

MANDATE

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IN THIS ISSUE

*Where can I find a church
that uses the BCP 1928?*

Page 2



*Meditating—
The Christian Way*

Page 3



*Holy Communion as
Supra-personal*

Page 4



*Meditating—
The Biblical Way*

Pages 5–6



*Meditating before
the Lord*

Page 7–8



*Meditating with Heart,
Soul, Mind and Strength*

Page 9–10



*Meditating—
Using a Simple Method*

Page 11–12



*Meditating and
Contemplating*

Page 13–14



*Contacting and
Supporting the PBS*

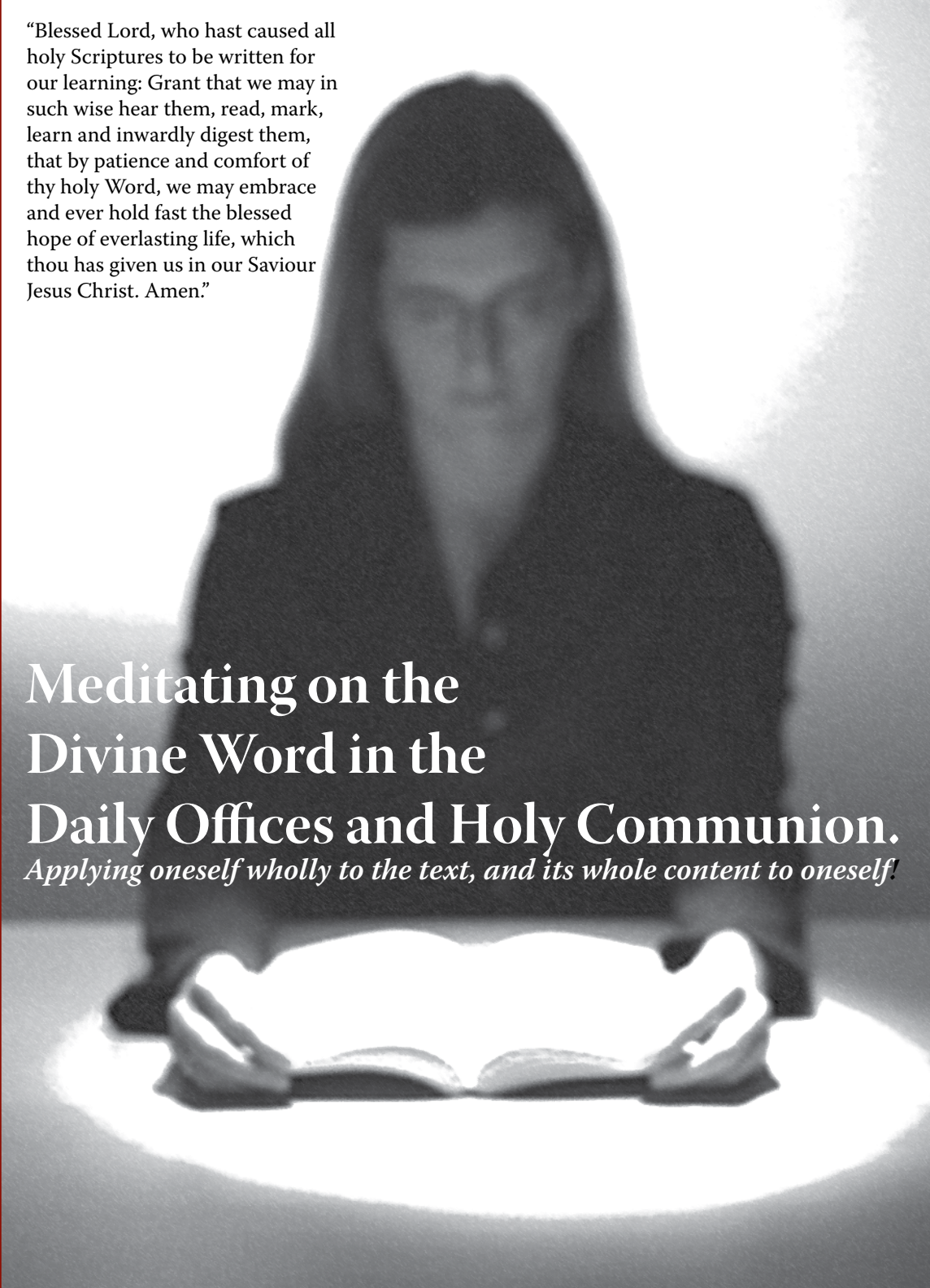
Page 15



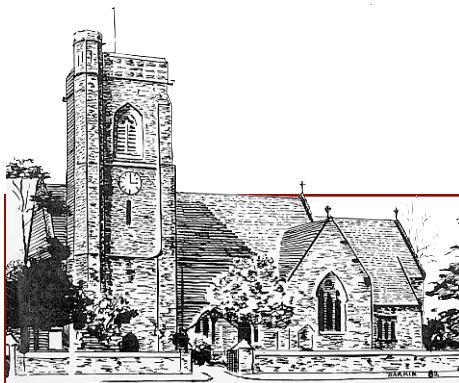
*Same-Sex—Spotlight on
the Church of England*

Page 16

"Blessed Lord, who hast caused all
holy Scriptures to be written for
our learning: Grant that we may in
such wise hear them, read, mark,
learn and inwardly digest them,
that by patience and comfort of
thy holy Word, we may embrace
and ever hold fast the blessed
hope of everlasting life, which
thou has given us in our Saviour
Jesus Christ. Amen."



**Meditating on the
Divine Word in the
Daily Offices and Holy Communion.**
Applying oneself wholly to the text, and its whole content to oneself!



Where can I find a church that uses the 1928 Prayer Book?

We will list parishes that use the 1928 BCP according to state or area, mentioning their ecclesiastical jurisdiction (Episcopal Church or one of the "Continuing Churches"), and all of their services, if from the 1928, or the ones that use the 1928 BCP. The Reformed Episcopal Church uses a Prayer Book which includes both the 1662 (Church of England) and much from the 1928.

Our knowledge of these matters is limited, so we would be happy to hear of par-

ishes that use the 1928 BCP. An excellent reference is the "Directory of Traditional Anglican and Episcopal Parishes," published by the Fellowship of Concerned Churchmen. This directory does not tell what prayer book is used. Please contact the editor, Mrs. Jane Nones, 4800 Dupont Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55409 if you would like to order a copy. For information call (612) 824 3933.

A number of readers have told us of other parishes that use the 1928 Prayer

Book. It makes us glad to know of such places, and also that folks are reading *Mandate*. Some have written to tell us of parishes that use 1928 that we have already listed. It might be a good idea to keep the issues of *Mandate* that have this column to use for future reference. We can only list a parish once. It is always a good idea to call first. Times and locations and personnel do change! The Fellowship of Concerned Churchmen has a web site which lists parishes that use the 1928 BCP.

Connecticut

Bridgeport-Fairfield Area

Church of the Resurrection (Anglican Province of Christ the King)

5 Church Street
Ansonia, CT 06401
203 734 6025

Sunday Services

Holy Communion 8:00 am

Holy Communion 10:00 am

The Rt. Rev. Rocco Florenza, Rector

Greenwich

Church of the Advent (Diocese of the Holy Cross/ Forward in Faith)

606 Riversville Road (North Greenwich Church Bldg.)
Greenwich, CT
203 861 2432

Mailing Address:
4 Connecticut Avenue,

Greenwich, CT 06830

Sunday Services

Holy Communion 9:00 am

The Rev. Robert Bader, SSC, Rector

Mystic

St. Matthias Church (Anglican Church in America)

Route 27 at Coogan Boulevard
(Ye Olde Mystic Village Meeting House)
Mystic, CT

401 322 5056

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 1374,
West Springfield, MA 01090

Sunday Services

Holy Communion 10:00 am

(1st, 2nd, 4th & 5th)

Morning Prayer 10:00 am (3rd)

The Rev. James Hurd, Vicar

Please write the Rev. Fr. David C. Kennedy, SSC, at 7231 Hearth Stone Ave., Boynton Beach, FL 33437-2920 if you know of parishes that use the 1928 BCP. Needless to say it will take a long time to list them all!

Praise God for that!!!

THE MANDATE

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Reflections from the Editor's Desk

Meditating— the Christian Way, not the Eastern.

The Rev'd Dr. Peter Toon M.A., M.Th., D.Phil (Oxon)

One of the many signs that biblical and creedal orthodoxy has little impact on western, secular society is seen in the modern use of the verb “to meditate” and the noun “meditation.” Though the words belong firmly to the text of the sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and though they are firmly embedded in the language of the devotional life and tradition of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church in its various jurisdictions, their common use in the West has little or nothing to do with the Jewish and Christian, even the Muslim, scriptural and devotional tradition.

For most people, these words point to activities which have their roots and inspiration in what is called “eastern mysticism.” A visit to a large bookstore or a search on the Web will illustrate this point. The fact is that they point to a self-propelled journey inwards, into the “center of one’s being,” in order to connect there with “the whole of Reality” and achieve a new consciousness and inner harmony. To make this difficult journey requires discipline and method, and there is an abundance of literature and an availability of yoga (and the like) classes to provide help in these. So “meditating” is the activity where an effort is made to achieve bodily stillness and then to lose contact with the external world as one goes through various layers of consciousness deep into the depths of one’s being, until one arrives at the point where one loses self-consciousness and becomes part of the whole Reality.

Let us be honest. Those who take yoga classes or use other means to engage in eastern mysticism often find that they experience such health benefits as the lowering of blood pressure and of bad cholesterol levels, as well as gaining more self control and being able to enjoy silence.

In contrast to eastern-style meditation, which is an inward journey, the meditation used in the Church of God over the centuries is more like an outward journey. That is, meditating is the use of all the powers of soul and body in a seeking after God, his truth and his will. It is a movement from the heart/soul outwards and upwards by a baptized

believer, using his intellect, memory, imagination, emotions and will – it is being lifted up to the Father in the name of Jesus Christ and assisted by the Holy Spirit.

The philosophy usually related to the inward journey is monism – the doctrine that all Reality is One and that the difference and variety that we see is not real. In contrast, that related to the outward journey is theism, the belief that the Creator of the

world is wholly distinct from his creation and that human beings are part of the created order – indeed they are made in the image and after the likeness of God and so ought to reach out to him.

Thus Christian meditation begins with relaxation of the body and a recalling of the presence of God with his people, and moves on to an engagement with the revealed Word of God, either read from Scripture or recalled from memory (or both). This engagement involves consideration of God’s

truth, the allowing of this truth to raise the affections (e.g., desire, love, joy and reverence) and motivate the will, so that the whole person, the whole soul, begins to reach after and towards God, desiring to meet him and to do his will. Such meditation naturally leads on to prayer of various kinds and intensities. When this godly exercise is done daily then one major effect by God’s grace will be the gradual creation of a Christian mind (mindset) in the one who meditates “in thy law by day and by night” (Psalm 1:2). For by meditation the Christian soul digests the heavenly food, which is the Word of God.

Meditation in the Christian tradition is closely related to Contemplation, in which the mind ceases to circle a truth or to be moved by a truth and instead focuses directly upon God in Christ and is taken up in wonder, love and praise. This state may last for a brief or longer time and usually the worshipper and adorer of the Beauty that is God is not conscious of space or time.

Both Meditation and Contemplation are appropriate, even necessary, in both corporate, public worship and in personal devotion. Are you meditating on God’s Word? Are you contemplating God in his beauty, purity and glory?



True Liturgy

Both impersonal and supra-personal because through, in and with Christ [One Person made known in Two Natures]

(A discussion starter adapted from a piece by Fr F. P. Harton, 1932,
raising the question of the place of autonomous individualism in
Christian worship)

When the individual person takes his part in the celebration of the divine mysteries he is not making his own prayer – he enters into an act of prayer which is going on independently of himself as an individual, because it is the prayer of Christ, our high Priest. Even on earth each Eucharist is not a separate act of worship, but the taking up, in that particular place, of the ceaseless worship of the Church throughout the world, and is one with the worship of the Church Triumphant...

The prayers of the Liturgy are plural, not singular, we not I (just as our Lord taught us in the fundamental liturgical prayer to say Our Father), for they are the prayers of the whole body of Christ. We must realize the universality of the liturgy – that it is not simply the action of the few or many people gathered together in the particular building in which the Eucharist is being celebrated; in the celebration of the holy mysteries that congregation is one with the whole Church, *semper et ubique*, the barriers of time and space disappear, the faithful are lifted up to the heavenly places, Christ descends upon the holy table, and the Church militant, expectant and triumphant, is one.

In the Liturgy is realized the unity of the Body of Christ, for the Church is an entity; its vital principle is the life of Christ, it is one with him its head, guided by the Holy Ghost. The individual Christian is not an entity, but a member of this unity, a cell of this living organism which is the Church. He has his own spiritual life, which must be lived and developed, but which can never be developed fully apart from the life in the organism.

The collective prayer of the body differs considerably from the separate prayer of the individual, for it is not simply the sum of many individual prayers, but the prayer of an organism which is more than an aggregation of individuals, the prayer of the mystical body of Christ the high Priest.

Attempts are sometimes made to assimilate the prayer of the Liturgy to that of the individual, but such attempts are really misguided. Services of a popular character (using the word popular in its best not its cheapest sense) are necessary to the full

expression of individual devotion and must exist side by side with the Liturgy, but the two must not be mixed or substituted for one another. A sensitive soul instantly feels that extempore praying and subjective hymn-singing, while eminently right at a prayer meeting, are out of place at the Eucharist, though perhaps he may not be able to say why he feels it. The individualist, on the other hand, wants to find in public prayer the direct expression of his own spiritual condition and needs, and to him therefore the Liturgy seems to be generalized, formal and cold...

The fact is that individual prayer, even when collective, is one thing, and the liturgical prayer of the Church another, and both are necessary. The Liturgy is not concerned with the individual as such; it is the expression of the worship of the body; hence liturgical prayer is essentially and rightly impersonal. The individual is required to sacrifice his individualism in order that he may enter into the fullness of the Body of Christ. Only as he is humble enough to do this does he find out what worship really is. In liturgical worship one is worshipping God the Father in union with the Incarnate Son, and this worship through Jesus Christ our Lord is far deeper than the most beautiful offering of our own which we can make to God the Son, because he is offering it in us who are members of his Body.

The liturgical worship of the Church is essentially impersonal, because it is supra-personal, and this impersonality is right. The sacred vestments, so far from doing honor to the individual priest, obscure his personality; he is not longer A.B., but Christ's deputy. The priest who attempts to use his personality or consciously develops personal eccentricities at the altar is putting himself before his Lord, and so dishonoring him; and the layman who worships merely as an individual is doing, in his own degree, much the same thing.

[Note: the truly corporate Liturgy provided by "The Book of Common Prayer" in its public services is explained and commended as in *Worship without Dumbing Down: Knowing God through Liturgy*; recently released, see page 15 below.]



1. Meditating, the Biblical Way

"His delight is in the law of the LORD and in his law doth he meditate day and night." Psalm 1:2.

Our purpose is to acquaint ourselves with that form of meditation which is described and commended in the Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments. The word itself, either as a noun or a verb, comes most often in the Psalter, as we shall later note. However, its first appearance is in Genesis, where we are told that, *"Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide..."* (24:63). That is, with only the natural sounds and sights of nature as his companions, Isaac reflects upon, thinks about, considers, and takes to heart what he knows of God and his revelation, as given to his father, Abraham, his mother Sarah, and to himself.

Then the word next appears as a word spoken by God himself in the form of a command to Joshua, the successor of Moses, as he prepares to lead the tribes of Israel into the promised land. *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do all that is written therein..."* (Joshua 1:8).

The LORD had chosen the people Israel as his covenant people, revealed his Majesty and mercy to them, and given them his Law and the terms of his covenant through Moses at Mount Sinai. As the leader of this chosen people, Joshua must be wholly aware day and night of what the LORD promises and requires, what he gives and what he commands. Thus he is commanded constantly to have the content of the Law in his heart and mind, always reflecting on one or another part of it, in order to be able to lead the people in obedience of God and into blessing from him.

Of course, it was the task of the priests within Israel, both before the building of the Temple and when the Temple actually existed in Jerusalem, to teach the people the content of the Law of God, so that they would know their privileges and duty. Within homes, the father had the duty to teach his family God's law, and the mother to teach the small children. We may note that Jesus learned much of God's law from Mary, his blessed mother. Also,

God sent unto his people prophets who urgently called the leaders and the whole people to true and hearty obedience to the Lord their God. Then, later, when there were synagogues in every town, teaching from the Law and the Prophets was given there, Sabbath by Sabbath, by the elders and rabbis. It is reasonably clear that people were regularly exhorted not only to know and keep the Law of the LORD but also to meditate on that Law!

We know that meditating was at the heart

of devotion and piety within Israel because of its prominence in the Psalter. The first Psalm was written to be an introduction to the whole collection of 150 Psalms. It is a short Psalm and presents a contrast between the righteous and the unrighteous (wicked) man. The aim is to present to Jewish men their vocation to be righteous before God and amongst fellow men.



Only in being righteous will any Jewish man be accounted blessed by God.

Psalm 1 begins: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, not standeth in the way of sinners, not sitteth in the seat of the scornful." Here are three things, in grades of intensity, that he does not do. That is he does not learn from or imitate those who are not godly and faithful before God. Positively *"his delight is in the Law of the LORD, and in his law doth he meditate day and night."* There is always in his mind, heart and consciousness, the content of God's covenant – his statutes and commandments. They are his spiritual food and he is constantly digesting them in order to be guided by them in his own life and that of caring for his family.

Psalm 19 ends with a prayer: *"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer"* (v.14). In Hebrew psychology the heart is the center of human life and consciousness – it is the mind, the will and the emotions. So here the person, who desires to be godly and righteous, is praying that everything he says, together with all the musing, reciting, pondering of the law of God in his mind, will be acceptable to the LORD his God.

Psalm 119 is the longest Psalm and is a celebration of the Law of the Lord. Here there is much emphasis upon recalling from memory what had been learned concerning God's revelation to his covenant people in deeds and words, in order to meditate upon it and then apply it to daily living before God.

"I will meditate in thy precepts and have respect unto thy ways. I will delight myself in thy statutes. I will not forget thy word." (vv. 15-16)

"O how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day" (v. 97)

Actually within the Law itself were basic commands to the people Israel, which required not only memorizing the essentials of God's statutes and commandments, but also meditating upon them with the intention of obeying them in changing situations. Through Moses, God said:

"Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes..." (Deuteronomy 11:18-21)

The law of the Lord was intended to become the basis of both mental and physical life, finding a permanent dwelling place in heart and mind, so that it could be recalled at any time.

Jesus himself was raised in a godly home by Joseph and Mary. Here he learned as he grew up the content of the statutes and commandments of God and that they existed to be believed and obeyed. His questioning of the teachers of the Law when he visited Jerusalem with his parents at the age of twelve, reveals that he was a young man who meditated upon God's law. He had a great desire to know more and more of the revelation of God to Israel and was so intensely occupied in this pursuit that he forgot to join the caravan leaving for Galilee! Mary and Joseph had to return to look for him! (See Luke 2:41ff.)

Then, also, we see Jesus actively meditating at specific points before his Ministry begins and then during that Ministry. Look at him, first of all, in the wilderness after his Baptism by John and before he went into Galilee preaching the arrival of the Kingdom of God. (See Luke 4:1-13) There he is reflecting upon what God revealed to Moses for Israel and is recorded in the Book of Deuteronomy. Using his memory, he is pondering what God required of Israel and how and where Israel failed her Lord, through disobedience and unfaithfulness. He is also pondering how he, as the new Israel, as the unique representative of Israel, will truly and really obey the Lord and do his will on behalf of all. That is, how he as the new Israel will succeed where the old Israel failed. So he is engaged in reflecting upon and praying about his Messianic Ministry, and it is here that he is tempted by Satan. But for our purposes, what we need to note is that meditation is

an essential part of the process whereby he comes to clarity and commitment concerning his Ministry as the Messiah of Israel. What we know is that he repeated constantly three statements quoted by the evangelists – "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God"; "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve"; & "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

Further, during his Ministry, he often went aside away from the crowds and even away from the disciples, to spend time in meditation and prayer. These times were absolutely important for him and his Ministry.

Right at the end of the Ministry, we see a most powerful portrait of Jesus engaged in meditation and prayer. He is in the Garden of Gethsemane after being with his disciples in the upper room where he instituted the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:39ff.). He knows that he will soon be arrested and before him is that towards which the whole direction of his Ministry has been moving. He considers what he is before him as the Suffering Servant of the Lord taking the place of sinners and in their behalf offering a perfect obedience to the Father even unto death. He meditates upon the vocation of the Messiah as he has received it from the Law and the Prophets and from his communion with the Father. He feels the horrible weight of all this upon his soul and so cries out, "Not my will but thine be done." And then he goes forth to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world by his sacrificial and atoning death.

Christians are urged to imitate the Lord Jesus and one such way is in the commitment to meditating upon God's word, his Father's word.

Finally, here are three simple pictures used by saints of old to indicate what meditating is all about.

1. Meditating is like chewing the cud. Think of the cow, in the shade of the tree, peacefully and continually chewing the cud. Likewise we are to repeat, reflect upon and consider the Word we have received.

2. Meditating is like taking pollen from a beautiful flower. Think of the honey bee, taking its time inside the flower removing the pollen. Likewise we are to make the effort and to take our time to receive the divine Word so that our lives can be as "honey"

3. Meditating is like being in a small boat that rises and falls as it moves through the ocean waves. We are to rock the Word of God in our hearts, as we lovingly repeat it, reflect upon it and consider it, in order that it may sanctify and guide us.

Let us delight in the Word of God, and meditate therein day and night!



2. Meditating before the LORD

"Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all."

1 Timothy 4:15

The special nature of meditation as an act of devotion to the Lord can be illustrated by making careful distinctions between different types of reading and relating to a written text.

(a) Informative and formative reading.

We live in an age that takes for granted the availability of the printed and typed page, be it in the newspaper, magazine, journal, or book, as well as on the computer screen. Most of the vast amount of sentences and paragraphs exists to be read as quickly as possible. We glance at the newspaper and read only those sections which have special interest or appeal. In the office, business people read reports, summaries, letters, hand-outs and the like each working day. Basically, for most of the time, most of us are reading for information, to be informed for a variety of purposes from amusement to conducting a business to making money. And in what we may call *informative reading*, the reader, the individual person is in charge for he decides what to read, when and with what intensity of interest. Reading to be informed can be done sitting down, standing up, or any other posture.

The Bible may be and is often approached in this manner, in much the same way as one reads a history book or an ancient classic. That is, it may be read in order to find out what it contains in terms of information about the Jews and their faith, and the Christians and their faith.

In contrast to informative reading, where the reader is basically in control of the situation, there is formative reading, where the reader seeks to hand over control to Another. In this approach, the reader reads slowly and prays that the Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, will guide him into genuine spiritual and moral engagement with the text. Thus the reader is seeking to be, indeed waiting to be, formed by the word of the Lord arising from the text. He is enlightened by the Holy Ghost to see the divine message in the text; he receives it

into his mind and heart, and allows it to form his mindset, his faith and his commitment to the Lord.

Formative reading is an appointed means of being formed by the Lord Jesus through the Holy Spirit by means of the written Word.

Unlike informative reading, which can be done in a context of hustle, bustle and noise, formative reading needs a certain level of peace and quiet, and in terms of bodily posture, whether sitting or kneeling, the sense of prayerfulness.

Obviously, we are all pretty well used to infor-

mative reading for it is part of living in the modern world. However, the discipline and habit of formative reading has to be cultivated for it does not come naturally to most people; we have to slow down and deliberately make space and time for it. We may claim that formative reading is another way of speaking of meditating upon Holy Scripture.



(b) Study of the text and meditation upon the text of the Bible.

The Bible has been studied as much as, and probably more, than any other book in the history of the world. Its languages, Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, have been carefully analyzed and their grammar, syntax, style and vocabulary have been meticulously scrutinized. Then there has been intense study of the possible authorship of each book, together with the place and time of writing. And with these the "theology" of each author and book. Further, there has been speculative study of the pre-history of the text before it reached the form and shape it came to have within the Bible. Also the social, cultural, historical context of the books have been investigated in depth.

At the level of the preacher or Sunday School teacher, there is the use of Commentaries upon the text, which attempt to explain what each word, phrase and sentence meant for the original writer and what it possibly means today. So we talk much in the modern church of the exegesis of the text and the interpretation of the Bible.

Now, of course, academic study of the Bible can be done by any serious-minded person, who has the appropriate gifts and abilities. In fact, departments

of religion or divinity in colleges and universities are not different in essentials from departments of history or anthropology. Perhaps, we may say that scholarly study of the Bible can be described as a sophisticated form of informative reading.

Meditation upon the text of the Bible is very different from scholarly study of the Bible, although in some cases meditation can follow from, and even benefit from, previous scholarly study. For meditation it is most helpful to know the basic facts about the text being read – e.g., who wrote it, when, and with what purpose. However, the purpose of Meditation is, as we have noted, to be formed by the truth and spirit of the text. Meditation is mental prayer; it is praying the text in the presence of the Lord, in order to note and to hear what he is actually saying to us from his Word. Generally speaking, the scholar regards the text as an ancient religious text to be analyzed, whereas the meditator regards the text as the written Word of God, a living message from heaven for now and today.

It may be observed with regret in passing that most graduates of theological seminaries know a reasonable amount about the scholarly study of the Bible, but few, very few, know anything practically speaking about the habit of meditation and formative reading.

(c) Formative reading and meditation in worship

Having identified the special nature of meditation, let us now note how it functions within the Anglican system of Daily Morning and Evening Prayer and Sunday Services. First of all, we should, wherever possible, be in church before a service starts in order to prepare ourselves by prayer and meditation to engage in worship. If, the service is to be Holy Communion, we can read slowly and carefully the appointed Psalm, Epistle and Gospel, meditating on a sentence or a phrase. If the service is to be Morning Prayer, we can read do the same with one of the appointed Canticles or Psalms.

The ancient Church distinguished between the *lectio continua* and the *lectio divina*, and this difference helps us to see the place of meditation within a service. First of all, we are to listen carefully to the *lectio continua*, the continuous reading of Scripture, that is to the reading of the Old and New Testament in Morning and Evening Prayer, the Epistle and Gospel in Holy Communion, and the Psalter in all services. And we are to supplement this general hearing by our own general reading of the Bible.

In the second place, we are to engage in the *lectio divina*. This is the ancient expression for meditation that leads to communion with God: it is the treating of what is written on the sacred page, and pronounced aloud, as the Word of God

to be received in heart, mind and will. Now there is always space and time within a service to engage in *lectio divina*, in short concentrated meditation. Before the receiving, during the receiving and after the receiving of Holy Communion is an obvious example. Another is while the choir is singing. In these moments one can focus upon a sentence, a phrase, from the lessons or psalms of the day, and treating it as heavenly food, seek to digest it through meditation and prayer.

For our services we use *The Book of Common Prayer* whose chief editor in the 16th century was Archbishop Thomas Cranmer. He was a master in the art of composing short prayers and one prayer that he composed for this Prayer Book contains a perfect description of meditation. Here is the Collect for the Second Sunday in Advent, which addresses the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in this way:

Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

In the petition to God made in this prayer, we can see the stages of Meditation.

First of all, there is the hearing of the Holy Scriptures in church in the lessons. This is in order that we may learn of God, Christ and salvation and of our duty to trust, serve and love God the Father through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Secondly, there is the reading the Scriptures. This refers both to the reading in our own Bible or Prayer Book as we hear the lessons read and also reading later for ourselves.

Thirdly, there is the marking or being observant and attentive to what we hear and read. This requires that we treat the Bible as the inspired Word of God, a letter from heaven, and thus give it our full attention.

Fourthly, there is the learning, the being taught, by what we hear and read. That is learning more of God, Christ or salvation or more of our duty to love and serve our God.

Finally, there is the digesting of the word of the Lord, the truth of God, that we have seen, heard and felt. The divine word has to move from the mind into the memory and the heart, that is into the will and emotions in order that it may influence our life for good.

The digesting of the food from heaven through meditation is in order that we may become more mature Christians, growing in faith, hope and charity.

“Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.”



3. Meditating with All My Soul

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly with all wisdom” (Colossians 3:16)

Let us begin by being with Jesus on the mountain side in Galilee where he delivers what we call “The Sermon on the Mount” (Matthew 5 – 7). In general, it may be said that everything that Jesus presents is of such a nature as to be the very basis for formative reading and meditation. For example, each of the Beatitudes calls for reflection in the presence of the Lord, a reflection that leads on to self-examination and prayer. Then each of the illustrations he uses – e.g., of salt, light, houses built on sand or rock – has the potential to lead to serious thought and prayer with practical application to life. At times, Jesus actually uses words which are intended to lead specifically to godly meditation. For example, “Consider the lilies of the field...” (6:28) and “Seek ye first the kingdom of God...” (6:33). Then he calls for an intensity of pondering and considering when he says: “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you...” (7:7). Each of us could with profit read through the Sermon on the Mount and notice how it calls for godly meditation in virtually every verse.

Then when you read through the Gospels to see what Jesus does and says, you encounter so many parables, and each of these is intended to cause listeners and readers to think, to ponder, to consider and to reflect upon “the kingdom of heaven.” The words, “The kingdom of heaven is like unto...” are intended to set you off on this godly exercise of enquiry leading to decision.

Of course, Jesus himself not only taught the necessity of meditation he also practiced it, as the Gospels make clear. You can imagine his profound and long meditation upon the role of Israel in God’s purpose, and his own vocation as the new Israel, by reading the accounts of his forty days in the wilderness when he was tempted by the devil (Matthew 4; Luke 3). You can read of his going apart from his disciples and his daily schedule in order to meditate and pray. And you can see him meditating on the Mount of Olives after dark, and at a time of great crisis, just before he was arrested by the Jewish authorities (Matthew 26:36ff.).

(a) Advice from apostles

All the apostles of Jesus were Jews and had been taught in their Jewish upbringing the solemn duty of reciting Scripture and of considering it daily as the word of the Lord. What they learned from Jesus was the right and godly way to do this so that

their encounter was truly with the living God as they meditated. It has often been remarked that the fourth Gospel, the Gospel of John, from the hands of the “beloved disciple”, John, is the “Spiritual Gospel.” It is the Gospel that presupposes the existence of the others and takes the reader into further aspects and dimension of the character, identity and ministry of Jesus. We may claim, I think, with some certainty that hours and days of profound meditation went into the creation and composition of this Gospel.

However, it is the apostle Paul who has the most to say in a practical way about the duty and benefits of meditation. This is only to be expected as he was writing to young Gentile churches and, further, there are a lot of his Letters in the New Testament. Before he became a Christian through his encounter with the Lord Jesus as he journeyed to Damascus, Paul, as a Pharisee, knew well the duty and discipline of meditation and no doubt he practiced it intensely as a pious Jew. After his conversion, he continued to practice it but now it was as a Christian, and this meant that he approached, read and recited the Law and the Prophets in a totally new way – as preparation for the Messiah who had come in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth. In fact, in his long stay in the deserts of Arabia, before he began his apostolic ministry to the Gentiles, he was able to discover afresh what to meditate before the Lord and to feed on his Word really meant (see Galatians 1:11-18).

The evidence of Paul’s preaching and teaching, as these are reflected in his Letters, abundantly reveals that he continued to meditate not only on the received Hebrew Scriptures but also on everything he came to know about Jesus, what he had done and what he had taught, and where he was now! And he gave frequent encouragement to church leaders and members to do what he frequently did, meditate before the Lord. He used a variety of verbs in his exhortations to meditate, but the purpose of all of them is to urge Christian believers to spend time reflecting upon and applying to their daily lives the Christian message.

Here are a few examples. Writing to the Romans, he gave many encouragements to meditation. Here is one: “Reckon [count] ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin but alive unto God through Jesus Christ” (6:11). Believers are to see themselves united in the Spirit to the Lord Jesus Christ in his death, burial and resurrection and this seeing will be a powerful means to living a new life. Writing to the Philippians, he urged them: “Let this mind

be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus..." (2:5). Believers are to be inspired to humility by the holy example of the Incarnation and Suffering of the Lord Jesus. And writing to the Colossians, he called for heavenly-mindedness: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God" (3:1-23). It has often been observed that they are the most useful on earth who are the most heavenly-minded in their devotion for they have great spiritual energy. Finally, writing to his assistant, Timothy, Paul told him to "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them..." (1 Timothy 4:15).

Let us now attempt a little basic psychology; that is, seek to describe in general terms what goes on in meditation. When we are meditating fully and intensely in the presence of the Lord we are using all the powers of mind and heart. To make things as clear as possible, let us take a simple example, e.g., meditating on the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus and what Jesus told Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:1-13).

(b) The whole soul

When we are suitably composed and aware of the presence of God, our **memory** becomes active in remembering what we have learned and what we have been taught on the topic that is before us. So we remember what we have been taught from the Catechism and from Scripture about spiritual regeneration and birth by the Spirit from above. Our **intelligence** then becomes active in seeking to understand it; and our **imagination** comes into use presenting to our minds a picture of a Baptism and/or Jesus talking with Nicodemus. As we ponder and engage in consideration of this passage of John's Gospel, we do such things as compare a physical birth with a spiritual birth, think why it is necessary that each of us be born again/born from above by the Holy Ghost; ponder the reasons why each of us needs the life-giving presence of the Holy Ghost in our souls and reflect on the mercy of God who gives his Spirit to dwell in the souls of men.

We do all this or similar acts of mind in the spirit of prayer looking to God not merely to give us clarity of mind but also to warm our hearts. Thus gradually **our will and our affections** (e.g., desire, love, joy, hope & awe) are brought into play and we begin to make resolutions of what God is calling us to be and to do. Such resolutions may include, for example, a determination to rely more on the presence and guidance of the Holy Ghost in our lives in such and such situations; to pray fervently that various friends and relatives will be born of the Spirit and enter the kingdom of God, and to be more spiritually minded in this or that particular.

Meditation is the godly exercise whereby we digest the Word of God and apply it to our lives. It is a discipline which is required daily for we need daily food and inspiration.

And it is a godly exercise for which we need to have the right posture and be in the right place. In terms of private meditation, it will probably be the case that reading of the Bible will go before it and prayers of thanksgiving, confession and petition will follow it. However, if the meditation is within an act of worship, then it will be intimately related to what kind of service and what is being read as the Lessons from Scripture and which Canticles and Psalms are being sung.

In terms of daily, personal meditation, we read that Isaac meditated as he walked in the fields at the end of the day (Genesis 24:63), and others have also found that the natural sounds of nature are a good context for this regular discipline of mental and contemplative prayer. Yet for most of us, it is probably a matter of finding a quiet place or quiet corner in our homes or places of business for 15 minutes or more and engaging in meditation there. There are no fixed rules as to time and place because each of us lives in different circumstances with varying duties and responsibilities.

The main thing is that we engage in meditation regularly as an essential part of our devotion to our Lord so that his word may go from our minds into our hearts and then affect for good the daily reality of our lives.

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4. Meditating: Using a Simple Method

"Thy word is a lantern unto my feet and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105)

T rue meditation requires the action of the whole person, the whole soul – the mind, heart and will. To face God, who is our Creator and Redeemer, we ought to offer nothing less than our whole selves. He does not want only a part of our attention and commitment. However, having recognized this, let us also acknowledge that human beings tend to fall into two classes – the intellectual and the affective – and this has a bearing on which method of meditation any given person may find the easier to use and gain benefit from.

The historic methods of meditation, which were developed at the end of the Middle Ages and perfected in the Counter Reformation in the sixteenth century by leaders such as Ignatius Loyola and Francis de Sales (see his *Introduction to the Devout Life*) clearly begin, after introductory prayer, with the exercise of the mind, the memory and intellect, and then they move to the will and the affections and thus are designed to take the Christian disciple gradually into the practical reality of resolving to love and serve God more fruitfully in daily life. Here consideration of God's truth and ways is seen as a necessary preliminary to being moved in the will and affections by the Holy Ghost towards resolutions and actions, which glorify God. What we may call the highway of holiness in this approach is from God via his written Word into the mind and from there into the heart and through the will and affections into daily living.

There are possible dangers in this general method which has been widely used by both Roman Catholics and Protestants.

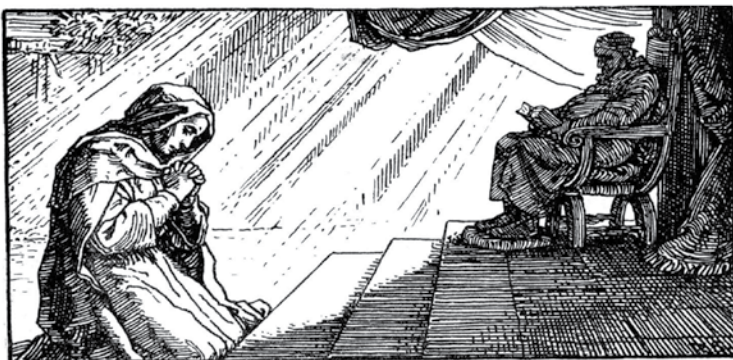
One danger is that, in the case of pastors and preachers, it is pursued in order to create sermons and talks instead of for growth in personal grace. Another danger is that consideration becomes so important for a person that it is an end in itself, and there is no overflow of God's truth into the affections and thus the exercise is only intellectual

and cerebral and does not have the direction to encourage holiness of life.

True religion in the affections

It has often been said that true religion is in the affections. By this is meant that the genuinely Christian person is one who desires God, hopes in God, loves God, reverences and fears God, and so

on. The affections (or emotions) are a part of the human person which can be excited or moved into intense feelings, and these in turn can deeply affect words and behavior, and thus life as a whole. In fact,



the sinfulness of man can be most clearly seen in the affections (e.g., in the love of evil and sin and the desire for self-gratification and the forbidden). However, true godliness is also found in the affections when desire, love, joy and the like are focused upon God and doing his will. The aim of traditional methods of meditation was to exercise the whole soul before God – the memory recalls God's truth, the mind considers and reflects upon it, the imagination pictures it, and then the affections and will are moved to please God, so that the soul desires God and loves him and expresses joy in him and his ways.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with these methods which work from mind to heart and will. Millions have used them with holy profit since the sixteenth century. But it is a fact that such methods when followed in full do seem primarily to suit those who are of the intellectual type, that is, for whom it not to be a burden but a pleasant task to engage in considering and reflecting upon holy things.

Happily there are complimentary ways of meditating which particularly suit those whom we may describe as belonging to the affective type. That is, suitable for those whose natural response to a question or problem is not first to consider it, but to feel it, to savor it and to seek to do something immediately about it. One such method is described below in "Meditation and Contemplation" (pages 13 & 14).

What all of us, whether we belong to the intellectual or the affective type or somewhere between, need to realize is that genuine Christianity is not in the first place about understanding and comprehending God or his ways: for as the prophet Isaiah declared for God: "My ways are not your ways and my thoughts are not your thoughts." Rather, Christianity is in the first place about loving God with heart, soul, mind and strength. And, further, Christianity is not in the first place about providing a sociologically correct analysis of human beings, but rather of loving the neighbor as we love ourselves.

Let us also be clear that in meditation we lift up the whole soul and mind to God and this is fundamentally an act of love. In the old *Penny Catechism*, there is the question, "Why did God make you?" And the answer is: "God made me to know him, love him and serve him in this world, and be happy with him for ever in the next."

True Prayer is an act of love and so is meditation. Knowledge of God and his ways there must be, it is essential, and knowledge is the province of the intellect and memory, but to be fruitful for Christian worship and living it is to be knowledge that proceeds from love, and knowledge which produces love. And, of course, genuine love is the action of the will desiring God and surrendering itself to him.

The Ignatian Method simplified

A method of meditation that can be used by both the intellectual and the affective types is the following. Further, it can be used in church to meditate on the Gospel for the day or at home on any part of the contents of the four Gospels. As a method, it is relatively easy to remember since each of the titles for its five parts begins with "P"

1. **Prepare.** Find a quiet place, make yourself comfortable, become aware of the presence of God around you, with you and in you. Breathe deeply and slowly. Open your Bible to the passage in the Gospels which you are going to read and meditate upon.
2. **Picture.** Read the short passage concerning Jesus (e.g., Mark 1:16-20) and form a picture of the scene in your mind's eye. Ask for the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Then place yourself in the scene so that you can see and hear Jesus and feel the power of his presence. Remember similar occasions from the Gospels where Jesus did or said similar things.
3. **Ponder.** Carefully consider what you hear Jesus say and what you see him do. What message does this have for you?

What is he actually saying to you? What can you discern for your own good from the reactions of those around and with Jesus?

4. **Pray.** Convert your reflections and considerations into prayers to God the Father of desire, love, joy, commitment, awe and reverence (as appropriate), and also offer petitions for God's help, guidance and blessing.
5. **Practice.** Make one or two specific (not general) resolutions to take into your daily life, from this moment, from that which you have learned and seen in the meditation.

In this approach, those whose imagination is vivid will find the picturing of the scene easy whilst those who enjoy discursive reason will pay special attention to the pondering. Further, those who feel their way into situations will be quickly moved by being in the presence of Jesus as they picture the scene and place themselves there. What is important is that the whole soul is exercised by all who meditate and that the memory, the intellect, the imagination, the will and the emotions and affections are exercised in a godly manner so that the fruit of meditation is holiness.

In conclusion

One way that some people may find useful or helpful as a way of thinking about the progress of the word of God within the human soul (mind, heart and will) is this. To think of its entry and inner life within the human person in terms of motherhood, particularly the motherhood of Mary, mother of Jesus, who prayed, "Be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38). Sister Margaret Magdalen writes:

"If we compare our experience to that of motherhood, first comes the conceiving of the word. We nurture it within us, as a mother-to-be nurtures the new life within her womb. We mother it, we protect it, foster and feed it, allowing it growing space. We listen to its heartbeat and its movements within, to what it is saying to us – indeed demanding of us and our obedience. And as we grow with it, changes take place in us. We find a new purpose in being, for we carry the word within. But that it not all, of course. Like Mary, at the appointed time, we bring it forth into the world, holding out the word of life that has power to save." (*Jesus: Man of Prayer*, 1987, p.98).

It should be the case that those who spend the most quality time fostering the growth of the Word of God in their souls in meditation and contemplation are actually those who possess the greatest energy to do God's will in his world.



5. Meditating and Contemplating

In the older Roman Catholic and Anglo-Catholic devotional books we read of “Mental Prayer” and “Contemplative Prayer.” Both are encouraged, but the latter is usually presented as a superior way of coming to and knowing God in the name of Jesus Christ. For our purposes we may assume that “Mental Prayer” is basically the same thing as “Meditation” and “Contemplative Prayer” much the same thing as “Contemplation.” “Mental Prayer” is considering and reflecting upon some truth revealed by God, while praying for illumination and inspiration by the Holy Spirit. In contrast, “Contemplative Prayer” is the focusing of the mind, heart and will upon God and being spiritually delighted by this vision and experience.



Counter-Reformation Saints and English Puritan Pastors

A clear distinction between meditation and contemplation is made by most of the famous devotional writers of the Counter-Reformation of the sixteenth century – e.g., St Francis de Sales, St Teresa of Avila and St John of the Cross. In fact, St Teresa (in *The Interior Castle*) and St John (in *The Dark Night of the Soul*) provide us with an analysis of the different forms of contemplation, that is, of the deepening union with God in the various stages and depths of contemplative prayer.

From a reformed Catholic (= Anglican) position, it is disappointing that St Teresa and St John do not emphasize the great value of biblical meditation. One obvious reason why they do not do so is that in the Spanish Inquisition of their time there was no availability of the Bible in the vernacular! And thus mental prayer for most people, who did not know Latin and did not have the Latin Bible, lacked direct encounter with the Word of God written. So it could be hard work and not immediately fruitful (as St Teresa herself found).

In contrast to the Roman Catholic Church, the reformed National Churches of Europe made the Bible in the vernacular generally available. So bib-

lical meditation was possible and was encouraged. So it is not surprising that in seventeenth century England, there was much teaching and not a few books published by the Puritans and evangelical Anglicans on the topic of meditation. However, while they took over some of the methods of meditation laid out by St Francis de Sales and Ignatius of Loyola, they did not make any hard and fast distinction between meditation and contemplation. The basic reason for this is that in their experience of prayerfully and meditatively reading the Scriptures, they came to delight in the presence of God, and so meditation and contemplation were seen as two aspects of the one discipline and the one means of grace.

For, considering the text of Scripture prayerfully often led to the focusing of the whole soul on the glory of God in the face of the exalted Lord Jesus (see, e.g., Richard Baxter, *The Saints' Everlasting Rest*).

Bearing the history of the meaning of the words in mind, how should we today think of meditation and contemplation?

Some suggestions

First of all, we should see them both as necessary disciplines for those who wish to grow in maturity in the Christian Faith, and to know the Father through the Son unto eternal life. Certainly those who are Christian pastors and leaders should engage in both daily if possible – and engage in them, not for the purpose of preparing sermons and talks but for personal edification and growth in grace.

Secondly, we should see them as different but closely related spiritual disciplines and activities. By meditation upon Scripture we gain gradually the “mind of Christ” and the desire to do his will; and in contemplation through the ministry of the Holy Spirit we actually taste and see that the Lord is good, as we are given brief anticipations of the beatific vision.

Thirdly, we should be aware that seeking to engage in contemplation without our minds, hearts and wills being first filled and engaged with the Word of God will mean that the task will probably be without genuine spiritual desire and energy. When we read of the “saints” bypassing meditation and going into contemplation, we need to remember that most often they were living with a discipline of ordered daily prayer and so were prepared by this for retreat into contemplative prayer.

Fourthly, we should look for the possibility of practicing and experiencing both meditation and contemplation in corporate worship before experiencing them in personal devotions. The reason for this is that we live in an age where autonomous individualism is taken for granted by society and culture, but that in biblical Christianity there is no place for this kind of individualism, for we are members one of another in the Body of Christ and Household of God. Further, our daily personal devotion as members of the One Body should properly flow from the experience in worship on the Lord’s Day of belonging to the local congregation of Christ’s flock.

In contrast to the traditional methods of meditation, there are one or two which are designed to lead from meditation to contemplation naturally and simply. Here is one such which can be used by any Christian but which will be particularly appreciated by those who are of the affective type. It is called the Sulpician method, named after St. Sulpice of France, but adopted and developed by others, and it is a method that focuses entirely on Jesus Christ, as the Incarnate Son of God. It is Christ-centered!

The Sulpician Method

As with all meditation, there is the necessary preparation of beginning by confessing your sins and asking for God’s forgiveness, becoming aware of his presence and asking for the help and guidance of the Holy Ghost.

You begin in an act of *adoration* – **Jesus before your eyes**. That is, either from the text of the New Testament, or from the Creed, or from memory, one presents to one’s mind’s eye a picture of Jesus. It can be one of many – e.g., of Jesus in his cradle at Bethlehem; of Jesus with the Jewish leaders in the Temple when he was 12; of Jesus being baptized by John; of Jesus in the wilderness being tempted; of Jesus speaking on a hillside or from a boat off shore or in the synagogue; of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration; of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday; of Jesus at the Last Supper; of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane; of Jesus on the Cross; of Jesus in the tomb; of the resurrected Jesus meeting his disciples; or of the exalted Jesus at the Father’s right hand in glory.

You look at him, you look intensely at him, and

you adore. You are wholly concerned with him, not with those around him or with the place where you see him. And as you look and adore you offer short prayers – “Lord I love thee and adore thee.”

As an alternative to focusing on Jesus in one specific situation, you may focus on one aspect of Jesus, for example, his authority as a teacher, his humility, his love for people or his communion with the Father. And here you bring into focus illustrations of this virtue or attribute in Jesus from your memory of the Gospel story. Then you adore him for the particular characteristic on which you focus. For example: “Lord, I adore thee for thy humility.”

The next step in the meditation is *communion* with Jesus – **Jesus in your heart**. Here your desire is to be like Jesus, to draw him into your life so that your life is shaped by his. Your desire may be expressed in short prayers, e.g., “Come into my heart Lord Jesus and make thy dwelling there,” and also by acts of the mind and imagination wherein you may envisage what changes his real presence in your soul will bring to, and create, in your life.

The third and final step is your *cooperation* with Jesus who desires your full salvation and sanctification – **Jesus in your hands**. Here you commit yourself to the Lord Jesus and make practical resolutions which, if put into action, will bring into your life that which you have adored in the Lord Jesus himself. Of course, you realize that anything you resolve to do can only be done with the guidance and assistance of the Spirit, for, as St Paul wrote, you are to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12-13).

Two points need to be made. First of all, there will be times, occasionally not every day, when your meditation is, as it were, taken up into what we may call contemplation and contemplative prayer, when you are lost in wonder, awe, reverence, love and praise before the Lord in his beauty and glory. These times you will especially cherish and remember with thanksgiving. But these are the gift of God and you cannot plan for them!

In the second place, this method of meditation is particularly appropriate to be used by any person, intellectual or affective by nature, during public worship and especially during the Order for Holy Communion. As the Gospel lection is read and heard, there will be opportunity to use this method to meet Jesus as he is proclaimed from the text of the Gospel. Then, in the period before, during and after receiving Communion, it will be particularly appropriate to have Jesus before your eyes, Jesus in your heart and Jesus in your hands – that is you can adore him, welcome him into your heart and resolve to go with him into daily life.

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Same-Sex Unions

Spotlight now on the Church of England

**A Statement on the Church of England's response to Civil Partnerships by
the Primate of All Nigeria, Archbishop Akinola.**

I read with utter dismay the pastoral statement recently issued by the Church of England House of Bishops with regard to the Civil Partnership Act scheduled to come into force on 5 December 2005 in Britain.

"While I was pleased to note the reaffirmation of the Church's historic teaching on both marriage and sexual intercourse, I was sorely distressed that these words are not matched by corresponding actions.

"The language of the Civil Partnerships Act makes it plain that what is being proposed is same-sex marriage in everything but name. This is even acknowledged in the statement. I find it incomprehensible therefore that the House of Bishops would not find open participation in such "marriages" to be repugnant to Holy Scriptures and incompatible with Holy Orders.

"The proposal that the bishops will extract a promise from clergy who Register [under the Act] that there will be no sexual intimacy in these relationships is the height of hypocrisy. It is totally unworkable and it invites deception and ridicule. How on earth can this be honored [by God]? For the Church of England to promote such a departure from historic teaching is outrageous.

"I also note with alarm that the statement encourages the church to ask nothing of lay people who become registered same-sex partners before they are admitted to baptism, confirmation and communion. This not only dishonors the laity and the sacraments of the Church; it also makes it obvious that the bishops of the Church of England are proposing a deliberate change in the discipline of

the church.

"It seems clear the House of Bishops is determined to chart a course for the Church of England that brings further division at a time when we are still struggling with fragmentation and disunity within the Communion.

"Let it be known that it is not a path that we can follow. It is also a path that is clearly at odds with the mind of the rest of the Anglican Communion.

"May I remind the Bishops of the Church of England that, when faced with similar decisions on the part of the Episcopal Church (USA) and the Anglican Church of Canada, discipline was imposed [by the Primates]. While I have great affection and respect for the historic role that the Church of England has played in all of our lives, no church can ignore the teaching of the Bible with impunity and no church is beyond discipline.

"I call on the House of Bishops of the Church of England to renounce their statement and declare their unqualified commitment to the historic faith, teaching and practice of the Church. Failure to do so will only add to our current crisis.

"I am, by this statement, asking my brother Primates, their bishops and all the faithful in our Communion to remain calm in the face of this new provocation as we look forward to our next meeting [of Primates]. I also call on all those who cherish and uphold the integrity and sanctity of the Word of God to pray for our beloved Church."

(Do order the 64 page booklet on the USA scene, *Same-Sex Affection, Holiness and Ordination. A Response to Presiding Bishop Frank. T. Griswold*, from the Prayer Book Society – see page 15.)

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