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Hesychasm Encounters Lectio Divina: An Intercultural Analysis of Eastern and Western¹ Christian Contemplative Practices

Abstract

Two ancient Christian spiritual practices have emerged in their appropriate cultural contexts throughout the complex history of Christianity. Various cultural contexts in *hesychasm* and *lectio divina* enlighten us 1) to be balanced in religious culture and social culture between solitude and communal spiritual practices; 2) to notice the ways people achieve spiritual fulfillment in various cultures; 3) to propose a verbal practice in meditation to those who belong to oral culture and a silent and visual practice to those who belong to a more literate culture; or to practice both if the culture is mixed; and 4) to recognize the meaning of spirituality defined by people of Eastern and Western culture.

Keywords: hesychasm, *lectio divina*, Christian contemplation, spirituality, Orthodox Christianity, Western Christianity

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Introduction

In our age, scholars of World Christianity, such as Andrew Walls,² Lamin Sanneh,³ and Philip Jenkins,⁴ are aware of the de-Christianizing of the West. On the other hand, a marked growth of memberships in Buddhist societies, as well as increasing numbers of Buddhist societies, monasteries and Buddhist Universities in the West inform us that Eastern Buddhist culture and spirituality is encroaching on traditional Western Christian spirituality.⁵ Likewise, a 2008 US Religious Landscape Survey reported that in the United States 73% of Buddhists come from an affiliation with a previous religion.⁶ It is also reported that “51% of Protestant teens left their childhood religion because their spiritual needs were not being met.”⁷ These two reports give an inference that Buddhist converts were, most likely, brought up in the modern Western Christian culture.

There will be several reasons for the decline of Christianity in the West. One of the reasons is modern Christian spirituality does not answer the needs of Christians from the traditional faith. Paul G. Hiebert, Daniel Shaw, and Tite Tienou, in *Understanding Folk Religion*, enlighten Christian scholars and practitioners about the spiritual needs of “split-level Christianity”⁸ in the non-Western world, when Western missionaries failed to replace local religious traditions to meet everyday spiritual needs. It is low level spirituality missionaries failed to deal with according to Hiebert. They argue that folk religions are based on the spiritual appetite of split-level Christians,⁹ especially the beliefs and experiences of supernatural realities that modern Western Christianity does not explain.¹⁰ In fact, in the West, there are other types of split-level Christians, where traditional Christianity does not satisfy current spiritual needs with the “spirituality”¹¹ of modern Western Christianity.

Paul F. Knitter, a leading theologian of Religious Pluralism, and Paul Tillich Professor of Theology, World Religions, and Culture at Union Theological Seminary, professes to be a Buddhist-Christian, and has said that some degree of double belonging is becoming more and more a part of the lives of serious religious people. Knitter understands that the dissatisfaction of Christians feeling of God as “God who is all out there”; “God who is totally other than I”; and “God who stands outside of me” motivates Christians to seek a double belonging. He goes on saying that these split-level Christians are “searching for ways of realizing *the mystery of the divine of God* in a way in which it is more a part of our very selves.”¹²

Indeed, in our days, many traditional Christians and split-level Christians in the West are challenging the Church to provide messages and techniques focused on *experiential spirituality* that can fill their spiritual void. In order to quench the spiritual thirst of split-level Christians and traditional Christians, some Western

spiritual leaders have learned spirituality and meditation practices from other Eastern religions. In turn, they have contributed new spiritual theories and practices to the Church. Some Christian spiritual leaders and scholars study *hesychasm*, ancient Eastern Christian contemplative practice, and lead Christians to follow it. Some examine *lectio divina*, ancient Western Christian contemplative practice, and motivate Christians to practice it. Since the culture of our world has become complex by the globalization that brings together Eastern and Western cultures, attempting to solve a problem in a simple way may not be much help. Thus, I am studying the two ancient Christian spiritual practices of contemplation—*hesychasm* and *lectio divina*—that could provide ways to meet the growing need of experiential spirituality in our complex contemporary world.

Hesychasm and Lectio Divina

1. Description

In general, *hesychasm*, a practice of contemplation rooted in Greek culture, is widely practiced in Orthodox Christianity and identified as an Orthodox Christian spiritual practice; while *Lectio Divina* is a practice of contemplation rooted in Latin culture and represents a Western Christian spiritual practice. The English translation of the Greek word, *hesychia* is “stillness” or “silence.” *Hesychism* is a form of prayer and meditation.¹³ The *hesychastic* tradition is based on ceaseless repetition of the “Jesus prayer:” “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me.” In fact, *hesychasm* covers other forms of inner prayer in the Orthodox Church in the East; however, most *hesychast* teaching is concerned with the Jesus Prayer.¹⁴ Its emphasis is upon contemplation and the mystical life.¹⁵ The word *hesychia* was introduced by St John Climacus, in the first half of the seventh century;¹⁶ nevertheless, *hesychasm*¹⁷ can be identified from the fifth century¹⁸ because according to many sources, the same practice was initiated by the Desert Fathers in the early 5th century.

On the other hand, the direct meaning of the Latin words, *lectio divina* is “divine reading”. It is also defined as “holy or sacred reading.” It is “a slow, contemplative praying of the scriptures.”¹⁹ St. Benedict, the sixth century Roman monk initiated the practice of *lectio divina* as the rule in the monastery²⁰ and *lectio divina* became one of the central activities for a monk’s daily life. Notwithstanding, the ancient spiritual practice of *lectio divina* of the West had been under the pressure of thirteenth century scholasticism and the European renaissance. From that time on, *lectio divina* fluctuated in importance under historical influences of particular cultural and political realities. In the Eastern Church, *hesychasm* is maintained by generations of Orthodox *hesychasts*. In any case, ancient Christian practices of

hesychasm and *lectio divina* have been revitalized by scholars and spiritual leaders in this contemporary post-World-War and post-modern culture.

In fact, both Eastern and Western ancient Christian “spiritual practices”²¹ are layers of contemplative prayer that are normally associated with asceticism, mysticism or supernaturalism, even though, some present-day Protestant scholars differentiate the term “spirituality” from “mysticism.”²² Alistair E. McGrath, Professor of Science and Religion, understands that the word “mysticism” has been used extensively in the past to designate the general area of spirituality. The modern terms “spirituality” and “mysticism” are derived from the French terms *spiritualite* and *mysticism*. They were both, in the seventeenth century, “used to refer to direct interior knowledge of the divine or supernatural, and were apparently treated as more or less synonymous at the time.”²³

2. Procedure

Organized procedure of *lectio divina* was initiated by Guigo II and there are four steps: the first step, *lectio* (reading) was to allow a phrase or word to arise out of the text and to focus on it. The second step, called *meditation* (meditation) was to ponder the words of the sacred text. The third step, *oratio* (prayer), and the fourth step, *contemplation* (contemplation) was the practice of resting in God’s silence.²⁴ On the other hand, most spiritual leaders in the East did not offer a specific set of techniques for *hesychasts*; they usually give several instructions or several ways so that one could follow one direction according to his or her spiritual atmosphere. St. Climacus offers the thirty-step-ladder which has thirty steps of virtuous living rather than a procedure of contemplative practice.

According to the tradition of Father Matta El-Meskeen (1919-2006), an Orthodox monk and also the spiritual father of 120 monks in the Monastery of St. Macarius the Great in Egypt, *hesychasm* was formed in three stages: stage one is vocal prayer; the second stage is meditation or inward prayer;²⁵ and the third and last stage is contemplation.²⁶ The first stage of both *hesychasm* and *lectio divina* is oral practice: a *hesychast* of the East recites the Jesus Prayer whereas a practitioner of the West repeats scripture texts. The second stage of both Eastern and Western contemplative practices is meditation. The Eastern monks and nuns practice “mental” or “inward prayer.”²⁷ Eastern Christians believe that meditation is the heart-to-heart relationship between God and *hesychasts* through meditative prayer, reading the Bible, or meditating on nature. It is said that, at this stage, the mind goes into the heart of *hesychasts*. It is a practice of interior silence and a loving relationship between *hesychasts* and the God of the universe.

Contrary to the Eastern *hesychasts*, in the meditation stage, Western Christians repeated the scripture verses with an active mind. A modern scholar of *lectio divina*, Duncan Robertson, explores the medieval understanding of reading and realizes that “in the early monastic rules, as in classical usage, *meditatio* chiefly means repetition, memorization, and recitation.”²⁸ It is true, an ancient monk, Guido II, used the analogy of eating food in explaining *lectio divina*. For him, “reading as putting food into mouth; meditation chews it and breaks it down; and prayer finds its savor.” In fact, for Western practitioners, silent or verbal prayer was found at the third stage.

In the final stage, in the deep silence of contemplation, both practitioners from the East and the West conquer earthly desire by the revelation of a gracious God. Practitioners from both traditions experience joyful moments through an encounter with God even though the way of their feeling, experience, and the goal of their spiritual fulfillment are not the same. At this stage, ancient Western Christians touched “heavenly secrets.” Guigo II highlighted the essential nature of silence by saying: “Let all my world be silent in your heart. Your words are so softly spoken that no one can hear them except in a deep silence.”²⁹ He also noted: “He (God) allows us to taste how sweet He is.”³⁰ On the other hand, *hesychast* Kallistos Ware believes that this is “the contemplation of God himself” and “the direct vision of God.” At this stage, he or she no longer “experiences God solely through the intermediary of his conscience or of created things,” but he or she “meets the Creator face to face in an unmediated union of love.”³¹ It is the loving union of the two persons—the Creator and his creature, the human being who shares the image of the Creator.

Cultural Factors Influencing Spirituality

1. Collectivism vs. Individualism

There are “two antithetic universes of thought”³² in human culture: the value of individualism and the value of collectivism. In the religious sense, I would rather use the words “solitary” and “communal” as alternatives. One of the core ideas and values of Western culture is individualism which the West embraced through the Enlightenment philosophy of humanism. Actually, the words “individualism” and “collectivism” are associated with the social outlook of a Western political philosophy and its focus is on the value of each human being. Individualism has been identified, as a whole, with Western culture and collectivism has been identified with Eastern culture and we must agree with this to some degree in terms of social culture.

In the religious sense, the above ideas are reversed. Overall cultural phenomena of modern-syncretic Western Christian spirituality highlights the communal worship, singing, dancing, preaching, teaching, listening, and reading of the devotional texts and scripture rather than solitary spiritual practices. Contrary to Western culture in religious practices, Eastern religious practices of meditation in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity appear secluded and solitary. Likewise, the distinctive characteristic of Eastern *Hesychasm* is asceticism and the meaning of the word *hesychia* itself shows the requirement of quietness as well as solitude or privacy. *Hesychists* usually go to a remote area to practice *hesychasm*. Appropriately, they are identified as “desert fathers and mothers,” “hermits,” or “ascetics.” In reality, not many extreme ascetic monks moved far away to the desert for contemplation in order to identify with Jesus’ experience in the wilderness. Most *hesychists* are not practicing asceticism or private devotion all the time; they have time for community as well. St Climacus, in his *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, said that community life is “a constant companion of the hermits (*hesychists*) (step 13-4).”³³

In the Eastern tradition, *hesychists* always connected with other monks and they also had connection with the laity. In most deserts, there were two types of monasteries—*laura* and *coenobium*. *Laura* is a community of monks who live in separate cells or caves practicing contemplation most of the time. On Saturdays and Sundays, they participate in communal liturgical prayer and worship.³⁴ A *coenobium* is a monastery in which monks live a communal life, with a daily routine of communal prayer, work, and meals³⁵ as well as partaking of the Divine Mysteries.³⁶ They were proficient both in active life and spiritual insight (step 4-20).³⁷ The life of a *hesychast* is lived both in solitude as well as a community.³⁸

On the other hand, *lectio divina*, is usually recognized as a communal spiritual practice by Western scholars today. As stated by Christine Valters Painter and Lucy Wynkoop, desert mothers and fathers practiced *lectio divina* communally and heard God’s voice personally as well as immediately. They consider that “most monasteries would not have been able to read the scriptures individually because books were very expensive at the time.”³⁹ In the same way, even though Studzinski sees the need of individual reading and meditating on the sacred scriptures,⁴⁰ he highlights the communal reading as “a social dimension.” He said that *Lectio* “took on the dimensions of a liturgical activity done in the presence of God and others.” He goes on to say “reading, not a mere individualistic activity, had clear societal dimensions. To read was to engage in a public act.”⁴¹

Chris Hann and Hermann Goltz rightly discern that “the dichotomy between individual and collective has a long history in the West, but Eastern Christians understandings are based on a notion of the person that negotiates the

Charybdis (Western) of individualism and the *Scylla* (Eastern) of collectivism.”⁴² As a matter of fact, spiritual practices cannot be formed as solely communal or solely solitary; they help human beings balance out between social culture and religious culture. Contemporary Western scholars and spiritual leaders have been aware that both ancient contemplative practices from East and West can be applied in solitude or communally.⁴³ Both *hesychasm* and *lectio divina* can be balanced depending on one’s cultural background. A person from individual social culture may prefer communal spiritual practices if a church offers deep social relationship as well as spiritual nourishment within a community of worship; otherwise, he or she may join another loving community that can balance his or her life. On the other hand, one from a communal social culture may prefer solitary spirituality. In fact, both ancient spiritual practices, *hesychasm* and *lectio divina*, are applicable for all seasons and it is for all who aspire to have a peaceful and harmonious life in one’s own cultural community.

2. Enlightenment Rationality vs. Spirituality

Scholars have been aware of Enlightenment culture that divided the modern world into two halves—the natural and the supernatural. For modern people, science is public truth and religion is a private faith, since religion is defined as a supernatural heavenly reality that cannot be proved by science. As a consequence, this dualism influences many Christians in the West and many undermine the reality of the spirit world, miracles, and God’s special and supernatural revelation. For them, Christian belief is “the answer to the ultimate and eternal questions of life, and science based on reason as the answer to the problems of this world.”⁴⁴ In *Christian Spirituality*, Alister E. McGrath, professor of science and religion, discusses one American Protestant professor of theology who confessed that he had never experienced God. In modern-syncretistic Protestant Christianity, it is possible to be a theologian or spiritual leader without any experience of God.⁴⁵

In fact, the world culture changes from time to time. Many Christian spiritual leaders and scholars from both the East and the West have become aware of the spiritual void in modern-syncretistic Christianity and have renewed their interest in these two ancient Christian contemplative practices. Still, it is not easy for many Western Protestants to accept the mystical or spiritual experience of contemplation, the way that ancient Christians encountered God, as essential for Christians in the contemporary world. For example, spiritual leaders and scholars in the West renew the study and practice of *lectio divina* and synthesize it with their evangelical beliefs. For them, *lectio divina* is “the intuition or awareness of the presence of God,” “mindful of the presence of God,”⁴⁶ “being with God,”⁴⁷ “to

rest in God's love," "achieve inner peace with God,"⁴⁸ God present in scripture,⁴⁹ and resting in the present with the God of the text.⁵⁰

James C. Wilhoit and Evan B. Howard clearly express their understanding of contemplation in this way: "Inner silence means not necessarily the expectation of any particular encounters with God" but it is merely "a way of surrender and a practice that develops over time." They assume that all "perception of any particular experience will fall short of the infinite divinity we know as God."⁵¹ It appears that many Christians in the West are still influenced by Western modern culture. Another evangelical scholar, John Jefferson Davis, believes that Christians are united to Christ by the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit illuminates the biblical text. Consequently, the text becomes alive and they reach an experiential level of contemplation.⁵² It can be assumed that the spiritual fulfillment for today's Evangelical Christians is an experience of the encounter with God in prayer and in the scripture through the union with Christ by the Holy Spirit. Today evangelical ways of contemplation may be popular with some modern-syncretistic Christians in the West, who need liberation from fear and anxiety, peace and happiness, and enable them "to live each moment in the loving presence of God."⁵³ However, one wonders whether a richer theology of direct, personal and intimate communion between two persons—the Creator and the created human being could be beneficial.

On the other hand, ancient Christians in the West believe that they can be in union with God by faith and encounter a vision of Him.⁵⁴ The prayer begins with God's co-operation and the Spirit of God moves along the way with them.⁵⁵ Their experience of silent prayer expresses a more personal and intimate relationship with God than the experience of today's Western Protestants. Western Protestants feel "enjoyment and satisfaction"⁵⁶ at the moment they are in the presence of God, whereas the ancient Christians in the West experienced God with deeper feelings and in deeper ways. Guigo II expressed his heartfelt feeling using the phrases such as "inmost heart,"⁵⁷ and "the heart is lifted up."⁵⁸ He also used the analogy of a bride as meditator and spouse as God.⁵⁹

In point of fact, the holistic spirituality of contemplative silence can be traced in the *hesychast* prayer of the East. The goal of *hesychasm* is the attainment of likeness to or union with God which is called *deification* (Latin) and *theosis* (Greek). Some may define deification as "becoming God." Yet, Orthodox saints such as St. Cyril the Great (c. 376-444) and St. Gregory Palama believe that union with God or *theosis* means being partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4).⁶⁰ It is participating "in God in a very real way, without becoming identical with Him." For that reason, *hesychasts* "speak about the experience of the Holy Spirit in a very realistic manner, but at the same time they stress that God's nature remains totally "inaccessible."⁶¹

It can be inferred that the spiritual fulfillment of *hesychasm* in the East is to experience and receive the shared energy of God that brings shalom—a feeling of contentment, completeness, wholeness, well-being and harmony—to human beings as well as the whole creation. Being deified by contemplation, *hesychasts* receive the wisdom of God here on earth. St. Climacus said, “Let us hear and wonder at the wisdom of God found in earthen vessels.”⁶² Nevertheless, all the contemplative practices in the East and the West, in ancient and in current times, arrive at one conclusion of faith: that in contemplation “God completes the work” through “God’s grace.”⁶³

3. Orality vs. Literacy

Every people group uses language as a media of communication among themselves, but the way people access their language differs from one society to another. It is largely believed that literacy has been a major contributor to Western society and the way of communicating and learning through written texts and visual aids has influenced Western culture and thought since the medieval renaissance. Interestingly enough, paper and the printing press were invented in China, Korea, and Japan long before the Western creation of the printing press influenced the West and the rest of the world; however, literate culture flourished in Western cultures to a greater extent than in Eastern cultures. All Eastern religious practices in Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism are connected with recitation, memorizing scriptures by heart, and chanting. Their practices reveal that people from Eastern cultures are more capable of learning through verbalizing and listening in oral cultures rather than learning through writing and visual aids as in Western literate cultures. Interestingly enough, even though cultural backgrounds vary from each other, the very first stage of both, *hesychasm* from the East and *lectio divina* from the West, is oral practice.

The significance of *hesychasm* from the East is reciting the Jesus Prayer, whereas the meditators from the West read the scripture slowly and aloud. Here, we realize the importance of calling “the name” in *hesychastic* prayer. Calling upon the name of Jesus is central in *hesychasm*. In Eastern culture, together with African and Native American cultures, a naming ceremony is very important for the family and relatives of a newborn baby and its religious leaders. Each newborn baby is usually given a name which has a special meaning. In the same way, the significance of giving names can be traced in both the Old and New Testaments. The names of God as well as His Son, Jesus Christ, and persons in the Bible are meaningful.⁶⁴ Jesus means “Savior”; and the meaning of Christ is “Anointed One” or “Messiah.” *Hesychasts* repeat the name “Jesus” because it is the name above all names (Phil. 2:9-

10), it is the name that saves (Acts 4:12), and it is the name that Jesus, himself, invites his followers to use when making their requests to the Father (John 16:23-24). For Eastern Christians, according to Woltmann, “this name has in it God’s power and presence.”⁶⁵ *Hesychasts* repeat the Jesus Prayer day and night, since people in oral cultures utilize repetition. As suggested by St. Climacus (step 28-5),⁶⁶ *Hesychasts* recite a simple, short and powerful prayer without ceasing (1 Thes. 5:17).

On the other hand, Painter and Wynkoop connect *lectio divina* with the Jewish traditional practice of *baga* or meditation on the Hebrew scripture. They understand that, the roots of *lectio* can be traced in Jewish practice of *baga*. In order to fix the sacred words in their minds and hearts, Rabbis and their disciples murmured the scriptures aloud. The monks of the Western church expanded the concepts of reading and speaking the scriptures and formed *lectio divina* as prayer.⁶⁷ “In the era of Saint Benedict,” Duncan Robertson says, “a monk making his first approach to a text needed to vocalize in order to decipher the writing. Pronunciation remained necessary at all subsequent stages of the reading process, particularly in the work of memorization, which formed the basis of the monastic *meditatio*.”⁶⁸ In point of fact, verbalization is vital for primitive Christians, in both East and West, as a very first stage of contemplation.

On the other hand, today’s Western evangelical scholars and leaders, by and large, do not encourage their people to practice *lectio* aloud. Since their background is rooted in literate culture, they assume *lectio* reading as “slow, quiet, and deep,”⁶⁹ as well as “slowly pondering its words, images and associations.”⁷⁰ Added to that, Davis suggests that readers visualize the scripture verses in order to have concrete imagery and full attention.⁷¹ Even though Jones accepts that reading can be done out loud as well as silent,⁷² he stresses the need of emotional and silent reading in group as well as individual.⁷³ In the present day, because Eastern and Western cultures are increasingly mixed, both practices of contemplation—*hesychast* and *lectio divina*—can be done in silence, out loud, or both.

4. Being vs. Doing

Interestingly enough, both influential leaders of *hesychasm* and *lectio divina*, St. Climacus of the East and Guigo II of the West, were inspired by the scripture verse, Genesis 28:12. Both of them contemplated Jacob’s vision of the ladder which reaches to heaven from earth and on which angels are ascending and descending. They realized that a person’s soul needed a ladder of spiritual practices in order to encounter God.⁷⁴ As a result, St. Climacus contributed *Ladder of Divine Ascent* to the Eastern Church and Guigo II contributed *ladder of Monks* to the Western Church. Both of them understood that the Ladder of spiritual practices helps connect God

in the spiritual world and human beings in this world. They believed that spiritual practices will bring human prayers to God and God's answers to earth. They also believe that through contemplation, the human soul is elevated to God. In fact, both practices have the same meaning of a soul ascending to his or her soul Maker who is in heaven or the spiritual world.

Notwithstanding, the interpretation of spiritual practices by Guigo II of the West differ from the interpretation of St. Climacus of the East. The Western monk interpreted the ladder, from his background culture, as a four-step systematic, textual, and spiritual function of reading for monks. Guigo II emphasized the four steps of activity—reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation. He might understand that spirituality means active spiritual exercises. Added to that, some historians have investigated three important historical documents—Rule of the Master, Rule of St. Benedict and Life of Benedict of Nursia—of the Western Church and realized that “the exercises of prayer—the divine office, Eucharist, reading, silent prayers, blessings, rites, and ceremonies—gives witness to a concern that all the thought of the monk, all the activities of his day, be referred to the presence of God.”⁷⁵

In the same way, today Western Christians believe that in order to be a pious person, one needs to do spiritual activities communally, such as prayer, reading the Bible and devotional literatures, preaching, teaching, attending to sermons, singing and listening to spiritual songs, involvement in worship programs, participating in social work, and performing other pious acts, rather than, inward silent practices of contemplation. In fact, this notion of spirituality as performing pious acts derived from the devotionalism of the West in the late medieval age under the pressure of emerging European renaissance culture. Nevertheless, modern spirituality of active devotion in God's presence and participation in God's work spread all over the world to some degree.

Contrary to the West, an understanding of spirituality in the East is “being” or virtuous living. Buddha and other Eastern spiritual leaders taught their disciples to practice ascetic and virtuous living along the way with silent meditation. Likewise, St. Climacus of the East believed that the practice of the virtues is essential for a *hesychast*. He pondered that the ladder might have thirty steps.⁷⁶ He grasped the concept of ladder as a spiritual treaty between God and human beings as well as thirty steps as thirty virtues.⁷⁷ He taught his disciples to practice ascetic life (self-denial of Matt. 16:24) and virtuous living (Col. 3; 1 Pet. 1:13-16) as a spiritual discipline in order to encounter God, the Holy of Holies. Only then they will attain Shalom—the holistic peace and harmony with the Holy Trinity as well as all creations.⁷⁸ History reveals that ancient Eastern Christianity flourished

and increased, for the most part, through its prayers, good example in practicing Christian virtues, and its theological and literary culture.

Conclusion

The holistic worldview of spiritual experience can be learned from Sophrony (1896-1993), a *hesychast*, who lived in the desert of Athos as a hermit for seven years. He explicitly testifies to his spiritual experience, when he claims that: “I was living in two worlds. One I apprehend through sight, hearing and the rest of my physical faculties. In the other world I was spirit only—all listener, all expectation. I tried hard to see—but saw with other eyes.”⁷⁹ It would not be wrong to say that, when a person is *deified*, he or she will receive some kind of divine wisdom with which he or she is able to discern all phenomena (in the past, present and future) in the secular world as well as the spiritual world and the universe. In actual fact, the post-modern search for holistic spiritual experience is available in our ancient Christian contemplative practices of *hesychasm* and *lectio divina*. Both practices offer experiential spirituality of interior tranquility.

End Notes

¹ There are various sets of boundaries between East and West. Here, my concern is not about geographical boundaries and political boundaries, rather it is about religious boundaries between East and West. In Christianity, Eastern means the Oriental Orthodox Churches rooted in Semitic cultures and the Eastern Orthodox Churches rooted in Greek culture. Oriental Orthodox Christians were separated from the rest of the Church in the fifth and sixth centuries. In 1054, there was another separation between the Eastern Orthodox, rooted in Greek culture and the Roman Catholic Church, rooted in Latin culture, under the Bishop of Rome. In the sixteenth century, there was the third separation which is between the Roman Catholic Church and Protestantism. To the Orthodox, Protestants and Latin-based Roman Catholics are two sides of the same coin of Western Christianity. See Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church, rev. ed.*, (London, England ; New York, N.Y: Penguin Books, 1993), 2-5.

² Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith*, First Edition edition (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2002).

³ Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003).

⁴ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, 3rd edition (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁵ Buddhism in the West, *Buddhanet*. <http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/buddhistworld/to-west.htm> (accessed September 11, 2014).

⁶ The Pew Forum On Religion & Public Life (February 2008), US Religious Landscape Survey, Religious Affiliation: Diverse And Dynamic, p 27. <http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report-religious-landscape-study-full.pdf> (accessed September 12, 2014).

⁷ Gabe Lyons, *The Next Christians: Seven Ways You Can Live the Gospel and Restore the World*, First Trade Paperback Edition edition (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books, 2012), 22-23.

⁸ The term “split-level Christianity” comes from Filipino Father Jaime Bulatao. It means the existence and practice of two or more thought and behavior which are inconsistent with each other but fits each other in Christians’ lives. It can also be termed as “double-standard Christianity.”

⁹ The spiritual appetite of this split-level Christianity principally fits with Pentecostal experiential spirituality.

¹⁰ Paul G. Hiebert, *Understanding Folk Religion: A Christian Response to Popular Beliefs and Practices* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2000), 15-18.

¹¹ John Garvey said, “The predominance of a secular point of view made spirituality appear as a separate.” See his *Modern Spirituality: An Anthology* (Springfield, Illinois: Templegate Publishers, 1985), i.

¹² Thomas C. Fox, “Double Belonging: Buddhism and Christian Faith”, *National Catholic Reporter*, The Independent News Source. <http://ncronline.org/news/double-belonging-buddhism-and-christian-faith> (accessed September 11, 2014).

¹³ Norris J. Chumley, *Mysteries of the Jesus Prayer: Experiencing the Presence of God and a Pilgrimage to the Heart of an Ancient Spirituality* (New York: HarperCollins Publisher, 2011), 20.

¹⁴ Christopher D. L. Johnson, *The Globalization of Hesychasm and the Jesus Prayer: Contesting Contemplation* (NY: Continuum, 2010), 2, 15.

¹⁵ Jan Woltmann, “A Beginner’s Journey into the Jesus’ Prayer” in *Ministry Compass*, vol. 40, no. 1 (Spring 2011):105.

¹⁶ Archimandrite Lev Gillet, *The Jesus Prayer*, Kallitos Ware. rev. ed. (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press), 32.

¹⁷ There is no connection between St. Hesychius, a priest at Jerusalem (c 450) and *Hesychasm*. See Archimandrite Lev Gillet, *The Jesus Prayer*, Kallitos Ware. rev. ed. (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press), 39.

¹⁸ Lev Gillet, *The Jesus Prayer*, 36.

¹⁹ Christine Valters Painter and Lucy Wynkoop, *Lectio Divina: Contemplative Awakening and Awareness* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2008), 1.

²⁰ Raymond Studzinski, "Bible Reading Revisited : The Librarian's Guide to Lectio Divina and Formative Styles of Reading," *Theological Librarianship*, vol. 7, no. 11 (January 1, 2014): 56.

²¹ Guigo II, *Ladder of Monks and Twelve Meditation*, trans., Edmund Colledge and James Walsh (NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1979), 67.

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²⁷ *Ibid.*, 55.

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³⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.

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⁶⁶ St. Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, 120.

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⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 126.

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