

2-1-2019

Renewing the Jesus Movement in the Episcopal Church: Weaving Good News Into Spiritual Formation

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Recommended Citation

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

RENEWING THE JESUS MOVEMENT IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH:
WEAVING GOOD NEWS INTO SPIRITUAL FORMATION

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF PORTLAND SEMINARY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

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PORTLAND, OREGON

FEBRUARY 2019

Portland Seminary
George Fox University
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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

DMin Dissertation

This is to certify that the DMin Dissertation of

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has been approved by
the Dissertation Committee on February 14, 2019
for the degree of Doctor of Ministry in Leadership and Spiritual Formation

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DEDICATION

To my beloved *Anam Cara*, Sharon, whose tender wisdom, compassion, and brilliance have encouraged and transformed me during our life together and beyond.

To our beloved children, Jill, Jason, and Jennifer, whose loving support and patience have inspired Dad to write what is in his heart

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Since it is true that no person is an island, I am blessed with an archipelago of professional personal friends who have inspired and challenged me during this whole process of academic and spiritual formation. To all the special caregivers in our cohort who listen, support, and pray with me; the Portland Seminary team—MaryKate, Cliff, Loren, Heather, and David—whose encouragement and guidance have kept me on the right path by running alongside me all the way: Thanks be to God!

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ABSTRACT

The Episcopal Church today experiences continuing decline in membership and new challenges to making Christ Jesus fully known. Research¹ reveals a significant number of members desire to understand scripture better, experience the mystery of the Eucharist, learn how to deepen their spiritual journey, and encourage clergy to deepen their journey as well. With the departure of many Evangelicals, the Church has lost its comprehensiveness.² This affects how leadership sees spiritual formation. At the same time, laity have expressed a desire for how to engage in a deeper prayer life.

Two solutions address these issues. Centering prayer explores silent, imageless contemplation to engender an ever-deepening self-awareness and transformation. The Presiding Bishop's vision for "joining the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement" is spelled out in a new rule of life called *The Way of Love*. Its goal is to prepare Episcopalians to share the ministry of Jesus today. A critique of these alternatives both affirms and challenges their possible ongoing contributions to spiritual formation in the Episcopal Church.

Episcopalians can renew a vision for authentic and contemplative discipleship as they are led to deepen their journeys into Christ. The promise of lifelong transformation

¹ "RenewalWorks: What We Are Learning," Forward Movement, 2018, <http://renewalworks.org/researchsummary/>.

² Comprehensive refers to the Episcopal Church ethos of accepting many differing principles of interpretation and practice alongside one another, finding unity within diversity. For example, Protestant and Catholic, conservative and liberal, Evangelical and Progressive views are all parts of the whole. How scripture is interpreted, what authority historic traditions drawn from ecumenical councils or creeds still have, and how reason or experience all contribute to understanding what it means to be a vital Christian community.

into Christlikeness may be enhanced by considering the Evangelical Option³: embracing the lordship of Jesus the Christ.

Historical ways to encourage Christian formation can be adapted to life today. These pathways include perspectives and select practices from Benedictine tradition and spirituality found in *The Cloud of Unknowing* and *The Practice of the Presence of God*, as well as Orthodox and Celtic traditions.

The Artifact addresses the person in the pew hungering for more spiritual development. Chapters include formation essays, chants, videos, Bible study, and journaling—all to be used by individuals or small groups. The artifact is open-ended with more chapters to be added over time.

³ The Evangelical Option refers to more than a knowledge about the historical Jesus, but a personal life-changing experience of coming into a personal relationship with Jesus uniquely as Lord and Savior by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit. This personal conversion of heart, mind and will may be experienced in several ways. Some witness to a sudden relational change of heart. Others come to a gradual realization, often after baptism, that Jesus (whose name means rescuer or one who saves) is the necessary way further into the Father's (God's) kingdom, the Truth above all truths, and essence of God-life, now and for eternity. The result is an open, accepting compassion without condescension for all others whose paths or experience of the Holy may be much different. In this way it enhances comprehensiveness in the Anglican tradition, and restores a balance to the circle of inclusiveness.

SECTION 1: THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Anglican Comprehensiveness

In an essay published just after his death in April 2012, the Reverend Canon James C. Fenhagen, former President and Dean of the General Theological Seminary of the Episcopal Church in New York City, shared his seasoned insights into both the unique charisms and challenges for today's Episcopal Church. Here is an excerpt from that article:

I am committed to an ecumenical view of the Christian church, but not at the expense of denying aspects of my own tradition that I believe must be part of any ongoing dialogue. I believe there is an “Anglican Way” that has much to contribute to the whole church and to which we can witness with conviction ... From the time of the reformation in the sixteenth century, the Anglican Communion has been committed to doctrinal comprehensiveness rather than uniformity. Comprehensiveness involves being able to hold together a number of seeming opposites within a unified whole. It allows for consistent theological debate and inquiry⁴

Anglicans find a unity within diversity among many different, sometimes conflicting, paths of understanding. Diversity reflects how we perceive the work of the Spirit as God transforms individuals and faith communities. Being comprehensive includes differences in how the Scriptures are to be interpreted by various cultures over time; as well as in where and how the Church needs to respond with a prophetic witness to issues advocating justice, equality, and ethical behavior.

⁴ Mark Sutherland, “The Anglican Way,” *Relational Realities*, April 2012, <https://relationalrealities.com/2012/04/10/the-anglican-way-james-c-fenhagen-2/>.

Historically the various strands within the Anglican tradition include Evangelical, Catholic, charismatic, Orthodox, activist, contemplative, conservative, and liberal, or a combination of several of these.⁵ One does not have to embrace the full spectrum of all these strands, only be open to how they may inform one's particular Christian worldview and spiritual experience. When Episcopalians talk about inclusion, they usually do not mean syncretism. These strands of tradition could be pictured as intersecting trails along a rolling landscape rather than as rigid, controlled-access highways.

The Metaphor of the Oregon Trail

One way to imagine Episcopal diversity is to see the several strands as historical trails weaving in and out of each other. Those intersecting trails suggest the pattern of westward travel along the Oregon Trail in the nineteenth century. In the 1840s, many Americans in the East were excited about the prospects of fulfilling their manifest destiny⁶: to expand westward as a part of God's plan to spread democracy, evangelize any Native Americans they encountered, and build new lives for themselves out west. There were merchants and fur trappers in the migration west, but the dominant pioneers were Christian missionaries.⁷

⁵ A current understanding of these ways of being an Anglican for the general audience can be found in Thomas McKenzie, *The Anglican Way: A Guidebook* (Nashville, TN: Colony Catherine Inc, 2014).

⁶ The popular early-19th-century belief that it was God's will to expand the dominion of the United States westward to spread democracy and capitalism. See <https://www.history.com/topics/westward-expansion>.

⁷ History.com editors, "Oregon Trail," *History* A&E Television, 2:41, December 6, 2017, <https://www.history.com/topics/westward-expansion/oregon-trail>.

In 1835, physician and Protestant missionary Marcus Whitman set out on horseback to discover a safe route. He got as far as Daniel, Wyoming. Returning later with a new wife and another missionary couple, they followed Indian trails and ended up in what is now Vancouver, Washington.

In 1843, Whitman joined up with a group of a thousand people, 120 wagons, and thousands of livestock. This was the Great Emigration of 1843. It took them five months to cross the plains and the mountains west. The way westward involved selling most of their possessions ahead of time as well as leaving treasured items along the trail as the going got rough and items became too burdensome to carry. The timing of the journey was paramount: starting later than spring would mean crossing the mountains during winter snows and severe cold. A late start would make the passage almost impossible or even deadly.⁸

The metaphor of the Oregon Trail journey speaks to our current Christian journey into spiritual formation. Inspired by a vision for going forth and being led further into the kingdom, we begin an arduous journey which will require some sacrifices and leaving behind even as we discover the wondrous beauty of what awaits us. We recall the words of Jesus to the rich young ruler: “‘There’s just one thing you’re short of. Sell everything you own, and distribute it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me.’ When [the ruler] heard that he turned very sad; he was extremely wealthy.” (Lk 18: 22-23)⁹

⁸ “Oregon Trail.”

⁹ All New Testament quotes in this thesis are taken from the Kingdom New Testament unless otherwise indicated. N.T. Wright, *The Kingdom New Testament: A Contemporary Translation* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2011).

Since Christ Jesus is leading us as the trail boss to Kingdom City at journey's end, we might want to ask what will it require of us to follow Jesus today? Given the variety of answers to "who do you say that I am" (Mt 16:15) in the Episcopal Church, we might also ask ourselves which Jesus we are choosing to follow. Is he the metaphor for God's love and compassion, the mystic seer, the revolutionary social justice advocate, a Jewish wisdom figure, a uniquely incarnate son of God and savior proclaimed in the historic Creeds, or a synthesis of interpretations? Among all of these alternative views of Jesus, we have to decide which ones to emphasize, renew, or re-discover as relevant in our own day.

What or who we believe Jesus is, or is not, directly influences how one chooses to follow him. Who Jesus is for us shapes discipleship (imitating his values and behavior or relational surrender to Jesus). How Jesus lives within us shapes spiritual formation (an ever-deepening journey beyond the false self toward God, or an ever-deepening love for Jesus as we are transformed into Christlikeness). As Anglicans who often seek a *via media* (a middle way), following Jesus can become a both/and experience.

We now review some facts of life about the health, changing status, and hopes for the American descendants of the Church of England. We turn to sociological research to get some answers.

Decline of the Mainline Churches in the United States

Mainline Protestant churches in the United States are struggling not only to survive but to thrive within a pluralistic secular culture which may no longer value their Christian worldview or their pathways to lifelong spiritual formation. This includes the

Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America (PECUSA), usually known as the Episcopal Church (TEC).

In a Pew Research study comparing percentages of church membership with the U.S. population as a whole from 2007 to 2014, the researchers concluded “mainline Protestants have declined at a faster rate than any other major Christian group, including Catholics and evangelical Protestants.”¹⁰ Only thirty-seven percent of Millennials who were raised in a mainline tradition still identify with mainline Protestantism.¹¹

We need to go back a few decades to help us understand in part how the Episcopal Church transitioned from a small but influential religious institution in the middle of the twentieth century to its struggles today to be a voice for progressive social justice issues.

In the September 1985 issue of the *New York Times Magazine*, a feature titled “The Episcopalians: A Church in Search of Itself” shared some of the self-assessments Episcopal leaders were voicing about the impact of cultural changes and the inability of the staid Establishment church to keep up.

The industrialization following the Civil War gave rise to many of America’s great fortunes, and those accumulating them were often Episcopalian, or were attracted to the religion because of its formality, rationality, conservatism and at least a patina of spirituality. Astors, du Ponts, Morgans, Vanderbilts, Mellons, Roosevelts—Episcopalians all.¹²

¹⁰ Michael Lipka, “Mainline Protestants Make Up Shrinking Number of U.S. Adults,” Pew Research Center, May 18, 2015, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/18/mainline-protestants-make-up-shrinking-number-of-u-s-adults/>

¹¹ Lipka, “Mainline Protestants Make Up Shrinking Number of U.S. Adults.”

¹² Paul Wilkes, “The Episcopalians: A Church in Search of Itself,” *New York Magazine*, September 1, 1985, <https://www.nytimes.com/1985/09/01/magazine/episcopalians-a-church-in-search-of-itself.html>

However, by the turbulent 1960s, American televisions brought the violence of war in Vietnam into homes in graphic detail. People were no longer insulated from seeing mass anti-war and civil rights protests, some turning deadly. The intimacy of television captured in real time the assassinations of President Kennedy, his brother Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King Jr. The rising anti-Establishment, anti-authoritarian cultural memes often pitted activist young people against their traditional, conservative parents in homes of mostly white, Anglo-Saxon, upper-middle-class to wealthy Episcopalians.

“This church, which had molded a synthesis of culture and faith, a value system that public life had a religious dimension, simply collapsed as the culture polarized,” says Wade Clark Roof, professor of the sociology of religion department at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Wilkes continues his analysis:

The upper classes were abandoning the church; the middle class, career-oriented and upwardly mobile no longer saw the church as necessary for their lives. “Let us say, there was no longer any noblesse who should feel the oblige,” said Bishop Moore, himself the son of a wealthy New Jersey family.¹³

Some of the decline in the Episcopal Church over the last thirty years has been attributed to growing disagreements between conservatives and more liberal-minded members with the advent of radical changes¹⁴ to the 1928 Book of Common Prayer (1979), women’s ordination to priesthood (eleven women “irregularly” ordained in 1974 and fully authorized by the 1976 General Convention (GC), the subsequent inclusion of

¹³ Wilkes, “The Episcopalians.”

¹⁴ Radical in the sense of the Latin *radix*, or root. The 1979 BCP drew from liturgical roots going back before the Reformation to the early Church liturgies, locating the Triduum and Easter Vigil with its proximity to Baptism in the center of the book.

LGBTQ¹⁵ persons in ordained ministry (consecration of V.G. Robinson as an openly gay bishop in 2003), and same-gender trial marriage rites (2009) later fully approved by GC (2015). In an August 2018 research article on decline in the Episcopal Church, we read:

The Episcopal Church shrank in the 1980s and '90s by a number of measures, but the pace picked up from around 2000. The pace of decline increased markedly again between 2005 and 2010. Since 2010, it has continued to decline: at a slower pace than 2005-10, but faster than 2000-05. In other words, things are not quite as bad as they were in 2005-10, but they are bad.¹⁶

In 2008, Pew Research predicted an eighty-two percent increase in the total U.S. population from 2005 (296 million) to 438 million by 2050. A majority of this growth will be due to immigrants coming into the country and their U.S.-born descendants, many of them Latino or other non-European-descent peoples. The sociological, religious and political ramifications of changing demographics are both challenging and significant for how an aging, mostly-white mainline church leadership in the United States chooses to approach evangelization, inclusion, and spiritual formation.

Continuum for Spiritual Growth in the Episcopal Church

RenewalWorks, the self-publishing arm of the Episcopal Church, shares survey data gathered from 2013 through 2017 among 12,000 Episcopalians in 200 congregations nationwide. They discovered a continuum of how participants view their life with God in Christ. A major part of RenewalWorks' vision is to build discipleship in the Episcopal Church by a focus on spiritual growth. Researchers assessed both the current spiritual

¹⁵ Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Queer. LGBTQ persons represent about 5% of the population in the United States. <https://news.gallup.com/234863/estimate-lgbtq-population-rises.aspx>.

¹⁶ David Goodhew, "Facing More Episcopal Church Decline," The Living Church, August 30, 2018, <https://livingchurch.org/covenant/2018/08/30/facing-more-episcopal-church-decline/>

health and potential for spiritual growth within Episcopal faith communities (congregations). “We are an older denomination with membership numbers in decline. Spiritual practices and embrace of beliefs are low relative to other denominations. Leaders often feel depleted, even defeated.”¹⁷

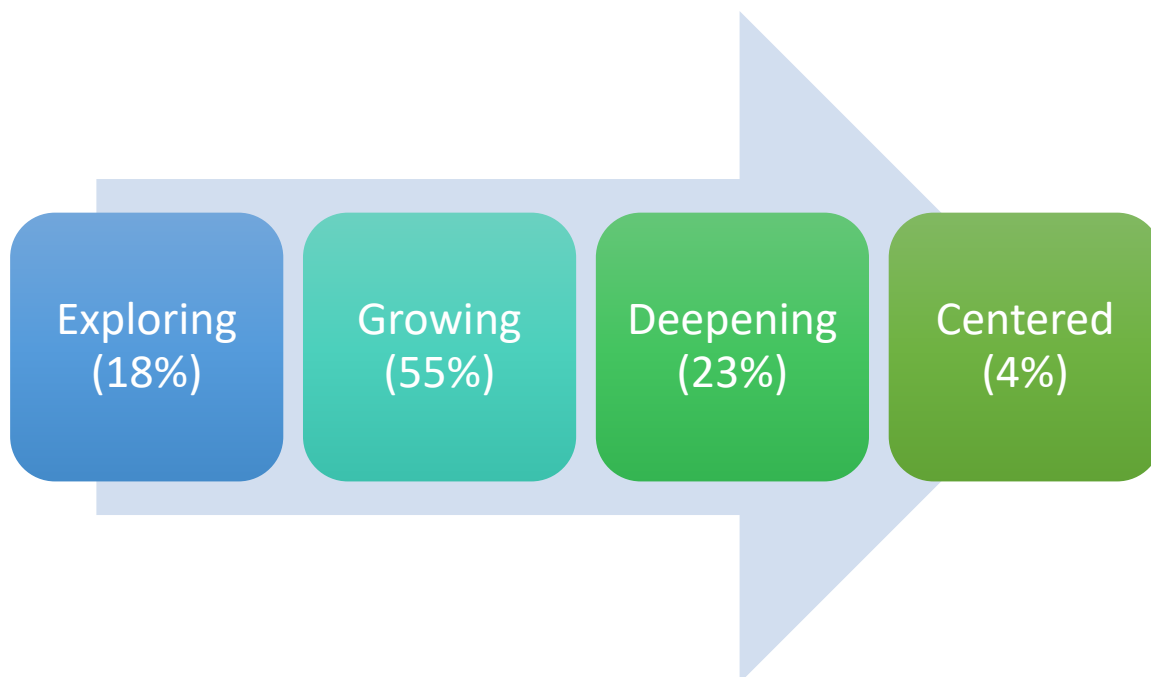


Figure 1: Where Are We Spiritually? The Four Stages of Spiritual Growth

The resulting data model depicts a spirituality continuum as four progressive stages of spiritual experience. The two beginning groups (Exploring and Growing) represent a majority of respondents (seventy-three percent). Respondents from these two groups tend to be older and have attended their church longer than ten years. They still have many questions about how to grow spiritually. Those who are identified as exploring or growing are not confident in where they need to go; they are highly

¹⁷ “RenewalWorks: What We Are Learning,” Forward Movement, 2018, <http://renewalworks.org/researchsummary/>.

dependent upon clergy to mentor them. The researchers ask, “Why haven’t more people developed a deeper, more mature relationship with God in Christ?”¹⁸

As we progress from the group least involved in specific spiritual practices (exploring) to the most intense and actively committed to a rule of life (being centered), the numbers of those involved declines. In other words, fewer Episcopalians claim a personal relationship with God in Christ is the most important thing in their lives. They would not feel comfortable claiming the importance of this personal relationship.¹⁹

Those who are exploring basic beliefs expressed in the Episcopal tradition are drawn to the beauty of the liturgy, especially the Holy Eucharist. They can affirm belief in God, but may not be sure about what they believe about Christ. Faith is not yet a perceived critical part of their daily lives.²⁰

While they still may have many questions about a personal relationship with God in Christ, they are beginning to explore personal spiritual practices during the week apart from church. These include prayer, time in solitude, and reflection upon scripture.

A turning point comes with the third, or deepening, stage when people openly admit to having a personal relationship with God. While they represent only twenty-three percent of parishioners surveyed, they report feeling closer to Christ and depend on him for daily guidance. They find comfort and support in belonging to small groups with similar spiritual interests. Within this welcoming environment, mentors and friends can

¹⁸ “RenewalWorks,” 4.

¹⁹ “RenewalWorks,” 7.

²⁰ “RenewalWorks,” 6.

encourage accountability for spiritual growth as well as provide a safe environment to discuss any challenges which may arise in their personal faith journey.²¹

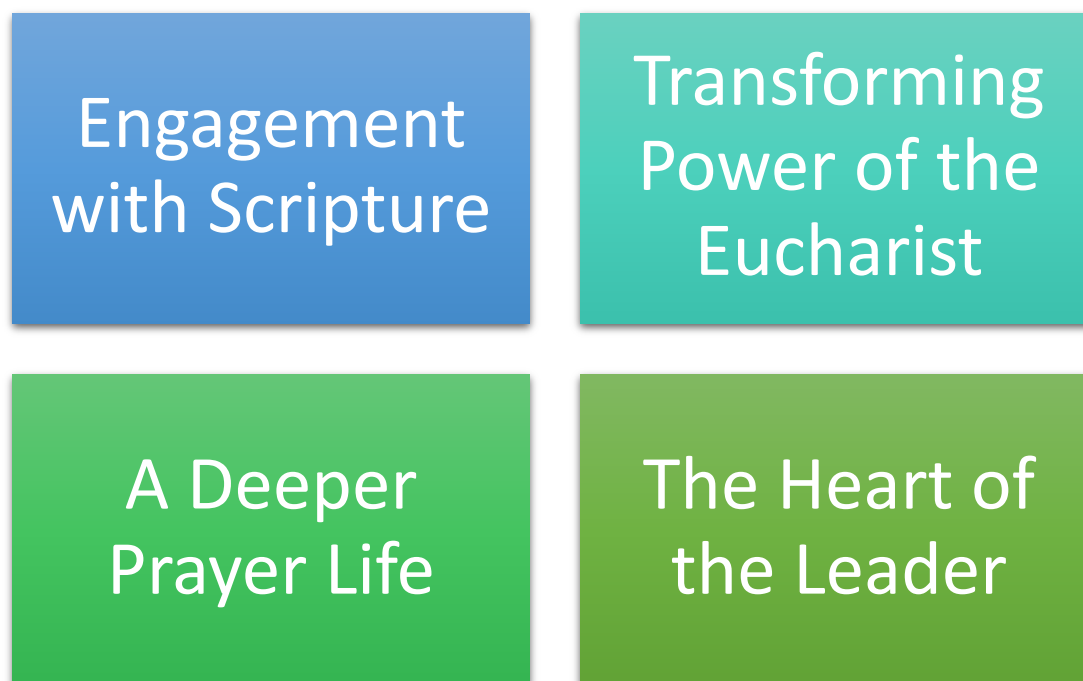


Figure 2: Key Catalysts for Spiritual Growth

Based on research by the RenewalWorks project, four key catalysts emerge as transformational for spiritual growth among today's Episcopalians. Here's an analogy about spiritual growth catalysts taken from chemistry. Catalysts accelerate chemical reactions. A catalyst is the presence of a substance which energizes and allows a desired reaction to proceed immediately.

In spiritual formation, the catalytic agent is always the presence and grace of the Holy Spirit. The four catalysts for growth are: engagement with scripture, participation in the mystery of the Eucharist, growing a deeper prayer life, and dedication of leadership to

²¹ "RenewalWorks," 6-7.

their own personal spiritual growth.²² Implementing these four ways to encourage spiritual growth may provide the necessary energy for renewing the Episcopal Church. This is a hopeful time for many Episcopalians who have remained faithful to the Church in spite of declining membership and the fallout from supporting controversial issues.

The Shaping of the Episcopal Church Today

The twentieth century was marked by widespread racial, political, and social turmoil. It was marked by rapid shifts between perceptions of security and anomie as a result of two world wars, a major depression, several regional foreign wars, the Cold War, and the advent of the post-industrial era of technology and digital connectedness. Waves of migration from rural areas to the cities and suburbs impacted how Americans lived, utilized time, and experienced personal freedom. By the time of the Vietnam war, the Episcopal church was no longer an institutional icon for the Establishment as the decline of aristocratic influence within its episcopal leadership was replaced by more egalitarian awareness.

There are increasing numbers of diocesan bishops and clergy today who are women, as well as those representing minority racial and ethnic groups, mirroring the U.S. population as a whole. Katharine Jefferts-Schori served as the first woman elected as Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church from 2006 to November 2015. As she assumed the helm, conservative Episcopalians began to leave the church in protest against changes in worship, acceptance of women's and homosexual ordination, rejection by most

²² "RenewalWorks," 7-8.

leadership of more evangelical views of Jesus, and the way Scripture was being interpreted.²³

Michael B. Curry succeeded Jefferts-Schori as the first black Primate of the Episcopal Church in November 2015. A descendant of African slaves and the son of an Episcopal priest, Curry was raised to value social activism and speak out about racial injustice. Like his predecessor Jefferts-Schori, Curry has been active in racial reconciliation and affirming gender equality, and he speaks from a liberal Protestant theological point of view.

Curry promotes his brand of missional leadership by referring to himself as the Chief Evangelism Officer (CEO) of the Episcopal Church. From the beginning of his tenure as Presiding Bishop, Curry has encouraged Episcopalians to envision themselves as the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement.²⁴ In his installation sermon on November 1, 2015, All Saints' Day, Curry preached:

My brothers and sisters, God has not given up on the world, and God is not finished with the Episcopal Church yet. We are the Jesus Movement. So don't worry, be happy! ... This way of love is the way of Jesus. This is the heart of the Jesus Movement. And it will turn the Church I might add, upside down, which is really right side up ... We made a commitment to live into being the Jesus movement by committing to evangelism and the work of reconciliation—beginning with racial reconciliation across the divides that set us apart. I believe the Holy Spirit showed up.²⁵

²³ Robert Prichard, *A History of the Episcopal Church: Complete Through the 78th General Convention*, 3rd Revised Edition (New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2014), 408-413.

²⁴ David Paulsen, "Presiding Bishop Leads Wave of Excitement for Evangelism Heading into General Convention," June 28, 2018, <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/library/article/presiding-bishop-leads-wave-excitement-evangelism-heading-general-convention>.

²⁵ Michael B. Curry, "Sermon at Installation as the 27th Presiding Bishop, Episcopal Church," November 1, 2015, <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/posts/michaelcurry/sermon-installation-27th-presiding-bishop>.

Three years later, at the summer 2018 79th General Convention, a priest observer tried to reconcile this vision of being part of the Jesus Movement with his perceptions of what he experiences:

I have never heard a sermon in an Episcopal parish mentioning the salvation of souls. If anything, what I hear more often is the striking absence of such language, given its prominence both in the biblical tradition and our prayer book. I hear a lot about justice. I hear a lot about equality. I hear a lot about making the world a better place, about caring for the oppressed and marginalized. These are all good things, in their proper place ... Contrary to General Convention's ideas that it will evangelize by aping the *Zeitgeist* (or at least the progressive slice of it), such salvation is, for very many of us, why we are in the Church in the first place. If we don't need saving—in a way that only makes sense in the Church and can only be accomplished within the Body of Christ—what is the point?²⁶

These two observations—one by a Primate of the national Episcopal church, the other voiced by a priest who is an academic researcher—represent different perceptions about what it means to engage in evangelization today as Episcopalians.

Evangelizing includes both outreach and in-reach. Reaching out gets members excited about following the example of Jesus as they make a difference in the lives of others who need tangible expressions of God's love. The more difficult aspect of evangelism for most Episcopalians today is to accept any need to surrender their objective knowing about Jesus to a subjective experience of inviting Jesus to become the living center of their lives (Rom 10:9). The point is both in-reach and outreach are needed to restore the balance to Anglican comprehensiveness.

²⁶ Samuel Keyes, "Getting Saved," Living Church, July 25, 2018, <https://livingchurch.org/covenant/2018/07/25/getting-saved/>.

Concluding Thoughts on the Problem

The balance of power has shifted in the last fifty years, embodied in the actions taken by General Conventions, as an evangelical presence has diminished while a progressive voice has gradually assumed prominence. Even as the Episcopal church has experienced decline in both numbers and political influence, the voices for more radical advocacy of gender and ethnic equality have re-shaped how Episcopalians view *lex orandi, lex credendi* (literally, “the law of prayer is the law of belief.”) This fifth-century aphorism attributed to Prosper of Aquitaine, a protégé of Augustine of Hippo, may be paraphrased as “what you see and hear us praying is evidence of what we truly believe as necessary for a healthy Christian life together.”

The problem for spiritual formation in the Episcopal Church today is that it has narrowed its perspective almost exclusively to liberal Protestant interpretations of who Jesus is and what it means to be formed into Christlikeness. It is no longer that unique branch of the Church universal distinguished by an openness to varied historical Christian traditions which have been vital parts of its inclusive identity.

No one tradition—including the ones missing in action like Anglican evangelicalism²⁷ or orthodoxy—has an exclusive claim on authoritative truth. All traditions need to listen to and value one another. Renewal includes at least a willingness to consider the gifts offered by each other and expand one's own worldview in the process. Living together in the resulting creative tension is very Anglican.

²⁷ This evangelical tradition within Anglicanism emphasized a faith grounded in conservative Biblical interpretation, a personal conversion experience to Jesus as Lord, and promoted growth in personal piety. That continues today in the Episcopal Church as a minority viewpoint. Some contemporary forms of evangelicalism among young people refuse to align with any political party while advocating inclusive views on social justice, racial and gender equality. There is increasing concern about global quality of life.

SECTION 2:

OTHER PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Introduction

There are other ways to re-vitalize the Church beyond simply revising the Prayer Book with gender-neutral, inclusive language or applying the catalysts for spiritual renewal recommended by the RenewalWorks study. One is the Centering Prayer (CP) movement sponsored through Contemplative Outreach and now being adopted by many Episcopal congregations advocating experiential faith formation. Centering prayer takes place most often as scheduled silent prayer time daily, either as individuals or together in small groups. The recommended time is twenty minutes twice a day. Training in how one settles into this form of imageless prayer, how one uses a prayer word to re-center one's consent to God, and what inner work one might experience over time is usually led by experienced, certified CP leaders.

The other alternative is the evangelism plan developed under the leadership of Presiding Bishop Michael Curry known as *The Way of Love: Practices for a Jesus-Centered Life*. Curry's promotion of "the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement" continues the same emphasis on combating racism, engaging in social justice issues, and affirming gender diversity and equality as his predecessors of recent decades, including Katharine Jefferts-Schori. The Episcopal Church's current model of evangelism draws from the influence of liberal evangelicalism, as previously discussed. In a 2017 article in *Episcopal Café* online magazine, Kathy Staudt writes

A watchword of "liberal" Christianity, beginning with Harry Emerson Fosdick and picked up by Verna Dozier and Bishop Michael Curry and others, is that we need to learn to "follow Jesus, not worship Him." I would be on board if we

added “follow Him, not *just* worship Him,” but my experience tells me that the energy that allows us to follow Jesus’s teachings comes from a more mysterious place that the tradition has named the work of the Holy Spirit or as the encounter with the Living Christ ... I think we Episcopalians and liberal Protestants have become shy about embracing a relationship with the Living Christ because we have ceded the language about “following Jesus”—even the word “discipleship”—to the theological discourse of American fundamentalist evangelical Christianity.²⁸

A personal conversion experience to Christ Jesus emphasized by George Whitefield and the Wesley brothers remains a minority voice among progressive Episcopalians, who welcome the idea of reaching out to others with the message and mission of being an enthusiastic part of the Jesus Movement. The extent to which Curry and his national evangelism team promote a vision for both historical and contemporary expressions of sharing the Good News will become evident as the *Way of Love* blueprint becomes operational throughout dioceses and local parishes.

Both Centering Prayer and the *Way of Love* will be thoroughly discussed and critiqued. The conclusion to this section suggests these two together provide a unique framework for fulfilling Jesus' summary of what it means to keep God's law (loving God and neighbor in Mark 12:28-31), well-known to Episcopalians from the Prayer Book liturgy. Whether they succeed in doing this adequately is open to further debate.

Centering Prayer: Recovering a Contemplative Path for Union with God

The centering prayer movement grew out of a concern by several Cistercian (Trappist) monks from St. Joseph’s Abbey in Spencer, Massachusetts that young people in the early 1970s were attracted to Asian meditation practices offered nearby, unaware

²⁸ Kathy Staudt, “Claiming Our Way of Being Christian,” Episcopal Café, January 8, 2017, <https://www.episcopalcafe.com/on-jesus-movements-claiming-our-way-of-being-Christian/>.

of their own Christian heritage of contemplative prayer. Fr. Thomas Keating, a Trappist monk for seventy-five years, became a major communicator for translating *contemplatio* into practical prayer for non-monastics. He was the founder of Contemplative Outreach which continues to this day as a global resource for Centering Prayer training and practice.²⁹

After Fr. Keating's death at the age of 95 on October 18, 2018, Dan Morris-Young writes

Largely in response to the 1962-65 Second Vatican Council's call to religious orders for renewal, Keating and fellow monks Fr. William Meninger and the late Fr. Basil Pennington (1931-2005), worked together in the 1970s to develop a contemplative prayer method that drew on ancient traditions but could be readily accessible to the modern world ... Keating's observation that many, notably younger persons, were being attracted to Eastern meditation practices helped spur his work to recover Christian contemplative prayer ... "The gift of God is absolutely gratuitous," Keating said in a documentary. "It is not something you earn. It's something that's there. It's something you just have to accept. This is the gift that has been given. There is no place to go to get it. There's no place you can go to avoid it. It just is. It's part of our very existence. And so the purpose of all the great religions is to bring us into this relationship with reality that is so intimate that no words can possibly describe it."³⁰

Following Keating's 20-year oversight as Spencer's abbot (1961-1981), his return to Snowmass allowed him the freedom to help form the non-profit organization Contemplative Outreach to both promote centering prayer and encourage international interreligious dialogue. While maintaining fidelity to his own monastic tradition, Keating, like Trappist Thomas Merton, ventured outside of his Catholic heritage to explore other religions' contemplative practices, notably Buddhism. Both Merton and Keating spent

²⁹ For a full biography see <https://contemplativeoutreach.org/fr-thomas-keating>.

³⁰ Dan Morris-Young, "Thomas Keating, Pioneer in Centering Prayer, Interfaith Dialogue, Dies at 95," National Catholic Reporter, last modified November 1, 2018, <https://www.ncronline.org/news/people/thomas-keating-pioneer-centering-prayer-interfaith-dialogue-dies-95/>.

decades within the Order of Cistercians Strict Obedience (OCSO), a cloistered Benedictine community which values strict observance of silence and solitude. This practice of silence is a preference, not a vow. It does, however, become the fertile inner environment for exploring one's consciousness and awareness of God's presence.

Levels of Awareness

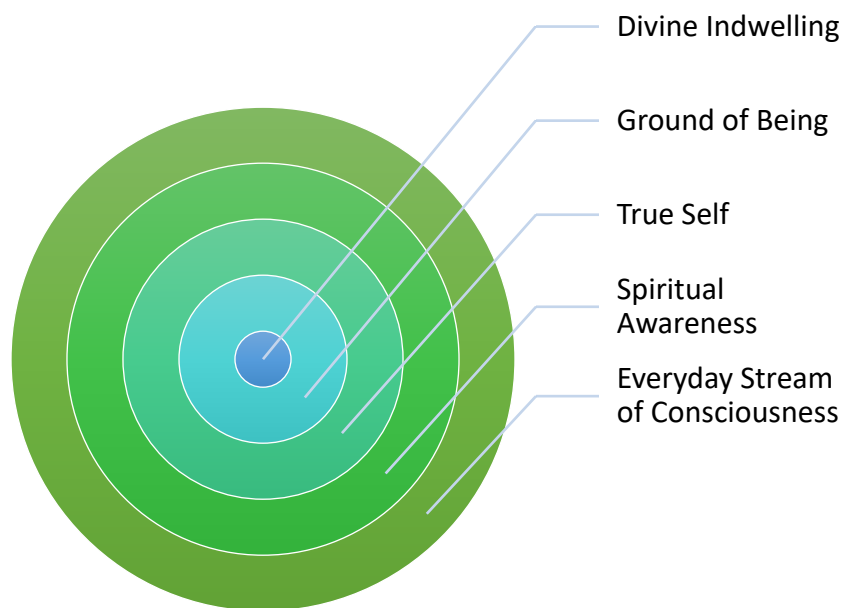


Figure 3: Levels of Awareness

In a 2017 YouTube video of teaching on centering prayer, Keating illustrates the levels of awareness discovered by contemplative practice as ever-deepening concentric circles with a common center. The first of five levels, from the outside to the center where mystical union with God resides, is everyday Stream of Consciousness. Keating pictures this as little boats floating on top of the ocean, unaware of anything deeper than one's conscious thoughts, feelings, and ordinary interactions. It is, says Keating, a dominating level of awareness, capturing our full attention.

The next level down is Spiritual Awareness. This is the beginning of awareness that there may be a reality beneath our ordinary senses that is mostly hidden from us. However, it is the beginning of real freedom to choose whether to accept or reject what we discover within.

At the third level down, we finally reach the potential to awaken to our True Self. This often comes with a surrender of our ego and letting go of false images or perceptions of oneself. This is the level of the *imago Dei*: God's idea of who we are from the very beginning, poetically described in Genesis 1 and 2. We learn to accept God and ourselves both as God is and as we are meant to be.

The fourth level Keating calls the Ground of our Being, previously often subconscious or unaware. We finally recognize and own our uniqueness. We become aware of the power and presence of all the gifts of the Spirit given to us in our baptism. This is the experiential result of awakening to our True Self and the depth of God's love for us.

Finally, at the very core of our existence, we may become aware of what has been there all along: Divine Indwelling. God has been within us since our beginning. We are invited by grace into the fullness of life in the Trinity; a life of infinite loving and sharing. It is God's total grace-gift to us; it is nothing we can earn or obtain on our own.³¹

These five levels of consciousness become the scaffolding upon which one is drawn into intimacy with God as a loving relationship unfolds and deepens. The levels appear to be sequential, each level following the previous one as awareness and openness to God's invitation become an experiential reality. Since Keating observes that the

³¹ Thomas Keating, "The Five Levels of Consciousness and Centering Prayer," July 19, 2017, YouTube video, 22:08, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p9VjVOnMo34>.

presence of the Trinity has been there all along, however, rather than something to acquire or accomplish, we must allow for some fluidity in how or when we arrive at the Center where one experiences unity with Christ Jesus and the Father (Jn 17:22-24).

Coming into deeper awareness of God-within-us is always dependent upon the movement of the Holy Spirit. As Nicodemus learned (Jn 3:8), the Spirit is not predictable, but comes and goes as God wills. The contemplative journey becomes a non-anxious waiting upon the Lord (Ps 27:14, Ps 130:5).

Keating describes the method of Centering Prayer as establishing a relationship with God in which we receive the gift of ever-deepening prayer. He links it to the last stage of *lectio divina*³²—contemplation. One moves from discursive meditation and active visualization to resting in God. It is a movement beyond thoughts and concepts to being in the presence of God, whether felt or unfelt. Unless you see the method as prayer, the discipline doesn't make much sense, he continues, because it's not a mental discipline.³³

God accepts your loving intent, whether or not you follow the discipline exactly as taught or have the method correctly established. The principle thing, reminds Keating, is just to do it. One begins by simply sitting down and closing one's eyes. When you do

³² *Lectio divina* is Latin for divine reading. It refers to an ancient four-fold approach to praying the Scriptures pointed to in Benedict's *Rule* (6th century) during private daily prayer and later elaborated upon by Guigo II the Carthusian, 9th prior of the Grande Chartreuse monastery in the 12th century. Guigo II lists these four steps as: reading (*lectio*), attentive focus on a portion of scripture; meditation (*meditatio*), to "penetrate, and, gazing into all the obscure corners, get to the heart of it" by the Holy Spirit; prayer (*oratio*), with fervent desire to be pure in heart; and contemplation (*contemplatio*), inflamed by God's presence the heart surrenders to the Lord's presence which is beyond thought or words. These stages are intertwined and may not follow this sequence. It is all up to God's grace through the Holy Spirit. See Guigo II the Carthusian, *The Ladder of Monks*. Translated by Sr. PascaleDominique Nau. (San Sebastian, Spain: Lulu Press, 2012), 13-22.

³³ Thomas Keating, "The Method of Centering Prayer - Part One," September 13, 2017, YouTube video, 30:47, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5FWvxwfN_CE.

this, your body will become still and the Holy Spirit can begin to work in you. The mistakes in method will gradually disappear, Keating promises, and God will take what you offer and use it.³⁴

Guidelines for Centering Prayer

1. Sit relaxed, eyes closed
2. Be in faith and love with God who is at the Center
3. Choose a sacred word—a love word to support your prayer
4. Whenever aware of distraction, use that sacred word gently to return to your intent
5. Take an additional moment or two of silence afterward to return to external awareness

Figure 4: Guidelines for Centering Prayer

There are five guidelines to sitting for twenty to twenty-five minutes twice a day. The first guideline is to simply sit relaxed and quietly with eyes closed. The second guideline is to focus on being in faith and love with God. Third, choose a sacred word that is a symbol of your intent to consent to God's presence and action in loving relationship. You are not entering a static or passive way of being but a dynamic relationship between creature and Creator.

³⁴ Keating, "The Method of Centering Prayer - Part One."

We ask the Holy Spirit for a word of only one or two syllables. It might be one of the sacred Names for God or Jesus: Lord, Jesus, *Abba*, Mother. The word might be a non-English word that has a special meaning to us: *Yeshua* or *Kyrie*. Holy words get into the physical body and eventually say themselves, emerging without conscious effort or as an unspoken reality. Our word means whatever we have invested in that linguistic symbol.

Centering prayer moves us beyond all thoughts, which includes feelings, perceptions, and mental imagery. To experience any of these distractions during meditating is normal, to be expected. We are not to resist them or try to make them go away. In fact, says Keating, we should adopt a light-hearted attitude: “Well, here they go again!” We can even keep a jolly attitude toward distractions.³⁵

Therefore, the fourth guideline is to gently return to the use of our sacred word whenever a thought or feeling draws you away from simple consent. Use the word only as often as necessary to remain calmly in that sacred space. We remember that the word is a symbol of our consent to allow God to do whatever God wills within us. It represents an openness to God’s initiative.

The concluding guideline is to remain still and silent for a couple of minutes after the twenty minutes have ended. This allows the heart and mind to gently return to our external reality as we open our eyes.³⁶

³⁵ Keating, “The Method of Centering Prayer - Part One,”

³⁶ Basil Pennington, *Centered Living: The Way of Centering Prayer* (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1999), 52.

The Cloud, Lectio and Centering Prayer

Modern Centering Prayer originated from two historical sources. The first comes from the last of four stages in *lectio divina*, divine reading. Keating and other Cistercians were experienced in this Benedictine contemplation of scripture for decades before compressing it into one practice. The stages of *lectio* are explained more fully below. Keating also drew from the fourteenth-century teaching of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, which also emphasizes imageless prayer. The *Cloud* teaches us to use one special word to re-focus our attention. Both *lectio* and the *Cloud* are forerunners for Centering Prayer.

At this point, we can see a slight divergence from the way the sacred word emerging from *lectio*'s stage of contemplative stillness is used compared to the instruction found in the *Cloud of Unknowing*, chapter seven. In David Robinson's contemporary paraphrase of a portion of that seventh chapter, we read

If at all possible, suffice to come to me with a naked intent, directly, without any other cause than being with God. If you want to enfold your soul in my presence, then take one little word or phrase to hold onto in your mind and soul. Choose a short word or phrase, such as "love," or the ancient prayer, "Lord, have mercy." Choose a short word or phrase rather than a longer one, for the simpler the word or phrase, the more it will harmonize with the work of my Spirit within you. Choose a little word or prayer phrase that lifts your soul and write this upon your heart, so this word or phrase will never leave you regardless of circumstances.³⁷

In *lectio divina*, as Keating alludes to in his introductory remarks, one has already gone through preliminary steps such as reading reflectively, meditating, and discursive praying.³⁸ During that process of discerning what particular word or short phrase emerges from the Biblical passage or story, we are drawn into a deeply silent way of resting with

³⁷ David Robinson, trans., *Cloud Spirituality, Living More Fully in God's Presence: A 14th Century Spiritual Classic*, (unpublished manuscript, 2017), 24.

³⁸ Thomas Keating, "The Message of Centering Prayer—Part One."

the Lord in the Spirit. The Benedictine monastic tradition shared by the Cistercians allows for *lectio* to be done daily as time apart from the offices (*opus Dei*).

Unlike the same sacred word used repeatedly in Centering Prayer based upon the *Cloud* tradition, the contemplative word in *lectio* changes as the scripture used suggests a word unique for that reading. Another difference from *lectio* is that Centering Prayer approaches apophatic (imageless) silence without ruminating on the Word (*lectio*), meditating (*meditatio*), or reflective praying (*oratio*).

There was initial resistance within Keating's Cistercian community to the use of centering prayer, bypassing the initial steps of *lectio* and focusing exclusively on the apophatic (imageless) aspect of contemplation. This was a valid concern that in the effort to bring a direct, simplified way of contemplative awareness to the masses, Keating abandoned historical cataphatic (praying with the conscious mind including imagery) ways in favor of so-called naval gazing.

Episcopal priest and international retreat leader Cynthia Bourgeault responds to that perceived problem with Centering Prayer when she writes

Exactly the opposite happened. As a new generation of Christian seekers took eagerly to the waters of Centering Prayer, their "deep immersion" experience of *contemplatio* began to stir a greatly renewed interest in both Bible study and participation in Christian community. *Lectio divina* groups started to spring up everywhere and are still the fastest-growing segment of the Contemplative Outreach's program for contemplative awakening.³⁹

Renewed interest in Bible study parallels the RenewalWorks list of catalysts for spiritual growth. Studying the Bible can be a valuable part of faith formation. However, the use of scripture in *lectio* is not a content-focused study. It is not intended to be an

³⁹ Cynthia Bourgeault, *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening* (Lanham, MD: Cowley Publications, 2004), 74. Latin *italics* are the author's.

analytical assessment of a text viewed through the historical-critical lens of post-Enlightenment interpretation. Benedictine *lectio* is a way of praying the Word written; the steps of *lectio* are intended to advance spiritual formation through contemplative insight.

Bourgeault's Non-Duality and Pure Consciousness

Cynthia Bourgeault has contributed to the alternative solution of Centering Prayer, but she travels farther into the realm of Eastern mystical philosophies.

Bourgeault advocates for Jesus as a wisdom teacher⁴⁰ rather than God's unique messiah or redeemer. If Jesus is no longer the unique son of God, one wonders how the portions of the Gospel selected for *lectio* provide an orthodox grounding for meditation and contemplation.⁴¹ Bourgeault is aligned with Richard Rohr as a faculty member at the Center for Action and Contemplation (CAC), which advocates strongly for a non-dualistic worldview. Bourgeault says contemplation is not related to belief but comes from a direct perception from the heart. It is not a breath or mantra way of changing awareness but letting go of attachment to objects as we move the mind down into the

⁴⁰ Cynthia Bourgeault, "Jesus as Wisdom Teacher," The Center for Action and Contemplation, April 9, 2017, <https://cac.org/jesus-wisdom-teacher-2017-04-09/>. Bourgeault claims Jesus was not a priest or prophet, nor would he accept the role of Messiah. His message was not one of repentance but of transformation of consciousness. Jesus came not to save us from the consequences of sin and judgment but to enable us to move into a higher realm of awareness. We are to realize by grace that we are one with God, one another, and the whole of Creation.

⁴¹ The wisdom perspectives and Christology of Bourgeault, like others in the Perennial tradition, see Jesus as just one of several wisdom teachers but not unique Savior or risen, conquering Lord. It stands in stark contrast to an evangelical understanding of Jesus proclaimed during the 18th century revivals of the Great Awakening in colonial America, largely through the preaching of Anglican missionaries George Whitefield (1714-1770) and John Wesley (1701-1791). Today's conservative Episcopalians would consider Bourgeault heterodox, unbiblical and a modern distortion of the historical understanding of Jesus as messiah and Lord. Yet, in the spirit of Anglican comprehensiveness, these two very different views of Jesus can co-exist civilly within the Episcopal Church without necessarily anathematizing each other.

body, physically into the region of the chest or heart. Bourgeault claims this movement coincides with the language of the Eastern Orthodox tradition of *hesychasm* or stillness as the mind descends into the heart.⁴²

Basil Pennington's Contribution to Centering Prayer

Trappist Basil Pennington, one of the three founding fathers of Centering Prayer, entered St. Joseph's Abbey in Spencer at the age of 20. He spent forty-nine years there (1951 to 2000), serving variously as a professor of theology, a professor of spirituality, and vocations director. He died in 2005 from injuries suffered in an auto accident. Previously, he traveled widely as an advocate of Centering Prayer and published several books on spirituality. In *Centered Living: The Way of Centering Prayer*, Pennington reflects on the reason why Christians are drawn to this type of contemplative prayer.

We can never hope to attain fullness and integration outside of Christ, no matter how enlightened a master we choose. Indeed the more enlightened masters always encourage the seeker to be true to his or her own tradition, to bring whatever one finds in the master's teacher back to the fuller living of one's own native path ...

By far most have come to Centering Prayer out of an experienced need ... the basic and most profound needs of the human heart—the need for God, the need for the infinite, for a compassion, for a strength, a challenge big enough to call us forth in all our fullness, a meaning big enough to make it worth carrying the world in our hearts with infinitely tender care—a love that really makes a difference.⁴³

Pennington writes about what it is like to be drawn into pure consciousness. He explains this progression of contemplative awareness leading to unity with God as a joyful, loving experience. He points out that in our old self-consciousness we get mired down into wondering about what we have, what we are doing, and what others think of

⁴² A Q&A with Cynthia Bourgeault, "Christian Nonduality," *Garrison Institute* (blog), February 13, 2017, <https://www.garrisoninstitute.org/blog/cynthia-bourgeault-christian-nonduality/>.

⁴³ Pennington, *Centered Living*, 20-21.

us. The critical shift in our consciousness comes when we experience, if only for a moment, the whole of our mind, body, heart and strength “oned” with God in complete delight and total fulfillment. It is a timeless state which cannot be described because it has no object of which we were conscious.⁴⁴

Conclusions

We can draw several conclusions from the teaching of Centering Prayer. First, the state of timeless, direct experience of God appears to match what is often alluded to by Christian mystics in their struggle to describe the indescribable. Secondly, we note the connection to what Jesus had to say about the first and greatest commandment: to love the Lord your God with your whole heart, mind, soul, and strength (Dt 6:5; Mt 22:37; Lk 10:27). In other words, Pennington seems to be saying that this pure contemplative awareness is the way to perfectly be in loving union with God. Jesus connects this consciousness, this perfected love, immediately to loving others with the same selfless devotion and purity of heart. We are not only to receive the gift of intimacy with God; we are to extend that perfect peace to others.

Third, even if this experience of unity with God through Christ happens only once in life, it is worth all the hours spent in patiently waiting upon the Lord (Ps 27:14) in Centering Prayer. “Worth all the hours of sitting in the darkness, being purified, cleansed and prepared, our desire ever growing,” notes Pennington.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Pennington, *Centered Living*, 96.

⁴⁵ Pennington, *Centered Living*, 97.

A cautionary word of wisdom here would be that apophatic waiting does not guarantee arriving at pure consciousness, nor should it ever be the goal or expectation of the practice. We're not praying to get anything or arrive at some higher level of awareness. Authentic prayer of any type requires deep humility as well as the willingness to totally let God be God in the encounter. From the beginning, we commit to letting go of anything, both what is perceived as holy and desirable as well as what is considered an obstacle to avoid. The ego, or false self, can become attached to either acceptance or rejection as a passion. Focusing exclusively on obtaining an ideal good or expending energy exhaustively resisting evil are both temptations to personal power. Either can become a preoccupation that may distort, or subtly sidetrack us from, the path of being drawn closer to the Trinitarian heart of God by grace.

This puts the garden temptation in Genesis 3 into a different light. Knowledge is desirable, even godly, when gifted through the Spirit. Knowing who we truly are in God's creation is part of being made in "our image" (Gn 1:27). In a culture which cherishes individualism and pride in human achievement, it is especially tempting to think there are no limits to what we can accomplish or ought to be doing, that we can handle an absolute knowledge of good and evil.

As Jesus demonstrates in the way of the cross, it is not power-over but radical emptying of oneself (*kenosis*)—that uniquely Divine-human Self—through sacrificial self-offering which overcomes both eternal death and hell. The temptation for the contemplative path is to assume that handling the paradox of duality (good versus evil)

and non-duality (“not one, not two”)⁴⁶ can be attained through deeper awakening. Yet, this Buddhist concept is part of the formative understanding of Centering Prayer which caused concern among many Cistercians under Keating’s abbatial leadership at the Spencer Abbey.

Centering Prayer remains a vital part of spiritual formation for many Christians who find its practice a sanctifying grace for discovering the hidden (unconscious) aspects of the false self and moving into the true Self on the way to union with God. It is a lifelong commitment to daily sitting in consent to God’s presence and activity within. Many attest to healthy psychospiritual and behavioral changes which mirror the journey into Christlikeness. The fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23) become evident to others who have come to know the Centering Prayer-er. Keating and other CP leaders would insist, however, that this is not the only or even best way to find God at the center. Rather, we each need to respond to whatever the Holy Spirit impresses upon us as our own authentic way of being and growing into an unceasing prayer relationship with God.

Becoming Part of the Episcopal Branch of the Jesus Movement

A second alternative to meet the challenges for a biblically based renewal in spirituality for the Episcopal Church is to embrace what Michael Curry calls joining the Episcopal branch of the historical Jesus Movement. Curry has promoted this vision from

⁴⁶ Shenigenori Nagatomo, “Japanese Zen Buddhist Philosophy,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2017 edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/Spr2017/entries/japanese-zen/>. “The everyday life-world for most people is an evanescent transforming stage in which living is consumed, philosophically speaking, by an either-or, ego-logical, dualistic paradigm of thinking with its attendant psychological states such as stress and anxiety ... Free, bilateral movement between ‘not one’ and ‘not two’ characterizes Zen’s achievement of a personhood with a *third* perspective that cannot, however, be confined to either dualism or non-dualism (i.e., neither ‘not one’ nor ‘not two’).”

the very beginning of his leadership as Presiding Bishop during his installation sermon in November 2015: “My brothers and sisters, God has not given up on the world, and God is not finished with The Episcopal Church yet. We are the Jesus Movement. So don’t worry, be happy!”⁴⁷

In a 2017 workshop for the Cursillo movement in the diocese of Oklahoma, Bill Carroll⁴⁸ identified eight aspects of what he judges the Jesus Movement means for today’s Episcopal church.

The Jesus Movement in Eight Points

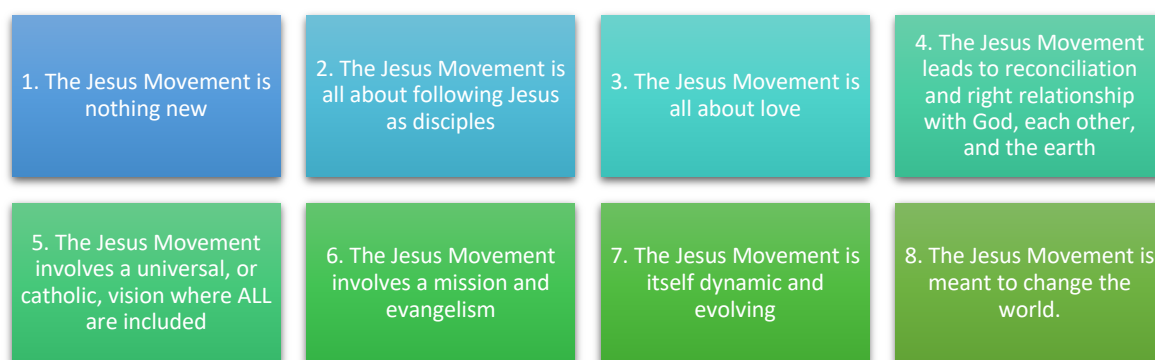


Figure 5: The Jesus Movement in Eight Points

According to Carroll, the idea of the Jesus Movement is not a new, twenty-first century concept nor does it take us back to a part of the hippie movement of the 1960s. It is, rather, a historic way early baptized Christians saw themselves as they began to live out the way of Jesus. Jesus came to show us the way of love as his disciples. Scripture

⁴⁷ Michael Curry, “Sermon at Installation of the 27th Presiding Bishop,” The Episcopal Church, November 1, 2015, <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/posts/michaelcurry/sermon-installation-27th-presiding-bishop/>.

⁴⁸ The Rev. Canon Dr. Bill Carroll is Canon for Clergy Transition and Congregational Life for the Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma. Carroll (PhD, University of Chicago) has also been a faculty member of an Episcopal seminary, the School of Theology of the University of the South in Sewanee, TN.

records that Jesus simply called the early disciples, saying “Follow me,” and people felt compelled to leave what they were doing to follow the rabbi from Nazareth.

To follow in the way of Jesus means to know God will never let us go, and that only love can set us free. We are to be reconcilers across racial, gender, and other barriers that divide us in the human family of God. The Jesus Movement continues a catholic (universal) vision of inclusion; there are no exceptions. Everyone is embraced and welcomed. Grounded in the love of God, we share the good news that we’ve learned from Jesus and by listening to others share their own stories. This movement is not about belonging to an institution seeing God’s dream happen. Bill Carroll says this is a way for our own particular time as we expect everything except the kingdom of God to change. If you want to change the world, follow Jesus!⁴⁹

The Influence of Verna Josephine Dozier

To understand more fully the liberal social Gospel emphasis of Bishop Curry, especially in regard to racism and inequality, we need to take a look at the life of Verna Dozier. Dozier’s impact as a dynamic and prophetic educator and change-agent has been integral to the vision of the Jesus Movement. “She is credited by many in the Episcopal Church with actually changing the field of scripture study and reclaiming attention to the ministry of all the baptized.”⁵⁰ Dozier grew up fighting both racial and gender stereotypes and prejudice against her becoming an educated, articulate advocate for biblical literacy

⁴⁹ Bill Carroll, “The Jesus Movement in Eight Points,” Episcopal Cafe, June 1, 2018, <https://www.episcopalcafe.com/eight-theses-on-the-jesus-movement/>.

⁵⁰ Frederica Harris Thompsett, “Verna Josephine Dozier - a Biography,” Biola University, accessed November 10, 2018, <https://www.biola.edu/talbot/ce20/database/verna-josephine-dozier>.

and scholarship. Dozier's early religious training was formed in a fundamentalist Baptist tradition as her mother read both the Bible and the works of William Shakespeare to Verna and her sister.

Dozier attended Howard University on scholarship, earning both a bachelor's and a master's of art degree in English Literature. While at university, Dozier's theological outlook was influenced by daily reading from liberal Baptist Harry Emerson Fosdick, author of *The Manhood of the Master*. In this book, Fosdick challenges fundamentalist Bible interpretation while emphasizing the humanity of Jesus. Dozier also expanded her horizons by listening in chapel to the sermons of Dean Howard Thurman. Dozier continued to be an intense student of biblical scholarship while teaching in public schools for thirty-four years.

Dozier had been asked to help teach scripture at the Episcopal diocese of Washington's School of Christian Living in nearby Chevy Chase. She was the only black laywoman on staff. It was here she met Bill Baxter, a local social activist working with a justice-based parish. In 1955, he invited her to join St. Mark's Episcopal Church on Capitol Hill where he served. Dozier said she was drawn to both Baxter's preaching and the church's beautiful liturgical language. Dozier remained a member for the rest of her life. She became beloved as a prophet in the biblical tradition and advocate for racial, economic, and social justice in contemporary American society.⁵¹

Thompsett records Dozier's influence on the current Presiding Bishop's approach to introducing a liberal form of evangelism to the Episcopal Church

⁵¹ Thompsett, "Verna Josephine Dozier - a Biography."

In 2004, Michael Curry, [then] Bishop of North Carolina, valued Dozier's theological and prophetic insights so much that he ordered hundreds of copies of Dozier's book, *The Dream of God* (1991), to use as the basic study guide for diocesan convention about mission. Curry called Dozier "his Moses." As a result, the vision statement of that diocese speaks of "a community of disciples following Jesus Christ into God's dream for us and all creation."⁵²

The Way of Love: Practices for a Jesus-Centered Life



Figure 6: The Way of Love—Practices for a Jesus-Centered Life

In conjunction with the General Convention in the summer of 2018, the Episcopal Church has produced several practical tools for small groups to implement the education and spiritual formation process for *The Way of Love*. The design provides for a structured approach to sharing a rule of life, where eight to fourteen people gather as often as weekly or as little as monthly to safely share personal information, insights, and

⁵² Thompsett, "Verna Josephine Dozier - a Biography."

meaningful dialogue by listening to and praying for one another. A group facilitator functions as a gentle encourager of honest self-disclosure, moving the conversation “from the mind to the heart,” refocusing topics, and acting as time-keeper for the group.

The group sets clear expectations at the outset, including boundaries and logistics such as silencing cell phones. The norms can be adjusted by mutual consent as the group experiences this special time together. Making the time for unhurried worship together is the single most important aspect each time the group gathers. Worship should be joyful and a celebration of the Spirit. Suggestions for this worship include praying Compline from the American BCP or the brief office found in the New Zealand Prayer Book; singing the simple chants of Taizé; practicing *lectio* using a brief passage of scripture; observing a period of silence in the presence of God and one another; or any other way of worship the participants agree upon. Mindful of Dozier’s teaching, the group experience is to be strictly lay-led, without asking clergy to assume leadership.⁵³

Critique of the Alternative Solutions

If we take the two previous alternatives for meeting the spiritual needs of Episcopalians together, we see a pattern that parallels what is professed in the Summary of the Law in the Rite One Eucharist, and the Penitential Order: Rite Two of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer. In both places, the scripture quoted by Jesus from Mark 12 becomes a confessional part of the liturgy:

Jesus said, “The first commandment is this: Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is the only Lord. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul,

⁵³ Becky Zartman, “Small Group Facilitation Guide & Curriculum,” ed. Jennifer Gamber, The Episcopal Church, 2018, <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wayoflove>.

with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.”⁵⁴

From the very beginning of the *proanaphora* (Ante-Communion, or part of the worship experience which comes before the Great Thanksgiving, celebration of Holy Communion), we find this reminder to love both God fully and our neighbor. Our neighbor, as Jesus reminds us in the parable of the Good Samaritan, is anyone in our path who needs loving attention. Jesus quotes the Hebrew *She'ma* (“hear” or “listen”) from Deuteronomy 6:4-5. In the Torah the second commandment to love one’s neighbor is part of the holiness code in Leviticus (Lev 19:18). It is significant that Jesus links these two together—loving God with our whole being and compassionately loving others—as the expected fulfillment of God’s will and the understanding of the whole First Covenant.

Centering Prayer is all about giving consent for God to do what God wills in a receptive, loving space of imageless silence. In this respect, it can become a catalyst for deepening one’s spiritual growth through contemplative experience of God who dwells within. But a word of caution should be inserted here. We must be clear about the context in which this type of prayer is used. That context for Christians is always Trinitarian formation, often described as prayer to the Father, through the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Apophatic prayer (imageless) must always be balanced with cataphatic (prayer with words and imagery). Basil Pennington sums up this context:

Centering prayer flows out of faith, and that faith needs to be fed by hearing the Lord, hearing him in his gospels. The conceptual and affective levels of our prayer life need to be fed so that they grow into the experiential. This creates a

⁵⁴ 1979 BCP, 324 and 351.

context in which we can articulate our experience and enable it to flow effectively into our lives.⁵⁵

We must avoid the temptation to idealize any form of prayer, especially one that promises to bring us into a mystical experience of God. To help us avoid any unintended idolatry, let us profess Jesus as the unique Divine-human who remains the way to the Father.

Bishop Curry's engagement of social gospel and justice directed to the poor, marginalized, and oppressed is anticipated in the *Way of Love* document. This community rule of prayerful sharing of our story in the context of the scriptural Story discloses who Jesus is for us, and what he does today through us. The whole eight-fold path of personal and interpersonal growth repeated by individuals in community aligns very well with what Christine Pohl describes as the practice of Christian hospitality:

Communities in which hospitality is a vibrant practice tap into deep human longings to belong, find a place to share one's gifts, and be valued ... Hospitality is at the heart of Christian life, drawing from God's grace and reflecting God's graciousness. In hospitality, we respond to the welcome that God has offered and replicate that welcome in the world.⁵⁶

Both alternative proposals, taken together, may encourage disenchanted Episcopalians to remain in the church by involving them in a deeper prayer journey as well as providing a refreshing way to make God's love concrete in their own experience of mission. This may also become inviting to those outside the church who see this approach as a way of authentic spiritual growth leading to outwardly living the Jesus way of love-in-action.

⁵⁵ Pennington, *Centered Living*, 180.

⁵⁶ Christine D. Pohl, *Living into Community: Cultivating Practices That Sustain Us* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 159.

However, both alternatives fall short of any expectation of surrendering to God through Christ Jesus as a personal experience. Conversion is more than recognizing a need to repent and turning around. It is to risk ongoing re-formation of the whole person into Christlikeness as God wills. Both alternative solutions do change how we see God at work in and among us, but it is not enough to imitate the compassionate works of Jesus without worshiping him as Lord and God. This continues to be a problem of losing comprehensiveness. The resolution may lie in the purposeful integration of both surrendering to Jesus as Lord and following him faithfully by asking the Holy Spirit to manifest spiritual fruit⁵⁷ in our lives for the sake of others.

I affirm the complementary ways of *cataphatic* (mental prayer including thoughts, feelings or images) and *apophatic* (imageless prayer) as ways the Holy Spirit can draw us more deeply into the kingdom and presence of God. I also affirm that faith (not just doctrinal assent but the active work of the Holy Spirit through us) is made visible through compassionate response to human injustice and inequality with hope (works).

In the thesis which follows, I will explore practical disciplines adapted from historic Christian spiritual traditions. They promise to heal the divide between Evangelical passion for personal conversion to Jesus and a liberal Protestant passion for making the love of Jesus for others a visible reality. It requires a deep humility before the Lord to keep God at the center of life while discerning both his will for ourselves and others beyond our good intentions. We are called to be both lovers of God through Christ

⁵⁷ "But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, great-heartedness, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control ... if we live by the spirit, let's line up with the spirit." Gal 5:22-23, 25)

and image-bearers reflecting God to all of creation, offering hope and healing for all God's children.

SECTION 3:

THESIS

A Vision for Renewing Congregations and Adults in the Episcopal Church

An operational goal for renewing congregations and individuals in spiritual formation begins with a commitment to a lifelong, personal, and holistic⁵⁸ journey as lovers of Jesus. After we become adopted children of God by grace (Gal 3:26-27, Jn 1:12-13), we begin to be transformed into Christlikeness. This transformation is simply the work of the Holy Spirit to perfect the image of Christ within us over a lifetime. It requires us to be open to change as we go forward for the rest of our life. Discipleship which leads to spiritual formation means following Christ through life as we engage in relationships. It can get messy, uncomfortable, and challenging. To follow Jesus as Lord involves our whole being, body, mind and spirit. We are being re-formed to “smell like Jesus,”⁵⁹ which means others are attracted to the truth and presence of Christ they sense resides with us.

⁵⁸ Holistic points to encompassing the whole person: mind, body, and the soul or spirit. At the same time, we would want to avoid the Gnostic heresy of seeing the body as evil, and only the trapped spirit as holy or good. Holistic captures the dignity and original blessing of Genesis 1 and 2. Paul’s condemnation of the flesh (*sarx*) is about corruption of desires and idolatries we experience while in this pre-resurrection body.

⁵⁹ 2 Cor. 2:15: “... through us reveals the sweet smell of knowing him. We are the Messiah’s fragrance before God, you see, to those who are being saved and to those who are being lost.”

A critical aspect of being formed into Christlikeness occurs when, empowered by the Holy Spirit, we risk intrapersonal growth and self-awareness as apprentices⁶⁰ of Jesus. This often takes place best when we develop emotional transparency and trust with others within small groups over time. The resulting honesty and authenticity allow us to become change-agents for the sake of others even as we discover our own strengths and weaknesses. We often need companionship with others willing to walk beside us on this journey into the kingdom of God here and now.

Gradual spiritual formation into Christlikeness does not take place in a silo but within a community receptive to the Holy Spirit moving among friends of Jesus (Jn 15:12-15). Jesus calls us to recognize others as they are, listen attentively to them, graciously respect their uniqueness, and seek to serve them as we discern their needs. This requires an unhurried patience and non-judgmental demeanor focused on the other person.

Finally, the tools which help us become open to being changed by grace are the traditional and historic disciplines used by Christians over the centuries to simply be present to God. All of these can be used by the Holy Spirit to perfect our love for God and others.⁶¹

⁶⁰ A term often used by Dallas Willard to designate those who are being disciplined and trained by Jesus to be with him. See Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1997), 276.

⁶¹ A practical review of historic Christian disciplines used in spiritual formation can be found in Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, 25th anniv. ed. (New York: Harper Collins, 1998).

Reclaiming an Evangelical Vision for Renewal

While spiritual disciplines may open the door for experiencing a deeper sense of growing closer to God, they only provide habitual means of grace which help train the whole person to expect what the heart is longing for. When we hear that phrase “what the heart is longing for,” we might immediately think it is about us finding true love.

The truth is that a loving God has been seeking us, to be in relationship with us, long before we were aware of our need for this restorative relationship. “But this is how God demonstrates his own love for us: the Messiah died for us while we were still sinners” (Rom 5:8). The surprising depths of love from God who personally enters God’s creation to rescue broken image-bearers for abundant life starting now is captured by John the evangelist when he writes,

So, just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, in the same way the son of man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may share in the life of the new age. This, you see, is how much God loved the world: enough to give his only son, his special son, so that everyone who believes in him should not be lost but should share in the life of the new age. After all, God didn’t send his son into the world to condemn the world, but so that the world could be saved by him (Jn 3: 14-17).

The Impact of an Evangelical Anglican Catechism

The Evangelical emphasis on personally appropriating the promise of John 3:16 has been part of the Anglican ethos since the Great Awakenings in America. Due to the preaching during these eighteenth-century revivals, many colonial Episcopalians began to heed the call for adult conversion.⁶² As we consider ways to renew the Jesus Movement

⁶² Prichard, *The History of the Episcopal Church*, 87.

in the Episcopal Church, we want to re-visit this Evangelical perspective whose voice has softened in recent decades. That voice continues to be articulated in the new catechism of the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA)⁶³. Historically, catechetical resources provide an outline or overview of what a church body's core teaching is: its dogmatic confession of faith and practice. Denominational catechisms are, to some degree, reflections of the cultures in which they are composed so they are not the final word on every doctrine or practice.

The 1979 Prayer Book offers a summary of Christian teaching in the section called "An Outline of the Faith, commonly called the Catechism." A subsequent section, "Historical Documents of the Church," records in small print the preface to the 1549 First Book of Common Prayer, Articles of Religion, the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral statement for ecumenical unity, and its supplement in 1888.⁶⁴

For Episcopalians, this catechetical body of teaching offers a springboard for further dialogue between sometimes diametrically opposed points of view. The purpose is not to prove or disprove a particular truth or practice. Rather, the catechetical structure provides a systematic, succinct presentation to be considered in an open-minded environment.

In vivid contrast to the Episcopal catechism, ACNA's *To Be a Christian, An Anglican Catechism* begins with an unapologetic invitation to know Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior. This catechetical imperative states in its very first section:

⁶³ Anglican Church in North America, *To Be a Christian: An Anglican Catechism* (Newport Beach, CA: Anglican House Publishers, 2014).

⁶⁴ 1979 BCP, 845-878.

In order not to miss what God is offering you, it is imperative that you receive Jesus Christ as your own Savior and Lord—if you have not already done so—and commit yourself to him to be his lifelong disciple ... to be a Christian is a lifelong commitment but it begins with becoming a Christian in a conscious way, just as being a spouse begins with taking marriage vows. Being a Christian is a process of advance from that point. As you continue with Christ, with his Father as your Father, his Holy Spirit as your helper and guide, and his Church as your new family, you will constantly be led deeper into your born-again calling of worship, service, and Christ-like relationships.⁶⁵

In the 1979 *BCP*, the answer to the question “What response did Christ require?” is “Christ commanded us to believe in him and to keep his commandments.”⁶⁶ The ACNA statement is a recapitulation of the Evangelical emphasis. The 1979 *BCP* statement points to a more generic expectation open to a variety of interpretations. By keeping these two perspectives in creative tension, we help restore the loss of an Evangelical voice within the Episcopal Church.

How do the Orthodox and Evangelical worldviews contribute to renewing and energizing the Jesus Movement?

The uniqueness of Jesus in the plan of salvation is clearly presented in *To Be a Christian*. The catechumen is reminded God saves us by undeserved love (grace), and that Jesus alone is the way. In his victorious death on the cross, Christ has effectively conquered sin and death, and the satan.⁶⁷ Our response is to repent of our sin and put our

⁶⁵ Anglican Church in North America, *To Be a Christian: An Anglican Catechism*, 17-18.

⁶⁶ 1979 *BCP*, 851.

⁶⁷ This is the Classical understanding of Christ’s death presented by Swedish theologian Gustav Aulén in *Christus Victor* (1930). He views the cross as the cosmic battle between Christ and sin, death, and the satan. Aulén proposes this was the Christian view of atonement for the first thousand years. He sets aside the Objective view of Christ reconciling with the Father (Anselm) and the Moral view of Christ that inspires and transforms us (Abelard). Evangelical theologian John R. Stott criticizes Aulén for going a bit too far in his rejection of Anselm, who claimed man cannot make satisfaction for sin; true, says Stott, man ought to but God is both satisfier and satisfied. Likewise the NT includes both the satisfaction and victory views. A real benefit of Aulén’s position is that it clarifies the continuing influence of the satan and

faith and trust in Christ. It means we have a change of heart turning from self-serving sin to serving God as we follow Jesus Christ. This is a critical step on the way into a lifelong journey of spiritual formation.

The Evangelical Option

“Getting saved,” to use the more Fundamentalist expression, is more involved than it sounds. There are plenty of well-known crisis-moment conversions as one surrenders to Jesus as Lord. Perhaps the most well-known is Saul’s experience on the road to Damascus. There he is confronted by a vision of the Lord in glory and struck down blind, though he later has his sight restored. That indeed was a life-changing moment for Paul, and the whole church to whom he became an apostle-evangelist (Acts 9:1-22).

In exercising what might be called the Evangelical Option, the expectation that one gives their life to Christ through a personal conversion experience may be more than a dramatic one-time conversion event. This would be the experience of many Anglicans, Roman Catholics, and others.⁶⁸ At the same time, the problem with all catechesis is that we are at risk for accepting intellectual assent as an equivalent for conversion of the will and heart. In the New Testament, the demons were some of the first to recognize Jesus as the son of God, whom they grew to fear and hate (Mk 5:6-10, Mt 8:28-29). The Evangelical Option asks for surrender of the whole person, not just the mind’s assent to

spiritual warfare, despite the ultimate defeat of death, the satan and evil. The devil is viewed only as myth by most contemporary Episcopal theologians. See John R. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 223-246.

⁶⁸ See the articles marked Conversion in both <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/library/glossary/conversion> and <http://www.gospelliving.org/conversion.html>.

doctrinal belief.⁶⁹ In line with Anglican teaching, Dallas Willard says the disciplines of meditation, study, solitude, and other spiritual disciplines leading to righteous behavior are reliable for a sustained conversion experience.⁷⁰ Having first come into a personal relationship with Jesus, most Evangelicals would see this ongoing conversion as synonymous with sanctification or growth into Christlikeness, for the sake of others.

To Be a Christian was composed by a community of conservative Anglicans,⁷¹ most of whom were Evangelicals or charismatics fed up with what they considered to be the growing liberal and unbiblical theology emerging from the Episcopal Church. The ACNA leaders considered themselves as continuing the Anglican tradition in contrast to apostate Episcopalians. This story has been repeated in several mainline churches over the last few decades—Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians—as perceived irreconcilable differences led to institutional dissolution of *koinonia* (Christian fellowship).

Specific to our spiritual formation focus on meditation and contemplation, the 1979 *BCP* catechism does not mention either prayer type by name but does say “adoration is the lifting up of the heart and mind to God, asking nothing but to enjoy God's presence.”⁷²

In the ACNA catechism, both meditation and contemplation are addressed, as well as the attitude toward prayer:

⁶⁹ Gary Black Jr, *The Theology of Dallas Willard: Discovering Protoevangelical Faith* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 70-73.

⁷⁰ Gary Black Jr, *The Theology of Dallas Willard*, 74-75.

⁷¹ This group of former Episcopal clergy and laity, along with some clergy and lay members of the Anglican Church of Canada, formed the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) in 2009.

⁷² 1979 *BCP*, 857.

In meditation I prayerfully read and reflect upon Holy Scripture according to its intended meaning, with openness to personal spiritual direction from God ... In contemplation I lift my heart in love to God without any deliberate flow of thoughts or words ... I should pray with humility, love, and a ready openness to God's will, in my heart hearing God say, "be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10-11; 2 Chronicles 7:14-15; Philippians 4:6).⁷³

In this series of catechetical answers, we hear allusions to *lectio*, including the last stage, *contemplation*, that loving stillness of waiting upon the Lord.

The restoration of an Evangelical voice in the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement would invite many to "worship Jesus as well as follow him."⁷⁴ This should not be seen as a threat but an opportunity for the community to grow in its awareness of how God is individually present for us.

From an Evangelical point of view, the uniqueness of this calling into a saving relationship with Jesus through his sacrificial death is pictured in the tenth chapter of John's gospel

"I am the good shepherd," Jesus continued. "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep ... I am the good shepherd. I know my own sheep and my own know me—just as the father knows me and I know the father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep, too, which don't belong to this sheepfold. I must bring them, too, and they will hear my voice. Then there will be one flock and one shepherd. That's why the father loves me, because I lay down my life so that I can take it up again. Nobody takes it from me; I lay it down of my own accord."⁷⁵

Jesus purposefully chooses the way of the cross. He knows those who will respond to his invitation, those who hear his voice. There are others besides the first-century Jewish hearers and a few believing Gentiles, others who will be brought in

⁷³ To Be a Christian, 97.

⁷⁴ Kathy Staudt, "Claiming Our Way of Being Christian."

⁷⁵ Jn 10:11, 14-18a.

because they, too, hear the voice of Jesus calling them into a discipling relationship. As the one both equal and obedient to the Father, Jesus' self-emptying love effects the victory over sin and death and enables the life of the new age.

Most aspects of this soteriology are rejected by current Episcopal spiritual leaders as being inconsistent with post-Enlightenment biblical scholarship, the use of religious metaphor, and rejection of doctrines of atonement. It is therefore difficult to re-establish the validity of an Evangelical or orthodox option for faith formation and personal conversion in a community which largely dismisses it as irrelevant or an obstacle to progressive self-understanding in a pluralistic culture.

We have been using the term Evangelical applied in an Anglican context. This is similar to but not identical to the quadrilateral proposed by David Bebbington in 1989 to define evangelicalism.⁷⁶ His four-point paradigm is conversionism, activism, biblicism and crucicentrism. In other words, most Evangelicals insist upon on a personal conversion to Christ, active proselytizing of non-Christians to accept Jesus as Savior, scripture as the highest authority for belief, and the cross as central to salvation with a belief in penal substitution. The latter contrasts with Aulén's Classic view of atonement discussed.⁷⁷ Brian Harris⁷⁸ offers a critique of Bebbington's quadrilateral by asserting there are several evangelicalisms (plural), some more suited to a postmodern era. Harris quotes Brian McLaren as saying while he believes in personal conversion, it too often

⁷⁶ See David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1989).

⁷⁷ Gustav Aulén, *Christus Victor*. See footnote 67.

⁷⁸ Brian Harris, "Beyond Bebbington: The Quest for Evangelical Identity in a Postmodern Era," http://archive.churchsociety.org/churchman/documents/Cman_122_Harris.pdf.

becomes a consumer product, marketed as all about me. We should, Harris claims, be saved for the world with a more gentle, inclusive view of reaching others in Jesus' name.⁷⁹ The Evangelical Option will remain a minority voice within the Episcopal Church, but one with a mission for seeing Jesus exalted in prayer, praise, and "passionate piety."⁸⁰ Evangelicalism is changing and adapting to modern theological and ethical issues. This change is helping to reshape its acceptance by moderate Christians, including Episcopalians who are looking for more emphasis on scripture and a return to historic, Christ-centered spirituality.⁸¹

Practical Disciplines for Spiritual Formation

We now move into the practical application of historical disciplines derived from four traditions of spirituality that have impacted Anglican spiritual formation over the centuries. They are Benedictine, Practicing the Presence (*Cloud of Unknowing* and *Practicing the Presence of God*), Eastern Orthodox, and Celtic ways of experiencing a closer walk with God in daily experience. Each tradition offers disciplines that open seekers to become more Christlike as they are drawn "further up and further in."⁸²

⁷⁹ Harris, "Beyond Bebbington," 205.

⁸⁰ Harris, "Beyond Bebbington," 211.

⁸¹ Gerald R. McDermott, "The Emerging Divide in Evangelical Theology," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 56, no. 2 (2013): 355-377.

⁸² C.S. Lewis, "The Last Battle," *The Chronicles of Narnia* (New York: Harper Collins, 2010), 96, ePub Edition. "'Further up and further in!' roared the Unicorn and no one held back. They charged straight at the foot of the hill ..." Thus begins the climax of the *Chronicles* as the children and talking animals are about to enter the fullness of Narnia, which is more real than the old Narnia. It becomes an invitation for adults to persist in their spiritual journeys into the kingdom of God, going more deeply, being drawn further up, until they reach Aslan's presence in this universe: Christ the King who reigns over all.

As we review the use, meaning, and purpose of the practices from these traditions, we recognize that each has its own history and development within the changing cultures in which they have been lived out. While appreciative of this historical context, the focus of this review is on the practices themselves. What follows is not an exhaustive compilation of what each tradition offers. Since all are centuries old and have been practiced by millions of saints (ordinary Christians) in a variety of ethnic and ecclesial contexts, they are presented as possible means of grace—what Anglican tradition considers sacramental openings for the Holy Spirit—in addition to the two dominical Sacraments of the Lord’s Supper (Eucharist) and Baptism. Their purpose is not to ascend some ladder of moral or theological perfection or exalted holiness; that would be antithetical to the spirit of humility. Rather, they may be seen as wildflowers in a mountain meadow inviting backpackers on the trail to stop for a moment, observe and feel the wind,⁸³ and be caught up in the vision that God is “making all things new.”⁸⁴

Disciplines from the Way of St. Benedict

For many, Benedict of Nursia (480-547) is known as the father of Western monasticism. By the time of the English Reformation in the sixteenth century, a Benedictine spirituality and lifestyle were already deeply embedded in the minds and hearts of Christians in the British Isles as well as most of continental Europe. As a

⁸³ Feeling the invisible wind is an allusion to *pneuma*, Spirit, which comes and goes as it wills, as Jesus told Nicodemus (Jn 3:6-8). We are also reminded of the Spirit (Hebrew *ruach*) at the very beginning of Creation (Gn 1:1-2), which has never stopped blowing as God continues to speak creation into being.

⁸⁴ A centerpiece of the now-but-not-yet vision of Revelation, chapter 21, that God is re-creating heaven and earth, to be joined together completely at last. “The new world will be like the present one, but without all those features, particularly, death, tears, and everything that causes them, which make the present world what it is.” N.T. Wright, *Revelation for Everyone* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 189-190.

complement to the eremitic spirituality of St. Anthony of the Desert,⁸⁵ Benedict established a Rule for the cenobitic⁸⁶ way of monastic living in community. Although its influence has declined with the rise of secular, pluralistic society, the way of Benedict has continued to be a spiritual headwater for many seeking a deeper journey into Christ. As Patrick Barry, OSB, notes in the introduction of *The Benedictine Handbook*:

The Rule was written by St. Benedict for his monks to guide them in their search for God through their life of dedication ... The real heart of the Rule, however, and the power which has kept it alive and relevant to Christian life today is not the regulations and practical directions for community living, valuable though they are. The heart of the Rule is in the chapters of spiritual guidance which are so full of the timeless wisdom of scripture.⁸⁷

There are no real vows in the Rule of Benedict (RB). There are three principles which ground Benedictines in daily holiness. These principles are obedience, *conversatio morum* (loosely translated as following the monastic life, or expecting constant changes), and stability.

Obedience is not a command to be blindly subservient to those in positional authority. It is, rather, a humble and loving submission to the spiritual leadership of one who stands in the place of Christ. In a monastery, this is usually the abbot. It is part of

⁸⁵ See Robert C. Gregg, trans., *Athanasius: the Life of Anthony and the Letter of Marcellinus*, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1980). Eremitic refers to the solitary or hermit lifestyle of early Desert fathers and mothers. They were still under episcopal authority and in community with others in the Holy Mysteries (Orthodox Eucharist), but spent most of their lives in solitary seclusion in remote places, open to occasional supplicants for wisdom or healing.

⁸⁶ Life lived in a self-supporting religious community together, following a common way of silence, constant prayer, and immersion in scripture, and a way of sanctifying both relationships with others and God, as well as seeing the sacred in the ordinary, daily aspects of life.

⁸⁷ Patrick Barry, OSB, "A Short Introduction," *The Benedictine Handbook* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2003), 4-5.

what is found in RB 7⁸⁸ on humility: submission in obedient love to a superior, and, when the task becomes odious, to remain patient (steps three and four of twelve steps of humility).⁸⁹ As one grows in humility, this voluntary submission to another expands to include everyone God places in our path with a spirit of hospitable welcome (RB 53).

Esther deWaal echoes this expanded practice of humility when she writes

Subjecting myself to another “in all obedience for the love of God” (7.34) means giving up my power, my arrogance, and instead submitting myself to seek the will of God through others. If I want to grow, openness and interaction with others is imperative since then I can grow with the help of someone else’s gifts. I admit my limitations and my weaknesses, and I let someone else hold me up so that I can go on.⁹⁰

Jesus’ own example of loving submission on the cross for our sake becomes the safeguard and guarantor of God’s gracious will unfolding through the gift of another whose heart is centered in the Lord.⁹¹

David Robinson has drawn the parallel between climbing the twelve rungs of Benedict's ladder of humility with the experience the Twelve-Step program created in Alcoholics Anonymous. The root of trouble in the spiritual life, reminds Robinson, is self-centeredness or pride. This is the original sin of the devil. The road back to recovery for the whole person is to enter into God-centeredness via humility.⁹² Humility lays a critical foundation for spiritual formation into Christlikeness shared by all Christian

⁸⁸ This is the common academic way of citing chapters and subsections from the Rule of Benedict.

⁸⁹ Terence C. Kardong, *Benedict's Rule: A Translation and Commentary* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 133.

⁹⁰ Esther deWaal, *Seeking God: The Way of St. Benedict* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2001), 47.

⁹¹ Kardong, *Benedict's Rule*, 132.

⁹² David Robinson, *Ancient Paths: Discover Christian Formation the Benedictine Way* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2010), 28-29.

spiritualities, such as those found in Anglican, Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox traditions.

Benedict reminds us that if we risk descending in pride, we ascend in humility. We begin by fleeing forgetfulness and keeping the fear of the Lord always before our eyes. Kardong explains the “fear (*timeant*) of the Lord” is actually a loving fear that we may sadden or hurt the beloved.⁹³ So, it is out of loving respect for God that we choose to be humble. The next step in humility is not to insist upon our own way but to do the will of God faithfully. The third step is willing obedience to someone in authority over us for the love of God. As discussed above, for non-monastics, this can be obedience to any person in authority over us for the sake of Christ who loves us both.⁹⁴

This path of self-denial includes giving up material goods and things that seem to possess us. It is often difficult to let go of ambition, needs for self-esteem, and assertiveness to feel just a little set apart from everyone else.⁹⁵ As we continue in the way of honest self-knowing, often with the help of a listening friend, and risk transparent self-disclosure, we find ourselves less willing to judge or condemn others. We learn to be content with who we are, which, in turn, leads to a quiet joyfulness.

The daily rhythm of praying the Psalms and canticles, listening to the Word and responding with praise and petition is the work of God (*opus Dei*). Nothing, says Benedict, is to be preferred or substituted for this ongoing mindfulness of dialogue between the community and the Lord (RB 43.3). This was put in the context of not being

⁹³ Kardong, *Benedict's Rule*, 595. (RB 72, Notes 9.)

⁹⁴ Kardong, *Benedict's Rule*, 133.

⁹⁵ deWaal, *Seeking God*, 47.

late for worship, but the principle of almost round-the-clock prayer sets the tone for “prefer nothing to the love of Christ” (RB 4.21) and qualified by Cyprian “... because he preferred nothing to us.”⁹⁶ We always remember we can love only because Christ first demonstrates his love for us by giving himself for the life of the world (1 Jn 4:19).

The original Rule provided for seven Offices spread out throughout the day and night. Chittister reminds us that the monastic day in the sixth century meant going to bed around sundown (about 6PM) and getting up eight hours later after a full night’s sleep (2AM)⁹⁷. Life in a world of electric lights and accurate timepieces makes that scenario implausible for most. In most Anglican communities today, following the pattern in the Book of Common Prayer, there are two main Offices, Morning and Evening Prayer (also known as Matins and Evensong, when chanted). There are two minor Offices, one at noonday, and Compline, usually in the late evening before bedtime. Any number may be observed by individuals or a community. The pattern is the same: a day hemmed in mindful recitation of portions from the Psalter, canticles (Scripture-songs), listening deeply to the Word, prayers, and praise. Periods of silence may precede and follow each Office. These patterns will be found in all Anglican or Episcopal rubrics for the offices in the various national books of daily or Common Prayer.

It is important to remember that the celebration of Eucharist, emphasizing the Lord’s spiritual and real presence under bread and wine, is central to at least weekly worship, if not daily celebration. Daily Mass is always celebrated in Roman Catholic and most Anglican monastic communities. This direct sacramental connection to the

⁹⁶ Kardong, *Benedict's Rule*, 85 (RB 4 Notes).

⁹⁷ Joan Chittister, *A Spirituality for the 21st Century: The Rule of Benedict* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2010), 102-103.

Incarnation and Christ's sacrifice and resurrection is important in spiritual formation for Episcopalians.⁹⁸ The emphasis on contemplative being with the Word, unceasing prayer, the connection between prayer and work (*ora et labora*), and hospitality to others does not eclipse this historical practice of coming together frequently to offer up the "sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving" in Holy Communion.

There is a unique Benedictine charism in treating ordinary things as sacred as the altar vessels (RB 31.10-11). Kardong notes that in RB 31.3, the Latin verse *curam gerat in omnibus* could mean to take care of everyone as well as everything.⁹⁹ It probably means both, with an emphasis on caring for people: especially the poor, the sick, the elderly, children, and guests. Contemporary wisdom may say "we love people and use things, not the other way around,"¹⁰⁰ but Benedict wanted his monks to honor both everyone they loved *and* everything they used as sacred vessels to the glory of God. It also points to the Benedictine values of simple living, minimal waste, and recycling, repairing, and maintaining things in good order.

The final discipline we consider in this tradition is *lectio divina* ("divine reading"). Mindful of the critique that the Centering Prayer movement emphasizes the last prayerful stage of *contemplatio* almost to the exclusion of the other three, we listen to Benedict's advice in RB4:55-58, 75-76

Listen intently to holy readings. Give yourselves frequently to prayer. Confess your past sins to God with tears and groaning at daily prayer. Correct these sins in

⁹⁸ RenewalWorks, "RenewalWorks: What We Are Learning," (Forward Movement, 2018), 7, <http://renewalworks.org/researchsummary/>.

⁹⁹ Kardong, *Benedict's Rule*, 258, 261 (RB 31 Notes 3-6).

¹⁰⁰ Mark Eckel, *The Whole Truth: Classroom Strategies for Biblical Integration* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2003), 130.

the future ... these then are the tools of the spiritual craft. If we have wielded them ceaselessly day and night, and returned them on the Judgment Day, we will receive that reward from the Lord which he promised.¹⁰¹

Benedict makes it clear that he expects his monks to make frequent times for private prayer during the day with an intensity of attention and emotion. To pray unceasingly here means as often as possible. This work of prayer will be handed over to God on Judgment Day.

The discipline of *lectio* was standardized in the twelfth century by Guigo II, the ninth prior of the Carthusian¹⁰² abbey of Grande Chartreuse, near Grenoble, France. Paraphrased portions from Sr. Pascale Dominique's translation of *The Ladder of Monks* follow.¹⁰³

Reading is the attentive first step of study of scripture by applying the mind. However, reading is not enough: we must gaze into the text to get to the heart of it. This is totally different than depending upon reason alone. We can never get real nourishment if we rely only on human insight.

In the next step, *meditating*, we look for hidden truths, and we begin to meditate in order to discern what should be desired by the soul. A phrase or a few words emerge as significant for our further attention.

In the third step, *praying*, we elevate the heart toward God in a deep prayer which disregards evil and distractions, recognizing we are unworthy sinners. Guigo II uses the imagery of the little dog trying to get scraps from the master's table (Mk 7:24-30) to

¹⁰¹ Kardong, *Benedict's Rule*, 81 (What are the Tools of Good Works?).

¹⁰² The Carthusians are an order of Roman Catholic nuns and monks (separate monasteries) who observe a secluded contemplative life with a full Benedictine *opus Dei* (the seven offices). The day allows for several interludes of *lectio*, devotion to Mary, conventual daily Mass, manual work, and study.

¹⁰³ This paraphrase of the four stages is taken from Sr. Pascale Dominique's translation of *Guigo II the Carthusian: The Ladder of Monks* (San Sebastian, Spain: Lulu Press, 2012), 13-22.

picture the humility needed.¹⁰⁴ We direct all of our strength to focusing on God's presence.

Using imagery of a bride (the soul) suddenly overwhelmed by the desires of the Bridegroom (Christ), we enter *contemplation* with a flood of joy. It is a totally absorbing encounter, having no words to describe it. But the Bridegroom suddenly departs. This happens, says Guigo II, so we do not presume upon familiarity. But He is never far away, always looking at us. His angels guard our intentions and correct our lack of desire for the Lord. The Lord is a jealous God, not willing to accept divided loyalties (Ex 20:5). The reference to jealousy is not an anthropomorphic projection of a human emotional state like envy or greed, which can be sinful. In this context, God's jealousy for us, especially in contemplative intimacy, is an expression of an intense love on God's part for which there is no substitute. Desiring anything less than God or defaulting to a god of our own making becomes an obstacle to holy union. This is what is at stake, warns Guigo II, when we are emptied enough of self-centeredness to embrace the One who comes as Bridegroom.¹⁰⁵

In a follow-up section of *The Signs That Reveal the Coming of the Holy Spirit*,¹⁰⁶ Guigo II talks about experiencing sighs and tears as gifts from the Bridegroom (Jesus). Its sweetness is indescribable and he won't even try with banal words.

¹⁰⁴ Guigo II the Carthusian, *The Ladder of Monks*, 21.

¹⁰⁵ Guigo II the Carthusian, *The Ladder of Monks*, 27-30.

¹⁰⁶ Guigo II the Carthusian, *The Ladder of Monks*, 23-25.

Guigo II concludes that we come down from contemplation a step or two at a time to relax in God's grace, trying to remain as close to the Lord as possible. All of the steps of *lectio* support one another and are necessary as our soul actively thirsts for God.¹⁰⁷

It is important to remember that *lectio divina* focuses on a brief passage of scripture and is not meant to occupy a lot of time but becomes an opening for the Spirit to draw us into possible ecstasy. This ecstasy is beyond description and an encounter purely initiated by God. The experience itself is not the focus. Our desire to be pure in heart is.

The way of Saint Benedict is a blueprint for non-monastic Christians to be in community with others who are being drawn by grace into a deeper awareness of God's surprising presence in the ordinariness of life. Through disciplines like humility and the adaptation of *lectio*, Episcopalians can re-capture their spiritual heritage by risking an openness to being changed—the heart of *conversatio morum*—into the likeness of Christ.

The Discipline of Practicing the Presence of God

The title of this *Practicing the Presence of God* section refers to the anonymous fourteenth-century English author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* as well as insights from the seventeenth-century lay Carmelite brother Nicolas Herman, whose letters and conversations were gathered into *The Practice of the Presence of God, and the Spiritual Maxims* were translated into English in 1741. Each of these contemplative guides presents a path of practical wisdom for drawing near to the heart of God. This relational intimacy is not something we accomplish or deserve on our own; it is offered to everyone

¹⁰⁷ Guigo II the Carthusian, *The Ladder of Monks*, 33-38.

through Christ's extravagant love for us by the Holy Spirit. They are frequently referred to by Episcopal teachers of spirituality.

Greg Boyd, the pastor of Woodlands Church in St. Paul, Minnesota, has sage advice for Episcopalians seeking to experience this reality of God here and now in their daily life:

God is the God of the living, not the God of the already-past or the not-yet-present. He's the great "I AM," not the great "I was" or the great "I will be." He's been present in every moment of the past, for which we can be thankful, and he'll be present at every moment in the future, which gives us great hope. But he's only *alive* and active now, in the present moment—which is, once again, the only thing that's real.¹⁰⁸

Father Joseph de Beaufort gathered the conversations and letters of his spiritual director Nicolas Herman, otherwise known as Brother Lawrence, which were published as *The Practice of the Presence of God*. Herman took the name Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection when he joined the discalced Carmelites of Paris as a lay brother in 1666. With all humility, Lawrence served as a dishwasher in the community kitchen, doing everything required out of love for God. Lawrence believed we ought to interact with God with the greatest simplicity, speaking openly and honestly, as we implore his gracious help in every moment. He would confess his faults without excuses or being overly scrupulous, then resume his practice of love and adoration.¹⁰⁹ Pointing beyond ecclesial devotions, Lawrence gives this advice to a younger monk:

It is not necessary for being with God to be always at church; we may make an oratory of our heart wherein to retire from time to time to converse with Him in meekness, humility, and love. Everyone is capable of such familiar conversation

¹⁰⁸ Gregory A. Boyd, *Present Perfect: Finding God in the Now* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 15.

¹⁰⁹ Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God, and the Spiritual Maxims* (New York: Cosimo Inc., 2012), 8-9.

with God, some more, some less. He knows what we can do. Let us begin, then. Perhaps He expects but one generous resolution on our part. Have courage. We have but little time to live; you are near sixty-four and I am almost eighty. Let us live and die with God.¹¹⁰

This is encouraging for Christians of any age. It is especially sage wisdom and comfort for those who know they are aging up and perhaps feel unsure or unworthy of God's love. Brother Lawrence goes on to encourage us to put all our trust in Him. In his last three letters (13-15), he knows he is about to die. Lawrence comforts his friend with thoughts about suffering as we practice the presence of God:

God often permits that we should suffer a little to purify our souls and oblige us to continue *with* Him. Take courage: offer Him your pains incessantly: pray to Him for strength to endure them ... I do not know how God will dispose of me. I am always happy. All the world suffer; and I, who deserve the severest discipline, feel joys so continual and so great that I can scarce contain them.¹¹¹

Lawrence is not trying to gloss over his friend's pain or his own. He is facing them honestly, confident of God's continuing presence. On his deathbed on February 12, 1691, having received the Sacrament of Communion, Lawrence was clear and alert. He died with these words: "I am doing what I shall do through all eternity—blessing God, praising God, adoring God, giving Him the love of my whole heart. It is our one business, my brethren, to worship and love Him without thought of anything else."¹¹² Practicing the Presence is a spiritual path which invites Christians to persist in their decision to simply allow God to be the living center of their loving attention. If they are intent on following Lawrence's Maxims, the promise is that God will reward their quest with an ardent fire of

¹¹⁰ Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God, and the Spiritual Maxims*, 29.

¹¹¹ Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God, and the Spiritual Maxims*, 35.

¹¹² Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God, and the Spiritual Maxims*, 68.

love for God. This is a joy, says Lawrence, that will far surpass anything they have known before and requires only simple consent.¹¹³

In the Maxims section titled “On Means for Attaining Unto the Presence of God,” Brother Lawrence writes we should guard the purity of our lives, immediately confessing and humbly asking for forgiveness for anything which might displease the Lord. We should persist in being faithful in the practice of training our gaze upon God in calm faith without distraction. We have to make a habit of consistently telling the Lord we love him with all our heart. It is hard, especially at first, but we die to self in order to be with God alone.¹¹⁴ Lawrence’s last words attest to the validity and integrity of this commitment.

The promise of radical intimacy with God alone is echoed by the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*. Following the example of Thomas à Kempis in *Imitation of Christ*, where Jesus frequently dialogues with a disciple, David Robinson has translated the *Cloud*’s Middle English into current idiom with the voice of Jesus speaking the content. In chapter twenty, “The One Thing Necessary,” Jesus comments on Mary of Bethany’s choice to remain present to and undistracted before her Lord:

What is that one thing? Assuredly, the one thing most important is that God is fully loved and praised above all other activities that you may do, whether physical or spiritual ... Why is this so? The best part, the inner awakening of perfect love for God begins on earth but will continue without an end in the perfect joy of heaven. Love for God is the one thing necessary.¹¹⁵

Anonymous’ evaluation of Mary’s focus to love God above all parallels what other contemplative teachers have said. While it is important to purify the soul by

¹¹³ Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God, and the Spiritual Maxims*, 51-52.

¹¹⁴ Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God, and the Spiritual Maxims*, 52-54.

¹¹⁵ Robinson, *Cloud Spirituality*, 45.

confessing sin and rejecting false humility, it is ultimately simple love which is the key to living into the fullness of God's presence.

As the *Cloud* author continues in the next chapter, there are two steps taken by Martha to actively love God: offer physical acts of mercy and love and meditate on our own unworthiness in light of Christ's passion. Anonymous reminds us that both active and early stage contemplative paths are desirable and useful in this earthly life.

However, it is the third, or "best" way, which begins here and continues after death. It lasts into eternity and therefore "shall not be taken away from her" (Lk 10:42). What Mary has chosen, enabled by God's grace, is to pierce the cloud of unknowing where we are drawn by a secret inner longing for Christ Jesus alone.¹¹⁶ This mirrors the promise of the sixth Beatitude: "Blessings on the pure in heart! You will see God" (Mt 5:8).

Carmen Acevedo Butcher reminds us of a classic way to describe the *via negativa* (way of negation, or what God is not like) found in the *Cloud*. She quotes the ninth-century Irish theologian John Scotus Eriugena, who drew from the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (Pseudo-Denys): "Nothing can really be said about God. No single noun, verb, or any other part of speech can describe him. Why do we expect visible signs to be able to articulate the invisible nature of God?"¹¹⁷

Gerald Sittser argues that Pseudo-Dionysius goes too far in his elevation of God's transcendence beyond anything else. For Pseudo-Dionysius, since God is greater than creation, he is essentially indescribable and unknowable. To know, we must abandon all

¹¹⁶ Robinson, *Cloud Spirituality*, 46.

¹¹⁷ Carmen Acevedo Butcher, trans., *The Cloud of Unknowing with the Book of Privy Counsel* (Boulder, CO: Shambala, 2009), xx.

earthly knowledge and enter into the darkness of unknowing. Apart from rational revelation, God is above being, transcendence and even the Trinity. For Dionysius

... to experience union with God even Jesus Christ must be left behind. He is the means, to be sure; but he is not the end. There is something above and beyond Jesus Christ, which can only be reached through mystical experience. Christ is not therefore God's perfect, complete and final revelation. There is an indefinable and unknowable God behind the revealed God ...¹¹⁸

Sittser is saying that Pseudo-Dionysius taught that there was a higher spiritual plane than that of Jesus Christ. This would be blasphemy since Christ is the second person of the Trinity and fully God. There is no higher contemplative or mystical plane than the presence of the Holy One. Dionysius was misguided by his Neo-Platonic philosophy into thinking mystical insight went beyond the *Logos* who is both the source and purpose of Creation (Col.1:15-18).

Perhaps Anonymous senses the danger for her¹¹⁹ young protégé as she warns him not to share any copies of this work, and to carefully evaluate whether or not he is being called to a life of contemplative prayer, especially the apophatic variety. One could possibly get lost in the darkness, lose their orientation to orthodox tradition, and end up being seen as a heretic, as several Middle-Age mystics were suspected to be, such as Meister Eckhart (1260-1328). The same criticism is sometimes put forth by those who are

¹¹⁸ Gerald L. Sittser, *Water From a Deep Well: Christian Spirituality from Early Martyrs to Modern Missionaries* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 168-169.

¹¹⁹ Robinson argues cogently that the author of the *Cloud* may have been a woman. "Based on the style of writing, the design of the book, the original language being Middle English not Latin, the metaphors used in the book, and the anonymity of the writer, I believe the author was a woman, most likely a Benedictine nun from the midlands of England." From Robinson, *Cloud Spirituality*, 10.

suspicious of current advocates of oneing and non-duality¹²⁰ or any contemplative practices compatible with Asian religions like Buddhism.

In chapter thirty-four of the *Cloud*, the author says that contemplation is a gift that God neither rewards for good behavior nor withdraws from those who are habitual sinners. Let God's grace do whatever it wills. "Let it work and you receive. Look on it, watch it, and leave it alone," she says. "Be content feeling moved in a delightful, loving way by something mysterious and unknown, leaving you focused entirely on God, with no other thought than of him alone. Let your naked desire rest there."¹²¹

In a complementary fashion, as we lean up against the cloud of unknowing, we are simultaneously encouraged to push down against a cloud of forgetting below. A cloud of unknowing above separates us from God, whose transcendent majesty requires us to un-learn how God is. A cloud of forgetting below separates us from the rest of creation, the good and the bad, spiritual or material; anything that is not God. Anonymous is very much an advocate of being aware of our surroundings and appreciating God's gifts in both others and the creatures we live alongside, including our psychospiritual realities. That awareness of being in the world, however, can become a distraction, a temptation to go off in reverie and imagination. We need to live in the present moment (chapter four), but in order to get where the Lord waits for us, we need to gently lay that aside and concentrate on what matters most. "For although it is good to meditate on my kindness,

¹²⁰ Advocates for both of these "alternative orthodoxy" perspectives include Richard Rohr, OFM, Franciscan priest, author, speaker, and founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation, New Mexico (CAC.org), and Dr. Cynthia Bourgeault, Episcopal priest, researcher, teacher of the Wisdom Way of Knowing and Centering Prayer.

¹²¹ Butcher, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, 79.

and to love me and praise me for my qualities, yet it is far better to meditate upon me as I am in my innermost being, and to love me and praise me for who I am.”¹²²

Episcopalians may want to ponder what the cloud of forgetting means in daily life for a moment. Consider how much time in prayer is often spent in petition, thanksgiving for blessings, and intercession on behalf of others. These are valuable aspects of praying which need to be attended to regularly. However, when we think of God, or pray to God only to get something we need or desire or to change outcomes we are unwilling to accept, we fall short of loving adoration without strings attached. “Love me and praise me for who I am” is just as true for our relationship with God as for those whom we love.

In chapter forty, Anonymous simplifies how we are to pray through our whole being. She tells us to pray using a short little word, one that is a cry from our spirit to the Spirit of God. Anonymous asks us to fill our hearts with wonder at God’s works without analyzing or categorizing those works. In Butcher’s translation, the words recommended are *sin* or *God*; in Robinson’s paraphrase, the single-word prayers become *help*, *thanks*, and *wow*. “Know this simple truth: the more you know me, the less you’ll know sin: and the more you are free of sin, the more you will be free to grow in God.”¹²³

The prayer word is not to be used like a mantra repeated over and over. It is rather more of a bookmark to remind us how we persist in loving God alone. Moderation is the key to success in the long journey of unceasing prayer. “Rejoice always, pray unceasingly, give thanks in all things, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus” (1 Thess 5:16-18). To pray unceasingly does not mean to exhaust oneself twenty-four hours a day

¹²² Robinson, *Cloud Spirituality*, 22.

¹²³ Robinson, *Cloud Spirituality*, 74.

with verbal or mental prayers. That is not possible, nor healthy. It does mean, through patient practice and attention, to remain aware and mindful that we are growing into faithful intimacy as God draws us ever closer to where he dwells within. In this respect, Anonymous encourages us “to throw caution to the winds” when it comes to contemplation. “I hope you’ll never stop doing this work for as long as you live.”¹²⁴

Both Brother Lawrence and the nurturing author of the *Cloud* teach us that contemplation is not some mystical gift reserved for the few. It is an opportunity for all who become aware that they are being wooed by a pursuing God—the Lord who wants to ravish us with an overwhelming and transforming love. To practice the Presence is at once profoundly simple and at the same time a way of letting go as we pick up our cross and follow Jesus (Lk 9:23).

The Orthodox Tradition of Theosis and the Jesus Prayer, or Prayer of the Heart

Upholding the heritage of the Desert fathers and mothers, preserving the beliefs and practices of the oldest Christian churches, and valuing living tradition over rationalism mark the spiritual formation of Eastern Orthodox Christians.

The Western forefathers (and it was mostly European men) of Anglican theology listened primarily to Continental reformers and then to Enlightenment thinkers to guide their interpretation of scripture and soteriology.¹²⁵ Today, however, some Episcopalians are discovering the beauty of ancient liturgies and the comforting assurance that the

¹²⁴ Butcher, *Cloud of Unknowing*, 93.

¹²⁵ An emphasis on salvation by grace apart from works, and being assured of heaven.

Incarnation can be experienced now. They are re-discovering the journey of Eastern Christian mysticism.

Michael Gama¹²⁶ reminds us that in the Orthodox East, *theosis*, or divinization, is proclaimed as the ultimate destiny of every Christian believer. Gama quotes Vladimir Lossky, a twentieth-century apologist and theologian, who argues the necessity of the *hypostatic*¹²⁷ union of God-man Jesus the Christ in our becoming “partakers of divine nature” (2 Pt 1:3-4):

God descends to the world and becomes man, and man is raised toward divine fullness and becomes god, because this union of two natures, the divine and the human, has been determined in the eternal counsel of God, and because it is the final end for which the world has been created out of nothing.¹²⁸

The language used in this argument is important. When we are raised toward divine fullness, man becomes god, not God. In Orthodox teaching, nothing in Creation can be confused with the Essence of God. We can only participate in the divine Energies which emanate from God by grace. Gama quotes a humorous conclusion when he writes “deification does not mean the change of our nature into something other than it is—it is not an ontological promotion.”¹²⁹

¹²⁶ I am indebted to Michael Paul Gama (DMin, LSF at Portland Seminary) for his 2014 dissertation, now published as a book, *Theosis*. His research on how Orthodoxy has positively impacted millennial Evangelicals has become a valued secondary source for this portion of the thesis. An emphasis on understanding divinization and stillness is found in chapter seven of Gama’s dissertation.

¹²⁷ The unique and perfect union of God and humanity in one person, Christ Jesus. Christ is fully God and fully man (human), without division or diminution of one or the other. Defined at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD against the monophysite heresy.

¹²⁸ Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NJ: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1976), 136.

¹²⁹ Michael Paul Gama, “Theosis: The Core of Our Ancient/Future Faith and Its Relevance to Evangelicalism at the Close of the Modern Era,” (DMin, Portland Seminary, 2014), <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/dmin/74>.

In expanding an evangelical awareness of the cosmic dimension of what the Incarnation points to, the process of *theosis* includes all of Creation being redeemed. Not only is humanity rescued or restored to holiness by grace, the whole of Creation is groaning to be restored (Rom 8:22-24) to the vision God intends. This is not some version of pantheism¹³⁰ but an inclusive view of how powerful the Incarnation is for the life of the cosmos.

Another difference from the classic Protestant teaching is the Orthodox emphasis on Christ overcoming the consequences of Ancestral Sin (death, not Adam's guilt).¹³¹ In *theosis*, which begins at baptism, we are united to Christ for a continuing life of growing into righteousness due solely to the grace and power of God. Without resorting to semi-Pelagianism,¹³² we who are being divinized co-operate with God's loving grace for us to become Christlike. There is a bit of synergism going on here between justification and sanctification, which are categories of salvation on account of Christ's redeeming sacrifice and life in the Holy Spirit after coming to faith familiar to Western (Latin) theologians.

¹³⁰ It is still debatable to what extent panentheism captures the Orthodox understanding of God present in Creation. The Orthodox are careful to preserve God's transcendence apart from manifestations of God's energies, such as the Uncreated Light on Mount Tabor (Mt 17:1-5, Mk 9:2-7, Lk 9:28-32). The possibility of this Light in contemplative ecstasy was defended by Gregory Palamas but opposed by Humanist theologian Barlaam of Seminaria in the fourteenth century. Later Orthodox synods affirmed Palamas' teaching, and it has become Orthodox *hesychast* doctrine to this day. See Nicolas Gendle, trans., *Gregory Palamas: The Triads* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1983), 17-22.

¹³¹ "While man is born with the parasitic power of death and sin within him, this fact cannot be charged to God but to the work of Satan and the illness of the entire Creation and human nature from which God creates each new man." John S. Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin*, trans. George S. Gabriel (Ridgewood, NY: Zephyr Publishing, 2008), 161.

¹³² Orthodoxy is often accused of the heresy of Pelagianism or its "softer" rejection of total depravity, Semi-Pelagianism. Orthodox do affirm the universality of sin, which cannot be overcome without God's grace. Orthodoxy, however, allows for humanity to initiate a response to God's will based on the justice of God, rejecting predestination. John Cassian is often cited as holding this view of "beginning of faith" as the view of the early Church.

Gama describes this perspective as a narrative way of looking at salvation:

As we look at the East, instead of finding a rational, linear and proof-texting support of *theosis*, we encounter a tapestry of narrative describing a divine economy in which the Incarnation and then the deification of humanity plays a central role ... Here again, we encounter the Eastern understanding of redemption as narrative, encompassing the redemption and recapitulation of the entire cosmos.¹³³

With the implications of *theosis* freshly in mind, we now turn to perhaps the most well-known and widely practiced form of contemplative prayer in Orthodoxy: the Jesus Prayer or the Prayer of the Heart in the *hesychast*¹³⁴ tradition.

Forms of the Jesus Prayer have been around since the time of the Desert fathers and mothers. In the fifth century, the ascetic bishop Diadochus of Photike, who also attended the Council of Chalcedon in 451, taught that using the Jesus Prayer led to inner stillness (*hesychia*). Some say it originated even earlier—in the second century—and was used by Anthony of the Desert.¹³⁵ Regardless of its origin, this practice was passed down through the centuries in monasteries, traveling from Egypt up through Asia Minor and coming across the Aegean Sea to Mt. Athos in Greece. It later made its way through Eastern Europe into Russia.

An entire section from the *Dobrotolubiye* (the Russian translation of the Greek *Philokalia*) is a seminal resource for preparing and experiencing the Jesus Prayer. From book five, Greek Fathers Callistus and Ignatius of Xanthopoulos wrote one hundred short

¹³³ Michael Gama, *Theosis*, 156.

¹³⁴ *hesychast* is an adjectival term meaning “stillness.” It is often used to describe an Orthodox form of contemplative prayer that also encompasses mysticism. *Hesychasm* is identified with Jesus’ teaching on prayer: “Here’s what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won’t be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace.” (Mt 6:5-6, The Message)

¹³⁵ Morris J. Chumley, *Mysteries of the Jesus Prayer: Experiencing the Presence of God and a Pilgrimage to the Heart of an Ancient Spirituality* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 14.

chapters covering an entire range of corollaries related to this spirituality. In chapter ninety-six, they offer a short summary of the teaching:

These, that is, non-attachment, silence, attention and prayer, set the heart in motion and produce in it heat, which scorches passions and demons and purifies the heart as in a furnace. This brings an insatiable desire and love of our Lord Jesus Christ; this opens the fountain of sweet tears in the heart ... The end of it all is passionlessness, as far as possible for man, resurrection of the soul before the body, assumption of the image and likeness of God and our return to that state by means of doing and contemplation ... This inheritance will continue to be so transmitted from generation to generation, even after our time up to the second coming of Christ.¹³⁶

The Prayer of the Heart can be very short, almost like an exclamation: “Jesus, mercy!” but an ancient form of this prayer has been received by Holy Tradition as “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” The Jesus Prayer underwent a revival in nineteenth-century Russia due to the teachings and advocacy of Orthodox bishops Ignatius Brianchaninov (1807-1867) and Theophan the Recluse (1815-1894). Much of the teaching of Theophan is preserved in the English translation of *The Art of Prayer*. Theophan teaches about the simplicity of the practice. “The practice of the Jesus Prayer is simple ... The essential part of this is not in the words, but in faith, contrition, and self-surrender to the Lord. With these feelings one can stand before the Lord even without words, and it will be prayer.”¹³⁷

The core of the teaching focuses on the constant invocation of the holy name of Jesus, first externally vocalized and, as one progresses, mentally in silence. Late-

¹³⁶ *Writings from the Philokalia on Prayer of the Heart*, translated from the Russian text by E. Kadloubovsky and G.E.H. Palmer (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1979), 267-268.

¹³⁷ Igumen Chariton of Valamo, *The Art of Prayer: An Orthodox Anthology*, trans. E. Kadloubovsky and E. M. Palmer (New York: Faber and Faber, 1966), 89. Igumen is a title equivalent to abbot, head of a monastery.

nineteenth-century Russian bishop Justin reminds us this journey is meant for all baptized laity, not just monks or clergy.

Every Christian must always remember he should unite with the Lord our Savior with all his being, letting Him come and dwell in his mind and his heart; and the surest way to achieve such a union with the Lord, next to Communion with His Flesh and Blood, is the inner Jesus Prayer.¹³⁸

While the Prayer of the Heart is certainly not the only prayer—consider the Lord’s Prayer or liturgical praise—it is, from Theophan’s perspective, stronger than other prayers. The secret to its power is that we are invoking the all-powerful name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. It is not some sort of magic charm or protection from evil; its power comes from a certain faith in the Lord, in a deep union of heart and mind with him.¹³⁹

This deep union of mind and heart only becomes possible after years of unceasing prayer, a grace-gift from the Holy Spirit, not something we achieve or perfect after a few months of effort. In fact, as soon as we engage the Name and focus our intention upon Jesus, we awaken the snake within, says John Chrysostom.¹⁴⁰ In the same way, according to Macarius the Great, when we force our way inward past the disturbing thoughts that always arise when we attempt to pray, at the very bottom of our soul we will find the snake nestling in the dark recesses of our hearts.¹⁴¹

Brianchaninov encourages us to engage the struggle with confidence:

The power given to His seventy disciples is given to all Christians (MK 16:17) ... Destroy within you the devil’s rule over you; destroy all his influence over you;

¹³⁸ Igumen Chariton of Valamo, *The Art of Prayer*, 88.

¹³⁹ Igumen Chariton of Valamo, *The Art of Prayer*, 99.

¹⁴⁰ Ignatius Brianchaninov, *On the Prayer of Jesus*, trans. Father Lazarus (Boston, MA: New Seeds, 2002), 22.

¹⁴¹ Ignatius Brianchaninov, *On the Prayer of Jesus*, 23.

acquire spiritual freedom. The foundation for your struggle is the grace of holy baptism; your weapon is prayer in the name of Jesus.¹⁴²

These are strange or unsettling words for many contemporary Western Christians, who are the product of an age that usually thinks in terms of sociological evil, mental illness, and misery caused by human greed on a global scale. It is hard, if not unimaginable, to consider anything beyond a neurobiological and evolutionary understanding of human nature. The Orthodox tradition bypassed the age of Enlightenment in the West and its subsequent insistence on a material, scientific view of the cosmos. Modern minds do not easily concur with a worldview that seems to take aspects of *Harry Potter* as factual narrative. However, the clinical experience of psychiatrists like M. Scott Peck with the reality of satanic evil,¹⁴³ and the research by Gregory A. Boyd in the field of theodicy,¹⁴⁴ may give us pause to wonder if we truly understand the depth of psychospiritual conflicts and suffering. How we choose to handle the preponderance of historical Orthodox teaching on spiritual warfare in the context of contemplative prayer and *Christus Victor* may provide unexpected dimensions for formation.

We are invited to consider the outreach by Lev Gillet, a twentieth-century Eastern Orthodox monk, who worked ecumenically with Protestants, Anglicans, and Catholics to spread the good news of invoking the name of Jesus in everyday life.

¹⁴² Ignatius Brianchianinov, *On the Prayer of Jesus*, 28.

¹⁴³ M. Scott Peck, *Glimpses of the Devil* (New York: Free Press, 2005).

¹⁴⁴ Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: the Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (1997) and *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy* (2001), both available from InterVarsity Academic, Downers Grove, IL.

Before beginning to pronounce the name of Jesus, establish peace and recollection within yourself and ask for the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Ghost ... Then simply begin ... Begin to pronounce it with adoration and love. Cling to it. Repeat it. Do not think you are invoking the Name; think only of Jesus himself. Say his Name slowly, softly, and quietly. A common mistake of beginners is to wish to associate the Name with inner intensity or emotion. But the name of Jesus is not to be shouted, or fashioned with violence, even inwardly ... Surrender your whole self and enclose it within the Name.¹⁴⁵

This is simple wisdom which promises to expand one's awareness of the immanent presence of Jesus. The non-violence of this approach echoes a teaching by Jesus on prayer: Father, may your name be honored; may your kingdom come (Lk 11:2b).

Learning to pray the Jesus Prayer starts out simply as a vocal prayer. It then transitions into a mental prayer in growing inner silence. After years of practice, with a constant attitude of humility and contrition before God, one may, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, move beyond the words (the mind) into that deep silence of our innermost being (the heart). Here, without words, we love the Lord who is always loving us in return.

The Orthodox remind us that this journey begins with baptism and chrismation (anointing with oil to be Christ's servant). It is sacramentally grounded in the death and resurrection of Jesus (Rom 6:1-11) and centered on the name and presence of Jesus, not some abstract form of imageless prayer. It can be used every day in any situation just to remember God's presence. It can be prayed in conjunction with the mystery of the Eucharist. For these reasons, Episcopalians may find this is a spiritual discipline which fits their own tradition.

¹⁴⁵ Lev Gillet, *On the Invocation of the Name of Jesus* (Springfield, IL: Templegate Publishers, 1985), 18-21.

Seeing with a Celtic Christian Heart

The exact origin of Celts is debated. However, they antedate the arrival of the Angles and Saxons in England and eventually became the dominant tribal group in Ireland.¹⁴⁶ Like other aboriginal and native peoples, the Celts had a strong belief in life after death. The veil between the two worlds before and after death was “thin,” meaning that they saw travel and influence between heaven and earth flowing back and forth.¹⁴⁷

Most of the Celtic people had a strong oral tradition kept alive in storytelling, songs, prayers, and incantations or protective spells. Christianity came to the British Isles (England, Scotland) by the late second century. It found a hospitable pagan home able to peacefully integrate a Trinitarian, Christ-centered and sacramental church into its own creation-centered mythology.¹⁴⁸

Once the Celtic Church became Romanized after the *witan* of Whitby in 664, the ecclesial power in Britain began to shift toward Rome and the Latin (Catholic) Church. Contemporary Celtic scholar and teacher J. Philip Newell describes the real tragedy of Whitby: its unnecessary rejection of the St. John tradition in favor of St. Peter. Newell contends both are necessary for a balanced and healthy spirituality:

Bishop Coleman of Lindisfarne, arguing the case of the Celtic mission, appealed to the authority of St. John, as the disciple who had leaned against Jesus at the Last Supper and heard the Lord’s heartbeat. Abbot Wilfred, on the other hand, presenting the case for the Roman mission from Canterbury, argued the authority of St. Peter, to whom Jesus had said: “Thou are Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church” (Matthew 17:18) ... The decision of the synod was a

¹⁴⁶ Timothy Joyce, *Celtic Christianity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 5.

¹⁴⁷ John O'Donohue, *Anam Cara: A Book of Celtic Wisdom* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2004), 211.

¹⁴⁸ Joyce, *Celtic Christianity*, 19-20.

fundamental rejection of the perspective of the Celtic mission. The St. John tradition, with its emphasis on the Light which enlightens every person coming into the world, had inspired the Celtic mission to believe, like Pelagius, in the essential goodness of humanity.¹⁴⁹

Newell goes on to explain that St. John's vision had encouraged Celtic Christians to look for God's grace within and beyond creation. He also claims this concept of listening for the heartbeat of God in all things, our selves, one another, and the whole of creation is key to practicing Celtic spirituality.

The connection to the Cosmos and respecting the "book of nature;"¹⁵⁰ remembering the sacred in the ordinary with Trinitarian prayers; invoking the *caim*, or protective powers of God, the saints, and angels; and viewing human nature as essentially good, apart from the Augustine of Hippo's focus on Original Sin, all shaped a Celtic Christian worldview that can be adapted to formation today.

A seminal source for Celtic prayer and spirituality is found in the nineteenth-century collection of folk memories by Alexander Carmichael published as the *Carmina Gadelica (Ortha nan Gàidheal)*. It contains distinctive Celtic spirituality embedded in prayers and incantations. Another valuable resource is the Northumbria Community's *Celtic Prayer Book Two: Father Up and Farther In*.

This selection from *Carmina Gadelica* is a blessing prayer:

The eye of the great God be upon you,
The eye of the God of glory be upon you,
The eye of the Son of Mary Virgin be on you,

¹⁴⁹ J. Philip Newell, *Listening for the Heartbeat of God: A Celtic Spirituality* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1997), 31-32.

¹⁵⁰ The Bible is the primary book revealing how God is. The exploration and wonder we find in the natural world is the second book we need to "read" to develop a deep, authentic understanding. In his lectures, outdoor meditations, and interreligious chants, Newell seems to focus upon experience as the primary revealer of truth.

The eye of the Spirit mild be on you,
 To aid you and shepherd you;
 Oh the kindly eye of the Three be on you,
 To aid and shepherd you.¹⁵¹

This is a charm to heal a sprain:

Christ went on the cross,
 Sprained the leg of a horse;
 Christ came to the ground,
 Whole became the leg.

As that was made whole
 May this become whole,
 If His will be so to do,
 Through the bosom of the God of life,
 And of the Three of the Trinity,
 The God of life,
 The Three of Trinity.¹⁵²

Invoking the help of Saint Michael the Archangel:

Thou Michael the victorious,
 I make my circuit under thy shield,
 Thou Michael of the white steed,
 And of the bright brilliant blades,
 Conqueror of the dragon,
 Be thou at my back,
 Thou ranger of the heavens,
 Thou warrior of the King of all,
 O Michael the victorious,
 My pride and my guide,
 O Michael the victorious,
 The glory of mine eye.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Alexander Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica: Hymns and Incantations*, ed. C.J. Moore, 7th ed., (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 2006), 252.

¹⁵² Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica*, 130.

¹⁵³ Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica*, 87.

This is a Trinitarian invocation:

O the Rock of rocks,
The peace of Peter and Paul,
Of James and John the Beloved,
And of the pure perfect Virgin,
The pure perfect Virgin.

The peace of the Father of joy,
The peace of the Christ of pasch,
The peace of the Spirit of grace,
To ourselves and to our children,
Ourselves and our children.¹⁵⁴

This is from the office of Compline for Thursday night to be chanted by the

Northumbria Community:

(silently make the sign of the Cross)

Find rest, O my soul, in God alone:
My hope comes from Him.

Come I this night to the Father,
come I this night to the Son,
come I to the Holy Spirit powerful:
come I this night to God.
Come I this night with Christ,
come I with the Spirit of kindness.
Come I to Thee, Jesus.
Jesus, shelter me.

I will lay down and sleep.
I wake again,
because the Lord sustains me.

By day the Lord directs His love;
at night His song is with me —
a prayer to the God of my life.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica*, 46.

¹⁵⁵ *Celtic Daily Prayer Book Two: Farther Up, Farther In* (London: William Collins, 2015), 935.

From the Prayer Book section Rites of Passage: Reaching Mid-Life, this prayer entitled “I need some laughter, Lord.”

I have had enough
of sad saints
and sour religion.

I have had enough
of sin spotting
and grace doubting.
I need some laughter, Lord,
the kind you planted in Sarah.

But, please may I not have to wait
until I am ninety
and pregnant. (Church of Scotland)¹⁵⁶

Conclusion

This overview of teachings and select disciplines from four historical spiritual traditions offers Episcopalians who identify spiritual growth as an important part of their life in the Church some creative possibilities. Spiritual formation is a long-term challenge, not a six-week or six-month course in adult education.

As one explores the opportunities to deepen our awareness of God’s presence and God’s loving attention toward us in the midst of community, we remember these are not things to be accomplished. One does not graduate into mystical prayer or set the bar at union with God. The temptation is to expect that more effort leads to quicker results. We remember Fr Gillet’s advice: “Don’t shout the name of Jesus!” Be gentle, kind and

¹⁵⁶ *Celtic Daily Prayer Book Two*, 1035.

patient. The reality is spiritual growth is usually marked by little improvements with lots of plateaus and even slippery downslopes we didn't realize were there.

Joan Chittister tells the lovely story of what a monk said when asked what they do all day. He said, "We fall down and get up we fall down and get up... we fall down and get up."¹⁵⁷ Spiritual and emotional maturity requires that we can laugh at ourselves and wonder at life's paradoxes as life unfolds. The kingdom of God is full of surprises, as both C.S. Lewis and N.T. Wright know so well.¹⁵⁸

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known,
and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our
hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may
perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Joan Chittister, *The Rule of Benedict: A Spirituality for the 21st Century* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2010), 150.

¹⁵⁸ See C.S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy* and N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope*.

¹⁵⁹ "The Word of God," *1979 Book of Common Prayer*, 355. This Collect for Purity appears at the beginning of the celebration of Eucharist in all Books of Common Prayer since 1549.

SECTION 4:

ARTIFACT DESCRIPTION

The need for a guide to spiritual formation, deepening one's journey into Christ Jesus and formation into Christlikeness, has been expressed as "a desire for a deeper prayer life" among Episcopalians based on a comprehensive survey by RenewalWorks.¹⁶⁰ This need for personal spiritual growth is not adequately addressed by adult catechesis or educational offerings for faith formation alone. Perhaps a metaphor for this desire across all generations and age groups of adults in the church is the old Coca Cola meme, "The Real Thing." There is a hunger for an experience of God's tangible presence through the Holy Spirit beyond cognitive knowledge of history, beliefs and practice. As noted in the thesis a key factor in addressing this need is to consider the Evangelical Option: challenging seekers to consider a personal relationship with Jesus as both desirable and necessary to their balanced formation.

The problem with the current Episcopal ethos is its focus almost exclusively on the social justice approach to doing what Jesus did and does through us today. It *is* important to care about righting injustice, empowering others trapped in poverty and racial prejudice, reversing the abuses of exploiting the environment. What seems to be missing, however, is the praise and worship of Jesus in the joy of the Spirit. There is no sense of urgency into bringing others to know Christ as savior and lord, an evangelical priority.

What opportunities does the artifact offer?

¹⁶⁰ "RenewalWorks: What We Are Learning," Forward Movement, 2018, <http://renewalworks.org/researchsummary/>, 7-8 "Key Catalysts for Spiritual Growth."

Mindful of the Anglican principle of comprehensiveness—allowing diverse understandings of the Gospel to co-exist together—the artifact offers short written articles, online audio and visual channels as well as interactive responses (journaling and art) to gently but directly consider what a relational experience with God in Christ looks and feels like. Portions of the historic spiritual disciplines described in the thesis are explained and modeled as options for building a rule of life suited to the needs of the person seeking a deeper prayer life.

This is not a step-by-step approach to spiritual growth nor an educational survey. It is, rather, an attempt to promote individualized spiritual development in the context of both personal reflection and small group dialogue and support. It is both an inductive and deductive approach to self-discovery and opening to where the Holy Spirit is leading.

SECTION 5:

ARTIFACT SPECIFICATION

We've set four achievable goals to implement a local adult spiritual formation ministry. Both young and older adults are invited into an adventure to deepen their spiritual life. They will be using a loose-leaf guidebook as they choose to explore many types of prayer and learn about principles of the spiritual life. Both online videos and audio chants supplement hands-on learning along with Bible study and journaling. The curriculum can be used by both urban and rural churches with a reasonable investment in educational supplies. Designed to be adapted to user experience, feedback helps shape the ongoing content by listening to what people are saying about their experiences. With support from diocesan leadership, we will identify individuals and churches interested in starting this lifelong spiritual formation experience.

Goals

This developing program markets a new approach for adult spiritual formation to diocesan and local leadership, including the Canon for Congregational Vitality (CCV) in the Episcopal diocese of Nevada. Tasked by the bishop with coordinating programs for spiritual growth, the CCV will help identify which individuals and congregations might be open to this path of deepening spiritual awareness and growth locally.

Local clergy and lay leadership of a handful selected parishes will initially be contacted to present an introduction to the purpose and theology of formation during a Sunday Eucharist or other convenient time. Cultivating this support is vital to the

program's success. Led by laity, it requires continual contact and promotion. Achievable goals are:

Recruit and meet with local participants during an informal time for fellowship, dialogue, and prayer. Ask participants to pray for guidance about being individually called to deepen their journey with Jesus. Introduce them to the historical spiritual disciplines which invite them to be open to the Holy Spirit's presence and leading.

The program will provide participants with specific skills and experience to be open to change — conversion of life — through sacramental grace and awareness of one's inner reality. As Anglicans, auricular confession and spiritual direction are recommended as sacramental adjuncts to this process.

Ongoing disciplines learned from the program will become adapted into a rule of life whose progress will be shared in a supportive small group community.

Participants will be empowered to share the good news of their changing relationship with Jesus, deepening self-awareness and how contemplative prayer is changing their perspectives and living in Christ.

The Target Audience

The Holy Spirit calls women and men of any age to “come and see” and experience the joy of discipleship with Jesus and to be formed into his likeness. In an aging church, it is important to address the needs of people age forty and older who are entering the second half of life. Therefore, the target audience will be middle-age adults and those who are aging up who voice a desire to find ways to deepen their spiritual journey with God. Adults with enough life experience to have known pain and joys,

successes and failures, will be ready for this opportunity to understand who they are called to be as maturing apprentices of Jesus.

Project Scope and Content

The artifact offers both narratives and formational experiences which challenge perceptions about who and where God is in our daily lives. This follows the pattern of Jesus, who not only taught through paradox and parables, but enabled healing and new life to emerge after letting go and trusting we are loved no matter what. Specifically, this challenge to change our misperceptions and be joyfully surprised where God is leading is encouraged with weekly chapters designed to stimulate thinking, feeling, and experiencing what the Gospel means for us. It is not a cookbook for sainthood nor a guarantee of psychospiritual health. It is rather a guidebook, asking us to look again as we journey into intimacy with God often through contemplative practices.

A series of weekly exercises are offered, which often include instruction and encouragement to:

- listen with the heart to story and narrative metaphors in the first person;
- deepen our understanding of the Gospel with commentary by N.T. Wright;
- learn to pray the Psalms and choose how to join in the Church's tradition of daily offices;
- experience the pattern of *lectio divina* as a contemplative gift from the Word;
- join in praise and meditation with songs and chants;

- experience the holiness of the ordinary in Creation through Celtic ways of seeing;
- journal with a wide variety of media and artistic expression;
- be introduced to the contemplative practice of the Prayer of the Heart, which awakens both dark and light angels within us as it deepens our soul's journey.

Although presented sequentially, these weekly chapters for spiritual formation may be prayerfully arranged according to how we feel led by the Holy Spirit. This is a new and developing artifact which is always incomplete and evolving; hence, the loose-leaf format.

Artifact Promotion

The use of the artifact will initially be offered to a select number of congregations and individuals in co-operation with diocesan leadership. This is the Episcopal way of respecting authority. As the program gets better-known and accepted, it can be promoted through mass media in the Church, word-of-mouth recommendation, and missional outreach by the originator or lay proponents. Following a Benedictine model, it is not clergy-centered.

Artifact Budget

The plan to share both hard copies and Internet email copies without professional production is intended to make it affordable for most rural congregations and individuals on limited incomes.

Initial cost of the program, including travel expenses to do introductory training and promotion, is estimated to be \$2,000 total for the first month for four churches, dropping to \$1,200 per month thereafter during training and on-site promotion. Variables would be diocesan grants, individual contributions, preaching stipends, and voluntary printing costs. There is no plan at this point to produce a hardbound book, given the flexible format which can be locally copied with permission.

Calendar for Action Plan

First complete draft of the artifact after dissertation approval in April 2019.

Begin field testing June 2019, or delay to Fall (September) 2019, depending on summer attendance patterns.

Revise and promote more widely in November 2019.

SECTION 6:

POSTSCRIPT

What Contributed to the Dissertation's Format?

My diverse professional background as a pastor, worker-priest and nurse provider all contributed to how I approached the problem for this dissertation. For each semester's independent study course, I chose to practice at least one discipline related the particular spiritual tradition being studied. Therefore, the thesis practical solutions are drawn from this study and experience, complemented by decades as a spiritual care provider and educator.

It has not always been comfortable being a conservative Christian in a liberal denomination. However, I have always valued diversity and engagement ecumenically while listening to and learning from a variety of Christian traditions, East and West.

The dissertation design was drawn from a research-based problem area (the spiritual growth catalysts described in the Problem chapter) connected to an ecclesial fact-of-life: in losing not only membership but much of its modern conservative, Evangelical base, today's Episcopal church may not be as comprehensive as it once was. It is skewed more toward liberal, post-modern theologies about Jesus with a focus on individual experiences interpreted within those frameworks. The Evangelical Option, suggested but never forced or required, and the re-introduction of historical spiritual practices become a potential resource for spiritual renewal.

How Effective is the Application of the Research?

The written statement becomes the blueprint for the artifact. This user-friendly product is intended to be affordable, as well as applicable across a wide range of ages and computer skills. It asks the seekers to respond to what is presented. Written, audio, and visual channels—made available via print and YouTube sites—provide multiple ways of tapping into one's preferred way of processing information. Journaling with artistic options offers another creative way to interact with the material. Suggestions for topics for group discussion are designed to enhance interactive learning as well. Spiritual formation is both a solitary and community way of being attuned to the Holy Spirit.

One option considered was to present the material fully online or create a website as an interactive educational module. The latter could be hooked up with others via a Facetime type of program. However, it was decided a more effective way to promote experiential spiritual disciplines would be to use low-tech: do it in person. We know that valuable subconscious and non-verbal communication takes place during normal human social interaction. Limbic resonance (emotional connectedness) requires proximity to another person. Technology often helps bring educational information into the home. Cognitive learning and spiritual awareness may interface, but they are not the same thing.

Several interesting ways to introduce the problem and proposed solutions might have been a review of Episcopal church history in the United States, tracing the theological development of Anglican doctrine over the centuries, or exploring the values and lifestyles of a particular contemporary age group as the target audience. These are all complex areas of study which warrant further research. The decision was made to focus

on the current culture in the Episcopal church and suggest alternatives for meeting those spiritual development needs by adapting historical Christian spiritual disciplines.

What Are the Specific Gains Made and Future Ways to Implement the Dissertation?

The dissertation builds on current research into how Episcopalians see spiritual journeying and what they want to explore more thoroughly. By remaining within the institutional structure, we can also assess the impact of what more progressive approaches to spirituality may offer as well as more traditional ones like a moderate Evangelical presence. The dissertation opens the door to the latter option in an assertive but non-judgmental way. Knowing Jesus as personal Savior will fulfill the needs of some, but not all, Episcopalians. The main advantage I judge as the result of this research is to broaden the concept of joining the Jesus Movement while recapturing classical spiritual concepts and disciplines which are still used by the Holy Spirit.

The user-friendly design of the artifact for the ordinary Christian could inspire a more mature ministry by the baptized intended for long-term, lifelong formation. We hope to do more than educate adults. We hope to encourage discipleship that flowers into sharing Good News, which leads to changed hearts.

Narrowing down the focus for a stated problem in spiritual growth and then coming up with attractive and authentic answers remains a challenge. It requires constant evaluation and feedback from the users: the people willing to engage the learning and activities suggested by the artifact to tell us how it's going. Every person responds differently depending on many aspects of their personality and where they are in their personal journey. We can, however, value their efforts and struggles by tracking what

they tell us about what works for them or what doesn't meet their needs. This all seems very subjective, and it is. Keeping everyone in prayer, we trust the Holy Spirit to reveal things that are not obvious at first, or unexpected outcomes. The curriculum is purposefully open-ended: it is always under development and open to change based on people's experiences in prayer and spiritual formation.

As the program grows within the dioceses and parishes which ask to participate, the logistics of providing training and access to resources need to be met. Creating a network among parishes and individuals may emerge as the program grows. We want to find ways to celebrate and affirm what is happening within the sacramental environment of a catholic Church. Retreats for adults and youth. Conferences. New liturgies. Joining local efforts to respond to discerned social justice needs. All things are possible when grounded in quiet, prayerful openness to where God is leading.

APPENDIX A:

ARTIFACT

Farther Up and Further In
A Journey into Spiritual Formation

by Robert Swope

For God alone my soul in silence waits;
truly, my hope rests in him.

He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my stronghold, so that I shall not be shaken.

Psalm 62: 6-7¹⁶¹

"I am the way," replied Jesus, "and the truth and the life!
Nobody comes to the father except through me.
If you had known me, you would have known my father.
From now on you do know him! You have seen him."

John 14: 6-7¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ *The Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Church Hymnal Corporation, 1979), 669.

¹⁶² N. T. Wright, *The Kingdom New Testament: A Contemporary Translation* (New York: Harper Collins, 2011), 207.

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Preface

These are exciting times for the Episcopal Church in the United States. It is a time of renewal and revival for our church: to make new again and to bring to life again. It means that things around us, among us and in front of us are already in the process of changing. Change in our American sub-cultures (generations, ethnic, socioeconomic), our lifestyles, our ability to cope and adapt, and unexpected consequences are always part of this historical cycle of life. For some change feels exhilarating. For others it can feel threatening or unwanted.

How we handle change within the Episcopal Church today may be more related to how and when we became active rather than any sociopolitical identity. A decreasing number of older members are cradle Episcopalians: born into an Episcopal family, baptized as a baby, went through adolescent Confirmation instruction and have grown up with this identity. Others have migrated to the Episcopal Church from other traditions, either through marriage or for various personal reasons. Most younger adults tend to be more accepting of women clergy, ethnic and LGBTQ gender differences as just part of daily life. Still others have been seekers: finding the beauty of historic worship, intellectual openness, advocacy for social change, and inclusion as desirable traits for a church home.

Where do you fit into this range of Episcopal Christians? Maybe none of the above. The good news is that all are welcome. We are a diverse, interesting family!

This particular invitation into a lifelong process of spiritual formation (which is not the same as Christian education) is based on results from a survey of spiritual growth

conducted among 12,000 Episcopalians from 2012 - 2017. It is also shaped by two other factors.

One is to recommend restoring an evangelical voice to the variety of historical traditions which make Anglican comprehensiveness truly possible again.¹⁶³ Please note that our use of evangelical has nothing to do with Fundamentalism or ultra-conservative, politicized expression of Christian belief. Anglican (or Episcopal) evangelicals affirm scientific understanding of the cosmos, social justice issues and egalitarian views of humanity as well as love for Jesus.

The other factor draws from historic Christian disciplines of prayer and spirituality—Benedictine, Orthodox, Unceasing Prayer and Celtic—which have all been important for centuries of Christian spiritual formation. Various chapters will explain and encourage your experience from these disciplines.

The challenge of a renewed emphasis on evangelism today is Presiding Bishop Curry's vision for us to become the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement. This has been further developed as a rule of life called *The Way of Love: Practices for a Jesus-Centered Life*.¹⁶⁴ Evangelism, reaching out with the good news of Jesus Christ, has always been a vital part of Christian vision for mission the Lord left to his followers as he ascended into heaven:

So you must go and make all the nations into disciples. Baptize them in the name of the father, and of the son, and of the holy spirit. Teach them to observe

¹⁶³ Evangelical, Catholic, charismatic, activist, contemplative, conservative and liberal, or a combination of these. See Thomas McKenzie, *The Anglican Way: A Guidebook* (Nashville, TN: Colony Catherine Inc, 2014).

¹⁶⁴ See Bill Carroll, "The Jesus Movement in Eight Points," Episcopal Café, June 1, 2018, <https://www.episcopalcafe.com/eight-theses-on-the-jesus-movement/>.

everything I have commanded you. And look: I am with you, every single day, to the very end of the age. (Mt 28:19-20)¹⁶⁵

Bishop Curry's message for loving *like* Jesus includes reconciliation (racial and justice-centered) and re-making relationships between God, each other and the earth itself. It is a dynamic approach to loving, always inclusive of everyone and open to evolving.

Bishop Curry's interpretation, however, does not have the same focus as the historical Anglican evangelical emphasis on a personal conversion experience to Jesus as savior and lord. The latter evangelical voice was once very much a part of the American experience, from colonial times to the present. In a true Anglican spirit of compromise in the 18th century, both spiritual regeneration by baptism and an adult conversion experience were eventually placed side-by-side as viable ways to begin to grow into Christlikeness, the goal of spiritual formation. We refer to this as *via media*, the "middle way" which includes both/and or a way between. Another example would be the co-existence of Protestant and Anglo-Catholic sacramental understanding and liturgical worship.

The primary agent for spiritual growth—deepening one's life in self-awareness, loving surrender and practicing the presence of God— is the active work of the Holy Spirit. Nothing is genuine without the Spirit's grace; all things are possible when the Holy Spirit moves within and among us.

¹⁶⁵ All New Testament quotes in this document are from the *Kingdom New Testament: A Contemporary Translation* unless otherwise indicated. Its translator is the former Anglican bishop of Durham and distinguished Biblical scholar, Dr. N.T. Wright.

My prayer for you as you begin this wonderful, prayer-filled journey into Christ is
"Come, Holy Spirit, come. Come and fill the hearts of your faithful people, and kindle in
us the fire of your love!" Amen.

— Father Bob

Chapter One:

What Is Spiritual Formation?

Although the term faith formation is often used to mean spiritual formation, I'd like to suggest we're talking about something different. For me, faith formation is acquiring knowledge about the *what* rather than experiencing and receiving a dynamic relationship with the *Who* (God). We need to see formation as the two woven together: knowledge and living in relationship with God and others, promised by Jesus when he tells the disciples:

"I am telling you the solemn truth," Jesus continued. "Anyone who trusts in me will also do the works that I'm doing. In fact, they will do greater works than these because I am going to the Father! And whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son." (John 14:12-13)

When Jesus is ascended, the Holy Spirit will be with the disciples to empower them to do what Jesus did during his earthly ministry, and even more after Christ is glorified. The Holy Spirit is already with the disciples and will remain in them. The Spirit is with us and will remain in us also.

Here's an experienced theologian's definition of spiritual formation. In *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective*, Dr. Jeffrey P. Greenman writes

The term "spiritual formation" has become popular, but since it is not a precise, technical term its actual meaning is sometimes unclear ... *Spiritual formation is our continuing response to the reality of God's grace shaping us into the likeness of Jesus Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit, in the community of faith, for the sake of the world.* Spiritual formation is an ongoing process for Christians. It is not a program or project or course that is completed in a few weeks, but rather a lifelong journey of transformation.¹⁶⁶

Let's unpack this summary for a moment. What does it mean in plain English?

¹⁶⁶ *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspectives*, ed. Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 24.

The Holy Spirit, or God, is going to change you and me into behaving and being like Jesus, the same Jesus with the Hebrew title *Maschiach* (Christ, or "the Anointed One"). Our only task is to respond to this invitation. The good news is that it isn't totally up to us; it's up to God to shape us like Jesus. Dallas Willard, in arguing the relevance of God in every aspect of our living, says the possibility to resemble Jesus (Christlikeness) lies in

the love of Jesus for us, and the magnificence of his person, [which] brings the disciple to adore Jesus. His love, and his loveliness fills our lives ... In this love of Jesus everything comes together. "If anyone love me, my word he will keep, and my Father will love him, and we will move in with him and live there" (John 14:23).¹⁶⁷

Episcopalians don't usually talk like this, do they? Ah, but we do!

The "community of faith" means the Church: the capital "C" Church, composed of Catholics, Anglicans, Orthodox, Methodists, Baptists, Pentecostals, conservative or liberal, and almost every other group calling itself Christian. The little "c" church can be found in my neighborhood, the place I usually go on Sundays. Community implies we enjoy gathering together, getting to know one other, together loving and worshiping the Lord, and feeling like we belong. This community is the local incarnation of the Body of Christ. That's the one we're baptized into.

"For the sake of the world" means I am not doing this only for me or my group of friends. The Lord intends for us to be formed into Christlikeness for the sake of others, including those we don't even know yet. The focus is not exclusively on me and what I want. It's what God wants us to become as we live out Jesus' command to love one another. There are no exceptions as to whom we are to love. Everyone is included.

¹⁶⁷ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering our Hidden Life in God* (New York: Harper One Publishers, 1997), 336.

This is not some Lenten supper program or adult Bible study for few months. It's for the long haul. For the rest of my life. Transformation of who I am is a long, persistent, and sometimes bumpy process. I'm not sure where I'll end up, but that's okay. God is in charge of the details. Like it says in Proverbs, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not rely on your own insight. In all ways acknowledge him and he will make straight your paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6 NRSV).¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁸ NRSV is the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. Our edition includes the extra writings of the Apocrypha and Deuterocanonical books sandwiched in between the Old and New Testaments. This version is used in Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox traditions. Some of our lectionary readings come from the Apocrypha.

Chapter Two: Getting Down to the Nitty-Gritty

For those of you unfamiliar with the term, "nitty-gritty" was first used about 1940 just before the beginning of World War II. No one seems to know where it came from. But it means we're now looking at what is essential and basic for the proposed journey ahead of us.

Each of the following essay reflection chapters contains one or more aides to understanding and hopefully stimulating your prayerful imagination. Imagining is what our creative minds do to make sense out of what we experience. Things don't always make sense at first, of course, and sometimes we're left with unanswered questions. A lot of spiritual stuff can be paradoxical. It's left *and* right, up *and* down, together.

Notice I didn't say right or wrong. That's more black-and-white thinking that sincere people sometimes fall prey to. Most of life appears to be full of gray areas, which just are what they are. That's paradox: both/and! Who said confusion is the beginning of wisdom? At least it keeps us humble as we plod along. Here's some of what will show up in the chapters:

1. An informal narrative on a particular subject, perhaps a perspective you haven't heard before. It's there to stimulate your reflection.
2. A brief Gospel passage study based on the *New Testament for Everyone* series by Dr. N.T. Wright. Tom Wright is formerly bishop of Durham, England, and a world-renowned biblical scholar, theologian, and teacher. His research is profound and thorough. However, with a pastor's heart, he writes in a down-to-earth way for ordinary intelligent Christians. You will be asked to purchase or acquire the six-volume paperback series on Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Dr. Wright has written commentaries for all of the New Testament books, but we're focusing on the four canonical Gospels. In his translation of the Gospels, part of the *Kingdom New Testament* appears in each section of the commentaries. Dr. Wright is witty and quite English but can "speak American" since he often lectures across the Pond here in the United States.
3. We will learn to not just read but *pray* the Psalms. This is an old tradition found in Christian monasteries, especially among Benedictines, who chant psalms together several times daily. I am asking you to consider using the late Dr. Eugene Peterson's *Message*

version, available in hardback or paperback. Yes, you may use any version of the Psalter you want to. However, I agree with former Denver Seminary president Vernon Grounds: With remarkable spiritual perceptiveness and mind-jolting language, Eugene Peterson makes these ancient hymns and poems come alive for 20th century readers. Undergirded by careful, reverent scholarship, his renderings speak in a contemporary idiom to which our minds — and hearts! — resonate.¹⁶⁹

We're not doing an academic analysis of the psalms. We're going to pray them.

4. We will learn to use another ancient form of contemplating the scriptures known as *lectio divina*. This is a way to let the Word get from our head into our heart. The last stage, appropriately known as contemplation, is just sitting silently with a brief passage or word and letting the Holy Spirit provide insight.
5. You will be offered online YouTube selections of simple, memorable chants which repeat over and over. Some are in Latin, but most are in English. Most of these come from the ecumenical Taizé community founded in 1940 by Protestant Reformed monk Brother Roger Schütz.

There will also be some Celtic-themed chants that lend themselves to simple repetition. St. Augustine of Hippo is sometimes quoted as saying "the person who sings prays twice." This is a lovely sentiment when coupled with the idea that we need to be praising God in our hearts in order for it to be true prayer.

You will also be invited to view and listen to short YouTube talks by Christian leaders familiar with prayer and formation. They offer insight and "aha!" moments for us to consider.

6. You will be asked to engage in personal journaling. The choice of which media to use is entirely up to you. This becomes your own creative space to write, draw, or create art to reflect upon what the theme of the chapter suggests. Spiritual formation involves the whole person, including all the physical senses and artistic expression. Jesus said little children belong to the kingdom of heaven (Mt 14:19). Without becoming *childish*, Christian adults need to express themselves with *childlike* wonder: such as through writing, painting/drawing, dancing, music, and other activities that outwardly demonstrate what we are thinking and feeling and maybe praying for.
7. You will be introduced to the Orthodox contemplative tradition of the Jesus Prayer. The prayer itself is simple but offers deep insight as a way of unceasing prayer. "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 NRSV). The purpose is to place the

¹⁶⁹ From the hardcover back jacket of *The Message Psalms* by Eugene H. Peterson (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1994).

mind into the heart — this usually takes a long time to learn, but it is possible for ordinary Christians everywhere.

Lest this all feels overwhelming, you are *not* expected to do all of these disciplines! They will be introduced with more detail gradually. It is best to begin with only one or two at a time and stick with it for a while. Spiritual formation is about quality, not quantity. It is about loving more deeply. You don't have to do things perfectly. You can select which disciplines seem to fit your personality or you feel drawn to. There are many ways Christians through the centuries have learned to help focus their attention on what the Spirit is saying for this time and place. Taste and see for yourself!

If you want more information about these disciplines, years ago evangelical Quaker scholar Richard Foster gathered many of these attitudes and practices together into one book: *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*. Foster has written many more books, including one on simplifying our lifestyles, *Freedom of Simplicity: Finding Harmony in a Complex World*. Both are available from booksellers in several formats, including Amazon.

Chapter Three:

Sharing Our Journey with Others

While there will be times we need to be alone for solitude or get away from the noisy world, spiritual formation is usually a team sport. It is most beneficial when we do it along with others. By sharing what we are learning or experiencing, pain as well as joy, we are part of a family that supports and loves us no matter what. In small groups, we always respect boundaries, personal space, and privacy. Confidentiality is necessary if honest sharing is to take place. If anyone consistently violates these precepts, perhaps they should be asked to leave the group. No one has to reveal anything that they are not comfortable sharing. Silence and listening together are part of Christian group life. A small meal or non-alcoholic refreshment may be made available, but the purpose of getting together is not socializing.

Each small group (I would suggest no more than six or seven members) sets its own rules for engagement. Usual ground rules for healthy small groups include time limits, not allowing anyone to monopolize the conversation, no gossip or criticism of others, and keeping to an informal but definite agenda so that everyone knows what to expect.

Leadership should rotate. This avoids any one person dominating the group. The scheduled leader should allow time for everyone to speak who wants to and serves as the timekeeper. Ending at eight-thirty means ending at eight-thirty. Decide if telephone or email reminders of when and where the meeting occurs would be helpful to the group.

There should be a covenant between members to show up every time, on time, and decide how long the group will continue to exist. Sporadic attendance can hamper the development of trust relationships. How to welcome new members or keep the group closed needs to be clearly

decided upon at the beginning of forming the group. Visitors may be invited if everyone knows ahead of time, as long as it does not compromise the intimacy and confidentiality of the group.

The group is led by baptized lay people. Your pastor or priest will appreciate this is not something they have to organize and run. Did you know St. Benedict only allowed priests into the monastery as long as they followed the rules and behaved like ordinary monks? Such a wise man of God and organizational saint Benedict was! His model for *cenobitic* (shared life together) religious community has lasted for over 1500 years.

Clear expectations up front avoids awkward moments in the future. Praying together, for one another, should never be excluded because there wasn't enough time. We expect God to show up. God always listens when we pray.

This may sound like a lot of rules, but these principles for small groups have been proven over time and experience to build authentic, enjoyable experiences. By all means, have fun!

Are you ready now to get going? To answer to the inner child in the back seat, "Yes, we are there: we are ready for the adventure of farther along and further in. Let's begin!"

Chapter Four:

Who Do You Say That I Am?

The story behind this question is found both in Matthew's Gospel (16:13-21) and in Luke's (9:18-22). The twelve apostles, the inner group of disciples Jesus hand-picked, are gathered around Jesus one day when he rather casually asks them "Who do the people say I am?" The disciples respond with what they've heard other people say. Interestingly it is all famous dead prophets, including a recent martyr. Elijah. Jeremiah. Perhaps another one of the prophets. The most recent to die was his cousin John the baptizer.

This confusion is evidence that people were trying to explain who Jesus of Nazareth was in light of the amazing things he said and did. He healed all sorts of physical diseases, including restoring people who had been shunned back into their communities. He even raised a couple of people from the dead. Most disturbing was Jesus' frequent complete forgiveness of sinners, a privilege reserved to God alone. Jesus violated all the norms of a ritual purity culture. Although he knew the Torah and the Prophets and Psalms intimately, Jesus taught on his own authority as one intimately connected to God.

Then Jesus narrows the focus of the question. It's not about what others think. It's personal: "who do *you all* think I am?" Simon, not known for his keen insights or grasp of spiritual depth, blurts out, "You're the Christ! The son of the living God." In the first century the hope for a Jewish messiah (Christ) was to be the national savior of a persecuted people. He was to come and defeat the pagan armies of Rome. The messiah would restore the glory of God's chosen people, taking over the throne of David as king. He would usher in an era of peace and prosperity.

Now here's an interesting follow up. Jesus then tells the apostles not to talk about this revealing declaration by Peter (Jesus changes Simon's name to *petra*, Peter, a rock). In other words, it is not yet time to reveal this truth before something else takes place. Jesus then explains he will have to go to Jerusalem, suffer at the hands of local authorities, be killed and raised to Life again.

According to the Gospel witnesses, Jesus affirms he is the Messiah-King they have been expecting. Instead of a political solution for a local religious group, however, Jesus' reign will vastly exceed any of their expectations. His glory will be revealed on a cruel instrument of Roman torture, the cross. It is through his suffering and death that deliverance will come. The sign of that victory and cosmic change will be a bodily resurrection. This is not some physical resuscitation bringing someone back from clinical death. It is far more profound, as the women and apostles will slowly realize. Jesus, the Messiah-Lord, begins his reign there and then. He *is* ironically exactly what Pilate has posted on the *titulus*, or inscription, on the crossbar: Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. And more than that. Christ Jesus is the one who rules over all of creation. It almost makes him sound divine, yet fully human.

In every generation of Christians, especially today, we have to ponder and answer the same question Jesus poses, "But you all: who do you say that I am?" It is popular today to say it doesn't matter what you believe about Jesus; you're entitled to your own opinion. You'll hear that in the video below from interviews on a college campus. This sounds egalitarian but it is simply personal opinion or perhaps what they've heard others say.

It does matter what you believe about Jesus because you are being challenged to either fall in love with him or consider him as just another ethical and mystical teacher. Is Jesus just another historical spiritual leader like the Buddha or Moses or Mohammed or some other

philosophical source of wisdom? Think for a moment about someone you love dearly. That relationship is built on trust and the truth of who they are.

Relationships built on little lies or misguided trust will eventually crumble and fall apart. Human intimacy is never perfect nor should we expect it to be. We love one another in spite of our imperfections. An anonymous person once said, "A friend is someone who knows all about us but loves us anyway." All genuine intimacy must be grounded in loving integrity. For whom are you willing to risk your life? Who gave his life in order to restore us to loving intimacy with God?

As an Episcopalian or Anglican you are part of a Christian community which allows for diversity of belief but not without historical perspective. Most Christians for most generations have struggled to clarify both who Jesus is and what God is really like (the three-in-oneness of the Trinity). The conclusion shared by most Christians including those across the world today is that Jesus is Lord: the unique Son of God, Savior. He has conquered death and evil by embracing them on the cross and extinguishing their power through his self-emptying death. As a result he now reigns over all creation, heaven and earth.

Knowing about this King Jesus is not the same as engaging in a loving relationship with him. What's even more remarkable is that we have to receive this relationship as a gift. We are incapable of entering into intimacy with God on our own. All we can do is surrender our innermost being to his mercy. This is what is behind that old term, repentance. The good news is that God will always accept this humble plea to be forgiven and renewed and changed to his glory. What is imperfect in us is transformed through Christ into God's loving presence within us. This is what Paul writes to the Galatian Christians

I am, however, alive — but it isn't me any longer; it's the Messiah who lives in me. And the life I still do live in the flesh, I live within the faithfulness of the son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Galatians 2:20).

"Who do you think or believe or trust that I am?" This is still the personal question for our day. As sacramental, catholic Christians we know the doctrinal beliefs about Jesus voiced in the historic Creeds professed in worship. We know the importance of the sacrament of baptism to make the benefits of Christ's death and resurrection effectively present to us today. However, the question remains: what do you expect from a loving relationship with Jesus? The answer you and I give will change our lives. For some it may be a push-pull process of hesitation and affirmation. It may take more time to honestly know Jesus as Lord.

The struggle eventually changes your relationship within your inner self (the place where the Holy Spirit lives) as well as your relationships with others. The Lord is infinitely patient, but our decision does have consequences. In the book of the Apocalypse or Revelation, John has a vision of the Sovereign Jesus in heaven exclaiming, "Look! I'm standing here, knocking at the door. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to them and eat with them, and they with me." You and I are invited to the Messianic banquet which is a metaphor for being constantly fed and nourished to live the abundant life promised by Jesus. All we have to do is open the door of our hearts to him, to desire for him to be the center of our lives.

YouTube Video

View the videos below. Reflect on your experience as a young person in terms of understanding who Jesus is. How has that changed? What is the Gospel for you?

WHO IS JESUS? NYC STREET SURVEY
The Property Rescuers - January 6, 2011 - 2:37
<https://youtu.be/johNLhZ5y48>

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL? NT WRIGHT
 Rodi Agnus Dei - April 27, 2013 - 13:15
<https://youtu.be/ICHovRHJAYY>

YouTube Audio

Play this Celtic Woman version of an old Gospel hymn. It is as beautiful as ever. You may watch the performance video and then listen with your eyes closed. Let the music and the lyrics lead your soul into quiet worship.

CELTIC WOMAN: AMAZING GRACE
 Celtic Woman Official - November 28, 2009 - 5:02
https://youtu.be/HsCp5LG_zNE

Journal

Try writing a short poem (it doesn't have to rhyme) in your own style that responds to this chapter's introductory question, "Who do you say that I am?"

Alternative: free word association. If you're not comfortable expressing yourself poetically, simply write the name Jesus in the center of the page. Draw a circle or ellipse around the Name. (You can use colored pencils)

Without overthinking it (!) write down five or six one- or two-syllable words placed and angled the way you feel they should be in relationship to the name of Jesus. Again, do this without trying to analyze anything.

Now go back and draw lines to connect the words you've written (they can be any type of lines, any distance from the center and from each other).

If you're in a group, share these journal items with one another without critiquing them.

Gospel for Everyone

Read Luke 9:18 - 27, Peter's Declaration of Jesus' Messiahship.

Respond to Wright's quote: "As Jesus said earlier, it's no use saying 'Lord, Lord' if you don't *do* what he says. Jesus' identity and his vocation are tied so tightly together that if you want to have anything to do with him you have to take the whole package or nothing at all. There are no half measures in the kingdom of God." (*Luke for Everyone*, 112) What is required of followers of Jesus today? What is the whole package?

Prayer

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you,
so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills,
that we may be completely yours, utterly dedicated to you.
And then use us, we pray, as you will, and always to your glory
and the welfare of your people, through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

"For self-dedication and commitment to God's will," *To Be a Christian*, 133

Chapter Five:

Humility

Christian humility is one of the most misunderstood concepts in modern culture. For some, it brings up the idea of a weak and wimpy individual who shuffles along in life with low self-esteem. They are either tolerated or pitied. For others, to be humble is the opposite of the confident, assertive corporate leader who speaks boldly and looks you in the eyes. He gets respect and is going places. For still others, to appear humble is a way of getting someone to do what you want them to. Exhibiting a docile attitude is designed to garner sympathy or manipulate feelings.

None of these stereotypes is remotely related to real Christian humility. True humility comes from a place of inner strength without arrogance. Humility is a characteristic of someone who knows themselves well enough not to have to put on a mask, or false persona. The humble person can listen closely to others because they are not preparing a mental reply ahead of time.

Humble people welcome diversity, new ideas, and even challenges to their own beliefs. They are not threatened by honest criticism, weighing the validity and willing to admit errors in judgment. Humble people have no problem apologizing for real offenses or mistakes. They want to learn from those mistakes in order to love others better.

Christian humility is always being formed from the heart of God. "But this is how God demonstrates his own love for us: the Messiah (Jesus) died for us while we were still sinners" (Romans 5:8). St. Paul says we need to have the same mind as Christ Jesus. Although he was equal to the Father as God, he made himself a servant, "and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!" (Phillipians 2:8).

Humility is not a passive venture. It becomes an active, purposeful choice for the sake of others in response to knowing we are loved unconditionally. This is why the Bible is full of admonitions to be humble: “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love” (Ephesians 4:2). “Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up” (James 4:10). “All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble” (1 Peter 5:5). As Jesus himself often reminded the disciples, “For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted” (Luke 14:11).

When St. Benedict was writing his Rule for community life, he dedicated a whole chapter to the subject of humility.¹⁷⁰ It is the heart of the Rule. Benedict describes a ladder from earth to heaven, like Jacob's ladder, with twelve rungs, or steps, to humility. The first and foremost is to be mindful of God at all times. “The God-life ... is a never-ending, unremitting, totally absorbing enterprise. God is intent on it; so must we be.”¹⁷¹

The second step in being formed in humility logically follows the first. If knowing God is the primary purpose of my life, then I must seek to follow his will without complaint or excuse. Again, we listen to Jesus teaching us what to pray for: “your will be done on earth as in heaven.”

The third and fourth steps are a little harder for modern Christians to embrace. Love God above all else. Seek to do his will faithfully. But then we are asked to listen to and obey the wisdom of someone who is Christ for us! We are asked to hang in there and follow that wisdom even when it becomes distasteful or difficult. For people raised in a culture that values

¹⁷⁰ Rule of Benedict, chapter 7.

¹⁷¹ Joan Chittister, *The Rule of Benedict: A Spirituality for the 21st Century* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2010), 83.

individualism and freedom so highly, this can be a hard pill to swallow. But the principle is that if we are going to die to self, we need to let go of our need to be in control all the time.

There are other steps to humility, which Dr. Chittister shares in the video below. We are reminded by St. Paul: “Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience” (Colossians 3:12) Humility done out of love is the basis for all disciplines in spiritual formation.

YouTube Video

JOAN CHITTISTER - HUMILITY

One Minute Reflection - joanchittister.org - November 11, 2018 - 2:21

<https://youtu.be/uQPzqBnxVj0>

What about the Benedictine concept of growing into humility excites you or challenges you?

YouTube Audio Meditation

Sit comfortably in a quiet place. Load the video and enlarge to full screen. Use headphones if you have them. Use an external speaker system if in a group.

Listen to and watch the video.

Look at the lyrics below. Chant along with the Taizé gathering.

Close your eyes, and chant along with the recording a third time.

Rest in silence for a moment.

"Bless the Lord, my soul, and bless God's holy name.
Bless the Lord, my soul, who leads me into life."

Mostar Taizé chant - Bless the Lord - Nov 15, 2009 - 4:27

<https://youtu.be/t4Svh-9ohg4>

Journal

You are going to compare two events in your life. Write about them or draw a picture.

Describe a time when you felt embarrassed, humiliated or defensive.

Do you remember why?

Describe a time when you consciously felt compassion toward someone and were able to gently respond with simple supportive words or actions.

What was the result? Did you tell someone else about this encounter?

Briefly describe any thoughts you have about why humility requires no affirmation.

Gospel for Everyone

Read Matthew 26:57-68, Jesus Before Caiaphas

There is a time to speak and a time to remain silent. Why do you think Jesus chose to remain silent when accused? Why did he speak the truth about himself, which got him condemned?

Think about times in your own life when it was difficult to either speak up or remain silent. How were you feeling?

Prayer

Loving Father,
 carry us when the path gets too rough,
 Give us the courage to continue to be available to You
 and to others,
 ready to share our experience without arrogance.
 Grant that the years that are left to us may be
 the holiest,
 the most loving,
 and the most creative.
 Thank you for the past, and for leaving the best wine until now. Amen.
 ---"Prayer from an Older Companion", *Celtic Daily Prayer Book Two*

Chapter Six:

Journey into Silence

If gold is a treasure, then silence must be spiritual gold. Christians, especially monks, have known this for centuries. When you think about it, the visible universe is almost totally silent. Only four percent of the universe is made up of visible stuff like planets and stars.¹⁷² That's not to say it isn't full of energies, radiation, and dark matter we can't hear, see, or even detect very well. The silence of Creation is the language of God, who made everything that is. We need to learn that language. We want to be able to listen to that silence, both outwardly and inwardly.

We turn to the Benedictines again for wisdom. The first word in Benedict's *Rule* is *obsculta*, Latin for "listen." Later in the *Rule* (chapter six), the monks are advised:

Therefore, due to the great importance of silence itself, perfect disciples should rarely be granted permission to speak, even good, holy and edifying words. For it is written, "In much speaking you will not avoid sin" ... It is the master's role to speak and teach; the disciple is to keep silent and listen.¹⁷³

You and I do not live in a monastery. However, the preference for silence should be noted, especially when we feel we can't wait to say something valuable. There is always the tendency to express ideas of which we are proud or to make a favorable impression on others. The temptation to pride or needing approval can be subtle. It is better, says Benedict, to just wait and listen to someone who has more seasoned knowledge. To listen respectfully to others is part of the ladder of humility: allowing others to be Christ for us. It's a hard lesson, and not easily remembered in the excitement of intense dialogue, but it can be very rewarding.

¹⁷² Richard Panek, *The 4% Universe* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011).

¹⁷³ Terrence G. Kardong, *Benedict's Rule: A Translation and Commentary* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 119.

Much of what follows is taken from a lovely, succinct chapter by Susie Hayward on silence and solitude. She is a humanistic psychologist, and consultant in human development to the Ampleforth Benedictine Abbey in Yorkshire, England.¹⁷⁴

The ability to cultivate silence comes with being attentive and learning to listen deeply. The resulting happiness at being one with everything in the hidden ground of Love is inexplicable (says Thomas Merton). Without silence, says Hayward, God has no voice.

Seeking silence begins from the outside in. In the noisy world we live in, we have to get somewhere apart from it all, like going on a silent or quiet retreat, getting out into nature away from the city, or isolating ourselves by enjoying a solitary activity or hobby. Creating a piece of art or listening to peaceful music can also provide an atmosphere of restfulness conducive to inner calm. Much like the white noise generators used by counselors or noise-cancelling headphones, external distracting sounds can be mitigated to where they are not consciously processed by the auditory channels of the brain. These external ways of becoming quiet prepare the stage for interior silence.

We can't talk and listen at the same time. This goes for the self-talk we naturally do as we process thoughts and feelings as well. Our everyday consciousness, like nature itself, abhors a vacuum. When we lower the impact of external, sensual stimulation, the brain wants to take over and provide its own entertainment. It takes repeated self-awareness, without blaming ourselves, to stop when we become aware that we are entertaining mental images.

This is the way of silent meditation: calm down, rest in the silence, do *not* try to prevent or control any distractions. That only diverts more attention away from the silence and wastes energy on trying to control our thoughts. We can just smile inwardly and let go of our need to

¹⁷⁴ Susie Hayward, "Silence" in *The Oblate Life* (London: Canterbury Press Norwich, 2008), 119-129.

control. We learn how to detach and move on. Gently return to the silence. This does not come easily for most people. God is kind and infinitely patient; we can learn to be kind and patient with ourselves.

We are creatures of habit, both good habits and not-so-helpful habits. We have the freedom to choose, unless we have given that up with addictions. Practice may not make us perfect, but that wasn't the goal anyway. God honors the effort. We're not trying to be an expert in silence or ascend to ethereal heights. Did we forget about humility? It's all related: humility, silence, receptive prayer.

Silence does not always bring us peace and tranquility. Sometimes the silence is empty. We feel the absence of God or the holy. This can be frightening or disappointing until we realize that this felt absence may be the Holy Spirit's way of weaning us from false or inadequate knowledge of God as his image-bearers. Centuries ago, the prophet Isaiah got this.

Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him when he is near ... "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways," says the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:6, 8-9 NRSV).

This was spoken in loving-kindness through the spirit of prophecy. We are not God, and much of who God is remains total mystery—far, far beyond our understanding. He is always loving us, of course, listening closely to us, waiting patiently for us listen for him with the ears of the heart.

As Hayward reminds us, interior solitude is not physical aloneness but a profoundly deep simplicity in which God alone is the center of our existence. Physical solitude is not a time of loneliness. It is time alone that requires us to honestly question who we are and how we can learn to be content and even creative without the external crutches of modern civilization around us. "For God alone my soul in silence waits; from him comes my salvation. He alone is my rock and

my salvation, my stronghold, so that I shall not be greatly shaken" (Psalm 62:1-2 from *The Book of Common Prayer 1979*, page 669).

YouTube Video

STARTING YOUR SPIRITUAL JOURNEY: EMBRACING SILENCE

Renovaré Britain and Ireland - Jan 6, 2015 - 3:21

https://youtu.be/ftUcpnd33_o

DALLAS' PERSONAL DAILY PRACTICES - The Rev. Dr. Dallas Willard

Tree of Life Community with Dallas Willard - Apr 18, 2011 - 6:03

(video is unfocused but audio remains very clear)

<https://youtu.be/GqlmeubS65Q>

YouTube Audio

Listen to and watch the following Taizé video on full screen.

Play it again with eyes closed, listening to the music and choir.

Wait for one minute in silence.

Play the video a third time, either watching or listening with eyes closed.

WAIT FOR THE LORD

Analyn Solano - Dec 3, 2012 - 4:42

<https://youtu.be/s7GexIvX8HU>

Journal

Reflect on the narrative about silence and solitude. Briefly describe where and how you have found nurturing silence or solitude in your life. If you have ever had struggles making time for this or you feel uncomfortable with silence or being by yourself away from others, picture how this feels by either writing about it or creating a drawing that depicts your feelings.

Gospel for Everyone

Read Luke 5:12-16, The Healing of the Leper

Reflection: What does the touch of Jesus do for people?

What does Jesus often do after or before a day of intense personal ministry?

Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, come.
Fill the hearts of your faithful people;
 kindle in us the fire of your love.
Come, Holy Spirit. Come!
Lord, send forth your Spirit
 to renew the face of the earth.
Breath of God: create in us pure hearts.

Chapter Seven:

Praying the Psalms

The Psalms have been both the primary songbook and the prayer book for both Jews and Christians for over two thousand years. They are a collection of 150 Hebrew poems set to music, intended to be sung from the heart by everyone. St. Athanasius, the great fourth-century Church father who defended the incarnation of the Word in Jesus, also commented on the use of the psalms.

In the Psalter you learn about yourself. You find depicted in it all the movements of the soul, all its changes, all its ups and downs, its failures and recoveries. Moreover, whatever your particular need or trouble, from this same book you can select a form of words to fit it, so that you do not merely hear and then pass on but learn the way to remedy your ill. Prohibitions of evildoing are plentiful in Scripture, but only the Psalter tells you how to obey these orders and refrain from sin.

(From a translation of "A letter of Athanasius, our Holy Father, Archbishop of Alexandria, to Marcellinus on the Interpretation of the Psalms," *Athanasius: The Life of Anthony and Letter to Marcellinus*, Paulist Press, 1980)

In looking at various disciplines helpful in spiritual formation, we are really talking about the transformation of the individual from the inside out. This is a transforming of the whole person: mind-body and soul, or spirit. All of those traditional ways of cleansing the temple of the body-soul—fasting, solitude, silence, simplicity of life, obedience, immersion in the scriptures, finding holiness in the ordinary, manual labor, caring for others, and much more—are valuable tools but they are not in themselves able to get into our innermost psyche or spirit.

A metaphor for this necessary transforming of the self is a floating iceberg: you and others see the tip above the waterline, but the majority is hidden beneath, out of sight. All of the patterns of acting and reacting we learned from childhood in our birth family (the ones who raised us) are stored in memory. Some are painful and the wounds have never healed. Some are joyful and the result of knowing we are loved. Until we are able to unpack and acknowledge

these emotion-laden forces, they will continue to drive us unconsciously every day. The journey to emotional and psychospiritual health can be a difficult struggle if we just live on the surface of our lives without risking deeper self-awareness.

The psalms expose our humanity in all of its glory and brokenness. They honestly reveal our anger, fears, hatred (yes, even wanting to hurt others), depression, hopelessness, and anguish. They also proclaim our hopes, joy, love, and celebration of God's friendship in praise and thanksgiving. N.T. Wright, in *The Case for the Psalms*, writes from a lifetime of praying with them in Anglican chants and deep reflection. They have the potential to unlock our deepest secrets and lovingly expose them to God's unconditional love.

The early Church spiritual athletes often memorized the entire 150 psalms and could pray them weekly alone or in community. To be honest, they had no distractions like we do in our busy, hurried world. Desert solitude was the place to face inner demons and to immerse the soul in God's Word, especially the songs of the Psalter. It was an incredibly intense life of unceasing attention to the Spirit. Few of us today, even monastics, can live this lifestyle *nor is it the one we are called to follow*.

How do we pray the psalms today? We learn to say them from the heart, not just with our minds. Most of us can read before the time we get to high school. We forget how most people in Western culture just a few hundred years ago were illiterate. Most in the underdeveloped world today still are, especially where girls are not allowed to be educated. We want to read, then re-read slowly and thoughtfully in a translation that makes sense for us. To recapture the often-startling emotion and power of the original language of the Psalms, I recommend you try the modern paraphrase by Eugene Peterson, *The Message Psalms*, as a fresh way of hearing them, letting them soak into your soul.

We need to translate their meaning into our own words and understanding. It's not a case of rote memorization of the psalms (although that would be helpful in many cases). It is, rather, making sense out of what they are saying to us, for us. Memorizing *that* becomes a way of recalling what we can pray sincerely from our hearts. We do not hide from God in shame and guilt. We openly expose our failures and weaknesses as the first step to healing and transparent living.

Frequent use of the psalter will lead to us remember them. A daily cycle of saying or singing the psalms as personal prayer reinforces their recall. This is part of Paul's admonition to "rejoice always, pray without ceasing. and in everything [not just the happy, comforting stuff], give thanks!" (1 Thessalonians 5). In this way, the Holy Spirit can continue to slowly transform us into the image-bearers God has intended for us to be all along.

YouTube Video

HOW TO PRAY THE PSALMS - TIM KELLER

DesiringGod.com on Oct 2014 - published June 28, 2015 - 6:25

<https://youtu.be/QWLN-2pQds4>

N.T. WRIGHT ON THE PSALMS

Portion of plenary address at the Calvin Symposium on Worship 2012 -

published by Philip Donald Sept 15, 2013 - 5:13

<https://youtu.be/y0pJ6zeJfa8>

YouTube Audio

ANGLICAN CHANT - PSALM 102 (*Domine, exaude*)

Choir of Ely Cathedral - July 30, 2013 - 7:28

<https://youtu.be/r17ImiMr7ZI>

(*stop* video before next selection)

Chanting of the psalms during the morning and evening offices is a historical way of praying the Psalter. It is the Word set to beautiful music and rhythmic cadence.

LET ME HEAR - J. Philip Newell, Sounds of the Eternal: Meditative Chants and Prayers
 Solo by Suzanne Butler - June 4, 2015 - 7:24
<https://youtu.be/5MA31P-iDr4>
 (stop video before next selection)

Listen to the recording all the way through (after skipping ad).

Repeat the video and sing along with the chant.

Close your eyes, play the selection, and repeat the chant once more.

Taken from Psalm 85:8 - "Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts."

Journal

Thumb through your copy of the Psalter. Don't just select one that is familiar or is filled with comfortable imagery. But do select one that you want to think more about, one that you want to pray.

This is not an analysis of what the words are saying. You are listening to the feeling and surprises that arise. Write about this experience. Perhaps translate the portion of that psalm into your own words. Close your eyes and just rest before the Lord, who is listening.

Gospel for Everyone

Read Mark 15:33 - 39, The Death of Jesus.

Matthew and Mark record Jesus quoting from Psalm 22:2 on the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" The anguish and pain of separation from *Abba*-Father is almost overwhelming torment. The psalms he knows so well flood Jesus' last consciousness as he is dying. This is the solace of memorized scripture, especially the emotional content of the psalms: God is with us in all of life's joys and tragedies.

Prayer

From Ps 103 - a David Psalm

Adapted from *The Message* version, Eugene Peterson

Oh, my soul, bless Yahweh.
From head to toe, I'll bless his holy name!
Oh, my soul, bless Yahweh,
don't forget a single blessing!

He forgives our sins—every one.
He heals our diseases—every one.
He redeems us from hell—saves our lives!
He crowns us with love and mercy—a paradise crown.
He wraps us in goodness—beauty eternal.
He renews our youth—we're always young in his presence.

Oh, my soul, bless the Lord! Amen.

Chapter Eight:

Lectio, Part One: Climbing Jacob's Ladder

Daily meditation on scripture has always been a part of Benedictine monastic tradition. It wasn't until the 12th century, however, that a systematic pattern for *lectio divina* ("divine reading") was written down.¹⁷⁵ Its four stages have been followed ever since. Those stages are: reading, meditation, praying, and contemplation. These are often pictured as rungs on Jacob's ladder described in the book of Genesis, chapter 28.

The story says Jacob was fleeing for his life from his older brother Esau. Jacob had tricked their father Isaac into giving away his blessing and inheritance to the younger brother. So now we find Jacob in the desert having to camp out overnight. He finds a stone for a pillow and lies down to sleep. Jacob has a vivid, prophetic dream.

In Jacob's dream, he sees angels coming down from heaven and going back up on a ladder from earth to heaven. Back and forth they go. Then God appears and announces that the ground Jacob is sleeping on will be given to him and his descendants forever. God promises to stay with Jacob and protect him wherever he goes. Jacob takes the stone pillow and marks the place, calling it Beth-El, "house of God," also interpreted as "place of transformation."

The image of ascending into heaven and descending back to earth becomes a metaphor for spiritual journeying with supernatural help. Angels are not only God's messengers. They also come alongside us on the journey to help us get over the rough spots. Angels help us stay on course and headed in the right direction. Remember that on Jacob's ladder, heaven is not the

¹⁷⁵ *Lectio* became standardized by Guigo II, the 9th Carthusian abbot of Grand Chartreuse near Grenoble, France in the late 12th century. Carthusians are a strict order of cloistered monks who value silence and solitude. They emphasize the practice of spiritual reading several times a day, as well as pray all seven Offices of *opus Dei*, the work of God.

final destination! To discern what vision or insight God wants us to have right now is one result. This is all part of the path of deepening our prayer life drawing from scripture. It is the way of *lectio* pictured as a ladder of divine ascent. We invite the Holy Spirit to make this holy ground.

In this first part, we will explore only the first two steps of the *lectio* journey. First, we will get into the Word by reading slowly and carefully. Secondly, we learn how to narrow down that scripture in order to concentrate on the image or phrase we feel beckoning to us.

The time for reading in Benedict's *Rule*, chapter 48, is not just a study time for content. It is rather a time to clear the mind of all extraneous noise and clutter, and then allow the words and images from scripture to seep in. With an attentive silence, the intellect is fully occupied as the Gospel comes alive with imagery and phrases begin to stand out. The passage should be read slowly, gently, and repeated several times. This first step of *lectio* is mirrored in the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer's* Collect prayer for Proper 28, the Sunday closest to November 16:

O God, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life ...

This attitude of sacred reading is followed by step two of *lectio*: meditation. This is a fluid transition to a solitary focus on one word or phrase that seems to emerge from our attention to the text and its imagery. This second stage should not be forced or selected as a logical choice of what is important. What is important for now may not be the main focus or obvious meaning of the passage. This choice is more of an intuitive grasp when we invite the Holy Spirit to guide what persistently nudges our awareness. Again, this should be neither rushed nor an intellectual decision based on a person's usual pattern of learning. We need to be aware ahead of time of our predictable filters and value-laden choices, especially if we do regular Bible study.

Read. Meditate. Clear the mind and let the text speak with an openness to what will reveal itself at this time. Let that distillation flow into a narrowing focus on just one word or phrase that seems to cling to our awareness. As our meditative attention narrows, we will experience a deeper level of interior silence. This is part one of two parts to *lectio divina*.

YouTube Video

WHAT IS LECTIO DIVINA? - FR JOSH JOHNSON (Roman Catholic)
 Ascension Presents - Dec 22, 2016 - 4:29
<https://youtu.be/gKYEOc3ik9k>

If you like short, rapid, get-to-the-point talks, this is one. Johnson gives a hip presentation of *lectio*, plus step five: put it into action! There are not a lot of details but it gives a sense of the flow in daily divine reading when we ask God to be with us.

YouTube Audio

Listen to the following chant from Scotsman (Celtic) J. Philip Newell's album *Sounds of the Eternal: Meditative Chants & Prayers*.

Its simple words are taken from Isaiah 48:6 and are easily sung.

Play the selection again and chant along with it. Repeat with eyes closed if so inclined.

Hidden Things - Suzanne Butler, soloist - 7:58
<https://youtu.be/rG-THBxIzz0>
Journal

Daily Gospel readings will be found online from various sources. One such source is the English Standard Version (ESV) daily lectionary at esv.org. It is compatible with Anglican, Episcopal, and Catholic lectionary use. Another option is to purchase an annual liturgical calendar with all of the daily readings listed on it. As recommended, pick a short Gospel selection for *lectio*.

Use the daily lectionary as often as it suits your lifestyle: daily, weekly, three times a week, or whatever frequency you choose. Try to do *lectio divina* at least once a week to start.

After the time in contemplation, enter a *brief* journal reflection on what you discovered or felt was important to you during this prayer time. Remember, *lectio* is not about getting anything or raising consciousness. It is simply making time for loving attention to the Holy Spirit speaking through God's written Word.

Gospel for Everyone

Read John 6:47-59, Eating and Drinking the Son of Man

N.T. Wright notes this teaching about “eating my flesh and drinking my blood” caused quite a stir. It still does! Episcopal/Anglican belief in the Real Presence ranges from a memory meal to something more like Roman Catholic change in substance. Eucharist is central to our worship. Reflect on what you believe is part of the mystery, and how it affects your worship experience.

Prayer

God of all grace,
in foolishness and pride,
we often dare to speak on Your behalf,
claiming to know Your ways
and making promises we struggle to keep.
Help us in humility to learn to be still,
trusting that You indeed are God. Amen.
—Celtic Prayer Book Two, page 1059.

Chapter Nine:

Lectio, Part Two: Waiting in Silence Upon the Lord

We now turn to the last two rungs of the ladder for *lectio*: a time of intimate prayer with God that can draw out our feelings, followed by a time of stillness before the Lord with as little effort as possible. You can see by this progression that prayer evolves just as our experience with interior silence changes how we are praying.

We started at the busy street level of awareness, letting the story from the Gospel with all of its characters and action get our attention and imagination. It's perfectly all right to see ourselves in the story at this point or identify with one of the characters, even Jesus himself. We look around and get a taste for life in the times of Jesus and his followers.

Next, like an observant photographer using a telescopic lens, we let something, someone, or something said grab our attention. We narrow the field of vision and get it clearly into focus. In a strange sort of way, it's not so much that we discovered something; it's more like something keeps tugging at our sleeve and won't go away. It persistently asks us to pay attention.

Now that we've stopped looking around and focused on what asks us to pay attention, we can silently engage that word or phrase with our whole being. We begin to do what is called affective praying. We are no longer uninvolved bystanders with no feelings one way or the other. Instead, we begin to feel our way toward God, who is patiently waiting for us to catch up to what God wants us to notice.

This is not an emotional reaction. It is rather a deeply personal encounter with the divine at the human level. As Guigo II the Carthusian reminds us, we can feel unworthy of this encounter. He likens us at this point to the desperation of the Canaanite woman who wants her daughter healed. When challenged that salvation comes first to the Jews, she replies, "Even the

little household dogs get crumbs from their master's table!" What a humble attitude. Jesus rewards her faith: her daughter is healed (Matthew 15:21 - 28).

The final rung on the *lectio* ladder is a moment of deep surrender, with no guarantee of anything other than faithful waiting in contemplative prayer. We do not need to say anything. We do not need to mentally telegraph what we want to Jesus. We are totally vulnerable. It is a silent moment or two. No words or images. No expectations for ecstatic insights. Just silently sitting, like Mary of Bethany when Jesus comes to visit. This is the Mary of whom Jesus said, "She has chosen the better part, and it shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 11:42).

The point of this resting in silence is the silence itself. God is in the silence, gazing at us without us realizing that God is right here. What is the point, then? The point is to let go and trust God to do whatever God chooses to do. We are being drawn into an inner chamber where all we can do is humbly adore Him who remains hidden. After a brief time, we gently return to the surface and open our eyes. What we get out of this is not predictable, but it is sometimes palpable. We come away knowing that the Lord has come near. That is enough.

YouTube Video

CONTEMPLATION IN THE MIDST OF CHAOS - DR. JOAN CHITTISTER
 30GoodMinutes - joanchittister.org - 14:18
<https://youtu.be/5kJ904QGBuw>

World-renowned Benedictine leader in the spiritual life and social justice, Sr. Joan reminds us that we need to "come to consciousness of the sacred in the secular." God will be found among us, within us, in the daily struggles of life. After watching this compelling video, what does contemplative living mean to you?

YouTube Audio

PRAYER FOR GLORY & CHANT: THE PLACE YOUR GLORY ABIDES

John Philip Newell - SalvaTerraChants - Dec 9, 2012 - 3:46

<https://youtu.be/sNG0S2EHSco>

Watch and listen to Dr. Newell's prayer and the chant.

Repeat with your eyes closed.

Reflect: Where do we see God's glory in our daily world?

Journal

Review the four stages or rungs of the ladder for *lectio divina*: reading, meditating, praying, contemplating. Are they depths of awareness in which you and God are in dialogue?

Write, or draw a picture, depicting how for you the experience of interior silence changes as you pray. Next, literally or mentally color the picture you have created. What pattern do you see?

Gospel for Everyone

Read Luke 9:28 - 45, The Story of the Transfiguration

This is a story of a mountain-top experience for the disciples, one that radically alters their awareness of where God's glory dwells. Jesus is more than just a rabbi or teacher. This revelation is a theophany: a disclosure of God's living presence, much like the burning bush was for Moses. In this case, Jesus IS the burning bush, revealing the glory of God within him. How do you interpret what Peter, James, and John experienced?

Prayer

(Celtic Christian prayer has always been earthy and vividly Trinitarian)

#30 The Gifts of the Three

Spirit, give me of Thine abundance,
Father, give me of Thy wisdom,
Son, give me in my need,
 Jesus, beneath the shelter of Thy shield.

I lie down tonight,
With the Triune of my strength,
With the Father, with Jesus,
 With the Spirit of might.

from the *Carmina Gadelica*, Gaelic prayers gathered by Alexander Carmichael in the
19th century

Chapter Ten:

Learning to Live Simply Within

The decision to live simply is really not based on economics. It is not the default position when life changes require one to live on less, like retirement. For Christians, it does mean a purposeful decision to not let consumer capitalism drive the values we've been marketed to by incessant media. Why is having more better? Who says the newest thing or fashion is best of all? Ironically, it seems many of the poor as well as the rich have embraced material prosperity as the goal for the good life.

What does Jesus really have to say about all this? In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches a set of principles for living the kingdom life here and now. The very first one of the Beatitudes says, "O how blessed you are! The poor in spirit will inherit the kingdom of heaven." Jesus does not glorify either poverty or wealth. Being poor in spirit means not becoming attached to the things which foster idolatry and greediness.

Those desires come from a person not yet yielded to love God first and foremost. Continue to live in the world, yes! But don't get sucked into running after things which will eventually decay, dry up, and blow away. Choose the kingdom way instead. Part of that way of life is choosing to live simply, without inner clutter. We become clear about what really matters.

What is important for our spiritual formation is an attitude of *interior* simplicity. Here's a secret about inner simplicity: when I have let go of everything except for loving God then I am free to choose what really matters.

Richard Foster, a Quaker writer and popular speaker, tells about the time when he learned the power of choosing to say "No!" in a sub-culture of the church which always expected him to

give an unqualified "Yes!" to obligations and invitations.¹⁷⁶ Each of us has competing inner desires, mostly all good, which compete for our attention. Religious piety. Common sense. Civil duty. Loving parent. Loving spouse. Responsible leader. Compassionate caregiver. Each of them wants what is best for itself. When we decide to let God be the center of our concern and attention, guess what happens? Those other good things all fall in line and allow us to say yes or no according to the freedom we have in the Lord. We don't have to go to an extra meeting; we can choose family night instead. We can turn down another volunteer board position and instead make time to write or paint. We don't have to attend a social event; we can actually take our day off. The key in all this, reminds Foster, is focusing on a living, loving relationship with God, not just treating the Lord as a passing acquaintance.

As we learn to trust this God-centered living, we gain the wisdom to evaluate our cycles of life. Sleep. Healthy body exercise and what we eat. Emotional balance. Quality communication in relationships. When and how we pray. It all results in a contented life which knows the truth of being simple and attentive to what really matters.

YouTube Video

Download and watch this part of a series on simplicity.

RICHARD FOSTER ON SIMPLICITY

Renovaré - Celebration of Discipline Curriculum - Jan 24,2009 - 10:00

<https://youtu.be/HeMJorECvMM>

What does the old Quaker song "'Tis a gift to be simple, 'tis a gift to be free" mean for you?
How is that shared in daily life with others?

¹⁷⁶ Richard Foster, *Freedom of Simplicity* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 85-88.

YouTube Audio

Listen to the Taizé chant My Peace I Give You

Listen to it again with eyes closed, and singing along

Listen to it again and keep silence for a moment afterward

TAIZÉ CHANT- MY PEACE I GIVE YOU

evangeliodelucas - July 18, 2014 - 7:50

<https://youtu.be/cY22uNjIXj8>

Journal

The practice of silence helps create a receptivity to God at the center.

Reflect how this has begun in your life, or how difficult it has been to realize.

Describe what inner simplicity means for you. Can you picture it?

Gospel for Everyone

Read John 17:9 - 19, Jesus Prays for His People

Reflect with N.T. Wright on what it means to be set apart for the truth.

How do we avoid being drawn back "into the world"?

Prayer

Lord, help me now to unclutter my life,
to organize myself in the direction of simplicity.
Lord, teach me to listen to my heart,
teach me to welcome change instead of fearing it.
Lord, I give you these stirrings inside me,
I give you my discontent,
I give you my doubt,
I give you my despair
I give you all the longings I hold inside.
Help me to listen to these signs of change, of growth;
to listen seriously and follow where they lead
through the breathtaking empty space of an open door.

-- A Prayer in the Middle Years of Opportunity, *Celtic Daily Prayer*, 220

Chapter Eleven:

The Prayer of the Heart, Part One: Mind into the Heart

We're not sure where or when it originated, probably in some form as early as the second century in the Egyptian desert among the monks. We do know that by the fifth century a certain mystic and bishop, Diadochus of Photiki, commends its use because it leads to inner stillness. That stillness in Orthodox tradition is a profound interior silence, often leading one into a deep, personal experience of the presence of God. This is the Prayer of the Heart, also known as the Jesus Prayer.

Calling upon the powerful name of Jesus has its roots in the New Testament. One day, Jesus is met along the roadside by a group of lepers who dare not come too near because of the social taboo associated with their disease. They cry out to the Lord, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" (Luke 17:11-13). Jesus heals all of them, but only one returns to give thanks. Luke tells another story about two men who went to the temple to pray. One was a religious expert who thanked God that he was not like the sinner in the back. The public sinner, a despised Roman tax collector, couldn't even raise his eyes to heaven, beating his chest in remorse, saying, "God, be merciful to me, sinner that I am." This one, says Jesus, the one who humbled himself before God, was the one forgiven.

God sees the heart. It doesn't even take words to be forgiven. In Luke chapter 7, a woman with a bad reputation dares to touch the rabbi's feet, another religious taboo. She washes the feet of Jesus with her tear-soaked hair. Then she tenderly anoints his feet with expensive perfume. Jesus forgives her sin even though not a word was exchanged between them.

Invoking the name of Jesus slowly over and over becomes a form of unceasing prayer. It is a way of focusing on the person of the Lord himself in a form of contemplative worship.

Theophan the Recluse, a nineteenth-century Russian bishop and mystic, refers over and over again to putting the mind into the heart as we pray, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." There are many forms of the prayer, some much shorter, such as "Lord Jesus, have mercy." Regardless of the specific words, the emphasis is on the intentional, focused holding of the name of Jesus at the center of one's attentive being. The Name leads to the Person of Jesus himself.

A twentieth-century Eastern monk, Lev Gillet, uses only the name of Jesus itself. The Name can be used by anyone, anywhere, as long as it is said with sincere humility, repentance, and adoration of the One behind the name—Jesus the Christ. Gillet reminds us the Jesus Prayer doesn't replace any other form of prayer, like the ones used in public worship at the Mysteries (Eucharist). Like other teachers of the way of the heart, Gillet reminds us one is expected to keep all of the other spiritual disciplines like fasting, holy reading, silence, community work, and hospitality. The Jesus Prayer can be said inwardly while engaged in these and other daily activities and should be said always with the intention of resting in the presence of the Master with thanksgiving and praise.

This translates from monastic experience to everyday life. We remember Jesus is with us in all times and places. We set aside regular times to sit and pray in silence. Over time, we find it becomes a habit. We spontaneously recall the Name and the presence of the Lord without thinking about it. The prayer changes us and the world around us. We never use it to get anywhere or become more holy. The focus is on Jesus, not us.

Experienced practitioners warn that it opens the door to our inner psyche, where both dark and light angels (metaphorically) live. This is where we may need a spiritual friend to walk

beside us. Advanced sensations of the warming of the heart are beyond the scope of the present discussion. It is enough to call upon the name of the Lord with quiet expectancy.

YouTube Video

Watch the following videos made by Orthodox Christians.

If you're in a small group, discuss what is being taught.

FREDERICA MATHEWES-GREEN - THE JESUS PRAYER

Theoria - April 19, 2016 - 8:03

https://youtu.be/lSsv9_9bOy4

FR SPYRIDION BAILEY - THE JESUS PRAYER EXPLAINED

July 18, 2016 - 3:54

https://youtu.be/y0ip_CN4vF4

YouTube Audio

Listen to the audio for a couple of minutes. (It is a loop recording.)

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN JESUS PRAYER CHANT IN ENGLISH

Orthodox Church - March 4, 2018 - 31:10

<https://youtu.be/ZxiLd5nBTbY>

Try to focus on the name of Jesus and the words of the prayer.

Does having it set to music help you pray?

Journal

Separate out the sections of the traditional full-length Jesus Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ - Son of God -have mercy on me - a sinner.

Write or draw what each of these phrases feels like to you, not a critical analysis, but your impressions and feelings.

Gospel for Everyone

Read Matthew 18: 21 - 35, The Challenge of Forgiveness

Be ready to discuss the consequences of being forgiven or not *forgiving*.

When we pray the Jesus Prayer, does that include forgiving others as well?

Prayer

Slow down a prayer of confession to reflect on its meaning.

Lord,
We have not loved you with our whole heart, mind and soul (pause).
We have not loved others as Christ loves us (pause).
We are truly sorry and humbly face the truth of our sinning (pause).
For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, forgive us (pause).
That we may delight in your will and walk in your ways (pause).
Father, through Jesus our Lord, continue to have mercy on us. Amen.

Adapted from the *Book of Common Prayer* 1979, 352.

Chapter Twelve:

The Prayer of the Heart, Part Two: One Way to Pray the *Jeshua* Prayer

By now, you realize that all true prayer is empowered and guided by the Holy Spirit. All Christian prayer is Trinitarian. We pray to the Father, through the Son, in the power of the Spirit. We can also address our prayer to any one of the Persons of the Holy Trinity, since the Three are One. Prayer will change us. How we pray will change over time because the creative Breath of God (Holy Spirit) is always gently blowing through our minds and hearts and even our bodies, the temple of the Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20). In the Prayer of the Heart, we learn to pray with the whole person: mind, body, and spirit, even as we focus on the holy name of Jesus.

You may have many questions about how to pray this prayer. Am I doing it right? Rest in the Lord! God sees the innermost you and honors your intent. It is your willingness to pray that matters. You are a unique child of God. How and what you pray will be unique to you. The Holy Spirit always prays through us (Gal 4:6—inclusive language: sons *and* daughters!).

I'd like to share with you a personal way I've been led to pray the Jesus Prayer after twenty years of beginning over and over. We're all beginners in prayer, every day! This is certainly not *the* way to pray. It is simply one person's experience of this tradition which has evolved over the years. I am not recommending it, only sharing it.

Preparation

As Frederica Mathewes-Green points out, we can use the Jesus Prayer at any time. It is, after all, a form of unceasing prayer. However, we can aside a time or times during the day when it is easier to focus our attention on this way for a little while.

I am blessed to live in a busy household that is quiet before dawn. I rise to praise the Father. What is helpful for me is to read and pray one or more psalms. This is what Benedictines

do in the office of Vigils. It is time to praise God and give thanks for all creation, sometimes just sitting in the dark in silence. I then use a prayer to the Holy Spirit I've adapted from Per-Olof Sjögren, a Lutheran Swedish priest who taught the Jesus Prayer.¹⁷⁷

Come Holy Spirit. Come Holy Spirit! Come ...
 Fill the hearts of your faithful people and kindle in us the fire of your love.
 Make our hearts a shrine for the words of Eternal Life.
 Keep us from the tumult and idolatries of the busy world,
 bid desires and passions to be still.
 Create a holy space in our hearts that in deep silence we may hear
 the voice of the Eternal.
*Lord Jesus*¹⁷⁸

O Holy Spirit,
 Make our hearts a dwelling place for the Lord of our lives;
 We need him—not just as one who visits but as one who abides in our hearts
 and never leaves.
Son of God

Lord Holy Spirit:
 Make our hearts a chamber for prayer.
 Help us to worship you, O God,
 with words and without words or image, day and night.
 The praise of Jesus always upon our lips and in our hearts
 until we are wholly sanctified.
Have mercy on us.

For many years I have used a prayer rope. It is an ancient aid to praying that goes back to the desert fathers and mothers. Orthodox teachers emphasize this aid is *not* necessary to pray the Jesus Prayer. As one moves from verbal repetition to silent mental praying we begin to experience inner stillness between the words. At this point the habit of the prayer is already

¹⁷⁷ Per-Olof Sjögren, *The Jesus Prayer* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 91. A more current edition is available from Amazon.

¹⁷⁸ I've been led by the Spirit to use: *Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on us*. I do not include the title Christ because of my aversion to a 19th century Enlightenment teaching which separates the historical Jesus from the "Christ of faith." For me, the name of Jesus alone is more intimate. Following the pattern of the *Our Father*. Jesus taught the disciples, I am praying *with* others, including those who cannot pray for whatever reason; praying *with/for us*, instead of *me alone*.

established with minimal reminders (we still have to recognize and gently put aside distraction). Our finger tips and breath and hearing beyond the words all work together in harmony.

I find it a comforting tactile experience as I slowly slide the knots between my thumb and forefinger. I am praying with my body, using the rope and my posture to help anchor devotion to the Lord. I have Abbess Michaila's permission to share with you the source for prayer ropes as an aid in the footnote below.¹⁷⁹

Praying the Jeshua Prayer

Select a quiet, comfortable place to sit without distractions. You do not have to use any East Asian/Zen posture or cushions. A comfortable chair or upright recliner may work best. Sit with your spine comfortably straight, eyes closed, and fingers lightly holding the prayer rope, if you use one. Let your body settle for a moment. You may silently make the sign of the Cross, and reverently kiss the knotted cross if you choose to, then continue.

My prayer word for Jesus is the Hebrew *Yeshua* (*Ye SHU ah*). This Name is audibly said at the beginning, the conclusion, and at every 11th bead. Listen to the Name: let its sound fill your awareness. Here at the beginning, only slowly continue in silence, pausing between phrases:

Yeshua (pause). *Holy Jesus, my Lord ... and my God.*¹⁸⁰
All praise ... all glory ... all joy, my King!
*We love you, Master.*¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ A variety of hand-knotted and artistic *brojanica* (Serbian for prayer rope) are available from St. Paisius Serbian Orthodox monastery in Safford, Arizona. Over the years, I have acquired several of these prayerfully hand-made by the sisters. They come in two designs: one Greek with a simple cross, the other Slavic/Russian with a tassel. Pick one that suits your tactile preference. I use the traditional black woolen knot with the 11th separation bead made from olive wood. They come in different lengths. I find the 4-ply 50 knot one convenient. Online store URL is <https://stpaisiusgiftshop.com>. Please consider giving a donation over the asking price to help support the sisters' ministry to young single women.

¹⁸⁰ The words of Thomas as he acknowledges the risen Jesus on the Sunday after the Resurrection.

¹⁸¹ This is the response of Peter to the risen Lord's question, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Jesus repeats this with slightly different meanings three times; Peter denied Christ three times. It is important that we tell our loved ones every day we love them. Telling Jesus we love him is just as important.

*In your mercy, purify my heart so that I may see and know you are
the Way, the Truth and Life itself.*

*In your mercy, continue to transform us into your likeness
as you draw us further into your kingdom.
We yearn for you, Heart of God!*

Moving to the first knot, we pray

Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on us.

Without imagery or distraction, concentrate on simply saying the words. Gently, without forced effort. You don't have to coordinate the words with breathing. Just let the words flow naturally. This is part of an effortless letting-go of our need to control.

Over time, the mental words may relocate to a space in front of your head or upper chest. Looking beyond the words, focus your attention on Jesus, who is truly present but unseen. It is Jesus, not the words, who is the heart of the prayer!

This is the beginning of putting the mind into the heart. We take the prayer from our receptive mind and place it in the center of the will, that place where Spirit meets spirit. We pray from the "you that is really you," as Frederica describes it. This is a process, driven by grace. It takes years of faithful practice for most of us to pray from the heart consistently. It is not a ladder to be climbed. It simply is being with Jesus.

Continue this rhythm of ten Jesus Prayers, fingering the knots interspersed with an 11th bead. At that 11th bead, a marker, you may continue on or pause and audibly say the Name

Yeshua (bow the head and pause) Then silently: *We love you, Master*, before beginning the next decade.

Concluding the Prayer Time

When you have finished whatever number of prayers you intend, conclude at the knotted cross. Reverence the cross with a kiss, then offer a prayer of thanksgiving. I use one like this:

*Lord Jesus, my Master and my King, you are the eternal Word of the Father.
Dwelling in light inaccessible from before time, you are the Logos of all creation,
The Light of the universe.*

*You are the Author of life: The Light of all habitable worlds.
You are Savior and Lord: The Light of my life.
By your grace, may I today be so filled with your Presence
That with compassion and loving-kindness to all,
May I give glory to You
Who with the Father and the Holy Spirit are one God,
eternally Now, before all space and time, unto ages of ages. Amen.*

You may end by slowly praying the Lord's Prayer.

Chapter Thirteen:

Sacramental Confession: Restoring Harmony

Confession of sin and absolution provide an awesome privilege and responsibility for followers of Jesus to get back into harmony with God, themselves, and one another. This harmonious restoration of relationship is essential to our spiritual formation. In one form or another, we can't do without heartfelt confession to live and grow in the life of the kingdom here and now. Like the new birth we experience at baptism, sacramental confession draws its power and authority from the Risen Lord himself.

According to John's witness, that authority was given to the apostles the evening of the Sunday of the Resurrection. In his glorified body — visible and real but no longer limited by space or time — Jesus appears in a room with doors locked by fearful disciples. Overjoyed they now listen closely to what he is telling them.

"Peace be with you," Jesus said to them again, "As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you." With that, he breathed on them.

"Receive the holy spirit," he said, "If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. If you retain anyone's sins, they are retained." (John 20:21-23)

Not every Christian denomination interprets this authority to forgive sin in the same way. Most Protestant churches without apostolic succession¹⁸² believe that pastors and ordinary Christians can only assure others that God, through Christ's sacrificial death on the cross, can

¹⁸² This is the historical "laying-on of hands" from several bishops consecrating a new bishop in successive generations, going back many centuries. Many traditions trace this back to the time of the apostles. It has been a major form of passing apostolic authority to each generation but it is *not the only valid way* for the Holy Spirit to insure every generation of Christians has the blessing and grace to do Christ's ministry. We never limit the Spirit or grace of God! Bishops are fallible human beings and sinners just like everyone else, make mistakes, and need to repent. They often will use a confessor or spiritual director to help guide their spiritual journey.

forgive sins. They are correct: only God can forgive sins. No one, clergy or baptized Christian, can forgive sins in and of themselves.

This is a delegated authority empowered by the Holy Spirit given to the Body of Christ, the Church. In our Episcopal tradition, only priests or bishops should say "forgive you from all your sins" (*The 1979 Book of Common Prayer*, page 353) as humble representatives of the Church. In the rite of Reconciliation of a Penitent (page 447), this applies:

The absolution in these services may be pronounced only by a bishop or a priest. Another Christian may be asked to hear a confession, but it must be made clear to the penitent that absolution will not be pronounced; instead, a declaration of forgiveness is provided.¹⁸³

Any baptized or believing Christian or deacon can, and should, witness to the love of God in desiring to forgive us from all our sins when we repent. This is especially applicable when the ministry of a bishop or priest is not available.

Let's review this once more. You don't *need* sacramental confession to be fully and totally forgiven of sin. Every time we pray the Lord's Prayer we ask that our forgiveness be conditional upon our willingness to forgive others. "Forgive us our sins/debts *just as* we forgive those who sin against us/our debtors." (Matthew 6:12, Luke 11:4). We ask God directly. The authority on earth to forgive sin remains Christ Jesus'. Like the gifts of the Spirit (I Corinthians 12:1 - 11) the gift to pronounce total forgiveness in Jesus' name doesn't belong to one person; it belongs to Christ's Body empowered by the Holy Spirit. This is why in the passage from John 20 it says Jesus "breathed on them:" he was giving the disciples the presence and power of the Holy Spirit to do what he was telling them to do. It was never on their own authority or worthiness.

What are the advantages of private or sacramental confession?

¹⁸³ *The 1979 Book of Common Prayer*, "Reconciliation," 446. "The content of a confession is not normally a matter of subsequent discussion. The secrecy of a confession is morally absolute for the confessor and must under no circumstances be broken."

No one is exempt from repeated sinning. "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (I John 1:8 - 9). The problem is lack of awareness of the depth and roots of our sin. We are like icebergs: a majority of our consciousness lies below the surface of our awareness. It is a constant struggle to bring what is deep inside us to the surface. We often need help to expose and own what is really there. Someone trained to listen, prayerfully discern, and help articulate what we are saying or not saying helps to identify what needs to be healed.

A popular but misguided concept about confession is the laundry list approach. We are tempted to list the things we think are sinful or feel guilty about. Not every guilty feeling is the result of sin. We have lots of tapes or messages from our family of origin stored in our memory. Some of it can be very unhealthy. "You're a failure ... you're worthless ... it's all your fault ... no one will ever love you ... it's not your fault; blame someone else ... you need to win at any cost." Neurotic guilt or shame is not real guilt. Arrogance and self-centeredness are equally false and wounded pride can become arrogant and resentful. Helping to sort out what is really a sin and what is not; what builds up self-esteem and what destroys it can all be honestly looked at with the help of a confessor. This is not psychotherapy; it is spiritual guidance done prayerfully and humbly by an authorized sacramental minister, usually a priest or bishop.

A more valuable way to examine our conscience is to look for patterns of behavior or recurring fascination with how we could get by with doing something we know is not God's will for our lives. Once we move from tempting thoughts (which are not sinful) to fantasizing about what the temptation might feel like or how we could engage without being found out, ignoring any promptings of the Holy Spirit, then we are entering a time of willful sin. Maturing Christians

will recognize this threshold, immediately stop and ask for God's grace. Focusing on the presence of Jesus — lovingly recalling his Name as a habit — helps realign our thinking and desires according to his will. Instead of focusing on the sin, we purposefully surrender our thoughts and desires to God who is always waiting for us to seek the Lord.

Sometimes not only do I need to confide my uncomfortable truths to someone else, I also need to be honestly affirmed. We *are* fully set free by Christ's extravagant love! We are no longer a slave to sinful habits. We can start to take small steps with the encouragement of a spiritual guide and supportive community. We *are* lovable: loved by God and others. This healing of the inner self takes time. It is seldom a one-shot event nor a straight line. Sacramental confession and absolution is meant to be a repeatable opportunity as we grow in self-knowledge and a desire to draw nearer to the heart of God. Jesus is the heart of God.

All the sacraments work together to bring us to wholeness and health. We are all in this together as the family of Christ. Baptism connects us to the new life of salvation by the death and resurrection of Jesus. Confession begins an ongoing journey into truthful self-awareness before the Lord who loves us no matter what. Anointing and prayers by elders (lay or ordained) for healing of mind, body and spirit is often linked to confession of sin (James 5:13 - 16). We have prayed about and prepared for the celebration of repentance found in the community's corporate confession in the liturgy. Assured once again of our forgiveness, we then offer thanksgiving and praise as we worship the Lord in the Eucharist. We join in eating that Bread and drinking from that Cup, discerning the Lord's Body and Blood (I Corinthians 10:16 - 17). Christ Jesus is really present to us and among us as he promised at the Ascension. "I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20b).

YouTube Video

View the following videos. Sometimes YouTube automatically cycles to the next video of their choosing. *Stop* the video when it is finished before this happens.

WHAT IS REPENTANCE? The Rev Dr J.I. Packer (Anglican)
JI Packer.com - January 11, 2016 - 3:09
<https://youtu.be/gExLXpPJDd8>

Q&A: WILL GOD FORGIVE ME OF REPETITIVE SINS? The Rev Dr Tim Keller
(Presbyterian)
baabaa1000 - February 22, 2011 - 3:21
<https://youtu.be/zNM3fR0-IW8>

Questions to consider: Why is repentance so important and what are its benefits? Why does "spotty repentance" still result in total forgiveness from God?

YouTube Audio

Play the following Gospel song by Gordon Mote. You can repeat it with eyes closed.

GORDON MOTE - I SURRENDER ALL
Música Para El Alma - August 19, 2017 - 3:19
<https://youtu.be/67Bn1pTfcZY>

Gordon Mote is a blind keyboard artist and singer. He comes from a conservative Protestant evangelical tradition. Many of his arrangements are quite beautiful and meditative.

A joyful celebration of knowing we are loved and forgiven through Christ is global and cross-cultural. For a different voice, here is a modern Gospel song sung by Arabic Christians.

To translate the Arabic with English subtitles, begin the video then click on the CC caption icon near the bottom of your screen. Enjoy!

MY LIFE IS YOURS - ARABIC CHRISTIAN SONG
strongtower27 - February 11, 2016 - 2:57
<https://youtu.be/dEFFF6nQZGQ>

Journal

Open your *1979 Book of Common Prayer* to page 446, "Concerning the Rite," a review of the principles of the Reconciliation of a Penitent, also known as auricular or private, sacramental Confession. Reflect for a few moments on the information you find in this introduction. Briefly write down any personal insights or responses you may have as a journal entry.

Now read over either Form One or Form Two of the rite which follows. Any further responses?

Gospel for Everyone

Read Matthew 18:15 - 20, Reconciliation and Prayer in the Community

Dr. Wright talks about real reconciliation, not pretending that everything will be all right. "Forgiveness is when it *did* happen, and it *did* matter, and you're going to deal with it and end up loving and accepting one another again anyway." What are the steps to reconciliation taught by Jesus? How do you feel about the hard choice when a person refuses to be reconciled? Especially when "there is real evil involved, refusal to face it means a necessary break in fellowship. Reconciliation can come only *after* the problem has been faced."

Prayer

Savior, hanging on the cross declaring God's love to us,
you are forgiveness.
Besides you hangs a thief,
beneath you waits Mary the forgiven,
and all around you watch those many people to whom you give new hope.
Forgiven sinners become your body and your Church,
may the reconciliation we share bring your gospel to all the world.

-- A Collect Prayer from Friday Evening, *A New Zealand Prayer Book*, 132

Chapter Fourteen:

Celtic Wisdom: Earthy Spirituality

Whenever you look at a Christian cross what do you see? In the West there is usually an intersection of the vertical post (up-down: heaven-earth) and the crossbeam (side-to-side: Christ's humanity and relationship to us). There are many variants of this basic pattern according to the culture it came from or beliefs it represents.

One recognizable cross is the Irish Celtic cross. It has a circle connecting all four arms of the cross. It often has an interwoven Gaelic knot pattern on the arms.



Although it may have some pagan origins (the sun god), the Christian interpretation of the circle would be the unity of the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The mystery of God is further symbolized by the infinite looping of the Gaelic knot. What is relevant to our discussion

here is the intersection and integration of both the transcendent (beyond our comprehension) and the immanent (the immediate, earthy, daily life aspects of God's presence with us). Both of these are celebrated in Celtic Christian tradition. Our consciousness is awakened to the immenseness of God reflected in the cosmos, and the intimate touching of the Spirit in our daily life as we encounter all of Creation and one another.

As Anglican scholar and writer Esther de Waal said, quoting a woman from southwest Ireland, "Heaven lies a foot and a half above the height of a man."¹⁸⁴ For Celtic Christians there is very little distance between heaven and earth, and both frequently cross over into the other. Another way of saying this is to note that all things — places, times, people, animals as well as

¹⁸⁴ Esther de Waal, *Every Earthly Blessing: Rediscovering the Celtic Tradition* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1999), xv.

plants, trees, earth, and those who have died — are related to one another without us becoming pantheists (seeing God and nature as the same). It is a beautiful, mystical and encompassing vision of God's goodness all around us, within us, prodding us to grasp the meaning of events and the sacred revealed in ordinary life.

Celtic Wisdom Then

Down through the centuries the Celtic Christians in Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England were very aware of the reality and tragedy of destructive evil and death in their lives. However, the greater emphasis has always been on the goodness of Creation and God's mercy and love. Jesus, Mary, the saints and angels, and the Holy Spirit were often implored to help, heal or rescue as expectant prayers were gently sung from dawn throughout the day into night by ordinary people.

These unceasing prayers humbly celebrated necessary food and warmth, secure safe passage out in the open sea, and physical healing often connecting God's grace with herbal medicine or sacred spaces. In villages and rugged, isolated areas there was a deep sense of belonging to one another, honoring family and community bonds, and blessing each season and cycle of life. Pilgrimage to holy sites, bard songs recalling sacred stories, dancing and outdoor festivals embodied their spirituality and vision of God's immanent presence.

Celtic Wisdom Now

One study says by 2050 over two-thirds of the world's population will live in frenetic urban areas. Even today our lives are often filled with busy-ness, constant noise and media designed to entertain or sell us something, and a drive to find fulfillment or achieve transient happiness. For some life is experienced as loneliness among the crowds. Adults at all stages of life can become isolated from genuine caring and warmth. For others there is a vague sense of

missing out on what's really important. We may feel disconnected from real contentedness and joy.

Celtic wisdom reminds us to seek and embrace real companionship and friendship in community. There is the lovely Gaelic word *anamchara* for soul friend; one who walks beside us in all of life's ups and downs, joys and sorrows, with loving support and understanding. One who is willing to first listen, and then speak the truth to us in love. This may or may not be a spouse or family member, but someone who "gets" who we are. We can recover our sense of belonging one to another and cherish that relationship.

Celtic wisdom today invites us to see the awesome wonder and beauty of life around us, especially in nature and in each other. Scottish troubadour and Celtic scholar John Philip Newell teaches that the early Celtic Christians had two books of revelation. The one is the Bible. The other is the book of nature. Both are necessary to get a real understanding of the goodness of Creation and the image God has placed in us to reflect his glory. The experience we seek is not an accumulation of facts but an artist's eye open to the mystery and surprise at the vastness of God's creativity and love for us.

In all of this awakening we are drawn into a constant earthy reflection. We are thankful for the simple, ordinary events of life often reflected in the faces of children, the elderly, and in the sounds and patterns of the universe as well as those we meet along the way. Heaven and earth truly are closer and more interconnected than we first imagined.

"Seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened for you," Jesus said about the kingdom of heaven available now in our midst. He, of course, is the heart of that encounter since all things were created by and for him (Colossians 1:15 -18).

YouTube Audio-Visual

Listen to and watch the following videos. The first is from the ancient Celtic monastic community of Lindisfarne Holy Island off the northeast coast of England. Two of its famous abbots were Aidan and Cuthbert.

MORNING PRAYER - an excerpt from the DVD "Lindisfarne - a cradle of Christianity"
Lindisfarne Scriptorium - May 4, 2014 - 2:38
<https://youtu.be/ekKGRnuakuc>

John Philip Newell teaching and chant at the Aztec ruins, Aztec, NM
PRAYER FOR MYSTERY and chant "Hidden Things" (Jeremiah 33:3)
SalvaTerraChants - February 27 - 2012 - 2:47
<https://youtu.be/PXeJiJ0DlbM>

Journal

You are invited to take a digital camera or cell phone with camera with you today and take pictures of ordinary things that remind you of the goodness and presence of God. If you do not have a digital camera, just take notes during the day of what impresses you about ordinary life, people, events which remind you of God's loving presence.

Write a photographic article about what you have observed or feel about what you have noticed this day. Mostly just reflection and simple description, not an explanation.

Gospel for Everyone

Read John 13:12 - 20, Like Master, Like Servant

"I've given you a pattern," says Jesus, "so you can do things in the same way that I did." He goes on to point out that the slave is not greater than the master. Jesus demonstrates the humility he is talking about by washing the disciples' feet, something that a servant would ordinarily do. How do we today continue to do for others what Jesus did in ordinary, everyday living? How do you feel about doing menial tasks?

Prayer

I will lie down this night with God, and God will lie down with me.
 I will lie down this night with Christ, and Christ will lie down with me.
 I will lie down this night with the Spirit, and the Spirit will lie down with me.
 O God and Christ and the Spirit be lying down with me.

The peace of all peace be mine this night
 In the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

--Closing Prayer from Wednesday Compline (night prayer), *Celtic Daily Prayer Book*
Two

This concludes the teaching and reflection portion of the Artifact *Further Up and Further In*. These fourteen chapters are not the final word for the ongoing project for spiritual formation. It is intended to be added to by you, the participant.

As the project is introduced into parishes and dioceses, we solicit feedback from users and welcome any helpful critiques and suggestions. Thank you!

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