

## CHAPTER III

### EMPOWERED FOR MINISTRY

Having considered the meaning of silence with some suggestions for incorporating its understanding into one's life, a consideration will now be made on the relationship of silence and solitude to action and ministry. In essence, the answer to this question has already been given. If silence is an understanding that the real Self within is Christ, created by God the Father, and that this Christ is Oneness, connection with all creation, then all that is left is to experience it. One experiences it by awakening to the hunger and desire for wholeness given by God's grace, by understanding that this Christ is within, and by using any of the previously suggested models plus many, many more. People may ask, though, "How will I know that I'm there? How can I really experience this feeling of oneness?" Fr. De Mello would say, "O, you will know it when it happens; you will know!" But he also would quickly add, "But you cannot force it; for it is all of grace, given by God in God's own time and manner."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Conference with Anthony de Mello, Syracuse, New York, July, 1986.

The crucial thing to understand is that this Oneness is within and to spend time in self-observation as to whether one's actions and attitudes reflect it. After years of dualities and separation, one will not be "there" in a moment. Besides the very purpose of one's existence here is to overcome the illusions of separateness and by forgiveness, seek to live and experience the True Self. Each conscious effort, each moment of reminder, simply work to bring one another step closer.

This Oneness with humanity and creation is seen in classical and current writings of those who seek to live the "mystical" tradition. From Moses to Jesus on through the apostles, the result of mystical encounter with the Divine results in deeper love and care for fellow men and women. It is merging of cause and effect, means and ends into one. It is healing of the source so that love and healing can be shared. It is ending of division so that Oneness is not only recognized, but shared and experienced. It is discovery of the True Self which is then seen as the Self in all creation.

"Charity means nothing else than love of God for Himself above all creatures, and the love of man equal to the love of yourself for God's sake."<sup>2</sup> Thus wrote the unknown author of the Cloud of Unknowing depicting the result of entering the cloud of stillness, of dumbness. The result is that one "considers all men his friends and none his foes."<sup>3</sup> The unknown author simply assumes that those who practice this prayer of silence will eventually contact people. The contact will be of impartial, unconditional love. A special association with a few close friends will be normal, as with Jesus himself,

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<sup>2</sup>James Walsh, Editor, Simon Tugwell, Preface, The Cloud of Unknowing (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), p. 169.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 170.

but one will be loving and connecting with all, especially those who are the most likely to be forgotten.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 173.

## Cause And Effect Are One

The Course in Miracles teaches it this way: "Ideas never leave their source."<sup>5</sup> It simply means that cause and effect become one and are seen as one. An unforgiving, angry person, or a community of them, will perpetuate division, regardless of the methods used to convey love and justice. If there is peace, there is and will be justice. And peace begins with each individual. It then simply spreads. Peace is not to be forced because force is in contradiction to itself. Love and peace are not made; they are seen as already being present and thus accepted and followed.

To "make" then a peaceful world, people need to change their thinking. As Presbyterians have often said; "Truth is in order to goodness," truth here being that one begins by seeing him or herself forgiven as a loved Child of God, as God created him or herself. If one sees a terrible, unforgiving, mean world, it is caused by how one sees oneself. It is the result of how society has programmed and conditioned one to see. It also reflects on how one sees him or herself as disconnected, cut off from God, unforgiven and even mean. Change then the thinking that one has been given about him or herself, and the world is seen differently too. The world through the eyes of the forgiven and joyful appears as forgiven, joyful and beautiful. Thus it is that ideas never leave their source.

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<sup>5</sup>Helen Schucman and William Thetford, A Course in Miracles (Tiburon, California: Foundation for Inner Peace, 1975), p. 517, Text.

The Course in Miracles calls the attempt to correct society's ills without first correcting the source, "magic."<sup>6</sup> It is the false premise that the cause and effect can be reversed; that if one can correct the ill effects, then the causes will be cured. It is magic in that it is illusionary, untrue, and unreasonable. Such magic may well give an illusion of cure since the ego will tend to feel gratified and benevolent in its good works, where in actuality, the situation has only worsened. It was worsened because the cause has been further obscured beneath illusions.

It is in this sense that the author of the Cloud of Unknowing places activities and action below contemplation. The contemplative life he sees as always healing the cause, which then by its connection with all creation, radiates a deepening of love and peace for all. Thus he sees two kinds of lives in the church:

One is the active life, and the other is the contemplative life. The active is the lower and the contemplative is the higher. . . . Further, these two lives are so joined together that though in part they are different, neither of them can be lived fully without having some part in the other.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 40, Manual.

<sup>7</sup>Walsh and Tugwell, p. 137.

This author concludes by stating that the active life is the lower one because it is transitory, beginning and ending in this life, whereas the contemplative life lasts for all eternity. Such reasoning is similar to the commentary on Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, wherein the essence of human existence is pictured with a lake image. In contemplation, the lake becomes still, clear and pure; in thought and action, it begins to ripple and grow cloudy until the doer again becomes quiet and still.<sup>8</sup>

The unknown author also wrote that in regard to thinking as a corrective of the source, or cause, one gains victory by not focusing on sin but on the loving, forgiving God. Thus one heals the source and is able to connect with activity. He, as other writers, uses the story of Martha and Mary in Luke 10:38f as an example. Martha is "activity" while Mary is "contemplation." Just as Martha was quick to criticize Mary for her "inactive adoration," so will contemplatives today be criticized by some social activists. The secret for contemplatives, he suggests, is to never become defensive but simply to be where one is in adoration. For, he adds, all activists will sooner or later come to contemplation. Ultimately, activists will "burn out" and be led back to their true Center, their True Selves, and there discover the peace they sought to make. The unknown author goes so far as to write: "A contemplative may not descend any lower towards active life than this, [than in joining the sister Marthas in mercy] except very seldom and when there is great need."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, Translators, How to Know God, The Yoga Aphorisms of Pantanjali (Hollywood, California: Vedanta Press, 1953), p. 19-20.

<sup>9</sup>Walsh and Tugwell, p. 164.

In one of this writer's early encounters with his India hermit companion, he told the hermit how active he had previously been in "social action projects." The author then told of his present search for a more balanced and deeper center. The hermit merely replied; "You'd do well to stay away from those types for awhile!"

Without further debating faith and works, it is simply pointed out again that "truth (cause) is in order to goodness (effect)," and that what one sees is what one is. It is also pointed out that the well known order of the Great Commandment that Jesus gave is a summarization of the Decalogue as well as the essence of living: "Love the Lord thy God with all your heart, mind, and soul, and your neighbor as yourself." Can it be that many have reversed the order? The author believes that he himself has.

Kathleen Healy points out after her own study of spirituality that in the West there is the tendency to reverse the order.<sup>10</sup> It seems ever more ironic for Protestants since much of their original motivation for formation was upon faith alone not on works. Have they now become a people emphasizing the opposite, "salvation by social works?"

One can see the obvious reversal of emphasis in the Hinduism of India. Here the emphasis is not upon corporate acts of salvation but always upon individual salvation as the key to community salvation. If one finds Self-Realization, one is then joined with all creation in love. Whereas the West seems obsessed with corporate acts, with community, with connectedness as a people and church, guaranteed by law and structure, the Hindu emphasizes the prerequisite oneness of Spirit, of the unseen Self. When this is realized, the Oneness is seen and experienced as already there.

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<sup>10</sup>Kathleen Healy, Entering the Cave of the Heart (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), p. 16.

Is this not a central teaching in Christian Scriptures? It is not sacrifice that God wants, but a clean heart and a clean desire. Jesus told the Pharisees in Luke:

Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. You foolish people! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also?<sup>11</sup>

Again here is the confusion of cause and effect, means and end. When the eye or cause is healed, it simply sees differently. It is not that something different is seen but that one sees differently.<sup>12</sup>

This, in summary, is the purpose of the Course in Miracles, to correct vision, to help people unlearn the troubled, joyless ways that they have seen modeled and have been taught to believe. Thus as the thinking changes, the world changes. It is seen differently. Again quoting Jesus:

. . . how fortunate you are! Your eyes see and your ears hear. I assure you that many prophets and many of God's people wanted very much to see what you see, but they could not, and to hear what you hear, but they did not.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Luke 11:39-40, NIV.

<sup>12</sup>William Johnston, The Still Point (New York: Fordham University Press, 1970), p. 49.

<sup>13</sup>Matthew 13:16-17, TEV.

When the cause is cured, therefore, cure comes.

It is in this sense that mystics and contemplatives can be seen as quite dangerous and threatening to the status quo. It is not that they directly attack but that they see things differently. Thomas Merton wrote that his consciousness of social justice was born in his early attempts to be a spiritual director. "The monk," he wrote, "is essentially one who takes up a critical attitude towards the contemporary world."<sup>14</sup> Each person who seeks to know God in silence and contemplation moves closer to this ground of all being. Kenneth Leech labels such people as "marginal" who find themselves withdrawing from the normal "publicists and bureaucrats." He writes:

The contemplative is more of a threat to injustice than the social activist who merely sees the piece-meal need. . . . [for] contemplation is the prerequisite for human liberation.<sup>15</sup>

Quoting Alfred Delp, a Jesuit priest imprisoned by the Nazis in World War II, Leech writes: "The great issues of humanity must always be decided in the wilderness, in uninterrupted isolation and unbroken silence."<sup>16</sup> Thus Leech ends his book bidding all priests and pastors to be spiritual guides, not leaders in the usual way they were trained to lead.

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<sup>14</sup>Kenneth Leech, Soul Friend (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), p. 189.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 191.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 191.

So in understanding one receives forgiveness and healing of the mind and soul. Guilt, fear, and worry are removed through repentance (the change of thinking) as one sees them as unreal and destructive to one's True Self. And it begins with each one as the song goes, "Let it begin with me." For it takes:

. . . but one to affect everything in creation. When you have the peace within, the very atmosphere of the planet is blessed. . . . at peace, you are endangered by nothing external. And in this feverish world of panic, fear and pressure, what could be more needed? Could man turn to armaments if he were at peace?<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Tara Singh, Commentaries on A Course in Miracles (Los Angeles: Foundation for Life Action, 1986), p. 46.

## Connectedness

The consequence of corrected thinking or "cause correction" is thus a realized connectedness with all humanity. Separation from brothers and sisters is seen for what it is, an illusion. Does the world wish to escape the frightening risks of nuclear war? End the separations of the mind that pit nation against nation. End the erroneous thinking that some are winners and others are losers for in oneness all are winners. Do people want to end the ravages upon the ecological system? End the separation of the Self from all creation, the dualism that teaches that God is here but not there. The Oneness that created the tree is the Oneness that created Oneself. An enlarged sacredness is always experienced by the one who finds the Silence within. Life itself becomes a sacrament as every moment, every breath, every sight becomes an echo of the Presence of God.

Does society wish to see enrichment of marriage and family life with a deeper experience of oneness? Discover the One within. George Maloney, a Jesuit priest, writes of relationships affected by silence and thus indirectly of marriage:

When my friend and I both seek to surrender ourselves to God in a deep silence and solitude, God's silence touches our mutual silence. . . . we know that only God's silent Spirit can teach us how to love each other. To the degree that we can abandon ourselves to listen to God's word spoken to us both, . . . to that degree do we

discover from God how to avoid selfishness and yet how to progress to even increasing, intense levels of love for each other.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>George A. Maloney, The Silence of Surrendering Love (New York: Alba House, 1986), p. 109.

When people feel cut off from themselves, they feel cut off from others. When connection becomes the force in life, the problem of connectedness for loving and acceptance dissipates. And when this is settled, people can become free to love and to be true friends. Without the Oneness found within, life continues as a frustrating, disappointing search to find it outside. People are loved for what they can give which is always an empty search until one comes to find it within oneself.

Many couples come together projecting myriads of fantasies upon the other that will hopefully satisfy their needs. A few months or years go by and disappointment and delusion set in. They may separate and try again or else exist in cynicism and despair.

The cries to "identify with the poor" are answered in the same way. Spiritual oneness is oneness with the poor. One may begin to see that in poor people in poor countries there is a love and community even deeper than in richer, more materially developed countries. One begins to see that the fewer material possessions one has the less distracted one usually will be from the Oneness within. Living in a country that is still among the richest, most militarily powerful, does not mean existing with the most peace, joy, or the fewest murders, robberies, or family violence. Indians would often ask the author, "How many times have you been married?" in their common assumption that most Americans become bored with what they have. In spite of the stereotype of expecting every Indian wanting to leave his or her native land to come to America, the author found many Indians who had returned to their native land. They described the West as "too mechanical and violent." One could also witness hundreds of Westerners in Indian ashrams searching for peace which was missed in Western materialism.

Thus richness to the awakened One may be poverty to the one asleep in illusions. Material possessions become relative and unimportant beside the richer task of feasting at the wells of unseen eternal water and life. Silence may even bring one to a kind of contempt for material wealth. Or, it may strengthen a resolve to live a simpler lifestyle. Again quoting George Maloney: "In silence we ultimately find the poverty of spirit that each of us needs in order to grow spiritually. Poverty of spirit is a call to constant conversion."<sup>19</sup> In this kind of "enriched poverty," a linkage with the physically poor of the world can be discovered anew.

Jean Vanier, founder of the L'Arche Community, a place which offers love and compassion to the mentally retarded, tells of his linkage with the poor through silence:

I discover more and more each day my need for these times of solitude in which I can rediscover others with more truth and accept, in the light of God my own weakness, ignorance, egoism, and fear. This solitude does not separate me from others; it helps me to love them more tenderly, realistically, and attentively. I begin to distinguish from the false solitude which is a flight from others to be alone with egoism, or bruised sensitivity and the true solitude which is a communion with God and others.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 154.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

Thus the true solitary never leaves society as often charged, but is reconnected with it on a deeper level. The true monk, in Merton's words, "takes on all the absurdity of the world, not leaving it behind."<sup>21</sup> So the one going into solitude does not renounce the world but in the truest sense he or she is linking to it. This is more than just a romantic notion as charged by some. It is the Incarnation as Jesus taught and modeled.

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<sup>21</sup>Thomas Merton, Contemplative Prayer (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), p. 28.

### Guilt, Anger Removed

Not only is the thinking changed in regard to cause and effect, but along with it, guilt and anger are removed by the acceptance of forgiveness. With such weight gone, a new kind of energy changes one's life. No longer expending energies in order to find acceptance and peace, one experiences it as already present. With nothing to prove or defend, one can begin to step back allowing the One within to lead. The old self which is crucified and put to death daily is no longer the barrier. The life now lived in the flesh is lived by faith in the Christ who lives within and everywhere.

Initially such freedom may overwhelm one with emotion and celebration. One wants to embrace the world telling it "You are loved, you are forgiven!" But soon one realizes that such outbursts usually turn others away. This may be especially a problem in many churches where decorum and order are attempted to be maintained at all times.

Later the exhilaration may give way to some deep depression and listlessness as one comes to realize that his or her life has been expended so long on illusions. At this point one may simply want to go to the woods and cry for being such a fool, asking that mercy and grace help save from further involvement in such blindness.

This was the experience of Bernadette Roberts in her book, The Experience of No-Self. A woman from Northern California who had been a nun for ten years and then wife and mother to four children, always faithful to daily mass and prayers, one day experienced what she had been desiring. She experienced her True Self, which she called

her "No-Self." Beyond all ritual and fear, she was driven into despair for nine months. She felt like a fool for her years of building false castles for the ego. As she returned to her role of mother and homemaker, she saw her roles differently. No longer bound by her past or worry of the future, she found herself able to live more freely in the Now.<sup>22</sup>

This has been part of the author's own story for the past several years. Seeing himself striving to please friends, family, and church, he began to feel a huge load lift when he came to understand the forgiving, accepting, giving Friend within. Perhaps the highlight of this journey came at the workshop with Fr. Anthony de Mello in July, 1986. It was there that he first understood about illusions and reality and how he is called to live for and in communion with the Christ within. The years of study and preaching, of seeking acceptance, of "plea bargaining" with God and life, began to seem quite ridiculous. In the ensuing months, he began to spend increasing amounts of time alone, reflecting, listening, evaluating, restarting. It was as if he really were beginning to live again.

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<sup>22</sup>Bernadette Roberts, The Experience of the No-Self (Boston: Shambhala, 1984), p. 104f.

William Johnston has written that ". . . all prayer, but especially contemplative, leads to forgiveness and to the collapse of those unconscious barriers which cut us off from others."<sup>23</sup> One of the first barriers to be broken will be that with one's parents and then with others. Anger and unforgiveness will increasingly be seen for what they are, illusions. Understanding that the One within forgives, one is then able to forgive others. He or she can release them accepting with unconditional acceptance with nothing left to separate from the love and Presence of God.

The Course in Miracles calls unforgiveness and conditional love, "specialness." Being unable to accept and love another for what that person is (because one cannot yet do so to him or herself), one attaches all kinds of special conditions to love. "If this or that is done, I will love you. If not, I will withdraw it." Such is the "special" kind of love parents often give to their own children because as parents they have not yet come to correct their own conditional self acceptance. Such specialness always causes guilt and anger because one does not live up to her own expectations, or better said, illusions. Forgiveness of oneself and thus others ends this destructive style and cycle:

Forgiveness is the end of specialness. Only illusions can be forgiven, and then they disappear. Forgiveness is release from all illusion, and that is why it is impossible but partly to forgive. . . . It is not you [the True Self] that is so vulnerable and open to attack that just a word, a little whisper that you do not like, a circumstance that

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<sup>23</sup>William Johnston, The Inner Eye of Love (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), p. 131.

suits you not, or an event that you did not anticipate upsets your world, and hurls it into chaos. Truth is not frail.<sup>24</sup>

Thomas Merton described pure solitude as not "shrinking from the good things of life or from the company of others, but it no longer seeks to possess them for their own sake."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Schucman and Thetford, p. 470, Text.

<sup>25</sup>Thomas Merton, No Man is An Island (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Jovanovich, 1955), p. 252.

Thus being free from guilt and anger, the pilgrim can accept life for what it is as now and free. Needing no approval, he offers himself to others for what he is, nothing more. She does not force ideas or methods onto others to win approval or to feed her own false self. She need defend nothing because she is accepted just as she is. What empowerment! What freedom! What peace! Perhaps such a person will be scorned by those with large vested interests in structures and systems, but this does not matter. Being able to forgive oneself, one is then able to extend it to others.

Is not war, then, the unforgiveness of one nation to another, a nation made up of individuals who are unable to forgive each other? In the 1960's, there was once a bumper sticker that said, "What if they gave a war and no one came?" Forgiven, anger-free people could not go to a war that threatened to annihilate the entire human race.

This is not to say that one advocates immediate elimination of all soldiers and policemen. Being free of guilt does not mean that one is unable to say "no" or be empowered to do so. However, when one assumes a constant defensive posture and is always afraid of losing, one becomes a defensive person or community. But what can one really lose? What then can really separate one from love and abundance?

### Abundance Is Recognized

With guilt and anger alleviated, one is then led in silence and solitude to the principle of abundance. In silence encountering the Divine Center one begins to see that she or he has everything. "He gave us his Son--will he not also freely give us all things?"<sup>26</sup> When this truth becomes part of one's faith experience, energies which were expended to get and protect are released and transformed into energies of acceptance and love. One understands that only as he or she shares does abundance become real and joyous. "Give and it shall be given unto you" is the principle. Since the Grace of God is Infinite, it is never exhausted or depleted. It is given to be given away.

Tremendous energy is normally expended in trying to "get;" the right books, the right education, the right spouse, the right car, job, food, house, etc. Such grasping is the ego's temptation. People wear themselves out chasing after abundance when in reality it is within at all times. Silence teaches that the One who created and gave this sense of "I-ness" will always sustain and care for His creations. Yet society programs people to see themselves as deprived and needy. A minister once told the author that she was in a very wealthy parish yet with people who were convinced that they were poor!

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<sup>26</sup>Romans 8:32, TEV.

James Heisig states that those in the West live in the economic penthouses" of the global community. Those who ride jets through the skies comprise, he writes, "an absolute aristocracy; for every one of them [who rides a jet] there are several thousand who have never ridden a bicycle." He further points out that "the number of people who own television sets is far lower than the number of those whose annual incomes do not reach the cost of a television."<sup>27</sup>

Yet hordes of middle class Westerners think of themselves as poor, deprived and lacking, including the religious clergy. Often people return from a country poor in material things to report how joyous and loving were the people. Unable to purchase many material items, oblivious to slick ads that whet sensory appetites, these people more likely find peace within and in the world about them. Again the reminder from Fr. Pennington, "Notice what they have, not what they do not." The budget of India, with nearly 800 million people, is less than that of New York State with around 12 million. Yet India manages to feed its own, and even export surplus food. They are a world leader, if not the foremost, in taking in homeless refugees of the world.<sup>28</sup> Yet many people in New York State seem to feel so poor deprived, and lacking. The experience of the "poverty of silence" helps to reconnect with Abundance and realize that it is found everywhere.

Heisig portrays much of the present "social action" as failing to see unlimited abundance:

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<sup>27</sup>James Heisig, "The Art of Wasting Time: Thoughts on the Exploration of Leisure" *Religious Review*, vol. 41, no. 3 (1977), 8-9.

<sup>28</sup>Heisig, p. 9.

All the privileged of the earth know for sure [is] that they have no objection to others sharing their own life style, provided it does not make any demands on their own appetites.<sup>29</sup>

The author felt some conflict when in 1987 shortly after returning from India, he was sent as a commissioner to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Wined and dined in the best hotels for ten days, he often heard challenges to do more for the poor. How hallow much of this seemed. It would have been better, he often thought, if the body had spent some time in silence with the poor of Biloxi, Mississippi, just blocks away, listening to them and sharing with them. Heisig points out that within a generation, six billion people will live on earth, five billion of whom will exist in bare subsistence due to the lost art of "wasting time," of listening to humanity and to the inner Voice.<sup>30</sup>

A central tenet of the Course in Miracles is that there is no scarcity for the child of God; he or she lives in abundance with all needs constantly fulfilled:

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

A sense of separation from God is the only lack you really need correct. This sense of separation would never have risen if you had not distorted your perception of truth, and had thus perceived yourself as lacking.<sup>31</sup>

A sense of lack is therefore only in one's mind with the inability to see abundance. When one awakens, it is seen, received, and shared.

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<sup>31</sup>Schucman and Thetford, p. 11, Text.

The author has driven a car over the past two years that was once "junked." While recently riding his bicycle, he was offered a fish to eat and then a bicycle pump to fix a flat tire. One man left his name and phone number if there were further needs. These are but simple signs of the care and abundance given each moment. It is all in the perception. It is for those with "eyes to see and ears to hear." Can conflict between nations and people continue when such abundance is experienced?

And if someone takes you to court to sue you for your shirt, let him have your coat as well. And if one of the occupation troops forces you to carry his pack one mile, carry it two miles. When someone asks you for something, give it to him; when someone wants to borrow something, give it to him.<sup>32</sup>

In the East there is the story of a spiritual master coming home one day to find a thief running away with his food and clothes. The master caught him red-handed. In embarrassment and fear, the thief ran out the door. The master then took a jacket left on the wall and held it up saying, "Here, you can have this too. I don't need it!"<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Matthew 5:40-42, TEV.

<sup>33</sup>De Mello Conference.

### Seeing Past The Illusion of Time

The illusion of time has been discussed earlier. Time is but the relationship of the earth to the sun, of earth's revolving in space which creates light and darkness. In silence, one comes to the understanding and experience of "time being no more, of no sun light needed because the Lamb of God is all the light needed."<sup>34</sup> Thus if time is no longer seen as real, the Child of God can cease being a slave to it. Consequently, the energies can then be expended to love and to be. The purpose of time as known becomes the testing ground to move beyond it and to cease being its slave and hostage. As Heisig points out, the world faces global disaster because of the tremendous fear of "wasting time." "Time is money, money is time" is the illusionary idol of the day.<sup>35</sup> "Use time to get," the ego counsels, "because you are so deprived."

In most Christian churches of Western, mainline denominations, rigorous demands of the clock are followed. A few years ago a pastor actually wrote a paper on how he had broken his day into eight minute segments so that he would never waste time!

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<sup>34</sup>Revelation 21:23.

<sup>35</sup>Heisig, p. 4.

Urban Holmes felt that present day theological education had greatly failed in helping the priest/pastor become a leader beyond slavery to time. He saw the education of priests as exercises in further social conditioning. He proposed an alternative model wherein the priest/pastor could be trained in the intuitive, non-time sphere of life. He called this sphere the "feminine cave," correlating to the Hindu "cave of the heart." To experience this the pastor would "waste time" spending periods in the woods, gazing at clouds, allowing the creative juices of the Inner Voice to be heard, loved, and then shared.<sup>36</sup>

What a contrast to less industrialized, "clockless" cultures. There time is much less important. Feelings, intuitions, hunches are given precedence. Thomas Kelly, the Quaker writer cited above, believed the West takes time so seriously as the result of the Marxist/social gospel emphasis of the past one hundred plus years. Unless the social order is changed, the religious feel failure and embarrassment. The problem, Kelly points out, is that such thinking results in a "lamentable reversal of the true order of dependence."<sup>37</sup> People become caught in past and future illusions unable to see what constitutes reality as the Eternal Now. If people live aware and awake to that, they will extend peace because once again, the cause has been cured of the falsehood of illusionary time.

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<sup>36</sup>Urban Holmes III, Ministry and Imagination (New York: Seabury Press, 1981), pp. 20-21.

<sup>37</sup>Thomas Kelly, A Testament of Devotion (New York: Harper and Row, Inc., 1941), p. 91.

With slavery to time broken, the individual is freed to live in the moment, relaxed and able to smell flowers, feel wind, hear cries. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the priest and the Levite no doubt had to pass by because of their agendas. They had time commitments; they had only "six eight minute segments" to reach Jericho. To stop and become involved with this poor chap would upset time schedules and commitments. The world is perhaps stepping past and by people, perhaps on people, even killing people, because of its obsession with keeping agendas and production schedules intact. "Money must be made, and time is money." Thus stress and death are given allegiance. To become silent, so difficult at first from attachment and enslavement to time, is to break out and to come into Oneself, into one's birthright that can then be shared with others.

Accepting Who One Is, Where One is

An inquirer went to a master and asked him what difference enlightenment had made to his life. And the master answered; "Well, now when I eat, I eat; when I chop wood, I chop wood; and when I walk I walk."<sup>38</sup> Such is the nature of the one who comes into the present, into the now. Silence aids in bringing one away from the past or future where the mind usually exists. Being someplace else other than where one is takes also much energy and money. For most Americans their education was programming to be someplace other than where they are. So ministers often leave seminaries taking on the problems of church and society forgetting to be who and where they are. Douglas Steere has written:

Now the Christian . . . is not in the first instance concerned with society or society's redemption. He is not a device for reaching and improving society as such. Yet, he does precisely that. The saint is rather a man or woman who has become clear as to exactly what he wants of all there is in the world. . . . He is one who is doing what he wants to do.<sup>39</sup>

Where does he or she find this? From silence, from Self Realization.

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<sup>38</sup>De Mello Conference.

<sup>39</sup>Douglas Steere, On Beginning Within (New York: Harper and Row, 1943), p. 41.

So if the person is active, he or she is active; if the person is quiet, he or she is quiet. Life becomes as a person riding in a moving train sitting still while all the world moves by. Or the present is like movies with one's True Self being on the screen while life and movement are flashing pictures. When the screen becomes "tired," it shuts off the pictures and becomes still, unworried, unconcerned and quiet because God is everywhere as the One.

De Mello would say, "For peace of mind, why don't you give up trying to be the universe's governor!" Be as you are, a creation of God wherever you are. A cartoon of "Ziggy," once given to the author, has Ziggy and some friends sitting on a rock watching a beautiful sunset and Ziggy saying, "If we were there, then there would be no here!"

Teresa of Avila reminds those who have drawn away to be quiet that "There would be no honey if some bees did not stay in the hive."<sup>40</sup> In such quietness and attentiveness, one learns to be more present when re-engaged with society. One learns the art of self-observation, of detecting signs and feelings of stress, of anger, of the need to again "shut off the movie" and withdraw for renewal.

The Gospels depict Jesus as frequently withdrawing to the mountains for prayer and renewal. This, it is recalled, was after his forty day "retreat" which came at the beginning of his ministry. He withdrew following word of John the Baptist's death and after busy days, his own disciples would say, "This is a lonely place, and the day is now

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<sup>40</sup>Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodrigues, Translators, The Collected Works of St. Teresa (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1980), p. 104.

over; send the crowds away. . . ."41 And yet again and again, ". . . he went up into the hills by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone. . . ."42

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<sup>41</sup>Matthew 14:15, RSV.

<sup>42</sup>Matthew 14:23, RSV.

So if one feels a need to be alone as the Voice calls, make plans to do it. If one works in a factory, office, or garage, he or she can be awake to God there. A person met and greeted becomes one's mission of connection and love. The child played with or nursed or bathed becomes one's present moment and mission. If not, one would not be there. At a retreat workshop a mother of seven children told how she had turned her house into a "hermitage" when needed.

At the funeral of one who had lived the life of the Spirit from her place as wife and mother, her son handed the author a quote from one of her books. It went; "How does one know that God still has a role and place for him on earth? Because that one is still here!"

So beginning where one is one finds contentment and becomes energized to just be whatever the moment calls for. Each moment, each hour, each day becomes sacred and holy as peace is shared and given and nurtured and praised from a soul satisfied and blessed by his or her bounteous lot.

O Lord, it is you who are my portion and cup;  
it is you yourself who are my prize.  
The lot marked out for me is my delight;  
welcome indeed the heritage that falls to me!<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Psalm 16:5-6, *The Psalms: A New Translation*, from Christian Prayer: The Liturgy of the Hours (Boston: The Daughters of St. Paul, 1976), p. 1030.

### Ending All Needs, One Loves

Thus in and through silence, one learns to love for love's sake because all needs have been met and filled. Nothing is fought after because everything is given. One can love unconditionally because nothing is needed. Since everything is given, people and events are seen as gifts to be received and shared. Content with Nothingness, the Nothingness is shared and given. Quoting Viktor Frankl:

. . . where the spiritual self steps itself in its unconscious depths, there occur the phenomena of conscience, love, and art. . . . [For] any love, based on emotions or "drives" is not true love. In true love, the self chooses, it is not driven.<sup>44</sup>

One chooses in the sense that one decides to be awake, to nurture and follow the Self and to accept life as a gift to oneself. Conscience, art, and love do not need sensory hype to produce them. Being reconnected to their source, they simply happen. They are created effortlessly and because they are not needed, they simply are.

Frankl also observed that in being and creating, the truly religious do not need public recognition or honor for motivation. He observed that for the sake of their own

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<sup>44</sup>Viktor Frankl, The Unconscious God (New York: Washington Square Press, 1975), p.

genuineness such "actualized" persons hide from public recognition.<sup>45</sup> Honors become devices which the ego uses to destroy effective, joyful, natural living. De Mello urged his listeners to avoid honors if at all possible as they become poison to one's humility and inner peace.<sup>46</sup>

In the past few years the Presbyterian Peace Program has honored churches which have made a "commitment to peace" by giving them certificates of honor with stained glass doves. Committees are urged to make a special tribute to those who have "made the pledge." Such action may actually contribute to the very things which destroy peace; pride, competition, shame, guilt.

When one can find the fulfillment which places him or her beyond such needs, tremendous amounts of energy are released to live in peace and to share with those sent one's way. When pastors can have ego needs met in other than "ruling" a church, winning bureaucratic favors, and commanding the respect of their communities, a well of energy may be opened to love for love's sake, not for what one can get in return. Churches can be loved for what and where they are and not with bargains for "growth;" eg. higher salaries or more authority.

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>46</sup>De Mello Conference.

Denominations may be filled with frustrated clergy who find themselves in situations where their "needs" are not being met. So they move from place to place, parish to parish, chasing illusions and dreams, projecting them onto every place they "get." This is not love; it is "bargain hunting," "shop-keeping," or "tit-for-tat." When needs are met as they can be, from Within, then expectations on people can be dropped. People can be accepted for what they are, gifts of love which will help people grow and to exchange gifts of peace. One wonders what peace churches could experience if beginning with the priest or pastor needs were already seen as being met so that life could then be lived and shared freely.

This also applies to family, to spouses and to children. To truly love them is to not need them. They are simply enjoyed for who and what they are. "If you truly love someone," De Mello taught, "you will get off their backs!"<sup>47</sup> What about physical sex, though? Does not everybody need that? Well, there have been several people throughout history who got along quite well without it. Some very contented people are celibate or single. Stories abound, of course, of cheating, abuse, and hypocrisy; but in current Western culture, one must work doubly hard to stay above the constant bombardment of sensate stimuli.

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<sup>47</sup>De Mello Conference.

At a seminar Scott Peck related how a woman had once come to him for counsel. She had been reared in America and thought that as a single woman she was abnormal if she did not have at least two sexual affairs each month!<sup>48</sup> Sex as a physical, chemical, hormonal act will always end in emptiness and loneliness. Frankl and others especially in the mystical tradition see sexual activity as an expression of the metaphysical. Bede Griffiths teaches that the visible physical world is an expression of the Divine idea, a "psychosomatic reality." The sexual act is symbolic of the union of reason and intuition where both become one.<sup>49</sup> As with all physical life it is a pointer which is symbolic of spiritual, eternal truth.

Scott Peck says that the one thing that "screws up relationships the most" is physical, sexual activity.<sup>50</sup> What he meant is that people tend to take it so seriously, as the sine qua non of relational intimacy. In reality, it is but the symbol of spiritual oneness.

A major emphasis in the Course in Miracles is that spirit and minds can unite but that bodies cannot, and "whom you limit to the body you hate because you fear."<sup>51</sup> To limit God or life to the body and its chemistry will leave one in frustration, guilt, and anger for the mind will constantly recall that the body is a decaying, mortal entity. To be attracted to another because of hormonal chemistry and to not see it as that is to be

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<sup>48</sup>Workshop with M. Scott Peck, Buffalo, New York, April, 1989.

<sup>49</sup>Bede Griffiths, The Marriage of East and West (Springfield, Illinois: Templegate Publishers, 1982), p. 121.

<sup>50</sup>Workshop with M. Scott Peck.

<sup>51</sup>Schucman and Thetford, p. 422, Text.

caught again in the illusionary trap of "trying to meet my needs with your body." It is a prescription for failure, loneliness, and depression.

The need to always be active is further resolved by the experience of the Light in silence. Energy is then released to reflect on one's priorities, on Whose one truly is, and on whether one is playing "leader" again rather than "follower" of the Spirit. Americans crave busy-ness to keep them away from the realization of the Self afraid that the "sacrifices" of insanity and busy-ness would be too great. It becomes another "ego trap."

Not action, but the egoism and personal motives with which we act are opposed to union with God. Pragmatism, under the guise of pastoral zeal for example, is antithetical to contemplation.<sup>52</sup>

Merton wrote:

He who attempts to act . . . for others or the world without deepening his own self-understanding, freedom, and integrity, and capacity to love, will not have anything to give others.<sup>53</sup>

Yet how easy it is to be caught in action for action's sake. One can find the activity so draining and monotonous, yet be frightened or confused as to how to stop, where to go,

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<sup>52</sup>Healy, p. 29.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

what to do. Yet without a change in understanding, a kind of "spiritual suicide" can be committed against one's True Self, one's True Life within.

Time in silence helps break one from this desperate treadmill. Communion is restored, life renewed and actions become more deliberately done out of love. One becomes emptied and cleansed of the need to act in order to love for love's sake. A Buddhist saying goes; "Emptiness equals compassion," meaning that when love is cleansed of the need to do, one can then love and "do" unconditionally.<sup>54</sup> The early Desert Fathers and Mothers taught that the cleansing of solitude and silence breeds compassion toward neighbors "because it makes us die to them! . . . We give up judging them, evaluating them, and thus become free to be compassionate."<sup>55</sup> Patanjali taught two thousand years ago that "non-attachment is not indifference." Rather, one loves people and things for what they are, not to possess them. And they are in actuality bearers of the Atman or incarnations of the Holy Spirit.<sup>56</sup>

One could reflect on the lack of omnipresence that Jesus modeled especially when tempted that one is needed everywhere and can somehow be there. John O'Regan wrote a helpful article entitled; "Unavailability as Poverty." Jesus, O'Regan points out, was always selectively available. As part of his incarnation as human, he accepted the

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<sup>54</sup>Johnston, The Inner Eye of Love, p. 115.

<sup>55</sup>Henri J. M. Nouwen, The Way of the Heart (New York: Seabury Press, 1981), pp. 34-35.

<sup>56</sup>Prabhavanda and Isherwood, p. 22.

limited range of his availability.<sup>57</sup> This is a good reminder when feeling guilty that calls are not made, phone messages not answered, and the sense that "I cannot do it all!"

The fifth state of Erik Erikson's developmental model is when a person comes to understand that he or she has only a limited range of physical options in life. Not to accept such a reality leaves one in an adolescent stage of existence. Actually humans have very limited options, but inward peace, joy and fulfillment can always be experienced.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>John O'Regan, O. M. I., "Unavailability as Poverty," *Review for Religious*, Vol. 40, p. 540f.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

One's availability not only then becomes a sign of one's maturity but one's freedom from the need to always be available and the ego trap it becomes. Being guiltless and forgiven, one can refuse to become trapped if charged, "But you were not there when I needed you!" Neither was Jesus, and in the experience of blinded individuals, neither was God.

Douglas Steere wrote that the great Pythagoras, the so-called "Father of Mathematics," required each applicant to his community of scholars to spend one year in complete silence before beginning instruction.<sup>59</sup> What a wise way to be cleansed of the egocentric needs to teach, to be known as a scholar, to always find oneself busy, productive, needing to help others.

The cleanser of silence helps clear one of such needs and frees one to live freely, unattached to anything but love; that unseen, unknown, but experienced Force. Cleansed of such needs, how can one not love the world freely and yet be a force for its redemption and its coming back to its Center? How can one not be empowered to be free, to live free, to model freedom, to teach freedom? Yes, the free one, the Self-Realized one is free and at peace, and is united. He or she just is! Having found his or her true Identity and the true reason for existence, what else is there left to do but to "enjoy God forever!"

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<sup>59</sup>Steere, On Beginning From Within, p. 100.

### Patience With The Western Church

This section concludes by stating that if silence and the understanding thus presented are to be empowering in the Western Church, the pilgrim will need patience. The test of detachment will need daily exercise in the routine expectations of the church. Silence has not been its emphasis; words and action have been. Early in the preparation of this paper, the author attended a "retreat" for Presbyterian clergy. The leader began by explaining that the retreat would not be a silent one because Presbyterians cannot accept this. (Laughter!) Then she told of a previous attempt with Chicago area Presbyterians to have a retreat with silence. It lasted all of five minutes because Presbyterians, it was boasted, are by nature very noisy and talkative. (Much more laughter!) The ensuing day illustrated her point.

Thus one who is becoming aware of silence and solitude and their importance for communion, perspective, and growth will need patience. Although Martin Luther was well acquainted with the "Rhineland Mystics," and found germination of his gifts within the confines of a monastery, this appreciation was soon lost with the Reformation emphasis and obsession with "the Word" and words. Calvin, who certainly had elements of devotion and mysticism in his writings and ministry, as noted above, still emphasized "right thinking" according to New Testament scholarship rather than "inner experience."<sup>60</sup> Calvin was much less concerned with

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<sup>60</sup>Frank C. Senn, Protestant Spiritual Traditions (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), p. 55.

personal piety than with "doing the word." One's place was not in a retreat or closet praying, but in the world, "engaging in obedient ethical activity."<sup>61</sup> Calvin condemned "ascetics" as being "Pelagian." Pelagius was a Fourth Century monk who taught that people were born without original sin and that heaven was open to all. Certainly such thinking would be heretical to "original sin" and "total depravity" advocates.<sup>62</sup>

Howard Hageman believes that Calvin was caught up in the body/spirit split of the Sixteenth Century. Seeing the flesh as sinful, his emphasis was on the mind and on right thinking. Even today, Presbyterians and Reformed followers are often typified as worshipping with only their heads and not with their bodies or emotions. They can be stiff and controlled people.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 71.

This is not to say that Calvin did not teach devotion, piety, and detachment. It is only the emphasis they received that is being addressed here as well as his strong reaction to and dislike of Roman Catholicism, especially the monastic orders. He judged monks as lazy people and "fat pigs," who used their laziness as an excuse for contemplation. Although he admits that earlier monasteries had their place, he did not encourage them, a thinking that has prevailed to present times. He commended Augustine for his description of the "ideal monastery," yet would not approve them for his time. Calvin castigated monks for not being a part of regular society in their attempt to formulate alternative, model communities. He judged them insincere in giving up their possessions. Calvin accused monasteries of being "schismatic" since they broke away from the true church:

For every monastery existing today, I say, is a conventicle of schismatics, disturbing the order of the church and cut off from the lawful society of believers. . . . [It is] an injustice to Christ when some call themselves Benedictines instead of Christians, some Franciscans, some Dominicans.<sup>64</sup>

Later Calvin even criticized Augustine himself for allowing monasteries to exist:

It was a beautiful thing to forsake all their possessions and be without earthly care. But God prefers devoted care in ruling a household, where the devoted household-

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<sup>64</sup>John T. McNeill, ed., Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), p. 1269.

er, clear and free of all greed, ambition, and other lusts of the flesh, keeps before him the purpose of serving God in a definite calling.<sup>65</sup>

And so he concludes that monks must be haters of society! They are the lazy, idle philosophers and ". . . though we grant there was nothing evil in that profession, it was surely no slight evil that it brought a useless and dangerous example into the church."<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 1271.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 1271.

Is it then any wonder that most Protestants have so little appreciation of the mystic, the dancer, the artist, or the contemplative? Is it any wonder that Protestants are known as a group of "workaholics," unable to relax, to become still, silent, and to go beyond words, ideas and actions? They have a large burden to unload or to carry, the burden of their works and attempts at "right thinking." Right thinking, as pointed out, is to understand that God is always above the best efforts at thinking and that to be connected most purely with the Divine is to "be still (dumb) and to know that I am God."

Howard Hageman also wrote that the frequent attempts to restore mysticism to Reformed communities simply ended in failure, often branded as having "Roman tendencies." Two German Reformed ministers, John Nevin and Philip Schaft, in Mercersburg, Pennsylvania, made serious attempts to restore some of Calvin's "sacramental spirituality" in the Nineteenth Century but were convicted of heresy. According to Hageman, the mystical elements that were a part of the early Reformation movement were lost to words, ideas, and then to the emotions of the evangelical movement.<sup>67</sup> Anyone seeking to restore or become engaged in such exercises of contemplation, of communion with the Inner Light in silence will thus need patience.

Pilgrimages, holy retreats, silent periods, are all an important part of the Christian Scripture tradition. The Pharaoh criticized Moses for wanting to lead the Israelites into the desert for prayer as an excuse for laziness. Onroute to the "Promised land," God made the people linger forty years in the wilderness purging them from attachment and impatience before entering the land. Elijah spent forty days on the mountain re-

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<sup>67</sup>Senn, pp. 75, 79.

turning later with great zeal to do God's work. Jesus spent forty days in the wilderness. John the Baptist was no doubt a part of the Essene Community, an early group of "ascetics" who lived in the desert.

Such constant emphasis on activity cannot but stifle one's true prophetic potential. Unless one takes the time to step back and reflect, he or she is not only liable for playing the fool but for making things worse. Anthony de Mello and Bede Griffiths are among the many who saw the relationship of the present homelessness in India and the past three hundred years of Western attempts to bring "Christ to India." De Mello would say, "Thank you. You Christians of the West have done enough for my country!"<sup>68</sup> In the name of Christ, Christians of the West have upset hundreds of indigenous cultures. Similarly in the name of Christ and ethical action, American Christians nearly destroyed the Native American population and their rich culture of intuitive, silent worship with their understanding of oneness with creation.

Bede Griffiths states that after the Sixteenth Century, the Church, both Roman and Protestant, underwent three centuries of stressing "ordered teachings." It has been only in the later half of the Twentieth Century that he believes the intuitive, creative and silent aspects of Christianity are being rediscovered.<sup>69</sup> William Johnston even thinks that the Protestant body has done better than the Romans with their evangelical empha-

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<sup>68</sup>De Mello Conference.

<sup>69</sup>Wayne Teasdale, "Interview with a Spiritual Master: The Trinity" (Interview with Bede Griffiths, December, 1986), "Living Prayer" 21 (May-June, 1988): 30.

sis upon "change of heart" over his Roman tradition of emphasis upon social, ethical, and religious rightness.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>Johnston, The Inner Eye of Love, p. 145.

Regardless, all have become, in the late Thomas Kelly's words, "rationalistic, humanistic, and service-minded."

Protestant emphasis, beginning so nobly in the early Luther, has grown externally rationalistic, humanistic, and service-minded. Dogmas and creeds and the closed revelation of a completed canon have replaced the emphasis upon keeping close to the fresh upsurging of the inner life. . . . the dearth of rich Protestant literature on the interior aspect of Christian living, except as it bears on the opening experience of conversion, bears testimony to its emphasis being elsewhere.<sup>71</sup>

The one who has discovered an understanding of silence and experienced it will thus need patience in today's Western church. But since time has no real meaning, and since happiness and joy are not dependant upon externals, he or she is willing to exist, witnessing that God is always giving, open, loving, and never needing defense.

Certainly the effects of recent awakenings to silence are making their impact. San Francisco Theological Seminary is a leader among Presbyterian seminaries. With the recent addition of a "Spiritual Director" to its staff and a Doctoral of Ministry degree in the area of "Spirituality," important steps are being taken.

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<sup>71</sup>Kelly, p. 33.

The Lutherans of Canada have recently opened their first monastery. An editor of a Presbyterian magazine walked a several-hundred-mile "pilgrimage" to the General Assembly meeting in 1988. Such acts are symbolic of the existing renewal now taking place. The author expects to see pilgrimages and silent retreats a regular, accepted part of the Western Church in future years. He expects to see silent retreats a normal part of Seminary training, and he expects to see some, who in response to the call, commit their lives to monastic prayer and devotion within the Protestant community.

Thus it is a hopeful, exciting era. It has never been better to be alive. The Spirit is working, moving, leading, and it is good!