

Behind Closed Doors

Most, if not all, the essays on this home page deal with various aspects of the Christian life in light of prayer, *lectio divina* and the tradition that gives them expression. Each may be viewed as forming a chapter with the potential of being strung together into a book although never has that been the goal. Instead, the intent is simply to take pleasure in exploring topics which readers of this home page may enjoy as well even if what's offered comes off as incomplete and amateurish. The search for subject matter is secondary to the expression of creativity and must always remain so, not the other way around. Curiosity lays at the heart of the matter which isn't concerned about effort, boredom or dryness that's involved. If you can maintain that focus best as possible and keep yourself...your ego...out of the way, the stuff you produce comes off as more genuine. Furthermore, it's accumulative, giving birth to new insights and hence new subject matter as is the case at hand.

I mention this right at the beginning because the topic at hand came to birth at a particular time when creativity generally speaking is low. That is to say, the writing took place in mid to late afternoon during the darkest period of the year within the heart of a New England winter. The time between lunch and supper is so much shorter and hence spills over to the time for writing. On one hand this is ideal. The dreary atmosphere creates a certain coziness against the backdrop of gray skies without detracting from an overall sense of isolation which can be foreboding. You're not distracted easily as would be the case in warmer climes. So while it's daylight you're aware that never are you far from the night. In fact dawn seems to have occurred a few hours earlier, and darkness will be upon us just as quickly. No small wonder that writing in the relatively brief daylight hours of winter afternoons has given birth to this essay. Before getting to the precise nature of "behind closed doors," some background is necessary which has affected many of us in the way we handle this situation. That background will touch upon our common religious heritage and how it impinges upon us, albeit in much diluted form.

Over the years I've read considerable material relative to the Judeo-Christian tradition and lesser so, about non-Christian religions such as Zen. Some in-the-know claim that Zen doesn't fall under the category of a religion, not a point of discussion here, yet it remains very important. Actually, one may fantasize what would Christianity turn out to be like if Jesus Christ had become incarnate in that environment and culture. All cultures have wonderful insights, to be sure, but the Judeo-Christian material is simply the best, I being aware of a certain prejudice in this regard. However, it has suffered a certain benign neglect at the hands of those responsible for its transmission which was no fault of their own. These people appreciated the documents, no question there, but never bothered to give the attention due them beyond rote presentation. On the other hand, an effective presentation

requires a slow, pains-taking pace of reading to uncover real treasures followed by, of course, a deeper commitment to what they represent. Lack of this means we as recipients desirous to know our heritage can feel out of touch with the material. Therefore we come to the conclusion that the real issue lies in the presentation (or lack of it), and that includes translations. On top of this you have interpretations which distances you further from the original text.

This situation, albeit unintended, seems to have come upon us rather quickly and has caught us unawares. We're left holding the bag not exactly knowing what to do with the heritage bequeathed to us, an embarrassing state of affairs. In the meanwhile spiritual seekers aren't standing by idly. They're out there pursuing a variety of paths. While some may be questionable, we can't help but wonder where and how we've missed the boat when it comes to marketing the Christian spiritual heritage. One thing seems sure, though, that Christianity has been relegated to the sidelines, no longer having the same clout it once enjoyed. Yet the more we reflect upon the matter, catechesis over the years by well-minded people was more culturally based rather than paying attention to its spiritual orientation. The latter always flourished in small groups, so perhaps diminishing congregations is a sign we're returning to that model. Some may welcome this as long overdue while others may wish to return to a model that has recently passed away and no longer has relevance. Since the spiritual component to religion had been relegated to the background without really appreciating the reasons why, few bothered to look under the hood to give an accurate diagnosis. Now suddenly we find ourselves not up to the task despite the riches in our possession. So the question is how to make the tradition available after we've seen how we have missed the boat.

As far as the tradition itself we've inherited, there's no problem with it, really. Despite what we may hear from time to time, most people have accepted Judeo-Christian principles as part and parcel of their lives which continue to impart cohesion to their lives. However, quickly the tradition has devolved into harmless observances which no longer pose threatening to a secular world view. While we're fortunate this heritage hasn't been jettisoned whole-hardheartedly nor with violence (yet), still we can't but be astounded it has withered away with remarkable rapidity. Instead of treating this as a loss (which it is) and being dumbfounded about it, we can use it as an opportunity to reflection at the reasons why and discover the good things present among the ruins. A closer look reveals that despite having familiarity with our Christian heritage, those responsible for it were trained inadequately. It seems that at the time of this training there was no sense of such inadequacy. As long as you fulfilled basic cultural requirements, you were okay. While most trainees and their handlers have been well intentioned, all along they had been oblivious as to the Christian tradition's deeper spiritual dimension. Such people in positions of teaching never were questioned because for the most part they had been feared. That offered them a secure position supported by the culture which at first glance

looked formidable but at heart was a house of cards ready to collapse. To top it off, those on the outside took great delight in this collapse which made the whole enterprise look rather foolish. The conclusion? Some persons (usually clergy and religious) in earlier generations had been raised with the expectation of being agents of expanding the faith, not to deepen it. And you expand more by assuming positions of authority than by real teaching. Hence the further you expand, the shallower you become. Then the bottom falls out as now is the case.

Several ways of revitalizing the Judeo-Christian tradition have been offered in these essays, albeit in a modest, limited fashion. One of these ways is discussed briefly in the present document, namely, a particular time of the day and ensuing disposition we normally just don't look at. The mood which attends this time of day is hard to pin down and deserves being called a malaise by reason of its nebulous yet all-pervasive character. Should we put off our inquiry for an extended period of time, we run the risk of losing insight into a side of our human nature that remains undisclosed and therefore has a long term affect on our well-being. We're not dealing with some deep, dark nasty side of ourselves but something quite bland and prosaic. That consists of our inability to focus our attention for any length of time or better, to confront the constant bombardment of distraction assailing us at a time of day when we're most vulnerable. If we confront this issue, we just might find ourselves better equipped to move forward and tackle more pressing matters. Besides, a better understanding of our mental and spiritual disposition during the late afternoon and twilight hours allows us to get a good night's sleep instead of the usual tossing and turning.

Confronting the end-of-day syndrome, if you will, is vital because it takes place each and every day of our lives. This constant repetition of a single experience spills over to the rest of the day and informs it in a less than desirable fashion. To have success here means we can take on other matters. The daylight hours is the time and place where we operate. If we're not equipped to inform those hours, our undertakings aren't as fruitful. We're more prone to dawdle away the time at our disposal. And so how we function during the apparently harmless and overlooked nature of the end of day has a lot to do with how we find meaning in life.

This issue can be put forward more precisely as follows. We go throughout a given day and engage in a multitude of activities ranging from the boring to the exciting. Meaning is essential to this activity without which it would fall apart. However, there comes a time when by necessity we lay aside all our activities, and that time begins with the evening hours. Though we could extend our work into the wee hours of morning, we can keep up this pace for only so long. In sum, there's only so much we're able to accomplish between sunrise and sunset or better, are able to do a good job at it. Now with the arrival of evening and the day's work behind us, we settle down and are left alone behind closed doors, if you will, which is either a welcoming experience or one fraught with anxiety of at last being

alone. Even if you're in the presence of a loved one there remains in the back of your mind that you could lose him or her and be left all by your lonesome. Indeed, it's a time of vaguely perceived dread, for even our beloved will pass away leaving us alone. The same applies with children. Cute as they are, they grow up and leave the parents behind.

Yet this dread can be an asset. It spurs us on to take action, for if we continue to wallow in our misery, we're as good as dead. We may be alive physically but on the spiritual plane where it really counts, dead as a doornail.¹ On the positive side, at this time when our resources are low we can be more open not so much to spiritual insights but to a longing for them. Usually we're too tired to engage in serious practice and study so must learn to moderate ourselves. This counters the most common step of alleviating boredom, namely, going to bed; we may not feel tired enough for it but slip into bed anyway simply to call it a day. It's an easy way out instead of staying with our weariness just a while longer in order to find what's really bothering us, low grade as it may be...low grade yes but relentless since we must face the same low-gradeness evening after evening. Better to make use of our weariness to see how acquainted we are with the spirituality that has been handed down to us and how we've adapted to it. Even the desire to explore our minds and hearts at this time is worth following through before we go to sleep, wake up the next day and fall into our familiar routine. Inevitably the evening rolls around, and we find ourselves back in the same painful situation.²

So these hours when we're too tired to do anything constructive aren't meant for heavy-duty activity, let alone thinking. Instead, they're an opportunity for assessing our overall situation, to take stock of ourselves, and see if our self-appraisal can carry over to affect positively the following day, even if by a little. That desire is sufficient to effect an improvement, however miniscule, but perceiving it is that which counts. These steps forward have nothing to do with personal transformation as it's being sold nowadays.

1. A good way of observing how people comport themselves in the evening hours is to take walk and gaze into homes and observe what people are doing, mostly in front of the TV, computer or twiddling with their smart phone. They've been doing this pretty much most of the day but continue doing the same right until they go to bed. Only fatigue intervenes after which they resume the same dreadful existence the next day.

2. Another time of day not unlike what we're describing is approximately 3pm or mid afternoon. There's a time gap for about an hour, even less, which can feel awkward for many people. The bulk of the day and work has been done while an hour or two remains to wrap up. Along this line consider the term "sundowning" which "refers refers to a state of confusion at the end of the day and into the night. Sundowning can cause a variety of behaviors, such as confusion, anxiety, aggression or ignoring directions. Sundowning can also lead to pacing or wandering. Sundowning isn't a disease, but a group of symptoms that occur at a specific time of the day that may affect people with dementia, such as Alzheimer's disease. The exact cause of this behavior is unknown." (from Mayo Clinic's website).

Instead, they are more along the lines of bringing our attention into greater focus which prevents this time of day from becoming a drag.

The evening hours are generally of a private nature. Obviously there's the issue of family life which may divert our distracted minds to a degree, but never does this take away completely the loneliness that creeps up on us.³ The evening hours might be termed an in-between time, that is, in between activity and sleep. They are representative of what we're made of minus the embellishments of society, family or the like. We're just present to ourselves, plain and simple. Instinctively we know this to be true...have felt it all along...yet fall short of coming to grips with it. Still, some kind of invisible blanket hangs over us which prevents us from bringing this to fruition. The influence from society, culture as well as our close associates, say that we can't be ourselves (and therefore implying we can't be happy) in this circumstance. Such a blockage, if you will, becomes more apparent the more we're aware of our vague restlessness which has nothing to do with self-deprecation. Even though we may be uncertain as to the source of the blockage within us, at least coming to grips with its presence is a giant step forward. The next step is to refrain from our natural tendency to personalization such as attributing it as the devil or the like. Best to let it be and move on because this secondary to the real work at hand.

There arises the question asked with regard to this time of day: can I be happy just as I am in this transitional stage from day to night or am I entertaining a fantasy? For all practical purposes, twilight here covers from sunset until well after sunset or when it's fully dark. We're more prone to raise such questions during these hours more than any other time of day, for our resources are pretty much on the wane. There may come to the fore memories pertinent to our religious upbringing which questions how we relate to God, most of them not favorable. The darkening hours can make us feel trapped by our thoughts, this transpiring more often than we'd admit. However, there's a way out. When these thoughts ooze in, we can step back from this vaguely disquieting time of day by performing a mental trick. That is, we can shift to the other end of the day or to the time when we wake up. Let's call it dawn, an inverse twilight, if you will, moving from darkness into light instead of from light into darkness. The patterns of both are similar, just inverted. So if we pay close examination to the pattern of one (the evening), chances are that while in it, easily we can recall the inverse pattern of morning twilight. While nothing external has changed, our insight has brought about quite a shift. Similarly, while in the morning twilight we can recall the evening one, thus anticipating any discomfort that may afflict us at that time. This isn't a clever little gimmick but one where our recollective faculty is put to creative use. The acid test is whether or not we've become more at peace doing it.

3. Actually this essay is being written at the threshold of the Christmas season as well as shortly afterward. It's well documented that Christmas is the most difficult time of the entire year for a lot of folks. It is a more extended form of those daily bits of isolation coupled with tiredness which we're discussing.

The major advantage of morning twilight is that we've just awoken from sleep, hopefully refreshed. There's always the promise of a new day which, going by practical experience, usually goes downhill despite our best intentions. Nevertheless, some of our hope or vague sense of promise can't help but rub off unless we're died-in-the-wool pessimists. The presence of our expectation says something about the early morning hours compared with its opposite on the other end of the spectrum. With a little practice, the positive nature of the dawn can filter down throughout the day, that is, beyond the customary first few hours of enthusiasm. After all, we have to pass through the day in its entirety in order to reach the evening. So with this pattern firmly in mind, the quality of the day is bound to be affected more positively than in the past. Yes, we're moving towards evening (usually symbolic of death) but are not fearful of what we hit upon when we arrive there. In fact, the day, having been informed by insight into the morning twilight, carries over this same informing action with regard to evening twilight. And the chief agent is our recollective faculty which is called *anamnesis*, a Greek word mentioned often in these essays.

Usually during the early morning hours we don't pose questions about the weariness of life even though we may experience dread at what the day will bring. Despite having detailed knowledge about what will come, we remain too caught up in the present exhilaration of participating in something larger than ourselves. For some strange reason the early morning offers a comforting buffer space even if we know we're going to confront a life and death situation. We can get a satisfying thrill at the danger to come from a safe distance regardless of the outcome. Even more mysteriously, we know somehow it will turn out to our benefit even if objectively it's a disaster. This points to something more than human within ourselves that transcends what we may have entertained about the future or better, what other persons may think of us. Perhaps this sentiment is akin to the experience of the first man and woman in the garden. They were actively engaged in caring for it but weren't daunted by the toil involved. After all, they enjoyed the cool of the evening when the Lord himself was accustomed to take a walk during those twilight hours (cf. Gn 3.8).

Henry David Thoreau is a person who has a lot to say about the evening hours. He was someone who lived by himself yet always managed to keep busy, especially with what we consider mundane, even useless pursuits. If you plow through his **Journal**, you'll find abundant references to the west and sunset. He exalted it to an almost religious status which invariably means in contrast with the east or the rising of the sun.⁴ However, the two—sunrise and sunset (i.e., the two twilights) are very important, and Thoreau is far more eloquent when describing sunsets in autumn and winter than the other two seasons. This

4 An example from February 27, p. 170: "Westward is heaven, or rather heavenward is the west. The way to heaven is from east to west round the earth. The sun leads and shows it. The stars, too, light it." In this same home page is posted a list of most of these references from Thoreau's **Journal**.

is especially true in New England where the autumnal and winter light is low and slanted compared with the more vertical light of spring and summer. Actually the sunsets in the warmer months are a bit more unsettling despite their beauty. It's hard to pinpoint this unease, but it has some validity. Perhaps summer evenings are weak when it comes to summoning. And by summoning is meant the ability (as in autumn and winter) to call the observer westward into twilight and hence darkness in an inviting sort of way. Also the colder months have a uniformity about them. Both the day and the night are more or less the same temperature-wise whereas the warmer months have a greater contrast.

Thoreau's appreciation of the two twilights into which is inserted the hours of a normal day is something within our reach, not something recorded by an eccentric semi-hermit a century and a half ago. A touch of the natural early morning peace and contentment can spill over into the day by retaining memory of it, a fact which brings up how we use our recollective faculty. We can anticipate the sun's passage throughout the day as it goes over our heads and sinks towards the west. Allowing the daylight hours to be informed by the morning twilight contributes greatly to an all encompassing experience of peace. It stays with you through tough times and can be accessed pretty much at ease through our recollective faculty or *anamnesis*. The impact during the day will, of course, become less as the hours slide by...that's to be expected...but that hard to pin down sense of foreboding is loosened up somewhat.

The informing gesture by *anamnesis* continues as we move toward evening and as we grow more weary which is bound to water down the effect to some degree. And so recollection of the dawn (and pre-dawn) hours here and there can lessen the blow of that vague but persistent sense of abandonment felt behind closed doors. As for these times of brief recollection, perhaps that's what is behind the celebration of the Church's Divine Office. These "hours" punctuate the day at strategic times thereby preventing us from being swallowed up by the day's events. Assembling in church every few hours or so from before sunrise to evening is a great antidote. Though few are able to follow the hours exactly, the popularity of the Office has been gaining strength in some quarters such as celebrating Lauds, noonday prayer and Vespers.

This structuring of the day is intended to insert God's presence without our lives and worked just fine until the dawn of the modern era when the telling of time became more problematic. Still, many people long for this. Given our hyper-active lives, then, how do we live in God's presence? Is it desirable or just a fanciful idea that used to enjoy wider circulation but no longer applies? In a less hectic, pre-industrial time (or better, pre-gadget time) people could live on two planes at once. That is to say, they could do their work and interact with each other while holding down their occupations and at the same time being aware of God. Not so much today due to the influence of electronic devices and what that entails. Nevertheless, quite a few people recognize this modern problem and resolve it by

withdrawing from their surroundings to a greater or lesser degree. Actually withdrawal is step #1. But to make it effective some long term plan is required. This way of countering the modern world's influence which isn't amenable to things divine makes you ponder how different we are from earlier generations...not those of the distant past but as recent as last one or two before us. We may be engaged in a wishful fantasy which the modern world would take delight in exposing. Therefore living out our insight is no small gamble which we undertake willingly.

The case society has against God or the presence of the sacred within the created realm is so overwhelming you'd think it would crush us. However, such a view has a fatal flaw right there for all to behold but few capitalize on it. When you look at people who try to make this case, what's their chief characteristic? Right away it's obvious that most aren't happy. That's the most basic requirement for discerning whether their view has validity or not. Granted, this is a simplification, but to introduce happiness into the equation puts things into perspective immediately. Any bumps in the road can be smoothed out later. The particularly effective way modern society has of isolating us from deeper truths is an impetus to focus upon the awkward and sometimes difficult evening hours we've been discussing. Now the value of confronting the alternation between day and night, morning and evening twilight, takes on a larger meaning. Perhaps we can deal with a crisis successfully here and there, but we shouldn't forget. The alternation just mentioned is a daily, inescapable occurrence.

Another feature of the evening hours is that they are particularly suited for pondering the famous Socratic dictum *gnothi seauton*, "know thyself." This involves a close inspection of oneself as you're able to muster. The first thing that hits you? The true but embarrassing insight of being influenced by thoughts or ideas alien to our innate happiness. In essence, the knowledge involved here relates to how we comport ourselves, rather difficult to sustain over an extended period of time because we're so prone to being distracted. Here is where the tiredness proper to the evening hours can be a natural aide in helping us to relax.

Permit a little sidebar, if you will, concerning the general idea of distractions which plague anyone who wishes to pray or do concentrated work. All trace their source from our previous experiences and sort themselves into a few consistent patterns of thought which repeat themselves in a predictable manner. "Conditioning" might be another word for this phenomenon. These patterns become ingrained and are difficult to eradicate, so that means a different approach. These patterns don't come at us all at once but grow slowly. Before you know it, we're locked in and can't escape. Looking back, we see that we allowed ourselves to be passive to negative influences and did nothing about them, thinking they were few and disconnected. Now that they've joined forces, as you will, we lack the means to break free. To counter these patterns to which we had been passive means we must adopt an attention which is active. It's the only way to break patterns which have become

constant in our lives, filing before us continuously and demanding our obeisance. Ways of countering this addictive and ultimately destructive pattern will be discussed shortly, but becoming aware of how terribly passive to events and thoughts is vital.

These memories or more precisely, the patterns we adopt which result from them may be viewed in light of the Latin noun *negotium* which has clear echos in the English, that is, as associated with the settling of disputes. However, its original meaning pertains to the transaction of business or one's occupation and affairs. *Negotium* thus includes both public and private concerns and can have spiritual connotations as well.⁵ In the footnote just inserted, observe the use of a parallel word, *cura* which is translated as “occupation” and close to our “care” as solicitude and attention (it also means 'trouble') *Cura* is more one-way, if you will, whereas *negotium* is more back-and-forth or pertains to activity between two or more persons. Thus it's easy to see how our “negotiation” had derived from this noun.

These two words tie into the theme of this essay, namely, how we comport ourselves behind closed doors when no one is looking in on us. Technically when by ourselves we don't engage in *negotium*, that is, the give and take of affairs. However, in another way we're doing this all the time, “negotiating” with ourselves by reason of that continuous inner dialogue. With this in mind and despite numerous positive connotations as represented by the St. Bernard quote, we can use the opportunity of being behind closed doors as a time to shift from *negotium* to *cura* or “care.” It doesn't come about by access to external stimuli but by facing up to our inner condition which is filled with a flood of images passing through our minds day and night. Furthermore, this inner commotion precludes access to the faculty of our memory or *anamnesis* (a term often referred to on this home page). Without that faculty being active in our lives we live on the plane of images pretty much all the time which, if not checked, amounts to a shallow way of living. We feel this shallowness as a kind of low grade ache...sometimes too low-grade in order to confront it. Being so habituated to it, we're wide open to less than desirable influences including evil which can have a field day at our expense. All the while we haven't a clue as to the source of our inner ache and can't give an accurate appraisal of our situation.

All this brings up, of course, how we comprehend things around us throughout the day which impinge upon us before we go to sleep or from morning twilight to evening twilight. The distractions which assail us habitually neglect two important modes of perception. You could almost say they throw a stifling blanket over our minds next to impossible to

⁵ One such spiritual use comes from St. Bernard's Third Sermon on Advent (#5.2): *numquam obliviscamur negotium animarum nostrarum et illa cura principaliter vigeat in cordibus nostris.* This translates as “so we must never forget the interests of our souls and we should make this the chief occupation of our hearts.” English translation from **Sermons for Advent and the Christmas Season** (Kalamazoo, MI 2007).

shake off. Yet all along we feel we're made for something better, that we're being held back in a state of tension which prevents us from entering what's rightfully ours. Such a state has become so much a part of our lives that we mistaken it as the natural one instead of our inherently normal one. Frequent observations people make about life as a shadow, its transitory nature and all the rest are indicative of this sentiment which gives the illusion of being inescapable.

During the inexorable, inescapable return of the evening hours...that sundowning noted earlier...we can put our weariness to good use instead of allowing the day's restlessness to ride roughshod over us. The last thing we need now is some type of activity involving concentration during the hours prior to sleep. In its place the natural weariness of evening demands relaxation. Should we observe ourselves carefully, we're more disposed to a relaxed type of perception that can shake off memories of the day that has just come to a close. Now when we're relaxed or better, too tired to be roused by unnecessary stimuli, we're disposed to perceive things in a fashion which is both de-contracted and informal. At this point it's important to be on the look-out against a desire to overcome our weariness, for that would be artificial and forced. It would simply increase the tension. Instead, we are to shift attention to what may seem impossible, the weariness in and by itself. We allow it to be present without trying to push it away and avoid having preconceived ideas about it or the like. This allows the weariness to steady itself before our eyes, and to our surprise, it vanishes into thin air. We discover that the weariness so familiar to us had been accustomed to assume a vast array of forms, some of which we latched on to and thus labeled as weariness in and by itself. Now they are gone and our innate peace emerges, almost magically.

We delight at the discovery of such an insight that had been under our noses all along without our knowing it. However, we have to distinguish between weariness in and by itself and thoughts about our weariness. Some of this temptation comes from our innate preference for form instead of the ground from which it had sprung. Such a term as "ground" in this context is awkward, giving the impression that we approach some invisible reality more by magic and manipulation than by insight. The desire for the former is always present, so it's a matter of discernment. And much of this discernment centers around our willingness to pass beyond (another awkward phrase) our preference for form to just abiding in that weariness which lacks form.

So after accustoming ourselves to abide with this weariness, we almost invite it to be our companion. Neither do we seek to manipulate nor escape it, and being watchful (and this watchfulness stems from weariness itself, not concentration which is not conducive for this time of evening) for what comes down the line, to our surprise no form appears. So it turns out that our expectation has been misdirected all along. As noted above, the essential component of the evening hours is relaxation which is both de-contracted and informal, not

an attention which is tense and ready to spring into action. The latter (unfortunately) is our natural condition which overflows with thoughts and emotions we had considered as life-giving instead of life-robbing. De-contracted means something experienced in this special situation which essentially is immune to explanation. This isn't a cop-out but a sign that we're hitting up against the limits of description. Try as we may to overcome it, we simply can't, and that doesn't imply being uneasy. De-contraction goes hand-in-hand with a perception of what is informal meaning it belongs to a reality wholly other than the one we're accustomed to. Bumping up against it accounts for some of the weariness we experience when seeking to impose forms upon our perceptions. Forms about our current state are less likely to arise from within us when we're tired but when they do, they're not as sharply defined.

Some of this parallels what happens to older people who seem more adapt than the rest of us at being alone behind closed doors. The ups and downs of life have made them less attached to form and therefore more open to the acquisition of what seems to be wisdom. They don't set out to adopt this, but it happens to them. Although we may acknowledge their wisdom in reality it is more akin to having given in less to folly. And so we're dealing with a relative wisdom; fine, to be sure, but lacking when it comes to deeper spiritual realities. Such is some of the fascination...and this is fascination from a distance, if you will...we have when passing by old people sitting around pretty much doing nothing. They may have plenty of thoughts accompanied by weaker but real emotions but are allowing them to slide by without latching onto them. They've seen it before countless times and let it slide right by them without knowing how they effect it. We don't see this in action but infer it by observation. It may be a bit far-fetched, but these people have learned to pray without being aware of it. However, like their relative wisdom, this relative prayer is incomplete because they're more observers than participators. So while they have the trappings of being free from the constant barrage of thoughts and emotions, they've learned to see, like Ecclesiastes, the vanity of it all.

What has been described in this rather brief essay is common to us all yet remains little explored. It might have to do with the incredible simplicity involved and our reluctance to go that route, that somehow it's beneath us. We all enjoy being the center of attention. Yet when it comes time to shut the door behind us, no one is looking. Literally we're out of sight and worse for our self-image, we are out of mind. If we face the embarrassing desire for attention and don't run away from it, we're forced to first to examine it and then see if there's anything else within us which is worth cultivating. One way of going about this as proposed is to keep alive through our faculty of *anamnesis* the twilight opposite to the one in which we are now. At that opposite end of the scale, if you will, when all things were bright and fresh, we had no such thoughts. Let's say we did, but chances are they would have been subordinated to the promise of the coming day (interestingly, little do we think of the evening twilight at this point). With the passage of time we see this model pretty much

static as determining out outlook on life because it's so basic and unchanging. Yet inverting the twilights as said above may add a little twist to all this. We may never get a handle on such a basic pattern but at least are better equipped to see what's involved. In essence, it's a fine rehearsal for the finality of death which cor Christians ends up in the resurrection. And, of course, the morning twilight is an archetype for the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

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