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THE CHURCH IN THE WILDERNESS:
CHRISTIANITY'S CONFLICT WITH CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER.

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Abstract of Thesis

Protestant Christianity has had a five-hundred year history of unease with contemplative prayer and spirituality, ranging from an arm's length discomfort to active suspicion. Among the numerous reasons expressed for this distrust, four stand out: contemplative prayer is seen as 1) irrational and lacking valid scholarship, 2) Gnostic, 3) Quietist, 4) passive and disengaged from the essential active societal work of Christianity. These assumptions are perilous in our current culture which is clearly hungering for contemplative experience and the accompanying fruits of transformation. In the absence of perceived interest or expertise in the Church, many seeking people have turned from Christianity to other paths or to no path at all. This thesis seeks to address the above four points and demonstrate that they are based on 1) out-of-date scholarship; 2) misunderstanding of the teachings, practices, and experience of contemplative prayer; and 3) miscommunication often based on loaded language and an incomplete understanding of contemplative terminology in its own frame of reference.

Chapter One: Christian Contemplation in the Postmodern Era.

*If you are a theologian you truly pray.
If you truly pray, you are a theologian.
(Evagrius. Chapters on Prayer. 60)¹*

*You must descend from your head to your heart.
At present your thoughts of God are in your head.
And God Himself is, as it were, outside you,
and so your prayer and other spiritual exercises
remain exterior. (Theophan, a monk)²*

Disconnection and Hunger

In a seminary class I attended during my time at the Vancouver School of Theology the discussion turned to ethical behaviour in civil society. The professor cited an example of road rage. "How would you manage a situation in which you were cut off by a speeding, angry driver?" A student's reply was tentative and thoughtful. "First I would look inside myself to check out my reaction..." The professor responded, "Quietism may not be helpful here..." And so the student's work of self-awareness in daily life was dismissed. In another class concepts for God were being discussed. A student states: "I mentioned that we have the models God as Father, God as Rock, God as husband, but what about God as mystery? Then there was silence and my question was not answered and the discussion went on as if I hadn't asked." These are simple examples of a complex and serious challenge facing mainstream Christianity: a misunderstanding, even disconnect, between the theological academy that educates clergy and supports churches, and the general population which has shifted identifiably in the direction of contemplative transformational spirituality found in Eastern religions.

¹ Evagrius of Ponticus, "Chapters on Prayer," 60, in *The Praktikos & Chapters on Prayer*, trans John Eudes Bamberger, OCSO. Cistercian Studies Series 4. (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1981), 65.

² Chariton's *The Art of Prayer*, trans. E. Kadloubovsky and E. Palmer. (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), 183, in Martin Laird, *Into the Silent Land: A Guide to the Christian Practice of Contemplation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, 27

Christianity has its own rich and longstanding tradition of contemplative prayer including a substantial spiritual psychology of transformation. Yet mainstream churches and the theological academy which supports them often dismiss contemplative prayer as being: 1) irrational and lacking valid scholarship, 2) Gnostic, 3) Quietist, 4) passive and disengaged from the essential Christian service of helping neighbours in need (local and global). These accusations generate an immeasurable loss for both the Church declining in membership, and a significant population of seekers who turn to other religions, or grassroots Christian movements with little church affiliation, or perhaps construct their own private spirituality drawn from various sources.

This thesis seeks to address this dilemma by demonstrating that these academic prejudices against contemplative prayer are rooted in 1) out-of-date scholarship, 2) misunderstanding of the teachings, practices, and experience of contemplative prayer, 3) miscommunication often based on loaded language and an incomplete understanding of contemplative terminology in its own frame of reference.

If successful, this thesis can make an important contribution towards resolving the tension between mainstream Christianity and its own contemplative heritage. Such resolution is essential for the well being of today's Church serving Christ in a turbulently evolving and earnestly seeking world.

Christian tradition of Contemplative Prayer and Mysticism

So what are contemplative prayer and spirituality and contemplation? Are they the same as mysticism? How does contemplative prayer relate to a "spiritual psychology of transformation"? What are the history and tradition of Christian contemplative spirituality?

Mysticism is defined by Bernard J McGinn and Sydney Spencer³ as: "... the sense of some form of contact with the divine or transcendent, frequently understood in its higher forms as involving union with God." The function of mysticism is "... not simply a transient ecstasy; it is a permanent state of being in which the person's nature is transformed or deified."

I take a fairly broad definition of *contemplative prayer*, but I do establish some clear parameters around this generosity. I include in my definition the discipline and practice of forms of prayer⁴ that facilitate our engagement with the divine mystery; *however* for these prayer forms to be truly part of contemplative prayer they *must cross an interior border into the realms of stillness and silence of apophatic prayer* – i.e. -- beyond all concepts: thought, words, images, or feelings.⁵ Augustinian brother Martin Laird considers this silent communion with God to be an innate human capacity "like the rhododendron's capacity to flower, the fledgling's for flight, and the child's for self-forgetful abandon and joy."⁶ Within this silence, Laird states, God hears us and we hear God. Laird asserts there are two inseparable aspects to Christian contemplative prayer: "the practice of stillness (also called meditation, still prayer, contemplative prayer, etc.) and the practice of watchfulness or awareness."⁷ Wisdom and insight are an inherent fruit

³ *Online Encyclopedia Britannica*.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/115240/Christianity/67557/Forms-of-Christian-mysticism#ref=ref301526> (Accessed August 2009)

⁴ Prayer forms are varied and can include *Lectio Divina* (praying with scripture), rosaries, mantras such as used in Christian Meditation, sacred words or images such as used in Centering Prayer, praying with icons, use of breath with attention focused interiorly on parts of the body (as the ancient hesychasts did), walking meditation or yoga etc. as part of sitting meditation. All of these can be helpful in facilitating the interior silence that eventually arises generating contemplation.

⁵ Apophatic prayer can be understood as communion with God beyond all concepts, within a silence and stillness that is paradoxically vitalizing. Cataphatic prayer (Kataphatic) includes all forms of prayer that utilize conceptualization: words, thoughts, images, feelings.

⁶ Martin Laird, *Into the Silent Land: a Guide to the Christian Practice of Contemplation*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1.

⁷ Laird, Martin, *Into the Silent Land*, 4.

of contemplative prayer, the response of the Holy to our listening presence, a response that generates healing and transformation from the greatest depths of the human soul and spirit. Contemplative prayer involves an alert-aware yet restful presence, an energizing paradox, rather than a hyper-vigilant state, or the conversely vague unfocussed slumberous state that early Christians perceptively identified as *pax perniciosa* (pernicious peace). Cistercian monk Fr. Thomas Keating describes contemplative prayer as "... a process of moving from the simplified activity of waiting upon God to the ever-increasing predominance of the gifts of the Spirit as the source of one's prayer."⁸ Keating considers mysticism and contemplation to be synonymous. I define *contemplation* as our direct, unmediated, immediate presence in experiential communion with the Divine Presence within a generative mutual silence; this contemplation is a primary fruit of the practice of contemplative prayer. Further fruits include ongoing healing of the human ego. Franciscan Fr. Richard Rohr describes contemplation as "full-access knowing" which "refuses to be reductionistic. Contemplation is an exercise in keeping your heart and mind spaces open long enough for the mind to see other hidden material." Rohr states that contemplation is about being vulnerable, being increasingly present, refusing to take the egoic path of dualism that seeks to generate dichotomies, to divide and conquer; contemplation can eventually take us to non-duality,⁹ an advanced unitive state likened to seeing with the eyes of the Divine.¹⁰ Rohr further states that contemplation is "counterintuitive for almost all Western people;" it is about *willingness* to allow God

⁸ Thomas Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart: the Contemplative Dimension of the Gospel*, 20th Anniversary ed. (NY:Continuum, 2007), 186.

⁹ Richard Rohr, *The Naked Now: Learning to See as the Mystics See* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2009), 34.

¹⁰ See my comments on the three classical powers of purgative-illuminative-unitive, this chapter, 7.

within to love us, rather than *willfulness* which underlies ego based prayers that proceed from our need for control.¹¹

McGinn and Spencer state that the majority of mystics consider any psychic phenomena to be secondary and even dangerous. For example John of the Cross states they should never be relied on (*Ascent of Mount Carmel*, 2.11). Teresa of Avila agrees with him. (*Interior Castle*. IV, Ch.2, no.9) Not all who engage in contemplative prayer experience psychic phenomena, dramatic or otherwise; instead they proceed simply and faithfully in their own gradual transformation taking on increasingly and identifiably the fruits of the spirit (Gal. 5.22). Experiencing phenomena is *not* sufficient criterion to define a mystic. Many contemplatives who do not have such experiences remain faithful to contemplative prayer, gradually bearing the fruits of their discipline. I therefore suggest that a genuine mystic is one who seeks faithfully, daily, however imperfectly, the apophatic place of interior silence and unknowing in prayer, with or without phenomena, with the resulting gradual transformation in Divine union that emerges from such personal constancy, through troubles and desolation as well as peace and consolation. The one who does so enters more and more deeply into union with God, manifesting genuine incarnation of the Holy through humble presence, exhibiting compassion, wisdom, strength and groundedness in relationships and activities of daily life.¹² This is no small exercise. I suspect that most of us can recognize the times we meet such living saints, even if we can't exactly identify what it is that infuses them.

Christian mysticism is a luminous thread that has vibrated throughout the history of Christianity from its earliest beginnings to our present time. Mystical encounters

¹¹ Richard Rohr, *The Naked Now*, 64.

¹² Thomas Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*, 180-181.

appear like wellsprings throughout the Christian faith: from Gospel legends of the Annunciation, Jesus praying in the desert wilderness, to post-resurrection encounters of followers with the risen Christ, the writings of Paul (II Corinthians 12.1-3) in the first century; Clement of Alexandria, and Origen in the second and third centuries; the desert fathers and mothers, Evagrius of Ponticus, Augustine of Hippo, Gregory of Nyssa in the fourth century; Pseudo-Dionysius and Maximos the Confessor through the fifth and sixth centuries; Scotus Erigena and Symeon the New Theologian in the ninth century; Hildegard of Bingen, Anselm of Canterbury, Bernard of Clairvaux in the eleventh and twelfth centuries; Meister Eckhart and his students Heinrich Suso and Johannes Tauler, Jan van Ruysbroeck, Mechtilde von Magdeberg, Marguerite Porete in the thirteenth century; Julian of Norwich and Catherine of Siena in the fourteenth centuries; Catherine of Genoa in the fifteenth century; Ignatius of Loyola, John of the Cross, and Teresa of Avila in the sixteenth centuries; George Fox (founder of the Society of Friends), and the controversial Mme. Jeanne Guyon and her advisor Bishop Francois Fénelon of the seventeenth centuries; through to the twentieth century figures such as Evelyn Underhill, Thomas Merton, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, and Desmond Tutu.¹³ This is a very partial list of identifiable mystics in the Christian tradition, all of whom in their own times and cultures present to us an engagement with the Holy at profound levels of union and impact on their own lives, and the lives of those who encountered them. The language used to describe their experiences of union with the Divine varies, but there are several characteristics they all have in common.

¹³ See Desmond Tutu. *An African Prayerbook* (New York: Image/Doubleday, 1995), xviii-xix. "And so, as we keep still in the presence of God, we luxuriate in this knowledge: that we are loved..."

The mystics (contemplatives) were grounded in relationship with the larger community. McGinn and Spencer state:

Although the essence of mysticism is the sense of contact with the transcendent, mysticism in the history of Christianity should not be understood merely in terms of special ecstatic experiences but as part of a religious process lived out within the Christian community.¹⁴

Those mentioned here all held their place within the church community of their day, often challenging the status quo to the point of endangering their own integrity and physical safety.

Most, if not all of these mystics had lengthy, in-depth experiences of suffering, physical and/or psychological, which were an integral part of their relationship with Christ, and also of their mysticism. This element of suffering was an intrinsic element of their psychological and spiritual transformation. Martin Laird states that “contemplative practice can contribute to, even transfigure, the struggle with afflictive emotions.”¹⁵

Christian mysticism has always had an inseparable relationship between psychological and spiritual maturation –i.e. -- transformation. While psychology as we understand it today is largely a late nineteenth-twentieth century phenomenon, it is nonetheless a recognizable element in the early mystics and throughout the tradition. Dr. John Bamberger, a Cistercian monk who is also a psychiatrist, attributes to Evagrius considerable “psychological insight”.¹⁶ Bamberger identifies Evagrius’s experience and articulation of the inner struggles and “psychic phenomenon” as the human ego at war with itself in the process of engaging “the true self”. Jean Leclercq states that the “depth

¹⁴ *Online Encyclopedia Britannica*,
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/115240/Christianity/67557/Forms-of-Christian-mysticism#ref=ref301526> (Accessed August 2009)

¹⁵ Martin Laird, *Into the Silent Land*, 95.

¹⁶ Jean Leclercq, OSB. “Preface” in Evagrius Ponticus. *The Praktikos & Chapters on Prayer*, John Eudes Bamberger, OCSO, trans. (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1981), vii.

psychology” of the twentieth century in fact does not reach the depths that Evagrius explores.¹⁷ Pseudo-Dionysius in the fifth to sixth centuries offered the apophatic (*via negativa*) approach to God which is the heart of Christian mysticism and contemplative experience. He also provided us with the now traditional three stages described as *purgative-illuminative-unitive* which are core to divinization (also called deification).¹⁸

I wish to highlight these classical “three powers”¹⁹ of transformation here, because in this thesis I refer to them with a perspective quite different from the traditional one. The *Purgative-illuminative-unitive* dimensions of the spiritual journey, as discussed by Pseudo-Dionysius, are viewed as linear, hierarchical stages of Christian maturity – we supposedly pass through one stage onto the next as if passing through grade and high school to graduation. Today these classical three powers are still generally viewed hierarchically with unitive experience presumably bringing us to full maturity. However this hierarchy of stages is clearly problematic for a number of reasons: individuals can have unitive experiences at the affective (emotional) level but recognizably not reach the currently identified highest levels of consciousness (non-duality); also twentieth century developmental psychology provides us with more sophisticated models having more levels/stages and more detailed descriptions of these stages.²⁰ Hence we may be tempted to demote or dismiss the “classical three”, but I am convinced we would lose much by

¹⁷ Leclercq, xii.

¹⁸ *Online Encyclopedia Britannica*.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/115240/Christianity/67557/Forms-of-Christian-mysticism#ref=ref301526> (Accessed August 2009)

¹⁹ *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*. Colm Luibhead, trans. (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 154-155, 235.

²⁰ Jim Marion, *Putting on the Mind of Christ: The Inner Work of Christian Spirituality* (Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads Pub., 2000), 26-27. See also my “Appendix II: Ken Wilber’s States and Stages of Consciousness.”

doing so. Far more is gained by re-envisioning purgation-illumination-union²¹ not as fixed hierarchical stages, but rather as three movements in a cyclical process, a spiral actually, through which we recycle again and again at ever deepening levels, carrying us through increasing stages of maturation²² – provided we complete each cycle. If we cannot, for whatever reason, complete the cycle, we don't progress.²³ This is process, not rigid hierarchical perfection, and so is fluid and imperfect yet filled with potential. It can carry us through unitive experiences at deeper and deeper levels. So please note, when I refer to these classical three powers, including unitive, I am speaking of movements in a cyclical/spiral process, not fixed hierarchical stages.

Hence, we can see purgation-illumination-union as the continuing cyclical process of union of human spirit with Holy Spirit gradually plumbing our greatest depths – resulting in ongoing psycho-spiritual maturation at the heart of the contemplative's prayer and lived life. Peace and quiet alone do not a contemplative make. At times, contemplative prayer can be an inwardly and outwardly turbulent and rocky process during purification (purgation) which directly impacts the human ego. Such a process was addressed by the great Spanish mystics John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila.²⁴ These

²¹ In Keating's terminology "purgation" is the same as "unloading and evacuation of the unconscious" which inevitably leads to insight ("illumination") which in turn paves the way to wisdom-understanding-compassion, the fruit of intimate union of human spiritual heart with the Divine in our deepest core ("unitive"). Hence these classical three powers viewed as cycles have a lot of mileage in today's spiritual psychology. cf. Thomas Keating, "Chapter 8 The Psychology of Centering Prayer", *Intimacy with God: An Introduction to Centering Prayer* (New York: Crossroad Pub., 1994), particularly 77.

²² cf. Thomas Keating, *Intimacy with God*, 85-88.

²³ Jim Marion, *Putting on the Mind of Christ*, 28-29.

²⁴ Jungian psychologists of the twentieth and twenty first centuries are fascinated by John of the Cross's "Dark Night of the Soul", and Teresa of Avila's "Interior Castle" e.g. John Welch, O. Carm. *Spiritual Pilgrims: Carl Jung and Teresa of Avila* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982) John Welch, *When Gods Die: an Introduction to John of the Cross* (New York: Paulist Press, 1990) Ann and Barry Ulanov, *Primary Speech: a Psychology of Prayer* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1982) Mary Wolff-Salin, *No Other Light: Points of Convergence in Psychology and Spirituality* (New York: Crossroad, 1982) Also Gerald May, *The Dark Night of the Soul: a Psychiatrist Explores the Connection Between Darkness and Spiritual Growth* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005).

two sixteenth century spiritual doctors of the Church provide us also with descriptions of deep interior experiences of transformation, of contemplative prayer in silence and stillness uniting human and Holy Spirit with resulting influence upon their relationships and communities. The mystical encounters of the contemplative at prayer, while interior and apparently solitary or “individual”, in fact inevitably initiate significant shifts in relationships and the larger community.

Christian mystics historically have influenced their communities and larger societies. Jesus was undeniably a mystic fully engaged in the religious, political and social issues of his time. The Desert Fathers and Mothers were known to provide counsel to those who sought them out, and eventually through John Cassian²⁵ and his impact on Benedict of Nursia, influenced the development of monasticism and the foundations of Western Christianity. Julian of Norwich, while living a solitary life in a cell attached to a church, counseled those who came to her window in times of societal upheaval.²⁶ Catherine of Siena intervened in a divided church and died young, ministering to the poor in Rome.²⁷ Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross affected significant changes in their Carmelite order and church of the day. Guyon and Fenelon had so significant an impact socially and politically they were attacked by both King and Church; their teaching underlies the formation of the Quakers.²⁸ John Woolman, an eighteenth century Quaker,

²⁵ *John Cassian Conferences*. Colm Luibheid, trans. Classics of Western Spirituality. (New York: Paulist Press, 1985) Cassian lived c.365-c.435 CE.

²⁶ Ralph Milton, *Julian's Cell: the Earthy Story of Julian of Norwich* (Kelowna, BC: Northstone, 2002)

²⁷ *Catherine of Siena: The Dialogue*. Suzanne Noffke, OP, trans. Classics of Western Spirituality. (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 1-9.

²⁸ Patricia A. Ward, “Madame Guyon and Experiential Theology in America,” *Church History*, 67:3, (September 1998): 409. See also: Dianne Guenin-Lelle. “Friends Theological Heritage: From Seventeenth-Century Quietists to A Guide to True Peace,” *Quaker Theology*, 6, (Spring 2002): <http://www.quaker.org/quest/issue6-3-Lelle01.htm> (accessed Feb. 2009).

is a prime example of contemplative prayer affecting social justice.²⁹ Thomas Kelly, a twentieth century Quaker, speaks clearly of the relationship between inner transformation through the prayer of quiet and the outer work of social transformation. "... holy and listening and alert obedience remains, as the core and kernel of a God-intoxicated life, as the abiding pattern of sober, work-a-day living."³⁰ Parker Palmer, another twentieth century Quaker, also identifies the invaluable relationship between contemplative prayer and outward relationships and action.³¹ Thomas Merton, a twentieth century Cistercian monk is well known for his integration of contemplative prayer and spirituality with social justice.

What is the relation of this [meditation/contemplation] to action? Simply this. He who attempts to act and do things for others or for the world without deepening his own self-understanding, freedom, integrity and capacity to love will not have anything to give others. He will communicate to them nothing but the contagion of his own obsessions, his aggressiveness, his ego-centered ambitions, his delusions about ends and means, his doctrinaire prejudices and ideas.³²

Merton is talking about the integration of contemplative prayer, psychological and spiritual transformation which includes healing and even transcending the ego, relationship to God-Self-Others, and incarnate social action in our communities.

Contemplative prayer takes many forms, ultimately arriving within the transformative apophatic arena. Very early in Christian history several ways of prayer were taught to draw a person gradually into contemplation – e.g. -- the use of scripture, concentration and focus of attention upon the interior heart ("Prayer of the heart"), use of breath and body postures.

²⁹ See *The Journal of John Woolman*, E. Glenn Hinson, ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1978)

³⁰ Thomas Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992, 1941), 32.

³¹ Parker Palmer, "Action and Insight: an Interview with Parker Palmer", *The Christian Century* (March 22-29, 1995)

³² Thomas Merton, *Contemplation in a World of Action* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 160-161.

Lectio divina (“sacred reading”) can be traced as far back as Origen in the second century. We find descriptions of the method in early saints such as Augustine of Hippo who writes of listening to psalms, and discerning Christ in the words. John Cassian, learning from the Desert Fathers and Mothers, describes the use of phrases of scripture, particularly the Psalms, read slowly and attentively with awareness of one’s experience, pausing where there is an attraction to a phrase or image in scripture, remaining there as long as one finds communion with Spirit. One word can contain all that is needed to sustain the person who finds him/herself drawn into and held within the apophatic silence of Divine presence.³³

The early church of the East speaks of “hesychia: silence, peace, sweetness of union with God” found within the person’s body as they concentrate their mind in prayer. (John Climacus. Seventh Century. *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, 27th step.) The repetition of a brief phrase is used to sustain the link of relationship with “the interior Master” (Augustine. Also Cassian’s *Conferences* X, 8-11). The phrases used in liturgies of the Church through to the twenty-first century were used in the fourth century Egyptian desert (Kyrie eleison, Lord have mercy). Invocation of the name of Jesus as a prayer drawing one deeper is found in the sayings of the Desert Fathers: Athanasius (The life of Anthony XCI), and Pseudo-Macarius (c.400CE. *Coptic Cycle of Sayings*), and later writers such as John Climacus (*Ladder of Divine Ascent*),³⁴ Fast forward to nineteenth century Russia where this “Jesus Prayer” was being used and taught by monks of the

³³ Olivier Clement, *The Roots of Christian Mysticism* (New York: New City Press, 1993), 200-202.

³⁴ Olivier Clement, 203-205.

Eastern church³⁵, and now is in current use in the West today. Diadochus of Photike (fifth century) writes: “Let us keep our eyes always fixed on the depths of our heart with an unceasing mindfulness of God.” (*Gnostic Chapters*, 56, 61.).

This “prayer of the heart” is described by Isaac of Ninevah (Seventh century Syria):

When you give yourself to prayer, if you are, as far as possible, free from all distraction, and if the verse comes suddenly to a halt on your tongue and immobilizes your soul in the silence, and if, independently of your will, this silence remains in you, be sure you have entered the peace you seek ... [if] you find tears filling your eyes and flowing with no effort down your cheeks, be sure that the wall before you is down ... if you find ... your intellect has become immersed in your heart without your having foreseen it ... [if] peace reigns over your thoughts, if this state continues, be sure that the cloud has begun to cover your dwelling with its shadow.³⁶

Isaac’s words foreshadow the fourteenth century classic *The Cloud of Unknowing*,³⁷ which in turn was the foundation upon which twentieth century Cistercian Fr. Thomas Keating and his community developed Centering Prayer as a way of bringing this deeply rooted tradition of contemplative prayer to twentieth century laity and church. Similarly, the sixth century writings of John Cassian influenced twentieth century Benedictine Dom John Main to develop his method of Christian Meditation to assist contemporary Christians to access their heritage of contemplation. Today, some thirty years later, the work of John Main is sustained worldwide through the World Community for Christian Meditation, overseen by Laurence Freeman, OSB,³⁸ and Contemplative Outreach International has spread the teachings of Thomas Keating and Centering Prayer around

³⁵ *The Way of a Pilgrim and The Pilgrim Continues His Way*. R.M. French, trans. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1965). See also *The Pilgrim’s Tale*. T. Allan Smith, trans. and Aleksei Pentkovsky, ed. Classics of Western Spirituality, 95 (New York: Paulist Press, 1999)

³⁶ Isaac of Nineveh. *Ascetic Treatises*, 12. in Olivier Clement, *The Roots of Christian Mysticism*, 207.

³⁷ Anonymous. *The Cloud of Unknowing AND the Book of Privy Counseling*. William Johnston, ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1973)

³⁸ World Community for Christian Meditation <http://www.wccm.org> (accessed October 2008)

the world.³⁹

The works of John Cassian deeply influenced Benedict of Nursia, who used *lectio divina* in his monasteries. Eleven centuries later, a wounded and disillusioned soldier undergoing a dramatic conversion, lived in poverty outside a Benedictine monastery learning their way of prayer, and the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises were born; Ignatius of Loyola taught his followers prayer using images, passages of scripture, the Lord's Prayer, breathing and focus of attention as a means of entering into the depths of the heart and silence. The Ignatian Exercises are well used today by Jesuits, Sisters of the Cenacle, and laity.

All of these forms of prayer begin in the *Cataphatic* realm, using words, images, thoughts, emotions, physical sensations. All of these forms of prayer *have the potential* to carry us into the contemplative apophatic prayer of human spirit communing with Holy Spirit well described as the "Cloud of Unknowing" provided we work with them according to the directions given to us by the great contemplatives of the Christian tradition.

I have been deeply engaged with contemplative spirituality for the past twenty-seven years, and in so doing have learned much from these great spiritual ancestors. I have also lived this life in the company of ordinary contemporary people, striving to deepen in prayer and relationship with God, themselves and others. These nearly three decades of experience inform my writing this thesis. This ancient and present community of contemplative Christians strengthens and undergirds my conviction of the immense significance of this transformative prayer and spirituality for the living church today.

³⁹ Contemplative Outreach International <http://www.centeringprayer.com/> (accessed October 2008)

Christian Contemplation and the Psychology of Awakening

Contemplative prayer, insight and transformation are a “package deal” on this path. It is an Easter path, an inside participation in the life, suffering, dying, and rising of Christ within the human soul. In the fourteenth century, Catherine of Siena described the inseparable connection between insight and transformation: self-knowledge is the entrance to knowledge of God, to the experience of God’s love through participating in Christ and eventually becoming Christ’s presence in the world. Speaking of herself, Catherine writes:

She has ... become accustomed to dwelling in the cell of self-knowledge in order to know better God’s goodness toward her, since upon knowledge follows love. And loving, she seeks to pursue truth and clothe herself in it. But there is no way she can so savor and be enlightened by this truth as in continual humble prayer, grounded in the knowledge of herself and of God. For by such prayer the soul is united with God, following in the footsteps of Christ crucified, and through desire and affection and the union of love he makes of her another himself.⁴⁰

In a twenty-first century context, Beatrice Bruteau writes similarly of the marriage of transforming consciousness and transforming life. She describes the relationship between contemplative prayer and action as being sourced in our ability to access our own depths of self and there encounter the inflowing love of God.⁴¹

Bruteau writes of two “selves”: the one which is our egoic descriptive self; the other is our true self, the deepest human core united with the ever inflowing Divine Spirit. Our egoic descriptive self is a contrast consciousness⁴² perpetually based in survival mode. It defines itself in terms of hierarchy – power, class status, possessions and

⁴⁰ *Catherine of Siena: The Dialogue*. Suzanne Noffke, trans. (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 25.

⁴¹ Beatrice Bruteau, “From Dominus to Amicus: Contemplative Insight and a New Social Order.” *Cross Currents*, XXXI, no. 3 (Fall 1981): 273-284.

⁴² Think of “contrast consciousness” as awareness that perceives “this as opposed to that”, “this separated from that”; contrast consciousness is not inclusive, but separates “this from that”, “me from you” in order to have identity.

wealth.⁴³ Recognizable as “the spirit of this world” which generates socio-economic, gender, cultural, racial inequities, prejudices (and road rage); it functions in the realm of duality that collapses into dualisms⁴⁴ of exclusion, of competition and exalted individualism, of beings separate from one another.

In her discussions of ego and egolessness, Dorothee Soelle notes that when the human being closes off from the open and flexible place of ego transcendence which allows union with God in our deepest and fullest being, then the ego takes over, shuts out God and becomes god itself:

With less God around, the ego can enjoy itself undisturbed while it is also subjected very differently to the constraints of self-examination and constant observation. It can no longer lose itself to anything and so becomes its own, albeit merciless, god.⁴⁵

In such a psychic environment, the darker side of the human person can infiltrate even our best intentions. The shadow can take hold in destructive ways, as previously stated by Merton.

Bruteau cites Merton as she describes the true self:

At the center of our being is a pin point of pure nothingness which is untouched by sin and illusion, a point of pure truth, a point or spark which belongs entirely to God.⁴⁶

If we remain in the egoic self, defined by descriptions and mutual negation, then indeed

⁴³ Beatrice Bruteau, “Dominus to Amicus”, 274-277.

⁴⁴ ⁴⁴ For the purposes of this thesis, it will be helpful to clarify the difference between the terms “duality” and “dualism”. Duality we know and live with in all aspects of life as opposites which come together: black and white, right and left, up and down, back and front, body and spirit, life and death, joy and sorrow, love and hate, etc. Duality needs no qualitative judgment against it. In fact tensions between the opposite poles generate energy which is often fruitful. Jung recognized this in his studies of the transcendent function. Dualism, however, causes problems, as the tension between the poles collapses into one or the other pole, resulting in imbalance and loss of life-giving energy –e.g.- illusion filled love that turns to hate, fundamentalism, etc.

⁴⁵ Dorothee Soelle, *Silent Cry: Mysticism and Resistance*, trans. Barbara and Martin Rumscheidt, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 224.

⁴⁶ Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (Garden City: Image, 1968), 142. Cited by B. Bruteau “From Dominus to Amicus”, 278.

we are separated from active participation in the Divine action. Contemplation, Bruteau states, is

the direct and actual experience of participation in the Divine Life ... The center of consciousness now locates itself in the sinless point of nothingness that is the True Self and looks back on the descriptions as something else.⁴⁷

The True Self is the genuinely “actualized” self in union with the Divine. The contemplative then can participate and cooperate with the transforming and healing work of the Holy Spirit within and act from the deepest human core. This partnership finds its simplest and most effective expression through a two-fold path: meditative practices which lead to contemplation and insight, and personal behaviour modification which chooses self-aware life giving responses rather than unaware life negating behaviour generated from egoic survival programs.⁴⁸ In this Bruteau agrees with Martin Laird’s description of contemplative prayer composed of contemplation *and* insight, and with Thomas Keating and his associates who developed an insight practice called “The Welcome Prayer”⁴⁹ which accompanies Centering Prayer.

Engaging in contemplative prayer practices with commitment takes courage for many reasons, not the least of which is the direct threat to the ego. Letting go of ego control is the drop off point into emptiness, the nothingness that Merton describes. It is also the primary gateway into union with the transcendent and immanent ever present inflowing love and life of God. Citing John of the Cross, Soelle says of this:

... we enter ... unprotected, without all the security mechanisms that we use for consolation and diversion ... and you are not ashamed of your nothingness. You are to let go of your fear of being nothing and be free for “the nothing that wants to be everything.”⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Beatrice Bruteau, “Dominus to Amicus”, 278.

⁴⁸ Beatrice Bruteau, “Dominus to Amicus”, 278.

⁴⁹ Cynthia Bourgeault, *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening* (Cambridge, MA: Cowley Pubs., 2004)

⁵⁰ Dorothee Soelle, *Silent Cry*, 218.

For Bruteau this is the open encounter and engagement with agapic love.

God cannot be seen, cannot be looked at, cannot be objectified, God can only be coincided with, or known from the inside, by experiencing in one's own subjective consciousness the radiant power of outflooding agape that is the Divine Life.⁵¹

This inflow of God as agapic energy into the human spirit flows through the many layers of human psyche. Bruteau makes an ultimate proclamation of grace that sounds very similar to Catherine of Siena:

In the first case, in finding God one found oneself, and
in the second case, in finding oneself, one found God.⁵²

The actualized human being is genuinely a lover, fulfilled in loving as God loves.

Increasingly the contemplative lives in a non-dual state of inclusivity. The subject/object polarities ruled by the descriptive egoic self dissolve, as the agapic through flow enters our lives in the world.⁵³ Change happens, beginning with the contemplative's outlook – hierarchy, competitiveness, possessiveness are replaced, not with a confusion of boundaries and identity, but with the fluid, grace filled dance of knowing who one is and functioning from that ground of being coupled with the capacity to respect the other. Our actions come, therefore, from a very different place. Agapic energies flow into every aspect of life's endeavour.⁵⁴ In Soelle's terms, human nothingness becomes God's everything.

The foundation on which the ego exists that has become ego-less is that God needs human beings and does not have to be looked on as an idol of fate that rules with a free hand just as it pleases. This cooperating of God and the human being who has become free of the ego is one of the basic certainties of mystical life.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Beatrice Bruteau, "Dominus to Amicus", 279.

⁵² Beatrice Bruteau, "Dominus to Amicus", 279.

⁵³ Beatrice Bruteau, "Dominus to Amicus", 280.

⁵⁴ Beatrice Bruteau, "Dominus to Amicus", 283.

⁵⁵ Dorothee Soelle, *Silent Cry*, 228.

This, then, is the work of the engaged contemplative, moving from silent apophatic prayer into daily life. It is the heritage of Christianity from our beginnings, a heritage from which much of Christianity has lost touch, generating a very real void. Many people of our time have been seeking the contemplative with immense longing, and our churches have been emptying out because of their need and our inability to meet it.

Actively Seeking Contemplation: Church at the Close of the Twentieth Century

1. State of the Liberal Mainstream Church.

In May 2008 I attended a silent Theravadin Buddhist vipassana retreat at Spirit Rock Insight Meditation Center outside San Francisco. For 8 days, 80 people together held a focused silence with several hours daily of sitting and walking meditation. We were a fairly even mix of men and women, mostly Caucasian, ranging in age from adolescents to seniors. Meanwhile, on the weekend during our retreat, there were another 75 to 100 people gathering in a hall outside the retreat area to hear a visiting teacher. Spirit Rock also lists among its activities, a family program now nurturing second and third generations of families, and teen retreats of mindfulness practice, silent sitting, walking meditation, small group discussions, and unstructured free time.⁵⁶ Of course I could not help comparing all of this to the Anglican parish I attend which has, on any given Sunday, an average attendance of 75 persons, more women than men, more seniors than young or middle age, some young families with children, and a sparse spattering of adolescents who come occasionally. Ours is one of the larger more active parishes on Vancouver's North Shore. I have also attended a smaller parish, all elderly, with no signs of capacity for renewal – a parish which has recently closed.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ *Spirit Rock News*, 21, no. 2 (Sept 2008 – January 2009): 6.

⁵⁷ See my chapter 6, 10.

While there are certainly clear signs of renewal in mainline liberal churches⁵⁸, a simple look at some basic statistics raise many questions if we compare my Spirit Rock experience with any given Sunday in my current parish.

The Anglican Church of Canada's yearbook reveals a clear and notable decline in church membership at the national level over the past 40 years:

Anglican Church of Canada Membership Statistics:⁵⁹

Year	1997	1987	1977	1966
Total Parish Roll Membership	717,708	808,220	997,371	1,292,762
Confirmed Membership	384,204	554,939	596,176	671,410

Attrition of Total Parish Roll Membership over 30 years: 575,054 or **44.5%**

Attrition of Confirmed Membership over 30 years: 287,206 or **42.8%**

These statistics are not at present reversing, according to Rev. Gary Nicolosi, the Congregational development officer for the Diocese of British Columbia. Citing from several sources including *Project Canada* by Reginald Bibby, *The Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches*, Statistics Canada, and a U.S. Episcopal Church magazine entitled *The Living Church*, Nicolosi demonstrates an increasing decline from the 1997 statistic for the Anglican Church of Canada: 1.3 million in 1961 to 658,000 in 2001 – a decrease of 53%. At the national level, those who attended church more than twice a month are numbered at 325,000. Nicolosi defines this latter group as “the attenders and the givers ...they determine the viability of the church.” The American Episcopal Church fares no better declining from 3.5 million in 1965 to 2.2 million in 2007 or 55%.⁶⁰

At the local level, the United Church of Canada's directory demonstrates an equally substantial rate of attrition in one of Vancouver's central presbyteries:

⁵⁸ Diana Butler Bass, *Christianity for the Rest of Us* (New York: HarperOne, 2006)

⁵⁹ Anglican Church of Canada. General Synod. *Anglican Year Book*. (Toronto: General Synod, Anglican Church of Canada, 1965 -) No statistics have been compiled for 2007 at the time of this writing.

⁶⁰ “Re-thinking how we do Church.” *Anglican Journal: National Newspaper for the Anglican Church of Canada*. 155, no.7, (September 2009): 1, 9.

United Church of Canada: Vancouver Burrard Presbytery:⁶¹

Year	2001	1988	1978	1968
Total Members Res. & Non-Res.	4,298	7,266	9,129	14,994
Total in Christian Ed. Programs	2,407	3,764	4,080	4,647

Attrition of Total Members Res and Non-Res over 33 years: 10,696 or **71.3%**

Attrition of Total in Christian Ed. Programs over 33 years: 2,240 or **48.2%**

Compared to these attrition rates in two mainline Canadian Christian denominations at local and national levels, the Harvard Pluralism Project⁶² estimates an American population of approximately 800,000 Western Buddhists (American converts) with the total American Buddhist population including Asian immigrants ranging from 2,450,000 to approximately 4 million. There are some 500 to 600 Buddhist Centers throughout the United States.⁶³ The Harvard survey provides a general picture of religion in the United States as well as Canada. Project Researchers state clearly that their statistics are general because in many instances it is impossible to compile precise numbers. However, even a generalized picture demonstrates the landscape for religion in North America has radically shifted in the past half century. Noting that Buddhism and other religions such as Islam have Western converts it is not difficult to determine where at least some of our declining church population may well have gone. This raises the question, why? The answer no doubt is many-faceted; my focus here is on the relationship of the decline to Christian contemplative spirituality.

2. Changing Church Needs the Contemplative.

Protestant Reformation and Rationalism.

Respected Quaker Thomas Kelly clearly identifies the watershed in which

⁶¹ United Church of Canada. *Year Book and Directory*. Toronto: United Church of Canada, 1970 - .

⁶² *The Pluralism Project at Harvard University*. <http://www.pluralism.org/resources/statistics/index.php> (accessed October 2008).

⁶³ Harvard estimates 1,285,000 Hindus, 250,000 Sikhs, 25,000 Jains, 18,000 Zoroastrians, 6 million Muslims, 6 million Jews, 768,000 Pagans (Wicca), 142,245 Baha'is. Christianity: The Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches estimate a 1998 "inclusive enrollment" of 158,294,022 and in 2004 an enrollment of 161,145,004.

Western Christianity lost its orientation and openness to the contemplative, the 16th century Reformation:

Protestant emphasis, beginning so nobly in the early Luther, has grown externally rationalistic, humanistic, and service-minded. Dogmas and creed and the closed revelation of a completed canon have replaced the emphasis upon keeping close to the fresh upspringings 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.⁶⁴

Writing during the onslaught of World War II, Kelly identifies a shadow in Western Protestant Christianity that by the 1960's and 70's hindered Christianity from addressing the spiritual needs of a generation and successive generations, the great spiritual hunger that the Roman Catholic monks, Father Thomas Keating (OCSO) and Father John Main (OSB) identified and sought to address. A rationally oriented, humanistic, service minded religion of dogmas and creeds could no longer nurture seeking souls. The radical shift in the map of religion in the West strongly suggests that Kelly was right.

Dorothy Soelle speaks to the conversation and searching that we three women engaged in at the Buddhist retreat:

The distinction between the ground of being perceived in personal terms, or in transpersonal terms, need not concern us here. For are "mindfulness" or "pure attentiveness" of Buddhist tradition not other words for what the Abrahamic traditions call "love for God"?⁶⁵

Soelle also adds to Thomas Kelly's perception regarding the current challenge to Christianity, as she herself sought for a mysticism missing from her German Protestant heritage.

What I was seeking had to be less dogmatic, less cerebral and encased in words, and less centered on men. It had to be related to experience in a twofold sense of the word: how love for God came about and what consequences it has for life. I was not looking for what Thomas Muntzer refers to as "made-up, fictitious faith," that is, something that is fine for

⁶⁴ Thomas R. Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion*, 7.

⁶⁵ Dorothee Soelle, *The Silent Cry: Mysticism and Resistance*, 2.

the head and keeps the institution functioning. Instead, I searched for the mystical element of faith – in the Bible and other sacred writings, in the history of the church, but also in the everyday experience of lived union with God or the divinity.⁶⁶

The rationalist trajectory of Protestantism has taken us 400 years down an analytical road to a barren land of such spiritual dryness that our deep yearning for intimacy with God cannot be fulfilled. The interactive mutual love relationship between one's self and the present and living Divine, so central to fulfilling the Great Commandment in daily life, is not being nurtured by the church at levels sufficient to meet the need of the current generations of spiritual seekers.

Opening to the Contemplative in Christianity

The sea change in Western Christianity can be identified beginning in the late 1960's and early 1970's as the entrance of Eastern meditation practices began feeding a great Western spiritual hunger that was not satisfied by Christianity. So great was the diversion of youthful population from the Church that Thomas Keating and members of his Cistercian community recognized that the contemplative prayer central to their lives had not been available to average church attendees for centuries. Keating and fellow Cistercians, including Basil Pennington and William Meninger, responded by offering Centering Prayer, based on the 14th century classic *The Cloud of Unknowing*⁶⁷. At the same time, Dom John Main offered teachings on Christian Meditation, a method he developed based on the 4th century *Conferences* of John Cassian.(c.365-c.435)⁶⁸ Thirty plus years later their work continues to foster contemplative prayer in Christian groups

⁶⁶ Dorothee Soelle, *The Silent Cry*, 2.

⁶⁷ Anonymous. *The Cloud of Unknowing and the Book of Privy Counseling*, ed. William Johnston (New York: Image Doubleday, 1973)

⁶⁸ John Cassian. *Conferences*. trans. Colm Luibheid. (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), Conference X.

around the world. At both grassroots and leadership levels, it is clear that Christians are seeking a way to deeper contemplative prayer.

In her book *Christianity for the Rest of Us*, Diana Butler Bass gives evidence of rejuvenation in mainstream churches. Christianity is renewing itself with what Marcus Borg terms an “emerging paradigm”⁶⁹. The foundational beliefs of the Christian tradition are being reviewed by scholars, clergy, and lay populations alike, and are undergoing a shift. The faith community is exploring its origins, questioning doctrinal beliefs about Jesus and the means of salvation, examining historical claims regarding the life of Jesus and how Christianity was formed, and very much a part of this all, discovering paths of contemplative prayer and spirituality that have long been suppressed within the Western church. Butler Bass lists one of the ten signposts for renewal in liberal mainline churches is some form of contemplative prayer.⁷⁰

Phyllis Tickle, former religion editor for *Publishers Weekly*, states: “We are in pursuit of the kind of unity that will be emergence Christianity, and with contemplation and prayer to look at what we are about.”⁷¹ Echoing Borg’s term “emerging”, Tickle describes a new Church in formation; Tickle states that Christianity is currently undergoing a mega-shift that seems to strike humanity every five hundred years (Reformation half a millennium past; Great Schism half a millennium prior to that; Benedict, Gregory the Great, and the doctrine-defining Council of Chalcedon before that;

⁶⁹ Marcus Borg, *Jesus: Uncovering the Life, Teachings, and Relevance of a Religious Revolutionary*. (NY:HarperSanFrancisco, 2006)

⁷⁰ Diana Butler Bass, *Christianity for the Rest of Us*, 115.

⁷¹ Judy Romero-Oak and Rhoda Parker. “The Contemplative Life – Tools for Emergence,” *Connections: The Newsletter of Spiritual Directors International*. 18, no.2 (August 2009): 2. This article quotes from Phyllis Tickle’s keynote address to the annual conference of SDI in Houston, Texas, April 15-21, 2009.

Jesus rocking Judaism five hundred years before that.⁷²) Richard Rohr, OFM, founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation, states that Christianity, like other world religions, is recognizing the necessity for the “non-dual mind” that can eventually develop from disciplined contemplation, and the great need to resurrect contemplative practices. Rohr states:

“We largely lost the contemplative traditions ... even in the orders that called themselves contemplatives. When it comes to suffering, infinity, love, death, God, freedom – the biggies – when you come to any of those you can’t deal with them with logic, with the rational mind, when you think dualistically.”⁷³

Returning to my Spirit Rock experience, at the close of the retreat I had interesting conversations with two Euro-American women, aged about early to late 40’s. Upon hearing I identified as Christian one woman said, “I’m trying to address my negativity towards Christianity. I recognize it is religious intolerance. Can you find insight teachers and meditation in Christianity?” The second woman acknowledged that she was also Christian, an Episcopalian from North Carolina, and that she, her priest and his wife secretly attend Buddhist retreats – secretly because their parish family “would not approve.” Then she added, “Jesus didn’t leave instructions.” Reflecting later, I thought I might have responded “... or perhaps we misunderstood and/or lost track of his instructions.” This Episcopalian woman is also a qualified psychotherapist who uses Buddhist insight teachings in her professional practice. She is part of an expanding community of psychotherapists who do.⁷⁴ And so, there were the three of us, part of an

⁷² Phyllis Tickle, *The Great Emergence: How Christianity is Changing and Why* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008), 1-31.

⁷³ Judy Romero-Oak and Rhoda Parker. “The Contemplative Life – Tools for Emergence,” 3.

⁷⁴ Contemplative Psychotherapy.net www.contemplativepsychotherapy.net “... a growing world wide directory of contemplative psychotherapists ... created with the intention of helping people find counselors who combine Buddhism and psychology in their psychotherapy practice.” (Accessed October 2008).

unnumbered community of seekers working out our relationships with the contemplative dimensions of Christianity and, in this case, Buddhism.

As has been shown, insight and transformation have been part of Christianity over its lifetime. We have now clear evidence that contemplative spirituality, working with insight and transformation, was practiced within the first centuries of the developing tradition. We also have a much clearer picture regarding the conflict between the formal church and contemplative spirituality as Christianity was being born. This early conflict has been present throughout the history of the church, including today, and it has cost us dearly.

Survey of Accredited Canadian Protestant Schools:

At the beginning of this chapter I cited examples of missed communication between students and professors regarding the practice of contemplative spirituality among the general population and what is taught in our theological schools. There is evidence that while these schools are embarking on some “catch-up”, there is still a substantial way to go.

There are thirty ATS accredited Canadian Protestant Theological Colleges and Seminaries listed on the Association of Theological Schools website.⁷⁵ These schools range from conservative evangelical to liberal mainstream, covering a wide spectrum of doctrinal emphasis and theological orientation. Reviewing their online calendars of degrees and course listings⁷⁶ reveals a patchwork quilt of levels of interest and approaches to contemplative spirituality and prayer. Eleven out of thirty, to varying

⁷⁵ (<http://www.ast.edu/MemberSchools/Pages/denom.aspx> (accessed 2009.08.20).

⁷⁶ Calendars for the 2009-2010 academic year.

extent, indicate an attempt to address contemplative spirituality.⁷⁷ Of these, six indicate an experiential component in addition to academic study. Academic calendar listings cannot provide a complete picture of what actually takes place in classes, however we can glean a general sense of what is happening.

School	Course re Contemplative	Contemplative Practice
Huron College (Anglican)	General examination of "heightened interest in spirituality in contemporary culture, its social, ethical, religious significance – ecology, vocation, aboriginal, globalization, mysticism"	None apparent.
Wycliffe College (Anglican)	Curriculum covering Celtic, English Evangelical, and Benedictine spiritualities; Spiritual life of parish; Personal prayer as "soil of ministry. Desert Fathers/Mothers, spiritual theology and psychology of prayer. Traditions of Lectio Divina, Ignatian prayer, Centering Prayer, Christian Meditation, Awareness Examen. Biblical teachings on prayer.	"Quiet Wednesday each term for retreat and spiritual nurture." Spiritual Mentors through off Campus. Lectio Divina, Centering Prayer, Christian Meditation, Awareness Examen.
Atlantic School of Theology (MultiDenom)	Pathways to God: History of Christian Spirituality. "Uses a practice-reflection model to introduce participants to experience a variety of models of prayer and encourages participants to integrate new prayer practices into their spiritual lives" (Lectio Divina, Centering Prayer, Ignatian prayer). "Contemporary, psychological approaches to prayer and embodied prayer."	As described in the course on Pathways to God – Lectio Divina, Centering Prayer, Ignatian prayer.
McGill U. Faculty of Relig. Studies: Montreal School of Theology (MultiDenom)	"Seminar exploring the phenomena of internal religious experience in their relation to received formularies of Christian thought and practice." Calendar states taught in alternate years.	None apparent.

⁷⁷ The Vancouver School of Theology, which had offered a Masters level degree in spirituality and spiritual direction, cancelled that particular program for the 2009-2010 academic year.

Regent College (MultiDenom) – Protestant Evangelical	"Surveys the major traditions and practices of prayer ... recognizes the value of contemplation... reading the great classic literature on prayer ...to deepen and enhance our practice of prayer ... trace the interconnectedness of theology, personal life and prayer in the inner lives of theologians and saints ... Augustine, Gregory the Great, Bernard, Catherine of Sienna, Teresa of Avila, Luther, Calvin, Owen ...	Not specifically stated, other than values contemplation.
Toronto School of Theology (MultiDenom)	Roots of the Orthodox tradition; Patristics and Eastern Xian traditions; Ignatius, Irenaeus, Origin, Athanasius ... Cappodocians, Maximus, Simeon, Palamas; Spirituality of Icons; Ephrem and Syriac Christianity; Spiritual Exercise as a Christian Philosophy; Origins, evolution and psychology of religious experience ... Fowler, Lonergan, Ignatian and Carmelite Spirituality.	For the course on Theology of Spiritual Exercise, preference is given to those who have done the Ignatian Exercises
Tyndale College (MultiDenom) Protestant Evangelical.	Exploring the Desert Wilderness, including a one day silent retreat; Prayer paths to God (Offered occasionally) – history and practice of Christian prayer, history, theology, and practice of prayer relevant to nurturing spiritual life, prayer practicum in lectio divina.	Occasional prayer practicum in lectio divina.
U. of Winnipeg Faculty of Theology (MultiDenom)	Pacific and Prairie Jubilee Programs in Spiritual Direction.	Centering Prayer Monday through Thursday from 12:00 noon to 12:25. Free ½ day contemplative prayer retreats 1 st Saturday of each month in term.
Knox College (Presbyterian)	Spirituality and Religious education "examines religious educational theories found in writings of Lao Tzu, Zen Buddhism, Thomas Merton, Parker Palmer ... understanding self as basis for theory of religious ed."	None apparent.
Queens Theological College (United)	Christian Spirituality and Inner Journey: includes classic and contemporary texts in dialogue with one's own spiritual journey.	None apparent.

Carey Theological College (Baptist)	Practice of Contemplative Prayer; Spiritual formation : inward journey, outward expression ..."rich treasury of experiential practice, pilgrim attitudes, and spiritual traditions.	As stated under courses: practice of contemplative prayer.
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It is not easy to establish contemplative prayer in seminaries and theological colleges. As a student myself, I found that when contemplative practice was a requirement for spirituality and spiritual direction students, they came. Once the requirement factor was removed the numbers slimmed until only the two of us leading were left. A divinity student supported by a spiritual director also attempted to mount a Centering Prayer group after Evening Prayer and was unsuccessful. Most students attend communal worship, particularly those who are studying for ordination. However meaningful communal worship is, it cannot on its own replace the interior depth and transformative energies built by a disciplined and sustained contemplative prayer practice. Students, particularly full time students, are easily overwhelmed by heavy academic loads; establishing the discipline for contemplative practice is difficult. Without the support and encouragement of faculty and curriculum, contemplative prayer does not fare well in Protestant seminaries and theological colleges. There are other reasons for this besides student study loads.

Dr. Lynne McNaughton⁷⁸, a former professor of spirituality now returned to parish ministry, states "We must tend spirituality ... It goes deeper than we realize," adding that the usual courses in theology and scripture hermeneutics are not in themselves sufficient. She states we do need courses that address historical, theological, political and social issues, but we also need experiential adult education – transformative learning

⁷⁸ Interview with Rev. Dr. McNaughton, St. Clement's Anglican Church, North Vancouver, BC. July 21, 2009.

which encounters the wilderness, the many ways we may be broken apart and the rebuilding; there needs to be both academic and spiritual training for theological education to be integrative – e.g. scripture courses and also training in Biblically based spirituality. Dr. McNaughton notes that around 1997-98 there was a movement in North American theological schools to incorporate more spirituality – but the movement has had some historical obstacles. Generations of theological training from the 1930's to 1950's taught a fear of mysticism – the aphorism “begins in ‘mist’ and ends in ‘schism’” accompanies the belief that mystical spirituality is individualistic and not socially engaged. Dr. McNaughton has identified a dualism that is one of the four primary concerns this thesis attempts to address. She suggests that for theological education to be grounded both historically and pastorally, it must deepen spiritually.

Richard Rohr provides us with some consideration regarding the depth to be accessed through attention to spirituality, particularly *contemplative* spirituality, and what it means. Working with contemplative prayer takes us into ongoing conversion, what other traditions may call enlightenment; we move “forward step by step from almost totally dualistic thinking to nondual thinking at the highest levels...We call that higher way of seeing and being present *contemplation*.”⁷⁹ The nondual perspective (advanced unitive seeing) that gradually emerges from mature contemplative prayer, enables us to experience greater presence in relationships with ourselves, with God who is both within and about us, and with our neighbours. In other words, we are taken body, soul, and spirit into the heart of the Great Commandment. But this is a very challenging proposition and pilgrimage, hard to do in individual lives, difficult to do in church congregations, and

⁷⁹ Richard Rohr, *The Naked Now*, 62. Also please review my comments in my chapter 1, 8-9.

very demanding indeed to do in seminaries. Speaking from his experience as a priest,

Rohr says:

Too many clergy study religion and Scripture before they critique their own lens and process. They see without examining their way of seeing ... *How you see is what you see*. And to see rightly is to be able to be fully present – without fear, without bias, and without judgment. It is such hard work for the ego, for the emotions, and for the body, that I think most of us would simply prefer to go to church services.⁸⁰

And finally Rohr says: “Moses could never have seen burning bushes as the Divine, could never have persevered with so much unknowing, unless he had moved to a higher level of seeing.”⁸¹

⁸⁰ Rohr, Richard. *The Naked Now*. p.63.

⁸¹ Rohr, Richard. *The Naked Now*, p.63.

Chapter Two: Contemplation and Scholarship

*If the reckoning of mortals fails to turn
the lock to which your senses hold no key,
the arrows of wonder should not run you through:
even when led by the evidence of the senses
the wings of reason often do not fly true...
Diversity of powers can only spring
from formal principles, and all but one
would be excluded by your reasoning.
(Beatrice. *The Paradiso*.)¹*

*Western people want to positively know -- and know rationally,
which surely narrows the field of knowability!
(Richard Rohr. *The Naked Now*.)²*

Contemplative Spirituality and Scholarship: Mind-Reason-Intellect-and-the-Heart

“Mind, reason, intellect, emotion, and heart” – these tend to be loaded terms for the Western modern and post-modern mind. To Protestant sensibilities they engage the most foundational reasons for the Reformation and the world that developed from it: reason over superstition, freedom of the mind to think and express one’s thoughts without oppression, a heart unfettered from emotional anguish caused by soul destroying rule of church and state. Today we consciously and unconsciously attach powerful meaning and assumptions to terms such as these. How often do we hold emotion as the opponent of reason? Matters of “heart” can raise specters of sentimentality; or the lustful Hollywood substitute for love which has overwhelmed our society for half a century; or unbalanced passion in religion; or more positively, boundless generosity -- “s/he’s all heart”. “Mind-reason-and-intellect” are highly prized in the Protestant tradition, having lifted Europe out of the Dark Ages, given scientific-medical-technical *and* theological progress. “Mind-reason-and-intellect” have been paramount in Christian scholarship supporting the

¹ Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: The Paradiso*. 2.55-60. 70, trans. John Ciardi, (New York: New American Library, 2003), 608.

² Richard Rohr, *The Naked Now: Learning to See as the Mystics See*, (New York: Crossroad Pub., 2009), 111.

prophetic role of social justice and action – one of the great strengths of both Protestant and Catholic traditions. However, the emphasis on mind and reason partnered with misunderstanding of what contemplative spirituality means by “heart” and “intellect” have, I venture to suggest, been undermining Christianity for centuries and robbing the church of immeasurable resources which can actually increase her strengths, bring balance to her weaknesses, and assist Christian scholarship profoundly in its prophetic role.

Heart informing mind in the contemplative tradition is very far removed indeed from emotionality overtaking reason; “Intellect” and “Heart” are vastly different from reason in competition with emotion. Intellect and Heart in contemplative spirituality are something else all together, function at a radically different level of being, and are fundamentally instrumental in integrating every aspect of the human being (body, soul, and spirit) with the Holy Trinity. These differentiations hark back to the beginnings of Christianity and pulse through our contemplative arteries to this day. St. Paul, Evagrius, Diadochos, Augustine and Aquinas, and many others agree on this matter in their own times and language, including contemporary Christian contemplatives such as Bruteau, Bourgeault, Keating, and Rohr, and scholars such as Huston Smith, Ken Wilber, and Raimon Panikkar.

The heart and intellect, in the contemplative tradition, are that part of our being that enables us to commune with that which cannot be perceived either by our rational faculties of logic, nor our emotions. The translators of the *Philokalia* speak of “the heart” as neither the “physical organ” nor our “emotions and affections” but rather “the spiritual

center of man's being".³ They also define the "intellect" as "*nous* (*νοῦς*)... the highest faculty in man, through which – provided it is purified – he knows God or the inner essences of principles ... of created things by means of direct apprehension or spiritual perception." The *nous* functions by "intuition" not by "formulating abstract concepts", and understands by immediate experience. "The intellect dwells in the 'depths of the soul'; it constitutes the innermost aspect of the heart ... is the organ of contemplation, the 'eye of the heart' (*Makarian Homilies*)."⁴ And so ... when we hear of "letting the intellect descend into the heart" (i.e. turn one's attention into the heart space, and pray from there), we speak not of adding a little emotional passion or sensitivity to our scholarship, although that may be a good thing, but of something very different: we speak of stilling our outward senses, bringing the body-mind-and-emotions to restful yet alert stillness, in order that our spiritual intellect may engage our core human spirit (heart) with the Holy Spirit in transformative union. This union in turn generates a purifying love that influences who we are and how we act from the inside out through Divine inspiration. The spiritual heart and intellect, the *nous*, has a specific function in integrating the human being – body, soul, and spirit – within the Divine Spirit.

The early contemplatives provide us with a sense of how this transpires. What we seek to perceive, God as Spirit, is beyond our physical and rational sensibilities. Evagrius states:

When you are praying do not fancy the Divinity like some image formed within yourself. Avoid also allowing your spirit to be impressed with the seal of some particular shape, but rather, free from all matter, draw near the immaterial Being

³ *The Philokalia: The Complete Text compiled by St Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St Makarios of Corinth*, trans. and ed. G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, Kallistos Ware, (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), 1, 361-362.

⁴ *The Philokalia*, 1, 362.

and you will attain to understanding.⁵

Evagrius describes concept free prayer which leads into the apophatic realm, and the ageless contemplative practice of watching one's thoughts, feelings, and impulses (termed mindfulness in the Buddhist tradition) as a means of guarding the deep spirit as it seeks communion with God.

Stand guard over your spirit, keeping it free of concepts at the time of prayer so that it may remain in its own deep calm. Thus he who has compassion on the ignorant will come to visit even such an insignificant person as yourself. That is when you will receive the most glorious gift of prayer.⁶

Three centuries later, Diadochos of Photike describes the same practice of detachment leading to non-conceptual prayer in which we perceive that which is otherwise unperceivable.

If...we learn persistently to be detached from the good things of this world, we shall be able to unite the earthly appetite of the soul to its spiritual and intellectual aspiration, through the communion of the Holy Spirit who brings this about within us. For unless His divinity actively illumines the inner shrine of our heart, we shall not be able to taste God's goodness with the perceptive faculty undivided, that is, with unified aspiration. The perceptive faculty of the intellect consists in the power to discriminate accurately between the tastes of different realities.⁷

Diadochos's terms of "perceptive faculty undivided" and "unified aspiration" are recognizable as the place of the highest levels of *unitive vision*,⁸ in Eastern religions termed "*Advaita*" or *nonduality*. Nonduality is the core fruit of mature contemplative prayer, and the key ingredient to any endeavour, including scholarship, grounded in contemplative spirituality. The significance of nonduality cannot be underestimated. It is sourced in the ongoing infusion of Holy Spirit into the human being and is nothing less

⁵ Evagrius of Ponticus. "Chapters on Prayer." 66, in *The Praktikos & Chapters on Prayer*, trans. John Eudes Bamberger, OCSO, Cistercian Studies Series, no.4, (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1981), 66.

⁶ Evagrius of Ponticus. "Chapters on Prayer." 60. When these early writers speak of "prayer" they are specifically referring to contemplation.

⁷ Diadochos of Photike. "On Spiritual Knowledge and Discrimination: One Hundred Texts," 29, 30, in *The Philokalia*, 1, 261.

⁸ Review my comments on the three classical powers of purgative-illuminative-unitive in my chapter 1, 8-9.

than the source of generativity, pure love, wisdom, discernment, mercy, compassion, justice and all that comes with Divine Presence. Nonduality transcends duality *and* dualism, is dynamic and emerges from holding polar opposites in tension until that tension gives way into new life. In Christian terminology, the nondual state of consciousness is eventually born from the ever deepening union of human spirit with Holy Spirit in the spiritual “Heart” –i.e. – human union with Divine Love, something Diadochos readily recognizes. He cites St. Paul: “This is my prayer, that your love may grow more and more in knowledge and in all perception, so that you choose what is best” (Phil. 1.9-10)⁹ – or in the NRSV version:

so that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you determine what is best so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

Diadochos, and I suggest Paul, are speaking of much more than simply rational moral choices here. Rather – detaching from “the *good* things of this world” (the contemplative practice of letting go of all thoughts, sensations, and attachments in contemplative prayer – no suggestion here of evil), uniting “the earthly appetite of the soul to its spiritual and intellectual aspiration” (focusing all our attention and awareness – mental, emotional, and physical – in contemplative prayer) “through communion with the Holy Spirit who brings this about within us” (the engagement of our entire being via our *nous*, our spiritual faculty for perceiving the otherwise unperceivable, with the Divine presence responding to us, brings about union – arriving at the unitive stage in contemplation.) Diadochos describes this contemplative union as Divinity actively

⁹ Diadochus of Photike, “On Spiritual Knowledge and Discrimination: One Hundred Texts,” 30, in *The Philokalia*, 1, 261.

illuminating “the inner shrine of our heart”, of tasting God’s goodness with the “faculty undivided”, and of that “perceptive faculty of the intellect” having “the power to discriminate accurately between realities” – Diadochos is describing union and the resulting advanced unitive vision (nondual) from the apophatic depths. Paul describes this experience in terms not so much of morality, but rather as an overwhelming experience of God’s love – with the powerful suggestion that such love engaging us in the utter depth of our being (inner shrine of our heart) is transformative – and we can deduce that from this transformation ethical choices, sometimes very difficult ones, are made. Certainly this is the contemplative experience, and describes the function of “the intellect” in the “heart” – the heart being, not the source of emotion but far beyond that – the spiritual center/core of the human being which sources the soul level of ego formation, emotions, rational thought, behaviour and action. When this heart is made pure through the loving purifying communion of contemplation, it baptizes our entire being and every endeavour we pursue.

Augustine and Aquinas, those giants of Christendom’s scholars, also note we have different levels of “intellect”. Martin Laird states Augustine speaks of “higher reason”, and that

St. Thomas Aquinas ... can be said to speak for virtually the entire tradition when he calls this aspect of mind that thinks and calculates “lower reason” (*ratio inferior*) and that aspect of the mind that communes directly with God in contemplation “higher reason” (*ratio superior*).¹⁰

This is something vastly different than the rational intellect functioning as the primary mover. Furthermore, let us not fall into the mistake of proclaiming that this notion of *ratio superior* (*higher intellect*) denigrates the rational intellect – for that is most

¹⁰ Martin Laird, *Into the Silent Land: A Guide to the Christian Practice of Contemplation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 26.

certainly *not* what is being said here. What *is* being said is that as a result of contemplation the rational intellect is baptized from the human depths with divinized human-Holy Spirit. The world looks different when viewed through the unitive perception that results from this union. As the unitive breaks repeatedly upon the shores of consciousness, nonduality is eventually the gift from the sea – nonduality of which Richard Rohr and Cynthia Bourgeault speak, and Huston Smith, Ken Wilber, Raimon Panikkar, and every contemplative tradition in the world’s great religions including Christianity. This Great Unitive Wisdom has been breaking upon the world’s shores with increasing force for at least the past century, challenging the Reformation Age, crashing upon the ship of the Western Enlightenment, calling to the Church to enter the ocean and plumb the depths. For contemplative priest/activists such as Richard Rohr, and respected contemporary scholars such as Huston Smith, Ken Wilber, and Raimon Panikkar, these different levels of intellect are *both* essential for scholarship to reach its full potential.

Today there are many scholars, particularly with experience in interfaith dialogue (comparative religion in action), who consider inclusion of the contemplative perspective to be essential. Ken Wilber and Raimon Panikkar agree that “mind” is much more than simply our rational thought processes. “Mind” in this context requires that our rational intellect operate in union with other more subtle and extensive ways of knowing. Scholarship involving contemplative spirituality engages the “inner eye” (Smith¹¹) otherwise named “the eye of the heart” (Bourgeault¹²) or “the third eye” (Panikkar¹³); immerses us in the tensions of duality and nonduality; draws us into the realm of the

¹¹ Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth: the Primordial Tradition*, (San Francisco: Harper Colophon, 1976), 49.

¹² Cynthia Bourgeault, *Cliff Notes. Commentary on Panikkar’s Christophany*. http://www.contemplative.org/christophany_overview.pdf (accessed June 2010).

¹³ Raimon Panikkar, *Christophany: the Fullness of Man*, trans. by Alfred DiLascia (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004), 31.

apophatic, a direct connection with the infinite which inevitably alters us in ways both subtle and profound.

Richard Rohr states that third-eye seeing was clearly identified in eleventh and twelfth century Paris by Hugh of St. Victor (1078-1141) and Richard of St. Victor (1123-1173). As Richard states:

humanity was given three different sets of eyes, each building on the previous one. The first eye was the eye of the flesh (*thought or sight*), the second was the eye of reason (meditation or reflection), and the third eye was the eye of true understanding (contemplation).¹⁴

Rohr is also clear that one level of seeing does not supplant the others. We need the perception of our senses, of our rational mind and its capacity for reflection, *and* the transformation of consciousness that occurs from the gaze and seeing of the third-eye or *nous*. These eyes give sight to our “heart space, our mind space, and our body awareness.” When these three are integrated in perception, “simultaneously open and nonresistant” we develop the capacity for the true presence of contemplative awareness in life. Rohr challenges the dualistic thinking that gives one or two eyes precedence over the others. Without the wisdom that develops from the third eye

it is very difficult for churches, governments, and leaders to move beyond ego, the desire for control, and public posturing. Everything divides into oppositions such as liberal vs. conservative, with vested interests pulling against one another. Truth is no longer possible at this level of conversation. Even theology becomes more a quest for power than a search for God and Mystery.¹⁵

We hear in Rohr’s words a description of the contrast consciousness¹⁶ of which Bruteau speaks in her description of seeing dualistically rather than through unitive sight. Rohr

¹⁴ *Richard of St. Victor*, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), De Sacramentis, I,X,ii and The Mystical Ark (Benjamin Major), III-IV, in Richard Rohr. *The Naked Now: Learning to See as the Mystics See*. (New York: Crossroad Pub., 2009), 183 n8.

¹⁵ Richard Rohr, *The Naked Now*, 28-30.

¹⁶ We can see in Rohr’s words an example of the tensions that arise when we function from an awareness that perceives in terms of “this against that”. See note re “contrast consciousness” on page 14.

also clearly states that third-eye seeing cannot negate the other levels of sight without losing essential ground:

The third-eye person has always been ... the authentic mystic who grasped the whole picture. There is more to the mystical gaze, however, than having "ecstatic visions." If people have ignored the first and the second eyes, their hold on the third eye is often temporary, shallow, and incapable of being shared with anybody else. We need true mystics who see with all three sets of eyes, not eccentrics, fanatics, or rebels. The true mystic is always both humble and compassionate, for she knows that she does not know.¹⁷

Contemplative scholarship, therefore, involves a mature unitive (nondual) vision which shifts and expands perspective: knowing ourselves in relation to Christ and others both psychologically and spiritually; applying insight, exploring implications at all levels of life's endeavours, and giving solid attention to the many areas of rigorous scholarship being offered by respected theologians and scholars.

Three Scholars and the Contemplative Gift of Non-Duality

As we have said contemplative prayer is not a matter of emotionality superceding reason. We are speaking of a much deeper and much more inclusive awareness that influences both emotion and reason through the presence of the active Divine Spirit. There is also a corollary misunderstanding regarding the relationship between contemplation and scholarship. This is the assumption that contemplative spirituality lacks a scholarly foundation, and therefore has little of value to contribute to academia and theology. Under closer examination this assumption simply does not hold up.

The point can be made by looking at the work of three highly respected and credentialed scholars in the field of comparative religion and philosophy: Huston Smith¹⁸,

¹⁷ Richard Rohr, *The Naked Now*, 29.

¹⁸ Huston Smith's academic career includes professorial positions at the University of Colorado (1944-47), Washington University (1948-1958), MIT (philosophy, 1958-1983), Syracuse University (1973-1983), and in "retirement" UCLA/Berkley as visiting professor of Religious Studies. He holds twelve honorary degrees

Ken Wilber¹⁹, and Raimon Panikkar.²⁰ These are only three among many who readily demonstrate that a) there is indeed viable and valuable scholarship attending to the realm of contemplative spirituality, and b) contemplation has a fundamentally essential role to play in matters of religion in the world, life in general, and Christian scholarship in particular. One significant focus that Smith, Wilber, and Panikkar share is their clear recognition of the nature of nonduality which emerges from the practice of contemplative prayer and how desperately Christianity (and the West as a whole for that matter) needs this today.

Pre-modern Tradition, Modernity, Postmodernity

Smith and Wilber identify three major time periods in human history which are of prime importance to this subject matter: a) the traditional view of pre-modernity which Smith identifies as covering everything human from our emergence on planet Earth to the modern period; b) the modern world view which emerged with the development of the scientific method – i.e. – in labour pangs from the time of the sixteenth century Reformation, birthing into being and proudly taking on the world during the eighteenth century advent of the Western Enlightenment; and c) the postmodern world view

and has published 14 books. <http://www.hustonsmith.net/> and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Huston_Smith (accessed 2009.10.30).

¹⁹ Ken Wilber is a widely published American philosopher (25 books translated into 30 languages), and founder of the Integral Institute through which he works with recognized experts in disciplines such as science and humanities, business, medicine, and also spiritual leaders in the world religions. <http://integrallife.com/contributors/ken-wilber>. (accessed 2009.10.30).

²⁰ Raimon Panikkar has PhDs in chemistry, philosophy, and theology. His career includes Visiting professor at Harvard University (1966); teaching and researching between the USA and India (1966-1987); Chair of Comparative Religious Philosophy, UCLA/Santa Barbara 1971-87; “retired” to Catalonia, Spain, 1987. He has published 50 books, supervised about 20 university theses from students around the world; collaborated on Classics of Western Spirituality; and consulted for UNESCO. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raimon_Panikkar; <http://raimon-panikkar.org/english/laudatio.html>; and <http://www.ecocontemplative.org/panikar.html> (accessed 2009.10.30).

challenging modernity from mid-way through the twentieth century and continuing.²¹

The era of *pre-modern Tradition* established the metaphysical world view found in the major religions of the world.²² At the heart of this era of tradition can be found the “perennial philosophy”, a common ground-of-being stance which contemplatives and contemplation-oriented philosophers see in all the great religions.²³ As we shall see, Smith, Wilber, and Panikkar all agree there is nothing in modernity or postmodernity that can replace this and that many if not all of our current dilemmas and difficulties – moral, ethical, political, and pretty much everything else – derive from the West’s incrementally aggressive action in dismissing the metaphysics (world view) of pre-modern tradition. This metaphysical world view has the contemplative at its core, and, as discussed in Chapter One of this thesis, the evident hunger and spiritual malnutrition of our time can be understood over the past five hundred years as a direct result of the loss of contemplative spirituality formed in the pre-modern period.

The *modern period* established our view of the natural world, laid the foundations for scientific understanding, and established the scientific method.²⁴ Empirical evidence is essential to this world view, and clearly the quantum leap forward for human abilities and understanding is part of our evolutionary history. The benefits to humanity have been immeasurable despite the enormous injustices that accompanied the leap. Smith goes to

²¹ Huston Smith, *Why Religion Matters: The Fate of the Human Spirit in an Age of Disbelief*. (New York: HarperCollins, 2001; HarperCollins eBooks, 2007), eBook type size S, 29-30.

²² Smith, Huston. *Why Religion Matters*. eBook type size S, 29-30.

²³ Smith, Huston. “Is There a Perennial Philosophy?” *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, LV (1987), 553-66.

http://www.worldwisdom.com/public/library/Is_There_a_Perennial_Philosophy.aspx#_ftn11 (accessed 2009.11.02). See also: Wilber, Ken. *A Brief History of Everything*. 2nd ed. (Boston: Shambhala, 2000), 31-32.

²⁴ Smith, Huston, *Why Religion Matters*, eBook type size S, 29-30.

some length in his book *Why Religion Matters* to acknowledge the benefits of science²⁵ – he does so to address the endemic polarization that problematically exists: if you like religion you must be against science, and conversely if you are committed to empirical science you have to dismiss religion and its metaphysics. This polarization – i.e. – dualism – embedded in Western consciousness is addressed by Smith, Wilber, and Panikkar in their works following here, including particularly the challenges posed to Christianity by the resulting divorce of contemplative spirituality from theology.

The *postmodern period* appears, in part, to have emerged out of the growing need to address the radical human injustices not addressed and also perpetrated by modernity. As Ewert Cousins and also Phyllis Tickle propose, we are in the midst of another quantum leap in human consciousness²⁶; and a world ruled by empiricism, capitalism, colonialism, ceaselessly at war, and divested of mature metaphysics has produced its own battery of injustices. Smith asserts that the great strengths of postmodernity are the social sciences which help address the great –isms: racism, sexism, colonialism, civil rights, women rights, etc. He quotes Thomas Kuhn’s definition of the postmodern perspective: “... facts derive their meaning from the paradigms that set them in place.”²⁷ Wilber views the definition through the eyes of a philosopher and social scientist: the postmodern viewpoint at its most essential holds the recognition that “all perceptions are simply perspectives and that all perspectives are embedded in bodies and cultures, not just in

²⁵ Smith, Huston, *Why Religion Matters*, eBook type size S, 32-36, 48.

²⁶ Ewert Cousins, *Christ of the 21st Century*, Rockport, Mass: Element, 1992. Dr. Cousins was Professor Emeritus at Fordham University where he was Director of Fordham Spirituality Program; Chief Editorial Consultant for the 107 volume *Classics of Western Spirituality*; General Editor of the 25 volume *World Spirituality: Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest*; served on the Board of *The Journal of Religion and Health*; advisor to Monastic Interreligious Dialogue, among other responsibilities and contributions to Christian studies. Also Phyllis Tickle, *The Great Emergence: How Christianity is Changing and Why* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008).

²⁷ Smith, Huston. *Why Religion Matters*, eBook type size S, 37.

economic and social systems.”²⁸ Essentially postmodernity demands a paradigm shift in human consciousness which is shattering to a dualistic world view. Relativism is but one consequence and, as Smith indicates, relativism and empirical science are not compatible. In matters spiritual, postmodern relativism can lead to a superficial syncretism – what The Tibetan Buddhist master Venerable Chogyam Trungpa terms “spiritual materialism”,²⁹ identified by the Christian contemplative community as “spiritual tourism”. This phenomenon is well recognized as spiritual seekers, lacking the transformative ground of being depth established through disciplined contemplative practice, travel a circuit of religious pluralism, unable to sink roots into the great experiential wisdom of primary tradition.

To summarize, each of these three periods, Smith and Wilber assert, has great strengths and weaknesses; their strengths they do better than the others, and are of great benefit, indeed essential, to the healthy maturation of humanity. The weaknesses of each era are also very real, definitely *not* to our benefit or betterment. Smith states: “We should enter our new millennium by running a strainer through our past to lift from each of its three periods the gold it contains and let its dross sink back into the sands of history.”³⁰ The problem here is that each successive era has filled in much needed parts to a developing whole while regrettably dismissing (“savaging” is Wilber’s descriptive term) that which went before. A dualistic worldview with its limitations demanding *either-this-or-that* has great difficulty sorting through this territory. Nonduality, which opens its perceptive field through the gateway of *both-this-and-that*, is better equipped to sweep

²⁸ Wilber, Ken. *Integral Spirituality: A Startling New Role for Religion in the Modern and Postmodern World* (Boston: Integral Books, 2006), 43.

²⁹ Chogyam Trungpa, *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism* (Boston: Shambhala, 1973)

³⁰ Smith, Huston. *Why Religion Matters*, eBook type size S, 48.

away the clutter of dualistic confusion and carry us into a more spacious universe – and nonduality is arrived at through disciplined engagement with contemplation which is based in pre-modern tradition. Christian theology following the scientific research methods of modernity and postmodernity has definitely benefitted in untold ways. However, divorced from contemplative spirituality, Christian theology has suffered in further untold ways from the absence of the nondual vision.

Huston Smith: Modernity and Spirit

Huston Smith entered the realm of nonduality two generations earlier than most Westerners. In his 1958 book *The Religions of Man*³¹ he demonstrated his capacity for exploring diversity from a nondual stance: while remaining thoroughly Christian, he engaged with other world religions on their terms, exploring them from *their* inside. He was at the forefront of the world which is still intensely struggling to emerge in the year 2010. Three of his works over the past half century critique the Western scientific world view and the problems resulting from over identifying with that view: *Forgotten Truth*, *The Soul of Christianity*, and *Why Religion Matters*.³² In these books he states clearly where Christian scholarship is falling short, specifically in theology: nonduality is arrived at through contemplative experience and practice established in pre-modern tradition, and Christianity has forgotten its roots.

Science, Spirit, and the Educational Dilemma.

The profound impact that modernity has upon our theological training cannot be

³¹ Huston Smith, *The Religions of Man* (New York: Harper, 1958), revised and re-titled *The World's Religions* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009)

³² Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth: the Primordial Tradition*, (San Francisco: Harper Colophon, 1976). *The Soul of Christianity: Restoring the Great Tradition* (New York: Harper Collins, 2005). *Why Religion Matters: The Fate of the Human Spirit in an Age of Disbelief* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001; HarperCollins eBooks, 2007)

underestimated. Smith states that the grip of modern scientific empiricism is so deeply instilled in our western consciousness, it has overtaken our educational institutions and professionals trained there. He notes that humanities and social sciences are second tier in the academic lineup, and cites lower salaries and funding as evidence – stronger evidence still, fields such as transformational psychology which function more experientially than empirically, must form their own organizations beyond the academic environment.³³ To belong to the academic lineup with recognition and validation of that community, the humanities have had to develop an empirical approach leading away from the experience of human spirit. We can readily see where this leaves seminaries and theological schools which seek the aforementioned recognition and validation from universities and colleges to which many, if not most, are attached. If humanities and social sciences are second tier, then theological schools generally fall into third tier if not lower. Ardently desiring and seeking equality with their academic peers, it is very difficult indeed, if not impossible, to span the abyss between the ontological and the empirical. Hence spiritual experience, and in particular contemplative spiritual experience, is addressed with ambivalence, mostly by shutting it outside the doors of Reformation-Protestant “Enlightenment” and the modern scientific methodology preferred by universities as well as schools of theology. Christians (and others) are left seeking spiritual depth elsewhere, similar to their cousins (actually their descendants: the humanities developed out of those sixteenth and seventeenth century Christian based European universities). They must

³³ Huston Smith, *Why Religion Matters*, eBook type size S, 164. Smith lists: Jungian Institutes; Association for Humanistic Psychology; Association for Transpersonal Psychology. All three, he says, are flourishing and have founded accredited training programs for professional therapists.

form groups such as para-church organizations to address the pressing need.³⁴ Our clergy and other degree earning “professionals” training for spiritual leadership must look beyond their seminaries to address the missing and needed elements – a fragmented training indeed.³⁵

Embracing the Skeleton; Missing the Lover.

Smith simply states: “The modern West is the first society to view the physical world as a closed system.”³⁶ The West’s modern perspective has reduced its view of reality to the material stratum. Science became the instrument for this reduction, yet even science needed more room to breath. Smith asks “Can science itself remain housed in being’s basement?”³⁷

Smith summarizes six points, drawn from science and relevant to religion, which identify how crucial the contemplative dimension is within religious traditions.³⁸ 1) Things are not as they seem. 2) Not only is there more than we perceive, the “more” is a “stupendous more”. 3) *We cannot know* this stupendous more in *ordinary ways*. 4) *We can know* this stupendous more through *ways appropriate* to it. 5) It is necessary to cultivate these appropriate ways; discipline and training are essential. 6) These appropriate ways also require suitable instruments.

Drawing on his knowledge of world religions, Smith outlines the “stupendous more” that Western modernity has been discounting. The modern mind dwelling in a 3-dimensional realm of space and time and matter/energy gradually lost the ability to detect

³⁴ For example: Thomas Keating’s Contemplative Outreach, John Main/Laurence Freeman and The World Community for Christian Meditation; Richard Rohr’s The Centre for Contemplation and Action; Cynthia Bourgeault’s The Contemplative Society and The Aspen Wisdom School; and many more.

³⁵ Huston Smith, “The Tunnel’s Left Wall: Higher Education,” *Why Religion Matters*, eBook type size S, 149-190.

³⁶ Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth*, 96.

³⁷ Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth*, 97.

³⁸ Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth*, 96-117.

other planes of reality. To live and love in the physical world only, Smith says, is like embracing the skeleton of one's lover as if that were the whole person. That which serves only the physical plane, seems destined to miss the messages from the other regions.³⁹ "Since reality exceeds what science registers, we must look for other antennae to catch the wavebands it misses."⁴⁰ The other antennae are found through the great teachers of the world's religions⁴¹

Beware, Smith warns, of viewing spiritual realities in terms of space, distance, separation. Separation, as Bruteau discussed, is what religion seeks to transform. Here we encounter a duality that opens into paradox: God is "out there", "radically other", "infinitely removed from what we are", and at the same time "nearer than our jugular vein".⁴² Smith brings us to the terrain of nonduality: of holding tension between opposites; withstanding the temptation to collapse into dualism; engaging the interior action that occurs in contemplation: "Transcendence *and* immanence, in absolute tension. If we lose our grip on either, the tone of our spiritual life collapses."⁴³

The non-physical world has its own dimensions and levels of being which, like science, require the appropriate instruments and disciplines to perceive and understand -- in this case, noetic knowing -- we need our "inner eye."⁴⁴ Tools and disciplines are available to religious communities at two levels: communal and personal.⁴⁵ Sacred texts, mythological tales, rituals and liturgies provide the means for communities to incorporate

³⁹ Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth*, 8. For a summary of the levels of reality with which Smith works see appendix I of this thesis. Ken Wilber uses these levels in his own discussions of growth and states and stages of consciousness, appendix II of this thesis.

⁴⁰ Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth*, 17.

⁴¹ Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth*, 18.

⁴² Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth*, 19.

⁴³ Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth*, 20.

⁴⁴ Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth*, 36.

⁴⁵ Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth*, 114.

spiritual dimensions into daily living. Then, through spiritual practice the individual personally internalizes these for a potentially deeper journey of integration. If religions deny their adherents the tools and teachings to access these spiritual dimensions, their members, particularly youth, will look elsewhere, as has been happening in the church since the 1960's.

Dimensions of Reality and Contemplative Knowing.

Smith describes four primary planes of reality; only the first one is physical: *terrestrial* (material), *intermediary* (realm of departed souls and shadows of Jung's archetypes), *celestial* (realm of the actual archetypes and gateway for human spirit to unite with the Divine, and, I suggest, the home turf of the *nous*/eye-of-the-heart), and *infinite* (the uncreated source of the others, and the prime source of nonduality/unitive engagement).⁴⁶ Smith suggests that these levels are identified in one way or another by all the major world religions. Human maturation integrates these levels, and the primary tool for this substantial spiritual work is contemplative prayer found by various names in the world's great religious traditions, including Christianity.

Smith, Wilber, Panikkar, and many others indicate these dimensions are our life environment in the ever present now, impacting directly all aspects of our lives. Cultural anthropologist Angeles Arrien indicates how important this integration is. As we engage in this level of spiritual work we encounter challenges that are the consequence of dualism: "fixed psychological patterns, fixed ideas, and unresolved family and social situations ... [which] will prevent our full creative expression"⁴⁷ Identifying and resolving such obstacles frees up the flow of creative forces that bring insight, depth, and

⁴⁶ See appendix I of this thesis.

⁴⁷ Angeles Arriens, *The Second Half of Life: Opening the Eight Gates of Wisdom* (Boulder, CO: Sounds True, 2005), 93.

wisdom to our lives, our work, our service – the fruit of engaging nonduality through the unitive level. Clarity, insight, and integration (purgation, illumination, and union)⁴⁸ are the path and the fruit of contemplation expressed within scholarship -- the Divine life sourcing ours with the vitalizing Sacred Presence that makes our scholarship truly prophetic.

This relationship between connecting our unitive relationship with God, and our outer endeavours including scholarship, is also clearly identified by Richard Rohr. The dualistic rational mind cannot access the “unconditionally loving God or an unconditionally loving self.” Our world view is at stake, and directly impacts our scholarship.

You see the text through your available eyes. You hear a text from your own level of development and consciousness ... Dualistic, early-stage thinking will murder the most merciful texts, because that is where they are. *We do not see things as they are; we see things as we are.* Take that as nearly certain.⁴⁹

States of consciousness and reality described by Huston Smith, and the stages of consciousness of which Rohr speaks, are core components of Ken Wilber’s Integral Spirituality. Like Huston Smith and Richard Rohr, Wilber sees contemplative prayer as essential to accessing nonduality, the integrating component of his extensive multi-disciplinary philosophy, and absolutely central to any valid scholarship in the complex and troubled Twenty-first century.

Ken Wilber’s Integral Spirituality

In the generation following Huston Smith, Ken Wilber also sought to identify and address the limitations of the modern perspective, and the need for an interior spirituality to accompany all endeavours in life, including scholarship. Wilber’s Integral philosophy

⁴⁸ Review my comments on these classical three powers in my chapter 1, 8-9.

⁴⁹ Richard Rohr, *The Naked Now*, 82.

is holistic, building on the evolution of human awareness and the planet in all areas – biological, cultural, psycho-spiritual, sociological etc. Smith identified that the “lower” becomes content for the “higher”. Therefore all stages of development, all perspectives are part of a living whole. The integral philosophy brings together the relationship between postmodern, modern, and pre-modern perspectives, and includes contemplative spirituality as an essential part of the whole. Indeed, Wilber’s work reveals how centuries of scholarship on “Gnostic” Christianity missed the boat, and how postmodern research, such as that by Karen L. King, when it includes contemplative experience, provides such very different findings from previous scholarship.

Wilber’s Integral Philosophy is extensive, and ranges far beyond the scope of this thesis. For our purposes, we will examine his AQAL (*aw-qwal*) System -- one of his specific tools that help provide context for understanding.

The AQAL System’s Four Quadrants

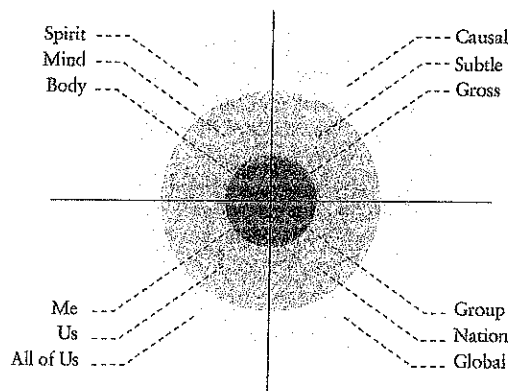
AQAL (*aw-qwal*) is the acronym for Wilber’s Integral model, and stands for: all quadrants, all levels (stages of development), all lines (developing intelligences such as spiritual, psychosexual, cognitive, etc.), all states (of consciousness), all types (e.g. masculine and feminine).⁵⁰ His AQAL approach to spirituality, our focus here, calls for holistic development: “physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual levels of being should be simultaneously exercised in self, culture, and nature.”⁵¹ This includes individual and communal, in all levels of being.

Wilber’s integral perspective diagrammed in the quadrants includes 1) singular and plural – individual and communal viewpoints; 2) pre-modern, modern, and

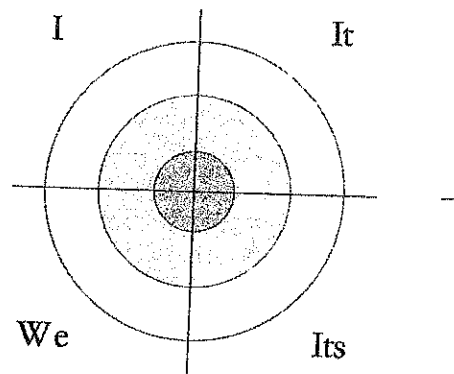
⁵⁰ Ken Wilber, *Integral Spirituality*, 26.

⁵¹ Ken Wilber, *Integral Spirituality*, 29.

postmodern approaches in the humanities and sciences; and 3) subjective and objective – interior phenomenology and exterior observation. All are considered to be essential to the whole. To exclude any one of these components eliminates a significant part of the whole resulting in a “broken” framework, an incomplete understanding and diminished being. All are needed at mature levels to help humanity become the fully realized beings we are intended to be; and all are needed for any religion to be whole. As we shall see, Wilber demonstrates that Christianity needs its contemplative dimension.



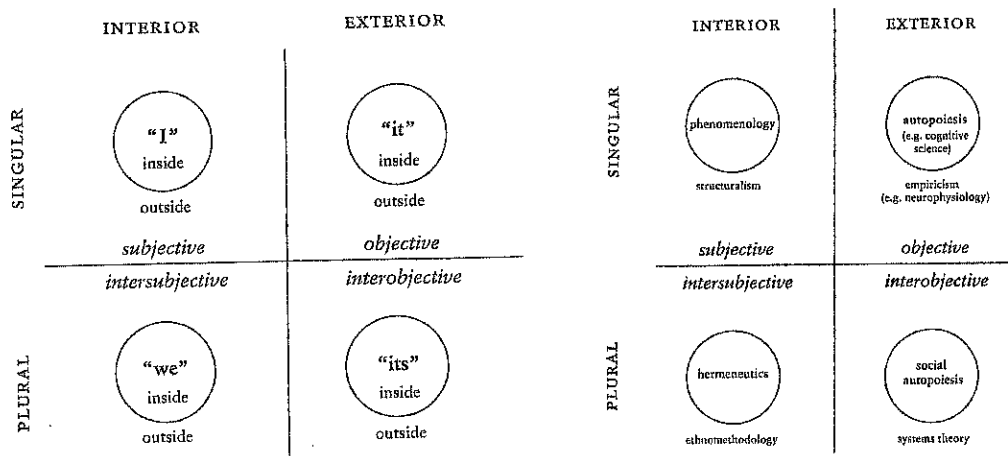
AQAL
IntegralSpirituality. p.24.



The Quadrants
IntegralSpirituality. p.20.

Fundamental to the quadrants are the levels of reality defined by Huston Smith – Wilber uses different terminology: gross (terrestrial), subtle (intermediate), causal (celestial), infinite which provide the states that progress into stages of psycho-spiritual development. Also included are the subjective personal (I), subjective collective (We), and the objective facts of the event (It, Its). Singular and plural, subject and object each take up a quadrant, and each quadrant has an interior and exterior perspective (zones).

Wilber considers his quadrants to cover all known paradigms for our current level of knowledge. (See diagram below.) Inner and outer perspectives in each quadrant create 8 “zones,” each of which holds a methodology useful for exploration. Each quadrant is a holon, “a whole that is part of other wholes”⁵²



8 Primordial Perspectives.
Integral Spirituality. p.36.

8 Major Methodologies
Integral Spirituality. p.37.

One zone/methodology on its own is incomplete and needs the others to create the full picture. As he works with these quadrants we begin to see how Wilber is creating a holistic perspective. The Upper Left Quadrant has both an interior and exterior view of the 1st person. The interior view, which he calls phenomenology, includes the experience of such things as introspection, meditation, contemplation, etc. The outside viewpoint of the 1st person locates a more objective observer, one who watches rather than experiences. The lower left quadrant (the postmodern perspective) holds the communal perspective. We have previously described Wilber’s definition of the postmodern viewpoint: recognizing that all perceptions are simply perspectives and all perspectives

⁵² Ken Wilber, *Integral Spirituality*, 34.

are embedded in bodies and cultures.⁵³ He emphasizes repeatedly that if we maintain ourselves, (consider our relationships, service, work) in only one zone of a quadrant, or only in one fuller quadrant, whichever, we will definitely have a skewed idea of reality.

Contemplative spirituality is primarily interior subjective, and therefore resides in Zone 1 of the Upper Left Quadrant. This is the region that for centuries has been most suspect or ignored or forgotten by mainstream Christianity, and radically denied by both modernity and postmodernity. Modernity, which demands empirical evidence through the scientific method, resides in the Upper and Lower Right Quadrants, and as Smith and Wilber describe, “savaged” the pre-modern subjective spirituality of the Upper Left Quadrant. Postmodernity (Lower Right Quadrant), which explores intersubjective truth and the social construction of reality, “savaged” modernity as having too limited a perspective, yet still shares modernity’s tendency to discount the subjective nature of pre-modern traditions. However, postmodernity identified that both the traditions and modernity were failing to recognize the way “culture molds individual perceptions” and therefore were assigning absolutes to cultural viewpoints.⁵⁴ Yet, says Wilber, the contemplative traditions have a great strength not found in the other quadrants: the in depth journey, exploration, and understanding of phenomenology of being and consciousness.⁵⁵ And this interior in depth exploration and understanding is the fruit of engaging the nondual perspective in the infinite dimension. The fruit of this exploration of inner (spiritual) dimension influences every aspect of life, and so do the loss of experience of this dimension and the resulting loss of awarenesses that derive from that experience. Smith (*Why Religion Matters*), Rohr (*The Naked Now*), Wilber (*Integral*

⁵³ Ken Wilber, *Integral Spirituality*, 43.

⁵⁴ Ken Wilber, *Integral Spirituality*, 48.

⁵⁵ Ken Wilber, *Integral Spirituality*, 47.

Spirituality), and Panikkar (*Christophany*) all address extensively the results of this loss on humanity and civilization and Christianity in our time.

Wilber's quadrants demonstrate how research and conclusions regarding "Gnostic" Christianity went astray, as will be discussed in the next chapter on Gnosticism. Working entirely in the right hand quadrants, scholars lacked the postmodern recognition (Lower Left Quadrant) that cultural viewpoints had been held as absolutes, and therefore were blind to their biases. Many of these scholars also lacked a depth of interior contemplative experience (Upper Right Quadrant, Zone 1), the location of nonduality (advanced unitive), which brings its own irreplaceable perspective to texts such as the Nag Hammadi and Berlin Codices.

Within each of these four quadrants are levels of development individually, communally, and globally. Details of these can be seen in Appendix II of this thesis. Wilber has worked with numerous developmental psychologists to refine these stages. Again, the point he makes is that we need all quadrants to gain the complete picture, and we need the Upper Left Quadrant of spirituality to bring in the deep wisdom of the great traditions.

Richard Rohr summarizes what this Upper Left Quadrant wisdom brings to the Church:

The growing consensus is that, whatever you call it, such calm, egoless seeing is invariably characteristic of people at the highest levels of doing and loving in all cultures and religions. They are the ones we call sages or wise women or holy men.⁵⁶

Rohr further describes the effect on western civilization having missed centuries of learning the paths and practices that develop from this "egoless seeing" (nondual perspective): "The tragic results have been rationalism, secularism, and atheism on the

⁵⁶ Richard Rohr, *The Naked Now*, 33.

Left and fundamentalism, tribal thinking, and cognitive rigidity on the Right. Neither is serving us well.”⁵⁷

The implications of these states and stages and quadrants become clear for scholarship and theological training. As modern orientation shifts into postmodern, our theology develops and benefits accordingly. But as Wilber and Smith demonstrate, we are predisposed to hold the most subjective area of the faith (Zone 1, ULQ – contemplative practice and spirituality) with great suspicion. Yet Zone 1 is the central arena for opening nondual consciousness. For several centuries, Christianity has left underdeveloped a significant part of spiritual maturation which provides essential insight and life to the Church. Rohr is stark in his critique of this historical lack: “From the way they talk so glibly about what is always Mystery, it’s clear that many clergy have never enjoyed the third heaven themselves, and they cannot teach what they do not know. Theological training without spiritual experience is deadly.”⁵⁸ Thomas Keating states that in the early centuries of Christianity theology *and* spirituality were inseparable.⁵⁹ He echoes the fourth century words of Evagrius: “If you are a theologian you truly pray. If you truly pray, you are a theologian.”⁶⁰ Keating, Wilber, and Rohr encourage the teaching *and practice* of contemplative spirituality in seminaries; Smith insists on the necessity of the contemplative dimension in Christianity; Panikkar argues for integrating nonduality into our Christology. With one voice these spiritual leaders note that this will then bring the invaluable missing dimension back into the churches, as well as open awarenesses for our

⁵⁷ Richard Rohr, *The Naked Now*, 33.

⁵⁸ Richard Rohr, *The Naked Now*, 30.

⁵⁹ Ken Wilber and Thomas Keating, *The Future of Christianity*, Disc One. (np: Integral Life, 2008)

⁶⁰ Evagrius of Ponticus. “Chapters on Prayer.” 60, in *The Praktikos & Chapters on Prayer*, 65.

developing theologians, scholars, and clergy. Huston Smith's image of embracing merely the skeleton; or including the whole body, soul, and spirit of one's lover, comes to mind.

Panikkar's Christophany

In his ground-breaking methodological study *Christophany*⁶¹, Raimon Panikkar makes a strong case for the validity of lived contemplative experience as an essential hermeneutical tool. He too, identifies the advanced unitive experience, the involvement of nonduality, as indispensable. Panikkar defines Christophany as:

a manifestation of Christ to human consciousness and includes both an experience of Christ and a critical reflection on that experience.⁶²

This sounds very much like Wilber's Upper Left Quadrant, Zone 1 experience, Zone 2 observation, and including the other three quadrants thereby generating integral scholarship that takes in all aspects of reality and being. Panikkar insists that Christophany does not replace the Christology of the past two millennia, but rather is part of that tradition, deepening its perspectives. Our encounter with Christ cannot be reduced to a solely doctrinal and rationally intellectual approach. It must include *experience of Christ*. We must open to the reality of the Spirit. "Without a mystical vision Christophany does not acquire its full meaning."⁶³

Like Smith and Wilber, Panikkar states we need "the third eye" – the intuitive knowing that arises as Divine Spirit baptizes human intellect.

The third eye does not compete with the intellectual eye; it belongs to a different order. Not only do we discover reality within us, but we become conscious that we ourselves constitute reality.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Raimon Panikkar, *Christophany*, 10.

⁶² Raimon Panikkar, *Christophany*, 10.

⁶³ Raimon Panikkar, *Christophany*, 10.

⁶⁴ Raimon Panikkar, *Christophany*, 31.

Here Panikkar echoes those who have gone before: Origen's three levels of reading (literal, ethical, spiritual),⁶⁵ Augustine and Aquinas, Hugh and Richard of St. Victor. The third eye (eye of the heart) is needed to accompany the rational eye. Christology and theology take on an incarnate dimension. The mystery penetrates and permeates our being more fully, opening our understanding and our encounter with Christ in whole new dimensions.

... we are suggesting the transcending of a purely rational approach and a thematic opening to the Spirit's action when we study the figure of Christ. "The Son of Man" is neither comprehensible nor real without the Spirit that gives him life.⁶⁶

Traditional theology and Christology has an external starting point based in western history, culture and methodologies. Much like Wilber, Panikkar suggests there is an equally valid place for an interior reference point which moves us beyond culturally embedded interpretations, and instead opens us to nonduality with its resulting ability to share experiences and conceptualization with other religions and cultures – from a common source – accessed via the third eye, something we see in the work of Huston Smith. We experience a significant shift in perspective, a heart and mind opening that occurs in the unitive level of our relationship with God. Panikkar asserts that the manifestation of Christ, at the heart of this transition is "so powerful" that it not only is beyond the mind's rational categories, it "unsettles them" Christophany then seeks language to express what has been seen, "drawing insight from the tradition" and contributes the result to the community and world. This is not therefore a solitary, self-serving process, but rather by its very nature *must* flow outward for the sake of

⁶⁵ Origen, "Commentary on Proverbs", 23 (PG 17, 221-4), in Olivier Clement, *The Roots of Christian Mysticism* trans. Theodore Berkeley and Jeremy Hummerstone (New York: New City Press, 1993), 99.

⁶⁶ Raimon Panikkar, *Christophany*, 10.

community and world. The inherent pressure to do so is evidenced in the Hebrew prophets and Jesus himself.

Contemplative practice is a dynamic process which opens the spiritual heart wherein resides the eye of wisdom. The resulting nondual vision contributes vital dimensions to theology, resolving seemingly irresolvable polarities and complexities.⁶⁷ Dynamic tension is the heart of the Christian divine-human relationship which moves us beyond the duality of “I—thou” – the contrast consciousness and separation Bruteau describes. Instead we are engaged in a *relationship of interabiding*, “pneumatic” (of the spirit), I to I – described by the writer of John’s gospel:

As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us ... so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. *John 16.21-23. NRSV.*

This relationship is one of union – the increasing union of divinization. Panikkar takes us through a process outlined by Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross and recognized through experience by mature contemplatives as they transition from dualistic experience into nonduality:⁶⁸ initially facing ourselves and egoic shortcomings and discovering grace and love; then the seeming absence of God in the Dark Nights; and finally the realization that God’s apparent absence is actually God’s most intimate presence for we are in union, nonduality at mature unitive levels. Throughout this ongoing process we must hold the tensions between our humanity/divinity and God’s Divinity/Humanity, awaiting resolution and emergence from the ever present paradoxes, like an arc of electricity between two poles. “The *seek me* cannot be divided from the *seek thyself*, for the *me* and

⁶⁷ Here again Richard Rohr cites a litany of examples: “...rationalism, secularism, and atheism on the Left and fundamentalism, tribal thinking, and cognitive rigidity on the Right.” *The Naked Now*, 33.

⁶⁸ Raimon Panikkar, *Christophany*, 32-35.

the *thou* are correlative. The *metron* is human and divine, theandric – indeed cosmotheandric.”⁶⁹ This is the moment and movement in which the human becomes divine, becomes Christ: “Jesus answered, ‘Is it not written in your law, I said, you are gods?’” (John 10.34) Holding the tension, not allowing it to collapse, gives birth to something new in the fires. This tension is the ultimate threshold.

In one sense the resolution never comes. There is no consolidation; that would be a collapse into dualism. Yet resolution does come; through the action of relating: within the tension is the living mystery of the Trinity, or as Panikkar names it, Advaita – nonduality, the dynamic never ceasing interchange of energy, of being. Perichoresis comes alive as we become part of the dance of self-emptying, self-giving, and somehow amazingly, self-receiving through receiving of other. “This is the Trinitarian life, this is the Christophanic experience: neither the mere dualism of creatureliness, the worldly, nor the monistic simplification of divinization”⁷⁰. I am myself and more than myself as I live and have being in daily life. The relationship, dynamically exchanging -- my humanity, God’s divinity / my divinity, God’s humanity -- becomes the ground of being upon which I stand, becomes the dimension in which I live, and move and have being. From this place scholarship becomes a living process, incarnationally sourced in the Divine. Rather than a historically oriented Christology that has resided within its own closed system, a Christophanic scholarship bursts open, “continuously self-revealing and creating,”⁷¹ generative in its very essence.

To arrive at this experience we must transcend the discursive rational intellect – not deny the rational intellect because, as we have stated, it too has a necessary and

⁶⁹ Raimon Panikkar, *Christophany*, 35.

⁷⁰ Raimon Panikkar, *Christophany*, 35.

⁷¹ Cynthia Bourgeault, *Cliff Notes*.

essential purpose -- but for this seeing a different organ of perception is necessary – *the noetic intellect, knowing through being*, seeing through the third eye activated by contemplative prayer. Of this Huston Smith states: “The mystic vision is not a feeling: it is a seeing, a knowing. We could add that it is a knowing that involves being ... It is noetic.”⁷² The contemplative dimension carries us body, soul, and spirit, into the heart of Christophany which then illumines the rational.

Panikkar expresses the concern similarly addressed by Huston Smith and Ken Wilber: the limitations of the modern mind in perceiving reality. Modernity sees history as the primary horizon, constricting the “real Jesus” within observable time and space and matter. Jesus was a historical person, Panikkar asserts, but we cannot end it there:

Christophany does not contest the historicity of Jesus. It merely affirms that history is not the only dimension of the real and that Christ’s reality is thus not exhausted with Jesus historicity.⁷³

Panikkar states that modernity has centered on anthropocentric ontology and epistemological problems. Before this period, Christology had room for the Spirit; but Copernicus so removed the possibility of angels and spirits that eventually Christ also was reduced to historical humanity. The mystical body of Christ was forgotten in modern time; the “word” became solely rational. However, Panikkar says, spirit transcends temporal. Like Smith, Panikkar asserts there are other levels of reality: “pneuma ... the functioning of the spirit, does not seem as bound to the flux of history.”⁷⁴

Scholarship having a foundation such as that provided by Panikkar’s Christophany and Wilber’s Integral philosophy is able to view things with an eye otherwise not available. Like Huston Smith, these scholars assert that experience of nonduality through

⁷² Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth*, 112.

⁷³ Raimon Panikkar, *Christophany*, 162.

⁷⁴ Raimon Panikkar, *Christophany*, 164.

noetic activity adds dimensions to research that may well result in very different conclusions. Two examples can be seen in the subjects of “Gnosticism” in the early formative centuries of Christianity, and in the seventeenth century Quietist movement around which there has also been much misunderstanding.

Chapter Three: Gnosticism and Noetic Knowing.

O the depth of the riches and wisdom (*σοφία*) and knowledge (*γνῶσις*) of God!
How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!
Romans 11:33 NRSV.

Accusations of “Gnosticism”

Contemplative Christianity has often been labeled “gnostic” by the protestant academy, a charge that substantially misunderstands a very rich spiritual heritage as if both “gnostic” and “contemplative” are misguided or heretical. There are several assumptions within the accusation: that “gnosticism” (and hence contemplative Christianity) emphasizes elements of knowledge or inner knowledge deemed esoteric, initiatic, and elitist so that adherents see themselves elevated above the rest of the community and beyond the guidance of Church authority; that “gnosticism” is syncretistic, pulling together elements from various religions and philosophies, resulting in impurity in religion, particularly Christian religion; and that “gnosticism” is inherently dualistic, splitting spirit and matter, defying a core Christian doctrine of incarnation, resulting in self-absorption and avoidance of engagement in social justice which for Christianity is an all important expression of Christ’s presence among us.

On the other hand, orthodox Christianity has been described by Tertullian¹ as that which is the “True Faith,” uncontaminated by such heresies, and is universally true because it is based on the teachings of Christ handed down by his apostles; and consequently has primacy; all other teaching is later, contaminated and heretical. Tertullian’s proclamation was one of many arguments which were used to define

¹ Karen L. King, *What is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 35.

acceptable Christianity under the authority of the newly forming Church, separating sheep from goats, true believers from those deemed heretics.

These among other assumptions have been re-emphasized by nineteenth century modern scholarship. Consequently contemplative prayer, tarred with the same brush as “gnosticism”, has not been held in positive regard by the mainstream academy and protestant church in general. However, advances in late twentieth and early twenty-first century scholarship, plus the considerable growth of contemplative spirituality and maturation of contemplatives over the past forty years seriously challenges these notions. It has become clear that labeling and condemning contemplative Christianity as “gnostic” is based on a two-fold misconception: regarding what “gnosticism” is; and regarding what contemplative prayer is.

What Gnosticism Is (...And is Not)

1. The Greek Word *Gnosis* (γνῶσις)

The Online Greek New Testament² defines the word “gnosis” as:

- 1) knowledge: signifies in general intelligence, understanding
 - 1a) the general knowledge of Christian religion
 - 1b) the deeper more perfect and enlarged knowledge of this religion, such as belongs to the more advanced
 - 1c) esp. of things lawful and unlawful for Christians
 - 1d) moral wisdom, such as is seen in right living

Wikipedia describes³ gnosis as “spiritual knowledge”, “insight”, “mature understanding”, the “intuitive knowledge” of the mystic arrived at through contemplation -- more transcendental than the rational epistemologically oriented knowledge suggested by parts a), c), and d) of the Online Greek New Testament definition. Part b) of that

² *Online Greek Bible*. <http://www.greekbible.com/> (accessed 2009.11).

³ *Wikipedia* <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gnosis> (accessed 2009.11).

definition appears to make room for the contemplative arena of interior knowing, perceiving, and understanding.

Jehanne de Quillan provides a further clarification regarding these definitions of gnosis, stating:

The Greeks used the word to describe more than one form of knowledge. Examination of most Greek lexicons will reveal two definitions of the word: the first a knowing or recognition, the knowledge or understanding of a thing, the insight or intuition that manifests itself in the thorough understanding; and the second a scientific knowledge, often based upon hypothesis and conjecture.⁴

From de Quillan's explanation it is possible to see how a rationally oriented, modern Western mind might orient towards the "scientific" definition, what de Quillan describes as "that acquired through hours or years of academic research and study." Western scholars, steeped in the modern academic discipline have tended to miss the other more intuitive meaning: "knowledge of the Self, the Divine Presence hidden within each one of us." Whichever of these two meanings we choose as our major mode for interpretation of texts will most certainly influence our understanding of scripture, tradition, and our own experience of faith. This thesis remains insistent that both meanings are necessary in order to maintain an integral approach to the Christian faith, i.e. as argued in my Chapter 2.

Furthermore I also assert that knowledge (gnosis γνῶσις) is integrally and indivisibly related to wisdom (sophia σοφία) when viewed from this interior and more intuitive stance. They are bonded through and within the agent of divine love and, like the perichoretic self-emptying dance of the Holy Trinity, these three elements empty into

⁴ Jehanne de Quillan. *The Gospel of the Beloved Companion* (Foix, Ariège, France: Editions Athara, 2010), 94. Jehanne de Quillan was born in the Languedoc region of Southern France. She was raised in an esoteric women's tradition, Laconneau, which claims its origins in an early Christian Wisdom tradition brought to France by Mary Magdalene. de Quillan's publication named here includes her translation of a text handed down through the Laconneau tradition for over a thousand years.

each other, receiving and outpouring in a dynamic life-generating flow. This is the deeper level of divine “inflow” facilitated by contemplative prayer, and which feeds into the rational levels we work with in scholarship and other arenas of daily life.⁵ Cynthia Bourgeault suggests that

gnosis and sophia are functional equivalents in that they both imply integral knowing with the whole of the being. Contextually, what the ancients understood by “gnosis” is closer to what we understand today by “wisdom” than by what we understand today as knowledge.⁶

Even searching for a clear definition of the term suggests how controversial this simple Greek word *gnosis* has become in Christianity, and therefore does indeed warrant our attention. What is perfectly clear, quite apart from the longstanding difficulties around such a seemingly simple word, is that the word “gnosis” (*γνῶσις*) and its synonym “Sophia” (*σοφία*) appear frequently in the Greek New Testament. In the synoptic gospels *σοφία* (*Sophia*) appears some eleven times either spoken by Jesus or used to describe him.⁷ From Acts through Paul’s letters to the Romans and Corinthians, *σοφία* appears some thirty times,⁸ and seventeen more times from Ephesians through Revelations. Its synonym *γνῶσις* (*gnosis*) appears in the gospel of Luke twice; in Paul’s letters to the Romans, Corinthians, and Philippians seventeen times; and in Ephesians through to 1 John some six times. The related word *ἐπιγνώσει* (*epignosis*) appears in

⁵ See my chapter 2, 32-40.

⁶ Cynthia Bourgeault. Email message, December 11, 2010

⁷ See Matthew 11.19; Matthew 12.4; Mark 6.2; Luke 2.40, 52; Luke 21.15 NRSV and the Online Greek Bible. <http://www.greekbible.com/> (accessed 2009.11).

⁸ For example Acts 6.3; Acts 6.10; Romans 11.33; I Corinthians 1.17, seventeen references throughout the Corinthian letters; and seventeen more times from Ephesians through Revelations. e.g. Ephesians 1.17; Colossians 2.3; James 1.5; 2 Peter 3.15; Revelation 5.12, 7.12, 13.18, 17.9. NRSV Again compared to the *Online Greek Bible*.

Ephesians through Peter fifteen times.⁹ The context inevitably includes “love”, “full insight”, “hidden treasures”, “fullness of God”, “united in love”, “unity in faith”, and similar descriptors indicative of union with God.¹⁰ All of this suggests some measure of knowing through experience at the level of the spiritual heart rather than solely through the cognitive level of the rational mental intellect. (Once again, let us remember here that current scholars in contemplative spirituality, as well as their predecessors throughout our Christian tradition, all agree that *both* spiritual *and* rational intellects are necessary for a balanced and whole Christian life. Repeating what we have said in the previous two chapters, one of these intellects does not replace the other; rather one on its own is incomplete without the other.)

We can see that *γνῶσις* (gnosis) is a fairly well used term in the New Testament. Paul used it with sufficient frequency that we might consider it significant in his teaching of the Christian faith, and the context and manner in which he used it bears little relationship to the description of “Gnosticism” that appears in early “orthodox” writings or in nineteenth and twentieth century scholarship. For Paul gnosis appears to be a legitimate and authentic form of spiritual knowledge i.e. mystical knowing more in keeping with the *νοῦς* (nous) referred to by Huston Smith, the Desert Fathers and Mothers, and authors of the *Philokalia*. Yet over eighteen centuries the term has migrated in meaning to something considered heretical, a pre-existent religion that competed against Christianity but was defeated by “True Christianity”. So thorough has the

⁹ For example Ephesians 4.13; Philippians 1.9; Colossians 2.2; 1 Timothy 2.4; Hebrews 10.26. NRSV compared to the *Online Greek Bible*.

¹⁰ For a full listing of scripture verses including *Sophia*, *gnosis*, and related terms, see Appendix III of this thesis.

transformation in meaning and context been that it resides within textbooks used in mainstream theological schools.

2. Textbook Definitions of Gnosticism.

*The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity*¹¹ summarizes gnosticism as preaching a dualism of spirit and matter; as determinist claiming a small elect over a lost majority; as a syncretistic blending of ancient myths with some Christian elements; claiming a secret knowledge higher than the church's and rejecting bishops and clergy; its members seen as having low moral virtue because of their confidence in their salvation; rejecting the physical reality of Jesus suffering and death, and instead claiming it to be merely metaphorical; attempting to infiltrate the orthodox church with their heresies; having secret "baptisms of fire", possibly referring to inner psychological occurrences; and a deep pessimism regarding the visible world. The textbook pretty much summarizes nineteenth century and early twentieth century scholarship. Among the leaders of this Modern era scholarship are Adolph von Harnack and also the scholars of the History of Religions School.¹²

Similar assumptions are made about "Gnosticism" in Norman K. Gottwald's textbook *The Hebrew Bible: A Socio-Literary Introduction*.¹³ Here Gottwald gives Gnosticism the status of a separate religion listing "Jewish, Christian, Gnostic, Greco-Roman, and Persian examples from the period 200 B.C.E.—300C.E.". He also attributes to Gnosticism the dualistic tendency of separating time and matter from spirit, with matter

¹¹ Henry Chadwick, "The Early Christian Community" in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity*, ed. John McManners (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1990).

¹² Karen L. King, *What is Gnosticism?* 55-109.

¹³ Norman K. Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible: A Socio-Literary Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 582, 584.

and history being substantially less valued; the preferred Gnostic spiritual emphasis, he suggests, focuses on “the realm of higher beings”.

Russell Pregeant’s textbook *Engaging the New Testament: An Interdisciplinary Introduction*,¹⁴ takes in more current scholarship on Gnosticism sufficiently to acknowledge problems have come to light through that scholarship, yet he still pursues the misunderstandings regarding what gnosis was and is. He maintains the idea of Gnosticism as a separate religion, competing with and overlapping Christianity. He describes a “general gnostic mythology” including a creation story (Nag Hammadi Codices)¹⁵ depicting a supreme deity, and lesser, flawed emanations responsible for creating a flawed world – in this Pregeant appears to be generalizing these texts as if they are an integrated part of a whole corpus of thought, which current studies on the so-called “gnostic texts” demonstrate is not the case. He describes gnosis as “a secret knowledge” enabling people to escape from this world through death into the realm of Light. Pregeant still maintains there is a “radical dualism characteristic of Gnosticism”; that Gnosticism has “some real similarities” to Christianity, but, dualistically, rejects “the Jewish god and the material world.” While Pregeant acknowledges that 1990’s scholarship sees Gnosticism as “complex” in its interaction with early Christianity, he has not caught up with the cutting edge research being done by scholars such as Karen L. King who challenges the concept of there ever being a separate entity called “Gnosticism”.

Timothy P. Jackson, in the *Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics*, also furthers the misunderstanding that Gnosticism existed as a separate competing and

¹⁴ Russell Pregeant, *Engaging the New Testament: An Interdisciplinary Introduction* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 91-93, 565.

¹⁵ Found in “Hypostasis of the Archons”, also known as “the Reality of the Rulers” or “the Nature of the Rulers”; and “On the Origin of the World”. See *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*, ed. Marvin Meyer (New York: Harper One, 2007), 187-221.

heretical religion.¹⁶ He lists the well known assumptions, including extremes of libertinism or asceticism; self-absorption, escapism, and failure to sustain a social conscience. He bases his description and assumptions regarding Gnosticism on the work of German-Jewish scholar Hans Jonas who, in 1934, published a first volume systematically reviewing Gnosticism. If Gnosticism actually was as Jonas and Jackson describe, this might be a suitable starting point to critique and build a contrasting viable Christian ethic. However Karen King notes considerable problems with Jonas's work and conclusions¹⁷ – problems she discusses in detail, which we will look at subsequently. In summary King states that Jonas 1) reified Gnosticism by insisting that there was an essential core to a unified whole (in spite of there being considerable diversity); 2) “maintained the traditional negative evaluation of it intellectually, morally, and religiously”, 3) reproduced the early polemicists arguments that created the orthodox in-group and the heretical out-group, and 4) rather than his conclusions being the “impartial” descriptions based on objective research, Jonas was actually making evaluative judgments based on modern era European standards for religion, piety, and morals, something Ken Wilber indicates postmodern research can identify as significantly problematical.

Here I confess that as a contemplative reading these assumptions regarding Gnosticism in foundational texts for core seminary courses, I have been very uncomfortable. The dualism inherent in the repeated proclamations of the evils of Gnosticism -- i.e. gnosis and therefore contemplation – have been difficult to encounter, frustrating and suffocating, relentlessly before me like an immovable and impenetrable wall, impossible to communicate through. This has given me numerous occasions to

¹⁶ Timothy P. Jackson, “The gospels and Christian Ethics,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics*, ed. Robin Gill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 42-62. See specifically 47-51.

¹⁷ Karen L. King, *What is Gnosticism?* 115-137. See particularly 135-137.

consider the feelings and tribulations of my spiritual ancestors, has often left me feeling alienated in my own faith tradition, and has certainly been an underlying impulse for the subject matter of this thesis. I am by no means alone in my frustration; decline in church attendance tells the tale that there are others who feel the same way – e.g. – revisit the conversation I had at Spirit Rock Buddhist retreat center (chapter one of this thesis)

3 Traditional Definitions are Challenged.

Twenty-first century research into the “Gnostic Gospels” demonstrates that there are major problems with the body of research regarding Gnosticism. One problem is that early Church history had a biased representation by Patristic victors in a polemical “battle to the death” for who defined orthodox Christianity; a second problem being that only secondary sources were used by scholars to form conclusions that were taken as “gospel truth” – no original texts were available until mid-twentieth century, and consequently the story formed about so-called “Gnostic Christianity” had a particularly lopsided foundation; and the third problem being the imperialist world view and prejudiced field of perception of both the early “orthodox” church Fathers, and the nineteenth/twentieth century scholars who picked up where their forbears left off –e.g. Hans Jonas as cited above. The most recent research by Biblical scholars such as Karen L. King¹⁸, Bart D. Ehrmans¹⁹ and others strongly suggests that “Gnosticism” as an entity and religion unto itself is something of an egregore -- rather than being an actual reality, it is a constructed intellectual concept formed by a group of people feeding the idea that it did exist. Ken

¹⁸ Karen L. King was appointed to the Harvard Divinity School in 1998 and from 2003 to 2009 served as the Winn Professor of Ecclesiastical History. In October 2009, she became the first woman appointed as the Hollis Professor of Divinity, the oldest endowed chair in the United States (1721).
<http://www.hds.harvard.edu/faculty/king.cfm> (accessed 2009.11.23)

¹⁹ Bart D. Ehrmans has been teaching Religion at colleges and universities since 1984 with a lengthy record of publishing and editing. He is currently the James A. Gray Distinguished Professor (2003 -) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Department of Religious Studies.
<http://www.bartdehrman.com/curriculum.htm> (accessed 2009.11.23).

Wilber's Integral philosophy with its four quadrant AQAL system readily demonstrates the blind spots in modern era research, with a significant warning about omitting contemplative spirituality from the mix. Mature contemplatives, some of whom are also respected scholars, have been providing a very different perspective on these "gnostic" writings, demonstrating that there resides in some of the texts an ageless and profound wisdom which holds true in light of contemporary Christian spiritual psychology, contemplative practice, and contemplative based social action.²⁰ All of this has, of course, significant ramifications for assumptions that Contemplative Prayer is "gnostic" (dualistic, elitist, initiatic, escapist) and therefore anti-Christian. Unfortunately, while past misconceptions are being addressed by leading edge scholars, their conclusions have not yet trickled down into the curriculum and textbooks of theological schools; hence Contemplative Christianity still suffers in the shadows of misrepresentation and misconception.

Contemporary Scholarship Debunks "Gnosticism"

1. Dismissing "Gnosticism"

In his book *The Gnostic Discoveries* Marvin Meyer²¹ cites Michael Williams and Karen L. King as scholars who suggest that Gnosticism is a non-viable category and

²⁰ Note Karen King's comment on the "Apocryphon of John", in *What is Gnosticism?* p. 137. See also *The Luminous Gospels*, trans. Lynn Bauman, commentary by Lyn Bauman, Ward Bauman, Cynthia Bourgeault (Telephone, Texas: Praxis Pubs, 2008). See also the three volumes translated from Coptic and commentary by Orthodox Theologian Jean-Yves Leloup, English trans. Joseph Rowe, *The Gospel of Thomas: the Gnostic Wisdom of Jesus*, (Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions, 2005); *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene*, (Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions, 2002); *The Gospel of Philip: Jesus, Mary Magdalene, and the Gnosis of Sacred Union*, (Rochester, Vermont, 2004).

²¹ Dr. Marvin Meyer (Ph.D., Claremont Graduate University; M.Div., Calvin Theological Seminary) is Griset Professor of Bible and Christian Studies and Co-Chair of the Department of Religious Studies, Chapman University. He is also Director of the Chapman University Albert Schweitzer Institute. Recently he has served as Chair of the Chapman University Faculty and President of the Faculty Senate. He is Director of the Coptic Magical Texts Project of the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, Claremont Graduate University, Fellow of the Jesus Seminar, and a past President of the Society of Biblical Literature (Pacific Coast). <http://www1.chapman.edu/~meyer/> (accessed 2009.11.23).

term.²² Williams, for example, suggests the concepts of “ancient gnosis” and “gnosticism” have brought much confusion, having many conflicting definitions and descriptions. “Gnosticism” has been seen

... as a protest movement that overturned traditional values and textual interpretations, a religion of innovators who adopted and adapted ideas from other religions; a religion of spiritualists who despised the body and the life of the body; and a movement of ethical extremists who opted for either an ascetic or a libertine way of life.²³

The result, he says, is scholarly obfuscation and no consensus.

Karen L. King has extensively reviewed and challenged the longstanding definition forged in the early centuries of forming Christianity. In her pioneering work What is Gnosticism?, King also agrees the term is problematic. In fact she clearly states the term does not describe any existing community of believers, but rather was generated in the midst of intense polemical rhetoric which sought to exclude those who did not fit well within the forming definition of early orthodox Christianity. Definitions, according to King, “tend to produce static and reified entities and hide the rhetorical and ideological interests of their fabricators”.²⁴ Such ideological interests reside within the very foundation of the term “Gnosticism” and primitive Christianity. King repeats her point:

...”gnosticism” never really was any “thing” other than a rhetorical construct, and the term simply reflects “the reification of a rhetorical entity (heresy) into an actual phenomenon in its own right (Gnosticism).”²⁵

The term was used then, as in much later centuries (17th century²⁶ to today), to designate which version of religion is held to be orthodox and which was considered heretical in the eyes of those with political power. The term, King concludes, has been “tainted with anti-

²² Marvin Meyer, *The Gnostic Discoveries: the Impact of the Nag Hammadi Library* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005), 38-41.

²³ Michael A. Williams, *Rethinking “Gnosticism”: An Argument for Rethinking a Dubious Category* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996) cited in Marvin Meyer, *The Gnostic Discoveries*, 38.

²⁴ Karen L. King, *What is Gnosticism?* 15. cited in Marvin Meyer, *The Gnostic Discoveries*, 39.

²⁵ Karen L. King, *What is Gnosticism?* 235-236. cited in Marvin Meyer, *The Gnostic Discoveries*, 39.

²⁶ Karen L. King, *What is Gnosticism?* 7. Henry More used the term in anti-Catholic rhetoric in 1669.

Catholic, anti-Jewish, colonialist, and evolutionary prejudices” of the ancient church, the Reformation and Enlightenment, and the modern era.²⁷ King notes that as far back as 1935, R.P. Casey, while not recommending elimination of the term, was openly questioning the concept.

There is no trace in early Christianity of “Gnosticism” as a broad historical category, and the modern use of “Gnostic” and “Gnosticism” to describe a large but ill-defined religious movement, having a special scope and character, is wholly unknown in the early Christian period.²⁸

Here I will note that this thesis will not refer to these early communities as “Gnostic” since, as the above scholars demonstrate, such a formal separate entity never really existed. To continue to use the label merely adds to the problem of the Gnostic egregore. Instead I use the term “Wisdom oriented Christians”. Those writings within the discovered codices that are identified as Christian (not all of the codices are) well reveal that these early wisdom oriented Christians taught and lived their faith from the place of inner knowing – gnosis (γνῶσις) through the nous (νοῦς) as discussed and defined in my previous chapters -- a contemplative Christianity that transforms us through purification and insight (purgation and illumination) carrying us into union with God in our deepest being (unitive).²⁹

2. Hidden History and the Polemics of Early Orthodoxy

The Early Church

The first two centuries of Christianity are now known to have been fluid and, yes,

²⁷ Marvin Meyer, *The Gnostic Discoveries*, 39.

²⁸ R.P. Casey, “The Study of Gnosticism”, *JTS* 36 (1935), 45-60 cited in Karen L. King, *What is Gnosticism?* 165.

²⁹ Review my comments on these classical three powers of purgation-illumination-union in my chapter 1, 8-9.

complex, with varying groups holding varying approaches, teachings, and emphases regarding who Jesus was, what constituted salvation, and which writings (letters, gospels etc.) were their authentic sacred texts – e.g. – the non-canonical Gospels of Thomas/Mary/Philip, Secret Book of John, Dialogues with the Saviour etc. The persecutions and martyrdoms came to an end in the fourth century when the Emperor Constantine officially established Christianity as acceptable and eventually the preferred faith of the state (edict of Milan -- 313 C.E.). Over a century earlier leaders such as Irenaeus of Lyons (c. 130 –c. 200 C.E.), Tertullian of Carthage (c. 155- c. 220 C.E.), and Justin Martyr (100-165 C.E.) had begun their work of consolidating communities of battered and scattered Christians. In an environment in which Irenaeus had seen many of his own community martyred including his teacher Polycarp, his ninety year old Bishop Pothinus,³⁰ and some fifty other members of the Lyons community, one can imagine how passionately he defined and protected the boundaries of what he considered to be the true Christian faith. The “orthodox” Church was established in an environment that generated unity through uniformity, produced a hierarchy of Bishops with considerable powers (e.g. excommunication), and a structure resembling the familiar Roman institutions of the day. Even from the first century, theology was a highly political matter; no less so after Constantine – of necessity it had to support the state, and hammering out of creeds, doctrines, and scriptures was intense to say the least – heresies were defined as those beliefs that did not fit the established and authorized version. We can well surmise the tensions that must have existed during these formative centuries in local communities of believers, and pressures brought to bear on those not holding to official doctrines.

³⁰ Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 85-87.

We also now know what happened to many of the precious writings that did not make it into the official canon. In his festal letter of 367 C.E., Athanasius

used his authority as archbishop to define orthodoxy and heresy and to condemn what was heretical. The Gnostic texts of the Nag Hammadi library were fated to be damned as heretical.³¹

Heretical books were destroyed. Likely a Pachomian monastery in Upper Egypt, descendant of the Desert Abbas and Ammas, had housed texts such “the Nag Hammadi library”, and to preserve them sealed the codices in a jar which was then buried like a time capsule in the desert sands.³² The teachings and texts of the excluded Christian groups disappeared from the radar screen for some eighteen centuries. The accusations made against these wisdom oriented Christians in the early polemical rhetoric are addressed as follows.

The Master Story

The rhetoric of the early Fathers of official Christianity was powerful. It generated our longstanding and unquestioned assumptions regarding the early history and development of Christianity including what is and isn't orthodox Christianity, what German theologian Walter Bauer (1877-1960) refers to as “The Master Story of Christianity.”³³ This master story, in whatever version, contains essential assumptions regarding the apostolic tradition, prophetic experience, and, by no means least of all, women's leadership in the church. Walther Bauer³⁴ outlines the fundamentals:

³¹ Marvin Meyer, *The Gnostic Discoveries*, 55.

³² Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels*, xix. Also note that Pachomius (287-347 C.E.) was the founder of cenobitic monasticism, beginning in the deserts of Egypt. See also Karen L. King *The Secret Revelation of John* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), s20.

³³ King, Karen L. *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala: Jesus and the First Woman Apostle* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 2003), 159, 189-190. See also Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 172-179.

³⁴ Walther Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), cited in: Karen L. King, *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala*, 159.

- a) Jesus gives the pure, uncompromised gospel teaching to his *male* apostles before his death and after his resurrection.
- b) Jesus *male* apostles divide the world between them and head out to impart the pure unadulterated teachings and doctrines of Jesus, the one true Son of God.
- c) Beyond the time of the apostles, the gospel continues to spread; only Satan imposes outside influences which begin to adulterate the doctrine and mislead true Christians.

King adds one more element: the patriarchally imposed assumption that the original true apostles were only men – an assumption used even today to “prove” apostolic succession must always and always has been *male*.

Well ... in the words of the songwriters Gershwin: “It ain’t necessarily so”...³⁵

Strategies and Tactics of the Early Polemicists

With the considerable help of the postmodern perspective of the late twentieth century, scholars such as Bart D. Ehrman and Karen L. King are able to identify the world view and tactics that went into the powerful rhetorical battles taking place in the early centuries of nascent Christianity. Certainly the rhetoric was intense and polemical, from which we may ascertain no middle ground was being given, at least by the orthodox side. We may also conclude that, as with any polemic, misunderstandings and invested motivations were hard at work. As for the human being in our present day, so for the human being in those early days: misunderstandings, misrepresentations, accusations may be a swampy bog of falsehoods and/or illusion mixed with varying degrees and shades of truth; two millennia later we might conclude that both sides had their points, but objectivity likely did not form the backdrop for the drama.

³⁵ George and Ira Gershwin, Dubose Heyward. *Porgy and Bess* (NY, 1935)

As Ehrman, King, Pagels and other scholars indicate, there were many varieties of Christianity at work in the era, some isolated communities in distant parts of the Empire, but in the larger centers most likely Christian communities intermingled with growing tensions. The wisdom oriented Christians had different interpretations on key elements of faith, scriptures, and creeds (not yet formalized) than their “orthodox” brothers and sisters. Ehrman suggests they may well have viewed the orthodox interpretations as “inadequate and superficial”.³⁶ As discussed in the previous chapters on nonduality, if there was a nondual perspective at work, (and indications are that there was) then indeed dualistic approaches to Christianity would be seen as limited by the wisdom oriented Christians. The response of the orthodox community is something we live with still today.

Ehrman names the victors in this battle “Proto-Orthodox” – on their way to becoming the institution of the “orthodox” church. Their arsenal in the battle was considerable.³⁷ Strategies included personal attacks, identity formation tactics with a politics of exclusion, patriarchal control, racism and sexism, and threatening punishment to any form of challenge.

Personal attacks included accusations of multiple forms of sexual immorality, cannibalism, and lack of reason. Purity by exclusion included anti-syncretism, literalism and reductionism. Mythical texts of the wisdom oriented Christians were dismissed as illogical nonsense. The proto-orthodox polemicists asserted that only their version of Christianity was truthful, and others were in error. Labeling those others as “heretics” strengthened the doctrinal walls to shut out the excluded. The finality of the exclusions

³⁶ Bart Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, 185.

³⁷ Bart Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, 189-193. See also Karen L. King, *What is Gnosticism?* 20-54.

were reinforced by threatening punishment of excommunication should any in the proto-orthodox camp wish to challenge the developing authority of the new class of bishops.

As group identity formed during the pre-Constantine era, three mutually exclusive groups were defined – Christians, Jews, and Pagans, with Christians having mounting power. The tactic of “transformation” (used by Justin Martyr, 160 C.E.) involved appropriating useful aspects of Judaism to Christianity without acknowledging the source, and labeling all else as evidence of deficiency in the other. “Hierarchical subordination” addressed any similarities by grouping everything under the term “natural law” and proclaiming that everything not Christian was an incomplete or partial revelation. King demonstrates that these same approaches were used in nineteenth and twentieth century modern era scholarship.

With the brilliance that can only be gained through the 20/20 hindsight of two millennia of developing civilization; including the postmodern perspective as defined by Ken Wilber and the recognition of attributes of nondual mind discussed by Bruteau, Smith, Wilber, and Panikkar; we can see the dynamics at work in the proto-orthodox assertions. Certainly they were functioning within the dualistic world view of imperialism with all its colonizing, subjugating, and patriarchal force. Literalizing mythical texts reduces and denies their potential power. Might it have been as simple as recognizing duality cannot comprehend nonduality, that Zen koans (and Jesus parables, and wisdom texts) cannot be fully accessed by the rational mind, but requires the nous (νοῦς)? Accusations of sexual immorality have always been a powerful control tactic in religious groups, and a very effective means for disempowering women. Scholars note that wisdom oriented Christians respected women’s leadership, something the proto-orthodox

patriarchy did not. Visit the Gospel of Mary Magdalene for an excellent example of the tensions recorded in the stories of non-canonical texts.³⁸ Further arguments against these particular accusations are found in the known ascetical tendencies of the wisdom oriented Christians that makes widespread licentiousness in their midst unlikely. King points out the considerable damage done to Jewish-Christian relations, the great and longstanding violence done to Judaism, and the masked politics of cultural synthesis that occurred through all of these polemical strategies.³⁹

3. Modern Scholarship and a Postmodern Critique.

Scholarship until the mid-twentieth century had been based solely on documents of the early church polemicists, as they established what they considered to be orthodox doctrine and scriptures and the authority of the patriarchal church hierarchy. This has forged a significantly biased scholarship with erroneous conclusions regarding Gnosticism and early Christianity. Discovery of original documents of the so-called “Gnostics” has provided a vastly different picture from what has hitherto been taken as “gospel”. In 1896 the Berlin Codex was purchased in Cairo; in 1917 a further papyrus of fragments of the third century Gospel of Mary was obtained from Oxyrhynchus in northern Egypt; and in 1945 the Nag Hammadi codex was discovered along the Nile.

These original texts now being studied are very diverse and overall do not match the previously described traditional definition. None of the texts fit the defined typological requirements; some simply do not fit the definition; others now considered to be orthodox demonstrate at least two or three characteristics of the definition. Scholarship of the past half century reveals that “gnosticism” is neither a heresy, nor some other

³⁸ Karen L. King, *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala*, 17, Codex, 10. See also *The Luminous Gospels: Thomas, Mary Magdalene, and Philip*, 60, dialogue 4.

³⁹ Karen L. King, *What is Gnosticism?* 47, 51.

ancient religion infiltrating Christianity. “Gnosticism” is the creation of 19th century scholarship which repeated the identity formation polemics of the early church.

As we revisit Ken Wilber’s four quadrants we can see what took place in this modern era scholarship. Firstly, as he stresses, each of the quadrants has an invaluable contribution – this means the pre-modern traditions (in this case nascent Christianity), modernity (singular and plural), and postmodernity. Nothing is gained by continuing the polemical rhetoric of the most recent insights dismissing in totality that which preceded it. Hence, from a postmodern perspective Karen King points out that the modern scholarship did indeed make valuable contributions to forward movement in understanding; but more was needed.

Modern scholarship spanning the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries introduced valuable methodology and insights to Christian theological study. For example, the History of Religions School⁴⁰ opened Christianity beyond its parochial boundaries to study larger social and cultural interactions. They identified Gnosticism as an entity to be studied in its own right not just as secondary, challenged Christian beliefs regarding chronological order and purity, and looked at “orthodox” Christianity and Gnosticism in their historical-cultural contexts.

Nonetheless, there were significant problems in modern-era research which come to light when viewed from the perspective of Ken Wilber’s Integral philosophy. The four quadrants of his AQAL system demonstrate the missing components: including the postmodern realization that belief systems are generated and maintained within cultural perspectives, and also the nondual insights that emerge from the contemplative practices of the wisdom traditions which cut through both modern and postmodern limitations.

⁴⁰ Karen L. King, *What is Gnosticism?* 107.

Modernity tended to fluctuate between Mythic and Rational on Jean Gebser's developmental scale of consciousness -- i.e. -- between Ethnocentric and Worldcentric.⁴¹ Perspectives were definitely opening to more inclusive possibilities, but still on the cusp of a necessary shift.

Modern scholarship on Christian history and Gnosticism was radically compromised from the outset, lacking recognition of the dualistic/polemical arguments and imperialistically influenced cultural voice of the early orthodox polemicists. Failing to recognize even the existence of the Master Story, and consequently absolutizing what had been culturally relative to those early centuries, they also failed to identify that the polemicists' documents were prejudiced. These were secondary, not original documents of the wisdom community, and had significant ideological, personal, and political biases. Not until the unearthing of the Nag Hammadi "time capsule" in 1945 was there any serious challenge to the polemical agenda and caricatures of the early wisdom-oriented Christian community. Modern theological scholarship took pride in participating in "objective" scientific methodology. However, unable to identify and observe the inherent biases and prejudices in their work, these respected scholars perpetuated the worldview and ideologies of their ancestors. Research and assumptions were filtered through the lens of European imperialism, Orientalism, racism, and sexism. Not until the rise of a postmodern perspective have scholars had the tools to identify the inadequacies of these early methods.

⁴¹ See Appendix II for a summary of the developmental stages of civilization and human consciousness. Wilber works with anthropologists, psychologists, theologians such as James Fowler, Evelyn Underhill, Jean Gebser, Carol Gilligan etc. See details in Ken Wilber, *Integral Spirituality* (Boston: Integral Books, 2006) "Chapter 4: States and Stages," 84-102.

4. What Goes Around Comes Around – Revisiting Our Spiritual Ancestors.

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And to know the place for the first time.
(T.S. Eliot. Little Gidding)⁴²

As Eliot suggests, today we do seem to be returning to the place from which we started, revisiting the debates of the early church in a turbulent world of intermingling cultures, religions, political and economic powers, crumbling empires, and spiritual hunger and confusion. Old patterns of thinking and ways of being are under siege, and out of the turmoil new things are being born that somehow seem not so new but rather are being *seen* anew. This includes the Christian debates on what *is* Christian, who *was/is* Jesus, and what exactly did Jesus bring to us – teach us, challenge us, hope we will grow to understand and live into. Two millennia ago, Christianity was newly forming and growing in power culturally, politically, institutionally. However in the twenty-first century, Christianity has gone into the wilderness, its own “dark night” – in many ways we are in exile – and the debates we are revisiting are once again life and death for us. Our contemporary world is struggling under the great burden of dualism and its resulting polarizations. There is also simultaneously a universal gravitational pull of humanity towards nondual seeing which dissolves and resolves the destructive tensions and complexities we seem trapped in. We can well see how fragile, how vulnerable and interwoven humanity is with each other and with creation, with our political/cultural/economic/environmental systems, and also with true common ground among faiths. At its best the postmodern perspective has facilitated this awareness, has opened room for

⁴² T.S. Eliot, “The Four Quartets: Little Gidding, V” in *The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), 197.

pluralism, but has not carried us to the place of integral being. That requires the spiritual awakening which comes from inner seeing, i.e., gnosis – found in Ken Wilber’s upper left quadrant; for Christians the fruit of this gnosis is the Christophany described by Panikkar. It is the contemplative tradition that opens this possibility for us today.

What Does “Gnosis” Really Mean?

“Gnosis” simply means “knowledge”. As discussed above (65, 66) Cynthia Bourgeault identifies *sophia* and *gnosis* as *functional* synonyms and states:

They both imply an integral, participational knowledge carried not in one’s head, but in one’s entire being.⁴³

This would appear to align with St. Paul’s use of the term. This is *noetic knowing*, which Huston Smith simply defines as “knowing through being”⁴⁴ and is actively engaged through the spiritual heart. Richard Rohr speaks of the third eye and the nondual perspective⁴⁵; Smith speaks of the “eye of the heart, the organ of spiritual vision”⁴⁶ and of the “inner eye”⁴⁷; Bourgeault also speaks of the “the eye of the heart”⁴⁸; Raimon Panikkar refers to “the third eye”.⁴⁹

Gnosis in the Gnostic Gospels

The so-called “Gnostic Gospels” are really wisdom oriented texts which like Zen koans are meant to be accessed via a “noetic reading”. The Gospel of Thomas provides an excellent example: sayings without story attached are stark, challenge us both mentally

⁴³ Cynthia Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Jesus: Transforming Heart and Mind – a New Perspective on Christ and His Message* (Boston: Shambhala, 2008), 22.

⁴⁴ Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth: the Primordial Tradition* (San Francisco: Harper Colophon, 1976), 112.

⁴⁵ Richard Rohr, *The Naked Now: Learning to See as the Mystics See* (New York: Crossroad Pub., 2009), 23.

⁴⁶ Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth*, 49, 90.

⁴⁷ Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth*, 36.

⁴⁸ Cynthia Bourgeault, *Cliff Notes. Lecture and commentary on Panikkar’s Christophany*, VST Fall, 2008, 1.

⁴⁹ Raimon Panikkar, *Christophany: the Fullness of Man*, trans. Alfred DiLascia (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004), 31.

and emotionally; as we remain present to the tensions generated by the sayings, we face ourselves through the text and simultaneously encounter the Divine Spirit present to us within the tension, and finally break through into a new place. In his introduction to *The Luminous Gospels*, Lynn Bauman states these Gospels, such as the Gospel of Thomas, are

a form of knowledge meant not simply to be understood intellectually, but to be experienced as transformative because it is grasped and held inwardly and fully lived... This is a distinction that is often forgotten in conventional religious circles. Typically we are satisfied to know the facts of our faith, its correct theological formulations, and the latest textual finds that contribute to current scholarship ... we often resist experimenting with the truth in such a way that we know it from within, as the level of lived experience... [The Gospel of Thomas] presents itself as a teaching which we are meant to engage personally and dialogically at the level of the heart, and not just through the rational mind.⁵⁰

The interior experience opens substantially our comprehension of the wisdom themes that King, Meyers, Pagels, and other scholars are discovering in the Nag Hammadi, Berlin, and other codices. Scholars such as King, Meyer, Pagels, Panikkar, Bauman and Bourgeault all invite us to look, yes most certainly, at high levels of academic scholarship that examines the texts for these perspectives and context, but also to engage the texts at the more numinous level of noetic knowing. From the second century of Christianity we have been called to read well through three meanings of scripture. Origen reminds us that -- of literal, ethical, and spiritual meanings -- literal and ethical alone are *not* sufficient:

If you try to reduce the divine meaning to the purely external significance of the words, the Word will have no reason to come down to you. It will return to its secret dwelling, which is contemplation that is worthy of it. For it has wings, this divine meaning, given to it by the Holy Spirit who is its guide ... But to be unwilling ever to rise above the letter, never to give up feeding on the literal sense, is the mark of a life of falsehood.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Lynn C. Bauman, Ward J. Bauman, Cynthia Bourgeault. *The Luminous Gospels*, 4-5.

⁵¹ Origen. "Commentary on Proverbs", 23 (PG 17, 221-4) in Olivier Clement, *The Roots of Christian Mysticism*, trans. Theodore Berkeley and Jeremy Hummerstone (New York: New City Press, 1993), 99.

These early wisdom oriented texts depict Jesus as a Wisdom teacher who pushes his students (disciples) to develop their own integrity, to no longer rely on the external authority of the teacher, but having the experience growing within himself/herself to eventually develop his/her own inner authority. Pagels suggests this is the meaning of Thomas the Twin (Gospel of Thomas) – the disciple becomes a Christ.

... You saw the spirit, you became spirit. You saw Christ, you became Christ.
You saw [the Father, you] shall become Father ... you see yourself, and what
you see you shall [become].⁵²

How does one become, like Thomas, a Twin to Jesus? Pagels suggests, along with many others in this thesis: in the silence of meditation we worship God, the Infinite beyond knowing. Catherine of Siena, Beatrice Bruteau, and also Raimon Panikkar⁵³ have described the stages: by knowing ourselves we know God and by knowing God we know ourselves. If we lay aside the misconception of secretive elitism, these wisdom writings of our early Christian forbears take on another perspective all together – one of nonduality, advanced unitive, integral seeing and being:

Yeshua says...
If you are searching you must not stop until you find,
When you find, however, you will become troubled.
Your confusion will give way to wonder.
In wonder you will reign over all things.
Your sovereignty will be your rest.
(Gospel of Thomas. Logion 2)⁵⁴

If read with the eyes of Empire, this logion can be interpreted to be much of what “Gnosticism” is defined as and accused of. However if read with the nondual heart, this logion is everything that Empire fears: integration, integrity, authenticity, autonomy.

⁵² “Interpretation of Knowledge”, 6.33-38. in *The Nag Hammadi Library*, trans. by members of the Coptic Gnostic Library Project of the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity ; James M. Robinson, director (New York: Harper & Row, c1977), 429, cited in Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels*, 134.

⁵³ Raimon Panikkar, *Christophany: the Fullness of Man*, 32-33.

⁵⁴ “The Logia of Thomas,” in *The Luminous Gospels*, 9.

This is Christ incarnate inviting us individually and communally to incarnate the living Christ. To do so challenges every form, every expression of Empire – and of dualism. As we shall see, this is the very issue at stake in the sixteenth century Reformation and underlying the attacks by Church and State on Quietism.

The Ongoing Misconception: Demonizing the Contemplative

In the early polemical controversies, Bishops demonized a different way of knowing, what we have termed noetic knowing, that develops nondual seeing. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, similar arguments are still being used to discredit contemplative prayer by likening it to “Gnosticism”. Accusations implied range through disregarding scriptural and clerical authority; of contemplatives considering themselves better than the Christian community; of dualism of body and spirit resulting in various irresponsible behaviours; and syncretism which generates heresies. Yet Gnosticism as a heresy of the early Church has been discredited by contemporary scholarship using the original documents written by the accused. Aligning contemplative prayer with this non-existent entity furthers the original injustice and alienates the twenty-first century Church from much needed vitality of the prayer of the deep heart. Rather than our Christian faith expressed through belief in a fixed set of theological facts and doctrines, these doctrines are instead *experienced* and lived from our deepest selves as we participate in the Divine Trinitarian energies dwelling in our spiritual heart.

So how does all this line up with the textbook definition of Gnosticism? Hopefully it highlights the misunderstanding inherent in the textbooks’ portrayal of the early Christian community. It is quite possible that some early Christians, immature in their faith and lacking quality teaching and leadership, may have slipped off the rails feeling

they had a special “secret knowing” that set them apart from the common crowd and clergy. Mysticism in any era and any religious tradition is fraught with such temptations to the false self. However, it is also likely that then as now interior prayer was misunderstood by those who were not practicing it. Was “gnosticism” a superficial syncretistic tossed salad of religions that gave comfort to the seeker, something we see happening in our own society; or was it something much more profound – the nondual/unitive vision resulting from the deep integration that happens as one matures on the contemplative path, enabling one to encounter the ground of being source of all religion? Were so-called “gnostic Christians” infiltrating the early churches, or were they members of the diverse Christian community simply joining their brothers and sisters in worship? Did they feel they were superior to bishops and clergy, or, as is often the case today, were they frustrated by church leaders who were not engaged in contemplative prayer and therefore unable to provide the teaching and guidance earnestly sought by members of their flock? Did this group of early Christians really deny the physical reality of Christ’s sufferings and death, or were they using metaphor as a way of entering experientially into Christ’s passion and deeply participating in it within their own interior lives? Did they have literal baptisms of fire, or were they looking for metaphors to describe what the interior process of purgation felt like on the way to illumination and union? As for low moral virtue, -- i.e. sexual immorality -- that is, and always has been, an aggressively deterring accusation in any conflicted religious environment. Were such accusations attempts to denounce Christian Wisdom communities that accepted women’s leadership as authentic? So ... were the accusations accurate or serious misunderstandings? Likely the truth spans the spectrum. Recent research into early

Christianity and “gnosticism” raises the red flag warning that the textbook summary of the accepted definition of “gnostic Christianity” must be questioned. Now as in the beginning of Christianity much is at stake in the searching *and* the finding.

Chapter Four: Quietism: Self-absorption or Self-awareness and Transformation?

The Problem of Quietism:

So, here we have the matter that concerned the seminary professor and student at the beginning of this thesis: contemplative insight practices, spirituality and prayer are labeled “quietist”, and consequently denounced. Since this particular prayer of quiet was first officially presented by Spanish Jesuit Miguel de Molinos in Reformation-affected Catholic Italy in the sixteenth century,¹ Quietism has been a perpetually pesky problem, troubling the church wherever it surfaces. Was Quietism genuinely the heresy that the Catholic Church proclaimed as bishops attempted to quench its wildfire spread through Reformation and Counter Reformation Europe? Or was it a legitimate, albeit sometimes confused, Christian teaching that gifted the general population with a direct living relationship with Christ, unmediated and uncontrolled by agenda bound clergy? Was Quietism dangerously misled, morally misguided, and unhealthily passive? Or was it instead so enlivening peoples’ hearts and minds in relationship to God, themselves, and others that it had become as serious a threat to Catholic Church and State as Protestantism was? The truth, as with Gnosticism, is likely a perplexing combination spanning the spectrum.

We do well not to accept passively the judgments passed down to us. The charges made against the principal proponents of Quietism (Molinos, Guyon, and Fénelon) clearly carried the serious biases of the power establishment of sixteenth century Church and State. Also, a closer look at the theology and teachings of the quiet prayer they taught

¹ Louis Dupré, “Jansenism and Quietism,” in *Christian Spirituality III: Post-Reformation and Modern*, vol. 18 of *World Spirituality: an Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest*, eds. Louis Dupré and Don E. Saliers in collaboration with John Meyendorff (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 133.

demonstrably align with traditional Christian contemplative spirituality of the millennium that preceded it. Furthermore, history reveals that Quietism was sought out by respected Pietist-Protestant leaders in Europe and Great Britain, and subsequently became one of the primary roots of the North American Protestant tradition as we know it today.²

As with Gnosticism, I suggest there are two clear problems at the outset: the first being a misrepresentation of what Quietism actually was; the second being a misunderstanding of what contemplative prayer actually is. Misunderstanding and misrepresentation drive each other like a dog chasing its tail, like an infinite feedback loop draining essential vitality from the Christian tradition.

Background: Crises in History, Label, and Leaders:

Sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe experienced an era of considerable turbulence and immense shifts in human consciousness manifested through many avenues: the Gutenberg printing press; an impetus to translate the Bible into local languages; rebellion and revolution against oppressive rule of royalty and Church; suffering and poverty; expanding exploration of the “New World”; emerging business class; developing Western Enlightenment. Into this tempestuous environment, respected Italian Jesuit Achille Gagliardi, professor of philosophy and theology at Padua and Milan and spiritual director overseeing several Jesuit houses in Northern Italy, wrote a pamphlet entitled *Breve Compendio Intorno alla Perfezione Cristiana* (1611. *A Short Compendium Concerning Christian Perfection*.) It was apparently well received and has been translated into five languages. This publication was the inspiration several years later for another

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guyon,_Jeanne-Marie-Bouvier_de_La_Motte- (accessed March 2009). See also Patricia A. Ward. “Experiential Theology in America,” *Church History* 67, no. 3 (September 1998): 488-495. See also Madam Jeanne Guyon, *Experiencing Union with God Through Inner Prayer & The Way and Results of Union with God*, revised in Modern English by Harold J. Chadwick (Orlando: Bridge-Logos, 2001), xvi-xvii.

Jesuit, Spaniard Miguel de Molinos (1627-1697) who wrote a book entitled *The Spiritual Guide*. Initially well received, it dealt with an interior prayer of quiet that was sufficiently threatening to religious authority that the great controversy of Quietism arose. In France, Madame Jeanne Guyon (1648-1717), an educated and sensitive aristocrat with a lifetime of suffering, and her spiritual advisor Bishop Francois Fenelon (1651-1715) also presented the “Quietist” prayer to a hungry and eager populace, and like Molinos encountered serious opposition from religious and royal authorities.

The term “Quietist” doesn’t actually appear in the writings of Guyon or Fenelon. Their terminology includes “prayer of the heart”, the prayer of simplicity”, “union with God”, “resting before God”, “the necessity of inner silence”,³ and, as I will demonstrate, was in keeping with orthodox contemplative prayer in the longstanding Christian tradition. The actual origins of the term “Quietist” seem somewhat murky – Louis Dupré suggests Molinos’ detractors first applied the term to his followers in Naples.⁴ From its beginning the word was a label separating out and denying orthodoxy (acceptance by authorities) to all identified by it.

Yet Guyon was sought out by many laity hungering for what she and Fenelon taught – prayer engaging an experience of God’s love, readily accessible to all. Guyon was also sought out by the Protestant Pietists from other parts of Europe seeking to instill a prayer of loving communion with God into chaotic Reformation churches which were losing sight of their original impetus. Quietism and Pietism together were movements enduring denunciation even though they were encouraging Christians in prayer based well within the genuine Christian contemplative tradition.

³ Madame Jeanne Guyon, *Experiencing Union with God Through Inner Prayer & the Way and Results of Union with God*, 9, 27, 171, 190, etc.

⁴ Louis Dupré, “Jansenism and Quietism,” 131.

Definitions of Quietism:

Quietism appears to have suffered a similar fate to Gnosticism – by naming Quietist teachings as heresy, orthodoxy was established and Quietism excluded. Common elements of misunderstanding in our time suggest that Quietism is self-preoccupied, narcissistically disengaged from the active work of social justice, irresponsibly passive, avoiding the prophetic role Christians are called to live in their local and larger communities. The Catholic Encyclopedia Online⁵ calls Quietism “false or exaggerated mysticism” containing “erroneous notions which, if consistently followed, would prove fatal to morality”⁶; says that it emphasizes “interior passivity as the essential condition of perfection”; and asserts that it has “been proscribed in very explicit terms by the Church”. The Catholic Encyclopedia Online echoes the sixteenth century denunciations against Molinos, Guyon, and Fénelon, and lacks acknowledgment of the noetic insight and transformative work of contemplative prayer described so far in this thesis. In summary, we continue to struggle with misconceptions and stereotypes, and theological misunderstandings regarding the nature and process of contemplative prayer.

The Matter of Language:

1. Language Promotes Misconceptions.

Encyclopedia Britannica defines Quietism as a doctrine that teaches that

perfection consists in passivity (quiet) of the soul, in the suppression of human effort so that divine action may have full play.⁷

Leszek Kolakowski defines Quietist spirituality as

⁵ “Quietism,” in *Catholic Encyclopedia Online*, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12608c.htm> (accessed January 2009).

⁶ Similar to the early so-called “Gnostic Christians” the accusation stands that if salvation is guaranteed without the need for official priestly mediation and control, Quietists will lapse into sexual misconduct and all manner of sinful behaviour. The charge was made against Molinos; the evidence given remains suspect as will be shown.

⁷ <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/487288/Quietism> (accessed Feb.6, 2009).

... founded exclusively on a non-differentiated interior contemplation of the divine, freed from reflection, feeling, and images. This contemplation is disinterested and uninterrupted, presupposing the destruction of the will proper and the knowledge of oneself; it is entirely a work of grace which fills the void left by the self-destruction of the self.⁸

Language such as “passivity”, “disinterested”, “destruction of the will”, and “self-destruction” can be seriously misleading. Passivity suggests a disengagement from self and community, sitting back in the face of injustices which Christianity from its social justice teachings is meant to address. “Self-destruction of the will” presents a picture that is mentally unhealthy whereas Christianity, particularly contemplative Christianity, is meant to guide us into balanced and wholesome mental health. The term “perfection” raises images of dogmatic and rigid striving for a hopelessly unattainable goal, something we Protestants have long labored for and reacted against, one of our more recognizable dysfunctional dichotomies. Here we might note that “perfection” was a subject of great interest to Jesus – “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5.48 NRSV) However this was not a moralistic perfection; rather the adjective τέλειός refers to wholeness, integrity and maturity, and in the scriptural context demonstrates the capacity to have compassion even for our enemies.⁹ Seeking this kind of perfection has been innately part of contemplative prayer since at least the time of St. Anthony in the desert. Hence language in the definitions of Quietism is set up for being misunderstood. This misunderstanding is similarly reflected in the stereotypes assigned to Pietism and the Puritans, as we will see later in this chapter.

⁸ Kolakoski, *Chrétien sans église La Conscience Religieuse et le lien confessionnel au XVIIe siècle*, trans Anna Posner, rev. ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), 495, 515 529, 544, 544-45, cited in Patricia A. Ward. “Experimental Theology in America,” *Church History* 67, no.3 (September 1998), 487.

⁹ *The Online Greek Bible* offers the definition of τέλειός as 1) brought to its end, finished 2) wanting nothing necessary to completeness 3) perfect 4) that which is perfect 4a) consummate human integrity and virtue 4b) of men 4b1) full grown, adult, of full age, mature. <http://www.greekbible.com/index.php> (accessed 2010.02.02)

Sixteenth century writings on the prayer of Quiet, and writings from previous centuries lacked the considerable psychological and spiritual vocabulary we are accustomed to in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Their descriptions of interior prayer processes tend therefore to be clumsy and lacking nuance. Yet Quietist terminology is similar to, if not the same as that used by Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross in the sixteenth century. Teresa and John clearly had their own well known tribulations at the hands of the Catholic religious establishment, but their writings have survived and are now considered to be amongst the most highly valued works on Christian mysticism and spiritual psychology. They had a psychological and spiritual brilliance considerably beyond those teaching the prayer of Quiet a century later; however Quietist teachings, as will be demonstrated, carried much the same principles.

2. What Does the Language Actually Mean?

When Teresa of Avila writes of passive prayer¹⁰ and the prayer of quiet,¹¹ she speaks of arriving at a deep inner rest and stillness in which, released from the control of the ego's discursive thinking, we commune human spirit with Divine Spirit as union occurs in the deepest recesses of the human heart, true apophatic-contemplative prayer. This is the moment of supreme paradox because, in genuine contemplation stillness and silence resound and dance, "passivity" is dynamic and filled with vitality, rest is energizing as the Divine love "inflows" (Bruteau's term), and infuses (Teresa and John's term). It is challenging indeed to comprehend this so-called "passive prayer of quiet". Verbal descriptions inevitably only confuse or approximate the experience; John of the

¹⁰ St. Teresa of Avila, "The Interior Castle," in *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, vol. 2, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1980), 272-273.

¹¹ St. Teresa of Avila, "The Way of Perfection," in *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, vol. 2, 28:4, 141.

Cross mostly used poetry, frequently erotic poetry which brought on accusations of him misbehaving with the nuns. (Remember the accusations of rampant sexual misconduct leveled at the “Gnostics”?) Herein resides the dilemma: personal experience is the only real way to comprehend, which potentially raises the old accusation of elitism, secretive cults, and religion out of control. In reality written and verbal descriptions simply cannot replace the actual lived in the body and soul experience. Take, for example, reclining on a warm tropical beach, ascending the heights of Everest, passionate love making in a truly loving relationship. There are some things which are simply beyond the scope of our rational intellect. They can only be known experientially.

“Perfection” viewed merely as total obedience to rules and laws is a deadly business; viewed as deepening in the love and qualities of the Creator it becomes a flowing process actively engaging beauty, truth, generosity, goodness and joy. St. Teresa describes “perfection” as nothing other than living the Great Commandment, infused from within:

...true perfection consists in love of God and neighbour; the more perfectly we keep these two commandments the more perfect we will be.¹²

Robert Griswold, addressing the contemporary needs of the Quaker community (as we shall see directly and strongly influenced by the Quietism of Madame Guyon) provides a more helpful context. He presents five principles of Quaker theology:

Divine Love, Divine Power, and Divine Authority exist and are known to exist by direct personal experience; this Light, this Christ, is universal and there for all people; Christ (by whatever name) is a reality that we can know personally and be in a relationship with now; the self we acquire in the process of our immersion in our culture, the ego we learn to defend and support in our daily lives, is not our most fundamental reality; and finally God finds us, not the other way around.¹³

¹² St. Teresa of Avila, “The Interior Castle,” I:2.17 in *Collected Works*, vol. 2, 295-296.

¹³ Griswold, Robert. “No Creed is Not the Same as No Theology,” *Friends Journal* (August 2001), 13-16. Cited in Dianne Guenin-Lelle. “Friends’ Theological Heritage: From Seventeenth-Century Quietists to A

Quietism: The Prayer of Quiet and Traditional Contemplative Prayer.

Louis Dupré¹⁴ gives clear evidence that the primary points of Quietist teachings were well in keeping with viable Christian tradition. He is similarly supported by Guenin-Lelle and Patricia A. Ward.¹⁵ First, the spiritual life involves non-attachment, letting go of ego centrality mentally and emotionally as one is able so that gradually and increasingly the Holy Spirit fills the soul. The long tradition of Christian spirituality from Jesus; through the teachings of the Desert Abbas and Ammas; the Rhineland mystics such as Meister Eckhart; Ignatius of Loyola; Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross;¹⁶ through to the contemplative teachings of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries presented by Thomas Merton, Thomas Keating, John Main, Kallistos Ware of the Orthodox tradition of the Jesus Prayer – all without exception hold to the spiritual psychology of conscious ego diminishment making psychic space for the Holy Spirit to strengthen the life of the true self in union with the Divine.

Second, spiritual life is teleological having purpose and direction from lower to higher, from beginning to advanced, from outer entrance ways to interior chambers of depth and maturity. Again, such a developmental process is well within the Christian tradition from its beginnings. Jesus taught about the Kingdom of God to which we are called, the Kingdom within each of us; he attempted to give more mature teaching to his inner circle of disciples – with strong gospel evidence that he found their comprehension levels a challenge. The comprehension levels of the imperial and religious establishment

Guide to True Peace,” in *Quaker Theology* no. 6 (Spring 2002) <http://www.quaker.org/quest/issue6-3-Lelle01.htm> (accessed Feb. 2009).

¹⁴ Louis Dupré, “Jansenism and Quietism,” 121-142.

¹⁵ Ward, Patricia A. “Experiential Theology in America,” *Church History* 67, no. 3 (September 1998), 484-489.

¹⁶ Louis Dupré, “Jansenism and Quietism,” 132.

were even more of a challenge for him, with well-known results – which Molinos, Guyon, and Fénelon encountered sixteen centuries later. The Jewish and Christian traditions carry an innate imperative to love and serve one's neighbour in order to bring God's compassionate presence to humanity and the world. Here also, Quietism presented by Guyon and Fénelon is in keeping with accepted Christian tradition.

Further to this, the stages of prayer described particularly by Guyon are similar to the traditional spiritual-psychological process described by Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross. Teresa uses the terms "prayer of quiet" and "quieting the mind" many times. "Quiet" is not a foreign term in contemplative prayer.

In her book *Spiritual Torrents* Madame Guyon describes three states in the process of interior quiet prayer.¹⁷ Guyon's first stage begins with quieting the soul in which will and senses let go of striving and give way to loving attention. This is a time of "special graces" and, by Dupré's description, can be a period of experiencing psychic phenomena. This sounds not unlike the religious experience of those involved in some kinds of charismatic prayer and also is not uncommon to those with mystical sensibilities at various stages and times of their journey in contemplative prayer. Madam Guyon's counsel regarding these phenomena is well in keeping with traditional spiritual direction. Be aware of any tendency to attach to the experience and "gifts", and return one's focus to the Divine Giver. Even phenomena which are genuine consolations lose value if attachment to them and ego exaltation replace the point of prayer, union with God.

The second stage sounds very much like John of the Cross's Dark Night of senses and soul – a growing aridity and desolation in which God seems to have abandoned the person. Prayer becomes dry and the practice of virtue is done with rote effort – going

¹⁷ Louis Dupré, "Jansenism and Quietism," 136-137.

through motions with faith and hope teetering between despair and oblivion. Typical Dark Nights can last for years. Contemporary spiritual psychology identifies this as a time of the Holy Spirit working within the unconscious levels of soul and unseen levels of spirit.

Eventually this opens into the third stage of a deep abiding union with stable maturity and joy – Teresa’s spiritual marriage – again, a stage recognizable with varying terminology over millennia in any of the world’s major contemplative traditions.¹⁸ One sees the same world differently because of the unitive opening in the soul. Guyon appears to be addressing a journey through stages of purification, illumination, and the unitive.¹⁹ All of her stages of maturation in silent contemplative prayer are recognizable and well mapped in Christianity from at least the time of the Desert Fathers and Mothers through to today.

Finally, Fénelon provided a central place in Quietism for “Pure Love”. Here he had a solid scholastic and theological foundation building on the earlier work of Francis de Sales’ *Treatise of Divine Love*. The Christian humanism of Frances de Sales advised the suffering faithful not to fret about their soul’s progress²⁰ – a Counter-Reformation encouragement addressing the burdensome tradition of purchasing indulgences from one’s priest, one of Luther’s “last straws”. De Sales was well within the Christian mystical lineage teaching of a loving relationship with a compassionate God (cf. Jesus, Desert Fathers and Mothers, Rhineland mystics, Discalced Carmelites), and so Dupré

¹⁸ Consider the Zen concept: first there were rivers and mountains, then there was nothing, then there were rivers and mountains – but oh what rivers and mountains!

¹⁹ Review my comments on these classical three powers, my chapter 1, 7-8.

²⁰ Louis Dupré, “Jansenism and Quietism,” 132.

suggests, on numerous theological points was Fénelon.²¹

Fénelon tells us that love for God is expressed and enacted in the silence of contemplative prayer. Meditation is defined as discursive, reflective prayer (Fénelon calls this “imperfect love”) expressing hopes and fears and concerns. Contemplation, “perfect love” for God, is experienced in prayer that is silent, simple, still, direct. Ward elaborates on this description of two kinds of prayer. The “prevailing form” of the seventeenth century was scholastic, for the educated who could read and interpret, a form not available to the masses of the day. The second form being presented by Molinos, Guyon, and Fénelon was available to the masses;

contemplative prayer leading to divine union is mystical, practical, and natural; it is available to the masses and requires no special training.²²

That contemplative prayer requires no special training is a highly questionable assumption, however I take Ward’s point that the illiterate could indeed pray and encounter a loving God which the former scholastic means of prayer, held firmly in the control of priests and the educated aristocracy, did not provide. Within the contemplative community of the twentieth century these two forms of prayer are not held as polarized opposites, but rather as closely related companions. The Brief Rule for Camaldolese Oblates²³ encourages both *lectio divina* (study and reflection on scripture, readings from the Church Fathers, saints etc.) as the opening stage leading increasingly into contemplative prayer, which is the final stage of the *lectio divina* process – i.e. – *Lectio Divina* and contemplative prayer are meant to be linked together as part of each other. Thomas Keating similarly encourages meditation (reflective prayer using words and

²¹ Louis Dupré, “Jansenism and Quietism,” 139-140.

²² Patricia A. Ward, “Experimental Theology in America,” 487.

²³ *Oblate Rule of the Camaldolese Benedictine Monks* (Big Sur, CA: New Camaldoli Publications, n.d.)

images) leading into contemplation (apophatic prayer of silence beyond words, concepts, images).²⁴ These are longstanding Christian definitions.

Fénelon also provides traditional definitions of various kinds of love: concupiscent love loves God for benefits received; love found through hope seeks benefits to come; charity mostly loves God for God's self and reaches perfection when love for God is purified of all self-interest. Fénelon aligns these three degrees of love with the stages of spiritual growth previously mentioned: hope comes with purification, charity with illumination, and pure love with the unitive stage. Levels of maturation in relationship are classified as "resigned" and "indifferent" – the first loves God through pain and suffering but is not free of egoic desires; while the indifferent person loves God and trusts into complete abandonment which leads to the higher state of "passivity". Again, "resigned", "indifferent", "passivity" are red flag words for the twentieth century. However, Fénelon clarifies – this higher state is such intimate union (unitive) that the person walks, talks, works as one with God's grace. Scholars such as Raimon Panikkar²⁵ and respected contemplative teachers such as Thomas Keating²⁶ affirm that Fénelon speaks of valid spiritual maturity.

The nineteenth century Quaker pamphlet called *A Guide to True Peace: or The Excellency of Inward and Spiritual Prayer*,²⁷ is a compilation of Molinos' *Spiritual*

²⁴ Thomas Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*, twentieth Anniversary edition (New York: Continuum 2007), 5-6.

²⁵ Raimon Panikkar, *Christophany: the Fullness of Man*, trans. Alfred DiLascia (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 32-33.

²⁶ Thomas Keating, Lecture given at Vancouver School of Theology--Chalmers Institute Summer School, July 2007. See also Thomas Keating and Laurence Freeman, *Oneness: Unity in Contemplation. Contemplative Outreach Enrichment Annual Conference. September 27-28, 2008, Pittsburgh, PA*. DVD. 92 minutes (Butler, NJ: Contemplative Outreach International, 2009)

²⁷ Francois Fénelon, Madame Jeanne Guyon, Miguel de Molinos. *A Guide to True Peace: or The Excellency of Inward and Spiritual Prayer*, compiled by William Backhouse and James Hanson, 1813. Reprint (Dixon, MO: Rare Christian Books, n.d.), 40-41.

Guide, Guyon's *Short Method of Prayer*, and Fénelon's *Maxims of the Saints* – the three works that resulted in the authors' arrests and imprisonment. The pamphlet provides evidence of how similar the teachings of Quietism are to traditional contemplative spirituality (and also how direct the influence of Quietism has been in the development of the Quakers). The English translation demonstrates how terminology and language pose problems – yet a patient reading that interprets older language into newer meanings is fruitful, demonstrating a genuine richness and spiritual wisdom in the text. For example, the following passage discerns the difference of meanings regarding “inaction”, “silence”, “emptiness”, and “love”:

Yet those greatly err, who accuse this species of prayer of idleness, a charge that can only arise from inexperience. If they would but make some efforts towards the attainment of it, they would soon experience the contrary of what they suppose, and find their accusation groundless. This appearance of inaction is, indeed, not the consequence of sterility and want, but of fruitfulness and abundance; this will be clearly perceived by the experienced soul, which will know and feel, that its silence is full and unctuous, and the result of causes totally the reverse of apathy and barrenness. The interior is not a stronghold to be taken by storm and violence; but a Kingdom of Peace, which is to be gained only by love. Let us then give ourselves up to God without apprehension of danger. He will love us, and enable us to love Him; and that love, increasing daily, will produce in us all other virtues.²⁸

This text is fully in keeping with the teachings of contemporary masters such as Thomas Keating who describes refocusing of wandering attention as an act as gentle as a feather touching a cotton ball,²⁹ that contemplative prayer is a loving relationship with God, and that contemplative prayer is also engagement with God's “Divine Therapy” healing our emotional wounds at the deepest level of being.³⁰

There is also an indication that self-knowledge is an intrinsic part of Quietist prayer. Defending herself as being within the lineage of Christian mysticism, Guyon cites

²⁸ Francois Fénelon, et al. *A Guide to True Peace*, 40-41.

²⁹ Thomas Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*, 121.

³⁰ Thomas Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*, 95-114.

Thomas Aquinas's direction to "taste" and "experience" the divine presence.³¹ Two things occur as a result of such experience: "certainty of understanding and assurance of affection". As Catherine of Siena and Beatrice Bruteau have stated, these are interrelated: insight into one's self (self-knowledge) accompanied by experiencing the love of God. Such is divine grace, because as Thomas Kelly interprets the Hebrew Prophets: "How can one see the living God and live"?³² How can one sustain self-respect in the presence of God; seeing one's wounds and failings, and feeling early memories of imposed guilt and shame, while remaining present to a substantial gift of grace and divine love allowing us to love ourselves and God while enduring the stages of purgation, illumination on the way to the unitive experience.

In light of the evidence that seventeenth century Quietism is aligned with traditional contemplative spirituality as well as spiritual psychology of the twentieth century, how did it come to be condemned as heresy?

Revisiting the "Heresy" of Quietism.

That Quietism gained such a negative portrayal and misunderstanding within both Catholic and Protestant churches had much to do with historical timing, and with the socioeconomic, religious and political issues of sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe. Also, the development of religious beliefs in America had its own path which determined views of Quietism as it transitioned from Catholic to Protestant adherents. And by no means insignificant, gender power or lack thereof, personalities and relationships of the players contributed to the challenges faced.

³¹ Patricia A. Ward, "Experimental Theology in America," 487-488.

³² Thomas Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion* (New York: HarperOne, 1992), 38.

1. Miguel de Molinos (1627-1697)

Miguel de Molinos (1627-1697) was initially a respected Spanish priest and confessor³³ teaching in Rome. Influenced by fellow Jesuit Achille Gagliardi's publication (*Breve Compendio Intorno alla Perfezione Cristiana*), Molinos published his own book, *Spiritual Guide* expressing the thesis that spiritual perfection could best be attained by abandoning ascetic efforts and instead concentrating on the passive prayer of interior quiet and abandon (relinquishment). This seemingly simple and straightforward instruction was sufficiently contentious to bring the wrath of the Jesuits and the Inquisition upon Molinos and his followers. The Quaker publishers of *A Guide to True Peace*, which includes *Spiritual Guide*, add the notation in their bibliographical notes: "Anyone in possession of this book will be excommunicated. Papal Decree 1687."³⁴ Molinos died in prison. Up to the end of the twentieth century, the transcripts of his trial have been inaccessible, securely sealed within the Vatican.

Ambiguity and many questions surround Molinos, his teachings, the accusations against him and the motivation of the Jesuits who attacked him. Their first assault was unsuccessful. Molinos was highly respected and hence defended by several cardinals who condemned his accusers. The Jesuits made a second successful attempt and Pope Innocent XI this time imprisoned, charged and found him guilty of immorality and doctrinal errors. Dupré raises many questions about the trial and Molinos himself.³⁵ Molinos was accused of sexual immorality because his teachings guaranteeing salvation through faith were said to give free license to such behaviour. Was he guilty or, when

³³ Louis Dupré, "Jansenism and Quietism," 133.

³⁴ Francois Fénelon, Madame Jeanne Guyon, Miguel de Molinos. *A Guide to True Peace: or The Excellency of Inward and Spiritual Prayer*, 46.

³⁵ Louis Dupré, "Jansenism and Quietism," 133-135.

questioned by the very effective Inquisition did witnesses respond as the Inquisition wanted them to? Had Molinos promoted such teachings, or was his intention misrepresented? Molinos confessed to the many charges against him – he also endured torture. Perhaps, Dupré suggests, his confession was Molinos living out non-resistance to evil. There does appear to be some confusion around his Quietist teaching – Molinos feeling prophetic, claiming he could discern the devil’s influence in his directees, blurring distinctions between active and infused contemplation. Was Molinos mentally unbalanced because of Inquisition pressure? Were they distorting his meaning, or was he not as clear as John and Teresa? Dupré describes Molinos during nine years of Roman imprisonment as a “model of goodness to all who approached him” and dying “a saintly death”.

Questions must be raised regarding the Jesuits of the time. Over a century since Ignatius of Loyola’s death, his successors did not all carry their founder’s experience of contemplative prayer that opens the spiritual heart to the inflowing presence of God, inspiring and incarnating the Jesuits’ call to service.³⁶ By the beginnings of the seventeenth century, there were two streams of Jesuit spirituality: one was “cautious”, “soberly ascetical”, methodical, moralistic, suspicious of mystical prayer, narrow in its approach to the Jesuit exercises and interpretation of their constitution. The other stream was:

expansive, more syncretistic within the broad tradition of Christian spirituality, and intent on developing the implications of the affective and even mystical elements in the life of the founder of the order.³⁷

³⁶ John O’Malley, “Early Jesuit Spirituality: Spain and Italy,” in *Christian Spirituality III: Post-Reformation and Modern*, vol. 18 of *World Spirituality: an Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest*, eds. Louis Dupré and Don E. Saliers in collaboration with John Meyendorff (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 12-17.

³⁷ John O’Malley, “Early Jesuit Spirituality: Spain and Italy,” 17.

We might well suspect that Molinos encountered the narrower interpretation of Ignatian spirituality. Within that interpretation he also engaged a foundational principle of Jesuit Counter Reformation response – one which appears susceptible to polarization in a narrow environment, specifically: how the Jesuits would bring Christ to the laity.

Jesuit vows included obedience to the Pope.³⁸ Jesuit work involved strengthening the Counter Reformation Catholic Church. They did not live in cloisters but “in the world” where they could serve Pope and people, with the intention of bringing Christ to the laity still within the authority of the official Catholic Church. Catholic theologians were responding to Luther’s theology of justification by faith, and also to a Lutheran accusation that ascribed to Rome a quasi-Pelagian tenet of saving one’s self. Quietists were being grouped with the Alumbrados³⁹ who claimed to be illumined by interior revelations and visions, challenging Church control of doctrine, sacraments, and salvation. Jesuits condemned them three times. The transition must have been challenging – the balance between Church authority, salvation by God’s grace rather than ascetical works, and the interior direct relationship with Christ available to laity who practiced contemplative prayer. Quietism renewed the faith of many laity. The teachings of the Ignatian Exercises were also designed to enliven faith in lay persons. Church authorities, including some Jesuits, who lacked the depth that Ignatius and some of his followers had known and experienced, appear to have collapsed the balance into a dualism on the side of moralism and rule. Molinos was caught in the rip of changing tides.

³⁸ John O’Malley, “Early Jesuit Spirituality: Spain and Italy,” 8.

³⁹ John O’Malley, “Early Jesuit Spirituality: Spain and Italy,” 18.

2. Madame Jeanne Guyon (1648-1717) and Bishop Francois Fénelon (1651-1715).

The spiritual philosophy grew in France through the deep faith of Madame Jeanne Guyon (1648-1717) and her spiritual advisor and follower Bishop Francois Fénelon (1651-1715). Europe was in turmoil: church and imperial powers greatly challenged by Luther's Reformation in the previous century; momentum building in the seventeenth century towards the Seven Years War in which Britain defeated France, the American Revolution in which colonists defeated Britain, followed at the end of the century by the French Revolution in which many members of the aristocracy would meet bloody deaths. Kings and bishops were nervous. The rigorous control of church and state over peasants was breaking down; the Age of Reason was building in which logic disrupted the conflation of religion with superstition and Imperial-Church oppression. Humanism was developing and expressing a new compassion in a harsh and violent era. History was foundational in the formation, fate, and future of Quietism.

Madame Jeanne Guyon has been accused of being "a hysterical woman" and a "spiritual imposter".⁴⁰ Dupré challenges the accusations.⁴¹ Guyon managed her material duties well, including the family estate after her husband's death, demonstrating good practical sense. She also significantly influenced spiritual leaders throughout Protestant Europe (a good reason for her to be suspect) as well as Fénelon who Dupré describes as "exceptionally talented and solidly religious."⁴² Guyon was genuinely spiritually sensitive, but in a patriarchal society and church that subordinated women. She endured considerable emotional stresses in a forced marriage, a hostile mother-in-law, children exposed to small-pox, and early widowhood. She was sufficiently educated to teach in a

⁴⁰ Louis Dupré, "Jansenism and Quietism," 138.

⁴¹ Louis Dupré, "Jansenism and Quietism," 136.

⁴² Louis Dupré, "Jansenism and Quietism," 138.

school established by Louis XIV's wife who defended her during her first arrest. In all of this we have clues to her personal strength and charisma. However, as Guyon's teaching and writing about the prayer of quiet spread, and its implications became clear, she lost royal favour. She also succumbed to temptations immature mystics may face through a combination of emotional and spiritual sensitivity and poor guidance. She appears naïve regarding phenomena such as visions, involuntary body movements, and she engaged in automatic writing – something Fénelon warned her about. She did not sufficiently link her experience with the contemplative tradition within the historical church.⁴³ By the time Fenelon stepped in to do so, it was too late.

Fénelon, her faithful advisor and eventually defender, was a well educated aristocrat, tutor to Louis XIV's son, and an archbishop. Initially in situations of considerable power -- in the Church, in the King's court, and as Guyon's priest/confessor -- Fenelon provided insufficient guidance to her overall. He saw something legitimate in Guyon, but over time it appears he gave in more to following than guiding her – a highly risky relinquishment of his professional role and position that cost them both dearly given the social upheaval of their times. Rather than functioning fully as her mentor/advisor, Fenelon seems to have reversed the roles -- Dupré suggests he took on the role as her spiritual child too literally,⁴⁴ failing to be as discerning as needed.

Dupré makes two further significant observations about them: he describes Guyon as having “extraordinary spiritual sensitivity” and having “a profound impact ... on some of the most discerning masters of her time”⁴⁵; and he describes Fenelon, in addition to being “exceptionally talented and solidly religious”, as a “seriously religious priest gifted

⁴³ Louis Dupré, “Jansenism and Quietism,” 138.

⁴⁴ Louis Dupré, “Jansenism and Quietism,” 139.

⁴⁵ Louis Dupré, “Jansenism and Quietism,” 136.

with a brilliant mind and connected with the highest circles.”⁴⁶ Together they form a metaphor worth our consideration: the experience based feminine and the knowledge based masculine – both necessary, as I have been repeatedly stressing, for solid contemplative spirituality. As it happens, experience and knowledge (theology) are also aspects of the Wesleyan quaternity (scripture-tradition-reason-experience).⁴⁷ We can conjecture that the theologically trained priest with his own spiritual longings was inspired by the depth of Madame Guyon’s experience. That advisor learns from advisee is nothing new ... consider the relationship of John of the Cross to his “charge”, several decades his senior, Teresa of Avila. In this case did the noble Fenelon naively relinquish too much of his own vested authority to Madame Guyon, seeking to respect what he saw in her and learned from her? We can only conjecture the degree to which this may have happened. In a more sympathetic environment such a relationship might have been unhindered, but these were not ordinary times. Fenelon’s theological training offered essential balance to Madame Guyon’s lack thereof; his rank initially afforded her protection; but they were challenging a rigidly controlled status quo in a dangerous era of enormous change. In the end, the authority of the institutions overwhelmed them. In retrospect can we learn from their story?

Their greatest challenge came from Bishop Jacques-Benigne Bossuet, a theologian, court preacher and advisor to Louis XIV. He is described as an advocate of political absolutism and the divine right of kings,⁴⁸ an acerbic orator and a former teacher of Fénelon. Bossuet clearly stood in opposition to any spirituality such as the prayer of quiet (labeled Quietism) that made Christ available to the general population outside the

⁴⁶ Louis Dupré, “Jansenism and Quietism,” 139.

⁴⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Outler (accessed 2010.01.07)

⁴⁸ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bossuet> (accessed February 2009)

rigorous control of the official church. He fought Fénelon through pamphlets, letters and the Inquisition, and won. Dupré describes the condemnation of Fénelon as oversimplifying his intentions, taking his statements out of context, and having a dogmatic critique that failed “to capture the subtle, psychological description of states of mind” that Fénelon had been forced to condense. Fénelon’s condemnation was more a matter of political shrewdness than any real concern for spiritual truth, and his condemnation removed the last protection from Madame Guyon. Summarizing the “heresy” of French Quietism, Dupré suggests it was really “nothing more than the all-too-deliberate decision to leave the ordinary.”⁴⁹ Quietism had challenged the status-quo in a time of immense upheaval in Church and State. Its threat to the ruling powers had little to do with any viable assessment of theology or spiritual and psychological well-being of the people.

The Prayer of Quiet:

Molinos, Guyon, Fenelon vs. Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross

As discussed (*Quietism: The Prayer of Quiet and Traditional Contemplative Prayer*), the prayer of quiet taught by Molinos, Guyon and Fenelon was actually within the longstanding Christian contemplative tradition, for example bearing marked similarities to the teaching of Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross. One may then well ask why the “Quietist” trio did not survive their times while John and Teresa did. A number of considerations present themselves.

Molinos, Guyon and Fenelon were overwhelmed by complex forces far beyond their control. Their demonstrated lack of discernment regarding their behaviour in challenging situations suggests they were politically naïve and did not have the opportunity to develop into the stature of their politically wiser and more mature

⁴⁹ Louis Dupré, “Jansenism and Quietism,” 141.

predecessors such as John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila. Teresa and John survived their times even though they lived in Spain during the turbulent era of the Inquisition and the Reformation. Teresa was undeniably politically astute, expedient and wise as she worked within the Counter Reformation Catholic Church. She was fortunate in two of her spiritual advisors who were sympathetic to her sensibilities. One of these was John. Some 30 years her junior, we might consider who was directing whom; undeniably John must have benefitted from Teresa's wisdom. In their effort to reform the Carmelite Order, they received permission and support from the Pope. They both trod a very fine line, and Teresa did undergo persecution by the inquisition, as John did famously by one of the monasteries he sought to reform and also near the end of his life. Support came from wealthy friends and others within the church. Their tribulations carried them into considerable spiritual maturity as evidenced in their writings.

Reading between the lines of these stories, it does appear that Fenelon, Guyon, and perhaps Molinos lacked Teresa's insight and wisdom regarding the powers around them. These "Quietists" also came more than a century later when the forces of Protestant development, wars, and the unstoppable force of rationalism had grown strong. Quietism was undoubtedly even more threatening to Catholic and Imperial authorities of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Lacking the background of influential support which helped Teresa and John, and struggling with varying degrees of immaturity, Molinos, Guyon and Fenelon were positioned for easy scapegoating by their highly threatened opponents and critics.

Quietism, Pietism, and the Protestants.

As the initial intensity of the Reformation began to subside, European civilization

developed along three primary lines: rationalism, humanism, and mysticism,⁵⁰ -- i.e. -- the Enlightenment and the spiritualities derived from Quietism and Pietism, with humanism influencing all. The new literacy and humanism divested of the heaviest imperial/church control, produced literature in arts, humanities and sciences. It also provided written works addressing not only theology but also experiential literature for significant contemplative movements of the era such as Quietism and the closely related Pietism of Protestant Europe and England.⁵¹

The new humanism was felt in both the rational and mystical trends, but as the Enlightenment opened, rationalism and humanism took precedence. Ken Wilber describes this overtaking as the rational “crushing” the contemplative tradition⁵² which, given how much we have lost over the past several centuries seems a fairly apt depiction. However, the mystical/contemplative tradition of Christianity did still continue, strongly influencing Protestant Christianity as it developed into the Evangelical, Pentecostal, and mainstream “liberal” denominations of our day. In this there has clearly been a “drift”, a slippage away from the original impetus and we have lost much of our awareness of those contemplative roots and profound spiritual longings from which contemporary Protestant Christianity has come.

Quietism and Pietism in North America:

The works of Guyon, Fenelon, and Molinos, discredited by the Catholic Church in France and Rome, had caught the attention of other parts of Europe such as Germany,

⁵⁰ Albert C. Outler, “Pietism and Enlightenment: Alternatives to Tradition” in *Christian Spirituality III: Post-Reformation and Modern*, 241, 248-250.

⁵¹ Patricia A. Ward, “Madame Guyon and Experiential Theology in America,” *Church History* 67, no.3 (September 1998): 489.

⁵² Ken Wilber, “Spiritual but not Religious,” Disc 2 of *The Future of Christianity*, Integral Life, 2008.

Switzerland, England, and subsequently America.⁵³ Their influence on the Quakers (Society of Friends) is direct.⁵⁴ Quietism also had a strong influence on more radical Pietists of north western Germany.⁵⁵

Much like Quietism, Pietist and Puritan expressions of Christianity were about love between God and humankind. Richard C. Lovelace (Professor Emeritus, Church History, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary) states that the Puritans were by no means as legalistic as the proverbial stereotype. Rather they were concerned about ethical living, and that sourced from the interior subjective experience of relationship with Christ. For Puritans evidence of genuine conversion included:

... the sanctifying effect of his [the Spirit's] presence, the impulse toward prayer, a spirit of freedom from legal bondage and fear, a spirit of gentle mourning for sin, the infusion of longings to be with Christ, and boldness in coming to God.⁵⁶

This once again evokes the three classical mystical stages of purgation, illumination, and union. Lovelace further connects this to the Puritan emphasis on religious experience as well as a later focus on the inner light found among more radical Puritans and the Quakers.

This attention to the interior spiritual life sourcing outward life arrived on North American shores with the European Pietists, English Puritans and Quietist affiliations such as the Quakers. Quietism's influence on religion in America is extensive. For

⁵³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guyon,_Jeanne-Marie-Bouvier_de_La_Motte- accessed March 2009.

⁵⁴ See Guenin-Lelle. "Friends' Theological Heritage: From Seventeenth-Century Quietists to *A Guide to True Peace*" See also *A Guide to True Peace*, 3.

⁵⁵ Albert C. Outler "Pietism and Enlightenment: Alternatives to Tradition" in *Christian Spirituality III: Post-Reformation and Modern*, 241. Albert Outler (1908-1989), was an American Methodist Theologian with a Doctorate from Yale. A highly respected Wesleyan Scholar, he is considered to be the first to recognize what he called the Wesleyan Quadrilateral of Scripture-Tradition-Reason-Experience. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Outler (accessed 2010.01.07)

⁵⁶ Richard C. Lovelace, "The Anatomy of Puritan Piety: English Puritan Devotional Literature, 1600-1640," in *Christian Spirituality III Post-Reformation and Modern*, 304.

example Guyon's writings were published as early as 1738 in Philadelphia.⁵⁷ Patricia Ward particularly cites Thomas Cogswell Upham (1799-1872), a Congregationalist and professor of moral philosophy at Bowdoin College, as instrumental in popularizing Guyon's teaching in America, translating her vocabulary into the everyday language of American experiential religion. Working first with the writings of Catherine of Genoa, and then Madame Guyon, he linked their experiential spirituality with the American nineteenth century holiness revival, theologically joining Wesleyans and Pietists with the Reformation and Catholic traditions.⁵⁸ Ward states: "Upham began to explore the psychology of the inner life, incorporating Quietist ideas into the theology of personal holiness or sanctification of the revivalist movement."⁵⁹

Upham taught that we could receive divine guidance by recognizing our "comparative nihility" before God, resting in a receptive mode which allowed God to work. This "recollected state" eventually became a habitual attention, enabling the person to live totally present to the moment.⁶⁰ Certainly this is a description of contemplative prayer, both the interior movements and the state of being present throughout active life. This sounds very much like Quaker Thomas Kelly who writes of prayerful attention to the Inner Light, developing an inward orientation toward it such that we are in unceasing worship and communion with the Divine who is at the same time guiding our engagement in daily life and relationships.⁶¹ It also sounds quite similar to Thomas Keating's practice of Centering Prayer.⁶² It also sounds like the fourteenth

⁵⁷ Patricia A. Ward, "Experiential Theology in America," 489.

⁵⁸ Patricia A. Ward, "Experiential Theology in America," 490, 492, 496.

⁵⁹ Patricia A. Ward, "Experiential Theology in America," 491.

⁶⁰ Patricia A. Ward, "Experiential Theology in America," 492.

⁶¹ Thomas Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), 5-6.

⁶² Thomas Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart: The Contemplative Dimension of the Gospel* (New York: Continuum, 2007)

century classic *The Cloud of Unknowing* which inspired Keating and, in the sixteenth century, John of the Cross.⁶³ Encountering divine love, “pure love”, Upham stated, was a matter of “inward consciousness” that must be *personally experienced* to be understood. Upham also took care to specifically outline the difference between egocentric absorption and true engagement with the Holy in the human soul:

The mark of true experience, in distinction from that which is a mere semblance, is that it takes the creature from himself, and turns his thoughts and affections in another direction, viz: towards God.⁶⁴

Ward does suggest that as Upham translated Guyon’s teachings into the language of American experience, he was somewhat reductionist. Nonetheless, his influence can be felt in American writers such as Harriet Beecher Stowe, a friend of Upham’s who also respected Fénelon.⁶⁵

The final word on Quietism and the reality that it has substantial spiritual validity in our times may well go to the Quakers who followed George Fox’s integration of interior prayer and social action. While we may conclude that Molinos, Guyon and Fenelon were “immature” contemplatives, we can also see this prayer of the quiet heart develop to maturity in Quakers such as John Woolman, Thomas Kelly, Douglas Steere,⁶⁶ and Parker Palmer.

Despite their numerical decline, those who have quaffed deeply from the Quaker tradition of silent meetings and serious “exercising of the heart toward

⁶³ *The Cloud of Unknowing and The Book of Privy Counseling*, ed. William Johnston, Foreword by Huston Smith (New York: Image-Doubleday, 1973) For example see Chapter 3, 48-49.

⁶⁴ Patricia A. Ward, “Experimental Theology in America,” 493.

⁶⁵ Harriet Beecher Stowe, “The Interior or Hidden Life,” *The New York Evangelist*, 17 (April 1845): 61, in Patricia Ward, “Experimental Theology in America,” 497.

⁶⁶ E. Glen. Hinson, “Baptist and Quaker Spirituality,” in *Christian Spirituality III: Post-Reformation and Modern*, vol. 18 of *World Spirituality: an Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest*, eds. Louis Dupré and Don E. Saliers in collaboration with John Meyendorff (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 331-332.

God” have manifested unquestionable signs of deep and mature spirituality. No other religious group has achieved so notable a record of social ministry and action.⁶⁷

Conclusion...

There is an observation to be made here that should not escape our notice, one which leads us into the final chapter of protestations against contemplative spirituality and prayer. As Dupré suggested, the condemnation of Fenelon, Guyon, and Molinos was less about the spirituality and practice of their prayer which actually was within the Christian contemplative tradition, but more about the threat that contemplative prayer posed to the power establishment of their day. A prayer that gave spiritual autonomy and integrity to the mass population was always dangerous to the ruling class. Freedom to think, freedom to feel, freedom to pray and freedom to act in accordance with one’s own integrity and conscience were at the core of the Protestant impetus. Practicing a Christian contemplative spirituality which matures both personal autonomy and community well-being was very much at the heart of the Pietist movement. The Quietist movement in Catholic France and Italy was quenched before its influence on the community could expand, yet clearly social justice and human well-being were central issues caught in the tensions. Contemplative prayer has been historically on the edge, on the boundaries of the disenfranchised from Jesus’ ministry unto today. Contemplative prayer inspires the call to social action and provides the foundation and ground of being underlying it. Let us now consider how.

⁶⁷ Hinson, E. Glen. “Baptist and Quaker Spirituality,” in *Christian Spirituality III: Post-Reformation and Modern*, 330.

Chapter 5: Contemplation and Action

This is what Yahweh asks of you; only this:
to act justly, to love tenderly, and
to walk humbly with your God.
(Micah 6.8)¹

Introduction: Is Contemplation Contrary to Active Ministry?

Protestants of just about every flavour have stood together for centuries in agreement that contemplative prayer is utterly contrary to social action. The image is presented of people sitting in isolation from the “real world”, meditating in self-pacification, narcissistically disengaged from any involvement in the needs of the community, not living the call of Christ for the Church to minister to the world. We can see in this stereotype the kinds of dualistic misunderstanding that generates misrepresentation, in this instance regarding the relationship between contemplative prayer and social action.

Contemplative prayer, however, is not about disengaging from the larger community; non-attachment is quite different from disconnection; stillness is not what it looks like to those who have not experienced the energizing paradoxes that occur during contemplation. All the arguments posed so far of Gnostic disconnection and Quietist passivity play a part in this accusation, and all are based on misunderstanding and misrepresentation chasing each other in a life depleting vortex.

I here suggest that contemplative prayer is very much about engagement and interaction from a ground of being sourced by a deep inflow of Holy Spirit generating wisdom and compassion. Contemplative prayer is about living intimately the Great Commandment. It is about relationship. Contemplative prayer practiced as a regular

¹ On the cover of Richard Rohr's book *Contemplation in Action*. NY: Crossroad Publishing Co., 2006.

discipline of personal spiritual development, innately develops a vital relationship with God and therefore with one's self, and consequently with others. Contemplative prayer opens the spiritual heart to the in-pouring presence of the Spirit who in turn deepens the outpouring of wisdom and compassion through us. Establishing ourselves in a whole and mature relationship with God strengthens a healthy relationship with ourselves; this in turn resources and facilitates our relationship with community. Ministry and social action arise from an increasingly integrated ground of being, and that in turn facilitates Spirit nurtured and guided non-violent ministry and social action.

We Protestants do have our inconsistencies and blind spots. The West has come to have high regard for Eastern spiritual leaders whose social activism is sourced in their faith tradition and meditation practice. His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh, and India's Mahatma Gandhi all have earned our attention and respect; all have sourced their lives in hours of daily meditation and demonstrate no conflict between silent sitting meditation and the consequent development of insight, compassion, and self-control central to their work addressing significant social injustice. Western Christianity also has its own contemplatives highly respected for their outstanding social action – Archbishop Desmond Tutu at the heart of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and Mother Teresa of Calcutta, to name two prominent in our attention – yet perhaps we tend to look more at their leadership and action, and forget the hours of prayer, solitude and silence underlying their challenging ministries.

Jim Marion, a Washington DC lawyer with a career in public policy,² outlines

² Born in 1945, as an adolescent Jim Marion entered a Catholic monastery where he remained for seven and a half years. He left, became involved in the American Civil Rights movement including marching with

what he considers to be the social accomplishments of Christianity since the Reformation.

The contributions to human welfare on this planet he sees as noteworthy:

... the glory of Christianity, unequalled by any other religion ... from Christianity and its Gospel-based principles have eventually come freedom from slavery, universal education, liberal democracy, the free market economy, social welfare programs, the movement for universal health care, and labor protection laws and unions.³

Admittedly Marion's list includes items reflecting an American capitalist ideology which not everyone will view as beneficial to the world (e.g. free market economy and an American style democracy); however, other items are noteworthy (abolition of slavery, universal education, labour protection, etc.) Marion is not only a social activist working within the American bureaucracy as a way to bring justice to his society, he is also a mystic and contemplative. To his list of the accomplishments of Western Christianity he adds:

... these advances are nothing compared to what could have been accomplished in the last two thousand years if the message of Jesus about the inner Kingdom of Heaven had been understood and heeded.⁴

Herein lies the challenge facing Western Christianity, both Protestant and Catholic: Jesus most certainly spent hours in solitude and prayer, moving from there into his highly engaged ministry. Therefore, how do we, likewise, viably unite and integrate contemplation and action?

Martin Luther King Jr., served in the Peace Corps, earned his law degree, served in President Carter's administration, and continues to work for the American Congress in Washington. During all these stages of his life he had a series of mystical experiences which he identifies as important aspects of his personal development.

³ Jim Marion, *Putting on the Mind of Christ: The Inner Work of Christian Spirituality* (Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads Publishing Co., 2000), 7.

⁴ Jim Marion, *Putting on the Mind of Christ*, 7.

The Challenge of Language: Definitions and Terminology.

1. Contemplation: Defining the Word.

David Steindl-Rast is a Benedictine monk involved in interfaith dialogue, teaching and directing meditation retreats, and social justice; he can be found on his Gratefulness website www.gratefulness.org, a website devoted to providing hope and healing of minds and hearts throughout the world in a turbulent and troubled era. During a retreat given in Australia, Br. David offers a definition of the word “contemplation”.⁵

By bringing contemplative practice into everyday living, Br. David says, we become more alive. Based on the original Latin, the term “contemplation” has three parts to it: “con” meaning “with” or bringing something together; “atio” meaning “activity”, in this case activity that is repeated over and over. And what is it that is repeated over and over? “Templ” which Br. David describes as the ancient practice of measuring out the heavens in order to bring them to earth in a temple —e.g.—Stone Henge etc. Therefore, “the original idea of contemplation is to put together the order above to which we look up with what we do below, to bring the order that we see up there, to bring the vision down to earth.” This sounds very much like the prayer Jesus gave us: Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as in Heaven. And so, Br. David states, contained within the very word “contemplation” is the indivisible union of contemplation and action; these are not separate entities or concepts, “contemplation contains action”. Finally, Br. David states:

Without action, contemplation is just looking up, keeping your eyes on the vision and doing nothing. It is no better than action without vision where you are running around like a chicken without a head. But contemplation is the putting together of the vision and the action over and over again. And a contemplative life does that, it does that in everyday living. And so we want to look at the various ways in our everyday living we can put together the vision and the action, in which we can again and again

⁵ David Steindl-Rast, *Spiritual Practices for Everyday Living Retreat*, Australia, June 2009. Part II. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TDwGH1DOydk> (accessed 2010.02).

find the vision, remind ourselves of the vision, whatever that will be for us, the vision that gives meaning to the action.

The real challenge here is how to engage this union deeply within ourselves so that the vision becomes integrated into our motivation throughout our whole being. This is ever so much more than simply an intellectual understanding that at times engages our emotions; this union is engaged at levels of the most fundamental depths of our human *being*. We are returned again to how we perceive contemplation from the outside arena. As in all things contemplative, misunderstanding the meaning of language can lead us away from what it is actually about.

2. Misunderstanding Meaning: Non-Attachment, Kenosis, and the Mind of Christ

Carelessness in terminology can add considerably to misunderstanding. As with Quietism, words given different meanings than originally intended can produce misleading conclusions. *Detachment* is often used as a synonym for *non-attachment* and both are often misunderstood as “disconnection”, i.e., indifference, disinterest, lack of caring, avoiding responsibility, passivity, withdrawal from reality, denial, despair, hopelessness – and other such states generated by being overwhelmed, or ignorant, or having “hardness of heart”. These have nothing to do with the non-attachment that is a core orientation within contemplative spirituality.

Non-attachment, or detachment, is both a discipline used in contemplative traditions and a blessed fruit that grows gradually. Non-attachment, not clinging to egocentric concerns and energies, letting go and releasing ego generated emotions, thoughts and impulses is the interior action by which the contemplative engages the process of kenosis. Kenosis, i.e. self-emptying, is the means by which the contemplative

moves through the traditional three stage process of purgation – illumination – union;⁶ self-emptying is the process of making place for the inflow of the Holy Spirit as described in Chapter One of this thesis. Kenosis, self-emptying, is the letting go of ego control in order, through union with God, to access the true self which is our mature self. Thinking, perceiving, feeling, and acting, gradually becomes imbued with the fruits of the spirit; we become God's compassionate presence in our daily relationships and world. This process and state of being is what Paul exhorts the Philippian community to strive for:

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let this same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself...⁷

How does this look and feel in contemporary terms? How does this so called emptiness manifest in the life and actions of those involved in contemporary social justice ministry? Claudia Horowitz, who has a Master degree in public policy from Duke University and who integrates contemplative spirituality into social activism offers a picture: "Spiritual activists move more freely between the inner quest for peace and the outer quest for justice, and we feel some comfort knowing it is a permeable membrane that joins our struggles, our commitments and our transformations."⁸ For contemplative Christianity, non-attachment is seen as the process of kenosis or self-emptying into the Godhead; contemplative prayer *is* this kenotic process in action. As such, contemplative prayer is considered to be a prayer of loving union with God, directly working on our personal ego generated tensions that impact our actions and relationships with God, self,

⁶ Review my comments on these classical three powers, chapter 1, 8-9.

⁷ Philippians 2.3-7a NRSV

⁸ Claudia Horowitz, *The Spiritual Activist: Practices to Transform Your Life, Your Work, and Your World* (New York: Penguin Compass, 2002), xii. In Karen Brandow, "Spiritual Direction for Nonviolent Activists of Faith," *Presence*, 14, no. 2 (June 2008), 40.

and others. Thomas Keating summarizes: "Centering Prayer is aimed at healing the violence in ourselves and purifying the unconscious of its hidden and flawed motivation that reduce and can even cancel out the effectiveness of the external works of mercy, justice, and peace."⁹

Horowitz and Keating make clear statements that challenge the longstanding Christian belief that contemplative prayer is passive and disengaged from the active work of social justice and mercy. Horowitz and Keating both speak of the direct relationship between inner transformation and healing and effective ministry. They are not alone. Thomas Merton stresses that we must move to a new level of prayer and meditation so that we can "grow to a more complete personal and Christian integration by experience."¹⁰ He continues:

He who attempts to act and do things for others or for the world without deepening his own self-understanding, freedom, integrity and capacity to love will not have anything to give others. He will communicate to them nothing but the contagion of his own obsessions, his aggressiveness, his ego-centered ambitions, his delusions about ends and means, his doctrinaire prejudices and ideas...¹¹

The real purpose of meditation, Merton states is to explore new dimensions of one's own "freedom, illumination and love" through developing a deeper awareness of our life in Christ. By nurturing our interior life in the love of Christ, which brings personal healing and integration, we more readily bring the fruits of that inner work to the outer work of social justice and ministry.

⁹ Thomas Keating, "Foreword" in Cynthia Bourgeault, *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening* (Cambridge, MA: Cowley Pubs., 2004), viii.

¹⁰ Thomas Merton, *Contemplation in a World of Action* (Notre Dame, IND: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 160.

¹¹ Thomas Merton, *Contemplation in a World of Action*, 160.

Contemplation and Prophetic Action

1. The First Gaze, The Second Gaze, and The Third Way.

Richard Rohr, OFM, is a Franciscan priest who, in his seventh decade, has been given permission by his superiors to live as a hermit. He defines this role as fifty percent of his time in solitude, prayer, reflection, writing, gardening and gazing. The other fifty percent of his time he is “on the road” – counselling, working in the local parish, giving retreats.¹² His major work in his latter years has been the formation of the *Center for Action and Contemplation*.¹³ As a Franciscan the integration of social action and contemplative prayer is part of Fr. Rohr’s heritage.

Rohr links contemplation with the development of genuine compassion. He speaks of our *First Gaze* as being exercised through the eyes of our egocentric programming (the false self), and our *Second Gaze* through the eyes of divinely sourced compassion (the True Self), and of contemplative prayer as the essential means for making the transition between the two.

The *first gaze*, Rohr says, is our immediate and initial reaction, including many forms of aggression, coming from the defended egoic self. What is contained in that first gaze is determined individually, but in general terms might well include “reactions of attachment, defensiveness, judgment, control, analysis.”¹⁴ Attachment or aversion covers most of these first gaze reactions. We all likely recognize the questions that Rohr poses as first gaze terrain: “How will this affect me?” “How does my self-image demand that I

¹² Richard Rohr and Friends, *Contemplation in Action* (New York:Crossroad Publishing, 2006), 16-17.

¹³ The Center for Action and Contemplation. <http://www.cacradicalgrace.org> See appendix IV for their statement of *Mission and Core Principles*.

¹⁴ Richard Rohr, *Contemplation in Action*, 15.

react to this?” “How can I get back in control of this situation?”¹⁵ The questions come from the dualistic contrast consciousness that Beatrice Bruteau describes in Chapter One of this thesis. We might reflect on the manner in which these questions manifest themselves behaviourally throughout our communities, large and local; our relationships with colleagues, neighbours, family, etc. The first gaze is not so much based in genuine compassion, but more, Rohr suggests, in defensive calculation.

The *second gaze*, Rohr summarizes, is “open, undefended, and immediately present,” and is generated from a “contemplative mind and heart.”¹⁶ The way to this second gaze is through the path of contemplative prayer which opens us to ground of being union with the source of wisdom and compassion from which we increasingly live.

Rohr is very clear that contemplative prayer is not about escapism and avoidance, but rather about engagement. He emphasizes well what I have stated in Chapter One: a little peace and quiet does not a contemplative make. Rohr’s words:

Avoiding people does not compute into love of God;
being quiet and alone does not make you into a contemplative.
Introversion and shyness are not the same as inner peace
or communion.¹⁷

Rather than avoiding, denying, distracting from the problem situations and relationships before us, contemplation reveals through our developing insight, wisdom and compassion how, directly and with presence, to address our challenges in the most constructive and creative approach we can muster with our given level of maturity.

Developing the second gaze is the Easter path that Jesus walked (“Thy will be done”. Mark 14.36); the insight of John the Baptist (“He must increase; I must decrease.”

¹⁵ Richard Rohr, *Contemplation in Action*, 16.

¹⁶ Richard Rohr, *Contemplation in Action*, 15.

¹⁷ Richard Rohr, *Contemplation in Action*, 17.

John 3.30); the mystical wisdom of St. Paul ("To live is Christ, to die is gain." Philippians 1.21, Romans 8.6-7). Rohr offers us the example of the young Carmelite nun Thérèse of Lisieux who, within the close confines of first her family and then her convent, was able to face her own mixed motivations and negative shadow side while seeking to serve others:

She suffers her powerlessness until she can finally break through to love. *She holds the tension within herself (the essence of contemplation) until she herself is the positive resolution of that tension...*¹⁸

Rohr here describes the essence of the actions both interior and exterior of Jesus during his arrest, trial, conviction, lashing, walk to Golgotha, and crucifixion. Rohr points us back to the descriptions and movements of Panikkar's Christophany. Holding the tensions until the egoic construct releases and the ground of being that is the True Self in union with the Divine Self breaks through. Intrinsic to the resolution is compassion, insight and wisdom – which are key evidence of Divine Being *present as action* in our midst. This breakthrough presents what Rohr calls "*The Third Way*".

This *third way*, Rohr states, *is* the path of contemplative action, the ground from which effective prophetic charism arises. In his attempts to describe this third way, Rohr falls into a recognizably mystic/contemplative reference point – it is neither this nor is it that: the third way is neither "fight nor flight"; it is neither direct advocacy espousing political or theological opinion, nor is it denial or avoidance. Rather, the third way is:

waiting and thinking and praying
until something more refined emerges,
until God has had a chance to speak and
until we have truly heard the other person.¹⁹

¹⁸ Richard Rohr, *Contemplation in Action*, 18. Italics are Rohr's.

¹⁹ Richard Rohr, *Contemplation in Action*, 21.

It is “holding the opposites together long enough till you know they are not true”²⁰ which, Rohr insists, *is* “contemplation.” As an example, Rohr cites the political climate of his own country, America – neither conservatism nor liberalism in political, philosophical, or religious form work effectively to address the national and international concerns of today. One is too closed, the other too open; both are based in the dualistic mindset of the ego. The third way is the way of wisdom, different from “mere intelligence,” coming from a consciousness transformed beyond the “dualistic win/lose mind.”²¹ This wisdom is sourced in ground-of-being-depths (ours and the Divine in union) which provides stability and flexibility, clarity and spaciousness, simplicity and panoramic comprehension of complexity, and creativity in the face of dissolution and upheaval, impermanence and change. Rohr calls this the ultimate “Reference Point”. He cites Augustine, Daniel Berrigan and Karl Rahner as those who demonstrate the power of this transformed/expanded consciousness, and quotes Rahner: “It is in paradox itself, the paradox which was and still is a source of insecurity that I have come to find the greatest security”²²

Rohr’s third way *is* the nondual consciousness described by Panikkar, Huston Smith, Ken Wilber, Beatrice Bruteau, and the millennia of past generations of contemplatives referred to in my previous chapters. To arrive at the mind state which brings non-dual third way consciousness into the daily affairs and nitty-gritty of life, of social activism, requires the discipline and the fruits of contemplative prayer.

2. Contemplative Action: The Inner and Outer Life.

There are plenty to follow our Lord half-way, but not the other half.
They will give up possessions, friends, and honors, but it touches them

²⁰ Richard Rohr, *Contemplation in Action*, 21.

²¹ Richard Rohr, *Contemplation in Action*, 27.

²² Richard Rohr, *Contemplation in Action*, 29.

too closely to disown themselves. (Meister Eckhart)²³

The ego loses its place as the acting and determining subject in priority over every relationship. (Dorothee Soelle)²⁴

Egocentricity melts away before the sun of mystical union. (Dorothee Soelle)²⁵

These words from fourteenth and twentieth century mystics speak clearly of what contemplative prayer is really about. Rather than acquiring a little passive peace while avoiding stress, contemplative prayer is really about restructuring and transcending our smaller egoic self into our intended personhood – our Christ like self – while engaging with presence in the joys and agonies of daily relationships and circumstances. The challenge and transformation involved is profound and at times frightening – so described by a member of one of the contemplative prayer groups I guide. We both agreed that contemplative prayer is not for the faint of heart.

Giving “the other half” of ourselves to God, the egoic self, *is* the death of “the old man” which gives way to rebirth into new life to which Christian scripture refers. And it is from this transforming self, this ground-of-being foundation, this unitive union with God, that we engage the empowering resources necessary for redemptive social action. How else did contemporary saints like Desmond Tutu and Mother Teresa of Calcutta find the inner resources to sustain them in such personally draining ministries as was theirs?

Thomas Kelly, twentieth century Quaker-teacher-and-activist offers us mentors who very much fulfill the pattern of contemplative activists -- beginning, of course, with Jesus himself; also St. Paul, St. Francis, and Quakers such as George Fox and John Woolman.²⁶ To this list we can add Fr. Richard Rohr, Parker Palmer, Dorothee Soelle,

²³ Thomas Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion* (New York:HarperCollins, 1992, 1941).

²⁴ Dorothee Soelle, *The Silent Cry: Mysticism and Resistance* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 211.

²⁵ Dorothee Soelle, *The Silent Cry*, 214.

²⁶ Thomas Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion*, 28.

and many others. For them all, undergirding their ministry can be found the transformative and sustaining practice of contemplative prayer. And this prayer is a cruciform path of dying and rising in the interior life. Kelly is very clear on this point. He simply states:

Moses knew, no man can look on God and live – live as his old self. Death comes, blessed death, death of one's alienating will. And one knows what Paul meant when he wrote 'The life which I now live in the flesh I now live by the faith of the Son of God (Gal. 2.20)²⁷

We are talking here of kenosis, of self-emptying. As Kelly states "Self is emptied into God, and God fills it ... Holy Obedience sets in, sensitive as a shadow, selfless as a shadow."²⁸ This is a process by which one gradually opens to, increasingly receives, and hence innately gives to others, the genuine love of God in practical incarnate expression. This is a very different Christianity from what most of our churches have engaged in for too long. Kelly states:

This is something wholly different from mild, conventional religion which, with respectable skirts held back by dainty fingers, anxiously tries to fish the world out of the mud hole of its own selfishness... Difference of degree passes over into utter difference of kind.²⁹

Four Steps for Contemplative Action:

We have here the means for Brother David's "bringing the heavens to earth" – i.e. – the transforming love of God into our personal body-and-soul-earth. We have here the substance of Fr. Richard Rohr's second gaze and third way. We have here the essence of what Thomas Kelly and his fellow Quakers refer to as "the Inward Light". We have here the living path that activates Jesus' prayer: "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as in heaven."

²⁷ Thomas Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion*, 30, 31.

²⁸ Thomas Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion*, 31.

²⁹ Thomas Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion*, 27.

Thomas Kelly outlines four classic steps for engaging this process of contemplation in action. These steps can be seen in all contemporary forms of contemplative prayer such as Centering Prayer and Christian Meditation, in the ancient/contemporary Jesus Prayer of the Eastern Orthodox tradition, in the prayer of quiet of Madame Guyon and Bishop Francois Fenelon and Fr. Miguel Molinos. We can see this prayer in the teachings of John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila, and of every mystic in the Christian tradition back to the Desert Fathers and Mothers and earlier still.

Step One: "The Great Opening". Receiving the vision, the insight, the inspiration, the illumination; recognizing and acknowledging experientially what George Fox named "the great opening"³⁰ – the identification by seeing through eyes attuned to revelation the sacredness of all life. Kelly describes this process as:

the invading, urging, inviting, persuading work of the Eternal One...
an infinite fountain of lifting power, pressing within us, luring us...
an increment of infinity is about us...the God of Love is wooing us...³¹

Indeed this impulse rises from within the human soul, is accompanied by longing, spiritual hunger and thirst on our part. It is a gravitational pull that can be gentle or vigorous. Either way it is only resisted with very real and painful consequences to our hearts and minds.

Step Two: Respond Where You Are. We begin where we are. We respond in the present moment and present circumstance. At ever deepening levels of our being we find ourselves "increasingly alone with God."³² The instruction is to maintain the interior "prayer without ceasing"³³ -- that God will continue to open us, guide us, purify us, fill us

³⁰ Thomas Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion*, 33.

³¹ Thomas Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion*, 33.

³² Thomas Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion*, 33.

³³ I Thessalonians 5:17.

– this is the intent of the prayer, and its further intent is to sustain us interiorly in God’s presence unceasingly even as we engage in the relationships and activities of daily life. The expression/word of the prayer is very simple – a brief phrase, even a single word is all that is needed. The Jesus Prayer³⁴ can be shortened to simply “Jesus” or “mercy”. Eventually over time even the words fall away, and all that remains is the interior attentiveness and intention: “Words may cease and one stands and walks and sits and lies down in wordless attitudes of adoration and submission.”³⁵

Step Three: Return and Begin Again. When we slip up, fall away, forget, get lost in distractions, assert our egoic self with its well-trained programs, then we simply acknowledge the slide and return to begin again, realign our interior presence right where we are. Do this gently, respectfully, without harsh self-judgments. Just simply begin again, right where we are.

Step Four: Learn and Practice Letting Go. Contemplative prayer, whether sitting, walking, engaging in daily life is ultimately the practice of the refined and subtle gesture of letting go (specifically of our egoic programming) and opening (to the Holy Spirit’s infusion). Kelly summarizes: “Relax. Take Hands off. Submit yourself to God... let life be willed through you”³⁶ – not letting your will attempt to control life.

Three Fruits of the Four Steps.

Maintaining this contemplative path in daily life produces recognizable results. Kelly summarizes these into three essential characteristics or fruits. As with the four steps of contemplation in action, these fruits are classical and identifiable through two millennia of Christian tradition beginning with Jesus himself.

³⁴ The traditional words are: Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, Have mercy upon us/me.

³⁵ Thomas Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion*, 34.

³⁶ Thomas Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion*, 34.

The First Fruit: Humility. Genuine humility is not easily acquired. Pride can be brutal – distressingly obvious or disturbingly subtle, as insidious as industrial chemicals in oceans and lakes and rivers and streams and just as hard to separate out. Kelly cites Alfred Adler’s superiority motive wherein we feed our egos through serving others.³⁷ Kelly also mentions the equally deceptive pride in our humility – a devious “demon” the early church named “vainglory”. Evagrius Ponticus (my most beloved of Desert Fathers), states ruefully:

I have observed the demon of vainglory being chased by nearly all the other demons, and when his pursuers fell, shamelessly he drew near and unfolded a long list of his virtues.³⁸

But true humility rises in the ground of the soul as the genuine fruit of the true self in union with God. There is no mistaking its presence as it accompanies genuine compassion and wisdom like the fragrance of cedar forests after spring rain. And this humility is not the mincing humiliation of ego distortions. This humility carries within itself the full power of the true prophets of God. Kelly describes this with magnificent clarity:

Only the inner vision of God, only the utterly humble ones can bow and break the raging pride of a power-mad world. But self-renunciation means God possession, the being possessed by God. Out of the utter humility and self-forgetfulness comes the thunder of the prophets...³⁹

As contemplative prayer carries us gradually through the painful process of transforming union (the repeating/cyclical crucifixion path of purgation-illumination-union)⁴⁰ we develop purity of heart from which flows the humility, compassion, wisdom, insight,

³⁷ Thomas Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion*, 35.

³⁸ Evagrius Ponticus, *The Praktikos & Chapters on Prayer*, trans. John Eudes Bamberger, OSKO (Kalamazzo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1981), 24.

³⁹ Thomas Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion*, 37.

⁴⁰ cf. my chapter 1. 7-8.

courage, and motivation of the prophets of God – including those in our communities today.

The Second Fruit: Entrance into Suffering. This is a suffering of a different order than our general ego generated pain. This suffering is that of the prophets and saints. This is the mystical *and* very incarnational participation in the sufferings of Christ by sharing the suffering of the world. The veils are lifted which hide our pain and that of others, and beyond that the pain of God. Denial and avoidance are no longer possibilities. We are carried beyond our smaller selves. We “enter into the divine education and drastic discipline of sorrow, or rise radiant in the sacrament of pain.”⁴¹ This is vastly different from “the Cross as dogma [and] speculation.” This is “the Cross as lived suffering.”⁴² God’s sorrows and concerns become ours. This is the heart and soul of the true prophet of God and, Kelly says, it can “shake the countryside for ten miles around.”⁴³

The Third Fruit: Simplicity beyond Complexity. This simplicity is the expression of nondual seeing, the perspective that flows from union – the “amazing simplification comes when we ‘center down’, when life is lived with singleness of eye, from a holy center.”⁴⁴ The characteristic hallmark of this divinely infused simplicity is the compassion we know as “the love of God”.

The wholly obedient life is mastered and unified and simplified and gathered up into the love of God and it lives and walks among men in the perpetual flame of that radiant love. For the simplified man loves God with all his heart and mind and soul and strength and abides trustingly in the love. Then indeed do we love our neighbors.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Thomas Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion*, 42.

⁴² Thomas Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion*, 43.

⁴³ Thomas Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion*, 44.

⁴⁴ Thomas Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion*, 46.

⁴⁵ Thomas Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion*, 46.

Hence Thomas Kelly affirms what I stated at the outset of this chapter – that contemplative prayer carries us body, soul, and spirit into the heart of the Great Commandment of Christ and by its own intrinsic nature causes us to live this Great Commandment as Christ like presence, however flawed our efforts, amongst those with whom we live.

3. Contemplative Life in Active Ministry.

What Thomas Kelly has described here is a life path. Clearly this is not a state of being arrived at overnight. Nor is it a goal to be accomplished sometime in the near or distant future. The contemplative life, its process of transformation into the likeness of Christ, its expression in relationships be they in family, ministry, social action, is an ongoing process moment by moment as we live our lives present in the now. Hence the nitty-gritty stuff of our lives, our struggles and strivings, present the material for our path. Some examples may be helpful here of those who practice contemplative prayer daily in their active ministries.

John Dear SJ, a Jesuit priest engaged in social justice internationally encourages the cultivation of inner peace as a means of bringing forward peace in the world.⁴⁶ Dear states that for the past 20 years he takes time daily for contemplative prayer, what he calls “quiet, intimate prayer” where he finds himself in a “deep place beyond words, where I feel the abiding presence of Jesus.” He adds

I am convinced that if we all took time to dwell in Jesus’ loving presence, our hearts would be converted, our lives would be changed, and we would actively demonstrate non-violence and compassionate love toward the whole human race. We would love one another as Jesus instructs, because we would understand that we are truly loved.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ John Dear, SJ, *Living Peace: A Spirituality of Contemplation and Action* (New York:Image Doubleday, 2001), 12.

⁴⁷ John Dear, SJ, *Living Peace*, 59.

Parker Palmer, a respected leading Quaker likewise proclaims the necessity of silent prayer, waiting and listening for God, as an essential part of his daily life of prayer and service. He states: "Burnout occurs when people are deeply unreflective about how they are feeling... The spiritual life means coming to know yourself so well that your identity no longer depends on agreeing to do whatever people want from you."⁴⁸ Palmer states that the shadow side of clergy can cause harm if not addressed. He says he needs two things in his work: friends with whom he can be honest and trust, and solitude for personal reorientation. He speaks of sitting with his Quaker community every morning for 45 minutes in silence as a way of learning how to be receptive, to gain clarity, and a way of touching God who is within him.⁴⁹

Evelyn Underhill, Anglican mystic and teacher, offers similar counsel as Parker Palmer in her 1926 address to seminarians in Northern England.⁵⁰ She describes the life of clergy as "usually and inevitably extroverted to excess," their attention focused on parish activities and administration. The result of relentless extroverted responsibilities can too often lead to

...a lack of depth, a spiritual impoverishment, and with it an insidious tendency to attribute undue importance to external details, whether of cultus or of organization; to substitute social and institutional religion for devotional religion.⁵¹

The consequence is the resulting spiritual impoverishment of the priest which then deprives the church of depth and "reduces its redemptive effect." More introversion through meditative prayer and recollection helps restore "psychic balance". Such

⁴⁸ Parker Palmer, "Action and Insight: an interview with Parker Palmer" in *Christian Century* (March 22-29, 1995), 326.

⁴⁹ Parker Palmer, "Action and Insight", 327.

⁵⁰ Evelyn Underhill, *Concerning the Inner Life*, 5th ed. (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1927)

⁵¹ Evelyn Underhill, *Concerning the Inner Life*, 41.

meditation enables clergy to bring depth and their own maturing inner life into their work in church and community. This prayer is not some form of feverish piety, but rather is such “a wise feeding of your souls as will enable you to meet all the demands made upon you without dangerous spiritual exhaustion.”⁵² The spiritual health and maturity of clergy and other spiritual workers has a direct impact on those they serve, in the quality of that service and is the primary factor in attracting people into faith and communion. It is essential, Underhill says, for clergy and Christian workers to keep steadfastly before them the great truths of Christianity, training in them, “forming the habit of constant recourse to their healing and purifying influences.” Underhill repeatedly states the difference between what she calls “the sphere of notion,” and “the sphere of experience.”⁵³

It requires, not merely the acceptance but the full first-hand apprehension, of the ruling truth of the richly living spaceless and unchanging God; blazing in the spiritual sky, yet intimately present within the world of events.⁵⁴

For Evelyn Underhill “meditative prayer” and “recollection” (i.e. contemplative prayer) strongly undergird the life of effective clergy and Christian workers and are essential in integrating their spiritual life and maturation into their service in parish and community at large.

Thomas Kelly, as we have seen, also professes the inner transformation and strength that comes from the prayer of silence and its essential presence in ministry. Such prayer develops

internal practices and habits of the mind ... of unceasing orientation of the deeps of our being about the Inward Light, ways of conducting our inward life so that we are perpetually bowed in worship, while we are also very busy in the world of daily affairs. What is here urged are inward practices of the mind at deepest levels, letting it swing like the needle, to the polestar of the soul ... the Inward Light...⁵⁵

⁵² Evelyn Underhill, *Concerning the Inner Life*, 42.

⁵³ Evelyn Underhill, *Concerning the Inner Life*, Prefatory note.

⁵⁴ Evelyn Underhill, *Concerning the Inner Life*, 24.

Such prayer, Kelly maintains, is intended for us all, not for some special select spiritual elite, or one particular denomination or tradition.

In keeping with the subject of this thesis chapter, Kelly names some of the known suspicions and misconceptions regarding contemplative prayer: fear of sentimentality; fear of narcissism; fear of “quietism” in its negative definition of withdrawal and avoidance of responsible engagement in the social needs of others and the world; fear of seeking “back-slapping” approval or what our spiritual ancestors termed “pride and vain-glory”.⁵⁶ We are not engaging in pure individualism and subjectivism.⁵⁷ Our focus is very different, and consequently our world view will undergo a significant shift.

Guidance of life by the Light within is not exhausted as is too frequently supposed, in special leadings toward particular tasks. It begins first of all in a mass revision of our total reaction to the world ... The dynamic illumination from the deeper level is shed upon the judgments of the surface level.⁵⁸

We enter into paradox with increased capacity to be there. We find ourselves living a resolution of supposedly incompatible opposites: released from *contemptus mundi*, we lose any desire for worldly ambition, while simultaneously quickened to *amor mundi*, the previously discussed “divine but painful concern for the world.”⁵⁹ There is a vast difference, Kelly says, between “intellectual obligation ominously hovering over our heads”⁶⁰ and the interior shift to a unitive sharing in God’s desire for all who are suffering and longing for their well-being.

Kelly describes how our relationships begin to change. We live more fully from a center of infusing love; moralism is replaced as all the virtues gather into one unified,

⁵⁵ Thomas R. Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion*, 5.

⁵⁶ Thomas R. Kelly, *Testament of Devotion*, 39.

⁵⁷ Thomas R. Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion*, 76.

⁵⁸ Thomas R. Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion*, 19.

⁵⁹ Thomas R. Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion*, 19.

⁶⁰ Thomas R. Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion*, 21.

simple, natural, humble expression of love – we find ourselves living within the dynamism of the Great Commandment incarnating through us.⁶¹ There is greater authenticity in our engagement with others. The ground of our social concern shifts from ego consciousness to a source of inner unfolding and all-encompassing love. We balance better our rational decision making with inner listening and unitive action.⁶² Reason and intelligence are not eliminated, but become partners with Spirit, infused with wisdom, compassion and discernment. God's cosmic love and suffering for humanity is not a diffused benevolence, but instead is focused through us to the specific particularity in which we act.⁶³ We find ourselves living within a matrix of union in God⁶⁴ -- a single center, a common ground with God and others; we share deeply in God's love and suffering for the world. Our own suffering becomes life-giving, enlarging our hearts. We encounter the mystery in which our own suffering for ourselves and others becomes God's suffering.⁶⁵ In ministry we encounter mystery, often uncomfortable bed fellows; yet as Ken Wilber demonstrates⁶⁶, like struggling lovers they need each other for wholeness. Paradox becomes unitive. Our influence may be simpler, hidden from the public eye, but it also becomes very, very real.

Conclusion

I can find no clearer, more viable description of the integration of contemplation and action than the above words of Thomas Kelly. He portrays for us the process of the contemplative person living the Great Commandment through a heart broken and restored

⁶¹ Thomas R. Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion*, 46.

⁶² Thomas R. Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion*, 78.

⁶³ Thomas R. Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion*, 82.

⁶⁴ Thomas R. Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion*, 55-56.

⁶⁵ Thomas R. Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion*, 43.

⁶⁶ Ken Wilber, *Integral Spirituality: a Startling New Role for Religion in the Modern and Postmodern World* (Boston: Integral Books, 2006)

again and again. We have, I conclude, a portrayal of the life cycle of the Beatitudes (Matt. 5.1-12) beginning with the broken heart – poor in spirit and mourning, meek (pliable and receptive), longing for purity of heart and hungering for God. Into this place of genuine humility the divine response grants mercy, inner peace, vision; and in turn, this gifted fruit flows forth to others offering mercy and genuine peacemaking where otherwise grief and many forms of violence would predominate. As Jesus himself knew, the rewards and challenges of such service to others can result in profound personal suffering – the broken heart of the one who serves as his/her ego programs are continuously asserted and relinquished, allowing for movement beyond, opening the inner spaciousness necessary to hold the suffering and compassion of Christ for the community. To hold this suffering redemptively, as the prophets did, one returns again to the poverty of spirit that is the soil from which the life of contemplative action emerges; and the cycle begins again.

This is the engaged process of Br. David Steindl-Rast's defined contemplation, bringing the heavens, the Kingdom of God, to earth. This is where the rubber meets the road for Fr. Richard Rohr's second gaze and third way. Contemplative prayer, far from being disengaged, profoundly engages the needs of community and world from an interior open wound of humility through which inflows endlessly the immeasurable resources of the Holy Triune God incarnating with great particularity in the immense needs of human kind and all of creation. Contemplative prayer, as simple and solitary as it may appear on the outside, is actually the act of birthing in the soul, generating the everyday prophets of God so engaged.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

“The devout Christian of the future will either be a ‘mystic’ ... or he will cease to be anything at all.”¹

Summation:

The topic of this thesis carries the assumption that the Christian Church is currently “in the Wilderness”, the Hebrew Bible metaphor for an exile in which God performs a work of deepening and purifying of the people of God.² To this assumption is added the corollary that the institutional church’s history of conflict with contemplative spirituality significantly impedes our capacity to make the transitions implicit in this particular exile. Whether or not one gives whole-hearted agreement to these statements, certainly the evidence is clear that the Christian Church is in a time of profound challenge, diminishment in membership and loss as a central institution in Western culture.³ It is also clear that in our time there is a great hunger for spirituality that reaches our human interiority and provides a path with transformative meditative practices to carry us through life; furthermore as I have indicated in chapter one, many have left Christianity seeking such paths. Diana Butler-Bass’s study of the mainstream church provides evidence that churches which are revitalizing themselves support practices of contemplative prayer and spirituality that Butler-Bass sees as one of the ten signposts of

¹ Karl Rahner, Quoted in Richard Rohr, *The Naked Now: Learning to See as the Mystics See*. (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2009), 38

² For example the time Moses and the Hebrews fleeing Egypt spent the metaphorical forty years in the wilderness before reaching the Promised Land, Numbers 14.20-35. Also note the exile of Judah into Babylon Jeremiah 39.1-10.

³ This is expressed locally as I write; for example, the Anglican Diocese of British Columbia is in process of shutting down thirteen parishes, while the Anglican Diocese of New Westminster is undergoing a Ministry Assessment Process in which deaneries sort out how to manage dwindling resources (financial and human) which inevitably means the closure of some parishes – In our deanery one parish has closed; the rest are discerning how to share staff and resources; one parish has reduced its priest’s hours to part time in order to pay off debts. See: Leigh Anne Williams, “Reality Check in BC: Diocese restructures.” *Anglican Journal*. 136, no.3. (March 2010): 1. See also my discussion in chapter 1, 17-18.

their awakening life.⁴ Therefore it is reasonable to conclude there is a significant place for contemplative spirituality in the renewal and re-visioning of the contribution of the Christian Church in the West.

In this thesis I have addressed four major arguments which impede Christianity from openly reclaiming its longstanding contemplative heritage. Intrinsic to the discussion is the implication that Christianity in our time is suffering diminishment due to the loss of its contemplative tradition. Supporting this implication are the words of some of our contemporary prophets; such as Huston Smith, Ken Wilber, and Richard Rohr; that humanity (including the Christian church) is in a time of enormous transition; and that contemplative prayer practices and spirituality are essential for Christianity to integrate what the Divine is pouring into human consciousness in these complex times. Therefore to conclude this thesis I will briefly review these four arguments, and our contemporary prophets' clear definitions of this time of change and Christianity's wilderness journey through it.

Definitions of Contemplative Spirituality:

In chapter one I have presented descriptions and definitions of what is meant by contemplative spirituality and prayer, including Christianity's unbroken tradition throughout two millennia beginning at least with Jesus, through the centuries up to and including our own time.

Contemplative prayer includes forms of prayer that lead us into the realm of the apophatic: a mutual and generative silence shared by the one who prays and the Divine One who participates in the prayer. The fruit of this prayer is a transforming

⁴ Diana Butler Bass, *Christianity for the Rest of Us*. (New York: HarperOne, 2006), 115-127.

consciousness which our spiritual ancestors described as deification or divinization – taking on the character (not the essence) of God, or in Christian terms becoming other Christs – *alteres Christi*. Nondual seeing arises and takes root in the midst of this process. Fundamentally the contemplative person gradually develops increasing depths of the fruits of the spirit (Gal.5.22) and lives more wholly within the Beatitudes (Matt. 5.3-12). Contemporary twentieth/twenty-first century contributions of spiritual psychology, theology, historical review, ongoing scholarship, and interfaith dialogue are greatly enriching and confirming the viability of Christian contemplative spirituality and prayer and contemplative practices today.

History provides a prime example of shifting human consciousness: for example, the sixteenth century Reformation was the time in which Europe and the church began to move from pre-rational magical/mythical consciousness into the greatly needed rational levels of the Western enlightenment and Modernity. Now, in what appears to be another such shift, this time beyond modern/postmodern awareness, western civilization including Christianity is faced with a considerable work of integrating rational with transrational consciousness – for example moving from “either/or” dualistic perspectives towards “both/and” inclusiveness. Franciscan Richard Rohr provides an indication of what is involved:

I would like to call contemplation “full-access knowing” – not irrational, but pre-rational, nonrational, rational, and transrational all at once. Contemplation refuses to be reductionistic. Contemplation is an exercise in keeping your heart and mind spaces open long enough for the mind to see other hidden material.⁵

The major theme of this thesis is that contemplative prayer is an essential tool for this integration because of the ever deepening levels of consciousness that occur in the

⁵ Richard Rohr. *The Naked Now*, 34.

process of inner union with God's Holy Spirit. Awareness, clarity of insight, compassion and wisdom arise from disciplined practices of contemplation as an intrinsic part of the nondual seeing which Rohr states is essential for humanity to navigate the complex challenges of our time:

You cannot be present or meet new reality – and let it be truly new or itself – with the judging, dualistic mind.⁶

Without that underlying experience of God as both abyss and ground it is almost impossible to live in the now, in the fullness of who I am, warts and all, and almost impossible to experience the Presence that, paradoxically, always fills the abyss and shakes the ground.⁷

Historical Arguments against Interior (Contemplative) Spirituality:

Four recognizable arguments claim that contemplative spirituality is more or less unhealthy and/or un-Christian and/or not viable for Christians. Misunderstanding of language used by contemplatives, both historically and also in the contemporary context, has certainly contributed to these arguments.⁸ Out of date scholarship has also posed significant problems, such as nineteenth century studies on gnosticism in the early church which is currently under review by contemporary and respected scholars in mainstream seminaries; e.g., Karen L. King, Bart Ehrman, Marvin Meyer, and Elaine Pagels, have all have been studying original documents not previously available, working from postmodern and even transrational perspectives which together provide a new comprehension of our human and Christian history and development.

The four concerns that have impacted mainstream Christianity's ability to engage its own contemplative tradition include: scholarship, "Gnosticism", "Quietism", and the relationship between ministry and social action.

⁶ Richard Rohr. *The Naked Now*. 118.

⁷ Richard Rohr. *The Naked Now*. 22.

⁸ See my discussion of language and terminology in chapter 2: scholarship, 29-36; in chapter 3: Gnosticism, 59-60, 75; in chapter 4: Quietism, 82-86; in Chapter 5: Ministry and Action, 105-111.

1. Scholarship. Confusion regarding language has caused much misunderstanding regarding “Mind and Reason, Intellect and Spirit”. At first glance there appears to be a conflict between the rational and contemplative intellects. A closer look demonstrates this is far from the case. The contemplative mind of nondual insight and wisdom undergirds, informs and inspires the rational mind engaged in scholarship as well as the matters of our everyday living. This contemplative mind/intellect or “nous” (νοῦς) is the “organ” of spiritual intuition which opens us into unitive experience of God with its consequent nondual seeing/comprehension,⁹ taking us beyond dualistic reasoning, expanding our awareness and bringing a panoramic seeing and understanding which in turn takes our world view (and hence our scholarship) to a whole new level. Contemplative literature from early periods¹⁰ may appear to decry the rational mind, but are most certainly *not* doing so. Rather the writers’ intention is to encourage us to imbue the rational with the transrational, i.e., with the intuitive and visionary insight accessed only through purity and humility of heart, classic Christian virtues fostered by contemplative prayer. Three respected contemporary scholars who introduce us to this kind of “contemplative scholarship” include Huston Smith, Ken Wilber, and Raimon Panikkar. Huston Smith discusses our transition from Modernity through Postmodernity and the need for contemplative practices which open our spiritual senses and provide the path so many seek in our time. Smith’s work is supported and built upon by philosopher Ken Wilber’s four quadrant AQAL system which looks at the need for rational and transrational to work together – the need for modern/postmodern/pre-modern- tradition to all be present and in balance for us to have the needed enlarged perspective for effective scholarship

⁹ cf. my chapter 1, 7-8.

¹⁰ For example Augustine and Aquinas, Hugh and Richard of St. Victor: see my Chapter 2, 6-9.

and for life in general. Raimon Panikkar further discusses the need for Christophany – the nondual awareness of Christ arrived at through contemplative prayer which adds an essential dimension to theology, scholarship and lived faith.

2. Gnosticism. Both language, i.e., inaccurate definition of the term “gnosis”, and out-of- date scholarship have contributed to considerable misunderstanding here. Gnosticism has been defined in Christianity as a heresy: dualistic, disincarnational and elitist, claiming special and secret knowledge, licentious, syncretistic, disrespecting church teaching and authority while infiltrating and misleading the faithful, a foreign religion competing with Christianity, and so on. Yet contemporary scholarship has an ongoing review of history, theology, and scholarship, and is consequently coming to view Gnosticism as an egregore – a reification of polemical rhetoric and master narrative consolidated into an entity that in historical reality did not exist in the early church. Several primary observations have surfaced to support this conclusion: a) The patriarchal/imperial world view of the early Church Fathers defined unity as uniformity, and defined as heretics those who did not fit the uniform view; b) Nineteenth century scholarship worked with the modern scientific approach to research, secondary documents, and the same patriarchal/imperial perspective as the early Fathers; c) Postmodern criticism with its ability to identify cultural perspectives, supported by contemplative experience and nondual insights are generating new understanding which dismantle the concept of a Gnostic heresy. Modern scholarship undeniably has contributed in many positive ways to Christian theology; yet lacking the postmodern perspective there were several blind spots which produced significant misunderstanding of the political and psychological dynamics of the early church. This biased history was

built on the patriarchal/imperialist worldview which modern scholarship had not identified, and so scholars could not see that they were perpetuating the same misrepresentation as the early Church Fathers. As Ken Wilber demonstrates, modern and postmodern perspectives still need the pre-rational traditions, i.e. the contemplative perspective to complete an integral view which opens our comprehension into deeper and vaster regions of nonduality.

Finally and significantly, the Greek word “gnosis” in its original use had two aspects to its definition: one meaning was more scientifically and rationally oriented, and took precedence in modern scholarship; the other meaning was more intuitive involving insight and relationship with the Divine. In this latter definition, “knowing” and “knowledge” are integrally linked to wisdom. As Cynthia Bourgeault states, this latter definition of gnosis “is the functional equivalent of Wisdom as it has traditionally been understood in the inner tradition. We are talking about Integral Knowing, Direct knowing, in which the whole being participates”¹¹ This wisdom is the kind of nondual knowing and seeing generated from the advanced unitive experience that eventually arises from disciplined contemplative prayer. A review of scripture (see Appendix III) demonstrates the term’s use and suggests that gnosis/wisdom was valued as a blessing in the first centuries of Christianity.

3. Quietism. Quietism was a term first used by detractors of seventeenth century Jesuit Miguel de Molinos. As with Gnosticism there was the accusation of heresy; in this case “Quietism” was labeled as dangerously misled, morally misguided, and unhealthily passive, disconnected from the social gospel of Christ, a threat to church authority (i.e. the ruling powers) because of its interior independence from those powers. Yet Quietism

¹¹ Cynthia Bourgeault. Email message to myself. November 24, 2010.

looks very different when we review the language used to describe this prayer of the quiet heart, the personalities and politics involved in the original seventeenth century controversy, classical Christian contemplative spirituality, the historical time of transition in European civilization as it shifted from pre-rational to rational consciousness of the Western Enlightenment and modernity, and, finally, the very positive influence of Quietist spirituality on groups such as the Quakers and Pietists. French Bishop Francois Fénelon and his spiritual directee Madame Jeanne Guyon, appear to have been spiritually genuine, but lacking the political astuteness necessary to navigate the charged environment of their times. In seventeenth century Catholic Europe, burning from the Reformation and division of the church, anything that looked “Protestant” –i.e. -- challenged the clerical/royal authority – did not fare well. However, in actual fact, “Quietism” was very similar to the prayer of quiet used and taught by Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, etc. and can be traced through the history of Christianity as following the legitimate and classical mystical tradition. Guyon and Fenelon both work with the classic three stages of purgation-illumination-union but failed to use the classic language of the tradition; also both spoke centrally of the love of God experienced within the prayer. Furthermore, “Quietism” did address the needs of the general population for a direct, living relationship with God that played a significant role in that period’s transformation of consciousness. Quakers, known for their silent prayer which supports their considerable record of social action, were strongly influenced by the teachings of Guyon, Fenelon, and Molinos.¹²

¹² See my chapter four, 92, 102. See also Guenin-Lelle. “Friends’ Theological Heritage: From Seventeenth-Century Quietists to *A Guide to True Peace*.”

4. Christian prophetic/social action ministry. Contemplative prayer has been accused of disconnecting its practitioners from the social reality of the world, of being passive and narcissistic, and disengaged from the acts of charity and social justice that are core to the Jewish and Christian tradition. However this claim is based in dualistic thinking and replicates the misunderstandings of the Gnostic and Quietist controversies. By reviewing language, i.e. definitions of the word “contemplation”, by looking at the spiritual psychology of contemplative prayer and the inseparable relationship of this transformative prayer with the consequent outward expression of God’s compassion and wisdom, we can see the misunderstanding contained in the above accusations. Far from being disengaged and disconnected from the world, and far from being passive and narcissistic, contemplative prayer draws us into the central stream of the Great Commandment. Through the process of ever deepening union with God in our “heart of hearts”, we find healing from our emotional wounds and interior contradictions; we develop fruits of the spirit including wisdom, compassion, and insight; and consequently there arises naturally in us a concern and care for the world; our service then becomes an expression of the Divine Presence participating in the world. Contemplative prayer, rather than disengagement, becomes the open heart of God in our hearts fully engaged in relationship and needs of those around us.

The Church in the Wilderness:

Church in the Wilderness is a descriptive term I have used to define the current time of purification of the people of God. More contemporary terminology may describe this period as a time of immense transition and awakening of human consciousness. For example,

- the Hebrew people in the wilderness with Moses were shifting their awareness of who God is and who they were -- there was a shift in their self-identity, in their relationship with God, and significantly their understanding of who God is/was. Long before that Abraham took his family and headed out into unknown lands for much the same reason.
- the Jews in exile from their homeland (586-539 BCE)¹³ had been force marched to the heart of the Persian Empire where they underwent a process of immense rethinking and transitioning, again in their self-identity, their relationship with God and their under-standing of who God is/was.
- Jesus and Paul both spent time in the wilderness deserts after significant spiritual awakenings which led to their ministries, each of which were arguably an impetus for major civilizational shifts.
- The Reformation and the birth of the Protestant tradition five centuries ago can also be seen in this light -- a turbulent era in Europe and western civilization with shifting consciousness, including as in the previous examples changing awareness in self-identity, relationship with God and understanding of who God is.

Wilderness experiences tend to happen in times of major transition: humanity and/or individuals find themselves in periods of chaos, disorientation, deep confusion, loss; this gradually shifts into reorientation, reorganization, awakening with expanded awareness, and new identity, new ways of seeing and relating to self/others/world/divine. Certainly this sounds like a description of what John of the Cross termed “Dark Nights”.¹⁴

¹³ *Oxford Bible Atlas*, ed. Herbert G. May. 3rd ed. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1984), 19.

¹⁴ John of the Cross, *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez, trans. Rev. ed. (Washington: ICS Pubs., 1991)

It also bears resemblance to what Karl Jaspers¹⁵ termed the Axial Period of the first millennium BCE when the major world religious traditions were formed, and also what Fordham Professor Emeritus Ewert Cousins has named our current Second Axial Period.¹⁶ This latter Axial transitioning describes our contemporary world as it moves through modernity and post-modernity into what is now occurring in this twenty-first century. Psychologist and philosopher Jean Houston refers to our current period as “Jump Time”,¹⁷ one of those massive shifts in human consciousness which profoundly changes just about everything. “Eco-philosopher Joanna Macy calls this time of the Great Turning.”¹⁸

Episcopalian writer and publisher Phyllis Tickle, drawing from the American society in which she lives, terms this time “emergent”¹⁹ specifically as it impacts Christianity. Wood Lake Books offers on its website a definition of what it terms the “emerging vision of Christianity” as being “primarily about... the transformation of self through a living and dynamic experience of God, who is not separate from us, but part of us; and it is about the transformation of society.”²⁰ Marcus Borg refers to an “emerging paradigm” of Christianity, which he describes as “way-centered... following Jesus on a path, a path of transformation”²¹

¹⁵ Karl Jaspers, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Axial_Age Accessed 2010.04.30. Also see Karl Jaspers; Michael Bullock, trans. *The Origin and Goal of History*. 1st English ed. (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1953)

¹⁶ Ewert Cousins, *Christ of the 21st Century*. (Rockport, Mass: Element, 1992)

¹⁷ Jean Houston, <http://integrallife.com/node/72504> Accessed 2010.04.30 See also <http://www.soundstrue.com/podcast/?p=813#bottom> Accessed 2010.05.02 Dr. Houston’s extensive biography is found at <http://www.jeanhouston.org/meetjean.cfm> Accessed 2010.05.02.

¹⁸ <http://www.joannamacy.net/thegreatturning.html>

¹⁹ Phyllis Tickle, *The Great Emergence: How Christianity is Changing and Why*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008)

²⁰ <http://www.copperhousepress.com/>

²¹ Marcus Borg, *Jesus: Uncovering the Life, Teachings, and Relevance of a Religious Revolutionary*. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), 15.

Hence Christianity is caught within the web of massive transitioning of human consciousness and civilization. Historically we can see a time of change for the church not dissimilar from previous periods such as the Reformation five hundred years ago, or five hundred years before that the Great Schism between the Eastern and Western church (1054 C.E.)²² Specifically, as local Anglican parishes close and dioceses are forced to reorganize; as Anglican Christians find themselves in varying stages of loss, grief and confusion, exploring “new” theologies and hungering for a deepening spirituality, wondering how to best leave a legacy for successive generations while proposing financial/ business and ministry plans to their bishops, we who live here on the ground in our Christian communities are most decidedly experiencing the impact of this “Jump Time”.

In her address to the Spiritual Directors International annual conference in April 2009, Tickle makes a statement that indicates just how substantial this period of transition is for the Christian Church:

Be clear that what has been does not die, but it has to give way to what is emerging. In the Reformation, Catholicism did not die; it just gave way to Protestantism. We do not know who we are, but we are post-denominational and post-Protestant, post-Christendom, post-enlightenment and post-rational. That is part of Emergence Christianity. It's all the way across the board... We are not rooted in one church tradition... We are swirling and coming together with the gifts of all our traditions²³

Tickle further states: “We are in pursuit of the kind of unity that will be emergence Christianity, and with contemplation and prayer to look at what we are about.”

Tickle's words return us to the works of Huston Smith, Ken Wilber, Raimon Panikkar, Richard Rohr and the others reviewed in this thesis. Wilber demonstrates we

²² Phyllis Tickle, *The Great Emergence*. 19-31.

²³ Judy Romero-Oak and Rhoda Parker. “The Contemplative Life – Tools for Emergence.” in *Connections: The Newsletter of Spiritual Directors International*. 18, no.2. (Aug. 2009): 2-4.

are shifting beyond the period of rational consciousness, an utterly essential phase of human development which enriched human kind in many ways, and from which Christianity has certainly benefitted – but we do not remain there forever; we continue to grow in consciousness. Richard Rohr indicates that the complexities of our world and its religions require nondual awareness to carry us through.

Non-polarity thinking (if you prefer that phrase) teaches you how to hold creative tensions, how to live with paradox and contradictions, how not to run from mystery, and therefore how to actually practice what all religions teach as necessary: compassion, mercy, loving kindness, patience, forgiveness, and humility ... It is not merely a change of morals, group affiliation, or belief systems, but a change at the very heart of the way you receive, hear, and pass on your own experience. This is transformative religion. We need true sanctity if this world is to thrive ... we need what Paul calls “a new mind,” which is the result of a “spiritual revolution” (Ephesians 4.23)²⁴

This is the time in which we are challenged to integrate our rational development with transrational stages; we do not lose what has gone before. Huston Smith identifies how the tools which awaken such levels of awareness come from the pre-modern contemplative traditions, and affirms that Christianity has such tools. Raimon Panikkar points us towards the result: Christophany ... the mystical sense of Christ which undergirds and permeates both our theology and our daily lives.

Conclusion:

Perhaps the most significant fruit of contemplative prayer for our time is the transformation in consciousness that it brings about through engagement with the unitive relationship with God, and the consequent nondual insights and perspective that relationship produces. This panoramic seeing brings an end to the dualistic split that separates many significant matters such as:

²⁴ Richard Rohr, *The Naked Now*. 132-133.

- silence and stillness from engaged action.
- intuitive knowing (gnosis) from rational logic.
- interior process from exterior daily living.
- psycho-spiritual transformation from service.
- spirituality from theology.
- Christ as the Path (way, truth, life) from Jesus as Saviour.²⁵

Nondual seeing, opened through mature unitive awakening, born from the union of human spirit with Holy Spirit, fostered and enabled by contemplative prayer – this dissolves these kinds of division; invites inclusiveness, panoramic seeing, wisdom and compassion and generative service; brings individuals and communities into vital living relationship with the Risen Christ, alive in our daily lives in the world. Contemplative prayer is a path opening us into vital dynamic union with God, activating within us the Great Commandment as taught by Jesus:

One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?” Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:28-31 NRSV)

²⁵ Christ as our Path involves us intimately in the process of “working out our own salvation” (Philippians 2.12), moment by moment in partnership with the Holy Spirit, “for God is at work within you” (ibid.) as described in my discussions on the role of contemplative prayer in our transformation into “other Christs”. See my chapter one, 2-19. The modern view of Jesus as Saviour requires primarily our belief that only Jesus saves us. See Marcus Borg’s discussion of “way-centered” Christianity vs “belief-centered” Christianity, what he describes as two differing paradigms within the Christian tradition. Marcus Borg, *Jesus: Uncovering the Life, Teachings, and Relevance of a Religious Revolutionary*, 5-26, especially 15.

Appendix I: Sophia, Gnosis, & Related Terms in the New Testament.

Wisdom:¹

Matthew 11:19 NRS² the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, "Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!" Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds." σοφία Sophia

Matthew 12:42 NRS The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of Solomon, and see, something greater than Solomon is here! σοφία Sophia

Matthew 13:54 NRS He came to his hometown and began to teach the people in their synagogue, so that they were astounded and said, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these deeds of power? σοφία Sophia

Mark 6:2 NRS On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! σοφία Sophia

Luke 1:17 NRS With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." φρονήσει understanding, knowledge and holy understanding of the love of God.

Luke 2:40 NRS The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him. σοφία Sophia

Luke 2:52 NRS And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor. σοφία Sophia

Luke 7:35 NRS Nevertheless, wisdom is vindicated by all her children." σοφία Sophia

Luke 11:31 NRS The queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the people of this generation and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of Solomon, and see, something greater than Solomon is here! σοφία Sophia

Luke 11:49 NRS Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, "I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute," σοφία Sophia

Luke 21:15 NRS for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. σοφία Sophia

Acts 6:3 NRS Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, σοφία Sophia

Acts 6:10 NRS But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke. σοφία Sophia

Acts 7:10 NRS and rescued him from all his afflictions, and enabled him to win favor and to show wisdom when he stood before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who appointed him ruler over Egypt and over all his household. σοφία Sophia

Acts 7:22 NRS So Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in his words and deeds. σοφία Sophia

¹ Greek translations and definitions cited in *Online Greek Bible*. <http://www.greekbible.com/> (accessed 2009.11)

² <http://www.biblestudytools.com> (accessed 2010.06)

Romans 11:33 NRS O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! σοφία Sophia

1 Corinthians 1:17 NRS For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power. σοφία Sophia

1 Corinthians 1:19 NRS For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." σοφία Sophia

1 Corinthians 1:20 NRS Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? σοφία Sophia

1 Corinthians 1:21 NRS For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe σοφία Sophia

1 Corinthians 1:22 NRS For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, σοφία Sophia

1 Corinthians 1:24 NRS but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. σοφία Sophia

1 Corinthians 1:25 NRS For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength. σοφός,α {sof-os'}

1 Corinthians 1:30 NRS He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, σοφία Sophia

1 Corinthians 2:1 NRS When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming

the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. σοφία Sophia

1 Corinthians 2:4 NRS My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, σοφίας sophia

1 Corinthians 2:5 NRS so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God. σοφία Sophia

1 Corinthians 2:6 NRS Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish. Σοφίαν / σοφίαν Sophia

1 Corinthians 2:7 NRS But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. σοφίαν sophia

1 Corinthians 2:13 NRS And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual. σοφίας sophia

1 Corinthians 3:19 NRS For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," σοφία sophia

1 Corinthians 12:8 NRS To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, σοφίας sophia

2 Corinthians 1:12 NRS Indeed, this is our boast, the testimony of our conscience: we have behaved in the world with frankness and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God—and all the more toward you. σοφία Sophia

Ephesians 1:8 NRS that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight σοφία sophia / φρόνησις,η {fron'-ay-sis}

Ephesians 1:17 NRS I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, σοφίας sophia

Ephesians 3:10 NRS so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. σοφία sophia

Colossians 1:9 NRS For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, σοφία sophia

Colossians 1:28 NRS It is he whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ. σοφία sophia

Colossians 2:3 NRS in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. σοφίας Sophia / γνῶσις, *n* {gno'-sis}

Colossians 2:23 NRS These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-imposed piety, humility, and severe treatment of the body, but they are of no value in checking self-indulgence σοφίας Sophia

Colossians 3:16 NRS Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. σοφία Sophia

James 1:5 NRS If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you. σοφίας Sophia

James 3:13 NRS Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. σοφός, *a* {sof-os'}/ σοφίας Sophia

James 3:15 NRS Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. σοφία Sophia

James 3:17 NRS But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. σοφίας Sophia

2 Peter 3:15 NRS and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation. So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, σοφίαν sophia

Revelation 5:12 NRS singing with full voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" σοφίαν sophia

Revelation 7:12 NRS singing, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen." σοφία Sophia

Revelation 13:18 NRS This calls for wisdom: let anyone with understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a person. Its number is six hundred sixty-six. σοφία Sophia

Revelation 17:9 NRS This calls for a mind that has wisdom: the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated; also, they are seven kings σοφίαν sophia

Knowledge:

Luke 1:77 NRS to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins. γνῶσις, *n* {gno'-sis}

Luke 11:52 NRS Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering." γνῶσις, *n* {gno'-sis}

Acts 5:2 NRS with his wife's knowledge, he kept back some of the proceeds, and brought only a part and laid it at the apostles' feet. ????

Romans 2:20 NRS a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth, γνῶσις, *n* {gno'-sis}

Romans 3:20 NRS For "no human being will be justified in his sight" by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin. ἐπίγνωσις, *n* {ep-ig'-no-sis}

Romans 11:33 NRS O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! γνῶσις, *n* {gno'-sis}

Romans 15:14 NRS I myself feel confident about you, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another. γνῶσεως (γνῶσις, *n* {gno'-sis})

1 Corinthians 1:5 NRS for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind— γνῶσις, *n* {gno'-sis}

1 Corinthians 8:1 NRS Now concerning food sacrificed to idols: we know that "all of us possess knowledge." Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. γνῶσιν / γνῶσις gnosis

1 Corinthians 8:2 NRS Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge; γινῶναι {ghin-occe'-ko}

1 Corinthians 8:7 NRS It is not everyone, however, who has this knowledge. Since some have become so accustomed to idols until now, they still think of the food they eat as food offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. γνῶσις gnosis

1 Corinthians 8:10 NRS For if others see you, who possess knowledge, eating in the temple of

an idol, might they not, since their conscience is weak, be encouraged to the point of eating food sacrificed to idols? γνῶσιν gnosis

1 Corinthians 8:11 NRS So by your knowledge those weak believers for whom Christ died are destroyed. γνῶσει gnosis

1 Corinthians 12:8 NRS To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, γνῶσεως gnosis

1 Corinthians 13:2 NRS And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. γνῶσιν gnosis

1 Corinthians 13:8 NRS Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. γνῶσις gnosis

1 Corinthians 14:6 NRS Now, brothers and sisters, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you unless I speak to you in some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching? γνῶσει gnosis

1 Corinthians 15:34 NRS Come to a sober and right mind, and sin no more; for some people have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame. ἀγνοσία, *n* {ag-no-see'-ah}
1) not knowing, ignorance

2 Corinthians 4:6 NRS For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. γνῶσεως gnosis

2 Corinthians 6:6 NRS by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love γνῶσει gnosis

2 Corinthians 8:7 NRS Now as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in

utmost eagerness, and in our love for you —so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking. γνώσει gnosis

2 Corinthians 10:5 NRS and every proud obstacle raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ. γνώσεως gnosis

2 Corinthians 11:6 NRS I may be untrained in speech, but not in knowledge; certainly in every way and in all things we have made this evident to you. γνώσει gnosis

Ephesians 3:19 NRS and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. γνώσεως gnosis

Ephesians 4:13 NRS until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. ἐπιγνώσεως epignosis

Philippians 1:9 NRS And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight ἐπιγνώσει epignosis

Colossians 1:9 NRS For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ἐπίγνωσιν epignosis

Colossians 1:10 NRS so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God. ἐπιγνώσει epignosis

Colossians 2:2 NRS I want their hearts to be encouraged and united in love, so that they may have all the riches of assured understanding and have the knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ himself, ἐπίγνωσιν epignosis

Colossians 2:3 NRS in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge γνώσεως gnosis

Colossians 3:10 NRS and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. ἐπίγνωσιν epignosis

1 Timothy 2:4 NRS who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ἐπίγνωσιν epignosis

1 Timothy 6:20 NRS Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you. Avoid the profane chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge; γνώσεως, gnosis

2 Timothy 3:7 NRS who are always being instructed and can never arrive at a knowledge of the truth. ἐπίγνωσιν epignosis

Titus 1:1 NRS Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that is in accordance with godliness, ἐπίγνωσιν epignosis

Hebrews 10:26 NRS For if we willfully persist in sin after having received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ἐπίγνωσιν epignosis

2 Peter 1:2 NRS May grace and peace be yours in abundance in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. ἐπιγνώσει epignosis

2 Peter 1:3 NRS His divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. ἐπιγνώσεως epignosis

2 Peter 1:5 NRS For this very reason, you must make every effort to support your faith with goodness, and goodness with knowledge, γνῶσιν gnosis

2 Peter 1:6 NRS and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance, and endurance with godliness γνῶσει gnosis

2 Peter 1:8 NRS For if these things are yours and are increasing among you, they keep you from being ineffective and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ἐπίγνωσιν epignosis

2 Peter 2:20 NRS For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overpowered, the last state has become worse for them than the first. ἐπιγνώσει epignosis

2 Peter 3:18 NRS But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. γνῶσει gnosis

1 John 2:20 NRS But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and all of you have knowledge

Insight:

Ephesians 1:8 NRS that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight σοφία Sophia / φρόνησις, n {fron'-ay-sis}

Philippians 1:9 NRS And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight ἐπίγνωσις, n {ep-ig'-no-sis}/αἴσθησις, n {ah'-ee-sthay-sis}

Understanding:

Matthew 15:16 NRS Then he said, "Are you also still without understanding? ???

Mark 12:33 NRS and "to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength," and "to love one's neighbor as oneself,"—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." σύνεσις, n {soon'-es-is}

Luke 2:47 NRS And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. σύνεσις, n {soon'-es-is}

Romans 3:11 NRS there is no one who has understanding, there is no one who seeks God. συνίημι, v {soon-ee'-ay-mee}

Ephesians 3:4 NRS a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. σύνεσις, n {soon'-es-is}

Ephesians 4:18 NRS They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of their ignorance and hardness of heart. διάνοια, n {dee-an'-oy-ah}

Philippians 4:7 NRS And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. νοῦς, n {nooce} *****

Colossians 1:9 NRS For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, σύνεσις, n {soon'-es-is}

Colossians 2:2 NRS I want their hearts to be encouraged and united in love, so that they may have all the riches of assured understanding and have the knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ himself, σύνεσις, n {soon'-es-is} / ἐπίγνωσις, n {ep-ig'-no-sis}

1 Timothy 1:7 NRS desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make assertions. νοοῦντες (νοέω, v {no-eh'-o})

1 Timothy 1:9 NRS This means understanding that the law is laid down not for the innocent but for the lawless and disobedient, for the godless and sinful, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their father or mother, for murderers, δίκαιος, a {dik-ah'-yoce}

1 Timothy 6:4 NRS is conceited, understanding nothing, and has a morbid craving for controversy and for disputes about words. From these come envy, dissension, slander, base suspicions, ἐπίσταμαι,ν {ep-is'-tam-ahee}

2 Timothy 2:7 NRS Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in all things. σύνεσις,ν {soon'-es-is}

Hebrews 5:11 NRS About this we have much to say that is hard to explain, since you have become dull in understanding. ἀκοή,ν {ak-o-ay'} (hearing)

James 3:13 NRS Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good

life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. ἐπιστήμων,α {ep-ee-stay'-mone}

1 John 5:20 NRS And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. διάνοια,ν {dee-an'-oy-ah}

Revelation 13:18 NRS This calls for wisdom: let anyone with understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a person. Its number is six hundred sixty-six σοφία,ν {sof-ee'-ah} / νοῦς,ν {nooce}*****

Translation of terms into Greek (*Online Greek Bible* <http://www.greekbible.com/>)

σοφία,ν {sof-ee'-ah}

1) wisdom, broad and full of intelligence; used of the knowledge of very diverse matters 1a) the wisdom which belongs to men 1a1) spec. the varied knowledge of things human and divine, acquired by acuteness and experience, and summed up in maxims and proverbs 1a2) the science and learning 1a3) the act of interpreting dreams and always giving the sagest advice 1a4) the intelligence evinced in discovering the meaning of some mysterious number or vision 1a5) skill in the management of affairs 1a6) devout and proper prudence in intercourse with men not disciples of Christ, skill and discretion in imparting Christian truth 1a7) the knowledge and practice of the requisites for godly and upright living 1b) supreme intelligence, such as belongs to God 1b1) to Christ 1b2) the wisdom of God as evinced in forming and executing counsels in the formation and government of the world and the

φρόνησις,ν {fron'-ay-sis}

1) understanding 2) knowledge and holy love of the will of God

γνῶσις,ν {gno'-sis}

1) knowledge signifies in general intelligence, understanding 1a) the general knowledge of Christian religion 1b) the deeper more perfect and enlarged knowledge of this religion, such as belongs

to the more advanced 1c) esp. of things lawful and unlawful for Christians 1d) moral wisdom, such as is seen in right living

σύνεσις,ν {soon'-es-is}

1) a running together, a flowing together with 2) knowledge 2a) understanding 2b) the understanding, i.e. the mind so far forth as it

συνήμι,ν {soon-ee'-ay-mee}

1) to set or bring together 1a) in a hostile sense, of combatants 2) to put (as it were) the perception with the thing perceived 2a) to set or join together in the mind 2a1) i.e. to understand: the man of understanding 2a2) idiom for: a good and upright man (having the knowledge of those things which pertain to salvation)

γινώσκω,ν {ghin-occe'-ko}

1) to learn to know, come to know, get a knowledge of perceive, feel 1a) to become known 2) to know, understand, perceive, have knowledge of 2a) to understand 2b) to know 3) Jewish idiom for sexual intercourse between a man and a woman 4) to become acquainted with, to know

ἐπίσταμαι,ν {ep-is'-tam-ahee}

1) to put one's attention on, fix one's thoughts on, to turn one's self or one's mind to, put one's thought

upon a thing 1a) to be acquainted with, to understand 1b) to know

σοφός,*a* {sof-os'}

1) wise 1a) skilled, expert; of artificers 1b) wise, skilled in letters, cultivated, learned 1b1) of the Greek philosophers and orators 1b2) of Jewish theologians 1b3) of Christian teachers 1c) forming the best plans and using the best means for their execution

νοῦς,*n* {nooce} (nous)

1) the mind, comprising alike the faculties of perceiving and understanding and those of feeling, judging, determining 1a) the intellectual faculty, the understanding 1b) reason in the narrower sense, as the capacity for spiritual truth, the higher powers of the soul, the faculty of perceiving divine things, of recognising goodness and of hating evil 1c) the power of considering and judging soberly, calmly and impartially 2) a particular mode of thinking and judging, i.e. thoughts, feelings, purposes, desires

αἴσθησις,*n* {ah'-ee-sthay-sis}

1) perception, not only by the senses but by the intellect 2) cognition, discernment 2a) of moral discernment in ethical matters

ἄγνοσία,*n* {ag-no-see'-ah}

1) not knowing, ignorance

ἐπίγνωσις,*n* {ep-ig'-no-sis}

1) precise and correct knowledge 1a) used in the NT of the knowledge of things ethical and divine

ἐπιστήμων,*a* {ep-ee-stay'-mone}

1) intelligent, experienced, one having the knowledge of an expert

διάνοια,*n* {dee-an'-oy-ah}

1) the mind as a faculty of understanding, feeling, desiring 2) understanding 3) mind, i.e. spirit, way of thinking and feeling 4) thoughts, either good or bad

νοέω,*v* {no-eh'-o}

1) to perceive with the mind, to understand, to have understanding 2) to think upon, heed, ponder, consider

πνεῦμα,*n* {pnyoo'-mah}

1) the third person of the triune God, the Holy Spirit, coequal, coeternal with the Father and the Son 1a) sometimes referred to in a way which emphasises his personality and character (the \\\Holy\\ Spirit) 1b) sometimes referred to in a way which emphasises his work and power (the Spirit of \\\Truth\\) 1c) never referred to as a depersonalised force 2) the spirit, i.e. the vital principal by which the body is animated 2a) the rational spirit, the power by which the human being feels, thinks, decides 2b) the soul 3) a spirit, i.e. a simple essence, devoid of all or at least all grosser matter, and possessed of the power of knowing, desiring, deciding, and acting 3a) a life giving spirit 3b) a human soul that has left the body 3c) a spirit higher than man but lower than God, i.e. an angel 3c1) used of demons, or evil spirits, who were conceived as inhabiting the bodies of men 3c2) the spiritual nature of Christ, higher than the highest angels and equal to God, the divine nature of Christ 4) the disposition or influence which fills and governs the soul of any one 4a) the efficient source of any power, affection, emotion, desire, etc. 5) a movement of air (a gentle blast) 5a) of the wind, hence the wind itself 5b) breath of nostrils or mouth

Appendix II: Huston Smith's Dimensions of Reality and Being.

Smith describes four primary planes: terrestrial, intermediary, celestial, and beyond these the infinite which is the uncreated source of the others. Humanity, in fullness of being, aligns with each of these planes¹ through interrelated levels of being, otherwise known as bodies: physical or gross body, mind or subtle body, soul or causal body, and spirit or nondual body. Each level seems complete in itself, not particularly aware of the next more inclusive level that influences, "encloses and permeates it." To that higher/greater/vaster plane or body, the lower plane is but its content.²

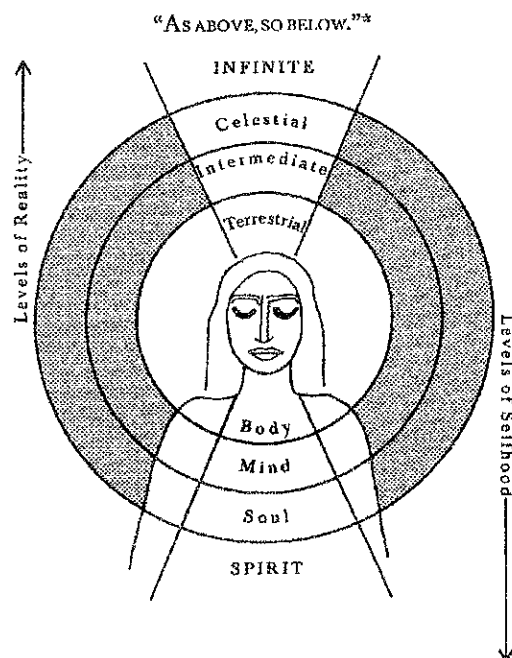


Fig. 1. Levels of Reality and Selfhood.
Smith: *Forgotten Truth*.

*The assertion is from *The Emerald Tablets of Hermes Trismegistus*.

The terrestrial plane also named the gross body³ is the realm most familiar and comfortable to the Modern mind. The human body here is physical, what Ken Wilber will

¹Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth: the Primordial Tradition*, (San Francisco: Harper Colophon, 1976), 37.

²Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth*, 61.

³Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth*, 37.

later term “the waking state of consciousness”⁴. This is also the region for our ego development,⁵ our contrast consciousness that defines our self in separation from others. We sense ourselves as solid beings, and since the ego needs to be in control to give us our identity, albeit our “false self”, it prefers to wall out awareness of the next level of being.

The *intermediate plane and the subtle body or mind* is alternately named psychic or animic.⁶ This is the region of departed souls, for example the Tibetan Bardo; and is the region of dreams and shadow consciousness. On this plane we encounter archetypal reflections; the original archetypes are in the next higher celestial plane. These reflections are closely related to Jung’s concept of archetypes, appearing in our dreams and mythologies and collective unconscious. These archetypes have their own energies, causing Jung “to regard them as the psychic counterparts of biological instincts” – surging with pressures that impact our terrestrial lives. This is the region of our personal unconscious; from here, our shadow, having both positive and negative energies, challenges our egoic solid sense of self, encouraging us to expand our consciousness – something contemplatives eventually must learn to engage and work with. Here is the source of metaphor, myth, poetry, art which gives life richness, dimensions, generativity. Ken Wilber will name this the dream state.⁷ Dreams can be powerful. We can emerge from

⁴ Ken Wilber, *Integral Spirituality: A Startling New Role for Religion in the Modern and Post Modern World* (Boston: Integral Books, 2006), 87, 89.

⁵ Reginald Ray, *Touching Enlightenment: Finding Realization in the Body* (Boulder, CO: Sounds True, 2008), 270-317. Dr. Ray is a Tibetan Buddhist practitioner and teacher, with 40 years of intensive experience. He states a great appreciation for John of the Cross; his teachings on the soul and stages of our spiritual journey reveals a close affinity to the Carmelite sense of the psycho-spiritual journey, and Smith’s states of being and reality.

⁶ Huston Smith. *Forgotten Truth*, 38. For this region Smith cites Plato’s Republic, Thomas Aquinas, Edward Conze and Buddhism (Eastern Buddhist VI, no. 2, (Oct. 1974).

⁷ Ken Wilber, *Integral Spirituality*, 89.

them with new insights and perspectives, helpful for relationships, art, and the prophetic work of scholarship.

The Celestial Plane shares its level with the Soul or Causal Body (*psyche, anima, atman, nephesh, nafs*.)⁸ This is Wilber's formless state.⁹ The Subtle state coalesces in what Plotinus termed the universal soul; Smith calls this universal mind. This is the collective unconscious. More of God's true nature appears in the Celestial plane – mystics seeing with the inner eye can intuit this plane, but unaided logic cannot navigate here.¹⁰ This plane is luminous, the home of the original archetypes, of Plato's forms. This is the abode of God Transcendent and the realm of classic theism. God here is anthropomorphic – archetypes assume the shape of the containers which set limits upon them. Theism is not the final truth. God is ever so much more.

This is also the final phase of our individuality. The soul is deeper (or greater) than mind.

It sees and hears through our senses without itself being seen or heard. It underlies all the changes through which an individual passes. The soul is dynamic, not solid:

In the faint glimpses of itself that the soul affords us, it appears less as a thing than as a movement: to paraphrase Nietzsche, it resembles a bridge more than a destination. Restlessness is built into it as a metaphysical principle.¹¹

Smith cites Plato and Aristotle: self motion is the essence of the soul.¹² The soul's movement has direction: all our desires and longing be they physical, mental, emotional, spiritual are seeking towards a beloved. Here we find ourselves within what Panikkar terms "Christophany" – the relationality of love between creator and created. But God's

⁸ Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth*, 74.

⁹ Ken Wilber, *Integral Spirituality*, 89.

¹⁰ Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth*, 49.

¹¹ Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth*, 75.

¹² Plato, *Phaedrus*, 245d. and Aristotle. *Physics*. 256b, 34.

love is the greater, flowing into us and through us returning to its source: “the love of God is an outpouring and an in drawing tide.”¹³

In the *Infinite Plane*, and *Spirit* or *nondual body*, God infinitely exceeds anthropomorphism. Religions mutually find we can only attempt to describe this level by what it is not. For Christianity this is the via negativa, the realm of the apophatic. Neither rational logic nor positive definitions can comprehend this realm. Paradox, as in Zen koans or Jesus’ parables, may have the capacity to jolt our senses into seeing beyond their usual range of vision, of knowing noetically. The infinite is unbounded, undifferentiated. Here we arrive at the drop-off point.

The Truth does not need us and is in no way dependent upon our powers of conceptualization. There are regions of being ... that are quite unrelated to the contours of the human mind. The mind ... is not made for grasping ultimates.¹⁴

This is the “place” we enter and that enters us, when contemplation is granted ... beyond words, beyond images, beyond concepts, in the dancing stillness, the motionless turning, the resounding and humming silence. The ultimate is omnipresent, beyond *and* within us. Here we encounter our essential true self one with the Divine Spirit – fully in union with Christ we engage unitive consciousness, seeing through the eyes of Christ. What Panikkar calls the divine human interchange is sourced here. This is the realm of Panikkar’s Christophany, the ground and source of contemplative scholarship and of contemplative living “in the world”.

¹³ Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth*, 85, citing Ruysbroeck.

¹⁴ Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth*, 58.

Appendix III: Wilber's States and Stages of Consciousness

Each quadrant has lines and levels of development of being. For example personal consciousness and global consciousness tend to progress along similar lines and levels. Using the developmental model of structuralist Jean Gebser, Wilber outlines stages of developing consciousness and pairs them with the states of being described by Huston Smith. The result enables us to see, among many other things, how scholarship, Christianity included, can develop serious blind spots.

Stages and states of consciousness overlap in complex and sometimes confusing ways.¹⁵

It is possible for a person to experience a spiritual state in any stage of consciousness, but that experience will be interpreted according to the stage in which a person is functioning. The major states (gross, subtle, causal, non-dual) are available to us from the beginning since everyone wakes, dreams, sleeps. However, we must develop along the stage of consciousness line for experiences of spiritual states to arrive at maturity. Using the Gebser categories of development,¹⁶ consciousness lines up like this:¹⁷

1. **Magic:** *Egocentric* – Impulsive and self-oriented. At this stage Jesus is the source of personal miracles and salvation. Prayer petitions tend to center on what I want.
2. **Mythic:** *Ethnocentric* – Consciousness focuses on the tribe, group, nation etc. There is a strong contrast consciousness of we-vs.-them which leads to conflict. Stability of group behaviour is very important. This is the world of absolutes and fundamentalism. In Christianity this is expressed through Biblical literalism, Jesus is the Only Begotten Son of God. Persons in this group have all the answers for everyone else. Put this together with economic, cultural, military imperialism in any century and see what happens.

¹⁵ Ken Wilber, *Integral Spirituality*, 90.

¹⁶ Wilber also uses other models for development: Piaget, Kohlberg, Loevinger, Gilligan, Fowler etc. See Ken Wilber, *Integral Spirituality*, p.60. Also Figures 2.4 and 2.5 between p. 68-69 for examples of some major developmental lines.

¹⁷ Ken Wilber, *Integral Spirituality*, 89-93. Also Ken Wilber and Thomas Keating. *The Future of Christianity*. Disc One, DVD (Integral Life, 2008).

3. **Rational:** *Worldcentric* – Here we value other human beings. We also value autonomy, success, the power of science. There are many right possibilities, but we still believe one system fits many possibilities. Jesus is a humanistic world teacher; there are other teachers, but Jesus is best for me. Wilber considers this to be an important level of developing maturity. It is a significant opening of perspective.
4. **Pluralistic:** *Diversity, postmodern* – This is an expanded world view with multiple paths and truths all equal. Jesus is one among many enlightened teachers and all the teachers are teaching post-modern pluralistic truths. Those truths rest on trying not to marginalize anyone. Tolerance, openness, inclusiveness are very important. Truth is open to different interpretations depending on your culture and tradition; all can offer salvation if followed sincerely and authentically.
5. **Integral:** *Integration* – We recognize that all stages make important contributions and that we all, more or less, have the potential to progress through stages. There is a keen awareness of interaction between awareness, thought, affect, action; and personal and cultural transformation in values. In Christianity, Christ is experienced as I-Am-ness, as the fundamental source of all Being, and the ground of integrating all essential truth. Christ is an integrated consciousness and as such is the leading edge of evolution. The Integral stance takes all of the forgoing factors into consideration and moves forward.

Bringing stages of development together with states of consciousness demonstrates the highest goal of enlightenment: the combination of integral (and beyond) consciousness with non-dual awareness.

Appendix IV: Center for Action and Contemplation.

<http://www.cacradicalgrace.org/aboutus/mission.html>

Vision

The Center for Action and Contemplation

Supports a new reformation

From the inside!

- ~ In the spirit of the Gospels
- ~ Confirming peoples' deeper spiritual intuitions
- ~ Encouraging actions of justice rooted in prayer
- ~ With a new appreciation for, and cooperation with,
other denominations, religions, and cultures

Mission

"We are a center for experiential education, encouraging the transformation of human consciousness through contemplation, equipping people to be instruments of peaceful change in the world."

Core Principles

- The teaching of Jesus is our central reference point.
- We need a contemplative mind in order to do compassionate action.
- The best criticism of the bad is the practice of the better. Oppositional energy only creates more of the same.
- Practical truth is more likely found at the bottom and the edges than at the top or the center of most groups, institutions, and cultures.
- We will support true authority, the ability to "author" life in others, regardless of the group. (non tribal)
- Life is about discovering the right questions more than having the right answers.
- True religion leads us to an experience of our True Self and undermines my false self.

We do not think ourselves into a new way of living, but we live ourselves into a new way of thinking (praxis over theory)

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