

**CHRIST BE WITH ME, CHRIST WITHIN ME, CHRIST BEHIND ME, CHRIST BEFORE ME, CHRIST TO COMFORT AND RESTORE ME, CHRIST BENEATH ME, CHRIST ABOVE ME, CHRIST IN QUIET, CHRIST IN DANGER, CHRIST IN HEARTS OF ALL THAT LOVE ME, CHRIST IN MOUTH OF FRIEND AND STRANGER.**

***And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.***

John 1:14<sup>1</sup>

DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST,

By the time you receive this newsletter the Advent and Christmas season will be fully with us. Just now as I write, however, it is the week before Thanksgiving, and our hearts are full of thanks to God for His manifold blessings upon this ministry, and especially just now for all the Lord did in the lives of the precious ones who attended the Pastoral Care Ministry School in the Netherlands. Many nations were represented there, and it was a great privilege to greet and interact with people from the podium. Always my chief regret is that I don't have the time or strength to get to know everyone individually and to thank them for their precious letters and expressions of love.

Along with a heart full of thanksgiving, however, I greet you with some sadness; for **I must announce that it is now imperative that I semi-retire. That means I have hosted my last five-day Pastoral Care Ministry School**, a sobering statement to have to make after so many decades of these wonderful gatherings and schools of healing prayer. There is no blessing greater than what comes to us as we meet in Christ's precious name and healing presence. Perhaps later, with some physical recovery, I can come in for a lecture or two when the team members will be leading a full week's conference (a very exciting thing to anticipate!).<sup>2</sup> In the meantime my physician has ordered a year of complete rest (how does one get such a thing?), and I am complying since there is no other reasonable choice. We would be most grateful for your intercessions for God's guidance for us, and especially for Mark Pertuit and Jean Holt, as we prayerfully explore how the legacy of PCM can best be carried forward. We shall keep you informed by newsletter and the websites.

BLESSED ARE THE MEEK

***Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.***

Matt. 5:5

*No man appears in safety before the public eye unless he first relishes obscurity. No man is safe in speaking unless he loves to be silent. No man rules safely unless he is willing to be ruled. No man commands safely unless he has learned well how to obey. No man rejoices safely unless he has within him the testimony of a good conscience.*

Thomas à Kempis (ca. 1421), *Imitation of Christ*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Scripture verses are taken from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* unless otherwise noted. Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

<sup>2</sup> The Lord willing, there is a possibility later of my conducting a school that would meet locally once a week, and should that happen, we will announce it in the newsletter.

<sup>3</sup> Since it was written in the 1400s, Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation of Christ* has been an all-time bestseller.

Our venue in Holland was close to the site where Thomas à Kempis lived, wrote, and taught. His work has been very special to millions of Christians down through the centuries<sup>4</sup> since he lived and ministered so effectively. He so well understood and lived out the beatitude of meekness, for he knew: *“It is vanity to hunt after honors and to climb to high degree”* (*Imitation of Christ*, p. 2).

All the truly great minds and hearts are those who eschew, as carefully as they can, the vanity that leads to pride and self-seeking in ministry.

In my books and in the latest, *Heaven’s Calling: A Memoir of One Soul’s Steep Ascent*, I’ve written, if ever so briefly, of the value of prayers for *hiddenness* in the lives of God’s ministers. I saw these prayers as even doubly necessary for women in their need to protect the “true” feminine. Men may take issue with me there, and rightly so, for there is a *meekness* that goes along with the desire for a proper hiddenness, and men surely need (and perhaps have a more difficult time grasping) this great virtue than do their feminine counterparts.

I’ve long been somewhat stymied by our Lord’s words in Matthew 5:5, and I have many, many times looked up their meaning in different commentaries. On my return home from the Netherlands, my new ESV Study Bible with its commentary was waiting for me. Immediately I turned to this text and rejoiced in what the commentary said about it:

*The meek are the gentle (cf. 11:29), those who do not assert themselves to further their own agendas in their own strength, but who will nevertheless, inherit the earth because they trust in God to direct the outcome of events.*

What a promise is bound up in the gaining of this virtue! This definition makes Psalm 37:11 all the more precious and meaningful because we know who and what the meek are: “But the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace.” And we see how once again we are to model after our Lord when he says: “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matt. 11:29).

#### RECOMMENDED READING

Mark Pertuit reviews an important book by Dr. Gerard van den Aardweg, a book that prayer counselors and therapists should know about and recommend.

*The Battle for Normality: A Guide for (Self-) Therapy for Homosexuality*

By Dr. Gerard van den Aardweg

A fine book on the healing of homosexuality that is often overlooked is Dr. van den Aardweg’s *The Battle for Normality*. Many books on this topic stress the importance of dealing with injuries to one’s identity as a gendered person. Early-life relationships with parents (particularly the same-sex parent) and with one’s childhood peers are explored. Avenues to healing are then detailed, and these typically involve catharsis (getting the pain up and out) and learning to relate nonsexually to people of the same sex. Dr. van den Aardweg’s book includes all of this while adding an essential, yet regularly neglected, element in the healing process, namely, being emancipated from a childish, egoistic stance.

When people seek healing for a homosexual neurosis, he argues, much time is typically spent on verbalizing pain from the past, and yet the person is frequently speaking/processing from a childish, me-centered position. As he once said, “Psychology is stuck in a pre-adolescent stage of development”—i.e., too much attention is given to feelings and to the dramatizing of them, to catharsis. To step out of the

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<sup>4</sup> *Study Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Bibles, 2008), p. 1828

childish posture (particularly by combating self-pity and tendencies to overdramatize) is to articulate the story of one's life from an altogether different point of view--and to already experience much healing. When the person fights the tragic, whiny, "inner complaining child," pain can be brought up and out, yet from an adult standpoint that makes growth far more speedy and reality-oriented.

What is particularly helpful about this book is that it is written for people who desire healing for their homosexual neuroses and yet who cannot find able (or willing) therapists. The book therefore has the benefit of being both very insightful as well as very practical. The author's comments on fighting self-pity through the use of humor, as well as on the role of virtue and self-discipline in the healing of the soul, are fantastic.

Dr. van den Aardweg is a Dutch psychologist who has treated persons struggling with same-sex desires for over 40 years. *The Battle for Normality* may be purchased through Ignatius Press at [www.ignatius.com](http://www.ignatius.com). (Ft. Collins, Colo.: Ignatius Press, 1997-03.)

*The Connected Child: Bring Hope and Healing to Your Adoptive Family*

By Karyn Purvis, David Cross, and Wendy Sunshine

I have heard extraordinary raves about the helpfulness of this book from adoptive parents and only had to scan it briefly to see how the content parallels in many ways and is complementary to the teaching and work of healing prayer in PCM. I asked a member of our team who was seriously abused as a child within the context of her own family to review the book. After a thorough study of the work, she exclaimed over how strongly the book spoke into her life. I believe it will be a valuable help for many who pray with others, helping them deal with the difficulties in life related to failures to properly attach first of all to the mother or mother figure, and then to others. The book contains valuable medical information explaining the differing chemical imbalances that result from these failures and remain within the body until rightly diagnosed and treated.

(New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, 2007. Further information is available from the Institute for Child Development at <http://www.magazine.tcu.edu/articles/2006-01-cv.asp>)

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*Heaven's Calling: A Memoir of One Soul's Steep Ascent*

My thanks to all of you who have written in response to reading my new book. The Lord seems to have given it wings, and to have such beautiful "reactions" from all over the world (and so quickly) has been amazing to me. So many identified with differing parts of my story, and saw their own open up before their eyes and with new understanding received healing. It seems the Lord has abundantly answered my prayer that in sharing my story, others would not only be more fully opened to their own, but would see more clearly the call of God upon their own lives.

Under the mercy,

*Leanne Payne*

# A Christmas Meditation

## The Divine Poverty

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. (2 Corinthians 8:9)

A friend of mine, interceding for a newborn baby in the hands of a pathologically selfish mother, could not sleep for her extreme concern for the child. She had tried to procure help for the baby, but all her efforts (and seemingly even her prayers) had failed. “I had the feeling I was taken in a battle and could nearly hear the clash of the arms.” She was immersed in a vicious circle of negative thoughts. In her despair and crying out to God she picked up the New Testament, determining to read it until she came to the answer. She was quickly led to the account of Christ’s birth and suddenly, in a profound night vision, she was taken by the Spirit to the crèche of the Infant Christ—whose very life on earth was endangered from the beginning. Looking in, she experienced for a brief moment something of the unthinkable humbling and vulnerability of the Babe who was human but also God. She understood what this impoverishment had cost Him. In grieving over the powerlessness of the newborn she was so concerned about, she was thus reminded of the Christ child’s utter powerlessness, a poverty He chose to take upon Himself so that He might bear ours.

My friend was supernaturally comforted and enabled to pray in faith for the baby born into the care of an unfit mother. At this Christmastide when she and I were in the midst of other difficulties—even some strong spiritual warfare—and the going was the roughest, she would say to me in hushed tones, “Oh, just go look into the crèche; Oh, just go and look at the Baby.” An intuition far beyond the ordinary of what Christ’s incarnation—the central miracle of all time—*really means*, together with a tiny hint of what it had cost Him and the Father, was afforded her. She would never again be quite the same.

The incarnation of Christ is staggering. That the Creator of all worlds yearns to be our Father and gave Himself to us in such a special way in His Son—the Son whom He sent into our dark world through the womb of Mary to grow in the form and flesh of man—is something to be grasped only as the Father Himself gives the power. And we, like Mary, believe in order to receive that “Holy Thing.” Then we find ourselves as extensions of the incarnation by the pouring out of God’s Spirit on us. This too we can only grasp as our Father gives it to us, pouring out on us our personal Pentecost. Even then it is staggering to the imagination. That the God of all that *is* not only redeems but reveals His mysteries and presence to mite-sized people is almost more than the human mind can at first receive.

Meditating on this, I was particularly struck with these last words of Christ before His ascension:

*All power* is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto *the end of the world*. (Matthew 28:18–20, KJV, emphasis mine)

The “all power” is in such contrast to the poverty and humility He knew as the divine Son who “laid aside His glory” and “emptied Himself.” His state of vulnerability never once veered but rather culminated in the cross and His full sacrifice for our sin. And Paul says that we should *imitate* Christ’s humility, even that our attitude should be as His:

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:6–11)

The immensity of who we worship, and who we become—*real persons*—sons and daughters of God by adoption into Christ, prepares us to look at the divine humbling and the incredible scriptural mandate to imitate it.

### **In Praise of the Incarnation and the Reality That Accrues to Us**

I in them and you in me. (John 17:23)

From the beginning of my adult walk with God, I have been struck by the mystery of the birth of Christ into human form and history, and what it means to those of us who accept Him as the divine son of man, the Messiah and suffering servant. These seven words of Jesus to the Father, “I in them and you in me,” express the central thought and point of everything Christian. He came, He died, He rose again, He lives forever. All this so that we might know this two-fold incarnation of the Father in the Son and the Son centered in us, the people of God.

This Christmas season, as I continue to gaze into the crèche at the God-Baby who humbled Himself to put on our flesh, I am again reminded of the poverty of spirit, soul, and body I knew when I was separated from Christ, and from holy converse with Him. My blind and deaf state into which He descended and confronted was one of terrible vulnerability.

While in the midst of these thoughts, my heart overflowing anew with wonder and thanksgiving to Him whose acts utterly changed my life, a cousin whom I had not heard from in many years contacted me. “Leanne,” she said, “I’m so amazed at what you’ve done,” and here she faltered, saying, “*and from such a poor beginning.*” Afraid her candor would be taken amiss, she had no idea how her words blessed me, affirming what my heart was remembering. For a moment she seemed to stand with me in awe at the God who takes broken lives and not only mends them but gives them meaning. And of course I cried out, “It was the Lord!” This was no trite reply—it welled up from a sure knowledge of what would have happened to me apart from the gift of incarnation, the gift of Christ’s life in me. After talking with her, I cried out in praise to God:

O Lord, it was You  
It *is* You, O Lord  
I heard you in the midst of my extreme need;  
I heard you say, “You have not because you ask not.”

And I asked largely of You,  
And You *gave*. . . .

O Lord, long ago I trusted in You, and You saved me utterly.  
You took me up from the ash heap,  
a place of powerlessness and death

And made me fruitful.

You made me as a tree whose branches reach out in every direction,  
Bearing Your rich fruits of all kinds and dripping healing waters, resins, and oils.

You caused my roots to grow down deep  
To tap into hidden reserves of goodness, beauty, and life.

I put You on anew, O Lord  
I cry out to You anew. . . .

Writing my prayer as fast as I could before the Lord, I continued to praise Him. A number of very special blessings and honors came my way, ones I had never expected to receive, and I cried out, "Lord, it is *all* gift. Why me, Lord, why me?" And here again I realized this joy of fruitfulness is for all who are willing to "put on Christ" and imitate Him in His poverty. It is merely what the good news of the gospel promises. It is merely answered prayer. It is for all who hear Him say, "Put Me on, receive Me into your deepest selves, walk with Me in obedience."