

The
Dangers of
Contemplative
Prayer



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**This book is dedicated
to all those who
TREASURE TRUTH,
who SEARCH for it, and,
having FOUND it,
joyfully SHARE it
with others.**

FOREWORD



Many are asking, “What’s all the fuss about ‘Spiritual Formation’ and the buzz about ‘Contemplative Prayer’? Sure seems to be OK with me! What could possibly be wrong or bad about ‘Spiritual Formation’—it sounds like sanctification! And haven’t we been told that we should spend ‘a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ?’”

Precisely, and that is part of the problem!

Howard Peth is looking at the recent phenomenon called “emerging,” or “new spirituality,” that is emphasizing Spiritual Formation and Contemplative Prayer sweeping through almost all Protestant churches everywhere—with his mouth wide open and his brain in overdrive!

He sees time-honored biblical words and concepts that have been understood for two thousand years being hijacked into twenty-first-century meanings! Some words with new meanings *that seem* not only fresh but marvelously believable in a day when old rules and traditions have been junked by postmodern thinking.

So what does all this new way of looking at “old” biblical concepts mean as we try to pick our way through the huge flood of books, TV talk shows, church services that rattle the “saints,” *etc.*—all of which is programmed to change the way young and old think about what God is like and how He wants us to think about Him.

Professor Peth is the first to admit that not all is well in some of our church worship programs—that some are boring and not connecting with either the young or the older. But the answer is not in throwing out biblical principles regarding the kind of God running this universe. Rather, we should *look again* at what those principles really are that “turned the world upside down” in the first century A.D.

At the same time, we must face head-on what has been predicted for these last days: “Perilous [strong word] times will come: for men will be lovers of themselves . . . having a form of godliness but denying its power . . . when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables” —**2 Timothy 3:1–4:4.**

Those prophetic words from the pen of Paul—as sobering as they are—seem to be growing truer and truer every day! Both professed Christians and the ungodly are now hardly distinguishable. Satan is delighted that his



age-old seductive weapon of *spiritualism*, formerly forbidden absolutely by Christian leaders, is now seeping more and more into evangelical Protestant churches. Under the influence of the so-called New Age—which never died out—seekers are captivated by listening to “spirit voices” as they trust ancient mysticism in a fashionably modern dress!

In other words, the prophetic radar screen is becoming clearer by the day! Before you finish reading this small volume, you will see the “blips” on that screen as Professor Peth highlights them for you. I promise you that you will see exactly the kind of world predicted, virtually word for word.

One way to test the alluring appeal of New Spirituality and those featuring “spiritual formation” and “contemplative prayer” is to ask certain questions:

1. What is said about the future of this world—is it a world united in peace or a world in the turmoil of the seven last plagues and the return of Jesus?
2. Who is the Christ they want to “experience”—is He the Resurrected Lord of Heaven and Earth, still in human form, waiting to return to earth, or is “He” the God-consciousness that resides within each and every one of us and who can be “found” by contemplation?
3. What is the role or purpose of the Bible—is it God’s message with His plan to forgive and empower its readers, or is it a collection of religious history recalling how others “experienced” their God-consciousness?
4. In presenting the “spiritual formation” emphasis as something now needed in the Christian church, what kind of books are being used as study materials?

In these pages, you will see more clearly how appealing and clever “Satanic witchery” continues to capture truth-seekers. You will follow the threads of Satanic charm that unfortunately have fascinated men and women for centuries, and by God’s grace you’ll be warned against them.

Herbert Edgar Douglass, ThD
Lincoln, California

AUTHOR'S PREFACE



Sooner or later, almost everyone wants to get closer to God. This impulse seems to be a part of our instinctive human make-up. We find it in the mystics among the Hindus and Buddhists, and in the Sufis among the Muslims. This natural, in-born desire has for centuries been traced among Catholic monks and nuns, and even among Quakers. I dare say even hard-core atheists and everyday doubters, underneath it all, and in their quiet times of reflection, feel an indescribable longing to draw close to the Supreme Being—if He momentarily exists in their conscious world.

In more recent times, sophisticated moderns in Protestant evangelical churches have attended weekend workshops or even week-long retreats to receive training that promises to satisfy this universal hunger, this longing to go into God's "presence"—and even hear His voice speaking to them.

In just the last few years, literally thousands of Christians—pastors, youth leaders, and ordinary believers—have paid large sums of money to learn techniques that take them into "the Silence" where—they are told—they can hear God's voice. *And in "the Silence," they really DO hear "spirit voices" speaking to them directly and personally!* It's quite an experience, a very seductive experience.

But Christian leaders—who see their flocks being deceived, misled, and exploited by this new craze—see it as diabolically dangerous, a threat not only to every *individual involved and ensnared*, but also to *Christ's church as a whole!*

Why do they come to this conclusion? Is it *wrong* to want to be *closer* to God? To *feel* close to Him? Or even somehow to sense the Lord *speaking* to us? Of course not! It's not only natural, it's spiritually beneficial, and something the Lord Himself desires, as our loving heavenly Father. And our dear Savior who gave His very life for us, said with tears in His voice: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! . . . How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!" —**Matthew 23:37.**

So the Lord wants—and eagerly waits—to see this God-given impulse manifest itself in our lives. But . . . this thing which is the subject of the book you're now reading, this thing called "Contemplative Prayer," is absolutely *the wrong way* to satisfy the hunger to get closer to God!



Let me explain briefly before you go deeper into these pages. Contemplative Prayer is not difficult to learn. Interested students can be taught the basic idea in thirty minutes or less—although they are told to “practice” it regularly and faithfully twice a day, every day, for twenty minutes or more each morning, and twenty minutes or more each night before retiring.

But students are also told that to enter “the Silence”—which is essential and the whole point of the training—“You must learn to *empty your mind*. You must banish every stray thought, or feeling, or image until you reach the ‘center’ of your consciousness. Only then will you begin to hear new voices of love and truth—spirit voices that will tell you things you never heard before, never knew before.”

When students trying to learn Contemplative Prayer techniques wonder aloud, “How can I possibly ‘empty’ my mind when it keeps constantly *thinking*—even when I’m trying hard to fall asleep at night?” the answer given is an ancient one—a technique discovered millenniums ago in ancient India by Hindu mystics of the East. Those mystics would tell you what they found: that by saying a syllable, word, or phrase and *repeating* it over and over every time a thought intrudes into your mind you will *finally banish every stray thought* and clear your mind for “the Silence” so you can actually hear the voices of the spirits you’re endeavoring to hear.

The word repeated in this manner is called a “mantra” from the ancient Sanskrit language, and the mantras the Hindu mystics used ages ago—and still use today in order to enter the trancelike “Silence”—are the names of their various *Hindu gods*. However, in the Christian churches where Contemplative Prayer is now being taught, they usually change the term “mantra” to “prayer word” and tell the student to choose a Christian name to be repeated, such as “Father” or “Jesus.”

But merely changing the terminology from *mantra* to *prayer word* and suggesting the name of a Christian deity instead of a Hindu god or goddess does not change the reality that *the roots and sources of Contemplative Prayer are from the ancient pagan religions of Hinduism and Buddhism*. The inconvenient truth for those who promote Contemplative Prayer is that it is **NOT Christian** at all and **NOT biblical** at all. Much to the contrary, it is condemned by the Lord Jesus in these words from **Matthew 6:7**—“When you pray, *do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do.*”

I have of necessity used the word *mystic* in this Preface, so perhaps I should define its meaning. The *American Heritage Dictionary, Second College Edition*, says this about the word *mystical*: “Of, pertaining to, or stemming from **direct communion with ultimate reality or God.**” The Hindu guru, Buddhist priest, African witch doctor, Indian medicine man, or spiritualistic

medium/channeler/psychic all believe that they have been blessed with the gift of **direct**, personal contact with the invisible, supernatural world of spiritual Reality—or, as our definition says, “ultimate reality or God.”

And they do indeed have direct contact with “spirit voices” that they hear speaking to them personally. They don’t get their information *second-hand*, from, say, reading the Bible or listening to an insightful sermon. No, the mystic *believes* he gets his teachings directly from the divine Source. *But what he fails to consider* is that the spirit world—ever since Lucifer’s rebellion in heaven, has contained *both* angels *and* demons, good *and* evil, truth *and* error.

And therein lies the danger, as pointed out in this book.

But stop to think for just a moment: *How does God communicate with mankind?* Before the entrance of sin, Adam did enjoy **direct**, open communion with his Maker. But since man separated himself from God by transgression, the plan of redemption has opened another avenue whereby we may still have connection with Heaven. Through His Holy Spirit, God gave revelations to His chosen servants—prophets and apostles—as we read: “Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”—**2 Peter 1:21**.

So those who will, may hear God’s voice still speaking to them directly in His written Word, the Bible—which is “God’s Love Letter to the Human Race.” And as we peruse the pages of His inspired Book, God expects us to use our MINDS. “ ‘Come now, and let us REASON together,’ says the Lord.”—**Isaiah 1:18**. Thus the “**mystic** meditation” that tells us to *empty our mind* of every last thought is *poles apart* from the “**Christian** meditation” that God approves, in which we *think deeply* upon lovely themes and *dwell* upon uplifting ideas.

For with our MINDS we enter into a relationship with God. The apostle Paul urges in **Romans 12:2**—“Do not be conformed to this world, but be **transformed** by the **renewing** of your MIND, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

As we enter into God’s presence through prayer and the study of His Word, the Holy Spirit transforms our *thinking*. Transformed thoughts lead to transformed *behavior*, and then to a new, transformed *life* in Christ.

Before concluding this Preface, I should mention one last feature of today’s religious scene, one that is often tied to, and that implements, Contemplative Prayer: “The Emerging Church.”

The Emerging Church—sometimes called the “Emergent Church”—is reflective of the trend toward innovation and novelty promoted by spiritual leaders who “*will try anything once*,” as some people say. But it’s also a reflection of the fact that *church pastors have a hard job*: They’re pulled in opposite directions by forces that seem to be in conflict with each other.

On the one hand, Christian pastors have sworn to uphold the Word of God and teach its doctrinal truths. On the other hand is the reality that they have to please the congregation, or people won't keep coming back.

Praise the Lord that there are still sincere, faithful pastors devoted to the God-given truths they're called to preach. And they're happy to continue doing that wonderful work in traditional ways without compromise. Others who are equally sincere and dedicated—and who perhaps have had experience in the business world before being called to the ministry—have been more willing to try new, even revolutionary, methods.

You see, leaders in the BUSINESS world don't have that *first* commitment of pastoral work to worry about. So they simply follow the advice of psychologists and advertising geniuses who adhere to the market-driven principle of "*Give the customer what he wants.*" All advertising commercials are extremely *market driven*.

In the last few decades, some pastors who were worried about their dwindling flocks looked around and saw the success in the business world of the market-driven principle. A few of them reasoned, "The person in the pew is like the customer in the store—he's *seeking* something." So they did in-depth studies analyzing their church-going seekers in order to determine exactly what they were seeking. And they came up with a blueprint for a "seeker-friendly church" that gave birth to the first Emerging Church.

This seeker-driven principle is based on the premise of "*Give the seeker what he wants.*" Never mind what God wants. That first commitment for ministers of the gospel isn't even in the equation. "Doctrine" is virtually a *dirty word* in the Emerging Church. Sermons are replaced by dramatic skits or "the Conversation" in which seekers lounge around in a semi-circle and offer comments on a topic led by a facilitator sitting on a barstool—and everyone's opinion counts, no matter how far-fetched and outrageous.

But we may ask: Are all these radical changes good? Do the *seekers themselves* even know what is best—do they really have enough wisdom to write their own prescription for what ails them? They do sense a real hunger for truth, and they go to a church expecting to be fed and instructed. So is it wise to throw out God's Textbook for the course?

And does the local minister honestly have a legitimate right to revamp, revise, and revolutionize the whole worship experience simply because he thinks the sheep in his flock *belong to him*—or do those sheep *really* belong to Christ, who calls Himself "the Good Shepherd"? —**John 10:11-16.**

Is it safe for a mere man to *change* God's teachings according to his own private inclinations? No! Not when **2 Peter 1:20** says, "Knowing this

first, that *no* prophecy of Scripture is of any *private* interpretation,” and **Revelation 22:18–19** warns of terrible punishments awaiting “*anyone*” who “adds to” or “takes away from” the words of God.

We should not presume to judge the leaders in the Emerging Church movement. God alone knows their hearts and minds. *They themselves may well be good men* with the **BEST** of **MOTIVES**—a strong, sincere desire to reach the world for Christ—but *their market-driven METHODS are wrong*.

For the Emerging Church offers us “feel good” churches that are “seeker friendly” and whose middle name is “compromise,” where God’s Truth is strongly diluted by “dumbing down” the teachings of God’s Word.

All this may sound too unbelievable to accept, but I assure you that this watering down of the Christian gospel message is absolutely true today—and it’s a *literal fulfillment* of Paul’s sad prophecy:

2 Timothy 4:3–4 — The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

In closing, let me say that what you’re about to read is by no means an exhaustive, comprehensive treatment of the subject but is instead a *brief overview* which I hope you’ll find “user-friendly.”

I must admit that as I was writing the pages that follow, at times I felt impelled by a terrible sense of *urgency* because this subject is a *deadly serious one*. I pray that my message may not offend anyone but instead will awaken all to something absolutely fatal: this “Trojan Horse” which has already stealthily entered the church.

H. A. P.
San Diego, California
October 2011

- Bible texts are from the *New King James Version* unless otherwise noted.
- Titles and pronouns referring to DEITY are capitalized, even in quotations where they were not so printed.
- Emphasis is supplied, even in quotations, to telegraph meaning for instant intelligibility. Subtle nuances are thus made so clear that one can almost hear the author’s voice.
- Contractions are freely used to achieve a lighter, more conversational tone in what might otherwise be heavy and bookish. Popular nonfiction presents scholarly facts to the masses, but a serious subject needn’t be a solemn one!

THE DANGERS OF CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER



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INTRODUCTION: “SATAN NEVER SLEEPS” —THE ANATOMY OF A HERESY



God has His faithful people—His sheep—everywhere in this world, and He loves them and cares for them as “the Good Shepherd” that He is. That’s what Jesus calls Himself in **John 10:11–16**, where He says also: “The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep.” And He adds, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me,” **verse 27**.

But sometimes even the best sheep, who always follow the Shepherd, *hear other voices and become confused*; as Jesus said, “The wolf catches the sheep, and scatters them,” **verse 12**. Yet we need not worry, for Jesus—who knows everything about shepherding God’s beautiful flock—tells us: “Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and *they shall hear My voice*; and there will be one flock and one Shepherd,” **verse 16**.

An example of this may be seen in **Acts 6:7**, which says:

Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and *a great many of the PRIESTS* were obedient to the faith.

Those Jewish priests were good men, sincere men, faithful to what they had all their lives been taught. They had heard “other voices” and followed them. But then, after hearing the voice of the Good Shepherd in the apostles’ preaching about the Messiah, they followed Him and “were obedient to the faith.” In fact, perhaps the most zealous of all the Jewish leaders was *Saul of Tarsus*, who experienced God’s miraculous metamorphosis of conversion to become *Paul, the great apostle to the Gentiles!*

How many today are there—good people, loyal followers of the faith of Jesus all their lives—who may have become confused and misled by “other voices”? Sincerely wanting to do what’s right, honestly seeking a closer, more intimate experience with the Lord they love, they’ve been deceived and seduced. They’ve innocently followed a way that “seems right” to them.

The Bible puts it this way—twice!—“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death,” **Proverbs 14:12, 16:25**.

But God wants each and every one of those “sheep” who may have been misled to come *back* to Him—now, before it’s too late. He loves them and calls them “My sheep” and “My people.” In **Revelation 18:4** He calls, “*Come out of her, My people*”—come out of deception and stop listening to other voices.

It’s easy to understand that deception is rampant when we recall that our universe is a battleground, the scene of a great controversy—a cosmic conflict

between Christ and Satan, Good and Evil, Truth and Error. Reduced to its most basic essentials, it's a battle for our **hearts** and **minds**. You and I are not *passive spectators* merely watching from the sidelines—we're deeply involved as *key participants*, whether we like it or not, and whether we even realize it or not!

This war against God BEGAN in Heaven with Lucifer's rebellion—but it's going to END on this earth with God's victory and vindication. It's the most UNCIVIL war in history, and it's "a fight to the finish" that is DEADLY—remember how the devil or "Dragon" tried to kill Jesus from the moment He was born? (See Revelation 12:1–5 and Matthew 2:1–23.) Fortunately, this colossal conflict is—in God's divine plan—the war to END all wars.

But for *now*, the battle is raging right here on Planet Earth, a war zone which has become "the Theater of the Universe." The apostle Paul says in **1 Corinthians 4:9** that "We have been made a **spectacle** to the **world**, both to angels and to men." The Greek word Paul wrote for "spectacle" is *theatron*, from which we get our English word "theater." And the Greek word translated "world" is *kosmos*, from which we derive our words "cosmos" and "universe."

Just as some TV addicts are hooked on soap operas to see what "Dick" and "Jane" will do in their latest crisis, the whole UNIVERSE is watching US—with intense interest—to see what *we* will do, whose side *we* will choose, in the great controversy between Christ and Satan! No trivial soap opera with its *fictional* characters could be half as interesting as the real thing, on which hang eternal destinies.

Even Shakespeare's line that "*All the world's a stage*" pales into insignificance compared to the awesome stakes involved here. For this controversy has all the aspects of a melodramatic play and is, in fact, the DRAMA OF THE AGES! Satan is the villain; Christ is the hero. There's a tragic plot—with intrigue and conflict—and a magnificent cast of characters involving not only kings and popes but even you and me! We may wear different costumes and act out different roles, but we each have a part, a vital part to play in this drama.

So Paul brings in the image of a drama—one that's better than any "Reality TV." But let's not forget that *we're not just actors in a "play"* but *soldiers* in a *battle* involving life and death.

All of us humans are inducted into this titanic battle the day we're born. So there's NO DISCHARGE in this war. No one can simply say, "Wake me when it's over." And when we become Christians we stand a good chance of becoming special targets of Satan. But I have *good* news, GREAT news for you: Now listen . . . *confidentially*, I read the back of the Book—and WE WIN!!!

It's very good to know that those who follow God are on the winning side. But since the battle's still raging, we *still* face a supernatural enemy

who *hates* us and wants to *deceive* us so he can take US down *with* him.

Let's kindly remember that those who have become involved in Contemplative Prayer are not bad, they're not evil, they're believers like us. Even religious leaders who are quite sincere may at times be misled. They themselves could be honestly deceived. They simply feel that Contemplative Prayer seems right. But . . . just because it **SEEMS right** doesn't mean it **IS right**—as we'll try to show those people in this study—and everyone else who cares about what the Bible says regarding these things.

So let's begin by looking at some pertinent Bible verses for background.

- **Revelation 12:7–9, 12** — “*War broke out in HEAVEN [!]: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. . . . Woe to the inhabitants of the earth! . . . For the Devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has [but] a short time.*”
- **1 Peter 5:8** — “Be sober, be vigilant; because **your adversary the Devil** walks about *like a roaring LION*, seeking whom he may **DEVOUR**.”
- **2 Corinthians 2:11** — We must be alert and beware, “lest Satan should take advantage of us; for **we are not ignorant of his devices**.”
- **2 Corinthians 11:13–15** — The apostle Paul warns us against those who “are *false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an ANGEL of light.* Therefore *it is no great thing* if his **MINISTERS** also transform themselves into *ministers of righteousness*, whose **END** will be according to their works.”
- **1 Timothy 4:1, KJV** — “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that *in the latter times* some shall *depart from the faith*, giving heed to *seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils*.”
- **1 John 4:1** — “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but **TEST** the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

My hope and prayer is that you'll take those Bible passages as seriously as God intended, for *these pages you're reading are not at all a routine report of everyday facts*. Instead, they must be an urgent wake-up call, a red flag, a solemn warning—in short, a cry of alarm to everyone I can reach.

The cause of my great concern is that I've recently learned of a diabolical strategy that—in all seriousness—threatens the very survival of Christianity, at least as we know it. The devil, reading the prophetic signs of the times better than anyone else, knows he has but a short time, for Christ will soon return. Therefore, in these last days “Satan’s pulling out all the stops” and attacking *ALL* the churches with *this “granddaddy” of all heresies!*

Some of those who are completely devoted to the New Age movement are so deceived by Satan that they unwittingly consent to have themselves—their bodies, minds, and voices—used as “channels” for *spirit entities who are actually demons* posing as mystic “masters” who supposedly lived centuries ago. A few of those “gifted psychics” even achieve popular celebrity status. No doubt scattered over the world are many more of those mediumistic channelers who contact and invite into their minds the *purported* “dead departed” (who are really clever devils) and converse with them. But even so, such mystics still were relatively few in number—until recently.

For in just the last few decades, *ancient Eastern mysticism* has been revived and is infiltrating almost ALL Christian churches in the Western world. It’s as if one of Satan’s demons suggested to his Infernal Highness:

We’ve had good success with those celebrity channelers of the New Age—but they’re still a mere handful. Just think what our legions could do if we *popularized mysticism among church-goers everywhere so that ALL Christians allow us to speak to them each time they PRAY!*

Satan saw that the evil results of this proposal could be—and would be—horrendously *delightful* from his point of view. And “the rest,” as they say, “is history”—the history and heresy of **Contemplative Prayer**.

This study has **THREE parts**. **First**, we’ll see what Contemplative Prayer **IS** and **HOW** it works. **Second**, we’ll examine its *roots* and *sources* to learn **WHERE** it comes from. **Third**, we’ll consider its *deadly DANGERS*—the *perils* of Contemplative Prayer to everyone seduced into its practice.

So let’s take a good, hard look at this hazardous heresy. To understand its all-out assault on Christianity, let’s *dissect* the *anatomy* of this *whole subject*—its sources, its promoters and proponents, and its dangers.

As a quick preview, let me simply **LIST some relevant TERMS** you’ll encounter. *I’ll define and explain these terms below as we proceed*, but for now just take a quick look at some seemingly harmless code-words used by those devoted to this heresy:

- Spiritual Formation ● Contemplative Prayer ● Centering Prayer ● “The Silence”
- Mantra ● Meditation ● The Emerging or Emergent Church ● Universalism ●
- Monism ● Pantheism ● Panentheism ● Zen Buddhism ● Mystical Experiences
- Spiritual Directors ● Spiritual Disciplines

The first term is . . .

Spiritual Formation = An all-inclusive term that covers everything discussed in this study. In fact, I could have used this broad, “umbrella” term in my *title*, but I choose instead to refer specifically to Contemplative Prayer because that mystical practice—with its resultant “Silence” and exposure to demonic influence—is the crux of this deadly problem and the focus of this study.

Spiritual Formation is a system of practices invented in 1548 by Ignatius Loyola, the Roman Catholic founder of the Jesuits, to train the young Jesuit priest to submit his mind and will to his superiors.¹ The one who trains him has the title of **Spiritual Director**.

So it is that even today, someone who is *not* a Jesuit, and *not* a priest, and *not even a member* of the Roman Catholic Church, but who is nevertheless *willing* to submit to Spiritual Formation and learn its practices, will have a human Spiritual Director appointed to guide him or her.²

The Spiritual Director is of course *trained* to do this sort of thing, but the fact remains that the new situation puts *a human being in charge* of personally directing the student, and all too often *this trusted person takes the place of the Bible* in the student’s intimate spiritual life.