

Unlocking the shackles of limitation

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An excerpt from John Main OSB, “Letting Go,” JOHN MAIN: ESSENTIAL WRITINGS, Modern Spiritual Masters Series (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002), p. 127.

One of the most difficult things for Westerners to understand is that meditation is not about trying to make anything happen. But all of us are so tied into the mentality of techniques and production that we inevitably first think that we are trying to engineer an event, a happening. The first thing to understand, however, is that meditation has nothing to do with making anything happen. The basic aim of meditation is indeed quite the contrary: simply to learn to become fully aware of what is, to learn directly from the reality that sustains us. [. . .]

We so often live at such a small percent of our full potential. If only we will turn from self to other, our expansion of spirit becomes boundless. It is all-turning; what the New Testament calls conversion. We are invited to unlock the shackles of limitation, to be freed from being prisoners within our self-limiting egos. Conversion is just this liberation and expansion arising

when we turn from ourselves to the infinite God. It is learning to love God, just as in turning to God we learn to love one another. In loving we are enriched beyond measure. We learn to live out of the infinite riches of God.

After meditation: "Finding a Teacher," W. S. Merwin, *MIGRATION: NEW AND SELECTED POEMS* (Port Townsend, WA: Copper Canyon Press, 2005), pp. 206-207

FINDING A TEACHER

In the woods I came on an old friend fishing
and I asked him a question
and he said Wait
fish were rising in the deep stream
but his line was not stirring
but I waited
it was a question about the sun

about my two eyes
my ears my mouth
my heart the earth with its four seasons
my feet where I was standing
where I was going

it slipped through my hands
as though it were water
into the river
it flowed under the trees
it sank under hulls far away
and was gone without me
then where I stood night fell

I no longer knew what to ask
I could tell that his line had no hook
I understood that I was to stay and eat with him.

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