



Christian Devotional Meditation as Spiritual Practice

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Abstract

Spiritual practices are familiar to many individuals, whether they identify as religious or not. In Christianity, there are many spiritual practices that people can relate to, such as service, prayer, sacrament, or quiet time, which is better known as meditation. Meditation could be understood differently, but most people understand quiet time as a regular individual session to pray, read the Bible, and contemplate. Using qualitative research through literature study, this paper compares two examples with some of the theories of Christian spirituality and meditation and how they could affect someone's life. In the end, this paper contends that Christian meditation as part of spiritual practice is one of the ways for Christians to be closer to God, and it has the implication especially to be missional on the perpetrator's life.

Keywords: Christian Meditation, Christian Spirituality, Meditation, Missional Spirituality

Introduction

Someone sitting cross-legged in the middle of a forest with a waterfall in the background behind, eyes closed and breathing steady. (Example 1)

On a cold and quiet evening, somewhere in South East Asia, a woman sits at her study table in dim light with her bible and Taize instrument background music. She bowed her head and repeatedly muttered, "Kyrie Eleison, Lord have mercy". (Example 2)

The two images above are examples of how people usually understand the concept of meditation. For some people, meditation is about a bodily situation where someone tries to be alone and quiet with a particular body position, and others may think that meditation is about being relaxed in the mind. For that matter, meditation has an expansive meaning; one of the Christian understandings comes from Balthasar, who said meditation is the loving, reflective, obedient contemplation of Christ, who is God's self-expression. All modes of meditation used by the one who gropingly seeks the Highest, "hoping

to be able to touch him" (Acts 17:27), are comparable, and this is especially true when the quest is radical and transcends all temporal boundaries.¹

The two images offered at the beginning will be used as examples to analyze different perspectives on Christian meditation. The primary objective of the research is to find out how Christian devotional meditation as part of spiritual practices might change someone's life, particularly in terms of being missional. This concern will be divided into three points of discussion. First, the understanding of devotional meditation as a part of spiritual practice for a Christian community. Second, factors need to be considered when doing Christian devotional meditation. Third, the effects caused by Christian meditation, can help someone to be missional.

Methodology

I use a qualitative method that includes a review of the literature. There are at least two reasons why I use qualitative methods. First, discussing Christian devotional meditation and how it might affect one's life entails discussing experiences, and qualitative methodologies are helpful in articulating the depth of experience.² Second, this approach needs more than just combining theory and practice; as a researcher, I am also called to demonstrate spiritual activities that give testimony to the underlying theological justification for an integrated theology.³ However, my qualitative approach is a literature review since it is the most practicable and effective for me. Another sort of qualitative research, conducted through interviews, is not feasible due to the limited research time available. Interviews can be performed online, but the sense of participation meaningful to qualitative research may be decreased.

Theoretical Foundation: Spirituality, Christian Spirituality, Meditation, Christian Meditation

Spirituality

From the Christian viewpoint, the term "spirituality" encourages us to recognize the significance of its root term, *spirit*, a key biblical word. In both Hebrew and Greek, the same word (*ruach* and *pneuma*, respectively) is used to indicate "breath", "wind", and "spirit". The understanding of the spirit

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- 1 Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Christian Meditation*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), 13.
 - 2 Lap Yan Kung, "Christian Ethics, Experience, and Qualitative Research", in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Theology and Qualitative Research*, First Edition, ed. Pete Ward, (John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2022), 175.
 - 3 Clare Watkin, "Qualitative Research in Theology: A Spiritual Turn?", in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Theology and Qualitative Research*, First Edition, ed. Pete Ward, (John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2022), 16.

determines how a person perceives spirituality. For example, suppose someone views spirit as something separated from physical reality, in a realm of its own, apart from the daily human experience. In that case, the resulting spirituality will be an escape into another world, and it is unlikely to bear fruit in the form of recognizable attitudes or behavior. However, if God created the world as good and subsequently became human, as the Gospel of John claims, “spirit” is a dimension of reality compatible with physical existence, implying that spirituality must be recognized from reality and has a far more comprehensive and down-to-earth meaning. It includes human existence and will manifest in several ways, depending on cultures, denominations, personalities, and gifts.⁴

Christian Spirituality

After examining the term “spirituality,” we may go on to the more specific phrase “Christian spirituality,” which has previously been used in a vague sense. As an academic field, Christian spirituality explores the lived experience of Christian faith, the subjective appropriation of faith, and the practice of discipleship in their individual and collective actualizations; nevertheless, this is such a broad description that it is prone to misunderstanding. Sandra M. Schneiders prefers to define Christian spirituality as an existential experience inside a more nuanced concept of spirituality in general before identifying it as Christian. Spirituality is the realization of the fundamental human ability for transcendence, defined as the experience of conscious participation in life-integration through self-transcendence toward the horizon of ultimate value perceived. Furthermore, Schneiders also argues that spirituality is a conscious and deliberate way of living, an ongoing project, not merely a collection of experiences or episodes.⁵

This exposition is in line with the opinion of Alister McGrath, who argued that spirituality refers to the life of religion, what drives and motivates it, and what individuals find helpful in maintaining and growing it. “The spirit” is what gives someone life and animation. It is about that which animates the life of believers and motivates them to develop and perfect what has only just begun. Spirituality is the practical expression of a person’s religious faith - what they do with what they believe. It is more than just thoughts, however, in this case, basic ideas of Christian faith are crucial for Christian spirituality. It is about

4 Bradley P. Holt, *Thirsty for God: A Brief History of Christian Spirituality*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 7.

5 Sandra M. Schneiders, “Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality”, in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, ed. Arthur Holder, (John Wiley & Sons, 2005), 16.

how the Christian life is created and lived out. It is about fully comprehending the reality of God.⁶

Spirituality, according to Christianity, is the practical application of one's encounter with Jesus Christ. The phrase "Christian spirituality" refers to the understanding of the Christian life, as well as the expressly devotional activities created to build and preserve that relationship with Christ. Christian spirituality might thus be defined as the method in which Christian people or groups seek to develop their experience of God or to "practice the presence of God".⁷

According to Bradley P. Holt, spirituality refers to three different realities. First, there is a capacity that all people have. If someone says, "I am so happy to discover my spirituality," they are referring to a human dimension that integrates spiritual meanings with physical activities, to integrate intellectual work with ethical action. Humans have a connection to the unseen realm known as "spirituality". Second, spirituality refers to a particular way of relating to God and the world. For instance, post-modern spirituality, family spirituality, Methodist spirituality, or liturgical spirituality. In each example, the adjective describes one style among others. Third, spirituality is a relatively recent academic subject that studies the first two meanings of the word. This aspect is a multidisciplinary field with contributions from theologians and historians, sociologists, psychologists, philosophers, and so on.⁸

Meditation

There is no agreed-upon definition for meditation since there are many types of meditation, and practitioners of one type tend to dismiss other forms by failing to see that what they all have in common may outweigh their differences. Without doing violence to the rich variety of practices in both the Eastern and the Western psycho-spiritual traditions, it is fair to say that the differences between them reduce to two significant strands with considerable overlap between them, namely meditation with ideation and meditation without ideation.⁹

The Western Christian tradition has long emphasized focused upon meditation with ideation, which implies that the meditator keeps one or a

6 Alister McGrath, *Christian Spirituality: An Introduction*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1999), 1-2.

7 McGrath, *Christian Spirituality*, 2-3.

8 Holt, *Thirsty for God*, 7.

9 David Fontana, "Meditation", in *The Blackwell Companion to Consciousness*, ed. Max Velmans, and Susan Schneider, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 154-155.

collection of ideas at the forefront of awareness and utilizes them to stimulate a directed course of intellectual work. The best example of such meditation in this tradition is the series of Spiritual Exercises developed in the sixteenth century by St. Ignatius Loyola and have since been used as an essential aspect of training within the Jesuit order. In these exercises, the meditator is progressively given scenes by his spiritual director from the life of Christ, which he learns to visualize with great clarity before “putting” himself imaginatively into each of them and experiencing, in consequence, the emotions of spiritual love and reverence that he would have experienced had he been present. The Exercises appear remarkably effective in arousing in the meditator’s emotions, whose strength and profundity he may never otherwise have experienced, and also in developing the spiritual qualities with which these emotions are connected.¹⁰

In contrast, in meditation without ideation, the meditator strives to shift attention away from cognitive processes and instead experience what is known as content-less awareness of the mind, which some traditions believe is the mind’s natural state. The premise is that the mind is usually so preoccupied with internal cognitive activity that it never has control over itself. The reality of this is easily shown by asking any group of individuals (except expert meditators) to stop thinking for one minute. Until one reaches an advanced degree of practice, even in ideational meditation, the mind is likely to continue to have ideas, except for brief interludes.¹¹

When learning to meditate without ideation, some traditions teach to gradually remove their attention from these ideas, rejecting them as fleeting mental occurrences that occur inside the mind but do not represent the substance of the mind itself. As the training proceeds, ideas occur less frequently, and the mind becomes increasingly “still.” In this state of developing stillness, even when ideas occur, the meditator’s consciousness stays still because it perceives the thoughts objectively and dispassionately as things that happen to the mind but do not constitute the mind.¹²

However, there is considerable overlap between these two types of meditation practice. In specific meditations, the meditator “enquires” into the meaning, which can be done by examining it as if it were a question (the ideational or conceptual approach) or just keeping it in mind until a resolution comes (the non-ideational or non-conceptual way). Sometimes, it might even be a hybrid of the two, with the meditator trying with both approaches. Mantra

¹⁰ Fontana, “Meditation”, 154-155.

¹¹ Fontana, “Meditation”, 155.

¹² Fontana, “Meditation”, 155-156.

meditation is an example of overlap meditation (focusing on a sacred word or phrase). One of the kinds of mantra meditation well recognized in Christianity is the Jesus Prayer, used primarily in the Eastern Orthodox traditions. "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me," in which the meditator considers sin, mercy, and the divine compassion that results in forgiveness. In this situation, the meditator uses a statement held in the mind through internal repetition. In one kind of meditation, the mantra's sound is claimed to aid in internal alterations, but in other forms, the meditator may be trained to consider the meaning of the words someone is using.¹³

Christian Meditation

Using the two divisions of meditation stated above, von Balthasar attempted to characterize Christian meditation in a non-ideal manner. Von Balthasar contended that Christian meditation entails being still. To hear something, we must first prepare ourselves by remaining still. If we talk to ourselves, or if our own ideas, wants, and concerns speak to us, the noise we generate will prevent us from hearing. As a result, meditation instructions usually begin with the requirement that we cultivate inner silence and emptiness to make a place for what is to be received. Mention is made of "turning off," "concentrating" the fragmented mind, and embarking on the "mysterious path inward," among other things. The quiet expected of Christians is not essentially and mainly of human origin. Instead, Christians must recognize that they already have within themselves and in God the calm, secret "chamber" into which they are to enter (Mt 6:6) and in which they are with the Father.¹⁴

Another definition came from Frederick and White. They consider Christian devotional meditation to refer to various practices, many developed from spiritual formation activities that aim to increase awareness and attention to God. These activities improve one's relationship with God, promoting healing and a deeper connection with others. Christian Devotional Meditation encompasses the greatest range of Christian spiritual activities intended to establish a connection with God.¹⁵

Accordingly, two examples mentioned in the introduction could be analyzed using existing definitions. Both examples can be categorized as meditation. The first example, "Someone sitting cross-legged in the middle of

¹³ Fontana, "Meditation", 156-157.

¹⁴ Balthasar, *Christian Meditation*, 18-19.

¹⁵ Thomas Frederick & Kristen M. White, "Mindfulness, Christian Devotion Meditation, Surrender, and Worry", in *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 18, (2015), 84.

a forest with a waterfall in the background behind, eyes closed and breathing steady,” can be understood as a non-ideal meditation practice. The meditator aims to redirect attention away from cognitive processes and toward contentless awareness of the mind. The second example is, “A woman sits at her study table in dim light with her bible and Taize instrument background music. She bowed her head and repeatedly muttered, “Kyrie Eleison, Lord have mercy”. This element can be understood as the mantra meditation in which the meditator considers sin, mercy, and the divine compassion that results in forgiveness.

Missional Implication of Meditation as Spiritual Practice

Categories of Christian’s Spirituality

Spirituality is primarily concerned with experience rather than philosophy. Spirituality refers to the fundamental ways of life we embrace to exist in this universe. It is walking in the spirit. For Christians, this entails walking in the Holy Spirit of the Risen Jesus. During this stroll, we may identify our beings, relationships, and behaviors, as these three comprise our humanity. Our being defines our position in the cosmos. Our four primary connections are to God, ourselves, others, and creation. Ideally, they will be loving partnerships. To develop these four connections, we establish regular patterns of action known as spiritual practices.¹⁶

As previously said, spirituality is about Christian living and experience. This raises problems concerning global, cultural, and historical perspectives. Geoffrey Wainwright, a Methodist writer, created a useful approach to comprehending the many varieties of spirituality within Christianity. In 1951, Harvard theologian H. Richard Niebuhr released a study titled *Christ and Culture*, identifying five key ways Christianity intersected with culture in general. He presented five widely accepted and significant categories in Christian discussions on social ethics. In his article “Types of Spirituality,” Wainwright believes that Niebuhr’s categories may also be used for Christian spirituality. We will outline the five basic categories based on Wainwright’s findings.¹⁷

1. Christ against culture

This perspective views the world as hostile to Christian beliefs and practices. The Kingdom of God’s ideals conflict with those of the world. This type of spirituality had a significant role in early Christian history. Christianity

¹⁶ Holt, *Thirsty for God*, 22.

¹⁷ McGrath, *Christian Spirituality*, 19.

quickly became the official religion of the Roman Empire. In the view of many, this resulted in a compromise on secular ideals. The monastic movement emerged as a reaction to the blurring of church and state, making it harder to distinguish between them. Monasteries were seen as centers of pure Christianity, free from the temptations of power and money and able to follow the true Christian ideal. Monastic spirituality often emphasizes cultivating “contempt for the world” or rejecting worldly temptations as a barrier to personal spiritual progress and salvation. Withdrawal from the world was the only way to ensure salvation.¹⁸

2. The Christ of Culture

This perspective means openness to the favorable perspective on the interaction between Christian religion and secular society. For instance, during the early era of Christianity, accepting the church as the Roman Empire’s official religion led to certain benefits. Bishops were elevated to a higher social standing and wore Roman rank badges. Throughout Christian history, there have been similar blindly optimistic views on the relationship between Christianity and culture. In the nineteenth century, German liberal Protestantism combined German culture with Christian principles. Liberal Protestantism envisions humankind progressing towards affluence. The doctrine of evolution revived this notion, which was supported by evidence of cultural stability in Western Europe until the late 1800s. Religion has evolved to address modern spiritual demands and provide ethical direction to society. In short, the “Christ of culture” concept suggests that Christian authenticity may be gained by embracing and participating in current society.¹⁹

3. Christ above Culture

This perspective emphasizes recognizing that culture is neither perfect nor evil but can be elevated and transformed. According to Wainwright, this style of spirituality emphasizes the incarnation. According to this viewpoint, Christ, by taking upon himself human nature, raises what was previously excellent to a greater level. This approach recognizes the world’s goodness without assuming perfection. Creation is good, but it can yet be improved. Although human nature is positive, it may be transformed through the impact of the Gospel.²⁰

4. Christ and Culture in Paradox

18 McGrath, *Christian Spirituality*, 20.

19 McGrath, *Christian Spirituality*, 20-22.

20 McGrath, *Christian Spirituality*, 22.

This perspective acknowledges that the world and human society are not inherently bad but emphasizes the need for Christians to face challenges in living authentically. An excellent representative of this perspective is the sixteenth-century reformer Martin Luther. Luther exemplifies the relationship between Christianity and society, which also aligns with his spirituality. Luther emphasizes the need for Christian believers to live and witness in the world. However, he also warns that the world can corrupt Christians; therefore, they must remain vigilant against such influences. This approach suggests Christians should expect to live in friction with the world. Luther's teaching of the "two kingdoms" refers to the "kingdom of the world" and the "kingdom of God." These two distinct levels of authority coexist and overlap. The world does not always embrace God's standards, and the Christian church's views and objectives are sometimes viewed as silly and foolish. Spirituality's "paradox" paradigm recognizes this tension and encourages Christians to accept it. It is an inherent part of the Christian religion and cannot be erased. While the church may not always be at odds with the world, there will be times when views and ideals are shared. Tension and conflict are unavoidable in some situations.²¹

5. Christ the Transformer of Culture

The perspective is based on a positive view of creation, recognizing its inherent goodness and the need for transformation. This transition is viewed as a hope for the future rather than a current reality. According to Wainwright, the transformationist spirituality approach is likely sacramental. He illustrates that the sacrament of baptism is associated with death and rebirth, emphasizing the need for a dramatic alteration of human nature.²²

Using Wainwright's five models, we can try to analyze two examples we had at the beginning of this paper and map out broad positions. Even though these positions are not exhaustive, and some appear to overlap at times, we can say that the first example could be the perfect representative of the first position: Christ against culture. "Someone sitting cross-legged in the middle of a forest with a waterfall in the background behind, eyes closed and breathing steady" can be seen as a belief or practice that views the world as hostile and the Kingdom of God's goal incompatible with this world. Previously, monasteries were used to demonstrate attempts to achieve pure Christianity, free from the temptations of power and money and able to pursue the absolute Christian ideal. Someone who withdraws from the world and is alone in the forest is also

21 McGrath, *Christian Spirituality*, 23.

22 McGrath, *Christian Spirituality*, 23-24.

a prominent form of cultivating “contempt for the world” or rejecting worldly temptations as a barrier to personal spiritual growth and salvation.

Meanwhile, the second example may illustrate the overlap of the second and fourth points (Christ of culture and Christ and culture in paradox). Somewhere in Southeast Asia, a woman sits at her study table in dim light with her bible and Taize instrument background music. She bowed her head and repeatedly muttered, “Kyrie Eleison, Lord have mercy”. There are no details on the nationality of this woman, but Taize is a small village in the Burgundy region of France. It’s not necessarily that this woman would be very missional by intending to visit Taize. Still, the fact is that she chose Taize songs as background music alone shows that she is missional, and open to intercultural interactions. She could have chosen other songs, but it’s more likely that her spirituality (read: Christ) transcends her cultural boundaries (Christ of culture).

However, at the same time, this example shows how Christ and culture are in paradox. With the example of Martin Luther, Christian lives are understood to bear witness in this world, even though this world is not considered merely evil. This woman, in her meditation, was living out the fact that Christians do struggle in this world, which is why she muttered, “Lord have mercy”. According to Luther, the Christian life can be marked by *Anfechtung*, a German phrase that may be translated as “temptation” but refers to much more. Luther viewed prayer as a conflict with God, similar to faith as a continual struggle against disbelief.²³ In this example, women live in the tension of the world and the Kingdom of God. She lives her own life, the present life (study table represents that she doesn’t necessarily withdraw herself from the world) but at the same time struggles to make an authentic Christian life.

Impact of Meditation

We have grown accustomed to viewing humans as social abstractions, forgetting that no two of us are the same, just as no two leaves are similar. When even our fingers, toes, and voices leave a distinctive impression, every spiritual practice may be seen in various ways in which different people like to interact with spiritual realities. My experience with the Other has shown that the Divine is considerably more understanding than we are at our finest. After all, the Creator created us and gave us many ways to interact and relate to the physical and spiritual worlds.²⁴

From the definition of spirituality, according to McGrath, there are at

²³ McGrath, *Christian Spirituality*, 23.

²⁴ McGrath, *Christian Spirituality*, 26-27.

least four points that show certain themes about spirituality, they are:²⁵

1. Knowing God, not just knowing about God.
2. Experiencing God to the full.
3. Transformation of existence based on the Christian faith.
4. Attaining Christian authenticity in life and thought.

The most important thing about these is, that it is about Christian living and experience. One of those many experiences could be the experience of encountering people with different religions. Facing diversity is inevitable for Christians. From early Christianity, where the gospel was first carried, it was a religiously plural world with many lords and gods, as Paul mentioned in his letters. The first three centuries of church history were a time of intense life-and-death struggle against the seductive power of syncretism. And these days, Christians are being called to this increasingly globalized world.²⁶

Christians are required to engage with non-Christians to communicate their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord in a way that is a dialectical and flexible relation between one's experience of the risen Jesus Christ and the experience of humanity as one becomes more open in intimacy to other faiths. Lesslie Newbigin argued that Christians must share the gospel due to the outpouring of joy. The news that the rejected and crucified Jesus is alive cannot be concealed. It must be told. When Christians share it with everyone, others are allowed to learn the truth about themselves and who they are by learning the true story of their lives²⁷ In short, Christians must bear witness to the world and their surroundings.

To share the Gospel or being missional is not mainly an intellectual exchange between ideas, but it is mainly a dynamic experiential process in which *whatever* one experiences of the indwelling Christ and the inclusive dimensions of our humanity is an occasion for personal transformation that has two stages: one surrender one's self-preoccupied self into God and then one is reborn as a particular, embodied expression of God in intimate interconnection with other human beings and with nature.²⁸

Spirituality is about being because we are small but significant individuals in the immense universe. How we picture that universe and its creator will determine how we see the meaning of our existence. We have reached a high

²⁵ McGrath, *Christian Spirituality*, 4.

²⁶ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1989). 157

²⁷ Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 116.

²⁸ Donald Evans, *Spirituality and Human Nature*, (United States: State University of New York Press, 1993), 250.

level of spiritual life when we can view all of our doings as secondary and exist simply before God: "For him, we live and move and have our being (Acts 17: 28). Fundamental to Christian views of spirituality are convictions about God as the Creator who loves and values the result of God's work. It can be seen from the way someone: 1.) Relating love and from God, 2.) Love from and to someone's self, 3.) Love from and to people, 4.) Love from and to other creations.²⁹

All this shows that the development of spirituality that a person experiences through meditation cannot be invisible, the impact must be visible in someone's life. By doing Christian devotional meditation, people must be attentive to the missional opportunity. They will become more sensitive to that. The vision of Christian spirituality encompasses not only "my God and I" but also the underprivileged world in which Christians have always lived. It is fundamental to the Christian life to care for the impoverished and defend those maltreated. For instance, Christians are called to love refugees. Some are only visible on television, but God calls us to provide them with practical aid, such as financial donations or lobbying for government assistance. Some refugees may live next door so that love may be friendship and hospitality. Christian spirituality has a special place for other believers. It is not only personal but communal. Our relation to God is as a body's members, not as isolated individuals.³⁰

A person's interactions with others might reveal the effects of meditation, the growth of Christian spirituality, and their ability to inspire them to attempt to improve the world. Furthermore, the current state of modern society is one in which people with different worldviews and lifestyles come into contact with one another due to factors like globalization, migration, urbanization, mass education, and mass communication. One may refer to this development as "pluralism." What are people's reactions to the reality of cultural and religious diversity in the middle of modernity, globalization, and the ensuing pluralism? is an inevitable question.³¹

The conceivable reaction with the expanding and deepening plurality and dealing with the alternatives existing relative to one's own worldview and value system. This purposeful embrace of and engagement in pluralism and contact with religious and cultural outsiders is recognized as "dialogue".

29 Holt, *Thirsty for God*, 22-23.

30 Holt, *Thirsty for God*, 27.

31 Jesse F. Tanner, *Dialogical Transformation: Exploring Avenues of Interreligious Dialogue as a Practice Promoting Spiritual Growth*, (Leuven: Peeters, 2016), 4.

This approach, rather than turning to exclusion, intolerance, and/or violence, publicly accepts the observed and experienced context of plurality and takes it seriously by engaging in active discussion and interaction with individuals from diverse faith traditions.³²

This diverse environment has forced many individuals of other religions to interact with one another and to start respecting the moral, intellectual, and spiritual integrity of others, which is one of its most significant effects. As a result, many opportunities for interaction between adherents of different religious traditions have been sought after and promoted. These interactions take responsibility for the pluralistic environment and acknowledge its obstacles and difficulties. One attempt that may and has been used to strive toward a constructive and sustainable future in an effort for peaceful coexistence is interreligious dialogue.³³

The fundamental objective of interreligious conversation is for everyone to learn from the exchange, in addition to the broader societal aims of fostering greater harmony and tolerance across communities. D. Tracy went so far as to employ the technical phrase in philosophical hermeneutics, “understanding,” which designates any interpretation’s purpose, goal, or field.³⁴ Thus, information is shared during interreligious conversation to foster a process of greater insight or understanding about both oneself and one’s own tradition as well as the other and her/his tradition. Overcoming ignorance and misunderstanding is the ultimate goal of learning. One can venture into a different religious environment through discourse and gain a deeper knowledge of the way of life, convictions, and practices of this religious other.³⁵

The interreligious dialogue with the primary mutual learning aim is transformational, involving an experiential, holistic growth, encompassing all aspects of one’s being (not just the intellect) rather than merely obtaining information or facts about the other religious traditions.³⁶ This means interreligious dialogue is not just about one’s ability to understand diversity or open-mindedness to pluralism but also about the growth of one’s spirituality. Not only having the vision that encompasses the understanding of “my God and I” but also the understanding of “me and the world in which I (as Christians) have always lived.”

32 Jesse F. Tanner, *Dialogical Transformation*, 4.

33 Jesse F. Tanner, *Dialogical Transformation*, 4-5.

34 D. Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religions, and Hope*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 7-10, cited by Jesse F. Tanner, *Dialogical Transformation*, 69.

35 Jesse F. Tanner, *Dialogical Transformation*, 69-70.

36 Jesse F. Tanner, *Dialogical Transformation*, 81.

The transformational power of interreligious dialogue works reciprocally. People can become more missional through Christian devotional meditation, not necessarily always in the terms of evangelizing, but also in building interreligious communication. Simultaneously, interreligious communication facilitates personal transformation. The experience of growth, change, and development in understanding that participants go through both during and after the conversation exchange is referred to as the transformative power of dialogue. Interpretation of the classic becomes a discourse with the contemporary religious other in interreligious contacts. In order to build a shared universe of meaning, one must: 1. engage the other and his or her religious perspective; 2. open up to and be grasped by the religious other in a back-and-forth process of exchange; and 3. have a realized experience of truth manifestation that affects one's entire being.³⁷

Conclusion

Christian Meditation is part of Christian spiritual practice understood differently and carried out differently. Meditation is done in order to have the growth of spirituality. "Spirituality" refers to the life of religion, what drives and motivates it, and what individuals find useful in maintaining and growing it. It is about what animates believers' lives and motivates them to develop and perfect what has just begun. Spirituality is the practical expression of a person's religious faith - what they do with what they believe.

Meditation could be divided into two divisions: meditation with ideation and meditation without ideation. Meditation with ideation implies that the meditator keeps one or a collection of ideas at the forefront of awareness and utilizes them to stimulate a directed course of intellectual work. The first example of this paper could be a suitable illustration of this first type of meditation. Meanwhile, in meditation without ideation, the meditator strives to shift attention away from cognitive processes and instead experience what is known as content-less awareness of the mind, which some traditions believe is the mind's natural state. Other than those two, there is also the kind of meditation that combines both forms, and the second example of this paper could be the perfect illustration of this.

Furthermore, meditation as a part of Christian spiritual practice impacts the lives of the doers or perpetrators. It can be seen from the way someone: 1.) Relating love and from God, 2.) Love from and to someone's self, 3.) Love from and to people, 4.) Love from and to other creations.

37 Jesse F. Tanner, *Dialogical Transformation*, 81-82.

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