

NAZARENE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A CHRISTIAN PRAYER LABYRINTH FOR SPIRITUAL FORMATION:
HOLISTIC PRAYER PRACTICES AND PLACES FOR SPIRITUAL HEALING AND
STRENGTHENING

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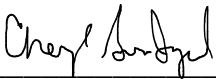
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ABSTRACT

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A Christian Prayer Labyrinth for Spiritual Formation:

A Proposal to Practice Four Levels of Spiritual Exercises in Four Archetypical Labyrinth

Places for Holistic Christian Spiritual Healing and Strengthening

Over the past four hundred years, American evangelicalism has often preached a shallow holiness message that failed to migrate the believer from holiness of heart to holiness of life because it has tended to diminish the human role in the sanctified life. This dissertation project proposes a holistic spiritual formation approach based on four classical spiritual stages to prayer and experiencing God. These four classic steps of growth which are purification, mediation, presence, and embodiment, aim to heal the believer's whole body, mind, spirit, and embodied life, respectively. In addition, this paper also reveals four types of places, desert, cloister, holy mountain, and community, as conducive spaces to exercise the four practices. The practices and places collectively foster ongoing holistic sanctification by aiding one to control passions, renew the mind, infill the spirit, and embody relationships and responsibilities. Next, the paper provides easy access to these places with a newly designed Christian prayer labyrinth as an archetype for these four places to exercise the four spiritual practices. Finally, the dissertation project enables labyrinth users to experience this holistic prayer method by providing a smartphone app with narrated labyrinth prayers and meditative background music for use in public or private settings.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The American evangelical church inspired a rich heritage of evangelism, missions, and ecclesiastical practices over its four-hundred-year tradition. The positive moral influence resulting from the seventeenth-century Puritan settlements, the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century First and Second Great Awakenings, the nineteenth-century Holiness camp-meeting revivals, and the twentieth-century stadium and mass media revivals transformed the moral fabric of American and global societies.

However, the theology of the evangelical church often extrapolated an instantaneous renewal of the heart to an immediate and complete transformation of the body, heart, mind, and life. This flattening of personal holiness to a few spiritual encounters created a dangerous dualism that downplayed our participation in transformative grace, resulting in a cheap grace that failed to model a higher moral standard for society. Dr. John Coe, professor of spiritual theology, refers to this disconnect between proclaimed and practiced holiness as a “sanctification gap.”¹

This paper proposes to show how a holistic sanctification message and its associated practices can address the sanctification gap. It draws from a rich tradition of mystics and theologians and their holistic messages and spiritual exercises. The dissertation uses these resources to explore how spiritual practices instill a life-holiness that heals and strengthens the believer’s body, heart, mind, spirit, and personal life. This project also develops a prayer labyrinth artifact to incorporate these spiritual exercises in an amenable prayer setting. The artifact is a newly designed Christian prayer labyrinth based on the classical Chartres Labyrinth

¹ John H. Coe, “Spiritual Theology: When Psychology and Theology in the Spirit Service Faith,” in *Psychology and Spiritual Formation in Dialog: Moral and Spiritual Change in Christian Perspective*, eds. Thomas M. Crisp, Steven L. Porter, and Gregg A. Ten Elshof (Downers Grove, IL: Intersity Press, 2019), 17, Kindle.

overlaid with four archetypical spaces conducive to practicing these spiritual disciplines. The prayer artifact could be placed permanently in outdoor ministry settings, drawn indoors on a floor or a canvas, or crafted as hand-sized fingerboards for private prayer settings. The project includes a smartphone app with narrated prayers set to meditative music to guide users through the labyrinth prayers.

Section I — Problem Overview

Why don't we expect aspiring athletes, musicians, tradespeople, or businesspeople to mature into professionals instantly? Who would dispute that it takes years of disciplined training to progress from having a career aspiration to becoming a practiced professional? Unfortunately, however, American evangelical leaders at times have failed to recognize that it also takes years of disciplined training and prayer practice to go from a Holy Spirit-inspired experience to a matured holy life. The problem stems from a single-dimensional or non-holistic sanctification that centers on the heart change wrought by the Holy Spirit and ignores the life change brought by our participation with the Holy Spirit.

Over the last four centuries, revivalists have preached that God draws all people by grace and infills those who call upon Christ, but they have frequently failed to stress human cooperation in ongoing holiness and cleansing of the heart, body, mind, and life. Though God gifts us with this mystical, spiritual salvation experience, He does not intend to overwhelm our nature or eliminate our free will in the ongoing transformation process. Those who have preached this born-again experience that overwhelms human nature have been labeled "enthusiasts" who believe "that their thoughts and actions are inspired and free from the sin and

error of ordinary believers.”² Ronald Knox believed the common denominator of all strands of evangelicalism was the practice of a grace that destroys nature rather than perfects it.³

Though it would be incorrect to paint all evangelicals with such a broad brush, Knox accurately identified those who place an extreme emphasis on Holy Spirit’s role. One example of this extreme is when the leading of the Holy Spirit supersedes the rational mind. Lovelace described this spiritual extreme as dehumanizing “by turning us into either dependent robots waiting to be programmed by the Spirit’s guidance or whimsical enthusiasts blown about by our hunches and emotions.”⁴ Spiritual extremes that void out the human factor lead to non-holistic holiness by ignoring psychological and physiological challenges. The problem is that enthusiasts effectively believe that the Holy Spirit transforms our body, heart, mind, spirit, and life in one experience without our cooperation.

A more participative spiritual formation encourages one to be filled with the Spirit continually and cooperates with the Spirit to transform them daily. Those who flatten sanctification and holiness to one or two experiences ignore the active verbs of the scriptures exhorting our practical participation with Christ to seek the transformation of the body, mind, and life. Thus, the church needs a meaningful theory-praxis of transformation (i.e., spiritual theology) that will be helpful to all believers, a practice of formation that is theoretically connected to both theology and the human experience.⁵ There is no lack of preaching on the love of God and justifying grace, but there is a lack of preaching on sanctification and its ongoing transformative effect on one’s life.⁶

² Richard F. Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life: An Evangelical Theology of Renewal* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 240, Kindle.

³ Ronald Knox, “Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion” (1950): 1-4, quoted in Richard F. Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life: An Evangelical Theology of Renewal* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 241, Kindle.

⁴ Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, 265.

⁵ Coe, “Spiritual Theology,” in *Psychology and Spiritual Formation*, 25.

⁶ Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, 211.

Section II — Proposal

This dissertation proposes a holistic transformation model of sanctification by leaning on four classical spiritual exercises--purification, mediation, presence, and embodiment--that purify and strengthen the believer's body, heart, mind, spirit, and life. It specifies a prayer tool with archetypal spaces conducive to the four spiritual exercises, enabling a holistic spiritual formation experience.

Briefly stated, this paper accomplishes its proposal by systemizing classical prayer practices and proposing to exercise them in a prayer labyrinth tool that models prayer spaces conducive to body, mind, spirit, and one's active life. The four traditional stages provide holistic practices in the following manner:

1. The purification stage involves ascetic disciplines to overcome spiritual ailments by cleansing of worldly pleasures and crucifying fleshly activities that conflict with the Spirit. This stage provides disciplines to heal spiritual ailments and strengthen one's faith and love. The purification process enables cleansing and fortification of the body and heart.
2. The meditative stage provides practices to prepare the mind for communication with God through repetitive prayers and meditations on scriptures and liturgies, which enable a clearing, quieting, and renewing of the mind in preparation for His presence.
3. The presence stage provides passive, contemplative exercises that listen for God's presence through Christ, believing that He provides access to the Father by grace. Though one cannot force or demand this mystical encounter, one can call upon

God by grace through faith and trust that He will respond with His unspeakable love and presence.

4. Finally, the embodiment stage involves practices and prayers that embody the inner renewal of the heart, body, mind, and spirit to the outer personal, professional, and ministerial life.

Section III — Method

Chapter Two discusses the problem in more detail by showing that a dualistic mentality was rampant in the revivals of American Christianity leading to a shallow holiness today. Moreover, it discusses how this current Christian culture of cheap grace and holiness infects the ethics of contemporary evangelical society.

The literature review in Chapter Three surveys mystics and theologians and their contribution to the concepts behind Christian spirituality, or mysticism,⁷ and the classical three-fold way of purgation, illumination, and union. The chapter then translates these stages into contemporary terminology by proposing four classical stages of purification, meditation, presence, and embodiment while maintaining the same spirituality concepts. Finally, Chapter Three discusses the classical practices related to these stages that have provided a holistic formation precedent. It explores spiritual exercises of various traditions employed through the ages to purify the body, heart, mind, spirit, and life.

⁷

Christian Spirituality and mysticism are related, according to McGinn, who informs us that “the study of mysticism is the acme of Christian spirituality” He also states that Christian mysticism and “the theology of Christian mysticism should not be separated in the study of Christian history.” Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*. Vol. 1 of *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1992), xi-iv.

To provide a holistic setting in which to practice a holistic formation, Chapter Four discusses how biblically the four physical places of desert, cloister, holy mountain, and community stimulate the spiritual and psychological mood of the believer in practicing the four spiritual stages. The idea is that these settings provide an amenable environment to practice purification, meditation, presence, and embodiment and thereby enable holistic spiritual formation of the body, heart, mind, spirit, and life. For instance, the archetypal labyrinth desert is conducive to purification as a place to wrestle with loss and temptations by employing ascetic practices. The cloister space provides a meditative setting for seeking communication with God. The holy mountain space provides a place where God reveals His presence and glory, and the labyrinth community space provides an environment to practice embodying the spirit of God in one's life.

The dissertation project also provides labyrinth prayers and liturgies with a smartphone app to guide the seeker through these metaphorical spaces to help develop a holistic prayer practice and influence ongoing spiritual maturity. To simulate these devotional spaces of desert, cloister, holy mountain, and community, Chapter Five proposes a Christian prayer labyrinth tool as an artifact for the dissertation project to be used in ministry applications. The paper introduces a new Christian prayer labyrinth based on the classical Chartres labyrinth, which overlays four archetypal places: desert, cloister, holy mountain, and community. The chapter then suggests the following three labyrinth contexts and forms:

1. For church and group ministries created in an outdoor space
2. For indoor ministries created on a portable canvas material
3. For private prayer use, as a handheld fingerboard

To assist prayer labyrinth users to practice holistic spiritual exercises in the labyrinth, Chapter Six develops labyrinth prayers addressing different spiritual ailments or daily strengthening prayers. Each prayer contains four steps and four spiritual exercises to holistically heal or strengthen the body, heart, mind, spirit, and life. Finally, to provide a more meditative experience, this chapter introduces a smartphone app to guide the labyrinth user with prayer narrations set to meditative background music.

Conclusion

Over the past four hundred years, American evangelicalism has often preached a non-holistic holiness message that fails to take the believer from holiness of heart to holiness of life because it has tended to diminish the human role in the sanctified life. This dissertation project proposes a holistic spiritual formation built upon the spirituality and practices of the church mystics and theologians that addresses a spirituality that heals the body, heart, mind, spirit, and embodied life. The paper also reveals how biblical places have been conducive to holistic spiritual experiences and proposes a prayer labyrinth artifact with four archetypal spaces conducive to practicing holistic prayers and liturgies. Finally, the dissertation project provides a smartphone app with narrated prayers and meditative background music to set a contemplative experience in the prayer labyrinth. We will begin this study by reviewing some history of the preaching of sanctification in the American Christian evangelical context.

CHAPTER TWO

American Evangelical Sanctification Gap

The following paragraphs will show that a dualistic⁸ mentality often governed American Christian evangelism, especially among revivalists, over the past four hundred years and contributed to a shallow holiness teaching. Next, it will show that this mentality which lacks teaching about how the Spirit of God transforms the person, still exists in the Christian evangelical church. Finally, the writings of a couple of contemporary theological scholars break down the root of this non-holistic holiness thinking which teaches a grace that overwhelms human nature. This paper seeks to enable the believer to practice deeper sanctification and ongoing transformation into the image and likeness of Christ by teaching and guiding in holistic prayer practices.

Section I — Dualistic Evangelistic Mindset

The seeds of American evangelical extremes could be seen with the Puritans, who at times preached that grace nullified free moral agency.⁹ During the seventeenth century, the English Puritans feared to overstress holiness due to the “dead orthodoxy,” or an over-emphasis

⁸ This paper uses Richard Rohr’s definition of dualistic thinking in which he describes the dualistic mind as binary. Holiness and transformation in American evangelical history were taught as a binary experience in which a believer was either sanctified or not, or perfect or not. However, the non-dualistic mindset understands that though a devout believer strives for perfection, the life transformation process is a series of victories and involves many degrees of progress and growth. “The dualistic mind is essentially binary, either/or thinking. It knows, by comparison, opposition, and differentiation. It uses descriptive words like good/evil, pretty/ugly, smart/stupid, not realizing there may be a hundred degrees between the two ends of each spectrum. Dualistic thinking works well for the sake of simplification and conversation, but not for the sake of truth or the immense subtlety of actual personal experience.” Rohr, Richard, “The Dualistic Mind,” Center for Action and Contemplation, January 29, 2017, <https://cac.org/the-dualistic-mind-2017-01-29/>, under “The Dualistic Mind” (last accessed January 8, 2022).

⁹ The concept of free moral agency is defined as having “the freedom to make our own choices, including even the choice to reject the Creator’s divine right to rule over our lives.” Theodore Griffin, “Blessed with Free Moral Agency: Choose life, so that you may live,” September, 3, 2021, <https://www.wesleyan.org/blessed-with-free-moral-agency>, under main heading, (last accessed September 29, 2021).

on works-righteousness they experienced in England.¹⁰ This salvation did not involve any human choice; rather, it was conditional on God's will to elect some for salvation and others for eternal damnation irrespective of repentance or "calling on the name of the Lord." Thus, according to this warped theology, there is no handle on our side of the door of the heart leading to Christ, so Christ either elects to open it or locks us out. He chooses our salvation or damnation. This extreme Puritan position on God's sovereignty continued into the Second Great Awakening of the eighteenth century regarding salvation and sanctification.

Jonathan Edwards continued the Puritan evangelistic teaching in the early part of the century, which some critiqued as failing to bring positive life change. During the First Great Awakening of the eighteenth century, Charles Chauncy accused evangelicals like Edwards and George Whitefield of providing an emotional experience through their preaching which did not result in transformation.¹¹ Whitefield, in his sermon "Christ the Believer's Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption," preached imputed sanctification and holiness, or a spiritual empowering and cleansing independent of any human cooperation.¹²

However, Whitefield seemed to live above this theology by acknowledging in sermons like "Walking with God" our responsibility to walk with Christ and participate in change from "glory into glory" to reflect His image.¹³ As a result of Chauncy's critique, Jonathan Edwards admitted that the revivalists of his time were guilty of not living what they preached and attempted to teach a more responsible grace. He responded positively to Chauncy's criticisms to bring reform to the reformers with his *Thoughts on the Revival in New England and Religious*

¹⁰ Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, 233.

¹¹ Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, 242.

¹² George Whitefield, "Sermon Forty-Four – Christ, the Believer's Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption," in *Sermons of George Whitefield: The 57 Classic Lectures Upon Christian Theology* (Pantianos Classics ebook Edition, 1771-2), 245, Kindle.

¹³ George Whitefield, "Sermon Two – Walking with God," in *Sermons of George Whitefield: The 57 Classic Lectures Upon Christian Theology* (Pantianos Classics ebook Edition, 1771-2), 13, Kindle.

Affections. Unfortunately, the leaders of the Second Great Awakening did not heed these lessons from Edwards very well.

The Second Great Awakening of the nineteenth century proposed an oversimplification of personal holiness, consisting of a spirit-filled experience and altar commitment: “The ultimate simplification, of course, was Charles Finney’s call for instantaneous commitment and instantaneous conversion with no waiting period to allow election to set in. The nineteenth-century revival leaders were like mechanics examining an engine in which the power train has somehow been attached to the carburetor; the whole of sanctification had been inserted into conversion.”¹⁴ This non-holistic thinking would be like believing a jet plane could fly without wings and just engines.

Finney, based in Ohio, was in the network of holiness associations closely connected with Phoebe Palmer, based in New York City. As one of the most prominent leaders of the nineteenth-century holiness movement, Palmer’s sanctification theology represented the evangelical holiness voice of that movement that continued into the early twentieth century. Palmer provided a more responsible message of holiness than that of previous evangelists. She stressed holiness built on an unwavering faith, a consecrated life, a crucifixion of self and passions, and any practices that would hinder a complete surrender. Her theology aligns with the Wesleyan belief in entire sanctification, which is the necessary first step to a life of ongoing holiness, or progressive sanctification.

Phoebe Palmer, and many in the holiness movements to follow into the nineteenth century, urged Christians to believe in the finished work of Christ, whose blood cleanses sinful nature, but many times the over-emphasis on altar renewal minimized the importance of ongoing transformation. Therefore, the sanctifying experience Palmer described was many times the

¹⁴ Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, 234.

initial altar experience that failed to emphasize an ongoing practice. In her letter, “To Rev. Mr. U.,” she writes of this altar experience: “The acceptance of the gift does not depend upon the worthiness of the offerer or the greatness of the gift, but upon the sanctity of the altar.”¹⁵ She seems to compress lifetime and holistic holiness into one experience, which she refers to as “an entire consecration and purification of body, soul, and spirit.”¹⁶

There is no question about the power of the sanctifying experience and the essential commitment of entire consecration. However, Palmer does not seem to address cleansing the body and mind as a lifetime process and seems to compress lifetime and ongoing holiness into one experience, which she refers to as “an entire consecration and purification of body, soul, and spirit.”¹⁷ Her lack of an ongoing transformative message against sin is evident as she proposes the sanctification event as a final remedy against temptation and sin in her “Letter to Mr. M.” She responds to his question about how long it would take to reach the state of perfection with the statement that as soon as Mr. M. believes and offers himself to Christ who came to “take away our sin, to destroy the works of the devil, and to purge us from all iniquity.”¹⁸ In her defense, she did not benefit from the more recent psychological and physiological sciences, which give insight on the daily challenge of temptations in these realms.

Acknowledging human ontological challenges to perfection is not intended to justify sin or lower the bar of perfection, but to realize the daily fight and to coordinate with the Spirit and Word to live perfectly over it. Likewise, this critique of Palmer, who represents much of the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century holiness mindset, is not intended to denigrate the Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification her group strove to model. However at times that

¹⁵ Phoebe Worrall Palmer, “Faith and Its Effects,” in *Great Holiness Classics, Volume 4: The 19th Century Holiness Movement*, ed. Melvin Dieter (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1988), loc. 2593, Kindle.

¹⁶ Palmer, “Faith,” loc. 2700.

¹⁷ Palmer, “Faith,” loc. 2700.

¹⁸ Palmer, “Faith,” loc. 2403.

preaching only emphasized the initial spiritual remedy over prayer practices to heal the body, mind, and soul. Wesley understood the need for ongoing transformation evident in his doctrine of progressive sanctification, of renewing our life through continual practices of prayer and devotion or means of grace. However, many times the revivalist camps failed to balance the message. This dualism that overemphasized spiritual renewal and underemphasized life transformation continued into the twentieth century through movements led by Billy Sunday, Billy Graham, and the Jesus Movement.

These critiques of revivals that preached the power of the Holy Spirit are also not intended to question the reality of God's presence falling on the regenerate and the heart-sanctified, but rather to question the preaching of early-twentieth-century revivalists like Billy Sunday, who produced shallow and moralistic Christians.¹⁹ Later, Billy Graham, one of the most famous evangelists of the twentieth century, modeled a typical evangelical message of salvation and being born-again as the one life-changing experience. The emphasis primarily on initial sanctification, or being born-again, and the calling of throngs of converts to the stadium altars, failed to address the ongoing formation gap.

It is true that Graham partnered with local churches for his converts to find fellowship and discipleship and that Graham lived a holy life free from the financial and sexual scandals that plague many celebrity evangelists. However, he typically did not preach on working out salvation or progressing in holiness but solicited responses to be born-again as the basis of a successful life. Unfortunately many times Graham's messages left out the essential spiritual formation steps of discipline and cooperation with the Spirit for life-transformation. That mentality implied that believers magically transform from born-again motors to rebuilt

¹⁹ Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, 262.

carbonators in one flattened experience. Unfortunately, this evangelistic message continues in our current Christian society.

Section II — Contemporary Christian Non-transformational Holiness

This lack of a responsible holiness message has seeped into the contemporary Christian culture through its worship song lyrics. It is beyond the scope of this paper to exegete the theology of twenty-first century evangelism, which includes an independent mega-church movement with varying theological messages. However, one common denominator of the twenty-first century church is its adoption of contemporary music for worship and devotion. Just as traditional hymns reflect past theology, contemporary lyrics reflect present theology.

To demonstrate that today's American Christian culture continues to adopt the dualistic mindset that lacks an emphasis on transformation of life, a case study was performed to evaluate the messages of the top forty Christian songs in 2019. The study evaluated the songs with two criteria:

- 1) To determine if the song messages were only about grace, such as topics of redemption and God's attributes.
- 2) To determine if any line or verse of the song contained a message regarding life transformation, such as addressing obedience to God, service to others, or self-responsibility.

Appendix I reveals the case study results showing that 87.5% of the contemporary Christian songs consisted of messages only about grace, and only 12.5% contained a transformational message in at least line or verse of the song. The study used the same criteria to

evaluate twenty popular hymns of John and Charles Wesley, who preached a balanced message of grace and life-holiness. The Wesley hymns consisted of messages that were 35% only about grace, and 65% contained a transformational message in at least line or verse of the hymn.

To compare the results of both groups of data, regarding the contemporary Christian songs, for every seven songs, six were completely about grace only, and only one contained a message regarding living a responsible life of obedience to God, service to others, or self-responsibility. (See Appendix I for the detailed survey results).

Like the messages of the American revivalists, it seems that twenty-first-century Christian messages flatten sanctification mostly into one experience. They reflect the continuing non-holistic evangelistic mentality that mostly equates holiness to a one-time redemptive experience and neglects the responsibility of the believer to participate in an ongoing life of holiness. Though it is beyond the scope of this paper to draw a relationship between the lack of personal ethic messages in contemporary Christian songs and the lack of ethics in the contemporary evangelical society, one cannot discount the influence of a top forty song list that is broadcast daily to millions of Christian radio listeners across the United States.

To attempt to gauge the ethics of evangelical society, George Barna conducted a study in 2003 comparing the ethics of born-again believers and evangelicals to secular society. According to this study, the low morality of today's born-again believers is on par with the secular world's. Barna's data shows that the morality of the secular person and born-again believer falls within ten percent of each other. His study's data was based on a survey that asked its participants if they believed the following practices were permissible:

- Gambling
- Pre-marital cohabitation and sex

- Having an abortion
- Practicing pornography
- Using foul language

See Table 9 in Appendix II for a summary of Barna’s survey results.

Since Barna’s broad survey is almost twenty years old, the following recent and more specific morality studies are offered.

Surveys on Sex Outside of Marriage

A 2020 Pew Research study on “casual sex” surveyed many Christian faiths. It revealed that 36% of evangelical Protestants believed that “sex between consenting adults who are not in a committed romantic relationship” is acceptable. In the same study, 46% believed that “sex between unmarried adults who are in a committed relationship” was acceptable.²⁰ Another study, a 2016 study by Barna Research, surveyed practicing Christians to ask if they believed cohabitation--“moving in together before tying the knot”--was a good idea, and 41% believed it was.²¹

Survey on Pornography & Extramarital Affairs

In 2014, Proven Men Ministries surveyed Christian and secular men and found the statistics for pornography use and addiction for each group were similar. Likewise, the statistics regarding

²⁰ Jeff Diamant, “Half of U.S. Christians Say Casual Sex Between Consenting Adults Is Sometimes or Always Acceptable,” Pew Research, August 31, 2020, accessed February 7, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/08/31/half-of-u-s-christians-say-casual-sex-between-consenting-adults-is-sometimes-or-always-acceptable/>.

²¹ Barna Group, “Majority of Americans Now Believe in Cohabitation,” June 24, 2016, accessed February 7, 2022, <https://www.barna.com/research/majority-of-americans-now-believe-in-cohabitation/>.

marital affairs were similar between Christian and secular men. The following are results from the Christians questioned:

- 64% of Christian men admit viewing pornography at least monthly.
- 54% of “born-again” Christian men admit viewing pornography at least monthly.
- 21% of Christian men think they are addicted to pornography.
- 27% of “born-again” Christian men think they are addicted to pornography.

In the same survey, Christian men were asked if they had a sexual encounter while married with a person besides their spouse, and here is a summary of those results:

- 35% of married Christian men had sexual affairs with someone other than their wives.
- 31% of married “born-again” men had sexual affairs with someone other than their wives.²²

Survey on Anger

According to the latest NPR-IBM Watson Health poll, some 84% of people surveyed said Americans are angrier today than a generation ago.²³ Though this is a secular population survey, since the above survey on pornography revealed the secular and Christian behaviors mirror each other, it is a good possibility that rising anger also plagues the Christian population.

Conclusions on Morality Surveys

How do these surveys relate to the state of personal transformation or the practice of ongoing sanctification that matures the believer? The studies of Christian moral behavior and beliefs in this section raise a flag of a lack of personal holiness teaching about the importance of

²² Proven Men Ministries, “Pornography Survey Statistics,” 2014, accessed February 14, 2022, <https://www.provenmen.org/pornography-survey-statistics-2014/>.

²³ Scott Hensley, “Poll: Americans Say We’re Angrier Than A Generation Ago,” NPR, June 26, 2019, accessed February 14, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2019/06/26/735757156/poll-americans-say-were-angrier-than-a-generation-ago>.

personal morality and a lack of daily spiritual formation practices. These statistics do not reflect Christians being transformed into the likeness of Christ.

Though this section’s research results represent just a few data sets, they expose a potential sanctification gap between Christians that proclaim a message of being like Christ and Christians who fail to live like Him.

Having provided an overview of the lack of a holistic holiness message in American evangelicalism from the seventeenth to twenty-first centuries, we now turn to a couple of theological voices to identify the root of this non-holistic thinking.

Section III — Two Theological Perspectives of Non-Holistic Holiness

Wesleyan theologian Thomas Noble addresses the problem of substituting a holistic discipline for a one-time altar experience. Noble implies that the formation process should be holistic and address the whole person’s body, mind, spirit, and life. He writes, “But one thing is clear: the Christian filled with the Spirit of Christ is not a person torn in two. Instead, the Spirit-filled Christian should daily work at the business of reconciling every other desire and motive to the one dominating, over-riding, all-embracing passion of life, to serve God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength.”²⁴

Spiritual formation is not an instant process because it involves renewing minds, bodies, and lives sometimes embedded in years of sinful practices. It involves a continual practice of prayer and holy living. Initial spiritual infilling does not immunize believers from the daily practice of walking in step with the Spirit.²⁵ “We are never to rest on our laurels, but always to

²⁴ T. A. Noble, *Holy Trinity, Holy People: The Historic Doctrine of Christian Perfecting*, Didsbury Lecture Series (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012), 195, Kindle.

²⁵ Noble, *Holy Trinity, Holy People*, 194-195.

pray that God will fill us afresh with the Spirit of Love.”²⁶ Noble informs us that holiness is not “revivalistic emotionalism, or some illusionary, quick-fix, instant holiness. Neither is it some superficial, simplistic, ‘sectarian distinctive’ or hobby-horse.”²⁷ He discusses how instantaneous holiness obtained simply by one altar experience nullifies our free will and bypasses sanctification that entails making daily ethical choices to maintain our allegiance to Christ.²⁸

The sanctified believer is not free from temptation and must practice a discipline of working out daily ethical choices and growth.²⁹ Noble, having Wesleyan beliefs, would recognize the benefit of an initial holiness experience to empower ongoing personal holiness. He addresses both sides of sanctification, which historically revivalists folded into one mystical experience. The failure to propose a holistic holiness that includes prayer and participation in ongoing spiritual maturity creates a divide between a potential and lived-out sanctification.

John Coe names this the “sanctification gap,” defined as “the spiritual distance between what one believes to be true about the goals of Christian growth and an awareness [or attainment] of the reality.”³⁰ Coe is the director of the Institute for Spiritual Formation and professor of Spiritual Theology, which is a discipline that attempts to bridge this gap by merging theology, pneumatology, and psychology to develop a holistic spiritual formation. Coe addresses the non-holistic errors of flattened sanctification that erroneously treat the initial experience and the life-long discipline as the same event.

Coe indicates that the church’s theological work on sanctification has been heavily weighted toward evangelical theological education and historical-textual studies. As a result, the church often neglects “an in-depth understanding of sanctification” and fails to understand how

²⁶ Noble, *Holy Trinity, Holy People*, 194-196.

²⁷ Noble, *Holy Trinity, Holy People*, 195.

²⁸ Noble, *Holy Trinity, Holy People*, 194.

²⁹ Noble, *Holy Trinity, Holy People*, 195.

³⁰ Coe, “Spiritual Theology,” 17.

to train bodies, minds, and souls to live in the Spirit. He writes, “There exists an adequate doctrine of sanctification, what is still missing [or lacking] is how that truth of sanctification becomes a reality in the believer’s life ... What is missing is an in-depth understanding of the process of growth in the Spirit.”³¹

Non-holistic spiritual formation fails to employ pneumodynamics³² and psychodynamics³³ to address the fundamental questions of how growth takes place and how the Spirit works in transformation.³⁴ By merging theology, pneumatology, and psychology, Coe works to bridge the sanctification gap. When ministers ignore that the gap exists and oversimplify spiritual solutions that affect the body, mind, spirit, and life, they short-cut the process of spiritual transformation. Coe shares an example story of the consequences of this faulty theology, as told to him by a pastor: “When people tell me their spiritual problems, that they don’t pray enough or that they struggle with anger or worry, and I quote to them the Bible that they should pray more, put off anger and not worry, they often respond ‘I know that pastor—so what is wrong with me?’ The truth is, I don’t know what to say or do from there. I’m stuck.” Coe believes this is a common problem for many pastors: “Those of us who preach would love to see transformation just by speaking the Word: ‘Pray more; love God; put off anger!’ And—poof—it is done. But that is a fantasy.”³⁵

Preaching spiritual transformation that ignores the whole human is as unrealistic as promising an Alzheimer’s patient that salvation will restore his or her memory functions. The problem with the sanctification gap mentality is that it fails to recognize that the believer’s

³¹ Coe, “Spiritual Theology,” 18.

³² The study of the Spirit’s work in the human experience. In other words, how does the Spirit work in our lives, and how do we cooperate with Him. Coe, “Spiritual Theology,” 28.

³³ An empirical study of the dynamic processes of human growth or understanding the person. Coe, “Spiritual Theology,” 29.

³⁴ Coe, “Spiritual Theology,” 21.

³⁵ Coe, “Spiritual Theology,” 17.

transformation continues after redemption through obedience to the Lord, service to others, and personal responsibility.

The truth is that spiritual formation encourages one to be filled with the Spirit continually and coordinate the body, mind, and life daily. Those who flatten sanctification and holiness to one or two experiences ignore the active verbs of the scriptures exhorting our practical participation with Christ to seek the transformation of the body, mind, and life. Thus, the church needs a meaningful theory-praxis of transformation (i.e., spiritual theology) that will be helpful to all believers, a practice of formation that is theoretically connected to theology and what is going on in the human experience.³⁶

There is no lack of preaching on the love of God and justifying grace, but there is a lack of preaching on sanctification and how it can transform one's life.³⁷ The problem with the reductionistic sanctification preached historically by American evangelicals is that it fails to allow participation with grace to holistically heal ongoing ailments of the body, mind, heart, and life.

Conclusion

Chapter Two has shown that the American evangelical church historically preached a flattened or dualistic sanctification message. It stressed salvation, redemption, spiritual renewal by grace through Christ. However, it lacked teaching about life transformation by grace through Christ by a daily walk of prayer, obedience, service, and personal responsibility to develop heart, mind, spirit, and life maturity. Chapter Three will provide a literature review of the rich Christian heritage of mystics' and theologians' holistic practices, means of grace, and spiritual stages for

³⁶ Coe, "Spiritual Theology," 25.

³⁷ Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, 211.

practicing a holiness that fosters maturity of the believer's body, heart, mind, spirit, and embodied life.

CHAPTER THREE

Literature Review of Four Holistic Stages

Chapter Two identified the problem of preaching a shallow holiness message, which predominantly contains messages of Christ's redeeming grace and fails to significantly teach about our participation in that grace to enable ongoing life transformation. The chapter discussed how the mindset that mainly addresses spiritual renewal fails to acknowledge the need for ongoing life renewal through obedience to God, service to others, and personal responsibility. The purpose of Chapter Three is to reveal through the literature and historical writings of mystics and theologians a systematic process for developing a spirituality that aims to holistically transform, heal, and strengthen the believer's heart, body, mind, spirit, and life.

This chapter discusses how the four classical stages of Christian spirituality, or mysticism, --purification, meditation, presence, and embodiment--represent four types of practices to aid the believer in the continuous journey of Christian maturity by healing spiritual ailments affecting four areas of the spiritual life. Section I provides a high-level overview of the four spiritual states. Section II discusses the stage of purification as the preliminary stage in the pilgrimage toward God's presence, which entails practices for purifying the body and the heart. Section III discusses the stage of meditation, which represents the beginning level of our communication which calls out to God through meditative prayer practices such as *Lectio Divina*, repetitive prayers, and worship that work to renew the mind. Section IV discusses the presence stage, or the highest level of contemplation, which involves listening for and experiencing God's ineffable presence and mystical union. Section V discusses the fourth spiritual stage of embodiment, which allows God's Spirit to embody our life and our world to

glorify Him. Finally, Section VI discusses how practicing these four stages acts uniquely to remedy spiritual ailments by healing or strengthening one's body, heart, mind, spirit, and life.

Section I — Development of the Four Stages from the Threefold Way

Over the years, mystical theologians in the Eastern Orthodox and Catholic traditions have specified a process for spirituality which has been formally described in three spiritual stages of the believer as the purgative, illuminative, and union stages. These are also known as mystical stages as they have been developed through mystical theology³⁸ and mysticism.³⁹ Historically, the mystics and contemplatives identified similar stages of Christian maturity or stages of spirituality,⁴⁰ whether these stages were Pseudo-Dionysius' "purgative," "illuminative," and "unitive stages"; Evagrius' *praxis*, *theoria physica*, and *theologia*; St. Bernard's "slaves," "faithful servants," and "sons"; Philoxenos and William of St. Thierry's *somatikoi* (animal man), *psychikoi* (rational man), and *pneumatikoi* (spiritual man); or Philoxenos' "first degree" (asceticism in the cenobitic life), "second degree" (the solitary life), and "third degree" (contemplation).⁴¹ Though all these models develop similar types for the spiritual process, since Pseudo-Dionysius' classical model with "purgative," "illuminative," and "union" stages has been one of the most

³⁸ "Mystical theology' denotes no more than a spirituality which expresses a doctrinal attitude." Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 1957), loc. 46, Kindle. Also, Mystical Theology is understood as the "elements of theology as are indispensable for the understanding of a spirituality: the dogmas which constitute the foundation of mysticism." Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, loc. 112.

³⁹ "Mysticism is frequently opposed to theology as a realm inaccessible to understanding, ... yielding itself to a specific experience which surpasses our faculties of understanding rather than to any perception of sense or of intelligence." Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, loc. 51.

⁴⁰ To understand the link between spirituality and mysticism, McGinn refers to mystical theology as a high form of Spirituality: "The study of mysticism is the acme of Christian spirituality." McGinn also insists that Christian mystical theology is part of Christian history as he writes, "The theology of Christian mysticism should not be separated in the study of Christian history." Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, xi-xiv.

⁴¹ Thomas. A Merton, *A Course in Desert Spirituality*, ed. Jon M. Sweeney (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2019), 137, (Kindle Edition).

popular models embraced by many mystics, such as St. Teresa of Avila, it will be the classical model adopted in this paper and then used to derive a contemporary spiritual stage model.

Stage 1 - Purification

“Purgation is an archaic word, from the root ‘to purge’ – to release, to empty, to quiet.”⁴² Purgation has been related to purging or purifying the heart from allegiances and habits that compromise faith by letting go of these to focus on Christ. It has been associated with practices of penance and fasting and with enduring the experiences of “dark nights” of trials, losses, and spiritual dryness. This paper will refer to this first classical stage of purgation as the spiritual stage of purification, which purposes to purify the believer’s heart. A purified heart prepares one for the second stage, which historically has been referred to as the illuminative stage.

Stage 2 - Meditation

The classical illuminative stage represented two spiritual functions: seeking quieting and renewing of the mind and seeking the presence of God. But to highlight these two functions, this paper separates the illuminative stage into the stages of “meditation” and “presence.” It defines the bi-directional communication between us and God of meditation and contemplation. In general, meditation has been understood as our efforts to approach the throne provided by God’s grace through Christ, and contemplation as the Father’s response through the Spirit. The processes of contemplative or mental prayer contain both the aspect of us calling upon God--meditation--and God responding--contemplation. The aim of this Christian meditation should be to prepare the mind for communication with God, which we trust by grace will lead to

⁴² Lauren Artress, *Walking a Sacred Path: Rediscovering the Labyrinth as a Sacred Practice* (New York, NY: Penguin Publishing Group, 2006), 29, Kindle.

contemplation, what this paper will refer to as the third spiritual stage of infilling presence, or mystical union with God.

Stage 3 - Presence

Presence has also been described as a participatory practice to reach a mystical, ineffable, mountaintop, or unspeakable experience with the presence of God. It's a mystical experience because, like the process of sleep, one can only prepare for presence and trust by grace God will grant us His Spirit. The classical stages of purgation and illumination, which now have been redefined as the stages of purification, meditation, and presence, were considered stages of the inner life practices leading to the final stage of union (not to be confused with mystical union) which represented embodying the kingdom of God in one's outer life.

Stage 4 - Embodiment

The classical stage of union defined an embodying union, or the stage we allow God to embody our personal lives. W. Paul Jones describes Teresa of Avila's embodied definition of union as, "Seeking a loving unity with all of creation and every living thing and awakening into a new and rich consciousness, where to be grasped by God is to transfuse life with feeling and depth."⁴³ Historically the word "active" also has also been used to define this stage where the presence of God is applied to our active life, community, and ministry. Henri Nouwen writes, "For most of us, the greater part of life is not on the mountain but in the valley. And in this valley we are called to prayer as active ministry."⁴⁴ Because the word "active" is a broad term and the stage union is not a clear term (it could represent experiencing God's presence), this

⁴³ W. Paul Jones, *The Art of Spiritual Direction: Giving and Receiving Spiritual Guidance* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2002), loc. 2468, Kindle.

⁴⁴ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Spiritual Formation – Following the Movements of the Spirit*, ed. Michael J. Christensen and Rebecca J. Laird (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2010), loc. 510, Kindle.

paper will refer to the classical stage of union, or what historically has also been called the active state, as the fourth spiritual stage of embodiment which aims to prepare one's life for community connection and embodiment.

Section II — The Purification Stage

A painter prepares a surface for painting by scraping the peeling paint and sanding the dirty and rugged surface to ensure the new paint will bond and cover smoothly. This type of preparation process applies to the renewal of all surfaces, whether they are houses, fingernails, automobiles, or human hearts. The purification process could be understood as a prepping process to cleanse the flesh and the heart daily to prepare for presence with God. Maybe the heart needs purification from temptations, or deeper love and commitment. Sometimes the heart needs a total renovation; but many times it just needs some sanding down in spots to re-establish some hidden places where the Holy Spirit can better adhere.

The Apostle Paul commands us to purify our earthly nature of evil desires and passions: “Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry” (Col. 3:5).⁴⁵ Cleansing-type prayer practices enable the believer to “put to death” the evil practices of the fleshly, or earthly, nature. This section discusses the first mystical stage of purification. We call upon God to help us purify sin and temptations towards destructive passions, excessive behaviors, weakening faith, and commitment. The purification exercises proposed are fasting, detachment, self-examining, repentance, and wrestling with “dark night” experiences to cleanse the heart and body to prepare for experiencing His presence.

⁴⁵ This paper uses the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible unless otherwise noted.

One way to achieve purification is through abstinence-type detachment practices also referred to as ascetic practices. Asceticism⁴⁶ includes exercises like fasting, detachment, and self-denial, which are disciplines to prepare a believer for fellowship with God, just as athletic disciplines prepare an athlete for competition. Dallas Willard writes: “The ascetic is one who enters the training appropriate for his or her development into an accomplished athlete (*athlasis*) of body, mind, or spirit.”⁴⁷ The ascetic’s training purposes to discipline and control excessive passions, and classically the goal of the ascetic was to reach the state of “apatheia,” which means freedom from passions.⁴⁸

The Christian tradition offers rich insight regarding the practice of asceticism. Thomas Merton identifies the purpose of ascetic practice as obtaining contemplation or presence with God. He writes, “There is no deep contemplative life without a most serious ascetic purification.” It’s not about bodily mortification, but “the emphasis is on the end to be attained, which is interior peace. ... [Ascetic] practices are subordinated to the purity of heart. Those that enable us to attain purity of heart are good. Others, no matter how good or how necessary they may seem, must be set aside.”⁴⁹ The discipline of detachment, according to Philoxenos of Mabbug, was intended to help detach the believer from pleasure and the world in order to attain virtue and knowledge.⁵⁰ Later he states the purpose is to “bring the body into complete

⁴⁶ “Asceticism must be held to include legitimate self-discipline, as well as bodily purgation based on a materialistic conception of evil; it may be regarded as a means of self-adjustment in the attempt to establish an ideal system of relationships, as well as direct striving for self-development; it covers varying degrees of stringency of practice ... and may be described as the voluntary practice of renunciation, suffering, and toil, for the deliverance and protection of the soul from defilement, for the increase of its powers by the discharge of its proper functions in accordance with its own conception of the moral and spiritual order, and for the consequent achievement and enjoyment of its full status.” O. Hardman, *The Ideals of Asceticism – An Essay in the Comparative Study of Religion* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1924), 16.

⁴⁷ Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1988), 149, Kindle.

⁴⁸ Thomas Merton, *A Course in Christian Mysticism*, ed. Jon M. Sweeney (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2017), 61, Kindle.

⁴⁹ Merton, *A Course in Christian Mysticism*, 63, Kindle.

⁵⁰ Merton. *A Course in Desert Spirituality*, 136

submission to the soul” to avoid sins of gluttony and other unregulated passions that could conflict with the spiritual life.⁵¹

Gregory of Nyssa helps us understand that the reason for seeking this cleansing of the heart is because God will only abide in that which is pure, just as paint can only adhere to that which is clean. He writes, “For the Godhead is purity, freedom from passion, and separation from all evil. If therefore these things be in you, God is indeed in you.”⁵² Though ascetic methods are a means of purification, extreme practices have been associated with asceticism at times. It’s important to note that this paper does not support a negative asceticism that attempts to lobotomize or permanently eradicate passions, as the Desert Fathers and Mothers attempted by living in isolation. Instead, the emphasis is on a positive asceticism that can temper passions and worldly allegiances and purify from sin. Ascetic acts like abstinence have been referred to as acts of detachment,⁵³ self-denial, and mortification. Not only is abstinence an ascetic act, but so also is fasting: “Abstinence and fasting are by far the commonest of all ascetic acts.”⁵⁴

Fasting food and drink helps ascetics purify the heart from sinful passions by detaching them from the world and encouraging focus on devotional activities like Bible reading and prayer. John Cassian writes that self-denial aims to purify the heart and “to retain our chastity of the flesh by prolonged fastings, hunger, thirst, and watchfulness ... to acquire purpose of heart by reading, vigils, constant prayer.”⁵⁵ Fasting is not an end but a means to the end of godly devotion and worship. Ignatius of Loyola provides a good understanding of the purpose of this type of asceticism, which is to remove anything from the world that would not allow a believer

⁵¹ Merton. *A Course in Desert Spirituality*, 149.

⁵² Merton. *A Course in Desert Spirituality*, 50.

⁵³ The early monastic life of the Desert Fathers was considered a way of detaching from the environment of the world of temptations to a desert life of seclusion.

⁵⁴ Hardman, *The Ideals of Asceticism*, 10.

⁵⁵ John Cassian, *John Cassian Collection, The Conference of the Desert Fathers*, trans. Rev. Edgar C. S. Gibson (Aeterna Press, 2015), loc. 3656, 483, Kindle.

to “praise, reverence, and serve the Lord.” So, for Ignatius, the purpose of fasting was to rid oneself of anything, even riches and health, if it hinders primary devotion to God.⁵⁶

The Desert Fathers and Mothers practiced an asceticism of detachment and solitude by leaving their professions and families to live a solitary and undistracted life in the desert. This was a way to purify from distractions and excesses they believed conflicted with experiencing God’s presence.⁵⁷ This degree of asceticism, which was effective in freeing the ascetic from ensnaring sin or excessive behavior, could be a model for seeking some moderate level of asceticism today.⁵⁸ Unlike direct violations of God’s commandments, excessive behavior is less obviously sinful because it involves practicing suitable activities, but excessively. Ascetic practices of fasting and detachment temper, or balance, this excessive conduct. Historically, Christian ascetics like the monastics permanently detached from family, marriage, and secular living. However, one does not need to practice asceticism so severely to control excessive conduct.

Like a counterbalance scale’s weights apply equal and opposing force to counter the product being weighed in order to reach balance, ascetic practices sometimes must be taken to the extreme to temper the weight of excessive behaviors. So, asceticism could be understood as balancing the scale of life’s extremes to purify the heart and instill wisdom in one’s life. The goal of ascetic practices is to aid one to reach the purity of heart and avoid the practice of a life of extreme behavior. Ecclesiastes 7:18 warns against the dangers of excessive behavior: “Whoever fears God will avoid all extremes.” Asceticism could be considered a self-balancing practice to prevent wholesome practices from leading to excessive behavior. For instance, common

⁵⁶ St. Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola* (New York: P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1914), 16, Kindle.

⁵⁷ St. John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2003), 72, Kindle.

⁵⁸ Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1982), loc. 212, Kindle.

practices such as eating, playing sports, entertainment, leisurely activities, and dressing nicely could be considered wholesome activities until unrestrained consumption warrants moderation practices, such as fasting of food and these activities.

Hardman recommends this temperance through the ascetic practice of fasting, or detachment. Though he cautions against dangerous extremes of ancient ascetical practices like “buffeting,” or abusing one’s body, and permanent avoidance of anything bringing personal joy or pleasure, proper temperance can regulate excessive behavior. Climate control systems regulate between extremes of hot and cold temperatures by providing neutralization, opposing extreme temperatures, and knowing when to disable and enable these extremes. Likewise, asceticism does not need to be practiced continually but long enough to counterbalance harmful extremes. For example, sometimes, a season of prayer can neutralize passions that seem uncontrollable. Other times ascetic practices of fasting are necessary for a short period to wean dependency on earthly pleasures.

Dieting is a typical example of controlling overeating by turning off one’s calorie intake until a desired state of equilibrium, or healthy weight, has been reached. However, just as it is not healthy to live in diet mode forever, neither is it healthy to live forever in a fasting mode. However, fasting helps us balance excessive behavior that becomes more important than God, whether that be in the form of controlling calories, time, or money. Although controlling excesses is a subjective process, it is an essential one because excessive behavior can compromise our allegiance or time with God. Jesus said we could not serve two masters, so fasting is a temperance practice to master anything that may be mastering us. (Matthew 6:24)

In conclusion, one could understand fasting and detachment as the cure for “attachment,” which places inordinate value on relationships, material possessions, careers, and personal

achievements. Detachment resets us from complexity to simplicity and reclaims our true self in Christ from these externals.⁵⁹ So, the practices of fasting and detachment can purify from the sin of overindulging. The first stage of purgation dealt with purifying bodily passions and purifying the heart of these dependencies. The Desert Fathers practiced this ascetic practice, also known as *bios praktikos*, to overcome sinful passions and prepare for *bios theoretikos*, the contemplative life.⁶⁰ Likewise, Ignatius of Loyola's spiritual practice of "Examen" can also help maintain spiritual purity through self-examination.

Loyola's "Examen" is a spiritual exercise that could be understood as a postmortem practice. To use an earthly example, after completing a corporate project, the project manager, in seeking continuous improvement, gathers the team together to reflect on project performance, both areas of improvement and areas of praise. It would be counterproductive to examine and look back while hands are still on the plow actively executing a project or living out the day during the project cycle. Likewise, Ignatius recommends times of pause to reflect on past days, contemplating our past performances with God--our project manager--and critiquing our lives for mistakes and sins. The intention is not to condemn but to continuously improve and prevent future mistakes, sins, and costly errors.

The "Examen" is a formal way to implement Ps. 139:23-24: "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting." Ignatius suggests self-examination to determine if one sinned against any of the Ten Commandments or committed any of the seven deadly sins. Then Ignatius suggests we repent and offer amendments to prevent this sin from happening again. He provides some techniques for preventing the reoccurrences of sin. If one has committed one of the seven

⁵⁹ Laura Swan, *The Forgotten Desert Mothers: Sayings, Lives, and Stories of Early Christian Women* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2001), 150, Kindle.

⁶⁰ Merton, *A Course in Christian Mysticism*, 5, Kindle.

deadly sins, he suggests amending by contemplating the opposite virtue of a particular sin. For instance, if pride is the issue, then contemplate humility, or if it's avarice--love of money--one might think about how "good health, a sympathetic heart, and a clear conscience is better than money."⁶¹ Ignatius stresses that the goal of examining past days is to purify oneself for future days, to give glory and praise to God, and to experience presence.⁶² The mystics practiced purification through ascetic acts and examining exercises but also through dark-night experiences.

St. John of the Cross wrote of another type of purification experience, which he called the "Dark Night of the Soul"--suffering and loss used by God to purify the believer: "These souls whom God is beginning to lead through these solitary places of the wilderness are like to the children of Israel."⁶³ St. John writes that the dark night of the wilderness journey is to purify the believer: "But neither from these imperfections nor from those others can the soul be perfectly purified until God brings it into the passive purgation of that dark night."⁶⁴

He defined the "dark night" as a desert or Sinai experience, signifying a struggle with temptation, sin, and the devil, just as Jesus confronted these during His forty-day fast in the desert. So, likewise, the dark night of loss and trial becomes a desert experience where believers face their sins and battle their demons with the help of Christ, the victor, who battled evil on the believer's behalf. McGinn writes, "The desert, traditionally the home for demons and not for humans, was the place where the encounter with the spirits of evil--demons of lust, of gluttony, of anger, of desire for possessions, and the like could be more readily encountered and mastered."⁶⁵

⁶¹ James Stalker, *The Seven Deadly Sins* (London: 1910), 16, Kindle.

⁶² Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises*, 77, Kindle.

⁶³ St. John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul*, 56, Kindle.

⁶⁴ St. John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul*, 34, Kindle.

⁶⁵ McGinn, *Foundations of Mysticism*, 136.

The trials do not purify in themselves but force one to wrestle with the fleshly temptations of doubt, despair, and sin, and to submit oneself to the Spirit to purify the heart. Through this, “misery becomes allied to our spiritual purification, a purging that leads us deeper into the experience of Christ.”⁶⁶ The dark night of loss, trials, and want does not bring discontent and despair, but purifies the believer’s false security. We see an example of someone reaching this state with the Apostle Paul. He writes, “I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him [Christ] who gives me strength” (Phil 4:12-13).

This section has shown how the purification stage written about and practiced by the Church Fathers and Mothers aimed to purify the heart of temptation, sin, excessiveness, and oppressive trials and losses. Purifying the heart removes obstacles to God’s presence. The next section will discuss how the second spiritual stage of meditation prepares the mind for communication with God to experience His Spirit.

Section III — The Meditation Stage

Meditation is part of a two-step process to communicate with God; contemplation, discussed in Section IV, is step two of that process. Section III examines how meditation sets up the initial stage of communication by calling out to God through active and passive prayers and trusting God through grace, to subsequently respond with His presence. First, this section clarifies that meditation is not a subjective effort to reach God through works apart from grace. Next, this section discusses how meditation is like the call and response protocol found in

⁶⁶ Margaret Dorgan, “Jesus Christ in Carmelite Prayer,” in *Carmelite Prayer: A Tradition for the 21st Century*, ed. Keith J. Egan (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2016), loc. 1052-1054, Kindle.

today's data and voice communication systems which enables the believer to call upon God through prayer, trusting He will respond. It then discusses how meditation also functions to clear the mind from distracting noise to enable conversation with God. Finally, the last part of this section compares the two communication functions of call and response to the two historical categories of active and passive praying and provides some example practices of each.

Christian meditation is not a human work apart from grace. Paul writes in Ephesians, "For through him [Christ] we both have access to the Father by one Spirit" (Ephesians 2:18). Christ provides a well of living water that represents His presence, and meditation involves the effort of dropping a bucket into the well and retrieving the healing water by the grace granted through Christ. The scriptures inform us that we are adopted into God's family and have been given access to the Father through Christ, so meditation is not creating the relationship but participating in what Christ has afforded us. The Apostle Paul assures us Jesus has provided a way through grace for us to call upon Him: "For through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit" (Eph. 2:18). Through Christ we can draw near to God, and Christ permits us to stake our claim to access God by calling upon him through prayer and meditation. Church Father Maximus the Confessor agrees, clarifying that our contemplative efforts are not human attempts to control Godly responses, but efforts through the mind of Christ granted to us to participate in Christ's invitation to call upon God through Him: "As rational beings humans themselves possess *logoi*, which are able to communicate with the *logoi* of the created order [Jesus]. Thus, humans as rational beings also keep the created things together under God, and they do so by using their contemplative faculty."⁶⁷ Maximus also informs us that as part of being renewed by Christ into God's image we possess the *logoi*, the mind of God, so that as natural beings we

⁶⁷ Lars Thunberg, "The Human Person as Image of God," in *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century*. Vol. 16 of *World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest*, eds. Bernard McGinn, John Meyendorff, and Jean Leclercq (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1987), 304.

possess a renewed ontological infrastructure to communicate with the mind of God in creation.⁶⁸ So meditative efforts to communicate with God are not works apart from grace since Christ grants us to access through grace and His mind. Therefore, proper meditation places us in a position to call out to God and expect by grace, He will respond. Like the process of dimming lights and listening to soft music places us in a position for sleep, meditation places us in a position for communication with God. Through these pre-sleep practices, we eventually hope to fall asleep; through meditative practices, we hope to communicate with God.

Communication with God through meditative prayer is very similar to the use of modern-day voice and data communication technologies to convey messages to others. Before conversation can flow, internet and telephone systems must first set up connections between the calling and receiving party. Meditation does the same thing, connecting the believer and God. Communications systems specify rules for setting up and tearing down connections, known as handshaking. These handshaking agreements must succeed in making a connection, or no voice or data information can flow. Meditative prayer follows the same communication process when connecting the believer (the calling party) to God (the receiving party).

Historically, meditative prayer, which describes the whole process of calling out to, connecting to, and conversing with God, has had two functions or levels. The initial level of meditation represents human efforts to connect to God's love, and the second level, contemplation, involves God revealing or infusing His love: "Meditation uses our faculties and human potential always under grace to come to know and love God, and contemplation is infused light and love that are pure gifts of God."⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Thunberg, "Human Person," 304.

⁶⁹ Ernest E. Larkin, "The Carmelite Tradition and Centering Prayer/Christian Meditation," in *Carmelite Prayer: A Tradition for the 21st Century*, ed. Keith J. Egan (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2016), loc. 2384, Kindle.

However, in some definitions the mystics included contemplation as both the call and response. For instance, the historical term “acquired contemplation” represents meditation, or calling upon God in prayer, and “infused contemplation” represents true contemplation, or God responding with love. Maximus included the concepts of meditation and contemplation in his three levels of contemplation. The first and second levels (Natural and Spiritual contemplation) represent meditative, or calling out, exercises. Natural contemplation describes both meditation on nature and meditation on scripture which aim to renew the mind by increasing the believer’s awareness of God and His attributes. Maximus’ third level of contemplation (Mystical) represents the level of contemplation that involves God reciprocating with His presence.⁷⁰ Though the terminology for meditation and contemplation is not standardized, meditation typically defines the believer’s initial participation, or call to connect with God, and contemplation defines God’s responding presence.⁷¹ Along with performing the communication function of handshaking or attempting to make a connection, meditation also functions to quiet the mind.

Electrical noise can drown out an internet or phone signal and prevent intelligible voice or data communication from flowing, so engineers design noise dampening filters to prevent the unwanted noise from drowning out the desired conversation. Likewise, our busy consciousness can be like communication line noise that can drown out our conversation with God. Mystics understood mental noise was an issue and realized that meditative practices such as prayer, worship, and scripture reading, to name a few, provide the church with practical ways of focusing the mind to dampen noise.

⁷⁰ Thunberg, “Human Person,” 304.

⁷¹ The medieval mystics defined three levels of prayer as “reading, meditation and contemplation, *lectio, meditatio, contemplatio*.” Meditation referred to the discursive prayers and contemplative prayer was a wordless prayer where we use little language and listen for God’s language. Thomas Merton, *Contemplative Prayer* (New York: The Crown Publishing Group, 1969), loc. 872, Kindle.

The mind is an important avenue to prayer, but psychologist Antonio Damasio helps us understand that it can also be a distraction. Damasio defines our mind's relationships with the objects in our world our "consciousness." He defines "core consciousness" as relationships with objects from our present world and "extended consciousness" as relationships with objects (memories) in our past or objects (plans, hopes, and dreams) in our future. Damasio describes these connections as pulses of activity. The average person creates many consciousness pulses to past, present, future objects simultaneously resulting in what he calls a stream of consciousness, a collection of many consciousness connections.

This stream of consciousness makes us wakeful, functional, and capable of multitasking both consciously and subconsciously. However, giving attention to just one thing requires an intentional effort.⁷² Our busy consciousness could hamper our ability to focus and become a noisy distraction, just as a noisy radio station signal can drown out the broadcast music, or a loud conversation in a busy restaurant can drown out one voice. Evan Howard recognizes this reality and therefore the need to clear the mind to communicate with God: "Sometimes my mind is so full of ideas and questions and plans and deadlines that I would love to sit with God, switch a button somewhere, and be done with all the chatter in my head."⁷³

Keith Egan, representing the Carmelite tradition of contemplative prayer, writes about how this exercise creates a mental focus that dampens or turns off mental noise:

One kind of meditation, *one-pointedness of mind* [emphasis original], seeks to confine awareness to a single object, doing this for a definite period of time. If the exercise involves vision, the meditator gazes at the object of meditation continuously. If the meditation is auditory, the sound, chant, or prayer is repeated again and again. In all cases awareness is concentrated completely on the visual object, or the sound. If our awareness

⁷² Anthony Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1999).

⁷³ Evan B. Howard, "Is Thoughtless Prayer Really Christian? A Biblical/Evangelical Response to Evagrius Pontus" in *Embracing Contemplation*, ed. John H. Coe Kyle C. Stobel (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2019), 37, Kindle.

is restricted to one unchanging object, consciousness of the external world gets turned off.⁷⁴

The quieting of the mind leads to the quieting of the spirit and allows for communication with God. Without such quieting of the spirit, Philoxenos of Mabbug indicates it is impossible to talk to God: “If man ceases to live in silence, he will have no converse with God. Hence, as long as the mind has not silenced all the trepidations and agitation of the world it will not even begin to stammer a little conversation with God.”⁷⁵

The first part of this section has shown that meditation is not a subjective effort to gain presence apart from grace. The second part discussed how meditation is like modern-day communication processes that enable handshaking and dampening noise to communicate. The next section will outline how active and passive prayer exercises seek to connect and communicate with God and provide some examples of these types of prayers.

The mystics label meditative prayer’s call and response functions in many ways, but this paper chooses to use the historical terms of active and passive prayer. For example, active and passive prayer encompasses other historical terms given to meditation’s call and response, such as mental prayer versus prayer of the heart, acquired contemplation versus infused contemplation, and discursive prayer versus non-discursive prayer. Below, this paper will discuss active prayer and provide some examples.

Merton relates active prayer with discursive and mental prayer “consisting of busy discursive acts, complex reasoning, active imagining and the deliberate stirring up of affections.”⁷⁶ Both Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross describe active prayer similarly as “an activity on our own part, especially at the beginning, an activity of reading, thinking, and

⁷⁴ Kieran Kavanaugh, “Contemplation and the Stream of Consciousness,” in *Carmelite Prayer: A Tradition for the 21st Century*, ed. Keith J. Egan (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2016), loc. 1272-1278, Kindle.

⁷⁵ Merton, *A Course in Desert Spirituality*, 144.

⁷⁶ Merton, *Contemplative Prayer*, Kindle loc. 590.

recollection.”⁷⁷ This type of prayer is active because it involves the believers connecting and communicating to God. Types of active prayer practices include reading longer passages of scripture, meditating on shorter passages, praying imaginatively, and meditating on nature or holy objects.

One of the most popular examples of reading long passages is the Daily Office prayers. The Daily Office is designed to guide believers to read through all one-hundred and fifty Psalms⁷⁸ every thirty or sixty days, and usually includes daily readings of Old Testament and New Testament passages that follow the liturgical church calendar. They are relatively long prayers that could take about thirty minutes to complete. Historically, the Daily Office has been referred to as active or liturgical prayer versus contemplative prayer.

Another type of active prayer involves meditating on shorter passages. One well-known ancient method is *Lectio Divina*, which originated with the Desert Fathers and Mothers and was popularized by John Cassian and the ancient rules of Basil and Benedict.⁷⁹ The first three steps of *Lectio Divina*, which are *lectio* (reading), *meditatio* (meditation), and *oratio* (praying), involve mental and discursive prayer using words or the mind. The fourth step, *contemplatio* (contemplation) consists of creating a posture to receive God’s presence with the heart by “tasting or touching the reality in the text” and will be further discussed with passive prayers.⁸⁰

Besides reading long passages and meditating on short passages, colloquies represent another example of active or mental prayer, where believers imagine themselves as present in a biblical story. Ignatius, in his *Spiritual Exercises*, employed colloquies as an active method of prayer, imagining himself present in scenes of the Passion to incite an appreciation of Christ’s

⁷⁷ Kavanaugh, “Contemplation and the Stream of Consciousness,” loc. 1199, Kindle.

⁷⁸ Psalmody defines the prayer practice of reading psalms meditatively.

⁷⁹ Larkin, “Carmelite Tradition,” loc. 2384, Kindle.

⁸⁰ Larkin, “Carmelite Tradition,” loc. 2271, Kindle.

sacrificial love: “In the Exercises, [active] contemplation [using colloquies] is a very active way of praying that engages the mind and heart and stirs up thoughts and emotions.”⁸¹

There are countless types of active prayers, but one other worthy of note is *Visio Divina*, or *divine seeing*, which involves meditating on images, objects, nature, or holy objects that assist in communication with the Divine. *Visio Divina* could be practiced by meditating on a painting of a biblical story, a cross, a sunset, or any part of God’s creation. One can understand how stained-glass Bible stories functioned as a visual Bible for the medieval illiterate as they practiced *Visio Divina* by gazing upon these scripture-story representations. Many times, they would recite prayers and imagine being part of the story to effectively connect with God. Also, *Visio Divina* consists of contemplating on nature images and praising the beauty of God’s creation.

Maximus categorized meditation on nature (natural contemplation) as the first level of contemplation which defines active prayer. The mystics often used contemplation to describe prayer and differentiated active from passive contemplation. Meditating on nature or holy images is also considered a mental form of prayer, or Gnosis, as Evagrius Ponticus describes it, which is a renewing of the mind to be filled with the knowledge of God and his attributes.⁸² One of the aims of active prayer is the renewing of the mind. These types of mental prayers discussed so far fall under active prayer because the believer actively uses mental faculties to connect to God. Passive prayer, on the other hand, involves using fewer words and places the believer in a listening mode.

Mystics such as Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross popularized passive prayer as an advanced method of communicating with God by entering a more receptive mode. Prayer

⁸¹ Kevin O’Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure: Experiencing the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius in Daily Life* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2011), 141, Kindle.

⁸² Merton, *A Course in Desert Spirituality*, 87.

transitions from active to passive when the believer quiets the mind and listens with the heart. Thus, passive prayer has also been described as the prayer of the heart. As discussed earlier, the fourth level of *Lectio Divina* or *contemplatio* represents this receptive posture. This type of prayer could be defined as a method that employs few words or actions and passively waits on the infusion of God's presence. The purpose of passive prayer, like the fourth step of *Lectio Divina*, was to attempt by grace to set up the connection to God's presence. It was "the ancient, monastic formula for appropriating the biblical text and for leading the practitioner into the experience of contemplation."⁸³

But ultimately the four steps of *Lectio Divina* encompassed both active and passive contemplation, or active and passive prayer. John of the Cross divides prayer into two categories "which he calls meditation [active prayer] and contemplation [passive prayer]. These two forms describe self-directed activity (meditation), or pure receptivity before God (contemplation)."⁸⁴ Whatever terminology is used to describe active and passive prayer, the end goal is to obtain presence, which God may bestow whether one is praying actively or passively. Yet, the mystics propose passive prayer as an advanced form of prayer.

Passive prayer, which involves more of the heart, employs fewer actions than active prayer, which employs cognitive functions. If the prayer process were a computer system, active prayer would be like deleting distracting computer processes to run more efficiently, and passive prayer would be like placing the computer system into sleep mode with minimal processes running. Though active prayer quiets the consciousness to a certain degree, passive prayer virtually shuts down the mind and tunes into the heart.

⁸³ Larkin, "Carmelite Tradition," 2269-2270, Kindle.

⁸⁴ Larkin, "Carmelite Tradition," 2383-2384, Kindle.

The most famous passive prayer practice is a repetitive prayer from the Hesychast tradition called the Jesus Prayer. It is sometimes referred to as the prayer of the heart because it involves simply repeating some form of “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me” petitioning God to infuse the heart with presence. Other historical repetitive prayers are the Our Father (the Lord’s Prayer) and rosary prayers. According to John Main, passive prayers in the past have mainly been practiced by mainline Christian churches through practices such as the rosary, litanies, the Jesus Prayer, and short ejaculatory phrases “as taught by John Cassian and The Cloud of Unknowing.”⁸⁵ Repetitive prayers are also referred to as ejaculatory prayers, which describe repetitively calling out to God with short holy phrases or words.

Another term used for the passive prayer practice of repetitive prayer is the prayer of aspiration.⁸⁶ There is no limit to the number of repetitive prayers possible, and a believer could personalize their own from inspiring scriptures. For instance, Psalm 3:7, “Arise, Lord! Deliver me, my God!” was David’s cry out to God when fleeing his enemy, and it could be slightly modified to be the source of this personal repetitive prayer:

Arise, Lord! Deliver me, my God!”

Arise, Jesus! Deliver me, my Jesus!”

⁸⁵ Larkin, “Carmelite Tradition,” 2275, Kindle.

⁸⁶ Aspiration prayer is where the believer repetitively calls upon God with the hope of having the Holy Spirit breathe (*aspirare*) upon them. Aspiration was a short prayer meant to be memorized and repeated throughout the day. One could understand it as another form of ejaculation but with a higher persistence to experience presence, as implied in its name. “Aspiration is a late Middle English word, which comes from the Latin *aspiratio*. This, in turn, is derived from the Latin verb *aspirare*, ‘to breath upon,’ from the prefix ad-, meaning ‘to,’ and the verb *spirare*, ‘breathe.’” Scott P. Richert, “What Is an Aspiration?” Learn Religions, July 3, 2019, <https://www.learnreligions.com/what-is-an-aspiration-542576>, under “The Origin of the Term” (last accessed December 18, 2021).

Today, two popular meditative prayer practices, “Centering Prayer” by Thomas Keating and “Christian Meditation” by John Main, incorporate a high degree of passive prayer. Though it’s helpful to categorize the stages of prayer that include penitent prayers (purification), meditative prayers, and contemplative prayers,⁸⁷ Merton cautions that they are ultimately one movement involving our whole being. Prayers may begin at various stages, but the hope is that they all engage the heart and involve “the whole man and proceed from the ‘center’ of man’s being, his ‘heart’ renewed in the Holy Spirit, totally submissive to the grace of Christ.”⁸⁸

This section has compared meditation to our modern-day data and voice communication processes where the caller, or believer, calls out to God in prayer, hoping God will answer or respond with presence. To accomplish this, however, the mind must be free of distractive noise to avoid drowning out the divine conversation. Therefore, the mystics provided methods of quieting the mind. Ultimately there are two types of prayers. The first, active prayer, also known as active contemplation or mental prayer, represents actively calling on God through discursive and imaginative prayers. The second, passive prayer, which is also known as infused contemplation or the prayer of the heart, represents using fewer words and less cognitive activity while passively waiting for God to respond and communicate His presence. All prayer steps have one goal, which is to connect to God by grace, trusting He will respond with presence, which is the third spiritual stage and will be the subject of Section IV.

Section IV — The Presence Stage

So, to review the spiritual stages to this point, the first two stages of purification and meditation prepare the heart and the mind, respectively, for contemplation or presence. This

⁸⁷ Larkin, “Carmelite Tradition,” 2346-2347, Kindle.

⁸⁸ Merton, *Contemplative Prayer*, 411, Kindle.

section discusses the third stage of spirituality, presence, and how it represents the goal of the believer's journey where God responds with unspeakable love. First, this section discusses how presence is the process of communication where God begins to respond to our calls, and we begin to listen and receive. Next, this section discusses presence where one experiences God's ineffable love that warms the heart. Finally, this section discusses presence as the stage where we experience God's apophatic⁸⁹ love.

This section discusses the stage of presence which represents the process of communication where God begins to respond to our meditative calls and the communication medium transitions from the mind to predominantly the heart. Maximus defined presence as the highest level of contemplation, or "mystical contemplation," where communication with God transitions from the intellect to the heart, resulting in a mystical fellowship. Maximus writes, "Mystical communion ... the fathers called 'pure prayer,' or in a kind of ecstasy on the part of one outside of oneself, and in the cultivation of the 'heart' ... Therefore, when the human heart is filled with presence of the incarnate Word, it is also open ... toward the living God."⁹⁰

In presence, God begins to respond to our attempts to reach Him through meditations like *Lectio Divina* and various forms of prayers. Benedictine oblate and inspirational poet Kathleen Norris understood this mystical transition from a mental to a spiritual state in defining the process of sacred writing or "active *lectio*," in which God inspires poets with words from their exposure to scripture. Norris notes that "active *lectio*" is not so much intellectual as it is "existential" and allows words to "work the earth of her heart." Norris writes, "Lectio [meditative or active] is an attempt to read more with the heart than with the head."⁹¹ Nouwen acknowledges that mental prayer exercises, like divine reading, place the believer in a position

⁸⁹ Apophatic knowledge is compared to a blackout of human knowledge, or "Dark Cloud of Unknowing" such that when one reaches a mystical, intellectual encounter with God, it exceeds all human knowing.

⁹⁰ Lars Thunberg, "The Human Person as Image of God," 304-305.

⁹¹ Kathleen Norris. *The Cloister Walk* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1997), loc. 188-196, Kindle.

for God to transition their meditative experience from the head to the heart. The believer should let the Word of God descend from the mind into the heart, where one can “ruminate on it, masticate it, digest it, and let it become flesh and blood.”⁹²

So at the level of presence, God communicates to both the heart and mind. Presence is an experience that illuminates the mind with the knowledge of God and inflames and transforms the heart with love for God. Yet, though God communes with us through two entities, His intellect, and His love, they are somewhat the same since “Love itself is a kind of knowing.”⁹³ So, presence is the stage where God begins to respond and communicate His unspeakable love into our hearts which is the goal of the believer.

Hesychia was defined as a level of sweet communion and contemplation that was considered “the crown of the desert life, the reward of all the hermit’s strivings and the foretaste of heaven.”⁹⁴ It’s where the believer has reached the summit of Sinai and seen God face-to-face.⁹⁵ The experience of presence is a stage to strengthen our love of God, and sanctification is the process of maintaining a pure heart, or what Wesley called heart holiness. So, the stage of presence is a means to refreshing the heart with God’s love and experiencing His love which is the apex and goal of the believer. Presence fills the heart with other-worldly ecstatic love, joy, and knowledge beyond expression or measure.

The Apostle Paul’s experience with presence was so mystical that he could not say if it took him out of his body or not: “I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows” (2 Cor. 12:2). Sometimes believers describe this mystical experience of presence as an uplifting

⁹² Nouwen, *Spiritual Formation*, loc. 279, Kindle.

⁹³ Bernard McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism 1200-1350*. Vol. 3 of *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998), 82.

⁹⁴ Merton, *A Course in Desert Spirituality*, 76.

⁹⁵ Howard, “Is Thoughtless Prayer Really Christian?” in *Embracing Contemplation*, 44-45, Kindle.

feeling transcending human knowing or understanding.⁹⁶ Brother Lawrence described presence as a restful sweet communion strengthening faith to meet the demands of one's life.⁹⁷ Bernard of Clairvaux's commentary on Revelation 19 compares presence to the mystical love of the bridegroom who invites his bride to drink abundantly of his love while on earth and when in glory.⁹⁸ John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila described this experience as becoming unaware of surroundings and the passing of time.⁹⁹

The mystics describe presence as transcending knowledge, understanding, and description, or as ineffable. In an apophatic tone, Augustine, a master of theology and philosophy, calls presence an indescribable reality: "You begin to have the experience, and there you experience that you cannot say what you experience."¹⁰⁰ Some, like Evagrius, referred to it as enjoyable but indescribable and advised believers to adore while not attempting to "define the divine."¹⁰¹ Not only is presence an ineffable, inspiring, and ecstatic experience of enflaming love, but it's also an apophatic experience.

Gregory of Nyssa pictures the apophatic nature of presence as ever boundless, yet ever drawing such that "the bride never ceases going in nor going out, but she rests only by advancing towards"¹⁰² This apophatic knowledge is compared to a blackout of human knowledge, or "Dark Cloud of Unknowing" such that the supra-intellectual experience of presence exceeds all human knowing. It is a positive knowing in that God grants knowledge beyond any in this world, but a negative, apophatic, knowing in that we come in a state of complete ignorance or mental

⁹⁶ James Martin, *The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2010), 69, Kindle.

⁹⁷ Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, loc. 475, Kindle.

⁹⁸ Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Loving God* (1090-1153), 24, Kindle.

⁹⁹ Kavanaugh, "Contemplation and the Stream of Consciousness," in *Carmelite Prayer*, loc. 1196-1198, Kindle.

¹⁰⁰ McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, 241.

¹⁰¹ McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, 155.

¹⁰² McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, 141.

darkness. Peter John Olivi writes, “Perfect unknowing is the knowledge of him who is beyond all that is known. This is entering the darkness, or cloud (of unknowing), along with Moses.”¹⁰³ The dark night of knowing defines a mystical phenomenon of entering into deeper communion with God, when we can no longer grow in the knowledge of him through reasoning propositionally but must advance through acquaintance experientially.

Darkness is a metaphor that mystics like Gregory gave to the state of advanced presence where the soul crosses over the threshold from immanence to transcendence, and from propositional discourse to mystical experience and love beyond words.¹⁰⁴ But Paul informs us that this love is better for it will outlive our knowledge: “Love never ends . . . as for knowledge, it will pass away” (1 Cor 13:8). Darkness was one metaphor used to define presence, and since the apophatic nature of presence is indescribable, the mystics attempted to describe the indescribable in metamorphic language like being “enveloped in the super lucent cloud of divine incomprehensibility.”¹⁰⁵ Some Christian mystics describe extreme, or ecstatic, spiritual encounters with God. James of Vitry writes regarding one of St. Francis’ other-worldly experiences that, “In 1219 ... we saw the first founder ... beloved of God and men, called Brother Francis, who was rapt to such great ecstasy of drunkenness and fervor of spirit.”¹⁰⁶

In summary, the experience of presence elevates the believer to the highest level of communication, which is the apex of the spiritual journey with God, through the medium of the heart and spirit, resulting in ineffable, unspeakable, and transcendent experiences of love and joy. So far, this chapter has discussed the contemplative inner life, which includes the spiritual

¹⁰³ McGinn. *The Flowering of Mysticism*, 121.

¹⁰⁴ Ryan A. Brandt, “Gospel-Centered Contemplation: A Proposal,” in *Embracing Contemplation*, ed. John H. Coe and Kyle C. Stobel (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2019), 192, Kindle.

¹⁰⁵ McGinn. *The Flowering of Mysticism*, 86.

¹⁰⁶ McGinn. *The Flowering of Mysticism*, 41

stages of purification, meditation, and presence. The next section will discuss the embodiment stage, which addresses the active or outer life of the believer.

Section V — The Embodiment Stage

Embodiment can be understood as the post-honeymoon stage, when lovers transfer their deep passion and relocate their private presence to experience home, family, and community life together while continuing to remain especially present with each other. Embodiment represents the process of the believer rising from the altar of deep presence and exiting that sanctuary of daily prayer and holy experience to carry presence into the outer world of relationships, vocation, ministry, self-improvement, and leisure. The embodiment stage represents the inner spiritual life lived into the practical outer life. It can also be referred to as the kingdom of God on our earth or the life of God embodied within our world.

Embodiment complements the contemplative, inner life stages of purification, meditation, and presence. In the embodiment stage, one practices the kingdom of God on earth by embodying the presence of God in the earthly contexts of persons, places, things, and activities. Below, this paper will discuss how the embodiment stage functions as the complement of the contemplative stage fostering presence, although through different means.

Mystics believed the contemplative life, which would entail this paper's purification, meditation, and presence stages, complement the active life, which is this paper's embodiment stage. Embodiment is a term used to describe the embodying of God's presence in our daily lives. This presence then becomes the driving and embodying force behind one's personal, ministerial, vocational, and relational responsibilities so that inner holiness becomes the means to

external holiness. Through worship and our experience of His presence, God desires to empower our spiritual life as well as our active, secular life of responsibilities and relationships.

Throughout church history some have misunderstood this complementary relationship between the spiritual and the secular. At times, monasteries and churches gave higher priority to the spiritual callings of monks, priests, and pastors than to secular callings. It is true that Jesus seemed to have elevated inner presence over life responsibilities, like when he reproved Martha for worrying more about cleaning the house and cooking dinner than spending time in His presence like Mary was (Luke 10:38-42). However, Jesus' admonition of Martha and praise of Mary in this one passage only tells one side of the story. In another teaching, Jesus clarifies the inner life of loving God as the means of the believer being able to keep His commandments: "If you love me [in your inner life], keep my commands [in your outer life]." (John 14:15).

Merton identifies Mary and Martha as types of the contemplative and active life, respectively: "In the monastic life one could find, according to Bernard, three vocations: that of Lazarus the penitent, that of Martha the active and devoted servant of the monastic household, and that of Mary the contemplative."¹⁰⁷ Finley proposes that contemplative and active are both one in the sense of worship. In contemplative activities, one seeks presence and worship, and through the active life, one seeks presence and worships Christ through acts of obedience to God and service to others:

The religious life moves in two directions that are ultimately revealed as one. There is a vertical direction which arises from the root awareness of a bond with transcendence, as described by Metz. There is also a horizontal direction arising from the fact that we do not go to God in isolation from others but only with others as our brothers and sisters. And underlying both the vertical and horizontal directions of religious experience there is the paradox that in Christ the horizontal and vertical meet and become one.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Merton, *Contemplative Prayer*, loc. 763, Kindle.

¹⁰⁸ James Finley, *Merton's Palace of Nowhere* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1978), 37, Kindle.

St. Francis is one example of a contemplative who found presence through the active life in serving others. Likewise, the Celts worshipped God contemplatively and actively. They valued the contemplative life as the “cave of the heart” or the “innermost cloister” where God finds us, and we find him. They also recognized that this inner experience was complimentary to their outside world. From the internal center, they moved out to the edges of the world, which they understood as the embodied life of ministry and human responsibility.

Many monks embraced both the active and contemplative and understood that the lines between the contemplative center and the embodied edges blurred. Ester de Wall alludes to these faded boundaries: “Are the edges not perhaps the center? Does the center not hold the edges? Perhaps it is just simply finding the right connection of the two, the right way of coming and going.”¹⁰⁹

To summarize, the first part of this section discussed the complementary relationship of the inner, contemplative life to the outer, embodied, life. The next part of this section discusses how the embodied life is also a place to experience contemplation, or presence through sacraments.

Embodiment is sacramental participation in our community of persons, places, things, and activities to embody God’s presence. The believer’s participation in the Eucharist and baptism exemplify how God embodies things and activities sacramentally. The Eucharist and baptism are rites through which God conveys His presence when we remember, respond, or participate with Him. The sacraments themselves are not innately holy, but when we participate in remembering God through them, He responds by grace and we experience His holiness. The

¹⁰⁹ Esther de Waal, *To Pause at the Threshold: Reflections on Living at the Border* (NY: Morehouse Publishing, 2001), loc. 559, Kindle.

sacrament is simply an earthly medium through which God, by grace, communicates His presence to us; so, it is “an external expression of an inward grace.”¹¹⁰

These two sacraments of the church are good examples of how God mediates His grace to us. Susan Carole writes, “The holy sacraments, baptism and the Eucharist, are ways to publicly remember and declare the Name of Jesus Christ. They are powerful symbols through which the Holy Spirit conveys grace. Baptism is participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rom 6:3–4). The event is sacramental because it draws the believer into union with Christ by faith, not by the material elements, but through them.”¹¹¹ Sacraments are a good example of God embodying our world because “one way we can describe liturgy and the sacraments is to say that they are special times when the divine and the human come together, when what is invisible takes on a form that allows it to be seen, experienced, understood, and responded to.”¹¹²

The Celts understood that God embodies through the church’s sacred objects and “through all the minutiae of daily life” so that home, family, work, and leisure become sacraments. Nothing is too small to be embodied by God:¹¹³ “The simplest sermon, the most banal conversations, the least erudite books become the source of knowledge and wisdom to these souls by virtue of God’s purpose.”¹¹⁴ God embodies Himself to us through our sacramental actions through which we participate with Christ.¹¹⁵ There is no activity or situation where God would not accept our invitation to embody such as “pain to be endured, some consolation to be

¹¹⁰ W. Tozer, “The Pursuit of God,” in *Invitation to Christian Spirituality: An Ecumenical Anthology*, ed. John R. Tyson (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2019), 404.

¹¹¹ Susan B. Carole, *Called into Communion: A Paradigm Shift in Holiness Theology* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 96, Kindle.

¹¹² Kurt Stasiak, *Sacramental Theology: Means of Grace, Way of Life: Catholic Basics - A Pastoral Ministry Series*, ed. Thomas P. Walters (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2001), loc. 252, Kindle.

¹¹³ *Celtic Christian Spirituality: Essential Writings-Annotated and Explained*, Annotated by Mary C. Earle. (Woodstock, VT: SkyLight Paths Publishing, 2011), loc. 675, Kindle.

¹¹⁴ Martin, *The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything*, 284.

¹¹⁵ Tozer, “The Pursuit of God,” 404.

enjoyed, or some duty to be performed. ... If we could lift the veil, and if we were attentive and watchful God would continually reveal Godself to us.”¹¹⁶

Embodiment is not a pantheistic claim that people, places, and things are innately holy, nor is it a claim that we can command God to make these holy. Instead, embodiment is the mystical relationship where we act by faith to cooperate with Him. We participate by calling on the Father through Christ in our activities and sacraments, knowing that Christ, who is our Mediator, has already provided the means for us to approach the Father and that we believe by grace that God responds and convenes His presence.

The Celts wrote extensively on God embodying nature and vocation. They understood “the heavens declare the glory of God,” and like the psalmist, they praised Him for the beauty of the green mountainous Celtic land surrounded by the majestic seas. God embodied them through their “natural contemplation” of nature and vocation. Their ancient and modern poems, like the *Herd Blessing*, *Blessing of the Kindling*, *Milking Prayer*, and *A Refrigerator*¹¹⁷ invited God to embody them in their vocation as they cared for their livestock and basic needs. There are also many testimonials of places functioning as a location for embodiment, where the “veil between heaven and earth is thinned” and Christians can experience God’s presence. These places become holy when they are consecrated to God and God is remembered in them.

This section has discussed embodiment as the complement of the contemplative life. When we participate sacramentally in places, things, and activities of our embodied life, God embodies His presence through these outer activities as he does for the inner contemplative. Finally, the next section on embodiment concludes by discussing how God embodies His presence to us as we love others.

¹¹⁶ Nouwen, *Spiritual Formation*, loc. 743, Kindle.

¹¹⁷ *Celtic Christian Spirituality*, loc. 719-765, Kindle.

Jesus promised to embody his disciples as they ministered the Gospel to others. He said, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you [embody you] always, to the very end of the age” (Matt. 28:19-20). Through our efforts of evangelism and in our works of compassion towards our neighbor, God conveys His presence through them to us, and through us to them. Johannes Baptist Metz writes, “Our human neighbor now becomes a ‘sacrament’ of God’s hidden presence among us, a mediator between God and humanity. Every authentic religious act is directed toward the concreteness of God in our human neighbors and their world. Love of neighbor, then, is not something different from love of God: It is merely the earthly side of the same coin”¹¹⁸

Church ministries were understood as sacramental by the Celts, who believed God embodied their evangelism and mission outposts as places “where God’s will is done and therefore places of his kingdom here on earth.”¹¹⁹ Jesus linked God’s glory with the unity of believers. Jesus said, “I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one” (John 17:22). God’s presence is convened in Christian brotherly and sisterly unity and with our neighbors. Merton writes of how God’s presence is not confined to contemplative encounters with God but also embodies our relationships with one another: “Whatever I may have written, I think it can all be reduced in the end to this one root truth: That God calls human persons to union with Himself with one another in Christ.”¹²⁰ This synergy of the Body of Christ becomes a form of embodiment as God’s holiness communes through each member: “Synergy is also the measure of a healthy body that is growing and full of perfect love. Accountability,

¹¹⁸ Johannes Baptist Metz, *Poverty of Spirit*, trans. John Drury (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1998), loc. 176-177, Kindle.

¹¹⁹ David Adam. *A Desert in the Ocean: The Spiritual Journey According to St. Brendan the Navigator* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2000), 106-107, Google Books.

¹²⁰ Finley, *Merton's Palace of Nowhere*, 36, Kindle.

encouragement, admonition, intercessory prayer, and support are impossible apart from other people. We become a holy people together.”¹²¹

Jesus alluded to the inner-outer spirituality of the four stages in describing Himself as the door of salvation: “I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture” (John 10:9). The door opens both into His presence and out to the “pasture” of the outer life. The mystics help us understand that we need to hold in tension the practices that foster presence with the embodiment of presence. Just as God fills the contemplative with His presence, in the embodied life God conveys His same presence to us as we participate with Him in our world through objects, activities, places, and people. When presence fills through inward our outward practices, it fosters holistic healing.

Section VI — Multiple Levels of Healing

Chapter Three introduced four spiritual stages as a method to practice Christian maturity and growth in grace--purification, meditation, presence, and embodiment-- which provide ongoing healing and transformation to ailments affecting the body, heart, mind, spirit, and community. The benefit of practicing these four stages of spirituality is that they allow one to foster spiritual healing and strengthening at multiple levels. Just as the efficient medical doctor can remedy a physical ailment or symptom by evaluating multiple levels of the body, the effective spiritual doctor can remedy a spiritual ailment by providing healing to multiple levels of our spiritual ontology. For instance, a medical doctor may first ask the patient, “What is ailing you? Then the doctor could apply remedies to one or many bodily systems, to heal each area. Likewise, a spiritual doctor could ask the believer, “What is your frailty?” or “Where do you

¹²¹ David A. Basic, *Way, Truth, Life: Discipleship as a Journey of Grace* (Kansas City, MO: The Foundry Publishing, 2021), 86, Kindle.

need spiritual strengthening?” Then the spiritual director could suggest a purification, meditation, presence, and embodiment remedy to heal and strengthen the believer’s heart, mind, spirit, and life.

The Apostle Paul recognized the complexity of our beings by stating that Christ intends to fill us completely: “He [Christ] fills everything in every way” (Eph. 1:23b). Christ acknowledges the human being as more than just an embodied spirit by specifying holistic healing: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind’; and ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Luke 10:27). Paul writes about allowing God to sanctify us at multiple levels of our being: “May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1Thes. 5:23).

To ensure proper remedy for a physical ailment, a medical doctor must analyze numerous biological systems within the body. Similarly, the spiritual healer must diagnose ailments of the body, heart, mind, spirit, and personal life to ensure proper spiritual healing. Only after proper diagnosis can the healer prescribe the correct remedy. The difference between physical and spiritual ailments is that spiritual ailments usually affect all parts of all human systems. Since prayers are the remedies used, each prayer below will contain four remedies to purify the heart and body, meditate the mind, infill the Spirit, and embody the life to enable holistic spiritual healing.

Take the case of addicts as an example. Their hearts and bodies suffer temptation, their minds require a renewal of God's commandment, their spirits need refilling, and their lives needs a community of support. The spiritual model of four practices aims to address each of these areas to provide fuller healing. There are endless spiritual ailments and areas of a believer’s life that

need strengthening that the four stages can remedy. For instance, people who suffer from the loss of a job, loved one, or health could start at the first stage of purification, with practices that wrestle against the dark night of doubts and trials to strengthen their faith. Then, in the meditation stage, they could seek solitude and prayer to contemplate scriptures to renew the mind that gives assurance of God's unfailing love to strengthen their mind and faith. In the presence stage, those suffering loss could seek the presence of God and experience His fullness in the Spirit to strengthen their assurance that God will never leave them or forsake them. Finally, in the embodiment stage they could seek the support of the community, such as the body of Christ, family, and friends to provide healing through encouragement, wisdom, and presence.

Conclusion

Chapter Three introduced four spiritual stages to cleanse and prepare the body, heart, mind, spirit, and life for God's presence. The purification stage provides exercises to purify the flesh and the heart. That chapter discussed purification practices of fasting, examen, and repentance that overcome temptations, sin, excessiveness, and personal loss to prepare the believer for presence. The meditation stage provides exercises to renew the mind through quiet meditation to prepare for a conversation with God. We trust that God responds by grace to our participative efforts to communicate with Him with infused contemplation or the beginning presence stages. Presence is the stage that infills the believer's spirit with God's presence to experience an ecstatic, ineffable, glorious, and transcendent mystical union. Embodiment is the stage that incarnates our inner life into our outer life. It describes the process of applying our inner spirituality to our active life. Embodiment is learning to become the kingdom of God on earth and incarnating into our relationships and responsibilities. By applying the exercises of the

four spiritual stages to ailments and areas that need strengthening, one can attain a holistic transformation. The next chapter will discuss holistic places that are conducive to these holistic practices.

CHAPTER FOUR

Holistic Places

Chapter Three introduced four spiritual stages that aid in the believer's holistic spiritual formation of body, mind, heart, spirit, and life. Chapter Four reveals how characteristics of four biblical places--desert, cloister, holy mountain, and community--are conducive to the holistic practices of purification, meditation, presence, and embodiment, respectively.

Section I — Physical Places Stimulate Spiritual Formation

The Scriptures and the Desert Fathers show us how the physical characteristics of desert, cloister, holy mountain, and community stimulate the practice of the four spiritual stages by setting an amenable spiritual and psychological mood. This section discusses the spiritual practice of purification. Desert characteristics, such as emptiness, barrenness, demon inhabitation, ruggedness, and reclusiveness, are conducive to the purification practices of detachment, repentance, temptation, loss, and trials.

A desert is a place almost totally void of life's necessities. Likewise, the spiritual disciplines of detachment and fasting self-impose a withdrawal from life's necessities and pleasures, so the desert is conducive place for the purification practice. If one desires to detach from life's busyness or fast from food or fun, entering a desert void of food, people, and social activities aids those practices. The Bible provides examples of the purification aspects of the desert.

The Sinai Desert aided in detaching the Israelite's dependencies on necessities and forced them to trust God to provide water, meat (quail), and bread (manna). Likewise, the Egyptian

desert's dry and barren land became conducive to the Desert Fathers' practices of detachment and fasting from earthy dependencies. In his *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, British adventurer T. E. Lawrence ("Lawrence of Arabia") acknowledges the ascetic attractiveness of the desert for the Egyptian desert contemplatives: "The desert [dweller] found no joy like the joy of voluntarily holding back. He found luxury in abnegation, renunciation, self-restraint. He made nakedness of the mind as sensuous as the nakedness of the body."¹²² St Jerome also links desert places to purification practices. He urged his monks to embrace the barrenness and harshness of the desert as the key to unlocking their chain of physical and psychological dependence on earthly things and placing their joy and hope in God. Jerome links desert places and ascetic practice by associating:

- The poverty of the desert to the beatitude of poverty
- The lack of food as the substance of abundant faith
- The lonely, rugged desert terrain as an open door to Christ who accommodates and suffers besides the bruised-knee penitent
- The untidy and unwashed head as being like Christ, our spiritual head¹²³

The desert place and its hardships fit into the monk's spirituality who "must bravely face the hardships of desert life and deprivation, trusting in Christ, not in his own power."¹²⁴ Merton writes that the Egyptian desert setting cleansed the body and purged the heart: "Each monastic observance, fasting, silence, reading, labor, etc., has as its function to purify the heart of vices and self-love, to free it from passion, and to raise us to the perfection of charity."¹²⁵ In the Judean desert, Jesus practiced fasting to confirm his heart's allegiance to the Father when tempted with

¹²² Belden C. Lane, *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes: Exploring Desert and Mountain Spirituality* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998), 20, Kindle.

¹²³ Merton, *A Course in Desert Spirituality*, 59, Kindle.

¹²⁴ Merton, *A Course in Desert Spirituality*, 60, Kindle.

¹²⁵ Merton, *A Course in Desert Spirituality*, 115, Kindle.

worldly power or basic food necessities (Luke 4). Christ going out into the desert is the model of monastic renunciation.

The monk's belief that the desert was inhabited by demons became a setting in which the Desert Fathers purified their fleshly desires and passions. The monk, like Christ, went into the desert to engage in combat with the spiritual enemy. He would not take anything of the world with him.¹²⁶ McGinn writes, "The desert, traditionally the home for demons and not for humans, was the place where the encounter with the spirits of evil--demons of lust, of gluttony, of anger, of desire for possessions, and the like--could be more readily encountered and mastered."¹²⁷ Here, it becomes evident that the practice of desert purification spirituality cleanses the heart, body, or flesh. Not only was the desert a place for wrestling with demons, but its lifelessness set a solemn mood for wrestling with personal loss and sadness.

The lifeless desert environment influences one psychologically to meditate on loss and dark night-type experiences. When pilgrimaging in the desert grappling with the loss of his mother, Lane writes, "It was a pilgrimage that echoed my mother's own long journey into relinquishment and loss. The desert of the Sinai is a perfect place for confronting deep fears and feelings of abandonment. Loneliness there is a constant companion, one who insists on being honored if not also loved."¹²⁸ The purification process strengthens the faith of the one who has experienced a personal loss. The lonely place of the desert becomes conducive to this practice and resonates with a lonely heart.

The dark desert as a vulnerable place also resonates with our vulnerability and encourages us to expose our dark side and be honest with ourselves and God. Stepping into the dark desert stimulates us to step into and admit to our darkness, allowing us to let go of

¹²⁶ Merton, *A Course in Desert Spirituality*, 147.

¹²⁷ Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, 136.

¹²⁸ Lane, *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes*, 26.

pretenses, purifying our identity. Nouwen also correlates this influence of desert emptiness and surrender saying that the desert's total nothingness "forces us to surrender ourselves totally and unconditionally to the Lord Jesus Christ."¹²⁹ Likewise, the characteristics of particular places have also been conducive to the practice of the spiritual stage of meditation for mental healing and contemplation.

The monastery, or cloister, provided a setting for isolation and quiet, conducive to study and education: "There was a time when the obvious milieu for theological education and study of the Word was the monastery. There words were born out of silence and could lead one deeper into silence."¹³⁰ The monastic practice of silence and meditation remains important today, influenced by cloister quietness. According to Nouwen, "although monasteries are no longer the most common places of theological education, silence remains as indispensable today as it was in the past. The Word of God is born out of the eternal silence of God, and it is to this Word out of silence that we want to be witnesses."¹³¹ Because the monks leave us with a rich heritage of the monastery cloister as a place conducive to the practice of solitude and meditative prayer, this paper will use the "cloister" image to represent the place of meditation.

Just as deserts set the mood for practicing purification and cloisters for meditation, mountain characteristics set the mood for practicing presence. The characteristics of mountain heights draw people to reach spiritual heights. The mountain characteristics of height, illumination, illusiveness, danger, glory, majesty, and beauty are amenable to presence practices of contemplating God's majesty, glory, beauty, and splendor, to name a few of His wondrous characteristics. Presence is the practice of drawing higher towards God and mountains are conducive because they draw us to climb higher. Hiking up a mountain is not only

¹²⁹ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1981), 10, Kindle.

¹³⁰ Nouwen. *The Way of the Heart*, 20.

¹³¹ Nouwen. *The Way of the Heart*, 21.

a journey toward a physical goal but representative of a journey towards a life goal and personal transformation.¹³² Diana Kappel-Smith wrote, “Plants and animals change as one goes up the mountain, and so apparently, do people.”¹³³ The higher elevations seem to influence a call to higher spiritual goals and transformation and to seek God’s glory and majesty.

The practice of presence is the advanced spiritual exercise from purification to mediation to presence to seek by grace the glory of God. Presence is the stage of maturity or advancement where the believer comes with a purified heart and contemplated mind to seek union with God. Gregory of Nyssa hints at this progressive step into presence “as entry into a moonlit desert night, then movement to a fog-covered mountain and, finally, into the impenetrable darkness of a thick cloud.”¹³⁴

The mountain was a place God used to reveal His glory. “The mountain symbolized for him (Moses) the glory of God.”¹³⁵ It’s a place to encounter God as Moses did on Mt. Sinai, where God would convey the Ten Commandments. God chose the majestic mountains as a perfect garment to reveal His majesty for Moses on Sinai, the disciples on Mt. Tabor, Abraham on Mt. Moriah, and the world on Mt. Calvary. God has leveraged the mountain’s superior height to reveal His prominent and Godly presence at Mt. Sinai, Mt Moriah, Mt Tabor, and the Mount of Olives. From the peak of the Mount of Olives, He majestically ascended in into glory, and He will use that same majestic summit to gloriously return one day. God chooses the magnificent and glorious characteristics of mountains as places to reveal His presence. So, the holy mountain is a place conducive to the practice of presence and being filled with God’s Spirit. The Bible provides another example of this link between mountain places and presence in the contrasting features of Sinai and Tabor.

¹³² Lane, *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes*, 87.

¹³³ Lane, *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes*, 87.

¹³⁴ Lane, *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes*, 26.

¹³⁵ Lane, *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes*, 107.

The harsh and remote Sinai terrain sets the mood for God's apophatic, mysterious and unreachable nature. The pleasant meadows and lively landscapes of Tabor set the mood for the cataphatic welcoming nature of God: "Sinai and Tabor represent two poles of a dialectical tension in biblical theology. The one [Sinai] is a reminder of God's utter freedom and inaccessibility, insisting that in no place are there permanent guarantees of the divine presence. The other [Tabor – the place of Christ's transfiguration] is an apocalyptic disclosure of God's glory, localized and made manifest in the messianic character of Jesus."¹³⁶

Sinai is a place devoid of vivid imagery, life, and welcomeness, thereby becoming an image of God's unapproachable nature. It's the place where God limits Moses' view of Himself. Sinai is unapproachable. Lesley Hazleton, an Israeli journalist, writing about her journey to Sinai, describes this unapproachable Sinai terrain: "If I were just to touch any one of those jagged peaks, it would draw blood."¹³⁷ The unwelcoming and unreachable landscapes of Sinai seem to resonate with the mystical presence of God, who appears in the darkness, behind a cloud, through a veil, and in awe through a burning bush. Mystical theologian Bonaventure believes Sinai symbolizes contact of the soul with the transcendent "darkness" of God or the mysticism of night.¹³⁸

Mt. Tabor, however, exhibits more pleasant characteristics where nature is more attractive and alive with tree-covered slopes above the grassy Galilean plains. This setting is amenable to practicing the cataphatic and welcoming presence Jesus revealed to the disciples there. Tabor's setting reflects a cataphatic image of Christ, who reveals God more clearly. Lane writes of the Transfiguration experience on Tabor: "God is found in a sharpness and lucidity of image. The mystery of the incarnation is disclosed in Jesus of Nazareth, his clothes glistening

¹³⁶ Lane, *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes*, 124.

¹³⁷ Lane, *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes*, 128-129.

¹³⁸ Merton, *A Course in Desert Spirituality*, 49.

and intensely white. There is no obscurity or confusion about what is seen.”¹³⁹ So the desert is conducive to purification, the cloister to meditation, and the mountain to presence, and finally, the community is amenable to practicing embodiment.

The final space conducive to specific spiritual practices is community. St. Patrick understood the characteristic of community space as a neutral zone between the sacred and the sinful and considered it a safe space to integrate the sinner and the saint. Community space borders the sacred and secular spaces and is conducive to practicing missions. It guards against sinners defiling holy places and embodies saints in sinners’ spaces. This safe space allows the secular community to find housing and safety but also sets apart the sacred place of the sanctuary. Unlike the Eastern monasteries that were built to escape the pagan Roman world, Patrick built Celtic monasteries to embody and penetrate the pagan world:

“The Celtic monasteries organized to penetrate the pagan world and to extend the Church. The eastern monks often withdrew from the world into monasteries to save and cultivate their own souls; Celtic leaders often organized monastic communities to save other people’s souls. The leaders of the Eastern monasteries located their monasteries in isolated locations, off the beaten track; the Celtic Christians built their monastic communities in locations accessible to the traffic of the time.”¹⁴⁰

These safe courtyard zones allowed God’s people to embody community, to practice God’s mission of restoration and reconciliation. Christopher Wright defines the mission call of God’s people into the world as “our committed participation as God’s people, at God’s invitation and command, in God’s own mission within the history of God’s world for the redemption of God’s creation.”¹⁴¹

Besides the example of St. Patrick’s monastic community spaces, Jon

Huckin’s *Nieucommunities* organization provides a modern-day example of the intermediate

¹³⁹ Lane, *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes*, 137, Kindle.

¹⁴⁰ George G. Hunter III, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism: How Christianity Can Reach the West...Again* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 28, Kindle.

¹⁴¹ Jon Huckins, *Thin Places: Six Postures for Creating and Practicing Missional Community* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 2012), 17, Kindle.

space of community. This intermediate community space could be understood as an incarnated space. Huckins explains that the incarnation, the Word becoming flesh, represents the missional character of God “tabernacled” in a particular type of space that he calls the “neighborhood” or community space. He defines the ideal space of missional incarnation as the “monastic-missional” space which guards the inward monastic [holy] life of the church while creating missional outposts [or buffer zones] adjacent to, or within, secular places. Huckins is describing a missional space similar to St. Patrick’s courtyard monastic community. Huckins writes, “Put simply, we believe missional-monastic community creates a fertile soil to commune with God, live in deep community with others, and extend the good news of the kingdom in our local contexts.”¹⁴² Huckins *Nieucommunities* inhabit houses and places within immigrant communities to provide them access to Christ. Like Huckins’ *Nieucommunities* and St. Patrick’s courtyard communities, the Christian church, individually or collectively, incarnates missions to broken people as they allow God to embody their spaces.

In today’s Christian context, a community space does not have to be a geographical place but can be any place where the Body of Christ embodies Christ. For example, a community space might be a family home, workplace, neighborhood space, civic space, or ministry space. Our lives are the neutral zone in which Christ is embodied to allow our sinful world access to Jesus. Embodied Christians became the neutral zone between Christ and the world as they go into their communities and share the Gospel using words or actions.

To conclude, community spaces have been shown to be conducive to the spiritual practices of embodying Christ to the world where the Kingdom of God on earth takes place through the church collectively or individually.

¹⁴² Huckins, *Thin Places*, 24, Kindle.

Conclusion

Chapter Four discussed how characteristics of the physical spaces of desert, cloister, holy mountain, and community influence the believer's body, heart, mind, spirit, and life to practice the four spiritual stages of purification, meditation, presence, and embodiment, respectively, to foster holistic spiritual healing. To simulate these devotional spaces of desert, cloister, holy mountain, and community, the next chapter will propose a Christian prayer labyrinth tool as an artifact for the dissertation project to be used in ministry applications. This labyrinth is based on the classical Chartres labyrinth, which overlays four archetypical places of desert, cloister, holy mountain, and community as amenable places to practice holistic prayer and transformation.

CHAPTER FIVE

Holistic labyrinth places

Chapter Four discussed how physical places of desert, cloister, holy mountain, and community are conducive to practicing the four spiritual stages to stimulate holistic prayer and enable spiritual formation. However, practical limitations prohibit traveling to these places for daily prayer, so Chapter Five addresses this limitation by superimposing these four holistic places onto a prayer labyrinth, derived from the classical Chartres Labyrinth, to model a place for holistic prayer. This chapter will first explore how Christian groups related labyrinth spaces to spirituality and introduce a newly designed Christian prayer labyrinth as an archetypal place for practicing ongoing holiness and Christian healing.

Section I discusses how societies have associated labyrinths with holistic spiritual practices and how medieval Christians associated the Chartres Prayer Labyrinth's paths and a circular structure with spiritual healing and maturity. Section II introduces a newly designed Christian prayer labyrinth that modifies the classic Chartres Labyrinth by overlaying four archetypal places: desert, cloister, holy mountain, and community. This section shows how practicing the four types of holistic prayers and liturgies in these holistic paths aids in spiritually healing and strengthening the believer.

Section I — Labyrinth Places Simulate Holistic Spiritual Formation

Though there are many forms of ancient and modern labyrinths, or mazes, and historians classify them into one of two types-- multicursal and unicursal--¹⁴³ most labyrinths today are a

¹⁴³ Unicursal is where “there is only one path, winding and turning, usually toward a center, and the multicursal, where the maze [labyrinth] wanderer faces a series of critical choices [such that there is more than one path and the possibility of dead ends.” R. Taylor, “Unicursal vs. Multicursal: Labyrinth as Metaphor for Narrative Structure ,” October 14, 2013,

unicursal maze. Jacques Attali writes that ancient cultures associated the labyrinth with spirituality.¹⁴⁴ History shows that many societies overlaid mythology or spirituality onto labyrinth paths and performed rites of passage and rituals to cleanse, contemplate, and embody their lives spiritually. Craig Wright discusses how ancient societies associated spiritual concepts of purification, meditation, and presence with labyrinths.¹⁴⁵ Though pre-Christian labyrinth history is worth mentioning, a full discussion is outside the scope of this paper. Instead, this dissertation will only cover a brief history of the Cretan Labyrinth, which the Greeks utilized as an archetypal space to model a salvation story. The Cretan Labyrinth is a pertinent subject because it was the labyrinth the medieval church would Christianize to form the classical Chartres Labyrinth and employ it as a prayer artifact for Christian spiritual practices.

As an overview of the Cretan myth, King Minos, the King of Crete and ruler over many Mediterranean Greek islands, attacked the city of Athens because he was outraged by the death of his son in that city. Upon returning home from battle, Minos was embarrassed to learn of his wife Pasiphae's lascivious behavior with a bull that produced an offspring named Minotaur. Minotaur was a flesh-eating monster with the body of a man and a head of a bull, so the King had a labyrinth constructed to entrap and conceal Minotaur. As a tribute and atonement to Minos for the loss of his son, the Athenians offered seven young men and women every nine years to the King to be sacrificed to Minotaur by placing them in the labyrinth where they were unable to escape and suffered a gruesome death.

The Athenian King's son, Theseus, was one of the youths selected for sacrifice to the labyrinth creature. Fortunately for Theseus, the King's virgin daughter Ariadne fell in love with

<https://billymcresearcher.wordpress.com/2013/10/14/unicursal-vs-multicursal-labyrinth-as-metaphor-for-narrative-structure/>, under "Universal vs. Multicursal" (last accessed June 7, 2021).

¹⁴⁴ Jacques Attali, *The Labyrinth in Culture and Society* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 1999), 19-20.

¹⁴⁵ Craig Wright, *The Maze and the Warrior: Symbols in Architecture, Theology, and Music* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 15-16.

him and plotted Theseus's escape. She gave Theseus a spool of golden yarn to help retrace his steps out of the labyrinth and gave him a ball of tar to choke and distract Minotaur and allow Theseus to kill the beast with his sword. As a result, Theseus escaped the maze and saved his companions from the monster and the labyrinth as well.¹⁴⁶

This tale of the Cretan Labyrinth, Minotaur, Theseus, and Ariadne became a prevalent pagan salvific myth, and many walked the labyrinth space as a metaphor to celebrate spiritual freedom. The Christian church leveraged the popularity of the Cretan Labyrinth and myth to create a Christian labyrinth and Christianize the pagan myth into a Gospel story. They copied the Cretan Labyrinth connection between the labyrinth space and spirituality by associating Christian practices with the Chartres labyrinth. The Chartres Prayer Labyrinth became the most popular Christian labyrinth, and the church used it in many ways to tell the Gospel story.

However, Christians also retained parts of the pagan story since it was so popular, allegorizing it to connect it to the Gospel. Penelope Reed Doob writes, "The Minotaur signifies the devil, hell, and death ... Theseus, a king's son, is Christ, who also accepted the lot of common humanity and therefore descended to the Minotaur; with the thread of divinity and the pitch of humanity, he overcame death, hell, and the devil." Pasiphae represented "the human soul married to Christ, who is estranged by her sinfulness; she couples with the devil and conceives monstrous affections."¹⁴⁷ Craig Wright adds, "Theseus slaying Minotaur and freeing the Athenian youth from Minotaur's power and maze represents Christ defeating Satan on resurrection day and freeing believers from Satan and hell."¹⁴⁸

Not only did Christians link the Chartres Labyrinth space to the Christian Gospel, but they also sectioned the three labyrinth paths to represent the classical spiritual stages of

¹⁴⁶ Penelope Reed Doob, *The Idea of the Labyrinth from Classical Antiquity Through the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), loc. 409-420, Kindle.

¹⁴⁷ Doob, *The Idea of the Labyrinth*, loc. 3138-3144, Kindle.

¹⁴⁸ Wright, *The Maze and the Warrior*, 7.

purgation, illumination, and union. Artress writes, “In Western Christianity, the mystical path is traditionally called the Threefold Path. The three stages that define the sequence, the process we experience as an ever-deepening sense of union with the Divine, are Purgation, Illumination, and Union.” The Christian Church linked purgation to the inward part, illumination to the center, and union to the outward path of the labyrinth.¹⁴⁹

Medieval Christians linked the outer winding paths leading to the center of the Chartres Labyrinth to the classical spiritual stage of purgation, or what this paper refers to as purification: “It is believed that the monks and pilgrims walked the first part of the labyrinth on their knees as a penitential act, to humble themselves before God.”¹⁵⁰ The labyrinth became a tool to purge one from sin when installed at the western entrance of cathedrals. The West entrance represented the direction from where sinners entered the Nave to begin their journey East through the labyrinth and then towards the body and blood of Christ on the cathedral’s eastern altar.¹⁵¹ The Chartres creator also embedded an image of sin into the labyrinth’s structure by designing it with eleven concentric circles since the number eleven symbolized sin.¹⁵² Not only was the labyrinth understood to purify from sin, but its inward paths with 180-degree turns-about depicted the state of wandering, disorientation, and struggle. Like Sinai was for Jew, the labyrinth represents a place of struggle blocking one from the promised land.¹⁵³ So, from its origins, the Chartres Prayer Labyrinth was understood as a place to wrestle with sin and offer repentance and penance. Medieval believers also linked the center paths and inner circle to the classical illuminative stage.¹⁵⁴ Illumination represented the stages of meditation, preparing the mind for prayer, and presence, contemplating the spirit to receive presence: “After we’ve quieted the mind on the

¹⁴⁹ Artress, *Walking a Sacred Path*, 29.

¹⁵⁰ Artress, *Walking a Sacred Path*, 29.

¹⁵¹ Wright, *The Maze and the Warrior*, 18-19.

¹⁵² Wright, *The Maze and the Warrior*, 23.

¹⁵³ Attali, *The Labyrinth in Culture and Society*, 19-20.

¹⁵⁴ Artress, *Walking a Sacred Path*, 29.

labyrinth's path the center is a place for meditation and prayer. Here people find insight into their problems; their lives are illuminated. We come to clarity in the center."¹⁵⁵

The church associated the Chartres Labyrinth with the meditative illuminative stage because the inner labyrinth's characteristics of quietness and solitude were conducive to their meditative practices. After traversing and meditating in the labyrinth's outer circular paths towards the center, the labyrinth's center was used as a place for meditation, prayer, and presence.¹⁵⁶ The church associated the Chartres Labyrinth with the illuminative stage of presence because the labyrinth's mystical center was inherently characteristic of God into which all things and labyrinth paths empty and exit. Labyrinth centers were often linked to presence or holy places, as is evident in one of the first known Christian labyrinths that appeared in the fourth century in the basilica of St. Reparatus. Its textual center, in the form of a palindrome, was built on the phrase *Sancta Ecclesia* confirming its use as a Christian treasure.¹⁵⁷ Christians later considered the labyrinth center to represent the Holy City or the New Jerusalem where Christ resides.

Medieval Christians placed a visit to the physical city of Jerusalem in Israel on their "bucket list" to discover presence and "walk where Jesus walked, to pray where He prayed, and to experience a solemn moment where he died."¹⁵⁸ During the Holy Wars, when it became prohibitive and dangerous to travel to Jerusalem, the Catholic Church installed Chartres Labyrinths in seven cathedrals and created an image of Jerusalem in its centers so believers could continue their pilgrimages to this virtual Jerusalem.

¹⁵⁵ Artress, *Walking a Sacred Path*, 29.

¹⁵⁶ Artress, *Walking a Sacred Path*, 29.

¹⁵⁷ Artress, *Walking a Sacred Path*, 52.

¹⁵⁸ Artress, *Walking a Sacred Path*, 32.

Pilgrims sought God's presence in the center, which represented not only Jerusalem but the Holy City and Christ Himself. When reaching the Chartres Labyrinth, monks "walked inwardly towards the center on their knees as a penitential act" to purify and prepare themselves for presence.¹⁵⁹ In another illustration of how the Chartres Labyrinth inner circle influenced the practice of presence, six petals bordered the center circle representing the Rose of Sharon, which was an Old Testament allusion to Christ. Also, some labyrinth centers depicted the presence of Christ with a cross. Thus, the Chartres Labyrinth was linked to the first and second classical stages of purgation and illumination and, finally, the last stage of union.

As discussed earlier, one interpretation of the classical stage of union¹⁶⁰ was equivalent to this paper's fourth stage of embodiment, where believers incarnate illumination experiences into their communities. Christians identified the characteristics of this outward path, which physically moves one out of the labyrinth, to be conducive to practicing moving outward into one's community. The labyrinth's external path is an archetypal space where Christians pray for God to prepare them to live in their relationships, responsibilities, and ministries. This is a good space for them to prepare for the day or tasks that lie ahead and ask God for wisdom to embody their family, careers, churches, friends, and neighbors.¹⁶¹

But the Chartres Labyrinth did not only represent the classical stages of spiritual practice; its circular space also modeled the circuitous and ongoing transformational journey opportune with second chances and higher ground. One aspect of the prayer spiral is its twisting and complex path from which its name is based. The word labyrinth is based on the Greek word *labyrinthos*, "a network of intricate passageways" which are sharp 180-degree turnabouts,

¹⁵⁹ Artress, *Walking a Sacred Path*, 28-29.

¹⁶⁰ Union was not a standard term, and many times the mystics defined experiencing God's presence like what is implied in the term mystical union. However, some used the term union as a stage of embodiment, as Artress points out, and that's how it will be defined in this paper: "Union begins as we leave the center of the labyrinth, following the same path back out." Artress, *Walking a Sacred Path*, 30.

¹⁶¹ Artress, *Walking a Sacred Path*, 28-30.

or *labrys*, and this meandering path has been representative of life's reversals and detours. The Greeks believed the labyrinth modeled the road towards spiritual maturity, containing many turnabouts and setbacks on the route to the Promised Land. It simulated the labyrinthine walk filled with "obstacles, dead ends, deceptions, reversals, signs, omens, respites, treasures, and promised lands."¹⁶²

Rejecting the idea of a formation that happens in one instant of time, the spiral labyrinth path represented the difficult journey of transformation as a recursive process to improvement. Ancient cultures used the labyrinth's circuitous inner and outer paths to symbolize the inward and outward spiraling process of transformation. West writes, "Eventual arrival at the center through a single [inward] path, seems to have evolved from an archetypal symbol known in virtually every culture throughout time: the spiral [labyrinth] the universal symbol of growth and transformation."¹⁶³

The circular path in, out, and back in again is characteristic of a continual flow and more representative of an ongoing pilgrimage of faith that allows for relapses and second chances. The continuous labyrinth path "becomes a fitting tool for transformation" and the daily rhythm of purification, contemplation, and embodiment.¹⁶⁴ Artress defines the labyrinth as a metaphor for this "inward and outward transformational journey" because it represents the cyclical formation process of moving between outer paths and the center and back out to the edges.¹⁶⁵

We can think of the labyrinth path to God as a bi-directional spiral. One is an inward progress towards a center to find presence and renewal, and the other is an outward pilgrimage

¹⁶² Joan Amelia Eahr, *Re-Genesis Encyclopedia: Synthesis of the Spiritual Dark Motherline, Integral Research, Labyrinth Learning, and Eco-Theology*. Part I. Revised Edition II, 2018. CIIS Library Database (RGS.), 4.

¹⁶³ Melissa Gayle West, *Exploring the Labyrinth: A Guide for Healing and Spiritual Growth* (New York, NY: Broadway Books, 2000), loc. 532, 640, Kindle.

¹⁶⁴ Artress, *Walking a Sacred Path*, 31.

¹⁶⁵ Artress, *Walking a Sacred Path*, loc. 168-169.

towards embodied presence.¹⁶⁶ The Greeks practiced initiation into community life [embodiment] in the labyrinth's outward path, and they practiced an encounter with God [presence] in the center place.¹⁶⁷ The Greeks believed the labyrinth was symbolic of a three-part spiritual journey of "detachment [purification]; parthenogenetic rebirth [presence]; and then integration or a Re-Genesis during the exit or ascent [embodiment]."¹⁶⁸ Medieval Christians also viewed their Chartres Labyrinth as a symbol of a cleansing process. Some believers viewed it as a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and Christ and saw the meandering walk as a walk of purgation. During the height of the Chartres Labyrinth's popularity in the thirteenth century, the Church used it to celebrate Easter and remember the burial and resurrection of Christ. In addition, some groups developed stations in the labyrinth for daily prayers.

These Chartres labyrinth practices aimed to progressively and holistically renew the heart, mind, spirit, and life. However, effective spiritual transformation does not purify, restore, infill, and embody only one time, but continually. Rohr relates the progressive nature of spirituality to holistic spirituality because it takes time to perform major body, head, and heart surgery to overcome our defenses and false gods.¹⁶⁹ Together, the labyrinth's spirals and labrys embody characteristics that influence the practice of an ongoing labyrinthine, or the laborious process of daily and continually "working out salvation." Practically speaking, the labyrinth represents the continual nature of holiness and holistic spirituality that transcends a one-time decision for Christ. Effective formation practices allow daily participative actions to put the flesh to death, take up the cross, renew the mind, be filled with the Spirit, and make disciples and glorify God.

¹⁶⁶ Artress, *Walking a Sacred Path*, 23.

¹⁶⁷ Attali, *The Labyrinth in Culture and Society*, 20.

¹⁶⁸ Eahr, *Re-Genesis Encyclopedia*, 4.

¹⁶⁹ Richard Rohr, *Breathing Under Water: Spirituality and the Twelve Steps* (Cincinnati, OH: Franciscan Media, 2011), 9, Kindle.

Though the church associated the Chartres Labyrinth with stages of spirituality, it was an informal linkage. The following section introduces a Christian Prayer Labyrinth to provide a holistic place for exercising holistic practices.

Section II — A Holistic Christian Prayer Labyrinth

This section will discuss the design of a new Christian prayer labyrinth, derived from the classic Chartres Labyrinth by overlaying four holistic spaces onto it while maintaining the Chartres' characteristic meandering and double-ax labrys.¹⁷⁰ The new labyrinth has four spaces with spirituality relationships named desert-purification, cloister-meditation, holy mountain-presence, and community-embodiment that allow holistic practices and spiritual formation. Lastly, the section will discuss three common labyrinth forms used for public and prayer settings.

Figure 1 depicts a newly designed seven-circuit Christian prayer labyrinth derived from the classical seven-circuit Chartres Labyrinth (See Figure 2).

¹⁷⁰ *Labrys* are the “double-ax symbol visible at the [labyrinth] turns, found between the turns throughout the pattern. *Labrys* is believed to be the root word for the word labyrinth. Artress, *Walking a Sacred Path*, 59.

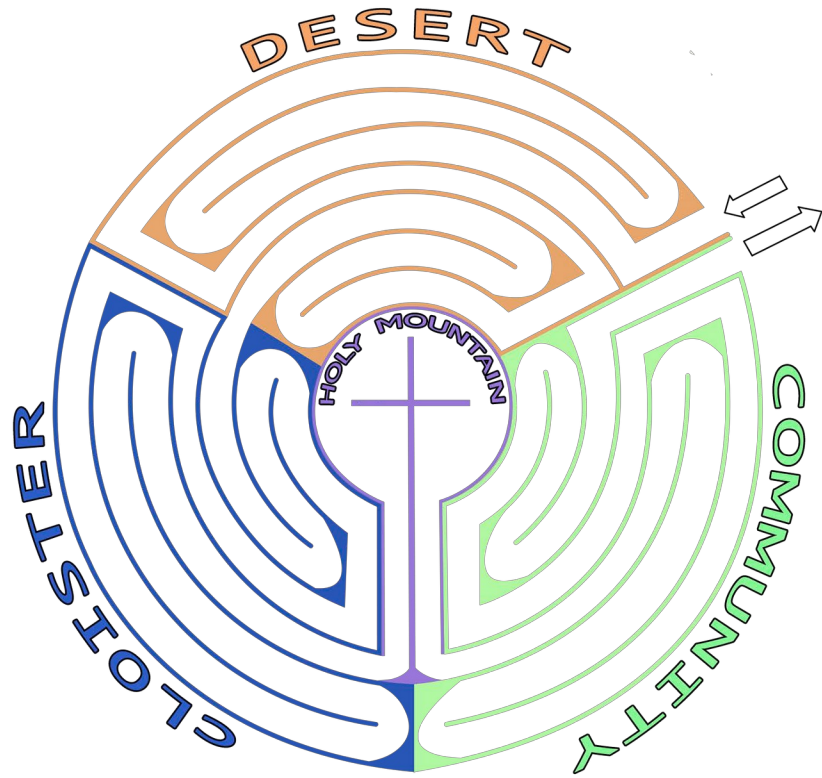


Figure 1 – Seven-Circuit New Christian Prayer Labyrinth



Figure 2 – Seven-Circuit Chartres Prayer Labyrinth

First, to maintain as many holistic classical features as possible, the new labyrinth supports the meandering, looping labrys while dividing the sphere into three spaces, desert, cloister, and community, with a central space called holy mountain. Each area is colored with a meaningful color to distinguish the path. For example, orange represents desert-purging, blue represents cloister-meditation, purple represents holy mountain-presence, and the green represents community-embodiment. This provides dedicated holistic space for exercising the holistic prayers that Section III below discusses.

Also, to model the progressive and sequential nature of the formation, the new labyrinth is unidirectional. This single-directional design is referred to as processional, which sequentially leads one path into the next. The processional design allows one to enter the labyrinth at the desert stage, progress through the cloister and holy mountain stages, and eventually exit through the community stage. Finally, since the labyrinth could be useful as a public or private prayer tool, this paper suggests three types of labyrinth forms to meet those needs.

First, the most common application of the labyrinth is as a public outdoor structure on church or ministry grounds. There are numerous creative ways organizations develop these outdoor labyrinths. Novices build low-budget ones laying paths with readily available material such as sticks, stones, candles, pavers, etc. Professional landscapers and artists lay permanent structures with cement or crushed granite with professionally painted designs. In general, their sizes can vary from ten feet to fifty feet in diameter.

Another common public form of labyrinth, mainly used for indoor halls and sanctuaries, is structured on canvas or vinyl material that can be folded or compacted for transportation between sites. These can average from 10 to 30 feet and fit inside fellowship halls, meeting

rooms, and sanctuary spaces. Finally, for private use, fingerboard labyrinths contain an etching of the labyrinth on wood or other material that fit in the palm of one's hand and provide holistic sensory feedback. This allows one to finger trace the labyrinth to simulate the labyrinth walking experience while practicing prayers.

Conclusion

Chapter Five introduced a newly designed Christian prayer labyrinth based on the Chartres Prayer Labyrinth with space-to-spiritual stage relationships and a circuitous path conducive to practicing holistic spiritual formation to purify the heart, meditate the mind, infill the spirit, and embody the life. The chapter discussed how labyrinths typically come in three forms: permeant public outdoor structures, portable canvas-type material, and handheld fingerboards. Chapter Six will demonstrate how to develop labyrinth prayers and will provide five sample prayers as examples. It also will introduce a smartphone app that narrates labyrinth prayers with meditative background music.

CHAPTER SIX

Holistic Labyrinth Prayers

Chapter Three discussed four spiritual stages of purification, meditation, presence, and embodiment based on the classical spiritual stages of purgation, illumination, and union that provide a holistic spiritual formation when practiced regularly. Chapter Four demonstrated how the desert, cloister, holy mountain, and community physical spaces contain characteristics conducive to exercising holistic spiritual practices that provide holistic healing and strengthening. Chapter Five proposed archetypically overlaying these physical spaces onto a newly designed Christian prayer labyrinth's sections, allowing for a Christian-based holistic spirituality that is space-based. Finally, Chapter Six will discuss the development of labyrinth prayers comprised of prayer steps to holistically heal an ailment or strengthen one's daily walk while migrating the labyrinth. It also introduces a smartphone tool to narrate the labyrinth prayer user to select their desired prayer and narrate it with meditative background music.

This chapter covers the two types of labyrinth prayers possible: ailment prayers for healing ailments and strengthening prayers for empowering and renewing one's daily walk. Section I discusses the development of labyrinth ailment prayers by creating four holistic labyrinth prayer steps designed to provide spiritual therapies to heal the body, heart, mind, spirit, and life. Section II discusses the development of labyrinth-strengthening prayers by creating four holistic labyrinth prayer steps designed to provide spiritual therapies to strengthen one's daily walk.

Section I — Developing Labyrinth Ailment Prayers

This section explains how to develop labyrinth-ailment prayers, which are labyrinth prayers¹⁷¹ aimed at healing ailments. Labyrinth prayers are also considered holistic prayers.¹⁷² To develop ailment prayers, one needs to identify conditions to heal. Table 1 lists ten such conditions, or ailments, as examples, but there are no limitations to the number of possible ailments that labyrinth prayers can heal.

Table 1 — Ailment list for healing prayers

List of Ailments
1. Addiction
2. Anger
3. Compassion – Lack of
4. Guilt
5. Grief
6. Loneliness
7. Oppression
8. Non-reconciled
9. Sexual Impurity
10. Spiritual Dryness

After choosing an ailment for healing, the next step is developing a labyrinth prayer set. Table 2 shows an example of a labyrinth prayer designed to heal the ailment of addiction, where column one lists the ailment type, column two lists the labyrinth prayer, and column three lists the labyrinth prayer step. In addition, column four lists the holistic area targeted by the labyrinth prayers and its associated healing properties.

¹⁷¹ The term “labyrinth prayers” will be used going forward to describe the set of four prayer steps consisting of desert-purification prayers, cloister-meditation prayers, holy mountain-presence prayers, and community-embodiment prayers.

¹⁷² For this paper, “holistic prayer” defines labyrinth prayer that aims to heal the whole person, including the body, heart, mind, spirit, and active life.

Table 2 – Labyrinth ailment prayers with holistic properties

Ailment Type	Labyrinth-Ailment Prayer	Labyrinth Prayer Step	Holistic Properties
Addiction	Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. ... but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live (Rom 8:12-13).	Desert-Purification	<u>Heart & Body Healing</u> • Cleansing Flesh
Addiction	Come Holy Spirit I need you. Come sweet Spirit, I pray. Come in your strength and your power. Come in your own gentle way.	Cloister-Meditation	<u>Mental Healing</u> • Actively calling out to God to connect with His power and presence.
Addiction	Be still and know that I am God (Psalm 46:10).	Holy Mountain-Presence	<u>Spiritual Healing</u> • Obtaining presence • Obtaining wisdom
Addiction	Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken (Ecclesiastes 4:12).	Community-Embodiment	<u>Life Healing</u> • A friend to provide accountability

Section II — Developing Labyrinth-Strengthening Prayers

Liturgical prayer books and devotional resources are good sources for developing labyrinth-strengthening prayers. Though a list of all possible liturgical and devotional prayer resources would be practically endless, Table 3 represents some historical and contemporary liturgy and devotional resources that ministry leaders can use for creating labyrinth-strengthening prayers.

Table 3 – Liturgical resources for labyrinth-strengthening prayers

Resources
1. The Daily Office – Based on the Book of Common Prayer
2. https://www.dailyoffice2019.com/
3. Venite-A Book of Daily Prayer by Robert Benson
4. Carmina Gadelica: Volume I, Translated by Alexander Carmichael
5. Carmina Gadelica: Volume II: Hymns and Incantations, Translated by Alexander Carmichael
6. Philokalia -The Eastern Christian Spiritual Texts – Annotation by Allyne Smith;

Resources
translation by G. E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware.
7. Prayers and Meditations for Taizé-Style Worship by Jeffrey Steen

Though liturgical prayer books like the Daily Office and devotional books often do not categorize their prayers as purifying, meditative, contemplative, or embodied, these prayer resources usually function like labyrinth prayers by informally addressing these four spiritual stages. These four practices appear in some order or frequency in most prayer resources because they represent the Christian prayer heritage. For instance, Robert Benson informs us that the Daily Office structure contains four practices parallel the four spiritual practices of this paper. He writes, “The structures for all four of them [Morning (Lauds), Midday (None), Evening (Vespers), and Night (Compline)] are parallel, mirroring the rhythm of the mass, the basic pattern for worship in the liturgical tradition. The basic pattern—praise [presence], confession [purification], hearing the Word [meditation], and going forth [community]—is vital to begin to hold in your heart.”¹⁷³

The Daily office informally provides four types of prayer practices. Whether prayer books contain purification, meditative, contemplative, and embodiment prayers by chance or by design, as in the Daily Office, or informally, the idea of creating labyrinth prayers is to translate these four prayer practices in prayer books to the labyrinth prayers.

shows how this process was accomplished by mapping Daily Office-type prayers and Celtic prayers to the labyrinth prayers. Column 1 lists the prayer resource, column 2 lists the labyrinth prayer, and column 3 the labyrinth prayer step. In addition, column 4 lists the desired holistic area and characteristics to strengthen.

¹⁷³ Robert Benson, *Venite: A Book of Daily Prayer* (New York, NY: Penguin Putnam Inc., 2000), 1.

Table 4 — Labyrinth strengthening prayers with holistic properties

Prayer Resource	Labyrinth Prayer	Labyrinth Prayer Step	Holistic Properties
<p>Daily Office 2021-2022 Advent Week 1 Sun AM</p>	<p><u>Confession of Sin:</u> Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred and strayed from your ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against your holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done; and apart from your grace, there is no health in us. O Lord, have mercy upon us. Spare all those who confess their faults. Restore all those who are penitent, according to your promises declared to all people in Christ Jesus our Lord. And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake, that we may now live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of your holy Name. Amen.</p>	<p>Desert- Purification</p>	<p><u>Heart-Strengthening</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repentance • Forgiveness
<p>Daily Office 2021-2022 Advent Week 1 Sun AM</p>	<p>You walked off and left us, and never looked back. God, how could you do that? We're your very own sheep; how can you stomp off in anger? Refresh your memory of us—you bought us a long time ago. Your most precious tribe—you paid a good price for us! Mark and remember, God, all the enemy taunts, each idiot desecration. Don't throw your lambs to the wolves; after all we've been through, don't forget us. Remember your promises; the city is in darkness, the countryside violent. Don't leave the victims to rot in the street; make them a choir that sings your praises. On your feet, O God— stand up for yourself! Do you hear what they're saying about you, all the vile obscenities? Don't tune out their malicious filth, the brawling invective that never lets up (Ps 74: 1-3; 18-23, The Message)</p>	<p>Cloister- Meditation</p>	<p><u>Mental-Strengthening</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recalling redemption identity • Calling out to God His promises
<p>Venite: A Book of Daily Prayer</p>	<p>We give you thanks Almighty God: for all your gifts so freely bestowed upon us and all</p>	<p>Holy Mountain-</p>	<p><u>Spiritual-Strengthening</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Praising and thanking

Prayer Resource	Labyrinth Prayer	Labyrinth Prayer Step	Holistic Properties
I Morning: Lauds <i>[Prayers of the People]</i>	whom you have made; we bless you for our creation, preservation, and the blessings of life; above all, the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the hope of glory and the means of grace. We thank you Lord.	Presence	God for His Goodness, creative power, redemption.
Venite: A Book of Daily Prayer III Eve.: Vespers <i>[Prayers of the People]</i>	We offer prayers for the welfare of the whole world, and for all people in their daily life and work: For all who hold authority, and all who work for freedom, justice, and peace. Amen. For all who suffer, and for all who remember and care for them: Lord have mercy; Christ have mercy. And for all those in whom we have seen the Christ this day, in joy and sorrow. Amen.	Community-Embodiment	<u>Life-Strengthening</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For Suffering • Praying for Authorities • Praying for those who work
Iona Celtic Prayer	I am bending my knee In the eye of the Father who created me, In the eye of the Son who died for me, In the eye of the Spirit who cleansed me, In love and desire. Pour down upon us from heaven The rich blessing of Thy forgiveness.	Desert-Purification	<u>Heart Strengthening</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repentance • Forgiveness
Iona Celtic Prayer	God guide me with Thy wisdom, God chastise me with Thy justice, God help me with Thy mercy, God protect me with Thy strength. God fill me with Thy fullness, God shield me with Thy shade, God fill me with Thy grace, For the sake of Thine Anointed Son. Jesu Christ of the seed of David, Visiting One of the Temple, Sacrificial Lamb of the Garden, Who died for me.	Cloister-Meditation	<u>Mental Strengthening</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remembering God's wisdom and mercy. • Calling upon God to respond
Iona Celtic Prayer	THOU King of the moon, Thou King of the sun, Thou King of the planets, Thou King of the stars, Thou King of the globe, Thou King of the sky, Oh! lovely Thy countenance. As you hold the universe and world in your hands hold my life in your loving arms.	Holy Mountain-Presence	<u>Spiritual Strengthening</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Praising God for as King of creation, • Praising His presence & love.
Iona Celtic Prayer	Spirit, give me of Thine abundance, Father, give me of Thy wisdom, Son, give me in my need, Jesus beneath the shelter of Thy shield. I lie down to-night, With the Triune of my strength, With the Father, with Jesus, With the Spirit of might.	Community-Embodiment	<u>Life Strengthening</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For wisdom • For needs • For peace to sleep.

So far, Chapter Six has discussed how to develop labyrinth prayers to heal ailments and strengthen one's daily walk by building purifying, meditative, contemplative, and embodied prayers to heal and strengthen holistically. The following section discusses developing active and passive labyrinth prayers to ensure they contain a balance of calling on God and listening for Him.

Section III — Active and Passive Labyrinth Prayers

Besides the labyrinth prayers having two significant applications that address healing ailments or strengthening one's daily walk, they employ two primary prayer methods which are active and passive prayers. The prayers above would mostly be considered active prayers since they are discursive or contain many words. As the mystics taught us, sometimes prayer needs to transition from the head to the heart. The intention of praying with the heart is to be quiet and more receptive by taking a more passive posture with fewer words and less cognitive energy and listening with our heart.

Passive prayer places the believer into a predominantly listening mode to hear God speak. The Psalmist suggested this passive approach in writing, "Be still, and know that I am God ..." (Psalm 46:10a). Though passive prayers can be employed in any of the four labyrinth prayer stages, it fits well in the meditation and presence stages, where communication is the primary function. Table 5 provides some passive labyrinth prayers. Column 1 lists the passive prayer type and passive prayer names, column 2 lists the passive prayer, and column 3 lists the overarching labyrinth prayer step.

Table 5 – General prayers used as holistic labyrinth prayers

Passive Prayer Type / Prayer	Passive Prayer	Labyrinth Prayer Step
Repetitive / Jesus Prayer	The Jesus prayer listening for God to speak: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me.” Repeat it again. “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me.” Keep repeating as you walk in the quietness of the cloister.	Cloister-Meditation
Repetitive / Come Holy Spirit Chorus	Come Holy Spirit I need you. Come sweet Spirit, I pray. Come in your strength and your power. Come in your own gentle way.	Holy Mountain-Presence
Wordless / Silent Prayer	Be still and know that He is God. Just be still and listen.	Community-Embodiment

Thus far, this chapter has explained the labyrinth prayer development process, and the next section will contain some labyrinth prayers samples.

Section IV — Labyrinth Prayer Samples

As discussed in this chapter and Chapter Five, each labyrinth prayer contains four steps, or prayer steps, related to one of the four spiritual stages. The prayer contains liturgies to practice in one of the four archetypal labyrinth places to heal ailments or to strengthen one’s daily walk. Appendix III lists a sampling of five of the initial twenty-five labyrinth prayers released in the phone app. Column 1 identifies which type of the four holistic practices the prayer targets: desert-purification, cloister-meditation, holy mountain-presence, or community-embodiment. Because each prayer contains a setup note, Column 2 identifies whether the text for each practice is a setup note or the prayer. Finally, Column 3 contains the text of the note or a prayer. Each

prayer is based upon various liturgies from scripture, traditional prayers, hymns, songs, poetry, and words of wisdom. Because it would require too many pages to list all twenty-five prayers in this paper, Appendix III displays five samples in Tables 10-14.

Tables 10-12, list three samples of ailment prayers with liturgies to heal on multiple levels: the body, heart, mind, spirit, and life. Tables 13-14 list two samples of strengthening prayers to enhance one's daily walk. The prayer labyrinth app currently contains the twenty-five prayers, which Section V discusses.

Section V — Labyrinth Prayer App

The smartphone prayer app narrates each of the twenty prayers in the initial release with meditative background music. This section provides user instructions for downloading from either the Apple or Google Play stores. It also provides user instructions for selecting and experiencing the labyrinth prayers.

To download the app from an Apple smartphone, go to the “app Store” on your smartphone and search for “Healing Prayer Labyrinth,” and then download it as you would any other smartphone app. To download the app from an Android smartphone (Most non-Apple phones would be of Android type), then go to the “Google Play Store” on your smartphone and search for “Healing Prayer Labyrinth,” and download it as you would any other smartphone app.

When opening the app, it displays the splash screen as depicted in “Figure 3 — Phone App Splash Screen 1” below. Click on the blue arrow in the lower right corner of the screen to continue. Then the app displays the splash screen as depicted in Figure 4 — Phone App Splash Screen 2” below. Click on the blue arrow in the lower right corner of that screen to continue. Then the app displays the splash screen as depicted in “Figure 5 — Phone App Splash

Screen 3” below. Next, click on the “Get Started” button on the bottom of the screen to continue to the main screen, as shown in “Figure 6 — Phone App Main Menu” below. The main menu contains a list of ailments or strengthening prayers to scroll through and choose from, as shown in “Figure 7 — Phone App Main Menu Select Ailment.”

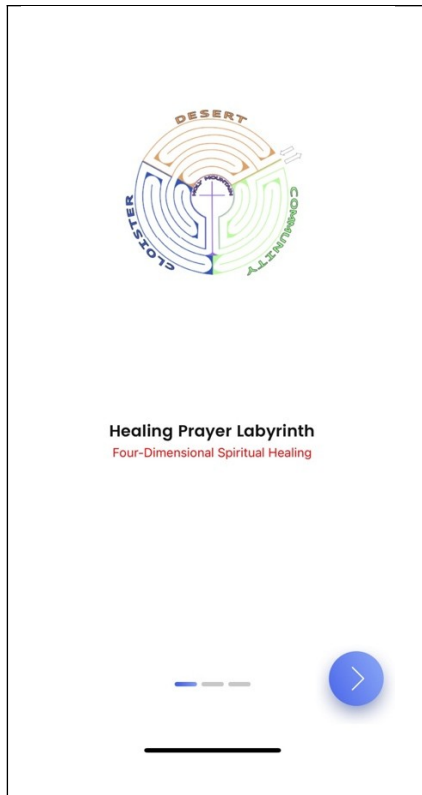


Figure 3 — Phone App Splash Screen 1

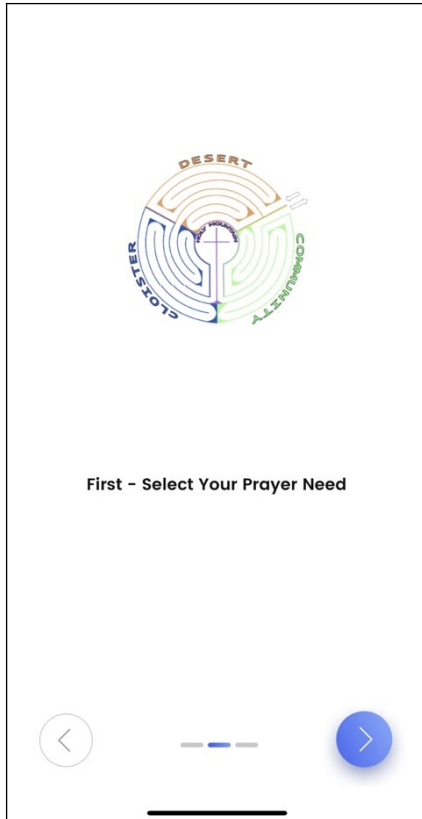


Figure 4 — Phone App Splash Screen 2

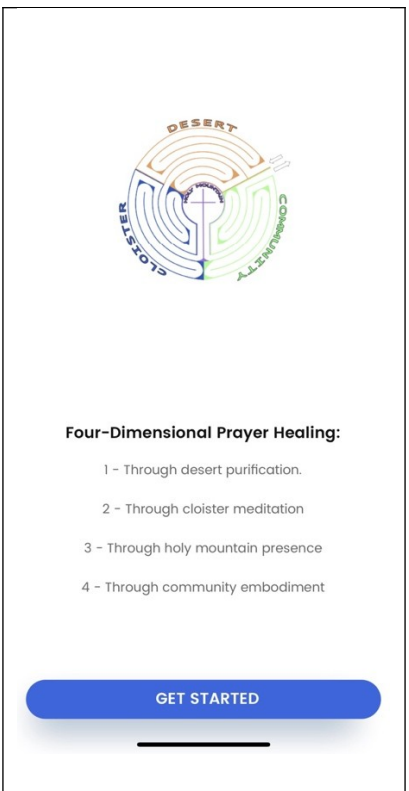


Figure 5 — Phone App Splash Screen 3

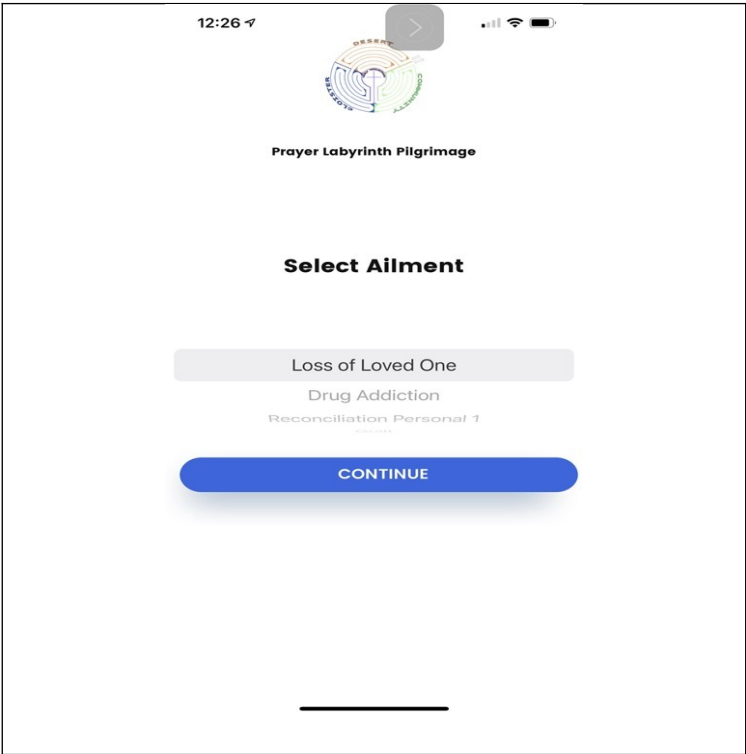


Figure 6 — Phone App Main Menu

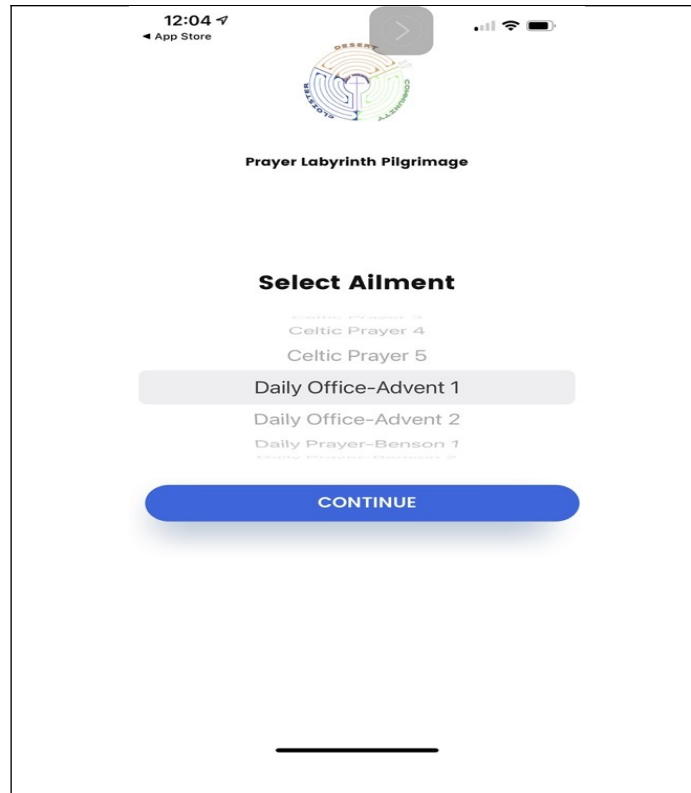
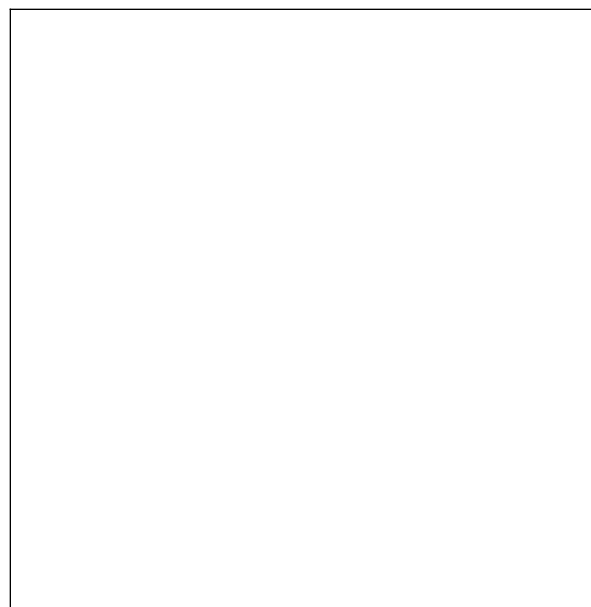


Figure 7 — Phone App Main Menu Select Ailment

When the user selects an ailment, the app displays the four prayers in sequence. First, it displays the desert-purification prayers in “Figure 8 — Phone App Desert-Purification Prayers.”



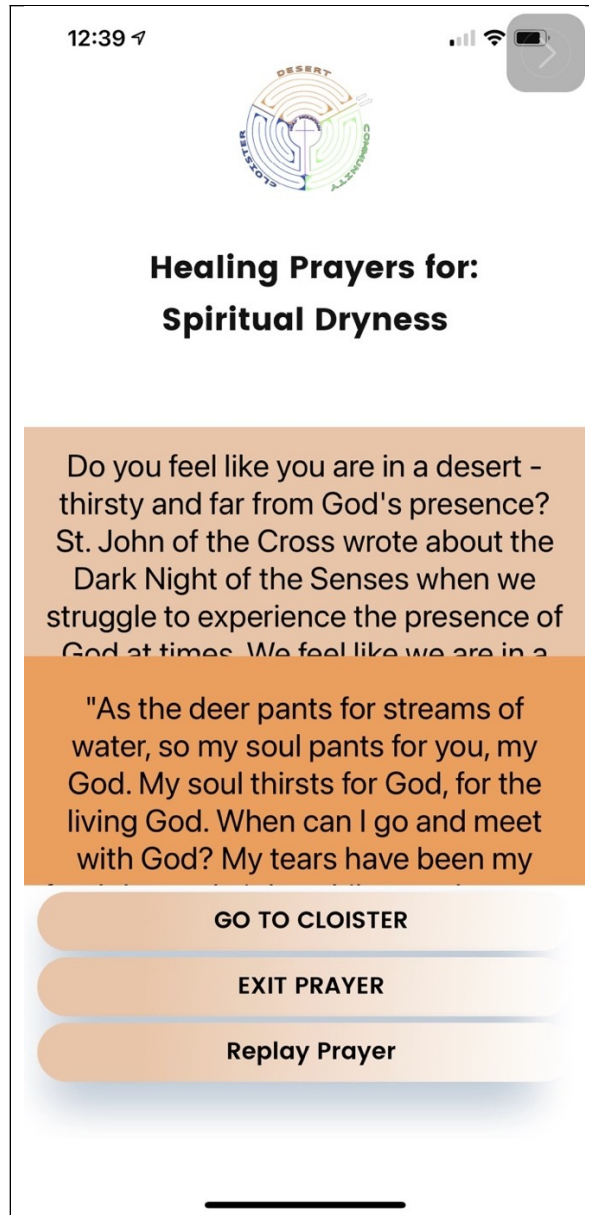


Figure 8 — Phone App Desert-Purification Prayers

The app will immediately begin narrating the note listed in the light-orange shaded area and will continue automatically to narrate the prayer in the dark-orange shaded area. The user can choose one of the following three choices at any time:

1 – Click the “Go to Cloister” button, and the app displays the next prayer screen as depicted in “Figure 9 — Phone App Cloister-Meditative Prayers.”

- 2 – Click “Replay Prayer” to replay the prayer portion in the dark orange shaded section to allow one to tarry in the desert area and meditate longer.
- 3 – Click “Exit Prayer” to return to the Main Menu.

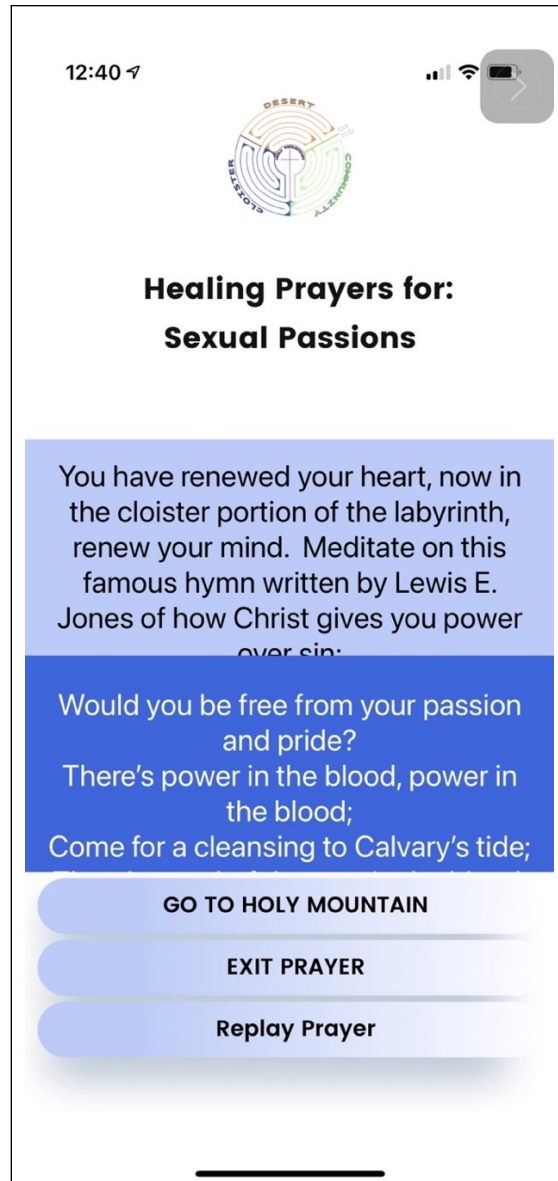


Figure 9 — Phone App Cloister-Meditative Prayers

The app will immediately begin narrating the note listed in the light-blue shaded area and will continue automatically to narrate the prayer in the dark-blue shaded area. The user can choose one of the following three choices at any time:

- 1 – Click the “Go to Holy Mountain” button, and the app displays the next prayer screen as depicted in “Figure 10 — Phone App Holy Mountain-Presence Prayers.”
- 2 – Click “Replay Prayer” to replay the prayer portion in the dark orange shaded section to allow one to tarry in the cloister area and meditate longer.
- 3 – Click “Exit Prayer” to return to the Main Menu.

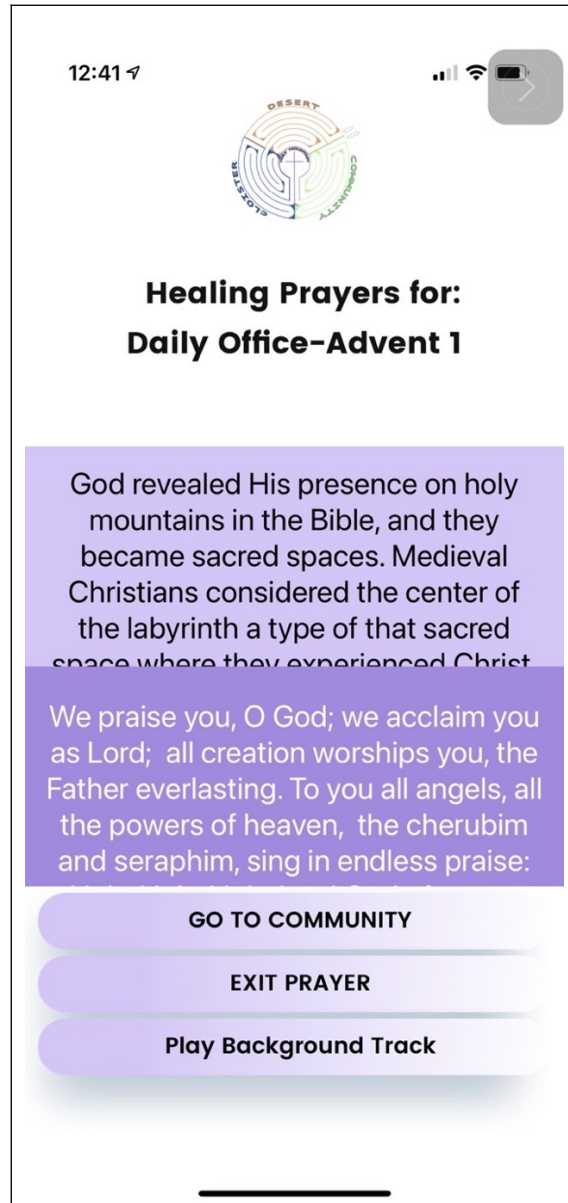


Figure 10 — Phone App Holy Mountain-Presence Prayers

The app will immediately begin narrating the note listed in the light-purple shaded area and will continue automatically to narrate the prayer in the dark-purple shaded area. The user can choose one of the following three choices at any time:

- 1 – Click the “Go to Community” button, and the app displays the next prayer screen as depicted in “Figure 11 — Phone App Community-Embodiment Prayers.”
- 2 – Click “Replay Prayer” to replay the prayer portion in the dark orange shaded section to allow one to tarry in the holy mountain area and meditate longer.
- 3 – Click “Exit Prayer” to return to the Main Menu.

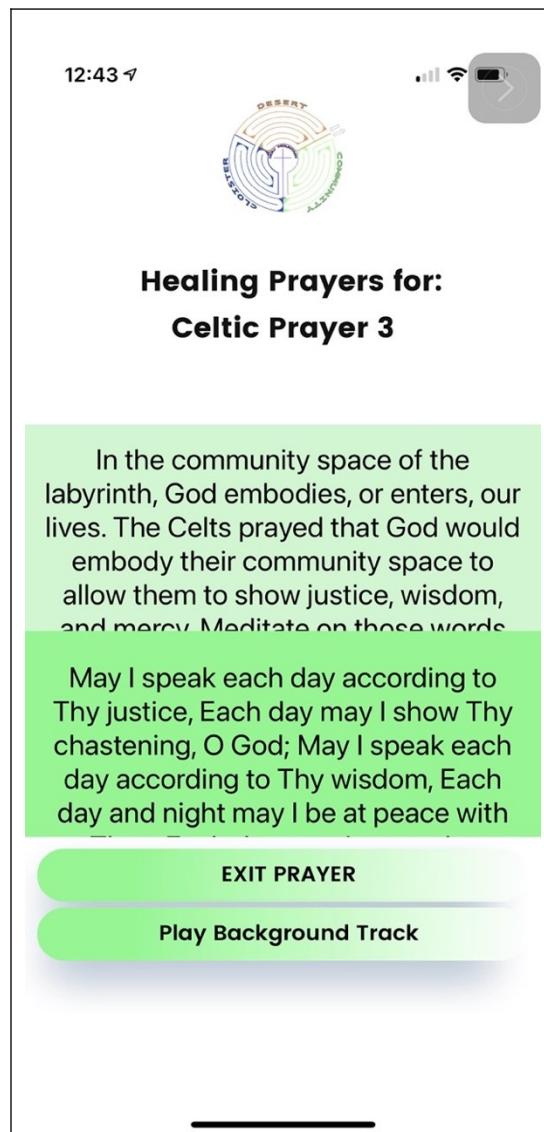


Figure 11 — Phone App Community-Embodiment Prayers

The app will immediately begin narrating the note listed in the light-green shaded area and will continue automatically to narrate the prayer in the dark-green shaded area. The user can choose one of the following two choices at any time:

- 1 – Click the “Exit PRAYER” button, and the app returns to the main screen shown in “Figure 6 — Phone App Main Menu.”
- 2 – Click “Replay Prayer” to replay the prayer portion in the dark orange shaded section to allow one to tarry in the community area and meditate longer.

Conclusion

Chapter Six provided instructions on building labyrinth prayers for holistic healing. Labyrinth prayers contain four prayer steps: purifying prayers to heal the body and heart of sin and temptations, meditative prayers to focus the mind for communication and renew the mind, contemplative prayers to infill the spirit, and embodiment prayers to connect God to one’s active life. Twenty-five labyrinth prayers have been written and are available in the prayer app; Appendix III contains five labyrinth prayer samples.

Finally, this chapter introduced the prayer labyrinth app and provided instructions for downloading it. The prayer labyrinth app helps believers navigate the labyrinth by narrating meditative prayers with background music. Since transformative prayer practices are an ongoing process, these labyrinth prayers should not be considered as instant cures or permeant spiritual healing but as daily spiritual formation practices to seek God’s presence for continual holistic healing and strengthening within our body, heart, mind, spirit, and life.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this paper identified a sanctification gap which was described as a difference between proclaimed and practiced sanctification. The American revivalists typically preached shallow holiness that consisted of a spiritual experience, but many times failed to teach an ongoing holiness experience in one's personal life. This shallow, or non-holistic, holiness stressed a heart experience of redeeming grace and minimized an ongoing experience of transforming grace to mature body, heart, mind, spirit, and life. The paper referred to this as a dualistic, or binary, sanctification because it teaches only two states, which are on or off, sanctified or not, and fails to recognize the many levels of experiences in progressive sanctification that plays out between our initial and final glory.

The goal of most believers is to experience God, and the paper leveraged off the writings of mystics who well documented the process and stages of entering God's presence. Their writings provide us with many spiritual exercises and prayers to develop a daily metric of ongoing holiness that seeks to heal the whole being. Purification prayers and exercises of fasting and persevering cleanse the heart, meditative exercises of reading scripture renew the mind and call out to God, contemplative postures still and infill the spirit, and embodying acts incorporate the kingdom of God on earth in one's personal space. These four types of prayer practices provide holistic healing as God's presence transforms not just our spiritual being but our hearts, bodies, minds, and lives as well.

This paper developed a prayer labyrinth and overlaid spaces of desert, cloister, holy mountain, and community which were conducive places to practice the four spiritual exercises. The project entailed developing a smartphone app to migrate users through the labyrinth with prayers and meditative background music. One of the two types of smartphone app prayer

applications is called an ailment prayer aimed to heal one suffering from an ailment, struggle, temptation, loss, or trial, for instance. The second type of prayer is called a strengthening prayer aimed to strengthen someone needing a daily touch, Word, or soul-filling.

Concluding Thoughts

Just another prayer tool

This paper proposes to use this as another prayer tool to provide a daily fellowship, maturity, and sanctification and does not propose to be the only method of prayer. However, it is the hope of the author that this systemized approach offers ministry contexts or private individuals with a structured daily prayer format for a contemplative and embodied labyrinth experience.

Future labyrinth prayer development

The prayers released are just examples of the many types of prayers that could be developed. Some possible sources for developing ongoing prayers would be the Daily Office, Book of Common Prayer, or countless prayer books developed over the years. For prayers to address specific ailments, one could use topical sources like Nave's Topical Bible, for one example, which contains lists of many ailments.

Labyrinth prayer applications

There could be an interest in developing prayers with specific applications for certain groups. For instance, some recovery groups may benefit from recovery prayer themes. Some other types of groups that might appreciate customized holistic prayers for their specific application could be grief and loss, singles, couples, children, and teen groups.

Private labyrinth suggestions

Finally, not everyone has access to a physical labyrinth, so walking in one daily may not be practical, so it would be helpful to create a labyrinth for use in one's private space. One example is to update the prayer app for tracing on the smartphone app screen and outlining the finger path with labyrinth colors. Also, one could develop a hand-held labyrinth board that could be finger traced. In both examples, the labyrinth prayer app could be employed to migrate the user and narrate the prayers just as it would in an outdoor labyrinth setting.

Community Prayer

The prayer app contains a few community prayers, such as a church dedication and a worldwide call for prayer for Ukraine. And though the smartphone app contains mostly private prayers, groups may use them as public prayers. But in the future, the plan is to develop personal and community labyrinth prayers to include in the app.

Bodily Prayer Benefits

Future study is needed on the topic of the physical benefit of labyrinth prayer because “there is something very powerful about saying a litany like this and walking about.”¹⁷⁴ Lauren Artress, the contemporary pioneer of the resurgence of the Chartres Prayer Labyrinth, indicates there is some area of study which could be researched regarding the physical benefits of labyrinth spirituality:

Walking the labyrinth is a body prayer. It is nonthreatening; all we are asked to do is to walk. Even those of us with the deepest inner divisions can do that. Moving through the labyrinth, we can learn what it feels like to stand firm in the world. We sense our feet firmly planted on the ground, our legs, pelvis, torso, arms, neck, and head flowing with energy and life.¹⁷⁵

Holistic Prayer Labyrinth Built at Largo First Church of the Nazarene

Appendix IV displays the holistic Christian healing prayer labyrinth based on the four spiritual stages and spaces and is located on the grounds of the Largo First Church of the Nazarene in Largo, FL.

Labyrinth Flyer

Appendix V displays the holistic healing labyrinth flyer, which provides an overview of the labyrinth healing stages to guide those desiring to walk the labyrinth. In addition, the flyer displays a QR code that links to the “Healing Prayer Labyrinth” app for Apple and Android smartphones.

¹⁷⁴ Adam, *A Desert in the Ocean*, 35-37.

¹⁷⁵ Artress, *Walking a Sacred Path*, 141.

APPENDIX I – CHRISTIAN MUSIC SURVEYS

Grace Versus Transformational Messages

In an attempt to gauge the contemporary Christian culture’s dualistic posture regarding holiness, Appendix I provides the results of an analysis of the top forty contemporary Christian songs in 2019, comparing the percentage of their messages of grace versus transformative. This study considered grace messages to speak of redemption in Christ and God’s saving and keeping attributes like love, wisdom, justice, and power. This study considered transformative messages to speak of pledging obedience to God, service to others, and responsibility to wholesome living. Table 6, Columns 2 and 3 list the criteria used for grace and transformative messages. The two song data sets used were from a 2019 Top Forty Contemporary Christian list played on Christian radio and twenty popular hymns of Charles and John Wesley.

Table 6 – Grace and transformative type messages

Metric No.	Category	Type
1	Grace Only	Loving God for His redemptive love for us.
2		Loving God for His goodness and character.
3	Transformative	Loving God to glorify Him.
4		Loving Others to benefit them.
5		Loving ourselves to glorify God.

Section I — Contemporary Christian Music Messages of Grace Versus Transformation

A non-holistic holiness mentality places little emphasis on ongoing life transformation and maturity but predominantly considers holiness as a spiritual experience. Therefore, it would be expected that non-holistic song messages would reflect this same ideology. When comparing grace versus transformation messages of the contemporary Christian songs, only 12.5%

contained messages in which any part of the song embraced transformational content. For instance, if just one line or phrase spoke of transformation, it would be considered a transformational song for this study. Stating from another angle, 87.5% of the Contemporary Christian songs contained messages totally about grace and not one line or phrase related to personal maturity. These results reflect a shallow holiness emphasis and mindset lacking messages of personal holiness and responsibility. Table 7 displays the summary for each of the forty songs regarding their grace versus transformative content.

(Note that the percentages in Table 7 or 8 are inconsequential since any number greater than ‘0’ in their transformative columns resulted in the song or hymn being considered as transformative.)

Table 7 — Christian Song messages rated by grace and transformation

Top Forty Pos.	Song	% Grace	Grace Messages	% Transformative.	Transformative Messages
1	<i>Reckless Love</i>	100	Redemption, Love of God	0	NA
2	<i>What a Beautiful Name</i>	100	Power & beauty of Jesus, Redemption	0	NA
3	<i>This is Amazing Grace</i>	100	Redemption	0	NA
4	<i>Great Are You Lord</i>	100	Redemption, Heart transformation	0	NA
5	<i>Ten Thousand Reasons</i>	100	Worship holiness, Redemption	0	NA
6	<i>The Lion & the Lamb</i>	100	Power of God, Redemption	0	NA
7	<i>Good Good Father</i>	100	God’s goodness, God’s provision	0	NA
8	<i>Glorious Day</i>	100	Redemption	0	NA
9	<i>O Come to the Altar</i>	100	Redemption	0	NA
10	<i>King of My Heart</i>	100	God’s provision God’s deliverance	0	NA

Top Forty Pos.	Song	% Grace	Grace Messages	% Transformative.	Transformative Messages
11	<i>Who You Say I AM</i>	100	Redemption Adoption	0	NA
12	<i>Lord I Need You</i>	75	Righteousness imputed	25	Overcome temptation
13	<i>Holy Spirit</i>	100	God's presence, Holy Spirit's Power	0	NA
14	<i>In Christ Alone</i>	100	Redemption, Protection	0	NA
15	<i>Cornerstone</i>	100	Redemption	0	NA
16	<i>How Great is Our God</i>	100	Greatness of God, Majesty of God Glory of Trinity	0	NA
17	<i>Build My Life</i>	50		50	Obedience for God, Service to Others
18	<i>O Praise the Name</i>	100	Redemption, Resurrection.	0	NA
19	<i>Amazing Grace – My Chains Are Gone</i>	100	Redemption, Goodness, Resurrection	0	NA
20	<i>Do It Again</i>	100	God's faithfulness, God's deliverance	0	NA
21	<i>No Longer Slaves</i>	100	Redemption, Adoption	0	NA
22	<i>Revelation Song</i>	100	Eternal God, Majesty, Redemption	0	NA
23	<i>Blessed Be Your Name</i>	75	Blessing God	25	Perseverance in Trials
24	<i>Mighty to Save</i>	50	Salvation, Deliverance	50	Obedience, Serving others by Glorifying God
25	<i>Death Was Arrested</i>	100	Redemption	0	NA
26	<i>Tremble</i>	100	Name of Jesus, Presence, Redemption	0	NA
27	<i>Open Up the Heavens</i>	100	Presence, Glory	0	NA
28	<i>How Deep the Father's Love for Us.</i>	100	Redemption, Resurrection	0	NA
29	<i>Our God</i>	100	God's greatness, God's healing power	0	NA

Top Forty Pos.	Song	% Grace	Grace Messages	% Transformative.	Transformative Messages
			Deliverance		
30	<i>This I Believe</i>	100	Trinity, Redemption, Resurrection.	0	NA
31	<i>How Great Thou Art</i>	100	Greatness of God, God in nature, Redemption	0	NA
32	<i>Here I Am to Worship</i>	100	Redemption	0	NA
33	<i>One Thing Remains</i>	100	Unfailing Love, Redemption	0	NA
34	<i>Resurrecting</i>	100	Redemption	0	NA
35	<i>Your Grace Is Enough</i>	100	Grace	0	NA
36	<i>Oceans</i>	75	Unfailing Love, Deliverance	25	Obedience
37	<i>Unstoppable God</i>	100	Creator God, Omnipotent God, Redemption	0	NA
38	<i>Only King Forever</i>	100	Mighty God, Wise, loving, just, Name of Jesus	0	NA
39	<i>Your Love Awakens Me</i>	100	Redemption	0	NA
40	<i>Living Hope</i>	100	Redemption	0	NA

Section II — John and Charles Wesley’s Hymn Messages of Grace versus Transformation

When comparing grace versus transformation messages of the Wesley Hymns, 65% contained transformative messages, and 35% contained messages totally about grace. This indicates the ideology of John and Charles Wesley in these hymns contained a more balanced message of grace and transformation. Table 8 displays the summary for each of the twenty Wesley hymns regarding their grace versus embodiment content.

Table 8 — Twenty Wesley Hymn messages rated by grace and transformation

Wesley Hymn List	Song	% Grace	Top Grace Messages	% Transformative	Transformative Messages
1	<i>A Charge to Keep I Have</i>	0		100	Serve God, Serve Others,
2	<i>And Are We Yet Alive</i>	50	Grace Redemption	50	Practice holiness Self-crucified love
3	<i>And Can It Be That I Should Gain</i>	100	Redemption	0	NA
4	<i>Blest Be the Dear Uniting Love</i>	50	Child of God Grace	50	Serving God Self-crucified love
5	<i>Blow Ye the Trumpet, Blow</i>	75	Redemption Resurrection	25	Transformation Self-crucified love
6	<i>Christ the Lord Is Risen Today</i>	50	Redemption Resurrection	50	Self-crucified love Modeling God
7	<i>Christ, from Whom All Blessings Flow</i>	25	Presence Joy	75	Transformation Obedience Service Unity
8	<i>Christ, Whose Glory Fills the Skies</i>	50	Presence	50	Transformation
9	<i>Come, and Let Us Sweetly Join</i>	75	God's love and joy	25	Sanctify or transform
10	<i>Oh, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing</i>	100	Grace Redemption Peace	0	NA
11	<i>Lo! he comes, with clouds descending,</i>	100	Second coming Deliverance Resurrection	0	NA
12	<i>Arise, my soul, arise, Shake off thy guilty fears</i>	100	Redemption, Adoption	0	
13	<i>Come, O thou Traveler</i>	25	Redemption	75	Fervent Prayer Restoration
14	<i>Come, thou long expected Jesus!</i>	67	Redemption, Resurrection	33	Transformation
15	<i>Father, I stretch my hands to thee</i>	100	Deliverance	0	
16	<i>Hail the day that sees Him rise</i>	100	Deliverance, Resurrection, Redemption	0	
17	<i>Hark! the herald angels sing</i>	100	Redemption, Eternal Life	0	
18	<i>Jesus, lover of my soul</i>	50	Protection	50	Transformation

Wesley Hymn List	Song	% Grace	Top Grace Messages	% Transformative	Transformative Messages
19	<i>Jesus! the name high over all</i>	33	Jesus God Redemption	67	Serve others
20	<i>Love divine, all loves excelling</i>	20	Redemption	80	Sanctified heart, Serving God, Fervent prayer, Transformation, Resurrection

APPENDIX II – CHRISTIAN MORALITY SURVEYS

George Barna Christian Morality Survey

Section I — Comparison of Christian Versus Secular Moral Behavior

Table 9 below shows the results of a survey by the Barna Group comparing Christian and secular behavior according to some moral categories. The percentages represent those who believed the activity is “morally acceptable.”¹⁷⁶

Table 9 — Comparing Christian and secular moral behavior

Activity	All Adults (Secular)	Evangelicals ¹⁷⁷	Born Again ¹⁷⁸	Other Faith	Atheist/ Agnostic
Gambling	61%	27%	45%	69%	75%
Living with someone of the opposite sex without being married, sometimes called co-habitation	60%	12%	49%	70%	87%
Enjoying sexual thoughts or fantasies about someone	59%	15%	49%	71%	78%

¹⁷⁶ Barna Group, “Morality Continues to Decay,” November 3, 2003, accessed September 29, 2021, <https://www.barna.com/research/morality-continues-to-decay/>.

¹⁷⁷ Barna suggested that those who describe themselves as evangelicals more closely resemble a segment that his company has labeled the “‘born again Christian’ population – a group that displays an above-average interest and involvement in religious activity, but whose religious fervor and commitment is nowhere near that of true evangelicals.” Barna Group, “Survey Explores Who Qualifies as an Evangelical,” January 18, 2007, accessed February 7, 2022, <https://www.barna.com/research/survey-explores-who-qualifies-as-an-evangelical/>.

¹⁷⁸ “‘Born again Christians’ are defined as people who said they have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in their life today and who also indicated they believe that when they die they will go to Heaven because they had confessed their sins and had accepted Jesus Christ as their savior.” Barna Group, “Faith Revolutionaries Stand Out From the Crowd,” March 6, 2006, accessed February 7, 2022, <https://www.barna.com/research/faith-revolutionaries-stand-out-from-the-crowd/#:~:text=%E2%80%9CBorn%20again%20Christians%E2%80%9D%20are%20defined.Jesus%20Christ%20as%20their%20savior.>

Activity	All Adults (Secular)	Evangelicals	Born Again	Other Faith	Atheist/ Agnostic
Having an abortion	45%	4%	33%	45%	71%
Having a sexual relationship with someone of the opposite sex to whom you are not married	42%	7%	35%	47%	69%
Looking at pictures of nudity or explicit sexual behavior	38%	5%	28%	49%	70%
Using profanity	36%	7%	29%	46%	68%

APPENDIX III – LABYRINTH PRAYERS

Section I — Labyrinth Ailment Prayers

Table 10 — Ailment Example – Spiritual Dryness

Prayer Step	Note / Prayer	Text
Desert-Purification	Note	Do you feel like you are in a desert - thirsty and far from God's presence? St. John of the Cross wrote about the Dark Night of the Senses when we struggle to experience the presence of God at times. We feel like we are in a desert. Yet, in this labyrinth space of the desert, He still is with you. Call out to God to fill you as David did as you meditate on a few verses from Psalm 42.
	Prayer	As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me all day long, Where is your God? (Psalm 42:1-3)
Cloister-Meditation	Note	While attempting to communicate with God by petitioning His grace, we can enter His presence. Traditionally, the cloister has been a quiet place to focus on God and enable this dialog of speaking and listening. Meditation in general calls out and creates images to relate to God, and mental prayer, in general, is listening for God to respond. Meditate on this song, “There Is A River,” by Max and David Sapp that compares Christ to the image of a well of living water, an internal spring, a river from deep within.
	Prayer	There is a river that flows from deep within. There is a fountain that frees the soul from sin. Come to these waters, there is a vast supply. There is a river that never shall run dry.
Holy Mountain-Presence	Note	On the holy mountain, God reveals His presence in the Bible. Imagine the holy mountain labyrinth space as a sacred inner space where God will also meet with you. It happens by grace when we call upon him and quietly listen for His responding presence. Call upon Him with the words of this classic chorus, “I'll My Cup Lord,” written by Richard Eugene Blanchard Sr. in the 1970s. Then take time to be quiet and wait for God’s touch and listen for His voice.
	Prayer	Like the woman at the well, I was seeking, For things that could not satisfy. And then I heard my Savior speaking, Draw from My well that never shall run dry. Fill my cup, Lord, I lift it up Lord. Come and quench this thirsting of my soul. Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more. Fill my cup, Fill it up and make me whole.

Community-Embodiment	Note	In community spaces in the Bible, such as the streets, homes, businesses, churches, and places of everyday life events, God and Jesus entered into people’s lives. Imagine this community space of the labyrinth represents those places of your community where God wants to penetrate through to your life. As you enter the community portion of the labyrinth, take the Spirit of God with you back into your community and life. Meditate on verse four of the famous Charles Wesley hymn, “Love Divine, All Love Excelling.”
	Pray	Finish, then, thy new creation, true and spotless let us be. Let us see thy great salvation, perfectly restored in thee. Changed from glory into glory, till in heaven we take our place, till we cast our crowns before thee, lost in wonder, love and praise.

Table 11 — Ailment Example – Oppression

Prayer Step	Note / Prayer	Text
Desert-Purification	Note	We must purify our hearts from sin to enter God’s presence. For the early Christians, the empty desert space was conducive to emptying and purifying the heart of bodily and sinful passions. But also, oppression can test our faith and cause us to doubt. So, as you enter the labyrinth desert space, imagine a desert space that empties the heart of doubts. When we are under attack, we may feel like God is distant and our enemies are nearby. So, meditate on these words from King David that lifted him above despair, doubt, defeat. Then pause, be silent, and listen for God's assurance and comfort.
	Prayer	Lord, how many are my foes! How many rise up against me! Many are saying of me, “God will not deliver him.” But you, Lord, are a shield around me, my glory, the One who lifts my head high. I call out to the Lord, and I know that he answers me from his holy mountain (Psalm 3:1-4). Claim these promises. Don’t rely on your strength. God is a shield around you. Trust Him
Cloister-Meditation	Note	Traditionally, the cloister has been a quiet place to focus on God and initiate communication through the dialog of speaking and listening - meditating and contemplating. As you enter the cloister paths of the labyrinth, imagine entering such a tranquil space conducive to quiet communication. Let it be a calm space conducive to quieting your mind and renewing it by meditating on these images of your King and deliverer. Then pause, be still in your body, be quiet in your thoughts, and know that He is God.
	Prayer	I will not fear though tens of thousands assail me on every side. Strike all my enemies on the jaw; break the teeth of the wicked. From the Lord comes deliverance. May your blessing be on your people. (Psalm 3:6-8).
Holy Mountain-Presence	Note	God revealed His presence on holy mountains in the Bible. As you enter the labyrinth holy mountain space, imagine you are on Mt. Sinai, where God revealed His glory to Moses. Believe He occupies the center of the labyrinth and imagine this is holy ground. From this space, call upon the Lord in a repetitive prayer standing on His own Words from Psalm 3. Then pause walking, and cease thinking, be still and wait for His comforting touch.
	Prayer	<p>Repeat this phrase derived from Psalm 3:7: Arise Oh God Deliver Me Oh God. Arise Oh Jesus Deliver Me Oh Jesus.</p> <p>Keep knocking, and He’ll open the door. Repeat as many times as you need until God shows up because He promises He will:</p> <p>Arise Oh God Deliver Me Oh God. Arise Oh Jesus Deliver Me Oh Jesus. Arise Oh God Deliver Me Oh God. Arise Oh Jesus Deliver Me Oh Jesus. Arise Oh God Deliver Me Oh God. Arise Oh Jesus Deliver Me Oh Jesus.</p>

		Repeat as long as you need.
Community-Embodiment	Note	Now you know God shields you. Even when thousands assail you, you will not fear. So now go back into your community standing on these promises and go from discouragement to encouragement. Don't fear those who are strong. Trust Jesus. Jesus said in John 16:33, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." So claim that promise repeating this classic hymn by Maltbie Babcock as you walk back into your community:
	Pray	This is my Father's world: O let me ne'er forget That though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the Ruler yet. This is my Father's world: Why should my heart be sad? The Lord is King: let the heavens ring! God reigns; let earth be glad!

Table 12 — Ailment Example – Sexual Passions

Prayer Step	Note / Prayer	Text
Desert-Purification	Note	We must purify our hearts from sin to enter God’s presence. For the early Christians, the empty desert space was conducive to emptying and purifying the heart of bodily and sinful passions. As you enter the labyrinth desert space, imagine such a space and cleanse your heart of wrong desires that conflict with God. Temptation entices our passion for selfish physical pleasure. Our lack of self-control causes us to sin. Meditate on the apostle Paul’s advice to overcome these powerful passions. Then offer your body as a living sacrifice and vow in Christ’s power to be pure and spotless.
	Prayer	He said, “Put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature such as sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires. Put on the new self, which is being renewed in the image of its Creator, Jesus Christ.” (Colossians 3:5).
Cloister-Meditation	Note	Traditionally, the cloister has been a quiet place to focus on God and initiate communication through the dialog of speaking and listening. As you enter the cloister paths of the labyrinth, imagine entering such a tranquil space conducive to quiet communication. You have renewed your heart, now in the cloister portion of the labyrinth, renew your mind by meditating on this famous hymn written by Lewis E. Jones and understand how Christ gives you power over sin. And then pause, be still, clear your mind, and wait on God to speak to you.
	Prayer	<p>Would you be free from your passion and pride? There’s power in the blood, power in the blood. Come for a cleansing to Calvary’s tide. There’s wonderful power in the blood.</p> <p>There is power, power, wonder-working power, In the blood of the Lamb. There is power, power, wonder-working power, In the precious blood of the Lamb</p>
Holy Mountain-Presence	Note	God revealed His presence on holy mountains in the Bible. As you enter the labyrinth holy mountain space, imagine you are on Mt. Sinai, where God revealed His glory to Moses. Tarry in the labyrinth’s center circle that represents His presence and celebrate with Christ your forgiveness by meditating or singing along with “Power in the Blood.”
	Prayer	<p>Would you be whiter, much whiter than snow? There’s power in the blood, power in the blood. Sin-stains are lost in its life-giving flow. There’s wonderful power in the blood.</p> <p>There is power, power, wonder-working power, In the blood of the Lamb. There is power, power, wonder-working power, In the precious blood of the Lamb.</p>
Community-Embodiment	Note	In community spaces in the Bible, such as the streets, homes, businesses, churches, and places of everyday life events, God and Jesus entered people's

		<p>lives. Imagine this community space of the labyrinth represents those places of your community where God wants to penetrate through to your life. Now go back into your community and practice voiding temptations and find an accountability partner. In fact, through service to others we can defeat our selfish passions. When we serve others, it brings us closer to God's presence. So, meditate on these words of service then before you leave the community space, pause, be still, and ask God to guide you back into your life responsibilities and relationships in your community.</p>
	<p>Pray</p>	<p>Would you do service for Jesus your King? There's power in the blood, power in the blood. Would you live daily His praises to sing? There's wonderful power in the blood.</p> <p>There is power, power, wonder-working power In the blood of the Lamb. There is power, power, wonder-working power In the precious blood of the Lamb.</p>

Section II — Labyrinth Strengthening Prayers

Table 13 — Strengthening Example - Celtic Prayer

Prayer Step	Note / Prayer	Text
Desert-Purification	Note	We must purify to enter God's presence. For the early Christians, the desert of emptiness was conducive to emptying their hearts of any sin or wrong intent. As you enter the labyrinth desert space, allow it to be a place to cleanse and recommit your heart with this Celtic blessing, and ask God for His cleansing and grace.
	Prayer	In name of the Lord Jesus, and of the Spirit of healing balm, in name of the Father of Israel, I begin my day. If there be evil threat or quirk or covert act intent on me, God free me and encompass me and drive from me mine enemy. God, help me and encompass me this day.
Cloister-Meditation	Note	Traditionally, the cloister has been a quiet place to focus on God and enable this dialog of speaking and listening. Imagine entering a tranquil space. Allow this Celtic daily prayer to guide you to communicate with God by calling upon the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then be silent, pause, and listen for the healing Words and touch from the Trinity.
	Prayer	Come I this day to the Father, Come I this day to the Son, Come I to the Holy Spirit powerful; Come I this day with God, Come I this day with Christ, Come I with the Spirit of kindly balm, God, and Spirit, and Jesus, From the crown of my head To the soles of my feet; Come I with my reputation, Come I with my testimony, Come I to Thee, Jesus -- Jesus, shelter me.
Holy Mountain-Presence	Note	God revealed His presence on holy mountains in the Bible, and they became sacred spaces. Medieval Christians considered the center of the labyrinth a type of that holy space. As you meditate on this Celtic prayer that calls to meet God in His sanctuary, imagine the center of the labyrinth is that sanctuary and then be quiet and still and trust that the Lord will fill this sacred space with His presence.
	Prayer	I am placing my soul and my body On Thy sanctuary this night, O God, On Thy sanctuary, O Jesus Christ, On Thy sanctuary, O Spirit of perfect truth, The Three who would defend my cause, Nor turn Their backs upon me. Thou, Father, who art kind and just, Thou, Son, who didst overcome death, Thou, Holy Spirit of power, Be keeping me this night from harm; The Three who would justify me Keeping me this night and always.
Community-Embodiment	Note	In the community space of the labyrinth, God embodies, or enters, our lives. The Celts prayed that God would embody their community space to allow them to show justice, wisdom, and mercy. Meditate on those words and vow to take these graces into your community.
	Pray	May I speak each day according to Thy justice, Each day may I show Thy chastening, O God; May I speak each day according to Thy wisdom, Each day and night may I be at peace with Thee. Each day may I count the causes of Thy mercy, May I each day give heed to Thy laws; Each day may I compose to Thee a song, May I harp each day Thy praise, O God. May I each day give love to

		Thee, Jesus, Each night may I do the same; Each day and night, dark and light, May I laud Thy goodness to me, O God.
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Table 14 — Strengthening Example – Daily Office – Advent 1

Prayer Step	Note / Prayer	Text
Desert-Purification	Note	We must purify our hearts from sin to enter God’s presence. For the early Christians, the empty desert space was conducive to emptying and purifying the heart of bodily and sinful passions. As you enter the labyrinth desert space, imagine such a space, and unclog your heart of allegiances that conflict with God. Meditate on the Daily office call to “Confession of Sin.” Pause, be still, and shut out the noise of your life, and hear God speak to you.
	Prayer	Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred and strayed from your ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against your holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done; and apart from your grace, there is no health in us. O Lord, have mercy upon us. Spare all those who confess their faults. Restore all those who are penitent, according to your promises declared to all people in Christ Jesus our Lord. And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake, that we may now live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of your holy Name. Amen.
Cloister-Meditation	Note	Traditionally, the cloister has been a quiet place to focus on God and initiate communication through the dialog of speaking and listening. As you enter the cloister paths of the labyrinth, imagine entering such a tranquil space conducive to quiet communication. Meditate on this Daily Office reading of Psalm 74 to begin communicating with the Father through the grace of Jesus. Then be silent, pause, and listen and trust God will respond.
	Prayer	<p>You walked off and left us, and never looked back. God, how could you do that? We’re your very own sheep; how can you stomp off in anger? Refresh your memory of us—you bought us a long time ago. Your most precious tribe—you paid a good price for us! Your very own Mount Zion—you actually lived here once! Come and visit the site of disaster, see how they’ve wrecked the sanctuary.</p> <p>While your people were at worship, your enemies barged in, brawling and scrawling graffiti. They set fire to the porch; axes swinging, they chopped up the woodwork, beat down the doors with sledgehammers, then split them into kindling. They burned your holy place to the ground, violated the place of worship. They said to themselves, “We’ll wipe them all out,” and burned down all the places of worship.</p> <p>There’s not a sign or symbol of God in sight, nor anyone to speak in his name, no one who knows what’s going on. How long, God, will barbarians blaspheme, enemies curse and get by with it? Why don’t you do something? How long are you going to sit there with your hands folded in your lap? God is my King from</p>

		<p>the very start; he works salvation in the womb of the earth. With one blow you split the sea in two, you made mincemeat of the dragon Tannin. You lopped off the heads of Leviathan, then served them up in a stew for the animals. With your finger you opened up springs and creeks, and dried up the wild floodwaters. You own the day, you own the night; you put stars and sun in place. You laid out the four corners of earth, shaped the seasons of summer and winter.</p> <p>Mark and remember, God, all the enemy taunts, each idiot desecration. Don't throw your lambs to the wolves; after all we've been through, don't forget us. Remember your promises; the city is in darkness, the countryside violent. Don't leave the victims to rot in the street; make them a choir that sings your praises. On your feet, O God— stand up for yourself! Do you hear what they're saying about you, all the vile obscenities? Don't tune out their malicious filth, the brawling invective that never lets up.</p>
Holy Mountain- Presence	Note	<p>God revealed His presence on holy mountains in the Bible, and they became sacred spaces. Medieval Christians considered the center of the labyrinth a type of that sacred space where they experienced Christ. Imagine as you enter the holy mountain labyrinth inner circle that Christ is waiting there for you and as you meditate on the lyrics of this canticle, or song, call out to God in praise. Then, be quiet and still and trust that the Lord will fill this sacred space with His presence.</p>
	Prayer	<p>We praise you, O God; we acclaim you as Lord. all creation worships you, the Father everlasting. To you all angels, all the powers of heaven, the cherubim and seraphim, sing in endless praise: Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. The glorious company of apostles praise you. The noble fellowship of prophets praise you. The white-robed army of martyrs praise you. Throughout the world the holy Church acclaims you: Father, of majesty unbounded, your true and only Son, worthy of all praise, and the Holy Spirit, advocate and guide. You, Christ, are the king of glory, the eternal Son of the Father. When you took our flesh to set us free you humbly chose the Virgin's womb. You overcame the sting of death and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. You are seated at God's right hand in glory. We believe that you will come to be our judge. Come then, Lord, and help your people, bought with the price of your own blood, and bring us with your saints to glory everlasting.</p>
Community- Embodiment	Note	<p>In community spaces in the Bible, such as the streets, homes, businesses, churches, and places of everyday life events, God and Jesus entered people's</p>

		<p>lives. Imagine this community space of the labyrinth represents those places of your community where God wants to penetrate through to your life. As you pray this Daily Office collect, or prayer, let it focus you back into your community and pray that God will embody you there.</p>
	<p>Pray</p>	<p>O God our King, by the resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ on the first day of the week, you conquered sin, put death to flight, and gave us the hope of everlasting life: Redeem all our days by this victory; forgive our sins, banish our fears, make us bold to praise you and to do your will; and steel us to wait for the consummation of your kingdom on the last great Day; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.</p>

APPENDIX IV – PHYSICAL HEALING PRAYER LABYRINTH



Figure 12 – Cross and Cloister - Community View



Figure 13 – Desert - Cloister View



Figure 14 – Entrance-Exit and Desert - Community View



Figure 15 – Desert Turnabout - Cleanse Message



Figure 16 – Desert Turnabout - Repent Message



Figure 17 – Desert Turnabout – Forgive Message



Figure 18 — Desert Turnabout – Persevere Message



Figure 19 — Cloister Turnabout - Pray Message



Figure 20 — Cloister Turnabout - Ask, Seek, Knock Message



Figure 21 — Cloister Turnabout - Believe Message



Figure 22 — Cloister Turnabout - Hope Message



Figure 23 – Community Turnabout - Reconcile Message



Figure 24 – Community Turnabout - Relationships Message



Figure 25 — Community Turnabout - Balance Message



Figure 26 — Double-Ax Labrys - Cloister-Community



Figure 27 — Double-Ax Labrys – Cloister-Desert

APPENDIX V – HEALING PRAYER LABYRINTH FLYER



Figure 28 – Labyrinth Flyer with QR Code - Page 1

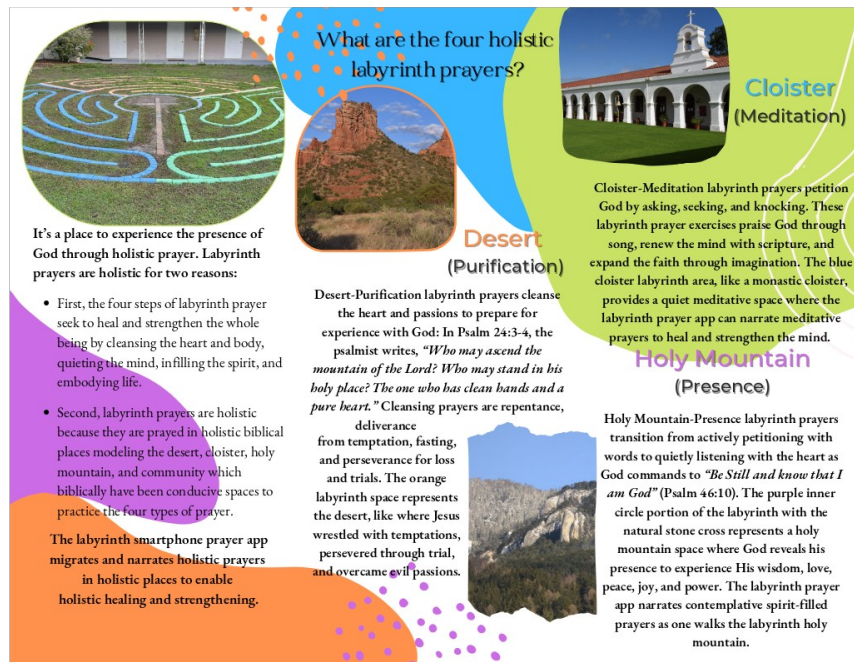


Figure 29 – Labyrinth Flyer - Page 2

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