



The Golden String

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BULLETIN OF THE BEDE GRIFFITHS TRUST

Winter 1995

THIRD ANNUAL MEETING OF THE BEDE GRIFFITHS TRUST

Russill Paul

It was on a pleasant August morning that we gathered together in the community chapter room of the Camaldolese Hermitage in Big Sur, California, for our third Trust meeting. We began with a simple prayer in silence, harmonizing our energies and tuning into the presence of those members who were unable to attend but who were present with us in spirit. Bro. Martin, Roland, Fr. Kilian and Fr. Conlan were thousands of miles away, but as we know, "the spirit without moving is everywhere", and the presence of Fr. Bernardino, who was able to attend for the first time since the formation of the Trust, was much welcomed and appreciated by everyone. We were to have a wonderful meeting in which much would be accomplished at a remarkably fast pace.

Sr. Pascaline co-ordinated the meeting with gentle ease, and Fr. Robert's clear perspective guided us. The following decisions were made.

It was resolved to move the Bede Griffiths archives from the Camaldolese monastery in Berkeley to the central library at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. The additional facilities, the strategic location, and the services of an experienced archivist make it the perfect setting. Proposed by Fr. Robert, the idea was unanimously approved.

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MONASTIC INCULTURATION AT SACCIDANANDA ASHRAM

Bernardino Cozzarini, OSB Cam

Our monastic experience in India comes to birth in the 1950s from two great figures: Fr. Jules Monchanin, a priest of the diocese of Lyons (France), who will take the Indian name of Swami Parama Aruby Ananda, the Bliss of the Supreme Spirit, and the Benedictine monk Fr. Henri Le Saux, known as Swami Abhishiktananda, the Bliss of Christ.

Saccidananda Ashram, the Ashram of the Trinity, was founded on March 21, 1950, with the purpose of bringing the monastic values of the Benedictine tradition to India and integrating them with the values of the Indian monastic tradition of sannyasa. The essence of sannyasa is the desire to reach the experience of God, of the Absolute, of moksha (liberation), following the path of Karma Yoga (the way of action), of Bhakti Yoga (the way of devotion) and of Jnana Yoga (the way of sapiential knowledge, or wisdom).

This is the journey of inculturation begun by these two fathers and continued by Father Bede Griffiths, who will arrive at the ashram in 1968 and who will take the name of Swami Dayananda, the Bliss of Compassion. We believe that these three fathers, called by God to the ashram, are its true founders and the initiators of Benedictine monastic inculturation in India. During the period from 1950 until 1993 the presence of these prophetic men of God ensured the charismatic vitality of this experience.

Fr. Monchanin had the first intuition and sowed the seed in the earth, contemplating the mystery of the Trinity in the light of Hindu spiritual tradition. Swami Abhishiktananda followed the growth and development of the seed and extended the bridge across to the farther shore, making it possible for the two great spiritual traditions to draw closer to one another and to appreciate that which is common to both of them. *The Further Shore* is the most significant of Fr. Le Saux's books. Fr. Bede Griffiths, Swami Dayananda, celebrated *The Marriage of East and West*, opening the ashram to the many and various seekers of God and of the Absolute. He showed the Indian Church, with great profundity, the ashram experience as a new way of being "missionary", announcing the Good News of the Kingdom.

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Trust Meeting

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The Trust will incorporate itself as a nonprofit corporation in the U.S. so that it can realize the many goals set forth by Fr. Bede in his vision statement for the Trust. John Douglas, our attorney as well as our Coordinator and Treasurer, is working on this.

Guidelines were set up for publications which will make use of Fr. Bede's writings, so that Bede's thought can effectively be made available and spread, but without being manipulated or exploited. Wayne Teasdale was elected chairperson of the literary committee of five members who will ensure that these procedures are carried out.

Fr. Bernardino plans to establish a small group to encourage students to do research on Fr. Bede's writings. He is aware of about five dissertations in progress at present. He will also attempt to keep archival materials updated and available for this purpose in Italy.

Asha, spokesperson for the committee for the poor, presented some guidelines by which the Trust can find ways of responding to the needs of suffering people. A sum will be set aside each year, and the Trust will vote on its use. This year \$500 was allocated: to be used in India to feed the hungry and to offer scholarships for poor children.

Russill and Asha will coordinate a team that will focus on organizing an international conference entitled "Other Half of the Soul", at the Mercy Center in Burlingame, CA. This will be a weekend event in the summer of 1997, with a holistic format bringing together lectures, sacred art and contemplative prayer sessions in a rich experience aimed at inspiring a network associated with the activities and goals of the Trust.

The following ministers were elected for a two-year term: John Douglas as Coordinator and Treasurer, Fr. Douglas Conlan as Assistant Coordinator, and Russill Paul as Secretary.

Members of the Trust who live in North America will form a regional organization that will be called the Society for the Renewal of Contemplative Life. Abbot James Conner, Milo Coerper, Don Conroy and Judy Walker (who was a close and dear friend of Fr. Bede) will also be among the first members of this organization.

The Bede Griffiths Trust, with its many limbs spread out around the globe, offers the possibility of a network that can bring the wisdom and spiritual energy of our dear Fr. Bede to many who are yet unaware of him and who are waiting to be touched by his spirit. It will also promote the growth and expression of this spirit in ways that are yet to be seen. As Father Bede himself would say, "It is the Holy Spirit that is central to all divinely inspired movements." For those of us who knew Fr. Bede, he embodied and communicated that Holy Spirit more than anyone else we have known. May his soul rest in love!

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Monastic Inculturation *(Continued from page 1)*

Monastic Values of the Benedictine Tradition

First and foremost is the quest for God. St. Benedict, in his *Rule*, defines the monk as one who sincerely seeks the Lord (RB 58:5). St. Benedict does not suppose that the monk, once he has sought God, may sit down because he has now reached his goal, but emphasizes that the Lord is to be sought sincerely in the present, right now. The monk is a person who ever seeks the Lord. The monk knows the labor of this quest, the doubt that accompanies such a journey, the joy of catching a glimpse of him ahead of oneself, and the hope of meeting him at the end of one's days.

The monk seeks the Lord in the Holy Scriptures. St. Benedict, addressing the novice, says, "Listen carefully, my son." The holy Patriarch proposes this listening to the Word of God as the primary thing for one who has set his feet upon the path of monastic life. Further, he adds, "willingly receive", that is, welcome the Word with a good spirit, and he concludes, "faithfully put it into practice" - that is, live the Word day by day so that one may finally arrive in the house of the Father (*Rule of Benedict, Prologue, 1*).

The monk carries through this journey in the monastery, and therefore the Rule says, "We intend to establish a school for the Lord's service." (*RB Prologue, 45*) St. Benedict sees the monastery as the place where one learns to serve the Lord and the brothers or sisters, a service which is performed in receiving the other person, whoever that may be: "let the person be welcomed as Christ himself." (*RB 53*)

Holy Scripture, the community, attention to the other person: these are the values that our founding fathers have brought to India, so that they might flourish in that culture.

Monastic Values of Hinduism

In India our three Fathers encountered the Hindu culture, with its profoundly monastic characteristics. The sannyasi seeks the Lord, seeks the Absolute. He seeks God through the Hindu scriptures: *Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita*. The monk places himself in the school of a master, a guru, to be introduced by this teacher to the experience of the *Sat-Guru*, the Lord, who dwells in the "cave" of the human heart. The monk's goal is *moksha* (liberation), to be realized either through meditation of the scriptures or through pilgrimage.

Encounter with the Absolute through the Hindu Scriptures

A son questions his father: "Father, teach me Brahman". And the father responds:

That from which the creatures are born, through the work of which - once they have been born - they live, into which, when they die, they enter: these you should strive to know: This is Brahman.....Brahman is Ananda, Bliss. In truth, only from Bliss the creatures are born,

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Monastic Inculturation (Continued from page 2)

for the sake of Bliss, once they have come into being, they continue to live, and into Bliss, dying, they return." (*Taittiriya Upanishad* 3,1; 3,6).

Brahman, the principle and origin from which the creatures arise, in which they live, and to which they return, is immanent and transcendent at the same time. It dwells, in its immanence, in every creature, and it resides in the heart of each person.

"Smaller than the small, larger than the large, Atman dwells in the hidden recesses of the creature. The one who is without desires, that one sees...the greatness of the spirit, of the Atman, through the grace of the creator." (*Katha Up* 1,2,20).

In these words we seem to hear anticipated that which Jesus will say, centuries later, speaking to his disciples of the Kingdom of God. It is like a mustard seed that, once it has grown, becomes larger than any other plant. But it is - he will say further - within you. (*Mk* 5:26-32).

The Absolute dwells in the heart of the human person. One encounters it, smaller than the small, in the hidden depths of one's heart; but here, in the heart, one finds also darkness. The journey of spiritual realization, for a Hindu, passes through the experience of the darkness and obscurity of trial, but within it dwells the light. If one has had the opportunity to visit a Hindu temple, one will certainly have noted that the deity dwells in the inner chamber of the temple, and that this is cloaked in darkness.

Father Monchanin asked some children, "Where is God?" While the Catholic children pointed their fingers toward heaven, the Hindu children indicated their heart as the place where the Absolute dwells. But to encounter the Absolute, who dwells in the secrecy of the heart, is not possible, the Scriptures say, except through the Atman which manifests itself to the human person.

Guru and Sat-Guru

The beginner, chosen and called to spiritual realization, places himself in the school of a master, a guru. The master's task is to help the disciple to encounter the *Sat-Guru*, the Lord, who dwells within the heart. The guru speaks most often with silence; his speech is the sacrifice of silence and his communication transmits an energy which directs the disciple in that path that will bring him into the heart of the mystery of Brahman. The teacher does not impose a spiritual path right away, but sets himself to listen to Brahman in order to discern what spiritual way the Absolute has prepared for this disciple. This is the real reason why they are chosen for one another, and when everything is ready, the two meet. Then the disciple serves his master and the master observes

his disciple: watching especially how he conducts himself in his everyday life. The master introduces the disciple into the understanding of Brahman, helps him in remaining stable in Brahman (*brahmacharya*) and receives him into sannyasa:

that is, into the life of renunciation and of witness to the Absolute. The sannyasi progresses in solitude, either devoting himself to contemplation and to the meditation of the holy Scriptures, or living the quest for the Absolute as a pilgrim, wanderer and beggar, abandoning himself to Him.

While an experiential knowledge of the Absolute is the foundation of everything, a knowledge through which that which has never been heard is heard; that which has never been thought is thought; that which has never been grasped is grasped. (*Chandogya Up* 6,1,3),

the master knows that every knowledge of the Absolute is partial, and he remains open to a further deepening: a further experience that is most clearly expressed in words of Krishna to Arjuna.

"Hear my supreme word, that which is the most secret of all; you are intensely loved by me, and I will tell you that which is good for you. Carry me in your mind...thus you will come to me...because you are dear to me." (*Bhagavad Gita* 18,64-65)

Having experienced this unique personal love on the part of the Lord, the disciple prays:

"Bring me from nonbeing to being; bring me from darkness to light; bring me from death to immortality." (*Brhadaranyaka Up* 1,3,28)

True Action

Encounter with the Absolute opens the monk toward others. This is the fruit both of his meeting with the Divine and of his response to the Divine as a harmony between engagement, study and prayer: karma yoga, jnana yoga and bhakti yoga. That which breaks the harmony is the *mind*, as Patanjali says: the mechanisms and vibrations of the mental and physical body. The action which is free of these mental forms is a gratuitous one; performed without ulterior motive.

Now the function of the guru comes to an end, and the scriptures remain. Master and disciple separate, take leave of one another, because they have met on the level of the Absolute and here their roles can even reverse: the master may become disciple and the disciple master. This transition is not without pain and interior struggle, because the disciple becomes aware of a certain tension with regard to the one who has accompanied him. The master, knowing the heart, positions the disciple in such a way that he can manifest this ambivalence that he interiorly bears towards him. Blessed is the disciple who, once he has put this state of soul into words, hears his master say: "this is the greatest day of your life. Now go!" The authentic master remains ever alone, though he has "begotten children."



**PARLIAMENT UPDATE:
MILLENNIAL MOMENT
ROUND TABLE II**

Wayne Teasdale

The Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions (CPWR), in conjunction with the Millennium Institute of Washington, D.C., held the second Millennial Moment Round Table in Chicago on November 19-20, 1995. The *millennial moment* itself is designated as the period of 1999 to 2001. The idea behind the millennial moment is that it provides an opportunity for the world to change direction, and thus it can become the basis for a radical transformation of consciousness on this planet in terms of how we relate to the Earth, to one another and to other species.

Some eighty persons met at the North Shore Congregation Israel in Glencoe to explore the meaning of the new millennium. A number of presenters examined it from different perspectives. Dr. Hillel Schwartz, author of *Century's End*, looked at it from a historical and socio-cultural perspective, while Peter Ackroyd, who organized Canada's centennial some years ago, and is the author of *The Anniversary Compulsion*, looked at Canada's centennial as a possible model for the celebration of the millennium. There were three panel discussion and small group sessions that focused on such questions as: how the millennium relates to the religions and to the future, the role of the religions in shaping a new civilization, extending the millennium beyond the Christian world so that it becomes an interfaith opportunity, and the issue of what gifts the various faith traditions can give in service to the planet as a whole.

The question of millennial gifts to the Earth comes under a joint program of the CPWR and the Millennium Institute called *Projects 2000*, and Jim Kenney, the director of the CPWR's international committee, spoke about this at length. One of the purposes of the Millennial Moment Round Table II was to generate some ideas about the kinds of millennial gifts that might be offered to the world from the faith communities as a whole and from individual churches, mosques, temples, communities, organizations and persons.

The Round Table included the participation of a UN representative, P.N. "Bawa" Jain, who is also a trustee of the Parliament. He shared with us what the UN is doing in preparation for the third millennium, and discussed in some depth the Values Caucus at the UN which was founded by him together with a number of the NGOs at the international forum in New York.

There was also vigorous participation of youth, including Tendzin Lodoe, a nephew of the Dalai Lama, and Farid Senzai, an Afghani graduate student in international relations at Columbia who was the representative of youth at UN50 in San Francisco in June, 1995. Both of these young leaders inspired the gathering with their insights, idealism

**BEDE GRIFFITHS AS MODEL
OF INTEGRATION**

John Stasio

I have heard it said that if one searches hard enough for a guru, the guru will find him. It is in recalling these words that I would like to share with you the story of my meeting with Dom Bede Griffiths, a meeting in which I found not only a teacher but parts of myself coming into harmony which I had not previously known.

My spiritual journey has taken me to many places. I have explored seriously Catholic religious life, political activism, yoga and meditation, bodywork, psychotherapy and many other avenues of self-exploration. And yet each seemed to touch only a part of me. It was not until my experience at Shantivanam, especially my personal time with Father Bede, that I came to experience in a real way the possibility of bringing together all the parts of myself that had previously seemed in conflict. Father Bede was and remains for me a model of integration. In his own life, he brought together a wide range of seemingly opposed characteristics. He was a scholar and a mystic, an English gentleman and an Indian holy man, a man with a deep passion for life and a celibate monk.

It was the summer of 1987 when I finally met Bede.

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and vision, but especially with their challenge to us.

The next Round Table will be held at the UN in April, and again this will bring together the Parliament and the Millennium Institute, but this time with the participation of the UN - particularly the latter's NGOs who have been in the forefront of change by offering ideas for the future course of the world organization.

One of the insights that occurred to me at this Round Table is the necessity of shedding old baggage as we move towards and enter the third millennium. The religions must shed all of their negative habits, the ones that have produced so much conflict in the past. They must especially shed or abandon their exclusivity vis-a-vis one another. This setting aside of unneeded baggage is itself a substantial gift to our planet, and it will greatly advance the world toward a universal civilization with a *heart*. A civilization with a heart will be one founded on community among the traditions, that quality of community we experienced at the historic Parliament of the World's Religions in the summer of 1993. Such a global society will be nurtured on the values of justice, compassion, love, and sustainability in relation to the Earth itself, other species and the poor. The Round Table gave us a lot of food for thought - and for action.

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Model of Integration (Continued from page 4)

I stayed at Shantivanam for a good chunk of that summer and was able to meet with Bede every couple of days. Our discussions ranged from spiritual direction to guidance in my meditation and to several talks about an alternative spiritual community that Sebastian Moore and I were exploring at that time. I asked Bede for his advice on balancing an active ministry and a serious commitment to a contemplative life, and on how a young religious community could respond to the many challenges of the rapidly changing world. He was helpful, challenging, inspiring, yet somewhat impatient with my leanings toward liberation theology. I feel that he was asking me to look at my real need at that time, the need for deeper personal grounding, from which a more authentic activism would emerge.

He was a mystic, an engaged mystic who deeply loved the people around him and the many gifts of the incarnate world. But he was ever focused on the One, and on the need to continuously surrender the ego to the Divine. He was not so distracted by the things of this world as I was, and he surely was a challenge for the zealous left-leaning Gospel revolutionary that was inside of me. There were a couple of days after one discussion when I really thought I hated him. I asked myself why I was wasting my time talking to this old man while there was so much work to be done in this world. And yet, these feelings of hatred and frustration, left to compost, have yielded beautiful flowers of love and appreciation. Because he so patiently hung in there with me, I have come to see that much of my zeal was motivated by a deep dissatisfaction with myself, and that the harmony and justice which I sought could only be realized as I began to heal the war and injustice raging in my own heart.

Although our discussions of sexual matters were limited, I do recall experiencing a deep well of compassion as I shared with him my struggles to integrate my sexuality and spirituality. We spoke of the futility of trying to suppress or cut off one's sexual feelings, and of the absolute need to incorporate this vital energy in the spiritual quest. He was not radical or blunt, and yet he let me know that all was well, that God was love, that sexuality was a powerful moving of love through our bodies and that with patience and compassion all the divisions I felt would, in time, heal.

In other talks, he recommended things for me to read. He was, at the time, very fond of Ken Wilber and Fritjof Capra. He suggested some spiritual practice and encouraged me, however frustrated, to remain connected with the Church. It was he who gave me back the Church; he made me feel for the first time that I had a home in the Church, a home into which I could bring every part of myself, a home in which I could encounter the healing power of love, a place where nothing is rejected, a Catholicism which is truly universal. For this I am eternally grateful. I loved him; I miss him; I still enjoy his company. ■ |

**THE GIFT
OF THE HOMELESS POOR**
Wayne Teasdale

Homelessness is a growing problem of deep concern for everyone in the U.S. Most of us do not know how to understand or respond to it. This column is intended to offer a context for ongoing dialogue on the subject. We invite our readers to share their views, their responses, questions or personal experiences in the column.

At the Bede Griffiths Trust meeting last September, we decided to devote an ongoing column in *The Golden String* to the homeless. Father Bede was deeply committed to the poor who surround Shantivanam. While the Trust was being set up, we had discussed ways in which we could assist the less fortunate in a continuing way. Giving money is one way. Another is to call attention to the homeless, and in this manner to conscientize people. This has a double effect: both resulting in some relief for the homeless and causing us to examine how we ourselves measure up to the Gospel.

Jesus has told us, "The poor you shall always have with you," and that statement itself should instruct us that these poor have some role to play, in spite of themselves. They are not only recipients of charity but also checkpoints on our own observance of the Gospel. The homeless, whether they realize it or not, live the way Jesus exhorted. They are vulnerable and insecure, and so they are able to be open to grace and to the opportunities it offers.

When we see the homeless, we are often tempted to look the other way. We don't want to look at the reality they represent. The poor challenge us by being free of all that our society feels of value. They remind us that we "have no lasting city here," but still we try to build one! Few of us could tolerate the exposure to the elements and to the streets which they endure, sometimes for years on end. By their simplicity and vulnerability they challenge us to look at our attachments. The West is radically attached to the impermanent. This attachment with all the forms it assumes is a supreme value of our society. We cannot deal with insecurity and vulnerability, and so our natural sensitivity is suppressed so that we won't see - or, more appropriately, won't *feel* anything when confronted with human poverty.

The homeless are our teachers, because they connect us with existential realities. I suggest that we see them no longer merely as poor unfortunates, but as ambassadors of the Gospel. God is using them to awaken us. They are a mirror for society, and they reveal truths that too often lie buried deep in our unconscious being. The homeless stir these truths to the surface, making them become conscious for us. Only then can we act upon them. ■ |

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHURCH

Bede Griffiths

(at Osage Monastery, July 1992)

I would like to share some reflections on the church. The many new understandings that have been coming can be disturbing, but there is an urgency in our thinking about these matters. It is instructive, for example, to recall the way in which we have habitually equated "Church" with Roman Catholic Church. A Council in the 15th century said,

The Holy Roman Church believes, professes and teaches that outside the Roman Church no one can be saved, whether pagan or Jew or heretic or schismatic, but will all go to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels, unless before their death they enter the Church.

That is canonical Catholic doctrine until recently. We must face these facts. The Orthodox Church, of course, has an equally strong claim. The churches of Jerusalem, Antioch and Alexandria were probably all founded before the Roman church. And the eastern churches are the inheritors of these ancient apostolic churches, so they say, "We are the apostolic church".

Then Luther comes along in the 16th century and says that Rome and the eastern churches are all corrupted; we're going to return to the authentic church of Christ himself in the New Testament. And he establishes the Lutheran Church. Then the Anglicans come along and accept the Reformation, but they try to preserve all they can of the Catholic tradition, taking a middle way. Then the reformed churches - Calvin and the others - come along and say, with some reason, there were no bishops in the early church but only presbyters. So now we have a Presbyterian Church. And each of these churches is convinced that it is right, that it is *the* authentic church. Then, later, the Pentecostals will say that the Holy Spirit descended upon our church at Pentecost...and *we* are the authentic church. Finally, the Society of Friends, the Quakers - whom I respect as much as any - will say that the Holy Spirit is present in the heart, and if you sit and meditate in silence, the Holy Spirit will give you all you need. You don't need priests or sacraments or doctrines; just sit and wait on the Holy Spirit.

All these churches are alive today, and all believe themselves to be authentic expressions of Jesus' own will for the church. How did Jesus himself understand the church? It is here that recent biblical criticism has brought some new light. The book that has impressed me most is *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*, by James Dunn. The view of the early church put forth here,

I think one can say, is that of scholars, whether Catholic or

Protestant, today. What emerges is that *none* of the organized churches can be traced back to the first century. They all come from the second century. This is very disturbing for Catholics, as we've always thought that Jesus appointed Peter the head of the church, that Peter founded the church of Rome and appointed a bishop there. None of that can be established historically today. I'm sorry if this seems a bit damaging, but it will come round in the end.

In the Letter to the Romans, written in the 50's, Paul addresses many greetings to definite people in the church at Rome, and never mentions St. Peter at all... The next step is: not only did Peter not appoint a bishop in Rome, but there was no bishop in Rome in the first century; there were no bishops of local churches in the first century...there was no single bishop as the head of a church until the 2nd century when we come to St. Ignatius of Antioch (martyred in 110). His letters presuppose that one bishop is head of the church and that he is supposed to be the successor of the apostles - and this has remained the rule until the present day. Before that time, in the first century, the churches were ruled by a group of leaders who were sometimes known as bishops and sometimes as presbyters. It is the letter to Titus, I think, where we find this, and where we read further that he should be a married man, with one wife and not more. That was the rule until about the 3rd century: nearly all bishops and priests were married. Gregory of Nyssa, the great mystical doctor, was himself a married man and the son of a married priest. That's in the 4th century. Then the monks came in - celibacy is a charism that belongs to monks but not necessarily to priests. The monks...began to be seen as models for the church, and more and more priests began to see that they, in their position of leadership, should be celibate like the monks. And so the two vocations, which were originally quite distinct, gradually fused together.

The bishops or presbyters appear at the end of the first century. Before that, they're not mentioned. In the lists of ministers of the church in Corinthians and Ephesians you will find apostles, prophets, evangelists, teachers, preachers, administrators and helpers, but no presbyters or bishops...it could be that there were presbyters, but they're simply not mentioned in the early church.

Now we must go back a stage further. What did Jesus himself appoint and do? Here I follow very closely Fr. Raymond Brown's book, *Priests and Bishops*. What we find there is that there were no priests, no bishops, until late in the century. Jesus appointed apostles...that means, one who is sent, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God, to continue his work. Jesus himself certainly empowered his disciples to preach the kingdom of God, and not only by word but by healing the sick, by cleansing lepers, by casting out evil spirits. To put it more concretely, what Jesus did was to communicate the Holy Spirit, and to me this is the essence of the church....

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Development of the Church (Continued from page 6)

So Jesus communicates to his disciples the Holy Spirit, which means communion. The word communion in Greek is *koinonia*, it's community. And our *koinonia*, our common life, our communion, our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. And that is Christian church - the *koinonia*. The communion of disciples who share the gift of the Holy Spirit coming through Jesus from the Father, *that* is the church. Now that gift was shared with his disciples, communicated to them so that they could go and share it with the people, in the towns and villages of Galilee. That was a kind of preliminary; Jesus always saw that his whole life was going to culminate when he went up to Jerusalem. The culmination of his life was certainly when he went to speak before the leaders of Israel in Jerusalem. That leads to his death and then to his resurrection. The resurrection, everyone agrees today, is the key to the gospel.

John Dominic Crossan, in *The Historical Jesus*, does reveal something impressive, as he finds the primary source of the gospels in the first letter to the Corinthians, written I believe in 55 AD, twenty-five years after the event. There are historical events in this epistle. One is the institution of the eucharist, and the other is the resurrection. These are the two most certain facts in the life of Jesus: the eucharist and the resurrection.

Jesus appoints disciples to preach, and then he goes up to Jerusalem. He dies and rises again, and his resurrection changes the lives of the disciples. Until then they thought he was a great prophet, they thought that he was the Messiah - probably in a very vague sense - but they didn't realize his eternal reality until the resurrection. Then they saw that he was really the one who is the presence of God among human beings.

The resurrection, then, is the turning point when they really began to see Jesus as he was. And all our gospels and epistles are written in the light of the resurrection - the light which came to them through their experience of the risen Christ. This is very well put in that wonderful book, *Belonging to the Universe* (Capra, Steindl-Rast, Matus, HarperCollins 1991) The resurrection was a new way of Jesus being with his disciples. It was a real *Presence*, as real as a physical presence when he was with them. This new spiritual presence was more real to them than the physical presence. That's why Jesus said, "It is necessary that I go from you. When I go, the Holy Spirit will come." He departs in the flesh to become present in the spirit. That is how he is present in the church today.

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esus himself in his eternal reality is present among his disciples in the Holy Spirit always. And that is the church.

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(To be continued)

BOOK REVIEWS

Pathways to the Supreme: the Personal Notebook of Bede Griffiths, London, Harper - Collins, 1995, 125 pp, \$16. (in U.S. through Harper San Francisco) **Reviewed by Bruno Barnhart**

This little book brings together the contents of two notebooks in which Bede Griffiths copied passages that he encountered in the course of his reading. Texts that were particularly significant for Bede, they have been arranged here in an order which recalls more than one of his own books, with an 11-page introduction by Fr. Bede.

The first part, **Cosmic Revelation**, deals with the religion of "primitive peoples", and includes texts by Mircea Eliade on symbolism and myth, sacred places and initiation rituals, and the corresponding human consciousness.

The Way of Poetry is centered around texts by Jacques and Raissa Maritain. Goethe, Rilke, Wordsworth and D.H.Lawrence also appear here.

The Way of Philosophy is the longest part of the book, and treats in turn of the Greek, Chinese, Buddhist and Hindu traditions. The Greek philosophical tradition is presented, first of all, through a long series of texts from *The Hermetic Mystery* (ed. Atwood), then by texts of Plato and finally by long passages from Plotinus. The Chinese tradition is represented by two pages of texts from Chuang-Tzu on the Tao. Buddhism is represented by several of the *Edicts* of King Ashoka and then by extracts from two Mahayana sutras (the larger *Prajnaparamitahridaya* and the *Lankavatara*) and finally by a Mahayana text of Nagarjuna. The Hindu tradition appears first in a series of reflections by Sir William Jones, then in a variety of ancient texts.

The Christian Revelation includes a series of texts from the church fathers of East and West - Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Cyril of Alexandria, Origen, Augustine, John Damascene and particularly Maximus the Confessor. Medieval authors include Isaac of Stella, Eckhart, Suso and Tauler. There follow texts of John Smith, James Nayler, Robert Barclay, John Henry Newman and a long passage on the human person by Jean Mouroux.

The Way of Mysticism consists simply of poems of Kabir and long passages from John Ruysbroeck, "the Flemish mystic, a disciple of Meister Eckhart, who shows the deepest insight of all Christian mystics" (p.xvii)

Thus from primitive religion through poetry, philosophy and theology we are able to come to mystical understanding, the wisdom which transcends word and thought and yet can be shown to have a basis in both poetry and philosophy (p.xvii)

Bede's introduction, while referring continually to his authors, follows about the same progression as his

(Continued on page 8)

Pathways to the Supreme (Continued from page 7)

introduction to *The Universal Wisdom*. It is the section on poetry, in the present volume, which stands out most from Bede's previous books, except for *The Golden String*. Many of the texts in this section focus upon the inner spark of creative intuition: a nearly preconscious impulse at the root of feeling and intellect.

The poet's intuition, creative intuition or emotion, is an obscure grasp of the self and of things together in a knowledge by union or connaturality. (*J. Maritain, p29*)

It is *music* which offers the natural metaphor for this interior creative movement, and this reflects a more general mystery.

All inmost things, we may say, are melodious; naturally utter themselves in song....All deep things are Song. It seems somehow the very central essence of us, Song; as if all the rest were but wrappings and hulls. The primal element of us; of us and all things...Poetry therefore we will call musical thought. The poet is he who thinks in this manner...See enough and you see musically; the heart of Nature being everywhere is music, if you can only reach it. (*T. Carlyle, p.36-7*)

This book - while not edited for scholars - helps us to understand the genesis of Bede's comprehensive vision and its relation to these various worlds of human experience. Within its limits, it will be useful both for students of Bede's thought and for those who will follow the same threads further.

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Prayers for All People, by Mary Ford-Grabowski, Doubleday, 1995, 350 pp, \$20.00
Reviewed by Wayne Teasdale

What is most profound in human consciousness has been - and is - often expressed in prayer. Prayer itself has many types and degrees: verbal - including petitionary prayer, liturgical prayer, chanting, singing, spiritual reading and reflection (what the Christian tradition calls *lectio divina*, literally, "divine reading") - and affective, feeling or emotional prayer, a more intimate kind that engages the heart. Finally there is contemplation - a wordless, imageless reaching out to the Divine in faith beyond the parameters of the ordinary spiritual life, that finds its fulfillment in union with God, or in realization of the ultimate state of awareness, the original nature of the Buddha Mind. Similarly, if prayer is authentic - that is, if it's open to growth - it will be a process, a journey to divine union (or the unitive life), or to enlightenment and liberation. It will therefore traverse many stages on its way to the final goal:



awakening, or being aware that life has a spiritual dimension to it, that life *is* spiritual; *purification*, or committing oneself to live this journey through a spiritual practice, virtue and compassion; *illumination*, or intense self-knowledge as we come into the awareness of the Divine, Ultimate Reality, and *transforming union* - realization, as one becomes the divine Love itself: infinite compassion.

While prayer books are common in every religious tradition, and these are meant as aids to cultivate the discipline and habit of prayer, to place us and sustain us on the path to transformation, there are no universal prayer books, no interfaith collections of the best prayers of each tradition. At least I don't know of any! Mary Ford-Grabowsky has thus made a contribution to this universal spirituality by offering us a beautiful collection of prayers from the various religions of the world. It is precise and accurate to say *collection* rather than prayer book because each religion has its own forms of prayer. They are not quite the same - although there are often similarities, and they are inspired from the same depths of the heart. To call it a universal, or interfaith prayer book would imply, I think, a syncretism in the way that we human beings pray. It would be to miss the rich diversity of inner life and awareness. The author was surely conscious of this point when she conceived this fascinating collection.

The volume not only spans the religions but the whole expanse of history, stretching back to the dawn of our spiritual consciousness in the simplicity of the Native American, African and other indigenous cultures. It includes the classic *Gayatri Mantra* from the *Rg-Veda* (III, 62, 10), the most sacred utterance in the Hindu tradition after the *AUM* itself, and directly related to meditation. It brings together the wisdom of the *Dhammapada* of Buddhism, the clarity of the *Tao Te Ching*, the mystical paradox of Eckhart and medieval Christian mysticism, with the perplexing terseness of Zen. The prayers are taken from all ages, and some are even contemporary, like Christine Gellie's *A Mother's Prayer* (pp. 14-15) or Charles Cummings' *The One Thing Needful* (pp. 184-185).

The prayers are arranged thematically, covering all the significant moments or transitions in life: coming of age, illness, marriage, the search for God, commitment to spiritual life, suffering, maturity, and death. One of my favorite "prayers" is a passage from the *Dhammapada* (90) entitled *Free from all Sorrow*: "The traveler has reached the end of the journey! In the freedom of the Infinite he is free from all sorrows, the fetters that bound him are thrown away, and the burning fever of life is no more" (p.314). Then there are Teresa of Avila's last words: "My Lord, it is time to move on. Well then, may Your will be done. O my Lord and my Spouse, the hour that I have longed for has come. It is time for us to meet one another" (p.287). A great book!

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The Gift of Prayer: A Treasury of Personal Prayer from the World's Spiritual Traditions, ed. by Jared T. Kieling, Continuum, New York, 1995, 252 pp, \$19.95

Each person prays in his or her own way, and every one of us has some sort of spirituality, even if we are not fully conscious of having one. This insight is true even of those of us who are skeptical, for in every person there is some opening to truth, to Truth itself, and a relationship to it - or a decision made about how to live. All prayer is born in the heart of spiritual aspiration, or the hope for it, in the desire for the Divine, the Truth, for ultimate well-being, or however we may conceive of eternal happiness.

Prayer is the human heart reaching out to the Divine, to Ultimate Mystery in faith, in hope, in love, maybe in complete vulnerability, skepticism and frustration, perhaps like that man who uttered, "Help my unbelief, O Lord!". We all pray, but we don't necessarily always have the words to express what is in our innermost depths trying to come forth to be heard. We pray as we can, not as we can't - to paraphrase an English spiritual master.

This little prayer book, made available by *Fellowship in Prayer*, is a real treasure and a wonderful aid in doing precisely that: in expressing what is in the depths of our being, no matter the occasion or the particular challenge, suffering, joy, expectation, decision, transition, journey or venture. Arranged under themes, we find prayers that give form to *adoration and praise, seeking the Divine, silence, intimacy with God, prayers for loved ones, peace and unity, protection, gratitude, earthly and heavenly life, and spiritual peace*. In the section devoted to peace and unity, for example, the editor has included *Peace Seeds*: twelve prayers publicly presented in Assisi on the United Nations Day of Prayer for World Peace, October 4, 1986. This gathering came at the initiative of Pope John Paul II.

The Assisi event was significant because it involved a clear recognition and signal to the international community that prayer matters, and is a resource, indeed a precious resource for transforming the consciousness of the nations, peoples, cultures and religions, not to mention the other components of human culture; e.g., universities, hospitals, businesses, the arts and sports. It was also a sign to each one of us that the dimension of spiritual life is important in changing ourselves so that we can contribute to the peaceful life of this fragile planet which is struggling to survive. The Assisi event was also featured as a day of fasting, and thus of sacrifice - witnessing that we must make sacrifices for the cause of peace and so that a new consciousness may come into being on the Earth.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS: COMING EVENTS

- Asha and Russill Paul will present a one-day workshop, **Music and Yoga**, on Saturday, March 30, from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm, at Mercy Center in Burlingame, CA. (415) 340-7474.
- The annual **Bede Griffiths Retreat** for 1996 at New Camaldoli (Big Sur, CA) directed by Brothers Cyprian Consiglio and Randy Sweringen and entitled **The Universal Call to Contemplation: Bede Griffiths**, will take place Fri-Sun July 19 -21. (408) 667-2456.

Doctoral Dissertations on Fr. Bede

Fr. Bernardino reports three theses that have been presented in recent years in the pontifical universities of Rome.

- **J. Rajan, Christian Interpretation of indian Sannyasa: A Study based on the Vision and Experience of Swami Bede Griffiths** (Pontificia Universitas S. Thomae, 1988).
- **A. Fernandes, The Hindu Mystical Experience according to R.C. Zaehner and Bede Griffiths: A Philosophical Study** (Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1992).
- **G.J. Thekealunkal, Interpretation of the Advaita of Fr. Bede Griffiths** (probable title; Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1995).

BEDE'S THEOLOGY OF PRAYER: *William Johnston*

William Johnston, in his new book, "Mystical Theology: The Science of Love" (HarperCollins, London, 1995, p.284-285), comments on Fr. Bede's understanding of his own prayer.

Shortly before his death in his ashram in South India, Bede Griffiths (1906-1993) wrote a short account of his personal prayer. For over fifty years, he tells us, he recited the Jesus prayer like the pilgrim who travelled through Russia reciting the name of Jesus - 'Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.' When he was not otherwise occupied or thinking of something else, the prayer went on quietly, sometimes almost mechanically. And it may be added that someone close to Bede relates that the Jesus prayer was on his lips as he lay dying.

What is important here is his theological understanding of the prayer:

"When I say, Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, I think

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The Golden String

Bede's Theology of Prayer (Continued from page 9)

of Jesus as the Word of God, embracing heaven and earth and revealing himself in different ways and under different names and forms to all humanity. I consider that this Word 'enlightens everyone coming into the world', and though they may not recognize it, it is present to every human being in the depths of their soul. Beyond word and thought, beyond all signs and symbols, this Word is being secretly spoken in every heart in every place and at every time.

These words recall the statement of the Council already quoted that grace is calling all people to the Word: from the beginning of time the Word has been enlightening everyone born into the world. Bede continues:

I believe that the Word took flesh in Jesus of Nazareth and in him we can find a personal form of the Word to whom we can pray and to whom we can relate in terms of intimacy.

In other words we can pray intimately to the Jesus who walked by the Sea of Galilee and died on the cross, while knowing by faith that the same Jesus, cosmic and glorified, communicates with all men and women who have existed or will exist. Such is the richness of mystical union with Christ the Word Incarnate.

Nor is this the last step. Through union with Jesus

BEDE GRIFFITHS ARCHIVES ESTABLISHED AT GTU LIBRARY; CONTRIBUTIONS INVITED

The Bede Griffiths Archives have been moved from Incarnation Monastery in Berkeley California to a more accessible and secure location in the Flora Lamson Hewlett Library (the general library) of the Graduate Theological Union, at 2400 Ridge Road, Berkeley CA 94709.

Here the documents of all kinds concerning Father Bede and his work - books, articles, correspondence, photographs and films, tapes and various papers - will be classified and conserved by a professional archivist, Lucinda Glenn Rand. Persons who have - or know of - any material concerning Father Bede, his work and associates, which has not been made widely public and may be of interest, are warmly invited to contact Ms. Rand at the GTU Archives: (510)

who is the Son, one is united with the Father in a trinitarian experience which will reach a climax in the *eschaton* - 'in that day you will know that I am in my Father and you in me and I in you' (John 14:20).

The Golden String

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