

Explorations of Planetary Culture at the Lindisfarne Conferences

EARTH'S ANSWER

Richard Baker-roshi
Richard Barnet
Gregory Bateson
Elise Boulding
Stewart Brand
Pir Vilayat Khan
Saul Mendlovitz
Jonas Salk
E.F. Schumacher
Russell Schweickart
Paolo Soleri
David Spangler
Brother David Steindl-Rast
Lewis Thomas
William Irwin Thompson
John Todd
Sean Wellesley-Miller

I left Lindisfarne wondering, "What if they are right?"

—Ted Morgan, *New York Times Magazine*

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The Lindisfarne conferences bring together a small, diverse group of men and women who are helping to express a new direction in cultural evolution. This book, taking edited talks from two conferences, focuses on the following aspects of planetary culture:

- The Transformation of the Individual
- The Creation of New Communities
- Decentralization and World Order
- Evolution and the Strategies of Consciousness
- Planetary Culture and the New Image of Humanity

- ☐ The image of the Earth seen from space and the re-awakening of religious search are creating a changed individual consciousness.
- ☐ People are seeking more fulfilling ways of living together in urban and rural society and expressing this effort in energy-conscious architectural forms.
- ☐ There are reasons to expect the fading of the corporate state, making way for a variety of small concerns to operate in the service of humanity. Various models of enlightened world governance are being widely discussed.
- ☐ Humanity as a species is beginning to comprehend its own nature and place within evolution and within the biosphere. This understanding may permit respect to replace exploitation in our relations with the natural world.
- ☐ Diverse facets of human culture and experience are now accessible to everyone, perhaps for the first time. The sense of a common human identity is growing.

There is a new awareness of convergence, of the intermeshing of old and new, of the sacred in art, science, and means of livelihood. This book is both a product of and a contribution to a planetary renaissance.

LINDISFARNE / HARPER & ROW

ISBN 0-6-012632-9

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Edited by
Michael Katz
William P. Marsh
Gail Gordon Thompson

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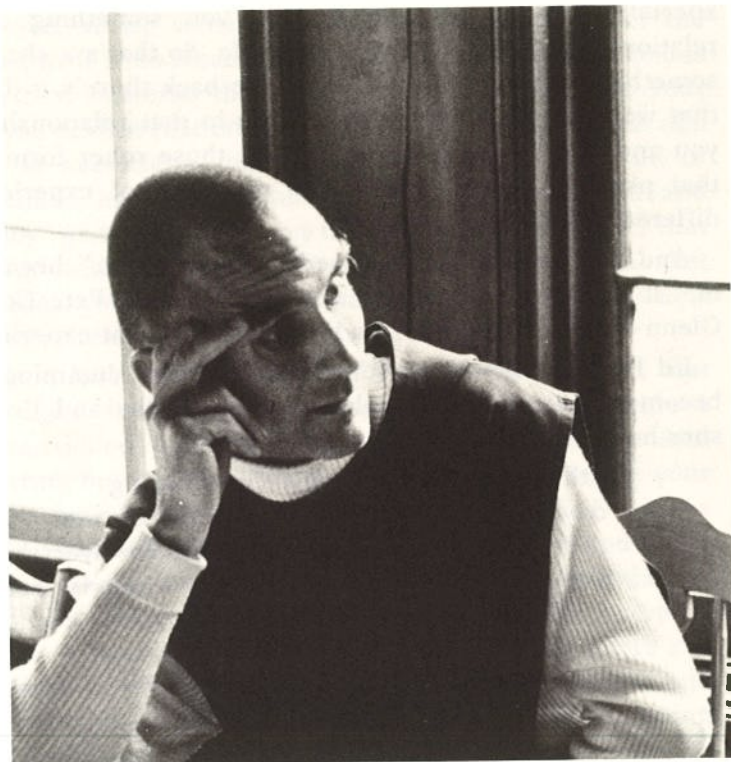
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FIRST EDITION

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOG CARD NUMBER: 76-26240

ISBN 0-06-012632-9

The large figure in the cover design was adapted by Janet Planet from the Codex Nuttall of Mexico. It represents the Plumed Serpent, Quetzalcoatl.



Brother David Steindl-Rast was born in Austria and received his Ph.D. in child psychology at the University of Vienna. A member of the Benedictine Order, he has been active in the ecumenical movement which

has brought contemplatives from the great religions together. He currently directs a small contemplative community on a converted lighthouse island in Maine.



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2 The Monk in Us

Brother David Steindl-Rast

When I came in here this morning little Damian was in the room and he said to me, "Are you going to be sitting up there and talking today?" I said, "Yes," and he said, "Is it going to be for children?" I had to say no because that was the level on which he asked the question. But on another level I think it is definitely for children and only for children because I would like to speak about planetary religion in the light of the monk in every one of us.

The monk in us is very closely related to the child in us or, if you want, to the mystic in us—and we are all meant to be mystics. We do a great disservice to mystics by putting them up on a pedestal and thinking of them as a special kind of human being. The truth is that every human being is a special kind of mystic,

and that creates a tremendous challenge for each one of us to become precisely that mystic we are meant to be. Here I'm taking mysticism in the strictest sense as the experience of communion with ultimate reality. All of us are certainly called to experience this communion. And there's no one and never will be anyone and never has been anyone who can experience ultimate reality in the same way in which you can experience it. Therefore, you are called to be that special kind of mystic that only you can be.

Now when I say that this has something to do with the child in us, I mean that there is in the child a longing to find meaning, an openness to meaning which tends to be lost or at least overshadowed by our preoccupation with purposefulness. I should say right at the outset that when I use these two terms, purpose and meaning, I'm by no means playing off purpose against meaning or meaning against purpose. However, in our time and in our culture we are so preoccupied with purpose that one really has to bend backwards and overemphasize the dimension of meaning; otherwise we will be lopsided. So if you find an extraordinary amount of emphasis on meaning, it is only to redress the balance.

In the child there is certainly a tremendous curiosity about how things work and a tremendous thrust towards purposefulness, and that is the only thrust that we tend to develop. But there is also a great longing for contemplation which we tend not to develop. The typical circumstance of a child when seen in public these days is one of being dragged along by a long arm, while whoever is dragging the child is saying, "Come on, let's go! We don't have any time. We have to get home (or somewhere else). Don't just stand there. Do something." That's the gist of it. But other cultures, many native American tribes for example, had an entirely different ideal for education: "A well-educated child ought to be able to sit and look when there is nothing to be seen," and "A well-educated child ought to be able to sit and listen when there is nothing to be heard." Now that's very different from our attitude, but it is very congenial to children. That's exactly what they want to do—just stand and look and be totally absorbed in whatever it is that they are looking at or listening to or licking or sucking or playing with in one way or another. And of course we destroy this capacity for openness towards meaning at a very young age; by making them do things

and take things in hand, we direct them very exclusively towards the purpose level.

Maybe I should say just a word more about purpose and meaning and the way in which I use these two terms, but I don't want to impose my definitions on you. I'd rather invite you to think about a situation in which you have to carry out a particular purpose and see what the inner dynamics are and then compare this with a situation in which something becomes meaningful to you. When you have to accomplish a particular purpose, the main thing is that you have to take things in hand. If you don't know what it's all about, somebody has to show you the ropes, as we say, so you know how to handle the thing. You have to take things in hand, to handle the matter, to come to grips with the situation, to keep things under control—otherwise you are never quite sure that you are going to accomplish your purpose. All this is very important for dealing with the situation in which a particular purpose has to be accomplished.

Now think of a situation in which something becomes meaningful to you. What is there to grasp? What is there to keep under control? That is not the idea. You will find yourself using expressions in which you are perfectly passive or at least more passive. "Responsive" is really the word, but you are more passive than in a situation in which you are accomplishing a purpose. You will say, "This really did something to me." Now you are not the one that keeps things under control and handles them and manipulates them; instead the experience does something to you. "It really touched me," or if it is very strong, "It hit me over the head!" or, "It swept me off my feet!"—something like that. That's when something becomes meaningful to you. So what really happens is that you give yourself to it, and in that moment, it, whatever it may be, reveals its meaning to you. Again let me stress, this is not an either/or proposition. The two have to go together, but certainly in order to find meaning in our purposeful activities we have to learn to open ourselves, to give ourselves to what we are doing. And that is typically the attitude that the child takes.

Now let me go on to a very important type of experience which Maslow has studied under the heading of the "peak experience," those moments in which meaning reveals itself to us—and we know it. In order to say more about this, it is again necessary that

I don't talk about something that's unrelated to your own experience, particularly since the peak experience in its matter, in its content, is so very evasive. In order to be able to speak about it at all, we'd either have to have a poetry session or a music session or something like that. If we want to have a discussion of it, we can only discuss some structural aspects and leave each one of you to fill in the context on your own. For those of you who may possibly not be familiar with the term or who need a little refresher for your memory, simply think of an experience that, when you think back on it, was a moment of which you could say, "That kind of thing makes life worth living." Or think of the term "peak experience," a very well-chosen term suggesting, for one thing, that it is somewhat elevated above your normal experience. It is a moment in which you are somehow high, or at any rate higher than at other moments. It is a moment, although it may last quite some time; even then that long time, say an hour or so, appears as a moment. It is always experienced as a point in time, just as the peak of a mountain is always a point. Now this may be a high peak or a low peak; the decisive thing is that it comes to a peak.

So as you look over your day or over your life or over any period of time, you see these peaks sticking out, and they are points of an elevated experience, points of an experience of vision, of insight if you want. That is also important to the notion of a peak. When you are up on top of a peak you have a better vision. You can look all around. While you are still going up, part of the vision, part of the horizon is hidden by the peak you are ascending. But once on the peak, you get an insight into meaning; there's a moment in which meaning really touches you. That is the kind of insight that we are speaking about now. It's not finding a solution to a concrete package of problems; it is simply a moment of limitless insight. You are not setting any limits to your insight.

Try to think now of a moment of this kind and make it very concrete, very specific. No generalities will help us here. It doesn't have to be a gigantic peak—they are very rare in one's life. But an anthill is also a peak, so anything that comes to a peak will do for our purposes. So just try and remember very concretely an experience in which something deeply touched you, an experience in which you were somehow elevated above a

normal level. I will make a little pause so that I myself can also think of one, and then we will look a little bit into the structure of these experiences. And, if these experiences are, as it appears to me they are, the epitome of the mystical experience, then even in our little anthill-type peak experiences there will have to be found the typical structure of the mystical experience, the typical structure of that child-like openness to meaning—the typical structure of monastic life as I will go on to demonstrate. So please try now and focus on one of those peak experiences...

I said that the content of these experiences is very evasive. You might even have to say, "Gee, nothing really happened." Well, that is a profound insight, because if you allow nothing really to happen, that's the greatest mystical experience. But as you talk about it you will find yourself inclined to use expressions such as, "Oh, I just lost myself. I lost myself when I heard this passage of the music," or, "I just lost myself looking at that little sandpiper running after the waves; as soon as the waves come the sandpiper runs back and then the sandpiper runs after the waves." You lose yourself in such an experience, and after you lose yourself for a little while, you are never quite sure again whether the waves are chasing the sandpiper or whether the sandpiper is chasing the waves or whether anybody is chasing anybody. But something has happened there and you really lost yourself in it.

And then, strangely and paradoxically—and this is exactly what we are aiming at; we are trying to find the paradoxes that must necessarily be in any mystical experience—you find that you would also say that during this experience in which you lost yourself you were for once truly yourself. "That was a moment when I was really myself, more so than at other times. I was just carried away." It's a poetic expression. There are certain things in life that cannot be expressed in any way except poetic expressions, so these expressions also enter into our everyday language. But then you find again the paradox, because about the very same experience of which you say, "I was carried away," you would have to say, "Yes, but at that moment, when I was most carried away, I was more truly in the present than I am at any other time." Like most of us, most of the time I would have to say that I am not really fully present where I am. Instead, I'm forty-nine per cent ahead of myself, just stretching out to what's

going to come, and forty-nine per cent behind myself, hanging on to what has already passed. There's hardly any of me left to be really present. Then something comes along that's practically nothing, that little sandpiper or the rain on the roof, that sweeps me off my feet, and for one split second I'm really present where I am. I'm carried away and I'm present where I am. I lost myself and I found myself, truly myself.

I go on to another paradox. I suppose that many of you will have chosen an experience in which you were alone—a moment alone in your room or walking on the beach or out in the woods or maybe on a mountain top. In one of those experiences you find that even though you were alone—and, paradoxically, not so much in spite of being alone, but because of being so truly alone at that moment—you were united with everything and everybody. If there were no other people around with whom you could feel united, you felt united with the trees, if there were any, or with the rocks or with the clouds or with the water or with the stars or with the wind or whatever it was. It felt as if your heart were expanding, as if your being were expanding to embrace everything, as if the barriers were in some way broken down or dissolved and you were one with all. You may check this out by finding in retrospect that you didn't miss any of your friends at the peak of your peak experience. A moment later you may have said, "Gee, I wish that so-and-so could be here and experience this beautiful sunset or could see this or could hear this music." But at the peak of your peak experience, you weren't missing anybody, and the reason is not that you had forgotten them, but that they were there or that you were where they were. Because you were united with all, there was no point in missing anybody. You had reached that center, if you want, of which religious tradition sometimes speaks in which everybody and everything converges.

All right, there is a paradox that when I am most truly alone I'm one with all. You can also turn this around. Some of you may have been thinking of an experience in which part of the peak experience was precisely that you felt one with all in an enormous group of people. Maybe it was a liturgical celebration, maybe a peace march or demonstration, a concert, or a play—some gathering where part of your tremendous enjoyment was that you felt that everybody there was just one heart and one soul and that

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everybody there was experiencing this same thing. Incidentally, this may not at all be objectively true. You may have been the only one who was really turned on like that, but you experienced it as if everyone were turned on in the same way. But even in this situation we turn the paradox around. When you are most one with all, you are really alone. You are singled out as if that particular word of the speaker (if it's some lecture that turns you on) were addressed to you personally, and you almost blush. “Why is he talking about me? Why is he singling me out?” or “This particular passage of this particular symphony was written for me and it was composed for me and it was performed for me; such a tremendous, lavish performance, and it is all for me, right here.” You are singled out; you are perfectly alone. And we come to see that this is no contradiction. When you are really alone you are one with all—even the word “alone” in some way alludes to that. It may just be a mnemonic device to remember this, but there may be more behind it—all one, one with all, truly alone.

I'd like to draw out a third paradox, which in some respects is the most important one, and see again if it checks out with your own experience. When the peak experience hits you or lifts you up or whatever it does to you, in a flash of insight everything makes sense. Now this is a very different thing from laboriously finding the answer to some problem, which is the usual way we think that finally everything could possibly make sense. We think we'll get the answer to this problem, but the moment we have the answer to this problem, several others arise. So we think, okay, we'll follow this other problem up to its end; we believe that we can hand ourselves along from question to answer, new questions arising to the next answer, and to the next answer, and then finally we might arrive at the final answer. But what finally happens is that this chain is a circle and we go around and around and around; the last answer raises the first question and so it goes on.

In your peak experience, somehow intuitively you become aware of the fact that to find the answer, you have to drop the question. Something knocks you over and for a split second you drop the question, and the moment you drop the question the answer is there. You get the impression that maybe the answer was always trying to get through to you, and the only reason it couldn't get through is that you were so busy asking questions.

*The moment you
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Why should this be? Why should this happen in our peak experience? There seems a grotesque disproportion between cause and effect. I was doing nothing but looking at a sandpiper running after the waves and running away from the waves; I was doing nothing but lying awake and listening to the rain drumming on the roof; why should suddenly everything make sense?

There's another way of trying to approach this. You might say, if you really try and check out the experience, that something teases you into saying yes. You see the sandpiper and something in you says a wholehearted yes, or you hear the rain and your whole being says yes to it. It's a special kind of yes; it's an unconditional yes. And the moment you have said an unconditional yes to any part of reality, you have implicitly said yes to everything, not yes to each specific thing, but yes to everything that otherwise you departmentalize into good and bad and black and white and up and down. You are not distinguishing. You just say yes, and all of a sudden this whole thing falls into a pattern, and you have said yes to the whole pattern.

Now if this in any way seems real to you, if there is any response in your heart that says, "Yes, that is something that applies to my own experience," then that is enough to show that each one of us has really experienced at some very important moments of our lives what it is that makes monastic life tick. That is very important, especially in this place called Lindisfarne, this outlandish namesake of a monastery that's been extinct for about a thousand years. That's very important for us, because if there is no connection between me, whoever I may be, and monastic life, then this whole thing is not particularly interesting; but if I can see and appreciate that some of the most important experiences in my life are precisely what is the core of monastic life, that puts me in an entirely different position. And that's exactly what I mean when I speak about the monk in us.

Now I would like to make just a few statements about monastic life. First of all, monastic life is a particular form of life. The monastery is a particular place and a particular environment. It could be called a professional environment, a controlled environment, a laboratory, a workshop. In fact, Saint Benedict's Rule, one of the key documents of our western tradition of monasticism, calls the monastery a workshop. It is a place in which everything is geared towards cultivating that contemplative dimension of

which we have been speaking, cultivating that mystical attitude, that openness towards meaning which all of us experience in our peak experiences.

So all of us throughout our lives are in a sense amateurs of the monastic life. The only difference between us and monks is that monks are professionals. But, especially in our time, we know that professionals very often are much less good at whatever they profess to do than amateurs are. Therefore, the more people discover how important the monk in them is, and the more they discover how important the openness towards meaning is, then the more important it becomes that everybody, amateur or professional, has access occasionally to this controlled environment in which he can cultivate the monastic or contemplative dimension of his life.

Now I'll just very briefly pick out these three paradoxes once more and show how they are really what makes monastic life, or religious life as professional religious life, tick.

If anybody has experienced the paradox that when he loses himself he finds himself, then that person has inner access to the very heart of what a life of poverty is meant to be. A life of poverty has only one goal and that is precisely to lose yourself and so find yourself. Everything else that has to do with the life of poverty in all the different monastic traditions, everything else that you may think of as phenomena of poverty (monks have no money, or they have all their money in common and have a lot more money than everybody else, or they must ask permission if they want to use the car, or they are only permitted to have so much money in their pockets, or they are not allowed to touch money and so they have to let other people touch the money...) are just ascetic means to cultivate that seed.

Let's not make the mistake of saying, 'I lose myself in order to find myself.' That is already turning this whole thing into a purpose matter and that's not it at all. I lose myself and I discover that so I have found myself. And now I spend my life cultivating this seed. What lies between the seed and the harvest is that ascetic effort in many, many different forms according to the different monastic traditions. And the harvest is nothing else but what the seed was, because you never harvest anything but what you sow; that is, you lose yourself and so find yourself—only more so. That's all.

If you take the second paradox, that when I'm truly alone, I'm one with all, and when I'm really one with all, I'm alone, you have the seed of a life of celibacy. Again, what lies between the seed and the harvest is simply ascetic effort that can take many, many different forms. It is just meant to cultivate this seed so that in the end you have precisely that, namely to be one with all and alone. One could make a very good case (but I think someone else ought to do that rather than a monk) that married life is another road towards the same goal of being one with all and truly alone. That means that you are one with yourself, that you are not just half of a pair, but that you are truly alone and so one with all—not only with your partner, but one with all. Marriage is not an egotism for two.

And now the third paradox lies at the root of what we call obedience. The first thing that we think of is that you do what somebody else tells you to do. That's a time-honored and very helpful ascetic means towards the end, but to get stuck in this would be totally wrong and totally fruitless. If it is just a matter of replacing my self-will with somebody else's self-will, I would rather have my own self-will; it is much closer to home. The whole idea is to get beyond self-will altogether, because self-will is the one thing that gets between us and listening. All our questioning, all our frantic looking for solutions, is just an expression of our little self-will over and against the totality. The moment I drop that and give it up, the whole comes through to me and gives itself to me. I'm not so intent on grasping it and grabbing it and holding it when I give myself to it.

Obedience means literally a thorough listening; **ob audire** means to listen thoroughly or, as the Jewish tradition says, "to bare your ear." The ear locks have to be removed so that you can really listen thoroughly. That's obedience in the Old Testament. In many, many forms, in many, many languages, the word for obedience is an intensive form of the word listening—**horchen**, **ge-horchen**; **audire**, **ob-audire**; etc.

In other words, obedience, doing what somebody else tells you, may be used as an ascetic means to get over that self-will, that always having your own ideas and your own little blueprints. It's a means to drop all this and to look at the whole and to praise the whole, as Augustine says. But the decisive thing is to learn to listen, and very often doing somebody else's will can be a

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hindrance to learning to listen; you just become a marionette pulled on strings. This is very important in the context of finding meaning, the context in which we see the mystical experience. When you find something meaningless you say that it is absurd. But when you say "absurd," you've given yourself away—because the term **absurdus** is the exact opposite to **ob-audiens**. **Absurdus** means absolutely deaf. So if you say something is absurd, you are simply saying, "I am absolutely deaf to what this is going to tell me. The totality is speaking to me and I am absolutely deaf." There is nothing out there that's deaf; you cannot attribute deafness to the source of the sound. You are deaf. You can't hear. So the only alternative that all of us have in any form of life is to replace an absurd attitude with an obedient attitude. It takes a lifetime to get just a little way in this.

What all this boils down to is that there is a lot more to life than just the phenomena. There is a whole dimension of life to which we have to listen with our whole heart, mind-fully as we say. Mindfulness is necessary to find meaning—and the intellect is not the full mind. The intellect, one has to hasten to say, is an extremely important part of our mind, but it isn't the whole mind. What I mean here when I say "mind" is more what the Bible calls the "heart," what many religious traditions call the "heart." The heart is the whole person, not just the seat of our emotions. The kind of heart that we are talking about here is the heart in the sense in which a lover says, "I will give you my heart." That doesn't mean I give you part of myself; it means I give myself to you. So when we speak about wholeheartedness, a wholehearted approach to life, mindfulness, that is the attitude through which alone we give ourselves to meaning.

A technical term that is mostly used in the Catholic tradition and is a good term for this is recollection—to be recollected, to live recollectedly. It means the same thing as mindfulness, wholeheartedness, openness to meaning. Recollectedness is concentration without elimination (that is T.S. Eliot's phrase), a paradox, because concentration normally limits. But if you can accomplish concentration without elimination, if you can combine the attitude of focusing on something and yet being totally open without horizons, then you have accomplished what recollection means. Then you have accomplished what all of monastic life in any of its traditions is after—recollected living, mindful living,

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deliberate living. Thoreau, when he goes to Walden Pond, says, "I have gone into the woods to live deliberately." That means recollectedly in this sense. There are many forms of monasticism that are not catalogued or recognized as such, and they may be much more important than the others. The decisive thing by which you will recognize monastic life is that it is recollected life, mindful life, wholehearted life. It is through wholehearted living that meaning flows into our lives. That means that while we are engaged in purpose we keep ourselves open enough to let meaning flow into our lives. We don't get stuck in purpose.

It may help us if we see that work in the narrowest sense is closely related to purpose. Work is that kind of activity that aims at a particular purpose, and when that particular purpose is accomplished the work as work ceases. Over against this is play. Play does not aim at any particular purpose. Play has meaning; play is the blossoming forth of meaning. You work until you have accomplished your purpose. You sweep the floor until it is swept. But you don't sing in order to get a song sung—you sing in order to sing. And you don't dance, as Alan Watts pointed out, to get somewhere; you dance in order to dance. It has all its meaning in itself.

Now we tend to think that the opposite of work is leisure. Leisure is not the opposite of work; play is the opposite of work, if you have to have a polarity like that. And leisure is precisely the bridging of this gap between the two. Leisure is precisely work-play or play-work; it is precisely doing your work with the attitude of play. That means putting into your work what is most important about playing, namely, that you do it for its own sake and not only to accomplish a particular purpose. And that means that you have to give it time. Leisure is not a privilege for those who can take time for leisure. Leisure is a virtue. It is the virtue of those who give time to whatever takes time, and give as much time as it deserves, and so work leisurely and find meaning in their work and come fully alive. If we have a strict work mentality we are only half alive. We are like people who only breathe in, and suffocate. It really doesn't make any difference whether you only breathe in or only breathe out; you will suffocate in either case. That is a very good pointer towards the fact that we are not playing off work against play or purpose against meaning. The two have to come together. We have to breathe in and breathe

out and so we keep alive. This is really what we are all after and is what all religion must be about—aliveness.

Now, the great question is why we are not more alive. And the answer is one word—fear. One thing is at the root of everything that distorts or destroys life—and that is fear. We are simply afraid to be alive. Why are we afraid to be alive? Because to be alive means giving ourselves and when we really give ourselves, we never know what's going to happen to us.

As long as we keep everything nicely under control, everything's purpose directed, everything's in hand; there's no danger, but no life either. A world in which we could keep everything under control would be so boring that we'd be dead. We'd die of boredom. We experience that in little ways every day. We get scared and we keep things under control, but the moment we really get them under control we get bored. Think of interpersonal relationships: "I got her number; I know how to handle her; I know how to handle him." That's all right to a certain point; it's very reassuring. But then comes the point where it gets totally boring, so we say, "Let's have a little adventure." Now the moment we have adventure we have danger; we have risk. We can't have adventure without risk, and so we open ourselves a little bit. We relax our grip a little bit, and the moment we do that it gets very interesting and adventuresome but also scary. The next thing we know, we're clamming up again and we're trying to get things under control again. So we go back and forth, back and forth, between these two poles all our lives, and that's really what the spiritual life is all about. That's what religion is all about—the fear of losing ourselves and what it is that overcomes that fear.

The thing that overcomes fear is courage. But courage is our contemporary expression for what traditional religion in all its different branches called faith. Let's not use that term faith more often than absolutely necessary because it throws us off. We have wrong notions about faith; we think that faith means believing something. Yes, it does mean believing something. If we really trust in a person, if we really have faith in a friend, that also implies that we are believing some things about that friend. But that is very secondary, and if we get stuck in that we'll never get at the root of faith. That's not what it means. Having faith does not mean subscribing to some dogmas or to some articles of faith

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or anything like that. Faith ultimately is courageous trust in life. The particular form that our religious faith takes depends entirely on the time and the place and the social structure and the cultural forms into which we are born, and there is an infinite variety of these. But the essence of our faith is the same at all times and in all places, and it is the courageous trust in life.

Faith versus fear—that is the key issue of religion. That is also the key of our attitude towards truth. We do know that religion has something to do with truth, but it isn't the truth that we can grab and grasp and take home with us. If we grasp and rigidly hold certain truths, next we will clash with everybody who does not hold those truths. When it comes down to it, everybody holds a different truth; there are as many different truths as there are people around. So if we insist on the truth being something that we must hold, then we are at odds with everybody else in the world. But the real truth that we are after is something that holds us; it holds us when we give ourselves, in those moments when we really open ourselves. There is only one truth and it takes hold of each person in an individual way. There must be an infinite variety of ways in which truth takes hold of all of us because in that variety the unity of truth blossoms forth. And it is beautiful and we must assert it and we must celebrate it. That's what life is and that's what religious life is, but it's giving ourselves to the truth, not taking the truth, grasping the truth, holding the truth. It's only the truth to which we give ourselves that will make us free. The one truth for all of us is that we must have courage to give ourselves to truth. Fear hangs on. Fear always grabs for something. The moment we get fearful, we grasp for something with the reflex of the monkey that grabs for the mother. We have it all deeply in ourselves, genetically, that fear makes us hang on to something. Faith is precisely letting go. Even in religious traditions that may not use the term faith, you will find this essence, namely the letting go.

This is the new situation of global religion in which we find ourselves today. It has finally become clear to us that what is really essential to all the different religions is faith, is this attitude of letting go, this courageous trust in life. That couldn't have become apparent to us much earlier than this, than 1974, because we just did not have the material to compare and to see what other traditions were all about. It took a great amount of

comparative religion and the gathering of data to really see and verify this, but by now it has become obvious to a good many people (and it will increasingly become obvious to everybody on this globe) that basically there are only two ways of being religious. The border lines which we thought went between Christians and Buddhists, Buddhists and Hindus, and Moslems and Jews are ultimately irrelevant. They are interesting and very important at a certain level, but when we come to the core of religion, they are irrelevant. There's only one line that goes through, and that goes through in another direction, horizontally. Through all the Buddhists, through all the Hindus, through all the Christians, and incidentally through each one of us, runs the line between the right way of being religious, the only way of being religious, and the wrong way of being religious. That is the line between fear and faith. Fear in its religious expressions takes all sorts of forms. Dogmatism is the most obvious one. Scientism is another one, but it's just a different kind of dogmatism. Fundamentalism is one. Moralism is one, because you hang on to something that you can do—it's what Paul called the law versus grace, or works versus faith. You do something; as long as you can do it you have something under control. You don't have to trust anything; you trust in what you can accomplish and manipulate.

Basically, what it boils down to is that there are only two forms of being religious around in the world anymore. If you'll excuse me I will call one fundamentalist and that's the religion of fear. Obviously in the way in which I use religion, it isn't religion at all, but it's called religion, so let's call it the wrong kind, the monkey religion, the aping religion, the religion of fear. And over against that is the catholic faith, but please let's write catholic with a small "c" because the great problem with Catholics is that they aren't catholic enough. There are catholic Buddhists who are much more catholic than the Catholics with a capital "C" and there are catholic Jews and there are catholic Hindus and there are catholic Moslems. There are even catholic atheists, but there are also fundamentalist atheists. And that's where the line goes through.

The focus is on meaning in the catholic faith. The focus is on riding the bike, as our friend Paolo said last night, over against the purpose of taking the bike apart. When we take the bike

apart, we have to take things in hand, and that's fine. It is very good to see the bike's purpose, to see its working, but it has to be in the context of the whole. When we give ourselves to meaning, we really have to give ourselves, and we know how difficult it is for us to give ourselves. If you don't know it just watch your language and see how many, many times a day you use idiomatic expressions in English that say, "I take this" and "I take that." We have not one idiomatic expression that says "I give myself to something." We take a course and we take an exam and we take a walk and we take a pill and we take a meal and we take a shower and we take a bath and we take a seat and we take all sorts of things that nobody can even take—a husband, a wife, a nap. (If you have ever tried to take a nap it's perhaps the surest road to insomnia, but the moment you give yourself to the nap, you're asleep.)

This is the reason there have to be places like Lindisfarne in which we learn to give ourselves as we take things in hand. Lindisfarne, or Houses of Prayer, or other places like this today are trying to become monastic and catholic, but they have a long way to go to become truly monastic and truly catholic. Every one of us has a long way to go.

But we have come a long way because our global consciousness is at this moment saturated with precisely the awareness that what really matters is meaning. When we were children we used to hang a little string into a salt solution and watch the crystals grow on it; no matter how saturated the solution was, the crystals would not grow without the little string. Now Lindisfarne may not be much more than a little string, but it's hanging in the right solution, and what is crystallizing for each one of us personally is the monk in us, and for all of us, global religion.