



CONTEMPLATIVE NETWORK

NEWS & VIEWS

Volume 1 No. 1 | Fourth Quarter 2021 | Jan Masterson, Editor

Letter from the President



Dear Friends,

Since 2008 our mission of teaching centering prayer, promoting research and interfaith dialog has exploded internationally. Our cutting-edge research has been presented worldwide. Our teaching audience now includes interfaith lay, clergy and seminarians in numerous countries. This first quarterly Newsletter just begins to describe our accomplishments; more will follow.

We continue to be all-volunteer with no payroll, travel and living costs. We have never directly requested donations. This Newsletter is due to the professional kindness of Jan Masterson, Editor, Bob Hillegas, IT and Heather Reichert, Web.

We are at a critical juncture in our journey. If we are to move forward we need help to cover out-of-pocket, third-party, contractor costs. Please consider a tax-free donation via our [website](#) or [donate your time](#). We encourage you to receive these quarterly Newsletters a few times to better understand us, but we respect your valuable time should you wish to unsubscribe.

Sharing the indwelling Spirit,

Deacon Robert Hesse, Ph.D.

President & Co-Founder

Musings from the Editor

Welcome to the first edition of the **Contemplative Network News & Views**. Our goal is to keep in touch quarterly with informative articles and general information. This is your newsletter. We want you involved whether it is a question for a Board Member, a suggestion for an article, submission of a book review, an original poem or a comment about content. Our email address is editor@contemplative.net. We look forward to hearing from you.

As your editor, I plan to use this space to share my thoughts, struggles and any lessons I learn along the way. I am trying to do the best I can with who I am and the resources at my disposal. I will use my words to try to help you be the best you can be. I promise to think before I write, to be conscious of how my words affect you, our readers. I promise to use my words to uplift instead of put down. I promise to always try to use my words wisely. I promise to remember how powerful words are. I humbly ask you to gently tell me when I haven't fulfilled my promises to you.

Stay healthy. Stay positive. Stay loving.

Jan

From the Board of Directors

TRANSCENDENT CONSCIOUSNESS RESEARCH

Comparison of Remembering Near-Death and Mystical Experiences

By Robert Hesse, Ph.D.

About 200 years ago medicine became more secular, separating from religion. This was contrary to the non-dualistic teachings of most theistic religions including the Abrahamic faiths. The non-dualism was grounded in the belief God and man, body and soul and faith and science were non-contradictorily meant for each other. Fortunately, numerous contemporary scientific conferences are testimony to the reconvergence of faith and science, medicine and religion.

The cutting-edge of medicine and religion research is on consciousness. For the approximate 87% of the population that believes in God and an afterlife, the transcendent state of consciousness between this world and the next is of great importance and interest. Two such states are near-death experience (NDE) and spiritual contemplative experience (SCE) a.k.a. mystical experience.

In 2019 the author presented the results of neuroscientific research comparing the remembering of NDE and SCE at the world-renowned Science of Consciousness Conference in Switzerland. This was unique since the two states had never been compared in this way. The research was conducted by several scientists and led by neuroscientist, Calixto Machado M.D., Ph.D., one of the world's leading experts on bringing people back from comatose states. He had access to the NDE subjects and Fr. Gilberto Walker, former Chairman of Contemplative Outreach, had access to SCE subjects as a result of teaching Centering Prayer.

Consistent with religious beliefs, both NDE and SCE have similar attributes: *cognitive* timelessness, *affective* peace, *transcendent* oneness, and *paranormal* out-of-body. SCE has been reported for centuries by all faiths, including Abrahamic contemplatives: Jewish Kabbalists, Christian Mystics and Muslim Sufis. Consistent with religious beliefs, there was neuro-correlation between remembering NDE and SCE. This was neuroscientifically demonstrated by snapshot, quantitative electroencephalogram tomography (QEEGt) and continuous EEG (CEEG) brain scans over broad frequency ranges. It was also confirmed by continuous anatomical assessments (CAA) of heart rate (HR) and HR variability.

These preliminary results hold promise for expanded research on more subjects for the physical-spiritual healing of patients, especially in palliative care to reduce the fear of death. This study was sponsored by tax-exempt Contemplative Network and funded by private donations.

“Science can purify religion from error and superstition. Religion can purify science from . . . false absolutes.”

St. Pope John Paul II

“There is no conflict between science and religion. Conflict only arises from an incomplete knowledge of either science or religion or both.”

Russell M. Nelson

A Conversation with...



Robert E. Kennedy, SJ
Priest, Professor,
Psychoanalyst, Zen Rōshi,
Author and
Contemplative Network
Board Member

By Jan Masterson

Robert Edward Kennedy is a Jesuit priest, a professor of theology at St. Peter's College in New Jersey, a psychoanalyst in New York City, a representative at the United Nations of the Institute for Spiritual Consciousness in Politics, a board member of the Contemplative Network and the author of two books, *Zen Spirit*, *Christian Spirit* and *Zen Gifts to Christians*. He is a Buddhist Rōshi (master teacher) in the White Plum Asanga lineage. Currently he conducts daily zazen (meditation) with his students via Zoom.

At first glance, one might think being a Jesuit priest and a Buddhist Rōshi is mutually exclusive. With an understanding of the Jesuit mission of dialogue with other faith traditions and learning about other cultures, it follows living in Japan, Kennedy would be attracted to the study of Buddhism. As he told Tom Fox in April 2007 for a podcast posted on the *National Catholic Reporter* web site, "I wanted a faith that was deeper." He explained, "Christianity... is an emptying of self. Buddhism tries to empty ourselves of a false identity and to come to the world as naked and as crucified as Christ was." He went on, "Buddhists would say, 'If God isn't present in this moment, where is he? You meet God in doing the deed of this moment in front of you...'" This belief aligns with the Christian concept we are all part of the Mystical Body so we meet God when we interact with others.

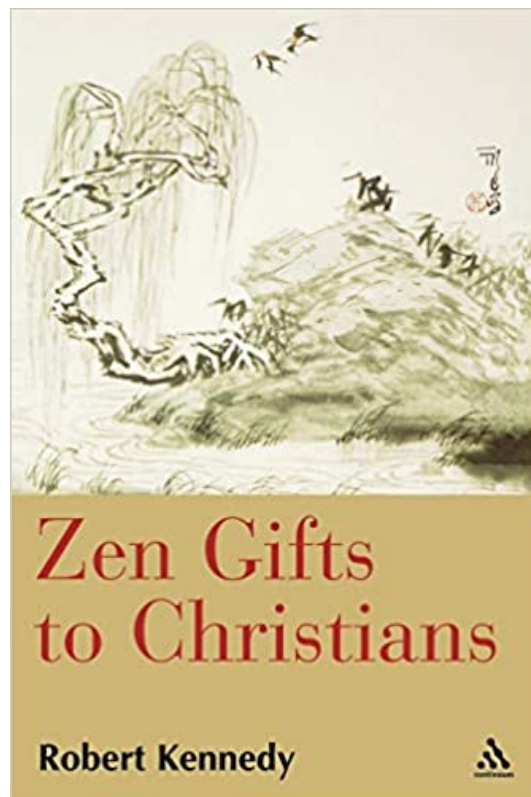
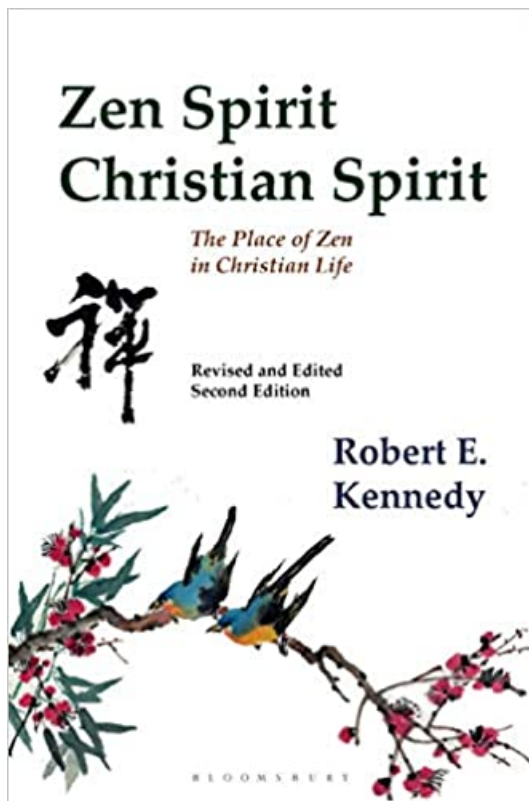
Fr. Kennedy graciously agreed to talk with me about his life and his beliefs. It was a joy and a privilege to have a wide-ranging conversation on a variety of topics. He is concerned about the current upheaval in the

world. He suggested a lot of misunderstanding could be avoided if people would just listen. We don't have to agree, but do need to respect each other and one's right to hold certain views. It is critical we recognize everyone filters their understanding of the world based on personal history. Everyone is trying to find their way in life the best they can.

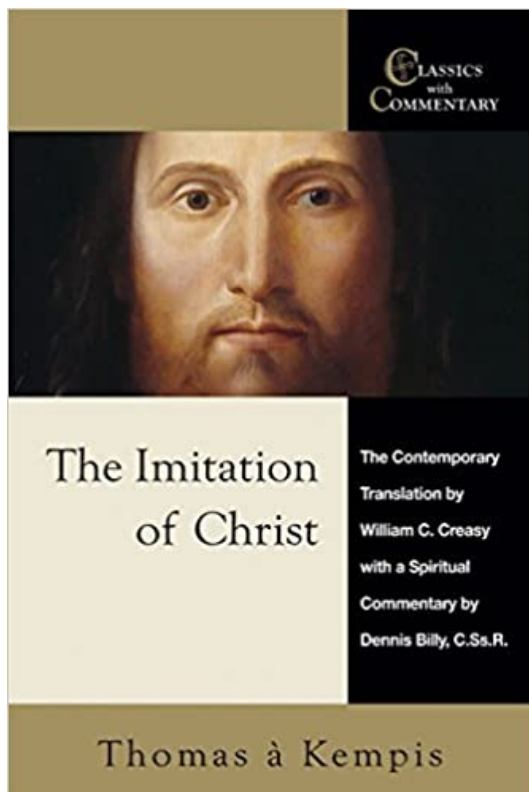
Fr. Kennedy is a priest, a teacher, a psychoanalyst, a representative at the United Nations and a published author. When asked which role he enjoys the most, he thought for a moment and responded, "Everything I do is based on being a Catholic Jesuit priest. Each role is defined by that." He went on, "Buddhism broadens my understanding of what being a Catholic means. It enhances the Jesuit approach to appreciating others" He made this observation, "Wisdom is practice." Reflecting on that statement, I realized how profound those three words are. To me it says: How we live our life shows what we believe deep in our heart and our soul. A sobering realization.

In his spare time, Fr. Bob enjoys reading especially American history. He likes poetry particularly W.S. Merwin, the son of a Presbyterian minister who was a practicing Buddhist and has been compared to Thoreau and Whitman. The other poet on Kennedy's favorites' list is Du Fu an 8th century Chinese poet known as the "Poet-Historian" and "Poet-Sage" who has been compared to Shakespeare and Wordsworth. Fr. Bob prefers classical music, particularly the romantic ballads, an apt choice for an Irishman. He enjoys the Law and Order shows on television and plays golf occasionally.

One thing I must mention about our conversation. Even though it was via telephone, I could "hear" the smile in his voice. Fr. Bob has a hearty laugh and an easy manner. Although I am not easily intimidated, I admit to being a wee bit nervous about interviewing this extraordinary man. I shouldn't have been. He was down-to-earth and very easy to talk with. At times, I forgot I was talking with a Jesuit priest and a Zen Buddhist Rishi; it felt like I was visiting a favorite uncle. Thank you, Fr. Bob, for a delightful encounter.



A Recommended Read



BOOK:

The Imitation of Christ

AUTHOR:

Thomas a' Kempis

EDITED BY:

Clare L. Fitzpatrick (C1993)

REVIEWED BY:

Carolyn Rogas

I am sure many of you are thinking why would anyone review a book written in the 15th Century? Since I was gifted this book on Mother's Day 2020, I have come to see the words of the author are as applicable to our lives today as they were for those living 500 years ago. They are even more of challenge for modern people who are surrounded by the comforts and conveniences of modern inventions we have come to take for granted. How often we become immersed in material things and forget their eternal destiny.

One of the things the Lord has told us is that we are not even promised a whole day at a time. "The Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him." (Mt. 24:44) You may feel your life is full. How many people have you heard say, "I'm just running all the time --- there isn't enough time in the day to get everything done." We often forget we are made up of body AND soul; all the frantic activity leaves no time for the soul to breathe.

Thomas a Kempis was a German-Dutch canon regular of the late medieval period. His birthdate is uncertain, but he was born circa 1380 and died in July, 1471. His surname at birth was *Hermerken*, meaning the family's profession, "little hammer." His father, Johann, was a blacksmith.

Thomas attended a noted Latin school in the Netherlands and entered the Monastery of Mount Agnes in the city of Zwolle in 1406. He was ordained a priest in 1413. He spent his time between devotional exercises and writing and copying manuscripts. As Subprior, he was charged with instructing novices. In that capacity, he wrote four booklets, which were later collected and named after the title of the first chapter of the first booklet, *The Imitation of Christ*.

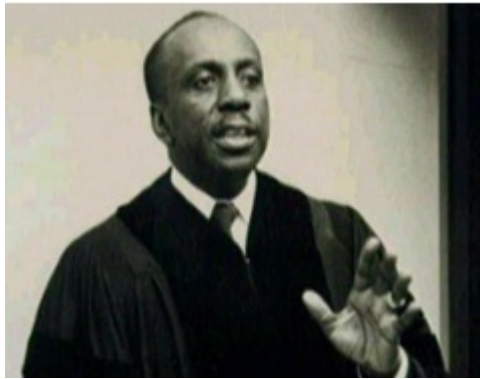
This edition of the book, as edited by Clare L. Fitzpatrick, follows the same format, Book 1: Useful Admonitions for the Spiritual Life. Book 2: Considerations for Leading an Interior Life. Book 3: On Interior Conversation. Book 4: On the Blessed Sacrament and Devout Exhortations for Holy Communion.

At its conclusion, the book contains passages suitable to the different state of life and spiritual necessities of the faithful and highlights prayers from the book itself. The text is in contemporary English, easy to comprehend and contains a number of beautiful illustrations.

If you are serious about a life of commitment and if you are yearning for a deeper relationship with your Lord, I highly recommend this book.

"Nothing is sweeter than love, nothing stronger or higher or wider, nothing is more pleasant, nothing fuller, and nothing better in heaven or on earth, for love is born of God and cannot rest except in God, Who is created above all things."

A Message from the Mystics



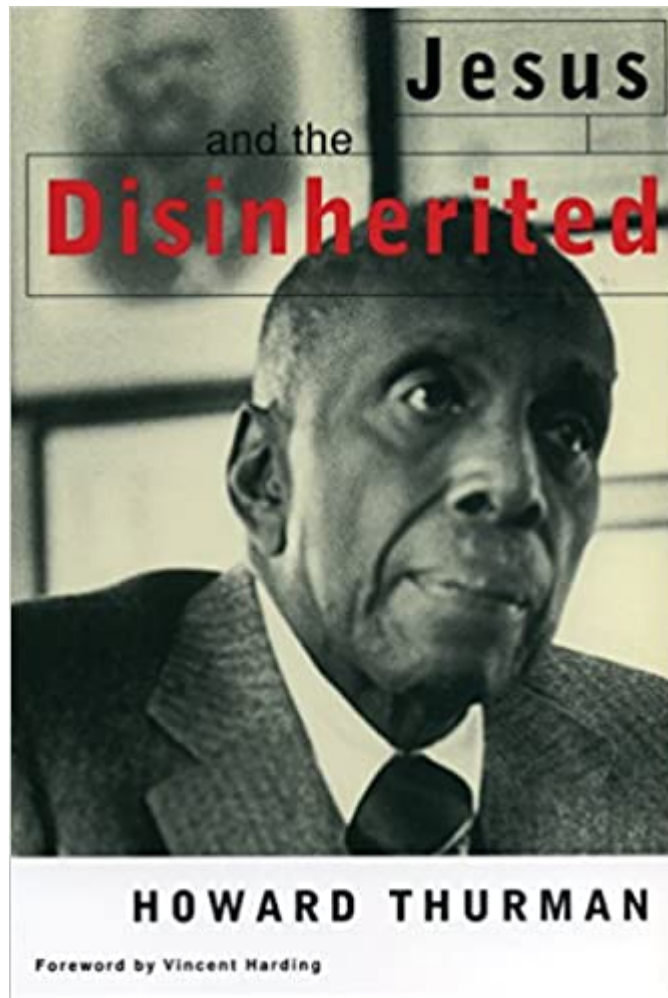
Howard Washington Thurman was born November 18, 1899; he died at the age of 81 on April 10, 1981 after an extraordinary life of service and a living example of interracial and interdenominational acceptance. As an ordained Baptist minister, he established and was the co-pastor of the Church of Fellowship of all Peoples in San Francisco. The congregation is one of the few deliberately integrated churches in the country. Its members include African Americans, Japanese and Chinese Americans, Native Americans and white Americans. Thurman believed, "The sense of community, then, seems to me to be a part of the creative intent of the creator."

Thurman's father died when he was seven years old; he was raised by his maternal grandmother who was a slave for the first twenty years of her life. As a result of her influence, he was a leader, albeit mostly behind the scenes, of the Civil Rights movement. Some considered him the "Moses" of the movement. Thurman had a huge influence on Martin Luther King, Jr.

As a result of a conversation Thurman and his wife, Sue Bailey, had with Mahatma Gandhi about oppression, freedom and non-violence, Thurman began pondering how the life and teachings of Jesus could be applied to people suffering under challenging circumstances. The result was one of his most influential books, *Jesus and the Disinherited*. The theses of the book: What do the teachings of Jesus say to people whose backs are against the wall? He returned to this question again and again throughout his ministry. MLK carried a copy of the book wherever he went.

Thurman believed social change would only come through personal change. He urged people to ground their spirituality in a life of prayer, meditation and silence. He believed it was imperative to merge an inner life of passion with an

external life of service. His dozens of books explored this theme as well as how people react when their “backs are against the wall.” His sermons discussed these ideas and strongly suggested it was our duty to do our best to live our life using the tools of prayer, meditation and silence.



“The mystic’s concern with the imperative for social action is not merely . . . to feed the hungry, not merely to relieve human suffering and human misery. If this were all, in and of itself, it would be important surely. But . . . the basic consideration has to do with the removal of all that prevents God from coming to . . . [fullness] in the life of the individual. Whatever there is that blocks this, calls for action.”

Howard Thurman

Poetry Corner

The Golden Thread

By Karen Camerino

A golden thread is woven through all faiths ---
Love your neighbor as yourself --- do unto others as you would like to be treated yourself.
Hindus profess it.
Buddhists profess it.
Muslims, Jews and Christians profess it.
No belief in God is required.
Be kind --- just be kind.
The world is finding it difficult to follow this thread.
For some, neighbor is someone who agrees with me politically and doesn't stray from a narrow view.
For others, neighbors worship the way I worship.
And if we are not neighbors? What then?
Permission to hate.
Permission to kill.
Permission to ignore.
Permission to build literal and figurative walls.
Permission to abandon our common humanity.
The Golden Thread is hopelessly knotted right now.
Only neighbors working together can loosen the knot.
Who is my neighbor?
Is it you?

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

This is your newsletter. We encourage you to be an active part of its pages. We welcome comments, questions and suggestions from you, our readers. We want to know what you think about our stories and what information you would like included.

Please send all correspondence via email to editor@contemplative.net. Your full name, country and email address *must* be included; if it isn't your submission will not be considered. If you do not want your full name used, we will honor that request. Our promise to you: All emails will be read thoughtfully and prayerfully. If your review, essay or poem is selected, you will be notified before publication via email. All editorial decisions are final.

To submit a book review, essay or poetry for possible publication, it must be an original composition attached as a Word document in Times New Roman, 12-point font. Accepted length is 350 to 500 words for book reviews and essays and no more than 20 lines of poetry. For a point of reference, this essay is 223 words, including the title and quote at the end. All submissions are subject to editing for grammar, spelling, punctuation and length. Be sure to keep a copy as submissions cannot be returned.

The pen of the tongue should be dipped in the ink of the heart.

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