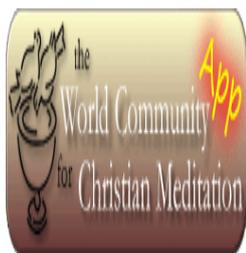


## November 21 Readings



From Laurence Freeman OSB, “Letter Four” THE WEB OF SILENCE

(London: Dartman, Longman & Todd, 1996).

If we can understand how silent nature is, we can learn the redemptive purifying power of silence. Whatever is simply itself is silent. It does not matter whether it is talking or quacking or blowing in the wind. Silence is not influenced by noise if the noise does not pretend anything or try to take over anything else’s identify or right to be. . . . Silence purifies. It restores us to our true nature and reverses the counter-currents of the unnatural.

Reappropriating our true nature in meditation means that by meditating we learn to meet the basic needs of our nature. By “meeting our needs,” I mean both senses of meeting—first, encountering . . . then fulfilling. We cannot fulfill them until we have fully faced and accepted them; until we can recognize our needs without feelings of guilt or self-rejection. These are human needs like wholeness, happiness, and peace. They are not abstractions. And they are not desires. . . . In the great discernment between needs and desires which silence brings us to, we are restored to a direct and harmonious relationship, a non-duality, with ourselves. The only victim of this is the phantom of our imagined self and its fears and illusions.

Meditation sharpens our sense of how many unnatural forces are at work today. . . The alienation from our own spiritual—boundless and compassionate—nature can only be corrected by learning again what our true nature is. Returning to nature does not mean country walks, but it can be as arduous and as refreshing as physical exercise. Meditation restores a healthy appetite for life in place of the decadent fascination with death and corruption. We see it in the love of life of the holy ones, the saint’s inability to be bored. The work of silence similarly reminds us that we must find our greatest pleasures in what is natural. . . .

[B]y finding our true nature, with our consciousness mirroring and partaking of the divine consciousness, we experience both peace and liberty. The peace arises from the certain knowledge that our very nature is rooted in God and is as real as God. It is the all-empowering peace of belonging to what we know will never reject or disown us, the self-confidence of love. Liberty springs from the joy of transcendence, of knowing that what we belong to belongs to

us. Rootedness allows expansion, just as St Benedict's vow of stability permits continuous transformation.

In the face of our contemporary crises we need to ask why we meditate. We ask it not to undermine our commitment but to refine and deepen it. We are not in pursuit of interesting experiences. Meditation is not information technology. It is about knowledge that redeems, pure consciousness. . . . This redemptive and recreative knowledge is the wisdom our age lacks. We can recognize it and discriminate between it and its counterfeits because it neither claims nor parades any possessive pronoun. No one claims it as their own. . . . It is the consciousness of the Holy Spirit and therefore it is the womb of all truly loving action. In the face of the most disheartening tragedy it is as close to us as we are to our true selves.

**Meditate for Thirty Minutes....** Remember: Sit down. Sit still and upright. Close your eyes lightly. Sit relaxed but alert. Silently, interiorly, begin to say a single word. We recommend the prayer-phrase "Maranatha." Recite it as four syllables of equal length. Listen to it as you say it, gently, but continuously. Do not think or imagine anything—spiritual or otherwise. Thoughts and images will likely come, but let them pass. Just keep returning your attention—with humility and simplicity—to saying your word in faith, from the beginning to the end of your meditation.

*After Meditation, "Just Now,"* THE PUPIL: Poems, W. S. Merwin, (New York: Knoph, 2001), p. 62.

In the morning as the storm begins to blow away  
the clear sky appears for a moment and it seems to me  
that there has been something simpler than I could ever believe  
simpler than I could have begun to find words for  
not patient not even waiting no more hidden  
than the air itself that became part of me for a while  
with every breath and remained with me unnoticed  
something that was here unnamed unknown in the days  
and the nights not separate from them  
not separate from them as they came and were gone  
it must have been here neither early nor late then  
by what name can I address it now holding out my thanks

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