

We Already Have Everything

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From John Main OSB, “Growing in God,” THE WAY OF UNKNOWING (New York: Crossroad, 1990), pp. 79-81.

What is the difference between reality and unreality? I think one way we can understand it is to see unreality as the product of desire. One thing we learn in meditation is to abandon desire, and we learn it because we know that our invitation is to live wholly in the present moment. Reality demands stillness and silence and presence. And that is the commitment that we make in meditating. As everyone can find from their own experience, we learn in the stillness and silence to accept ourselves as we are. This sound very strange to modern ears, above all to modern Christians who have been brought up to practice so much anxious striving: “Shouldn’t I be ambitious? What if I’m a bad person, shouldn’t I desire to be better?”

The real tragedy of our time is that we are so filled with desire, for happiness, for success, for wealth, for power, whatever it may be, that we are always imagining ourselves as we might be. So rarely do we come to know ourselves as we are and to accept our present position. But traditional wisdom tells us: know that you are and that you are as you are. It may well be that we are sinners and if we are, it is important that we should know that we are. But far more important for us is to know from our own experience that God is the ground of our being . . . This is the stability that we all need, not the striving and

movement of desire, but the stability and the stillness of spiritual rootedness. Each of us is invited to learn in our meditation, in our stillness in God, that we already have everything that is necessary. [...]

After meditation: from St Augustine of Hippo, "The Confessions," AN ANTHOLOGY OF CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM, ed. Harvey D. Egan (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1996), p. 68.

Long have I loved you, O Beauty, so ancient and so new, long have I loved you! And behold, you were within me and I was outside, and there I sought for you, there I rushed headlong into the well-formed things that you have made. You were with me, and I was not with you. . . . [But] you called and cried out to me and broke open my deafness; you shone forth upon me and you scattered my blindness; you breathed fragrance and I drew in my breath. . . .

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