & Row, 1st Edition, 1978 (1985 reprinting). ISBN 0-06-062831-6.

page	quotation
29	Hence, you can <i>actually</i> encounter the living Christ in the event, be addressed by His voice and be touched by His healing power. It can be more than an exercise of the imagination; it can be a genuine confrontation. Jesus Christ will actually come to you. (p. 26)
34-36	A fourth form of meditation has as its objective to bring you into a deep inner communion with the Father where you look at Him and He looks at you. ... allow your spiritual body, shining with light, to rise out of your physical body. ... Listen quietly, anticipating the unanticipated. Note carefully any instruction given. ... Do not be surprised if the instruction is terribly practical and not in the least what you thought of as "spiritual." ... some have asked if I am endorsing astro-travel or astral projection in this meditation exercise. My answer is, "No, decidedly not!" (pp. 27-28)

- **Foster, Richard J.**, *Celebration of Discipline*, HarperCollins, 3rd Edition, 1998. ISBN 0-06-062839-1.

page	quotation
4	"If you wish to know in your self the reality of the gracious life of God seen in the Bible, you may find no better counselor than Richard Foster" – Dallas Willard (pp. 209-210)
23, 26	Richard J. Foster shows that it is only by and through these practices that we can find the true path to spiritual growth. (book jacket)
26	God has given us the Disciplines of the spiritual life as a means of receiving his grace. (p. 7)
29, 34, 35	take a single event, or a parable, or a few verses, or even a single word and allow it to take root in you. Seek to live the experience, And, by your imagination, that moment you are one of Christ's disciples on the spot, and are at His feet. ... Whatever it is that weighs on your mind or is a concern to you, just say "palms down." Release it. You may even feel a certain sense of release in your hands. ... turn your palms up as a symbol of your desire to receive from the Lord. ... It is wonderful when a particular meditation leads to ecstasy, but it is far more common to be given guidance in dealing with ordinary human problems. (pp. 29-31)

page	quotation (continued from previous page)
30	Thomas Merton writes, "Meditation is really very simple and there is not much need of elaborate techniques to teach us how to go about it." (p. 21)
36	To believe that God can sanctify and utilize the imagination is simply to take seriously the Christian idea of incarnation. (pp. 25-26)
38	A rosary or prayer wheel has the same objective. ... sheer repetition without even understanding what is being repeated does affect the inner mind. (p. 64)
39	In physical matters we always tend to pray for the most difficult situations first: terminal cancer or multiple sclerosis. But when we listen, we will learn the importance of beginning with smaller things like colds or headaches. Success in the small corners of life gives us authority in the larger matters. ... As with meditation, the imagination is a powerful tool in the work of prayer. (pp. 39-41)
41	Writers like Lao-tse of China and Zarathustra of Persia, ... These writings have been listed to help you see the excellent amount of literature at our disposal to guide us in our spiritual walk. (pp. 71-72)
43, 47	We may have a sense of dryness, aloneness, even lostness. ... When God lovingly draws us into a dark night of the soul, there is often a temptation to seek release from it and to blame everyone and everything for our inner dullness. (pp. 102-103)

- **Foster, Richard J.**, *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*, HarperCollins, 1992. ISBN 0060628464, 9780060628468.

page	quotation
37	Eastern Christian hesychastic tradition ... called aspiratory prayer or breath prayer. ... a repeated phrase reminds us an an entire Psalm, a short, simple prayer of petition that can be spoken in one breath, hence the name "breath prayer." ... It is also possible to discover your own individual breath prayer. ... Notice the brevity of each of the prayers – seldom more than seven or eight syllables. ... Begin praying your breath prayer as often as possible. (p. 122)
38	At the outset I need to give a word of warning, a little like the warning labels on medicine bottles. ... In the silent contemplation of God we are entering deeply into the spiritual realm, and there is such a thing as a supernatural guidance that is not divine guidance. ... I want to encourage you to learn and practice prayers of protection. ... "... All dark and evil spirits must now leave. ..." (pp. 156-159)
40	What is the goal of Contemplative Prayer? ... our final goal is "union with God," which is a pure relationship where we see "nothing." (p. 159)

- **Foster, Richard J.**, *Richard J. Foster's Study Guide for Celebration of Discipline*, HarperCollins, 1983, ISBN 0-06-062833-2, 9780060628338.

page	quotation
23, 26	The function of the Spiritual Disciplines is now clear. They are the <i>means</i> for receiving God's grace. (p. 6)
29, 35, 36	If some words do come to you, you take them with utmost seriousness. (p. 20)
34-36	Following the counsel of Ignatius of Loyola, attempt to use all of your senses as you slowly read the passage. ... You become quiet, and after a little while, Jesus returns and sits on a nearby rock. For a time, you are both silent, ... enjoying one another's presence. After a bit, the Lord turns to you and asks this question, "What may I do for you?" ... you turn to the Lord and ask, "What may I do for you?" And you listen with the heart quietly, prayerfully. ... I might just as well come clean and tell you that I have <i>no</i> interest at all, nor experience, in astro-travel or any of the rather exotic forms of meditation. (pp. 19-20)
39	We are working with God to determine the outcome of things. ... we are co-creators with God in advancing His kingdom upon the earth. (p. 25)
40	Merton, Thomas. <i>Contemplative Prayer</i> (A powerful analysis of the central nature of contemplative prayer. A must book.) (p. 22)

- **Foster, Richard J., and Beebe, Gayle D.**, *Longing for God: Seven Paths of Christian Devotion*, InterVarsity Press, 2009. ISBN 083083527X, 9780830835270.

page	quotation
7	The challenge for Fox is to move us beyond the objective text of Scripture to embrace the Spirit of God, which is love. For Fox, this meant that the spirit of Scripture, which is God's love, must be exalted over the text of Scripture. ... our experiences with the inward Christ provide us with new insights as we move through life. ... And so, new understandings emerge. (pp. 178-183)

- **Foster, Richard J., and Griffin, Emilie**, Editors, *Spiritual Classics: Selected Readings for Individuals and Groups on the Twelve Spiritual Disciplines*, HarperCollins, 2000. ISBN 0060628723, 9780060628727.

page	quotation
30	Thomas Merton has perhaps done more than any other twentieth-century figure to make the life of prayer widely known and understood. ... His interest in contemplation led him to investigate prayer forms in Eastern religion. Zen masters from Asia regarded him as the preeminent authority on their kind of prayer in the United States. (p. 17)
32	GOING DEEPER: <i>Centering Prayer in Daily Life and Ministry</i> , This book contains a series of essays by such experts as Trappists Thomas Keating and Basil Pennington. (p. 36)

- **Foster, Richard J., and Smith, James Bryan**, Editors, *Devotional Classics, Selected Readings for Individuals and Groups*, HarperSanFrancisco, 1993. ISBN 0060669667, 9780060669669.

page	quotation
40	Merton, Thomas. <i>Contemplative Prayer</i> I think this is Merton's best book. (p. 67)
42	a kind of writing that ... seeks to form the soul before God (p. 1)
44, 47	Such souls will likely experience what is called 'the dark night of the soul.' ... For a soul will never grow until it is able to let go of the tight grasp it has on God. ... God perceives the imperfections within us, and because of his love for us, urges us to grow up. His love is not content to leave us in our weakness, and for this reason he takes us into a dark night. He weans us from all of the pleasures by giving us dry times and inward darkness. (pp. 33-36)

- **Foster, Richard J., and Willard, Dallas**, Editors, *The Renovaré Spiritual Formation Bible*, 1st Edition, Harper Collins, 2005. ISBN 0060671084, 978-0060671082. Reprinted as *The Life with God Bible* in 2009.

page	quotation
5	Spearheaded by bestselling authors Richard J. Foster ... and Dallas Willard ... (website)
8	This direct mediating of God's presence through the Holy Spirit continues to develop up to the present. Alongside this continues the indirect mediating work of Scripture (pp. xxxvii-xxxviii)
10	Chapters 1-39 ... are closely linked to the 8th century BC prophet Isaiah. ... chapters 40-55, formed well after the time of Isaiah the prophet, Chapters 40-66 articulate <i>hope</i> , the conviction that the deportation of the 6th century BC will end soon It is right to say that the tradition of Isaiah does not "predict" Jesus. Nonetheless, the early Church, in its interpretive imagination under the inspiration of God the Spirit, found the utterances of this tradition especially important for its testimony to Jesus. ... The Church has taken these poems to refer to Jesus, even though it seems unmistakably clear that the primary reference in these poems is to Israel as God's servant. ... Isaiah focuses upon the sovereign capacity of God to make all things new. That future, however, is not simply a divine gift. It is at the same time a human task given to people like us. (pp. 982-983)
10	A politically powerful African (v 27) reads Isaiah 53, which early Christians understood as prophecy of the Messiah. (p. 1998, commentary on Acts 8:27-35)
10	Isa 53:4 is said to be fulfilled by Jesus' healings, (p. 1807)
10	We do not know who wrote it or exactly when it was written, although its portrayal of Daniel ... indicates that it was most likely partially written ... in 167 BC. (p. 1245)

page	quotation (continued from previous page)
11	Over time what began as stories told of the founding families of the People of God were written down and collected together (Gen 12-50), and a prologue (Gen 1-11) was added Adam, Eve, Cain, Abel, and Noah, are larger-than-life archetypes The Genesis narrative of creation is prehistory. ... In literary form they parallel stories of creation, the garden, and the flood found in Near Eastern mythology. ... Borrowing from other creation accounts, (p. 13-15)
12	Paul shares the ancient Jewish condemnation of homosexuality. ... How binding his opinion should be today has been the source of much contemporary debate, (p. 2076)
13, 23	Adam and Eve "fell" because, though innocent, they lacked character. Innocence is not virtue. Innocence, ... is a form of ignorance and lack of character. (p. xxxvii)
13, 24, 43	To develop Adam's and Eve's character – and ours too – God has to be "absent" as well as present in human life. (p. xxxvii)
23	<i>divine mediation</i> – that is, God's ways of arranging to be <i>with us</i> . (p. xxxvii)
23	God certainly could have stood over Adam and Eve ("been in their faces," as we sometimes say) and prevented them from succumbing to Satan's clever appeals. Instead, God arranged for them to be "on their own," and the result was then expressed in what they did. (p. xxxvii)
24	This allowing us to be "on our own" in order to develop character within us is an arrangement God still abides by and respects. (p. xxxvii)
24	As in the garden of Eden, God balances his manifest presence and seeming absence through divine mediation by providing appointed figures, forms of worship, social structures, cataclysmic events, Scripture, and other revelations. (p. xxxvii)
24	God's presence – and absence – is mediated through Scripture, traditions, and rituals of the religion of Israel: (p. xxxviii)
24	By the means of his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus breaks open the ethnic vessel within which the treasure of God's presence had developed. (p. xxxviii)
25	After Jesus' ascension into the heavens we see God's all-inclusive people ... being indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who also personally mediates God's presence for the formation of Christ's character in individuals and "all nations." (p. xxxviii)
43, 47	God purposely works to establish a <i>balance</i> between his "manifest presence" and his "seeming absence," so that we will develop character. (p. xxxvii)
45	God ... allows us to be increasingly "on our own" as we spiritually mature. (p. xxxvii)

- **Foster, Richard J., and Yanni, Kathryn A.,** *Celebrating the Disciplines: A Journal Workbook to Accompany "Celebration of Discipline"*, HarperCollins, 1992, ISBN 0060698675, 9780060698676.

page	quotation
40	"... One has begun to know the meaning of contemplation when he intuitively and spontaneously seeks the dark and unknown path of aridity in preference to every other way." – Thomas Merton (p. 87)

- **Galli, Mark,** *A Life Formed in the Spirit*, Christianity Today, Sept. 2008, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2008/september/26.41.html?start=2>, retrieved February 2012. Cited on page 4.
- **Keating, Thomas,** *Open Mind, Open Heart*, Continuum International Publishing Group, 2002, ISBN 0826414206, 9780826414205.

page	quotation
33	The sacred word is only a gesture, ... it has no meaning other than your intent. You should choose your word as a simple expression of that intent, not as a source of meaning or emotional attraction. The less the word means to you, the better off you are. ... Having chosen a sacred word, we do not change it during the prayer period, for that would be to start thinking again. ... When you become aware of thoughts, return ever-so-gently to the sacred word. " 'Thoughts' is an umbrella term for every perception including sense perceptions, feelings, images, memories, reflections, and commentaries. (pp. 49, 139-141)

- **King, Robert Harlen**, *Thomas Merton and Thich Nhat Hanh: Engaged Spirituality in an Age of Globalization*, Continuum International Publishing Group, 2001, ISBN 978-0826413406.

page	quotation (text in quotation marks are Merton's words; remainder from R. H. King)
30	"One might say this gives my meditation the character described by the Prophet [Muhammad] as 'being before God as if you saw Him.' ... My prayer tends very much toward what you call <i>fanā</i> ." ... This is an extraordinary reply that places Merton squarely within the mystical tradition. (p. 143)
31	"... We left the ground – I with Christian mantras and a great sense of destiny, of being at last on my true way after years of waiting and wondering and fooling around." ... Merton was clearly prepared to take his engagement with other religions, and Buddhism in particular, to a new level. (p. 112)
32	Foremost among the Buddhists Merton met on this trip was the Dalai Lama. ... Merton noted that a "real spiritual bond" had formed between them. (p. 22)
32	"We discover an older unity. My dear brothers, we are already one. But we imagine that we are not. And what we have to recover is our original unity. What we have to be is what we are." (p. 114)
32	he [Merton] did not offer much practical advice to his readers, That task was taken up in the 1970's, several years after Merton's death, by the Trappist monks of St. Joseph's Abbey in Spencer, Massachusetts. With the encouragement of their abbot, Thomas Keating, they devised a form of contemplative practice They called it centering prayer. (pp. 143-144)
33	There is a close fit between the practice of centering prayer, as Keating describes it, and Merton's method of meditation. (p. 144)
44	Merton felt particularly drawn to a life of solitude, (p. 42)
44	"Resting in God, sleeping, so to speak, in His silence, remaining in His darkness, has fed me and made me grow for seven years." (p. 43)

- **Leadership Journal**, *The Apprentices*, Christianity Today, Summer 2005, retrieved Feb. 2012. www.dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?artID=112.

page	quotation
48	Zander: This poses a huge landmine for pastors. If they do what Dallas suggests, some in the congregation will think they've become heretical. ... Interviewer: So, how does a pastor introduce these ideas without being tagged as a heretic? Zander: I would start with your staff and elders first.

- **Merton, Thomas, and Inchausti, Robert**, *Echoing Silence: Thomas Merton on the Vocation of Writing*, Shambhala Publications, 2007. ISBN 1590303482, 9781590303481.

page	quotation
45, 47	My brother, perhaps in my solitude I have become as it were an explorer for you, a searcher in realms which you are not able to visit – except perhaps in the company of your psychiatrist. ... An arid, rocky, dark land of the soul, sometimes illuminated by strange fires which men fear and peopled by specters which men studiously avoid except in their nightmares. (pp. 66-67)

- **Renovaré**, *Purpose Statement*, retrieved Feb. 2012.
<http://www.renovare.us/WHOWEARE/WhatisRenovar%C3%A9/tabid/2475/Default.aspx>.

page	quotation
4	We seek to resource, fuel, model, and advocate more intentional living and spiritual formation among Christians and those wanting a deeper connection with God.

- **Renovaré Spiritual Formation Institute**, retrieved February 2010.
<http://www.renovare.us/WHATWEDO/Training/SpiritualFormationInstitute/tabid/2348/Default.aspx>.
Cited on page 4.

- **Smith, James Bryan**, *The Good and Beautiful God: Falling in Love with the God Jesus Knows*, InterVarsity Press, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-8308-3531-7.

page	quotation
4	Richard Foster invited me to help him build and launch a Christian spiritual renewal ministry called Renovaré. (p. 11)
4	The influence of all of these people – Richard [Foster], ... Brennan [Manning], and Dallas [Willard] – on me is so strong that I am not sure I have any ideas that were not shaped by theirs. (p. 12-13)
5	You may not immediately recognize it, but the book you have just read is very much a part of what Renovaré is all about – it has the same DNA as Renovaré (back page)
14	these narratives are running (and often ruining) our lives. That is why it is crucial to get the right narratives. (pp. 24-25)
14	If God were our judge, the verdict would be “Guilty as charged.” (p. 78)
14, 21	Jesus ... forgives the sin of all people for all time, (p. 153)
15	“ <i>God is an angry judge. If you do well, you will be blessed; if you sin, you will be punished.</i> ” Not only is this narrative found in most primitive religions, it is also seemingly found in the Hebrew Bible. In Exodus 20:5 we read the following warning about idols: “You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parent, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me.” The rabbis in Jesus’ day taught this, and it was the dominant narrative among the people Jesus associated with. ... Though it has ancient Jewish roots, this narrative is also held by modern Christians. (pp. 40-41)
16	sin is not actually normative before conversion, (p. 158)
16	True, God does not want us to sin, and God does want us to do well. But that is only because sin harms us, and acts of goodness are healing both to us and to the recipients of our goodness. (p. 77)
17	What if God were actually like the one in this narrative, a God who responds to us with “absolute delight” regardless of how we look or feel, or what we have or have not done? (p. 87)
17	The chief point is that there is only one thing that separates us from God, and it is not our sin. (p. 102)
18, 47	Hell is simply isolation from God. A person – even a person others think of as decent and upright – who rejects God is experiencing hell on earth. ... People may choose to bar God from their life. Thus the doors of hell are locked from the inside. (p. 125)
19, 47	God’s wrath is a <i>temporary and just verdict on sin and evil</i> . (p. 121)
22	What would happen if humans rejected his love? ... God experienced the pain of unrequited love. (p. 139)
22	As a Christ-follower ... you are ... able to experience heaven now and will be fully glorified on your final breath in this life. (p. 156)

- **Smith, James Bryan, and Graybeal, Lynda L.**, *A Spiritual Formation Workbook: Small Group Resources for Nurturing Christian Growth*, Foreword by R. J. Foster, HarperCollins, 1999. ISBN 0062516264, 9780062516268.

page	quotation
5	A Renovaré Resource for Spiritual Renewal (front cover)
27	COVENANT. In utter dependence upon Jesus Christ as my ever-living Savior, Teacher, Lord, and Friend, I will seek continual renewal through: Spiritual exercises, Spiritual gifts, Acts of service. (p. 99)
37	PRACTICING THE CONTEMPLATIVE TRADITION: <i>Pray the same prayer for ten minutes each day</i> . There is a tradition in the Eastern Church called “hesychasm,” which is the practice of repeating a simple prayer over and over. (p. 36)

- **Steindl-Rast, David**, *Recollection of Thomas Merton's Last Days in the West*, Monastic Studies, Mount Saviour Monastery, Pine City, NY; 7:10, 1969. Also at http://www.gratefulness.org/readings/dsr_merton_recol.htm, retrieved February 2012.

page	quotation
31	Merton: "I see no contradiction between Buddhism and Christianity. The future of Zen is in the West. I intend to become as good a Buddhist as I can."

- **Tennant, Agnieszka**, *Not a Hallmark Bible*, Christianity Today, Sept. 2005, www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/septemberweb-only/137-52.0.html, retrieved February 2012.

page	quotation
5	Interviewer: How is <i>The Renovaré Spiritual Formation Bible</i> different from, say, a life application Bible? Dallas Willard: Fundamentally, a different vision of the Christian life underlies them.

- **Willard, Dallas**, *Spiritual Disciplines, Spiritual Formation and the Restoration of the Soul*, Journal of Psychology and Theology, Spring 1998, vol. 26, no. 1, pp. 101-109.

page	quotation
46	Indeed, solitude and silence are powerful means to grace. Bible study, prayer and church attendance, among the most commonly prescribed activities in Christian circles, generally have little effect for soul transformation, as is obvious to any observer.

- **Willard, Dallas**, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*, HarperOne, 2001. ISBN 0060694424, 978-0060694425.

page	quotation
5	"Essential guidance for spiritual growth." – Richard J. Foster (front cover)
26, 28	The key to this self-transformation resides in the practice of the spiritual disciplines. ... <i>The Spirit of the Disciplines</i> places solitude and silence, prayer, simple and sacrificial living, meditation upon God's word and ways, and service to others at the heart of the gospel. (http://www.dwillard.org/books/SpDisciplines.asp)
44, 47	Thomas Merton writes: "... <i>O beata solitudo!</i> " But solitude, like all of the disciplines of the spirit, carries its risks. ... "It opens out to us the unknown abyss that we all carry within us ... [and] discloses the fact that these abysses are haunted." (p. 161)

About the Authors

The 1st Edition of this document did not include any personal information about us because we think this document stands on its own. However, since so many readers have asked about our background and motivation for writing this document, we have included it here. Please know that for all of our professional and personal background, the most important thing to us is our commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ and His word, in all we say and do. The credibility of this document is not based on who we are (our qualifications or authority), but who Christ is, as revealed in Scripture.

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Dr. Connie Davis: Connie holds a Ph.D. in Rhetorical and Communication Theory from the University of Illinois and has taught courses in public speaking, business and professional speaking, organizational communication, human communication, negotiation, and persuasion at the University of Illinois and the University of Northern Iowa. Connie grew up in the Evangelical Free Church, and her parents served as medical missionaries with the EFCA in the Democratic Republic of Congo when Connie was a young child. She has traveled throughout the world and has lived in England, France, and Africa. For over 25 years Connie was active in the local, district, and national Women's Ministries of the Evangelical Free Church of America as a dramatist, speaker, and Western District Vice President. She is currently a member of The Chapel, where she serves on the steering committee and as a women's Precept Bible study teacher. Connie has been teaching inductive Precept Bible studies for the past 13 years, and has served as a national and international retreat and conference speaker. Married to Tim for 26 years, Connie homeschooled their two children, Emily and Timothy, for 8 years.

Why we wrote this document: This document was written in defense of the faith, to counter the false teaching and mysticism of Renovaré we personally encountered taking root among believers in our former church. We provide this document under the spiritual authority and endorsement of the elders and pastor (Dr. Richard Parker) of our church, The Chapel (thechapelgainesville.com). If you have any questions or comments about this document, please do not hesitate to contact us at DrTimothyAldenDavis@gmail.com.