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JESUS CHRIST AS LOCUS FOR THE MEETING OF WORLD RELIGIONS ?

I. Preliminary

Religions do not meet and dialogue with one another immediately, "Christianity Itself", for example, meeting "Hinduism Itself" as though in some Platonic heaven of Ideas they have to be embodied for encounter in living men and women of flesh and blood. Only in the world of living human beings that a better understanding between religions can come about. For this reason I do not propose to undertake here yet another theoretical survey of inclusivism, exclusivism, pluralism and the various christologies that have evolved in recent years in the effort to relate the person and mission of Christ to the other great religions of the world.¹ Instead I shall offer some reflections on my own relationship with a young Brahmin couple which has been for me a source of considerable insight into the dynamics of the "meeting between religions". First of all however, it is necessary to explain the term *locus* as I understand it in the light of my experience of the inter-religious living. I shall use it in three sense :

a) The general context of all human interaction, namely the shared experience of what Thomas Hobbes called "the human predicament", the basic experience common to the whole human race of simply *being human upon the earth*. It includes the awareness, however obscure, of what Karl Rahner speaks of as "reference to the incomprehensible Mystery which we call God".²

b) The various religious traditions, which, within the general context, are simply expressions of the quasi-universal attempt of

1. For a useful example of such a survey, see Alan Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism; Patterns in the Theology of Religions*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New, York 1982.

2. Karl Rahner, *Christ in the Non-Christian Religions*, in *God's Word among Men*, ed. G. Gispert-Sauch, Vidyajyoti, Delhi 1973, p. 102.

human beings to find some way of giving ultimate meaning to this experience, fuelled in almost every case by a profound, inarticulate, conviction that the *Mysterium tremendum atque fascinans* has in various ways communicated with men and women (and children) down the ages, taking the initiative for bringing the relationship established with conscious beings established by creation to a new level of intimacy. So Ādi Śankara comments on the Aitareya Upanishad:

The supreme transcendent Reality created the entire universe without help of any substance other than Himself, and entered into all beings for the sake of Self-realization, and being entered there He realized directly His own Self, as 'I am this Brahman'. Therefore He is the only One Self in all beings, and so everyone else too should realize thus; 'He is my own Self; 'I am this Brahman (Ait. U. Bh. 11.i).

Each religion can therefore be seen as the "*sub-locus*" or "universe of discourse" which provides for each of its members, in so far as they make it their own, the *locus standi* or home-base from which they survey the world and enter into contact with people of other faiths.

c) Finally, *locus* is a convenient and common term for the specific subject of any serious discourse. I take it that this connotation of the word is the one the formulators of the title of this paper had chiefly in mind, "Jesus who is called Christ" being envisaged as a possible starting-point or point of arrival or convergence for the sharing of experience and insight by the adherents of different religions. I propose tentatively to offer a third and more comprehensive alternative.

II. Background

My own experience of living and working with people of other faiths goes back nearly forty years. For the first twenty years I taught philosophy to mixed groups of students of several different faiths in a college in Bombay. Since 1972 I have been living in the Christa Prema Seva Ashram in Pune, a basically Christian ashram open to men of and women of all faiths and none, provided of they are engaged in serious spiritual quest. However, this needs not be their only motive for coming to the Ashram. These two long-term commitments led to many wider contacts: visits to Hindu ashrams, chiefly the Brahma Vidya Mandir at Paunar, near Wardha, the

Sri Ramanashram and the Tapovanam Ashram both in Tamilnadu, and the Sivananda Ashram in Rishikesh. There were also visits of various lengths to the homes of students and friends and many professional encounters leading to friendship. I have very rarely taken part in meetings of a more temporary nature organized for dialogue on some specific subject: in almost every case, the "dialogue" arose spontaneously from my normal life-situation. I am convinced that the fact of having a reason for being together which had not been artificially contrived facilitated an ease of relationship which would have taken much longer to establish if we had met specifically for dialogue. We met primarily, not as protagonists for our respective faiths, but as human beings whose religious backgrounds happened to be different. There was, of course, always an implicit awareness of this, that frequently became explicit, but by no means invariably. Moreover, the Christian faith was my *locus standi*, and this meant that for me at least Jesus Christ was always at the heart of every encounter, even when he was not named, as a latent preoccupation not easily verbalized. I have never felt at ease with the *epoche* or "bracketing-off" theory, according to which participants in dialogue are expected to prescind temporarily from their own beliefs in pursuit of perfect objectivity. I do not in fact think this is possible, but consciousness of one's own faith need not lessen one's sympathetic appreciation and empathy with the faith, experience of others: indeed, the contrary may well be the case. This point was well taken by Dr. M.M. Thomas some years ago, in his summing-up of an account of the ongoing meeting of religions in the CPS Ashram: "What Sara is saying is that in this place, *openness to other religions springs from commitment to Christ*".

III. The Encounter

1. The CPS Ashram

The CPS Ashram in Pune is in fact singularly well-adapted to easy and informal sharing between Hindus and Christians. It was founded in 1927 by an Anglican priest, Father Jack Winslowm to make it clear that the Gospel could be lived in terms of Indian no less than Western life-style. In 1972, when the original community had come to an end, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Ashram, Bishop Christopher Robinson, invited the Anglican sisters of the community of St. Mary, the Virgin, who had been in India for a hundred years, and my

own Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to see if we could revive the Ashram on an ecumenical basis. We were inspired by Vatican II, and the members of my community also by our own strong sense that our whole way of life in India had to become much more "inculturated", both outwardly and inwardly: in particular we felt drawn to help all Indian Christians to recover the rich cultural and spiritual heritage of which they had been deprived in varying degrees by the missionary policies of the past, inspired by an outdated theology. We therefore had a perfectly good objective reason of our own for wanting to enter more deeply into the spiritual and religious traditions of our neighbours and could in all sincerity describe ourselves as learners. I do not remember any Hindus questioning the sincerity of this motivation once it was explained to them, though from time to time Christians suspected us of losing our Christian faith.

Today our life and ministry has for backdrop the great transmigration of peoples and their religions and the discovery by the West of the religions of the East. Within India, inspite of politically-motivated conflicts, often of a violent nature, occuring as in other parts of the world, the meeting of religions continues quietly in the course of normal life.

2. The Meeting

So it happened that some thirteen years ago a young Hindu couple came to stay in the Ashram while they worked with Sri B.K.S. Iyengar, the well known teacher of Yoga whose Institute is within walking distance. Their reason for coming to us is important; it, most emphatically, was not an inter-religious dialogue. They were in fact extremely apprehensive at first about staying in a Christian ashram, because Ananda (not her real name) had been seriously harassed as a very sensitive child of ten by the staff members-mostly the ayahs - of her Protestant missionary school, who asked her constantly if she had accepted Jesus as her personal saviour, because, if not, she would surely go to hell. When her much-loved grandfather died, they asked if *he* had accepted Jesus: she did not know if he had even heard of him. If he had not, where was he now? She had nightmares for weeks, imagining him in torment, until with rare maturity she said to herself "To hell with hell", or words to that effect, "I'm a *Hindu!*" She took to reading books on her own

faith, stopped worrying and set out firmly on her own path. It was some time before we heard this story: all we knew at first was that an aunt who had stayed in the ashram while doing some examination work in Pune had recommended it as a simple and peaceful place where they would feel at home. Fairly soon, however, a sense of great mutual empathy grew up between us. We recognized in each other the same basic values and what I can only describe as a feeling is that our roots went down into the same waters, beyond the differences of "name and form" in which we expressed and lived out our religious beliefs.

This was strongly confirmed for me when I was about to give a talk to some novices staying in the ashram on "Hinduism as a Living Faith". I suddenly asked myself what kind of a fool I was to undertake this, when I had in the ashram two Hindus for whom their religion was very much a living faith, though they did not go in for much ritual observance. I therefore asked Ananda if she would give the talk. She willingly agreed, and began by explaining that though most people think Hindus are polytheists in a rather crude sense, this is not really the case: every Hindu knows in his heart that there is only one supreme Mystery "beyond all name and form" which we long to know and enter into relationship with, but which totally eludes our mental grasp. "So", she said, "to have contact with that great Mystery, *we have made for ourselves many gods*. She then explained about the Trimurti; when we experience the Mystery as Creator who brought everything into being, we call him Brahmā, or when we are aware of being sustained in being, rescued from disaster and pervaded by a loving presence, we call him Visnu, with Krisna as his privileged *avatār* when we see him as the one who brings all things to their appointed end, with a view to a new creation, he is known as Śiva, the beneficent.

They came to stay for a month or two every year, often over Christmas, with their small boys. There was little explicit reference to Jesus in our conversation, but they knew that he was the Guru of the ashram and his teaching in the Gospel was for us the practical handbook for daily living. Their Yoga schedule made the presence at our common prayer difficult, but this is always completely free for our guests. Nevertheless they regarded the daily liturgy of the Eucharist

and the triple arati and hours of meditation as essential elements, setting the daily rhythm of our life.

Once they reported that they had visited eight ashrams that year, "but we are very sorry to tell you that this is the only one that is *alive!*" They attributed the aliveness to our openness to change: "every time we come, there is something different", but they always considered it very much an ashram ("a Hindu Christian ashram as Hindus would have made it", as Ananda told me many years later).

Then they stayed with us for a whole year, and became associate members of the community, sharing some of our deepest reflections and sharing with us their own hopes and struggles in living up to their ideals in a more and more consumerist society in which they had the responsibility of educating their two small sons. I think, it was during that year that one night when they had come in late from Yoga and I was helping to wash their supper dishes we somehow got on to the subject of Christians adopting "Hindu" ways - i.e., in-culturation. I observed that people often thought this was a new and wiler way of trying to "catch" caste converts, as so few had responded to more direct methods of approach. "Yes!" they said, "we've sometimes wondered if that was it ourselves. What *is* the reason?" "So far as I am concerned", I said, "it certainly is not that. I think of it as trying in some small way to make up for the damage done, with the best of intentions, by earlier missionaries, by making anyone who became a Christian give up many things they need not have given up at all. I think many others share this view. I cannot of course speak for "born" Indians, but I think that for many of them the great motivation is also the desire to regain the lost heritage, cultural and spiritual, that belongs as a birthright to all Indians". They looked at me. "That" they said, "makes *sense*".

3. The Eucharist

One morning, to our astonishment, and totally without preamble, they came into the chapel just before Mass and sat down. Our liturgy is Indian in style, but simple, without elaborate ceremonials, but a reading from Indian scriptures in harmony with the biblical readings for the

day before we begin, a chappati as an Indian form of the purest unleavened bread, eight flowers out on the thali as a symbol of the eight main directions of the compass, and offered to non-communicants, if any, agarbatti, and an arati during the Great Doxology to express the offering of the whole creation "through him and with him and in him". All singing or chanting is in an Indian language, usually Hindi or Marathi with some Sanskrit chants (a minimum of the latter).

At the communion, someone offered Ananda and Vivek a flower each from the thali; I described the sequel in an article in *Vidyajyoti*:³

That night at the satsang they shared with us this deep hurt. "We were *fully in it!*" they said. If you did not want us to participate fully, you should not have let us in. We were about to receive *the flesh and blood* of Jesus Christ, and—*cut!* Somebody offered us a *flower!* 'The contempt in the tone on the word 'flower' and the expressive gesture that accompanied it spoke volumes. No explanation about 'full Christian initiation' cut any ice at all — their argument was simple: 'There is one mystery beyond all name and form' (that favorite phrase) which men call by many names. In this place, access to that mystery is through Jesus Christ. *And we belong to this community!*'

They had no special instruction in Eucharistic theology from us apart from the general orientation on how we understand the "Guruship" of the risen Christ in terms of his presence among us in word (the Gospel), His Spirit in the community and his sacramental presence in the form of bread. We briefly "explain" this to everyone, adding that the bread used for the reserved sacrament is special bread which lasts for some days, and is regularly renewed. The Lord giving himself as food, of course, makes good sense in the Indian context, as it is a basic symbol of Hindu tradition, especially in Maharashtra, where the medieval poet saint Tukaram constantly used it.

At the end of the satsang, which was extremely lively, with participation from many guests, including a young Jewess, I felt com-

3. Sara Grant, Towards a Practical Indian Ecclesiology, in *Vidya Jyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, January 1985, pp. 29 ff.

pelled to say that although I had no right whatever to say, and was *not* saying, that everyone who came to the ashram could receive communion, honesty demanded that I should say that, given their understanding and desire, I would have had no personal problem if Ananda and Vivek had done so. To this Ananda immediately replied that this was a fantastic place, but she felt they would never be able to think of such a thing again "until all Christians think as you do, and I'm afraid that day will *never* come!" At this point her husband, fearing they had wounded us, began to explain that they had "spoken from the heart" out of their own deep hurt. I said that I was very glad they had felt free to do so, and that I myself had responded from the heart. "And for the future", I said to Ananda, "I don't think we can make hard and fast rules; there too we must let the heart speak".

On the way to bed I thought I should check out with the Spirit in the community, and asked one of the old sisters present, a great lover of the liturgy, whether she had been scandalized by my response. "*Scandalized!*" she said. "Certainly not! I was thinking all the time of Our Lord's words: 'No one can come to me unless the Father draws him', and how *powerfully* they are being drawn by the Father"!

I waited in some trepidation to see what would happen next, as if they had made a habit of communicating I would obviously have had a problem as Acarya. What actually happened was that they did receive once, on the following Christmas night I have always felt that for them this was a kind of initiation, a going at least once to the "Mystery beyond all name and form" by the way of "this community".

4. The Easter Vigil

The Easter Vigil of that year was the first they had ever spent with us. On the Wednesday in Holy Week I was putting up a collage of photographs of victims of the Bhopal gas disaster, a mother sitting hopelessly beside her daughter who had been brutally raped, and several other scenes of human despair and sorrow, together with Jyoti Sahi's painting of the two disciples with Jesus on the road to Emmaus. The caption was "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer..." To the right was Jyoti's second Emmaus painting of the

risen Christ sitting cross-legged on a rocky ledge in a serene golden light, engaged in "the breaking of the bread. Facing him are two disciples, still standing, and a peacock, the symbol of immortality. Beneath this I had put the second half of the verse of Luke quoted above - "and so to enter into his glory?". Ananda stood behind me, transfixed. "So that's what Christianity is about!" she said. "I knew about Christmas - God is a little child - very nice for the children - but *this* is something else again!"

We have from the beginning exercised considerable freedom in our celebration of the Easter Vigil, as we were given a mandate by both our Churches to help in the evolution of more Indian forms of Christian worship. Some years ago we hit upon the idea of prolonging the Vigil by devoting several satsangs during Holy Week to prayerful pondering on the biblical readings for the first part of the Vigil, matching each with a "resonating" text from the Indian scriptures. We then felt free to introduce Indian texts in the earlier part of the actual Vigil, which would help to make it more intelligible and devotional for our multi-religious household (most of whom would normally have attended the satsangs).

5. A Thoroughly Hindu Celebration

At the Vigil that year, in view of the long preparation of the satsangs, we had as readings before the usual New Testament ones the whole of the Katha Upanishad, followed by Psalm 71. In the Katha Upanishad the boy Nachiketas is kept waiting for three days and nights outside the house of Yama, the Lord of the dead. As amends for this discourtesy, he is offered three boons. The third, which Yama is extremely reluctant to grant, is to know the secret of the ultimate goal of human existence, and the meaning of human life. Yama finally yields, since Nachiketas refuses all substitutes, however alluring, and tells him of the two paths that lie before every human being for them to choose between them, with their very different ends, and of the "one Ruler, the supreme Self, who is in all things, who transforms his one form into many. Only the wise who see him in their own souls attain eternal joy... 'This is That'? thus they realize the ineffable supreme joy. How can 'This' be known? Does he give light or does he reflect light?"

There the sun shines not, nor the moon, nor the stars; lightnings shine not there, much less this earthly fire. From his light all these give light, and his radiance illumines all creation (Katha U.5, end).

Psalm 71 foretells the coming on the earth of a Man who "shall save the poor when they cry, and the needy who are hapless. He will have pity on the weak, and save the souls of the poor, for to him their souls are dear. May his name be blessed for ever, and endure like the sun. Every tribe shall be blessed in him, all nations bless his name". So we moved from the Upanishadic vision of the "human predicament" to the more earth-bound vision of the psalmist, and came to the threshold of the Easter proclamation of "the Word made flesh" as the Man who "underwent death and is alive to endless ages, and holds the keys of death and the underworld". We had taken as theme of this Vigil "the Lord of the Dance". We had just been given a small but extremely beautiful image of the Nataraj, which throughout the Vigil stood at the foot of the great Paschal lamp, gleaming in its light. It seemed to us that this Man could indeed be called Lord of the Dance, for in his own life, death and resurrection he visibly personified the hidden rhythm of the Creator Spirit at work in us and in our confused and torn-apart world, bringing all things to their final consummation.⁴

We ourselves felt that this had been one of the most powerful celebrations we had ever had. Ananda and Vivek had been present throughout. At the renewal of the baptismal commitment, each of us had lit one of the wicks of the great lamp, instead of holding a candle, and the priest had invited even those who had not been baptized to light a wick if they wished to do so, to express their own re-commitment to the values for which Jesus had lived and died, however they would express this. I think everyone did.

Next day Vivek spontaneously asked if I would like "feed-back" on the whole experience. We discussed the readings, and the difference between Jesus and Hindu gods as one of myth and history. We agreed that there is no contradiction, but rather a deep harmony,

4. Adapted from: Sara Grant, *Towards an Alternative Theology*, ATC, Bangalore, 1991, pp. 70-71.

between; On the one hand the Hindu myths seen as marvellous imaginative interpretations of the experience of being human on the earth, and, on the other, the Man who can be seen as the historical expression in terms of our flesh and blood of the Satpurusa or archetypal Man of Rg Veda X.90, living out in his own person in a limited historical context the mystery of life-giving death adumbrated in the myth of the Purusa whose death gave birth to the whole creation, and so offering to the whole human case a visible and practical clue to the human predicament—the clue of self-sacrificing love “for the life of the world”. “There is something in the Gospel that India badly needs, Vivek told me, “the selfless giving of life in sacrifice for others”. He paused and added: “I must say that I have to agree with Prakash (another young Hindu who had also been present)—that was a *thoroughly Hindu* celebration!”

IV. Reflections

I find that the same pattern has been repeated, though over a much shorter time-span, in practically every comparable experience of meeting with people of other faiths which it has been my privilege to have: the encounter arising from a normal life-situation, gradual growth in mutual sympathy, and above all, this I think is the most significant element—the recognition in each other of a certain depth of spiritual experience. Indeed the only meeting I can recall which began on a really hostile note was with a boy in the Tapovanam Ashram in Tamilnadu who opened a frontal attack on sight, before there had been any time for normal intercourse, during a week’s celebration in honour of the late founder of the Ashram, Sri Gnananandagiri. He took one look at me and asked: “You are Christian?” “Yes,” said I. “Why you come here?” Without thinking I said mildly: “Gnananandaji belongs to all of us, doesn’t he?” He looked extremely surprised and said: “Like all gods?” “Yes,” I said, on the principle that one might as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb, “like all gods. All right?” “All right,” he said, and added gruffly: “Sorry!” I think this is significant. It seems to me that we too often make the mistake of beginning straight away with Jesus. If this happens spontaneously, well and good, but in India at least this easily blocks communication, because people expect Christians to proselytise, and they naturally resent this, even though, left to themselves (or to him!) they may be strongly attracted to Jesus and his Gospel. (Father

Hans Staffner quotes Pratap Chandra Mozoomdar, a Bengali missionary of the Brahmo Samaj, (1840-1905) "Missionaries have missed us, but Christ has reached us".⁵ Time and again I have found that it was only after recognizing in each other the awareness of the nameless Presence that the dialogue has moved on to specific mention of our respective "names and forms". So in the Sivananda Ashram in Rishikesh it was not until I had been there for nearly five weeks and had been asked to give the discourse at the nightly satsang three times (initially because it was known that I had done doctoral studies in advaita). She had told me that it was "extraordinary, indeed almost incredible, that a *Christian* should have such an understanding of Sandara". Then the late Hrdyananda Mataji suddenly pounced on me and asked: "Why do you Christians always insist that Christ is unique?" Again, a few years ago, an old Swamiji who had sat for hours in our chapel and described his experience as "a tremendous Presence - an *immense* sanctity", such as he had never experienced in any other ashram. He told us at the end of a meditative satsang on the seat of the Lord just before he left us on Good Friday: "Any one who can stand before the cross and meditate on the death of Jesus *is Christ's* man"! More recently, at one of the last sessions of a retreat-seminar held in Bangalore last year to commemorate the twentieth death anniversary of Swami Abhisiktananda, which brought together Hindus and Christians of different backgrounds in an atmosphere of great mutual understanding and communication beyond words, a Swamiji from the Tapovanam Ashram felt that he could bring up quite simply one of the great but usually unexamined blocks to complete transparency between advaitins and Christians. He asks: "Had the time not come to abandon the Trinitarian terminology which to Hindus seems to obscure rather than illumine the tremendous simplicity of the One without a second?" There was a pause as no one quite knew how to respond to this extremely trustful and genuine question. Yet I think all the Christian theologians present felt something had to be said. At last someone suggested that it would be difficult to discard the expressions Father, Son and Spirit, as they express the inner experience of Jesus himself. They could perhaps be understood in the light of Sankaracarya's

5. See Hans Staffner, *The Significance of Jesus Christ in Asia*, Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, Anand, 1983, p. 7. Staffner gives many fascinating examples of Christ "reaching" Hindus without benefit of missionaries.

teaching on *lakshana*, as pointers to a reality which transcends all conceptual understanding. In fact, they do tell us something about the One without a second which that phrase does not in itself make plain, namely that there is in the supreme Mystery beyond our comprehension an inner dynamism of life later hinted at in the sanskrit term *saccidananda*; we could not therefore scrap these terms without great impoverishment, any more than we could scrap the terms *Atma* and *Brahman* in the Vedic tradition: they also point beyond themselves to a reality dimly apprehended in the experience of faith. What struck me most in this exchange was the relating of the *anubhava* of the eternal transcendent and immanent Mystery which we shared to the experience of Jesus. And the effectiveness of an insight from the advaitic tradition in breaking the apparent impasse. This seems to be an important indicator for future inter-religious meetings.

One further insight has repeatedly come to me in recent months. It is the extraordinarily intense sense of the inexpressible mystery of God present in all things and most intimately in our own being that underlies the deep-rooted Hindu antipathy to the notion of the "uniqueness of Christ"; this is not merely a jealous sensitivity for the honour of their own gods;⁶ it simply does not make sense to them in face of that powerful if obscure experience to absolutize any name and form whatsoever. We need a Christology which can liberate us from the confused thinking and clumsy language which has only too often given the impression that we do in fact confuse the infinite Godhead with the *namarupa* of his manifestation in our flesh. We shall not however come to this until our theology becomes much more contemplative, and more deeply rooted in Asia.

V. Conclusion

I said at the beginning that for me Jesus Christ was always present in every encounter, even when he was not named. Some years

6. This also may will be part of it: as Swami Nityanandaji of Tapovanam Ashram apologetically explained to me after the incident of the initially hostile boy, Christian missionaries in the past not infrequently spoke disparagingly of Hindu gods under the mistaken impression that this would promote the cause of Christ. This is still reuted.

ago I realized that this insight was in fact strongly supported by the Prologue of John which by illuminating my own experience transformed my understanding of the dynamics at work in the meeting of religions, and the vastness of its scope.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Through him all things came to be.

Not one thing had its being but through him".

Everything still comes to be and exists in him: therefore he underpins and permeates every human encounter, and indeed initiates it in an ultimate sense. As the Bhagavad Gita says :

He is the Light of lights, said to be beyond darkness. Knowledge, the object of knowledge and the goal of knowledge. He is seated in the hearts of all",⁷ and illumines the partners in dialogue through each other.

"And the Word became flesh, and lived among us". A man among men, known in the world of "names and forms" as Jesus the Christ, to whom no created being and no insight into truth can ever be alien when seen in its true nature. Flesh and blood human reason and intuition alone cannot fathom his identity, much less reveal it to others. Deep has to call on deep, from each side of the encounter, and recognition of "the glory of God shining in the face of Christ Jesus"⁸ is possible only through the gift of faith, and that "abdication of reason of all claim to autonomy in the realm of ultimate truth" which Hindu tradition also recognizes as essential for attaining the Goal. But when the gift is given, it seems that he is recognized as someone not alien, but long familiar.

It is on these grounds that I feel justified in my conviction that Jesus Christ as Word or Self-communication of God, the source of all existence and all illumination, is the *locus* of every meeting between followers of different religions, even when he is not the focus of the conscious attention of the group as Word made flesh.

7. Gita 13:17.

8. 2. Cor. 4.6.