

What is Quietism?

Quietism was a system of spirituality that has had many repercussions; the key writers are still popular. It was, like Pietism, a mystical reaction to 17th century dogmatism and the oppressions of the 30 Years War. The leaders were intensely spirituality who suffered significant persecution, especially after Pope Innocent XI condemned it in 1687. Quietism is very diverse containing some helpful ideas on communion through to outright heresy. Noteworthy Quietists include: Madame Guyon, Miguel de Molinos (*The Spiritual Guide*) and François Fénelon (Archbishop of Cambrai). Guyon clearly loved God and suffered greatly, but the behaviour of some leaders was nothing like the movement's ideals. Fénelon was guilty of lying and manipulation while his doctrine of God led directly to the Deism of the next century.

Teachings

Essentially, Quietism is an exaggeration of Romanist meditation, fused with ideas taken from medieval mystics. Chief errors include passivity and denial of the will leading to mysticism. This is similar to modern Charismatic errors.

- The soul's highest goal is passive contemplation of God. The soul: intellect, will and emotions, must be renounced in the quest for spiritual union so that it is lost in the divine (shades of Hinduism).
- The soul surrenders to God in a specific act of crisis, following which the soul is kept in divine union and responds in perfect love. This mystical idea has spawned many later perfectionist and Holiness teachings.
- Less able Quietists added that self-denial and death of self is experienced by ignoring all distractions and obstacles; including thoughts of heaven, spiritual exercises and the church. [Cf. Prov 10:16; Rm 2:7; 1 Cor 9:27, 15:58; Phil 2:12-13; 1 Thess 1:3; 2 Pt 1:5-7]
- This results in 'mystic death', a dehumanisation of humanity which resembles Buddhism. Perfection is attained after the annihilation of the will and unity with God.

Dangers

- Passivity, Neoplatonism and mysticism.
- Ignorance of Biblical commands to maintain godliness with personal ethics and corporate practices (such as the Lord's Supper).
- Disobedience to the command to do good works or to maintain self-control.
- We are never told to renounce our will, intellect and emotions, but to subjugate them to God's will. Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit.

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Understanding Ministries

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