

Solitude as a Door to Disclosure and Empowerment:  
The Planning of Solitude Periods for Western  
New York Presbyterians

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In Partial Fulfillment

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Doctor of Ministry

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by

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ADVANCED PASTORAL STUDIES

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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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#### ABSTRACT

Title:

"Solitude as a Door to Disclosure and Empowerment: The Planning of Solitude Periods for Western New York Presbyterians."

The purpose of this paper is to discover the meaning of solitude and silence and to observe if such understanding and practice enhances one's understanding of him or herself. It was also a study to see if such understandings and practice empower one to do a higher quality of ministry or detract from it.

The author had little if any understanding of solitude and silence upon commencing the study. His background was preparation for active, busy, competitive ministry. His tradition as a Protestant and Presbyterian was not one in which silence and solitude were taught or experienced as a necessary part of religious belief. Thus doing this study was usually an experience of being in new territory in which the author often felt that his own established belief system and lifestyle were threatened. The topic was chosen and pursued, however, because of the author's increasing concern that he was slowly destroying himself as a busy, harried pastor and family person.

For an advisor, the author sought someone with experience in solitude and silence. This led him to the selection and

approval of a Roman Catholic Sister. She introduced him to some of the classics in Roman Catholic history, such as St. John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, and the unknown author of the Cloud of Unknowing. She also directed him to Fr. Anthony de Mello, a Jesuit Priest from Puna, India. The author also sought understanding from the Quaker community, reading primarily the writings of Douglas Steere and the late Thomas Kelly.

Being given approval and a grant from San Francisco Theological Seminary, he then traveled for nearly two months to India, including a short stop at the Iona Community in Scotland. In India, he visited six different ashrams and prayer centers, observing how silence was used and interviewing several Christian and Hindu teachers.

Upon returning from India in the Spring, 1987, the author then reviewed and sought to synthesize what he had been reading and reflecting upon. He felt increasing confidence in the understanding and practice of solitude and silence in his own life and ministry. The parish of which he is pastor became a literal laboratory for his practice and the revision of theory and practice.

The project of this paper was leading two retreats of twenty persons, with a special aim of securing fellow Presbyterians from the author's own Presbytery. The event included two weekends, separated by four months during which an attempt was made to teach and practice silence.

A result of this paper and project has been to convince the author that silence is an absolute necessity to the understanding and living of the Christian life. In silence, in seeking the cessation of all thought and doing, to just be, one begins to touch the True Self. Here in solitude one slowly begins to experience the combining of thought and action, of cause and effect. Here is where the true peace and bliss of one's creation are experienced. Here one is liberated from the sad and disappointing attachments of life and is able to infuse, often quite unconsciously, peace and joy in the lives and world about him or her.

Thus this paper begins with the definition of silence and solitude. In the second part, suggested techniques are offered as to "how" one may practice and attain this silence. These are not offered as ways to "make God bless" but as ways that may bring one into the experience of the Inner Self. In the third part, a consideration is given to the issue, "Does such understanding and practice actually empower one for ministry?"

The conclusion in the author's mind and experience is an emphatic "Yes."

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## INTRODUCTION

Never has the author undertaken a work that became so exciting, rewarding, and life changing as this dissertation/project. The study has been part of a journey over the past decade, a journey to find a better, more peaceful way to exist as a person and pastor. The journey has given the author a prayer understanding and experience which have become central to his life and work. This paper is a product and summary of much of this journey and experience. It no doubt contains evidence of excesses that were part of the journey and which may still linger. Yet it is felt that many of these excesses have evolved into a more central, quiet path.

The shock of the India pilgrimage in 1987 is still part of his daily life. The experience is woven like a thread throughout this paper. Much of the ground he stood and walked upon was not only totally new in a physical sense, but theologically as well. Ashrams, the "Gita," the Upanishads, the Sutras, Yoga--these were foreign places and names to the author.

Life since India has often seemed like the walk of a new child amid the old, familiar surroundings.

For the continual patience of his parish, the author remains very grateful. They have watched and waited as new ideas and terminology began to emerge. They have been kind and loving during the days and hours he was away "working on his paper."

He thanks Jay Bradway for the gift of a computer; the Palyszeski's for use of their trailer appropriately located in Bliss, New York; his staff for their support as he often used them to bounce around new ideas; his good friend Charles Griffin who introduced him to the Course in Miracles; and the patience of Presbytery as he took kind of a two year "Sabbatical" to complete this paper. He also gives thanks for the friendship and guidance of Sister Joan Wagner, his approved Advisor.

He is most thankful for the patience and support of his wife and family who at times wondered if their home would become an ashram and their husband and father a hermit! They have been the best testing ground of any so-called "enlarged consciousness" and whether it had really anything to do with love, or more to do with ego.

Whether this study, therefore, would ever be judged worthy of acceptance is of smaller consequence in comparison to the exciting journey of the past few years. For in the deepest part of his soul, the author believes he has not only found the strength to write a paper, of a length he never thought possible; he has come to experience his very own self, whom he now sees, as none other than his True Self, the Christ within.

CHAPTER I  
UNDERSTANDINGS

What Is Silence?

"Be still and know that I am God!"<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew word for "be still" is dumah, from the simple root dm. The word "dumb" is derived from it.

Its proper meaning, therefore, is to be dumb, which is applied both to silence and quietness, and also to the stupefaction of one who is lost in wonder and astonishment.<sup>2</sup>

Dumah then reveals the key to understanding what silence is and how one approaches it. It is the understanding that God, or whatever one calls that which represents the picture of Infinity, is far beyond all understanding and comprehension, so far that it is as if one were dumb in comparison. This Infinity is beyond all words to express. Poetry, art, dance, all images, remain but symbols, as nothing in comparison. Silence, therefore, is

<sup>1</sup>Psalm 46:10, RSV.

<sup>2</sup>Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), p. 203.

the simple recognition that that which is known is as nothing in comparison to that which is unknown, the Infinite. Thus it is in this sense that God is thought of as the Unknowable One.

This Unknowable to Christianity and other major religions is what is called "God," "Allah," or the "Braham." In psychology, it is often called the subconscious, the great reservoir or abyss of rich treasure, the potentially powerful, yet never fully known. This same unknown, as the source of all knowing, is best experienced, best "known," by becoming silent, quiet, by listening, by "being still and knowing that I am God."

Psalm 46:10 could thus be paraphrased as: "Be dumb, give up all your reasoning, thinking, making, building, learning," says God, "and know me."

What a contrast to striving, fighting, grasping minds and lives. One here is taught that to experience and know God such is unnecessary and indeed must be laid aside. "Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."<sup>3</sup>

To an American woman, who had gone to India to seek peace and light in 1937, the late Sri Ramana said in commentary on this same verse:

'Be still and know that I am God.' Here stillness is a total surrender without the vestige of individuality. Stillness will prevail and there will be no agitation of mind. . . . there 'knowing' means Being.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Mark 10:15, RSV.

<sup>4</sup>T.K. Vendataraman, Publisher, Talks With Sri Ramana Maharshi

Later in the conversation, the woman asked in confusion as to the role of her past education and schooling: "(But) does not education make a sage more useful to the world than illiteracy?"

To which the teacher replied:

Even a learned man must bow before the illiterate sage. Illiteracy is ignorance: education is learned ignorance. Both of them are ignorant of their true aim, whereas a sage is not ignorant because there is no aim for him.<sup>5</sup>

"What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" the rich man asked Jesus.

"Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me," Jesus answered. And, the story goes, the man went away sorrowful for he had many possessions.<sup>6</sup>

To become silent, to become dumb, to know God, is to understand that all possessions of mental accumulation, of personal defenses, must be laid aside to sit in wonder before the Wonder. The late Anthony de Mello once said:

Think of who God is. Make your greatest picture or image of Him, your most comprehensive definition. Now be honest and

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(Tiruvannamali, India, 1984), pp. 322-323.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 323.

<sup>6</sup>Luke 18:18f, RSV.

humble enough to admit, "But God is really nothing like this, for God is so much more!"<sup>7</sup>

This is becoming silent. This is beginning to know God, in the understanding of the Psalmist, in the coming into silence.

This is what John Calvin may have had in mind when he wrote: "Let this therefore be the first step, that a man depart from himself in order that he may apply the whole force of his ability in the service of the Lord."<sup>8</sup> This "depart from himself" is the becoming still, becoming dumb, recognizing that God is above all efforts of reason or work. Thus could Calvin go on to write:

. . . the Christian philosophy bids reason give way to, submit and subject itself to the Holy Spirit, so that man himself may no longer live but hear Christ living and reigning with him.<sup>9</sup>

Silence, therefore, is first recognizing this magnitude, infinitude of God, and the smallness, finitude of one's own thoughts and words, and works. Silence is this understanding.

In the book A Course in Miracles, it states:

. . . the essential thing is learning that you do not know. Your past (our present knowledge) is what you have taught yourself. . . . your part is very simple. You need only recognize that everything you learned you do not want. Ask to be taught, and do not use your experiences to confirm

<sup>7</sup>Conference with Anthony de Mello, Syracuse, New York, July, 1986.

<sup>8</sup>John T. McNeill, ed., Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), p. 690.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 690.

what you have learned. When your peace is threatened or disturbed in any way, say to yourself, 'I do not know anything, including what this mean.'<sup>10</sup>

This acceptance of the unknowability of God as the basis for silence and therefore the knowledge of God, is the theme of the Thirteenth Century, anonymously written book, The Cloud of Unknowing. Probably written to a young monk, the English writer's theme is the unknowability of God as the prelude to one's communion with Him. Leaving all the usual structures of thought behind, the seeker will find him or herself entering a great cloud of darkness. One's aim is to not think about any creations that are possessed or known:

Do all that lies in you to forget all the creatures that God ever made. . . . . Let them alone and pay not attention to them. . . . for when you first begin to undertake it, all that you find is a darkness, a sort of cloud of unknowing. . . . This darkness is always between you and your God . . . so set yourself to rest in this darkness as long as you can, always crying out after Him whom you love. For if you are to experience Him or see Him at all, insofar as it is possible here, it must always be in this cloud and in this darkness.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Helen Schucman & William Thetford, A Course in Miracles (Tiburon, California: Foundation for Inner Peace, 1975), pp. 275-277, Text.

<sup>11</sup>James Walsh, ed., Simon Tugwell, Preface, The Cloud of Unknowing (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), pp. 120-121.

## Words

The understanding of the unknowability of God can perhaps be understood better by considering words. Words are symbols, pointers. To confuse them with essence is to misunderstand their purpose. "When the wise man points to the moon," an Eastern saying goes, "all the fool sees is the finger."<sup>12</sup> Words are these pointers. A symbol of one culture is different than that from another, but they are all pointers, not the essence. Another Eastern saying goes, "When you say, 'I see a tree,' you no longer see the tree." What is seen is one's image or idea of it.<sup>13</sup> Words help to categorize life, but they can also deeply limit awareness to life if their function is not seen.

When a young child sees a bird for the first time, he or she responds to it with wonder. The child laughs and is overcome with awe. Later, people tell him that it is a "bird;" say "bird!"

Soon the mystery can easily be lost. An illusion of knowing what this fluffy wonder was is relegated to the word, "bird."

In a similar way people do with the names for the Divine. "God" becomes just a word no longer associated with mystery

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<sup>12</sup>Conference with De Mello.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

and awe, but a common word loaded perhaps with years of images and ideas and definitions. But in such thinking, or non-thinking, people may well have lost or become blind to God; "When we say we see God, we no longer see God, but just our own little ideas of God." Silence is the understanding that God is beyond all words and attached ideas.

What about revelation, then; where does one discover the Word of God? Revelation, or the revealing of God to humanity, is based upon the belief that God created the universe, sustains it, and is thus discovered by observing it. "All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made."<sup>14</sup> "When God created the universe, he danced it," De Mello would say.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, as people study the dance, they can learn something of the dancer. Again, "Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made."<sup>16</sup> Yet, since God is always beyond any language of human creation, God is always beyond the limitation of language. It is ". . . his invisible nature," as Paul wrote above. The world then is never as people perceive it; it is much more. Human understanding is finite; God is infinite.

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<sup>14</sup>John 1:3, RSV.

<sup>15</sup>Conference with De Mello.

<sup>16</sup>Romans 1:20, RSV.

It is in this sense that it is said that the world which is perceived is unreal. For, "From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides thee...."<sup>17</sup>

To take what is perceived and accept it as finality is idolatry.

Since God is seen as sovereign over all things, he is looked for in all things. Yet he is always seen beyond the visible with the eye of faith in the invisible, or that which is experienced in faith. Paul wrote the Corinthians in quoting from Isaiah 64; "What no eye has seen nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him."<sup>18</sup>

Organized religions seem to have the tendency of thinking of God as primarily revealed in special ways that no other people can know. Thus they limit God to their visible scriptures and beliefs, to their forms of worship and devotion. Then they grow fearful and attack other forms which do not conform to their small ideas. Yet God is not limited to writings or doctrines.

At best these are the pointers to the invisible God of love; at worst they are used to attack and destroy those who seemingly threaten to destroy doctrinal idols.

The Bible is a marvelous gift to humanity recording words and stories of past sages and seers who sought to live in union with God. Yet the Bible is not all inclusive. The Bhagavadgita

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<sup>17</sup>Isaiah 64:4, RSV.

<sup>18</sup>1 Corinthians 2:9, RSV.

is also a marvelous and unique record of the love of God. The Course is Miracles is also a modern form of writing that can point humanity toward the invisible God of love. But none of these or hundreds of others are all inclusive. Exclusive beliefs are mere idols which lead one to defensiveness and to hate of others who seemingly threaten the destruction of the false god of words.

Silence, therefore, is first recognizing this magnitude, infinitude of God, and the smallness, finitude of one's own thoughts and words, and works. Silence has this understanding as a basis.

## It Is Within

Silence is also the understanding that this God, Spirit, or Eternal Wisdom, is within each person. To come into silence is to come into this realization, this awareness. It is coming into one's truest Self. It is not contingent upon a place of physical silence as much as it is on this understanding. One may spend days in a quiet hermitage, a quiet wooded area of solitude, and yet not know or realize the Self. One could simply return rested, or perhaps insane from the boredom. In the same sense, one could live within a busy, noisy city and experience silence because it is understood as being within.

Solitude is in the mind of man. One might be in the thick of the world and maintain serenity of mind; such a one is in solitude. Another may stay in a forest, but still be unable to control his mind.<sup>19</sup>

To experience silence, therefore, is to live in awareness and communion with this inside, inward Presence. The ashrams of India call it, "entering into the cave of the heart." Bede Griffiths, a Christian Ashram teacher in South India, describes it likewise. He speaks of humanity as being in three spheres: the body, the soul, and the spirit. The body is obvious to the

<sup>19</sup>Vendataraman, p. 15.

physical eye. The soul, the psyche, is the favored part in Western psychological studies in this century. Griffiths refers to the soul as the "ego," the normal understanding or present knowledge of the mind. It is the false "I." But the third, deeper sphere, is that of the spirit. This is the place of God's dwelling, the Inner Cave, the place of the deepest, truest Self, the real "I" of the individual. It is the place of the Real, "real" here being synonymous with the Eternal.

Living with silence, therefore, is living not only in such awareness but in communion with this inner "I," the Presence of God. It means coming to the understanding that one can live and work out of this Center, this communion. It is understanding this "I" as the eternal, true Self, distinct from all mortal, finite manifestations that one normally takes for being the "real me." It was the "I" that was known by God long before this "I" was born into a body, long before the worlds were even created.

"God chose us in him before the world began, to be holy and blameless in his sight, to be full of love."<sup>20</sup> This is one's True Self, the God-within, incarnating this body, this mind.

The Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali, a two thousand year old writing on the principles of Hindu thought, pictures this True Self as the Atman. One comes to this by simply understanding that this is so. The mind and its thought waves are reflections

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<sup>20</sup>Ephesians 1:4, NAB.

of this inner "cave," not the cave itself. Understanding is portrayed with the image of a lake. The water above the bottom is the mind, the normal self or ego. The bottom is the Atman, of the True Self. Existing in silence is simply understanding this as the first step. When one thinks or acts, the waters begin to ripple in the lake. When the thinking and doing slow down, or cease, the "wind" stops and the water becomes still and clear. It is not necessary, or possible for most people to ever stop thinking. Only being deeply asleep, without dreaming, could one approach it. Yet this is not necessary for one to exist in the communion with the inner Cave or Spirit. If making the mind go blank would lead one to bliss or joy, then one could ask a friend (?) to hit him over the head. Complete stillness of thought waves is thus not very possible, but the understanding is. One understands that thought waves are reflections, and that they become part of the ego or the false self. To lose contact with silence, the Atman or the Spirit, is to falsely identify one's Truest Self with the ego. When one does this, one is living by illusion, disconnected with one's inward Center, the Holy Spirit.<sup>21</sup> In their commentary on the Aphorisms, Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood say:

This false identification is the cause of all our misery . .  
 . . The real Self, the Atman, remains forever outside the

<sup>21</sup>Swami Prabhavananda & Christopher Isherwood, Translators and Commentary, How to Know God, The Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali (Hollywood, California: Vedanta Press, 1981), pp. 18-19.

power of thought-waves; it is eternally pure, enlightened and free--the only true, unchanging happiness. It follows, therefore, that man can never know his real Self as long as the thought-waves and the ego-sense are being identified (as the true Self).<sup>22</sup>

Many Western and Christian writers attest to this force, this God within. Catherine de Hueck Doherty's Poustinia is a book about living out of this inner Center which she calls the "inward desert." "Poustinia" is the Russian word for "desert," but this does not necessarily mean physical desert. It is primarily the place within. "Deserts, silence, solitudes are not necessarily places but states of mind and heart."<sup>23</sup> The word "desert" speaks then of both the concept of unknowability and within-ness. Doherty writes that in Eastern Christian spirituality the enlightened one seeks to live out of his or her inner "poustinia." Few ever give their whole lives to living in physical deserts. Some do. They become "hermits" and live in small huts near villages. They are called "Poustinics." They are reminders to others of the living out of one's own inner poustinia.

Richard Foster, a contemporary Quaker, describes solitude and silence as a place of inner fulfillment. However, solitude, not understood as God within, leaves one in emptiness and

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>23</sup>Catherine de Hueck Doherty, Poustinia, Christian Spirituality of the East for Western Man (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Marie Press, 1975), p. 21.

loneliness. Again, silence is this understanding that God is within. "It is not even first of all a place physically," Foster writes, but again, "a state of mind and heart."<sup>24</sup> When one takes this solitude and silence seriously, one will enter a path which ultimately leads to freedom. Thomas Kelly, another Quaker who lived earlier this century in the United States, wrote of the common Quaker term of "light within." A free person lives in and out of this awareness, this light. He also calls this, "living in one's Holy Silence." He writes:

Deep within us all there is an amazing inner sanctuary of the soul, a holy place, a Divine Center, a speaking voice. . . . It is a light within which illumines the face of God.  
 . . .<sup>25</sup>

Douglas Steere, another Twentieth Century Quaker, wrote two books devoted to this understanding: Together in Solitude and On Beginning Within. Both are predicated on the understanding that God, Light, Peace, are within oneself. He speaks of living each day in an "inner dialogue with God." It is what he teaches as the meaning of Hosea 2:14 where God is depicted as longing to woo his people into the desert, not necessarily a physical one, but to the inner one. "Therefore,

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<sup>24</sup>Richard J. Foster, Celebration of Discipline (San Francisco: Harper and Row, Inc., 1978), p. 84.

<sup>25</sup>Thomas R. Kelly, A Testament of Devotion (New York: Harper & Row, Inc., 1941), p. 21.

behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her." As Steere continues:

. . . until I have been lured into the desert, until I have then been brought in solitude to the very ground of my being, where I am beyond the grip of my surface self with all of its plans and distractions, I am not able to hear the divine whisper.<sup>26</sup>

The Course in Miracles speaks of humanity's True Selves as being God's Sons, or God's Children. This was the Self created with conception in the mind of God. For nine months there was existence in the quiet of the womb, asleep in the flesh.

At birth began what is called the illusion of separation, one being thrust out on his or her own, away from the "cave," away from God and love. Therein began the development of the Ego, the false self, given by parents and society. This false self believes that it must fight now to regain the sense of security and oneness of the womb, of the creation. However, the more the Ego seeks to get, the greater the separation deepens. Atonement is the understanding that this separation is false, an illusion. The same God who created people will eternally care for them, inside and outside the body. Atonement is merely the awakening to the abundance given as a birthright. Atonement is then given by Grace at creation. One merely receives it

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<sup>26</sup>Douglas V. Steere, Together in Solitude (New York: Crossroad, 1985), p. 92.

through understanding, the enlightenment of the True Self, or Center. As the Course states:

Peace is an attribute in you. You cannot find it outside. Illness is some form of external searching. Health is inner peace. It enables you to remain unshaken by lack of love from without. . . .<sup>27</sup>

The miracle occurs when one comes to understand and live this understanding. Suddenly one is united, and not only with his or her True Self, but with all brothers and sisters. This atonement is discovered and experienced through understanding and experience in solitude and reflection. "The purpose of Atonement is to restore everything to you; or rather, to restore it to your awareness."<sup>28</sup> Understanding one's True Self, the God within, beyond all perceptions, is therefore a matter of awakening from the sleepwalk of illusions or attachments to other than this Inner Spirit or Self.

Psychiatrist Viktor Frankl, in his book, The Unconscious God, makes the case that deep within each human being is a force which seeks out ultimate meaning. As a Jewish prisoner in Nazi German, he observed fellow prisoners at Auschwitz. He was surprised that contrary to apparent reason, peoples' faith in God was deepened. They were driven, he concluded, deep into

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<sup>27</sup>Schucman & Thetford, p. 15, Text.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 9, Text.

their subconsciousness where they were connected with what religions call "God."

What Frankl observed as a flaw in Freudian psychological theory was that it had become victimized by the mechanical/objectivity obsession of Twentieth Century Western culture.

The result was that the human being lost its sense of a unified whole, connected by this deep spiritual center. Materialism came to permeate psychoanalytical ways of thinking and of therapy. Frankl had already begun this alternative thinking before the War and death camp experiences. He had coined the term "existential analysis" as a response to his observation that people were universally asking, "What is the meaning of living, of life?" He concluded that there was something about life itself, deep within human nature, which forces this question upon humanity. What is it? Frankl concluded, "What comes to consciousness in existential analysis, then, is not drive or instinct, neither id drives nor ego drives, but self."<sup>29</sup> This self is none other than the Inner Light, the Atman, the Spirit or True Self in each person. In fact, Frankl later concluded:

We may therefore fully subscribe to what has been said in the Indian Vedas [Hindu Scriptures]: "That which does the seeing, cannot be seen; that which does the hearing cannot be heard; and that which does this thinking, cannot be thought."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Viktor E. Frankl, The Unconscious God, (New York: Washington Square Press, 1975), p. 24.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

This, he concludes, is what religions call God within. And it is this level which modern psychoanalysis has failed to enter, choosing to stay outside at the "psyche" or soul level. Present psychoanalysis he claims "has id-ified, and de-selv-ified, human existence."<sup>31</sup>

Herein, Anthony de Mello taught, lies psychoanalysis' present limitation in Western practice and development. Being stuck at the "id" or psyche level, its emphasis is upon how humanity can fulfill its needs and wants.

"How can I meet my needs?" is the cry. In "spirituality" or mysticism, with the understanding of the God within, this cry is replaced with the awareness of the Source, the True self within. When this awareness and Voice are accepted and identified with as one's True Self, all needs become seen as already met. Needing, desiring, getting, fade away as untrue illusions. "Something deep down within us is not really interested in success or being loved, but to be free. You have no need to belong to anything." Or, as de Mello later said, "You are happy when you no longer have any desires. At this point, you realize that everything that happens is good and wonderful."<sup>32</sup> Or as the Psalmist wrote; "The Lord is my Shepherd,

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>32</sup>Conference with De Mello.

I shall not want." Peace of mind, true happiness, are therefore simply awakening to this silent God within.

Frankl believed that the goal of psychoanalysis ought to be "...to make conscious the unconscious--including spiritual unconscious--only in order to allow it finally to recede back to unconsciousness."<sup>33</sup> In other words, one can live with an awareness of the Unknowable Light, Voice within. It can be listened to, reflected upon, sought for direction, yet it can never be forced or known or perceived completely since God is infinite.

Now we see only puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we shall see face to face. My knowledge now is partial; then it will be whole, like God's knowledge of me.<sup>34</sup>

Frankl also believed that this inner subconsciousness has a transcendent quality about it. Here the author believes that Frankl departs from the traditional teachings of spirituality.

Whereas Frankl believes that this light or Voice is transcendent of the person, traditional spirituality would state that this Inner Voice is also one's True Self, a creation by and of God.

Quoting Frankl:

I man ask whether this consciousness has not to be something other than myself; might it not be something higher than he who merely perceives its "voice?" In other words, I

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<sup>33</sup>Frankl, p. 38.

<sup>34</sup>I Corinthians 13:12, NEB.

cannot be the servant of my conscience unless I understand conscience as a phenomenon transcendent of man.<sup>35</sup>

From John 17, Jesus is quoted by John as praying for humanity's oneness in Him with the Father. This oneness is in awareness of the Holy Spirit within, incarnating one's body.

I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may be in us. . . .<sup>36</sup>

It is a delusion, according to this understanding, to believe in the body or whatever one sees (or thinks, for that matter) as the True Self. These are temporary vessels given to clothe God-created spirits. The body and tongue are mortal, finite; the Spirit is immortal, infinite.

Thus to the Corinthians Paul could describe how he and his fellow workers were sustained in a time of turbulence:

". . . because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Frankl, p. 38.

<sup>36</sup>John 17:20-21, RSV.

<sup>37</sup>2 Corinthians 4:18, RSV.

## Transcendent Of The Ego

What the Inner Conscience transcends is the normal false images of oneself or the Ego. Ego is used here as the false image of oneself. It is also understood that no one escapes such an image. Literally, to think, to awaken the mind, is to use one's ego. To think is to use words, and words are symbolic expressions of what is inexpressibly within. Ramana once said: "The egoless `I Am' is not a thought. It is a realization. The meaning or significance of `I' is God. The experience of `I Am' is to Be Still."<sup>38</sup> Therefore, even in repeating a phrase in prayer, such as, "I am God's Child," it is understood that the ego is actually saying it. It too is a perception. "Brahman itself does not say so. What need is there to say it. Nor can the real `I' say so. ...to be saying it is only a thought."<sup>39</sup>

Ramana further stated:

"I am Brahman" is an aid to concentration. It keeps off other thoughts. That one thought alone persists. . . . See whose is that thought. It will be found to be from "I." Wherefrom is the "I" thought? Probe into it. The "I" thought will vanish. The Supreme Self will shine forth of itself. No further effort is needed.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Vendataraman, p. 187.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 169.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 170.

Further, if one becomes aware of his or her decision-making powers, he or she will come to the logical conclusion that he or she does not know and cannot make accurate judgments. For what is it that one really knows? Just the picking up of a stone will illustrate. What really is known about the stone? Reason leads to the conclusion that infinitely more is unknown than known. Similarly with decisions to "know" God: infinitely more is unknown than known. De Mello taught that even Thomas Aquinas, after writing thirteen volumes about God, concluded the only thing one knows definitely about God is that one does not know what God is!<sup>41</sup>

With this consciousness, the outward manifestation of a person is also affected. As will be discussed in chapter three, when this "cause" is understood and allowed to emerge, the effects upon the world are love and forgiveness.

This Inner Conscience is what Christianity and other religions call "God's Spirit." Paul pictures this Spirit as beyond words, yet working in one's existence as awareness to it is developed.

Quoting Paul: "For we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Conference with De Mello.

<sup>42</sup>Romans 8:26, RSV.

Therefore, "living in the Spirit" is living in the awareness and remembrance of this ever present, inward Spirit.

This Spirit leads and directs. This Spirit places the person where he or she is at any particular moment. This Spirit helps one to see that all decisions are basically ones of forgiveness and love.

The Ego is seen as that which teaches people to believe in the separation of one's self from this Inner Light.

It teaches that reality is in the things seen, not the unseen. What one experiences and understands, when the Inner Spirit is seen as one's True Self, is the falsehood and unreality of all else. As false, the Ego does not really exist as it is false and unreal. Atonement, again, is coming back to the True Self, the Created Spirit, given by the Creator at birth. It is realized or experienced by understanding and asking to be back "in touch," to be "home" again.

Fr. Bede Griffiths describes contact with this inner Self or Spirit as following intuition. Intuition is listening, hearing, and responding to deep feelings within. This intuition ". . . is at first blind; it is a confused and obscure grasp of reality, in which the seeds of all future knowledge are contained."<sup>43</sup> This intuition does not replace reason but is superior to it. Reason sees that by itself it cannot know.

<sup>43</sup>Bede Griffiths, The Marriage of East and West (Springfield, Illinois: Templegate Publishers, 1982), p. 60.

Reason thus becomes a handmaid to intuition, to one's subconscious voice that is listened to in the quiet and silence.

"We use words to go beyond words and reach the wordless essence," as an old Buddhist saying goes.<sup>44</sup> With reason alone depended upon, humanity easily loses the whole picture. Reason tends to analyze, to take apart, while intuition tends to see as whole.

Without the intuitive, subconscious Voice, Frankl believed that people drift ever deeper into what he calls the "existential frustration" of the West. It is due to the "reductionalism" wherein "man is just a naked ape" or a "complex biochemical mechanism." It also applies to the manic desire of the West for self-interpretation based on analysis alone without seeing the whole.<sup>45</sup>

Fr. Bede thus defines intuition:

[As a] knowledge which derives not from observation and experiment or from concepts and reason but from the mind's reflection on itself. [For] what distinguishes the human mind above everything else is . . . its power of self-reflection.<sup>46</sup>

Thus he sees intuition as "passive intellect."

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>45</sup>Frankl, pp. 91-96.

<sup>46</sup>Griffiths, pp. 153, 155.

What one does in silence, therefore, is to quiet the mind to return to this understanding of God within. One "passively" reflects, listening, asking. One is simply but profoundly returning to Who he or she actually is, an idea from the mind of God. Indeed, the whole creation is from this idea, the mind of God.

The eternal ideas are the forms, concepts, and natures of things, and they are grounded in and activated from logos. Each one of us . . . exists eternally in God in our idea.<sup>47</sup>

Thus in silence one returns to this Center, this idea. This is and must be a basic understanding of silence, that this God resides within. A distinction of Christianity, according to Bede, is that this idea is a communion of love relationships.<sup>48</sup>

William Johnston, in his 1970 book titled The Still Point, concluded that the inner "still point" or intuitive center, is basically the same for both Zen Buddhists and Christians. He sought to connect the strong Japanese child dependence upon the mother to Zen and the Christian dependence upon the God within as the True Self or Mother. "Amaeru" is the Japanese word for this child dependence. Johnston believes it easily relates to

<sup>47</sup> Wayne Teasdale, "Interview with a Spiritual Master (Bede Griffiths): The Trinity," Living Prayer 21 (May-June, 1988):24-31.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

Zen mysticism in which one seeks to become dependent upon "mother nature." It becomes the dependence upon the great "cosmic self."

Johnston writes:

In short, this would indicate that the longing for silence, the hankering for passivity, the love of solitude, the submerging of the self--all this may originate in the desire for dependence, total dependence like that of the child on its mother.<sup>49</sup>

Compare this to the Psalmist's longing:

O Lord, my heart is not proud, nor are my eyes haughty; I do not busy myself with great matters or things too marvelous for me. No; I submit myself, I account myself lowly, as a weaned child clinging to its mother.<sup>50</sup>

In order to comprehend this, one must therefore experience it. Analysis, reason, theory, doctrine, and understanding are but a beginning, not the end. The experience brings peace, love, bliss, or "saccidananda" as is said in India.

Saccidananda is simply to be in one's idea, to be in God. One enters into this in silence. The name of Bede Griffith's ashram is "Saccidananda." It is to be a place of silence, of understanding, where, nurtured by others in the silence, one

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<sup>49</sup>William Johnston, The Still Point (New York: Fordham University Press, 1970), p. 115.

<sup>50</sup>Psalm 131, NEB.

can become more open and receptive to this Inner Self, the inner bliss.

### Reformed Teachings, Evaluation

Throughout the Reform tradition, there has been an emphasis upon God within. True, there has not been emphasis upon going to the literal desert or woods. But as Fred Cunningham notes, detachment from the unreality of seen things has always been important in the understanding of identifying with God. However, it has been more of an "attitudinal" detachment rather than "geographical." Prayer has been seen as appreciating and being with God.<sup>51</sup> Mr. Cunningham believes that Calvin emphasized that people pray with their hearts, their "intuitions," not just with their minds. Fasting was also taught as a way to go deeper within to one's Center, a way to help see beyond one's normal "attachments" and activities of daily living.

Zwingli was more subjective than Calvin in this regard. Christ, to Zwingli, was not in any way specially present in the elements or act of the sacrament. The implication was that Christ is always within God's people, everywhere. No doubt the infrequent observance of the Lord's Supper in most Reformed Churches is a present day witness to the past heritage that God

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<sup>51</sup>Fred B. Cunningham, Annotated Bibliography of the Spirituality of the Reformed Tradition (Battle Creek, Michigan: Emmaus Center, 1982), pp. 2-3.

cannot be confined or thought of as being limited to any one place or idea.<sup>52</sup>

Today, however, one could conclude that for many contemporary Reformed Christians, they are not certain if God is anywhere but in mental pictures and activities. They may have lost the understanding of the Unknowable One within by the multitude of present stimuli leading to the attachment to sense objects.

It was such excessive activity that led many in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries to move out into the literal desert to rediscover the God within. These were known as the "Desert Fathers and Mothers." It was an attempt to break through the Ego, that false self, to reconnect with the True Self, the Center.

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<sup>52</sup>Cunningham, pp. 7-8.

It was in this nothingness that I have to face my solitude, a nothingness so dreadful that everything in me wants to run to my friends, my work, and my distractions so that I can forget my nothingness and make myself believe that I am worth something.<sup>53</sup>

The turmoil of constant noise and busyness can drown out this Center. Often in the history of Christianity, and perhaps in all major religions, there has been a significant return to physical solitude to rediscover and reconnect with the solitude within. The purpose of these early Christian desert pilgrims who gave birth to the Christian monastic movement was to "come to realize that it is not we who live, but Christ who lives in us, that He is our true self...."<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Henri Nouwen, The Way of the Heart (New York: Seabury Press, 1981), p. 27.

<sup>54</sup>Nouwen, p. 30.

### Is It One's True Self?

The question may arise, however, as to whether or not this God-within is a person's True Self. Has not the emphasis in Western Christianity been just the opposite? Have not the Reformed teachings of "total depravity" been interpreted as meaning that people are basically, in their truest selves, sinners, or bad? And have not the Roman Catholic teachings of "original sin" been understood in much the same way? Many observers believe so. Matthew Fox, a Dominican Friar, has caused controversy in present day Roman Catholic circles by his book title and emphasis on "original blessing." This is in contrast to the past centuries' emphasis on "original sin." Indeed, it has led to his own censure as a Roman Catholic teacher.

Many, if not most Westerners, have grown up in the Church or society with emphasis on their being basically bad rather than good. The author was clearly taught this as a child. Such an emphasis is frightening and keeps one from going within. One fears that the silence and listening would merely lead into deeper trouble. So one is taught that God must be outside of the self, in the pages of a book, the Bible, only the church, or "up there" in heaven.

In India, the contrast in emphasis is easily observable. Children, when asked where God resides, will point

to their hearts and chests, signifying within themselves. In Western culture, as the author has observed many times, children will point upward, beyond, when asked the same question. The author recently heard an elderly man state the novelty of thinking that God resides within. A life-long Presbyterian, for seventy-five years, he confessed that hearing the author speak of God within was a "new teaching." Incredible! Not only has there been an emphasis upon innate badness, but also God is not there either. God, the Holy Spirit, only comes infrequently, on condition that people are openly and inwardly pure and truly sorry for their sinful natures. Certainly this emphasis contributes to the lack of silence experienced in many Western churches. Who would want to spend time in quiet with one's demonic nature, if that indeed is one's True Self?

In Fox's book, Original Blessing, he points out that God-within is humanity's basic nature. People are created ideas, energies of God, given bodies as dwellings. Their truest, original state is this blessing, a creation of God. Thus Fox's theology is termed "creation spirituality" in contrast to what he believes has dominated Christianity in the West since Augustine and especially since the Seventeenth Century. He calls this later emphasis a "Fall/Redemption" theology. It begins with humanity's sin in which people were to be conceived and born. Such theology is a theology of dualism, of separation of the human being from his or her true nature. It is a theology

which cuts people off from the surrounding world, from nature, from trust in basic feelings, intuitions and drives. It separates people then from the artist, women, and intuitive gifted people such as Native Americans.

It fails to teach love of the earth or care for the cosmos, and it is so frightened of passion that it fails to listen to the impassioned pleas of the anawim, the little ones, of human history.<sup>55</sup>

Fall/Redemption theology, Fox suggests, has become the dominant teaching of those in power who seek control of the minds of people under their authority. It tends to "confuse the kingdom of God with the church."<sup>56</sup> It cannot trust the Spirit to be equal in each creature because such belief would challenge and topple those in control. Thus in order to control this "innate badness" of humanity, a basic, select body of Scriptures and Creeds had to be taught as ultimate authority by those who then permit only their interpretations. People could not be permitted or encouraged to submit to the light within but to ecclesiastical authority without. Teachings of original sin or total depravity, of fear and guilt with the threat of eternal punishment are then used to keep people in subjection and under control.

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<sup>55</sup>Matthew Fox, Original Blessing, (Santa Fe, New Mexico: Bear & Company, 1983), p. 11.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 101.

In this understanding, it can be seen why Jesus was so vehemently rejected by religious authorities of His day. After allowing centuries of tradition to become idolized into rigid "belief," Jesus appears as a loving, forgiving Light, especially to the fearful and the poor, the anawim. He is put to death on the charge of blasphemy for the claim to be the sinless Son of God.

Authorities in every age tend likewise to seek control of their subjects. To encourage subjects to follow the light within would be seen as extremely threatening to their authority.

A sinless Center, the True Self of humanity, would have to be out of the question. The concept of a great leader, as the Jewish idea of Messiah, tends to be outward; a military, political leader who can establish a politically free nation, being separate and hopefully more powerful than all others. An Inner Self, which unites one with all humanity is impossible, dangerous and outrageous.

Yet was not this the promise of the prophets?

I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts;  
I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer  
will they need to teach their friends and kinsmen how to  
know the Lord.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Jeremiah 31:33b-34, NAB.

And was this not the realization of the apostles at Pentecost when in the dream of the prophet Joel it reads:

I will pour out my Spirit upon all mankind. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. Even upon the servants and the handmaids, in those days, I will pour out my Spirit.<sup>58</sup>

In Jesus the awareness of this Inner Spirit was given anew. He was the one who lived out of his sinless, pure, original Center. The vision and seeds of this Inner Center were always present even in what the church came to call the "Old Testament" writings. However, the concept of "original sin", as taught and understood by present day spokespersons, is foreign even to these Old Testament writings. Fox quotes Jewish Theologian Herbert Haag:

The doctrine of original sin is not found in any of the writings of the Old Testament. It is certainly not in chapters one to three of Genesis. . . . the idea that Adam's descendants are automatically sinners because of the sin of their ancestor, and that they are already sinners when they enter the world, is foreign to Holy Scripture.<sup>59</sup>

Yet the West has constructed such a belief in humanity's innate badness and in God's absence that the idea of God within does seem like a "new teaching." Yet Henri Nouwen writes: "...we

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<sup>58</sup>Joel 3:1-2, NAB.

<sup>59</sup>Fox, p. 47.

come to realize that it is not we who live, but Christ who lives in us, that he is our true self."<sup>60</sup> What is "crucified" is the false self, the "ego," that which has been constructed in the false belief that one is separated from one's true self, the Christ within. When this is crucified one continues to live, but it is

". . . no longer I who live (the false self), but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh (the true self) I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."<sup>61</sup>

Silence is therefore predicated upon this understanding that the basic self is a direct creation of God and that this created Self is good.

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<sup>60</sup>Nouwen, p. 30.

<sup>61</sup>Galatians 5:22-23, RSV.

## It Is a God of Peace and Joy

If one's basic Center is God, the Divine, it also follows that silence is understood as a way to question and check on one's existence level. If one is living out of his/her Truest Center, then he/she is living in love and peace, in guiltlessness.

For "...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...."<sup>62</sup> If on the other hand, one becomes aware that fear, anger, guilt, and sadness are in constant control of the mind and actions, then he or she can understand that the Truest Self has been ignored or forgotten in place of delusion or the false self, the ego. In this sense spirituality has often been called "waking up" to the True Center. Anything else is "sleep-walking" in illusions. As Jesus told his confused disciples: "Open your eyes and see!"<sup>63</sup> Or, wake up to life, love, and joy.

The story is told of the great Buddha, who when asked if he indeed was the "Buddha, the Great Teacher, the Enlightened One," merely replied, "I am none of these. I am awake!"<sup>64</sup>

<sup>62</sup>Galatians 5:22-23. RSV.

<sup>63</sup>John 5:35, NAB.

<sup>64</sup>Kenneth Wapnick, Forgiveness and Jesus (Crompond, New York: Foundation for "A Course in Miracles," 1983), p. 233.

People can exist in such delusions that they think they are comfortable or at least "normal" in miseries, in anger and guilt. A bumper sticker states: "Life is a bitch and then you die!" Such is an honest reflection for "sleep-walkers." Unwilling to see or believe in the basic Oneness of the Spirit of love, people then not only accept life as miserable but project their anger and misery onto others.

Psychologist Kenneth Wapnick points out how misery is projected by either directing it outward onto others or inward onto oneself. Depression, sickness, diseased bodies are often but the result of inner turmoil, unaccepted forgiveness, ignorance of the True Self. People become separated from their Center living lives of estrangement. Atonement is the waking up, the coming back home again, to oneness with the God within, the True Self. Atonement simply means, "at-one-ment."

In one of his most helpful books, Wapnick writes: "Once we feel guilty, it is equally impossible not to feel deserving of punishment for what we have done wrong and to fear the form this punishment will take."<sup>65</sup>

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace. This is one's Self, one's birth right. This Spirit is within, the basic Self, the One with whom one can become one in communion.

Silence is entered with this understanding, with this kind of awareness and listening. "Am I then at peace with my Self?"

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

Am I happy, am I free?" If one can answer "Yes," then one is awake. If not, one is "asleep" in illusions.

Anthony de Mello taught that misery is basically the loss of awareness of the peace within and the attachment to illusionary needs. People think this or that is needed in order to attain peace. They need money, a better job, sex, food, a better house, a longer vacation, a new spouse, a new car, more children, fewer children. The list is endless. Culture sustains itself by whetting appetites for this and that "need." Countries go to war over the illusions of unmet needs. However, with the understanding of God within, a God of love, peace, joy, and abundance, one begins to see the fulfillment of all needs.

But as De Mello pointed out, most exist like programmed robots, trained to spend their time and energy looking outward for peace and happiness. Jesus said; "What will a man gain by winning the whole world, at the cost of his true self?"<sup>66</sup>

Often pets are trained to respond to commands and programming. Once trained well enough some of these are featured in circus acts. People applaud because of how well the animals are controlled by signals and orders. It is ironic that these same people fail to see how much they are like these animals.

They are bombarded with commands from radio, television, advertisements. They are told what to consume; what clothes to wear, what food to eat, what car to drive, what places to

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<sup>66</sup>Matthew 16:26, NAB.

visit, what beliefs they must hold. As animals respond unthinkingly to their programming so do people become robots, slaves to their egos, their false selves.

Once a religious teacher was sharing this point with listeners when a man became very irritated at such an insinuation.

He jumped to his feet and exclaimed, "I am not a robot. I make all my decisions by myself. You are wrong!"

The teacher replied, "O sit down and be quiet, you dumb bastard!"

The man was shocked and said, "You call yourself a man of peace and God and yet use such profane, angry language?"

"Oh," the teacher replied, "I am so sorry. I must have lost control. Please forgive me."

The man accepted the apology and admitted that he likewise became at times quite emotional and angry. Whereupon the teacher replied, "Now you see what I mean. I make two different kinds of statements and you respond like a robot!"<sup>67</sup>

Silence is the understanding that all needs are met, given by the Source of love within. There is nothing to get or strive for; all is merely received and accepted.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God; not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship.  
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<sup>67</sup>Conference with De Mello.

<sup>68</sup>Ephesians 2:8-10a, NIT.

How often this is emphasized in Scriptures. "My God shall supply your needs fully, in a way worthy of his magnificent riches in Christ Jesus."<sup>69</sup> No striving, working, bargaining, buying, can attain such abundance. Peace and joy are simply the understanding that God is within and awakening to the multitude of gifts bestowed each moment. And the essence of these gifts is love, peace, and joy.

Great writers on spirituality have usually highlighted the communion of peace within. Mechtild of Magdeburg, a Thirteenth Century German mystic, discovered anew by recent theologians, offers poetic descriptions of this delightful, wonderful God within: "I God, am your playmate! I will lead the child in you in wonderful ways for I have chosen you. Beloved child, come swiftly to me, for I am truly in you!"<sup>70</sup> Or, "Do not disdain your body. For the soul is just as safe in its body as in the kingdom of Heaven."<sup>71</sup>

God, a playmate within bodies! How beautiful, how near, and how easily forgotten. Such freedom and joys are experienced when simply understood that all such qualities are incarnated into one's body. Such understanding transforms how one views

<sup>69</sup>Philippians 4:10, NAB.

<sup>70</sup>Sue Woodruff, Translator, Meditations With Mechtild of Magdeburg (Santa Fe, New Mexico: Bear & Company, 1982), p. 47.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

the self, the body. One can truly enjoy and love oneself. "We" is all that is needed, the communion of the self with the Spirit within in Oneness.

### Humanity's Basic Nature, Then, Is Good

Of course such joy and peace were always there. They have always been one's True Nature. Happiness has just been forgotten by the crowding in of illusionary needs and worries and by guilt that one has falsely accepted in the place of forgiveness. Goodness and love have always been there, that "Forgotten Song," as the Course in Miracles describes:

Listen, perhaps you catch a hint of an ancient state not quite forgotten; dim, perhaps, and yet not altogether unfamiliar, like a song whose name is long forgotten, and the circumstances in which you heard completely unremembered. Not the whole song has stayed with you, but just a little wisp of melody. . . . But you remember, from just this little part, how lovely was the song, how wonderful the setting where you heard it, and how you loved those who were there and listened with you.<sup>72</sup>

One simply comes back home to become born again in the truest sense.

Naturally if one thinks of oneself as basically bad or sinful, one fears listening or following this Spirit within. Instead of love and freedom, guilt and fear are the constant companions. This is the false thinking that God is not truly within, and second, that if God is, S/He must be inept and weak.

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<sup>72</sup>Schucman & Thetford, p. 416, Text.

As such, one comes to believe in the reality or the power of misery and despair.

If God is all-powerful, God must be eternal, everlasting, and real. If pain and misery are not eternal, then they can be seen as unreal and illusionary. This is one of the most difficult lessons to understand, one of the chief reasons that silence is feared rather than embraced. By equating sin, sadness and pain with love and peace people make them as powerful as love and God. People make them eternal and real. Yet by simple use of reason people can understand that this is not so. Misery begins with an inability to see oneself as forgiven, guiltless, loved by God. Worry and fear, it is concluded, must be a basic part of existence, essence. It is a way that the ego, or Satan, deludes people into thinking that joy cannot be known. Misery is given a power that is unreal. "I cannot then be at peace, I cannot be happy because I am in need, of forgiveness, of union with God." Or as the ego teaches, "I cannot be at peace and have peace because I have further needs to be first met. I must attain full knowledge, or more knowledge, or more food, etc."

Such needs are again delusions when it is understood and experienced that a God of limitless abundance and strength lives within.

So one views pain and suffering as results of attachments to the physical/material world. Suffering is associated with perception and thinking modes, the thinking that a person, in

one's basic, truest self, can experience loss. Humanity is born with this misunderstanding since the body itself is such a sensate organism. A child wants what it sees or finds satisfying to the senses. The child grows into adulthood seeking ways to acquire more of that which merely "corrupts and thieves break in and steal."<sup>73</sup> They become seduced into thinking that "things do satisfy." The world creates armies and stockpiles of armaments, even to the point of threatening annihilation of the planet, in an insane but ignorant attempt to get and keep satisfaction and freedom.

But can one ever exist beyond the problem of suffering and evil? Not in this present bodily existence. Every waking hour is a test to stay awake and detached from the sensate. Every moment is a test to remain in communion with the Silence, with the Inexpressible. When Ramana was asked where one is to begin for such realization, he replied: ". . . with dissatisfaction."<sup>74</sup> Another time he said: "Suffering is the way for Realization of God."<sup>75</sup> In other words, the pain and suffering become reminders that one has been caught again in attachments to the body, including the mind and the emotions. Pain and suffering are mistaken perceptions.

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<sup>73</sup>Matthew 6:19f.

<sup>74</sup>Vendataraman, p. 165.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 106.

This can be illustrated by the relativity of suffering among humanity. What is pain to one is peace to another. In India the author saw thousands of examples which to an average Westerner like himself, would have been suffering in the extreme.

Millions exist there, as in many other poor countries, without central heating, plumbing, or electricity. Millions never hope to have an automobile. Millions never hope to own a bicycle.

Millions will never see a mega-mall, a Mcdonald's restaurant, or a computer. Yet as Fr. Basil Pennington recommended to the author before departing for India, "Notice what the Indian people have and not what they do not."<sup>76</sup>

This does not negate the sharing of one's goods with others but increases it as will be shown in chapter three. When the abundance is recognized that one already has, the extra material possessions become experienced as needless weights and as objects over which to become anxious.

In most of the author's teachings heretofore, suffering and pain have been understood as real. As such he was made to feel guilt and shame. The sufferings of Jesus were to be seen as sufferings shared with all the oppressed of the world. Sufferings of people were then to be seen as the extensions of God's sufferings. The author understood that his task was to enter into these sufferings as a way to identify and thus redeem

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<sup>76</sup>Interview with Basil Pennington, October, 1986, St. Joseph's Abbey, Massachusetts.

the oppressed. Such an understanding is now understood as only strengthening the sufferings of people and not alleviating them.

This does not mean that one is exempt from suffering or attachment to the body. It does mean that one can begin to see them differently, as "unreal," and thereby disarm their power.

Thus Paul was not insensitive to his or others' suffering when he wrote: ". . . [the] sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us."<sup>77</sup>

It is how "believers" do not "grieve as others which have no hope."<sup>78</sup> In the later reading, Paul was writing to those who had lost loved ones. The death of a close loved one is always a very difficult test for one's attachment to the body. It takes time to move beyond the sense of loss, but it can and is done.

Thus the peaceful person recognizes pain, tragedy, and even physical death of the body as not real in the above sense.

Pain is not real in the sense that it is the same as the eternal Self.

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<sup>77</sup>Romans 8:28 RSV.

<sup>78</sup>1 Thessalonians 4:13, RSV.

## Meaning of the Crucifixion

Suffering, pain, and death as unreal perceptions leads one to consider again the suffering and death of Jesus. It is the view here that Jesus demonstrated by his death that nothing can ever harm or destroy the True You. The body can be destroyed but the Spirit cannot. This is what Easter and Resurrection are teaching. As the bodies of loved ones are laid into graves of earth, returning earth to earth, Christians affirm that the true person is not there but safe in the forgiving love of the Creator.

Thus one can look at all tragedies and quietly affirm, "But this is not real. Property and bodies have perished but not the eternal Spirit." Murder is not real in the sense that the True Self was destroyed. A fatal crash is not real in the sense that people were killed. Only bodies were laid aside. As the Course teaches:

Assault can ultimately be made only on the body. There is little doubt that one body can assault another, and can even destroy it. Yet if destruction itself is impossible, anything that is destructible cannot be real. . . . The message the crucifixion was intended to teach was that it is not necessary to perceive any form of assault in persecution, because you cannot be persecuted.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup>Ibid., p. 85, Text.

To falsely identify oneself with any form of unreality, therefore, is to identify with pain, loss, and misery, all of which are mere illusions when one awakens to the Spirit of joy and forgiveness within. One sees that forgiveness was present all the time; one seeks now to accept it in place of the false attachments that led to misery. Guilt and fear are energies used to worry about what is not there.

How then does one understand evil or sin? Evil is that which destroys vision and along with it, a sense of wellness, peace, and union with God and humanity. Matter is a neutral entity as a form of stored energy. The brain is a part of this matter called a human body. When the body dissolves from its present form, the Spirit or immortal part, defined as the True Self, continues. Evil is blindness that causes one to forget this distinction and to see matter and the body as the only true reality. The real is mistakenly thought of as that which is known through the "scientific method." Evil is then basically ignorance or asleepness. It is responding to nightmares of loss as if they were real. Evil or sin is then a false association or understanding.

Although the author sees this perception as taught in canonical Scripture, one could miss it especially with the canonization process of the Fourth Century. Seeing bureaucratic power threatened, the Fathers, who succeeded in defining

orthodoxy, insisted that the material world be defined as basically real. There must be a bodily death and bodily resurrection. Thus became the major purpose for the formation of the Apostles and Nicene Creeds and the deletion of several "gnostic" letters which taught otherwise. With discovery of the Nag Hammadi letters in this century, the issue of gnostic heresy is being reopened. Gnosis, as taught until recently, has been greatly misunderstood as pointed out by such writers as Elaine Pagels, Kurt Rudolf, and Louis Bouyer. Gnostic teaching over the past one hundred years "...is nothing but a collection of errors and confusions."<sup>80</sup>

Thus writings such as A Course in Miracles are not to be simply discarded as gnostic or "modern day triumphalism," but as part of an ancient way of viewing reality. Jesus did not really die on the cross, then; his body did. Gnostic teachings did not teach as vital the bodily resurrection of Jesus. His Resurrection was accomplished by a series of manifestations and appearances following his body's crucifixion.

Most of the Christian Church since the Fourth Century has used the crucifixion in just the opposite manner; to increase fear and guilt. This is from the false premise that one's basic nature is bad and that one's identity is eternally related to one's mortal body. Such thinking uses the crucifixion to shame

<sup>80</sup>Louis Bouyer, A History of Spirituality: The Spirituality of the New Testament And the Fathers (New York: Seabury Press, 1982), p. 211.

minds rather than to free them. Kenneth Wapnick tells of a crucifix he once saw which had these words attached: "This is what I have done for you; what have you done for me?"<sup>81</sup> The very object meant to liberate from fears and guilt can be used to increase them. Such fear and guilt can be only perpetuated by minds which have not received forgiveness for themselves. Such misunderstanding can perpetuate the misuse of religion in the name of God.

In Acts 15 a similar example of misuse is recorded. Certain Jews from Jerusalem had gone up to Antioch teaching that unless believers were circumcised, as the "scriptures taught," they could never be saved. Paul was furious and returned to Jerusalem where a council was convened to settle the issue. They ruled that circumcision was not necessary. Such an example, no doubt, has been repeated untold times by religious teachers.

The message of guiltlessness thus becomes distorted to teach guilt and fear.

Nothing then can harm or destroy the Real Self. This is the essence of who one is, the Real Self. The world will dissolve, but the God-in-me lives forever. Herein lies humanity's great liberation as well as its deepest joy. To experience silence, one must understand that this is so.

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<sup>81</sup>Wapnick, p. 228.

## It is Within All People

Not only does one understand that God is within, one also understands that to enter Silence this Presence is within all people. It is the deepest, truest connecting link. It is a contradiction to think of the God of Creation as only a private matter in and for a few people alone. To be awakened in silence is to be awakened to all creation. It is to understand that one is connected with all that truly is, with God.

For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.<sup>82</sup>

Mystical writers have expressed this oneness for centuries.

In the Thirteenth Century, Mechtild of Magdeburg wrote:

Woman! Your soul has slept from childhood on. Now, it is awakened by the light of true love. In this light the soul looks around here to discover who it is who is showing Himself to her here. Now she sees clearly, she recognizes for the first time how God is all in all.<sup>83</sup>

Or, an example from the ancient Gita:

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<sup>82</sup>Colossians 1:15-17, NIV.

<sup>83</sup>Woodruff, p. 82.

When a clod of earth, stone, and gold become alike, serenity is achieved. He sees the Atman in all beings, and all beings in the Atman, for his heart is firm in Yoga (oneness). Who sees me in all things, and all things in me, he is never far from me, and I am never far from him.<sup>84</sup>

The unknown author of the Cloud of Unknowing wrote: "He considers all men his friends and none his foes."<sup>85</sup> And Jesus himself is recorded by John as saying:

I pray . . . for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. . . . I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me.<sup>86</sup>

The Course in Miracles continuously stresses that in the True Self, one is in unity with all.

Nothing that ever was created but is yours. Your relationships are with the universe. And this universe, being of God, is far beyond the petty sum of all the separate bodies you perceive.<sup>87</sup>

Atonement is returning through understanding to unity with one's Self and with the world and universe. Sin is not only a

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<sup>84</sup>P. Lal, Transcreator, The Bhagavadgita (Delhi, India: oriental Paperbacks, 1971), pp. 49, 51.

<sup>85</sup>Walsh, p. 170.

<sup>86</sup>John 17:20-23, NIV.

<sup>87</sup>Schucman & Thetford, p. 299, Text.

separation from the Self but from creation. With enlightenment comes unity. "If I have no private thoughts, I cannot see a private world. . . . I can also call upon my real thoughts, which share everything with everyone."<sup>88</sup>

Thus in deepest silence and prayer one unites the world to him or herself. One is re-awakened to the world; to its pain, but most importantly, to the unity of love within it. Rather than fleeing the world, one finds it. This is the perspective of all genuine practice of silence or prayer. The Desert Fathers and Mothers fled the world of separation and attachment to regain the world of love, peace, and oneness. They fled illusions of individual privateness to rediscover oneness and love. In silence, one stands alone yet abundant in everything that is true and real.

As Matthew Fox and John Biersdorf point out, this is a step away from the privateness and separation dominant in scientific thinking from past centuries. They point out the identification with Newtonian thinking of separateness of things and bodies. This separateness only deepened with the development of the Protestant Reformation period. Much then of the present era is being defined by one's differentness from others. Mysticism, silence, and oneness had nearly been pushed into oblivion in Western Christianity. Grueling, bloody wars

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<sup>88</sup>Ibid., p. 87, Workbook.

have been fought, and are presently, to maintain the separateness from others.

Currently a new understanding is emerging in Western scientific studies. No longer is physical reality being thought of so much as being--

. . . fundamental building blocks of matter, but of fields of energy which comprise the universe. Subatomic physics, in its search for fundamental building blocks or particles, has found them to disappear and change into mutating patterns of energy best understood through field theory. Matter becomes, then, a temporary condensation or density of a field of energy.<sup>89</sup>

The older classical physics of determinism and separation is being "replaced by the uncertainty principle," rediscovered in 1926 by German scientist Werner Heisenberg.<sup>90</sup> Thus, as Biersdorf points out, "Modern physics ... holds that the universe is an interdependent whole in which everything is connected with everything else."<sup>91</sup>

Such conclusions have come from scientific studies of subatomic particles, specifically that characteristic called "the spin." These particles make up the whole universe. Scientists have discovered that each particle's spin is around

<sup>89</sup>John E. Biersdorf, Healing of Purpose (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), p. 87.

<sup>90</sup>Stephen W. Hawking, A Brief History of Time (New York: Bantam Books, 1988), p. 54.

<sup>91</sup>Biersdorf, p. 88.

an axis which can be divided into a plus and minus factor. These forces are extremely versatile, so much so that upon each successive measurement, their pattern changes. It has been concluded, from observation, that these subatomic particles of energy are related to all other particles in the universe and that a change in one's pattern will have an effect on the pattern in adjacent or distant particles. They tend to communicate with each other faster than the speed of light, yet still "continue in some fashion to be one, even though they are in two locations."<sup>92</sup> And ". . .evidently, once systems have interacted, they continue to be linked by a mysterious quantum connection."

Quoting physicist John Bell, Biersdorf writes: "Once connected, always connected, despite their apparent separation, the very beings of the two systems never part."<sup>93</sup> Biersdorf goes on to say, "The connection is instantaneous, unmediated, and does not diminish with distance,--it is as strong at a million miles as at an inch." And so, as Bell concludes, "Reality is non-local. The difference between here and there is, on some level, unreal."<sup>94</sup>

Prompted by such findings, a neuroscientist from Stanford University, Karl Pribram, along with his colleague, Karl Lashhay, began doing experiments with trained animals to observe the

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<sup>92</sup>Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., p. 91.

brain. Training the animals to perform certain maneuvers, they would then remove parts of their brains. What they discovered was that no one part of the brain exclusively held the memory. A small part of each brain remembered the whole, and vice versa. Such an ability led Pribram to think of the brain as a "hologram."

A hologram is a technique in photography in which a three-dimensional picture is produced by a lenseless camera. The first such use in commercial photography was in the Star Wars film in which an image of Princess Leia was shown as a hologram. In a hologram, ". . . the image is seen as suspended in space and can be viewed from any angle just as the object it represents."<sup>95</sup> Again quoting Biersdorf:

A fascinating characteristic of the hologram is that any part of it will reconstruct the entire image. If the piece broken off is very small, the image will lose detail, but the whole image will be there. Discovering this characteristic, Pribram considered the possibility that "the distributed memory store of the brain might resemble this holographic record."<sup>96</sup>

Later Pribram came to understand the world as a hologram, and later, collaborating with his physicist son and using the work of David Bohn, a physicist at the University of London, they came to see the universe as a hologram, a "holoverse." Interestingly, David Bohn was a student at the time of the

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<sup>95</sup>Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., pp. 93-94.

writings of Krishnamurti, an Indian guru who wrote for the Western student describing ancient Vedic principles.<sup>97</sup>

All of which is to say that even scientific studies are collaborating with what the religious mystic has described from experience for centuries, that the force of God within is a part of everything and everybody. As Biersdorf points out, the descriptions of ultimate reality experienced by St. John of the Cross, Meister Eckhart, and the author of the Cloud of Unknowing are close to the scientific definition of the holographic order of the universe.<sup>98</sup>

Matthew Fox describes this understanding with the word "panentheism."

Pantheism states that "everything is God and God is everything." Panentheism . . . thus means, "God is in everything and everything is in God." Panentheism is a way of seeing the world sacramentally.<sup>99</sup>

God, the Force, the energy of subatomic particles, is in everything, including oneself. Thus all people are connected with all others at all times. When one rejoices, all do; when one cries, all do. The Course in Miracles not only recognizes

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<sup>97</sup>Ibid., p. 95

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>99</sup>Fox, p. 90.

this but teaches the inherent power and potential in such an understanding:

I am alone in nothing. Everything I think or say or do teaches all the universe. A Son of God cannot think or speak or act in vain. He cannot be alone in anything. It is therefore in my power to change every mind along with mine, for mine is the power of God.<sup>100</sup>

Silence is therefore the coming into one's self with this understanding. It is a contemplation of the holoverse, listening for the inner Voice which is always a voice of love, peace, and forgiveness. What is within is within all. Such understanding is part of the celebration of the sacrament of Holy Communion. One partakes of what is a part of everybody; one loaf, one bread, one body, joined together in faith and understanding.

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<sup>100</sup>Schucman & Thetford, pp. 87-88, Workbook.

## It is Now

Silence is also the understanding that this God or Reality is now, in the present moment in which one exists. It is the understanding that any other moment is but a memory or fantasy.

It is the realization that everything one did yesterday, last week, in past years, is but memory. It is gone. The only real world is that which exists now. Tomorrows are but dreams and hopes. What will happen tomorrow is not real for this present moment.

Silence is seen then as the coming into the present. This is the coming into one's real Self. Silence, or the practice of it, can be as simple and deep as the observation of where one is in the present. "Am I really here, in the now?"

De Mello told the story of a family who wished to travel to the Swiss Alps. They planned the trip for weeks buying cameras, film, and maps. Their thinking was future oriented and they were hardly able to wait until departure time. And then they left. For the week that they were there, all they did was race to and fro taking pictures, planning how they would describe Switzerland to friends back home. And so they returned to America, anxious to tell their stories but in a deep sense, never really having been there!<sup>101</sup>

<sup>101</sup>Conference with De Mello.

Without this understanding of experiencing God in the now, one could live a lifetime, yet really never have lived. "Tomorrow I will find happiness; tomorrow my ship will come in.

When I finish college, I will find happiness. When married, when children come, when they go. . . when I leave this church, this area . . . when I finish my doctorate, I will then be happy!"

And thus the bliss of the Present could be missed. Becoming dumb, becoming still, is to come into the present Self, laying aside all worries and fears as silly illusions about the past or future. "Now is the day of salvation. Now the Kingdom of God is among you."<sup>102</sup>

A bad experience or a tragedy, can be a crucial test to living in the present. De Mello was asked how a person who had been raped was to ever be able to let go of such an experience and to live in the present with peace. He replied that with gentleness and patience, one can slowly become loosened from such chains by understanding that it is past and as such it is not longer real. To hold onto such pain merely gives it a power that is not there. He then taught this simple formula or exercise for meditation to help one return to the freedom of living in the present.

The moment one is unhappy, worried, anxious, or fearful, become aware of it. The more "asleep" one is in past illusions, the more upset he or she will be. This is the first step;

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<sup>102</sup>Matthew 4:17, RSV.

observation, awareness of the sadness, worry, or guilt. The second step is to understand that such painful feelings and memories are not in the present, but only exist in one's mind through one's past programming. As such they are not the True Person, but only the "should's and should not's" which exist in minds. Simply understand this. One need not feel it. The third step is to not identify with the feeling or memory. Observe it as if one were a third person looking on. See that part of the self as angry, sad, depressed, or burned by past thoughts and actions. But do not allow the Self to be identified with it. It is not the True Self. The last step then is to do nothing.

Only observe; be aware; fix nothing. This step, de Mello pointed out, is most difficult for the Western mind because of its obsession with fixing things. But to "fix it" is to give it a power that is unreal and which is not there. Peace and fear cannot co-exist; peace, the Power within, is all or nothing.

It is Now; simply understand this and the illusionary power of the past will begin to dissipate.<sup>103</sup>

Silence is this understanding. It is the questioning, the search for: "Where am I? Am I here, in the present?" To talk is to upset or destroy the pure present because talk and words are but symbols from the past. Again, paraphrasing Psalm 46:10; "Become still, dumb, and know the Unknowable, God."

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<sup>103</sup>Conference with De Mello.

Another way to see this is to realize the relativity of time itself. Science can remind people that time is an artificial or temporary manner of existing in transitory bodies.

Reason prohibits the understanding of time as real. Measured time for earthlings is but the revolutions of the earth at some twenty-five thousand miles per hour around its center axis, as it moves in its orbit around the sun. The earth is one of a billion such systems in the universe, perhaps the only one with its particular definition of time. To even speed up oneself in space affects the concept of time. One could theoretically speed fast enough from one end of the universe to the other that one would never grow old!

It was in this context that Tilden Edwards wrote of the importance of breaking out of the normal, worldly identification with time and space. This, he points out, was part of the purpose of "sabbath time." Sabbath time has been the age old reminder of that which scientists are saying anew today. It is the reminder that God is not bound by our "measured laws" of time.

As Einstein is quoted by Edwards, "The only real time is that of the observer who carries it with him," and even that, as it has been shown, is not "real time." Real time is relative, uncertain, unknowable. Herein is God experienced anew in freshness and liberation.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>104</sup>Tilden Edwards, Sabbath Time (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Seabury Press, 1932), p. 29.

Although Edwards does not trace the problem more directly to "Newtonian Physics" as does Biersdorf, Edwards does acknowledge that the Reformation leaders, Luther and Calvin, led in abandoning "contemplative time" in favor of "analytically active" time.<sup>105</sup> Biersdorf sees the loss of prayer in the mystical, timeless tradition as part of the effect that the Enlightenment period had upon religious thinkers. Wholeness or timelessness was dropped in favor of analytical, "building block" kind of thinking. A renewal in "sabbath time" thinking or ordinary time as relative and unreal, is being renewed in the West partly due to the emergence of new scientific thinking in this century.<sup>106</sup> Sabbath rest therefore becomes, according to Edwards, a kind of revolutionary act which defies the normal boundedness of the workaday world. It is a time to catch one's breath and to break from the constant identification with clocks and watches in the normal mode. Karl Barth himself wrote that a Sabbath Rest ought to constitute a "living without a program! Let things take their course with particular freedom."<sup>107</sup>

This is why dancing, according to Edwards, and the experience of this author, can be helpful in re-entering timelessness. Dance, especially that which is slow, calm, and even, can reunite "reality in God rather than rending it violently

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>106</sup>Biersdorf, pp. 86-87.

<sup>107</sup>Edwards, p. 48.

through ego-asserting movement."<sup>108</sup> Such an activity leads one back to the Now. It leads one to enjoy rather than to use, to rest rather than to act, or to savor, in Fox's words, rather than to consume.<sup>109</sup>

James Heisig, a Roman Catholic priest who has worked in Japan for many years, wrote a helpful article entitled, "The Art of Wasting Time: Thoughts on the Exploration of Leisure."

In it he points out how the obsession with the unreality of time has worked to destroy many attempts to break from it and to experience leisure. Time must be transformed into a money-making commodity, and to do nothing with it is seen as a terrible waste. "Time is money; money is time." So, Heisig concludes, for Western culture:

Leisure has become a luxury item, with less to be found among workers today than there was among the slaves of ancient Greece. . . . We are so firmly locked into the modern myth of time that the thought of unlocking oneself, even for the purposes of relaxation, has become the moral equivalent of undressing in public.<sup>110</sup>

Such has the unreality of time captured and held people in bondage. To return to sanity and peace, then, is to simply become aware of where one is; here or there? To inter silence,

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<sup>108</sup>Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>109</sup>Fox, p. 52.

<sup>110</sup>James W. Heisig, "The Art of Wasting Time: Thoughts on the Exploration of Leisure," Religious Review 41 (1982): 4

unaware of attachments to such illusions of time, can be quite painful. Unfamiliar with being just "here," the searcher can become overwhelmed and ill. This was part of the author's experience on a ten day retreat attempted in the summer of 1987.

Staying still for such a period, alone in the woods, became so difficult that he became ill and had to leave.

Heisig believes that: "the proper use of leisure . . . demands the capacity to turn solitariness into solitude, not to dread it as mere isolation from the things that have value."<sup>111</sup> The dread of such solitude begins to turn to sheer joy and peace when one understands the concept of time as illusionary and can begin to relax into the present moment. Direct physical solitude or a more authentic Sabbath rest can begin to lead one back, so that such an understanding is carried in some measure through every moment, every holy instant of living. Until this is understood, the "art of wasting time" is lost. "Time off" can be used as just a different setting for the same frantic pace of escape from one's True Self and Center.

The story is told in the East of a person going to a famous spiritual master seeking enlightenment. When the master was asked what it meant to live in enlightenment, he simply said,

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<sup>111</sup>Ibid., p. 6

"Well, when I eat, I eat. When I chop wood, I chop wood. When I walk, I walk." He had learned to live in the present.<sup>112</sup>

Living in the present moment is therefore the experience of having hope realized now. It is not living, hoping that someday the ship will come in; it is seen as in. God is within, God is forgiving and loving, connecting one with all creation, and this God is right now, within. One must merely understand this and keep awakened to it and not fall asleep into deeper illusions and thus more misery.

A Course in Miracles stresses over and over the importance of living in the Now, the "Holy Instant." All sadness, fear, and anger result from being out of the present with one's thinking. The ego takes this tendency and destroys peace and happiness. "The ego has a strange notion of time, and it is with this notion that your questioning might well begin. . . . 'Now' has no meaning to the ego."<sup>113</sup> The purpose of time is to simply liberate one from it and from its devastating tendency to destroy freedom if mistaken for reality. It is understood, therefore, that striving and concentration are to be for the present moment, which is the "Holy Instant." When this is begun to be seen and experienced, one can see brothers and sisters differently too. They can be seen without their past, and thus released from one's own prejudging mind. Forgiveness is letting

<sup>112</sup>Conference with De Mello.

<sup>113</sup>Schucman & Thetford, p. 229, Text.

go of the past and forgetting it. To hang on is to hold not only oneself in bondage, but one's friends as well. Time is used to work, to progress from the past into the present, aiming toward the time when "time will be no more."

Of course living perfectly in the present is as difficult as stopping all thoughts from crossing the mind. It is therefore the understanding that is crucial so that when anger and anxiety arise, one can be aware that he or she has slipped away. Anxiety is symbolic of one's lack of self-forgiveness as one clings to past events and "scripts." So in silence and understanding, one can seek to gently let anxiety go and to be healed.

It is also in this sense that sin is understood as unreal and the power it holds over one to be delusionary. Although all have sinned by not living in the present and clinging to the past, this chain can be broken by returning to the True Self.

Is this not then what forgiveness means? "Now that we have been put right with God through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>114</sup> Being put right, or "justified," is having sins forgiven, and forgiveness is forgetting sins against another. This occurs through repentance and the change in one's thinking, the Greek word for repentance being, metanoia. One chooses, accepts forgiveness and lets the past go with its inability to allow the future to emerge with

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<sup>114</sup>Romans 5:1, TEV.

hope. Understanding this is all that is needed, indeed all that is possible. It is by faith alone it is experienced.

Ironically, the same vocabulary can be utilized yet this understanding of forgiveness be missed. The message can be filled with guilt and accusation as a way to manipulate people according to one's own bondage to the past. Ego, with its attachment to the body and sense object uses religion to grasp and believe in a god of scarcity. So God is portrayed as a punishing, threatening God in order to motivate people to love.

What a vast contradiction. A god who punishes and threatens in order to love is a god who can never be fully loved or trusted.

He is seen as one who sacrifices for an ungrateful, spoiled world. Such concepts always leave people feeling guilty and attached even more to their past, for who can ever match such "sacrifice?" Guilt is then seen as attachment to the past and as such is attachment to fantasy. When one is freed by enlightenment in seeing the past for what it is, one can experience peace and freedom.

Jesus Christ is seen as the One who lived totally in the present, eternal Now. "Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand."<sup>115</sup> Religious leadership, threatened by such freedom, destroyed Him rather than let go of the past traditions of their fathers. The purpose of tradition is that one is able to live in the present moment. The stories of ancestors' past liberation

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<sup>115</sup>Matthew 4:17, RSV.

are remembered so that liberation can be lived in the now.

Kenneth Wapnick points out that the:

. . . pre-Freudian world of Biblical times could not have understood this dynamic of projection. Thus, it could never have seen that something that appeared to be outside--an "evil force"--was really nothing but thoughts of guilt and fear.<sup>116</sup>

One can see then how guilt and fear could be projected onto the devil outside or onto God. The idea of the avenging, wrathful God, so prevalent in the Old Testament, is understood as unresolved guilt and fear both of the writer and the people.

The idea of an unforgiving God is understood as coming from minds that have not yet accepted total forgiveness. The perception of people as evil and demonic is the result of the unforgiveness and non-love of one's own Inner Self. The world looks odd and "funny" to a mind which sees itself as such. The Bible has many examples of such thinking, as does the world today, including religious writings. To be a "blind leader leading the blind," as Jesus taught in Luke 6, is to be an unforgiving, judging leader. The motes are seen in others' eyes but the log in one's own is missed. But in relinquishing such judgment, one begins to see instead a beautiful world.

The past does have a place, a very important one, if it is used to remember whereby the present can be lived. Time,

<sup>116</sup>Wapnick, p. 254.

however, can imprison rather than liberate when one fails to see that it is unreal, simply an illusion created by the speed of a floating planet earth around its axis.

Reflection on time can be helpful, then, when one is able to observe that where and what one is today is a product of one's past. Schooling, culture, travel and parents contributed to what one is now. It seen in the eyes of forgiveness, such past can be viewed as Paul wrote in Romans: "We know that God makes all things work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his decree."<sup>117</sup> Such past is part of one's "baggage" or destiny. As one observes such programming, one can then decide to re-program and move beyond the negative attitudes and behaviors that affect the present.

The future then can become the positive anticipation of what one has and is learning now. It becomes the testing ground of one's present thoughts, ideas and learning. One can observe if positive anticipation is a part of present existence. Jesus taught that constant worry of the future is a sign of an unenlightened mind with questions such as; "What are we to eat, or what are we to drink, or what are we to wear?"<sup>118</sup>

Therefore one's aim and focus is to remain in the present and to observe "where" one is. If anger and worry prevail, they are seen as signs of attachment to the past and future in negative

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<sup>117</sup>Romans 8:28, NAB.

<sup>118</sup>Matthew 6:31, NAB.

and illusionary ways. Anger and worry are seen as misdirected and unenlightened thinking and energy. If peace and a sense of union and communion with God prevail, the future will take care of itself. "Do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day."<sup>119</sup>

In the author's observation of himself and the church, he has concluded that there are excessive amounts of action outside of harmony with the present and without awareness of its "unrealness." A relaxation into the present through forgiveness has been thought of as a sign of laziness or denial from reality. Thus the emphasis has been on various goals and objectives with constant analysis of how far one has come. Certainly plans and goals are important as guides and gauges, but only as long as these agendas do not blind the Voice and direction of the Spirit in the Now by not seeing them for what they are.

De Mello taught that "the most loving thing one can do for people is to free oneself from them. Don't try to make people fill your loneliness, emptiness."<sup>120</sup> Loosen the self from the past by forgiveness, and one will then see others as forgiven.

Seek to see others in the present moment, unattached to the

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<sup>119</sup>Matthew 6:34, RSV.

<sup>120</sup>Conference with De Mello.

past. Silence is thus seen as a coming into the present and thus into one's authentic Self. As the Course teaches:

To forgive is merely to remember only the loving thoughts you gave in the past, and those that were given you. All the rest must be forgotten. Forgiveness is selective remembering.<sup>121</sup>

Just as God is believed as one Who overlooks past ignorances and sins, so one now overlooks one's neighbor's. Power and authority are refused to be given delusions, to the insane attempts of the ego to destroy the Center, the Spirit of God.

Thomas Kelly, quoted earlier, also saw the loss of this understanding in Western Christianity as an inability to let go and be present to the Now. He wrote how it:

. . . (stretches) the now into the past and forward from the now into the future. . . . In this ribbon of time we live, anxiously surveying the past in order to learn how to manage the most important part of the ribbon, the future. The now is merely an incidental dividing point. . . .<sup>122</sup>

And then he concludes, ". . . the new fellowship is . . . born among those who have found the love which is in the Eternal Now."<sup>123</sup>

And so rather than seeing such a perspective as impossibly difficult or laborious, it actually can be experienced as a

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<sup>121</sup>Schucman & Thetford, p. 330, Text.

<sup>122</sup>Kelly, p. 93.

<sup>123</sup>Ibid., p. 101.

tremendous relief. One can lay down the heavy burdens of the past and concerns for the future and come into the present. Moreover, numerous exercises can be used to help shift the focus if such an understanding has not been in one's experience. These will be discussed later.

### Seeing The Physical Differently

Thus it is that God is said to be real. God, the undefinable, inexpressible, unknowable, but eternal, is experienced only in the present moment. God, the Spirit, the eternal idea of which people are a part, is the only true reality. Again, it is that which is unseen, within yet unbound by the body or material sense objects. Thus bodies are not real; they are not eternal. They are temporary tents, as Paul calls them,<sup>124</sup> which house the spirit for a few years and then return to dust, to material which will eventually be totally dissolved.

Stephen Hawking points out that "Black Holes" of the universe are areas where a solar system once existed. Suns, which are masses of burning gases, are not eternal. They run out of gas like an empty fuel tank. When this happens, planets shrink into the nothingness from which they originally came. Earth's sun will also "run out of gas" one day and the system of which it is a part will be gone into another "black hole."<sup>125</sup> Only the Spirit, the dabar, the creative energy of God, the Mover, is eternal. Only this is Real. All else is transitory. To come

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<sup>124</sup>2 Corinthians 5:1, RSV.

<sup>125</sup>Hawking, pp. 81f.

into silence, into the present, if but for a moment in that holy instant is to step outside of the unreal into the real. The body and all sense objects are no longer real. Spirit identity and attachment are sought. As the Course teaches:

At no single instant does the body exist at all. It is always remembered or anticipated, but never experienced just now. Only its past and future make it seem real.<sup>126</sup>

Silence, in this understanding, does not forget the body in its daily living, but will see it differently. Bodies are temporary dwellings in which the awakened mind dwells as a temporary classroom. Life becomes a constant lesson in transcendence of the body and of seeing within it but the pointer to the Beyond, to the Holy Now. If sense objects are but considered, one begins to see beyond the physical sight. Sense objects become pointers, not the reality. To see sense objects as reality is to make prisons out of them rather than freedom containers. Sense objects are seen as sacraments, pointers beyond to the eternal, within and without. All the world and all the universe thus becomes a sacrament. It is all pointing, reflecting Presence.

In the East, De Mello taught, the universe is seen as the dance of the Creator. In the beginning, God danced the worlds!

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<sup>126</sup>Schucman & Thetford, p. 362, Text.

So if humanity studies the dance, it can learn more of the Dancer.<sup>127</sup> Protestants may have had this truth in mind when they "desacramentalized" the church in the Sixteenth Century. God is not only in Priests, or in bread, wine, or water; God is everywhere and everywhere pointing beyond to the Indescribable.

The idea, as Julian of Norwich wrote in the Thirteenth Century, is to see God everywhere. "Joy is to behold God in everything."

The problem was that the moment to behold God in everything became bogged down in the mud of intellectual reason and materialism. With scientific inquiry moving to increasing fragmentation, the "big picture," the universality of all was lost.

Scott Peck teaches that sexuality itself is but a pointing to union with one's Creator. Thus mystics have said for centuries. All things point to the Beyond. Quoting Peck: "The thing that tends to screw up most relationships, however, is sexual union!"<sup>128</sup> What he meant was that most people fail to see what it is pointing toward. They tend to become locked into the body, the sense object, as the ultimate goal and release.

Thus they are always left with anxiety in such a limited understanding and experience, for bodies are known to be mortal.

"Is there more than this?" will thus always be asked.

<sup>127</sup>Conference with De Mello.

<sup>128</sup>M. Scott Peck, Further Along the Road Less Traveled: Sexuality and Spirituality (New York: Simon & Schuster Audioworks, 1988), side one.

The Course teaches that "Minds are joined; bodies are not. Only by assigning to the mind the properties of the body does separation seem to be possible."<sup>129</sup> So the body is a sacrament, with its longing for union with another always pointing to the union with God, the only satisfying one. Not seen as such, bodies merely enforce the separation thought possible because of the seeming separation of bodies. Sexual union points to and reminds one of the union already given by creation, a spiritual union lost by the belief in sense objects as united and real.

Thus Peck reminded his listeners that some celibates often have richer, more joyful, sexually fulfilled lives, because they have accepted and experienced more radically the union with God of which the physical only points. He quotes from Jane Gustafson's book, printed in 1978 called Celibate Passion, herself a Catholic Nun, who wrote:

Passion will erupt as in the orgasmic rhythm of lovers pulsing to the same ecstatic delights and ending in blissful union. God's eternal, phallic, battering ram will at last break through our egotistical barriers, the human will transcend all possible attachments to become open and free, relaxed and expansive allowing the deluge of God's passion to explode in the soul's innermost caverns filling, flooding, and saturating it with new life.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>129</sup>Schucman & Thetford, p. 359, Text.

<sup>130</sup>M. Scott Peck, side one.

Jokingly he told of observing a convent sign which said, "Nuns make better lovers!" It humorously depicts the more real union of Self with God as Creator of which physical sexual union points.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>131</sup>M. Scott Peck, side two.

## Conclusion

Thus is silence seen, first of all, as an understanding that God is beyond all description and unknowable in the ultimate, definable sense; that this God is within and therefore exists as one's Truest Self; that this God is love, peace, and joy and who as Creator of all, connects with all creation; that this same creation that is seen by the physical eye points to the eternal realities inherent within it and that this God can only be experienced in the Now, the Holy Instant. In the next part, suggestions will be given to facilitate the incorporation of such understandings into one's daily life.