THE INTERSPIRITUAL DIALOGUE. (TRT: 54:56)

01:17 - EQ PHIL'S VOICE THROUGHOUT (PHIL PERKINS)

NARRATOR: Starting in the mid 1960s. Religious leaders from different faiths and cultures have been gathering for interfaith dialogue, designed to promote understanding and respect for different religious traditions in hopes of reducing religious tensions around the world.

Father Thomas Keating, a Trappist or Cistercian monk who has led interfaith conversations for several decades, is now leading inter spiritual dialogues-to shed light on what has been called the Ultimate Reality, which lies at the core of all religions and of life itself.

NARRATOR: In the high plains of Colorado. Outside the village of Old Snowmass lies Saint Benedict's, a Trappist monastery named for the fifth century Saint Benedict of Nursia.

Father Thomas Keating has a deep appreciation for the mystical experience which he believes dwells at the heart of most world religions.

TITLE: THE MONK, THE SUFI & THE RABBI

A film by Stephen Olsson

FATHER THOMAS: All the religions of most of them began with some very significant and profound spiritual experience of the founder or founders. Is soul. It's the experience that the founder had, or the closest you can get to it that contains the dynamic, enlightening power and the experience of the ultimate reality, insofar as that's possible in this life. How to make that experience available to their constituents seems to be the purpose of each religion.

PRIEST IN MASS: This is my body which will be given up for you.

TITLE CARD: The Snowmass Interspiritual Dialogues began in 1983. 35 years later, a video camera was allowed inside to film.

FATHER THOMAS: Well, in those days I had the chance to meet some very wonderful teachers from the East. And as you know, some of the practices in the different world religions don't understand each other to. Well, in fact, you sometimes feel more at home in someone from a different tradition than the people in your own tradition.

Swami: To me, sincere seekers is always a joy and to meet sincere because from other traditions, it's something we don't get too much of a chance to do.

SWAMI:-The first evening we were to present a question and I didn't present a question. It hadn't been formulated in my mind. And the next morning it struck me that I knew what the question was. My question was: Will you all be able to accept me because I from my as part of our tradition, we can accept people of other traditions and we even which perhaps not everyone here will agree with.

We feel that the different religions are leading actually to to in some sense the same goal, although that sounds a little trite perhaps, but that that ultimately the goal is One. I feel I can accept a Christian and a Muslim and a Buddhist and a Jew without difficulty. But can you accept me as a white faced but idolatrous Hindu?

MAHMOUD: I'm here because I'm longing, hoping, hoping to be human, to become a human being.

ROGER: I am a long time member, and I always have the question of what will happen this year. How will it unfold? How will we get along? What will we talk about? How deep will these friendships be made? ~~In my own. '~~

FEMALE SWAMI: So I've been participating in interreligious dialogue for a number of years, and-I still have a lot of ignorance about what it means to be a Jew, what it means to be a muslim or a Sufi, what it means in the deepest way to be a Christian. How does it feel to be a Christian? What? What gives you joy? What feed your soul? '

DAVID: So I think I come wanting to learn and to unlearn. Wanting to be present to moments like you, Swami, when you say my tradition is accepting, will I be accepted and to feel my heart break that that is a question that had to be asked, and to know that there it is in my tradition, broken hearts and hearts that have been broken. So that's what I mean by unlearning.

PAUL: Monotheistic religions have embedded in them a potential, perhaps an exceptional potential for boundary making that is intolerant. Beyond that, all of our religions, I think, are instruments of the more fundamental human problem of fear. And that's the root for all of us, isn't it? And then we appropriate our religions take what ammunition we think that our religions are handing us, and use them to reinforce the worst that our fears want to do.

FATHER THOMAS: So even beyond or even more profoundly than fear. There's there's a human instinctual issue, it seems to me, of the need for security. So of all things that

give security, perhaps religion is the chief, provided it says you have the best religion, or you have the surest path to safety in the next life. All the benefits of this life depend on some security. So it It can be desperate in some people who've been deprived from from a normal amount of security in childhood.

RABBI HOFFMAN: What happens when you encounter somebody in your tradition? I imagine you in the halls of the Vatican, you know, and encountering somebody who's rigidly intolerant, who would.

FATHER THOMAS: Well, I was originally intolerant. It took 50 or 60 years to to get over that, to recover. It's very powerful affirmation to believe that there's only one religion that is salvific, that really redeems you or that makes you fully human or whatever.

FATHER THOMAS: Not easy to let go because it means that your deepest motive for security is is is based on faith and faith, When you asked when does faith become intolerant? When it becomes a belief system, faith and belief are not the same thing.

Belief is doctrine and so on. But faith is the is the is the spontaneous openness to the goodness of God. It's trust in reality or nature or the absolute, whatever your path to God has been, there it is. And once you've negotiated that path, you are in everybody else's path. So beyond the I or beyond, get rid of the false self, you get to the true self. Well beyond the true self is still deeper self, which is the mystery of God manifesting in each human being through their uniqueness.

ROLAND STANICH: We are all here I think because we all have identified a spiritual dimension in ourselves..

SWAMI: Are we OK with that? Mahmoud.

MAHMOUD: Realizing that life is spiritual doesn't necessarily bring us here. Right? We can stay within our own traditions, and be fulfilled, you know. There is another dimension that completes us, completes us as human beings by coming to know each **other.**

KURT JOHNSON: And so can you say that again, so we have somewhere to go with it?

MAHMOUD: Are you kidding? You want me to make it up twice?

SWAMI: : One other thing that I was thinking is that and it's ties into intolerance coming from thinking I know something which I don't really know. So the the need to be certain

about my beliefs and because of insecurity, wanting to reinforce my beliefs by forcing it on other people.

RABBI HOFFMAN: We have lots of options among the Jewish people. One of the greatest intolerances is the tolerance of paranoia, which takes us to one of the main ceremonies in the Torah is the invention of the word scapegoat, which is very ironic, you know, to say the least, that we invented this word.

We're word it that play it out of the world stage. You know, it was so, it's one of the big fears that we have as we feel this economic chaos coming. What happens when everything got rattles? We're really frightened of that because everybody's memory is fresh. What happened in the hyperinflation in Germany in the 30s. And watch out, you know, because once the economy unravels, then the scapegoating is inevitable. Mahmoud could you comment?

MAHMOUD: Well, I think it's all been said having a grievance that's not resolved. I can't think of a uniqueness about the Muslim intolerance versus other services comes down basically the same things.

NARRATOR: As the afternoon session begins, the group agrees with Rabbi Hoffman's suggestion to use the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East as a case study for the group, an opportunity to try to move beyond mere tolerance by listening deeply to the other's position and gradually come to understand and even empathize with the other.

RABBI HOFFMAN: So the next step give a narrative of the Middle East. The situation has been the least between Jews and Muslims.

MAHMOUD: Well, the first disagreement is how you how you stated the issue. I I don't see it as a Muslim Jewish conflict.

I've never seen it as that. I see it as an Arab Israeli conflict. . It's politics. Politics between nationalist agendas of of competing forces. You know, it's not it's not along religious lines, because there are Christian Arabs that were just as affected by what happened.

So I think the story, my story of it, of of how I experienced it, and I should qualify something, my children are half Palestinian.. My ex wife is Palestinian. so I, I have a maybe a deeper connection than than just being Egyptian.

MAHMOUD: So the way I see it is that the Middle East used to be a much more tolerant and integrated place, before the Zionist movement appeared, the political Zionist movement appeared claiming a national right in the area. I remember my mother telling me how Egypt there were so many Jews in Egypt that she worked with,

and that they came from all over the world, not just indigenous Egyptians, but from France and all over the world. Especially during the problems that happened with Germany in the 1930s, many of them chose to come to Egypt to settle in Egypt because Egypt was an open place for people.

And so the history that I know is that Jews and Arabs and Jews and Muslims if you want to go to a religious thing, had lots of room for coexistence and understanding between us. And all of that started to change with the politicization and competition over Palestine.

And that that changed everything and ended up, You know, in the name of, of meeting the aspirations of one community, causing great injustice to another community that did not have a major hand to play in your suffering. The Palestinians are not guilty about what happened in Russia or happened in Germany when they had no hand in that, but they ended up paying a very heavy price of losing their homes, among them my wife's family, who had to leave in 1948.

MAHMOUD: And it was just a great injustice. And it seems like, you know, one injustice happens and it causes another injustice to happen. And there's another injustice waiting to happen because nothing is solved. It's just competition over power and possession that has never been solved and it's still not solved.

MAHMOUD: So what I hear is the the rationale of Israel and security. And you know that every time something happens, it's the Holocaust all over again is a hollow argument. And I understand the suffering. I understand the, the, the generational memory of what happened, the horrible things that happened, but,.I don't know how it can be applied to state power and a government and, and a nationalist agenda that that is enforced by arms and by violence.

You know, how that how those two come together. I don't understand. It just seems like an excuse or rationale for, you know, for domination, domination of people who cannot really defend themselves. There is such an imbalance that Israel gets to do whatever it wants, and if anybody questions or objects, it's because we suffered, because we, you know, it's going to happen to us again. The Arabs want us dead, to throw us into the sea.

And a lot of that is our problem of opening Four mouth too much and bluster. Right? When we had no capacity to do any of that, anyway. It’s all just talk, just talk that's translated into into a weapon to use to advance a political agenda of a country. It has nothing to do with, for me, I don't see it having to do with the history of the Jews, as broad as it may be of what happened in Europe.

What's happening in the middle east is what's happening in the Middle East, about the Middle East. And the real problems between the Israelis living in the Middle East and the Palestinians living in the Middle East and is to be found in countries that are affected by it, and that's where it needs to be solved. Not by dragging, you know, what happened elsewhere, as important as it is in your history, I see it as a manipulation which is being used to justify nationalistic agendas, It's actually causing it's been used to cause a new wound to open it, and it's just not solvable.

RABBI HOFFMAN: My narrative does start in a small Ukrainian town when I recently went back. It really starts with my birth, because I was born right at the time when Israel was being born.

And I went back to the Ukrainian town and there was old man there. I said to the Ukrainians, where did the Jews live here? They said, there were never any Jews here you know I said, no, my family was here for 500 years, you know, where did they live? They said, no, there was never any Jews here. So I found an old man on a hay wagon.

And I said, "did you know where the Jews lived"? And he jumped off the wagon, and he caught me by my arm. And he said. " I've been waiting 65 years to tell a Jew my story. I was shocked. And he says, come, follow me" , and Neil was with me. We walked down a road and into the forest. You know, he says, "I was only five years old, and the Germans brought all the Jews, and the Germans brought all the Jews here down this road and into the forest.

And then we stood in this ravine, and in a half hour they they shot everybody".

And so this was really, for me, the beginning of the story. And my family came out and there was this longing to go to Israel. After 2000 years. Napoleon once saw a group of Jews mourning that lost to the temple, he says, who died yesterday? They said, no. It happened 2000 years ago. He says "They are still mourning the loss of their country 2000 years ago. They'll get it back"

Napoleon said that. He had never heard of such a thing.

So we have this longing for 2000 years to. And somehow. So my mother in high school wrote an essay about Palestine and she never been there. She was the only high school girl to encapsulate this longing. And this is a family heirloom. And then I went back during the Six-Day War, 1967. I had just happened to be there.

And the feeling was that a ring of countries had made an alliance and at any moment I was going to die. Then the whole situation changed front of my eyes, you know, the of the Six-Day War, and I was there with the chauffeur blowing at the, at the Wailing Wall, and you know, this it felt like I was part of history. Colorado. I never felt that. In

Jerusalem I felt part of a much bigger story that started way back thousands of years. And so after that, I read 100 books on the Holocaust because of what happened there.

And for me, it was one reality, you know. Because the people, a lot of the people are survivors and their children. And I became a psychologist. I work with specialized iun survivors and their children and their mentality and helping them heal. And so this was a big reality, emotional reality for me.

And then I also worked in a Palestinian school and tried to make things a peace. But every time I make a activity like this for peace, then something would happen and it would blow up. And it was an ongoing problem. How do we how do we have this Jewish presence in a neighborhood of not just Palestinians, but that could be very tumultuous and vicious and violent and it never made any sense. How do we do it today? How do we do it before it? Never. Logically, it makes no sense. So I, you know, God's will. How did we get on this journey? What does it mean? How do we heal it? I have no idea. Absolutely zero.

FATHER THOMAS: So our hope is that during our meeting these few days in this spacious atmosphere and with the intentional community in the background, praying for us, that that you might move forward in your inner experience and find God in each other and in the place and in nature and in yourself.

PEOPLE WALKING OUTSIDE TOGETHER

RABBI HOFFMAN: So what did you think of that? That last idea that the war was economic? Absolutely. Absolutely weird. Just then we can have a lot of. Yeah, yeah. That that thought you were saying you can't do it. I don't think you should.

FATHER THOMAS: So to have those people talk together, it might help to discontinue, you might say, the error of of competition between the religions of competition, that in some cases, because of self-defensiveness and fear of based on security needs, that led to violence.

And so the religions have probably contributed more, at least apparent motivation to world tragedies than any other group. It's because people feel so strongly the need for the security of feeling they belong to the “best religion”, or the one religion or the true religion.

SWAMI WOMAN: We all come from a place of deep appreciation for the possibilities of what others can teach us. I think we're all coming from a place of open heartedness that

we're here to be able to learn and to be able to to take in what's been given from other traditions.

ROLAND: One of the first questions is always, who are we? And so that's that sort of has to be my starting point.

FATHER THOMAS: So at some point, maybe in the transformative process, who are you becomes the great question. And it's not your resume, it's not your personality, it's not your character. It's God manifesting in your uniqueness.

MAHMOUD: So I don't feel that I'm really qualified to represent Islam, you know. That it is too broad you know.

DAVID: I think what's helpful for me is not to have you speak on behalf of Islam, although I want to understand Islam, I want to understand Mahmoud.

MAHMOUD: It's more relevant. Yeah, absolutely.

SHAWN OBRIEN We can't confidently speak about the specific theologies of our own traditions, but we can speak from our own experience, and to sort of take that mentality back to our communities and sort of let them know that it's OK for you to every time you speak, not to feel obligated to toe the line of the tradition. That you can speak for you, and not speaking for all of Christianity or all of Judiasm

ANGELA: So in that sense, bringing this back to the people in our traditions that we encounter then being a a lighthouse for that.

DAVID: Maybe it's too much nuance, but I mean, I'm comfortable speaking out of my tradition, and I differentiate that from speaking on behalf of the tradition. Yeah. Very good.

TZVI HERSCH HOFFMAN: Religion influences our perspectives and our attitudes and our opinions about certain subjects, but there are also there are channel for us, I suppose. And we're a channel for them.

ROLAND: I see that's one thing that we're doing, is that we're edified. We're all in different journeys. There's a unity to those journeys, and your journeys edify mine, and you make my way safe and sure.

FATHER THOMAS: We feel a oneness with the human family and with all creation and a accountability to bear other people's burdens or or to experience their suffering or to experience their joys so that we, we no longer think of ourselves only, but as always, ourselves as a, as a part or a Holon, so to speak. That is to say, an individual within a

higher kind of being, which is the whole body and the spirit, and we don't know how far that is going to to develop in the evolutionary process.

MASS SERVICE: Through him, with him, in him. Oh God Almighty father,

FATHER THOMAS: Religion emerged in a ritual and organized way when the human species became capable of rational consciousness, abstract thinking. The purpose of religion is to help them to meet the needs of human nature at its deepest level.

The problem is that we bring to our religion, our human failings and our lack of evolution or human development so that we respond sometimes to situations with a religious belief system that is kind of exploited to provide us with excuses for behavior that are really motivated by our instinctual needs, especially for security, certitude, power and control and esteem.

FATHER THOMAS : So religion itself has to go through a developmental process within us. Religion is meant to bring us or point us or establish us on a journey that is constantly changing and growing and developing.

NARRATOR: Halfway through the retreat, members of each religious community are asked to perform a typical ritual or prayer from their faith to share with the other members of the interspiritual group.

ALIA BRADY: Increase, no increase, therefore, Putra, in emptiness there is no form, no feeling, no perception, no formation, no consciousness, no I know ear, no nose, not.

FATHER THOMAS: So. God is a dynamic reality that is always becoming and his very being is a happening rather than a noun or a static presence. He's always present but always changing. And this is why it's so difficult to practice theology, because God is all things at once. And so if you say there is no God, there's some truth to that, if by no God you mean there's no God that you think of. The true God is beyond your thoughts, and please let him show you who he really is by the unfolding of the experience of union, communion, and unity.

SHOTS OF PEOPLE IN MEDITATION

FATHER THOMAS: So with this evolution taking place, it seems time to lay aside the idea of of emphasizing conversion as the chief work of missionaries and rather look at the issue of trying to foster communion, collaboration, not just tolerance or forbearance, but a real sense of respect and appreciation of what has been done in other religions to contribute to the good of humanity.

FATHER THOMAS: So without in any way denigrating the values that we first embodied as representing our own tradition, we were sharing something in common that is innate, perhaps to human nature itself.

FATHER THOMAS: Is contemplation or deep meditation, something you only acquire by practice? Or is it something you discover within yourself with the help of a practice? But the fact that everybody has it, whether it's called a divine spark or the divine indwelling or some other phrase, it's an experience that is beyond words.

But that is part of the evolution of our developmental process, which obviously moves beyond childhood and adolescence into adulthood and maturity. Why shouldn't it go on evolving?

BELL RINGS

GROUP MEDITATING

NARRATOR: Finally, the Rabbi and Mahmoud are ready to continue the Arab-Israeli dialog.

RABBI HOFFMAN: So the next step, step two, is we're going to switch roles. I'm going to become Moslem Arab, and he's going to become Rabbi Hoffman.

TITLE: (AMERICAN RABBI PLAY ACTING EQYPTIAN SUFI)

RABBI: Listen, it's not about it's not about Moslems and Jews. You know, this is a this is nationalism. This is the god of nationalism, the idol, the false idol of nationalism. And these people are coming in with this, you know, okay, it's real stuff, but it's a sob story, you know, how do you use a sob story of politics?

It's a little manipulative, you know, it's you're trying to leverage your own pain, the pain of the Holocaust, the Europeans did that. We didn't do it. You know, we were there welcoming. I know a lot of Jews who came to Cairo, and Egypt, to find refuge from the Germans, you know, why should we? You had a bad day.

Why should we suffer? You know it's not fair. You exactly that. You took the your karma and then projected it, and you made us scapegoats. The Palestinians, particularly helpless. Helpless! And you made this juggernaut of political and military power against these helpless people. They have no arms. And what are they going to throw a rock at you? You know, and you took away their land. And you made you just did to them what was done to you.

So, you skapegoated them, you know, how is that fair? There's no justice here. It's a very unfair situation. And you went from being the underdog to the over dog, you know.

And how does that make sense? It doesn't heal the wound, it just makes the wound more difficult, you know? *:*

And look, before Zionism, before political Zionism came to the Middle East, you know, it was a nice place to live. People tolerated each other. And this opened a gaping wound in the heart of the Middle East has caused instability ever since.

You guys are troublemakers, you know. Everywhere you go, you cause trouble. It's not, it's not. It's unjust. It's it's not, not fair. My kids are half Palestinian, you know. And how do I explain this to them? This. Of course we should fight against it.

MAHMOUD: Okay, so now I respond to your say your story. Which one? You say you'd be Rabbi Hoffman.

RABBI; You can just say "You are right". (laughter)

MAHMOUD My story is a lot longer than your understanding of it.

TITLE: (EGYPTIAN SUFI PLAY-ACTING AMERICAN RABBI)

And it's been it's been in our memory for thousands of years. And Europe is not where it happened. It happened in Palestine at the beginning of Jewish history. And we've been longing to go back to where we belong. We've been homeless for centuries with no place to go, no refuge, and this is the only place we belong, we feel we belong.

And you don't understand my story. And I try. I try to find some way of healing, some way of reaching out and, you know, finding the humanity of of the people that are suffering and try to alleviate in some way. But violence always gets in the way. Your violence always gets in the way. (laughter)

Somebody always does something to bring back the nightmare of what could happen to us again. And it doesn't matter if it's real or not. It doesn't matter if they have the means to do it or not. It's real in my heart and I'm always afraid that could happen again when I expect it.. And if I if I ever think I'm safe, that's the sign of danger for me.

That it's going to happen. Somebody will take advantage of that and and do it again.

RABBI HOFFMAN: OK, So now we'll switch back to our own. The hardest part of this is leaving one's ego behind to really be in the place of the other. You.

So, how did I do?

MAHMOUD: You did I did really well. And you captured. What, what I was trying to say. You added something from your own at the end. I can't remember what it was, but that

wasn't what I said. You know, you kind of interjected something in there, you know? But but overall, I think you did reflect that. You heard you heard what I was trying to say.

RABBI HOFFMAN: And you also did very well, you know, specially this connection to the heart, you know, and I thought you captured my tone, which was most important to me.

MAHMOUD: I think what touched me and which I have a hard time relating to because, you know, if I when I think about myself, if the roles are reversed, If I am Israeli, a Jew,

I don't know why it would be, but it would be difficult for me to reach out because I would feel guilty, you know that. What am I doing? You know, I'm I just cut these guys leg off, and I'm giving them a Band-Aid, you know? Right. But what is that? You know. I have a hard time putting myself in that place.

RABBI HOFFMAN: Make it into a question.

MAHMOUD: I mean, how how how do you feel, what goes on in your mind or heart and about that, about the reality of what you represent to these people. Right. You know, and, and the way they were being treated and humiliated and, you know, cordoned off in an open air prison and all these things that they're experiencing. How do you?

RABBI HOFFMAN: Well, first of all, I always look for the underdog, whether it's in basketball or wherever it is. You know, I always look for the underdog, you know. And I spent my life working with different kinds of people in difficult situations, Poverty or, I started my career working with black gangs in Philadelphia.

MAHMOUD: I'd like to ask one more question. I don't know, maybe. Yeah. Go ahead.. When you were reflecting back to what I said, yes, you made a comment that, you know, I understood it as that I have a fantasy understanding of how great things were in the East between Jews and Arabs, and that's not how it was.

RABBI HOFFMAN: That's what they tell me, the people who lived. I know a lot of people who lived in Cairo. And so it's a mixed bag, very close. But also the as soon as Israel was formed in Iraq or in Egypt, the reality changed very, very overnight. The people who were in Cairo and had to give up their homes, their bank accounts and things like that. So it's just part of this. Everybody has a different narrative, you know.

RABBI HOFFMAN: So, what interested me in your story was maybe something along the same lines of: what's the what's the Middle East without the Zionism? Are we the cause of all the trouble or are we really we're taking the the scapegoat wrapped for? like I said, I quoted Nasser and his philosophy that whenever a Arab ruler gets a trouble, he

makes a fight with Israel and that keeps people's attention off of the economic problems or the minority problems in that country, and that focuses on the, the the dark energy on Israel.

SWAMI: Do either of you feel any different after this?

RABBI HOFFMAN: I do. I anytime I can listen and not overreact. You know, one of the great studies is meditation just lengthens the reaction time. So if I can sit here and not, my tendency is to react, right away, and be defensive. I learned that in my family.

MAHMOUD: I, I don't know if I feel differently, but I feel closer to you because of the conversation we had. And and it always strikes me how that happens, you know. I've developed really good friendships with a couple of Israelis through dialogue like that. And the understanding of that there's something there that's bigger than our conflict. That's something that really connects us because of the common religious thing. There is so much connection religiously between us. And Jews and Muslims are closer than Jews and Christians and Muslims and Christians in a religious sense , you know, in their understanding of of God. And we have much more connections there, and stories. So it always warms my heart to have the kind of we just remember that just listening to you and being with you, reminds me of that, you know.

RABBI HOFFMAN: And having a conflict that hasn't yet listened to feels like it festers under the under the skin. And making it manifest relieves a lot of tension for me. You know that this is in my marriage with my wife and my connections with people, if I can make the conflict, the disagreement and listen to really listen to the the person for me, that that makes a closer relationship as well.

MAHMOUD: Yeah, yeah. I remember during the beginning, if I may, just the first one when we first met, when I first came here, you know, and I remember feeling like you were kind of in my face a little bit, you know, like wanting me to make a statement about what I think, you know, about the politics of the Middle East and things.

I don't know, just the way you were kind of trying to draw me out about Nasser and about, you know, what happened and, you know, things like this. And I, you know, some this feels more read, you know, than what happened before.

RABBI HOFFMAN:: Yeah. More Kosher.

RABBI: There is a defensiveness in this situation. It's just, you know, let's let's get to it right away. Yeah. It's in your face all the time. I mean, I go to Israel every year, for teaching. And it's in your face all the time, all the time. And so, but as a Jew, I have to.

That's been a big move for me as a Jew, to have to move back from that and in your face, you know.

SWAMI: Well, it was beautiful for us also to see how because we're also aware of the incredible tension around this topic and to see how you both stated your positions calmly without getting excited, but still buried your hearts, and then how very accurately you reflected those in your own way. And some, in some cases even stating something that wasn't stated by the other person, but only implied, or that you could read from what the person was saying, what the other one was, actually what was underneath their words and reflecting that back. So it seems that you really could understand the other person's viewpoint.

RABBI HOFFMAN: Shukran.

MAHMOUD: Thank you so much. Thank you.

FATHER THOMAS: We are united at a deeper level than our religious convictions, and that those convictions should help us to move towards a trans rational exchange or understanding with the absolute. And also, it doesn't exclude other paths by which God may lead people, such as art or nature especially, or science.

And I've read recently, science is saying that there's some evidence that we go in and out of creation every trillionth of a second.So now that we think in those terms, it's just mind boggling. The importance or significance of God and the old cosmology that Scripture depended on, which has been completely changed by the discoveries of modern of serious modern science, means that that we we need to think of God in a much bigger way than we ever did when we thought of the cosmos as a kind of arc over the earth, and the earth sitting on four pillars.

This doesn't work anymore for people who have the solid evidence that the universe is expanding at millions of miles an hour in every direction, and it's been doing this for 13.7 billion years, and that life came through the evolution of elements and catastrophes and the crashing of galaxies and the supernovas that spewed their last energies into the universe at temperatures that created new elements and the elements became life.

And finally, you have planets and then life. And life itself is a structure that is pretty much the same throughout the genetic evolution that we've experienced. This enables us to perceive there's no reason why this evolution can't continue.

MEDITATION SEQUENCE

SWAMI: It's very important for spiritual seekers to keep holy company. And that, for me, has been the most important part of these few days, is that I felt I've really had real holy company. And it's something that strengthens our convictions, and sweeten's our meditation. And it's a great source of strength in our own search to know we have brothers and sisters who are also seeking.

And in addition, I feel so grateful to have gotten at least a little glimpse of appreciation for both the Christian and Jewish paths which I didn't have before, and to feel that I have friends in those traditions which I didn't feel I had.

FATHER THOMAS: what I think is some of the most enriching experiences for seekers is what you experienced here is some degree and maybe some of you more than others. When in your dialogue, you suddenly experienced a certain consensus. That was sounds to me like it was a movement into this higher kind of consciousness, which just "is".

It can't be described. It's the sense that this whole group is being inspired by one idea or one intuition of higher consciousness,

GROUP SITTING IN CAFÉ SETTING

PAUL: You're a non dualist. Is awe part of your life?

Mahmoud: It's the completion of our humanness. It's to know what it is to be a complete human being. Not perfect, but complete. "Insan-I- Kamil"

MAHMOUD: . And so we're given these faculties and this of perception so we can have that, have a human experience.

DAVID: As be there for perfect, whole and complete is a better translation of the Greek word either for perfect, whole and complete, as my father is perfect, whole and complete. There's a there's an aspect of completion, at least in the Greek, according to this guy, it's true.

MAHMOUD: (subtitle) Which is not the same as "perfection".

DAVID: No, it isn't. Messier, but no less good.

FATHER THOMAS: So what hopefully the interspiritual dialogue can do is to expose more people to a level of conversation that shares with one another the spiritual weakness and the spiritual strength that each one has experienced so far in their spiritual evolution.

TSVI: HOFFMAN: Yeah, I see, I really like that idea. I think it's an incredible idea, mainly in that, as I understand it, that Jesus is a, you know, a human manifestation of God, so to have this completeness, this idea of wholeness is it's a very nice idea, you know.

ALIA BRADY : I just wanted to say too, even though the Buddhist path is about the elimination of suffering, I definitely don't think it is meant to depreciate the human experience. I think I've said this about five times in different ways, but, and I think that includes Awe, and even in enlightenment, I don't think you feel less, I think you feel more.

FATHER THOMAS; So what joins us is not rational motivation, ultimately, but the oneness that we really are, which doesn't need a name and doesn't have one.

To recognize that we're not really fully practicing our own religion until we love all the other religions as expressions of different experiences of the divine mystery that no one religion can fully express.

(Bell rings)

FATHER THOMAS: So I'm really trying to get ready for the transition. They call it death, don't they? But but I think of the wonderful transitions that the universe makes. When a star is born, an old one dies. And it's a it's a death and resurrection scenario.

What's left of the old star is thrust into the universe and becomes new elements and new galaxies and planets and eventually life. So life is the result of enormous material catastrophes. So that's what I'm doing, and I can't very well describe it because every day is different.

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