

**Rick Archer (RA):** Fr. Thomas, I am honored to have you as my guest this week. I have really enjoyed reading a couple of your books and I've really been looking forward to this.

**Fr. Thomas (TK):** Thank you.

**RA:** I thought I would start by asking you some very fundamental questions, maybe even metaphysical. Then we could move on to your idea of the road map of the territory from initial awakening to spiritual interest to its culmination, and then finally we can talk about centering prayer and contemplative prayer. How does that sound?

**TK:** Fine with me.

**RA:** Let me start with probably the most fundamental question. In reading your books, the word "God" is mentioned many, many times. So please define for us, if you will, what you understand or experience God to be. What is God?

**TK:** This is a very difficult term in interspiritual or interreligious dialogue, because there are as many ideas of God as there are people. "God" was used originally in the Hebrew Bible in distinction to the other local gods of different cities, states. It was pretty much not even a national deity, but people looked to some entity, some higher power, to protect them from their enemies. It would be nicer if we had another word for God. But one can start getting too metaphysical and just quote the Hebrew Bible, "I am who I am" or "I am *that* I am" [Exodus 3:14]—a text discussed at length by many scripture scholars.

The best description of God is "is-ness" without any limit, "I am," without any other pronoun. The Buddhists have done well in establishing an attitude towards the uncreated God as distinct from the God of creation or the creator God. It's the same God, of course, but God as I will use it here is simply a label. It is the one I'm used to in my tradition. Maybe someone can invent a better one. God is everything. Call him "Butch" if you'd like!

**RA:** You know there's a tussle that's been going on between science and religion for quite some time. When I look at anything of a scientific nature, if I look at a presentation on astronomy for instance or a Discovery Channel show about the microscopic world, or listen to a quantum physicist, to me I am hearing and seeing God. That's what they are talking about: this incredible explosive, infinite creativity is micromanaging every subatomic particle and yet, at the same time, managing the galaxies.

**TK:** You have certainly got the right idea as far as a Christian perspective, especially that

of the mystics. But, of course, one's idea of God changes as one's own consciousness matures and one gives up treating God as a kind of dependency where one may get into codependent attitudes or even demanding attitudes towards God. The main thing is to have a big idea of God, huge! Science, both the infinitesimal aspect of it and the grandiose astronomical aspect of it, are presenting us with a new cosmology that religion has to take into account, especially the Christian tradition. Our scriptures are really based on a view of God that is patriarchal and limited by the culture of the time, and it just doesn't work anymore. Theology needs a solid cosmology on which to build a theology that will appeal to people of our time.

**RA:** Would you be comfortable in using the "omni" adjectives for God: omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent? Does that jive with your experience of God or intuitive sense of God?

**TK:** Yes, but they're a little too metaphysical. They come from the essentialist metaphysics of the Middle Ages, which was a great tool of research and did a good job, but has severe limitations, because God has aspects that are beyond reason. That is to say, those aspects don't reject reason, but reason isn't enough. For instance, how do you resolve infinite justice and infinite mercy? Well, you don't on the rational level. It remains a mystery, a contradiction. You have to open your consciousness and transcend the rational concept of God. It's only in the experience of that transcendent presence that one perceives that God is in everything without being limited to anything. God is as dynamic and expansive as change itself, and that is what is changeless about him.

The dynamic idea of God that evolutionary cosmology has provided for us (and only in the past fifty years in a convincing way) is a revelation of a higher power in which we are immersed and engulfed, and can never be separated from, because we have really no identity except what has emerged in the evolutionary process. Creation is not a one-time event. It's always happening, and in a sense, the being of God is always becoming. Becoming what? Becoming everything. Because God is constantly producing everything. Human consciousness is really God experiencing human consciousness. That means that we're a kind of icon of God, as Bernard Lonergan put it. This is why humans are so important and are so dignified, because God dwells in them and is calling them into a certain equality. It's equality as far as that's possible, for humans have limitations even after they have been healed by the infinite gifts of the

Almighty.

Whatever we say of God we have to be prepared to say the opposite. He doesn't quite fit into any affirmative statements. If you say "he is . . ." you have to be willing to say "he isn't . . ." He isn't anybody you can think of, that's for sure. Thus, one of the main breakthroughs of the spiritual journey is to perceive that God is manifesting in us and inviting us to become fully human because that is the way to become as fully divine as humans can be in this evolutionary process. We don't know the end, but there's no reason that the process should stop. We've been evolving from amoebas for billions of years and we haven't stopped. The brain is still evolving without question.

**RA:** I have a friend who likes to refer to us as sense organs of the Infinite. By that token, and if we consider God to be omnipresent, then not only are we sense organs of the Infinite but dogs and mosquitoes are, and even rocks, we could say. Everything expresses or reflects that to the best of its ability in terms of its physical structure.

**TK:** All that is very congenial to my way of thinking—in regards to the development of consciousness from the infant, who starts out with almost zero self consciousness, and begins to build the self that is dependent on parents and teachers and culture and its experience, its temperament, its limitations. The world that we see, and that everybody else is judging all the time, is very prejudiced. It's seen through my tinted glasses. In that sense, the world is unreal—not because it *is* unreal, but because our *view* of it is. It is built on the illusions of what we want it to be and our appetite for control, pleasure, and security. The spiritual life involves recognizing these appetites as illusions of our false self and detaching ourselves from them without expecting that these problems are going to go away or that suffering is going to disappear. The spiritual life is precisely to lead this divine life in human circumstances that involve both suffering and great joy and is continuing to evolve. We don't know where it's going. We have to learn to take responsibility for the world that we're in, and this we are very reluctant to do because it limits some of our desired freedoms.

**RA:** Our short term goals. So, ultimately, when you get right down to it, we are God looking out through these eyes. You hinted that if you go to our very core, that's who and what we are. To what extent can that be realized? And if it is realized fully, say in the person of someone like Jesus Christ, does one actually rise above the possibility of suffering? From the perspective of suffering, people looked at Jesus and said, "Oh he must be

suffering terribly.” From his perspective, was he really suffering if he was fully one with God, or was he residing in a sort of a transcendent haven that was beyond anything the physical body was being subjected to?

**TK:** It’s a very important point to understand suffering. Most of us are too busy getting away from our own personal suffering to think about it too much, unless you are thrust into or immersed in terrible suffering, as many people are today. I think this is where our cosmology even comes in. What does evolution mean? Does it mean that we are going to evolve out of suffering altogether while still in this life? That is not the promise. The promise is that we are developing our capacity as human beings to do the things that God does with the greatest of ease: to forgive, show compassion, respect everyone, experience oneness with everyone.

In the Christian perspective, God has identified with human nature even in its spiritual poverty, or sinfulness and alienation from himself. That says so much about God. Why would God want to identify with such a helpless and spiritually destitute group of people, who are certainly the lowest intellectual beings we know of in the universe? They may improve somewhat, but right now they’re pretty childish; we’re pretty childish in many of our social choices. But God doesn’t look at suffering the way we do. There is a certain interrelatedness of the Christian mystery, so that the Trinity is *the* great mystery, that somehow God is a community. God is not three persons, as we understand “persons,” but there are three relationships that treat us in a personal way.

God seems to adjust himself to every creature at their level of consciousness, however primitive. What Jesus has done is to integrate the human condition with all its limitations, with which he completely identified as a human being. He threw away all the divine privileges in so far as being human and just showed us how to be human in a divine way, which involves the acceptance and the realization of being called to unity with God and oneness with each other.

That seems to be the program: to change what is most opposite to God or distant from God or alienated from God into divine love itself, and in this way to manifest what is, perhaps, one of the deepest realities of God, which is his humility. He doesn’t seem to care about being God. He has everything and has need of nothing, except to pour out his goodness and love on those who are willing to accept them. Once humans begin to have a certain choice, limited though it is, God can’t control everything that happens in the same way. He has to respect the gift he’s given us of

autonomy in some degree.

**RA:** It's reminiscent of an adolescent maturing into adulthood. At a certain point, the parent has to grant them a certain degree of autonomy and freedom. It's a very risky business and they might go off and do crazy things. But if that freedom isn't granted, they'll never grow into adults.

**TK:** Right, and parents need to trust children even when they make mistakes, because everybody makes mistakes in this society, even though we have some social inhibitions from people who think we should do well. Making mistakes is human, and God is not put off by it. There are a million or perhaps a trillion chances, hence no lack of generosity or abundance on God's part.

**RA:** This discussion points to something that I find fascinating. I tried to write out a question to really express it clearly. So I'll just read it and maybe we can make sense of it: "Is loss of wholeness a necessary condition for manifestation? If somehow all the parts maintain full awareness of their essential nature as wholeness, it seems there wouldn't be any impetus for diversification. The tendency would be to merge back into wholeness, and actually some enlightened people have reflected just this. They practically have to be fed to be kept alive, while others have become more dynamic and engaged in the world."

I don't know if that was clear. But if you imagine the Big Bang and the manifestation of the universe, it almost seems that God necessarily has to play a hide-and-seek game with himself, where he creates these parts and appears to get lost in them, even though he essentially *is* the parts.

**TK:** What do you do if you are infinite and have infinite happiness and don't need anything, what do you do to occupy yourself?

**RA:** You get bored. You say, "Hey, let's have some fun."

**TK:** Then what do you do?

**RA:** "Let's play. Let's create something."

**TK:** You play. In other words, there is a playful character to God. He wants to see what these creatures can or will do in different circumstances, and this enables him, by his identification with us, to feel what it's like to be human with our limitations: to love us in our weakness and spiritual poverty, and to love healing and forgiving us—all the things we find hard to do, is what makes God apparently happiest.

**RA:** I came across a quote from Teresa of Avila. She said, "It appears that even God is on

the journey.” In other words, this whole process of the universe is one big evolution machine, which is God’s spiritual practice.

**TK:** You hit the nail on the head when you said God likes to play hide and seek. That’s the classical game. But that doesn’t mean that he wants to cause us suffering. There is so much to learn, and one of the great things to learn is that the game is designed for us to have fun, not to accomplish something. As soon as you want to win, you’ve lost the pleasure of playing. A certain amount of competition is not bad, but the game is over once you make it a career.

There are lots of other games God plays and another one he likes very much is, “Let’s pretend.” Or again, “Let’s do it again,” like a child who has joy in knocking down a stack of blocks and then cries out, “Oh Daddy, let’s do it again.” He has this marvelous, apparently playful attitude, but he also can play rough. He wants to see if we are willing to join him in the game. The most serious of games is that of healing the wounds of the world and then becoming whole, which is the same idea as salvation or redemption, and we’re aware of having this capacity for boundless happiness. That’s the greatest proof of God’s presence. Even in strange ways, people are always looking for happiness. If they are malicious, that’s their idea of happiness.

**RA:** Like you said earlier, our perception of reality gets filtered through these lenses of our perception and becomes quite distorted in the process, at least in certain stages of our development. So we think it is going to make us happy to kill somebody or rob a bank or things like that.

You mentioned a minute ago that God likes to play rough sometimes. There are probably inhabited planets throughout this vast universe that are routinely smashed to smithereens by asteroids and this planet alone is evidence enough that all kinds of horrible things can happen. Thinkers and philosophers have pondered this for millennia, and there have been books like *Why do Bad Things Happen to Good People*. Let me hear your comment on this thought. Would it have been possible for God to have set us in a universe that didn’t have polarities? It seems the very nature of relativity is if you are going to have hot, you have to have cold. If you are going to have fast, you’re going to have to have slow. If you’re going to have happiness, you have to have suffering.

**TK:** That is the human condition. That’s the way we were launched on an evolutionary process towards wholeness, not a possession of wholeness from the beginning. I think

it is a good idea to remember that once God creates anything, he's in trouble, because it's not going to be God if it is a creature. It doesn't have all the power. In creating, out of his goodness, creatures to share his happiness, he's taking the long view that it's not going to be hunky-dory all the time. Certain situations have to evolve for people to be able to accept God, especially when he plays rough.

**RA:** If it is all about play . . .

**TK:** Not all about play. An aspect of reality is its playful side. Life on Earth is a serious game; it's a serious situation. It is also true that God has a great sense of humor and likes to play and would like us to understand that some things he does are a game and not to take it too seriously. Once you have creatures with free will, anything can happen, and perhaps that's why God made it this way.

The Father, in the Trinitarian relationships, is infinite possibility and the Son is the articulation of those possibilities and actuality. The Spirit is the complete surrender of each of those relationships to each other in total oneness. God is always infinitely one and infinitely diverse at the same time. The relationships couldn't be more different. The Father and the Son can never be made into one on every level. There are relationships in God that are distinct.

We're invited into this dynamic of self-giving love and this is our problem. Humans don't like being creatures. They want to be in control. They want to be in charge of their efforts and draw attention to themselves, which is not what God is. He just *is*. He doesn't need any attention and he doesn't need any adulation. We need adulation in order to remember that we are created out of nothing. As soon as we can fully accept that, and I emphasize *fully*, we can become everything. We can be God, too. God, of course, can't support something that is not true. We are not God by nature, but we are invited to become God by grace—the sheer gratuity of God sharing his goodness, which means, of course, his compassion, forgiveness, respect, and oneness.

These are the real values of the human person. We're just barely beginning to emerge from the domination of our animal instincts. Some anthropologists are beginning to think that the evolutionary process is at a critical level in our time, in which a new level of consciousness beyond the rational, the capacity to understand reality intuitively, may be beginning to emerge globally. The globalization of the world may be an opportunity in which the higher power can reveal to people more and more

at the same time these insights into ultimate reality that we haven't been able to reach on the rational level and can't because of the nature of that level of consciousness.

**RA:** Someone once brought up the metaphor to me that two thousand years ago, in the time of Christ and Buddha, it was as if there was a very thick membrane that had to be penetrated in order to realize God and to become enlightened. But now that membrane has been penetrated over and over again so many times that it's become quite porous, and the price of entry is much lower now. People are having all these awakenings all over the place quite spontaneously, even without doing any spiritual practice—at least that they can remember.

**TK:** Yes. It's interesting that many people who can, I think, reasonably be believed about their spiritual experience are pointing to invisible energy that science hasn't taken into its reckoning as yet, and which it needs to do because of the increasing evidence that such energy exists. What holds the body together are its trillions of cells with no apparent head office or center of activity, so that consciousness is a communion of all the possibilities of human, body, mind, and spirit and a kind of synthesis of all levels of creation. The human as an icon of God is worth reflecting upon.

If we try to dissolve difficulties on the rational level, we just get into emotional turmoil. To accept them, sit with them, wait them out, and give them to God is the best way to deal with suffering, according to many of the mystics of all the world traditions.

**RA:** And perhaps to learn to embrace paradox and to encompass irreconcilable notions within one noggin.

**TK:** Yes. This is why meditation is so important, because it's probably the most direct access to our deeper capacities for consciousness beyond the rational level of consciousness. One of the great questions is, "Who are you?" Adolescents are said to take great interest in that question. It certainly isn't in our resumé or what you tell a doctor when you are going to see a new one about your life. It's not about our personality, in which our character and our education are expressed in the details of our behavior and our major way of looking at the world.

Beyond the egoic self, as it's usually called, is a self that we don't normally access except through meditation or prayer or some special invasion of God's presence into our life, which is totally gratuitous. At the deepest level, there suggests a self deeper even than the true self, and this is the manifestation of God in our spiritual poverty and weakness and in the difficulties of human nature. Somehow, who God is

is expressed in that experience of human weakness. Not too many people understand that yet.

In meditation, by sitting long enough, the dust begins to settle and you begin to see more clearly that the deepest self is God-consciousness manifested in our uniqueness as a human being. We are completely united with everyone else in the human species. God is in everyone else. To me, this is one of the great gifts of the evolutionary cosmology and of science today and why religion has to listen to science, because it's really giving us up-to-date revelations of who God is and developing a cosmology that can support deep union with God.

What is being revealed is that everything is interconnected and interrelated in the material universe and functions in community or communion with other things. As you go up the levels of consciousness, the presence and the action of God are in everything that happens: not just God's presence, but God's presence and action. That action is healing the conscious and unconscious wounds of growing up and childhood trauma, and at the same time activating all the capacities of grace—which are, in the Christian scheme of things, the fruits and gifts of the Spirit. In this perspective, death is not the end. It is the completion of the human journey that prepares us to move beyond human support and all possessiveness, just to be who we are and to be content with that immense gift.

**RA:** Death is just a pit stop. I know this is not part of the official Christian doctrine, but do you personally believe in reincarnation? Do you feel that the soul carries on from life to life and evolves in that way? Or does that not fit for you?

**TK:** It doesn't appeal to me, at least from my experience. In my view, and it seems to me to be enriched by the discoveries of our time, people have past-life experiences that are very strong. We know now that everything is recorded in our bodies somewhere and maybe there's some master database somewhere, and everything that has ever happened is recorded there. Nothing dies except what is false, which is the false self. That's what dies. But you don't have to die physically to die to the illusions of the false self.

**RA:** Are you saying that when you have a past-life experience you're picking up on somebody else's memory that was recorded in the cosmic computer?

**TK:** I'm saying it could be possible without our knowing it, because of the oneness of human nature. You think past-life experiences are your own, but they might not be.

However, I don't know, and so I'm happy to respect the fact that so many people believe in it. Actually, I think both could be possible.

**RA:** It's just that the vast majority of humanity obviously did not end up at the pinnacle of human spiritual evolution. So what happens to them? Do they get another chance, or what?

**TK:** That's the great question. I don't think you will ever get a complete answer, because it's part of our package of trust that we need to surrender completely to God. It doesn't matter what happens, as long as it's God's will, because that will is one of infinite love and compassion and is trying to bring us into our particular contribution to the evolutionary process. We can't do that without a community, that is, without support from other folks and learning from other folks. Human nature has been pretty limited up till now. We all need the support, the encouragement, the trust, the love of a community to become fully human.

There is a lot of interesting information about dying now. Actually, many hospice people are beginning to say that the dying process is a transformative process. As the dying go through the stages that Elisabeth Kübler-Ross identified, they become stages of liberation and freedom. One moves from denial to anger to fear to acceptance to peace to joy.

**RA:** If death is gradual, I suppose you could do that.

**TK:** God isn't limited by time, so he can transform us in a nanosecond. But it's a good question. In other words, we are always looking at reality or the biggest events from our limited perspective, with our tinted glasses from what we heard in kindergarten, from our parents, or from our important others. We have to graduate from those attitudes or at least re-evaluate them in later education and especially in adolescence and early adulthood.

We need to provide young people with opportunities to discuss these basic issues of life, more than they seem to have in most universities today. There is a preoccupation with drink and sex. That is the way it was when I was in college and that's the way it apparently still is. It's childish, but it's a way of growing into one's own decision-making capacities, and it is in that state of uncertainty that the young people need to be loved by parents. We've all made more or less the same mistakes. And we will not recover from advice alone, but only from love, and from being loved in our mistakes.

**RA:** You've mentioned the false self, several times. Perhaps we should get into that. In your books, you outline in great detail how the false self gets formed and how eventually it is seen through. In contemporary spiritual circles there seems to be a lot of talk of "no self," there being no one home, so to speak, and of being egoless, and so on. It would be interesting to discuss this for a few minutes.

**TK:** There are some very good books on the subject. Thomas Merton has one from a contemplative perspective [*What Is Contemplation?*]. We have to take steps as we grow conscious of the self to protect the life that we have. The false self is a project to build a self out of what we perceive in early childhood to be sources of happiness or gratification. Security symbols, the affection and esteem symbols, are very important, and later the desire for control and power. These instincts are normal and necessary to survive in infancy.

But since there are no standards to judge these by, they tend to become not just needs, but demands. Since everybody else has the same needs and demands, we're in for social conflict. Here is where a wise and appropriate religious instruction could be extremely helpful in preparing the human psyche for maturation and going beyond. The gratification of those three energy centers, when excessive, produces frustration. Then come the afflictive emotions, like anger and grief, and you are in various moods for hours, days, years, or a lifetime. The false self doesn't exist. It's all in the head.

**RA:** It sounds like you're saying that even though ultimately the false self doesn't exist, it's necessary to form one in order to function as a human being. Would it be possible for a child to grow and not form one at all?

**TK:** It might be better to call that *ego*. Ego is the development of the necessary and the good side, the human values that are involved in development. It's the exaggeration of them, the fixation on them, or the addictive process that the false self initiates, that leads to exaggeration. Hence, it's impossible to realize, because everyone else is trying to do the same foolish thing—that is, squeezing gratification out of sense information that is meant to give pleasure, but can't give permanent pleasure or true happiness.

**RA:** In your experience, have you ever seen an example of anyone who has gone through infancy and adolescence and formed a healthy functional and necessary ego without forming what you call a false self?

- TK:** Some certainly try. But the information that I would consider essential for human growth is missing in ordinary education. There is such care nowadays not to impose a religious attitude on children, which is perhaps correct. There's not a universal set of ethical values that you can present to a child that would help it to see the value of moderation in its desires and openness to relationship even with people we don't like, or at least openness with people who are different from us.
- RA:** So are you saying that the absence of proper ethical training is the main culprit in the development of a false self and the fact that it is so predominant in our society?
- TK:** I think you need some basic ethics. But here's another problem. We don't have a common ethic among the world religions or no religions. His Holiness the Dalai Lama in his book *Beyond Religion*, and in his activities in recent years, is trying to develop an ethic that is built on human nature and that everybody could identify with.
- RA:** And no religion would have a problem with, presumably.
- TK:** Yes. It would have to consist of very general principles, and then each religion could add the particularities that are special to their respective traditions. His Holiness had two main principles when I last heard him speak, if I can remember them. One was the unity of the human family. If we could just believe the discoveries of science, which in microbiology and other sciences show how unified the development and structures of the living body are, we might be able, just from the facts of science, to realize that humans are inseparable from one another. Once you accept oneness as a principle of inter-human relationships, you feel responsible for everyone else's needs and sufferings. Most people are not about to take that on, unless they are strongly motivated.
- RA:** No man is an island.
- TK:** Exactly. If I'm suffering, everyone else is touched by this. As one of the quantum mechanic scientists said, [WHO?] "You can't have a thought without influencing everything in the universe instantaneously." Even a thought about others, or a judgment of others, affects society in ways that we don't understand yet or we don't realize the damage that negative thinking can produce. Or especially negative acting, like vengeance. No good has ever come from violence that has any permanency to it. Yet that's the regression that most humans go through in conflict situations; they regress to the level of animals, which is revenge.

The evolutionary process is stuck or stalled at a point in which we can't go back

to the irresponsibility of the beasts and we can't go forward into divine union without the grace of God. We are literally crucified between heaven and earth, to us a familiar symbol. When you look at a cross, even though nobody's on it, it's a marvelous symbol of where the human condition is right now. To get out of that place requires an integration of joy and sorrow, of hope and realistic self-knowledge. It is not just one thing, but the holistic development of all the human qualities that are inspired by the principle that most people can accept. We can hope that science can convince us that we really are part of the oneness of everything and that everything that happens to one person, affects us. Paul in his teaching on the mystical body of Christ expresses that insight from a spiritual perspective. We are mutually intended to support each other, and everyone is needed for the full health and development of the corporate body that is evolving into the fullness of the human family and its potential for unity with God.

- RA:** We were talking about how some sort of universal ethical training might prevent people from developing the false self, which causes so much trouble. I was thinking that maybe that's a top-down solution and that, in fact, your solution, which has been centering prayer, might get more to the root of the issue. In other words, ethical behavior might spontaneously spring from a deeper communion with God and with the innermost self, and that would take care of the issue. Some sort of universal training at an early age in something like centering prayer, contemplative prayer, might really transform society. I'm sure you've had that thought.
- TK:** Yes. We've had that thought. To be realistic, however, a number of people will think, "It comes from the Christian tradition and I'm not a Christian." Or some Christians who are very literal-minded will think, "This is not the way I understand the Bible."
- RA:** But you yourself have had an eclectic background with regard to meditation. I know you were exposed to Transcendental Meditation back in the 1970s. Would you agree that perhaps centering prayer could be adapted to any tradition and that within the context of any tradition something like centering prayer could be taught that would be harmonious with that religion?
- TK:** Sure. Some of the other major religions already have similar traditions and teachings. Centering prayer is a lot like Zazen in the Buddhist Vajrayana tradition.
- RA:** It's a lot like Transcendental Meditation, too.
- TK:** They're just sitting. It's not quite the same as Vipassana, which is a concentrated

process and is good mental training, to control the mind. But centering prayer is a kind of receptive practice. Anybody who can be receptive will benefit from it and it could be presented or adapted to people without a religion. We've taught it in prisons, and there we discovered that when men in the yard saw their friends becoming more calm and peaceful, they asked them what the cause was. Some asked to come to the weekly meetings, which was all the authorities would grant. Sometimes there was a lock-down and they couldn't get there. Prison is very tough, and not much is done for rehab.

In any case, those men who had no religion at all and who came to the weekly meetings began to experience the same effects of peace and calm and less impulsive reactions to insults and things like that. In other words, they were becoming more human. But you can't always persuade people to do this; you can only offer. There are a number of efforts being made, not only in centering prayer practice, but by other forms of meditation like the World Community for Christian Meditation founded by Dom John Main and generously spread around the world by Laurence Freeman, also a Benedictine monk.

**RA:** So what is centering prayer? How does it work?

**TK:** It doesn't "work." It is a receptive process.

**RA:** Well, describe the mechanics, if you will.

**TK:** OK. We have four major guidelines. The first is to make the intention of consenting to God's presence and action within us. By "action," as I said earlier, we mean purification and the enhancement or enrichment of spiritual practice: that is, the practice of the virtues of forgiveness, understanding, and the service of human needs. A lot depends on intention, so whenever you sit down to do the prayer, this is the first thing to do: resume your intention to consent, which is a kind of enhanced form of acceptance. Acceptance is the necessary basic relationship with God, but consent is a little more personal and a little more warm. It is the welcoming of God's presence.

**RA:** Let's say you're teaching me centering prayer right now, and you're going to tell me to sit down and to have the attitude of relinquishing control: to consent, to be willing, malleable, receptive.

**TK:** Give yourself to God and put yourself in God's hands. Fall into the hands of the living God, so to speak. It's the safest place there is in all creation.

**RA:** It's not like, "I'm going to sit here and I'm going to do this, by golly!"

**TK:** Actually, there are four steps. The second step is to introduce a sacred symbol that

expresses that basic intention of consenting to God's presence and action within us.

**RA:** Visual symbol, auditory symbol, thought?

**TK:** It can be a word. It can be watching the breath. It can be a simple inward glance towards that deeper self that I spoke of earlier.

**RA:** But it's not an external thing, not like some music you put on, or something you think will be helpful.

**TK:** It's totally receptive of God alone. It is a chance just to be with God alone and to be, "Well, here I am, dear Lord, at your disposal. Please heal my faults when you see that they are no longer of help to me." It's a single syllable, if you use a word. We call it a sacred word. It can be a holy word or it can be something that expresses your disposition, like "love," or "peace," or "gratitude."

**RA:** Or it could be a mantra like "OM" or "shalom"?

**TK:** Yes, it could be. It could be the holy name of God.

**RA:** You are not chanting it out loud; it's mental.

**TK:** Yes. It is totally interior. You don't say it in centering prayer as a mantra that is said repeatedly, deliberately. It's only used when you need it—that is to say, when the bombardment of thoughts get a little overwhelming and you think you can't put up with it much longer.

**RA:** Let me just interject a question here that someone sent in to ask you on this very point. They said: "In your guidelines for centering prayer, one chooses a sacred word and introduces it with eyes closed. And when one becomes distracted by thoughts, one returns to the sacred word. What does one do between introducing the sacred word and before becoming distracted by thoughts, if one is just a beginner? Specifically speaking, does one introduce the sacred word once or can one keep thinking the sacred word over and over again in the beginning stage?"

**TK:** The crucial distinction is, are you *having* thoughts or are you *engaged* in the thoughts? If you are *having* thoughts, this is normal and impossible to avoid. The brain is a kind of receptor set and you can't do anything about that. It's like a river with boats moving on top of it. You can't stop the boats, but you can stop yourself from getting on a boat to see what's in the hold. So you just let the thoughts come, let them go. As time goes on, the capacity to let go of thoughts becomes more and more second nature. But it takes time. It's not a onetime success story. You have to do it regularly because we have habits of constantly thinking about every blasted thing that happens. It's an

exercise in not thinking or detachment from thinking.

It's not as if thinking is wrong. It's that we've abused it to the point where we can't think as a rule under our own initiative when we don't have some special project we're thinking about. You notice you're engaged with a thought like, "What are we going to have for dinner"? As soon as you get into the contents of the meal, you're engaged, you might say. Then you ever so gently return to your sacred word as a symbol of your intention, because this is not a success story or our project. It's surrendering to the invitation of God to learn how to be. This is even more important than doing. You keep returning patiently again and again, maybe a hundred times to the sacred word. You're free to return.

You don't say it like you're hanging on to a life-preserver, because then it has become an egoic project. You don't look for success, or you don't look for consolation or peace. You just are present to God's presence and action, and over and over again renewing that intention. You don't think about the sacred word or whatever your symbol is. You just *do* it. Sometimes, as you get more proficient, to even start to do it is enough to return. Sometimes you may experience an attraction towards a deeper silence. This is a sign that you've connected with this practice.

In that silence, it is consciousness without content, so that *presence* best describes it rather than a thought or a desire. It's a sense of being in God or God in us, and wanting to be there. You keep that up, we suggest, for twenty minutes in the beginning, because it takes most people that much time to quiet down. We suggest doing it twice a day for at least twenty minutes. Every meditation requires at least twenty minutes, just because the mind is so co-opted by habits of thinking and choosing that are related to those three basic instincts: security, power and control, and affection and esteem.

**RA:** The body takes a while to settle down, too.

**TK:** As your defenses go down all the time, purification begins. That is to say, thoughts that are in the unconscious that we repressed because they were too traumatic to handle in childhood begin to come to our awareness. Then you just acknowledge them and give them to God. If you want to think about your insights more fully, you do so after the prayer is over.

**RA:** Will people be able to practice centering prayer based on our conversation, or is there some kind of formal instruction needed?

**TK:** We have formal instruction that we recommend, but some have picked it up from the books that describe the process. The practice has a certain subtlety. It is as simple as could be. But simplicity for humans is the organization of much multiplicity. You need the help of others as well as further training. You make an intensive retreat where you do more sitting than the normal twice-a-day practice. We need to find a place for it in the very active lives that we lead in the American culture. This requires motivation and determination. We urge people to realize just how illusory the false self is. Sometimes the best preparation for centering prayer is some incident that brings to our attention just how little we actually know about anything.

**RA:** So if I were practicing centering prayer, and my sacred word was love, and I'm sitting there, I sit and close my eyes, maybe I wait for half a minute to let myself down a little bit.

**TK:** Good idea. A few deep breaths might help.

**RA:** A few deep breaths, and then I introduce the word "love" and I don't say "love, love, love." I just think it once. (I'm just repeating your instructions here.) Then I sit and enjoy the presence. The next thing, I notice I'm thinking about what I'm going to do tomorrow. As soon as I realize that I've wandered off on to that thought, I just come back and think "love" again. That's pretty much the process, right?

**TK:** Right. When your twenty minutes is up, sit for another minute and a half or so to allow whatever has happened to the nervous system to settle down and work its way into your active faculties so you can bring a little of the peace you received or experienced into daily life and into relationships that are difficult.

**RA:** You were saying that as you settle into this more deeply restful state, then the repressed material buried in the nervous system and psyche begins to bubble up. Silence gives them the opportunity to begin to release the emotional junk of a lifetime, which they can't do if we are running around like crazy people. Once we habitually settle down, they have the opportunity to start.

**TK:** Yes. The body naturally gets rid of negative or harmful influences if we allow it.

**RA:** It has a natural tendency to want to do that, right?

**TK:** It's habituated not to do it or even not to know that it's possible to do anything different from what we're doing. We're pretty much enslaved to our culture and you are always thinking about how to resolve problems instead of accepting them and moving on. The sense of God's presence is likely to appear in daily events. You're more sensitive to

the divine action.

Distracting thoughts are like boats going down a river. The current will take them all the way if you just wait a minute. Just don't get on the boats; let them go by. That's the purpose of the word. The practice of returning to the word is not magical, nor has it any power. It just gives the true self a chance to have a little breathing space. In your relationships with others, you will often notice your faults, and you may reflect, "Why did I get so angry at that statement?", because it didn't seem proportionate.

The Holy Spirit begins to show us how to improve our response to people, difficulties, and challenges. The prayer does help people to get through great trials, like suffering a great loss. The prayer will help them let their feelings come and to grieve and to let them go without being as blown away as they used to be by difficulties or tragedy. This is something we all need in our time, where the media provide us with the endless woes all over the world. Every day, you get bombarded with violence and injustice everywhere in the world. This can't be good for people. We need some kind of a break. The mass media have their limitations and we have to figure out a way to balance the bad with the good, so we are not overwhelmed by depressing thoughts. We need to have some beauty to live in this world. Nature seems to be intended for that purpose.

**RA:** When people are sitting in centering prayer, and they enter a deeply, restful state and some of this kind of repressed negativity or conflict begins to bubble up, can they expect to experience negative emotions, anger, fear, sadness?

**TK:** That's exactly what they experience.

**RA:** Turbulence?

**TK:** Whatever they repressed.

**RA:** It's got to come out.

**TK:** It needs to come out in order for the full capacities of the positive energies to function. These are the faculties of grace like love, compassion, forgiveness, understanding, the inclination to serve, knowing how to listen. All of these capacities buried under the load of our own feelings of neglect or whatever bothered us begin to thrive. I don't say negative thoughts and afflictive emotions are suddenly all taken away. But they won't blow you away the way they used to. If you keep doing this practice, you'll be attracted to practices for daily life and also perhaps begin to lengthen the time that you give to

this sitting, waiting, listening, total receptivity, alert passivity. All these things are not very congenial in modern, contemporary, professional lifestyles. So they have to be learned. But the body and the human organism are completely prepared for this and will revive, and you'll discover that you have the capacity for the whole contemplative journey within you. You don't have to try hard to do it. Let it happen.

**RA:** It does you. You mention in your books that centering prayer is preparation for contemplation, if I got you right. So it sounds like contemplation is a second stage of something.

**TK:** It depends on how you define "contemplation." If you mean a broad program, then centering prayer is the first step in a process. Maybe I didn't make it sufficiently clear that the actual fruits and gifts of the Spirit in prayer give one the sense of reassurance, of being loved by God, or that everything is OK. These contemplative dispositions don't necessarily arise at once. But as you do the prayer, they begin to become more frequent—not only in prayer, but in daily life.

**RA:** I see what you mean. It's as though centering prayer opens us up to a realm of experience that provides a foundation of sorts and that almost spontaneously from that springs a greater sense of God's presence, of trust, of acceptance, of the inherent wisdom in the universe, and so on.

**TK:** And a perception of God's action in our daily life. You see, he brings people into our lives, or through a book or a phone call or an event that we need, to see something about ourselves that had been hidden from us, and that would help our spiritual growth. In other words, we begin to enter into this psychotherapeutic relationship with God, in which he deals with our unconscious, our temperamental defects, and our personality disorders in a way that is almost incredible. The divine wisdom knows us through and through, and still loves us infinitely. We see how God is teaching us with great patience, tenderness, and consideration, and how he waits for us and chooses just the right moment to give us a special grace, like on a retreat or some event in our lives that opens us to a deep place in our emotional life.

There's nothing wrong with the emotions. It's mostly resisting them that is the problem, because we're often afraid of our feeling. Once we accept the fact that we are in God's care and in a therapeutic relationship with God, then the inner room of prayer begins to expand to the whole of our life and everything we do. You can turn to God and say, "Well, what shall I do about this? What do you want me to do?" In other

words, there's a sense of companionship or of being lived in.

As I say, sometimes God plays his games and he goes away someplace without telling you, seemingly, just to see what you'd do with that, or whether you'll blame him, and how far you're willing to play the divine games. One game he likes to play is basketball, with us as the ball. The harder the ball hits the floor, the higher it rises. So we have to learn that, sometimes, the bigger the trial, the greater the transformation that will come from it. We begin to learn the way God works, which is not according to appearances. Another trick is, when you want to throw a basket, you have to dribble. So the ball hits the floor: boom, boom, boom. That's when difficulties pile up, one right after another. But it's the only way you get to the basket, if that's what you want to do.

**RA:** To recapitulate: You're saying that centering prayer, twenty minutes or so, twice a day, is not only restful in and of itself, but it will, over time, help to develop a kind of vision or view of the world that everything is divinely orchestrated; it's not arbitrary and capricious. There's actually a sort of a loving intelligence, which we could call God, which is helping to bring about our progress and our evolution.

**TK:** Yes. In other words, you're in a relationship with God. This is the word many theologians today prefer to "person," because "person" has a certain context in the East. I found that many Eastern teachers thought that when we spoke of God as a person, we meant "personality," which of course would be a rather childish idea. God may not be a person, but my feeling is whatever he can be, he is. At least, he treats us in a personal way because that is the nature of consciousness.

**RA:** Some Eastern perspectives have it that God has both impersonal and personal aspects.

**TK:** I would agree with that. He's impersonal with stones and he is personal with people, always adjustable. God is so accommodating. That is why the universe works in spite of all the astronomical catastrophes. Out of that immense chaos emerges the human consciousness, which is a masterpiece of organization. That is still going on. If we could collaborate with it, we have no idea of what wonderful things the human race might be capable of in this next millennium.

**RA:** If we think of what the human race may be capable of, perhaps we could get a hint by seeing what an individual is capable of if that individual really progresses far along on the spiritual path. Maybe at this phase of the interview, which is probably going to be

the last phase, you could lay out for us what you see as a kind of road map of spiritual progress from very preliminary stages to the ultimate stage, if there is an ultimate stage. What does a person go through? What have you gone through over these decades?

**TK:** It's not anything I expected for sure. I've been a poor playmate for the wonderful opportunities that God has given me. But I think that if you put human development in the context of evolution, you see that there is a certain unity of purpose or organization or experience. Like in biology, the earlier forms of life grow by movement or by complexity, the biologists would say. Then, all of a sudden, new levels of consciousness in the animal comes and then mammals, and then humanoids. There's a certain progression.

As for humans, we don't know how they started out. That's a matter of controversy among the religions. All that we know as of now is that the human development theories of Jean Piaget (1896–1980) and company recapitulates the whole movement of evolutionary progress from matter to life, to higher forms of life, more complex and conscious lives, and lives capable of more and more complex movement. Then there is the human brain, developing to its present level, which is apparently the largest among the primates.

Our spiritual journey and our relationship with God are going to reflect that context. We start off as children thinking of God as "Dad" and "Mom" or like the father and mother who are parenting us. Then later on, God becomes a companion or a friend, or a soul mate; or then he becomes a lover or an engaged person, or our spouse. Then, we can look upon God as fulfilling all kinds of other relationships. In other words, God is so adaptable; you can count on him for any relationship. But there's a certain progression of intimacy and transformation that takes place in human development that involves a communion with God that is permanent, that is a stage of consciousness. It is like living in a house that has a certain atmosphere, a presence that never goes away. Then you find out that the same presence is outside the house.

The spiritual journey seems to be integrating our turbulent, trivial daily life of floundering, with things to be done, with the fact that we're called to the most sublime communion or union that can be conceived of and to become as much as possible equal to God. Why he chose this plan, you'll have to ask him! But it seems to be repeated in outstanding mystics, contemplatives, sages, and saints. At some point,

union, let us say, like John of the Cross presents, is Christian perfection as a bridal union. We're celebrating on the feast of Epiphany that grace of bridal union with God and with Christ.

What happens after that? Transforming union introduces one to a whole new set of circumstances and capabilities and possibilities, which move towards what is called "non-dual consciousness" or "unity consciousness" or the "death of the separate sense of self." The last is the ultimate cause, the separation of all our problems in the first place, even more fundamental than the false self. It's the idea of being separate from security, love, or control that causes the developing infant to look for gratification and the exaggeration of those desires and its relationships that the parents teach you and other folks.

The goal is to move into the realization that our deepest self really is God's presence in us, which does not forestall our uniqueness but which manifests the divine dispositions in this virtually deprived evolutionary creature who hasn't evolved from his animal consciousness enough. We still have the animal brain that you have to have to survive in this time. The divine and the human in the evolutionary process have come together and are battling to see whether we're going to evolve into divine human beings, manifested by Christ's example and teaching, or we're going to keep regressing to the instinctual responses of our animal nature, which lead to violence and all the other negative emotions that will hinder us from moving as a community or as a race into divine union.

**RA:** I know you're a modest man and you may not want to talk about your own experience, but have you gone through the stages that you just described in that union with God and then further maturation into non-dual unity?

**TK:** Well, I'm working on it. It's not a ski tow that takes you nonstop to the top of a ski slope. It's something you're working on all the time. Having lived to be ninety, I can see there's a lot of work yet on my unconscious that God can do in order that all my actions may be moved by Christ within. Christ is becoming us in order to make us into what he is, the bosom companion and a manifestation of God. As Jesus said, "The Father and I are one." This is not a numerical assertion, but an equality of life and consciousness in which everything is more or less saturated with the divine presence that might be identified as it is in scripture, as the house of God, or the bosom of God. If you prefer a fleshy image, it could be imagined as the womb of God, in which we are

all getting ready to go through the birth canal to eternal life.

**RA:** When you consider the size of the universe—I'm sure you've studied astronomy, or seen presentations—it's vast, beyond comprehension. These days, they're finding planets around most stars and a good many of them apparently in what they call the Goldilocks zone, which can be habitable, not too hot and not too cold. Let's presume that the universe is actually teeming with life and that a good deal of that life has evolved to at least the level of our species. How does Christ come in with all that? We think of Christ as this guy who lived two thousand years ago. Would he be on tour, going to all these inhabited places? Or does each planet have its own Christ, and is Christ more of a universal principle that was manifested in Jesus of Nazareth, but that could also be manifest in billions of other highly evolved souls who are ministering to their respective planets?

**TK:** We don't know the answers to those questions. But we don't have to be afraid of them if you have a Christian perspective, because it's the Word made flesh in Jesus and also made flesh in each of us. In a sense, we also are incarnations of God in a much more limited sense. The Word made flesh possesses the human nature of Christ. Christ is believed to be a divine person possessing a human nature. We are going to participate in the same structural relationship with God as we negotiate our complex journey into non-duality and liberation from the false self and the ego. The false self and ego have no future. They're illusions, and so God can't support them. But we do need a developed ego to survive in this world. How you deal with that is precisely the conundrum or the paradox of everyday life.

**RA:** Don't you find that there is something multi-dimensional in your own experience, where you have an ego, which you need functionally in order to get through the door and go and eat lunch? On the other hand, you know there are dimensions that are beyond the ego, that are impersonal, and somehow all those strata coexist nicely together.

**TK:** That's what is called "simplicity" or "holy simplicity," when all the levels of which human nature are composed are cared for, are well developed and integrated one with the other and in a hierarchical fashion. It doesn't mean that one's state of life is necessarily better than another, but it does mean that they're different; and that the difference is important to the overall completion of what the Christians call "the mystical body of Christ," which is his glorified body after its resurrection.

Christ, remember, was at work from the beginning of time. The man Jesus Christ is a historical figure, Christians believe, possessed by the Word of God, which is not the same as Christ as God. Christ as God can continue to have manifestations of the Word of God on other planets or other places. But it's basically the same movement that is expressed in different ways and on different planets. It would not be the historical context that we're familiar with on planet Earth. This doesn't diminish Christ. But it's going to take some ingenuity to figure out how to get to these other planets. They're a long way off. Scientists may figure out a way of going faster than light, but it may take a little time. We need to be prepared to deal with a new kind of intelligence. If these people are better than us, how are we going to get on? We have to grow out of the narrow mindedness of much of the human race that puts nation or religion ahead of the basic goodness of being human.

**RA:** If we do go there, I think what we'll find is that very same presence of God is just as much saturating everything there as it is right here.

**TK:** Absolutely.

**RA:** In that sense, we're already there.

**TK:** Teilhard de Chardin says that God is present in every subatomic particle. That is another way of saying God is omnipresent or everywhere.

**RA:** That's sort of how we started this discussion.

**TK:** There's another factor we may discover, which is that time and space may be just constructions of our intellect, part of our way of seeing the world. There may be planets that have a different kind of structure. God will be just as present there. Perhaps if you think of yourself as an icon of God or a unique expression of the Word made flesh, God's remarkable response to Job comes into a new focus.

If you can recall that story, Job got very angry with God because he felt mistreated. He'd been a very good man and God allowed him to be tempted by the devil, according to the text. Job had every kind of problem: loss of family, reputation, business, his body (he finally got left covered with sores). His friends come to kind of console him with pious platitudes. His response was, "I didn't do anything wrong. God is unjust and I want to bring him to judgment." God finally appears and his presence answers all Job's questions. God then restores him to ten times as much as he had before, as God can always do.

But there's one sentence that is very intriguing. God opens the conversation by

saying, “Where were you when I formed the cosmos and made the stars and fixed the earth?” (Job 38:4) Now was God just sort of ironically teasing him or was God actually trying to lead him to a new understanding of who Job was. God seems to be trying to evoke the answer, “I was there, too!” As if to say, “You were always co-creating with God and you will be creating everything in the future.” In other words, equality with God is quite something! I don’t know why people want to become president of this or that company or nation when you’ve got a gilt-edged invitation to become one with God, in a relationship that is totally loving and self-giving. In other words, we don’t think big enough about God. We judge him by our own limitations and negative feelings.

**RA:** Sometimes God wants to play at being president of a company. If someone could be president of a company, and yet aware of their oneness with God, we might have better companies.

**TK:** We will have to do a little more evolving to get to that place, but it’s certainly within our range of possibilities. If people would put their minds on becoming God, too—not in the sense of power but in the sense of serving every living thing as far as they had the talents to do so—then the world would become the Garden of Eden. We have to make it the Garden of Eden or we will make it into Hell. The false self not infrequently makes its own hell.

**RA:** Some Christians would hear you say that and consider it blasphemous, but it bears repeating that you’re not talking about the individual false self becoming God. You’re talking about realization of that level of life at which we and God are one.

**TK:** Yes, and discovering that it’s always been that way. We just thought it was different because we didn’t have the symbols that could teach us.

**RA:** Yes. Again, centering prayer: we’ll have to end on a practical note.

**TK:** Well, it’s a very humble start of just shutting up and sitting down and letting God be God.

**RA:** That’s a useful tool.

**TK:** The bottom line is always love, and loving God with our whole mind, heart, soul, and strength. It’s the vision statement of the Judeo-Christian religion. To love one another as God has loved us, or at least as we love ourselves, is our mission. Centering prayer is only designed to help you do that.

**RA:** I’ve really enjoyed this discussion because you know, personally, although I have

never been a religious person, I, over the years, have gotten more and more appreciative of God, and sometimes discussions in contemporary spirituality are somewhat dry. They just sort of emphasize the absolute value without any kind of divine quality to it. And that doesn't jive with my orientation or my experience. So it's been delightful reading your books and having this conversation with someone for whom that orientation has been very strong for your entire life.

**TK:** I still have lots to do. It's up to God to decide how long he wants to work with my limitations. He can take them all away in a nanosecond, too. If you get shot or bombed, there's nothing that can prevent God's love from happening. If he's called us, as he says he has, there's nothing to be afraid of. Whatever we're scared of, sit with it and give it to God. Gratitude and trust in God and self-surrender: those are the transformations of consciousness we are working towards in contemplative prayer as I understand it.

Religion does need to make sure that it is leading and teaching people to go in this direction. Otherwise, it seems to me, it's not really meeting its purpose and getting too involved in externals or rituals or structure. They're important, but only up to a point; they're not ends in themselves. God can work independently of religion. He has many ways of bringing people to himself. Some people have been so damaged by religious misinformation or malformation that they can't go by that path. They have to at least have a period of freedom. God is sheer freedom, liberation, and this is the disposition: that we're invited into total freedom so that you can be God, too, without pride or attributing it to yourself. But have a sense of immense gratitude to God for even thinking of you.

**RA:** It occurred to me as you said that, that everything has something to contribute. Religion has something to contribute; science has something to contribute. The non-religious sort of spirituality that's in vogue these days—people say, "I'm spiritual but not religious"—has something to contribute. If all these people could just let their guard down a little bit and be open to the gifts that each has to give, then there would be kind of a neutral enrichment that would make everything more vibrant and healthy.

**TK:** You're describing the interspiritual movement.

**RA:** Well, my take on it is that we have reason for optimism. The signs are there as you were saying earlier on. There is a kind of a mass awakening taking place, and somehow all these intractable problems and institutions that seem to be so opposed to

human happiness and betterment don't stand a chance. Everything will either fall away or transform itself as this invincible upwelling of Spirit takes place, as it seems to be doing with greater and greater force and speed.

There's a verse in the Hindu scriptures, where there was this huge rainstorm because Indra got mad at some villagers because they were worshipping Krishna. So they begged Krishna to protect them and he came and picked up a mountain and held it over the village to protect them from the deluge. Then all the villagers thought, "Oh, he can't hold up that mountain all by himself, I better take a stick and help him hold it." So they all grabbed sticks and they were helping hold up the mountain. Of course, they weren't doing anything at all; Krishna was doing it all. So you and I are just holding sticks here.

**TK:** That's a good image. It's amazing how God makes use of very defective instruments to bring about amazing results. But we may have to wait. Who knows what God has in mind? All I can say, at least in my experience, is that however bad the situation is, if you're on this journey to transformation, God is working to transform it into a very valuable assistance or part of your spiritual journey. To really be united to God is what gives God glory. He'll turn the world upside down to bring someone who's willing to ultimate unity-consciousness.

Thank you for your interest in this—the most important issue for human beings, whether they want to become God on their own terms or on God's terms. They haven't done too well on their own terms up till now. So they might try this one. Let God be God.