THROUGH WORDS AND SILENCE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF WILLIAM JOHNSTON AND THOMAS MERTON, ROMAN CATHOLICS IN DIALOGUE WITH ZEN.

by

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Abstract

Cultures have always influenced one another to some extent. Yet never before has the confrontation of cultures been as extensive as it is today. Never before have we had such sophistication for considering that interpenetration as we have today. These two developments leave us with a heavy responsibility to evolve an understanding of humankind which will help prevent a ravishing of the world by people of all cultures who remain too locked into views of reality that lead to misunderstanding and violence rather than to that compassion which more than ever is demanded by the nature of our times.

This thesis will explore the development of one form of intercultural confrontation: the meeting between Zen Buddhism and Roman Catholicism, from the perspective of Roman Catholicism. It seeks to unravel some of the implications of this confrontation. It examines various dimensions of spirituality found in selected works of two Roman Catholic writers, William Johnston and Thomas Merton.

Themes common to the thought of both men will be used as a background against which the thrust of my argument will be made. A radical difference between the approaches of the two consistently colours their respective stands on each of the major themes considered in the individual chapters of this study, on their views of Christianity, their attitudes towards Zen and their approaches to
symbols and realities found in different traditions. This difference will be traced ultimately to their different epistemologies, examined in my final chapter. Out of the work of the two men two contrasting creative approaches to dialogue will be expounded.

The confrontation with Zen Buddhism leads to a great enrichment of understanding in the writings of Johnston and Merton, an understanding both of eastern spirituality and of Catholicism. Johnston develops a perspective which uses the study of Zen for the elaboration of meanings implicit in Christian life and thought; he also develops an overview of human spirituality which allows an essential role for all religious traditions. Merton develops a radical attitude towards all expression which finally emerges from his sensitivity to the bottomless depths from which all expression emerges and to which all expression finally points. This leads to a liberation from the need for absolute involvement in any one religious tradition in preference to any other. I believe that this view of Merton's thought, consonant with much that is presently being undertaken in the area of literary criticism, has not been elaborated before. It represents a new approach to Merton and helps to explain some of the difficulties Catholic writers have had in dealing with this startling man.

Merton uses the ideas and symbols of religion with poetic freedom, Johnston with rational commitment. Their positions can be viewed as contradictory or as complementary. Either way, they serve as useful models for further exploration of one of the most exciting developments in modern man's unique cultural situation.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION ............................................. 1

I. THE FOUNDATION OF HUMAN NATURE ............. 28

II. METHOD IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE ................. 44

III. THE EXPERIENCE OF ENCOUNTER ............... 76

IV. THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ....................... 111

V. PRINCIPLES OF DIALOGUE ......................... 142

FOOTNOTES ..............................................

SOURCES CONSULTED ....................................
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Introduction

A mere glance at the condition of this world should convince us of the ineptitude of all human efforts to establish a paradise on earth, no matter in what guise it be striven for. Has not that anxiety, which some philosophers believe constitutes the primary mode of human existence, gripped the whole world in unforeseen ways? Where is there a ray of hope for man? Are we not pilgrims underway to the eternal, in quest of ultimate truth? Have we not to assist and learn from each other on the way?

Heinrich Dumoulin

People do not live by bread alone. They are also sustained by their philosophies and by the societies of which they are members. Humans are born into particular world-views; traditionally they also died with the same world-views which they would have used, without much critical examination, throughout the course of their lives. Generally people accept both of these interrelated parts of their worlds - their philosophies and their societies - as absolute.

Yet that to which people turn for sustenance, like people themselves, undergoes transformation. Gregory Bateson has suggested that ideas, like societies and cultures, should be understood as having natural histories. They are bound by limits, have shape, strive to maintain themselves, respond to their environment, adjusting to it in various ways, age, and, though subject to sometimes surprising resurrections, eventually die. They do not, in time, remain constant.

Today society is changing. The limits of our worlds, in varying ways and to varying extents, are shifting. Much of the
world is passing through a period of intense social flux. At the same time ideas and ways of thinking are changing to an unprecedented degree. It is increasingly difficult to draw sharp boundaries about our own cultures as we once might have done, and give them certain definition. In the past one very important way of doing this involved identifying other people or ideas as "alien" or "strange" or "outside" thereby, through isolation, maintaining a sense as well of the inside, of oneself or one's culture. Today interactions with other cultures have led to our absorbing parts of those cultures into our own, not without conflict and with implications which may be appreciated only by future historians.

Religion is one of the areas most significantly affected by the cultural interpenetration of the modern world. This thesis examines developments within Roman Catholicism which have been stimulated by its contact with Japanese Zen Buddhism. The very existence of this Christian-Buddhist dialogue will surprise some. Others, however, are less surprised by its existence than they are convinced of its importance. Arnold Toynbee has written:

When the historian of a thousand years from now comes to write the history of our time, he will be preoccupied not with the Vietnam War, not with the struggle between capitalism and communism, not with racial strife, but with what happened when for the first time Christianity and Buddhism began to penetrate one another deeply.

though it might be said that Toynbee allows himself more visionary scope than becomes a serious historian, this particular comment is apropos here. It indicates the seriousness with which this dialogue, this "inter-penetration" is taken by a foremost historian of the present century.
John Hick puts the case more cautiously though with equal force:

Within the last few decades inter-religious dialogue has begun in many parts of the world. This is bound to influence the future development of each tradition. For the religions are not rock-like entities, "the same yesterday, today and forever", but are on the contrary historical movements undergoing continuous change and growth. As living organisms they interact with their environment; and in the unified world of modern communications the other religions form part of the environment with which each is in interaction. It does not follow that the religions will eventually flow together into a single world faith - indeed that seems highly improbable. But it does mean that further thinking within each tradition is likely to be done, to an increasing extent, in the light of the various options opened up by awareness of the other traditions.  

The story of Roman Catholic interaction with Japanese Buddhism is actually several hundred years old. The first Christian missionaries to Japan were the Jesuits who arrived at Kagoshima in 1549. One of these priests, Francis Xavier, was very enthusiastic about the people he encountered, remarking that the Japanese surpassed the European Christians so greatly in "their culture, their social usages and their mores" that one had to be ashamed to say so.  

The early Christian mission in Japan grew remarkably. Thousands of converts were made, seminaries were established and the Jesuit priests were influential with Japanese political leaders. The story of this period is told by Charles Boxer in The Christian Century in Japan. 

The early successes of the Catholic mission in Japan did not continue, however. The Jesuits arrived during a period of great political flux in the country. This period ended with the
establishment of a centralized government under Nobunaga, Hideyoshi and especially Tokugawa Ieyasu who established the Tokugawa Shogunate which was to continue for several hundred years. Various reasons have been proffered for the Catholics' loss of popularity. These will not be discussed here but it is worth noting a couple of the factors involved. These were an increased awareness on the part of the shogunate of the connection between the Christian missionaries and their military forces and the negative attitude towards Catholics brought by the more recently arrived Dutch and English.

In 1614 an edict of expulsion was issued. It declared in part that

the Kirishitan band have come to Japan ... longing to disseminate an evil law, to overthrow true doctrine, so that they may change the government of the country, and obtain possession of the land. This is the germ of a great disaster, and must be crushed.

A period of increasing persecutions followed and thousands of Christian martyrs went to their deaths. During the following centuries the Christian fellowship had to go underground, where it survived in small numbers and curious form until the middle of the last century.

It is interesting that the earliest Jesuit missionaries partook in some Japanese ceremonies, notably the "cha-no-yu" or "way of tea". They were concerned with adapting themselves to the Japanese culture in order that they might better be able to present their Christian message to these people. According to Dumoulin, Zen presented them with a great challenge for they regarded it as
the most important form of Japanese Buddhism. Yet of all the Buddhist schools it was "most contrary to the law of God" and the Zen practitioners raised questions which the missionaries were at a loss to handle. According to one of them: "The people who make the great meditations state questions which neither Saint Thomas nor Scotus could satisfactorily answer to the unbelievers." Dumoulin tells us that while the early Jesuits were aware of the challenge presented to the rational mind by the Zen practitioners and while they recognized its aesthetic development, they were blind to the mystical side of Zen. Clearly the differences between the Japanese and the western Christian traditions were, at the extreme, so radical that no easy framework of understanding could be found to accommodate them. The questions remain. Even today one of the issues sometimes raised is whether or not Zen can be considered a religion in the western sense.

Some of the differences between the two traditions are explored in the fascinating novels of Shusaku Endo, a contemporary writer who is himself both Japanese and Catholic. His Silence, which centers around the actual apostasy of the Provincial of the Japanese Jesuits, Christovao Ferreira in 1632, imaginatively and sensitively raises some of the issues which will be discussed more academically in this thesis. I offer a lengthy quotation from this novel since it so vividly depicts the intensity and complexity of the conflict involved in the earliest missionary work. This excerpt involves a meeting between the apostate Ferreira and Rodrigues, a former student of his at seminary in Spain who is deeply distressed by his former mentor's apparent
betrayal of Christianity:

'For twenty years ...' Lowering his eyes Ferreira whispered weakly. 'For twenty years I have labored in this country. I know it better than you.'

'During those twenty years as Superior you did marvellous work,' said the priest, raising his voice in an attempt to encourage the other. 'I read with great respect the letters you sent to the headquarters of the Society.'

'Well, before your eyes stands the figure of an old missionary defeated by missionary work.'

'No one can be defeated by missionary work.' When you and I are dead yet another missionary will board a junk at Macao and secretly come ashore somewhere in this country.'

'He will certainly be captured.' This time it was the interpreter who quickly interrupted. 'And whenever one is captured it is Japanese blood that will flow. How many times have I told you that it is the Japanese who have to die for your selfish dream. It is time to leave us in peace.'

'For twenty years I labored in the mission.' With emotionless voice Ferreira repeated the same words. 'The one thing I know is that our religion does not take root in this country.'

'It is not that it does not take root,' cried Rodrigues in a loud voice, shaking his head. 'It's
that the roots are torn up.'

At the loud cry of the priest, Ferreira did not so much as raise his head. Eyes lowered he answered like a puppet without emotion: 'This country is a swamp. In time you will come to see that for yourself. This country is a more terrible swamp than you can imagine. Whenever you plant a sapling in this swamp the roots begin to rot; the leaves grow yellow and wither. And we have planted the sapling of Christianity in this swamp.'

'There was a time when the sapling grew and sent forth leaves.'

'When?' For the first time Ferreira gazed directly at the priest, while around the sunken cheeks played the faint smile of one who pities a youngster with no knowledge of the world.

'When you first came to this country churches were built everywhere, faith was fragrant like the fresh flowers of the morning, and many Japanese vied with one another to receive baptism like the Jews who gathered at the Jordan.'

'And supposing the God whom those Japanese believed in was not the God of Christian teaching ...' Ferreira murmured these words slowly, the smile of pity still lingering on his lips.

Feeling an incomprehensible anger rising up from the depth of his heart, the priest unconsciously clenched his fists. 'Be reasonable,' he told himself
desperately. 'Don't be deceived by this sophistry. The defeated man uses any self-deception whatsoever to defend himself.'

'You are denying the undeniable,' he said aloud.

'Not at all. What the Japanese of that time believed in was not our God. It was their own gods. For a long time we failed to realize this and firmly believed that they had become Christians.' Ferreira sat down on the floor with a gesture of tiredness. The bottom of his kimono fell open exposing dirty bare legs, thin like poles. 'I am saying this neither to defend myself nor to convince you. I suppose that no one will believe what I am saying. Not only you but the missionaries in Goa and Macao and all the European priests will refuse to believe me. And yet, after twenty years of labor here I knew the Japanese. I saw that little by little, almost imperceptibly, the roots of the sapling we had planted decayed.'

'Saint Francis Xavier ...' Rodrigues, unable to contain himself any longer, interrupted the other with a gesture. 'Saint Francis Xavier, when he was in Japan, did not have that idea.'

'Even that saint,' Ferreira nodded, 'failed to notice this. But his very word "Deus" the Japanese freely changed into "Dainichi" (The Great Sun). To the Japanese who adored the sun the pronunciation of "Deus" and "Dainichi" was almost the same. Have you not read the letter in which Xavier speaks of that mistake?'
'If Xavier had had a good interpreter such a strange and trifling error would never have arisen.'

'By no means. You don't understand what I'm saying.' For the first time nervous irritation appeared around his temples as Ferreira answered. 'You understand nothing. And the crowd that comes for sight-seeing to this country from the monasteries of Goa and Macao calling themselves apostles - they understand nothing either. From the beginning those same Japanese who confused "Deus" and "Dainichi" twisted and changed our God and began to create something different. Even when the confusion of vocabulary disappeared the twisting and changing secretly continued. Even in the glorious missionary period you mentioned the Japanese did not believe in the Christian God but in their own distortion.'

'They twisted and changed our God and made something different!' The priest slowly bit the words with his teeth. 'Isn't even that our Deus?'

'No! In the minds of the Japanese the Christian God was completely changed.'

'What are you saying?' At the priest's loud cry the chicken that had been quietly nibbling food on the bare floor fluttered off into a corner.

'What I say is simple. You and those like you are only looking at the externals of missionary work. You are not considering the kernel. It is true, as you say, that in my twenty years of labor in Kyoto, in Kyushu, in Chugoku, in Sendai and the rest churches were built;
in Arima and Azuchi seminaries were established; and the Japanese vied with one another to become Christians. You have just said that there were 200,000 Christians, but even that figure is conservative. There was a time when we had 400,000.'

'That is something to be proud of.'

'Proud? Yes, if the Japanese had come to believe in the God we taught. But in the churches we built throughout this country the Japanese were not praying to the Christian God. They twisted God to their own way of thinking in a way we can never imagine. If you call that God ...' Ferreira lowered his eyes and moved his lips as though something had occurred to him. 'No. That is not God. It is like a butterfly caught in a spider's web. At first it is certainly a butterfly, but the next day only the externals, the wings and the trunk, are those of a butterfly; it has lost its true reality and has become a skeleton. In Japan our God is just like that butterfly caught in the spider's web: only the exterior form of God remains, but it has already become a skeleton.'

Christian activity in Japan recommenced with the forceful opening of the country to foreign commerce by Commodore Matthew Perry in 1854. Significantly, the Christian missionary activity which has taken place between then and now has resulted in a two-way exchange. To some extent Christianity since then has been successful in Japan, though in what sense and to what extent it
appeals to the unique Japanese mind is difficult to determine. In 1905 Masaharu Anesaki, the Japanese student of religion, wrote of the Buddhist-Christian dialogue in terms which are strikingly similar to some of the things said by the present-day Catholics studied in this paper:

A time will come when all the world will accept the Christian religion, but this will never abolish the difference of tastes and modes of expression... Buddhists will never lose their spirit of toleration. There may grow in Japan a form of Christianity without Pope and without Holy Synod, but Buddhism will nevertheless hold its footing therein forever. In short, Buddhists are ready to accept Christianity; nay, more, our faith in Buddha is faith in Christ. We see Christ because we see Buddha.

This thesis will examine neither the success of the Christian movement in Japan nor Japanese perceptions of Christianity. It is the other side of the dialogue which concerns us. For at the same time that Christian missionaries were working in Japan to spread the Gospel, they were studying Japanese culture. They were in the forefront of those who produced a relatively large body of English-language studies of various aspects of Japanese life. This literature includes scholarly surveys of the Japanese religious situation, such as George Cobbold's Religion in Japan: Shinto-Buddhism-Christianity (1894) and the later world war two study of William Bunce, Religions in Japan (1955). Of equal breadth are the English-language works of Anesaki, notably History of Japanese Religion (1930) and Religious Life of the Japanese People (1938). These writers explore the confrontation of two cultures, two world-views, two religions.
More specific separate studies of Buddhism and Shinto and of individual Buddhist sects and their founders also became available in English. The classic work for the English-language study of the area, Sir Charles Eliot's *Japanese Buddhism*, was published in 1935. During the last twenty years there has been a noticeable increase in the number of English-language books about all aspects of Japanese life and culture. The more recent publications on religion are characterized by a tone of scholarly erudition and methodological sophistication not available to the authors of earlier works, who nevertheless were remarkable for their time and often displayed a deep sensitivity to the complexity of the issues involved in studying another culture.

Throughout the history of English-language studies of Japanese religion one area has consistently received the greatest attention. The number of volumes published on Zen Buddhism far exceeds those published on all the other Buddhist sects of Japan combined. Works dealing specifically with the Zen tradition have been available since the earliest years of the present century. The Zen master Soen Shaku attended the famous Chicago Parliament of World Religions (1893) and later toured the United States in 1905-6. His lectures, translated by his student and secretary Daisetz Suzuki, were published in 1913 under the title *Sermons of a Buddhist Abbot* and in the same year Kaiten Nukariya's *The Religion of the Samurai: A Study of Zen Philosophy and Discipline in China and Japan* was offered to the English-speaking public. From that point on there was no turning back: the English-speaking world became increasingly aware of this Japanese Buddhist sect and today the word "Zen" is familiar to most western-

Western knowledge of Zen has passed through a number of unique phases during the past hundred years. Heinrich Dumoulin identifies five of these:

2. Rudolf Otto: "Born of the Gravity of the Numinous"
3. Beat Zen, Psychotherapy, Esotericism
4. Japanese Zen Meditation and Pluralism
5. Zen Meditation for Christians

Though it is the last phase which concerns us here, this cannot be understood without some knowledge, however cursory, of the preceding stages which provide part of its groundwork. Xavier's sense of respect and humility before Japanese culture, Anesaki's curious remark that he could see Christ because he could see Buddha, the multi-faceted fascination of the present century with Zen, all inform the contemporary dialogue between that Buddhist sect and Catholicism. Particular aspects or attitudes of each of the preceding four stages can be found in the fifth stage, "Zen Meditation for Christians". Consequently, a few remarks about these stages are in order.

The individual who, more than any other, bears the distinction of making Zen known in the west, Daisetz Suzuki, im-
pressed upon that task his own unique mark. "Suzuki Zen", which is sometimes criticized as departing from the classical Japanese forms, is the type of Zen most westerners think of when they think of Zen. It is characterized by emphasis on satori, or enlightenment, and on the irrationality of the koan exercise, which involves the use of seemingly pointless puzzles such as "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" during meditation. Suzuki's work is marked by an interest in experience and in psychology. He used William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience* and other psychologies especially in his later writings. With Richard DeMartino and Erich Fromm he authored *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis*. Suzuki's emphasis on experience and psychology foreshadows some of the concerns of current dialogue between Roman Catholicism and Zen.

Rudolf Otto made Zen known in Germany through his preface for Ōhasama Shūei's *Zen: der lebendige Buddhismus in Japan* (1925) and his article "Das numinose Erlebnis im Zazen" included in his *Das Gefühl des Überweltlichen: Sensus Numinis* (1931). The significance of these articles, as Dumoulin indicates, is that they clearly associate Zen experience with western mystical experience, noting particularly the sense of the "numinous" in both. This theme was later explored in Dr. Suzuki's *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist*. It too has a special significance in the latter dialogue between Zen Buddhism and Roman Catholicism.

Dumoulin's third and fourth stages reflect the expansion of interest in Zen during the fifties and sixties. This expansion included the establishment of Zen meditation halls under the direction of Japanese masters throughout the United States and
Europe and travel to Japan by westerners interested in studying there. Zen came to be associated with the Beat Movement of the early fifties and provided inspiration for artists, writers and musicians as well as for psychologists and psychotherapists. Carl Jung, Karen Horney and Erich Fromm are notable among the latter group, their fame adding a note of respectability to the popularity the Eastern religion was then experiencing in the west. What might have been dismissed as a fad had it lasted but a decade has clearly proven its deeper worth over the years as a quieter but continually growing involvement with Zen continues among westerners interested in the spiritual life.

Roman Catholics interested in Zen have produced a great deal of literature during the past twenty years. I surveyed this material as the first stage in the preparation of this thesis, reading works by Heinrich Dumoulin, Hugo Enomiya-Lassalle, Aelred Graham, William Johnston and Thomas Merton. On the basis of these readings I was able to isolate the various themes which eventually became the chapters of this thesis as I shall discuss later in this introduction. During the writing of my text I came to discover and read Kakichi Kadowaki's *Zen and the Bible: A Priest's Experience* as well as more academic writings by Heinrich van Straelin and Joseph Spae. Several authors have written shorter articles relevant to the Roman Catholic dialogue with Zen Buddhism. Among those which I read are works by David Steindl-Rast, Peter Kreeft and Chalmers MacCormick. I also examined *Zen Way - Jesus Way*, a well-known work by Tucker Callaway, who for many years lived in Japan as a Protestant scholar and missionary, and John Eusden's *Zen and Christian: The Journey
Between. The interested reader will find these writings listed in my bibliography.

In terms of the quality and quantity of attention they give to Roman Catholic dialogue with Japanese Zen Buddhism the writings of Merton and Johnston are outstanding among the literature I studied. And since a study of the themes I isolated in the works of all these authors would prove too unwieldy, I decided to examine the themes in detail in the writings of just these two priests. This approach provides the basis of the following thesis.

A few words about the lives and writings of these two men are appropriate. Merton, of course, is already very well known. There is little question that he is one of the spiritual giants of our century, as well as a cultural figure of no little repute. By the early fifties, graduate studies were already being produced on his poetry. His autobiographical *Seven Storey Mountain* made best seller lists throughout that decade. His writings were influential with the peace movement of the sixties. Now little more than a dozen years after his untimely death in 1968, several full length studies of his life are readily available. His books continue to sell well and to be reissued. Brother Patrick Hart tells us in his foreword to *Thomas Merton: Pilgrim in Process* that "there have been over a hundred doctoral and master's studies completed as well as a number of serious critical works on aspects of his diverse interests and concerns." 20

Though Merton's thought covers a number of important areas the present thesis will focus only on those works which specifically consider the Roman Catholic confrontation with the religions
of the East. Merton's interest in the east was evident briefly during his student days at Columbia University. At that time Brahmachari, a Hindu monk, was living in New York and during his pre-conversion days Merton discussed spirituality with him. Brahmarchari advised the young student to read deeply in the spiritual wisdom of Christianity rather than seeking his way in a foreign religious tradition. Merton later reflected that perhaps God had brought this Indian holy man to America precisely to give him this direction. In any event, after his conversion, Merton's great energy and intensity were devoted to working within the Roman Catholic tradition.

Only during the last years of his life did he rediscover his earlier interest in Eastern spirituality. Yet once he made the decision to re-involve himself with the study of Eastern religion he threw himself into it with the same intense energy and commitment that characterized his earlier conversion to Catholicism. Eastern spirituality became a, if not the, major concern of his thought during the last years of his life. Merton produced a number of essays on the relationship between Zen and Christianity as well as a number of penetrating studies of Eastern spirituality itself. He published the book whose production, of all his many works, he enjoyed most - a "contemplative translation" (from English texts) of the thought of the Chinese sage Chuang Tzu, whom he considered "my kind of man". Merton also published Mystics and Zen Masters (1967) and Zen and the Birds of Appetite (1968).

An essay, "The Zen Revival", was acclaimed by Daisetz Suzuki as showing more insight into the true nature of Zen than
anything else he had ever read in a European language. 22 Merton's only extended trip outside his monastery was to Asia. His personal record of this journey was published posthumously as The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton (1968). Taken together, these works will form the basis of our observations about Merton's dialogue with eastern religion.

William Johnston is not so well known as Merton. Born in Northern Ireland in 1925, Johnston undertook studies for the priesthood and the missions with the Society of Jesus. He has lived in Japan since 1951, where much of the time he has been a professor at the Jesuit-run Sophia University in Tokyo. Johnston's earliest published work deals with the mystical tradition of medieval Europe. His study of The Mysticism of the Cloud of Unknowing (1965), for which Merton wrote the introduction, notes similarities between eastern and western spiritual thought and experience. Later writings include: The Still Point: Reflections on Zen and Christian Mysticism (1970); Christian Zen (1971); Silent Music: The Science of Meditation (1974) in which Johnston relates modern science and the art of meditation; and The Inner Eye of Love: Mysticism and Religion (1978). In 1980 Father Johnston gave a series of lectures at Oxford University on "Christianity in Dialogue with Eastern Mysticism". These were later published as The Mirror Mind: Spirituality and Transformation (1981). Father Johnston is still living and working in Tokyo and, as is not the case with Merton, we may yet see further developments in his thought about inter-religious dialogue. Given the significance of his writings for the dialogue this is certainly a pleasant prospect.

Roman Catholics come into contact with Zen in two places and
in two ways, exemplified by the two priests whose writings are the basis of this thesis. Thomas Merton learned of Zen through his wide reading in world spirituality. His meetings with practitioners of these traditions were infrequent and brief. He travelled in Asia only after he was convinced of the validity and the very great significance of Asian spirituality. On the other hand, William Johnston's contact with Zen has been primarily first hand. He has studied Zen meditation in Japanese Buddhist temples and his teaching experience in Japan has brought him into continual contact with practitioners of the Buddhist dharma over a period of almost thirty years. It may be that the manner of exposure to Zen has an effect on the observations of the Roman Catholic participants in the dialogue.

It certainly seems to be the case that the writings of Roman Catholic authors about Roman Catholic dialogue with Zen reflect their authors' personal proclivities and interests as well as their shared Christianity. In the pages that follow this observation will be explored with reference to Fathers Johnston and Merton. We will see how their thoughts on "Roman Catholicism in Dialogue with Japanese Zen Buddhism" are both similar to and different from one another. Yet the basis of the thesis is what these men say in common rather than how they differ. The themes which form the chapters of the thesis indicate the major points in this commonality. If the stress seems to be on how they differ, I invite my readers to keep a reflective eye on those similarities which, above all, provide the structural coherence for this study and about which, though outside the scope of this thesis, a great deal may yet be written.
I intended from the beginning to use a thematic approach to the material. An alternative approach might examine the thought of each individual as a self-contained unit and only then compare it to the thought of the others. Insights not found in my study might well emerge from such an approach. However, I wanted to explore the dialogue not so much from an individual as from a supra-individual perspective. It is clear that no dialogue can exist apart from the individuals who create it. Yet my primary concern is how "Roman Catholics" did - and do - enter into dialogue with "Zen Buddhism". I did not seek uniqueness - though this cannot be ignored - but commonality. The thematic approach is more appropriate for this concern.

I want to say a few words about how the themes are identified. The specific themes emerge from the texts themselves and are not superimposed on them. Initially I used a tripartite model in the process of uncovering the "themes". I assumed that both Roman Catholicism and Zen Buddhism are religions. It seemed that an abstract model of religion could appropriately be applied to both. The model I chose saw religion as having three dimensions: (1) an exposition of the human predicament; (2) a resolution of this predicament; and (3) an ideal goal actualized through the resolution. I then began the difficult task of looking for these tentative themes in the texts.

It seemed likely that modern writings on the "human predicament" might use one of two approaches - that of psychology or that of sociology. Despite scattered reflections on the nature of the modern world and of the differences between the societies and cultures embodying the two spiritual traditions of Zen Buddhism
and Roman Catholicism, the writings examined simply do not include enough material on the "sociological" dimension to warrant its inclusion as a separate chapter in this thesis. Thomas Merton is, of course, very well-known for his social concerns. His writings include discussions of the relationship between Christianity and the social order, justice and racial equality. His talk on the day of his death was entitled "Marxism and Monastic Perspectives". But his writings on interaction between Roman Catholicism and Zen Buddhism do not explore this interest to any significant extent. Nor have I found this discussed at length in any of the other writings I examined, with the exception of the works of Joseph Spae.

On the other hand, I did find in the writings of William Johnston a very strong and consistent concern with modern psychology. I doubt if anybody can present an adequate examination of the whole of Johnston's thought without including his reflections on psychology. Perhaps it is necessary to mention that I choose the term "psychology", rather than "psychologies", deliberately. Johnston, in fact, is no psychologist and as a layman his interests in psychology are quite eclectic. He borrows ideas from various "schools", some of which, notably the "Jungian", of which he makes much use, might not even be admitted by academic psychologists as part of their discipline. My choice of the singular is meant to indicate that Johnston's use of this material results in a consistent, singular approach to human nature.

One of the most exciting discoveries in the writing of this thesis occurred during initial drafts of the chapter on "human nature". Having decided that the examination of the "human predic-
ament" (the first of the three dimensions of religion in my initial model) should take the form of a discussion of "human nature" as seen by both men and that Johnston's writing on "psychology" gave the key to an approach I was ready for an in-depth examination of the writings of both men on this topic. To my interest I discovered that the two took radically different approaches to it. The general tone and direction of the understandings of "human nature" which I found in their writings differ radically from one another. Johnston places emphasis on differentiation and the multi-faceted nature of the human; Merton decries this approach and turns to a non-dual understanding of the person and of reality. This difference and their reflections on "human nature" form the material for chapter one, "The Foundation of Human Nature". As we shall shortly see, this chapter provides not only a thematic introduction but also a methodological foundation for the entire thesis. The distinctly different emphases that inform their understanding of human nature also inform their approaches to the other themes constituting the dialogue.  

Still using my tripartite model of religion I examined the writings for an exposition of the ideal goal of human life in both traditions. However it seems to me that the goals, though discussed briefly at various points, do not receive sufficient attention to constitute a separate theme for a chapter of the thesis. The reflections of both Johnston and Merton on the ideal goal of spiritual life can more appropriately be considered with discussions of the resolutions of the human predicament. This combination of "resolution" and "ideal goal" covers
the two topics of "meditation" and "mysticism" (or contemplation), which receive, proportionately, more attention than any others in the writings of Johnston, Merton and the other authors examined. Actually, a simple skimming of the titles of their published works and of chapter headings in those works bears this out. In this thesis one chapter apiece is devoted to the themes of "meditation" and "mysticism".

As my thinking about "meditation" and "mysticism" developed several important insights emerged. I realized that the reason "mysticism" receives so much attention in the dialogue is that it represents the "experiential" dimension in Catholic Christianity. "Experience", whether mystical or not, is so significant in the dialogue that it can be said to form its core, to be its most crucial element.

Mysticism is not unrelated to other experiences. It occurs in the matrix of human life. It is primarily on the basis of their own experience that both Merton and Johnston participate in the dialogue. In other words, their participation is not primarily theoretical, abstract or academic. It was their own experience, within the Catholic tradition, practicing in the Zen tradition, encountering men of the other tradition, that gave shape to the dialogue. Their writings about it grew out of this experience and reflection on it.

The central chapter of the thesis deals with this broad personal experience. In keeping with this theme it is anecdotal and biographical. This chapter, "The Experience of Encounter", also includes an examination of the experiential dimension of Christianity known as "Catholic mysticism" and its bearing on the
dialogue. Significantly, although both men claim centrality for experience, they take different approaches to it. This difference is fundamentally the same as that which first appears in the chapter on "human nature".

The material on "meditation" also underwent a transformation. I began to see it in a slightly changed context. Initially it seemed that the one certain thing the west could take from the east was their tradition of meditation. When I began to consider "meditation" in the larger framework of "methodology in the spiritual life", however, I saw that there were other "practical" or "technical" matters shared between the two traditions. These are collectively discussed in the second chapter of the thesis, "Method in the Spiritual Life". Here I will also argue that the different approaches of Merton and Johnston can be seen most clearly in their different attitudes towards "means" and "goals" in spiritual life.

One of the major areas of difference between the two traditions is the presence of theology in Christianity. Theology is mentioned in the various writings I studied although in none does it receive a thorough treatment. Thomas Merton reflects that the central difference between Buddhism and Christianity is that the one aims at "ontological enlightenment" whereas the other's aim is "theological salvation". In Johnston's writings theology (especially the theology of Bernard Lonergan) plays a special role. Both men suggest that theology may very well be a key dimension of the dialogue. Indeed, both men suggest in different ways that it may eventually be theology, not experience, which provides its growing edge. This is discussed in the chapter
on "Theological Reflection".

At this point, it seemed to me that I had covered most of the thematic bases. There were chapters on: (1) Human Nature; (2) Spiritual Methods; (3) Experience; and (4) Theology. The question still remained, however, as to how dialogue was actually possible. I wondered whether or not there was any real pattern to the dialogue. Is there a "framework" which any individual interested in such dialogue can adopt?

I found the answer to this question in a consideration of epistemology. The differences between Johnston and Merton, which had appeared initially in my reflections on their views of human nature and consistently in each of the other three areas I considered, seemed to point finally to their different epistemological attitudes. The suggestion of this thesis is that either of these attitudes can be useful for interreligious dialogue. Moreover, I would hazard that the epistemological attitude which becomes evident in an examination of Merton's study of Zen indicates a radically new approach to Catholicism itself. Though this approach is not inconsistent with the thought of earlier Christians such as Meister Eckhart, the situation in which it has developed, that of twentieth-century interreligious dialogue, is new. It is this situation in which Merton develops an epistemology that allows him to use religious language and to approach the spiritual life in a unique way, a way which is perhaps destined to play a role in developments within Christianity in the future, a way which is particularly suited to the temper of our "deconstructivist" times.  

Johnston's thought, closer to traditional Catholic models than Merton's, is also suggesting a re-framing of
attitudes towards religion and religions that has much to offer the contemporary world. His thinking offers a creative approach to individuals who are concerned with dialogue within the framework of the traditional spiritual systems, of understanding and respecting people and traditions in their "otherness", and of developing the meanings already inherent in the symbols and ideas of the Christian faith. The thought of both men may, in a sense, be said to be paradigmatic and to offer models with which the ideas of others engaged in interreligious dialogue can be compared. This material is dealt with in the chapter on "The Principles of Dialogue".

Only the initial isolation of major themes was done on the basis of pertinent writings of all the individuals involved in the dialogue. The exploration of the themes and the discovery of the "principles of dialogue" were based solely on the writings of Johnston and Merton. Still Johnston and Merton are only two of the individuals involved in the ongoing dialogue. Any model based on their writings needs to be considered against the thought of others engaged in the work. Such a task is beyond the scope of this thesis but I believe it would have to be undertaken before the broader implications raised by this study could be properly evaluated.

Some distinctions that have not been elaborated on here would appear in a broader survey. The work of Father Joseph Spae, for example, could direct us to the social dimensions of this dialogue which, though significant, remain underdeveloped in Johnston and are scarcely dealt with at all by Merton. More conservative traditional approaches stress the differences between Zen Buddhism and
Christianity somewhat in the manner of Johnston without his well-developed dialogic program. The writings of Heinrich van Straelin are startling in this regard. In light of this kind of writing the radical side of Johnston's thought is readily apparent. One has only to read Father van Straelin's archly conservative books on Catholicism in Japan, and in dialogue with other religions to appreciate how far Father Johnston's thought brings us.

Dialogue is a key concept of our time. Traditional religious systems in the west are no longer able to maintain the isolation from other major systems of meaning which has been characteristic of them during the past several centuries. If they are to continue to provide life-orientations for their followers whose life-experience brings contact with individuals of alien traditions they must examine the ways in which they can creatively dialogue with those traditions. Such is the aim of this thesis which examines the creative struggles of Fathers Johnston and Merton in their profound and courageous explorations of the Japanese Zen Buddhist tradition. My own initial readings indicate that the basic distinctions that emerge from a comparative study of the thought of Fathers Johnston and Merton are applicable to the reflections of others involved in dialogue. Such explorations augur well for the future of the spiritual life of humanity.
In understanding human activity we must look to the images of human nature which give it meaning. The aggressions of the militant protector of society, the power and money making of the businessman and politician, the creative works of the artist and the day-to-day activities of the average citizen are all embedded in particular views of what it is to be human. Of themselves the actions might seem to speak loudly enough. Yet the necessary visions, so often unfocused and unexplored, with which they arise and to which they speak, warrant examination.

Active man too often remains in darkness about human nature. All too unknowingly men have abdicated the difficult responsibility of defining that nature, of discovering its limits and potentials. Satisfied with the identities provided by society, man has been content with living the "unexamined life". Yet once we see man as something more than a mere physical organism we see how central to the human mode of being in the world are visions, images of the world and, particularly, of humanity.

Man is an animate being which can see itself. Men move through the world as much by the inner as by the outer eye. And not merely active man is also actor, responding to external stimuli but also to fancied roles, to notions about who man may be. And dialogue occurs between what man does and what man thinks.

The story of human history is more than the story of physical events, important as these are. It is also the story of the unceasing quest for meaning interwoven with those events. Unlike that of the other animals, man's presence in the world is marked
by constant questioning of that presence, by the need for interpretation. Man does not rest simply and easily in the physical world but struggles uneasily in the interpretation. Man and animal seem to share the same physical universe and to be subject to the same physical laws. Yet their modes of presence in that world are, for man, painfully different. In the words of Rilke:

> die findigen Tiere merken es schon, dass wir nicht sehr verlässlich zu Haus sind in der gedeutenten Welt.

Man struggles towards meaning, above all towards the meaning of what it is to be human. Yet in all interpretation lies the discomfort of the interpreted world and the struggle with the dissonances that forever arise between the meaning and the world. The knowing brutes are aware that we don't feel very securely at home within this interpreted world. Yet it remains our fate to continue to be concerned with our meaning.

Throughout countless centuries philosophy, mythology, art, literature and religion have explored the question of man's nature. Socrates considered self-knowledge the central focus of all proper thought, the principal duty of man. Life becomes genuinely worth living insofar as it is examined and understood. The mythologies of the world, as Joseph Campbell has shown, elaborate the nature of humanity in all its multifold breadth and profound depths. Artists explore and express new and old images of man. Poets and novelists write of man's deepest responses, feelings, yearnings and deeds.

Religions too, speak to the issue of human nature. Buddhism
and Christianity, like all religions, call man to recognize the true self. The philosophical duty of self-knowledge becomes the principal religious task as man is challenged to become that true self and realize the genuine depth and breadth of the potential in personal life. Man is called to recognize the "Buddha nature" or the new life in Christ.³

Today we recognize that what culture understands of human nature undergoes subtle, though highly significant, changes. The difference between the modern western view of man and that of medieval Christendom is illustrative. The medieval saw man in a hierarchy extending from God, the Creator, to the lowest of created things. Man's being was rooted in a Being who infinitely transcended him and with whom man's relationship could be expressed only in such metaphors as that of Creator and created. Man's meaning was provided in revelation and supported by church and society which were themselves intensely interrelated. Man's task, through grace, was to work the way towards salvation.

Today we think of man in terms provided by the physical or social sciences. Meaning can no longer be easily accepted as the gift of grace as perhaps more than ever before man's place in the universe is the subject of continual questioning. The great intellectual advances of the past several centuries have situated modern man in a universe vastly different from that of his medieval ancestors.

The end result of the revolutions in human thought brought about through the work of such intellectual giants as Nicolas Copernicus, Charles Darwin, Sigmund Freud and Albert Einstein is an image of a relative man in a relative universe. Modern man is not secure in the notion that there is meaning in the universe
which transcends the visible world. And, despite the tantalizing discoveries now emerging from the growing edge of modern physics associated with scientists such as David Bohm, the popular scientific approach points away from any such meaning. Yet it is precisely through this "popular scientific approach" that contemporary western men seek to delineate and understand their own nature. This is in a special way true of psychology.

As a science, psychology seeks to examine man on the basis of empirical evidence. The core of most academic psychology resolutely refuses to consider anything but behaviour in its exploration of man. It insists that man can be properly understood in terms of those processes which it has identified and which it studies: learning, perception, motivation, development, conditioning. And despite its implication in the very process of thinking (including scientific thinking), man's awareness of being a subjective centre of meaning in life is reduced by this psychology to a mere epiphenomenon, having no value in and of itself.

Modern psychology, with notable exceptions of Gestalt, psychoanalytic, humanist and more recent transpersonal schools, has imagined man in a way that many philosophers and artists view as alienating. More than a hundred years ago thinkers such as Kierkegaard and Nietzsche wrote of the distance created between the ordinary man and full human potential by the modern manner of thinking of which science is the most successful expression. Yet whatever its limitations and whatever its success in outgrowing those limitations it is psychology which provides modern western man with the most popular views of the nature of being human.
This introductory chapter is concerned primarily with the understanding of man in the writings of Johnston and Merton, with their views of human nature. Both are distinctly modern men. Thus their thinking about man's nature is influenced by modern psychology. The writing of William Johnston is replete with references to that discipline and several of its subdivisions. Thomas Merton speaks very differently. One finds few of the allusions to biofeedback, brain waves, states of consciousness or depth psychology which the attentive reader comes to expect from the pen of William Johnston. What Merton offers is profound analysis of the Cartesian dualism which underlies almost the entire discipline of psychology. Merton views psychology primarily with an eye to its limitations and to the distortions of human nature which it perpetrates. Johnston takes from it insights which broaden and delineate his own essentially Christian view of man.

In his introduction to Silent Music: The Science of Meditation Johnston welcomes dialogue with scientists. In particular he acclaims those "students of consciousness", those "modern prophets", who recognize the absolute necessity of including in their study the writings of the great mystics and seers of all times and cultures. As a modern man Johnston is moved by the tremendous voice of scientific thinking. As a long time student of Christian mysticism he is convinced of the value of that mode of religion. His affirmation of an areligious science which studies mystical phenomena is an affirmation not only of these phenomena and of the view of human nature they imply but also of the scientific approach to understanding. True science, for Johnston, is a quest for wisdom.
Reflection on the insights of modern psychology into human nature has led students of mysticism to a new evaluation of the phenomenon. Discussing the "scientific" approach to the study of mysticism taken by the nineteenth century Catholic scholar, August Poulain, Johnston observes:

Poulain wrote at the turn of the century. Little did he know that the science of mysticism was on the verge of an earthquake that would shake it to its foundations and make his Theresian revolution look like a tiny tremor. I mean the impact of psychoanalysis, the meeting between Christianity and the religions of the east, the discovery of brainwaves and the popularity of biofeedback and research in drugs.

Most of Johnston's writing has been published during the past decade. Most of the psychology to which he refers, apart from the work of William James and the psychoanalysts, especially Carl Jung, to whose notions about the subconscious Johnston gives special attention, is also work of the past decade. He has been particularly intrigued by the physical approach to the brain and its correlation with various states of consciousness. In this regard he makes reference to his friend, the Japanese researcher Tomio Hirai, author of a study of meditation and brainwaves, Zen and the Mind. Before looking at Merton's reflections on modern psychology we might mention that this most recent work in the field displays a greater sophistication than earlier psychological work both in its technical refinement and in its interest in subjective dimensions of human experience.

Since Thomas Merton died in 1968 it is not surprising that he was unfamiliar with brainwave research. Whether or not he would have viewed this work with the same critical attitude...
he took towards other modern studies of human nature is a moot point. Would he have seen the attempt to integrate the subjective dimensions of human experience with objective correlates as a redressing of the earlier overemphasis on the empirical? Or would he have pointed incisively at the dualism inherent in any attempt to find such a correlation? We shall never know, since he did not turn his pen to writing about this material.

The dualism inherent in this understanding of human nature is central to the Cartesian view of reality underlying the subjective-objective distinction made by science in its program of empiricism. But, for Merton, both the subjectivity and the objectivity taken in this approach are artificial and lead to both epistemological and ethical error. The distinction underlies the alienation so troublesome to modern man. As Merton puts it:

Modern man, insofar as he is still Cartesian (he is of course going far beyond Descartes in many respects), is a subject for whom his own self-awareness as a thinking, observing, measuring and 'estimating' self is absolutely primary. It is for him the one indubitable reality, and all truth starts here. The more he is able to develop his consciousness as a subject over against objects, the more he can understand things in their relations to him and one another, the more he can manipulate these objects for his own interests, but also, at the same time, the more he tends to isolate himself in his own subjective prison, to become a detached observer cut off from everything else in a kind of impenetrable, alienated and transparent bubble which contains all reality in the form of purely subjective experience.

The individual perceives himself as isolated from the world and threatened by it so that he must incorporate as much as he can in the way of knowledge or material possession or power or
pleasure in order to defend that self. The "ego" in this view must be an aggressor in a hostile world, a world from which it is alienated.

However, Merton goes further than this. The "ego" construct alienates the self from its own true nature. In seeking to shore up its own identity by self-images of power and possession, with or without the material accoutrements of those images, by relating to the world primarily in terms of role-identities, it fails to perceive its own deeper truth, its essential unity, a unity beyond duality and hence beyond need.

Merton came to know the deeper truth about man through his commitment to Christianity. The language in which he discusses ego and self and alienation and Cartesian duality is modern language. And Merton's biography is a modern biography. Like many another modern man Merton's life was no stranger to alienation. A later chapter will examine some of Merton's experience in more depth but here we should mention an experience of his late teenage years, before his conversion to Catholicism, which testifies to this alienation:

I was in my room. It was night. The light was on. Suddenly it seemed to me that Father, who had now been dead more than a year, was there with me. The sense of his presence was as vivid and as real and as startling as if he had touched my arm or spoken to me. The whole thing passed in a flash, but in that flash, instantly, I was overwhelmed with a sudden and profound insight into the misery and corruption of my own soul, and I was pierced deeply with a light that made me realize something of the condition I was in, and I was filled with horror at what I saw, and my whole being rose up in revolt against what was within me, and my soul desired escape and liberation and freedom from all this with an intensity and an urgency unlike anything
I had ever known before. And now I think for the first time in my whole life I really began to pray - praying not with my lips and with my intellect and my imagination, but praying out of the very roots of my life and of my being, and praying the God I had never known, to reach down towards me out of His darkness and to help me to get free of the thousand terrible things that held my will in their slavery.

Merton's sense of alienation and his profound desire to overcome it grew out of his own life. Reflection on his own life brought insight about the condition of modern man. Merton's sense of alienation predated his conversion to belief in God, to Christianity, to Catholicism, to becoming a Trappist monk and eventually a kind of a hermit. In becoming a Christian and in exploring the meaning of that becoming Merton moved beyond his alienation to the discovery of his true self, continually removed the barriers of his alienation and with increasing fulness became that true self without barrier. In becoming his true self he also found his proper relationship to the material world and to other people.

Commenting on this theme on the day of his death, Merton noted:

The whole purpose of the monastic life is to teach men to live by love. The simple formula, which was so popular in the West, was the Augustinian formula of the translation of cupiditas into caritas, of self-centered love into an outgoing, other-centered love. In the process of this change the individual ego was seen to be illusory and dissolved itself, and in place of this self-centered ego came the Christian person, who was no longer just the individual but was Christ dwelling in each one. So in each one of us, the Christian person is that which is fully open to all other persons, because ultimately all other persons are Christ.

Like Johnston, Merton maintains a Christocentric view of
human nature. Nonetheless, his analysis of the alienation inherent in the modern western world and of modern views of man centered on the Cartesian ego, or its science, has a validity that is not dependent on his Christocentric view. But this Christian inspired "areligious" analysis provides a framework of interpretation by which the modern secular individual can come to understand Christianity. It provides a currency of translation by which Christian concepts of original sin can be made relevant to contemporary consciousness. Merton's profoundly insightful notion of the need to overcome alienation by recognizing one's true self, by living from the centre of one's self, resonates to the Christian concept of dying to oneself ("ego") so that Christ may live in one.

Thomas Merton, a modern man using the language of the modern world, was a radical critic of that world, of its view of human nature and of the mode of living consonant with that view. William Johnston, also a modern man speaking the language of the modern world, mines the riches buried in the understanding of human nature provided by modern psychology and sings the praises of the modern scientist in search for wisdom. Johnston and Merton share fundamentally Christian understanding of human nature and both dialogue with modern thought. But where Merton found only the dust of the world Johnston found riches.

A thorough reading of Johnston's writings leaves one with a strong impression of how much he has taken from his dialogue with modern psychology. I have isolated the following themes which recur throughout Johnston's writing and which form an essential part of his understanding of human nature:
1. Psychology teaches us the importance of attending to ourselves.

2. The mind can be understood as composed of various levels. Much of it is unconscious and goes beyond that of which we are commonly aware.

3. The mind can be thought of in terms of "states of consciousness", encouraging us to recognize a variety in human awareness.

4. The human passes through various stages of growth. To assume that man is static or that his nature is fully given at birth is to avoid the task of change and development.

5. Psychological disciplines (especially Jungian work) teach us how to move down into deeper levels of psyche.

6. Psychology teaches us the importance of the unconscious in human motivation. It also highlights the great significance of the body, of feeling, of sexuality, of meaning (here Frankl's logotherapy) and of myth.

7. Brainwave measurement provides an "objective" indicator of differences in consciousness, even of a very subtle nature, such as may exist between Zen and Yoga or even between Rinzai and Soto forms of Zen.

8. Psychology provides us with a language to delineate some of the differences between East and West.

9. Mystical theology can be understood better if we reflect on what is taught by modern psychology.

If we examine these insights as a whole we see that they challenge any restricted notion of human nature such as might be provided by behaviourism or by common sense. They also challenge man to live in the light of an expanded vision of human potential. Johnston presses a strong case for the richness of human nature and the particular insights he adopts from psychology acclaim that richness. Indeed, along with his interest in
the work of modern psychology, he is critical of any approach which fails to take into consideration the full scope of human potential. In one lecture he indicates that any psychology which does not consider mystical phenomenon will be inadequate, an insight quite in accord with the recent development of transpersonal psychology.10

Johnston acclaims the concern of modern psychology with individual growth. While Merton is critical of any concern which tends to focus on the "ego" - and there can be little doubt that much modern psychology tends in this direction - Johnston recognizes in the sincerity and truthfulness of this modern quest an affinity with traditional Christian concerns.

Both Merton and Johnston accept views of human nature which draw a distinction between the everyday self and the fully realized self. Both are aspects of the human being but it is usually only the former of which people are aware. The challenge is to grow into the latter. Only from it can the former be truly appreciated.

No account of Johnston's view of human nature would be complete without a consideration of the use he makes of the writings of Jesuit theologian Bernard Lonergan. Common to all humanity, Lonergan contends, is a shared human nature which he describes in his "transcendental precepts". In his most recent book, The Mirror Mind: Spirituality and Transformation, Johnston writes:

Even when Buddhists and Christians have different beliefs they can still join hands in a common method that is basically human and leads through conversion or enlightenment to truth and goodness. Concretely,
this means fidelity to those transcendental precepts that enshrine the inexorable demands of the human spirit and point the way to human authenticity.

The common method which is basically human is both psychologically and epistemologically antecedent to any specific religious commitment. Its goal or ultimate result, both as regards thought and as regards action, is also posterior to any such specific commitment. The transcendental precepts, which Johnston discusses in his most recent works, are five: be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible and be in love. In actual human life these precepts are most likely to be realized in those situations where there is faith and community, precisely in specific religions.

We shall have occasion later to return to a discussion of these transcendental precepts. Sufficient for the moment to note that their presence indicates a common human nature which is transcultural, and that they imply a movement or transformation beyond the common self to the true self.

Both Merton and Johnston draw a distinction, which in neither case should be understood however as a clear-cut dualism, between man's everyday self and his true self. Yet the true self is that way of seeing, that boundless way, which in recognizing the falseness of that false self, noted subjectively in the sense of alienation, truly thereby recognizes also its truth.

Dialogue with modern views of human nature has been important for both of these men in the development of their understanding of man. Yet the ways they have reacted to and used this material have differed from one another. While positing the duality between
a false self, which would include those images of man held commonly by society and by modern psychology, and the true self Merton highlights the need to move beyond all duality. The metaphor I like to use to describe the movement suggested by Merton's thought is that of depth. Consciousness seeks to move ever deeper to its source or foundation. Or, more accurately expressed, it seeks a recognition of its own boundless freedom, a freedom in the absence of a gap between its knowing and its being, the freedom which is proper to the children of God.

Johnston too sees the image of the false man. He challenges us to move beyond our limitations into those fuller potentials which are ours by birth. In this regard he takes from modern psychology notions of those expanded potentials. His use, in particular, of models of human psyche which speak of states of consciousness, levels of awareness and stages of growth allows him to advocate an exploratory approach to human nature. We cannot suppose that we know all that there is to know about man nor, analogously, that we already experience all that there is to experience or even that we already exist in the fullness of our being. Psychology has provided descriptions of aspects of human being normally beyond the scope of the average man and, in so doing, challenges us to move into them. But, especially through the concept of the unconscious mind, it calls for an open endedness in our models of human psyche.

It is, we might note, this open endedness which Johnston recognizes and acclaims in all true science. For the scientist, precisely in being true to his work as a scientist, recognizes
the limitations and incompleteness of his understanding of the world and of himself. Psychological science, both as a study of the psyche and as a science, has much to teach the student of religion and the religious man.

We should note that the approaches of Merton and Johnston to understanding the nature of man are not necessarily mutually exclusive. We have suggested the metaphor of depth to describe Merton's approach and breadth to describe Johnston's. Yet in a sense they contain one another. While Merton's approach moves continually towards simplicity and, as it were, purification of all human experience, moves towards confrontation of the core of human experience and at that point breaks through to a recognition of the nondual nature of man, to that which is beyond words, Merton's voluminous writings and his explorations of the worlds of politics and eastern religion indicate his own involvement in the incredible variety and fascination of the world. Nor should this be taken lightly; Merton continually recognizes the danger of quietism in himself and in religious generally and speaks strongly against it; he is no escapist. Nevertheless, for Merton all experience is the proverbial finger pointing at the moon and the moon is not an object or a thing to be experienced but the imageless ground of all experience.

The openminded joy and celebration of human variety which one sees in Johnston, his adamant refusal to reduce all true difference to oversimplistic unity, his constancy in perceiving nuances of difference is not the egocentric posturing of the polemicist concerned with staking out his territory and defending it against all comers. Rather it is the sincerity of the searcher
after truth. It is a recognition of the genuine complexity of life which must be confronted and not evaded. If ever we are to develop true understanding. That the final understanding may itself be beyond this complexity is not foreign to Johnston's thought. Indeed his writing often points to this possibility, which he considers most likely. Yet man's nature, extending as it does towards ineffable silence, manifests an edifying multiplicity which we would be amiss to ignore or fail to appreciate.

Both Johnston's and Merton's views on human nature call for growth and development beyond existing limits. Yet their thought offers us more than this. It is not merely on a theoretical level that they present this teaching. Rather, like all men of religion, they speak of the way by which this growth and development may take place. The next chapter, on methods of growth, will examine this with particular reference to the dialogue with Japanese Zen Buddhism.
Method in the Spiritual Life

In the last chapter I examined the nature of man as Johnston and Merton picture it. Both see human nature as dynamic. Both view it with an eye to transformation. Both perceive a process of development, shaping human history and human life, through which man gradually achieves or attains to "the true self".

One does not have to look too hard at the views of the two men to discern in them a tension between "the true self" and what might be called "the self of common experience". This tension suggests the primary dynamic of growth in human life. Man strives to resolve the gap between a sense of what might be, of what inheres in "the true self", and the everyday being of everyday life, which is characterized by a sense of dukkha or "unsatisfactoriness" in the Buddhist tradition and by sin or "missing the mark" in Christianity.

In light of the understandings of human nature explored in the last chapter, this chapter will look at the ways man seeks to achieve realization of "the true self", to attain "salvation" as a Christian or "liberation" as a Buddhist. In my discussion of their views in that chapter I suggested that the metaphors of "breadth" and "depth" distinguish the respective positions of Johnston and Merton. Johnston sees human nature primarily in light of its multifarious potentials and distinctive abilities. His view is a celebration of diversity. Merton's understanding stresses man's fundamental unity with God, the ground of all being. He strives to maintain his footing on that base which
Eliot has called "the still point of the turning world".

The views of the two men are also in line with — and may be understood in the light of — a distinction well established in the field of comparative religion, between two types of religion or spiritual experience and expression: those of duality and non-duality. This distinction, which is sometimes identified as that between religions of confrontation and religions of interiority, has often been used to differentiate the religions of the west from those of the east. Within traditions, however, individuals may tend primarily towards the one type even while the religion with which they identify tends primarily towards the other. Furthermore, it is not uncommon for both types of experience to play a role in the spiritual lives of specific individuals. At the end of the last chapter, I suggested that my identification of the spirituality of Johnston and Merton as dualistic and non-dualistic respectively could not be maintained absolutely and was not intended to be understood that way. It is more accurate to say that they show a preference for one or the other type. When looked at this way significant characteristics of their positions can be identified and examined without blatant oversimplification of their highly developed spiritualities.

The distinction between dualism and non-dualism also plays a very special role in any considerations of "method" in the spiritual life. Consequently, I want to open this chapter on "spiritual techniques" with a further consideration of the distinction. In particular, I want to examine how it bears on an understanding of the "goal" or "end" of religion in Christianity.
and in Zen. Our appreciation of the "way" in religious life and of "methods" or "techniques" in spirituality will vary according to the view we hold of the "goal" towards which we are moving.

One of the fundamental distinctions drawn by religions characterized by a sense of dualism is that between the natural and the supernatural. This distinction allows for two orders of reality, one of which is contingent upon the other. When these are understood as metaphysically and not just epistemologically distinct - that is to say, when they are taken to have reference to actual states of being and not just to levels of truth (such as the "absolute" and "relative" truths of Hinduism) - the order established by the distinction is not one which can be overcome merely by a realization of the truth.

Indeed, for the consistent dualist, the distinction can never be overcome at all. It is a matter of fundamental conditions of being, inherent in the structure and dynamics of reality itself. This is an important point and brings us to another - perhaps the most fundamental of all dualisms - the distinction between "knowing" and "being". So, for example, the Christian will argue not only that there is a distinction between man and God for man in his present earthly condition, when he "sees darkly as in a mirror", but that, even when he sees "face to face" after death - when he knows God directly - this distinction will remain. The difference between the Creator and the created is absolute. The created order is fully and finally dependent upon the Creator, who, according to the Christian myth, has given man not only existence but freedom and not only freedom but, in the wake of man's initial misuse of that freedom, redemption. Without this
redemption no salvation and no spiritual life would be possible. Man could have knowledge - indeed one reading of man's "fall" understands it as a fruit of his eating of the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil", by which he sought to become like God - but that knowledge could never suffice to bring man to his true estate as a child of God, that "state of grace" which is a condition of being rather than of knowing.

In light of the fact that the natural order is subsumed by the supernatural order - that the being of man is contained in the being of God but not vice versa - it is significant that communication between the two orders has been initiated by the Creator. Traditional Catholic teaching has allowed for knowledge of God through observation of the natural world and the order of the universe. However, while the natural order may indicate or hint at the supernatural, from which it takes its being, man's full appreciation of the supernatural order and his understanding of the will of that order are dependent upon the communication of information from that order to this. Only through the "revelation" of God's Word in the Old and the New Testaments can the natural mind have any full knowledge of the intention of the supernatural. This gift of revelation, this self-presentation of the supernatural to the natural reaches its culmination in God's taking on human nature in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

Man is invited to respond freely to God's revelation, to follow the law of God presented to the human race in the Old and the New Testaments. As a Christian, man is above all invited to live in harmony with the "new law" established by Jesus: the law of love. The description Jesus gave of himself as "the
"way" may be understood in terms of the role he played in mediating the orders of the natural and the supernatural. The Christian believes that through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, the human race, as a whole, has been redeemed. Through his existence a fundamental re-alignment of the two orders takes place - the two become one in him. The stage has been set on which it is now possible for individual people, through living in accord with God's will, to aim at their own transcendence of death and the merely natural state which culminates in it. As "the Way" Jesus provided the foundation for a restored relationship between the natural and the supernatural dimensions of existence in human life. This restoration was for all time and for all men and, in this sense, it belongs to a transpersonal order. However, if on the fundamental level of being itself Jesus as "the Way" has united two previously alienated orders, he also serves as "the way" through providing a model for human living. His life, centered on love, stands as The Paradigm for all truly Christian life. One is a Christian insofar as one accepts this basic understanding of the order of being expressed in "the Way" and seeks to model his or her behaviour on knowledge of "the Way".

At this point an important reflection needs to be added. With the dualistic mind there is the possibility of system. In religion which allows for the natural/supernatural distinction there is a tendency to introduce another fundamental dichotomy, that between good and bad. The supernatural is associated with the former and the natural, either through an inherent quality of evil or through lack of the good, with the latter. This, in turn, bears upon the ethical dimension and man is called upon to
identify with the qualities associated with the supernatural - in Christian terms, to be in a "state of grace".

Traditionally the distinction between the natural and supernatural has allowed for the association of the natural order with death and with evil. As the realm of "the world, the flesh and the devil" it has been viewed negatively. Consequently, traditional Catholic thought has stressed the importance of disciplining the body and the desires of the body. This has often been discipline in a sense that, even for the naturalistic modern mind, could be understood positively. However, we cannot overlook that the Christian tendency to associate the bodily with evil (with death) sometimes reached an extreme of masochism disguised and dignified by the label "self-mortification". The positions taken by both Johnston and Merton differ fundamentally from this traditional rendering of the message of Jesus. This has a crucial bearing on the understanding of "method" in the spiritual life, as we shall discuss shortly.

Hand in hand with the distinction between natural and supernatural orders of reality goes a distinction between "nature" and "history". The sacred dimension of human life is understood either as rooted in ahistorical, cyclical processes of "eternal return" modeled on the phases of nature most noticeable in the agricultural year or as directed through time towards a unique and yet-to-be-established future. Religions of duality have combined their emphasis on the distinction between the two orders with an emphasis on the future and the process of history. When the distinction between the two orders of being has not existed, when the tension expressed by the gap between them has not been formulated, religion
has tended to focus on "being" rather than becoming, on the deepest (indeed fathomless) ground of "is-ness" rather than the outreach into a desired but not yet realized - and, in some sense, not yet existing - goal. In this case there has been a corresponding devaluation of history and an emphasis on the here and now.

Fundamental differences between Roman Catholicism and Japanese Zen Buddhism find the two religions on opposite sides of the dichotomy I have just outlined. The distinction between the natural and supernatural is fundamental to Catholicism. So is the emphasis on history and the future. The Catholic aims at achieving salvation, through grace made available by the action of Jesus, in heaven after death. While the Catholic strives to live in accordance with the law of God, it has not been unusual for Catholics to have a sense that they did not know how it was with them spiritually. Indeed, we might even say that there was a tendency to devalue any personal knowing of the "supernatural" condition of one's soul as a vain attempt at usurping the judgmental ability that resided only with God. Sometimes, of course, the church, as the collective body of Christ on earth saw fit to exercise its judgment (shaped, as it believed, by the grace of God) over its members. By its own definition it was involved in a supernatural task and exercised an authority which could not be - and for centuries was not - questioned on merely natural grounds. As far as the individual was concerned, the spiritual life was future oriented and he or she would know the final judgment only after death. Here we have a clear and crucial distinction between "knowing" and "being" in regard to the human soul.
This situation naturally led to not a little anxiety and good Catholic priests could only advise their parishioners to let things rest with God. The natural world was seen as corrupt and the natural mind as darkened. Adherence to the external order of the church provided man with the only framework for the living out of life. Security lay not in knowledge of or reflection on what today would be called "the self" (or even "the ego") but in identification with the order of society, which was itself seen as involved in the order of God.

Zen does not draw a distinction between natural and supernatural orders of reality. Admittedly a difference is recognized between "ordinary mind" and "enlightened mind" but that difference has only a relative reality since, for the "enlightened mind", it ceases to exist. One's ordinary nature is the Buddha nature and the Zen tradition is replete with stories emphasizing precisely this point. Significantly, the Buddhist tradition has not lacked notions of another order of reality; indeed, one of the principal forms of Buddhism is built on recourse to Amida Buddha, whose efforts make it possible for ignorant man to enter into the Pure Land. This, however, is not viewed as a final resting place but rather as a place more conductive than this world for entry into nirvana. In practice, it is not uncommon for monks in Japan to use elements from both Zen and Pure Land traditions. The significant point, however, is that the metaphysical status granted the distinction between the supernatural and the natural, between heaven and earth, God and man in Christianity is not to be found in Buddhism.

In view of all of this, it is not surprising that the Zen
monk is taught not to rely on the efforts and actions of others to bring enlightenement. Indeed, Zen is sometimes distinguished from other forms of Buddhism, such as Amida Buddhism, as "self-effort" (jiriki) from "other-effort" (tariki). The Zen student must be self-reliant. The process of enlightenement is a natural one. Following the procedures that have been enshrined in the Zen tradition the monk will move towards realization. Zen does recognize the existence of "false enlightenements", but the Zen master is able to identify these and distinguish them from the real thing. Moreover, this "enlightenment", when it occurs, has the quality of a complete transformation in consciousness. In this sense, it might be compared to the popular notion of "rebirth" in Christianity: it is experienced in the consciousness of the individual. In the Christian case, however, we have already commented that traditional Catholic spirituality frowned upon all inner "self-conscious" experience, a position in accord with its emphasis on the future and the supernatural. Consequently it has not been unusual for Catholic Christians to have no sense whatsoever of any inner spiritual experience and even among today's Catholics there is a general mistrust of more experiential forms of Christian faith. In this context spirituality becomes an exclusively extroverted phenomenon.

A further point needs to be made about Zen "enlightenment". It is nothing special. The enlightened mind is not different from the everyday mind, except that it is enlightened. This understanding serves to emphasize the here, the now and the natural. It is unlike the Christian "rebirth" experience insofar as the latter emphasized a restored relationship with the supernatural
dimension and a special opening of the soul to Jesus with an eye to the promise of the future coming of the Kingdom.

In light of these considerations, we can now turn to an examination of "method" in the spiritual life as it is represented in the thought of Johnston and Merton. The reflections in the first part of this chapter argue that there is a fundamental difference (that of non-dualism vs. dualism) between the characteristic approaches of the two religious traditions of Japanese Zen Buddhism and Roman Catholicism. This difference is meaningful for the issue of "goals and methods" in spirituality. Moreover, it has a special relevance for the subject of this study.

If we can establish a difference between Roman Catholicism and Zen Buddhism by using their acceptance or non-acceptance of a set of dualistic distinctions (natural, supernatural; God, man; here, there; present, future; "good works", grace; means, goal) and if we consider that this difference can be described on a continuum running from "dualism" on the extreme which recognizes these conceptual distinctions to "non-dualism" on the extreme which does not, then we can say that the thinking of Thomas Merton increasingly seems to accord with that pole at which we also find Zen Buddhism whereas the thinking of William Johnston increasingly accords with the opposite pole. However, this is not to say, as has sometimes been argued, that Merton "became a Buddhist". Nor is it to say that Johnston fails to appreciate the insights of Zen. Rather, it is a question of different slants which characterize the thought, writing and spirituality of the two men.

Merton continued to make use of the distinction between the
natural and the supernatural, even in his last public talk when he identified it as one of the basic distinctions between Zen and Christianity. He speaks Christian language when he talks of the need for grace. His thinking continues to have a touch of future orientation. Yet, despite these Christian formulations in his thought, his writing more and more falls into line with that Zen perspective which he found so compatible. Can we not find in Merton's understanding of grace less of an effort to see it according to traditional theology and more an understanding of it as an accord between the givenness (the gift) of being and the gratitude of the conscious person who lives with trust in the fundamental process of reality operative even in the darkness at the core of human life... (operative, we might say, though Merton did not, even on the unconscious level)? Can we not detect an increased emphasis on the here and now? The Asian Journal, in particular, is full of this sort of thing. Thus:

I'm glad I came here. All morning alone on the mountainside, in the warm sun, now overclouded. Plenty of time to think. Reassessment of this whole Indian experience in more critical terms. Too much movement. Too much "looking for" something: an answer, a vision, "something other". And this breeds illusion. Illusion that there is something else. Differentiation - the old splitting-up process that leads to mindlessness, instead of the mindfulness of seeing all-in-emptiness and not having to break it up against itself. Four legs good; two legs bad.

Let me try to contrast the position expressed by Merton - the "mindfulness of seeing all-in-emptiness" in such passages as the one above with the position Johnston characteristically takes. Johnston believes that all human beings are moving
towards the same goal, which is best expressed in Christian
terms: man is returning to the Father. We see that Johnston is
here making a statement about the fundamental state of being of
the universe. This is the way things are. It is the way things
are irrespective of how man may think about them. Since this is
the case all men, in reality, irrespective of their particular
vision of their spiritual life, are on this path. All men are
"returning to the Father". (Since all men, however, have some
insight into the true nature of their being, all men, irrespective
of the religious framework through which they understand their
spiritual lives, have something valuable to say about the way
and the journey.)

Johnston emphasizes the significance of the Christian formu-
lation. It is his accepted belief system. However, it is also
an admitted part of his accepted belief system that Christianity
springs from the pivotal reality of all human spiritual life in
a conscious and manifest way. Christianity has, as Johnston says,
"the plum of Divine Sonship". From a human perspective, Johnston
admits the relativity of his belief system (of all human knowledge)
but at the same time he accepts the absolutist claims made by
that system for itself. For Johnston, then, the "return to the
Father" has paramount significance as a description of spirituality.
And this description contains two overriding conceptions which
colour his view of spirituality, giving it a dualistic tinge.
The expression "returning to the Father" contains 1) the concept
of person, of "Father" and of relationship ("Father and child")
with its demand for communication, and 2) the concept of movement,
of "return", with its requirement of extension (of "breadth") in
both time and space.
To this point I have discussed "duality/non-duality" as pertaining to the living of spirituality with special emphasis on the dimension of time, the essential framework for discussions of "goal" and "method". Another aspect of human existence, that of the corporeal, which is of especial importance for "method in spirituality", can also be examined in light of this dichotomy. In Zen and the Bible, Father Kakichi Kadowaki relates a story told by Zen master Momon Yamada:

Once an American priest came to see me. He sat down in front of me and said, "Teach me the satori of Zen. Tell me what state of mind a person attains when he is enlightened." He was certainly asking a lot! If the answer to that question could be put into words and we could understand enlightenment just by hearing about it, we wouldn't have to go to all this trouble doing zazen. The priest probably thought that as long as he was in Japan, he'd have an instant enlightenment before going home. I replied by saying, "Before I answer your question, I've got one of my own. Christ said that unless you have the mind of a little child you cannot enter heaven. Now just what is the mind of a little child? What is the psychological state of a baby? Someday you'll be going to heaven, won't you? In what frame of mind do you intend to go?" The priest became lost in deep thought. After a while, though, he came up with a very fine answer, "The mind of a baby is Mu." He said the same thing that Zen teaches. So I said, "That's right. It's Mu and to understand what Mu is is to be enlightened." Delighted, he slapped his thigh and said, "I understand!" "It's too soon to feel so happy. You've understood here (pointing to his head), but in Zen you have to understand here (pointing to his hara or belly)." "I majored in philosophy in college. If I understand up here, that's good enough."

Like many westerners, the American priest thought that intellectual knowledge was enough. The roshi valued a different kind of knowing, however, and tried to convey this to the priest,
who was apparently too caught up with his own kind of conceptual knowing to be able to see beyond it. Though it is overstating the case, it seems that religion in the west has become largely a matter of behavioural conformity to a set of moral laws coupled with assent to a body of doctrine, which only theologians and philosophers should seek to understand. Zen teaches that religious knowledge needs to become rooted in the gut. After all - for Zen - one's being is one's knowing. What one is is what one knows. Knowing and being are one. Knowing is all important - for it is not other than what one is. On the other hand, the Christian model has tended to see knowledge as "knowledge of", so that we have a separation between the knowing and the thing known or between conception and reality. In this context, a separation between "mind" and "body" is understandable.

Unfortunately, it may not be possible to appreciate just what the roshi meant by "knowing in the belly" unless and until one has some such experience. Ultimately, this means that one has to be a certain way in order to know a certain truth. Such comments as that of the roshi however indicate one of its challenges of the Zen tradition - as of the Yoga tradition of India - to the west. For his comment provides a foil against which the west must question the bounds which it has traditionally drawn around spiritual life.

Although the first chapter of this study dealt with the ways in which Johnston and Merton understood human nature, one of the things which we did not discuss at that time was something which might be called "spiritual anatomy", a matter which sounds more esoteric than it actually is. Neither Merton nor Johnston
discusses this topic in great detail. Merton deals with it in an indirect way; not so much in what he says as in the general tone and attitude underlying his understanding of spirituality. Johnston talks about the matter more particularly. At this point I want to examine what he has to say about it. Through an understanding of how both men deal with this issue we may be able to appreciate how they find value in the topic of "method" in the spiritual life.

In his most recent work, *Mirror Mind: Spirituality and Transformation*, Johnston discusses the role of the hara (or belly) in the Japanese Buddhist tradition. The Japanese see the belly as the centre of human existence. They associate it with femininity and generativity (through contact with it, Johnston says, one comes into contact with one's mother's mother), with the "original nature" and with the unconscious. Through specific exercise the Japanese may seek to keep awareness in the belly and to move always from that centre of being.

Johnston notes that this idea is not so far removed from Christianity as might be thought. He recalls various notions that have existed in the Christian tradition: "the ground of being, the core of being, synteresis, "Seelenfunklein", the sovereign point of the spirit." He reflects that Bede Griffiths has suggested that it is precisely this centre or core of the human personality where eastern and western spirituality can meet.

Johnston's work places great emphasis on the importance of being aware of all aspects of human nature: the feelings, the unconscious, thoughts, images and so on. He also stresses the
need to be aware of the body. He affirms the body and tells us that the old dichotomy between body and spirit (or soul), which saw the one as bad and the other as good, needs to be reassessed. Indeed, for Johnston, the life of Christ is itself the greatest affirmation of the human body. Johnston reflects on the corporal nature of true Christian spirituality, especially in its Catholic form, where Eucharistic mysticism plays such a central role. He also mentions various biblical passages which emphasize the role of the body in spiritual life, recalling such images as David dancing naked, of Magdalene washing the feet of Jesus, of Jesus himself washing the feet of his disciples. He recalls Jesus breaking bread and saying: "This is my body: take and eat". He recalls the crucifixion and the resurrection.

Nevertheless, though Johnston stresses the vital significance of accepting the body and of exploring its potentials and its use in the spiritual life, he places major emphasis on the notion of "transformation". The physical is indeed the physical as we know it and needs to be explored in such terms, but in the spiritual life we discover, as we explore more deeply and more fully, that there is an aspect to the material which is not material as we usually understand it. The radical dichotomy and antagonism between matter and spirit cannot be maintained. Rather the Christian must accept the material and corporeal (even as God accepted it in taking on the flesh) since it is in and through the flesh that salvation is being worked out and that the process of spiritualization is taking place. In this regard, Johnston makes reference to the ideas of his fellow Jesuit, Teilhard de Chardin, who understands all of physical life as undergoing a process of
Christification or spiritualization. In discussing the process of transformation in *Mirror Mind* Johnston speaks of the transformation of the breath and of the body. He suggests that we have to move in and through the centre of our being. This involves an initial acceptance of the physical centre but then the transcending of that physical centre into an even more profound centre.

He writes:

But as meditation develops, just as one transcends the breathing, so one transcends the tandan. Just as one must eventually forget the breathing, so one must eventually forget the body. But (and here we are back to the paradoxes) just as there is a breathing that is not breathing, so there is a center that is not a center. When I say that it is not a center, I mean that it is not located specifically at the navel or at any part of the body. But it is of the utmost importance, for it is nothing other than the true self. To this center we must return continually; we must never lose touch with it.

Johnston suggests that we have to get in touch with our "true nature". The last chapter noted the richness and variety and fulness which Johnston, in consonance with much modern psychology, discovers in man. To be in accord with the "true nature" man must claim this fulness. Later in this chapter I will indicate some of the many ways or methods through which Johnston suggests man can do this. Here I want to note Johnston's change of emphasis, inspired I believe by his study of Zen, from the traditional duality of matter and spirit which viewed the former as evil and something to be overcome to a more dynamic view which sees matter as something which must be accepted and which only then is somehow transformed. Even given this affirmation of the unity in man of matter and spirit, however, Johnston tends to give the edge to the spirit. As he puts it:
... one can use another Zen saying: "Examine the place where you stand." The meaning is that you should pause, recollect yourself, keep in touch with your deepest self.

The point I wish to make here, however, is that while this process of recollection is at first associated with the belly... one must go beyond the physical to a center that is spaceless and timeless. If one remains too long with the physical body, one's progress may be obstructed.4

In reflecting on this passage I call to mind a theme often reiterated in the Zen Buddhist tradition: form is emptiness; emptiness is form. I wonder if Johnston hasn't gotten the first part of this but not the second. A Christianity with a negative attitude towards the body and the material world tends either to ignore form (at least bodily form) altogether or to de-value it. Johnston, by contrast, affirms the body and the world - recognizing them in their own right. He begins with these. According to Johnston, however, a transformation takes place. One comes to see that there is a body which is not the body as ordinarily understood. "One must go beyond the physical to a center that is spaceless and timeless." Such a center, having no boundaries, can indeed be called empty. "Form is emptiness."

When I try to superimpose the Buddhist understanding onto Johnston's Christian formulation, however, it seems to me that the move from form to emptiness is not matched by a corresponding move from emptiness to form. Johnston's acceptance of the everyday world - the world of our senses, of our emotions, and of our thoughts - goes hand in hand with his emphasis on the process of transformation. One must begin with the here and now but go beyond that. One must, in Buddhist terms, come to see that form is
emptiness. On the most obvious level, this means that we come to realize the physical is not ultimate. We are not finally bound by the parameters of time and space and body. We are indeed physical (and psychological) but through spiritual development we realize the emptiness of these forms. For Johnston these dimensions of our existence are not the core dimension. They must be transcended.

Johnston himself does not refer to this insight of his by using the Buddhist notion of emptiness. However, it seems valuable to do so. And if we now take such a reading one stage further, we can suggest that it has ontological implications. No particular form has true existence in its own right; all form is dependent on other form which, at the same time, is dependent on it. This means that all ordinary realities and ordinary awareness of them must be understood in a relativistic way. In Johnston's understanding this relativity is best seen in his emphasis on the necessity for transformation. We cannot rest in any of these forms, although we must at least begin with them.

The next step is to raise the question that if none of the specific forms that we know in our everyday, physical and psychological worlds, can be said to exist in and of itself, self-sustent and self-sufficient, but rather to be bound of its very nature to other forms, then on what do these forms as a whole depend? The Buddhist, depending on his particular school, may answer that they have no foundation or that they are all mutually co-arising or co-originating or that they depend on mind only. In the recognition of the ultimate emptiness of the world, it becomes quite impossible to read Johnston's spirituality through
revision of Buddhist metaphysics. Johnston accepts a supernatural reality which is other than and in every way superior to those manifested forms, which stand in relationship to it as product to source, creation to creator or, in the more personal language favoured by Johnston, as child to father. That reality - which is complete in its own being - is God.

Johnston associates his "timeless and spaceless" reality (which I have suggested may be equated with the Buddhist emptiness) with "the Word", which is "the Way", the fundamental matrix of all human experience. It is this which provides the ultimate meaning (as the individual religions may provide a relative meaning) of human existence. And, for Johnston, "the Word" has a special association with word and rationality in their ordinary sense. Hence they may be contrasted with silence. Man participates in a universe of discourse. The universe is not ultimately silent because God exists. God has revealed himself to man as "the Word". The very existence of human discourse and human rationality point to this reality as the natural points to the supernatural, though only the self-revelation of God to man indicates the true measure of that meaning. This curiously Jungian theme, to which I shall return later, distinguishes Christianity from Zen Buddhism. Zen proclaims the radical insufficiency of all formulations as of all forms and, while deeply aware of the existence, reality and power of thought, turns its ear to the resounding silence at the heart of the world.

Since Johnston associates his "emptiness" with something concrete and positive he actually sets up a "duality" between two orders of reality. This suggests that there is a "mundane"
and a "spiritual" order. A creative tension exists between the two which are related through the process of transformation of the one (the "mundane") into the other (the "spiritual"). The real difference between this view and the traditional Catholic view is that Johnston's view works with (rather than against) the world and the flesh in the process of spiritual development and, while Johnston does situate man's final goal in the realm after death, he nevertheless recognizes that the spiritual order exists in the here and now and that spiritual experience is not something which begins only after death.

This approach is consonant with Johnston's use of the "states of consciousness" paradigm in modern psychology. Ultimately it is structured by an implicit evaluation which recognizes the "world transformed" as "higher" than the "mundane world". The process of transformation takes place precisely in the living (and experienced) spirituality of the individual (a very Jungian theme). It may be actuated in a variety of ways and so this emphasis on the individual and on individual differences is matched by an interest in the diversity of ways by which spiritual development may be furthered.

While Johnston accepts and affirms the everyday world and its role in the spiritual life I have suggested that there is a dualism implicit in his view. His movement from "form is emptiness" is not really matched by the other side of the Buddhist equation "emptiness is form". The traditional Catholic tendency to "situate" the goal of the spiritual life somewhere other than "here" and sometime other than "now" (precisely "in heaven" "after death") is different from the Buddhist emphasis on the here and now. If
Johnston may be said to move through the realities of the present world to a centre that is "timeless and spaceless" his understanding nevertheless carries more than a hint of the traditional view. The chapter entitled "Theological Reflections" will reinforce this reading of Father Johnston's work by pointing out that the "ultimate reality" for him in the dialectic between "word" and "silence" is the former and not the latter.

Once we grasp the approach Father Johnston takes to the everyday world and to the process of transformation (a key notion in his philosophy as can be seen by the subtitle he chose for his most recent book *The Mirror Mind: Spirituality and Transformation*) we can understand the role played by "methods" and "techniques" in the spiritual life as he sees it. Johnston tells us quite clearly that anything which truly develops human nature and human potential will help in spiritual growth. This rather optimistic appraisal of human nature fits in with Johnston's belief that man's nature is unified in the process of transformation into the spiritual - a rather Teilhardian concept. His approach is clearly time oriented: man is moving into the future both individually and as a whole. The future into which man is moving - a future which is shrouded in mystery to human eyes - is characterized by a "transformation" of man's fallen state into a gloried state.

In practice, Johnston's theory about the "unity" of mind and body - his rejection of the old view which saw the world, the flesh and the devil as all of a nasty piece - allows for a multiplicity of "ways" in the spiritual life. I sense that Johnston's acceptance of the physical world and his celebration
of the breadth of man's potential experience is a genuine reflection of his participation in the modern world. Yet hints of the old duality remain. The physical world can be understood as real only when one sees its involvement in transformation into the spiritual. In practice, Johnston's "ways" include a lot of methods for working with the body and the emotions and other aspects of human nature with an eye to their transformation. "One must go beyond the physical." Johnston's view of the world, then, is always future oriented. His duality, which we discussed in the first chapter on "Human Nature" in terms of his emphasis on diversity and variety in human potential, now manifests itself in his concern with time. The emptiness of the Buddhist who understands not only that "form is emptiness" but also that "emptiness is form" is rooted in the present. Johnston's vision grows out of and maintains its orientation towards Christian eschatology.

With this orientation towards the very great diversity of potential in human nature, towards acceptance of the various aspects of that nature (including the physical and emotional) and towards transformation into a spiritualized future Johnston is able to make use of the "methods" which he finds in eastern spirituality. His concern with transformation suggesting a tension between "what is" and "what will be" naturally leads to a concern with ways of transformation, with getting from here to there.

Johnston emphasizes this. He tells us that the very notion of "way" can be a source of unification between religious traditions. As early as Silent Music he wrote: "Way is a word
that brings us together." In that study he emphasized the similarity between the Chinese Tao (道) or "way" and the Greek (ὁδός), which, he noted, was mentioned some 880 times in the Septuagint. Johnston understands these "ways" as part of the search for wisdom. As he puts it:

There are many ways to wisdom. Each religion is a way and within each religion many smaller ways open up ....... All these ways influence one another. Knowledge of other ways can help the wanderer to find his own path and it can guide the traveller or pilgrim as he journeys towards wisdom, sometimes in anguish and dismay and temptation.

In Silent Music he tells us of some of these ways. There does not seem to be any real order to his presentation and the wide variety finds unification only in their focus on the process of transformation and growth towards wisdom. Johnston's most recent work, The Mirror Mind, is at least partially organized around the notion of "ways". Various chapter sub-headings indicate that this concept provides at least a partial and quite significant focus for Johnston's study of the Zen Buddhist tradition. A list of the ways towards wisdom which Johnston mentions includes:

1. repetition of a word or mantra: eg. litany, Ave Maria, rosary
2. attention to the breathing
3. the use of the mandala and other methods of deepening consciousness - the crucifix, the tabernacle
4. friendship
5. purification or healing
6. the way of the scientist
7. transcendental meditation
8. Zen and Yoga
9. meditation associated with biofeedback and the use of machines
10. Jesus Prayer
11. Pentecostalism
12. group prayer
13. relishing an obscure sense of presence (note especially the Quakers)
14. Christian Zen
15. Japanese tea ceremony, flower arrangement, archery etc.
16. "vertical meditation" - which "spirals down into its own silent depths, to the core of the being".
17. "secular meditation"
18. spiritual training: art of leading a person to what he already possesses. This may have much to do with realization and conscious grasp of hypnagogic imagery that fills the mind with its richness and depth.
19. techniques for entering mystical silence: for restricting or rejecting the rational consciousness thus allowing the deeper, intuitive consciousness to rise to the surface of the mind.
20. listening to every sound
21. visualization
22. developing the "interior senses"
23. fasting
24. dancing
25. the way of love

Johnston's list is endlessly suggestive. He notes that any or all of the methods he has mentioned (and he hasn't tried to be
systematic or thorough) will be effective for individuals of particular inclinations. The personality of the individual is an important factor here. From Johnston's perspective one ought to use those methods for which one has a particular affinity.

It is worth noting the manner in which Johnston discusses method in the spiritual life. He uses an approach of differentiation and elaboration. He isolates various techniques - although he also stresses the importance of having an overall framework of a "faith commitment" in order that true growth in spirituality can take place. Techniques by themselves will not work, although they can play an important part in the spiritual life.

Johnston tells us the "faith" is vitally important to the spiritual life. Without it, he states, no progress in spirituality is possible and, by example, he reflects that it was probably for this reason that Aldous Huxley didn't get very far. Johnston reflects that "faith" can be found in Buddhism as well as in Christianity. The objects of the faiths are different but the function is the same. The Buddhist has faith that there is a "Buddha nature" and the Christian has faith in God. It is these faiths which sustain the individual search for wisdom, especially through its periods of "anguish and dismay and temptation".

One distinction does exist between the faith of the Zen Buddhist and the faith of the Christian, however, which Johnston does not seem to discuss. Since the goal of the Christian life is always in the future - at least this side of the grave - faith fills the gap between here and there. This is the case even for the Christian who is in the state of grace. By contrast, the enlightened Zen Buddhist, who has seen the heart of reality, has no awareness
of this kind of tension. There is no need to fill a non-existent gap between the emptiness of form and the form of emptiness.

Techniques, however, do have their place. If they can be identified and isolated, it may be possible to "lift" some of them out of their original religious framework and adapt them to another. A secondary advantage to be gained from the study of "techniques" in other religious traditions is that one can seek for them anew in one's own tradition. Johnston is able to discover anew the role of the rosary, of the tabernacle and even of friendship.

Johnston is quite aware of the limitations of "methods" in spirituality. However, this does not prevent him from giving them a lot of attention. Merton, on the other hand, does not seem to have as great an interest in "methods". In several places throughout his works he is rather critical of "techniques". In the Asian Journal he talks several times about mandalas in Tibetan Buddhism but then he tells us that he really doesn't think that they will be much of use to him. One has the impression that he finds them rather exotic. More than that, however, his particular approach to spirituality - which contrasts with that of Johnston - hardly allows for specific "techniques" which by their very nature tend to place the attention on less than the whole of life or, on the other hand, to select "special" elements of reality for attention. One senses that - increasingly - the whole of life became sacred for Merton. Both the style of Merton's life and the orientation of his religious metaphysic would tend to lead him away from any interest in particular "ways" or "techniques" of spirituality. In a letter to Father Johnston,
cited in *The Still Point*, Merton disagrees with the emphasis the former placed on the "technicalities" of Zen practice - specifically on the breath and the postures. \(^{23}\)

Johnston's "Zen" is social: he studied in traditional Zendos and, as a member of the Japanese Christian community, seeks ways of helping the evolution of an oriental Christianity, which he recognizes would be different from the European models. In this context his interest in Eastern "methods" has a special importance. Merton's "Zen" like that of R. H. Blyth, whose *Zen in English Literature and Oriental Classics* and other writings are delightfully irreverent in their wisdom, was wholly individualistic. By the time he travelled to Asia, there to observe Buddhism first hand on its own ground, Merton had already written the studies on that tradition which had won him accolades from Buddhists themselves.

His Eastern trip was meant to involve him in the renewal of Christian monasticism in the East. However, as he himself acknowledged, it was more importantly - for him, at least - to provide an opportunity for first-hand encounter with Asian religion. The questions in his mind during the trip were not so much those concerning the "specifics" of what could be adapted from eastern monasticism into the western tradition as those which bore on what Merton called "the great affair". \(^{24}\) This, I suspect, was the question of whether or not the religions were fundamentally the same or fundamentally different, whether or not commitment to a specific religious framework was essential to spiritual growth.

Despite his lack of interest in "techniques" of spirituality, Merton's own spiritual life was lived in a clear-cut way. His
was the way of contemplation in solitude. Merton's quest for solitude took shape primarily through his life as a monk in the Trappist Order and through his work as a writer. Towards the end of his life his contemplative vision was also operative in his discovery of photography.

As a monk Merton sought to surrender all claims to those notions and experiences which claimed the men of the world: to security, power, wealth, amusement, pleasure. Eventually he realized that his monastic vows demanded surrender of all claims to intellectual, aesthetic and spiritual experiences as well. The detachment implicit in the vows was total. The monk was truly a dead man.

In the next chapter I will discuss the role of experience in the spiritual lives of both Johnston and Merton. Yet the dimension of experience in Merton's life can be properly understood only against the background of his monastic vows: his commitment to contemplation and to the surrender of everything implicit in those vows. For Merton, the monk, more than for Johnston, the missionary, the concern for experience grew out of and lead into the realization of the emptiness of all experience. For Merton, the monk, the movement into the "special" world of the monastery carried forward his spiritual life. But the further development of that spirituality brought him to an appreciation of the mundane world which he did not have when he began. The disgust with the world—and, more significantly, with himself—which coloured the years of his conversion and entry into the religious life, dropped away. To his surprise, he discovered a new affinity with the world he had sought to escape by entering the monastery. As early
as 1953, writing in *The Sign of Jonas*, Merton reflected on a visit to Louisville:

We drove into town with Senator Dawson, a neighbor of the monastery, and all the while I wondered how I would react at meeting once again, face to face, the wicked world. Perhaps things I had resented about the world when I left it were defects of my own that I had projected upon it. Now, on the contrary, I found that everything stirred me with a deep and mute sense of compassion ... I went through the city, realizing for the first time in my life how good are all the people in the world and how much value they have in the sight of God.

Notice the difference between Johnston and Merton. As we see it in the writing, Johnston begins with arguing for an acceptance of the world. That acceptance, however, must be seen as a first stage in a process leading to transcendence. We move through the physical centre to a centre that is timeless and spaceless. Merton begins by escaping from the world. He finds in it reason for disgust rather than celebration. His escape, however, transforms him in such a way that he comes back with a renewed appreciation for the world. And this renewed appreciation which is expressed in 1953 in very Christian terms of its value in the sight of God, increasingly comes to be expressed silently — without any overt theology. "The mindfulness of seeing all-in-emptiness."

Just as Merton's life of increasing solitude brought to him a profound appreciation of the world and a recognition of his deep connection with it, so did his writing, his principal means of communication with the world, bring him more deeply into solitude. Merton once reflected on this:
Writing is one thing that gives me access to some real silence and solitude. Also, I find that it helps me to pray, because when I pause at my work I find that the mirror inside me is surprising clean and deep and serene and God shines there and is immediately found, without hunting, as if He had come close to me while I was writing.

Merton discovered the meaning of his life through solitude. And it was particularly this orientation, the view of the monk, which he took with him — and which, in a real sense, took him — into his interaction with the religions of the east. In all his dialogue with Buddhists the voice of the monk — indeed the voice of the hermit — predominated.

For Johnston, the goal of all spiritual life — the return to the Father — is the same. It is one. But the means men use to seek this goal are different. This implies a distinction between means and goal which requires the future orientation so popular in Christianity. It also emphasizes multiplicity of "ways" in spirituality. Johnston also stresses the notion of "grace", which requires the natural-supernatural distinction used by Christianity.

Merton, too, speaks of the supernatural function and source of "grace". Yet as I read his thought he is far more convicted by the Buddhist notion of "grace" which sees it as the quality of "givenness", the "suchness" of ordinary reality. In his writings about Zen, Merton was much taken by the thought of Hui Neng who emphasized not the distinction but the sameness of "goal" and "means" in spirituality. Dhyana is prajna: meditation is wisdom.

The final word on "method in spirituality" must be this: the "method" of the two men was the way they lived their lives.
Zen Buddhism is a monastic way. Merton - the Zennish Christian - was a monk. Johnston - the missionary, with a keen appreciation for the distinctiveness of both Christianity and Buddhism - was not. The way these two men lived - as a monk and as a missionary - coloured not only their own spirituality but also their views of interreligious dialogue. Johnston could borrow "techniques" and "insights" from Zen which could be incorporated into Christianity. Merton recognized an affinity with the Zen monk that went beyond all religious tradition, all need for particular "ways".

This chapter, and the preceding one on "Human Nature", have been of a kind. Both have sought to abstract from the writings of Johnston and Merton reflections and models, which could provide us with an understanding of the Roman Catholic dialogue with Japanese Zen Buddhism. The following chapter takes a different slant. It will trace the course the dialogue has taken not so much in the thought as in the lives of the two men.
The Experience of Encounter

In 1959 Thomas Merton sent his translation of parts of the *Verba Seniorum* to the Japanese Zen Buddhist monk Daisetz Suzuki. Struck by similarities between stories of the Egyptian Desert Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries and those of the Zen masters, Merton suspected that Suzuki might be similarly impressed. Later Merton was to reflect:

> There are countless Zen stories that almost exactly reproduce the *Verba Seniorum*—incidents which are obviously likely to occur wherever men seek and realize the same kind of poverty, solitude and emptiness.1

The similarities noticed by Merton did indeed impress Dr. Suzuki. The Zen monk had a reputation as the leading "missionary" of his Buddhist tradition to the English-speaking world. Suzuki had himself studied some aspects of the Christian tradition and in 1957 published a comparative study of Meister Eckhart and Zen under the title *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist*.

Sometime around 1958 Suzuki and Merton engaged in a written dialogue, first published in *New Directions* in 1961 and subsequently included, under the title "Wisdom in Emptiness", as the second part of Merton's *Zen and the Birds of Appetite*. Merton later decried the kind of approach he used in his own "final remarks" at that time. He was, he said, "tempted to cut them out altogether", since, as he put it,
...they are so confusing. Not that they are "wrong" in the sense of "false" or "erroneous", but because any attempt to handle Zen in theological language is bound to miss the point. If I leave these remarks where they are, I do so as an example of how not to approach Zen.

Merton had finally come to realize that the way to approach Zen was through experience. Yet indications of what he would later realize clearly and fully are already present in his earlier work. Even in the Suzuki dialogue Merton struck on themes that would remain central to his study of the East. Above all he stressed the importance of "wisdom in emptiness", a theme which serves as a leit-motif for his entire eastern dialogue. The quest for wisdom demands the surrender of all that is false, especially false images of the self and false religion. The process of surrender returns us to a fundamental innocence, beyond distinctions and contradictions of any kind, including those of theology:

The thing about Zen is that it pushes contradictions to their ultimate limit where one has to choose between madness and innocence. And Zen suggests that we may be driving toward one or the other on a cosmic scale. Driving toward them because, one way or the other, as madmen or innocents, we are already there.

It might be good to open our eyes and see.

The dialogue between Merton and Suzuki stands out as an event in the spiritual history of the world. Of far greater importance than issues discussed or ideas shared is the very fact that individuals of different religious traditions met
together in a genuine attempt to encounter one another. This is the fundamental basis of the dialogue. It is its experiential framework, at once the context of the dialogue in which discussions and spiritual practices could be shared, and the primary content of that dialogue. It is one thing to condemn people or cultures for immorality, falsehood or ugliness when one has no breadth of experience or depth of contact with them. Once that contact and experience are established, however, it becomes quite another matter to deny the good, the true or the beautiful in those people or cultures. The very contact and experience themselves have a compelling quality which moves individuals to question their ideological stands.

Contact and experience are not a matter of mere physical proximity. They require a way of seeing, an orientation towards understanding. In their dialogue with Zen Buddhism both Merton and Johnston demonstrate particular ways of seeing and understanding, which allow them a creative orientation towards their discussion of experience. Johnston and Merton maintain the same contrasting emphases—on duality and non-duality respectively—that characterize their reflections on human nature. Yet the choice of experience as the central dimension of the dialogue is common to both.

Johnston and Merton speak as individual human beings and as Catholics. They speak with reference to their personal life situations as well as a spiritual tradition and a community. Consequently in their dialogue with Zen both men refer to the experiential stream of Catholicism, found above all in its mysticism. Here they are dealing with a specific type of
experience, and reflection on experience, that together form the mystical tradition. At the same time, Catholic mystical theology provides a scheme which Johnston and Merton can use in order to reflect upon all their encounters with Zen. The two men use that scheme in characteristically different ways. The difference will be discussed at the end of the present chapter, and once again in the following chapter, "Theological Reflections". Accordingly the present chapter has a twofold structure: (1) presentations of concrete encounters from two lives, and (2) consideration of the Catholic mystical tradition as it bears on this inter-religious dialogue by providing a matrix for understanding experience.

The first of the two sections is the more important. The concrete encounters - with men, with art works, with practices - are the very heart of the dialogue. And already, in the earliest encounter of Merton with Suzuki, an encounter which took place in New York in the spring of 1964 at Suzuki's request, we find evidence of this. In that encounter we have the coming together of two men formed in two different religious traditions but nevertheless sharing a particular type of life, a particular type of experience and a particular openness to dialogue. Merton later wrote of his encounter with Suzuki in a way that can be used to illustrate the stages of his own engagement with Zen. The following, deceptively simple passage reflects Merton's "movement in dialogue" from the specific and concrete, through and beyond the cultural, and back to the concrete:

One had to meet this man in order to fully appreciate him. He seemed to me to embody all the indefinable qualities of the
"Superior Man" of the ancient Asian, Taoist, Confucian and Buddhist traditions. Or rather in meeting him one seemed to meet the "True Man of No Title" that Chuang Tzu and the Zen Masters speak of. And of course this is the man one really wants to meet. Who else is there? In meeting Dr. Suzuki and drinking a cup of tea with him I felt I had met this one man.

This pregnant passage, typical of Merton, introduces several of the themes that weave their way throughout the dialogue. It begins with an expression of the necessity of encounter, the historical and simple human basis of the dialogue which, in Merton's reflection, becomes also its major content: "One had to meet this man in order to fully appreciate him". In meeting "this one man" Merton discovers the fulness of the Eastern traditions by confronting their "indefinable qualities" in the flesh, the only way they can be fully appreciated. Immediately, however, Merton realizes that Suzuki is better described as transcending tradition altogether. He is, in language provided by one Eastern philosophy for such a person, the "True Man of No Title". Recognition of this person and desire to meet him go hand in hand and Merton significantly locates the presence of the desire for this meeting in the human heart. The conjoining of the meeting and the desire leads Merton to pose a koan-like question, emphasizing a favourite theme of non-duality: "Who else is there?"

Finally in all simplicity the passage returns to the concrete. Merton shares a cup of tea with this man.

Examining this paragraph we are struck by the various insights it contains and the fluidity with which they are brought together. Shifting focus a little, we can also reflect on the
language Merton uses. Here lies one key to the dialogue. Merton chose to express his insights in language taken from Eastern tradition. This is only partially a reflection of his subject - Daisetz Suzuki. It is the courtesy of a truly wise heart. By using the language of the other to describe that other, Merton bridges the distance between them. Eastern title, koan-like question and concrete cultural detail combine as Merton sees the other through his understanding of the other's tradition, the tradition which informs the other's being and provides his or her standard of life. By moving beyond the implicit judgment of describing his encounter through the language of his own Christian tradition, Merton demonstrates his concern with meeting the other in simplicity, in humility and, above all, in emptiness.5

Yet Merton does use personal language to speak of his meeting with Suzuki. It is a powerful and startling expression that captures his response to the encounter. Merton tells us that meeting Suzuki was "like finally arriving at one's own home."6 Finally. Home. After all those years in a Catholic monastery. Home. Finally!

Recognizing the other, Merton recognized himself - not so much through that love which sought to affirm and respect distinctions as through that love which saw them all in their emptiness. The encounter between the monk who was a Christian and the monk who was a Zen Buddhist was not an encounter between strangers. Merton often used familial language to describe his engagement with Eastern spirituality. Witness his own trip to the countries of the east. On October 15, 1968
during the flight from San Francisco to Honolulu, Tokyo, Hong Kong and Bangkok Merton once again used his metaphor. He wrote: "I am going home".  

In "Little Gidding", Eliot reflects that "we shall not cease from exploration/and the end of all our exploring/will be to arrive where we started/and know the place for the first time". So Merton discovered. Encountering someone or something we think alien and discovering what we actually share, what we hold in common, provides a shock to expectation. It is always a surprise to discover our true home where we do not expect to find it. Such shocking confrontation can liberate one from old structures, as all truth liberates. In Mystics and Zen Masters Merton mused:

Indeed it is illuminating to the point of astonishment to talk to a Zen Buddhist from Japan and to find that you have much more in common with him than with those of your own compatriots who are little concerned with religion, or interested only in its external practice.

In light of his encounter with Suzuki Merton reflected on his own compatriots and his own religion. In comparison with the affinity he felt with Suzuki, Merton saw estrangement in his relationship to those Catholics who found religion uninteresting or who understood it as a matter of mere behavioural conformity. In the astonishment of this experience Merton found illumination. He discovered that it was possible for people belonging to different cultural and religious traditions to communicate on the deepest levels of a human nature shared beyond culture.
One expression of this discovery came to him during his study of an ancient Taoist sage. On his own testimony, the book which he most enjoyed writing was a re-translation - through his own contemplative vision - of English translations of the Chuang Tzu. Of Chuang Tzu himself Merton once remarked:

I think I may be pardoned for consorting with a Chinese recluse who shares the climate and peace of my own kind of solitude, and who is my own kind of person.

Through such contact with individuals of the Eastern traditions Merton's understanding of his "own kind of person" deepened and became more secure. His experiences with Suzuki and Chuang Tzu were identifiable encounters among a series of such interactions that occurred during his life, from his pre-Catholic days until the day of his death. It was a Hindu monk who had directed the spiritually questing Merton, still a student at Columbia University, to study the wisdom of the west. Merton did so. Subsequently he become a Catholic, but at various times during his life, especially in the late 50's and 60's, he also read deeply in the wisdom of the east.

The final weeks of Merton's life were spent in the company of eastern religious. What was perhaps the culminating spiritual experience of his life also took place in the east. The immediate stimulus was eastern religious art. Shortly before he left for his Asian trip Merton had a conversation with Deba Patnaik, during which Merton told him: "Deba, this journey is very crucial. It's a final one for me." The finality of which Merton spoke was not physical but spiritual. It was the culmination of his
long study of eastern religion, of the true, the good and the beautiful to be found in the eastern traditions and of the overarching question of the absolute validity of eastern religion. Perhaps Merton suspected that it might also be the occasion for a sort of spiritual finality in his own life.

The entry in The Asian Journal for December 4, 1968 describes an experience of which Merton remarked:

I know and have seen what I was obscurely looking for. I don't know what else remains but I have now seen and have pierced through the surface and have got beyond the shadow and the disguise.

The experience to which Merton here refers occurred while he was contemplating Buddhist statues at Polonnaruwa, Sri Lanka. Merton has seen the meaning of eastern religion. Moreover, as Merton describes it, it is quite possible that this experience was simultaneously an insight into the very nature and meaning of existence itself. Certainly Merton's study of the east had gone hand in hand with his study of himself, increasingly so during the last years of his life. His understanding of himself had deepened with the deepening of his understanding of eastern religion. This final experience of seeing into eastern religion may therefore have been a seeing into himself as well.

The experience was perhaps the most profound Merton ever had. He says as much:

I don't know when in my life I have ever had such a sense of beauty and spiritual validity running together in one aesthetic illumination.
Here the significance of the aesthetic dimension as a bridge between the two traditions is brought out. Unfortunately, there is not a great deal of discussion of this dimension in Merton's or in Johnston's writings on the dialogue. It is in passing comments by the two men that one senses that the beautiful was of crucial significance in their approach to the East. We will find some references to this a little later in our discussion of Johnston. Here we see it in Merton. Though it must be an aside in this paper, it is worth noting. Future studies, however, may well find this a worthy area of investigation.

One other powerful indication of the role played by the beautiful in Merton's dialogue should be mentioned. This lies in his late discovery and use of photography. Merton was an artist all his life - most notably in his poetry. In his later years he turned increasingly towards the eye, as had his father before him. It is as though, as an artist, he was practicing one of the basic messages Zen had for him: "It might be good to open our eyes and see." Merton's photographs of his Eastern trip, preserved for us in John Howard Griffin's Hidden Wholeness, are themselves expressive of his contemplatively trained vision.

It is at this point that Merton makes one of those remarks that serve to give us the most striking insights into his thought. The Sri Lanka experience, combining as it did spiritual and aesthetic elements, was so forceful and so full that it led Merton to feel it needed no superimposed Christian framework to explain it. Indeed, it needs no explanation of any kind. As an experience it stands complete in itself. It is its own meaning:
This is Asia in its purity, not covered over with garbage, Asian or European or American, and it is clear, pure, complete. It says everything; it needs nothing.

Merton's Asian Journal records meetings with important representatives of Eastern religious traditions. Notable encounters took place with Sonam Kazi, with the Dalai Lama and with Chatral Rimpoché. With Chatral Merton discussed many topics, including dharmakaya, the Risen Christ, suffering, compassion for all creatures, and motives for helping others. However, their primary topic of discussion was dzogchen, a form of Tibetan meditation which the Journal describes as "the ultimate emptiness, the unity of sunyata and karuna, going 'beyond the dharmakaya' and 'beyond God' to the ultimate perfect emptiness." The two men recognized that they both sought the same thing - perfect emptiness - and together they made a compact to achieve it.

Greatly impressed by this monk, Merton commented that, in the event of his choosing to live with a Tibetan teacher, he would pick Chatral. Then he added: "But I don't know yet if that is what I'll be able to do - or whether I need to." Here we see what must have been a recurrent theme in Merton's thoughts during his last trip: the possibility of studying Buddhist philosophy and practice first hand. Yet the questioning of his need to do this reflected his conviction that the "ultimate emptiness", though pointed to by all tradition, including Christianity, is nevertheless beyond any and all tradition. Earlier in Zen and the Birds of Appetite Merton had written:
We begin to divine that Zen is not only beyond the formulations of Buddhism but it is also in a certain way 'beyond' (and even pointed to by) the revealed message of Christianity.

Merton's first hand experience with the Buddhist tradition, his travel in Asia, his exposure to Asian art and, in particular, his meetings with Eastern monks and religious elicited from him a response of recognition. In exploring the "foreign" Buddhist tradition Merton discovered the bottomless depth of his own nature. Brother David Steindl-Rast, in a perceptive article on Merton's final trip, comments:

In his Asian Journal, more stirringly, maybe, than in other writings, he has put before us a spirituality of openness - not of dissipation but of compassion ... The challenge of this task will always remain valid. For "this kind of monasticism cannot be extinguished. It is imperishable. It represents an instinct of the human heart."

This "instinct of the human heart" led to Merton's encounters with the east and to the success of those encounters. "Openness to experience", which Steindl-Rast rightly sees as the key to Merton's Asian Journal, may also be used as a key to the life and thought of William Johnston. It is to these that we shall now turn.

By his own account, Johnston first developed a practical interest in Zen when he returned to Japan after his tertianship in Ireland, shortly after Merton sent his Verba Seniorum to Dr. Suzuki. Johnston was introduced to Zen by Father Enomiya-Lassalle, a fellow Jesuit missionary who had realized in the late 1940's
that his work in Japan could succeed only if he had a deep and broad understanding of Japanese culture. Knowing that Zen played a central role in that culture, he undertook its study. Besides reading, he practiced Zen meditation and to his very great surprise discovered that this practice led to a deepening of his own spiritual life as a Christian.

Father Johnston visited Zen temples with Father Lassalle. As a professor at the Jesuit-run Sophia University in Tokyo Johnston also came into contact with Japanese students. One of these invited him to visit the famous Engakuji Zen temple complex in Kamakura. Several visits, during which he was taught the practice of Zen meditation, left Johnston quite impressed. Commenting on the effect this practice had on his personal spirituality Father Johnston later wrote:

As far as interior disposition was concerned I changed nothing: but I found that I was enormously helped and, so to speak, deepened by the half-lotus posture which I then took on for the first time ... The Kamakura experience somehow helped my daily meditation, which I continued to make in the half-lotus position (I could never manage the full lotus—alas for Western legs) in some kind of Zen style ... It was a continuation, but at the same time a remarkable deepening of what I had been doing before I ever heard of Zen.

At the same time that Johnston was studying Zen a new form of Catholicism, seeking to recover its inherent contemplative dimension, was emerging in Japan. This movement, owing much inspiration and practical advice to Zen, has sometimes been referred to as "Christian Zen". It grew out of the Japanese context, the desire to find a Christianity suitable to that
context and the need to recover genuine spiritual experience within a Christian framework. This matrix of requirements would call for a great sharing on the part of all concerned, a sharing which still continues on today, promising to bring new and perhaps surprising developments in the future.

While this was taking place in Japan, the Second Vatican Council, which was to have a special effect on these missionary endeavours, was meeting in Rome. It gave official approval to the position of the more insightful missionaries, recognizing that spiritual and cultural goods were to be found in every tradition and that the Christian had a responsibility to "acknowledge, preserve and promote" those goods. Clearly Zen meditation and the emphasis on a non-dualistic metaphysic were among the goods in Japanese Buddhism which could be and were being acknowledged, preserved and promoted, even to the point of their being integrated with Christianity.

Outside of Tokyo Father Lassalle opened the first of several small centres where individuals interested in Zen practice could meet. These centres were very simple and spare Japanese-style rooms, with tabernacles on the floor so that Catholics could meditate in the presence of the Sacrament. Today many Japanese Catholic priests and nuns are taking the lead in the process of dialogue in Japan, forging new developments from the meeting of their traditional culture with their newly accepted Christianity.

Father Johnston acclaims the more contemplative form of Catholicism which emerges in this setting, noting that though it is well suited to the Japanese it is also of great value to non-Japanese Christians. Johnston has presented his "Christian
Zen" to groups of people in North America, Europe and Australia. Christian Zen is also the title Johnston chose for one of his earliest studies of the dialogue.Significantly, he was later to disclaim the label "Christian Zen". This may indicate a growing sense of Johnston's need to affirm and maintain the distinction between the traditions of which his own experience would convince him.

Interestingly enough, Johnston notices one special value in the use of Zen. Zen meditation can be practiced without any particular belief. Johnston tells us that a few agnostics among his acquaintances have actually come to experience God through the practice. Whatever its implications for Johnston's conviction of the necessity of faith, for development in the spiritual life, this does suggest that Zen meditation is well suited to a world which, lacking the experience of God, can hardly be expected to hold the belief.

The dialogic movement in Japan has also involved formal meetings between groups of Buddhists, Catholics and Protestants. Besides discussions and presentations these formal meetings have included religious practice. There have been sessions of Zen meditation, Protestant Bible services and Catholic Masses. Meeting in this fashion allows the participants to deepen their appreciation of the spirituality of different traditions.

In these meetings the participants have even been able to share what Johnston calls "a kind of communal religious experience". The contemplative slant of the meetings leads to each individual's entering the silence within. However, Johnston says that in the communal sitting there is also a silence and a presence that
emerge from the entire group, that are proper to the group itself. This is especially significant. People from different traditions are not just exchanging ideas but together entering into a spiritual experience beyond tradition, though one which is amenable to interpretation by the specific traditions. In these situations the Christian may experience a "sense of presence", understood by Johnston as the presence of God.

I have begun my review of the dialogue in Father Johnston's life with a discussion of institutional or communal aspects of it. It should be noted that this differs from my discussion of Merton, who really only in that final trip which culminated in his death, was actually involved in these aspects of the dialogue - and then, it seems clear, his own personal quest, his own questions, had priority over his more institutional concerns. If I have chosen this approach in my discussion of Johnston, it is because Johnston's entry into the dialogue does seem to have been tied up with his institutional concerns and because his own reflections on the meaning of dialogue are very much involved with this. Communal aspects of dialogue always concerned Johnston more than they did Merton. However, Johnston certainly had contacts with Zen which were less "formal" or official than those described above and whose aim was rather more personal than institutional. Speaking of his personal interest in Zen, Father Johnston tells us:

People have frequently asked me why I got interested in Zen at all, and as so often happens, this question is far from easy to answer ... Yet I suppose some answers can be given, even though I cannot vouch for the fact that they are the real ones. For one
thing, the contemplative ideal in Buddhism has always fascinated me. I never tire of gazing at the statues of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas rapt in deep silence, in nothingness, in unknowing ... And then there is the gentle smile of compassion that so often plays around the lips of the Bodhisattva. All this is beautiful.

It is not surprising that it was the contemplative ideal in Buddhism which appealed to Father Johnston. During his college days he had specialized in Christian mysticism, studying particularly the anonymous fourteenth century text, *The Cloud of Unknowing*. In the last part of this chapter we will examine the special role played by Christian mysticism in the dialogue. Here it is sufficient to note Johnston's personal sensitivity to the contemplative ideal and the significance he feels it had in his attraction to Buddhism. Mention of "deep silence, nothingness, unknowing" brings to mind Merton's "poverty, solitude, and emptiness". Johnston's responsiveness to these values leads him to approach the other tradition with openness and humility. Like Merton Johnston also responds to the beautiful in Buddhism, the beautiful which is beyond words and doctrines, touching a fundamental chord in human nature. Unfortunately, as noted above, we do not have detailed accounts of the role played by aesthetic appreciation in Johnston's and Merton's interest in the Buddhist tradition. The clues we do have - and here is one from Johnston - indicate that its role was of great importance.

For all his communion with Buddhists, Father Johnston continually maintains a sense of difference between the Christian and Buddhist traditions. One delightful story in *Christian Zen* illustrates this. As part of a Zen retreat (sesshin) Johnston
attended he had an interview (dokusan) with the Zen roshi. During the dokusan the following dialogue took place, with the roshi speaking first:

But tell me, what about your Zen? What are you doing?

I'm doing what you, I suppose, would call 'gedo Zen'.

Very good! Very good! Many Christians do that. But what precisely do you mean by 'gedo Zen'?

I mean that I am sitting silently in the presence of God without words or thoughts or images or ideas.

Your God is everywhere?

Yes.

And you are wrapped around in God?

Yes.

And you experience this?

Yes.

Very good! Very good! Continue this way. Just keep on. And eventually you will find that God will disappear and only Johnston San will remain.27

This story is striking for several reasons. First of all it is striking that a Roman Catholic priest should submit himself to the authority of a teacher in an alien religious tradition in a formal setting. This is something that Merton never did, though he apparently considered it, as we have seen. Johnston's sensitivity to the awkwardness inherent in this situation can be seen in a statement following the above conversation. He says: "One should not, I suppose, contradict the roshi, but nevertheless I did so."28 He effectively recognizes his position in relation
to the roshi, a position which he had accepted, and yet he goes beyond this position, taking issue with the roshi. Johnston himself is actor and audience for these two roles, the "locus" of their coming together and of the problem created for him as a Christian by their coming together. Johnston takes two perspectives: that of "Zen student" (as insider, as participant) and that of "student of the Zen tradition" (as observer, as outsider, as Christian). The fact that this Christian can participate in an alien religious tradition points to the priority of something fundamental, basic to and shared by both religions - points in fact to human nature. This priority of human nature and its role as mediator can be seen in an endearing episode related by Johnston:

The roshi was seated on a slightly raised platform, and down below, some distance away, was the cushion on which I was to squat. I wondered why he was so far away; later I put this question to a Japanese who knew the temple pretty well. Almost furtively he said, "I'll tell you the reason. The roshi drinks sake, and he doesn't want you to smell his breath." Seeing my surprise he went on hastily, "I don't mean that he drinks too much. He doesn't. But he drinks some, and he doesn't like people to know."

I reflected that, after all, Zen roshi were human beings, good men like the Irish Catholic pastors.  

Johnston recognizes the commonness of human nature across cultural and religious boundary. He uses this to make sense of the contradictions he experienced, including the contradiction between the roshi as enlightened Zen teacher and as sake drinker. Another observation can be made on this story. Johnston experiences being "wrapped around in God". This is not mere religious belief.
It is a profound personal and Christian experience. Yet the experience does not occur in any classical Christian setting. It occurs rather in a setting which one might have thought antithetical to such a Christian experience: a setting from another religious culture. And it is not merely a matter of a Christian's using the "props" of another religion.

The experience becomes the basis for part of the interaction between Johnston and the roshi. It becomes a matter of discussion. The roshi accepts and affirms Johnston's experience with ease. It does not seem a foreign experience to him. Yet he understands it in a manner which startles Johnston, as it might any Christian. He suggests that if Johnston continues to make this "very good" progress he will come to a stage where "God will disappear and only Johnston-San will remain". This is a very disturbing statement for a Christian, who believes that God is more real - ontologically, if not always psychologically - than he is himself. A basic tenet of Johnston's faith was being challenged. He had to respond:

Recalling the teaching of The Cloud that there are mystical moments when self totally disappears and only God remains, I said with a smile, "God will not disappear. But Johnston might well disappear and only God be left."

Johnston apparently contradicted the roshi and put forward his own belief. By recourse to a classical Christian text he recognized a fundamental similarity - and a radical difference - between the two traditions. He stated his conclusion firmly. Yet the roshi was not in the least perturbed. His response left
Johnston with matter for reflection.

"Yes, yes," he answered smilingly, "It's the same thing. That is what I mean."

The roshi was not bothered by terminology. The experience was what counted. Yet perhaps the roshi missed a crucial distinction that the Christian terminology recognized. On later reflection, however, Johnston came to the conclusion that what the roshi said was not a denial of God. It was a denial of duality. And this denial, presented in language startling to Father Johnston, led him to broaden his own understanding of God. In fact the encounter with the roshi pointed the way to the true understanding of God: "God is not, strictly speaking, an object. He is the ground of being." And since he is the ground of being, he is imageless, he is not to be grasped, not to be pinned down by some thought or idea. Naturally then as one goes deeper in meditation "God" will disappear.

In "Oriental Meditation", one of a series of six tapes he recently published under the title *Contemplative Prayer*, Johnston tells us that, although he studied under a Zen roshi for a while, eventually he stopped. In part this was a response to the difference he recognized between the attitude of the roshi and his own. The roshi thought that salvation was well and good but quite unnecessary in the presence of enlightenment. Johnston believed that salvation was the true goal of life and enlightenment merely something which it would be "nice to have as well".

Perhaps the question of whether or not salvation and enlightenment are ultimately the same can be determined only by an indi-
individual who has experienced both. However, since salvation is a process whose goal is beyond death, the question remains unresolved. Johnston is convinced that the "ultimate goal" of the Buddhist and the Christian is the same but that it lies shrouded in mystery for human eyes.

Even if it is not possible to determine the relationship between enlightenment and salvation it is still possible to compare the experiences which occur in the working out of both processes. Merton does this when he compares his monastic life with those led by his Zen Buddhist and Tibetan friends. He sees striking similarities. Yet, despite his own claim that the ultimate goal is the same for all, Johnston thinks that what is happening in the two traditions on this practical level is not the same. The conviction of this difference eventually led to his cessation of Zen practice, at least in a formal setting under the direction of a roshi.

Johnston states that when individuals of both traditions enter into the silence the Christian is often confronted with the "sense of presence", which the Zen Buddhist calls illusory. At the same time the Christian mystical tradition also recognizes a stage at which this "sense of presence" vanishes. Johnston affirms the validity of both experiences, that which is "dualistic" and that which he calls "monistic", and wishes to preserve the tension between them, a tension which is resolved theologically in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.

Father Johnston's thinking is open-ended and unresolved. This is at once his greatest weakness and his greatest strength. It contrasts with Merton's more simple and penetrating style.
Perhaps this is a reflection of the fact that many of the difficult issues which inevitably arise in everyday life lived in the midst of a foreign culture can be simply avoided by a cloistered approach that examines that same tradition from afar. In this sense Merton may be said to fail to deal with many of the nitty-gritty issues which must eventually be dealt with in the meeting of two cultures.

On the other hand Johnston seems to withdraw intellectually from the radical issues his confrontation has suggested. This is not to say that he returns to a pre-confrontational Catholicism. He does not. Nor is it to suggest inadequacy or unwillingness to explore truth. Johnston takes a position which allows him to live alongside his Buddhist friends and to engage in dialogue with them while yet ensuring that he himself will remain firmly grounded within his own tradition. He recognizes that they share an ultimate goal and states his deep respect for the Buddhist tradition (both positions officially taken by the Vatican Council), while reaffirming his own Christian commitment.

Johnston continually strives to pin down his "sense" of the difference between the two traditions. In part he does this by examining faith. The Buddhist takes refuge "in the Buddha, in the dharma and in the sangha" while the Christian places his faith "in Jesus, in the gospel and in the church". Johnston observes that church and sangha are different communities. This observation draws attention in the first place, to the influence upon Johnston's experience of the fact that he lives in Japan, amidst a community and a tradition different from those in which his own sense of self-identity was shaped. He deals with this community daily.
Naturally he sees differences. In the second place it suggests that sociological interpretations of the dialogue are necessary - that we will gain a full understanding of the dialogue only by understanding the ways in which two different communities actually come together in time and space. This will call for consideration of the ways in which culture and community reflect one another and the complications of introducing foreign elements into either side of that equation. These considerations are beyond our scope, however, and are mentioned only insofar as they arise directly from Johnston's dialogue. Though not developed, they do implicitly underlie much of what he has to say and may provide a very significant clue to an understanding of the difference between his thought and that of Merton.

The remainder of this chapter extends our consideration of the material that has proceeded, which centres on specific events in the lives of Fathers Merton and Johnston. It is important to see that these events are more than a series of occurrences in the lives of two men, making sense only in the framework of biography. In fact they point to (or intend) a specific area of the Roman Catholic tradition. This area, or aspect, of the Catholic tradition, which emerges as paramount in the inter-religious dialogue with Zen Buddhism, is Catholic mysticism, and especially apophatic mysticism or the mysticism of negation. It is to this dimension of their tradition that both men are led by their experiences in encounter with Zen.

Actually that to which their dialogue with Zen Buddhism continually returned them was already of vital concern to both men before they began their study of the eastern tradition. Both
men were deeply and personally interested in Catholic mysticism. We have already noted that Johnston's university studies dealt with fourteenth century mysticism, especially that classic of apophatic mystic writing, *The Cloud of Unknowing*. It was the contemplative edge of Buddhism which first awakened Johnston's interest in Zen.

Merton's entire life had a mystical slant. In *Thomas Merton on Mysticism* Raymond Bailey tells us:

(Merton's) social commentary, as well as his poetic outpourings, were the fruit of his preoccupation with the quest for the Divine. The dominant motivation in Merton's life and the primary motif in his work was this mystical quest for union with God. Throughout his life Merton remained constant to his contemplative commitment explicit in the poetic vow recorded in *The Tears of the Blind Lions*: "May my bones burn and ravens eat my flesh/If I forget thee, contemplation . . ." Moreover, Merton's thought and methodology were rooted in traditional mystical theology and framed in the matrix of the symbols and structures of Catholicism.

For both Merton and Johnston the surest way to understand Christianity is the mystical way. It is a way which emphasizes experience and personal transformation, in contrast to those ways which are more concerned with behavioural conformity and non-reflective belief. This distinction is sometimes referred to as that between esoteric (or hidden) and exoteric (external, suitable for the uninitiated). The exoteric dimension can be said to be concerned with the external or outwardly observable dimension of religion and it is more social in orientation. Rituals in which the public participates, to the end of social conformity and the marking of everyday events, may also be
understood as having relevance to a hidden dimension of experience in the spiritual lives of the participants. Every symbol may be said to have two sides (at least): one with reference to experience on the level of the group or community, the other with reference to experience within the psyche of the individual. The first dimension will be the more obvious, because shared by the group, whereas the second may be apparent to only a few. By way of example, Christmas may be a celebration marking the birth of Jesus, or the winter solstice, or both, a time marked by festivities and the sharing of gifts (with all that implies in terms of community), but it might also be seen as indicating the possibility of an inner experience, possibly the birth of the self.

It is this latter, less popular approach which interests both Merton and Johnston. This approach gives shape to their reflections on Zen Buddhism, and is strengthened by those same reflections and experiences. Merton refers to dialogue between contemplatives of the two traditions, such as his own meeting with Daisetz Suzuki, as the "most essential dimension" of the dialogue, precisely because it introduces the element of inner experience. The meeting of contemplatives is a meeting of individuals who are sensitive to the esoteric aspect of their respective religious traditions. They can share their concern with experience with their fellows from other religious traditions. In Merton's words:

A little experience of such dialogue shows at once that this is precisely the most fruitful and the most rewarding level of ecumenical exchange. While on the level of philosophical
and doctrinal formulations, there may be tremendous obstacles to meet, it is often possible to come to a very frank, simple, and totally satisfying understanding in comparing notes on the contemplative life, its disciplines, its vagaries, and its rewards.  

One reason Merton offers for focusing on experience in the Roman Catholic dialogue with Zen Buddhism is that the experiential path is for him the central and most vital approach to Catholicism itself. He deals with his own Catholicism through experience, referring especially to the tradition of Catholic mysticism, and he carries this orientation with him into his study of Zen.

A second reason, however, has to be mentioned. Not every Catholic takes the mystical approach to his tradition. Indeed, until very recently, this approach was highly suspect. Merton himself points out the dangers of the false mysticism which was the only kind that was generally recognized. In the case of the Zen tradition, however, it is impossible to ignore the dimension of experience, since the tradition itself clearly and unequivocally sees this as central. The Westerner who does not take an experiential approach to his own tradition, the Westerner who inclines to the exoteric understanding of Christianity, will be inclined to approach Zen with the same general attitude. Merton warns against this:

The great obstacle to understanding between Christianity and Buddhism lies in the Western tendency to focus not on the Buddhist experience, which is essential, but on the explanation which is accidental and which indeed Zen often regards as completely trivial and even misleading.
Merton is here making an important epistemological distinction, to which we will return in the chapter "Principles of Dialogue". It is the distinction which Korzybski made famous earlier in the present century as that between map and territory, between the description and the thing described. The map is not the territory, though it is often mistaken for it. Zen ensures that this mistake will be corrected when it is made. It does this by taking a very iconoclastic approach to all "words and scriptures". It also takes a critical approach to experience, recognizing the danger of false enlightenments.

By and large the Christian tradition is not as conscious as Zen of the distinction between map and territory. Christianity has been quite anxious about any idiosyncratic experience and has at various times censured individuals who have had experiences which they expressed in heterodox ways. St. John of the Cross, one of the greatest of Christian mystics, was jailed by his fellow monks. Meister Eckhart was condemned by his church. So, too, was Thomas Aquinas, whose late mystical experience led him to reflect that all his magnificent writings were like straw by comparison.

At the same time that it has been quite zealous in guarding against "false" experiences, Christianity has been strongly interested in correct affirmations of belief, in credal statements. As Merton notes, Christianity begins with the revelation of God's word. By no means can Merton be accused of underestimating the importance of the word in the Christian life. Yet he is critical of what can be called a "literal" approach to the word. His contact with Zen has deepened his sense that Christianity is also a religion
of experience. He cautions:

The obsession with doctrinal formulas, juridical order and ritual exactitude has often made people forget that the heart of Catholicism, too, is a living experience of unity in Christ which far transcends all conceptual formulations. What too often has been overlooked, in consequence, is that Catholicism is the taste and experience of eternal life.

Merton does not say that the Zen satori experience and the experience of Christian mysticism are the same. Yet he does suggest that the conscious experience of transcendence of the ego and discovery of one's true nature (which is God for the Christian and the "no-mind" for the Zen Buddhist) is similar. It is this experience which is especially stressed in the apophatic mystical tradition.

William Johnston similarly emphasizes the mystical tradition. He refers to a realm of mystical experiences which transcends expression and which forms the basis for all the world's religions:

All authentic religion originates with mystical experience, be it the experience of Jesus, of the Buddha, of Mohammed, of the seers and prophets of the Upanishads. The founders speak of a realm of mystery that lies beyond the reach of thinking and reasoning and concepts of any kind, a realm about which one can only speak stammeringly and indirectly.

On the basis of his own experience Johnston tells us that union between people, irrespective of their beliefs, their formulations and ideas, is deepest when they share mystical silence
together. Earlier we described Johnston's shared religious experience with Zen Buddhists and others. Deeply moved by such experience, Johnston reflected on it. His impression was that, though there was much in common, important differences existed even on the experiential level. Johnston explained these by distinguishing between faith and belief.

Faith, which Johnston refers to as a "formless inner light", belongs to all humans as humans. It is a spiritual response to the human situation - an affirmation of the ultimate meaning of human life and a recognition of the mystery which surrounds it. On this level humans can be most deeply united. In Johnston's words:

... when this faith flowers and develops into the naked faith which I have called mysticism then the union is deepest. This is the union of people who are in love without restriction or reservation and whose love has entered the cloud of unknowing. They are one at the centre of things; they are one in the great mystery which hovers over human life and towards which all religions point.

Belief stands to faith as superstructure to infrastructure. A belief is an expression of faith, when conditioned by culture and tradition. However, the beliefs of specific religions also lead people to the experience of faith, and protect that experience, providing it with a social and intellectual context. Despite their reference to the common inner light of faith, Johnston does not see all belief systems as relative. He is a convicted Christian and maintains Christian belief as his primary map of reality, a fact which will become clearer in our discussion in the next chapter.
R. C. Zaehner once commented that Zen Buddhism and Roman Catholicism were well suited for dialogue with one another, because both sought to be true to the experiences of unity in diversity and diversity in unity. The mystical experience, which always involves a passage beyond the "ego-construct" or everyday self to one's true ground, the core of one's consciousness and being, may accord with either the notion of "unity in diversity" or of "diversity in unity". Mysticism of the first type tends to be monistic or non-dualistic, whereas the second type is relational or dualistic. Zen Buddhism belongs to the first type. The opposite is true of Christianity, where theological concepts of the supernatural order and of man's relationship with God the Father through Christ, ensure the maintenance of a dualistic outlook.

Yet this is something of an oversimplification. The Zen experience permitted both Johnston and Merton to broaden and deepen their already well-developed appreciation of the apophatic tradition of Christian mysticism. By placing emphasis on "not-knowing", this type of mysticism encourages non-dualistic types of experience. The fundamental basis of all human knowledge is the act whereby one thing is differentiated from another, leading in its paradigmatic form to the distinction between subject and object. In apophatic mysticism such a distinction is rendered impossible by virtue of the "un-knowing" which is its approach to reality irrespective of the particular religious metaphysic in which this type of experience is found. In the case of Zen Buddhism, clearly non-dualistic, and in the case of Christianity, dualistic.
It must be mentioned, however, that in the case of Christianity we do not find a simply dualistic metaphysic, as embodied in the co-equal principles of light and darkness of Persian Zoroastrianism. It is true that Christianity emphasizes man's position as created being and as son, and hence his distinction from the Creator God and Father. This distinction also leads Christianity to maintain the continuation of the "personality", the uniqueness of the individual, even in the state of salvation. Nevertheless, Christianity recognizes as its legitimate goal the prayer of Christ "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You."\(^45\) Clearly this is a non-dualistic goal emerging from a dualistic background. The simultaneous existence of "unity in diversity" and "diversity in unity" is given its most significant expression in the theological notion of the Trinity, the greatest of all Christian mysteries. We shall also return to this topic in the next chapter.

In their discussions of Christian mysticism and its relationship to Zen Buddhism both Johnston and Merton make reference to the centrality of experience. Both use the apophatic tradition of Catholic mysticism as their fundamental cultural and religious framework for understanding. There is, nevertheless, an important distinction between the ways in which these two men use that tradition - a distinction which, not surprisingly, is the one we elucidated in the chapter "Foundation of Human Nature".

Merton and Johnston recognize both kataphatic and apophatic types of mysticism in Christianity: mysticism of affirmation and of negation. One would think that their preference for the latter type, reinforced by their study of Zen, would lead them to non-
dualistic experience and understanding of reality. Indeed, Merton's life and thought do seem increasingly to have moved in this direction. In Johnston's case, however, sensitivity to the non-dualistic dimension is matched by a concern for the dualistic sense of the world. His experience with Japanese Buddhists and with Zen broadened his sense of difference between Christianity and Buddhism. His personal spiritual life, as it can be understood from his writings, likewise returns again and again to his experience of relationship to God the Father, an experience of dualistic type. Even his stress upon the two dimensions of "unity in diversity" and "diversity in unity" contains an implicit dualism. And the fact of dualism provides one of the central points to which Johnston turns in order to elucidate his "sense" that the traditions are different. In one of his clearest expressions of his position, Johnston wrote in *The Mirror Mind*:

> I have pointed to Christian experiences that may be understood more profoundly in the light of Buddhist practice. But I do not wish to make the unforgivable error of claiming that Buddhists and Christians are "saying the same thing", for the differences are obvious. The chief difference, it seems to me, is that in the Hebrew-Christian tradition the true self is essentially relational. I find my true self by going beyond this true self to the other. If my true self is a mirror, this mirror reflects a face other than my own — yet this face becomes mine in a remarkable way. For what union could be closer than that of the pure mirror and the object it reflects? In self-realization I become one with God just as the object is one with the mirror and just as Jesus is one with his Father. And yet (paradox of paradoxes) I can cry out to the God with whom I am one; I can cry out, as Jesus cried out, "Abba, Father!" "

Merton also declaims those who find a too easy similarity between the two traditions. He writes:
It must certainly be said that a certain type of concordist thought today too easily assumes as a basic dogma that 'the mystics' in all religions are all experiencing the same thing and are all alike in their liberation from the various doctrines and explanations and creeds of their less fortunate co-religionists."

A couple of reflections may be made on Merton's remark.
First of all, Merton's always careful wording deserves attention. What he is condemning is not the notion that the experiences of the mystics are all the same but the too-easy assumption of this notion as a basic dogma. Merton was critical of people who accepted doctrine of any kind too superficially or too easily. The doctrine of revelation, for example, so fundamental to the Christian religion, had to be assimilated as an "experience" and not merely a credal statement. Merton was no less sensitive and astute in his approach to other religious traditions than he was in dealing with his own. Furthermore, he was aware of man's relationship to "various doctrines and explanations and creeds" and of the difficulty of true liberation from these. Nevertheless, in contrast to Johnston, Merton was far more inclined to the position that similarity between the traditions did exist and that the doctrines, explanations and creeds were less important than was often thought.

Ultimately, for both Merton and Johnston, the truly important thing was the phenomenon of religious experience. Captivated by what they had found in Zen Buddhism and aware of its unflinching concern with direct experience they were led to reflect further on the role of experience within their own Christian tradition. While both men warned against experience for the sake of experience -
and especially warned against the seeking of "special" or unusual experiences - both agreed that the touchstone of all true spirituality was the individual's personal inner life. Both gave testimony to this not only in their writing and teaching but especially in the example of their own living.

In the present chapter, I have explored the personal experience of both Merton and Johnston with Zen and noted some significant differences between these experiences. Above all these stands the fact that most of Merton's experience took place in a western cloiser while most of Johnston's occurred amidst his active life in Japan's largest city. We cannot say conclusively that it was this difference which led to their different views on the nature of experience in Zen and Christianity. What is clear, however, is that Johnston maintains his "sense" that there are differences between the experience of the Zen monk and that of the Christian, whereas Merton seems far more deeply convinced of their fundamental similarity. The next chapter will carry this argument one step further, examining how the two men understand the relationship between experience and expression in the two traditions. We will also have occasion there to look briefly at some Christian theological issues which are discussed by both men in their reflections on Zen. This will lead us into the concluding chapter where I will examine the epistemologies underlying the approaches to dialogue developed by the two men.
Theological Reflections

In the last chapter I examined that dimension of the inter-religious dialogue where both Johnston and Merton tell us the two traditions we are discussing seem to have most in common. Yet even in their writings about that dimension, the dimension of spiritual experience itself, I have observed a difference of approach and attitude on the part of the two men. Merton is inclined to the position that fundamental experiences in the two traditions are not different whereas Johnston insists that they are.

Merton has chosen to focus on the non-dualism of Zen Buddhism, so consonant with his own preferred approach to Christianity, and on the monastic practices of poverty, solitude and emptiness that are its practical correlates. Johnston, by contrast, expresses his conviction that the experiences of the two traditions are different from one another, indeed that they must be different, since the religious frameworks in which they are situated are different. In The Still Point he tells us:

In the last analysis, Christians and Buddhists agree that meditation is not totally divorced from one's philosophy of life. Even though it is sometimes said that "It doesn't matter what you believe: just sit!" one must sit (I will be forgiven for repeating it) on a philosophy of life. One, of course, is detached from the words and concepts and images in which this philosophy is couched; but it is there ... The Christian contemplative and the Zen monk have each his own philosophy: they sit on different zabutons.

Both men do recognize, implicitly if not always explicitly,
a distinction between theology and experience in the Christian framework. Neither man is an original theologian and neither claims to be one. Both share the commonly held tradition of Catholic theology that has developed over the centuries and that has the support of the church behind it. Both men were trained in conservative orders. However, both came to identify with the mystical approach to Catholic theology, no doubt at least in part on the basis of their own life experiences and interests. Both men are concerned with the particular relationship between experience and theology that is encouraged by Catholic mysticism, and both men take this concern into their studies of Zen Buddhism.

This distinction which both men draw between theology and experience, and the connection which they also seek to establish between the two, can be discussed in the more generalized terms of "expression" and "experience". This second formulation provides a better basis for comparison with Zen, where we can also speak of "experience" and "expression" even if we cannot speak of "mysticism" or of theology in the strict sense. The difference in the ways the two traditions consider the relationship between "experience" and "expression" proved to be an important subject of reflection for both men.

The present chapter will look at this issue. While striving to be fair to both men, I do believe that I gave the edge to Merton in my discussions of "experience" in the last chapter. This was in keeping with my reading of the thought of the two men; "experience" receives more emphasis in Merton's thought than in Johnston's. In this chapter, the emphasis will be reversed. It is in the thought of Johnston that we find the more elaborated
theological framework for understanding interreligious dialogue. It is this framework, in fact, which makes dialogue a requirement in Johnston's thought as I believe it is not a requirement in Merton's, however much it may have been a vital concern in his own spiritual development.

Johnston has a great deal to say about the relationship between experience and expression in religion, emphasizing the role of the latter in religious life. This chapter will look at that material as well as noting the part played in world spirituality by the specifically Christian concepts which inform Johnston's life. Later the fundamentally human traits which Johnston believes will lead us to an appreciation of the truth, best expressed in Christian terms, will be examined. Of course, I will also explore Merton's writing about these matters, noting similarities and differences between his views and those of Johnston. I will conclude the chapter by a consideration of the Trinity in the thought of both men.

In one of his books, William Johnston notes the distinction between "mysticism" (the experience) and "mystical theology" (the interpretation or reflection on the experience) which he says is absolutely essential for us to make today. Johnston does not hold with those who claim that only the experience is important. He does admit that mystical experience is the "basic thing" and that all efforts to formulate it are totally inadequate since it is ineffable. At the same time he tells us:

We need to interpret mystical experience and to find its meaning. We need to distinguish the authentic from the inauthentic. Then there is
the practical need to guide people, to protect them from mistakes, from illness, from illusion - to help them understand what is happening in their lives and save them from unnecessary suffering.

In one sense, the role of theology, from this perspective, has been to interpret spiritual experience. Traditionally it has been the reflection of reason on matters of faith: the matter of God and grace and Jesus Christ and the Trinity. When religious experience has arisen it has been understood within the framework of the theological systems. Hence those systems have been able to serve as a safeguard of orthodoxy, as a measure against which individual experience could be evaluated. Since such theological systems did exist, and since they were enshrined within the authoritative structure of the church organization, it was possible for individuals whose experience led them to heterodox interpretations to be condemned.

Christian theology contained the spiritual wisdom of generations. By and large, it served to protect individuals and to give them a spiritual understanding of their lives. It offered a framework within which they could make sense of the details of their personal and collective existence. For those souls who inclined towards the mystical it offered touchstones whereby their entire inner lives could be transformed. In addition it offered matter for rational speculation, which stimulated spiritual growth.

Johnston believes that theology presents a necessary context for individuals to develop their spiritual lives. Interpretation is necessary. The rational faculties have a role in the human spiritual life. Admittedly, such evaluation as theology provides
will always be inadequate to capture the full impact of truly spiritual experience. And without the experience it will be little more than a form of words— but it does provide an essential component of mature spiritual life. And Johnston, perhaps as a result of his training as a Jesuit, never neglects this fact.

An emphasis on theology in Christian spiritual life can also be found in Thomas Merton. But increasingly his writing stresses experience over interpretation—in contrast to Johnston, who wants to use both but who sometimes gives the impression that, in a crunch, he would choose theology over experience, the authority of tradition and the wisdom of community over the demands of his own inner awareness.

One of Merton's strongest statements on the place of "theology" or "interpretation" can be found in his passage in which he contrasts Catholicism and Zen:

It cannot be repeated too often: in understanding Buddhism it would be a great mistake to concentrate on the "doctrine", the formulated philosophy of life, and to neglect the experience, which is essential, the very heart of Buddhism. This is in a sense the very opposite of the situation in Christianity. For Christianity begins with revelation. Though it would be misleading to classify this revelation simply as a "doctrine" and an "explanation" (it is far more than that—the revelation of God Himself in the mystery of Christ) it is nevertheless communicated to us in words, in statements, and everything depends on the believer's accepting the truth of these statements.

This study is concerned with Christianity rather than with Zen. At this point, however, it is important to introduce a reflection on the matter of Zen which bears on the understanding of
Catholicism which Johnston and Merton developed in light of their contact with Zen. It is well known that Zen has little truck with explanations, with "words and letters", with the use of reason to achieve understanding. It sees these as downright misleading. Yet it should not be thought that there is no "philosophy" in Zen. Both Johnston and Merton recognize that there is. In an early work, *Christian Zen*, Johnston wrote:

One becomes detached in order that something else may shine forth. In the Buddhist this is his Buddha nature. For, contrary to what is often said, true Zen is based on a very great faith - faith in the presence of the Buddha nature in the deepest recesses of the personality; faith that, as the Four Noble Truths point out, there is a way out of the morass of suffering and that man can be transformed through enlightenment.

In the chapter on experience we noted that Johnston referred to faith as a "formless inner light". Elsewhere he suggests that it can take other forms, however, and that this is merely one of its conceptual formulations. He recognizes as central to Zen the faith that there is a Buddha Nature, a faith which, in line with his specific understanding of religion as focusing on inner experience and transformation, Johnston understands as the core of Buddhism.

Other conceptions and ideas and philosophies and images can be found in Buddhism - even in its most iconoclastic Zen form. Johnston would distinguish these from the more basic "faith" and classify them as beliefs. In Johnston's way of seeing things both faith and belief are necessary - they go hand in hand, supporting and giving meaning to one another. He frequently emphasizes faith, however, as essential to all progress in the
spiritual life. He makes it perfectly clear that — in spite of what might sometimes be said — Zen does have a "very great faith". No progress is possible without it:

You can't go on detaching yourself indefinitely in the hope that something may or may not turn up inside. One may of course begin meditation without such faith, and many of the people who come to our place in Tokyo do just that, but the time comes when faith is necessary, and without it no one goes through to the end.

It is not precisely clear from Johnston's work just why he considers this faith so essential. Perhaps he thinks it provides a focus to maintain orientation for an individual throughout the more difficult and dark stages of spiritual life. Perhaps it provides a sense of there being a real goal, a positive, definite and final end. Perhaps it is to situate the individual in a psychological orientation which will prepare him for the reception of grace, though, of course, the Zen understanding does not entertain this possibility. In any event Johnston is convinced that both "experience" and "expression" are to be found in Zen. Merton also notices this. He writes:

Zen implies a breakthrough, an explosive liberation from one-dimensional conformism, a recovery of unity which is not the suppression of opposites but a simplicity beyond opposites. To exist and function in the world of opposites while experiencing that world in terms of primal simplicity does imply if not a formal metaphysic, at least a ground of metaphysical intuition. This means a totally different perspective from that which dominates our society and enables it to dominate us.
The relationship between word and silence in the Zen tradition grows out of the Zen experience and the non-dualistic metaphysic which underlies it. As Merton expresses it, the Christian tradition begins with revelation and continually seeks to come to terms with the implications of the duality involved in the meeting of the natural and the supernatural, the meeting of man and God.

The Christian is concerned with understanding the revelation of God in human history and the implications of that revelation for his own life. Revelation provides him with that framework whereby he can give meaning to his life. In large part, the Christian seeks to understand revelation through the study of the word - through reading the scripture and through reflection on that reading. Modern Christians are divided between those who take more "liberal" approaches (which make much use of the apparatus of modern scholarship) and those who take the so-called literal approach.

Merton suggests an approach to scripture, which is consonant with his approach to religion in general. This is the approach which understands revelation not merely as "text" but as event. Furthermore, as event it takes place not only in the framework of history but also and most importantly in the life of the individual.

In noting that revelation is fundamentally an experience, Merton faces squarely the responsibility of each individual to take a stand on this matter - and to allow himself to be transformed by it. This challenge is especially acute in a world that exposes individuals to more than one revelation, each claiming ultimate authority for itself.
The experiential approach to scripture is not new. Johnston takes some time through his writings to speak about the role of "mystical theology" in medieval Christianity. Theology, though it had an abstract, rational and intellectual side, was also to be understood through the intuition, through contemplation. The great truths of the Christian faith were not merely to be appropriated through intellectual understanding - as one might understand any external event of history - but were to be felt in the innermost core of the soul. In The Inner Eye of Love Johnston writes about some of the giants of mystical spirituality in the Christian framework. He noted:

Their theology, I have said, welled up from their mystical experience. But (and this is very significant) it also led to mystical experience ... Their theological treatises, even when they were apologetic in nature, were calculated to lead the reader to a relishing of the great mysteries of faith ... The experience of the Trinity was very real for Thomas (as it has been very real for all the Christian mystics) but a sad situation was created some centuries after his death when unenlightened scholastics repeated his Trinitarian words without enjoying his Trinitarian mysticism. They grasped the conceptualization but not the enlightenment which inspired it.

It was not merely an abstract notion that the soul was made in the image and likeness of God. Through spiritual transformation the Christian came to realize in personal life, in inner and outer experience, precisely this truth. Today, however, there is still a tendency to divorce Christian belief from Christian experience, a divorce which Johnston himself decries. "A theology which is divorced from the inner experience of the theologian is
arid and carries no conviction." Part of his interest in Bud- dhism has been the concern to find ways to renew spiritual experience in a Christian framework.

Since the modern world - as R. D. Laing has forcefully told us - no longer even believes in the existence of the soul, let alone seeks experience of it - it is not surprising that Christianity, as a religion in the modern world, should very largely handle its concerns with the "inner man" through external conformity and the hope of "spiritual life" in the hereafter. Much criticism has been leveled against those who do hold an "experiential" approach to Christianity by fellow Christians who want to stick to the "word". On this basis Heiler distinguished eastern from western religion - noting that the former was "mystical" and the latter "prophetic". While there are few who would say that "experience" is totally free of cultural influence - or that it should be - there are perhaps even fewer who realize that the "acceptance of revelation" is itself an experience.

Even in his discussion of theology Merton returns to the centrality of experience. Christianity which neglects this experience is destructive - or at least fails to live up to its own truth. Without genuine inner experience, the Christian life becomes

not so much a living theological experience of the presence of God in the world and in mankind through the mystery of Christ, but rather a sense of security in one's own correctness: a feeling of confidence that one has been saved, a confidence which is based on the reflex awareness that one holds the correct view of the creation and purpose of the world and that one's behaviour is of a kind to be rewarded in the next life. Or, perhaps, since few can attain this level of self-assurance, then the Christian experience becomes one
of anxious hope - a struggle with occasional doubt of the 'right answers', a painful and constant effort to meet the severe demands of morality and law, and a somewhat desperate recourse to the sacraments which are there to help the weak who must constantly fall and rise again. 

This is unfortunate and perhaps it need not be the case. By and large, neither Merton nor Johnston thinks that the mystical or experiential approach to religion needs to be restricted to a special class of people. All humans are called to it. There are indications today - of which the work of Johnston and Merton is one - that the imbalance is finally being redressed. In Merton's opinion two types of Catholicism can be identified, and the latter type, which comes closer to Zen, is actually closer to the heart of the religion. In Zen and the Birds of Appetite Merton reflects:

This obsession with doctrinal formulas, juridical order and ritual exactitude has often made people forget that the heart of Catholicism, too, is a living experience of unity in Christ which far transcends all conceptual formulations. What too often has been overlooked, in consequence, is that Catholicism is the taste and experience of eternal life.

Several things have been attempted to this point. By considering theology as an "expression" of some reality - either of the external world or of the inner, subjective world (both of which are available to us in our everyday experience) - we are able to look at it in a way which allows for comparison with Zen. For Zen also has an "order of expression". Both Merton and Johnston recognize that not only Christianity but also Zen has an underlying metaphysic. This is sometimes underplayed by writers about the Zen tradition
but such recent works as Toshihiko Izutsu's *Towards a Philosophy of Zen Buddhism* make it perfectly clear. In any event, neither Merton nor Johnston ignores this metaphysic.

Christianity, however, has developed in a culture with an established duality - inner and outer, subjective and objective - whereas Zen has always emphasized a "unity beyond opposites", to borrow Merton's phrase. The "unity beyond opposites" has also had a place in the Christian tradition. The Western mind, however, has emphasized the duality, the distinction, and has used the laws of logic to maintain this duality. When Western spirituality has elicited the sense of nonduality it has often been considered highly suspect as in the notable case of Eckhart's spirituality.

In Christianity, then, we have a rational tradition and a dualistic metaphysic playing key roles in the development of spirituality. By contrast, Zen has opposed the operations of discursive thought and has developed in the framework of a nondual metaphysic. Merton's personal spirituality, with its roots deep in Christian apophatic mysticism, finds an affinity in Zen. As "religious systems" he tells us that he considers Zen Buddhism and Christianity as different as tennis and mathematics: Christianity seeks "theological salvation", Buddhism "metaphysical enlightenment". Yet one always has the sense that Merton was far more struck and convinced by the similarities than he was by the differences between the two. By referring even his Christian theology to "spiritual experience", and viewing the theology as less than central to the spiritual life, he is able to find that Christian theology may not be such an unbreachable barrier between the two traditions.

In an important recent study, *Thomas Merton's Dark Path: The*
Inner Experience of a Contemplative (which contains excerpts from an unpublished Merton manuscript), William Shannon comments on a change in Merton's use of theology in his various writings on contemplation. According to Shannon, Merton's 1948 publication, *What is Contemplation?* was like "any standard manual of spiritual or mystical theology":

It is an essentialist approach to contemplation, defining it in terms of the call to contemplation inherent in baptism and distinguishing it into infused contemplation and active contemplation, the former alone being contemplation in the strict sense.\(^7\)

Shannon compares this with his later work, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, which describes contemplation "in such a way that much of what he says could be understood and accepted by people belonging to other religious traditions".\(^{18}\) Later, especially in *Birds of Appetite*, Merton shows that he is able to appropriate not only the vocabulary but also the experience of Zen. Certainly a central part of that experience was an awareness of the inadequacy of all theological systems, even of the necessity of using "God-language" at all. His published works never quite reach a consistent willingness to throw the whole of the theological enterprise overboard, but one cannot help but note the increasing detachment Merton found vis-a-vis this aspect of Christianity, even when he provides us with statements about its importance.

In a letter to Erich Fromm, Merton described a conversation he had with Ivan Illich. His remarks in the letter indicate the line Merton's thinking was taking on the matter of theology:
We had some discussions on the question of a non-theistic religious experience. The point I was trying to convey was that religious experience in the Jewish, Christian, Zen Buddhist, or in a general mystical human way, is an experience which may not be different as a human experience in the case of a theist or a nonbeliever. I am not denying the significance of various conceptual frames of reference, but I do believe that when it comes down to the phenomenon of the religious experience itself, the theological frame of reference is not as crucial as it may appear to be.

I have argued that Christianity maintained a sense of duality which was given rational expression in Christian theology and that, even when mystical experience or even the deep experience of everyday life was contrary to this, that sense of duality was maintained. The dualistic perspective that could be found especially in the radical distinction that was drawn between the orders of the natural and the supernatural and also that between mind and body, inner and outer was all pervasive. One could even find traces of the Manichean distinction between "good" and "evil" (personified in God and the Devil), although this had to be tempered by the Augustinian understanding of "evil" as a privatio boni.

Merton never entirely escaped the theological distinction which gave expression to this duality. He passionately yearned for union with his God, with all that from which he truly felt disunited. Increasingly he seems to have found that union - especially as described in his Sri Lanka experience. Yet even on the final day of his earthly life he made reference to the distinction between Christianity's supernatural dimension and the natural order of the Eastern religions, which has so often been used to explain the
difference between the two. In a talk given to representative monastic leaders from Asia and the west Merton commented:

I believe that our renewal consists precisely in deepening this understanding and this grasp of that which is most real. And I believe that by openness to Buddhism, to Hinduism, and to these great Asian traditions, we stand a wonderful chance of learning more about the potentiality of our own traditions, because they have gone, from the natural point of view, so much deeper into this than we have.

Merton goes on to indicate that we find not only "natural techniques" but also "graces" in the Asian traditions. Here is a recognition that there may be such fulness in the Asian traditions that Merton cannot really feel satisfied with the old distinction. His sense of the insufficiency of natural man, however, may be so deep that he rather sees the supernatural in Zen than the merely natural in Christianity. In any event, he concludes by indicating a transcending of all of this, a passing beyond all limited distinctions:

The combination of the natural techniques and the graces and the other things that have been manifested in Asia and the Christian liberty of the gospel should bring us all at last to that full and transcendent liberty which is beyond mere cultural differences and mere externals - and mere this or that.

Perhaps the single, most important observation Merton came to make about Christian theology as a result of his encounter with the eastern religions was that the way of reason could never provide the ultimate answers for the spiritual life. This obser-
vation alone would not put Merton outside of a Christian framework, for Christianity has itself recognized this even when it has not emphasized it. It does form a part, however, of what I would call Merton's emancipation from Christianity as tradition, his preference for the existential, for Zen, and therefore for suitably modern language in understanding the spiritual life. Merton wrote:

When Gabriel Marcel says: "There are thresholds which thought alone, left to itself can never permit us to cross. An experience is required - an experience of poverty and sickness" ... he is stating a simple Christian truth in terms familiar to Zen.

William Johnston's position on theology in dialogue with Zen Buddhism is both similar to and different from that of Merton. I have already stressed that both men call for an understanding of Catholic theology from the experiential point of view. Christian theology will not really make sense until one's life is transformed in ways consonant with it. Both find special affinities with the apophatic approach to Christian spirituality. Both recognize the presence in Zen of a metaphysic and Johnston stresses the importance of this in Buddhist faith and belief. Both recognize the inadequacy of all attempts to give expression to the deepest of spiritual experiences and realities. Like Merton, who speaks of Christianity's beginning in the revelation, Johnston notes that Christian meditation begins with the word:

The path of meditation, particularly of Christian meditation, ordinarily begins with words. But as
prayer and meditation develop, the whole process usually begins to simplify ... And the time may come when one prefers to use no words at all, but simply to be silent in the presence of the mystery.

The priority of the word in Christian meditation is very important for Johnston. He is conscious of the cyclical movement of the meditating Christian from word to silence to word, again and again. His suggestion to meditators is to follow whatever wants expressing at any particular time: whether it be word or silence, image or emptiness. The whole is composed of both. Nevertheless - and I think he differs from Merton in this - he gives precedence to the word. He not only begins with the word but he also ends with it. This is an important point in Johnston's thinking, providing a key not only to his understanding of Christianity but also to the interreligious dialogue, as we shall see in the next chapter.

Reflecting on the process of meditation Johnston asks:

But does the cyclic process of words - silence - words - silence - words - silence go on forever? Just as the yin and the yang proceed from the Tao, is there a final reality from which all words and silence flow?

Johnston answers his own question with an affirmation of his Christian belief:

I believe that there is a final word, and this is the Word Incarnate who dwells in the depth of our being through baptism and the Eucharist.

The implications of this belief for the human individual are
then elaborated. Johnston states these implications theologically and then notes their experiential reality in the human being:

The Word made flesh awakens in the substance of the soul and cries out: "Abba, Father!" And in this way is effected the divinization of the human person through the grace of Jesus Christ. In this way are fulfilled those words of the gospel: "But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God" (John 1:12). Through baptism and the Eucharist one becomes a child of God: through mystical experience one comes to realize existentially that this is so.

Johnston elaborates on his understanding of the word in distinguishing between an "outer" and an "inner" word, between belief and faith:

In religious experience it is possible to distinguish between a superstructure which I shall call belief and an infrastructure which I shall call faith. The superstructure is the outer word, the outer revelation, the word spoken in history and conditioned by culture. The infrastructure, on the other hand, is the interior word, the word, spoken to the heart, the inner revelation.

The outer revelation has been given in a special way to the Christian tradition. However, the "inner word", the "inner light", is not restricted to Christianity. It "shines in the hearts of all men and women of good will who sincerely search for the truth, whatever their religious profession."28

In examining this distinction Father Johnston recognizes that he allows a special dimension to Christianity which is not to be found (at least by him) in the other traditions. This
dimension is the "historic" reality of Jesus Christ, who existed in only one time and place and not in others. This historic dimension has been much emphasized by Christians dealing with other religions. To some extent it can be understood only in light of the great emphasis the western tradition has placed not only on reason, as we have been discussing, but also on history: on a linear, one-dimensional understanding of the nature of time and on the uniqueness of individual reality. Father Johnston refers to a Japanese Carmelite, Ichiro Okumura, in discussing this:

"Father Okumura appeals to Chinese philosophy. The human religious consciousness, which is the same everywhere, is the yin: Christ is the yang. People of all religions are united by reason of the yin; but Christ the yang, "is unique, absolute, historical reality, and so Christianity cannot be equated with other religions ... Historical protofact of two thousand years ago becomes endless historico-religious reality in Christianity and in the church. In this sense, Christianity is metareligious, meta-spatial, meta-chronological, historical divino-human reality.""

By using the metaphor of the yin-yang Father Okumura suggests that the "commonly religious" and the "uniquely Christian" are bound together. He might also be suggesting that there is an interpenetration, a mutual arising of the concrete, historical and the transcendent. Actually, however, this metaphor needs to be taken one step further. It is not only Christianity which has a yin and a yang. Each religion has its own unique tao, though the Tao is complete in all of them. We have to recognize not only the uniqueness of Christ, which, given the particular nature of Western consciousness has always been stressed, but also the uniqueness of Buddha, of Mohammed, of Moses and so on.
Johnston develops Father Okumura's statement in another direction. He distinguishes between "cosmic Christ" and "historical Jesus". The latter, he notes, was a Palestinian Jew of a particular period in time: he lived and thought as a Jew of that period of time and that place. The Risen Lord, on the other hand, who is nevertheless the same Jesus, is above individual culture and time:

This means that all cultures can claim him as their own and all religions can tell us something about who he is. This belief in the transcultural nature of the Risen Jesus has already appeared in the art and sculpture of many nations and races but the theological elaboration is far from complete. What can be said is that Christology is developing and that Buddhism may well throw light on the mystery of the Risen Jesus.

Johnston's Christology is well-elaborated for the dialogic concerns which play such a central role in his life. He draws another distinction between Jesus Christ as mediator of grace and Jesus Christ as mediator of meaning. It is possible to understand this by drawing on the distinction often made between the orders of the supernatural and the natural. Grace, of course, comes from the supernatural realm. It is a "gift of God" which provides man with that which is fundamentally necessary for progress in the spiritual life. Meaning, on the other hand, can exist without reference to this supernatural dimension. It is the way in which man makes sense out of his life: it is that which gives his life value and orientation within the natural framework.

Johnston introduces a further distinction here. Meaning is relative to the "subjective" order of life. It is relative to the individual. I cannot "objectively" convince you that my meaning...
for life is the right one since it always involves the element of personal commitment and faith. Johnston associates "grace", however, with the objective order of reality. It is something which is not dependent on the individual. It is in no sense "constructed" by the individual; it does not depend on individual understanding. In this sense, it is not relative.

Johnston believes that Jesus Christ is the mediator of grace for all mankind. It is through the death and resurrection of Jesus that mankind can achieve his ultimate spiritual goal, that goal which is now shrouded in mystery from human eyes. Jesus Christ, however, is not the mediator of meaning for all of humanity. The other religious traditions serve this role for their followers. This needs to be understood and respected. Johnston puts it this way:

... we find more union with Buddhists when we move from the objective to the subjective order. Concretely, we do this by distinguishing between Jesus Christ as the mediator of grace and Jesus Christ as the mediator of meaning. I believe that Jesus Christ is the mediator of grace to the whole human race, but he is not the mediator of meaning to Buddhists and to other people who do not believe in him. They find meaning in their own set of symbols— in the Buddha and the dharma and whatever it may be.

Johnston has identified two sides—an inner and an outer—of man's religious life: faith and belief. The coherence of these in the spirituality of every human being provides a ground for the meeting in oneness or unity of people from different religious traditions. They are alike in that they all have a faith and a belief. For Johnston the faith and the belief are both important;
both have essential roles to play in man's spiritual life.

Faith is preeminent and provides the foundation for all spiritual life. Yet faith is sustained and given shape by belief. Faith also plays an important role in interreligious dialogue. It provides the meeting ground for individuals of different belief systems. Though faith may be expressed in different forms— as faith in Jesus, in the gospel and in the church for the Christian and faith in the Buddha, the dharma and the sangha for the Buddhist—yet when it becomes really deep, faith tends to become supraconceptual. Through the deepening of their different faiths individuals of various religious systems may be able to enter together into the supraconceptual silence of the mystery that surrounds human life.

There is a parallel to be drawn between the two sets of distinctions which Johnston uses: faith/belief and (Jesus Christ mediating) grace/meaning. Johnston does not draw this parallel himself but I believe that it helps to clarify his thought if we do so. It is implicit in his writings and helps to shed light on his sometimes confusing use of the two terms "faith" and "belief".

Johnston's understanding of the "objective" order of the universe is grounded in his acceptance of Christian theology. God is a fundamental reality for Johnston. The fact that the Buddhist may not see this or may not accept this does not alter the fact since it is not dependent on human understanding. On the other hand, as we noted above, belief systems are dependent on human understanding. Faith becomes an inner attitude of response to that which is deepest and most true about the human reality. For Johnston, irrespective of any individual or cultural beliefs, that "objective
ground and order" is God and his revelation in Jesus Christ: the Word Incarnate. Looked at in this way we see that there is a definite connection between Johnston's approach to understanding religion and Christianity and his emphasis on the word. Johnston's mysticism is a mysticism of uniqueness, distinction and differentiation. Merton's is one of emptiness. Johnston begins and ends with the word. That word has ultimate reality for the whole of mankind. The whole of mankind must enter into understanding it.

Full understanding is not to be found in the present development of Christian theology. On the contrary, just as we can understand the fullness of Christ only if we consider both his historic reality as Jesus of Nazareth and his cosmic, anhistoric dimension, so we can understand the fullness of the latter, the "objective order", only if we consider the insights that will come from the eastern encounter with Christianity along with those insights that have already developed in the Christian tradition. Christian theology still has a very long way to go in its development. It is an unfinished enterprise.

Inevitably the developments which will come from the encounter with eastern spirituality will surprise us. Jesus brought a message for the whole of mankind, not just for those who live in the western world and think as westerners. Johnston's experience has convinced him, at least, that the east has a way of understanding which is radically different from that common in the west. As he puts it:

The longer I live in Tokyo the more I become aware of the enormous cultural gap which separates East and West. The way of thinking, the words, the manner of expression of Buddhism
and Christianity are so different that anyone who tries to write a theological book about both is doomed to superficiality and even failure. For the fact is that Christians and Buddhists speak different theological languages.

Buddhism has grown in the context of the east. It is particularly appropriate to the east and its ways of experiencing and understanding the world. Today we find that Christianity is being accepted to some degree by easterners. Yet we must understand that the way in which the easterners experience Christianity will not be the same as the way in which westerners experience the same tradition. Eastern and western Christians will each be able to find different aspects of the truth in the Christian religion. Christian theology must keep itself open to those novel aspects of the tradition which will inevitably emerge over the years ahead.

Johnston recognizes that at present there is no "common theological language" for Buddhists and Christians. This necessitates our taking a stand within the framework of one particular tradition. Nevertheless, Johnston does suggest that the future may hold the hope of such a development. He believes "that a time will come, probably in the next century, when we or those who come after us will forge a common way of speaking and even some kind of common theology."

Although Johnston states that only in the future may a common way of speaking about religious experience develop and although he emphasizes the great gulfs of understanding which separate the traditions of the east and the west at present, he does suggest a basis of commonality for understanding spirituality.
He finds this basis in the thought of Jesuit theologian Bernard Lonergan.

Lonergan had suggested that the definition of theology might be expanded to include not merely "reflections on matters of faith" (the traditional Christian definition) but reflection on matters of religion in general. Rather than focusing on "metaphysical principles" theology will turn to a consideration of those fundamental human inclinations which underlie all religions. Lonergan calls them "transcendental principles". There are five in number:

- Be attentive
- Be intelligent
- Be reasonable
- Be responsible
- Be in love

Johnston discusses these in *The Inner Eye of Love* and again in *The Mirror Mind*. The transcendental precepts represent potentialities of the human being and indicate the ways in which human nature can express itself most fully. As such they underlie the various religions of mankind, for these religions indicate how man may become his true self. Johnston discusses how each of these precepts might be said to be enshrined in Christianity and how each also finds its place in Buddhism.

Johnston refers to the fifth precept as "a more crowning precept which gives beauty and joy and fullness to human life". His discussions of love always refer to the duality wherein two distinctive beings encounter one another. For the Christian this is the basic experience of being called by God, of being loved by
God. It is the recognition of man's relationship to the fatherhood of God, a recognition of the relational ground of human being, of the depths from which man calls out: "Abba, Father!"

Given his belief about the fundamentally communicative nature of ultimate reality from which all religions spring, Johnston must wrestle with the seeming difficulty of speaking about love in the Buddhist tradition where there is no allowance for any God with whom one might be in relationship. *The Inner Eye of Love* discusses Johnston's conviction that Buddhists are indeed in love in an unrestricted manner. Johnston cites examples of the unselfish devotion of various Buddhists practitioners as evidence of this. He indicates that the Buddhist is in love without having any clear sense of the "who" or the "what" of that love. Since Johnston tells us elsewhere that we mature by recognizing and identifying the various dimensions of our experience, I wonder if his mention of "vagueness" at this core point is not an implicit put-down of Buddhism. In fairness, however, Johnston notes that in the Christian tradition it might also be said that no clear image of the object of spiritual love can be maintained. Once again Johnston sounds the various themes that infuse his work with its distinctive character:

... if Buddhist mystics are not clear about the object of their love, Christian mystics are not clear either. For them God is not a clear-cut object but a loving presence, which they obscurely sense. They feel that they are in a cloud of unknowing, crying out to a God whom they love but cannot see. And at times even this loving presence is withdrawn and they are left crying out in the night of naked faith. Only from revelation can they say that the emptiness in which they find themselves is the love of a benevolent Father who wraps them in His tender care.
It is striking that while Johnston lists the first four "transcendental precepts" in precisely the same way in The Mirror Mind as he listed them in The Inner Eye of Love, the fifth precept is expressed differently. In the earlier book it is: be in love. In the latter book it has become: be committed. Although I have no way of proving it, this change may well be an indication of the basic stance on interreligious dialogue that Johnston has developed over the years. As Johnston puts it:

The final precept is the most important: Be committed. This means that I must be committed to truth wherever I see it. And so, while I am committed to the truth I discover in Buddhism, I integrate it with the Christian truth which is mine by baptism. 38

Being in love becomes being committed. It involves being who you are, expressing conviction. It involves recognizing and respecting the "personhood" of others, their right to stake a claim to meaning. Once again this entails an emphasis on distinction and differentiation which remain the "bottom line" for Johnston. His work seems increasingly to move in the direction of emphasizing this. By contrast, Merton's thought moves increasingly in the opposite direction.

I cannot conclude this chapter without a few words about the Trinity. This has always been one of the central theological issues for Christianity and it is certainly one to which the issues I have been discussing in this chapter have a special relevance. Neither Merton nor Johnston provides a complete discussion of the idea of the Trinity. Yet it is central to the theological concerns of both men, as indeed it may be for most Christians.
Merton mentions the Trinity in the essay "A Christian Looks at Zen" included in *Zen and the Birds of Appetite*. He speaks of the central Christian mystery: that in us, through the Spirit, Christ loves the Father. Again Merton emphasizes his usual theme: this is not merely a theological doctrine; it is a matter for ordinary Christian experience. Merton refers to St. Paul who noted that, just as nobody can know my inner self except my own "spirit", so only the Spirit of God can know God. Nevertheless, it is a truth for the Christian that the Spirit of God knows God in the depths of my individual and human being. This is possible since God became man. Merton tells us: "This experience is utterly real, though it cannot be communicated in terms understandable to those who do not share it." 39

In speaking of this trinitarian experience in the inner life of the individual Merton uses traditional Pauline language: putting on or having the "mind of Christ". He compares this with the notion of "having the Buddha mind" and suggests that the similarity of language might indicate some fundamental similarity of experience. In fact, he reflects, the references to the "mind of Christ" and the "Buddha mind" are doctrinal notions - though the "doctrine is about the experience". 40 But in the final analysis "experience", as Merton understands it, is "empty" (in the Buddhist sense). So we cannot say that the experience of having the "mind of Christ" is different from that of having the "Buddha mind". Of course, (by the same token) neither can we say they are the same. In the final analysis Merton will say that saying is not important.

Merton is moved by the writing of Dr. Suzuki who found in Meister Eckhart's reflections on the Trinity an expression of
"Prajna intuition". Merton quotes Eckhart and then indicates how the language of Eckhart is translated into that of Zen:

"In giving us His love God has given us the Holy Ghost so that we can love Him with the love wherewith He loves Himself." The Son Who, in us, loves the Father, in the Spirit, is translated thus by Suzuki into Zen terms: "One mirror reflecting another with no shadow between them."

(Suzuki, Mysticism: East and West, p. 41)

Merton tells us that he sees no reason why the statement of Suzuki cannot be accepted as quite in accord with the theological implications of the trinitarian doctrine. At the same time, he acknowledges that such accord remains to be established. Rather than discussing the possible theological ramifications of the doctrine, however, Merton highlights the very significant fact of Doctor Suzuki's finding an affinity between his Zen insight and the Christian teaching. In Merton's words:

Furthermore it is highly significant that a Japanese thinker schooled in Zen should be so open to what is basically the most obscure and difficult mystery of Christian theology: the dogma of the Trinity and the mission of the Divine Persons in the Christian and in the Church. This would seem to indicate that the real area for investigation of analogies and correspondences between Christianity and Zen might after all be theology rather than psychology or asceticism.

William Johnston also reflects on the trinity. In the chapter "Monism and Dualism" in Christian Zen he notes that at the most profound levels of Christian prayer one passes entirely beyond the egoistical level of ordinary consciousness, so that it is no
longer appropriate to say the "I" (the ego) is praying but rather
that in me Christ is praying to his Father in the Spirit.
Johnston likens the condition in which the spiritual experience
can emerge to Zen:

Such an experience may seem a thousand miles
from Zen, but there are still similarities -
not only in the silencing of the faculties,
the deep repose, the detachment and the
integration, but also in the nonself condition
in which the word "Father" rises up in the heart.
For, reading Gregory and the mystics in depth,
one sees that this cry does not issue from the
empirical ego (which has been lost). It is the
cry of Christ to his Father, the Son offering
himself to the Father in Trinitarian love, the
Son who is within as in the Pauline. "I live,
now not I; but Christ lives in me." So Christian
prayer ends up in a Trinitarian context. It ends
up with the frightening paradox that there is
dialogue within a being that is totally one.43

Johnston understands the Trinity as "unity in diversity" and
"diversity in unity" (to use the language of Zaehner). The two
are one; and yet they are two which are one. This is the great
mystery of the Trinity which lies at the heart of Christianity.
Johnston recognizes the similarity, on a psychological level at
least, of the condition of consciousness in which the most profound
experience can occur for both the Christian and the Zen Buddhist.

He goes on to discuss his belief that the Zen tradition has
stressed the unity and the Christian tradition the diversity. It
is, for the Christian, the doctrine of the Trinity which actually,
mysteriously, resolves the paradox of the two and the one. The
Zen Buddhist has, of course, no such doctrine. Yet both Merton and
Johnston suggest that Christian trinitarianism may not be far
removed from the experience at the heart of Zen.
Francis Huxley discusses this point in the very last paragraph of his study, *The Way of the Sacred*. He tells us:

The mind of the Buddha, say Zen Buddhists, is in fact no different from that of an ordinary man, although his sense of identity has suffered a sea-change. To the question "What am I?" he can only answer, "That art Thou." This is the mystery of the sacred in a point. In it, as Coomaraswamy says, theology and autology - the science of the principle each man calls "I" - prove to be the same. "For," as he continues, in words which put our argument finally to rest, "as there are two in him who is both love and death, so there are, as all tradition affirms unanimously, two in us; although not two of him and two of us, nor even one of him and one of us, but only one of both."  

If this mystery is expressed in theology - and if this mystery is indeed to be found at the heart of all spiritual traditions because it is to be found at the heart of man - then it may indeed be theology which provides the ultimate ground for sharing between traditions. Yet clearly the traditions do not say the same things - at least not in the same way and not with the same emphasis. Our study of the "comparative philosophy" (if I may use that blanket expression) of Zen Buddhism and Roman Catholicism has indicated that the one has stressed relationship based on a number of distinctions (man and God, natural and supernatural, here and hereafter, body and soul, self and other) whereas the other has stressed nonduality. I have tried to show that whereas Johnston finds himself quite at home with the former, Merton inclines towards the latter. This is no less true of their view of dialogue than it is of their general view of spirituality. And it is to this matter that I will now turn in my concluding chapter.
Principles of Dialogue

My exposition of the views of William Johnston and Thomas Merton throughout the chapters of this thesis argues for a crucial difference between the ways in which they understood Roman Catholic dialogue with Zen Buddhism. In this chapter I will conclude my discussion by indicating that dimension of thought to which their individual dialogues ultimately leads us. While one might choose any of several areas to provide an "ultimate perspective" on the dialogue, there is one in particular to which the writings of both men leads. This is the dimension of epistemology, the question not so much of what one takes to be ultimate truth (be it "God" or "nirvana" or whatever) as of how one orients oneself towards truth, how one seeks to find truth, how one understands the quest one is on.

Johnston opens his most recently published book, The Mirror Mind: Spirituality and Transformation, with a discussion of epistemology. Merton discussed epistemology in his final talk, given in Bangkok on the day of his death. The differences between the two men are nowhere more obvious than they are here. As long as we maintain our focus on the Christian language which both men used and fail to examine the ways in which they used that language we will fail to grasp the radical implications of their dialogue. For it is not primarily in adding to experience, in providing a sharing of methods or techniques, or in exposure to a new range of symbols that the dialogue with Zen is most challenging. It is in what it has to teach us about what it is
to know - to know in any sense, but especially to know "ultimately" in the sense which has always been of concern to all spiritual traditions. What are the limits of human knowing? What are the limits of my existence as a noetic being?

In the long development of my study two epistemologies, two ways of knowing, seem to emerge. The first of these relies on the acceptance of an ultimate truth as a final source and reference and foundation for all other truth. There is a final concept to which all other concepts lead, a final symbol to which all other symbols point. This epistemology accepts that the final truth is not merely of the order of knowing; it is also of the order of being. There is a being whose ultimacy or finality is such that it knows no gap between its knowing and its being. Neither its knowing nor its being has any limit. Precisely in this, however, lies its difference from man; For man is constantly confronting limitations - both of knowing and of being.

To speak in more recognizably Christian language, this ultimate is of the nature of person, defined finally by a quality of relationship. It is an absolute being whose nature is three persons in one: God and who is known to man, within the limitations of human knowing, because of the revelation. Hence we say not only that there is a relationship of the persons in God one to another, but that man is in relationship to God as men are in relationship to one another. Truth in this model must be relational and personal both. One comes to know truth as one comes to know person. One comes to be oneself most truly insofar as one is in relationship to God and to other men. It is in the position of a border between self and other (whether man or God) that one
recognizes who one is and who the other is. That very recognition, however, is at once a radical acceptance of the full otherness of the other, of his or her being as an independent, free, self-determining and self-knowing being (either absolutely in the case of God or within limits known ultimately only to God in the case of man) and a radical acceptance of the other as not-other precisely in that I can accept them into myself, can truly know them and be with them.

This first epistemology is the traditional Catholic position. It is the position which Johnston takes and it remains central to his thinking throughout the entire corpus of his work. He has chosen to emphasize this in selecting the title of his most recent book. The human soul becomes most truly itself insofar as it allows itself to reflect the other. Practically speaking, this means keeping the mirror of one's being as free of smudge as possible in order that it may reflect truthfully. This may be accomplished through those techniques which we discussed in the second chapter of our study. In rather more abstract language it may be achieved through faithfulness to those "transcendental precepts" which Johnston believes can be found in every spiritual tradition. By emphasizing these precepts he emphasizes not so much ultimate truth or being as way, as method of approach to the ultimate. In his own words:

... we can find common ground by working towards a foundational theology based not upon metaphysics but upon transcendental method. Even when Buddhists and Christians have different beliefs, they can still join hands in a common method that is, basically human and leads through conversion or enlightenment to truth and goodness. Concretely, this means fidelity to those transcendental precepts that enshrine the inexorable
demands of the human spirit and point the way to human authenticity.

Johnston refers to his epistemology as a "moderate realism". This seems to be the view of common sense, a view in accord with the way in which most people approach reality, and as such, developed creatively in Johnston's program for dialogue and his cognitive model of the way in which the different religions can be said to fit into the overall framework of a Christian worldview, may be useful to Christians interested in becoming involved in studying the other religious traditions. In fact, it is a view which calls for dialogue in a way that Merton's view, as we shall see, does not demand it.

Johnston tells us that his epistemology provides us with a "middle course between a naive realism that overemphasizes objectivity to the neglect of the subject and the extreme idealism that denies any objectivity whatsoever." By formulating his epistemology in this way - on the basis of the acceptance of different orders of reality - a subjective and an objective - Johnston accepts a fundamental gap between knowing and being. He affirms his belief that there is a fundamental, concrete, solid, firm, given reality as well as the reality of my own knowing and the knowing of other beings.

The second epistemology which has emerged in this study may be described as taking the negative view. It is not concerned with any absolute considered as an other. While it may indeed allow for the experience of recognizing an other (whether an other person, another being, or an other viewpoint different from itself) in the final analysis its focus is on that invisible root
of consciousness where self, other and the meeting of self and other may be said to take place. It knows not so much through the recognition of its own noetic quality as through the recognition of its own coherence in the lack of any gap between knowing and being. It is precisely this coherence, however, which can never become an object of knowledge. The state is reached when one surrenders the effort to know, although this is not to suggest that one has no responsibility to know as well and as thoroughly as one can, but rather that once one does reach the limit of one's knowing one does in fact reach that limit. One simply is - and that is enough. Symbols and words there are; one accepts these and one uses these. However, one surrenders the sense of seeking to relate these to one another in terms of their relationship to a "super-symbol", which ultimately centers and gives meaning to them all, or in terms of their relationship to an "absolute reality" in the extra-linguistic, objective order.

This second position, probably best expressed in Zen Buddhist epistemology, is the one which Merton comes to accept and the one which increasingly underlies his most mature writings. Merton does not emphasize any distinction between subjective and objective orders of reality, between the knower and the known. He speaks rather of the necessity of focusing on consciousness:

"Buddhist and Christian monasticism start from the problem inside man himself. Instead of dealing with the external structures of society, they start with man's own consciousness." The positions which consciousness will take are, in a sense, all that man can know, though if he pushes through to the limit - and beyond - he may come to know in the very recognition of the ignorance of his own knowing: "... all immersed in illusion together, but ... the
illusion is also an empirical reality that has to be fully accepted, and ... in this illusion, which is nevertheless empirically real, nirvana is present and it is all there, if you but see it."

One has to move from the relative perception of truth to the absolute, which, nevertheless, is different from the relative only from the relative point of view. So Merton invites us to enter into the dialogue between all such positions as consciousness may take up, whether they be intellectual or spiritual or intuitive or any other kind of positions. As he put it:

... you respect the plurality of these things, but you do not make them ends in themselves. We respect these things and go beyond them dialectically. The kind of thing I am saying is that in Christianity you have a dialectical approach to this, and in Buddhism you have an essential dialectic called the Madhyamika, which is the basis of Zen, and so on. All these dialectical approaches (Marxism, of course, is also dialectical) go beyond the thesis and the antithesis, this and that, black and white, East and West. We accept the division, we work with the division, and we go beyond the division.

Religious tradition has declared that it expresses a truth which remains inviolate. This truth may be known through the use of the intellect or through inner spiritual experience, may be known through natural means or through revelation or through some combination of these ways. In Catholicism we have the notion of a truth which is "semper idem", always the same, yesterday, today and tomorrow. Accidental differences which have entered into the presentation of this essential truth in no way affect its ultimate validity.
Today we are faced with an interreligious dialogue. We must deal not only with the relationship between two orders of truth—the absolute and the relative, the unchanging and the changing, the essential and the accidental—but we must ask another difficult question. We must decide what we are to make of the fact that different traditions may express different absolutes. Do these traditions point to one and the same absolute—differing only in historical expression of it? Or is this notion of one supreme unifying truth or being, this "super-symbol", itself misplaced? Did Anesaki mean the same thing when he said that he could see Christ because he could see the Buddha as Johnston meant when he said that true dialogue will take place when Buddha and Christ meet one another in their followers?

I will not attempt to answer this difficult question here. However, one interesting observation comes out of my study. If one accepts the notion of two orders of truth, the way in which one envisions the relationship between them within one tradition will be consonant with the way one envisions the relationship between traditions. By emphasizing "word" in his understanding of Christianity, Johnston has put stress upon communication, upon duality. He can easily accept, however, that there is no reason why God could not reveal himself through different languages. His emphasis on the unique saving act of Jesus is not threatened by this since the grace of that act operates on the supernatural level whereas the different languages of spirituality pertain to the natural level.

Johnston is careful here not to push his position too far. On the one hand he is saying that all men are going to the same
goal; that all languages, insofar as they express truth, have reference, either consciously or unconsciously, to the same ultimate, the same essence, the same final being: to God the Father who is one with Jesus of Nazareth, His Son. Yet his immense respect for the other and for the right - indeed the necessity - for the other to live his own meaning, to be his own person, to define his own life in terms of his own community and culture make him quite uneasy with those who would refer to all men of good will as "anonymous Christians". Johnston admits that this approach does provide an "ingeniously logical" solution for the Christian who nonetheless recognizes truth and goodness in non-Christians, and Johnston is indeed a man of logic and clear expression, but he cannot accept it precisely because it is an insensitive approach. It is at this point that Johnston reveals two key aspects of his particular epistemology - aspects which distinguish his thought sharply from Merton's. These two aspects, both of which have a sort of finality or absoluteness in Johnston's thought, actually bring Johnston to a point at which he is struck by their seeming contradictoriness. Johnston's experience leads him to a confrontation between that ultimate perspective of Catholicism which informs his life and that concern for the other, which is a part of his spiritual outlook and central to his view of Christianity, a religion of person and relationship. Tradition and individual are as intimately interrelated for Johnston as are word and truth, Word and Truth. Yet Johnston cannot accept that, in the final analysis, in the light of heaven, the Buddhist view of reality will be as accurate as the Christian view centered on Jesus who is God. Johnston handles this contradiction by suggesting
that we should "refrain from pushing logic to its ultimate point and learn to live with the paradox and the tension."

Unlike Johnston, who eventually abandoned his personal practice of Zen meditation in Japanese zendos, Merton, who had never made such a practice, chose Zen because, of all the religious traditions which interested him, it most clearly pushed to the extreme. It was Merton who wrote:

This thing about Zen is that it pushes contradictions to their ultimate limit where one has to choose between madness and innocence. And Zen suggests that we may be driving toward one or the other on a cosmic scale. Driving toward them because, one way or the other, as madmen or innocents, we are already there.

It might be good to open our eyes and see.

I have suggested that there is a relationship between the way in which Johnston answered questions about the relationship between the absolute and relative orders of truth and the way in which he dealt with the issue of the relationship between Buddhism and Christianity. Epistemologically, his solution lay in his "moderate realism", which sought to take a middle way between the rejection of the subject and the rejection of the object. It is worth comparing this with what Merton has to say in his article on "Monastic Experience and East-West Dialogue". Here we can see something of the difference between the temper of the man who believed we needed to live with the tensions and the contradictions and the man who felt driven to seek their resolution - if not in words, then in that silence which is most proper to the freedom that is not only to be found within but also beyond all words and all ultimate essences. Merton wrote:
This monastic "work" or "discipline" is not merely an individual affair. It is at once personal and communal. Its orientation is in a certain sense suprapersonal. It goes beyond a merely psychological fulfillment on the empirical level, and it goes beyond the limits of communicable cultural ideals (of one's own national, racial, etc., background). It attains to a certain universality and wholeness which have never yet been adequately described—and probably cannot be described—in terms of psychology. Transcending the limits that separate subject from object and self from not-self, this development achieves a wholeness which is described in various ways by the different religions; a self-realization of atman, of Void, of life in Christ, of fana and baqa (annihilation and reintegration according to Sufism), etc.

If Johnston's dialogue with Japanese Zen Buddhism led him to discover a freedom within tradition, Merton came to a freedom from all tradition. Johnston came to understand language and tradition in a new way. He discovered that new meanings of old symbols could indeed be discovered through a study of the spirituality of another tradition. He came to find a systematic explanation for the role played by other traditions within the overall plan of salvation that he believed was the final meaning of life.

Merton decried taking systems and traditions as final resting places, but he continued to use Christian language. This has led to a debate between those who felt that Merton became a Buddhist (for certainly his epistemology is closer to that of Zen than to that which has come to be associated with Christianity) and those who insist that he remained a Christian. Though Merton did say that he wanted to be as good a Buddhist as he could and though he considered living the life of a Tibetan Buddhist monk, I think he saw that in the final analysis this was not necessary. Unlike Johnston, he felt no need to explain those other spiritual traditions
in light of some other ultimate, which alone gave final truth to life. Those traditions, like everything else, have final value in and of themselves.

Though Merton continued to use Christian language he came to use it in a radically new way - a way that suggested the freedom from tradition which I am speaking about here. The vast majority of commentators on Merton's thought seem to have neglected this radical turn, most evident in his epistemology. While Johnston would continue to insist that, since all symbols and spiritual practices pointed to the same underlying reality, they could be used to inform one another and to teach us more about that underlying reality, that "archetype" to use a Jungian term, to which they sought to lead and from which they derived their final meaning and their being, Merton stopped looking for the other, the hidden essence, the final resting point. He discovered a "wisdom-in-emptiness" which was able to rest, finally, in "not-knowing". He came to see that, indeed, there was no other.

Johnston speaks of a set of principles enshrined in all religious traditions, principles which are of the essence of human being. By faithfulness to these principles one can be lead to the final truth, the truth which lies hidden in mystery from human eyes. Even Johnston's principles emphasize the positive, the individual, the distinct. They emphasize "identification" and "recognition", coming to know the "word" that one is, the "word" that the other is, the "Word" that God is. through a recognition that it is in relationship that the true meaning of these words will emerge. This emphasis on the entire structure that is the "language of life" goes hand in hand with the stress Johnston places
on the social dimension of truth. His concern with his own identification as a Catholic, his own commitment to his own tradition, along with his interest in the institutional dimension of dialogue are met by his equally genuine concern for the otherness of the Buddhist with whom he dialogues. He recognizes the right of the Buddhist to speak his own language, stating only that the language of the Buddhist, like his Christian language, leads ultimately to the Word which is God the Father. One needs a tradition, a religious language, to move to this word: to recognize where one truly is and who one truly is, that is, a being of relationship. One comes to speak one's language more fully and with more understanding if one can come to understand the language of the other both because, in doing so, one is affirming the essential nature of "being-in-relationship" and because one is at the same time coming to broaden the number of associations one has with the individual symbols of one's own "native language" by the process of comparison and contrast with the symbols of another "religious language" which, nevertheless, has reference to precisely the same ultimate and essential being, to the Word, to God. Dialogue is an essential part of Johnston's theology. And if he is convinced that present efforts to create a "common theological language" are doomed to failure, as his own effort failed, he is nevertheless convinced that such a language will emerge in the future. It will emerge because the language which we speak on the natural level to which we are bound strives to point ever more accurately to the Final Truth, the truth of a supernatural being, the Truth of God.

The rather abstract vision of dialogue which Johnston expounds
contrasts with the increasingly concrete approach of Merton. Johnston's entire programme for dialogue rests on the acceptance of a final and ultimate reality to which all other realities have reference. Merton seemed to abandon all attempts to speak of such "ultimate realities", visioned as somehow other than that which is given in the here and now and essential to the emergence of meaning for the here and now. After a long and arduous journey, full of darkness and confusion and despair, Merton reached the point at which mountains were mountains and rivers were rivers. And words were - well, they were words. Merton used them with freedom and abandon, not emphasizing any Archimedian Point at which all were striving to point, but rather emphasizing their very darkness, their unknowing, and the full expression of the non-duality between subject and object out of which words flowed. Seeking to express my sense of the difference between the thought of the two men I have sometimes suspected that Johnston's efforts were geared to plummeting depths which were like the depths of the ocean and did, indeed, have a bottom - no matter how far away that might be. He again and again expresses his conviction that no real progress can be made in the spiritual life unless one has faith - and that faith has to be in something positive. Only with such a viewpoint will one be able to go through all the dark nights and the sacrifices and the disciplines and so on. For Merton, on the other hand, there was no bottom, as he did not always think but as he seems increasingly to have become convicted through his study of Zen. Here, however, it is worth noting that the "epistemological revolution" through which Merton passed - passed by way of all those dark nights which he could not choose because, in fact,
they seem to have first chosen him - did not rely upon his study of Zen.

The "epistemological revolution" (which can be seen also in such contemporary writers as James Hillman and Jacques Derrida) was rather part and parcel of Merton's twentieth century apophatic mysticism, a mysticism which Merton, like few, "Christian" mystics before him, seems to have taken to the limit. Merton was able to go beyond religious tradition altogether because he lived in the twentieth century. He was exposed to other spiritualities. And while he continued to speak Christian language out of the fullness which opened in his life, out of the depths of his "un-knowing", he was also able to speak freely with the language of the other traditions. He used religious language as a poet.

Johnston's epistemology returns us to structures. The archetypal structure of relationship, the mold on which all structures are fundamentally based, the dualism emphasized in his thought in many different ways. Johnston has stressed the value of living out a commitment of faith and belief. He has insisted on the dimension of community and of tradition. In a sense his personal view of spirituality gives priority to tradition and community over individuality, though he does recognize an interplay of forces. For Merton, however:

If you forget everything else that has been said, I would suggest that you remember this for the future: "From now on, everybody stands on his own feet."

This, I think, is what Buddhism is about, what Christianity is about, what monasticism is about - if you understand it in terms of grace. It is not a Pelagian statement, by any means, but a statement
to the effect that we can no longer rely on being supported by structures that may be destroyed at any moment by a political power or a political force. You cannot rely on structures. The time for relying on structures has disappeared. They are good and they should help us, and we should do the best we can with them. But they may be taken away, and if everything is taken away, what do you do next?

Merton does not need structures. He does not need religion. He does not have to remain a Christian. He has indeed achieved the "freedom of the sons of God" - the freedom that he has come to recognize in himself and in all men, the freedom from distinction, from this and that, from subject and object, from self and other. He had already recognized this freedom in his meeting with Suzuki, that "True Man of No Title", the "man one really wants to meet", for, as he asked then: "Who else is there?" I do not sense in Merton any need to say that - while we recognize the validity of other perspectives and other religions and other peoples - in the final analysis, in the last reckoning, in the day of judgement, the Christian message, the Christian formulation, the Word identified by and with the Christian Jesus and the Christian God will win the day. Merton's sense of himself and his sense of reality underwent a sea-change that distinguished it so radically from that of most of his fellow Christians that, while they continue to argue that he indeed did remain a Catholic, they seem to have missed his message for his language. For Merton there was no final symbol, no ultimate Word. While most students of Merton - at least those who identify themselves as Christians - seem to have sensed that something revolutionary took place in his life, I do not think they really understood just what that was.
Yet an epistemology different from that of the vast majority of Christians — and certainly from that of William Johnston — underlay the adventure Merton had with Zen. It can be seen in much of his writing of the last decade of his life. I will offer a couple of examples which suggest, both in form (that of dream and poetry) and in content, the sort of revolution that took place in Merton’s life. In the *Asian Journal* he chose to give us the following dream:

Last night I dreamed that I was, temporarily, back at Gethsemani. I was dressed in a Buddhist monk’s habit, but with more black and red and gold, a "Zen habit," in color more Tibetan than Zen. I was going to tell Donald Kane, the cook in the diet kitchen, that I would be there for supper. I met some women in the corridor, visitors and students of Asian religion, to whom I was explaining I was a kind of Zen monk and Gelugpa together, when I woke up.¹⁵

I will leave the exposition of this dream to the fancy of my readers, suggesting only that in light of the comments I have made in this chapter its implications are indeed revolutionary. It may well be compared with a verse from his *Geography of Lograire*, a poetic depiction of Merton's inner landscape. Note here the emphasis on movement and transformation without any corresponding need to provide those processes with a final end.

Should the dance of Shivas shapes
All over flooded prairies.
Make hosts of (soon) Christ-Wheat
Self-bread which could also be
Squares of Buddha-Rice

¹⁵
Neither Johnston nor Merton has produced an entirely consistent perspective on dialogue. If my argument about their epistemologies can be accepted, it must nonetheless be accepted in full recognition that contradictions are to be found scattered throughout their writings. Johnston seems to me to have come closest to the position I have argued was taken by Merton in his Christian Zen, probably in his own sitting practice and in his emphasis on silence. It is at these points that one senses Johnston was himself most challenged to move beyond the viewpoint I have suggested he developed over the years. Merton, on the other hand, comes closest to Johnston not so much in his emphasis on word and system (for he has stressed poetics and individuality to an extreme not finally compatible with Johnston's thought) but in his belief in Christ and his stress on the supernatural. As I have stated elsewhere in this thesis, I do not think that Merton had finally resolved all the conflicts between his own radical position and the position that was associated with the more traditional Christianity that surrounded him and gave structure to his life. Yet if Johnston rose above his conflicts to an intellectual position that allowed him to contain and give meaning to them, while at the same time allowing him to work in creative and sensitive ways for both the Christian and the non-Christian Japanese religious, Merton seems to have resolved his conflicts in those moments which were free of verbal overplay of any kind, of belief of any kind, of the requirement for explanation of any kind. Certainly his experience in Sri Lanka was one of those moments and perhaps his description of that experience one of the clearest expositions of his viewpoint - or, rather, his freedom
from the need for any absolute viewpoint, his freedom from tradition.

Wilfred Cantwell Smith in one of the most interesting studies of interreligious dialogue, his 1981 study *Towards a World Theology*, wrote:

I do not regard it as requisite for the thesis of this study to proffer here and now a disciplined epistemology to go along with our new global awareness. Many current western epistemologies are oriented more to science than to history, more to things than to persons, and are more individualistic than will probably (or anyway should) endure. The task of attaining an epistemological sophistication that will be historically self-critical as well as universalist, is interlinked with, nor prior to, our task of attaining corporate critical self-consciousness in the religious realm. In fact, some would hardly be surprised if the comparative study of religion contributed more to the development of western epistemology than vice versa: but the two should go hand in hand. In any case, the striving to understand religion is part and parcel of, certainly not subordinate to, man's general aspiration to truth.

Merton and Johnston have evolved epistemologies which have reflected their individual life histories. Part of those histories, for whatever reasons, has been their involvement with the Zen tradition of Japanese spirituality. Acutely aware of the difficulties and the possibilities inherent in the interaction they have struggled to make meaning out of their individual experiences with their own professed religious tradition and the tradition of Zen Buddhism. Many further studies will need to be undertaken before we will begin to understand their tremendous efforts. In particular, we will need to explore those studies of symbolism, of language and of metaphor such as may be found in the work of
Paul Ricoeur or David Tracy among many others. We will need to examine the social dimension of dialogue, asking, for example, what new light the writings of such a scholar as Joseph Spae might bring to our discussion. We will want to look at the interreligious dialogue that takes place not between Roman Catholicism and Zen Buddhism, but between Roman Catholicism and various forms of Islam or Judaism, of Hinduism or the many more traditional and less systematized religions of the Third World, as well as the dialogues among those religions themselves. The more than one hundred page bibliography, *Christian Faith Amidst Religious Pluralism*, published by Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia in 1980, gives some indication of the scope of English language materials already available in this area. In the introduction to that work reference is made to some twenty-seven periodicals that are journals of interfaith dialogue. All of this gives some hint of the tremendous effort before us. As Johnston has observed we are at the beginning of a long task. The importance of that task can hardly be overestimated. And there can be little doubt that, however we eventually come to understand interreligious dialogue, the work of William Johnston and Thomas Merton will play an important part in it.
FOOTNOTES

Introduction


10. An interesting study of two forms of Christianity which developed in Japan in isolation from Western contact (Mukyō-kai and Makuya) can be found in Carlo Caldaro, *Christianity: The Japanese Way* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979).


12. Ibid., p. 209.

13. Ibid., p. 209.

14. "But can we truly dismiss Zen as 'passive mysticism'? Is it mysticism at all? Is it a 'way of salvation'? Is it individualistic? Is it 'subjective'? These are not easy questions to answer, with any amount of exactitude, though it can be said from the start that terms like 'mysticism', 'passivity', 'subjectivity', and so on, especially the term 'religion' cannot be applied to Zen without very strict qualifications and indeed they should perhaps not normally be applied to it at all."


16. A good introduction to the characteristics of Japanese culture can be found in Charles A. Moore (ed.), *The Japanese Mind*.
The Japanese thought-and-culture tradition is probably the most enigmatic and paradoxical of all major traditions, but - partly for that very reason - it presents more intellectual and cultural challenges, more unique and interesting suggestions, and more provocative reactions than any of the other great traditions of Asia. The paradoxical character of the Japanese mind has been inevitable and unavoidable for the Japanese - in adopting, adapting, and attempting to harmonize such differing and conflicting philosophies and religions as Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, German idealism, and indigenous Shinto. And it is also inescapable and beyond clear-cut comprehension for all but the Japanese, especially the West. It makes an exciting study but a demanding one.


A time may come when all the world will accept the Christian religion, but this will never abolish the difference of tastes or modes of expression. Eastern peoples will hardly lose thoroughly their inheritance of serene meditative faith. Their Christianity will never be the Christianity of a Jew, fervent and sometimes very exclusive. The Greeks demand wisdom and the Jews a sign; the gifts are diverse, but the spirit the same. There are many paths and roads in forests and valleys, but those who have climbed up to the hilltop by any of these routes equally enjoy the same moonlight on the open summit. This is an old Buddhist proverb. Buddhists will never lose this spirit of toleration. There may grow in Japan a form of Christianity without Pope and without Holy Synod, but Buddhism will nevertheless
hold its footing therein for ever.

In short, we Buddhists are ready to accept Christianity; nay, more, our faith in Buddha is faith in Christ. We see Christ because we see Buddha. The one has come to us in order to release us from the fetters of passion and avarice, and to convince us of an ideal higher than any worldly good. His gospel was that of resignation, attainable by meditation, yet never leaving one to the dreamy quietism of pantheistic or nihilistic philosophy, but purifying human activity by calm enlightenment, and pushing one to the love of all beings by faith in an incarnate Dharma. The other appeared in flesh as Son of Man, to redeem us from sin, to recover us to the love of our Father, from a covetous attachment to our own egotism. His gospel was that of love and hope, but never of fury and vanity. He preached no wisdom, but the wisdom of his believers is holy and leading to the Father, purified by faith and strengthened by hope.

The question of the future depends upon how fully the followers of the two Lords understand each other, and how the two streams of the civilizations nourished respectively by them in the West and the East can harmonise with each other and contribute conjointly to the future progress of humanity. The solution of this problem is no matter of merely abstract speculation, but of sympathy and faith. Just as at the fountain-heads of these two streams there appeared the Truth in flesh, the Faith in person, the realisation of this harmony in love and faith needs an incarnate person, representative of humanity. The person may be a powerful individual or a nation. If the appearance of Christ or Buddha has not been in vain, if the two streams of civilization have been more than ephemeral, then we shall hope not in vain for the second advent of Christ or the appearance of the future Buddha Metteya.


23. There is a great deal more to be said on the relationship among religions from the perspective of the commonality of "human nature" across cultural boundaries than I have said in this thesis. My advisor, Professor William Nicholls, has examined interreligious dialogue as a primary stimulus in Merton's realization of his true identity. See W. Nicholls and I. Kent, "Merton and Identity" in Donald Grayston and Michael W. Higgins (eds.), *Thomas Merton: Pilgrim in Process* (Toronto: Griffin House Graphics Ltd., 1983), p. 106-120. This is a potentially very fruitful area of exploration, though one fraught with many difficulties. In the framework of my thesis as a whole the argument developed in this first chapter is significant especially for its epistemological implications.

25. Although I have only been able to hint at it in this thesis, it became increasingly clear to me as I wrote and studied that a great deal could be understood through a comparison of Merton's thought with that of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida and that, indeed, one great missing part in the full understanding of Merton's project is a consideration of it against the background of French intellectual history of the present century. My discussion of Merton's ideas begins with his critique of the ideas of René Descartes. I have made some little mention of his interest in existentialism. References will be found in his writings to the thought of Claude Levi-Strauss and also to that of Roland Barthes, whose *Writing Degree Zero* was reviewed by Merton, and Michel Foucault. Merton was fluent in French, having spent a significant part of his childhood in that country, and was particularly sensitive to its culture. By his own account, several of the dreams which he recalled having during the last days of his life took place in the south of France. Although scattered references can be found in the literature to these influences on Merton, I am not aware of any complete study of them.

One affirmation of my sense of the importance of Derrida's thought for the study of Merton and in particular of Merton's involvement in interreligious dialogue can be found in some comments of Winston L. King in his foreword to Keiji Nishitani's *Religion and Nothingness*. Discussing western streams of thought which have a special affinity for Nishitani's work, King reflects:

>A more recent but very lively school of American thought - one for the moment more often to be found in departments of literature than in departments of philosophy or religion - is that derived from French
structuralist and poststructuralist Derrida. A principal theme of this school has been the attack on the distinction between author and reader. At successive levels of generalization, this theme becomes an attack on the distinction between creator and interpreter, subject and object, and finally between self and nonself. When and if the methods of this critique begin to be employed on the traditional subject matter of theology, Nishitani's somewhat parallel critique of the Western crises of theism and selfhood may find a surprising kind of welcome.


A deeper sense of the value of William Johnston's work might be developed through a comparison with the writings of Paul Ricoeur, another key figure in the French scene.
Chapter One


3. For a valuable discussion of this topic see the works of Lynn de Silva, especially The Problem of Self in Buddhism and Christianity (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1975).


5. Ibid., p. 48.


7. Merton, Birds, p. 22.


Chapter Two

1. This distinction can be found discussed in many places. One of the best and most recent studies of it is Peter L. Berger (ed.), *The Other Side of God: A Polarity in World Religions* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press, 1981).

2. Although this study will focus on dialogue with Zen Buddhism I should mention that William Johnston has made some observations on Amida Buddhism. See especially his "Pure Land Buddhism and Nembutsu: The Meditation of Faith" in *Studia Missionalia* 25 (1976): 43-64.


4. "An Eastern lady wanted to know what I had been working on so diligently. I replied that I was writing a book about an Englishman who became a Communist, then a Catholic, later a Trappist monk, and finally a Buddhist, at which point, his life having been fulfilled, he died."


9. A detailed examination of the role of the belly as the centre of being can be found in Karlfried, Graf von Durckheim, Hara: The Vital Centre of Man (New York: Fernhill House, 1970).


11. Ibid., p. 63.

12. Numerous works have been written by and about Teilhard. One valuable study of de Chardin's relation to Eastern religions is Ursula King, Towards a New Mysticism: Teilhard de Chardin and Eastern Religions (London: W. Collins Sons & Co., Ltd., 1980).


17. Ibid., p. 10.

18. Ibid., p. 10.

19. Ibid., p. 11.

20. "... it is probably for this reason that a man like Aldous Huxley, who had great interest in meditation but no particular belief in anything, just didn't get anywhere."

Johnston, Christian Zen, p. 18.


Chapter Three

1. Merton, Birds, p. 100.

2. Ibid., p. 139.

3. Ibid., p. 141.

4. Ibid., p. 60-61.

5. I do not intend to suggest here that one can ever go totally beyond one's cultural conditioning, the roots of which are both deep and pervasive, so much as to highlight Merton's freedom in adapting the usages of another culture. This is the point I will make further on when I speak of Merton's language as "poetic".


11. Ibid., p. 11.


15. The editors of Merton's Asian Journal provide the following glosses:

Sunya, sunyata: Sanskrit, "emptiness, the Void." A basic concept in certain schools of Buddhism, particularly Madhyamika and Zen. The term goes back to Nagarjuna's sunyata, the "Silence of the Middle Way," and continued to evolve, in depth and complexity, finally to reach its maturity in the sunya doctrines of the Madhyamika school. "The terms are used in two allied meanings: (i) the phenomena are sunya, as they are relative and lack substantiality or independent reality; they are conditioned (pratitya - samutpanna), and hence are unreal; (ii) the Absolute is sunya or sunyata itself, as it is devoid of empirical form; no thought-category or predicate ('is,' 'not-is,' 'is and is not,' 'neither is nor not-is') can legitimately be applied to it; it is Transcendent to thought (sunya)." (Murti) S. B. Dasgupta, in his Introduction to Tantric Buddhism, page 9, defines sunyata as "enlightenment of the nature of essencelessness" and points out that when it was combined with karuna (universal compassion) as the two chief elements of bodhicitta (enlightened-mindedness) this "perfect commingling ... had farreaching effects in the transformation of the Mahayanic ideas into the Tantric ideas." Christmas Humphreys relates sunya with tathata (suchness or thusness), while the Dalai Lama, in his pamphlet Introduction to Buddhism, calls sunyata "the knowledge of the ultimate reality of all objects, material and phenomenal."


Karuna: "the Mahayana Buddhist term for compassion; a trait of bodhisattvas." (Ross) Among the mythic
bodhisattvas, Samantabhadra is the classic exemplar of karuna, "representing the love aspect of the Buddha-principle." (Humphreys) "He has vowed to serve all sentient beings by guiding them to a happy life which is attained by the profound intention to be free from all attachment and resistance to things. In him, action is identical with his vow." (Morgan) In Theravada Buddhism, karuna is the second of the four Brahma viharas, or sublime states of consciousness. (See Humphreys: Buddhism, pages 125-126.) Merton, Asian Journal, p. 381.

Dharmakaya: the Sanskrit term for "the cosmical body of the Buddha, the essence of all beings." (Murit) Merton, Asian Journal, p. 372.

A clear discussion of these and other related concepts of the Madhyamika, the Buddhist philosophy which was one of the main cultural ingredients that went into the making of Zen, can be found in a book which Merton read during his Asian trip and from which he quotes extensively in the Asian Journal. This is T. R. V. Murit, The Central Philosophy of Buddhism, 2nd ed. London: Allen & Unwin, 1960.


20. My account of Johnston's engagement with Zen relies especially on his Christian Zen and a taped lecture, "Oriental Meditation", one of a series of six tapes published under the title Contemplative Prayer (Kansas City, Mo.: National Catholic Reporter
I. Zen and the Birds of Appetite (p. 16) Merton notes: "Of course there are many Christians who are very much aware that there is something to be learnt from Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and especially from Zen and Yoga. Among these are those few Western Jesuits in Japan who have had the courage to practice Zen in Zen monasteries, as well as the Japanese Cistercians who are becoming interested in Zen in their own monasteries." I believe Merton's choice of the word courage is well made. I want to stress my admiration for the deep sense of integrity and the intellectual and personal honesty which led Johnston both to a study of Zen and to the development of the position I have tried to elaborate in this paper. I wonder if those who do not have a knowledge of the profoundly conservative nature of Catholic life during the past few centuries can appreciate the magnitude of Johnston's effort. I say this particularly in light of the danger of minimizing that effort in comparing it with the radical re-framing of Catholicism which I find in Merton's thought. If I find myself with rather more rapport for Merton than for Johnston I nevertheless suspect that Johnston may offer a way into dialogue with Zen (and a way into Christian spiritual development) for many who find Merton altogether too far out. A study of Johnston's promising juxtaposition of reason and faith, tradition and individuality and his notion of dialogue has yet to be undertaken. A comparison of Johnston's work with that of Paul Ricoeur might be especially useful in elaborating all of this. I also regret that no intel-
lectual biographies yet exist of Johnston or those other Jesuits who have been engaged in the study of Zen in Japan. Since much relevant material is likely to be lost over time and since this development is of such moment for the study of man this is indeed unfortunate.


23. William Johnston, "Oriental Meditation" /audio tape/. In Mirror Mind (p. 29) Johnston tells us: "I personally have met people who claim that they have no religious experience and even no faith, when in fact all they need do is to reflect on themselves. If they do so, they discover hidden treasures in the fields of their own souls."


27. Ibid., p. 8.
28. Ibid., p. 7.

29. Ibid., p. 8.

30. Ibid., p. 8.

31. Ibid., p. 8.


33. Johnston, "Oriental Meditation" /audio tape/.


35. For a discussion of the esoteric/exoteric dimensions of religion see the work of Frithjof Schuon and Rene Guenon. Another particularly useful discussion can be found in Jacob Needleman, *Lost Christianity: A Journey of Rediscovery to the Center of Christian Experience* (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1980). His discussion of Merton's study of the east in light of what he (Needleman) calls "intermediate Christianity" is fascinating.

36. Sociological dimensions of religion in dialogue demand much further study. Sharing (whether of material possessions, ideas, companionship) undoubtedly has implications that go far beyond both the material and the approach of my thesis.

38. Ibid., p. 209.


40. Merton's attitude towards the censoring (or "condemnation") of individual thinkers by the official church is indicative of his general stand towards all officially and absolutely established positions. In *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (p. 42-43) Merton makes a comment pertinent to the issue under discussion in this thesis:

"The first step in identifying 'heresy' is to refuse all identifications with the subjective intuitions and experience of the 'heretic', and to see his words only in an impersonal realm in which there is no dialogue - in which dialogue is denied a priori."


43. Ibid., p. 77.

44. R. C. Zaehner has written much, in his own inimitable way, about the interrelationship of religions. The theme of "unity in diversity" and "diversity in unity" recurrs again and again in his work.


47. Merton, Birds, p. 43.
Chapter Four


3. Ibid., p. 43.


6. Ibid., p. 103.

7. Ibid., p. 18-19.


10. Ibid., p. 57.

11. "Many people used to believe that the 'seat' of the soul was somewhere in the brain. Since brains began to be opened up frequently, no one has seen 'the soul'. As a result of this and like revelations, many people do not now believe in the soul."


16. Ibid., p. 58.


18. Ibid., p. 151.

19. Ibid., p. 212.


21. Ibid., p. 343.


24. Ibid., p. 84.
25. Ibid., p. 84.

26. Ibid., p. 84-85.


28. Ibid., p. 69.


30. Ibid., p. 21.

31. Ibid., p. 21.

32. Ibid., p. 20.


34. Ibid., p. 16.


40. Ibid., p. 57.

41. Ibid., p. 57.

42. Ibid., p. 57-58.


Chapter Five


2. Ibid., p. 4.

3. Ibid., p. 4.


5. Ibid., p. 342.


7. "... some theologians have called non-Christians 'anonymous Christians' - men and women who possess the grace of Christ without knowing that they do so. This is ingeniously logical and, as an attempt to solve the old problem of the salvation of the non-Christian, it may have some validity. But it does not help dialogue. After all, what Christian would like to be called an anonymous Buddhist?"

Johnston, Mirror Mind, p. 21-22. The notion of the "anonymous Christian" was developed especially by the German theologian Karl Rahner, S. J.

8. Ibid., p. 22.


11. Merton's "freedom from tradition" did not depend entirely on the epistemological revolution through which his thinking passed. The way he came to think, a way which I have chosen to call "poetic", was consonant with the particular words and symbols he preferred to use when he wrote. Many of these symbols, associated with the world of nature which was so important to Merton or with the apophatic type of mystical experience he favoured (words indicating groundlessness, boundlessness, open-endedness), were not specifically Christian and could be used by people of other traditions.


14. Various students of Merton have attempted to approach his work by de-emphasizing his Christian language and stressing that his message can be understood in suitably modern languages, for example psychology with notions such as the search for the "true self". Though this is a valid approach to Merton's work I have several arguments with it. In the first place there is no doubt that Merton did use Christian language even at those times when he himself was striving to get beyond the problems such language presented for inter-religious discussions. I believe our understanding of Merton is better served if we look not so much at the
terms he did use as at the way in which he used them: i.e., "poetically". The Christian language can be used as poetically as the language of psychology. Translation, if it is a valid possibility (a question we need to raise continually), will serve us best if we do not simply try to replace one absolute text by another. A preacher is a preacher whether his gospel be Christian, Buddhist, Marxist or Psychological. Secondly, Merton increasingly gained the freedom of "lila" - of play - of the dance of life above the void. No solidity. No concrete, absolute, final center. Interpreters of Merton who strive to base Merton's thought necessarily, I believe, lose his most radical message.


I. Works by William Johnston

A. Books


B. Articles


C. Tapes

II. Works by Thomas Merton

A. Books


B. Articles

III. Works about Merton

A. Books


**B. Articles**


IV. Works by other Roman Catholics


V. Other Works


