Monastic Interreligious Dialogue

Pierre-François de Béthune, O.S.B.

Abstract

The monks are engaged in interreligious dialogue according to their specific charisma. As contemplatives they situate spontaneously the encounter at the spiritual level. Beyond dialogue, they offer their hospitality in what can be called an *intrareligious* dialogue. The study of some important pioneers, like Thomas Merton or Henri Le Saux, allows us a remarkable deepening of the theology of interreligious encounter.

Ten keywords

Hospitality
Spiritual experience
Prayer
Church
Pioneers
Humility
Openness
Boldness
Reciprocity

The formation of commissions for monastic interreligious dialogue (DIM/MID) some thirty years ago is one of the most recent developments in the area of interreligious dialogue. It is also one of the most important, for it gave concrete expression to a constitutive element of all true dialogue, namely, **encounter at the level of spiritual experience**. Obviously monks are not the only ones to engage in this form of dialogue. Later on I shall mention the many people, Christians as well as those of other traditions, who practice this type of dialogue. However, monks have engaged in it more intentionally and have written extensively about their experience. A closer look at the initiative undertaken by Benedictines will make it possible to come to a better understanding of dialogue at this level.

I shall begin by describing (1) the **history of the formation of the DIM/MID commissions,** a history that shows how thinking about dialogue has evolved over the past decades. This evolution would not have been possible, however, without the commitment of the (2) **pioneers of dialogue**. The **history of DIM/MID from 1978 to 2011** (3) will demonstrate the growing acceptance of dialogue that was possible and necessary over the course of these years. I will conclude by looking at (4) the **challenges and promise** of this form of dialogue.

1. The creation of commissions for monastic interreligious dialogue

The formation of commissions for monastic interreligious dialogue was made possible by an evolution — or better, a revolution — of the Catholic position. What was involved was nothing less than a new conversion to the Gospel.

We have come a long way. The few Christian monasteries that were founded in Africa or in the Far East at the end of the nineteenth century were outposts of Western civilization. There was no contact with the local religions. By way of illustration, consider this episode that took place in 1931 at the Chinese monastery of Si-shan, founded by the Belgian abbey of Saint.André: “One day during a walk, a Chinese novice and ex-bonze by the name of Wang said he thought there were similarities between Buddhism and Christianity. The prior, Dom Joliet, felt that he needed to retract this statement and insisted that the novice explicitly affirm the pre-eminence of Christianity, doing so on his knees in front of those who were with him on the walk. The guilty novice did as he was told, but a few days later he left the monastery” (Delcourt 1988, p. 209). Daring to see similarities between Christian and Buddhist monasticism was regarded as an expression of apostasy; blindness, instead, was considered a monastic virtue.

But a major evolution was taking place, mainly because there were those who dared to look kindly and objectively on other spiritual traditions. A change of mentality came about quickly. After the Second World War the Christian missionary movement started up again, but this time with much greater respect for the actual situation in which the so-called 'young churches' existed.

It was at this time that some Benedictine and Cistercian monks began to pay more attention to the culture and spiritual life of other continents. Thus, when Abbots Cornelius Tholens and Theodore Ghesquière recommended at a meeting of Benedictine abbots in 1959 that they needed to find better ways to coordinate the establishment of monasticism in the young churches, their proposal was well received and an opening to dialogue was assured. With the establishment of the "Secretariat to Aid the Implantation of Monasticism" (AIM) two years later, we can say that Christian monks became much more conscious of the life — more precisely, the spiritual life — of monasteries in Africa and Asia. But this awareness was still driven by a missionary purpose, a concern to spread the faith through monasticism.

Inspired by the Second Vatican Council and its Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, in 1965 the Secretariat of AIM drew attention to the presence of Hindu or Buddhist monasticism in the countries where it was preparing to establish Christian monasteries. The founders of AIM went to far as to suggest that coming to know these other monastic traditions could contribute to the renewal of the spiritual life of Christians.

The Congress that took place in Bangkok in 1968 had an especially significant impact on this consciousness. Ardent proponents of monastic renewal such as Abbot Primate Rembert Weakland, Abbot Cornelius Tholens, and Father Jean Leclercq were deeply impressed by the massive presence of Buddhist monks in Thailand. Indeed, the recognition of our minority status makes us all the more aware of the necessity of dialogue.

Moreover, the accidental death of Father Thomas Merton during the course of this Congress made people take even more notice of his own evolution during the last years of his life and his profound interest in becoming familiar with other religions.

'The experience of God in the different religions' was the theme chosen for the second pan-Asiatic Congress, this one held in Bangalore in 1973 (Secretariat AIM 1974). Many were asked to collaborate in developing this theme, especially religious such as Hugo Enomiya Lassalle, S.J., Vincent Shigeto Oshida, O.P., Edmond Verdière, M.E.P., and also Raimon Panikkar. At the conclusion of this monastic gathering, however, Abbot Primate Weakland noted, with some chagrin, that relatively few monks played an active role in the congress.

His concern produced results, and a year later there was an official letter, signed by Cardinal Sergio Pignedoli, President of the Secretariat for Non-Christians, asking the Abbot Primate to arrange for intermonastic dialogue. He noted that "the monk represents a point of contact and of mutual comprehension

between Christians and Non-Christians. The presence of monastics in the Catholic Church is therefore, in itself, a bridge that joins us to all other religions" (Pignedoli 1974).

The two people who played a leading role in this undertaking were Monsignor Piero Rossano, secretary of the Secretariat, and Abbot Tholens, who had just spent a year at Shantivanam in India. The Abbot Primate asked him to lay the groundwork in Europe and North America for the establishment of monastic interreligious dialogue commissions within AIM. Many of those he contacted expressed interest in this project and he was able to secure the collaboration of monks like Mayeul de Dreuille and Armand Veilleux.

His efforts came to fruition in two important meetings that took place in 1977, one at Petersham in the United States and the other at Loppem in Belgium. These meetings brought together scores of monks and nuns to discuss their contacts with the East. At the beginning of the following year two commissions were set up, the 'North American Board for East-West Dialogue' (NABEWD) and the commission for 'Dialogue Interreligieux Monastique' (DIM) for Europe.

2. The pioneers of dialogue at the level of spiritual experience

This evolution would not have been possible without the witness of a large number of pioneers of dialogue. They did not have any canonical authority or mandate, but they had a decisive impact on the mentality of those who were in a position to make decisions.

With the perspective that is made possible by the passing of time, we can now see that these pioneers had much in common, even if they had almost no contact with one another. Almost all of them were Westerners and monks, or at least members of religious congregations. During the thirty or so key years that followed the Second World War, they contributed mightily to the creation of a positive attitude toward the spiritualities of the East. Along with other Westerners — explorers, archaeologists, artists, philosophers — who were captivated by the East, they felt an attraction to Hinduism and Buddhism and did what they could to gather the treasures of these religious traditions and place them at the service of Christianity. Indeed, what motivated them was the missionary impulse that was dominant in the churches at that time. They went to Asia with the intention of working towards a deeper 'inculturation' of Christianity. At the beginning, they made the contact with other spiritualities in order to enrich the Christian life, as well as to convert pagans. Little by little, however, their way of thinking evolved. Their fascination with the religions of Asia led them to exam-

ine them without ulterior motives and finally to give themselves, body and soul, to a respectful encounter with the religions of Asia.

Even though they were rather marginal members of the orders to which they belonged, the sincerity of their spiritual quest obliged their superiors to respect their peculiar ways, and at the same time their religious vocation presented them from breaking away from the Church. For that reason their writings and especially their personal witness was able to affect a large number of Christians.

One of the first to set out on this new way of living the Gospel was Charles de Foucauld (1859-1916), whom we can therefore consider the precursor of the pioneers. He was converted to the Christian faith of his parents because of the example of Moroccan Muslims and later became a Cistercian monk. In 1901 he left the monastery to live with the Touaregs of the Saharan desert. He did not attempt to enter into explicit dialogue with Muslims. Rather, his intention was to witness to the Gospel by the simple expression of hospitality, given and received. In this way he inaugurated a different model of Christianity and became an inspiration for many Christians.

Fifty years later there was already a large number of Christians who opted for this approach. Their undertaking was audacious, especially in the years prior to Vatican II, for they were setting out on ways that were new and even forbidden. But an inner conviction urged them forward. During their journey they suffered deeply from the conflicts that arose between their inner experience and the traditional doctrines of the Church. In the end, however, they were able to give witness to a Christian faith that had been profoundly reaffirmed and renewed by this very encounter.

Some names: Jules Monchanin, Henri Le Saux, O.S.B. (Swami Abhishiktananda), Francis Mahieu , O.C.S.O. (Acharya), Bede Griffiths, O.S.B., Thomas Merton, O.C.S.O., Aelred Graham, O.S.B., John Main, O.S.B., Edmond Verdière, M.E.P., Serge de Beaurecueil, O.P., Hugo Lassalle, S.J. (Enomiya Makibi), Yves Raguin, S.J., Christian de Chergé, O.C.S.O., and also the Islamic scholar Louis Massignon, friend of Charles de Foucauld, and Raimon Panikkar. We should also mention some priests and religious who were born in Asia, such as Vincent Shigeto Oshida, O.P., Augustine Okumura, O.C.D., John Kakishi Kadowaki, S.J. and Aloysius Pieris, S.J. They already represent a further stage, about which we shall speak in more detail later on.

In order to illustrate this important phase in the history of the dialogue of spiritual experience, I would like to single out five individuals. Their experiences were very different, but they were all persons of deep spirituality and each in his own way experienced an interreligious encounter that transformed his Christian faith.

Hugo-Maria Lassalle, S.J. (1898-1990), or the inculturation that takes on farther than one imagined (Baatz, 1998).

Lassalle was a German Jesuit missionary who was sent to Japan in 1929. In his desire to become everything to everyone, he became a Japanese citizen and took the name **Enomiya Makibi.** Recognizing that it was impossible to know the Japanese people without becoming familiar with Buddhism, he initiated contacts with Buddhist Masters. However, it was only in 1943 that he decided to participate in a *sesshin*, a week of intense meditation in a Zen monastery. That was the beginning of his lifelong dedication to this spiritual path. His progress in the way of Zen was eventually recognized by Zen masters, and he was authorized to teach. He reflected deeply on his experience in order to situate the practice of Zen within the Christian life, writing books to introduce Zen to Western Christians (Lassalle 1960). Especially important is the contribution he made to place the encounter between Buddhism and Christianity at the experiential level of meditation and prayer. Beginning in 1967 he conducted *sesshins* in European Benedictine monasteries. His methods were not always well understood and he was criticized for having ended up as a Zen missionary in the West. However, his only intention was to further the spiritual life of everyone, especially of Christians.

Henri Le Saux, O.S.B. (1910-1973) or the challenge of *advaita* (du Boulay 2005).

The life of this French monk from the Abbey of Kergonan changed radically when, quite by accident, he came across some material on Hindu monks. He became convinced that it was up to Christian monks to bring the Gospel to the people of India. When he was 38 years old he was finally allowed to join Abbé Jules Monchanin in India, and the two of them founded a Benedictine monastery, the Saccidananda Ashram, in Tamil Nadu. His encounter with the great Hindu guru Ramana Maharshi at Tiruvanamalai was so overpowering that he gradually changed his understanding of why he had come to India. He launched headlong into a mystical quest of *advaita*, non-duality; he took the name Swami **Abhishiktananda**; he became the disciple of Swami Gnânânanda and made pilgrimages to the source of the Ganges in the Himalayas; he became a Hindu *sanyasi*, though never for a moment abandoning his commitment as a Christian monk. He left behind a diary in which we can observe the huge inner struggle he had to endure in order to keep his vocation intact (Le Saux 1998).

Thomas Merton, Father Louis, O.C.S.O. (1916-1968) or the monastic quest that leads one to cross boundaries (Mott 1984).

He spent less than two months in Asia, but he is now widely known for his openness to Eastern spiritualities. When he entered the Cistercian monastery of Gethsemani in 1941, he became an avid student of the monastic tradition, especially that of the Cistercian Fathers of the twelfth century. Later he discovered other traditions: Sufi, Tao, Buddhist. Little by little he came to understand that the future of Christian spirituality demanded an awareness of other spiritual

paths. He interpreted his departure for Asia to take part in the Bangkok Congress as the logical outcome of his spiritual quest. On the first page of his *Asian Journal* he described taking off from the San Francisco airport: "We left the ground — I with Christian mantras and a great sense of destiny, of being at last on my true way after years of waiting and wondering and fooling around. May I not come back without having settled the great affair. (…) I am going home." (Merton 1973 4-5)

Serge de Laugier de Beaurecueil, O.P. (1917-2005) or how the study of Muslim mysticism prompts interreligious hospitality.

His experience exemplifies yet another way of coming to the dialogue of spiritual experience. He was determined to devote himself to a scholarly career and published numerous monographs on Muslim mystics, especially Ansari. Then he went to Kabul, the homeland of Ansari. There he put into practice the mystical teaching of his master by offering unconditional hospitality to the poor and to abandoned children. As the 'priest of non-Christians'—the title of one of his books—he developed a theology of encounter that greatly inspired Western monks. (de Beaurecueil 2004)

Christian de Chergé, O.C.S.O. (1937-1996) or the destiny of one who prays with all who pray (Kiser 2002).

The last of the pioneers whom we must mention is one who already belongs to the generation that was formed by the Second Vatican Council. It is precisely because of what he received from those earlier pioneers that he could so clearly show where interreligious dialogue should lead. What he strove particularly was to experience an intense communion of prayer with devout Muslims. His witness and that of all the Cistercian monastic community of Tibhirine continues to inspire all who encounter people of other religions. Even though he published almost nothing, the notes and manuscripts he left behind provide the material for a sound theology of dialogue (Salenson 2009).

I should also mention the many 'pioneers' who came from other religions, spiritual leaders who made their traditions known to Westerners and who were interested in learning more about Christianity. For example, the Swamis Vivekananda, Aurobindo, and Chidananda; Dr. Suzuki Daisetz Teitaro; Buddhist monks such as the Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hahn, Chöngian Trungpa, Kalou Rimpoche, and Buddhadasa, or even the Tea Master Nojiri Michiko. Describing the kind of dialogue they engaged in would require another essay, one that, to the best of my knowledge, has not yet been written.

3. The history of DIM/MID from 1978 to 2011

Once they were set up, the North American and European commissions for monastic interreligious dialogue began to function with a great deal of enthusiasm, especially the 'North American Board for East-West Dialogue'. The two commissions easily became part of an already existing dynamic movement for interreligious dialogue, but their specific role only became apparent to the degree that they engaged in activities that were properly theirs.

Right after its inaugural meeting in January 1978, NABEWD began publishing a Bulletin. Thanks to its first editor, Sister Pascaline Coff, this publication was largely responsible for raising awareness throughout the United States of the importance of dialogue at the spiritual level. This work continues until now: since January 2011 DIM/MID launched *Dilatato Corde*, its on-line, multilingual journal, (http://www.dimmid.org).The content of Dilatato Corde includes personal testimonies and reflections on monastic interreligious dialogue, scholarly articles, and helpful information.

At the beginning the mandate for the 'sub-commissions of AIM for dialogue' was quite limited. According to Father Paul Gordan, a member of the Board of Directors of AIM, "Interreligious dialogue is beyond the competence of the monks who are directly or indirectly involved in it. The DIM subcommissions should limit themselves to concrete issues that may arise from contact with non-Christian monasticism in those areas where Christian monasteries have been established." (Gordan 1980)

But these edicts, issued in 1980, were already out of date.

In fact, already in 1979, Catholic missionaries in Japan who wanted to organize an 'East-West Spiritual Exchange' between Buddhists and Christians had requested the collaboration of the European DIM to arrange for Japanese monks to spend some time in European Christian monasteries. This experience of hospitality was eye-opening for both guests and hosts. It became clear that this kind of meeting, much of it devoted to silence and held in a setting dedicated to the spiritual life, allowed for a deep level of communion. At the end of their sojourn the Pope addressed some important words to the participants: "I thank you for coming to Europe for an East-West exchange on the spiritual level. I congratulate those among you who have lived in small groups in the great Christian monasteries and have shared fully their life of prayer and work for three weeks. Your experience is truly an epoch-making event in the history of interreligious dialogue. (L'Osservatore Romano 27/9/1979)

For its part, NABEWD organized an important monastic symposium on 'The Monk as Universal Archetype,' at which the main speaker was Raimon Panikkar. He later published a book based on his presentations at this meeting: *Blessed Simplicity* (Panikkar 1982).

In 1980 AIM, this time working together with DIM, held the third pan-Asiatic congress in Kandy. The meeting was marked by the well-integrated participation of Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims. At the end of the congress some participants organized a meeting of Christian monks from Asia, specifying that participation at this meeting was limited to monks born in Asia. This was not an act of defiance with regard to those great pioneers who had come from the West — and whom the Asians themselves venerated — but rather an expression of the desire of Asian monks to take charge of monastic interreligious dialogue in Asia and to work together towards this end. Their initiative marks the end of the age of the pioneers. Some years later the movement of monastic interreligious dialogue would find a *modus agendi* that was proper to Asia and Oceania with the creation of commissions on these two continents.

In the meantime the 'East-West Spiritual Exchanges' continued. In 1983 the Reverend Hirata Seiko, President of the Institute of Zen Stidies, invited Christian monks to spend time in Zen monasteries in Japan. This second 'Spiritual Exchange' proved to be a decisive event in the history of the European DIM. The seventeen participants — among them three abbots — were deeply moved by the experience. They understood that exchanges like this could not be "limited to concrete questions." It was not enough simply to enter the house of the other; one had to enter their spirituality as well, making a serious attempt to understand and appreciate their reasons for following a monastic way of life. In order to do this, a high level of reciprocal trust is essential. A description of this memorable voyage is given in a book written by one of the participants, Father Benoît Billot (Billot 1987).

A significant fact : some months later the Secretariate for non-Christians' with the collabiration of Father Abbot Simone Tonini, one of the participants of the Spiritual Exchange, has been able to draw up a precise text about interreligious dialogue at this level:

> At a deeper level, persons rooted in their own religious traditions can share their experiences of prayer, contemplation, faith and duty, as well as their expressions and ways of searching for the Absolute. This type of dialogue can be a mutual enrichment and fruitful cooperation for promoting and preserving the highest values and spiritual ideals of man. It leads naturally to each partner communicating to the other the reason for his own faith. (Secretariatus pro non christianis 1984, p. 138)

Referring to this paragraph of the document produced by the Secretariat, Pope John Paul II added in his conclusive speech, "Here I think especially of intermonastic dialogue" (ibid. p. 24).

The day of prayer for peace that was held in Assisi on October 27, 1986, showed that it was possible for followers of different religions to encounter one another at the deepest level. As consultor to the Secretariat for non-Christians, I

was invited to take part in this gathering, and I was able to experience a common prayer for peace offered by all who came together at the entrance to the basilica of Saint Francis. All of us, followers of different religions, were praying. Unless one identifies prayer with its formulation, it was obvious that we were united in one prayer.

The following day I met the Zoroastrian delegate, Mr. Homi Dhalla, who told me, "I will no longer be able to pray as I used to; from now on I will always pray in communion with all who pray."

What John Paul proposed to do at Assisi II was not well received by some of his advisors. His decision to go ahead came from a personal conviction that he had already expressed in 1981: the prayer of believers, whatever their religious affiliation, is inspired by the same Spirit. In response to the criticism he had received for extending an invitation to followers of other religions to pray together, he explained his thinking in an allocation he gave to the cardinals and the Roman Curia on December 22 of that same year, 1986. This text (Secretariat for non-Christians 1987) is one of the foundations for the encounter of monks with other religions because, without neglecting other approaches, the principal objective of DIM is to foster interreligious exchange at the level of prayer and meditation.

The 'East-West Spiritual Exchanges' between Christian and Zen Buddhist monks are still taking place (S.E. XII, 2011). However, the third (1987) needs to be singled out because it was the most important. Forty Japanese monks were hosted in European monasteries and then came together in Rome for a symposium at Sant'Anselmo, the centre of Benedictine monasticism. Following the symposium, the Pope granted them a private audience. In his discourse, which was also addressed to the Christian monks who accompanied them, he said:

> Your specific contribution to these initiatives consist not only in maintaining an explicit dialogue, but also in promoting a deep spiritual encounter, for your life is above all one devoted to silence, prayer, and a witness of community life. There is much you can do through *hospitality*. In opening your houses and your hearts, as you have done these days, you follow well the tradition of your spiritual father, Saint Benedict. To your brother monks coming from across the world and from a very different religious tradition you apply the beautiful chapter of the Rule concerning the reception of guests. In doing so you offer a setting wherein a meeting of mind and heart can take place, a meeting characterized by a shared sense of brotherhood in the one human family that opens the way of ever deeper spiritual dialogue. (Secretariatus pro non-christianis 1988, pp. 5-6)

This text clearly defines the specific character of the dialogue engaged in by monks and demonstrates the confidence that the Catholic hierarchy has given to the work of the DIM/MID commissions.

A short time later there was another occasion to clarify this way of encountering other contemplative traditions. A *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on some Aspects of Christian Meditation* was published by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 1989. Its purpose was to warn Catholics of the danger involved in the practice of Eastern forms of meditation. The document recalled some fundamental aspects of Christian prayer, but an overall tone of suspicion regarding the spiritual practices of other religions and an haughty ignorance of these practices prevented it from being very useful. At the request of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, which was surprised that it had not been consulted about the matter, I made a close study of the document and confirmed that any attempt to deal with matters pertaining to another religion that is not carried out in a spirit of dialogue ends up by doing more harm than good. After presenting my critique of the document to the staff of the PCID, its president, Cardinal Francis Arinze, wrote me an official letter requesting that DIM undertake a new study of this subject. What followed was an extensive consultation of the members of DIM throughout Europe as well as in the United States and India on the practice of dialogue in and through meditation. A team of monks and nuns synthesized their responses in a small document entitled *Contemplation and Interreligious Dialogue: References and Perspectives Drawn from the Experience of Monastics* that recommended prudence and boldness. This document was officially approved and published by the PCID. (Secretariatus pro non christianis 1993)

Up until this point DIM was a sub-commission of AIM. However, the difference of their methods and objectives was becoming more and more evident. In addition, two new commissions had been created, one for India and Sri Lanka, the other for Australia. Thus, in 1994 Abbot Primate Jerome Theisen set up DIM/MID as an independent secretariat, but always in liaison with AIM.

The witness of the monks of Tibhirine helped DIM to further widen its horizons. The European DIM invited the prior of Tibhirine, Father Christian de Chergé, to its annual meeting in 1995, which was held at the abbey of Montserrat (Spain). There he introduced us to his practice of communion in prayer with all who pray. Until that point we had confined ourselves to contact with monks of other religions, which meant that we essentially limited ourselves to dialogue with Buddhists and Hindus. But the testimony of de Chergé called us to open our hearts to all who pray. One year later the tragic deaths of the monks of Tibhirine and the way in which their witness has radiated throughout the world was a sign of God's blessing on this kind of dialogue.

Finally, I should mention a number of important conferences organized by the North American commission in recent years. In the mid-1990s the Dalai Lama expressed a desire to continue the dialogue he had had with Thomas Merton. Thus far, three conferences for Buddhist and Catholic monks have been held at Merton's monastery, Gethsemani in Kentucky. The first took place in 1996 and dealt with monastic spiritual practices (Mitchell, Wiseman 1997). The

two that followed were on suffering (Mitchell, Wiseman 2003) and on monasticism and the environment (Mitchell, Skudlarek 2010). Nuns in North America have created an original form of encounter called 'Nuns in the West' that brings together Christian, Buddhist and Hindu nuns living in North America. Monks have followed with 'Monks in the West' (Skudlarek, 2008) This kind of exchange on concrete issues of monastic life has proven to be very fruitful.

In conclusion at this overview we can recognize that in a little less than fifteen years DIM/MID has clearly been able to — or more exactly, has had to — evolve. Among other experiences of dialogue they were able to articulate a method of interreligious encounter that was based on the spirit of Benedictine hospitality. Monks, obviously, are not the only ones who engage in this kind of dialogue, but the 'monastic' way of engaging in it has now been recognized throughout the Christian world and beyond.

Over the course of the next fifteen years a 'dialogal movement' has gradually taken shape alongside the liturgical movement and the ecumenical movement. To say that interreligious dialogue has become a 'movement' implies that it is no longer the sole concern of a small group of committed individuals. For this reason the present concern of DIM/MID is to insure that the movement for dialogue be well grounded as well as widespread, involving more and more of the faithful in a dialogal consciousness that is so crucial for the future of religion.

Issues and Perspectives

The interreligious dialogue engaged in by monks can now be situated in the overall movement of dialogue, and its specific contribution can be analysed and evaluated. I will do this by adopting a distinction between communication and communion that Thomas Merton made in his Asian journal on the day of his departure (Merton 1975, p. 5). In its beginning stages dialogue can bring about a relationship of empathy expressed by intense communication and even a certain sense of connivance. We will see that it is, however, possible to go much further and to create a sincere bond, a true communion of mutual recognition.

Communication

With its emphasis on the virtue of silence, the monastic life would not appear to be a very good training ground for dialogue. As Saint Jerome noted, "A monk is not known by his speech, but by his sitting in silence" (Letter 50,4). Nonetheless, as we have observed, the contribution of monks to interreligious dialogue has been important. Their normal way of contributing, however, has

normally not been by means of talks or writings, but through the witness they have given, the paradoxical witness of a 'dialogue of silence' (Walker 1987). And yet, words are here necessary to describe this kind of dialogue.

At the basis of this intermonastic encounter there is what we might call a tacit connivance. Thomas Merton called attention to this in a talk he gave at a conference organized by the 'Temple of Understanding' in Calcutta toward the end of his time in Asia. He noted that a marvellous **communication** takes place among people who are engaged in a spiritual quest (Merton 1975, p. 308). In fact, when a Christian monk is welcomed into a Zen or Thai monastery, he feels right at home! He likes the fact that its location is a bit withdrawn; he finds the same monastic simplicity, the same respect for nature and care for beauty. He recognizes that in monks who belong to a very different religious tradition there is the same love of silence and the same reliance on traditional sacred Scriptures. He also notes the important role of the Master in the spiritual development of the community. Within all monastic traditions there exists the same tension between the love of solitude and openness to the outside world, between radical detachment and respect for culture. At the end of his stay in a Zen monastery, a Christian monk remarked, "We had discovered how profoundly we were in agreement about what constituted the ideal life. As we were saying our good-byes, it became clear that we had just taken part in a reunion of long-lost brothers. How could we have been so unaware of this for such long a time?" (Billot 1987, p. 176).

In fact, the monastic traditions of the West and the East probably have a common origin (de Dreuille 1999, p. 70). The existence of Hindu, Jain, or Buddhist monks was already well known in the third century BCE. Alexander the Great brought back from India the so-called 'gymnosophists', that is to say, naked wise men, probably Jains. In ancient Greek and Latin literature there are hundreds of allusions to India and its inhabitants, including dozens of descriptions of the monks who lived there (Majumdar 1981). Among the thirteen authors who describe the life of these monks more in detail, two Fathers of the Church are especially significant: Clement of Alexandria (Stomata III, 194) and Jerome (Adversus Jovinianum, 14). Moreover, we know that in Alexandria there was an Indian quarter that housed merchants from the west coast of India who came to Egypt via the Red Sea. It was therefore quite possible that contact was made with these people and their culture. Some influence of this culture and its ideals is also possible upon the first Christian monks.

In fact such an influence is even probable. Obviously, Christian monks would be quite reluctant to acknowledge any dependence on other religions. But we cannot hide a troubling fact about the decision of those first monks to live in the desert. The desert is often referred to in the Judeo-Christian tradition, but it is always a place to traverse. One may live there for forty years or forty days, only to return to human society. The invitation of Christ to the young man who wanted to be his disciple (Matthew 19, 21) is very clear: "If you wish to be per-

fect, go, sell your possessions, give the money to the poor and then come, follow me." According to Saint Athanasius (Life of Antony, 2, 2-5), Saint Antony (d. 355), who is considered to be the founder of Christian monasticism, recognized his vocation when he heard this verse from the Gospel of Matthew. However, after hearing these words, rather than following the example of Christ and the apostles, he retired once and for all to the desert, continually seeking out places that were more remote. He heard the words, "Follow me," and his response was to separate himself from other human beings. How is one to explain this — to say the least — curious interpretation of the Gospel? By way of contrast, when Saint Francis of Assisi heard this same text in the thirteenth century, he too recognized his vocation, but he understood it as a call to proclaim the Good News in the surrounding towns and countryside, only withdrawing now and then to spend a few days in the mountains. It is difficult to understand Saint Antony's way of responding to the Gospel without hypothesizing the existence of foreign influences, for example the Indian ideal of perfection, which involves a progressive turning away from the world of illusion (*maya*) and a permanent withdrawal to a desert area or to the source of the Ganges. Of course, it will never be possible to prove that this ideal did in fact influence the Christian world. Anyway it seems that the sense of 'being at home' that Christian monks experience today when hosted by Buddhist or Hindu monastic communities is probably not fortuitous. Whatever the case, we can be glad that Antony's way of coming to understand the Gospel made it possible for monasticism to develop in the Church. At the very time that Christianity became a state religion, this monastic movement — in all likelihood, the result of outside influences — provided the Church with a way of being faithful to the Gospel and not becoming completely swallowed up by the cares of the world.

In the same way of reflexion we should also recall the theme of the monk as a universal archetype that Raimon Panikkar developed during a conference sponsored by NABEWD at Holyoke in 1980. With the collaboration of monks and nuns of different religions he reflected on the call that is addressed to monks in every country and that invites them to continue their common search for 'Blessed Simplicity' (Panikkar 1982).

However, these many similarities and connections that favour communication between monks of different religions are not the most decisive factor in intermonastic encounter. The monastic world is certainly a favourable environment (in the strongest sense of the term) for dialogue. It is the setting (the biotope) where the dialogue of spiritual experience can flourish. Monastic commitment, moreover, provides the time that is necessary to arrive at spiritual maturity. But the agreement between monks that is most decisive is found at a deeper level than that of the monastic institution or spiritual anthropology.

Actually, the most fundamental characteristic of all monastic traditions is their dedication to the spiritual quest. The awareness that another monk is engaged in this zealous search is what makes real communication possible. And

when we look at the different features of a life consecrated to the spiritual quest, we see how they prepare the way for a particularly fruitful encounter.

The beginning of the monastic way of life is directed to awakening the heart. The Rule of Saint Benedict opens with the words, "Listen, my son, and open the ear of your heart." The sixteen ideograms of the Zen manifesto, attributed to Bodhidharma, proclaim, "Go straight to the human heart." Everything a monk does is intended to reach his heart, to strip it, to purify it by transforming his 'heart of stone' into a 'heart of flesh.' The Christian tradition even speaks of a 'pierced heart,' opened by a wound that cannot be healed (See Acts 2,37 and John 19,34). When someone whose heart has become vulnerable meets an authentic witness to another religious tradition, he or she can be profoundly moved and be led to an 'intrareligious' dialogue, to use the expression of Raimon Panikkar to which we will return.

If monks of all traditions recognize one another as companions on the path, it is because they are all involved in the same quest. A *mondo* of Mazu (Japanese: Basho), a Chan Master of the eighth century, offers a good example of this characteristic of the monastic life (Despeux 1980).

> When Dazhu made his first visit to Mazu, the latter asked him,
> --Where do you come from?
> --I come from the Great Clouds monastery in Yue prefecture.
> --What brings you here?
> --I come in search of the treasure of Buddha's teaching.
> --Do you not see the treasure hidden in your own dwelling? What is the point of wandering around so far from home?
> --What is the treasure of my own dwelling?
> --Your very question at this moment. That is your treasure!
> At these words Dahzu was awakened to his 'Original Heart'.

It is there, in the question, or more exactly, in the space between the question and the response, that monks meet one another. In this silent space where the question resounds profoundly, the answer is not necessarily given, but the partners in dialogue experience an intense encounter, one that goes beyond words, and similarities.

It should be noted that this space is not a place, some well-defined area. Interreligious dialogue is often described as a coming together in a place that we have in common, like a mountain top that we come to by different paths. That image is too simplistic. If we want to use an image, a better one would be a bottomless well whose opening cannot be measured, a well that draws to itself those who are in search of the Absolute. They are united in their quest, but the only thing they have in common is their movement towards this abyss of silence and emptiness. What they have in common is not some possession, a patrimony they share, but a great desire. That which unites them is what surpasses them.

Moreover, the monk has no place he can call his own. Like Christ, he has "nowhere to lay his head" (Luke 9,58). The *sanyasi* and the gyrovagues represent an extreme form of this renunciation. In relation to the 'world,' monks are marginal figures. They regard themselves as "aliens and exiles" (1 Peter 2,11). They witness to impermanence and universal relativity. For this reason they are not too attached to dogmatic formulations and thus run the risk of being labelled as relativists. But in the presence of the Absolute, nothing else can be regarded as having any absolute value.

In fact they are not loners, spiritual isolationists. At least for Christian and Buddhist monks, it is clear that their commitment is not made in isolation, but is related to the church or the *sangha,* and particularly when they encounter believers of other faiths (Cornille 2008: 80).

The most ancient account about a monk can be found in the Rig Veda (X, 136, translation of Panikkar 1977). In a hymn it offers an evocative description of the wandering and naked ascetic known as a *kesin:*

> Ridden by the wind, companion of its blowing,
> Pushed along by the Gods,
> He is at home in both seas, the East
> And the West – the silent ascetic.

Thus already in the eighth century BCE the monk is recognized as someone who travels great distances to unite East and West!

To complete this catalogue of the ways the monk has traditionally been understood and how these characteristics favour an in-depth interreligious encounter, I should mention one final distinctive feature: poverty, or — in the Buddhist world — emptiness. When Thomas Merton and Dr. Suzuki Daisetz exchanged letters, they instinctively treated of the place of poverty and innocence in the spiritual life (Merton 1968, p. 109).

It is also true that those who are firmly committed to this kind of encounter discover that they become even poorer. We might think that the insights gained through interaction with great religious traditions would be experienced as enrichment. In fact, the encounter with other spiritualities and the wonder that they arouse involve the loss of many of our points of reference. Many of the cultural and theological riches garnered by Christianity to defend and illustrate the faith henceforth ~~now~~ are seen to be less essential than had been thought. The practice of dialogue at the level of spiritual experience, precisely because in involves an encounter with the ineffable, produces a certain deconstruction of doctrinal formulations. The most precious fruit of this kind of dialogue is the grace of poverty, the blessed poverty of the Gospel Beatitudes.

Therefore, when monks and others become involved in this determined spiritual quest and interact with people who are filled with the same desire, communication at a spiritual level takes place quite naturally. By giving witness to the possibility of dialogue at this highest level, they point to the ultimate goal

of all dialogue. Such encounter is, in fact, like the keystone of the entire building we call dialogue. But this keystone does not close off the building. Like the keystone of the Pantheon in Rome, it is an opening to the sky.

At this point we can see how, beyond this intense communication, a concrete link can be established Indeed the experience of monks in dialogue has revealed a particularly fruitful method of encounter.

Communion

The most promising intermonastic exchanges have taken place in the context of **reciprocal hospitality.** As we have seen above, the DIM/MID commissions have indeed sponsored conferences, colloquia, and lectures by experts in the field of interreligious dialogue. But I believe it will be more helpful to limit here my description to their method of welcoming the other which is more specific.

Of course they are engaged with many others in this search. In recent times numerous authors have written about the need to face the 'risk of hospitality' (Marty 2005, pp. 124-148), if we want to go to the end of the road in our encounters with the followers of other religions (Cornille 2008: 177-210). Doing so does involve a risk, as the word 'host' itself suggest it: Both words 'hospitality' and 'hostility are shaped upon the same Indo-European root 'ghost'.' The guest, the stranger, may also be an enemy; he always arouses a certain anxiety. To extend hospitality one has to overcome fear and go beyond one's comfort zone. If hospitality is always sacred, is it not because it involves a reaching out, a going beyond?

In any case, this way of proceeding is especially suited to the encounter with followers of other religions because it means receiving the stranger *as stranger*, respecting differences rather than trying to smooth them over. The guests who are thus received recognize, as for them, that they are not at home and therefore have to show a certain reserve vis-à-vis their host. This kind of interreligious encounter, by its very nature, avoids any kind of syncretism. It is profound, demanding, but never confusing.

Hospitality is known and honoured by all cultures and religions. The Taittiriya Upanishad (1,11,2) says, "Let your guest be a god unto you" (Clooney 2011). One could cite innumberable parallel texts. Accordingly, to adopt this kind of encounter for interreligious exchanges seems a beautiful opportunity. It should be noted, however, that sacred hospitality, so honoured within all religious traditions, has almost never been extended to those who belong to another religion. Rather, in this case hostility and rejection seem to be a sacred duty. Religions, therefore, need to undergo a radical conversion in order to become truly hospitable (de Béthune 2007 146-150).

This conversion is particularly needed today. Time has come to pass beyond mere talk. It was already a major progress to be able to speak peacefully with believers of other religious traditions. But after several decades of interreligious dialogue we detect a certain weariness for meetings wich remain at the level of words.

Philosophical insights (Levinas 1979, Ricoeur 2006, Derrida 2000) and socio-political positions (Volf 1996, Yong 2008) have provided new ways of looking at the encounter between religions when situated at the level of hospitality (Kearney 2010).

Theology is also being summoned to renew itself (Monge 1997). Is it able to "rejoice in the truth" (1 Cor 13,6), no matter where it comes from? How can theology express 'hospitable truths', expressing convictions which seriously take in account the truth of others?

Raimon Panikkar came up with the expression 'intrareligious dialogue' to define this kind of encounter: (Panikkar 1978). In this case the dialogue is not only engaged between two partners, but it happens inside the person who receives a question in his own heart and affront an interior struggle when coping with this challenge. It is then a shared interiority, an other kind of hospitality. "Intrareligious dialogue and hospitality always go together" (Panikkar 2007).

Monks, as for them, bring their expertise in giving concrete expressions of hospitality. As we have seen, right from the beginning of their establishment, American and European commissions have sought ways to offer interreligious hospitality, notably by welcoming Buddhist monks who came to spend time in Christian monasteries. This was their way of putting into practice the Benedictine charism of hospitality as set forth in the Rule of Saint Benedict (RB 53), which is a kind of résumé of the ancient Christian teaching on this subject. Basing his teaching on the hospitality of Abraham (Genesis 18) and the teaching of the Gospel (Matthew 25), Saint Benedict says that the monks should receive "all the guests" as messengers of God, and even more "adore Christ" who comes to visit them. Thus, when the abbot of the monastery carries out the ancient rite of washing the feet of the guests, the Rule specifies that the following verse of Psalm 47 [48] is to be sung: "We receive your mercy, O God, in the midst of your temple." The visit of the stranger is indeed a blessing of the Lord.

By applying these proposals to Buddhist monks, Christian monks have discovered just how deep this kind of encounter can be. By simple, wordless gestures, an intense communion takes place, as is shown by the following anecdote. As he was leaving, a Zen monk remarked, "I have spent two weeks in this Trappist monastery. The monks work hard. They don't eat very well, nor do they get a lot of sleep. So where does this joy come from that I see in their faces?" Because of the difficulty of communication, it was not possible to respond adequately to this Japanese monk, but it was clear that during his silent stay in that monastery, without receiving any explanation, he experienced the essence of their life.

What Christian monks who were received in Zen, Tibetan, or Thai monasteries, discovered was even more significant than what they learned when they welcomed Buddhist monks to their monasteries. The number of Christian monks who have taken part in this kind of 'immersion program' is already quite large. Being a helpless stranger, unable to make oneself understood, obliged to eat unfamiliar food, being confined to a setting that is completely foreign makes one feel very vulnerable. But it is precisely this situation of vulnerability that makes the spiritual experience of encounter so powerful.

Obviously, to receive hospitality is a decisive experience. We must describe more in detail this aspect of the encounter, in order to correctly apply it on the interreligious context.

In the Law of Moses it is written, "You shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 19, 34; see Exodus 22, 20; 23, 9; Deuteronomy 10, 19). That means that to be a good host you must have had the experience of being in need for a shelter.

Here we need to remember that hospitality, in the strict sense, is intend for strangers, for people who has no right at all. Such foreign guests are not welcomed because of family or nationality ties, nor because of their financial standing — their ability to pay a hotel or hospital room — but only because of their need. They are human beings, brothers and sisters in need. It is therefore impossible to understand the essence of hospitality and to put it into practice unless one has also experienced the need to be welcomed.

To *offer* hospitality is a moral duty; it is even the basis of any morality. But to *receive* hospitality is an experience of grace, a spiritual experience. Therefor it is in such situation that the so called 'interreligious encounter at the spiritual level' is most promising.

All the pioneers of interreligious dialogue attest to this. Actually, anyone who has been the recipient of unexpected and undeserved hospitality knows how overpowering such an experience is. Father Le Saux's interreligious breakthrough came the day he left Shantivanam, his normal dwelling place, to live at the ashram of Ramana Maharshi at Tiruvanamalai, and then with Swami Gnânânda at Tirukkoyilur (Le Saux 1970, 1978, 1998). For each of these pioneers it would be possible to point to the decision they made one day to uproot themselves in order to dwell with the followers of another religion and learn from them. When we read their writings, it is obvious that their decision was not made out of disregard for their own Christian religion. They wanted only to show their great respect for a religious tradition that they had discovered and admired. They were possessed by a great desire to see how the Holy Spirit was at work there.

All traditions of hospitality insist on the necessity of such humility. For example, to take part in the *cha no yu*, the Japanese tea ceremony, one has to enter the room by a small door that is only 70 cm high, the *nijiri guchi*, the 'door of humility.'

The teaching of the Gospels is equally clear. When Jesus sent his disciples to announce the coming Kingdom, he told them to present themselves helpless and in need of hospitality (see Matthew 10 and Luke 9 and 10). The reason he asked them to "take nothing" with them, "no gold , or silver, or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff," was not, as is usually understood, because he wanted them to practice *detachment*. Rather, it was because he wanted them to be concretely *dependent* on the goodness of others, compelled to count on the generosity of their hosts. He ordered them to "enter the house" with the words "Peace to this house," adding, "Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide." This way of conducting themselves, so carefully described, is not just an expression of *captatio benevolentiae.* Nor is it a description of what they should do before they announce the Reign of God, and therefore something external to it. No! To act in this way is already a proclamation of the Reign of God. Hospitality asked for and received constitutes the prelude of the Good News; it shows a 'God who is in need of people.' Only after this will it be possible for those who welcomed the disciples to hear "The kingdom of God has come near to you" (Tassin 2011).

To begin asking for aid is typically Jesus' way of encountering people. (cf. John 4, 7 : Jesus said to her : « Give me a drink! »). But, curiously this attitude has not been much followed later on. The missionaries who were so eager to announce the Gospel did not mind to follow its recommendation about how to annonce it. However recent monastic interreligious experiences have proven the spiritual fecundity of such way.

In fact there are two sides to hospitality. They are complementary, and both are essential. We should always respect both of them, because if one is lacking, hospitality is not only incomplete, it is denatured. The first side, hospitality offered has been more studied. It is noteworthy that the books dealing with interreligious hospitality I have quoted above deal almost only with this expression of hospitality. But if this is the only kind of hospitality we are engaged in, we are running the risk of want of balance. We can see how in some interreligious gatherings that are unilaterally arranged by Christians the members of other religious communities, who have graciously accepted the invitation to participate, feel ill at ease, because they have the impression to be looked on with condescension. We ought to ask ourself regularly if we have already asked hospitality to our partners before to offer it. Only when we have enough received from them, can we in our turn offer them the best.

One last point should be added here. If I am stressing so much the importance of the two sides of hospitality, it is because in this way the dynamism of the encounter can be fully realized. It is a fact that one of the main problems of interreligious dialogue is the reciprocity and more precisely the equalityé between the partners of the interreligious encounters. To be fair, the dialogue must be established on an equal footing. But then, how to avoid indifférentism (Cornille 2008: 202) ?

Now, contrary to the dialogue, hospitality implies an inequality between the host and the invited guest. While the latter is humbly begging for a shelter, the former is in the position of sharing generously. As I have proposed, we better begin asking. But there is also an other stage, when the parts are reversed. At this point the invited person can, in her turn, welcome the other. I think that this way of proceeding is partucularly necessary in the interreligious encounter.To keep the exchange from becoming static and sterile, it is essential that the roles be alternated in this way. Thus an encounter experienced in the setting of hospitality will be always dynamic: a continuous movement, something like breathing, just as life.

In conclusion, we can say that the specific contribution that monks make to interreligious dialogue is twofold.

The monastic way of engaging in this dialogue is an invitation never to renounce to place this encounter at the level of spiritual experience, because only in this way we can accept religions as such, and not only as historical or sociological phenomena.

Furthermore, monks remind us of the necessity of reciprocity in the encounter, and more specifically, they show us that the entrance door to mutual recognition is through the humble request for hospitality.

As we can see the contribution of monks is nothing extraordinary, something nobody else could succeed. Rather, their way of engaging in dialogue simply accentuates the essential elements of all interreligious encounter.

Therefor, when a Christian asks to be admitted to the inner sanctum of another religion, all the while observing the limits that go with the acceptance of hospitality, he or she can enter into what this religion holds as most sacred without creating any confusion. Raimon Panikkar often spoke about *communicatio in sacris.* The Catholic Church used to label as sacrilegious any participation by Catholics in that which was sacred to another religion, or even to another Christian community. Panikkar, however, would say, “The only true communication is *in sacris*.” At the conclusion of this chapter, It was necessary to recall that interreligious hospitality culmine in interreligious prayer. But to deal adequately with that topic requires another chapter.

In any case, while practising interreligious encounter as monks do, we can wholeheartedly accept what Thomas Merton said in Calcutta some days before his death, “And the deepest level of communication is not communication, but communion. It is wordless. It is beyond words, and it is beyond speech, and it is beyond concepts. Not that we discover a new unity. My dear brothers, we are already one. But we imagine that we are not. And what we have to recover is our original unity. What we have to be is what we are.” (Merton 1973)

References

Åmell, Katrin 1998 : *Contemplation et dialogue.* Upsala: The Swedish Institute of Missionary Resarch.

Billot, Benoît 1987 : *Voyage dans les monastères zen.* p.176. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer.

Blée, Fabrice 2011: *The Third Desert: The story of Monastic interreligious Dialogue* Collegeville: Liturgical Press.

Clooney, Frank 2011: Food, the Guest and the *Taitiriya Upanishad:* Hospitality in the Hindu Tradition. In Kearney, Richard (ed) *Hosting the Stranger: Between Religions,* p. 140. New York, Continuum.

Commissions pour le Dialogue Interreligieux Monastique 1993 *Contemplation et Dialogue Interreligieux : Repères et perdspectives puisés dans l'expérience des moines.* PCID Bulletin 84, 250-270 Vatican City. English version in: *The Attentive Voice.* 2011 pp. 143-164. New York, Lantern.

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith 1989: *A Letter on some aspects of Christian Meditation.* Vatican City.

Cornille, Catherine 2008 *The im-possibility of Interreligious Dialogue.* New York: Herder & Herder.

de Beaurecueil, Serge de Laugier – 2004 *Mes enfants der Kaboul.* Paris : Cerf

de Béthune, Pierre-François 1993: Monks in dialogue*. Studies in Formative Spirituality*, Pittsburgh, Duquesne University XIV, 1, 129.

de Béthune, Pierre-François 2010 *Interreligious Hospitality : The Fulfillment of Dialogue.* Collegeville : Liturgical Press.

de Dreuille, Mayeul 1999: *From East to West: A history of monasticism.* p.70 New York: Gracewing.

Delcourt, Henri-Philippe 1988: *Dom Jehan Joliet: un projet de monachisme bénédictin chinois.* p. 209. Thèse de Doctorat en théologie à la Faculté de Lille, Paris: Cerf.

Derrida, Jacques 2000 *Of Hospitality.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

du Boulay, Shirley 2005 *The Cave of the Heart.* New York: Maryknoll Orbis Books.

Dupuis, Jacques 1997 *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism.* Brescia: Editrice Queriniana.

Gioia, Francesco 1986 *L'accoglienza dello Straniero nel Mondo Antico.* Roma: Editrice Borla.

Gordan, Paul 1980: Le dialogue interreligieux et l'A.I.M. *Bulletin AIM,* Vanves 27, 44.

John-Paul II 1986: Address to the Roman Curia. *Bulletin of the Secretariatus pro non christianis* 64: 54-62, Vatican City.

Kuttianimattathil, Jose 1995 *Practice and Theology of Interreligious Dialogue: A critical study of the Indian Christian attempts since Vatican II,* Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti Publications.

Lassalle, Hugo-Enomiya 1960 *Zen – Weg zur Erleuchtung.* Wien: Herder.

Le Saux, Henri 1970 *Un maître spirituel du pays tamoul.* Chambéry : Présence.

Le Saux, Henri 1978 *Souvenirs d'Arunâchala : récit d'un ermite chrétien en terre hindoue.* Paris : Epi.

Le Saux, Henri 1998 *Ascent to the Depth of the Heart: The Spiritual Diary of Swami Abhishiktananda.* Delhi: ISPCK.

Leclercq, Jean 1986 : *Nouvelles pages d'histoire monastique.* Vanves : Secrétariat AIM.

Levinas, Emmanuel 1979 *Totality and Infinity.* The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

Majumdar, R.C. 1981 *The Classical accounts of India,* Calcutta: Firma KLM Private LTD.

Marty, Martin E. 2005: *When Faiths Collide.* p. 124. Oxford: Blackwell.

Merton, Thomas 1968 *Zen and the Birds of Appetite.* New York: A New Directions Book.
Merton, Thomas 1975 *The Asian journal of Thomas Merton,* p. 308. New York: A New Direction Book.
Mitchell, Donald W. & Skudlarek, William, OSB (ed) 2010 *Green Monasticism.* New York : Lantern Books.
Mitchell, Donald W. & Wiseman, James OSB (ed) 1997 *The Gethsemani Encounter: A Dialogue on the Spiritual Life by Buddhist and Christgian Monastics.* New York: Continuum.
Mitchell, Donald W. & Wiseman, James OSB (ed) 2003 *Transforming Suffering: Reflections on Finding Peace in Troubled Times.* New York: Doubleday.
Moffit, John 1970 *A New Charter For Monasticism: Proceedings of the Meeting of the Monastic Superiors in the Far East, Bankok, 9 to 15 December.* Notre Dame - London: University of Notre Dame Press.
Monge, Claudio. 2008 *Dieu Hôte: Recherche historique et théologique sur les rituels de l'hospitalité.* Bucarest: Zeta Books.
Mott, Michael 1984 *The Seven Mountains of Thomas Merton,* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
Panikkar, Raimon 1977 *The Vedic Experience: Mantramanjari.* Berkeley: University of California Press.
Panikkar, Raimon 1978 *The Intrareligious Dialogue.* New York : Paulist Press.
Panikkar, Raimon 1982 *Blessed Simplicity: The Monk as Universal Archetype.* New York: Seabury Press.
Panikkar, Raimon 2010 *Foreword to* : de Béthune, P.-F. Interreligious Hospitality: Collegeville: Liturgical Press.
Pignedoli, Sergio 1974 : Lettre à l'Abbé Primat*, Bulletin AIM,* 17*,* 62:Vanves.
Pohl, C. D. 1999 *Making Room: Rezcovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition,* Grand Rapids MI and Cambridge U.K. : William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
Ricoeur, Paul 006 *On Translation,* London and New York: Routledge.
Salenson, Christian 2009 *Christian de Chergé : Une théologhie de l'espérance.* Paris : Bayard.
Secrétariat AIM 1974 *Les Moines Chrétiens face aux Religions d'Asie, Bangalore 1973.* Vanves : Secrétariat AIM.
Secretariatus pro non christianis 1984: *Dialogue and Mission: The attitude of the Church towards the followers of other religions.* Bulletin, nr 56, § 35, p. 138: Vatican City.
Secretariatus pro non christianis 1988 *Discourse of the Pope to Zen and Christian monks.* Bulletin nr 67 p. 5-6. Vatican City.
Skudlarek, William 2008 *Demythologizing Celibacy: Practical Wisdom from Christian and Buddhist Monasticism.* Collegeville MN : Liturgical Press.
Tassin, Claude 2011 Au commencement était la maison. *Spiritus* 2011 201 : 415-428
Volf, Miroslav 1996 *Exclusion and Embrace: A theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation,* Nashville: Abington Press.
Walker, Susan (ed) 1987 *Speaking of Silence: Christian and Buddhists on the Contemplative Way,* New York: Paulist Press.
Yong, Amos 2008 *Hospitality and the Other: Pentecost, Christian Practices and the Neighbor,* New York: Maryknoll Orbis Books.*