

Meditation: Pagan and Christian

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What started “out” to be a simple study of current forms of meditation, such as Transcendental Meditation, Silva Mind Control, biofeedback, and a comparison of them with Christian meditation, has grown into a rather full-fledged historical and phenomenological study of meditation in its various forms and manifestations. Because much of our world’s religious experience—both pagan and Christian—comes under the concept of meditation (or mysticism, the term for comparable practices in the Christian West), we will find ourselves ranging over the years and over the forms of religious experience, from Buddha to TM, from Eastern Orthodox mysticism to Pentecostalism, from the *peyote* religion of primitive American Indians to the contemporary drug culture, from medieval mysticism of the Christian West to the proper Scriptural understanding of meditation as a part of the Christian’s devotional life.

The first section of this paper will consider the general phenomenon of meditation. The second section considers the various types of meditation and nature mysticism. The third section looks at the monistic meditation of the Hindu and Buddhist East, bringing in a study of TM as a development of Hindu monism. The fourth section develops the role of mysticism in the Christian West, with special attention to the effect of mysticism upon Luther and its role in Lutheranism. The fifth section will evaluate meditation from our evangelical perspective. And last, we will consider the proper role of meditation in the Christian’s life.

I. The Phenomenon of Meditation

Of all the hard facts of science, I know of none more solid and fundamental than the fact that if you inhibit thought (and persevere) you come at length to a region of consciousness below or beyond thought...and a realization of an altogether vaster self than that to which we are accustomed. And since the ordinary consciousness, with which we are concerned in ordinary life, is before all things founded on the little local self, and is in fact self-consciousness in the little local sense, it follows that to pass out of that is to die to the ordinary self and the ordinary world.

It is to die in the ordinary sense, but in another sense, it is to wake up and find that the ‘I’ one’s real, most intimate self, pervades the universe and all other beings...So great, so splendid is this experience, that it may be said that all minor questions and doubts fall away in face of it; and certain it is that in thousands and thousands of cases the fact of its having come even once to a man has completely revolutionized his subsequent life and outlook on the world.¹

For thousands of years man has been fascinated with the perceptions that can come into one’s mind under the influence of certain stimuli, and has sought to break through from ordinary sensory consciousness of existence or of God to a mystical consciousness, whether this takes the form of a consciousness of unity with the divine or of a consciousness of unity with the eternal and underlying truths of the universe. Apparently in every religion in the world there has been an interest in the mystical experience achieved through the various methods of meditation. In the Eastern religions the breakthrough of mystical consciousness is an integral and necessary aspect of the religion; in the Christian West mysticism has generally been an incidental or variant form of religious life. Coupled with the traditional religious use of meditation, there has been a recent growth of interest in the techniques to achieve mind and mood alteration without religious

connotations (as in the use of psychedelic drugs). The contemporary interest in meditation is as a means to achieve a liberating high, an insight into the meaning of the universe and of one's place in the universe.

We can accordingly describe meditation and meditational methods as the means used to achieve the feelings either of religious bliss or of natural bliss. The means used to achieve the break-through into the altered state of consciousness (henceforth abbreviated a.s.c.) are almost limitless in variety, reminding us that in meditation we are not dealing with an exclusively religious phenomenon, but with a phenomenon that is, in itself, a neutral event, neither religious nor unreligious, but capable of being interpreted in either direction. This means it can be used in Christian and in pagan environments and be interpreted accordingly as either a Christian or a pagan or a secular phenomenon.

Various checklists of means to induce a.s.c. can be presented; note that most of these are non-religious in character:

Altered states of consciousness can be triggered by hypnosis, meditation, psychedelic drugs, deep prayer, sensory deprivation, and the onset of acute psychosis. Sleep deprivation or fasting can induce them. ...Electronic stimulation of the brain (ESB), alpha and theta brainwave training, clairvoyant or telepathic insights muscle-relaxation training, isolation (as in Antarctica) and photic stimulation (light flicker at certain speeds may bring on a sharp change in consciousness.ⁱⁱ

Another list is presented in a handbook on drugs, listing means of "turning on" or "getting high" in addition to the use of drugs:

Sensitivity training; encounter therapy; Zen Buddhism; Yoga; Transcendental Meditation; Massage; Hypnosis and self-hypnosis; ...Parachute-jumping.ⁱⁱⁱ

This book also lists the falling-in-love experience, the ecstasy of sexual fulfillment, and mystical religious experiences^{iv} as further means to an a.s.c. To these lists can be appended such mundane occurrences as "attitude adjustment hour" at the local tavern, exhilaration at beautiful music or after a difficult accomplishment, staring at a flickering fire or at a candle, road hypnosis as the lights flash by in the dark, the repetitive movement of the assembly line worker, and even the hypnotic hum of a lawnmower in the distance. Alfred Lord Tennyson used to silently repeat his name over and over to achieve a self-induced a.s.c. "Virtually everyone has had an exalted expanded period of consciousness, but...many people forget such episodes or attach no significance to the transient alteration."^v

What all these means to induce a.s.c. have in common is that they use some device external to the person to bring about out an a.s.c. Often the stimuli to the a.s.c. takes the form of sensory deprivation in which the senses are focused on a single stimuli (a sound, a mantra, one's breathing, a light thought) with profound effects upon the human mind. If you would want to quickly induce an a.s.c. in yourself, you could do so by taping the two halves of a ping-pong ball over your eyes, and then to stare into the unmitigated blank whiteness; after about twenty minutes very strange things indeed would be seen and visualized.

What the various methods of inducing a.s.c. also have in common are the sensations and feelings of the a.s.c. These alterations often include:

loss of ego boundaries and sudden identification with all of life (a melting into the universe); lights; altered color perceptions; thrills; electrical sensations; sense of expanding like a bubble or bounding upwards; banishment of fear, particularly fear of death; roaring sound; wind; feeling of being separated from physical self; bliss; sharp awareness of patterns; a sense of liberation; a blending of the senses (synesthesia) as

when colors are heard and sights produce auditory sensations; an oceanic feeling; a belief that one has awakened; that the experience is the only reality and that ordinary consciousness is but its poor shadow; and a sense of transcending time and space.^{vi}

One apologist for the Christian faith finds it quite necessary to admit: “A reasonably convincing case can be made out for the fact that experimental psychedelic experiences *sometimes* seem to betray the...characteristics of introvertive mystic states of mind...”^{vii}

It is noteworthy here to also comment on the repeated instances of people moving from one method of a.s.c. to another method. We are recently familiar with those who gave up their psychedelic drugs for Jesus highs and became the “Jesus freaks.” The study on drugs in contemporary America notes this phenomenon of using nonchemical routes to a.s.c. to replace the drug high, and then comments on the appeal of religion to the drug user seeking an alternate.

Ordinary religious services seem to have little appeal in this connection. But special services stressing ritual, mystical insight, and the emotional aspects of religion—“religious highs”—attract large audiences in the youth drug centers. The Eastern religions at first appeared to have the greatest appeal; but recent reports suggest that esoteric and fundamentalist forms of Christianity such as Jehovah’s Witnesses are also attracting some youthful drug users. In the Jewish tradition, a return to the Chassidic mode of “singing and dancing God’s ecstasy” is enjoying a revival; and the Catholic mass has on occasion been similarly adapted to the ecstatic goal. Long-haired denizens of the youth drug scene who have turned from drugs to Christianity became numerous enough by the early 1970s to earn a distinctive title—“Jesus freaks.”^{viii}

Commenting further on the relationship between the a.s.c. of drugs and of religion, the drug report quotes:

Once you have learned from a drug what being high really is, you can begin to reproduce it without the drug; all persons who accomplish this feat testify that the non-drug high is superior.^{ix}

This study on drugs then goes on to comment that providing alternatives to drug highs may be the best way to reduce the current infatuation with drugs in our country. “Young people will cease using drugs if they are provided with some better nonchemical technique.”^x Certainly here we have a reminder of a special assignment Christianity has in our time, to point clearly to the Gospel as God’s answer to all of man’s needs and desires.

Thus far we have been presenting meditation as an aspect of the general psychological phenomenon of a.s.c. To treat religious meditation, and specifically Christian mysticism, in the same breath with natural a.s.c. is to do them all a grave injustice. One simply cannot equate the supernatural mystical experiences in the Christian faith with pagan meditation and with the a.s.c. induced by the natural means listed above. To do so is to fall into the trap of treating religion phenomenologically, and to reduce all religion—Christian and pagan—to aberrant brain perceptions. Aldous Huxley, renowned evolutionist, in his book *Doors of Perception*, attempted to equate his mescaline drug trips with religious mysticism, and thus belittle all religious experience. Courses on “Comparative Religion” at universities often attempt to treat religion only according to shared characteristics, so that all can be lumped together as a futile and long-outmoded belief system. Indeed to treat all forms of a.s.c., including Christian mysticism, alike will only end up with a conclusion like this:

mystics, from whatever religion or background they come, are apt to speak the same sort of language, and partly because mystics in different religious traditions often recognize in each other a common experience, which, they assert, transcends their original theological

differences, so the question inevitably arises as to whether this phenomenon does in fact provide evidence for an ultimate reality which lies beyond the formulations of all religions and represents the truth they are all trying, however imperfectly, to proclaim.^{xi} Many have tried to use the seemingly common expressions of meditation in the world's religions to assert that all religions are one under the skin. In his book *Meditation and Mankind* Vladimir Lindenberg equates Chinese meditation, Buddhist meditation, the practice of Zen Buddhism, Hindu yoga, Hasidic Judaism, Suffish Mohammedanism (dervishes), the American Indian religion of the Great Spirit, monasticism in eastern and western Christianity, the experiences of Francis of Assisi, Ignatius Loyola, the Waldensians, the Moravians of Zinzendorf, and the Quakers, asserting that all of these diverse religious strands come from the same spinning wheel because of the common element is one of meditation or mysticism.^{xii} Such study of common religious phenomenon is one of the major forces behind the religious syncretism of our day.

The point missed by such efforts at comparative religion and by psychological studies of the phenomenon of meditation is the essential differences of the frameworks within which these a.s.c. appear. To say that every religion has exhibited mystical tendencies, or has initiation rites and sacrifice and worship, and thereupon to insist that they are all the same is to forget that what makes something valid or true or legitimate is not the *form* in which it comes but the *content* that is presented and the *belief* behind the action. Buddha talks of God and the Christian minister talks of God, but they mean something quite different with the term "God." Christians baptize, Jews and Moslems circumcise, Hindus bathe in the Ganges, but each rite—however parallel—has different purpose and a different effect. A Christian mystic and a TM meditator may both achieve personal bliss and tranquility, but for completely different reasons and with different validity.

But still we have a serious warning sounded in this brief presentation on the phenomenon of meditation and of a.s.c. If indeed there is similarity between mechanically induced a.s.c. and religious meditation, then there is a high degree of suspicion cast upon the whole wide range of meditation, of whatever source and in whatever religious tradition. If a Buddhist and a TM meditator and a Christian mystic and a drug user can say they each have come up with the "perception of truth" by their experience, then we do have to be very careful with the whole experience which we are treating. One never truly knows, as Luther is said to have commented (and he spoke from personal experience with mysticism) if he is looking on the face of God or on the face of the devil. But more on the evaluation of meditation later.

II. The Types of Meditation; Nature Mysticism

It is clear from the welter of types of mystical experience that one has to do some sorting out, some work in classifying the kinds of mystical experience. R.C. Zaehner gives us a good division:

the tentative conclusion that what goes by the name of mysticism, so far from being an identical expression of the selfsame Universal Spirit, falls into three distinct categories.^{xiii} He lists these categories as nature mysticism and religious mysticism, which latter is subdivided into monistic meditation and theistic meditation.^{xiv} Nature mysticism, or natural mysticism, is that form of mystical experience that appears without any religious aspects involved. A brief look at some of the methods used to induce natural a.s.c. will help to explain this kind of mysticism.

Drugs have often been used to induce a.s.c. identified as similar in nature to religious experiences; we can mention here the *peyote* of the American Indians, the hallucinogenic

mushrooms of various natural religions, and the LSD and heroin trips of the drug culture. Also in use today are the pseudoscientific techniques like Silva Mind Control and Alpha training, which attempt to use biofeedback (the monitoring of bodily functions, especially brain waves, for an instant feedback) to lead the subject to bliss and happiness through modification and control of bodily functions (especially the self-inducing of favorable brain waves).^{xv} Biofeedback principles of achieving a favorable a.s.c. have been codified in one case into a religious movement, Scientology. The various self-realization human potential movements of our day also come close to being the religious experience of many, their religion with the blessings of science. Other forms of the natural mystical experience include the contemplation of nature that has so moved many poets, especially the English romantics, to feelings of unity with the cosmos. The various kinds of peripheral mood altering referred to earlier (light stimulation, beautiful music, etc.) are usually passed off as temporary and soon-forgotten mystical states. Although yoga and TM both claim to fit under this category of natural or “scientific” consciousness modification, they both belong rather to monistic meditation, as we shall see.

The principle charge that must be laid against forms of natural mysticism is that although they assert independence from religious connotations, they do indeed become the religion for many using them. Satan passes off the counterfeit and it is swallowed by the gullible human heart, resentful of God to begin with, as an acceptable and plausible alternative to religion. Such techniques are basically introspective, that is, they reach into the subconscious and pull out that which suffices for and passes for God. The a.s.c. is seen as reality, a very personal reality, and attempts to communicate an objective reality are often met with scorn. This obsession with self is the basic sin—and indeed all nature mysticism is amoral and very conducive to an unchanged life—and often has the effect of so entangling the practitioner that he is no longer receptive to the calling and working of a God who is transcendent to him. “I have my experience, and that is my god.”

What we have left then, after thus dismissing nature mysticism, is properly the nub of the matter, *Meditation—Pagan and Christian*. A definition like that of the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* will help us to understand what is meant by religious mysticism:

In general, an immediate knowledge of God attained in this present life through personal religious experience. It is primarily a state of prayer and as such admits of various degrees from short and rare Divine ‘touches’ to the practically permanent union with God in the so-called ‘mystic marriage.’ The surest proof adduced by the mystics themselves for the genuineness of their experience is its effect, viz. its fruit in such things as an increase in humility, charity, and love of suffering.^{xvi}

Indeed it is always striking to note how the mystic of any stripe does grow rapidly in personal morality.

As we noted above, religious mysticism (as opposed to nature mysticism) is of two types, monistic and theistic. The differentiation is not based so much on techniques of meditation used to achieve the mystical state, but on the goal of the mystical state. Monism teaches that the mystical state achieved through meditation is one in which the self becomes God, or that God is self. Monism is the mark of Eastern religions like Buddhism, and Hinduism and its offshoots like Zen and TM, though at times overeager Christian mystics have become monistic in their descriptions of the state arrived at in mysticism. Theism, in contrast, teaches that the mystical state achieved through meditation is one in which the meditator achieves an intimate union with God, but one in which the distinction between God and creature is maintained. Theistic meditation is characteristic of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, though some Hindu mystics also

maintain the theistic differentiation between self and God. Christian mysticism accordingly has the characteristics of asserting a transcendent reality (God) above self and the cosmos (and therefore that the underlying reality is not an impersonal pantheistic unity) and of asserting that the soul is not absorbed into the divine but rather is united in love and in will with God.

III. Monistic Meditation

To understand the pivotal role meditation plays in Eastern religions, we have to refresh ourselves on the basic tenets of Eastern religion. The Eastern religions are, as we have noted, monistic in that they posit a single world spirit, a single all-encompassing being (e.g. Brahman in Hinduism), of which all divinity, all life, all things are merely different manifestations. The essential goal of human existence is to break through to a higher consciousness (enlightenment) that recognizes the essential unity of the spirit of the universe and thus to grow into a selfless unity with the single world being. Earthly life, however, is separated from this essential unity of being by the illusions of reality about life now and by the three laws of existence. The first is *reincarnation*, the continual flow of life and death, which means that an individual will continually be born into this life of suffering unless liberated through higher consciousness. The second law is *karma*, the immutable law of cause and effect, regulating where a person is reincarnated in future existence according to his actions now. The third law is *dharma*, the duty of each person to remain in his present place in life, to make the best of it in personal morality and earnest seeking after enlightenment, so that according to karma he may escape to a better reincarnation in the future existence. We have thus in monism an elaborate scheme of work-righteousness that hopefully will lead one to the point where he escapes the three laws of existence when his individual existence comes to an end and he is merged into the essential and still spirit of the universe. He thus will be liberated from the ceaseless coming and going, creation and destruction, from the transitory and illusory present existence of misery and suffering. Salvation is not “‘union’ of the soul with Brahman, but rather absorption in it through the intuitive grasp of the truth that the soul and Brahman are one.”^{xvii}

The role of meditation in monism is to provide the channel through which this salvation (enlightenment, self-realization) might be achieved. One Buddhist writer uses these words to describe the goal of meditation:

control our wandering minds so that our self-nature can return to its normal condition, by which is meant a passionless, still, and imperturbable state, free from all external influences, in which our immanent wisdom can manifest and function on in the normal way, that is the way of the absolute, beyond all relativities and contradictions.^{xviii}

The techniques of meditation to achieve this breakthrough are varied from one religion to another, especially tending to follow the method used by the founder or innovator of a particular religious school. But they do have in common the psychological characteristic of altering the state of consciousness through sensory deprivation and concentration upon a single stimulus.

In Buddhism the means used to achieve the liberating enlightenment (seeking Nirvana, the cessation of self-existence) are uniformly methods of sense deprivation and sense manipulation. One may ponder the breath, its in and out movement (creation and extinction, the endless flow of existence) at the nostrils or the movement of the abdomen as it inhales and exhales. One might contemplate the thirty-two parts of the body, thinking of them as being fleeting and disintegrating, until self no longer is seen as real. One may use repetitious chanting. One may use total immobility to explore one's inner being until all desires (the mark of self) are

removed and the illusions of life drop away, especially the illusion that there is any self-identity. The Buddhist seeks *samhadi*, the state of enlightened self-perception.

In Zen Buddhism meditation takes the form of a motionless concentration upon inner values and processes, especially upon *koans*, riddle-like proverbs that express the eternal verities of existence, until the state of *satori* is achieved. In Jainism, an off-shoot of Hinduism, the aim of meditation is to achieve the state of being nothing at all, by doing nothing at all in a total asceticism. In extinction of self lies liberation to the realization of essential unity with the cosmos.

Hinduism, the mother of all Eastern religious thought,^{xix} likewise has meditation as its central religious practice, with the goal of meditation again being to “enter into the heart of things, become himself the thing, himself the world, himself God.”^{xx} We have become familiar with yoga, the use of physical and mental discipline to achieve relaxation, and thus enlightenment and the real realization of union with Brahman. Through the use of rosaries and mantras (sounds without meanings), trances and physical immobility, the Hindu is aided in his meditation exercises. A yogi is a master at one of the meditational techniques, one who is qualified to teach the method to others.

In each instance of monastic meditation the aim is to use a precise and codified method of meditation to pass through ignorance and illusion to enlightenment, to the higher consciousness of being that will liberate self to become at last one with all being that exists. The main article of faith in Hinduism therefore is that through self-effort a “man will work out his destiny through the interaction of karma...dharma...and reincarnation.”^{xxi} Although in Hinduism there is a popular religion of outright worship of the various deities as individual saviors (as in the Hare Krishna movement), and there are also those in Buddhism who also worship Buddha as their savior, the primary emphasis in Eastern religion is on monism, the use of meditation to achieve a realized unity with the essential Spirit of the Universe. In monism meditation is essential. It is the chief function of man as a religious being.

In the light of the earlier discussion on the phenomenon of a.s.c., one is certainly tempted to reduce the whole esoteric mumbo-jumbo of Eastern religion to the psychological experience of a.s.c. It seems incredible that a psychological experience should have become the religion of so many. From the eternal perspective, of meeting the God who is there, monistic meditation is one of Satan’s most successful efforts to separate man from God’s grace and love in Jesus Christ.

But from another perspective, meditation has been seen in many studies to have beneficial physical and psychic effects, giving the practitioner—in addition to his religious delusions—feelings of serenity and peace and often a high level of morality. It is this aspect of meditation that has been promoted by TM^{xxii} in the western world during the last decade, as it has sought to become the emotional and psychological panacea for modern man. In the *TM Book: How to Enjoy the Rest of Your Life*, TM is praised as a movement that “changes the quality of life from poverty, emptiness, and suffering to abundance, fulfillment, and happiness.”^{xxiii} TM is being touted as cure for all the ills of society. Among its claims^{xxiv} are that it will reduce crime and war, reduce drug abuse and the use of alcohol and cigarettes, reduce prejudice and bad feelings between people, solve environmental problems, and promote world peace. It is claimed that even if only one percent of society meditates, the whole of society will be improved; “sociologists found that when only 1% of a population is practicing TM, the whole population suddenly begins to measurably increase its efficiency, orderliness, and productivity.”^{xxv}

Through recent publicity given to the TM movement we have all become aware that it has come under increasing scrutiny and attack for purporting to be only a technique to inner discipline and peace, when it is in truth a thinly disguised variant form of Hindu yoga. Resistance to TM has come about chiefly because of its deceptive practice of claiming to be a totally non-religious scientific method, when it is in fact not only the meditational method of monism but it also promotes the pagan Hindu pantheistic view of life. TM's deceptiveness has been able to mislead many into viewing it as only a method to relaxation, bedazzling educators and, legislators into promoting its use in public schools and in government programs. Even Valparaso University of the LC-MS has developed its own TM program under Prof. Karl Lutze.^{xxvi} Much has been written on TM in recent years, both in the secular press and by Christian analysts. We have no desire here to go over the ground others have covered so well.^{xxvii} However I would like to go into TM as it relates to our paper, that is the relationship of TM to Eastern monistic meditation.

TM itself asserts its origin in Hinduism. "According to Maharishi, several revivals of the true understanding of life and the means to fulfillment have occurred within man's written memory. The first was about 5000 years ago...Lord Krishna...within 2000 years the teaching was lost. It was restored by Buddha...revived in its purity, about 2500 years ago, by Shankara. The teaching was given out correctly for several centuries, but...was obscured with time."^{xxviii} It was revived by Guru Dev, the teacher of Maharishi, meaning that the Maharishi's TM teachings have their roots in Hinduism and Buddhism.

What the teaching of TM actually is (that is, what it is trying to attain through the method of meditation) is summarized by one of its adherents:

By expanding the conscious mind, taking it from the outer, gross fields of attention to increasingly subtle levels ((enlightenment)), we can locate, deeper than the deepest aspect of our individual nature, a universal field of life...A field of permanence and of unity ((the pantheistic Brahman)), it is the source of all change and multiplicity. It is a field of Being as distinct from becoming, a field of Absolute life, a fullness, an inexhaustible and unlimited reservoir of life energy, creative intelligence, happiness and peace. It has been called names, in different ages, by great seers of the truth of reality. Buddha called it Nirvana; Jesus called it the Kingdom of Heaven within ((!)); Hindus call it Satchit-Ananda (Absolute Bliss Consciousness); Confucius and Lao-Tse called it Tao...The essence of Maharishi's teaching is that in transcendental meditation a systematic technique has been made available ((to relax? to stop drug abuse? No—)) by which anyone can incorporate this infinitely rich field of Being within his conscious experience.^{xxix}

As much as adherents of TM attempt to disavow any religious overtones to the actual practice of TM, and insist it "does *not* involve religious beliefs,"^{xxx} just this brief glance into the intended goal of the practice of TM reveals it to be more than a technique, but rather a philosophy, a religion, a belief system that is totally pantheistic and has been taken from monistic Hinduism. "TM is practised for the express purpose of leading one back to his Source. And that Source is plainly the Hindu Absolute, Brahman."^{xxxi} TM is identifiable with monistic thought at several points:

- 1) Both teach that Brahman is the source of all existence and is the essential Being that constitutes all existence.
- 2) Both teach that the present existence of anything is only a manifestation of Brahman.

- 3) Both teach that the basic need of mankind is to reach a consciousness level in which there is an awareness of unity between self and Brahman.
- 4) Both teach that the way to this consciousness of true reality is through meditation, through self-achievement.
- 5) Both teach that individuals who have themselves already attained the perfect enlightenment (the yogis) are qualified to be examples and teachers for others to lead them to the same enlightenment.
- 6) Both teach that the goal of life is to be absorbed in Brahman.
- 7) Both teach that proper thought (aided by the use of mantras and proper practices will lead one to this goal of Unity.^{xxxii}

When I began my study of TM I was aware of the Hindu connection (use of Hindu mantras and chants, the Hindu origins of Maharishi, the initiation ceremony worshipping Guru Dev, Maharishi's teacher) but my study of TM, one that was combined with a look into the monistic meditation of the eastern religions, has fully convinced me that TM is *not* some simple technique for relaxed living, rather it is a religion complete in itself, a Hindu pantheistic view of life achieved through the medium of meditation. This is not a technique with which a Christian can make peace and utilize for personal development. It is a religion at war with everyone of our Christian teachings given to us by God in the Word. It is on a crusade to replace Christian thought, and it must be discarded as such.

Maharishi knows that if he gets the person to engage in the form of meditation—even if the person has not accepted the religion at which these forms are directed—the TM practitioner is already having his religious beliefs subtly reoriented to the monistic view. Writing on those who seek to use Buddhist meditation while not accepting the Buddhist belief, one convert to Buddhism writes:

The taking of the three Refuges ((the doctrine of Buddhism) and the frequent invocation of the Lord are more important than westerners generally allow...Names do not matter, but the psychological attitude of relaxing and trusting in a Power not oneself, matters very much indeed...It is not meditation which heals the dislocated mind...the actual healing is accomplished by that Power not ourselves, call it what we will. Self-effort and taking refuge in another power are opposite sides of the same coin. The one is useless without the other.^{xxxiii}

No matter how it is presented, the TM practitioner is trusting in something to aid himself, and that something is not the Lord God.

IV. Christian Meditation (Mysticism)

As we have previously noted, Christian mysticism—which makes use of the common body of meditations technique to achieve the a.s.c. of mystical religious bliss—is a type of theistic meditation. It shares many similarities with Mohammedan and Jewish mysticism, declaring with them that the mystical state achieved through meditation is one in which the meditator achieves an intimate union with God, but one in which distinction between God and creature is carefully maintained. In this section of the paper we look only at the Christian church's experience with mysticism as it uses meditational manipulation to achieve the mystical state.

Within the Christian church mysticism has had an almost continuous presence from the early church to the present. At various times and in various branches of the Christian church it has had a major, even a dominant influence, while at other times and in other denominations it

has had only peripheral impact. It should be stressed here again, that whereas in monism meditation is the central religious practice, in Christianity meditation is a nonessential addition to the core of Christian belief and experience. Nevertheless, we should not underestimate the impact mysticism has had—and continues to have—upon the practice of the Christian faith.

The Christian church has had its long infatuation with mysticism for two reasons, example and inclination. The example of Eastern monistic meditation helped spawn the initial mystical element of Christianity, as we shall see, and it has continued to attract many to explore Eastern spirituality for concepts and methods to apply to Christian spirituality (cf. the works of Thomas Merton in the Roman church). In our present day the growth of interest in a.s.c. entices some Christian churches to promote their own Christianized versions of the “new consciousness;” one Paw Paw United Methodist Church recently advertised its own program of Alpha Control as it jumped onto the bandwagon. The current interest in “new” and “higher” consciousness also creates a climate in which there is a greater receptivity to Christian churches—like the Pentecostal—which emphasize the mystical in their worship.

But it is not example alone that has led the Christian church into its embrace of mysticism. The natural inclination of man’s heart is to embrace the mystical experience and hold it dear, dearer than the Scripture itself. Serious-minded Christians want to move *beyond*—beyond “carnal Christianity” to a higher spirituality and a deeper satisfaction from their faith, beyond the merely verbal assurances of Scripture to an assurance of salvation that has been personally experienced, beyond the basic dogmatic truths of Scripture to a perception of God that utterly fills one’s being and invigorates the whole of life. Who of us has not felt he should be—and can be—more of a Christian than he is? Who of us has not sought to grow in faith and in understanding, in discipleship and in sanctification? And would it be too much of a leap for us to think that the Gospel in Word and Sacrament is not sufficient to bring us to this higher level of spirituality, but that some form of spiritual exercise (like meditation) and some personal religious experience are additionally needed to bring us through to our goal of greater sanctification? Man’s heart does indeed look for the assurance of salvation, and his heart puzzles whether the fullness of that assurance can be found in the revealed Gospel or if one must look beyond to his own religious experience.

But the real question mysticism raises is the one as old as the Christian faith: does man raise himself up to God by good and holy deeds (sanctification), or does God come to man and totally possess Him in the revealed Word of Truth (justification)? This tension between sanctification and justification is as old as Pharisaism (“I am Worthy of God’s attention”) and as modern as Pentecostalism (“I am *sure* I am worthy of God’s attention”). It has been categorized in different ways: *Christus in nobis* or *Christus pro nobis*; grace in us or grace for us; Anders Nygren’s *Agape and Eros*, (*Agape* is the love God has for man to descend to save him; *Eros* is the love man has that seeks to possess God). But in whatever way the mystical approach is described, it is essentially the approach of work-righteousness that seeks to draw oneself up to God and merit His favor.

A note on terms: as we moved into this study of Christian meditation we have had to do some adjustment in our understanding of the word “meditation.” As we usually understand meditation in the Christian church, it means reflections upon the Word of God. However in this study on Christian mysticism/meditation, we are using meditation in the sense defined earlier, of mind-manipulative methods to arrive at feelings of bliss. Please note this carefully, or there will be confusion on the points being made. The mystical theology we will be describing is not meditation in the traditional Christian sense of using the Word for personal instruction, but

mystical theology is meditation in the sense of seeking and applauding the experience that leads one to feel God is nigh and has delivered one.

The history of mysticism in the Christian church is generally traced to Dionysius the Areopagite, the pseudonym of a writer in the early sixth century. According to Dionysius: Salvation is regarded as the deification of the saved, and deification is the highest possible resemblance to God and union with Him. ((Salvation)) is to be sought (!!)) in moral and intellectual discipline, with the sacraments as an aid and a means, and through contemplation ((i.e. meditation)) which carries one outside of self, above reason, to the vision which realizes that the individual is never really separated from God. Yet the self continues to exist, even when merged with God.^{xxxiv}

Through the action of self one experiences the new birth and reaches up to God! In this summary scheme of Dionysius lies a program for mysticism that has been a part of the Christian church for 1500 years.

The ideas of Dionysius have passed alike to Western and Eastern Christianity. Before we consider the more familiar role of mysticism in the Western church, we should note briefly the dominant role of mysticism in Eastern Orthodoxy, especially its use of meditation to achieve the mystical state. Eastern Orthodoxy has long been characterized by a mystical theology and mystical practices. The whole worship form of the Eastern church is designed to stimulate the upward movement of the soul to God through the use of symbols, lights, incense, chanting, and constant reference to the pious examples of saints and angels. This upward mobility of the soul is to be accomplished apart from the direct Word of Scripture, for one of mysticism's chief characteristics is the replacement of the means of grace with immediate sensory experience.

Nowhere in Christianity does mysticism come so close to traditional Eastern monastic meditation as in certain types of Orthodox spirituality centered in the monastic life. Even while Western monasticism moved towards activism, Eastern monasticism has remained strongly contemplative. One such mystical movement within Eastern monasticism has received the name Hesychasm (Greek ἡσυχία quiet). Hesychasm began in the thirteenth century on Mount Athos in Greece among the Russian Orthodox monks. In 1351 it was officially endorsed by the Eastern church.

Two elements characterize Hesychasm. The first is that the true knowledge of God comes not through the intellect and understanding but through direct interior illumination. In Hesychasm one seeks to rid himself of the delusions and vanity of life that he might be united with the eternal and the unchanging. The Hesychast reduces the mind and the flesh that the spirit might develop in self and that the God-in-self might be served. The second characteristic of Hesychasm is that meditation is the means used to "be enveloped by the light which shone around Christ at the time of His transfiguration."^{xxxv} The close link between Hesychasm and Eastern meditation is revealed in this description of Hesychast practice:

Discipline similar to various forms of Far Eastern yoga play an important part in hesychast life, being utilized as aids for contemplation. For long periods of time...the hesychast remains completely quiescent in a darkened room, sitting either cross-legged on the floor or on a low stool symbolizing the dung hill upon which Job sat, his hands either in an attitude of prayer or with one over the heart while the other holds a rosary, his eyes focused, on the navel while he repeats the Jesus Prayer ((Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me a sinner)), constantly invoking the Sacred Name of Jesus in conjunction with his heartbeat and respiration.^{xxxvi}

For all hesychasts, the invocation of the Name has ultimately the same meaning and significance; it is a method of concentration on a single medium; it is a way of contemplation, recollection, and remembrance of God resulting in deification of Him; it is a way of worship and thanksgiving. Yet it is even more than this, for it is a way of life.^{xxxvii}

The use of the Jesus name as a mantra to aid in contemplation that the soul be released and prepared for the higher union with God, the immobility and intense concentration to remove the distractions of world and time, the monastic setting where in solitary one seeks to find God,—all these point out the link between Hesychasm and Eastern monistic meditation. Hesychasm is still practiced in Eastern orthodoxy, though with the absorption of Russian Orthodoxy into the Communist state, Hesychasm has lost its most responsive practitioners.

Russian orthodoxy has long been attracted to mysticism, as much of its literature both sacred and secular, reflects. When Tolstoy, himself a mystic, wrote in the nineteenth century, he often reflected the Orthodox bias for the direct experience of God as opposed to a mediate perception through the Word. He tells a story of a bishop on tour of his diocese. The bishop hears of three pious monks living on an island in a lake and takes a boat to visit them. The monks turn out to have no knowledge at all of Scripture and doctrine. Patiently the bishop seeks to teach them, but finally he has to settle only for teaching them the Lord's Prayer; they are too simple to learn anything more. He leaves with some doubt over the genuineness of their faith. As his boat leaves the island for the mainland, in the distance he sees three figures moving towards him. As they come closer he sees that they are the three monks from the island, running across the water to catch him. They climb into the boat and admit that they have already forgotten the Lord's Prayer. But the bishop falls on his face before them and says that they are holier men than he is, for they truly are in God. They need not concern themselves with such matters as creeds and doctrines, for they already know God directly. The three monks return to their island, still running on the water, and the bishop goes his way, realizing that to be in God is more than any intellectual understanding of Him.

In recent years Eastern mysticism has again been investigated by the Western church, with increasing approval. A recent book published by Fortress Press received a favorable review in the "Book Newsletter of Augsburg Publishing House." The book, *The Jesus Prayer* (1975), promotes the use of the Jesus Prayer used by the Hesychasts. In this book the Jesus Prayer is praised by the author as "one of the simplest in form but richest in content of all the prayers in the long history of Christian worship."^{xxxviii} The reviewer describes how we are to use the Jesus prayer: "a prayer of the heart; prayed in time with the beat of the heart, or with the breathing out and breathing in of respiration. Since these functions continue day and night, prayer can be so coupled with them as to make these very bodily functions an unceasing prayer."^{xxxix}

As long as the Western church retained the purity of the Gospel, it resisted the mystical tendencies that overwhelmed the Eastern church. To be sure, monasticism appeared early in the West, but initially its aim was basically ascetic, to free the monk from the concerns of the body that he might pursue the matters of the spirit. However as theological decay set into the Western church (especially the work-righteousness) and as Christian fervor and piety lessened and as the successive monastic movements failed to invigorate the church, the Middle Ages found many—especially in monasticism—who looked to mysticism as the cure for the ills of the church. Although we cannot trace all of the movements and varieties of mysticism in the Middle Ages, we can consider the basic approach of Western mysticism during this period.

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries the “New Piety” became a force in the church. Neve characterizes the period: “They wanted to experience what until then they had only subscribed to. Thus there broke forth an impetuous, outspoken, religious subjectivism...Certainty conversion, and experience are the three characteristics of the new piety.”^{x1} The chief concept of the New Piety was that the human soul, imitating Christ’s path of humility and suffering, must rise through intuition and meditation and contemplation to a personal experience of salvation and of union with Christ. The path to God lies through meditational, subjective techniques!

The New Piety reached a height and found its most eloquent spokesman in Bernard of Clairvaux (+1153). Bernard, incidentally, was praised by Luther as one of the best saints of the Middle Ages. Bernard’s mystical approach is summarized by Neve:

If one meditates profoundly on the holiness and purity of Jesus, there breaks forth the mighty consciousness of one’s sinfulness, and at the same time one feels the wrath of God in all its severity. But then, if one gazes at the sweetness of Jesus and His mercy, he becomes certain of forgiveness at the hands of a God who does not impute sin...This is the first step of the mystical way to God, which is at the same time the way of conversion...By reflecting on the love of God in Jesus, the impulse is awakened to imitate Jesus’ love, patience, humility, etc., and above all His obedience. ((cf. “O Sacred Head Now Wounded”)) The perfect surrender of the will of the individual to the will of God is the most distinctive mark of the imitation of Christ. ...The third and highest stage...is an absolutely spiritual experience of God which is not transmitted by sensuous means, but which is enacted spontaneously in the soul. ...an ascent of the soul to the Godhead.^{x1i}

Though Bernard definitely is advocating the mystical concept of the soul’s journey to God, he still seeks to safeguard his mysticism with assurances that the movement of the soul to God takes place only by the grace of God and through the Church and its sacraments. Bernard’s scheme does remind us that there is more to the life of the Christian than his conversion, which is where orthodoxy has too often stopped in its application of the *ordo salutis*; but the means to achieve the sanctified life is not self-determination but the continued preaching of the Law and the Gospel. Other names connected with this first period of Western mysticism include Richard of St. Victor and Hugh of St. Victor, both involved in defining and systematizing the mystical journey the soul was to take to union with God.

After the New Piety had waned in the thirteenth century, it was supplanted with a fresh involvement with mysticism in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. This second phase of medieval mysticism was called the *Devotio Moderna*, the Modern or New Devotion. Like the earlier New Piety, the *Devotio Moderna* stressed the devotional fervor that leads to the mystical union with God. Among the familiar names and movements associated with the *Devotio Moderna* are Thomas a Kempis (*Imitations of Christ*), the Brethren of the Common Life, Joan of Ark, Catherine of Sienna, Nicholas of Cusa, and the great German mystics, Meister Eckhart and Johann Tauler. The *Devotio Moderna* covered a wide range of teaching and expression, and before we consider the more pertinent German mystics, we can note the extreme expressions of the *Devotio Moderna* to compare it with the meditational movement that has been our concern.

An expression of Western mysticism close in language to the principles of Eastern meditation is the *Cloud of Unknowing* (ca. 1375). According to this work, “Man’s part in drawing near to God consists in emptying his mind of every thought. When he has brought his reason to a standstill, he must wait for God to disclose Himself.”^{x1ii} “The actual work of perfection requires that the mind rigorously empty itself of the very thoughts which are the staple

of ((traditional Christian study-of-the-Word)) meditation.^{xliii} Every thought of God and of His creatures must be trampled down and covered with a ‘cloud of forgetting.’^{xliiv} The Christian is not to reach God through the self-revelation of His Word; the Christian is not to reach God through self-effort; the Christian is simply to let God happen to him.

The audacity of the *Cloud of Unknowing* is matched only by the visionary experiences of God claimed by some of the mystics of this period. As an example, Catherine of Sienna, in the subtitle to her book: *The Dialogue of Catherine of Sienna*, claims that the material she wrote was “given in person by God the Father, speaking to the mind of the most glorious and holy virgin, Catherine of Sienna, and written down as she dictated it in the vulgar tongue, she being the while entranced and actually hearing what God spoke in her.”^{xlv}

We have mentioned the German theology as a more pertinent expression of the *Devotio Moderna*, both because it is a more representative expression of mysticism, and because of its connection with Luther and the Reformation. In Meister Eckhart (ca. 1260-1327) we have a mystic who had what he believed to be a direct vision of God and who then attempted to lead others to that vision of glory. He taught that the unity with God demonstrated by the mystical experience is the primary and highest purpose of man. “Eckhart asks: ‘Why did God become man? So that I might be born to be God. Yes—identically God.’”^{xlvi}

His mysticism was the result of his own highly individualized and deeply subjective religious life. Thus it was as a result of Eckhart’s influence, mysticism in the West has come to mean a form of inner individual experience that not only resists any logical or rational demonstration, but also withstands or opposes it. Eckhart’s mysticism was Eckhart’s own intense, personal, and self-justifying religious vision.^{xlvii}

The German perception of the *Devotio Moderna* is well summarized in the *Theologica Germanica* (ca. 1350). The *Theologica Germanica* equates salvation with obedience to God. It declares, for example, that “the new birth that is necessary to enter the kingdom of God (John 3:3,5) is nothing else than the birth of obedience. When Christ says that ‘No man cometh unto the Father but by me’ (John 14:6), what is meant is that the only way to God is by following Christ’s example, that is by complete obedience.”^{xlviii} Christ becomes the new Law-giver, and the “Christ-life is primarily a union of man with the will of God, and it requires submission to all things.”^{xlix}

The *Theologica Germanica* was published by Martin Luther 1516 (partial) and again in 1518 (complete) with the following commendation:

no book except the Bible and St. Augustine has come to my attention, from which I have learned more things about God, Christ, man, and all things.¹

With this commendation comes the perplexing question of the link between Luther and mysticism, and then also of the role of mysticism in Lutheranism.

There is no doubt that for a period in his life Luther was strongly drawn to the German mystics. After he had tried without success the ascetic way of self-denial to bring him to God, Luther found himself drawn to the mystics and sought to apply their methods to himself during his formative years at the Augustinian monastery of Wittenberg (ca. 1513 ff), tutored in his efforts by Staupitz, himself a major force in German mysticism. Years later Luther recalled this flirtation with mysticism, as Fife has gleaned for us:

...he recalled that the ecstatic dreaming of the Neoplatonists ((of whom Dionysius the Areopagite was the chief proponent)) had stimulated him to speculation that led nowhere. Fired by these writings, for the time, however, his emotional nature had moments of elation in which he believed that he had found a direct path to God. In a sermon of 1523,

he remembers, that he “was carried into the third heaven.” Toward the end of his life he recalled that while engaged in exercises to attain spiritual unity with God he had felt himself to be...in the “chosen of the angels.”^{li}

Martin recalled later that when Staupitz compelled him to a life of theological scholarship, he rescued him from being lost in visions like those of St. Briget.^{lii}

During the years in which he had little direct contact with Scripture, and even after he began his spiritual studies (Romans, Galatians, Psalms), Luther both used the German mystics with appreciation and frequently reflected in his writings the lessons he had learned from them.^{liii} But as his evangelical understanding of Scripture deepened, and as he gained a personal understanding of the Gospel message, the influence and use of the German mystics began to wane. Their theological influence upon him had long disappeared by the time he rebuked Muenzer and Karlstadt and the Anabaptists for their experiential theology in the mid 1520's.

Estimations of the influence of mysticism upon Luther uniformly assert that although Luther was for a time in contact with the mystical writers and used their method in his pursuit of peace with God, nevertheless the distinctive mystical theology left no lasting impact upon him. For example, James Clark concludes:

In the critical years of 1515-1518 Luther read Tauler with enthusiasm and not without profit. The simple eloquent style of the medieval writer helped Luther in his approach to the general public in his pamphlets and sermons. He also gained as a theologian; he was enabled to gain a new sense of the sacramental in worship and a deeper insight into personal religion. Doubtless Luther read his own ideas into Tauler and misunderstood him. He selected what fitted in with his own beliefs and ignored or minimized the rest.^{liv}

The editor's introduction to Luther's edition of the *Theologica Germanica* adds this:

One looks in vain in Luther's writings for doctrine of the mystics. Unlike them he never becomes subjective in his approach, but continues to emphasize at every step...justification by faith.^{lv}

The German mystics were sifted through the Gospel before they were adopted by Luther.

The major problem Luther and Lutheranism has seen in the mystical theology of self-meditation, is that mysticism bypasses the Gospel in Word and Sacrament for an immediate perception of God that Scripture either presents nor considers possible for fallen man.

Luther parted company with any attempt to know God through lofty flight of abstraction or through meditative submersion in, and intoxication by, mystical experience. He had tasted all this; yet he retained nothing but a horror of these experiments in assurance, since they always left him in doubt whether he was experiencing God or himself. No, the Spirit of God meets us in an inexpressibly simple and earthly manner in the plain and clear words of Christ, in His person, in the consecrated Christians, the saints on earth, and finally even in the Sacrament. God speaks—and how would He be understood otherwise?—in human fashion to man, with words of sharp and abasing command and with words of comforting and uplifting promise. He comes to us amid our earthly existence...and puts us, as it were, in communication with Christ. ...In other words, God does meet us, not outside but within the history of our human experience. He does not wait for man to soar into His incorporeal realm beyond the reality of man's own life, but He reveals Himself to man in the midst of his reality so simply and clearly that no one can find an excuse before Him.^{lvi}

But even though Lutheranism has repudiated mysticism, its characteristics of experience, certainty based upon that experience, and a moving conversion that achieves that experience, have continued to fascinate Lutheranism both in the past and yet in the present. There have been individual defectors from Lutheran orthodoxy, like Jakob Boehme and Caspar Schwenkfeld, who held that there must be “serious personal regeneration over against the orthodox doctrine of the imputation of Christ’s righteousness”^{lvii} and in other ways maintained a subjective theology.

The attraction of mysticism finally proved to be too much for the Lutheran church, and in the movement called Pietism, mysticism exerted its greatest influence upon Lutheranism. In Pietism the emphasis is upon experience and rebirth and the new life, rather than upon the objective reality of our salvation through forensic justification. Various Lutheran theologians in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries helped preserve in Lutheranism an appreciation for the personal emphasis of mysticism; among these were Johann Arndt and Johann Gerhard. Of Gerhard Theodore Tappert writes: “The great systematic theologian...accommodated himself to the prevailing orthodoxies, ((but)) complained privately in his correspondence of the need for reform, and cultivated a mystical religion which was borrowed from the late Middle Ages and was expressed in his *Sacred Meditations*.”^{lviii}

The real stimulus to the insertion of the mystical element into Lutheranism came through Philip Spener and his successor, August Francke. Spener greatly praised the *Theologica Germanica* and quoted the early Luther (1515-1516) on the value of mysticism. Again Tappert evaluates Spener’s ties to mysticism, summarizing from Martin Schmidt in “Spener und Luther,” *Luther-Jahrbuch*, Vol. XXIV, Berlin, 1957, pp. 102-129:

The distinguishing feature of Spener’s whole program of church reform, for which the *Pia Desideria* was the classic expression, was his rejection of the scholastic tradition ((of Lutheranism)) and the substitution for it of the tradition of mystical spirituality...Characteristic of this tradition is the central place given to regeneration...instead of justification. ...the language of ‘rebirth,’ ‘new man,’ ‘inner man,’ ‘illumination,’ ‘edification,’ and ‘union of Christ with the soul’ in common to Spener and the older mystics.^{lix}

It was this German pietism that greatly influenced Zinzendorf and the Moravians, and subsequently through them the Methodism of the Wesley brothers. Within Lutheranism mysticism lost any formal role after the collapse of Pietism, except for its influence still felt directly in the Lutheran Brethren church, which “differs from other Lutheran churches in accepting as members only those who have a personal experience of salvation.”^{lx} But even though mysticism has lost its formal character in our time, the attraction of readily available “new life” and “new piety” materials continues to be a threat to members and pastors alike as they feel that the old Gospel and the old preaching aren’t getting the job done anymore. The natural inclination of man’s heart will continue to feel that self-induced personal efforts will achieve what the Gospel seems not to have accomplished.

Within non-Lutheran Protestantism the tenets of mysticism have remained constantly present. One can consider the various fringe “Inner Light” movements like the Mennonites and the Amish, the Quakers and the various churches of the Brethren, and the far-left fringe movement, Christian Science. The Inner Light movement has “refused to accept the Scripture as such, that is, the ‘letter,’ as the Word of God. The Bible was nothing but an empty letter. The Spirit was to be the teacher...In other words, the Word was thought to be in man...the emphasis was upon personal experience.”^{lxi} The Inner Light movement, in common with mysticism, stresses the possibility of and the need for the subjective religious experience that comes apart

from Word and doctrine, through a meditational kind of inner illumination immediately from God.

Within Protestantism one can also consider the pervasive role of religious subjectivism, seemingly detached from mysticism, but directly descended from the patterns of traditional mysticism. The Baptist church in particular has long emphasized the experience of conversion and the assurance of salvation through the strength of one's religious life and the recitation of one's religious prowess. The clearest example of mystical theology in practice in our day is the charismatic movement. Whereas the Baptists stress the subjective experience of conversion, the charismatics stress the subjective experience after conversion. Pentecostalism and its other sister charismatic movements are genetically descended from Methodism and the Holiness churches, from which they derived the holiness and sanctification teachings necessarily present to permit the soul's ascent to God in the mystical fervor of glossalalia and kindred *charisma*.

The more I have studied Pentecostalism in connection with this paper, the more firmly I am convinced that it is directly a manifestation of mystical thought and directly an example of meditation in the sense of appreciating and seeking mystical experience through mind manipulative methods. Almost every one of the comments made by mystics of the early Christian church can be utilized without change by Pentecostalism. It too seeks the certainty of salvation in one's own experience of God. It too stresses the need for seeking the higher religious experience. It too relies less on doctrine and more on holy living, less on justification and more on sanctification. It too asserts that God comes to man with grace apart from the Word and Sacrament, in a direct and irrational outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It too declares man is able to move closer to God through personal seeking and through the emptying oneself of all sin and self-striving. Is the ecstasy of the charismatic different from the ecstasy of the monistic meditator? Is the path to charismatic ecstasy any different path than the meditational technique of centering one's thoughts and hopes and senses upon receiving a higher religious experience? Is not the experience of glossalalia valued in the same way and for the same reasons as Catherine of Sienna and Meister Eckhart valued their visions and as the mediator of the East values his new consciousness?

In recent years the Roman Catholic church has also reluctantly made peace with the charismatic movement, for many of its members have enthusiastically embraced the ecstatic assurance of salvation fostered by the charisma. The Roman church never lost its interest in mysticism, even in the Counter-Reformation period when Rome and its monastic orders turned to activism and precise doctrinal formulation to oppose the Protestant heresies. There were many individual advocates of mysticism, notably St. Theresa and Ignatius Loyola in Spain and the Quietists of France. The main continuance of mysticism in Rome was in the continued use of mystical means to popular piety: the rosaries and novenas, the endless and mindless prayers in alien tongue, the exotic service with lights and incense and mystery, the accounts of saints with their exotic piety,—all contributing in the popular piety to give the faithful a feeling of unity with God and an awe of His holiness and glory in the irrational and immediate manner so prized by the mystics. The importance of the mass was not what one learned, but what one felt, not upon the Word (buried in Latin), but upon the vision of God developed in the service.

When many of the trappings of traditional Catholicism disappeared after Vatican II, the mystically minded among the faithful were set adrift. One Catholic charismatic comments upon the effect:

Certainly, one can admit that in the Roman Catholic communion the removal of the Latin mass and the substitution of the more 'cerebral' liturgies with too little silence and too

much creative novelty in them have catered too much to the mind rather than to the heart. Traditional devotions...have largely disappeared and left a communal void. So the Pentecostal movement supplies the 'heart prayer' and the prayers supplementing the formal liturgy which was formerly catered to by rosary and benediction, the Way of the Cross and novenas.^{lxii}

In our study of Christian meditation we have seen in all major branches of the church the continual attraction of the mystical experience achieved through meditational methods similar to those used in monistic and nature mysticism.

V. A Christian Evaluation of Meditation

In our survey of meditation as a technique to achieve mystical union with divinity, we have come to understand that meditation is the core religious experience of a major segment of this world's population in the pagan East and that it also exerts a strong and continuing attraction for many in the Christian West. We have found it in such a wide range of religious life, both pagan and Christian, that it would seem to be sheer audacity to make a general evaluation of all use of meditation and of all mystical experience. And yet we will make such a general evaluation. Wherever the experiences of meditation are praised and practiced, there one finds common assumptions about man and about God and about the revelation of God. Wherever meditation is found, common assumptions are made about the value of the mystical experience for one's certainty of salvation. Wherever meditation is found there is a concurrent tendency to reduce sin to a minor perversion manageable by man and to isolate oneself from the community of man for a solitary pursuit of the divine.

It is the great pride man has in himself that leads him to assume that he can of himself first identify and then find God. How typical of fallen man that he assumes he has within himself the resources to find God. There is a double perversion here, both that man is innately capable of raising himself up to God and then also that God is that much like man that He is readily discernable to man. Both of these perversions are condemned in Scripture and doomed to failure. How can one whose "imagination is evil from his youth" conjure up the holy God? How can one whose inborn attitude is hostile to God find the God he hates and fears? How can the heart warped and twisted by sin arrive at the truth about God's identity and character and at the truth about itself? How can man surrender himself to God without the mediating work of the Savior to make that surrender acceptable and to properly motivate the life of sanctification? Is it not revealing that the sin-filled heart is deceived into thinking that what is basically a mental disorientation (the a.s.c.) is arrival at the truth? It is an obvious point to note that no pagan meditator (nor nature mystic observing God's creation) has ever arrived at the true God much less has any pagan meditator ever arrived at the Gospel truth about God's mercy and forgiveness in Jesus Christ. Meditation serves to sink the person deeper into his self-delusions about God; he makes a God to fit his own tastes and aspirations and then uses meditation to find his own invention and mystical experience induced through meditation to verify his arrival at God.

Christian meditation is also not immune from a false understanding of God caused by seeking to know Him through one's own sin-warped perspectives. We have noticed the tendency (emphasized by repeated warnings against it) in Christian mysticism to arrive at the pantheistic content of self-deification. The God who is found in mysticism is often subtly or grossly distorted from the God who has revealed Himself in the Word. We can mention Eastern Orthodoxy's emphasis on pneumatology at the expense of Christology or the unitarian theology of many (primarily black) Pentecostals. To rely on a supposedly direct communion with God

detached from all external aids is to expose the soul to impressions and suggestions arriving not from God but from the disorder within one's own heart. Meditation finds a God who is strained through one's sinful flesh, and that can only result in damage to one's perception of God. Paul wrote to the Corinthians on the folly of seeking God with the resources of fallen man: "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." (1 Cor. 1:21)

"Through preaching"—through the Means of Grace man comes to know the true God and trust in Him. In all forms of meditation the understanding of God mediated in Word and Sacrament is bypassed for an immediate knowledge of God that comes uniquely and directly and individually. Although the meditator claims that his ecstasy and his knowledge and his fulfillment come from God, the reality is that he is despising what comes from God. He is calling God's self-revelation insufficient and incomplete. He is declaring that there is something more for man than that which God simply and clearly reveals, and that this hidden "more" is attainable only by personally wrestling it away from God. But the 'more' the meditator receives is not of God but of himself, and when he parades his "more" before the unenlightened, he is not parading God but his own accomplishments before them.

The meditator is asserting that his own experience is more valid for salvation than the very words of God. He is asserting that subjective experience outweighs the objective proclamations of the Gospel. Well do the Smalcald articles point out the irony that those who insist upon an immediate perception of God also insist on proclaiming to others how to come to God "as though, indeed, the Spirit could not come through the writings and spoken word of the Apostles, but through their writings and words he must come."^{lxiii} Likewise we should ask how the message of conversion experience and of new life in Christ experience and of Pentecostal experience can do better than the Scripture to call men to faith in God. The meditator is not replacing a mediated knowledge from God with a knowledge directly from God; rather he is replacing the mediated knowledge of God with his own perception. Of the enthusiast Karlstadt, Luther wrote: "he wants to teach you not how the Spirit comes to you but how you come to the Spirit."^{lxiv}

Blessed indeed are those who have learned to seek God where He is to be found, in His self-revelation in the Word and Sacrament and especially in the face of His Son. Hear how he encourages us to trust that He has already made Himself available to us and we need not seek some hidden "more":

"Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down), or "'Who will descend into the deep?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart"; that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming... Romans 10:6-8 NIV

Recall how He warns us against any effort to come to Him on the basis of our own efforts "that...faith might not rest on man's wisdom, but on God's power." I Cor. 2:5, NIV. "He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy." Titus 3:5 NIV. In the rebuke to the Corinthian congregation to stop seeking for something more apart from God's revelation and the "foolishness of preaching" lies a rebuke to all who claim to find something of God apart from His simple and sufficient message of self-revelation.

The idea that there is a religious truth to be found apart from Scripture is the fatal entrapment for the pagan meditator and a dangerous enticement for the Christian Mystic. As each turns to his experience and his perception for the assurance of salvation he is basing

salvation upon his own mind and worth and not on Christ and the sure promises of God. And surely the meditator has to face the question, is what is experienced truly of God? Or is it of the devil? Or is it a projection of the subconscious? Or is it a self-induced delusion? He can never answer that question with surety, for the meditator has left the Gospel and gone over to the religion—not of grace—but of works. The meditator finally needs no God to approve or disapprove of him; he will make it to God's place of honor on his own doing.

The meditator's concern with self-achieved righteousness is also revealed in his attitude towards sin. To make possible his leap toward God, the meditator must believe not only that he can free himself from the impediments of sin and evil (actual sin) but also that he is unencumbered with any built-in limitations that separate him from deity (original sin). Among the pagan meditators the limitation upon man effected through original sin is unknown; among Christians, meditation flourishes most where there is a lack of emphasis upon or an actual rejection of original sin and the corrupting nature of the old Adam; Christian meditation flourishes in the atmosphere of man's potential for self-achieved holiness. In both kinds of meditation the problem of actual sin is dealt with as a matter of the will, that if a person sincerely seeks and tries his best, he can reduce and remove any sinful acts or delusions that keep him from enlightenment or from the mystical bliss of affinity with God. The meditator does not see himself like Paul in Romans 7, constantly aware that "best intentions" are not fulfilled and that even pious acts are constantly tainted with sinful motives and unloving concern. Instead the meditator sees himself as the rich young man who came to Jesus and said of the Law: "all this have I kept from my youth" just like this young man the meditator feels he has successfully removed from himself all sin and he now stands before God waiting for His applause and accolades and for reception into divinity. Indeed so pious has been the one who pursues God, that he even has an abundance of merit (cf. e.g. the Roman Catholic saint with his surplus assigned to the treasury of merits, and the Buddhist saint who distributes excess merit among all the other creatures of the world). Even as the Gospel is abandoned or perverted in meditation, even so is the message of the Law ignored and reduced.

Another of the traits common in meditation is its emphasis upon an otherworldliness exemplified by the pursuit of the divine in isolation or in closed communities cut off from the world and by the asceticism that cuts self off from the concerns of the body and the world. The inherent nature of meditation is to spin the practitioner back within himself, for the soul's pilgrimage to God is solitary travel, though perhaps taken with a few other like-minded faithful. Whether one looks at the gurus of the Himalayas, the monasteries of Korea and Japan, Mount Athos and Clairvaux, or the communes of the Begards and the Beguines, or the charismatic home prayer groups, he sees this pattern of isolation for the private benefit of the soul. This is far from the meaning of "Thy kingdom come!" in the Lord's Prayer, with its concern of outreach and of serving Christ by serving others. The meditator is too often content to pursue his private salvation indifferent to family and community and society and church.^{lxv} He will have his deliverance, but the unenlightened masses are to be left in their darkness until they are wise enough to follow his example.

Coupled with this self-serving private pursuit of truth often comes a disgust with life and existence. The monistic meditator longs to be freed from his body and seeks to cut off as many reminders as possible that he is, after all, but mortal. The theistic meditator despises the good things of God's creation and feels all the more holy and closer to God as one after the other he renounces God's blessings: marriage, fruitful work, home and family, relaxation and pleasure, good food and drink, friends and neighbors. The meditator and mystic figures ahead to the end of

his existence and then tries to live now as if dead (and deified) already; the Christian does keenly feel his absence from the Lord and does value his citizenship in heaven, but then he seeks the kind of involvement with life in which his family and his society and Christ are served. This is the contrast between the passive Buddha figure—eyes closed to the world, totally self-serving—and the active image we have of Christ—eyes sparkling with love, hands reached out to help, a crowd of people around.

These comments evaluating meditation are not meant to be an exhaustive refutation nor a specifically Scriptural analysis. They are given only to summarize some of the shared characteristics of meditation that are grossly and fatally at variance with Christian doctrine and life.

VI. Proper Christian Meditation

Even though our study of meditation has been a negative look to expose and reject this practice in its various manifestations, our study should have turned our thoughts to two vital concerns. The first concern is to gain an understanding of proper Christian meditation. The second concern is use of such meditation in the nurture and cultivation of the Christian life. The previous sections of our study of “Meditation: Christian and Pagan” have surely heightened our awareness that there have been and are many who desire some method of growth in piety and in communion with God, and that too often the Christian church has neglected this concern and need in its concern for the corporate life of the church. Not only the laymen but also the pastor remain unskilled in the methods of growth in personal piety. I can recall no encouragement or guidance in personal growth in sanctification and devotion to God offered to me during nineteen years of Christian education, beyond the repeated and unadorned admonition: Read your Bible! Yet we do want more for ourselves, knowing that God has more for us and that He describes and promises it in His Word: joy and peace and satisfaction in our salvation; a life that bears fruit richly, fortyfold, sixtyfold, a hundredfold; greater strength for personal needs and for serving others; a personal devotion to God that inspires and guides others; a keener understanding of Christian ethics and the will and strength to follow through on our intentions to be obedient to God; see God better and see self in God better. Many in our congregations also want these things for themselves and they are turning to other churches and other interests to meet their need. We would surely be remiss in this study of meditation if we would not take to heart the basic principle it gives to us: the person who is serious about his God does want to be close—and closer—to Him.

But to where do we turn for this personal growth in piety and devotion? What do we use in our Christian meditation? We have heard the many wrong methods of meditation, and in hearing of them we have seen how they have been at variance with God’s Word of truth. Anything that we would use for ourselves or teach to others must take into consideration all that the Bible says about God, man, revelation, sin, the community of the Church, etc. We hear the admonition of the Formula of Concord:

And after God through the holy Ghost in Baptism has kindled and effected a beginning of the true knowledge of God and faith, we should pray Him without ceasing that through the same Spirit and His grace, by means of the daily exercise of reading and practising God’s Word, He would preserve in us faith and His heavenly gifts, strengthen us from day to day, and keep us to the end. *For unless God Himself be our Schoolmaster, we can study and learn nothing that is acceptable to Him and salutary to ourselves and others.* (Emphasis added)^{lxvi}

The basic element in any proper Christian meditation must be God coming to us in His Word. John Dobberstein has some reminders:

((Evangelicalism)) rejects any mysticism that puts the initiative with the worshipper. Man cannot by searching find out God.

Our task is not to “practice” and “cultivate” prayers and the so-called spiritual life, but rightly to hear God’s Word and give Him due answer in prayer.

Another characteristic of evangelical meditation and prayer is its fundamental concern with the Scriptures... This by no means excludes the use of other words and witness or meditation upon the general truths of salvation.^{lxvii}

Dobberstein reminds us of the passive nature of Christian meditation in this quote from Paul Althaus:

No exercise of any kind, no spiritual training, no mental cultivation, no method, no asceticism, no ‘fasting’ in any sense, not even inquiring and seeking prayer can *coerce* it ((it being the coming to us of God in His Word))^{lxviii}

That is, meditation is dependent upon God, not dependent upon us; meditation is in no way a turning to oneself; it is totally a turning to God.

Because of these considerations much that is available in meditational and devotional materials and guides must be rejected or used with great caution. For example: even though the article in *Your Church* magazine (March/April and May/June 1976)^{lxix} on meditation presented good analysis of the need for meditation and the effect of meditation, the program for Christian meditation described and recommended is unacceptable. This proposal for Christian meditation dwells too much on the mystic concept of illumination from within oneself and not from Scripture. Meditation is described as something carried out apart from the “Word, with reliance upon man’s ability to hear God from within oneself. This program of pop Christian meditation is only a Christianized version of TM (e.g. the mantra is to be something like “Amen” or “Bless the Lord”).

Other unacceptable materials are those of the Roman Catholics of recent and medieval times. Dobberstein comments:

It is not true that prayers and books of devotion, even the so-called “classics of devotion,” can be used indiscriminately. Many of them are infused with a mystical tradition that is completely alien to the Gospel and can only be confusing to the evangelical users of them... The difference that separates us is that all Roman Catholic meditation rests upon the dogmatic assumption of synergism. For the Catholic, meditation and spiritual exercises are self-preparation for the reception of spiritual graces. According to Ignatius Loyola, the worshipper thus cooperates with God, serves God, and saves his soul. By employing the whole mechanical and psychological apparatus of exercises, he seeks to call down divine grace. This the Evangelical must reject.^{lxx}

Besides these points he makes, a look at the devotional materials of the medieval period and of recent Catholicism reveals that they wrongly rely upon the imaginative of the meditator. In these materials the meditator is asked what he thinks or understands about the passage or story from Scripture, rather than what God has said about the passage or account. Instead of being concerned with what the words say and with how they are to be applied to oneself, such meditational exercises and guides are concerned with the impression they make upon one and the

meditator's subjective reaction to God's Word. Too often Roman meditation is of the kind described by Dobberstein: "a pseudo-spirituality which is too holy to concern itself with practical things. ...morbid introspection and preoccupation with self: ...a wretched soul-destroying narcissism..."^{lxxi}

Where then do we turn for our understanding of Christian meditation and for the program we are to follow and to teach to others? To the source so obvious to us, by the grace of God, yet the source too neglected by so many. God's Word contains many admonitions to meditate and offers some guidance into the nature of Christian meditation. We have to be careful in our study of meditation in God's Word, because not all of the times the word "meditate" is used in our translations does it refer to the meditation we are considering. For example, in I Timothy 4:15 the Authorized Version translates: "meditate upon these things give thyself wholly to them." The accurate translation would be to "take pains with these things" (NAS) or "Be diligent in these matters" (NIV); the Greek word *μελέτα* here means to "take care" not "meditate." Or in the Old Testament in Genesis 24:63 we read "Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide;" of the word *חַוֵּשׂ* translated as "meditate" the Gesenius dictionary indicates it may well mean to "talk," as with servants and friends. In this passage the NAS has "meditate" in the text with the marginal note, "to stroll; meaning uncertain; the Jerusalem Bible simply translates "walking." Also we have to be careful to translate each word according to context. The verb *הִלָּךְ*, the principal Hebrew verb that deals with the concept of meditation, also has other meanings, as in Psalm 2:1, "Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine ((that is plan within oneself)) a vain thing" and in Proverbs 15:28, "The heart of the righteous studieth ((that is consider within oneself)) to answer." From the uses of the verb *הִלָּךְ* we see it has the reflexive meaning of speaking or thinking within oneself. (Remember the little boy who said thinking is talking to oneself?) When this verb is used in connection with an object, specifically the deeds or words of God, than we have the Bible's description of Christian meditation. For example:

This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night. Joshua 1:3

But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night. Psalm 1:2

When I remember thee upon my bed and meditate on thee in the night watch. Psalm 63:6

I will meditate also of all thy works and talk of thy doings. Psalm 77:12

A second Hebrew verb, *חַוֵּשׂ*, also deals with meditation, as in these examples:

Mine eyes prevent ((anticipate)) the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word. Psalm 119:148

My hands also will lift up into thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in thy statutes. Psalm 119:48

As one notes from these examples, the concept of Christian meditation is a special concern of the Psalms (which are themselves transcribed meditations, cf. Psalm 5:1). In the New Testament the only example of meditation I noted was in Luke 2:19, where "Mary kept all these things and pondered ((Greek *συμβάλλω*)) them in her heart."

As we look to the noun forms for "meditation" we gain additional insight into proper Christian meditation. Meditation is not a neutral action (as was claimed, for example, by the LC-MS pastor quoted on page 13 above); it is either good before God and therefore salutary or it is unacceptable to God and therefore detrimental to soul and faith. We must plead "Let the words

of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight” (Psalm 19:14) precisely because it is possible for our meditation to be unacceptable to God. Wrong meditation is a barrier between us and God, as Job is reminded after a self-justifying speech: “Indeed you do away with reverence and hinder meditation before God.” (Job 15:4, NAS translation) That is, Job’s substitution of earthly wisdom for divine wisdom in his thoughts was neither God-pleasing nor beneficial to Job. It is only our meditation of Him that shall be sweet (Psalm 104:34) and profitable for us. As one meditates upon God’s Word he receives the blessing described by the Psalmist:

O how I love thy law! It is my meditation all through the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies...I have more understanding, than all my teachers; for thy testimonies are my meditation. Psalm 119:97-99

From this study we learn that Christian meditation is an activity within oneself, an activity of talking over or thinking over to oneself that he has learned from God’s words and deeds. Unless it is based upon God’s revelation it will not be of benefit to faith and soul. Its purpose is our growth as Christians.

We see then that Christian meditation is nothing new or strange to us. It is simply a personal study and application of the Word through reflection upon its message and application to ourselves, that should stimulate and direct our prayers to God. It is like the preaching of a sermon to ourselves, that should stimulate and direct our prayers to God. It is like the preaching of a sermon to ourselves: there is exegesis that seeks to see what God has to say; there is comprehension that understands what God has said; there is application that appropriates what God has said; there is decision that seeks to use what God has said. Loehe gave a simple definition of meditation: “reflection upon divine words in the presence of God.”^{lxxii} Dobberstein supplies his definition of meditation as the personal care of one’s own soul, God speaking to me alone:

This personal “care of soul” is prayerful, thoughtful, meditative, receptive listening to the Word of God as it speaks to me out of the words of the Bible and of witnesses (*meditatio*), the self-examination which is its necessary concomitant, as I am “taken aside, searched, challenged, smitten, and brought to decision” (*tentatio*) and finally the prayer that is my response to the Word of God that confronts me (*oratio*).^{lxxiii}

But even though meditation is familiar to us once we define it in Biblical perspective, the use of meditation is extremely difficult,—difficult not because of any inherent aspect in meditation or because it is ethereal and lofty, but difficult because it is hard to discipline oneself to use this simple and basic means to personal growth in Christ. It takes self-discipline and determination and strength to diligently apply oneself. There is no automatic way to sanctification, only the struggle of which so many of Paul’s epistles offer reminders and illustrations. To meditate requires the approach of the whole man in faith.

But we have much encouragement to make this our own effort and to teach meditation on the Word to those under our care. One encouragement is that through meditation we grow in our personal relationship to Christ. Unlike the monistic and mystical concepts of meditation in which meditation is wrongly used as an attempt to grow *into* God or *into* Christ, Christian meditation helps us to grow *in* Christ. We do not need to grow *into* Christ because we already *are* in Christ, as the beautiful teaching of the mystical union assures us. We do not meditate to attain any union with God; we meditate to enjoy to the fullest the union we already have with Christ, and in that union to receive His strength and comfort.^{lxxiv}

A second encouragement is that through meditation we receive a spiritual uplifting of such strength and joy that it can be called a Christian high. Instead of this world counterfeit and destructive and vain and temporary highs that lead one from God, “be filled with the Spirit...Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Ephesians 5:18-20) In this thought also lies, I believe, our answer to members who are using drugs or alcohol or TM or other means of mind and mood manipulation to obtain bliss. Why settle for such destructive highs, when we have the high of the Spirit?

But the greatest encouragement of all is that God has commanded us to meditate upon His Word. And where there is God’s command, there is also His blessing.

Appendix I

In his book, *Minister's Prayer Book*, Dobberstein supplies an appendix with two examples and guides to Christian meditation. The first is Luther's "A Simple Way to Pray" (1535) which uses thoughts from the catechism as devotional material; although the meditations are cast in the form of prayers, they give us good insight into the searching and application of Scripture that makes up Christian meditation. Dobberstein's second example is "The Ladder of Devotion or The Heavenly Ladder" by Caspar Calvör (1691); Calvör presents the clearest explanation I have found of the actual practice of meditation.

Appendix II

The doctrine or the mystical union is one of the more comforting and encouraging of the Bible's teachings, and also one of the more neglected. In brief the doctrine of the mystical union teaches "the mystical union is the real and most intimate conjunction...of the Holy Trinity and the God-man Christ with the believer, effected by God himself through the Gospel, the Sacraments, and faith, by which...he is in them, just as also believers are in him; that by a mutual and reciprocal immanence they may partake of his vivifying power and all his mercies, become assured of the grace of God and eternal salvation, and preserve unity in the faith and love with the other members of his mystical body." (Quoted from Quenstedt in the *Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church*, p. 1689) The mystical union is taught many places in Scripture, e.g.: II Corinthians 6:16 "temple of the living God;" I Corinthians 6:19 "temple of the Holy Ghost;" Ephesians 1:23 "the body of Christ;" II Peter 1:4 "partakers of the divine nature;" Ephesians 3:17 "Son dwells in hearts by faith;" John 14:22 "we ((God)) will make our abode with him;" Ephesians 5:23 ff, the marriage bond; Ephesians 5:32, the head and members; John 15:1ff, the vine and branches; and especially the union of Christ with his people in Holy Communion.

This doctrine is capable of puzzling us (as Luther does in commentary on Psalm 50:2 when he writes: "with these same words he pours himself and his dear Son Christ into us and draws us into himself, so that he is completely *vermenschet* ((i.e. incarnated)) and we are completely *vergottet* ((i.e. deified))." quoted from WA 20, 229, 28ff, p. 1689 of *The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church*). This doctrine is capable of abuse when the emphasis is placed upon the subjective "mystical" inwardness and not on the objective "union: surety. The doctrine of the mystical union differs from mysticism in several important aspects: First it asserts that the union is not something achieved by some personal action by a few people, but rather it is granted to all by grace; it is not attained, but enjoyed. Second, the Scriptural doctrine of the mystical union avoids any pantheistic concepts of self-deification; the "temple of God" (us) is distinct from the God who inhabits it. Third, the teaching of the mystical union emphasizes that God comes to work in us, rather than mysticism's thought of man's coming to God.

The teaching of the mystical union can be of such comfort to our people that it deserves further study on our part. Especially enlightening would be an analysis of its virtual neglect in our time within orthodoxy. For further reading see Robert Preuss, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, pp. 190-192; Pieper's *Dogmatics* at various points; and the articles on "mystical Union" and "mysticism and Lutheranism" in the *Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church*.

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ⁱ Ferguson, *The Brain Revolution*, page 47.

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

ⁱⁱⁱ Brecher, *Licit and Illicit Drugs*, p. 509.

^{iv} *Ibid.*, p. 508.

^v Ferguson, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

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- ^{vi} *Ibid.*, p. 51.
- ^{vii} Anderson, *Christianity and Comparative Religion*, p. 21.
- ^{viii} Brecher, *op. cit.*, p. 509.
- ^{ix} *Ibid.*, p. 510.
- ^x *Ibid.*, p. 510.
- ^{xi} Anderson, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-19.
- ^{xii} Lindenberg, *Meditation and Mankind*, *passim*.
- ^{xiii} Zaehner, *Mysticism, Sacred and Profane*, p. 198.
- ^{xiv} *Ibid.*, p. 198ff.
- ^{xv} Ferguson has a good summary of these techniques, pp. 82-129.
- ^{xvi} Cross, *Oxford Dictionary*, p. 935.
- ^{xvii} Schulberg, *Historic India*, p. 122.
- ^{xviii} Luk, *The Secrets of Chinese Meditation*, p. 15.
- ^{xix} The most ancient Hindu religious writings are the *Vedas*, written 1500-1000 B.C. The *Upanishads* are commentaries on the *Vedas*. The *Bhagavad Gita* is the most sacred of post-Vedic Hindu writings, a sermon of Krishna on proper living.
- ^{xx} Lindenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 62.
- ^{xxi} Schulberg, *op. cit.*, p. 114.
- ^{xxii} Transcendental Meditation goes under a variety of names, each emphasizing a different aspect of the movement. SCI, Science of Creative Intelligence, is the doctrinal aspect; TM the actual practice of meditation, and SIMS, Student's International Meditation Society, the youth and student movement.
- ^{xxiii} Denniston and McWilliams, *The TM Book*, p. 11.
- ^{xxiv} *Ibid.*, *passim*.
- ^{xxv} *Ibid.*, p. 215.
- ^{xxvi} A letter from Lutze is printed in the *TM Book* (Denniston, page 18) to prove that TM involves no religious beliefs. In this letter Prof. Lutze declares he finds no conflict between TM and the Christian faith. He practices it within the context of his Christian life. "Nor does my calling upon the exercise of TM imply that my Christian faith or religion is inadequate, any more than my efforts to get enough sleep, proper diet, exercise and recreation would imply an inadequacy in my religion. I regard meditation as another of God's good gifts to me like friendship and education."
- ^{xxvii} For three recent notable Christian analyses cf.: Gordon Lewis, *What Everyone Should Know about Transcendental Meditation* and Robert Wehrwein, "Transcendental Meditation," *Journal of Theology*, (CLC), Vol. 16, #1, March 1976.
- ^{xxviii} Forem, *Transcendental Meditation*, pp. 203-204.
- ^{xxix} *Ibid.*, pp. 224-225.
- ^{xxx} Denniston, *op. cit.*, p. 14.
- ^{xxxi} Lewis, *What Everyone Should Know About Transcendental Meditation* p. 73.
- ^{xxxii} Lewis, *passim*. In each case he contrasts monistic Hinduism with the Christian witness.
- ^{xxxiii} Byles, *Journey into Burmese Silence*, pp. 37-38.
- ^{xxxiv} Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, page 210.
- ^{xxxv} *Ibid.*, p. 570.
- ^{xxxvi} Gregorson, *The Transfigured Cosmos*, p. 54.
- ^{xxxvii} *Ibid.*, p. 78.

xxxviii “Book News Letter of Augsburg Publishing House” (May-June 1976).

xxxix *Ibid.*

xl Neve, *A History of Christian Thought*, Vol. I, p. 184.

xli *Ibid.*, p. 186.

xlii Magill, ed., *Masterpieces of Christian Literature in Summary Form*, p. 289.

xliii Notice here how the proper Christian meditation (as the term is generally understood in our midst) is cast aside for the mystical meditation with which our paper deals; cf. The note on pages 18-19.

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xlv *Ibid.*, p. 281.

xlvi *Ibid.*, p. 249.

xlvii *Ibid.*, p. 247.

xlviii *Ibid.*, p. 278.

xlix *Ibid.*, p. 280.

¹ *Luther's Works*, Vol. 31, “Career of the Reformer,” p. 75.

^{li} Fife, *The Revolt of Martin Luther*, p. 271.

^{lii} *Ibid.*, p. 218.

^{liii} *Ibid.*, pp. 218-232 *passim*. Cf. Also Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand*, pp. 52-67 for a narrative account of this period.

^{liv} Clark, *The Great German Mystics*, p. 48.

^{lv} *Op. cit.*, p. 74.

^{lvi} Bornkamm, *Luther's World of Thought*, p. 99.

^{lvii} Bodensieck, ed., *The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church*, Vol. I, p. 316.

^{lviii} Spener, *Pia Desideria*, Theodore Tappert, ed., trans., p. 6.

^{lix} *Ibid.*, p. 57.

^{lx} Bondensieck, *op. cit.*, p. 327.

^{lxi} Neve, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 39.

^{lxii} Masyngeberde, “The Charismatic Gifts in Worship,” p. 121.

^{lxiii} *Concordia Triglotta*, p. 496, 6.

^{lxiv} Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, p. 230; from *Luther's Works*, Vol. 40, p. 147.

^{lxv} Cf. Paul's reaction to such *private* charismatic piety, as in I Corinthians 14:13-17.

^{lxvi} *Concordia Triglotta*, p. 887 (FC II, 16).

^{lxvii} Dobberstein, *Minister's Prayer Book*, p. xvi.

^{lxviii} *Ibid.*, p. xv.

^{lxix} Brame, “Meditation,” *Your Church*.

^{lxx} Dobberstein, *op. cit.*, pp. xiv-xv.

^{lxxi} *Ibid.*, p. xl.

^{lxxii} *Ibid.*, p. xvlli.

^{lxxiii} *Ibid.*, p. xiv.

^{lxxiv} Cf. Appendix II.