

popularized. The World Parliament of Religions (1893) was a major marker of borrowings and adaptations among the world religions, with the introduction of Swami Vivekananda and Hinduism to America. While later in the 20th century, D. T. Suzuki was travelling across the Pacific to instruct Westerners in Zen meditation techniques, Christian clergy began writing texts and practicing these Asian forms of meditation. Among this group were Bede Griffiths, Thomas Merton, Anthony de Mello, William Johnston, and John Main. John Main, a Benedictine monk, began to recite a Christian mantra, rather than longer passages from the Bible. In 1991 a seminar led by another Benedictine, Bede Griffiths, led to the founding of the World Community for Christian Meditation, termed “a monastery without walls.” Meadow attempts to “assimilate” Buddhist *vipassana* or insight meditation into Carmelite spirituality, especially John of the Cross, making the integrated form a meditation upon “emptiness” that spiritually satisfies (Meadow: xvi).

More recently among evangelicals, a “rediscovery” of spiritual disciplines has led to some renewal in meditation practices, but there is equally caution in practicing “new age” or Buddhist/Hindu meditation practices, as threats to biblical orthodoxy. This is especially noted in anti-cult literature on Transcendental Meditation, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, and some forms of Yoga.

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William T. Purinton

#### IV. Islam

From the earliest period, various forms of meditative and contemplative disciplines were cultivated within Islam. These revolved primarily around the pietistic practice of the devotional recitation of the Qurʾān. Early ascetics are known to have retreated into a mosque for a number of days and to have devoted their time to continuous prayers and meditation, sometimes contemplating just one qurʾānic verse for an extended period (cf. 1 Thess 5:17). An early representative of this world-renouncing piety is Ibrāhīm Ibn Adham (d. 777/8) of Balkh in present-day Afghanistan, who advocated a constant meditative and contemplative activity (Arab. *murāqaba*): “Vigilant meditation is the pilgrimage of Rea-

son (*Al-murāqaba ḥajj al-ʿaql*)” (cf. Massignon: 171, n. 65).

These practices, which find biblical analogues, were conceived to be an imitation of practices of the prophet Muḥammad, linked to his custom of engaging in vigils (S 73:1–4, 20; cf. Pss 63:6, 77:6; Sir 39:7). He would spend one month a year, often in seclusion, in a cave on Mt. Ḥirāʾ outside Mecca (cf. Matt 14:23; Mark 6:46). There he would engage in meditation and other devotional practices (Arab. *tahannuth*, see Wensinck, “*tahannatha*”; Kister: 223–36), which can be equated with the contemplation of God and devotion to his worship (Arab. *taʿabbud*). This practice can be identified with seclusion or (religious) retreat (Arab. *khalwa*), a focus of which was (religious) meditative reflection (Arab. *tafakkur*; see Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), *Kitāb al-Tafakkur* or “The Book of Meditation”; a brief summary is given in Waley: 542–43; cf. Treiger: 35–47).

Around the 10th century, early pietistic trends in Islam, which became known as Sufism, revolved around particular styles of mystical praxes that included prolonged withdrawal into solitary spiritual meditation (Arab. *khalwa*; from the Arabic verb *khalā*, “to be alone”). *Khalwa* constitutes an integral component of spiritual training in the Sufi tradition and involves ascetic self-discipline, gradually increased fasting, vigils, periodic voluntary seclusion, isolation, or a retreat in a solitary location (cf. Luke 2:37; Acts 14:23). *Khalwa* is frequently comprised of personal devotions and meditative practices and states (Arab. *awrād*, sg. *wird*). It is usually combined with intense meditation through the continuous remembrance and recollection of God (Arab. *dhikr*), a repetitive recitative practice derived from the Qurʾān (S 8:45, 18:24 and 33:41; cf. Ps 119:55). The practices are often coupled with specific breathing patterns, bodily postures, and rhythmical movements. The meditation on a qurʾānic quotation (most often the credo *lā ilāha illa llāh*, “there is no god but God”), or a divine name or names, can be a collective or a solitary practice, vocal/audible or mental/silent, and can be performed either during a retreat or in everyday life. Both the physical and the “subtle” bodies provide sacred spaces in which *dhikr* can take place and the practice can also be directed at different body parts. Especially important is the notion of the conceptualization of the subtle body, and in particular of the mystical heart. Even though historical influences have not been established in a conclusive way, there are resemblances between certain aspects of the *dhikr* and the hesychastic prayer of eastern Christianity, that is the monastic traditions of “constant prayer” which can be traced back to the Desert Fathers (Nasr 1986: 195–203), also known as the Jesus prayer or prayer of the heart, as it is based on Jesus’s injunction in the Gospel of Matthew (Matt 6:6) (cf. Teule: 18). Certain features of the *dhikr* are also comparable to

the meditation techniques of Yoga (Anawati/Gardet: 235–58).

As in the Jewish and Christian meditative traditions, Islamic meditation practices can involve visualization and imagination (on the use of imagination in meditation and the need to master and to leave it behind, see al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī's (d. 857) *Kitāb al-Tawahhum*). In Sufi practice, individual letters of the written Arabic of the Qur'ān, as well as the calligraphic form of the divine name or names, are visualized and meditated upon (Nasr 1987: 31–33). Another meditation technique of Sufi contemplation (Arab. *tawajjuh*) involves intense concentration undertaken in a dream or waking state, when a transmission of spiritual energy or love (*tawajjuh*) creates an inner vision (Arab. *taṣawwur*), often of the image of a disciple's master (Bashir: 206–9), entailing a spiritual experience. Further, Sufi music and dance performances (Arab. *samā'*, literally hearing or audition) aim to draw the audience towards contemplation of God (Boivin).

With these practices, the mystic strives to eventually overcome different stages of development in order to transform his lower self into a soul at peace (Arab. *nafs muṭma'inna*; S 89:27). This goal can only be achieved through immense spiritual discipline and meditation, the ultimate aim being a perfection built on the annihilation of the self in God (Arab. *fanā' fī Allāh*).

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Sara Kuehn

## V. Literature

One of the most influential works of the medieval period was the anonymous Franciscan text, *Meditationes vitae Christi* (ca. 1300, *Meditations on the Life of Christ*), with its immersion of the reader in a vivid experience of the visual and other sensory details of the Gospel narrative. Its stated aim was to make the reader "in thy soule present" at the scene, for example witnessing the breath of the ox and the ass on the holy child. This affective approach was formative of the whole genre of the religious lyric and thus of the meditative poetry of Richard Rolle, William Dunbar, François Villon, and others. The recent publication of the short Italian text of the *Meditationes* may reveal the earliest version of this work. Irrespective of this, its journey format suggests an important influence on Dante. The work as transmitted more widely also influenced the development of the lullaby in the English carol and the German *Wiegenlied*. Yet, as Michelle Karnes argues, Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Christ* (ca. 1410) was exceptional in presenting a revision in English of the *Meditationes*, which was equivalent to a vernacular gospel for lay people and which yet treated gospel scenes not as something the reader imaginatively entered into directly but as the basis for a consciously textual experience in the present (Karnes: 6–10, 18–22).

John Donne's collection of poems, *Divine Meditations* (1633), with its highly personalized sensual and plastic imagery is a further part of the afterlife of the *Meditationes*.

John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding* (1666) describes its own author's discovery of the Bible as a source of meditation even as his work, as an exemplary spiritual autobiography, presents itself both as a rival text to the Bible and as a vehicle for meditation with its strong reading of selected biblical texts (the story of Esau as refracted through Heb 12:16–17 and the words of Luke 14:22–23: "Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled"). As Felicity Nussbaum argues, "the force of the autobiographical text is that Bunyan is creating a substitute personal text to replace the Scriptures as a devotional guide" (Nussbaum: 22).

The use of the Bible as a vehicle for meditation is presupposed by the reception of a range of particular translations which contribute to the cumulative literary tradition: from the Vulgate to the Luther Bible; to the KJV; to William Barnes' Rhythmic Versions of the Psalms (1864–74); to the Buber-Rosenzweig translation of the Hebrew Bible