

# THE WORD INSPIRES US

## INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

I

*Professor Thomas Berry:* First of all, a word of deep appreciation for the talk by Father Francis. Toward the end I was thinking of our gathering here, and of what constitutes commitment to the Spirit now. What is the Holy Spirit asking of Christians in these times? This is closely related to another question that has been asked: "Are we gathered here to commemorate the past or to create the future?"

What we have done so far is to listen to some wonderful insights into the past of some of the major traditions. We have met each other personally and have called to mind the great spiritual visions and disciplines of the past. Something further needs to be said, however. The great mission of our times is to create the global human tradition for the first time. Until this generation, mankind has lived in distinctive traditions, even though they influenced each other to a certain extent. But from here on each of us must accept the totality of the human tradition as our own *personal* tradition. This is especially true in things spiritual. This does not involve the mixing of traditions in such a way that we create a kind of formless composite. The traditions themselves express abiding distinctions in their primordial experiences and in the structure that they have given to the great civilizations of mankind during the past 5,000 years. But at this time, due largely to the changes that have come about in our technological society and in the new

sciences, we embrace the human endeavor with a new comprehensiveness in cultural extent and in historical depth. Even with primitive peoples we experience a greater affinity than since the rise of the higher civilization. In the future our children will from kindergarten up be educated in the global human tradition at the same time as they are educated in their own distinctive cultural and national traditions.

The whole meaning of this gathering is in the coming together of peoples and traditions to share in and to create this common human heritage. We represent at this moment a coming together of major segments of the human tradition on a scale and with an intimacy that is unique; I cannot recall a gathering precisely such as this having taken place in this country before. Our meeting is on an intimate, lived, experiential plane, concerned with the actual carrying out of the spiritual disciplines associated with the various religious traditions. But it is this work particularly that needs the illumination of the Holy Spirit, and I wonder if Father Francis would care to comment on the work of the Spirit in relationship to this mutual presence of the traditions to each other. We certainly will need the sustaining presence of the Spirit as we draw these traditions together, so that in our intimate presence to each other each tradition will be grounded more firmly in its own primordial experience. It may be that the presence of Spirit may now be

more important than that of *Logos*. Exactly here, as regards the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, Christians may attain a new expansion of their own thinking in the light of the traditions of India. This is particularly true of the sense of divine immanence that is communicated so powerfully by India. Perhaps our *Logos* Theology should be more deeply vitalized by Spirit Consciousness or Spirit Presence.

*Father Francis:* My answer will be brief. As I see it, we are faced with the question of the present. The past is what got us where we are, the future is somehow in seed, but in the present there's another pain, there's a pain of knowing, a union of heart that isn't followed by union of mind. I don't see where it's all *going*, but I don't think that's my job. I think what the Spirit is asking of me and of everybody else right now is: humility.

I am reminded of a famous incident in the life of Anthony, the patron of Christian monks. Once Anthony beheld all the dangers that lie in wait for a man who begins the search for God: the illusions, the counterfeits of enlightenment, the danger of listening too much or not listening enough to others, the tricks played by one's imagination, etc., and he cried out in anguish, "How can a man possibly succeed?" The answer came back: "Humility."

I learn so much every time I contact anybody from another tradition, and I can feel the pain in my mind of letting go of things that I thought were essential—there they go, and I'm still all right. There is a superficial way that we can decide out of our own rationality what union is, but then it becomes a compromise instead of a union—"I'll trade you three passages of St. John for four of the Vedanta." That's compromise and that's a sin against truth. Because if the Lord has really given

us what we have, then the Lord who is One will make us one; and I can't do that by throwing things away. I have to be humble, because I have undoubtedly added many things to what God has told me, things that he never said, and it takes a lot of reflection and a lot of help to know what is less than essential.

If we're humble, then I think we are faithful to the Spirit, and if we're humble, then where we're going will happen. In terms of the Christian Scriptures, God is in the process of making something new. Well, if it's new, I've never seen it before, and so I don't know—but I'm really happy about that. Most of what I've seen up to now hasn't been that great, so I'm glad it's *new*.

*Nur (S. Durkee):* It seems to me—and I say this in humility because I don't understand what you were saying—that you speak always of the crucified, suffering Christ, and I hear very little about the Resurrected Christ. I say this not in arrogance, but in humility, and as one coming out of your tradition. But I've come *out* of it because I just don't, and never have understood it. In the church where I went there was only the crucified Christ; in the church where I'm standing now, I see the crucified Christ behind you; but I don't see in this room, except in our beings, the Resurrected Christ.

*Father Francis:* Right on, man.

*Nur:* Don't put that "right on" me now! I'm not talking about anything that's flip or hip, I'm talking about a real question for a lot of people in this room, because we're talking about commitment to the Spirit, embodying in our beings that Resurrected Christ. The stigmata is obvious to us all, because we all suffer. The Lord Buddha very clearly perceived that there is suffering among us in this world; there's

no question about that. But commitment to the Spirit is commitment to that Resurrection, and in the face of suffering in the world our testimony, our witness of Christ, is the witness of our resurrection and his Resurrection.

*Father Francis:* First, there is the Lord's image of the grain of wheat: the whole purpose of the grain of wheat is to grow, in the mystery of life, and produce fruit. Now the way the grain does that is to lose its hard shell, lose its identity. What it may experience is a power of death—what's going on in the mystery of life is transformation. Paul says, in writing about his own life, that we carry about within us the dying of Christ so that the life of Christ may be manifest. What deflects me from fidelity to the Spirit is my idea of resurrection, my idea of what it means to be really human. If you're looking for the Resurrection, listen to what I'm bearing witness to in my consciousness—fidelity, and not avoiding the Spirit in pain. But also look at who I am. I'm not a sad man. I'm proud of my God, I'm happy, and I love people, and I know even with my slight bit of learning that when I let go of my grasp on life, I *live!* Perhaps it's because I'm only beginning to be a disciple, as St. Ignatius said on his way to martyrdom—but what I see is the fact of pain, mine and everybody else's; and it's fidelity to that reality that produces life.

*Nur:* While understanding that *dukha* or suffering is a necessary concomitant of life, I'm reminded of what the 13th Dalai-Lama said: "We resolve to practice those causes which give rise to happiness and put an end to suffering and unsatisfactory experience." That is, we make a positive practice within our life to practice those causes which give rise to happiness and put an end to unsatisfactory experience and suffering. Therefore, I

ask again: why in this room is there not an image of the risen Christ. Suffering is real: I certainly am not going to argue otherwise, but we dwell on it because we are afraid, it seems to me, to see the other image of that which is risen, that which does rise above the pain. We reinforce the idea of our own suffering rather than admit the resurrection possibility in everything that we do.

*Sarah Small:* I come from a different background, and Jesus is very much alive for me. I'm sure that he rose because he rose *in me*. I didn't have opportunities that most of you had, but I don't worry because Christ in me solves everything. He said that there would come a time when men would be running to and fro, looking for knowledge and never coming to the knowledge of the Truth. The Truth is Jesus Christ. He now lives in me. Commitment to the Holy Spirit? That's the seal. You know, my mother used to can food, and she'd put it in a jar and she'd place a little rubber around it to seal it. The Holy Spirit is my seal. He's my mirror; he lets me see myself as I am. I'm nothing. I'm happy just to be in Jesus who teaches me every day. If you stand and wonder why you never met him, it's because you look at a building, and Christ is not the building.

*Nur:* I never said that I had never met Jesus; I feel that I see him all the time.

*Swami Satchidananda:* Friends, we seem to be going off the track. It seems to me that some of us are trying to establish that their belief is the truth. It's not for that purpose we are here. In fact, no two people can see that one truth in the same way—not even two Catholics. (Laughter) Yes, God made all of us equally, but unfortunately each of us is trying to make our own God. You have your God; let

me have mine. Why should I force my God down your throat, or you, your God down my throat? Is it possible? We all have different minds—God purposely created us that way. Well, let's make the best use of it! That's why the whole world is a joy—variety is the spice of life. We don't want to live in one spirit. We are all one in spirituality. In spirit there are no two spirits. Spirit is God. There are not two Gods, but there are different bodies, different minds, different emotions. "Love thy neighbor as thy own self." It is easy to love my neighbor as my neighbor, but to love my neighbor as my own self, I should see my own self in his self. To do that, I would have to know what is my self. That is why they say, "Know thyself!" Then see thyself in himself, then love himself as yourself.

We are all here for the same purpose, to live in the Spirit as one family. But to fulfill this purpose there can be many, many paths. All roads lead to Rome, we say, but unfortunately in that very same Rome they say there are no different paths to that one Home! All the rivers, ultimately, come and dissolve in the same sea, losing their name, form, taste, and everything. So let us take our own paths, suitable to our taste, our temperament, our capacity, our environment, our tradition. We are not here to create uniformity, which is not possible—many people have tried. We don't even need to create unity; the unity is there, just let us see it.

Spiritual hunger is common to all, and we all have to satisfy this hunger. If somebody wants to worship Christ on the Cross, fine; if somebody wants to worship Christ in his resurrected form, fine; if somebody wants to worship their Christ in a different form; that too is fine. As someone coming from South India, I think of how the Hindus worship a god by the

name of Skanda. Some of the people say their Skanda must be very young, alert, more or less independent, and should not even have family botherations. So they wanted him to be always a young man, unmarried, with a peacock's vehicle, with a spear, ready to come and save them from trouble. But the family people thought: No, that won't do. If I go to him with family botherations, he won't know what they are. If I go with a complaint about my wife, he will say that's why he's not married. We must have a married Skanda. So they have him as God with two wives. But the sanniyasins, like us, needed an unmarried god; up in the hills, therefore, he is standing as a sanniyasin. But all are the same Skanda. He can come to you in any form you need. He is able to appear to you as you want. And even as the same God, he has many different names, such as Muruga, Sukramanya, Skanda, and many others. Can you say that Christ, Jesus, Saviour, Lord, are different gods or are they different titles for the same One?

*Brother David:* Let me try to respond more directly to Nur's question. On one level, all of us Christians will probably agree from experience that there is too much emphasis on the suffering Christ and far too little on the risen Christ. But on another level, you cannot separate the two. Sasaki Roshi said it exactly right yesterday; I took it down verbatim. He said, "The death of Christ on the Cross is his Resurrection." That is a perfectly Catholic statement: his death is his Resurrection. St. John has only one word to cover both: his "exaltation." That means his exaltation on the Cross, his exaltation in the Resurrection, his exaltation in the Ascension; and his pouring out of the Holy Spirit is also included. St. John doesn't say he died, he says: he poured out his spirit, so Pentecost is also in-

cluded. In John's Gospel all this is *one* mystery.

*Nur:* I understand what you're saying as to levels—one could say that in the birth of Christ is the death of Christ and the Resurrection of Christ, because it's all one thing—right? Is that the same or is it different?

*Brother David:* There is a very special way in which his dying is the Resurrection. Christians do not believe his resurrection is a revivification, or a "come-back" of any sort. He *died* into Life. He died into *Life*.

*Nur:* But there is, after all, the description of the death, the final minutes on the Cross, and of the descent into Sheol; and there is testimony to the Resurrection. I understand what you mean when you say that in that death is the Resurrection. Yet the other day Father Panikkar said that if one were to understand that in dying there was no resurrection, that would be real death, the true death of Christ. And I understand, in my small way, what that means.

I am not trying to avoid testimony to my own personal belief in Jesus Christ as my Saviour; I couldn't be here speaking without that Presence having been in me. But that's not what I'm talking about; I'm talking about the way in which that Word does go forth. And that as beings from whom that Word emanates, as we focus upon the suffering image, we continue that suffering, and in some way refuse to accept within ourselves the responsibility to re-father our own beings in our resurrection.

Alan Watts said the other morning, "Well, it looks like we're beginning to get a *catholic* church." I understood what he meant, or at least the possible spirit of what he meant; and part of that spirit, it seems to me, is the understanding inside our own beings of what that resurrection is, and the will-

ingness to give witness to it, as well as to our sufferings. That is what I'm trying to get at. You can keep the Cross forever, as far as I'm concerned: but there should be room in our commitment for that Resurrection. We still, as Christians, haven't gotten over being "hung up," if you like, on the image of the suffering Jesus alone.

*Father Francis:* Thanks, Nur. I think it's a lot clearer, and I apologize if my answer before was too quick and deflected what you were trying to say. I think we got a good response from Swamiji, which reminded us that as a limited person I can only perceive one way. I know that if I'm challenged to let go of my grasp of life—if I do that, I'll experience resurrection. It certainly is true that for the last four or five hundred years, we have not lived out or manifested that we really think Jesus Christ is right here right now. And that experience is the experience of Resurrection. He said he'd be here, so he's here. When we know that, then we know Resurrection.

Just one second on the theological level. The Lord Jesus Christ died in an act of love. That act of love was so powerful that it couldn't die, and he passed to God in that act and the redundancy back into time and space of that act is what we call Resurrection. So it's one act—of Death and Resurrection.

*Dr. Alan Watts:* There is an ancient Latin saying, *Crux medicina mundi*, which means "The Cross, the medicine of the world." But never forget that a medicine is different from a diet. I often doubt whether Christians believe in the Resurrection and still less in the Ascension, because shortly before Jesus was crucified, he said, "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Paraclete (that is, the Holy Spirit, the Strengthened) cannot come to you." And then, when he was

risen, the Angels surrounding the tomb said, "Why seek you the living among the dead? He is not here, but has gone before you." Now whatever you mean—whether you take the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus in a strictly literal and historical sense, or in a sublimely mythological sense, or any kind of sense—you also have to heed the words he said, I think mockingly, to the Hebrews: "You search the Scriptures daily, for in *them* you think you have life." Now, if Jesus is in Heaven—and Heaven of course is everywhere, we're in Heaven—there ought to be every Easter Sunday a solemn and ceremonious burning of the Holy Scriptures. (Of course, the person who conducts the ceremony must have read them! Again, I quote St. Paul, "The letter killeth and the Spirit giveth life.")

*Father Robert Vachon:* Father Berry reminded us that we are experiencing the search for a global human tradition. He spoke about living this already in the *present*—it's not only a question of creating the future. The only thing I can say (it's been in my heart these past few days) is this: It's one thing to be together, juxtaposed, each one with his own rite, in a great spirit of tolerance, which is wonderful and very important, and we must thank Swami Satchidananda for bringing this again to the foreground. But there is another dimension I have found in my own life that I would like simply to communicate to you. I was ordained a priest in 1955 and as far as I know, I'm still a Roman Catholic priest, and still in communion with the Church. But since 1963 I have tried to open up, and to let go, to the Hindu tradition. This has brought me to the point of asking Professor Panikkar yesterday: "Must we die to Christ?" We have been speaking all along during our history about the death of Christ,

but I wondered to what extent I *myself* must not die to Christ. When I said that I wanted to be faithful to Christ, I felt the pain of the concrete, and I still feel it; I must not negate it, and I hope that I remain faithful to Jesus. But I still ask the question. And the answer, I dare to say, is that I had to let go at one point and say: "Yes, I must die to Christ in order to live to Christ." This is not a gimmick or a catch-phrase to give importance to the ego; I know too much what it means to die myself when I say that.

This is what I ask of all those who have been explaining their own spiritual traditions, "What does it mean to *you* to let go, in your own spiritual tradition? In your own spiritual life, as you open up to the Other?" Swami Satchidananda said, "We want variety," "I must love my neighbor as my own self." All I can repeat to myself these days is: "Love the other as myself." But to me it means that I must enter into the self of the other *as other*, and for that I must die to my own self. Of course, we can say, "I must see myself in himself." In order to see myself in himself, it is said that I must see and that I must know myself. This is very true, this is pure Hindu tradition. But I say: to know the other as other and to experience him from *within*—whether I'm a Christian, or a Zoroastrian, or a Buddhist, I don't care what the ideology or religious tradition is—is quite another matter. What does it mean to love the other as my very self? Well, for me at the present time it means to enter into the other as *other*, to lose myself in the object. To lose myself—and this I speak as a Christian—to lose my Christ, in the other, the non-Christian, and there, I don't dare to say that I find Christ, and yet I do find him.

*Dr. Watts:* That's like atheism in the name of God.

Father Vachon: Yes, exactly.

Father George Simons: This conference has given me a better sense of the relationship of theory to practice or of dogma to spirituality. That's why I'm happy that this conference is *doing* things. But on the other hand, I would be happier if there were some specific opportunity to reflect on the doing.

I find myself, in terms of my own experience, at cross purposes when one spiritual exercise asks of me a kind of devotional attitude, imploring the Deity, and then immediately I go into another situation in which my whole being is structured into a kind of receptivity which to me is a radically different form of behavior in which this imploring function does not take place. I would be much happier if there were some reflection about the spiritual impact and the consistency of what's taking place. For example, the monastic cursus does something to the human being who's involved in it. I don't know Zen meditation, but I have done Theravadin Buddhist meditation for quite a while, and it does something quite different. As Swamiji says, perhaps each of these ways are rivers going down to the same ocean, but we have to find some of the sign posts so that we don't go off into an estuary some place. This is why I find it necessary for us to reflect directly on the experiences in which we are involved.

Father Francis: People are getting restless, because in ways we've moved up into our soul some place, past reflection; I would suggest we just pray for about three or four minutes before we move on. I think we've lost something, so stand up, or do whatever you like, and let's pray for a few minutes.

## II

Brother David: A whole group of participants have formulated the fol-

lowing question: *Must Christians set aside their exclusive claims in order to be faithful to the truth?* Will representatives of various traditions please address this question?

Father Francis: I think a distinction has to be made between *my* exclusive claims, and the exclusive claims of Jesus Christ. This is, as I tried to point out, a point of crucifixion for a Christian, a point of pain. Since I cannot pretend to fully understand any claim of Jesus Christ, I have to be willing to die to my understanding of it, as Pir Vilayat has said so beautifully, leaving resurrection to God—knowing, however, that there is a Resurrection. This problem of the concrete does not arise primarily from my consciousness. My experience of my own personality is, now I speak personally, largely still illusory, because I am well aware that God has not finished purifying me.

Perhaps the best philosophical presentation of this problem of the concrete was given by Karl Rahner when he said that there are two ways in which we must look upon God's causality: God is the transcendental cause of everything that is—he is present and he is beyond; God is also categorical cause. That is, he is in a special way the cause of certain events and realities within creation—I can categorize the causality of God and say, "God is acting here in a special way." It is this second manner of causality which provides the basis for the scandal and the pain in Christianity.

Brother David: If I hear you correctly, Father Francis, you're saying that the claim to exclusiveness is not *my* claim, but it is Christ's claim. Would any other Christian here like to address himself to this question?

Professor Berry: I would like to say that I am not sure that there are exclusive claims. There are *unique* claims, but Christianity and Christ have exclu-

sive claims only because everything is included. In other words, the inclusion, the universal inclusion, is what makes for the exclusion, and I do not myself accept what might be called exclusive claims.

Brother David: If I understand it correctly, you're basing your argument on the point that *truth* is always inclusive.

Pir Vilayat: "Only through me can you reach the Father" means that only through immanence can we reach transcendence.

Professor Panikkar: The exclusive claims of Christ cannot be distinguished in any human statement from my understanding of those claims. I would contest the correctness of the question, if we understand the exclusiveness of Christ as independent from my understanding of that exclusiveness.

If this is the case, my understanding of the exclusiveness is limited to the categorical world in which I am thinking. I think I could prove that the greatness and at the same time the weakness of all Semitic thinking—Jewish, Christian, Moslem, and Western Tradition—is its way of approaching intelligibility based on the primacy of the principle of non-contradiction. A is not non-A. The more A is A, the more A is not non-A: so that any kind of affirmation—I am your God, you are my elected people, you are the universal Saviour—is understood as synonymous with "All you who do not belong to the particular category of thought in that statement are excluded": you are not God, not elected people, not universal Saviour, and the like.

The basic pivot on which Asiatic, mainly Buddhist and Hindu, thinking is based is the principle of identity, so that the more A is A, the more A is A and thus indistinguishable from A.

I cannot now develop that, but if this is the case, the whole problem of the exclusiveness of Christ should be understood theologically and philosophically as the kind of particular interpretation belonging to a particular culture, and if I have to speak as a Christian (I'm always unhappy when people put labels on me), I would say that this is not the only exclusive way of understanding the message of Jesus Christ.

Archimandrite Kallistos: For me, as a Christian, the heart of the matter is the nature of the Incarnation of Christ. As Christianity has been traditionally understood, Christ is the Son of God in a unique sense; he is not just a superior prophet, the first among the prophets, he is Son of God by nature, whereas all of us are only sons of God by grace. Are we as Christians now being asked to give up this traditional understanding of our Faith? If this is indeed what we are being asked to give up, then let us be absolutely clear about the change which we are making. This is not a hurdle to be jumped.

Rabbi Arthur Green: Thank you; I thought that was very clear and honest. I want to say something historical. I think the great sin of Western religion, is really ours, and it's an Old Testament sin. It comes from the Prophets and the Psalms: the gods of the nations are sticks and stones, eyes have they but they see not, and so on. It's the protest of a religious revolution against *religion*; what the Prophet there is saying is, "Religion, phooey! What I have to tell you is not religion as religion has ever been understood." And in that sense, he means the gods of the nations are sticks and stones—that's garbage, that *religion*. But we turn it around and say the Prophet meant that we have the one true religion and other religions are false!

Pir Vilayat: I wonder under what authority we would like to set our-

selves up as judges of the greatness and place of Christ?

*Professor Panikkar:* Under the authority of humble disciples trying to understand his message.

*Dr. Watts:* This is getting to the nitty-gritty—the troubled religious question. Everybody in religion is playing spiritual one-upmanship, such as I am more inclusive than you are, I'm more aware of my sins than you are. The nature of recognizing oneself as being a member of an "in" group is that you have to do so by contrast with an "out" group. Saint Thomas Aquinas gave the show away by announcing that occasionally the saints in heaven would walk over to the battlements and look at the souls of the damned suffering in hell, and praise God for his justice. It's a much more profound statement than you might think, because St. Thomas was a very great philosopher.

But we have come to a point where Christianity must be seen in a different context than that of Mediterranean culture, the cosmos in which it originally found itself. Let us suppose that there are human beings on other planets in this galaxy and indeed on planets in other galaxies altogether. Now if God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ, that whosoever believed in him should be saved and have eternal life—are those human beings on other planets going to have to wait for missionaries in space ships from Planet Earth in order to be saved? The merely statistical probability of there being other human beings in this universe is colossal. So if God truly does love the world, which is the basic assumption of the whole thing, then obviously there could have been incarnations of the Logos-Sophia, the only-begotten Son of God, on other planets, in other worlds. But where's the difference in

principle between another planet and, say, at the time of the birth of Christ, the civilization of the Incas in Peru, or the Chinese? They were as out of touch with the Mediterranean civilization as Alpha Centauri is out of touch with us today. The Bible and the teachings of the Church do not say that the man Jesus of Nazareth was the *only* historical incarnation of God the Son in time and space. They just don't say it. The only-begotten Son of God is the second person of the Trinity and Jesus of Nazareth was the *avatar* or incarnation of the second Person of the Trinity.

When it is said that at the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow, and that only in the Name of Jesus may men be saved—the Name of Jesus is not J-E-S-U-S or ISSA or ISESOUS, or however else it may be spelled. We *pray* in the name of Jesus, but that doesn't mean that the name of Jesus is a signature on a blank check over which you may put any amount. When you pray in the name of Jesus, you pray in the spirit of Jesus, you ask the sort of thing that Jesus would ask for. So the name of Jesus means the spirit of Jesus, which is identical with God the Son, the Logos-Sophia.

In strictly theological language, there's been a ghastly mistake, one extremely genuine Incarnation of the only-begotten Son of God has been confused with the only incarnation of the Son of God in all time and space. And that is deplorable shortsightedness. Today we have a different conception of time and space; in those days they had a Ptolemaic conception of the solar system and knew nothing about the nature of other galaxies. Furthermore, one must not suppose that the human being Jesus of Nazareth knew all the things there are to know, because it was expressly said by St. Paul, "Let this mind be in you

which was also in Christ Jesus who, being in the form of God, thought not identity with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself and made himself of no reputation and was found in fashion as a man and became obedient unto death." Because if God the Son did not become a human being in the full sense, he did not become man. I'm talking in strict terms of Catholic dogma. In order to be genuinely human, he had to renounce omnipotence and omniscience, in the fullest possible sense of both words, whatever they mean. Thus he did not know, for example, that Moses didn't write the Book of Genesis, as we do now. There were many things he didn't know. He never said anything about the existence of China. There are an enormous number of things he didn't know because he was under, and accepted, the limitations of his own culture. Therefore, if in the culture where you believe that God is a universal monarch fashioned after the image of the Pharaohs of Egypt and the Cyruses of Persia, you say you've had this cosmic consciousness and experienced that you are identical with the Godhead, and you say, "I'm the Son of God," that means "of the nature of God" (as when one says son of Belial, son of perdition, son of a dog [in Arabic], son of a donkey, all meaning "of the nature of"). Then, when it is said of someone, "Son of God," it means that he's of divine nature.

The whole thing is made very clear in the Gospel of St. John. The moment when Jesus said, "I and the Father are one," it says in the Gospel, "The Jews took up stones to stone him." And he replied, "Many good works have I shown you from the Father, and for which of these do you stone me?" And they replied, "For a good work we don't stone you, but for blasphemy, be-

cause you, being a man, make yourself God." And he said, "Isn't it written in your law (he was quoting the 83rd Psalm): 'I have said *You are Gods.*' Now if God said that to those to whom he gave his word, and you can't contradict the Scripture, how can you say that I blaspheme because I say I am a Son of God?" No answer. If you read the King James Bible it says, "Because I said I am *the* Son of God," and you will see that "the" is printed in italics, as if for emphasis. But all things printed in italics in the King James Bible are interpolations by the translators. It says in Greek "a son of God." Now I find nothing in our dogmatics or in our scriptures to oppose the notion that the Son of God may have been incarnated more than once.

*Father Burkhard Neunheuser* (Professor at College of St. Anselm, Rome): -

It would be wonderful if we could start this supposition regarding incarnation, as occurring not only *once* in Christ Jesus but *several* times. It would be wonderful, but I don't know if we Catholic Christians can speak in this manner.

*Brother David:* I can give a brief answer to this. There are a sufficient number of Catholic theologians in good standing who at this present time hold this opinion, based precisely on the arguments which Alan Watts presented—of other planets, and so on. That the Son of God could have become incarnate on another planet—this is at the moment acceptable within Roman Catholic doctrine.

*Father Burkhard:* I have no difficulty admitting this for *another* planet, but *here*, on our earth, I don't know any theologian today who would speak so. I would refer to the Gospel of John, "No one comes to the Father but through me"; to me, this is not only the eternal Son of God, but the Son of God incarnated in Christ Jesus.

Therefore, for us human beings on this earth I don't see any possibility of coming to the Father except through this one incarnation in Christ Jesus in historical time.

*Brother David:* You have made your point very clear, Father, and a decisive word that you used was "for us." Now what does this "for us" imply? That is the question with which we are confronted now. Who is this "us"? Does what Alan Watts termed the Mediterranean culture represent this "us," and are not in the historical context other cultures and traditions as far removed as planets?

*John D. Keister* (Chaplain of Roanoke College, Virginia) I simply wanted to quote Paul Tillich when he said, and I think rightly, that Jesus died to himself, he died to Jesus to be the Christ; so the particular died to the universal.

*Father Francis:* I don't want to prolong this particular line of discussion unduly, because it will become a Christian discussion about the New Testament, and that can lose interest for other people. However, it does make clear how important the New Testament is for Christians as a normative prophetic utterance. Actually, the New Testament, following Jesus himself, avoids the term "Son of God" because the term did not say enough: "Son of God" is a messianic term bearing principally the overtones of *King*. (Its subsequent use in Christian reflection derives from an entirely different background.) This is based mostly on the fact that Jesus' prayer was summed up in the recollection of early Christians by the phrase "Abba," an intimate term in which a child addresses his own father and one that had never before been used in prayer. One of the results of modern historical analysis of the New Testament text is to establish that Jesus carefully avoided all the claims that were being made for the

Messiah of his day, the reason being that they were all inadequate. When he was asked (Mark 14:62), "Are you the Son of the Most High?" he answered, "You have said it. And you will see the Son of Man coming." If Jesus preferred a title, it was "Son of Man," which is so enigmatic that after twenty hears of work, I'm not much wiser. So this question is one that throws us completely into a mystery. I see there a real providence of God.

Without getting involved again with the theological terminology that was evolved in the Mediterranean background of earliest Christian preaching, we can say that we are still reflecting upon the prophetic witness to the experience of Jesus in his death and resurrection. I think the famous phrase of St. Augustine, speaking about the term *persona* in the Trinity, is very much to the point: "We use the word 'Person' in regard to the Trinity, *non quia Scriptura dicit, sed quia Scriptura non contradicit.*" We have always understood, in the apophatic way of understanding God, that formulations are like the sides of a dyke, and the truth is the beautiful clear water in the middle—if you need dykes and bump into them and then fight about it: well, good luck. But if you're the kind of person who swims in the middle of the water and enjoys it, then fine. We are in a dyke situation. The *onoma* of Jesus as it is found in that particular text from Philippians is *kyrios*. Paul is trying, in his way, which is much deeper and more mystical, though perhaps intellectually less differentiated than ours, to say that Jesus bore the same name as *Theos*. *Kyrios* is the normal translation for Yahweh in the Septuagint. Jesus bears the name *Kyrios*, and it is because he has not clung to this reality that he has been raised up by the action of the Father and, now that

he has been raised up, every tongue confesses: *Iesous kyrious*, "Jesus is Lord," to the glory of God the Father. That's the confession, and what Paul is saying, in real Semitic fashion, is: they bear the same name. What does that mean? They are the same, but not the same. You figure it out.

*Brother David:* I agree with what Father Francis said: this might turn into an internal Christian dispute. However, Father Kallistos' question has not been adequately dealt with yet, namely, that Christ is Son of God in a unique way; the discussion seems to focus on: what does it mean to be Son of God? One mistake that has been made is to consider "Son of God" a philosophic term, a predicate which can be predicated of this man. But philosophically, if you know what "God" means, *Son of God* is pure nonsense. It must be taken in its Scriptural context. The question is: What does the Scripture mean by Son of God?

*Nur:* There's a saying in Islam which is, "If thou art the prophet, put on the sandals of the prophet." In John it says, "And their birth comes not from human stock nor from nature's will nor from man's, but from God's." That is the understanding of what it is to be a son of God. A child of God comes not from human stock nor from nature's will nor from man's, but from God's. The idea that there's one Only-Begotten Son is true, because there is only one Only-Begotten son, because the Word is made flesh, and it is this flesh, as the Buddhist says, verily this six-foot body is it.\* We can talk philosophy forever, but the crucial point is whether or not we realize we are the Word made flesh; our beings realize God within ourselves. I am the only-begotten son of God, as are you.

\*Durkee referring to himself. Ed.

*Brother David:* It seems that Nur has well expressed a particular point of Christian doctrine—of what it means to have faith. It does not primarily mean to subscribe to a series of propositions. When my faith has reached full maturity, when I am "doing the truth in love," then I can say with St. Paul: "I live—yet not I, Christ lives in me." Nevertheless, one has to ask whether other believing Christians who are here can assent to Nur's formulation.

*Professor Panikkar:* Let me in fear and trembling propose an effort at intelligibility at this juncture. We are speaking of how Mediterranean Christianity is, and I can't agree more. But I constantly feel the paradox of our effort at overcoming Mediterranean categories with Mediterranean categories. Otherwise I accept fully what has been said and I fully agree, yet I understand too the uneasiness of many other people who feel that this is a kind of gnosticism. May I offer a theological hypothesis, in order to determine the real problems in following the Mediterranean way of thinking?

Could we not allow for a radical distinction between *individual identification* and *personal identity*? Have we not mistakenly considered these as totally synonymous? Individual identification is what the police use—time and space, when a person is born, name, father, son of Mary, Pontius Pilate, first-century Palestine. This is an individual identification by which those who take the categories of space and time as constitutive of the person ask the fundamental things needed to locate the individual. The individual identification of the Son of God, the Son of Man Jesus, the Redeemer, his cosmic, personal and historical acts, etc., are clear for most Christians and they do well in not allowing any blurring of that individual identification; other-



wise we do not know what we are speaking about.

Any lover, any person of experience will agree that if something does not express what I am, or what my fiancé is, or my friend is, or my father is, it is only the individual identification. In the mystery of the I-Thou relationship, however, through which with faith I enter into something which becomes really *alive*, and I say, "This is my father, my wife, my child, my friend," we are involved with something which touches the core of the person, a *personal identity*. But personal identity is not the individual identification, and when we say the Christ of Faith—to use dangerous words because of the overloading of the theological jargon—is only the individual identification, we are distorting his personal identity. I may say things of my Hindu neighbor by way of individual identification which he cannot accept; but the personal identity, which can only be discovered in a personal relationship through faith, love, hope, doubt and many other things, is altogether different. Generally speaking, Christians discover the personal identity of Christ through the individual identification of their particular tradition, but they do not stop there. Perhaps we do not need to make any other hypothesis in order to discover that this Jesus the Christ, who had other sheep whom even the disciples didn't know, who is Alpha and Omega and also in-between, Beta, Delta, Gamma, etc.—we forget that there are some important points there—is not the monopoly of Christians; his personal identity is something which only can really be known in prayer, in contemplation, and with regard to the different formulations of others. I am not saying that *that* which Christians call Christ is Buddha; I am not identifying the *whats*. I am only pointing to the mys-

tery of the *who*, who is he? Let's not answer with a *what*.

*Brother David:* Thank you very much, Dr. Panikkar. It seems that this distinction helps us move ahead.

*Professor Thomas Berry:* That's an excellent saying that we work in Mediterranean categories, but now we're into global categories, which must necessarily enlarge our terminology and, to some extent, that is the key to this discussion. I myself think that this relationship between Saviour personalities is not one we can adequately deal with. Anyone with a sense of divine providence and anyone with a Christian sense at all would have to agree that there are other Saviour personalities that are functioning throughout the world, in and through whom divine providence is bringing about a communication of his love, his reality, and so forth. There is really only one problem as I see it—the Buddha-Christ issue. We must simply look at each of these personalities as they present themselves. Buddha is the *Dharma-kaya* and a person can't fight over it. We are to some extent creating a false problem, because we're taking the idea of Christ and saying these other people are opposed to this idea. Well, it's not really so: Christ has a uniqueness, Buddha has a uniqueness. We must not rob these people of their uniqueness. One is not the other. They did not function in the same context; a person who begins with the idea that one excludes the other, well, it doesn't make adequate sense. A resolution is possible. The more one studies Buddha, the more one studies Confucius and Lao-Tse and the sages, and the *avatar* idea of the Hindu, the more he can see that what they're saying is in no way a challenge to what basically Christians are saying, and vice versa. In my own approach to the problem I find relatively little difficulty.

I still do not know of anyone who has studied Buddha and studied Christ sufficiently to even state the problem—no scholar that I know of has ever done it, and so we're functioning on an inadequate basis, and entering into non-existent problems. A large part of them are dissolved in simple understanding of the historical, cultural facts. One cannot limit divine revelation, divine providence, and divine redemptive functioning to a particular people, a sector of humanity. Neither a Hindu nor a Christian can believe it. These revelations do not equate, they are unique, they're not contradictory. It's a very simple thing. When you go through the spiritual classics of the world, they give internal evidence, a person might say, of validity and of acceptability, and they're not simple human documents or classics or something like that. They are imaging forth a divine revelation.

*George Simons:* I think that, with very few exceptions, *we* are the people, as Alan Watts put it, "of Alpha Centauri"—and maybe saying "with very few exceptions" is a problem of Western consciousness (trying to account for all contingencies). We are *not* the people of the Mediterranean culture out of which our Scriptures come. There's something new going on all the time and that is true for every tradition represented here. The earliest history of Buddhism, for example, already shows different perceptions of the meaning of the Buddha. Form criticism has shown the growth of different perceptions of the meaning of the Christ in the formation of the Scriptures themselves. We ourselves are already just as "other" as perhaps the first Buddhists were "other" to the time of Christ. We have to disabuse ourselves of an *essentialist* view of Scripture, theology, and history. History is ongoing, it's not static. Anyone

who works at history finds that every time he establishes a point of time in history for the beginning or end of some phenomenon, he makes a lie. He's taking a photograph, and a still photograph is not the truth because life is in motion. Look at Roman Catholicism right now, and you see that other things are going on, in terms of objectives, goals, experiences, life styles. Look at what the monks are doing today instead of what they were doing in the monastery twenty years ago. Our theology and spirituality must interpret the present experience. They do not provide the exclusive norms by which we allow ourselves to have experiences.

*Swami Satchidananda:* I'm not here as a Christian or a Catholic, but an adorer, a worshipper, and a believer in Christ. Fortunately or unfortunately, I've gone through some of the sects within Hinduism. When you read the *Bhagavad Gita*, in very many places Krishna says, "I'm the only one; believe me; trust me. Just meditate on me; forget everything else." And if you look at Saiva Siddhānta or Vaishnava Siddhānta philosophy or the Sakta Siddhānta philosophies in Hinduism itself (they're called the Siddhāntas as opposed to the Vedānta), each Siddhānta says that it is the only one.

As a *Saivait*, when I was a young boy, I was not allowed to read a story of Vishnu. When I wanted to go to a temple or read a story of Vishnu, my Saiva parents would say, "You are a worshipper of Siva. If you go and listen to anything of any other God and his glories, you are sinning against him. You will even go to hell." But let me point out one thing: there were about 63 Nayanar Saints recognized in the Siva category who worshipped Siva, and there were many Alwars who worshipped Vishnu. During their time of worship they never fought among

themselves. They never worried about the others. Why? Because they concentrated on their method, while the others concentrated on theirs. Even today I believe that. If you believe in one approach, that is the unique thing for you. You should stick to that. The trouble comes in claiming uniqueness over all other unique things.

After all, why do we pray, meditate, and concentrate upon a name and a form? To fix the mind on it and to develop those qualities and the image in the mind. As you think, so you become. If you think of Lord Jesus, you develop his qualities—it's a psychological fact. Therefore, if you take Lord Jesus as your Ishta Devata, think of him, meditate on him, speak of his glories, so that you can develop that one pointed concentration. But if you dig a Christ-well here, and then a Buddha-well there, and a Siva-well here, with a Vishnu-well there, you won't get water anywhere. When you select an Ishta Devata, stick to that. When the other man selects another Ishta Devata, let him stick to that.

The main thing is to concentrate the mind on one thing, develop it. Once you reach the summit of what you are worshipping, you will probably see that others are also walking toward the same summit. And then you will shake hands with them and say, "Let's have a cup of coffee."

*Brother David:* I think Swamiji has made two very important contributions. On the one hand, he has focussed all this on spiritual formation. On the other hand, he has enunciated very clearly a principle which is also the principle of the Center for Spiritual Studies, of which Swamiji is one of the co-founders, namely, that we favor neither eclecticism—picking out tidbits here and there—nor syncretism—a mixing up of everything

and making a new thing out of it—but going so deeply into *your* thing that you come out recognizing it's truly the same as everybody else is going into.

*Sasaki Roshi* (Kio Kanda, translator): I have just become a Christian. To me it does not matter what Jesus said about the Son of God, but what is most important is that he spoke because he had realized the truth. If Christ had said, "I like those and I don't like those," that would have meant that he had not realized the truth. I heard Dr. Alan Watts quoting the statement, "I and the Father are one." How do you think *we* Christians should realize this statement? Is this *one* Father, or one against two, or the absolute one? You cannot be a true Christian believer if you cannot realize that when Jesus Christ said, "I and the Father are one," that statement came from an overwhelming and absolute confidence that he had realized *all*, and that therefore it was not necessary for him to look around any more. It was not necessary to make any distinctions when he realized *all* and made that statement; and if *you* cannot realize this fact, then you cannot be a true Christian. Christ realized that God's truth is universal. That is the reason I came here, to shake hands with Christ. For when he said, "I and the Father are one," he realized the truth, he realized God.

At the same time, the statement "I and the Father are one" indicates a *particularity* which is firmly based on universality. If there is no *self*, you cannot live. Without the particularity of Jesus Christ based on universality, there is no Jesus Christ and no God, just as if there is no particularity of women and men, there will be no human beings. When Christ expressed himself to the people, he was expressing the necessity, the importance and the inevitability of this particularity

which is based on generality. Without having this universality firmly attached to particularity, a religion will come to an end.

When you continually make religious talk in religious language, the majority of people don't follow. People with scientific minds don't really care about some sort of incarnation and about resurrection. Resurrection was not the word of Christ himself, but an addition of later People. The meaning of resurrection or incarnation or any religious term is that you realize the particularity which has this universality as foundation.

I am a Christian, but I really haven't studied Christianity. But I'd like to think that Jesus Christ must have had this understanding. Not only through religious experience, but also through the pursuit of knowledge, we have to clarify this basic position of Christ and the meaning of his statements. There are a number of people who think that the God of Christianity is the only God. But this attitude is like a man thinking that only his wife is a woman. One should not be so foolish.

*Brother Gabriel* (Mt. Saviour): Perhaps the following quotations from the Christian Scriptures may alleviate some of the fears that Christians in this group may be experiencing after this kind of a discussion, and may also help those who are not Christians here to better understand the role of Jesus.

The Name of Jesus, of course, means Saviour—and that indicates something already: if such a word is used, there must be someone to be *saved*. We are that someone; all men are that someone. As Jesus himself says, "I have not come to condemn the world, but to *save* the world" (John 12:47).

In another place Jesus says, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6). "No one can come to the

Father except through me." Since the word "way" has been used earlier in our discussion, I would like to concentrate on it for the moment. From Jesus' use of "way" we can see that he is not referring to some little outline of ascetical practices which could just as well be one set of prescriptions as another. No, Jesus as "the Way" has a much deeper significance, an ontological actuality that is unique. Very simply, it means that Jesus is the vehicle by which mankind is *re-created* and enabled to return to the Father—to be *saved*.

Jesus as "the Way" is as universally necessary to make this return to the Father as air is to maintain our bodily life. We are not always conscious that it is air that we are breathing, but it is nevertheless the only way we can maintain our bodily life. Shall we complain that it is *air* that we breathe? No—rather than complain, let us be gratefully aware of the air we enjoy that keeps us alive. So, likewise, let us rejoice that the *Word of God* has been made *Flesh* and let us become gratefully aware that he is "the Way" for all mankind to return to the Father. Christians believe this to be a revealed truth, prepared for in the Old Testament and made explicit in the New Testament. What I want to point out, however, by several quotations from the New Testament, is that Christians have no ground for complacency in the mere belief in Jesus as "the Way" and that others should be encouraged by the very words of Jesus in adhering to their own pursuit of truth and goodness.

Of course, there are strong statements of Jesus which seem to indicate at first glance that explicit faith in himself is necessary to share the inheritance of the Son of God: "I tell you, if anyone openly declares himself for me in the presence of men, the Son



of Man will declare himself for him in the presence of God's Angels. But the man who disowns me in the presence of men will be disowned in the presence of God's Angels" (Luke 12:8-9). "If anyone is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his own glory and in the glory of the Father and the holy Angels" (Luke 9:26).

But in the following quotations we must listen carefully to Jesus' criterion for determining who has really fulfilled the conditions that constitute true acknowledgement of him and his way: "It is *not* those who *say* to me 'Lord, Lord' who will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the person who *does* the will of my Father in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). "Anybody who receives my commandments and *keeps* them will be the one who loves me" (John 14:21). "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord' and not *do* what I say?" (Luke 6:46). "My mother and my brothers are those who heard the word of God and *put it into practice*" (Luke 8:21).

We truly acknowledge Jesus as "the Way," therefore, when we live as he lived and walk as he walked. But there are many who walk this way, who follow the way of Jesus, without necessarily *knowing* of or having explicit faith in the historical Christ. Take note of the following quotation: "Come, you whom the Father has blessed, take for your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; . . . Then the virtuous will say to him in reply, 'Lord, *when* did we see you hungry and feed you; . . . *When* did we see you a stranger and make you welcome; naked, and clothed you; sick or in prison, and go to see you?' And the King will answer, 'I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me' "

(Matt. 25:34-40). What is evident here is that the "virtuous" have kept the commandment of love without having known that it was Jesus they had served. The Spirit of Jesus has been operative among them even without their being aware of it. In another place Jesus says, "I give you a new commandment: love one another; just as I have loved you, you also must love one another. By this love you have for one another everyone will know that you are my disciples" (John 13:34, 35). Anyone who follows this *way* of love is a true disciple of Jesus.

St. Paul makes a similar point when he writes to the Romans: "It is not listening to the Law but keeping it that will make the people holy in the sight of God. For instance, pagans who never heard of the Law but are led by reason to do what the Law commands, may not actually 'possess' the Law, but they can be said to 'be' the Law. They can point to the substance of the Law engraved on their hearts . . ." (Rom. 2:13-15).

For some time now I have been a fond reader of Jakob Böhme, a Lutheran Christian mystic of seventeenth-century Germany, who, with a breadth and depth of vision not so common among the many warring and opinionated Christians of his day, takes up this very word of St. Paul and convincingly enlarges upon it: "The law of God, and also the way to life, is written in our hearts: it lies in no man's supposition and knowing, nor in any historical opinion, but in a good will and well-doing. The will leads us to God, or to the devil; it avails not whether you have the name of a Christian, salvation does not consist therein. A Heathen and a Turk is as near to God as you, who are under the name of Christ: if you bring forth a false ungodly will in your deeds, you are as much without God, as a Heathen that has no desire nor will to God." Böhme then goes on

to comment on Matt. 21:28-32: "Or do you not know what Christ said concerning the two sons; when the father said to one of them, go and do such a thing, and he said he would; and the other said no. And the first went away and did not do it; but the other that said no, went away and did it, and so performed the will of his father; and the other who in word was obedient, did not do it. And we are all like one or the other of these: we bear the name of Christ, and are called Christians, and are within his covenant: we have said yes, we will do it; but those who do it not are unprofitable servants and live without the will of the Father. But if the Turks and the Jews do the Father's will, who say to Christ 'No' and know him not, who is now their judge, to thrust them out from the will of the Father? Is not the Son the Heart of the Father? And then, if they honor the Father, they lay hold also on his Heart: for without, or beyond his Heart, there is no God." (*Threefold Life of Man*: Chap. 6, Nos. 19, 20, 26, 27 and 28.)

We must be daring enough to check ourselves when we sense that perhaps we are not hearing the sound of the Word, and try to discover what it is that is holding us back: is it our pride? Is it our self-will? Jesus seems to have this problem in mind when he says, "Even if you refuse to believe in me, at least believe in the work I do; then you will know for sure that the Father is in me and I am in the Father" (John 10:38, 39). Jesus certainly desired to have his followers believe in him in addition to keeping his commandment of love, but he allows for those who find it difficult when he says, "Anyone who says a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but let anyone speak against the Holy Spirit and he will not be forgiven either in this world or in the next" (Matt. 12:32). It is clear that Jesus would rather see a man turn to

God and keep the commandment of love than merely cry out, "Lord, Lord" and do nothing.

Jesus is not at all interested in having himself proclaimed or adulated, but rather he is concerned with that essential repentance which would lead his disciples to the Father; he wants them to willingly love as he loved, and walk as he walked, with absolute trust in the Father. Jesus is so completely at one with the Father's will that he is wholly and altogether the way to the Father. That is why he can say as Head of all mankind, "I am the Way."

*Brother David*: Thank you very much, Brother, for emphasizing that orthodoxy is a means to an end, and the end is orthopraxis, and not vice versa. So that the right doing is the end, not the right teaching. There must be teaching, but only on account of that doing.

*Father Robert Vachon*: One must die and dissolve in the process of *becoming*: my remarks concern the reluctance of institutions to die in order to be transformed.

I am a priest, and that way I'm part of the institution of the Catholic Church. To me, to die to that institution of priesthood means to try to become a Brahmin, a Shaman, to become a Rabbi. And it means also to allow my Hindu brother, my brother the Shaman, my brother the Rabbi, to take and live the priestly institution. Which means, in the concrete, in the last analysis, to celebrate the Eucharist. But in order to do this, there must be deep transformation within ourselves, and if we have not united mystically we shall never unite institutionally. If we are to unite mystically, I think there must be on our part—we, the Christians—a readiness to die in order to arrive at a non-duality. We must live this disincarnation to the utmost, as Pir Vilayat mentioned. And we cannot be Christians unless we live this dis-

incarnation which has been expressed and lived so beautifully by our Eastern brothers, the Hindus and the Buddhists. We must become nothing, nothing, no-Christ.

On the other hand, if we are to be truly Christian, if we are to be no-Christ, then we must incarnate, and this is a point which I feel has not been brought out sufficiently: the particularization, the uniqueness of Christ. I reject the exclusiveness of Christianity and of Christ, but I hold on to the uniqueness of Christ, and of Buddha, and I feel that we must hold on to this uniqueness, this incarnation. And if we are to live the incarnation to the utmost, we must disincarnate; but in order to disincarnate we must also incarnate. Which is first, which is last? The answer belongs to each one of us. It is not up to me to say that we must dissolve first, incarnate after, or incarnate first and dissolve after.

If I want to be a Christian, I must be a Hindu and a Buddhist, and if I want to be a Hindu and a Buddhist, I must truly become a Christian. And when we start at the mystical level to live this, then maybe at the institutional level we can share the Eucharist together, we can share the Hasidic celebrations together, we can celebrate Krishna and Rama, and do it with

great confidence and love.

*Professor Panikkar:* I want only to publicly apologize for my quick answer a while ago to the very deep and pertinent question of Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan. I feel very sorry for my answer, because I think that he pointed something that we have forgotten in our discussion.

*Pir Vilayat:* If you remember, I questioned our ability to assess the place of Jesus Christ, to establish ourselves as judges of his rank, deciding whether there could be others who are of the same rank. I feel that we are not in a position to be able to do this. Dr. Panikkar's reply, for which he has apologized, was, I thought, a very strong one. It is only weak minds who need arguments to strengthen their convictions. There is a story among the Sufis that, in order to assess the beauty of Laylā's face, one has to be Majnun. When a child says that his mother is the most beautiful woman in the world, he is speaking from a place that nobody could question. Therefore, I do not feel that we have the right to question anybody's feelings about the place that a person occupies in his heart. It's a question of love, and not of judgment. The beloved always comes first.

## THE ROLE OF THE GURU IN AHIMSA TRAINING

*Asato ma sad gamaya  
tamaso ma jyotir gamaya  
mrtyor ma amrtam gamaya  
om santih santih santih*

Lord, lead us from the unreal to the real, from darkness to light, from death to immortality. *OM. Peace. Peace. Peace.*

This problem of *himsa* and *ahimsa* is exercising the hearts of sane and holy people all over the world, especially since we have come a long way from our primitive ancestors who had the courage to *face* the person whom they hated and hit him. We no longer have the courage even to fight. One person does not kill another in single combat, but one person is capable today of wiping out whole cities. Probably it was the enormity of this problem which moved the organizer of this symposium to suggest a discussion of this topic. Indeed, we are desperate—we have shouted from the rooftops: "Love one another!"; we have proclaimed: "God is Love!" But nothing has worked. Perhaps we should begin our discussion by asking ourselves what *understanding* means.

Understanding is not tolerance. Tolerance is a dreadful word—not that intolerance is better. The attitude of tolerance really means that you say to me: "Ah well, you silly man, I tolerate you (*I hate you*)."

Such a superiority-inferiority complex is an expression of violence. If you watch my hands (here the Swami holds up his hands: right hand at a level higher than the left), it is as if the right hand tolerates the left hand; stands up there and looks down upon this one. But maturity demands that we come down; that's what all the gods have taught us: "Come down." When God matures, he comes down, incarnates. When you come down to the same level, there is love. And you put your arms around your brother and say, "I love you." There is no longer tolerance, but love. But even that is not quite adequate for understanding. (You know, English is not my mother tongue. I learned it in school.) Understanding? Two words? How come you use it as one word? *Under standing*. Stand under. So, when I stand *under* you, then I understand you, not until then. Not in tolerance, not even in love, but in *understanding*, standing under; I appreciate you when I look up to you.

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# WORD OUT OF SILENCE

## A Symposium on World Spiritualities

Edited, and with an Introduction by  
JOHN-DAVID ROBINSON

Drawings by Frederick Franck

Dedicated to  
DAMASUS WINZEN  
1901-1971

Seeker, Founder of Mount Saviour, Seer

And to  
THOMAS MERTON  
1915-1968  
Poet, Monk, Prophet

They rejoiced in it and were glad to see the day.

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