

SPIRITUAL JOURNEYING, A CONVERSATION ABOUT

DVD: "A Conversation with Jerry Jud, 'The Journey to God,' 9.24.04, with Roger Telshow at Timshel--Montrose, PA--c 2004 by Gerald J. Jud"

Beloved brother Jerry:

"When the evening of life comes," said St.Jn. of the Cross, "we shall be judged on love." Well, for you & me, the evening of life has come; & as I write this commentary on this DVD (which Loree & I & Mark just saw-heard), I do so in awareness that you understand that I understand that (1Cor.13.8 TEV) "Love is eternal," the rest "will pass." Thus have I given myself permission to be as frank with you as I've been throughout the 46 years of our friendship.

1 You & I have sharpened our conversational skills on each other! My first impression of this DVD was of your high skill in conversing with Roger. And I thought of these words of Ken Woodward with which he concludes his Foreword to my FLOW OF FLESH, REACH OF SPIRIT (Eerdmans/95): "To paraphrase Dante, abandon all hope you who enter on these pages, of remaining firmly fixed in your cherished assumptions. You're in the presence of a great conversationalist. So let the conversation begin."

2 You continue Christian practice (weekly attendance at worship in your nearby UCC church) while having reversed your syncretism from seeing Vedanta (Upanishadic philosophical Hinduism/Buddhism) through Christian eyes to seeing Christianity (& all else) through Vedantist eyes. Repeatedly, you renounce the dualism of the West (& of the three Abraham religions) in favor of the East's monism.

3 On the DVD, we see you well practicing what an inner-life teacher said to you: "What's your hurry?" Extensive daily meditational praxis has slowed you way down, slower than I've been slowed down by my extensive daily lexical praxis (reading the Holy Book in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, & [usually] German). But we are both of us slower than the frenetic, stuffs-driven American life swirling around (& truth to tell, somewhat within) us. I love the Amerind advice "Slow your body down so your soul can catch up." Too fast, & no inner peace; no inner peace, no inner joy; no inner joy, no smile on the Father's face. (My religion is biblical. Life's purpose is to call forth a smile on the Father's face--as the Bat Qol [the heaven-Voice] said at our Lord's baptism, "This is my son, who pleases me"--& 1Thes.4.1 & Heb.11.6.)

4 My '43 ThD dissertation called dualism/monism an unnecessary either/or. (Your move from the former to the latter was unnecessary & an impediment to spiritual as well as intellectual journeying.) I quoted the British theologian Edwin Ewert Aubrey (from whom I had a U.Chicago '41 course in "Nature and the Supernatural") thus: "ontological continuing [monism] in the prosaic dimension, epistemological discontinuity [dualism] in the poetic dimension." What's "real" is neither dimension but the two together (an insight decades later reinforced by quantum mechanics).

The irony, Jerry, is that while you renounce ontological dualism, you practice the rhetorical dualism of preaching for monism (as the religion you've chosen) & against dualism (your birth-religion). The Lord delivered me from that fallacious either/or 64 years ago. But since you use dualism/monism to signal West/East, I'll do so here.

5 Converts (you, e.g.) tend to be unfair to the "from" & overgenerous to the "to." INSTANCE: You draw a straight line from dualism to a "million" women burned to death during the Inquisition. (My estimate is 50,000.) You do not speak of the (actually!) millions of women burned by monism (suttee in India--to which the [British] dualistidc soldiers put a near-complete stop).

6 Speaking of him as "countercultural," you said "Jesus was a classical mystic." That is so wildly contrary-to-fact that it called to mind Voltaire's sardonic comment, "If God made man in his image, it didn't take long for man to return the compliment." You describe Western consciousness as "a trap": your comment traps Jesus in the East.

7 You may remember my self-description as "OO" (Orthodox [Christian] Open).

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As do you, I believe we should be "open to all avatars" (truth from whatever quarter). But unlike you, I see this openness as compatible with loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ, Scripture, & the Great Tradition ----to being a classical Christian.

Two Olympics ago, you spoke on behalf of URI (United Religions Initiative), & I tried to help you make a Christian witness within your witness to the local/global need for pro-human cooperation among the religions--instead of preaching an emergent world-religion (which insults all on-the-ground religions)--but to little effect. Through many years I've tried to have this effect on Mel Yosso's "Transculture-Transreligion" --to better effect.

8 "How do you want to experience the end of your times now [today]?" Loree & I are delighted that you & Georgeanne are coming to "Christ will come again" (this year Craigville Theological Colloquy) & staying in our home: there are two eschatologies, the personal (in your question) & the personal-historical-cosmic. Let's see how they talk to each other. (Other readers of this open letter to you should know that in preparation for the Colloquy experience, you asked me to "do" your DVD & I asked you to read Don Bloesch's LAST THINGS [in response to your asking me what one book to read].)

9 In mentioning the spiritual journey's need to "leave home," you instanced Bunyan's PILGRIM'S PROGRESS (without mentioning that at the foot of the Cross, his sin-burden fell off: your DVD never mentions sin, only evil). Then you converted both Bunyan & J.B. Phillips (YOUR GOD IS TOO SMALL) from orthodox Christians to monists! (See Sec.2, above.) When you speak of the goal, like the bliss-preachers of pop-Hinduism on television ("Follow your bliss!"), you say to your discipline (for that is what the interviewer reveals that he is), "Bliss is all." That's the Subcontinent East with its stagnant social conditions (except where under the stimulus of Christianity). How different the Christianity-dominant West (despite its corruptions), as in von Hügel's "Caring is all"!

Two deities are wrestling within you, Jerry. Your new monistic god is beyond good & evil: Kali creates & destroys. The coeval ethic? Acceptance. Your old dualistic (biblical, Christian) god accepts you only on condition of your repentance from acceptance & your joining his team (as Rein.Niebuhr) to "change what can [& should] be changed." Your new god has taught your disciple to say "I am God." Then your old god slams him with this: "Evil, suffering, inequity, injustice: how does this fit into your picture of God? How can you sleep at night when you're [as god!] responsible for the whole damn thing?" Roger brushed off this sharp but smiling-gentle confrontation: "I am not the messiah, but I am God." Jerry, how come you did not press the logic: "Christianity says the Messiah is God--so if you're God, how come you're not the messiah, taking on the divine caring-saving mission?" What's sad here, Jerry, is the misfit between your words (which are monistic) & your deeds (which continue, as throughout your life, to be messianic, caring, changing what needs to be changed around you & throughout the world). You're still walking the Christian walk, but you've stopped talking the Christian talk. Part of the problem, I think, is your continuing adolescent resistance to your preacher-father's God-talk--a resistance that has sometimes appeared in snide remarks you've made about my free-flowing evangelical speech. (I had the ad- & disadvantage of growing up under a very different father, highly articulate & a sniffer at clergy. My rebellion from him took the form of thorough enculturation into biblical-evangelical speech, the very language you sniff at in distancing yourself from your father.)

10 "Do not build an altar to your experience." This sound, antinarcissistic advice is good for all three: your disciple, you, & me. God is not through with you (!) yet! Roger begins by saying that in the interview, he wants to "explore the mystical experience." In this paragraph's first sentence, you warn him against escapist mysticism: you use mysticism both for its inherent values & to provide a critical (not just escapist) distance from "the world." Your unspoken model for your critical-caring mysticism is Jesus--but you speak of him to your disciple only in asides: what is central to your walk is only an aside in your talk. And your disciple vacates the conversation unenlightened by the Light of the world--indeed, having said "I am the light of the world" (the reverse of your preaching of daily self-transcendence).