

# Monks in the West Conference

## 第三屆西方僧伽大會

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At one of our business meetings, I had heard how Ajahn Jotipalo was invited to go to an inter-religious monastic conference at CTTB. I was not initially interested and didn't give it another thought; however, a few weeks later Rev. Heng Sure asked our community if there might be another senior monk who had an interest in participating in the conference. The question was raised to the community, "Who would like to go?" No one seemed interested, so I decided to volunteer. After all I was, I said encouragingly to myself, raised as a Christian and I spent time at a Trappist monastery as a youth and had admired the Desert Fathers (the early Christian monks). I should go.

Fifteen monastics wound up attending the conference: seven catholic monks and eight Buddhist monks, all from different traditions. Reverend Heng Sure from Berkeley Buddhist Monastery served as the conference facilitator, and made it clear there was no overly defined agenda; thus, the conference could unfold organically. There was something refreshing about knowing we were going to be creating this conference ourselves, especially since our group was such a diverse bunch: on the catholic side, Trappists, Benedictines, and Camaldolese; and on the Buddhist side, Theravadans, Chan monks, and two schools of Zen.

在我們的一次工作會議中，我聽說阿姜查·提拔羅被邀參加在萬佛城舉行的一個宗教交流會議。最初我對這件事並沒有興趣，所以也沒有再去想它。但是過了幾個星期，恒實法師又來詢問我們僧團是不是有其他資深的僧侶有興趣參加。問：「有誰要去？」當時，因為沒人感興趣，所以我就自告奮勇報名出席。我鼓勵自己：畢竟我是生長在基督教的環境，年輕的時候住過天主教的修道院，又很景仰那些沙漠教父（早期修苦行的基督徒），基於這些宗教背景，我應該去的。

總共有十五位僧侶參與這次會議，其中包括七位天主教神父和八位來自不同傳承的佛教僧眾。柏克萊法界宗教研究院的恒實法師是這次會議的協調者，他開始就表明我們沒有一個嚴格的議程，也就是會議將以很自然的方式展開。對我來說，我們將討論自創的議題是一種很清新的感覺。我對自由式的討論感到很新鮮，這個方式是很好的，特別是我們討論組有不同宗教背景分成員參與：其中有天主

Each day we had both a meditation period and Catholic mass, and the rest of the time was filled with discussions on various themes. Although there were differences in our views and beliefs, I was struck by each monk's ability to listen respectfully to the others and offer meaningful feedback.

A different monk introduced the discussion theme for each session. He would tell a story or relate an experience he thought the group would find meaningful, and then discussion would unfold spontaneously. The openness of this format encouraged authenticity of expression and enabled us to relate our experiences in a natural way. Our conversations covered so much ground that in an article of this length I can only summarize. Health care, the use of technology, the challenges of midlife crisis and "monastic burnout": these were some of the topics discussed. Each monk also talked about the monastic form of the tradition he followed and how it might be affected by the modern era. In addition, one day we had the opportunity to answer questions from CTTB high school students.

The most important benefit of these discussions for me was the realization that my tradition is not alone in the challenges it faces: hundreds if not thousands of monks throughout North America have the same concerns as I do. As the conference progressed, a certain harmony evolved--not as a result of our emphasizing the similarities of our beliefs, (that can only lead to distortion), but as a result of our willingness to accept each other's differences. Often the discussion focused on the challenges and problems we faced, and because these were remarkably similar, we were left with the feeling of profound commonality despite our different beliefs and goals. Thus, it was very easy for us to empathize with one another. The awareness of our differences naturally did come up from time to time, but in an atmosphere of such mutual respect this was not a problem. In fact it caused hardly a hiccup in the discussion.

Dialogue can be a tricky business. We have to be true to ourselves, to our own beliefs and understanding; but at the same time we need to have the humility to acknowledge the folly of holding rigid views, and to see how this sort of rigidity impedes our own spiritual progress and leads to an arrogance which renders authentic dialog impossible.

The Buddha spoke in the *Canki Sutta* of the five grounds for conviction, each being a potential foundation for delusion if held wrongly. The five are: faith ('it's true because I have faith'); approval ('it's true simply because I like it'); oral tradition ('it's true because it's been passed down orally or because the texts say it is true'); reasoned cogitation ('it's true because I've hammered it out through reason'); and reflective acceptance of a view (accepting a view after thinking it over). In the Buddha's own words: "Something may be

教的特拉普修士、本篤會神父、和卡馬爾多利修道會的修士，佛教方面有小乘佛教僧人、中國禪僧和兩位日本禪宗的僧人。

我們每一天的作息都包括禪坐和彌撒，其他的時間就都是用在會議討論。讓我印象深刻的是，雖然我們之間的見解和信仰很不相同，但是，讓我吃驚的是我們彼此之間能互相尊重、用心的聆聽，然後給予有意義的建言。

每次會議都有不同的僧侶先大略介紹此次討論的主題，他會用有意義的故事，或者親身的經歷，引領大家熱烈的討論和交換意見。這種開放而自由的討論方式，讓參與的人很容易也很自然地講出自己最切身的感想和體驗。我們討論的題目很多，總括來說包含：健保、現代科技的用途、中年危機與挑戰、還有「寺院的懈怠」等等，除此之外，我們也講到各自教派的修行及現代環境對修行的影響。此外，有一天，我們有機會到萬佛城高中回答學生們提出的問題。

從這次的研討當中我覺得受益最深的一點是，我了解到我的僧團不是唯一要面對這些問題的；事實上在北美居住的許多僧侶都有同樣的擔憂，我們大家所面臨的挑戰也都相同。在會議中，我發現我們之間的和諧，不是來自我們宗教信仰中的相同點，而是發自內心，全心全意地去接受別人與我們的差異。我們討論的論點常常聚焦於我們所面臨的問題和挑戰上。因為它們都很相似，即使信仰和目標有差異，僧侶們對所面臨的問題和挑戰的認同感卻是非常一致的。因此，讓我們彼此間很容易就能互相理解。當然，不時地我們還是會意識到對方的差異，但是在彼此尊重的氛圍裡，這根本不是什麼問題。

不同宗教的對話時是要有點技巧的，一方面我們要忠於自己的信仰，同時又要以謙卑心去了解他人的觀點。如果頑固的堅持自己的見解，不但妨礙自己靈性的成長，也會讓我們變得傲慢，而此慢心會阻礙我們之間真誠的對話。

佛陀在《商伽經》中提到五種法。但若不遵循，將可能成為愚癡的基礎。信（它是真的，因為我信仰它），喜（它是真的，因為我喜歡它），隨聞（它是真的，因為一直以來都是口口相授，或者書本上說它是真的），相省處（它是真的，因為這是我推理出來的），見歡受是（深思以後而採納的見解）。佛說：「對於某些事物，雖然你信，但它們可能是空虛、虛妄和虛偽；而對其他的某些事物，

fully accepted out of faith, yet it may be empty, hollow, and false; but something else may not be fully accepted out of faith, yet it may be factual, true and unmistakable. Something may be fully approved of... well transmitted...well cogitated...well reflected upon, yet it may be empty, hollow and false; but something else may not be well reflected upon, yet it may be factual, true, and unmistakable. [Under these conditions] it is not proper for a wise man who preserves truth to come to the definite conclusion: 'Only this is true, anything else is wrong.'"

He says further: "If a person has faith, he preserves truth when he says: 'My faith is thus'; but he does not yet come to the definite conclusion: 'Only this is true, anything else is wrong.' If a person approves of something...if he receives an oral tradition...if he [reaches a conclusion based on] reasoned cogitation...if he gains a reflective acceptance of a view, he preserves truth when he says: 'My reflective acceptance of a view is thus.' but he does not yet come to the definite conclusion: 'Only this is true, anything else is wrong.' In this way... there is the preservation of truth..."

When we encounter others with different views, we need to do so with respect. We need to have the humility to acknowledge the fallible nature of views and opinions. Many of us are raised to see those who are different as a threat; but if we are going to live harmoniously with each other in such a broad and diverse world, we must learn how to relate in a shared space. Differences needn't be denied. What is important is that both sides feel safe to be who they are and to express what they truly believe.

When we are able to listen to and respect one another fully, we find a similarity in our common humanity that surpasses any differences in view. Tightly clung to views lead to conflict and strife, and sometimes even to war; and yet often, over time, our perspectives evolve and change. Ideas are deceptive. By dwelling on our different beliefs, we overlook what we share in common--which is something far more meaningful and pervasive than the mind attached to views can recognize. Our capacity to respect others, to acknowledge and try to understand their moral battles and victories, even when their beliefs are different from our own, can be a source of inspiration regardless of one's creed.

I am profoundly grateful to the CTTB community for hosting us during those few days. I am also grateful to Reverend Heng Sure, and to all the monastics whose attendance at the conference made it possible. Inter-religious conferences are a lot more valuable than I realized. I now see them in a new light--one much brighter than before. ❀

你雖然沒有信心完全接受，但它們可能是真實、不虛和不偽。又對於某些事物，雖善信，雖喜，雖隨聞，雖相省處，雖見歡受是，其為空虛、虛妄和虛偽；而對於某些事物，雖不善信，不喜，不隨聞，不相省處，不見歡受是，其為真實、不虛和不偽。在這種種情況之下，有智維護真理之賢者，不會妄下結論：『只此唯真，他為偽。』

佛陀更進一步的說：「如果一個人有信，他說：『我信的是這些。』但他還沒有下明確的結論：『只有這才是真的，其他都是假的。』那麼，他就是維護真理的。如果他善喜一些事物，如果他接受隨聞的傳統教導，如果他通過相省處而得到一個理性上的認識，如果他經過深思熟慮後才見歡受是某一觀念，他說：『我經過深思熟慮後才接受的觀念是這些。』但他還沒有下明確的結論：『只此為真，他為偽。』那麼，他就是一位護持真理的人。」

當我們遇到與人意見分歧時，要以尊重的態度去面對他人。我們應該以謙虛的心意識到觀念和見解的本身是很容易產生錯誤的。大多數的人都被養成「看到差異等於看到威脅」的想法，如果我們要一起和諧地活在這個世界上的話，那麼就得在這共存的空間裡，學習互相關懷。不必否認彼此的差異，重點是，我們互相都可以安心的做自己，以及表達我們真正的信仰。

如果我們可以全心聆聽，並且完全尊重他人時，我們會發現，人性的共同點往往會讓我們超越觀念的差異。堅持己見的後果就是爭執和衝突，乃至戰爭。我們的觀念和見解是不可靠的，因為它會隨著時代的變遷，而跟著演變。如果只執著於信仰的不同，就會忽略了我們共同點，而這個相同點其實是比較有意義，更具有普遍性。儘管信仰不同，但是如果以尊重的態度，去認知他人修行中的挑戰以及領會道德戰爭後的勝利，不管他信仰的教條是什麼，那都是一個鼓舞人心的源泉。

我深深的感恩萬佛聖城這幾天來的款待，也要感謝 恆實法師和與會的所有僧侶們。宗教交流會議的重要性遠遠超過我的想像，我看到它所散發出新的光芒——比以前更加明亮。❀