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The Teaching of

JOHN MAIN on

Meditation and Christian Faith

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Edited by Peter Ng

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Meditation and Christian Faith



I would like to share with you what I have experienced in my own life of the truths of our religion through the sort of meditation I spoke to you about. God is our Creator and Father. Jesus is our Redeemer and Brother. And

the Holy Spirit dwells within each of us in such a way that we are all of us, quite literally, “temples of holiness”.

Meditation is how we come to terms with these truths.

Most of us are familiar with these truths. But the great weakness of most Christians is that, although they know these truths on the level of theological theory, these truths do not really live in their hearts. In other words, we have not realized them as the grounding truths of our lives.

The aim of meditation is to turn to our own nature with total concentration, to turn to and experience the living Spirit of God dwelling in our hearts.

In meditation we do not seek to think about God nor do we seek to think about His Son, Jesus, nor do we seek to think about the Holy Spirit. We are trying rather to do something immeasurably greater. By turning aside from everything that is passing, we seek not just to think about God, but to *be* with God, to experience him as the ground of our being.

John Main OSB, *The Gethsemani Talks*,
to the Trappists of Gethsemani Abbey,
Kentucky, USA, November 1976

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Meditation and Our Relationship with God



Meditation is based on our faith, as Christians, that

the fundamental relationship of our lives is our relationship as creatures, with God our Creator.

Each one of us is created by God, and therefore each one of us has a Divine origin.

To appreciate the full wonder and glorious mystery of this fundamental relationship, most of us have to get into touch with ourselves first, to get into a full relationship with ourselves. We have first to find, expand and experience our own capacity for peace, for serenity, and for harmony, before we can begin to appreciate our God and Father who is the author of all harmony and serenity.

Meditation is the very simple process by which we prepare ourselves to be at peace with ourselves so that we are capable of appreciating the peace of the Godhead within us.

This is the reason for the Psalmist's saying: "Be still and know that I am God." (Ps 46:10)

John Main OSB, *Word Into Silence*



3

Meditation and Following Jesus



The great task of our life, and of prayer, is the realization of our intimate union with God, our Father through Christ in the Spirit.

The foundation of our journey to God is the self-giving of God in Jesus. In the Incarnation, God has emptied himself out, into Jesus,

pouring the Divine essence into the person of Jesus Christ. This is the extraordinary mystery of God,

reduced to almost nothing as he takes on human form.

The Incarnation is about God in Jesus taking on all our human limitations and accepting them by becoming a human person like us. The Incarnation is about the reduction of God to man, so man may enter into Godliness through Jesus Christ.

The whole purpose of Christian meditation is to follow in the way of Jesus.

We have to be reduced to the single activity of being.

We must be reduced to nothing so that we may pass through, to become all.

John Main OSB, *The Hear*

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Meditation and Union with God Through Jesus



The life and teaching, the death and resurrection of Jesus, and his sending of his Spirit to dwell within us, have radically transformed the potential for the development of human consciousness.

Because of what Jesus has done, we are no longer cut off from the full experience of God. We are called to share in God's own nature and being, through Jesus.

We can reach God the Father through the human consciousness of Jesus, the Son. His human consciousness (his body, mind and spirit) is to be found in our own hearts.

That's what the In-dwelling of the Holy Spirit means.

In meditation, we open our human consciousness

- with all its limitations and faults -

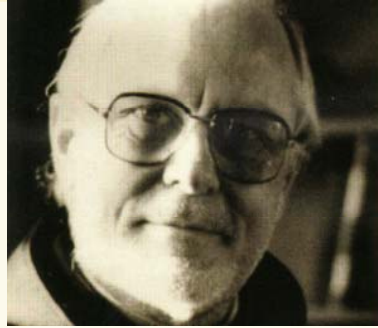
to the human consciousness of Jesus,

unlimited and glorified in the Divine life. Thus the human consciousness of Jesus leads us to the fullness of being, to God. That's why Jesus said: "I have come that you may have life, life in all its fullness." (John 10:10)

John Main OSB, *The Heart of Creation*

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The Aim of Christian Prayer



Prayer is the process wherein we discover who we are and why we are. So prayer,

meditation, is not just a way of 'doing' something but it is a way of 'becoming' someone – becoming yourself:

created by God, redeemed by Jesus and a temple of the Holy Spirit.

And so, dearest brothers, in meditation we go beyond thoughts, even holy thoughts. Meditation is concerned not so much with thinking as with being. We seek to become the person we are called to be, not by thinking about God but by being with Him. Simply to be in His presence is all sufficing.

Simply to be with Him is to be drawn into being the person He calls us to be.

This is the message of Jesus' injunction to seek the Kingdom first and then all else will be given.

Our aim in Christian prayer is to allow God's mysterious and silent presence within us to become more and more not only a reality, but the reality which gives meaning, shape and purpose to everything we do, to everything we are.

And so, prayer is not the time for words, however beautifully and sincerely phrased. All our words are wholly ineffective when we enter into mysterious communion with God whose Word is before and after all words.

The Gethsemani Talks, John Main OSB
to the Trappists of Gethsemani Abbey, Kentucky, USA, November 1976

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Meditation on the Journey of Prayer



The essential message of Christianity is that

our call and our potential is to enter into the life of God through Jesus, through his Spirit present in our hearts.

The journey of prayer is simply to find the way to open our human consciousness to the human consciousness of Jesus. In prayer, the way we travel is to become wholly absorbed in Jesus and to travel with him in his return to the Father.

The question however remains: How do we open our human consciousness to the human consciousness of Jesus? What stops us from recognizing the presence of Jesus in our heart is our own egoism. We are thinking about ourselves; we are locked into ourselves. It is here that we turn to meditation.

In meditation,

we seek to disassemble the barriers that we have set up around ourselves, and

we start the process of dismantling the ego that cuts us off from the consciousness of the presence of Jesus within our own hearts.

John Main OSB, *The Heart of Creation*, 'Being On The Way'



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Meditation and the Prayer of Jesus



As far as our tradition is concerned,

there is only one prayer, and that is the prayer of Jesus. He is the universal mediator.

There is no way to the Father except through Jesus.

St Paul tells us that, "We do not know how to pray, but the Spirit prays within us". (Rom.8:26) The prayer of Jesus is his communion of love with the Father in the Holy Spirit. Meditation is our total openness to and oneness with this prayer of Jesus. Christian prayer is in essence disposing ourselves so that the murmur of the prayer of Jesus may arise in our hearts.

The theology is that *the* prayer is the prayer of Jesus.

We have to stand back and allow his prayer, as it were, full power within us.

As soon as we realize that the Way is the prayer of Jesus, then

our only challenge is to stand back sufficiently enough to allow his prayer to become super-eminent.

The requirement is total selflessness, a total abandoning of our own thoughts, imagination, insight, and above all abandoning of our own prayers and an openness to the prayer of Jesus in our heart.

John Main OSB, *The Heart of Creation*

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The Significance of the Mantra



The journey of prayer is simply to find the way to open our human consciousness to the human consciousness of Jesus.

How? It is here that we turn from theory to meditation. What stops us from recognizing and entering the presence of Jesus in our heart is our own egoism. We are thinking about ourselves; we are locked into ourself. In meditating, we start the process of dismantling the ego and its persistent attempt to place ourselves at the centre. Saying the mantra is like unlocking the door of our heart. The mantra is like the key unlocking the door to allow the pure light of love to flood in.

Jesus says: "No one can be a follower of mine unless he leaves his self behind." In meditating, we seek to leave self behind and to be open to the powerful personal presence of Christ in our hearts.

The mantra is like a sacrament, the outward sign of our faith in his presence. In saying your mantra, you are letting go of your own thoughts, your imagination, fears and daydreams.

We must learn to be disciplined, and we must learn to leave our thoughts and imagination entirely behind. The faithful recitation of the mantra is the way.

John Main OSB, *The Heart Of Creation*

The Purpose of the Mantra



All Christian prayer is basically the experience of being filled with the Spirit.

In Romans 8:26-7, St Paul puts it this way: “We do not even know how to pray, but through our inarticulate groans the Spirit himself is pleading for us,

and God who searches our inmost being knows what the Spirit means.”

In meditation, our way forward to this growing awareness of the Spirit praying within us is simply in our deepening fidelity to the saying of the mantra.

The faithful repetition of our word integrates our whole being, and brings us to the silence, the concentration, the necessary level of consciousness that enable us to open our mind and heart to the work of the love of God in the depths of our being.

John Main OSB, *Word Into Silence*

