



# Yogya and Christianity:

*Mystical Paths in Tandem*

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# yoga and christianity:

*Mystical Traditions in Tandem*

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## FORWARD

The existing similarities evident in the mystical traditions of yoga and Christianity have long been a source of interest to me. My own academic studies in Christian spirituality, and my interest as a practitioner of yoga, were bound to collide sooner or later. The similarities in the traditions of yoga and Christianity are rarely addressed in an adequate or simple manner. The time is ripe for providing insights and explanations to the increasing body of Christians who are drawn to practice yoga, but often question how to reconcile their interest in yoga with a profound dedication to their Christian beliefs and heritage.

While some published works have addressed this issue from a more academic viewpoint, I wanted to provide audiences with something a bit more accessible—material that could be easily presented or digested in a few hours. What follows is an exposition prepared for a series of presentations on this topic given at a number of yoga studio centers and churches in the Washington D.C., area.

As I began organizing my thoughts and drafting an outline of the material to be presented, a number of presuppositions began to emerge:

### Underlying Presuppositions:

- Common ground exists in the traditions of yoga and Christianity. A comparative examination of the two spiritualities, their mystical practices and traditions—which are their primary avenues of intersection—will make this evident.
- Books by enlightened authors such as Dom Bede Griffiths, Justin O'Brien, Paramahansa Yogananda, and Raimundo Panikkar, can shed light on the two traditions—and make a positive contribution towards the building of bridges between them. (*See bibliography for additional sources*).

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- The Christian tradition is comprised of a vast spiritual heritage and rich mystical tradition of treatises and works recorded over countless centuries—beyond what is contained in scripture. This is a heritage and resource which all Christians have in common at least through the Protestant Reformation—even though most Christians are not aware of this. This point of reference serves as a springboard for this study and overview.
- Mysticism must be defined in a way that is accessible—before proceeding to illustrate common ground between the two traditions.
- Yoga will be considered within the context of the Hindu tradition. In many ways they are inextricably linked, even though in actuality, the yoga tradition pre-dates and contributed to what eventually became Hinduism.

These, then, are the presuppositions and inherent beliefs which supported this study and served as its foundation. They were the springboard for the research I began one summer, and which was revised, expanded, and completed, during the following summer of 2003.

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## INTRODUCTION

What is Yoga?

To the average person, yoga is merely another fitness or exercise routine—it is generally perceived as an activity for getting into in shape, and reducing stress. To the masses, yoga is a trendy, cultural phenomenon and a hot commodity—it is everywhere—references to yoga appear frequently in magazines, books, and even in advertising. In our Western culture, yoga is primarily considered a physical discipline and is often presented to others in a more sanitized version—devoid of its more meditative and philosophical context. For a smaller percentage of individuals, however, yoga is not only a physical practice—but a spiritual one as well. Even so, a person can practice yoga without undermining his/her own religious tradition or faith.

Yoga is not rooted in a dogmatic tradition, and does not require assent to a particular body of truths or beliefs. What we define as yoga—is actually a very ancient tradition—spanning what some scholars believe to be perhaps as many as five thousand years. Yoga pre-dates what evolved into the Hindu tradition—but it also constitutes its underlying essence. While the two are very much linked in literature and history, Yoga, is in the final analysis, a path leading to self-transformation and transcendence—it is path meant to result in growth and change for its practitioner.

Yoga is not easily defined—it has a long history and is understood in varying ways. A common definition of the word is that of “*union*,” coming from the Sanskrit root “*yuj*,” meaning to yoke or join. In order to shed light on our understanding of this very ancient discipline, let us consider some ways in which the yogic tradition has been explained or defined.

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## Yoga as Defined by Patanjali

Patanjali, an ancient sage who lived around 200 A.D., and who is often referred to as the **Father of Yoga**, is the author of the **Yoga Sutras**. In this inspirational and relevant work, Patanjali, offers one of the earliest definitions of yoga. What follows is my interpretation of over ten different translations:

**Yoga chitta vritti nirodhah.**

*Yoga is the cessation of the fluctuations of the mind.*

While this statement or aphorism is both pithy and simple, its essence is not easily grasped—and its practice is even more challenging—demanding unwavering commitment on the part of the practitioner. Implied in this *sutra* or verse is that the outcome of a yoga practice leads to the stilling of the mind—resulting in the ability to direct and focus consciousness— which in turn, culminates in freedom.

It is often said that the *asanas*—or the postures or poses of yoga, evolved in order to still the mind in preparation for meditation. Patanjali, in the **Yoga Sutras**, asserts that the *asanas* should be both steady and comfortable. When the practitioner assumes a yoga posture, the body registers an immediate change in its flow of energy. The practice of *asana* overcomes dualistic experience in its most dedicated practitioners. In the process of stilling the mind and directing consciousness, the yoga practitioner is able to experience transformation and encounter and know his or her own true nature. And for the rare adept, it can also culminate in the transmutation of the body—from the physical—to a spiritual or immortal one.

## An Explanation of Yoga by Georg Feuerstein

Georg Feuerstein, one of yoga's pre-eminent scholars, defines yoga in the first session of his recordings, on the **Lost Teachings of Yoga**, as “*the art and science of disciplining the body and the mind.*”

As such, yoga is a spiritual discipline which is supposed to set us inwardly free. Feuerstein notes that yoga is a culture—not a religion. Yoga has expressed itself

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in many cultures and periods of time through specific practices. “*Yoga is a tool for expressing the depths of human nature—it is a self transcending practice.*” It not only is a practice which aims at balancing the body, but it also enables the practitioner to pursue a virtuous life. Yoga is predominantly an experience, and as such is to be valued above knowledge. In the yoga tradition, experience is always highly valued, and supercedes study in importance or relevance.

Feuerstein also defines yoga as a liberating teaching. In other words, yoga enables us to experience freedom from our limited notion of whom and what we are. We often associate ourselves with material things, forgetting what yoga attempts to remind us and instill in us through its embrace of many techniques—that “*we are immortal, super-conscious beings—we are unlimited and free.*”

Furthermore, “*yoga is a continuum of theory and practice where one must pay attention to the exercises and techniques embodying theory*”...In this context, study is held in high esteem, and it complements practice. But remember—that the experience of a yoga practice is to be much more highly valued.

Yoga can also be understood as a practice leading to purification, and ultimately to inner growth. Yoga involves “*profound commitment to self-transformation which is a result of self-discipline...Yoga is a gradual process of replacing unconscious thought patterns with more conscious patterns.*” This implies the need for both time and practice.

Feuerstein also speaks of yoga as being a spiritual discipline which leads to deeper levels of consciousness, ultimately disclosing and revealing the meaning of life. Yoga leads to greater self awareness. In actuality, most of us do not live in full consciousness of who we are. The practice of yoga allows us to know our true spiritual nature.

Feuerstein believes that the world is stuck in perceiving rational consciousness as the highest form of consciousness. The practice of yoga allows us to access what some may term altered states of consciousness—states where there is no experience of duality—and where the interconnectedness of all living things is experienced and perceived. This experience of consciousness is not reserved for a select few, but is available to all who are willing to awaken to their true nature. Yoga has much in common with the world’s spiritual traditions, because they all seek more meaningful and authentic living.

A Definition of Yoga by Douglas Brooks

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In *Meditation Revolution: A History and Theology of the Siddha Yoga Lineage*, Douglas Renfrew Brooks, offers a comprehensive definition of yoga, which is excerpted here:

*Though there are many different yoga traditions, yoga is not a term with many meanings. Rather it is a concept used in different ways. In the most encompassing sense of the word, yoga means any concentrated effort directed towards accomplishing a goal. As the Sanskrit root **yuj**, suggests, one ‘yokes’ oneself to a task...The term suggests a heightened anticipation, a deliberate preparation, and a goal set upon with a commitment. Yoga then is a process, one through which a person makes a determined effort...Yoga is the practice of concentrating the mind until it becomes one-pointed—that is, until it can focus on a single object without wavering.*

*Yoga is always an endeavor of human accomplishment rather than a disembodied theory or theology...Yoga then implies (1) the process of a difficult effort; (2) a person committed to it; (3) the instrument he uses; (4) the course of action chosen; and (5) the prospect of a goal. Seen in this light, yoga is not as unfamiliar or foreign a concept as we assume. Instead, yoga is intrinsically human; the simplest and the greatest achievements of civilization require yoga. Without yoga what could ever be accomplished? Placed in the realm of spirituality, yoga is that by which we accomplish the fullest expression of our growth as human beings. To learn yoga is to advance one’s own purpose for being human; to teach yoga is to have accomplished the goals that others recognize as most valued. (xxii)*

Brooks reminds us that yoga is a practice—and it is a spiritual discipline aimed at our liberation, our transformation—and ultimately, our transcendence. Yoga enables us to know our true nature and find meaning through a practice that requires our attentive commitment.

### Justín O’Brien on Yoga

We have already considered that yoga is a culture, and that it shares much with the Hindu tradition. However, that does not imply that all Hindus practice yoga in all its forms, though many do embrace some of its practices.

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For Christians, it is important to know much more about Hinduism—its culture, traditions, and literature than most of its members do. This is particularly important when one takes in consideration that currently, one sixth of the world population is Hindu—and one fourth of the world population is Christian. Add both of these percentages together, and they constitute a significant portion of the total world population. If we are to have a greater understanding of each other, we must learn what we can from each other. Prejudice is rooted in ignorance and fear—and lack of respect for others.

The forward to Justin O'Brien's book, *A Meeting of Mystical Paths: Christianity and Yoga*— contains the following quote from *Swami Rama* on yoga, its origins, and Christianity:

*The origins of yoga are obscure and go back many thousands of years. Its central teaching is that our essential nature is divine, perfect and infinite. We remain unaware of this reality, however, because we constantly identify with our bodies, minds, and external objects. That false identification makes us think and feel that we are imperfect and limited...Comparing the science of yoga with the great religions of the world, particularly Christianity, one realizes that yoga...offers practical methods to aspirants of any religion, so that they can know the center of consciousness within. Through the meditative methods of yoga one can dispel the darkness of ignorance, and become aware of our essential nature... (ix)*

This quote parallels and summarizes what Georg Feuerstein eloquently conveys in his recorded lectures on the *Lost Teachings of Yoga*, regarding our true nature, the origins of yoga, and what this practice can offer us.

From a Christian perspective, one is almost drawn to see the inherent connection between *Swami Rama's* words and the New Testament passage: “*The kingdom of heaven is within. (Luke 17:21),*” as well as the psalmist's verse: “*Be still and know that I am God.*” These verses acknowledge that it is within that that one experiences and encounters the Divine—all that is mystical originates within. For Christians, faith and spiritual practices are the marks and reflections of the inner life with Christ, whom ultimately dwells within the heart and soul. For the Christian, Christ is the source of all reality.

Elaine Pagels, the New Testament scholar, has recently published a book entitled, *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas*. She has spent a lifetime researching and examining the faith of the early Christians before the canon of scriptures was codified. *The Gospel of Thomas*, a book many early Christian sects and communities had access to, was re-discovered in 1945, in an earthen jar, in Nag Hammadi, Egypt. Pagels contents that this work was not included in the present day canon of scriptures, because it reflected the belief that

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divinity was present within each and every one of us. This belief was eventually considered heretical. Instead, the **Gospel of John** was chosen because that book affirmed that only the Incarnate Jesus could truly reveal God.

Many Christians do not realize that it took the early church, over two hundred years to agree on the present canon of scriptures; the current canon of scriptures believed to be the divinely inspired word of God, was established in the fourth century.

### Christian Yoga

Though there are books that have been written supporting the notion of a Christian yoga, Georg Feuerstein, for one, would not agree with the usage of this term. In a very real sense—mysticism and mystical practices within the Christian tradition—constitute its yoga. Certainly the aims of mystical practices in both Christianity and the yogic tradition are very similar—but the practices of both traditions are not interchangeable nor can they in all fairness be blended.

A number of works have been published addressing various interpretations on what is meant by Christian Yoga—though purists would argue there is no such thing. One can however, adapt yogic practices such as the practice of yoga poses or *asanas*—and link the poses to classic Christian prayers—to the Lord’s Prayer or to the Psalms, for instance. One can also employ *pranayama*, and breathing techniques in preparation for prayer and meditation in a Christian context. A variety of meditation techniques can and have been adapted for Christian practice, as Thomas Ryan has done in **Prayer of Heart and Body: Meditation and Yoga as Christian Spiritual Practice**.

The Indian Jesuit, Anthony De Mello, SJ, also wrote a number of books where he adapted yoga meditation practices for a Christian audience. **Sadhana—A Way to God: Christian Exercises in Eastern Form**, is an excellent source for these adaptations.

### Defining Mysticism

Before undertaking this comparative study of the two mystical paths of yoga and Christianity—it is important to first clarify and explain what is meant by the terms mysticism and spirituality.

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St. Thomas Aquinas the great Christian philosopher of the Middle Ages, defined mysticism very simply and elegantly as the “*knowledge of God through experience.*” This can be simplified further by stating that mysticism is “*the experience of God.*” How God is experienced by individuals is not by any means, a uniform experience. For each tradition and each individual person it is unique. Implied in this definition is that mysticism or mystical experiences are not the exclusive domain of a select few. After all, how many of us have not had profound experiences of a sense of oneness or identification with the Divine while witnessing a sunset at the beach, or a birth, or some similarly meaningful moment?

In the recent tome, *Mysticism: Holiness East and West*, the authors, the husband and wife team of Denise and John Carmody, present an elaborate discussion of mysticism and how it is understood in both the Eastern and Western traditions. One simple definition they offer of the term is that mysticism is the “*direct experience of ultimate reality.*” (10).

The Carmodys note that:

*...mystics are aware of ultimate reality at first hand with such vividness and such vitality that there is no room for doubt.* (13)

In other words, what is perceived as real is so obvious, that it cannot be mistaken for anything else.

One of Evelyn Underhill’s explanations of mysticism in her book, *Mysticism*, published in the early twentieth century, and regarded as one of the most important contributions to this subject, takes an approach similar to that offered by the Carmodys. In one brief, yet succinct definition, Underhill describes mysticism as “*the art of union with Reality.*”

A mystic experiences oneness or unity with reality. The yoga tradition and its scriptures are replete with acknowledgments of this sense of oneness and the interconnectedness of all things.

Mysticism as described by Underhill and the Carmodys, is the route or path, or practice—by which one discloses or experiences reality—in other words—what is real. In the yogic tradition, mysticism also leads the practitioner away from what is unreal—and what is illusion—to what is real.

This is further supported by Henri Nouwen, one of the great Catholic writers of the twentieth century, who also addressed this notion of reality and what is real:

*The mystical life is the life by which I grow towards what is real, and away from illusion... The future of Christianity in the West depends on our ability to live mystically...*

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This is a very profound and strongly worded statement, and much is implicit in it. Nouwen believed that Christianity would not survive into the future without mysticism. In its natural course of evolution, the radical next step for the Christian tradition should be the ability for all Christians to live mystically, and not primarily dogmatically. Similarly, yogic texts often address the notions of reality and illusion as we have already seen—what is unreal must be dispelled in order to come to a realization of one’s true nature. This can be achieved through the practice of yoga in its various forms.

Thomas Merton, the prolific Roman Catholic author and Trappist monk, who many consider one of the greatest Catholic writers of the twentieth century, was also one of the first to explore Eastern and Western mysticism in the 1950’s, and the 1960’s—long before most Christians found it acceptable or fashionable to do so. While he wrote extensively on the subject in the over sixty volumes he produced prior to his untimely death, there is one observation on the life of a mystic that sheds light on the discussion thus far. Merton observed that “*the purpose of a mystic is not to do—but to simply be.*” Feuerstein would agree with this assessment because he believes that yoga also values the notion and experience of simply “*being.*”

Merton’s observation is both a powerful and simple statement in a materialistic culture that measures the worth of a human being by what a person does for a living. When people routinely meet in our culture for the first time, the question that is most often asked is: “*What do you do?*” Judgments are made about the individual’s worth—and the validity of the person’s contributions to society based on that answer. What if instead of giving one’s chosen profession, a person responded with the simple dictate: “**I AM?**” Or, what if this person simply elaborated a bit more by stating: “*I am a mystic?*” What reactions would each of these elicit? And what does it imply on a deeper level?

The implications are actually quite profound, if one takes a moment to reflect on it.

In yogic practice, a simple breathing or *pranayama* technique, based on the “sound” produced during inhalations and exhalations, is called “**So Ham,**” and it is a sacred *mantra* that means “**I AM THAT**”. As one focuses one’s awareness on the breath and its very subtle sound, one realizes the presence of the Divine in one’s own true nature—thus experiencing union with Ultimate Reality. What this really means is that the Divine is as close to one as one’s own breath.

### Defining Spirituality

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Let us now turn our consideration to the term spirituality; what is implied by its use?

The word "*spirituality*" is used frequently and sometimes rather loosely and inappropriately in our culture. Unfortunately, it is a word that is sometimes misused and misunderstood. The dictionary is a good starting place to look up its meaning.

The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines spirituality in this manner:

*1. The state, quality, or fact of being spiritual."*

The entry for "spiritual" further explains:

*"1. Of, relating to, consisting of, concerned with, or effecting the nature of the spirit; not tangible or material. 2. Of, concerned with, or affecting the soul. 3. Of, from or pertaining to God. . .*

Often the words religion and spirituality are used interchangeably. But they really refer to very different things. Religion is more concerned with dogma—with basic beliefs, faith, and attributes of God—but spirituality is concerned with how an individual relates to God. Implicit in this discussion is the understanding that spirituality involves lifestyle choices—how one chooses to live life.

The Dominican priest and author, Simon Tugwell, OP, in his book, *Ways of Imperfection*, noted that from a Christian perspective:

*The earliest use of the Latin word spiritualitas, remains very close to what St. Paul meant by 'spiritual' (Pneumatikos): Christians by virtue of their baptism, are meant to be spiritual in the sense that they are meant to be led by the spirit and live by the spirit.*

Tugwell notes that spirituality directly affects how people choose to live their lives and indirectly what they value. It is in the realm of our every day lives that we encounter the sacred. This is a reality that Christians and yoga practitioners both agree on. The spiritual life is profoundly organic—there is a fluidity involved in the communion of the human spirit and the Infinite Spirit. It is perhaps not as mysterious as it may once have been considered.

A greater percentage of persons today readily accept that ordinary moments in their lives can disclose the extraordinary—moments in which all human beings can and do experience God. When the psychologist, Abraham Maslow, wrote about peak or transcendental experiences in the mid-twentieth century, such experiences were regarded by most to be the exception and not the norm.

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## Christian Spirituality

Many Christians are unaware of the rich spiritual heritage of their tradition. They have never heard of the Patristic Fathers, or read the many volumes of their works—spanning the early centuries of Christianity. Christians are just as unaware of the works of the medieval era—most have not heard of or read the writings of Julian of Norwich, Meister Eckhart, and Hildegard of Bingen. Most Catholics are just as ignorant of the Counter-Reformation—or the Post-Reformation Era, and the works produced during that time—such as the writings of Ignatius of Loyola, Francis de Sales, John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, and Therese of Lisieux, just to name a few. And then there are the authors of the modern era and the twentieth centuries—when luminaries such as C.S. Lewis, Teilhard de Chardin, Karl Rahner and Thomas Merton wrote. Many Protestants have not read the writings of their own traditions or theologians—Charles Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, Martin Luther, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and John Calvin.

*The breadth of diversity in Christian spirituality startles even Christians. A careful examination of Christianity over the centuries demonstrates that Christian spirituality is not a single thread any more than Christian faith is one exclusive denomination. Spirituality is like a tapestry requiring many dyed threads woven together... (O'Brien, p. xi)*

There are as many spiritualities as there are individuals, and movements, and religious orders: Desert Spirituality, Franciscan Spirituality, Salesian Spirituality, Ignatian Spirituality, Medieval Spirituality, and Dominican Spirituality—just to mention a few. Each one of these is undeniably Christian, but emphasizing different charisms—that is to say—Gospel values and virtues. Whole tomes have been written on the many types of spiritualities. Most Protestants might not be aware of the fact that books have also been written on the nuances and diversities of Protestant spiritualities.

As just noted, different spiritual movements recognized in the Catholic Church, are derived from an emphasis placed on particular Gospel values and virtues.

In the following passage, we see one example derived from a letter St. Paul wrote explaining the Christian ideal of life:

*...The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have*

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*crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other. (NIV Galatians 5: 22-26)*

Another passage from Paul further illustrates the Christian ideal:

*...I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to preserve the unity of the Spirit. (NIV Ephesians 4: 1-3).*

Salesian spirituality, which is the fruit of the writings of St. Francis de Sales, and St. Jeanne de Chantal, in the seventeenth century, and of their collaboration in the foundation of the Visitation Order, is an example of one of the many spiritual traditions within the Catholic Church, which is rooted in the Gospels, and in such scriptural passages such as the two noted above.

The differences that exist in various spiritual traditions are what virtues they may choose to emphasize. For example, much of Salesian spirituality rests with the cultivation of what are referred to as the “*little virtues*,” many of which are listed in the two passages just noted, such as humility and gentleness.

Another characteristic of this spirituality includes the universal call to holiness—the understanding that holiness can be attained in any vocation or station of life—as long as persons do what they are called to do—and live their lives and do their work to the best of their ability. This was a radical notion in the seventeenth century, when many considered that salvation or enlightenment was only reserved for priests and members of religious orders—certainly not for the laity in general—or women more specifically.

Other spiritual traditions have emphasized different gospel virtues. When the Franciscans were originally founded by Francis of Assisi, its members lived in utter poverty, in simple emulation of Christ—not even personally owning a copy of the Bible.

If one is a Christian, and does not know or recognize some of the Christian spiritual writers mentioned previously, it simply reveals Christians must undertake a more comprehensive study of their own traditions before they can undertake a deeper consideration and treatment of the vast wealth of literature and information offered by the yoga tradition.

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Christians have been traditionally schooled in the scriptures and may know their bible stories backwards and forward—citing chapter and verse as easily as they might note their names and ages. Catholics on the other hand, often lack this knowledge and information and are often better versed in their beliefs, practices, and rituals. But up until the last twenty years to thirty years, none—but those in theological institutions—were schooled in spirituality.

Now it is not uncommon for Catholics to belong to bible study groups and for Protestants to engage in spiritual practices like walking on replicas of the Labyrinth of Chartres Cathedral in France. This practice of walking the Labyrinth in the Middle Ages, was a substitution for undertaking a pilgrimage, which was a very dangerous enterprise. In a labyrinth there is only one way in, and one way out. Walking a labyrinth is a very meditative practice. For some, this practice yields deep insights, and is a catalyst for change. How one approaches and walks the labyrinth is a metaphor for how one lives life.

In the first chapter to his book, *A Meeting of Mystical Paths: Yoga and Christianity*, O'Brien describes yoga and Christianity as traditions in tandem. In order to fully appreciate the implication of his statement, we must be informed of our own tradition before we can begin to embrace and appreciate someone else's. Only then can we understand how and where both traditions intersect, and what remains unique to both. Only then can one's tradition truly be enriched by the understanding of another.

We are living in an era where:

*...Traditional Western approaches to religious thought and spirituality are undergoing revision...we are learning that genuine spirituality exists in many guises. We are admitting that pluralism in approaches does not endanger one's preferred beliefs... (1)*

It was only a couple of decades ago that an Apostolic Delegate from the Vatican, to the United States, publicly recognized the importance of reading the scriptures and holy books of both Hindus and Buddhists. He recognized not only that these works are rich sources of spirituality—but that for Christians, and Catholics in particular; they would be the key to a deeper understanding of other people, cultures, and religious traditions. Many of the world's conflicts, divisions, and wars, have been rooted in religious misunderstandings and intolerance.

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Ironically, the tide has turned more recently. In February of 2003, the Vatican, issued a document entitled, **Jesus Christ the Bearer of the Water of Life: A Christian Reflection on the New Age**, warning Catholics of becoming involved with other traditions and their practices. Luckily many Catholics who are themselves yoga practitioners, and more open in their perspective—have chosen to realize the necessity of building bridges supercedes the practice of fueling more divisions.

The August 2003 issue of **Yoga Journal**, noted that this document issues warnings about many of the practices of the New Age, including the practice of yoga. The document states that all the practices described detract from Jesus and his teachings as the ultimate solution for a culture that is in crisis. However, it neglects to note that yoga is a five thousand year old spiritual practice that has withstood the test of time. Its ability to adapt to different cultures and times has certainly contributed to its endurance.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Olga Rodriguez Rasmussen, received her doctorate in spirituality and education from United Theological Seminary, and for over twenty-three years worked and taught in a number of institutions—including St. Louis University, Washington University, and most recently—as Chair of the Theology Department at Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School, in Washington, D.C.

Presently, Olga divides her time between a private practice in various healing modalities and teaching yoga. She is a Reiki Master Teacher, and is certified in **Reconnective Healing™** and **The Reconnection™**. She is also the co-founder of a new, emerging modality, **neo-energetiks™**.

Olga is also a **Registered Yoga Teacher** with the **Yoga Alliance**, and has been an **Affiliated Anusara Yoga Instructor** since 1999. She currently teaches at **The Health Advantage Yoga Center**, where she has taught a variety of classes since 1998. She introduced and taught yoga at Georgetown Visitation to faculty and students, during her last five years there.