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Margaret English de Alminana
Southeastern University - Lakeland

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Reconnecting with the Mystics

By Margaret English-de Alminana, Ph.D.

Kathryn Kuhlman and the Reshaping of Early Pentecostalism

Kathryn Kuhlman helped to shape a generation of Pentecostal/Charismatic theology and praxis by reintroducing a depth of spirituality which harkened back to the teachings of the mystics. She introduced the concept of spiritual silence to a generation of Sawdust Trail Pentecostals known for their exuberant and lively worship services, and she popularized the experience of being “slain in the Spirit.” But her most notable innovation resulted from discarding healing lines and cards together with a healing theology based upon the faith of the adherents. Instead, she invited pilgrims into a transcendent experience of the manifest presence of the Holy Spirit, which rested upon a foundation of love.

The Healing Theology and Praxis of Kathryn Kuhlman

Humble beginnings provided Kathryn Johanna Kuhlman (1907-1976) with a perspective she never lost: “Everybody wants to be a big preacher, a great preacher, a famous preacher, a wealthy man, a celebrity...I know where I began. I know from whence I have come.” Raised on the American Pentecostal Sawdust Trail, schooled at the feet of Pentecostal masters such as Aimee Semple McPherson and A. B. Simpson, and widely lauded by the Charismatic Movement that swept North America in the mid-century, Kuhlman was rarely benefitted by the embrace of any group. In fact, her practical theology was truly her own as was her ministry’s Pentecostal praxis and tone.

“Kuhlman suffered from the fact that she walked in a theological shadow world between the Pentecostal and mainline Protestant denominations. The Pentecostals held her at arm’s length. On the one hand, she did make a distinction between professing Christ and accepting the gift of the Holy Spirit, thus implying the two-stage process characteristic of classical Pentecostalism. However, at least by the 1940s, she did not preach the necessity of a ‘second Baptism,’ thus denying one of Pentecostalism’s central tenets.”¹ According to Fredrick Jordan, Kuhlman did not teach the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a second experience in the early years of her ministry. However, although she seldom emphasized it in her sermons, other biographers such as Jamie Buckingham trace a long relationship with the doctrine from the earliest years of her ministry.² In fact, she readily acknowledged having had the experience, but in the early 1970s when the Charismatic Movement was at its height, and everyone seemed focused on the experience, her lack of similar singular focus created a question in the minds of her audiences.

This is not to suggest that the audiences’ concerns were without warrant, for Kuhlman’s services, although deeply spiritual, were a far departure from normative Pentecostal experience. She introduced the concept of silence—a spiritual vernacular known only to Roman Catholics at the time and altogether unspoken

¹ Fredrick W. Jordan, “At Arm’s Length: The First Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh, and Kathryn Kuhlman”; Edith L. Blumhofer, Russell P. Spittler, and Grant A. Wacker, eds. *Pentecostal Currents in American Protestantism*, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), p. 189.

² Jamie Buckingham, *Daughter of Destiny*, (South Plainfield, NJ: Bridge Publishing, 1976), p. 44.

by classical Pentecostals, whose services were marked by lively clapping, stomping, shouting, and eruptions of glossolalia, trademarks of the Sawdust Trail tradition. In contrast, Kuhlman would draw her crowds to a hush. During one service when a man continued to murmur in tongues under his breath, she spoke to him directly from the pulpit, demanding absolute silence. Her obstreperous crowd complied for endless minutes of utter silence, eventually broken by numerous individuals around the room being slain in the Spirit and dropping to the floor.³ The phenomenon of being *slain in the Spirit*, experienced as early as in her ministry with the Parrotts,⁴ was brought into the public fore by Kuhlman, who during times of special “visitation” saw entire sections of an auditorium of hundreds at a time undergo the experience.

Theology and Praxis of Healing as Demonstrated in Kuhlman’s Ministry

Despite the introduction of silences, quiet worship, and even the phenomenon of congregants being “slain in the Spirit,” none of these innovations surpassed Kuhlman’s introduction of an entirely new way of understanding healing as well as a new methodology for practicing the gift of healing.

Like other female Pentecostal ministers before her, Kuhlman did not start out with the intention of becoming a healing evangelist. The great crowds and opportunities came at the end of a lifetime of evangelism. “Like two of her predecessors, Maria Woodworth-Etter and Aimee Semple McPherson, she was a dynamic and successful soul-winner long before she was noted for her healing ministry.”⁵ Nevertheless, Kuhlman’s greatest contribution was the advancement of a praxis of healing. Heretofore, classical Pentecostal healing evangelists employed several standard strategies for demonstrating and administering their gifts of healings by moving their enormous crowds through long healing lines. Often seekers were lined up for hours while one-by-one the evangelist and other attendants would anoint each person with oil, lay hands of each individual head, and pray specifically for whichever disease or malady the seeker might communicate. Certain tent ministries would pass out cards used to communicate their prayer needs in writing. Such cards were often kept as a vehicle for creating ongoing mailing lists in order to solicit continued donations.

Kuhlman, who certainly would have practiced such methods alongside her former husband, as well as her sister and brother-in-law in her early years of itinerant and tabernacle ministry, later rejected them. Burroughs A. Waltrip was a noted fundraiser, and was disgraced in ministry, together with Kuhlman as his wife, for his less-than-ethical approaches. Whether it was the enduring lash of this corrective experience that caused Kuhlman to seek other methods was a matter she never discussed. She did, however, discuss her deliberate pursuit of more ethical approaches. Regarding this resolution, Kooiman Hosier writes:

In the early days of her ministry Kathryn was greatly disturbed over many things that she observed in the field of divine healing. “I hated traditional tent healing services,” she explained. “Those long healing lines, the filing out of cards...It was an insult to your intelligence. Once, after visiting such a service, I cried all night. I determined that with the Holy Spirit’s help, my ministry would not be that way.” Because she was confused by “methods she saw used, and disgusted with “performances” she witnessed, she delved even harder into the Word of God for answers.⁶

Sawdust trail evangelists often accused the sick individual who went home unhealed following their services of lacking the prerequisite faith for healing. Kuhlman lamented, “Too often I had seen pathetically sick people dragging their tired, weakened bodies home from a healing service, having been told that they were not healed simply because of their own lack of faith. My heart ached for these people as I knew how they struggled, day after day, trying desperately to obtain *more* faith, taking out that which they had, and trying to analyze it, in a hopeless effort to discover its deficiency which was presumably keeping them from the healing

³ An experience recounted by Benny Hinn.

⁴ When Kuhlman was six-years-old, elder sibling, Myrtle, married a student evangelist from the Assemblies of God, Everett B. Parrott, an event that would change the course of Kuhlman’s life. The Parrotts traveled the Northwest “sawdust trail” as traveling evangelists. At 16 years old, Kuhlman left home to join them, a circumstance that eventually launched her own ministry.

⁵ Wayne E. Warner, *Kathryn Kuhlman: The Woman Behind the Miracles*, (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant, 1993), p. 154.

⁶ Helen Kooiman Hosier, *Kathryn Kuhlman, A Biography*, (London: Lakeland Books, 1977), p. 66.

power of God. And I knew their defeat, because they were unwittingly looking at themselves, rather than to God.”⁷

According to Roberts Liardon, her early days of ministry took place during the “time of the Holy Spirit’s restoration to the Body of His gift of healing. A great ‘healing revival’ was in progress” and noted evangelists such as Oral Roberts, William Branham, and Jack Coe were itinerating throughout North American preaching a message of healing by faith.⁸ Although historians have suggested that Kuhlman simply visited the healing ministries of noted male evangelists in her past, it is clearer from the actual historical record that Kuhlman had become intimately acquainted with the inter-workings of such ministries, first as an assistant to the Parrotts and then in her ministry with Waltrip. No doubt she had pushed the wheelchairs of many defeated and deathly ill individuals out of the tents or buildings and had observed the pain of their disappointments first-hand.

What Kuhlman had experienced in the tent revivals and healing meetings she attended throughout her youth had a crushing impact upon her. “I saw the harm that was being done in attributing everything to ‘lack of faith’ on the part of the individual who had not received a healing...The looks of despair and disappointment on the faces I had seen, when told that only their lack of faith was keeping them from God, was to haunt me for weeks.”⁹ Emotionally overcome and struggling to find God’s compassion in the situation, Kuhlman prayed: “They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid him.”¹⁰

Kuhlman’s reaction isolated a primary theological tension between God’s sovereignty and human agency that had created no small degree of consternation for the movement. If a suffering person was granted no divine intervention by way of healing, then all that was left was resignation to some inexplicable higher purpose, which might seem to bring into question God’s mercy. If the suffering person’s participation in the healing act by way of faith and prayer brought no results, then the individual’s faith had failed. W.K. Kay explains:

To upgrade faith is to risk condemning the unhealed for their own illnesses and, worse, to make them feel guilty that they even asked for prayer. To downplay faith is to risk pushing healing back behind a barrier of divine inscrutability. Healing becomes conditional upon God’s mysterious will, and human beings cannot do very much to find what this will is or to make it happen.¹¹

Kuhlman suggested that her prayer was answered in the Spring of 1947, when she began studying for a series of sermons on the Holy Spirit. She realized that when the crucified Christ said it was finished, he included not only the salvation of the soul but the healing and deliverance of the body as well. “I knew that if I lived and died and never saw a single healing miracle like the apostles experienced in the book of Acts, it would not change God’s Word. He made provision for it in our redemption at the Calvary.”¹² Had her theology of healing been formed solely in the sufficiency of the atonement, Kuhlman would not have departed from contemporary thought. However, she went another step in the inclusion of the Holy Spirit. “...Jesus wanted to give His church a gift, the greatest gift possible: the person and the power of the Holy Spirit, the power of the Holy Spirit who was so faithful to Christ’s ministry while He was here on earth. The secret in the power and the healing of sick bodies is in the Holy Spirit.”¹³

Therefore, although she anchored her understanding of the justification for healing in the atonement, the actual healings themselves would be initiated beyond this doctrinal rationale. She would go another step

⁷ Kathryn Kuhlman, *I Believe in Miracles*, (New York: Pyramid Books, 1962), p. 212.

⁸ Roberts Liardon, *Kathryn Kuhlman, A Spiritual Biography of God’s Miracle Working Power*, (Tulsa, Ok.: Harrison House, 1990), p. 64.

⁹ Kuhlman, *I Believe in Miracles*, p. 213.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ William K. Kay and Anne E. Dyer, eds. *Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies: A Reader*, (London: SCM Press, 2004), p. 47.

¹² Buckingham, *Daughter of Destiny*, p. 102.

¹³ Kathryn Kuhlman, “The Key – Faith,” The Kathryn Kuhlman Foundation, #117, 1979. Radio talk show, audiotape.

and anchor her theology in the manifest presence and person of the Holy Spirit. "The secret of the power of the healing of sick bodies is found in the person of the Holy Spirit."¹⁴ Her revelation of healing did not stop there, however. In addition to identifying the manifested presence of the Holy Spirit as the agency of healing, Kuhlman remarked upon the motivation, which is a vital key. Some may recall that Roberts and other "faith" healers' theological foundation for the healing ministry rested purely upon a sufferer's faith access and the atonement doctrine, which Kuhlman rejected. For Kuhlman, the access of faith rested not in a doctrinal understanding but in Christ's love. She explained:

Love is something you do. The very last thing he did before he went away was to give the Holy Spirit to the church. You can't love without giving. That's the reason he gave the church the greatest possible gift; there is no greater gift than the person who had been so faithful...the one who had not failed him.

You shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost comes upon you.¹⁵

Inspired by the new revelation from her studies, Kuhlman preached a series on the Holy Spirit. After Christ died, he sent the Holy Spirit, the comforter to his church. "The last words he said before he went away were, 'And ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.'" God the Father had given him the gift, and now he was passing it on to the church. Therefore, every church should be experiencing the same miracles seen at Pentecost. The gift of the Holy Spirit is for us all.¹⁶ The missing piece she had discovered, in Kuhlman's estimation, was the place of the Holy Spirit in the act of healing. The Holy Spirit is the power of the Trinity. It was *His* power which raised Jesus from the dead. It is that *same* resurrection power that flows through our physical bodies today, healing and sanctifying us.¹⁷ As she delivered her revelation about the Holy Spirit that was completely new to her, she shook under the power herself. The next day a woman came up to her and claimed she had been healed of a cancerous tumor as Kuhlman spoke. She considered this the "beginning of miracles" in her ministry.¹⁸ From 1947 onward her ministry would be characterized by the ministry of healing.¹⁹

In time she would announce or "call out" miracles in various sections of her auditoriums and invite long lines of those who felt themselves to be healed to join her on the platform where she would allow them to share their information. Some professed that a goiter had suddenly disappeared, others walked out of wheelchairs, still others felt themselves free of cancer.

Customary at Kuhlman services, the evangelist neither formed healing lines for seekers nor laid hands on heads. Instead, she simply declared that a healing was taking place in the seating area in which a seeker was located, a methods some called a *word of knowledge* or divinely imparted information regarding the Holy Spirit's healing activity. The individual might attest to experiencing a sensation and some change in symptoms, and therefore would be invited to the platform to share the perception. Later, that person would be advised to seek the confirmation of a medical doctor before medicines or treatments were discontinued. Kuhlman's methodology was adopted by a generation of Pentecostal evangelists and pastors, generally with somewhat

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Kathryn Kuhlman, "Kathryn Kuhlman, Franklin, PA," The Kathryn Kuhlman Foundation, YouTube posting, accessed 7/29/2011.

¹⁶ Buckingham, p. 104.

¹⁷ Kathryn Kuhlman, "The Beginning of Miracles," Kathryn Kuhlman Foundation, n.d.; audiocassette.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ The cassette recording of Kuhlman's message entitled "The Beginning of Miracles" was one of the most requested, and was the first essay in a posthumous collection of radio messages entitled "*Heart to Heart With Kathryn Kuhlman*." The story was also printed in a booklet entitled *What Is the Key?* which was published in the early 1960s. This pamphlet was offered during broadcasts of *I Believe in Miracles* free of charge to anyone who requested it by self-addressed stamped envelope. The standard narrative Kuhlman recounted regarding the beginning of miracles in her ministry is contained in these two versions. Kathryn Kuhlman, *What is the Key?* Box 1, Collection 212, The Kathryn Kuhlman Collection, Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton, IL., in Artman, Amy Collier, "'The Miracle Lady': Kathryn Kuhlman and the Gentrification of Charismatic Christianity in Twentieth-Century America," (PhD diss., The University of Chicago Divinity School, 2009), p. 65.

less spectacular results. Kuhlman never berated seekers for their lack of faith, but often cried with them, laughed with them, and marveled at their testimonies.

A further distinctive of her ministry was her scrupulous effort to return the credit to God. As each and every pilgrim walked across the platform claiming him or herself to be healed, Kuhlman would repeat a mantra, "We give you the praise, Lord Jesus. We give you the praise." During these services she would often stop the proceedings in order to disclaim credit, saying, "I have nothing to do with these healings." "I'm not a healer." "The Holy Ghost has healed you." Those who walked with her to and from the services claim that this concern only increased after the service was completed. "After a meeting we would be with her and go through the kitchen. I remember her walking through the kitchen and putting her hand out and people would fall down in the kitchen. In the elevator she would say over and over 'I give it all to you,' [to God] on the way out."²⁰

Kuhlman's Decision to End Her Marriage Became Her Turning Point

The scale and depth of Kuhlman's ministry was predicated upon a pivotal event that occurred early in her career. She often reflected about a time when she said she died to self and surrendered all to God. Her decision to leave Burroughs Waltrip and live as a single woman for the rest of her life, laying aside her longings for companionship and family, and determining to remain celibate for the purpose of preaching the gospel, was what she referred to when she spoke of "dying." Viola Malachuk confirmed this observation: "She said when she would speak that Kathryn Kuhlman died. That is what she meant."²¹

I had to make a choice. Would I serve the man I loved, or the God I loved? I knew I could not serve God and live with Mister. No one will ever know the pain of dying like I know it, for I loved him more than I loved life itself. And for a time, I loved him even more than God. I finally told him I had to leave. God had never released me from the original call. Not only did I live with him, I had to live with my conscience, and the conviction of the Holy Spirit was almost unbearable. I was tired to trying to justify myself.²²

That decision became a transcendent one for Kuhlman. Like Abraham called upon to sacrifice Isaac, Kuhlman would be called upon to prove her devotion to God. Although it surrounded one of the greatest controversies of her life, as with Abraham, the event became a doorway through which she entered into a depth of ministry few have traversed.

Millions around the world, Christians and unbelievers alike, attested to the healing virtue displayed in Kuhlman's ministry. Physicians and other medical specialists confirmed hundreds and possibly thousands of miracles, and the multiple thousands turned away at the doors to her services suggest many were convinced that miracles took place.

Observers believed the dying-to-self experience Kuhlman described respecting events surrounding her marriage to Waltrip were akin to experiences described by mystics who sought to transcend the powers of the present world in order to find a place of operation in the world of the spirit. Allen Spraggett was a secular journalist and psychic researcher who held this opinion. His other works include writings on psychic phenomenon, extra-sensory perception, and parapsychology.²³ Spraggett interviewed Kuhlman for a book on her supernatural power. In it she points to the day she left Waltrip as the beginning of her Spirit-empowered ministry. She says:

²⁰ Telephone interview with Viola Malachuck, conducted 1/29/11.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Sermon by Kathryn Kuhlman, "The Ministry of Healing," delivered at Melodyland, Anaheim, Ca.; Roberts Liardon, *Kathryn Kuhlman, A Spiritual Biography of God's Miracle Working Power*, (Tulsa, Ok.: Harrison House, 1990), p. 58; provided as an official response to questions by Carol Gray, The Kathryn Kuhlman Foundation, 4411 Stilley Rd., #202, Pittsburgh, Pa, 15227.

²³ Allen Spraggett, *The Unexplained, Startling new discoveries in ESP by a leading expert*, (New York: The American Library, Inc., 1967).

I remember walking down a dead-end street and realizing that my life was a dead-end street. It was four o'clock in a Saturday afternoon. It was at that time and in that place that I surrendered myself fully to the Holy Spirit. There are some things too sacred to talk about. I will only say that in that moment, with tears streaming down my face, God and I made each other promises. He knows that I'll be true to Him and I know that I'll be true to Him. In that moment, I yielded to God and obeyed, body, soul, and spirit. I gave him everything.²⁴

From the experience she called her death, Kuhlman pinpointed the beginning of her miracle ministry.

Then I knew what the scripture meant about taking up your cross. A cross is the symbol of death. That afternoon, Kathryn Kuhlman died. And when I died, God the Holy Spirit came in. There, for the first time, I realized what it meant to have power.²⁵

Beyond the practical experience of full surrender and spiritual death, this mystical death became a cornerstone of Kuhlman's theological foundation, one which she taught often, albeit without dredging up all the sordid details of her personal failure. Although virtually unschooled in church history, Kuhlman revisited a well-paved path that mystics throughout the centuries had laid. In doing so, Kuhlman reintroduced her own folksy version of their theology of the Spirit into modern era Pentecostal thought. Eventually, other Pentecostals and Charismatics would seek out the teaching of the mystics, but Kuhlman went before them, pointing their thirsty souls towards these ancient wells.

Kuhlman and the Mystics

Mystic Thomas A. Kempis taught that dying to self was essential to finding union with God. He said, "My son, said our Lord, forsake thyself, and thou shalt find Me. Stand without following of thine own will, and without all property, and thou shalt profit in grace; and if thou wholly resign thyself into my hand, and take nothing to thee again, thou shalt have the more grace of Me."²⁶ Madame Jeanne Guyon taught that he or she who would find union with God must let go of everything else: "You must give up both the external and the internal things—all of your concerns must be placed into the hands of God. Forget yourself. Think only of Him. In doing so, your heart will remain free and at peace."²⁷

Such teachings were not found among the mystics alone, but one can find similar accounts among others who have operated in Spiritual ministry. Andrew Murray renounced all his earthly desire for honor and position. He said, "This was Jesus' goal when He was on earth: 'I seek not mine own honor: I seek the honor of Him that sent me.' In such words we have the keynote of His life. ... His intercession in heaven and His promise of an answer to our prayers, Jesus makes His first object the glory of His Father. Is this our object, too? Or are self-interest and self-will the strongest motives urging us to pray?"²⁸

Complete obedience was the way Charles G. Finney described this death to self. He said, "To pray effectually you must pray with submission to the will of God. Do not confound submission with indifference. No two things are more unlike each other. ... What I mean by submission in prayer is acquiescence in the revealed will of God. To submit to any command of God is to obey it."²⁹

Guyon and others taught that union with God was possible and that union can come only through death to self, pride, and ambition. Through brokenness, surrender, and death to self, one can advance to a transcendental state beyond the limitations of the human mind and powers. Kuhlman reintroduced the

²⁴ Allen Spraggett, *Kathryn Kuhlman, The Woman Who Believed in Miracles*, (New York: The American Library, Inc., 1970), p. 114.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Thomas A Kempis, trans. Richard Whitford, *The Imitation of Christ*, (New York: Washington Square Press, Inc., 1964) p. 186.

²⁷ Madame Jeanne Guyon, ed. Donna C. Arthur, *Experiencing God Through Prayer* (Springdale, PA: Whitaker House, 1984) p. 28.

²⁸ Andrew Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, (Springdale, PA: Whitaker House, 1981) p. 146.

²⁹ Charles G. Finney, ed. Louis Gifford Parkhurst, Jr., *Principles of Prayer*, (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1980) p. 14.

possibility of empowerment in this life through union with God, a theme that would become common in some sectors of Pentecostal/Charismatic thought. Beyond merely teaching that such empowerment exists, Kuhlman demonstrated it in her meetings, which often were transcendent spiritual experiences for her audiences. Her experience of dying to self...

...brought with it a kind of self-surrender, a radical selflessness, which she had not felt before. God became so real to her that the mundane world receded into a relative unreality. The immediacy of her perception of God was so overpowering that at time she felt it was God controlling her body, not she herself.³⁰

She preached about her spiritual perceptions, which some have called “out-of-body” experiences, although she referred to her altered state as “ecstasy.”³¹ “There is evidence of dissociation, or trance, in Kathryn Kuhlman’s ministry. She said that during the miracle services she often is ‘in the Spirit’ – a state or condition which she describes as ‘being out of the body.’ She is unaware of her surroundings or herself while in this condition.”³² Regarding this experience, Kuhlman said, “Please realize how detached I feel from the things that happen [in the services]. That is the reason why it never fazes me when the miracles and ministry are discredited, because it isn’t me. I am completely detached,” she said.³³ “It’s as if my body is possessed by the Holy Spirit and as though I were removed, up above somewhere, looking down on the proceedings. I feel as though I am just a bystander. And to tell the truth, I am honestly just as amazed as anyone else by the miracles. And I know that I have absolutely nothing to do with it. The Bible says that it is ‘Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord,’ and that is the only explanation.”³⁴

This out-of-body experience ... is the altered state of consciousness in which Kathryn Kuhlman is caught up in a mystic rapture. This is the ecstasy in which I have seen her, at times, stand for several minutes, in what appears to be a cataleptic state, her face upturned, her hands outstretched in prayer, unmoving, transfixed, in ethereal smile on her lips. She seems oblivious of her surroundings, in a transport of wonder and of joy.³⁵

It also may have been her death-to-self experience that left her with such disarming humility. She once told a massive crowd that they had not come to see Kathryn Kuhlman. She said she would not walk across the street to see Kathryn Kuhlman, and neither would they.³⁶ On other occasions she spoke of her earlier life by saying that no one wanted to hear a girl evangelist speak, and she couldn’t blame them. She had a unique ability to shift the focus of her audiences away from herself and onto God. In every service, she protested continually that she had no power to heal anyone, that only God had the power to heal. She refused to even claim a gift, saying that if God were so gracious to give anyone a gift, that person should not speak of it. It is in this scrupulous reverence that she helped her audiences to enter into their own transcendent experiences with the Holy Spirit.

Spiritual Theology as Demonstrated in Kuhlman’s Life and Ministry

In charting Kuhlman’s journey across the American heartland, one remarkable feature of her homespun stories and vignettes is the parallel experiences she inadvertently undergoes with the well-chronicled journey of the mystics. Beyond the mystical death she notes so often in her sermons, she also endured a long season of mystical progress, called by St. John of the Cross “the dark night of the soul.” Kuhlman found herself on a desert of spiritual drought for several years following her departure from Waltrip. According to St. John of the

³⁰ Allen Spraggett, *Kathryn Kuhlman, The Woman Who Believed in Miracles*, p. 114.

³¹ Kathryn Kuhlman, “Full Gospel Businessmen’s Fellowship,” Logos International; videocassette.

³² Allen Spraggett, *The Unexplained, Startling new discoveries in ESP by a leading expert*, p. 165.

³³ Hosier, p. 75.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

³⁵ Allen Spraggett, *Kathryn Kuhlman, The Woman Who Believed in Miracles*, (New York: The American Library, Inc., 1970), p. 114.

³⁶ Kathryn Kuhlman, “Dry Land, Living Water,” Las Vegas Welcomes Kathryn Kuhlman, May 3, 1975, video recording.

Cross, in this phenomenon “the soul is progressing through the beginner to proficient stage. Once the soul passes through, one experiences a deeper kind of joy and the spirit of love.”³⁷

Kuhlman, whose theology of miracles changed the Pentecostal Movement and presented it with an entirely new praxis of healing, also largely reshaped its understanding of prayer. Hitherto, since the days of the Azusa revival, classical Pentecostal prayer had been a loud and boisterous affair, noted by dramatic eruptions of glossolalia, shouting, running, and other outward displays. Kuhlman, in contrast, was often attacked by her more traditional Pentecostal detractors because her prayer and devotional life departed from these norms.

More than once Kuhlman was blasted by critics for what appeared to be the lack of a regular prayer and devotional time. It was one of the questions most often asked of her during interviews, one she seemed to struggle to explain. She told her followers that she stayed prayed up, that she was always in prayer, but none seemed to understand what she was attempting to convey. Close friend and confidant, Maggie Hartner, said, “I’ve worked with Kathryn for years. Kathryn Kuhlman is praying all the time.”³⁸

Dave Wilkerson recalls Kuhlman telling him that “‘I take my secret closet with me—if I’m in a car that’s my secret closet, or where I am—there’s nothing in the Bible about being in a geographical place or location to pray—I’ve learned to commune with the Lord anytime anyplace.’ This is but one of the many great spiritual lessons Kathryn Kuhlman taught me to pray without ceasing,”³⁹ Practicing the presence of God, an askesis forgotten from the days of monk Brother Lawrence and mystics like Jean Pierre de Caussade, was re-introduced into Pentecostal and Charismatic devotion in some measure through the praxis of Kuhlman.

Simon Chan suggests that prayer in union with God is less produced by the emotionalism of old-time Pentecostals and more by the practice of entering into the ongoing prayer of the Trinity, wherein Christ “ever liveth to make intercession.” “The whole life of a Christian may be described as a life of prayer. The life of prayer is embodied in Paul’s injunction to pray without ceasing.”⁴⁰ With great simplicity Kuhlman re-laid a foundation of prayer and spiritual union long lost to the time of monks and mystics. Through displays of great spiritual visitation and power she demonstrated without theoretical exegesis the benefit of her life of spiritual union with God. In fact, *Time Magazine* in 1970 called her a “one woman shine of Lourdes,” a phrase that stuck as press and public, believer and skeptic, acknowledged that her life was unusually touched by a spiritual presence.⁴¹

Kuhlman said, “A reporter once said to me, ‘How much time do you spend preparing for a miracle service?’ The question threw me at the time because it was the very first time it had been asked. I said to him, ‘You don’t understand, *I stay prepared*. You don’t prepare for a service [like this], *I’m prepared twenty-four hours out of the day*.”⁴²

³⁷ Chan, Simon. *Spiritual Theology: A Systematic Study of the Christian Life*, (Downer’s Grove. Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1998) p. 135.

³⁸ Hosier, p. 73.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Chan, pp. 128-129.

⁴¹ Buckingham, p. 224.

⁴² Hosier, p. 73.