

Hear my cry, O Merciful One,
listen to my prayer;
From the depths of my being
I call to you,
for my heart is faint.
Lead me to the Rock that is,
my strength,
for You alone are my refuge,
Your steadfast love conquers
my fears

The invitation of the Christian Contemplative Tradition: Beyond Rational Consciousness

What is non-duality? Without contemplative centers, the Christian perspective was virtually lost in the church. Monasteries grew because there was no other place where you could go to find this dimension of the Gospel. The intimacy, closeness, presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit got to be more and more unknown. When I was a boy, the Holy Spirit was known as the “forgotten guest” of the soul. How could we forget the infinite presence of Love? The solution is to develop and interiorize a personal relationship with Christ as the Incarnate Word and Son of God.

Many Christians are deprived of a deep faith in God’s presence within them and the immense possibilities of the Christian life as presented by Jesus in his teaching and example. The intimacy that that implies is beyond any human intimacy that we can conceive of and is the source of our being at every moment. How important it is to integrate into this Infinite Reality that is beginning to be seen as not only the supreme Being, but Being beyond being? That is, “isness” that has no limitation in any direction. Whatever you do, you are not only in the presence of God, but under the influence of the Spirit suggesting within us what the proper response to every detail of daily life actually is.

The extraordinary invitation of the Gospel to become one with God involves the gradual development of a consciousness beyond rational consciousness into what some spiritual traditions call “non-duality.” In the Christian mystical tradition this is usually called the transforming union. The classical description of Saint John of the Cross of the spiritual journey culminates in the transforming union as the term of the Christian spiritual journey

The transforming union is to become who you really are. Whatever happens to you then is seen as God’s plan. You may be given an important apostolate. You may become ill and called to offer-up your suffering for God’s people, or you just become old and offer this to God.

Through these means we become in the deepest sense co-creators and co-redeemers with Christ.

Science, without intending it, has reinforced some of the great mystical intuitions of all time. Ilia Delio's explanation of spiritual evolution following the writings of Teilhard de Chardin is crucial to this idea of the stages of consciousness. God's diversity is manifested in the multitude of reactions of human beings. This diversity is not meant to lead to wars, as it has in human history, but to the enrichment of perceiving God from the infinite number of perspectives that human beings can perceive.

We cannot explain that level of consciousness without living it in some degree and fostering the Divine Indwelling. Centering Prayer is precisely our consent to God's presence and action within us, the Divine Indwelling and a way of preparing ourselves to receive.

On the level of rational consciousness, effort is all-important. Effort becomes a hindrance, however, to further development at a certain point when rationality turns into the realization of the self-in-God. Some of us are slow learners. The purpose of the Redemption of Christ was to go to the most extreme lengths to convince us that God is willing to do anything to make us participants in the divine nature, both now and in the world to come. What dies, in this perspective, is the body and the false self. The ultimate Self is beyond the True Self. It is the Word of God manifesting in our particular human uniqueness.

The extraordinary invitation of the Gospel to become one with God involves the gradual development of a consciousness beyond rational consciousness into what some spiritual traditions call "non-duality." In the Christian mystical tradition this is usually called the transforming union.