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**Aspects of the cosmic Christ in the
spirituality of Dom Bede Griffiths.**

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the degree of

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of

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By

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ABSTRACT

Alan Griffiths was born at Walton-on Thames, England in 1906. He was educated at Christ's Hospital and later at Oxford (under the tutelage of C.S. Lewis). At Oxford he read English literature and philosophy. After considerable inner turmoil he was converted to Christianity in 1931 and entered the Roman Catholic Church in 1933. As a novice Benedictine he was given the name Bede, and was finally ordained as a priest 1940. In 1955 Fr Bede went to India to start a Benedictine community with Dom Benedict Alapatt. He later moved to Kurisumala Ashram in Kerala, and finally, in 1968, to Shantivanam Ashram in Tamil Nadu. He died at Shantivanam in 1993. Fr Bede was, and still is, regarded by many as a spiritual pioneer. This high regard stems from an appreciation of his spirituality which was rooted in a mystical experience of God. This thesis investigates aspects of Fr Bede's cosmic christology as they arise from his spirituality. The aim of this research is to show that Fr Bede's cosmic christology that stems from an expression of a real mystical experience of Christ, as the source, sustainer and goal of the whole cosmos, offers both value and insight to Christian spiritual practice and the formulation of doctrine. What makes Fr Bede's spirituality so valuable is the manner in which he integrated East and West in his spirituality and person, coupled with his ability to draw upon that integration in reflecting and articulating his experience – which ultimately shaped his cosmic christology. In order to share his knowledge and experience of the cosmic Christ, Fr Bede draws upon linguistic and philosophical concepts from the East (and Hinduism in particular) as well as the language and theory arising from discoveries in the areas of quantum physics, microbiology and transpersonal psychology in the West. It is the primacy of spiritual experience, coupled with Fr Bede's ability to integrate the religions, cultures and world-views of the East and West within himself, which makes his cosmic christology so compelling.

TRANSLITERATION OF SANSKRIT AND GREEK

TERMS

For the notation of Sanskrit words used in this thesis the Harvard-Kyoto convention is adopted.

For the notation of Greek words used in this text diacriticals are indicated.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
TRANSLITERATION OF SANSKRIT AND GREEK TERMS	iii
CONTENTS	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
CHAPTER 1: Introduction	1
CHAPTER 2: The marriage of East and West in the life and of Bede Griffiths.	4
A) Anglican to agnostic, agnostic to Catholic, Catholic to Christian sannyasi.	4
B) Fr Bede as Christian sannyasi.	10
i) A brief description of sannyasa.	10
ii) Christian adoption of sannyasa and Fr Bede's interpretation of it.	12
C) Conclusion.	17
CHAPTER 3: The philosophical and theological background to Bede Griffiths' concept of the cosmic Christ.	18
A) Revelation.	19
i) General or cosmic revelation.	20
ii) Particular or historical revelation.	24
B) Three levels of reality.	27
C) A new vision of reality.	30
i) Science.	32
ii) Biology.	37
iii) Psychology.	39
iv) The perennial philosophy.	44
D) Conclusion.	46
CHAPTER 4: Between two horizons: Aspects of the cosmic Christ in the spirituality of Bede Griffiths.	47
A) An examination of the manner in which Fr Bede understands and utilises traditional cosmic christology.	48
B) Christ in India.	55
C) The cosmic Person – <i>purusha</i> .	57
D) Christ and creation.	64
i) Jesus: Self-knowledge of the Father.	64
ii) Jesus: God of God.	67
iii) Jesus in history and his full humanity.	70
iv) Buddha, Krishna and Christ.	72

E) Conclusion.	75
CHAPTER 5: The contribution of Bede Griffiths' cosmic christology to spiritual experience and theological discourse.	77
A) Spiritual experience.	77
i) The importance of a contemplative lifestyle.	79
ii) The relationship between Creator and creation, and the effects of this relationship for eco-human well-being.	82
B) Theological discourse.	88
i) Theological methodology.	88
ii) Theological language employed in formulating doctrine.	93
C) Conclusion.	95
CHAPTER 6: Conclusion.	96
End-notes	103
Appendix A: A glossary of Sanskrit terms	107
Select Bibliography.	110

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction.

“The Christian of the future will be a mystic or he or she will not exist at all” (Rahner in Schneiders 1990:677). This statement serves as a poignant reminder that doctrinal accuracy alone will never secure the survival of the Christian faith. There can be no expression of the mystery of God if there is no experience of the mysterious God. Likewise there can be no experience of God if there is no mystical approach to the mystery of God. It is the primacy of experience that makes the mystic better able to adapt his or her faith within a context of constant change in the surrounding culture.

Throughout Fr Bede Griffiths’ life, as a Benedictine monk (both in England and India), spiritual experience always took priority over doctrinal formulation. Within the context of this research it can safely be said that for him the experience of Christ was primary. This experience was beyond one culture, one language, one philosophy – and even, one religion. As will be shown, Fr Bede’s experience of Christ was primarily, although not exclusively, cosmic in nature. His cosmic christology, as it is recorded in his many works, arose from a desire to share the truth and excitement of his discovery with those with whom he came into contact. Thus, Fr Bede’s aim is not so much to articulate the doctrine of the cosmic Christ as it is to articulate and share his mystical experience of the reality of Christ, and to communicate the significance of that reality for the whole cosmos or created order.

This thesis will investigate aspects of Fr Bede’s cosmic christology as they arise from his spirituality. While many of the aspects of his cosmic christology are not new to the doctrine of Christ, in the sense of being completely unique, they are extremely valuable in that they

stem from his spiritual experience and are filtered through his context and character.

However, there are some cases in which Fr Bede has drawn upon, and applied, previously unused concepts in expressing his cosmic christology. Thus, one can say that his christology has a unique or personal 'flavour' to it. It will be shown that this 'flavour' is of great value for spiritual experience and doctrinal formulation that is of cosmic significance.

Fr Bede's spirituality, and subsequent theological reflection upon that spiritual experience, were fundamentally shaped and enriched by his life, and in particular the years he spent as a monk living in India. This rich life's experience (discussed in Chapter Two) allowed Fr Bede to operate within the conceptualities of both eastern and western culture and philosophy. Thus, unlike many other Christologies, Fr Bede's christology is able to draw on the positive aspects of both Eastern and Western culture, leading to a far more culturally balanced and contextually honest christology. This thesis will point out the value of applying philosophical and linguistic concepts that were previously unused in christology. Such an integrative christology can be of global significance, since approaching the doctrine of Christ in this manner supersedes boundaries created by drawing on only one culture and one set of philosophical and linguistic concepts.

Fr Bede's spirituality is integrative in nature. It will be shown that his spirituality encouraged him to integrate and move beyond some of the limitations of traditional christological language and philosophy. Stemming from this one is able to see a greater harmony between a mystical approach to God, as found in the East, and the pragmatic and social approach as found in western spiritualities. This approach reflects one of his primary spiritual aims, that is, to establish a marriage between East and West (cf. Griffiths 1982:40; 1989:296).

Bede Griffiths' integrative approach makes his christology much more acceptable to the eastern mind, through its application and integration of eastern linguistic concepts and philosophy, while at the same time serving as an important corrective to some of the dualities found in modern western society and religion. Most notable amongst these dualities is the radical dualism placed between creation and creator that can be found in many forms of western religion and secular culture. Gaining a clearer understanding of how an experiential, or spiritual, christology can achieve such aims is of importance in understanding how future challenges to doctrine may be encountered through mystical or spiritual experience.

Thus, the following investigation of Fr Bede's cosmic christology will serve to show how a doctrinal formulation that arises from spirituality can add valuable insight for both Christian doctrine and practice. In order to achieve this aim, the thesis will follow a number of logical steps. Firstly, since Fr Bede's context radically affects his spirituality, the following chapter will highlight some formative spiritual events in his life. Chapter Three is structured as a more technical discussion of the philosophical and theological concepts that arise from his experience, and so forms the background to his cosmic christology. The argument is further developed in Chapter Four where significant aspects of Fr Bede's cosmic christology are discussed. These are aspects that are seen to offer creative insights while enriching the continuing development of the doctrine of Christ. The next chapter draws on these insights and shows in a specific way what contribution Fr Bede's cosmic christology can make to Christian spiritual experience and theological discourse. The thesis concludes with a summary of its findings and selected comments on Fr Bede's spirituality.

CHAPTER 2: The marriage of East and West in the life of Bede Griffiths.

This thesis maintains that Bede Griffiths' spirituality is primarily based upon his experience of God. Thus, any discussion of his spirituality would need to discuss and highlight some of the important and formative experiences that comprise the rich tapestry of his life. The section that follows aims to do just that, with the intent of giving some insight into who Fr Bede was, and how his spiritual experiences helped him formulate his cosmic christology.

Naturally it would be an impossible task to record and discuss the whole of Fr Bede's life. However, it is possible to suggest some formative and influential experiences, and events in his life that relate to his cosmic christology¹.

A) Anglican to agnostic, agnostic to Catholic, Catholic to Christian sannyasi.

Bede Griffiths went to India in 1955 where he lived until his death on 13 May 1993. He was born Alan Griffiths on 17 December 1906 in Walton on Thames in England, where he was raised as a member of the Church of England (Griffiths 1979:18).

Alan's upbringing was thoroughly English, an aspect of his person that would affect rest of his life. He was educated at Christ's Hospital. Here he became interested in the literary works of the great English and classical writers that would later be instrumental in his conversion to the Christian faith (Spink 1988:44). It was at Christ's Hospital that Alan had his first truly religious experience, which interestingly enough, took place in nature (cf. Griffiths 1979:9-12). Fr Bede relates in the video, "A human search: the life of Fr Bede Griffiths" (1993), that while walking one evening he was suddenly overwhelmed by the

beauty of nature as if he realised the power of God for the first time. In reflecting on this awesome experience of God in nature, Fr Bede describes it as his first awakening to “cosmic” religion. Although, at the time, he sensed that these feelings had “something of a religious character” to them, he had no interest whatsoever in any sort of formal religion (cf. du Boulay 1998:16). Such a desire would surface only later in his life.

Alan Griffiths entered Oxford in 1925 and soon came under the tutelage of C.S. Lewis², who had a marked effect on Fr Bede’s spiritual and academic development. At Oxford, according to Fr Bede, his love for nature grew to become his only religion (Griffiths 1979:10). Fr Bede reflects that it was only years later that he came to realise that the love and power that he had experienced that day in nature at Christ’s Hospital emanated from the same God who was preached about in Christianity (Griffiths 1979:130). While at Oxford, Alan Griffiths met two significant people, Hugh Waterman and Martyn Skinner, whose friendship would be a “constant thread through Alan’s life... corresponding regularly until the end of their lives” (du Boulay 1998:20). They all shared the same view that ‘modern’ society had lost its sense of the sacred (Spink 1988:54). Fr Bede was later to make this one of the central emphases in his spirituality, seeking to correct the modern secular western world-view with the mystical world-view of the East. However, in the pre-Indian stage of his life Alan, together with these two men, attempted to overcome this loss of the sacred in society by entering into a social experiment to withdraw from modern industrialised English society and engage in living a common life in the countryside. While this experiment in the Cotswolds did little to appease his dissatisfaction with western society, it was nonetheless valuable and formative for him. This time in Alan’s life can be characterised as a period of philosophical and spiritual discovery as he undertook a concentrated ‘diet’ of seventeenth and eighteenth century literature. Included in this ‘reading diet’ was the Black Letter edition of the Authorised

version of the Bible – approached initially as purely a literary study. However, Alan soon began to find that the “reconciliation of religion and philosophy which he had glimpsed in Dante and St Augustine had its root in the Old Testament itself” (du Boulay 1998:51). Du Boulay notes an important shift in Alan during this stage, recounting that soon “Hugh and Alan passed from reading to praying, dropping to their knees” (du Boulay 1998:51). Although correspondence around that time confirms that they did not consider themselves Christians, there can be little doubt that Alan had begun to experience an awakening to the Christian faith (du Boulay 1998:52)

In the months following this experience in 1931, along with continued contact with C.S. Lewis, Alan began to discover Christianity more acutely (cf. du Boulay 1998:60-61). It was during this time of intense struggle and confusion Alan felt the need to spend a whole day in prayer. While praying, he saw himself at the foot of the cross of Christ and surrendered himself to the Lordship of Christ. Once he had fully associated himself with the Christian faith it was less than a month before he entered monastic life at Prinknash Abbey. He became a novice there on 20 December 1933. After making his Simple Profession (21 December 1934) and Solemn Profession (21 December 1937) he studied philosophy and theology before being ordained as a priest on 9 March 1940 (Griffiths 1979:168).

Fr Bede notes in the video “A human search: the life of Fr Bede Griffiths” (1993) that his profound interest in religions of the East came as a result of the writings of Christopher Dawson³. From this time on he began to study Chinese and Indian religion in earnest, and was introduced to the practice of yoga by the Jungian analyst, Tony Sussman. He became convinced, as had others before him, that if the Christian religion was ever to penetrate the East, it must be interpreted into eastern categories to make it intelligible to the eastern mind

(Rajan 1989:102). This realisation would have a profound effect upon the way in which Fr Bede later lived and expressed his spirituality in India. It was, however, only in 1955 that Fr Bede had an opportunity to go to India himself. This opportunity came at the request of Dom Benedict Alapatt, an Indian Benedictine monk, who had asked him to assist in the establishment of an Indian Benedictine monastery in Kengeri, Bangalore.

Initially Fr Bede had no intention of changing his lifestyle from the accepted Benedictine standard. He wore a traditional habit and built a western style chapel with chairs and reading desks. The cells of the monastery were simply furnished with wooden beds and straw mattresses. Gradually however he began to realise that what he regarded as poverty (as a Benedictine monk) was in fact luxury compared to the ordinary way of life in the neighbouring village (Griffiths 1982:13). In the nearby villages it was common practice to sleep on the floor, eat meals with one's hands and to go barefoot. The 'simple' lifestyle that the monks were living was considered one of comfort compared to that of most Indians. Hence, Fr Bede recalls that he slowly began to reject these western practices in order to "come nearer to the condition of the poor man in India" (1982:18). Throughout his ministry Fr Bede constantly sought to enter into the experience of those among whom he lived and worked.

A further step of inculturation took place in March 1958 when Fr Bede, together with a Belgian monk, Fr Mahieu, founded Kurisumala Ashram at Kerala. Ashram life was based on utter simplicity. Fr Mahieu had come to India in order to reveal the contemplative nature of the Catholic Church to India and felt that his task could best be performed in the formation of an ashram that combined advaitic and Christian traditions of contemplation (Rajan

1989:106). This was the first time that the concept of advaitic sannyasa had been incorporated into Christian monastic life (Rajan 1989:102). In this regard Fr Bede writes:

It was our desire to enter into this tradition of Indian sannyasa and to establish a Christian ashram, in which the life of prayer and asceticism could be followed along Christian lines, yet keeping always in touch with the traditions of India (Griffiths in Rajan 1989:107).

At Kurisumala the Benedictine rule was followed with a strict Cistercian observance to complement the contemplative emphasis of the eastern traditions. Fr Bede stayed here for ten years. In 1968 he moved to Shantivanam (meaning 'Forest of Peace') Ashram in Tamil Nadu to take over from one of the founders of the ashram, Dom Henri le Saux⁴ (Abhishiktananda). Fr le Saux had been deeply influenced by the contemplative life of India. He would retreat to his hermitage in a cave on Mount Arunachula whenever possible and eventually left Shantivanam altogether.

Fr Bede comments on this further step of change and inculturation that took place as a result of his move to Shantivanam, saying, "Here we were able to start our monastic life again in a more radical way... now I embarked on something different" (Griffiths 1989:24). At Shantivanam Fr Bede was able to enter more deliberately into the contemplative life of the East.

Life at the Ashram was truly ecumenical (in the broader, inter-religious, sense of the word). There were times of structured prayer and meditation, as well as reading from the scriptures of the different religions. Fr Bede describes the religious life of the community as follows:

... we meet for prayer three times a day, not for the formal prayer of the liturgy as at Kurisumala, but for more informal prayer... as well as readings

from the Bible... In the morning we read from the Vedas, at midday from the Koran... (Griffiths 1982:24).

A further innovation to religious life at Shantivanam was the way in which the Eucharist was celebrated. Following the concessions of Vatican II, the liturgy and elements used for the Eucharist were adapted in order to make them more culturally accessible to the Indian mind.

From an ecumenical point of view what Fr Bede was aiming to achieve here was a fulfilment of true *sannyasa* (cf. Chapter 2 B (i) for a discussion on *sannyasa*), where the *sannyasi* is in essence beyond all religious divisions and seeking to move beyond the limits of one set of cultural, philosophical or religious symbols, aiming only to attain pure *advaita* (non-duality) (Spink 1988:154; cf. section 2 B (ii) for a further discussion of *advaita*). This emphasis on going beyond the concepts and symbols of religion to an experience of the reality that they represent was an essential element of Fr Bede's spirituality⁵. As will be argued in Chapter 5 B (ii), Fr Bede saw language, doctrine and philosophy as inadequate to fully capture the truth of an experience of God. As a consequence, these aspects of the faith should be integrated and transcended in a quest for spiritual truth.

One further aspect of Fr Bede's spiritual life that significantly influences his spirituality is his relationship to the pilgrims and ashramites at Shantivanam. Rajan says that many of Fr Bede's disciples regarded him as a spiritual guide, and in some cases as their guru (1989:102). However, from conversations with Professor Edwards, who knew Fr Bede personally, it would seem that he never regarded himself as a guru in the technical sense of the concept, but rather as a teacher (*acharya*). The Hindu guru has the awesome task of taking responsibility for the salvation of his disciples. For this reason, Fr Bede spoke of Christ as being the only true guru (*sadguru*), the only one who could truly save anyone from

their sins. It is nonetheless true that he fulfilled a very important spiritual role for many through his teaching and spiritual discipline. Moreover his spirituality served not only to teach and guide many spiritual pilgrims but also served as an example of commitment to fostering a contextually honest spirituality.

Fr Bede stayed at Shantivanam, living as a Christian sannyasi, until his death on 13 May 1993.

B) Fr Bede as Christian sannyasi.

It is important to devote some of this discussion of experience to examining Fr Bede as a Christian sannyasi. Fr Bede's life as a sannyasi affects not only the way in which he lived out his faith, but also the manner in which he expressed his spiritual experiences.

Accordingly, this aspect of his life and spirituality has a profound effect on his cosmic christology.

Before discussing Fr Bede as a sannyasi I will give a brief outline of the concept of sannyasa in India.

i) A brief description of sannyasa.

The most basic description of sannyasa is total abandonment. The word *sannyasa* is often transliterated as *samnyā sa*. However, in English literary texts, and many of Fr Bede's own works, it is anglicised as sannyasa. The word sannyasa is composed of the prefix *sam* which

means totally or wholeheartedly, and the verb *nyasa* meaning to lay aside, resign or abandon (Rajan 1989:10).

Therefore the sannyasi is a person who completely abandons every care, need and concern for the world, self and others in order to attain realisation of the Supreme Self. The person who chooses this rigorous ascetic life of poverty and exploration for Self-realisation is called a *sannyasin*. Sannyasa, as an *ashrama*, is the best means of *brahmavidya* (knowledge of Brahman) (cf. Abhishiktananda 1984:3). Commonly sannyasa is the fourth *ashrama* or stage of one's journey to Self-realisation. In Indian life there are commonly four *ashrama*: *brahmacharya* (studentship), *grhastha* (householder), *vanaprastha* (forest hermit) and lastly *sannyasa*, the stage of renunciation (Vattakuzhy 1981:14-17). After a person has completed their duty (*rsis*) by passing through the first three *ashrama* he is able to make a break with the past in pursuit of *moksa* (final liberation or salvation). However, old age or completion of the first three *ashrama* is not a pre-requisite for sannyasa. At any stage in one's life a person could at will withdraw from all worldly pursuits, cutting short, or leaving out, the preceding stages altogether to enter into sannyasa (Vattakuzhy 1981:18). All that is necessary is a desire for complete detachment from everything in order to foster an intense attachment to the divine.

The person who completes the ritual initiation into sannyasa (*sannyasa diksha*) is "expected to be free from all bonds in the world in order to be a visible witness to the transcendence of God" (Rajan 1989:23). As Father Bede says, a sannyasi is

...called to go beyond all religion, beyond every human institution, beyond every scripture or creed, till he comes to that which every religion and scripture and ritual signifies but can never name... the Sannyasi is one who is called to go beyond all religion and seek that ultimate goal (Griffiths 1982:43).

The values of the life of sannyasa are: absolute poverty, complete solitude and silence, and universal love and equanimity, as well as contemplation and prayer in order to realise the divine. Sannyasis are regarded as dead to society because of their total renunciation. Rajan notes that when a person is initiated into sannyasa, his kinsmen perform the ceremonies and rites for death (*atyesthi*) (Rajan 1989:25). When the sannyasi dies his physical death is commemorated using a different ceremony called *samadhi*.

ii) Christian adoption of sannyasa and Fr Bede's interpretation of it.

The Christian monastic life and the life of the Indian sannyasi are in many ways similar, and in many others dissimilar. Rajan suggests that both share a common aim, that is, to reach the consciousness of the Ultimate Reality, or God (1989:160). From a Christian perspective Conner suggests that it is the purpose of every person, and more so the monk or contemplative, to return to "that original unity from which we have strayed, in order to restore the 'image' in which we were created" (1996:81). Here it can be seen that in sannyasa there is a common meeting point between Christianity and Hinduism.

This contemplative and unitive desire was observed by some early Christians who came to India, such as Roberto De Nobili who arrived in India in May 1605, and is believed to be the first Christian to have adopted sannyasa. Initially sannyasa was outwardly incorporated into Christianity as a means of making this faith more culturally acceptable to the Hindu (Rajan 1989:71). By adopting the life style of the Indian holy person in the matter of dress, diet and manner of living, the Christian sannyasi was able to engage more effectively in mission work.

At this stage, the aim, in almost all cases, was to convert Indian people to the Christian faith by proclamation of the gospel accompanied by social action.

Later, however, with the arrival of Christians such as Jules Monchanin (Swami Parama Arubi Anandam) and Henri Le Saux (Abhishiktananda), the aim changed considerably. The deeply contemplative nature of *sannyasa* was realised as well as the benefits that *sannyasa* would have for the Christian faith. This is a notable shift. It moves from a desire to impart the Christian faith to India, to a desire to enrich the Christian faith by learning from the religion and philosophy of India. During this stage there was a greater realisation that the *advaitic* experience (i.e. the non-dual experience of God beyond name and form) and devotion to Christ could co-exist and assist the Christian devotee in attaining the goal of realising the Ultimate Reality. This stemmed from the recognition that India was already a deeply spiritual country and that this spirituality could be of benefit to the Christian faith (Rajan 1989:88). This view is much closer to Fr Bede's motivation for entering *sannyasa*.

The emphasis of the Christian *sannyasi* thus shifted from a one-sided desire to proclaim a culturally acceptable version of the Gospel, to a mutually enriching emphasis on contemplation. Rajan writes:

Abhishiktananda asserts that a Christian *sannyasin* who would devote himself to be a witness to the Absolute can effectively spread the message of the Gospel. A widely spread Christian *sannyasa* would prove to the Hindus that the Church is primarily a spiritual reality and that her selfless social service through various organisations and institutions is subservient to her essential function of contemplation (Rajan 1989:93).

One of the major differences between the Christian *sannyasin* and the Hindu is that the Christian *sannyasin* is often linked to an ashram or monastic community, whereas the Hindu

sannyasin is traditionally a wandering ascetic, since sannyasa in Hinduism implies renunciation of all things. This difference has been justified by suggesting a reapplication of the authentic approach to non-attachment (particularly in relation to possessions). As Fr Bede puts it,

[t]his is the real renunciation which is demanded, the renunciation of 'I' and 'mine'... detachment is the key word. It does not matter so much what material possessions you have, so long as you are not attached to them (Griffiths 1976:11).

The aim of the Christian sannyasi was thus to detach oneself from all things, as a spiritual discipline that can take place within community, and to establish a form of contemplative life based on the traditions of Christian monasticism and Hindu sannyasa.

Christian sannyasa is essentially a spiritual reality, a living experience in the Spirit of Divine Love. Its source is nothing other than the inner experience of the Incarnate Word who in its constant unveiling phenomenon makes sannyasa a potent means of making God's love available to all.... Jesus' union with the father and the dedication to his fellow-beings, both lived through the Holy Spirit, is the model for Christian sannyasa.... Thus the life of Christian sannyasa consists of two-fold experiences; experience of God and experience of human communion (Aykara in Rajan 1989:190).

It is in this sense that Fr Bede was a Christian sannyasi. For Fr Bede, sannyasa was not just a way of life or some form of religious order; rather it was a matter of 'being', and as such, far more than just the action of complete renunciation. It is only after utter renunciation of all, even sannyasa (or renunciation) itself, when the experience of the divine is realised in the centre of one's being, that one begins to grasp what living as a sannyasin means (cf. Rajan 1989:113).

From an early stage Fr Bede began to realise that western thought and practice, which dominates most of the modern world, was inadequate. It made up only half of the truth. Cartesian philosophy and Newtonian physics, along with the western emphasis on reason, was leading humanity astray. In essence its complete dependence upon reason and science makes it a prisoner to the limitations of language and human reason. This has contributed towards a world-view that makes existence profane, robbing it of the mystery of the sacred.

Fr Bede relates:

I had begun to find that there was something lacking not only in the Western world but in the Western Church. We were living from one half of our soul, from the conscious, rational level and we needed to discover the other half, the unconscious intuitive dimension. I wanted to experience in my life the marriage of these two dimensions of human existence, the rational and the intuitive, the conscious and the unconscious, the masculine and the feminine. I wanted to find the way to the marriage of East and West (Griffiths 1982:8).

It was through his exposure to the Hindu notion of *advaita*, in particular, and through his life as a Christian in India, that Fr Bede began to discover this marriage and strive for non-dual existence. In the West the masculine aspect is dominant and is characterised by aggressive power, rational thought, deductive science. In the East, on the other hand, the feminine is dominant, and can be associated with features such as sympathetic power, an intuitive mind and the perennial philosophy. For Fr Bede it was only a marriage between these two that would save the world from ultimate destruction (cf. Griffiths 1982:40; 1989:296).

Through his lifestyle as a sannyasi, that is, a lifestyle characterised by contemplation, simplicity and complete renunciation, the marriage of East and West became a reality for Fr Bede. As sannyasi Fr Bede aimed to transcend East and West, masculine and feminine, reason and intuition, to reach the one Reality, the source of everything. This Ultimate Reality

escapes all explanation. It can be experienced only in the depth of one's being. According to the Chandogya Upanishad VI:2. 1-4 it is "beneath and beyond all multiplicity". The Absolute is the source of both East and West, masculine and feminine. Here all things are One (cf. Ephesians 1:10 and Rajan 1989:115). This realisation is consciousness of the Absolute. This is what sannyasa makes possible – the transcendence of all religion, all creeds, all spiritual exercises and rituals (Griffiths 1982:42). It is here that one discovers the True Self, where the I-Thou separation breaks down between the person and God. Such constructs have been difficult to formulate from a purely western mind-set. The eastern mind-set, which is far more intuitive than rational, allows for a greater understanding of Reality in this sense.

This is the great discovery of Indian thought, the discovery of the Self, the Atman, the Ground of personal being, which is one with Brahman, the Ground of universal being (Griffiths 1984:16).

It is my conclusion that sannyasa, not as a manner of living but as a way of being, brought Fr Bede to an experience of what it means to be truly Christian. It is important to note at this point that as a sannyasin one does not reject the things renounced (such as one's religion and values); rather these are integrated as part of who and what one is. Every stage in one's life is a significant part of Self-realisation. In a sense one has to pass beyond the 'symbols' used in religion to the reality that is represented. The symbols contain and convey something of the reality that they signify. The symbols are therefore to be integrated into one's spirituality as one moves towards a greater realisation of the truth, since they are not a 'false' reality, merely an attempt at representing the true reality. The symbols of a religion are not to be regarded as the religion itself, but to be transcended in order to discover why the religion exists.

C) Conclusion.

The experiences of life significantly influence and impact on one's spirituality and subsequent expression thereof. Taking this into account, this section aimed to give some insight into Fr Bede's spiritual development and the significant aspects of his life and spiritual experience and how these shaped and gave rise to his spirituality, and so too, his cosmic christology. The essential elements of the above discussion have shown how Fr Bede's spirituality began and ended beyond the commonly accepted boundaries of the Christian faith. It is notable that his spirituality began at Christ's Hospital with a 'cosmic' awakening to God in nature (cf. Griffiths 1979:9-12), and ended with a highly developed understanding of the cosmic Christ, through his contemplative life as a sannyasi⁶. As a sannyasi, Fr Bede constantly sought to integrate and transcend the symbols of religion in order to discover the One True Source of all reality that lies beyond all religious expressions and structures. Out of this he was able to develop a cosmic christology that is based not just on the doctrinal and philosophical formulations of one religion, but to move beyond those names and forms to an experience of Christ as both the source and goal of the whole cosmos. One of Fr Bede's favourite passages from the Svetasvatara Upanishad outlines his understanding of the cosmic Christ in this regard so well.

I know that Great Person of the brightness of the sun beyond the darkness.
Only by knowing him one goes beyond death, there is no other way to go.
(Svetasvatara Upanishad III:8).

CHAPTER 3: The philosophical and theological background to Bede Griffiths' concept of the cosmic Christ.

The previous chapter pointed out some significant experiences in Fr Bede's life that informed and developed his spirituality. A further aspect that makes his spirituality so significant arises from his desire to share those experiences and discoveries of truth with others.

Naturally this process requires the use of language and concepts to communicate what he has discovered. This chapter of the thesis will give insight into Fr Bede's understanding and use of particular theological and philosophical concepts that underpin his cosmic christology.

A primary focus that arises from Fr Bede's mystical spirituality is the relationship between God and the created order. This conclusion is surmised from his desire to overcome any artificial dualities (*dvaita*) that have arisen between Creator and creation. Fr Bede employs his understanding and expression of the doctrine of the cosmic Christ as a 'vehicle' to explain this non-dual (*advaitic*) relationship. It is in his theology of the cosmic Christ that the discussion of the relationship between the absolute and the contingent takes shape and is articulated with the greatest accuracy of which language is capable. Thus, since this thesis is discussing a theology that arises from a reflection upon spiritual experience, it is important to scrutinise the philosophical and theological background that Fr Bede employs in expressing his doctrine of the cosmic Christ. An understanding of how he utilises theological and philosophical concepts and terms will lend a fuller understanding of both his experience of the cosmic Christ and its significance for others.

This discussion will focus on three areas in particular: firstly, Fr Bede's understanding of revelation as both general and particular; secondly, there will be a brief discussion of what Fr Bede accepted as the three primary aspects of reality; namely, the physical, spiritual and psychological; finally, this chapter will conclude with a section that outlines Fr Bede's 'new vision of reality'. This discussion will take the form of a breakdown of some developments in contemporary society and in science, that shaped Fr Bede's spiritual paradigm – in a sense giving him a wider vocabulary to use in articulating his cosmic christology.

A) Revelation.

To comprehend Fr Bede's concept of the cosmic Christ it is necessary, firstly, to consider his understanding of revelation. For Fr Bede revelation takes place in two stages (Griffiths 1992:95). Firstly, revelation began before Christianity, and thus also before the incarnation of Christ. This revelation takes place in a cosmic religion. That is, ancient cultures and people became aware that there is a sense of the sacred which is present in animals, plants, the earth, the sun, humans, in fact, in all creation (Griffiths 1992:95). This is the first stage of revelation and it is aptly called the cosmic revelation.

The second stage of revelation, which is also an aspect of the cosmic revelation, is far more particular and is very much like the revelation of God contained in the sacred texts of the world's religions. This came gradually as people developed their use of language and symbols and began to use their powers of discrimination in relation to the Truth contained in all reality, particularly as it is related to places, events and people (Griffiths 1982:89). Fr Bede refers to this second stage of revelation as being a distinct movement within the cosmic

revelation because of its close ties to history and culture (1982:175-176). Fr Bede's understanding and use of these two forms of revelation follow below.

i) General or cosmic revelation.

This section is concerned with general or 'cosmic revelation', the first stage mentioned above. Fr Bede speaks of it as, "... the revelation of ultimate Truth, given to all mankind through the Cosmos, that is, through the creation" (Griffiths 1982:88). In this sense, then, Fr Bede speaks of the whole of creation as a theophany or manifestation and revelation of God. However, as a Christian, he also points out that this revelation essentially takes place through Christ.

The Father manifests himself in his Son or Word, who by taking our human flesh assumes the whole creation to himself and fills it with his presence (Eph 4:10). We cannot properly speaking think of anything apart from Christ; it is he who gives existence its meaning (Griffiths 1984:219).

Fr Bede thus goes further and refers to the whole of creation not only as a theophany, but in fact a "christophany" (Griffiths 1984:219). This emphasis highlights an interesting and complex aspect of Fr Bede's spirituality. Throughout his lectures and writings he is concerned, on the one hand, to relate all of his discoveries to the Christian faith. However, on the other hand, he is also moved to point out that the authenticity of these experiences transcends one particular religion's expression thereof.

So, having made the point, he goes on to say that he "began to see how all religion had grown from a perception of an all-pervading spirit which was held to be present in all phenomena" (Griffiths 1995:vii). While this spirit or power was very often conceived as one, it was held

that it would manifest in many forms. These manifestations of the divine were regarded as gods and goddesses, angels and spirits (cf. Griffiths 1995:viii). The understanding of these manifestations came to be expressed in the myths and legends of cosmic religions that predate Christianity. Fr Bede explains the importance of these myths in cosmic religion and revelation as follows:

A myth is a symbolic story which expresses, in symbolic terms which rise from the depths of the unconscious, man's understanding of God and the mystery of existence. Myths are of infinite value and importance. I do not think it is too strong to say that God revealed Himself from the earliest times in the form of myth... Every religion is derived from mythology... (Griffiths 1983:115).

This kind of general or cosmic revelation predates the particular revelation of God that is often found in contemporary formalised religion. Rather, it is the foundation from which particular revelation stems. Wong notes that, "cosmic revelation is based on the belief that God reveals himself in creation and the human soul" (1996:1).

Pertaining to this form of universal or cosmic revelation, the cosmic Person would be that person who underlies, or is manifest in, all creation as the one who creates and gives meaning to all creation. For Fr Bede, this person is Jesus Christ. As seen above, Fr Bede considers all creation as not only a 'theophany', but in fact a 'christophany'. The whole creation finds its meaning and purpose in Christ because in the incarnation God enters the created order, and in the ascension Christ assumes the whole material universe into the Godhead. Thus, not only is God seen in the whole of creation, but the whole of creation is seen in God. In making this point Fr Bede quotes (1989:171) Meister Eckhart, "God only spoke one Word [i.e. Jesus, the Word of God], and in that Word the whole creation came into being". Fr Bede relates this understanding directly to the Christian faith by referring to St Paul's letter to the Ephesians:

“He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe” (Ephesians 4:10). Accordingly, Fr Bede accepts that the whole creation holds together in the Christ, the cosmic Person. As is maintained in the letter to the Colossians chapter 1:17 “He is before all things, and in him all things hold together”. At this point, as in others, Fr Bede’s cosmic christology was influenced significantly by the work of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin⁷. For Teilhard, Christ is the centre of all creation. He writes in one of his early essays, ‘Le Milieu mystique’, as if he were Christ speaking:

It is I [Christ] who am the true bond of the World. Without me, even if they appear to make contact with one another, beings are separated by an abyss. In me they meet, despite the Chaos of the age and of Space (Teilhard de Chardin in Lyons 1982:150).

For Fr Bede, as will be discussed in more detail later, Christ has a universal and cosmic significance that is much broader than the Christian faith, its symbols and Church (cf. Griffiths 1983:128). His desire was that Christians would see that the salvific activity is not only for Christians but that it has significance for the whole cosmos. While the Church is a sacrament of Christ it does not contain him; rather it is a symbol or sacrament to the world of the true Christ. Fr Bede quotes the last verse of St Thomas Aquinas’ hymn *Adore te devote latens deitas* in illustrating this. He writes:

Jesu quem velatum nunc aspicio, Oro fiat illud quod tam sitio, Ut te revelata cernens facie, Visu simus beatus tuae gloriae. The translation, which really does not do justice to the beauty of the Latin, is: “Jesus whom I now see under a veil, grant that that may be which I so desire, that I may see Thee, face unveiled, and be blessed with the sight of Thy Glory”. We pray that the veil may be taken away, the veil of the sacrament, so that the reality may appear.... Jesus, the humanity of Jesus, is a sacrament of God. It is a sign of God’s grace, God’s love, God’s salvation, but we have to go beyond the sign to the reality (Griffiths 1983:129-130).

Lyons comments on Teilhard's cosmic christology, with reference to this point, saying that:

In Teilhard's view, Christ's Body is not merely mystical; that is, ecclesial. It is also cosmic, extending throughout the universe and comprising all things that attain their fulfilment in Christ. Fundamentally, the Body of Christ is the one single thing that is being made in creation (Lyons 1982:154-155).

Thus, Teilhard's cosmic christology served to further corroborate Fr Bede's belief that Christ has a significance that is far greater than Christianity alone, that is a cosmic significance. Arising from his own christology and influenced by Teilhard, Fr Bede concludes that the cosmic Christ is present in all forms of religion, including those general or cosmic forms of religion that predate Christianity (cf. Griffiths 1983:75; 1989:118-127 and Panikkar 1988:127-132). The following quote illustrates Fr Bede's position.

It needs to be said that Christ is present in all religion. Jesus died for all humanity, without exception. So, from the beginning to the end of the world the grace of Christ through the cross is offered to every human being in some way, normally through their conscience, their traditions and customs or holy books (Griffiths 1992:96).

A more detailed discussion of the Fr Bede's theology of the cosmic Christ, and its ensuing implications for the Christian faith, will follow in Chapters Four and Five. Fr Bede found a great deal of resonance between his cosmic christology and the highly developed notion of cosmic revelation in the Hindu scriptures in general, and the Upanishads in particular.

The above discussion shows that Fr Bede was aware of, and clearly accepted, a general or cosmic revelation that predated Christianity and has a broader significance than the Christian

faith. However, he relates this general revelation to the cosmic Christ, seeing it as a 'christophony' and in this doctrine shows that Christ has a universal relevance for all religion, but also a particular relevance for Christianity and the Christian church.

ii) Particular or historical revelation.

The second stage of revelation, as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, is called historical or particular revelation. As its title suggests, it is based on a particular concept of time and a subsequent understanding of how God chooses to reveal God's self within that understanding of time and history.

The essential difference between historical and cosmic revelation relates to the historical view of time and the cosmic view of time. Wong points to the difference.

The understanding of time in the Hindu and other Oriental cultures is cyclic. It rests on the rhythms of nature or the cosmic order with the endless recurrence of day and night and the four seasons of the year. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, however, time is linear. It has a beginning and is moving towards an end, an *eschaton*, with various *kairoi*, or moments of divine grace, in between (1996:2).

It is important to note the relationship between linear time and history within the Christian faith. In linear time, history takes the form of events that follow one another chronologically. Thus, linear historical revelation conceives of God as revealing God's self not only in creation and the human soul, but also through the successive moments of human history, in relation to people and the events that take place in their lives. For Christians, the incarnation of Jesus Christ would be the climax of God's gradual self-revelation in human history. In

fact, Christianity derives from the historical event of Jesus Christ who was born at a particular time, in a particular place, lived there and eventually died.

This is what is specific in the Christian mystical experience. The absolute reality is experienced as revealed in Christ, in the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth. It is not an experience of absolute reality revealed in the Cosmos, in the cycle of time in nature, nor in the human Self, the psychic being with its capacity for self-transcendence, but in a historic person and a historic event (Griffiths 1982:179).

As a Christian Fr Bede emphasised the historical necessity of the incarnation of Jesus, a man of Nazareth, born in Bethlehem under a Roman Emperor, crucified by Pontius Pilate. This series of historical events illustrates a valuable part of the relationship between God and the created order (cf. Griffiths 1989:166-175). Wong notes that for Fr Bede this historical event

reveals the unique character of the mystery of Incarnation. The real meaning of the Incarnation is that, by adopting our human nature, God fully enters into the world and history, sharing our human condition (1996:2).

In Fr Bede's own words,

The ineffable Godhead, the one absolute reality, was revealed in the historic person of Jesus of Nazareth at a particular time in a particular place. It has to be emphasised that, in biblical faith, it is a matter of the infinite being manifest in the finite, the eternal in the temporal, in a specific time and place. This is a key point by which Christian revelation is distinguished from the Hindu and Buddhist view (1989:165).

The theological significance of such a particular historic view of Christ will be discussed in Chapter 4 D (iii). However, the essential aspect that needs to be noted at this stage is that while Fr Bede contrasts the cyclic and linear notions of time, he also suggests areas of complementarity between them.

The following serves as an example of this complementarity. A cyclic notion of time, such as that found in the philosophy that underpins Hinduism, tends to depreciate the meaning of this present world and its history. Fr Bede maintained that this view was, to a large extent, responsible for the situation of poverty in India. Christianity on the other hand, with its historical view, is very committed to the here and now, that is, to material and historical realities. At times Christians need reminding that the Kingdom of God cannot be solely identified with this present world. For this reason, Fr Bede says:

The danger of Hinduism is that it tends to see time and history as a passing phenomenon without any ultimate significance. The danger of Christianity is that it tends to attach too much importance to temporal events and to lose the sense of timeless reality.... The Hindu surely needs to discover the real value of time and history.... But the Christian must learn that the Kingdom of God is not to be found in this world.... The Kingdom of God lies beyond history in the timeless reality in which all things find their fulfilment (Griffiths 1982:180-181).

However, it must also be noted that there are many Christians who maintain with vehemence that the Kingdom of God is not of this world and so do very little to change the world in which they live. A clear example of this is to be found in the Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches in South Africa and their lack of social awareness and involvement during the years of the apartheid struggle. The same criticism can be levelled against such Christians, as is levelled against the purely mystical sections of the Hindu faith. I believe that Fr Bede's aim was not so much to show that one needs a balance of two views of history, but rather that one needs a balance that takes seriously both the present physical reality and the transcendent spiritual reality.

To return to Fr Bede's understanding of revelation, it is important to note at this point that his spirituality did not demand an acceptance of one form of revelation or truth over another. Rather, Fr Bede's desire was for truth, regardless of where it came from. Consequently he was able to integrate both cosmic and particular revelation into the expression of his cosmic christology, in such a way that they were mutually complementary.

Thus, Fr Bede's understanding of revelation, as taking place in both cosmic and historical forms, is an essential aspect that underlies his theology of cosmic Christ. The Hindu, cyclic view of time serves as a corrective for some Christians who place an overemphasis on the historical Christ, while the Christian view of time and history is able to emphasise the fact that God, in Christ, is active in human and cosmic history.

B) Three levels of reality.

A further essential aspect to understanding Fr Bede's theology of the cosmic Christ is his view of reality. In accordance with the standard Hindu view of the cosmos, he maintained that the universe is made up of three interdependent and interconnected aspects of reality, namely the physical, the psychological and the spiritual (1982:184). Fr Bede noted that this view of reality was the view of the ancient world that had been lost in contemporary western society and culture. However, it is regaining acceptance amongst those who accept the new science (cf. Griffiths 1982:183; 1983:20 and the following section (Chapter 2 section C) for a more detailed discussion on the elements of the new science that Fr Bede used in his theology).

Fr Bede maintained that the commonly accepted western understanding of the world, based on Cartesian philosophy and Newtonian physics, is limited in that it attempts to explain all of reality in mechanistic and reductionist terms. Fr Bede maintained that if one subscribed only to this materialist view of the cosmos one's view of reality would not only be limited but wrong (1989:15). This limited view of reality imposes a radical subject/object distinction by maintaining that matter is merely an "extended substance" that is extended outside of the human mind (Descartes in Griffiths 1983:20). Fr Bede summarises his understanding of this viewpoint as follows,

... we have a mind, and that mind is quite different and distinct from this matter, this world. Science is the process of the mind observing this external world. Then, for those who believe in religion, beyond this matter and beyond this mind there is a God, above everything. That is the three-tiered universe which we have inherited (1983:20).

Fr Bede's own view of reality differs significantly from the above-mentioned understanding. In formulating his view of reality Fr Bede integrated elements of the new science. In particular he aligned himself with the new understanding of reality that no longer conceived of matter as extended substance, but rather as a web of interconnected relations forming an organic whole⁸. Such a view of reality is not entirely foreign to the eastern mind. However, for western culture and religion with its strong emphasis on rugged individualism it is somewhat strange. Drawing on scientific views such as this one, which was made popular and accessible through scientists such as David Bohm and Fritjof Capra, Fr Bede was given a suitable vocabulary for sharing with westerners his experiences of a cosmos united in Christ.

Fr Bede also maintained that the physical world could not be separated from the human psyche, that which he calls "the consciousness" (1983:20).

Instead of a separate, extended world and separate mind we have a field of energy which has its own laws and structures but which is also interdependent with the whole psychological world, the world of consciousness.... You cannot separate the world from consciousness any more (Griffiths 1983:20).

Beyond the physical and psychic 'worlds', Fr Bede held, there is the spiritual world which "though separate from matter and soul is yet interwoven in the whole structure" (1983:20). This view of reality is not alien to Christianity; in fact it can be found in the theology of St Paul and in the theology of the Church Fathers, Irenaeus and Origen. For Fr Bede the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a sign of this integral reality.

His physical body did not disintegrate, but was reunited with his soul, his psyche. Soul and body did not 'disappear' but were transfigured by the indwelling Spirit (Griffiths 1984:184).

Fr Bede's cosmic christology draws a great deal of inspiration from this view of reality, as well as the new physics that interprets the universe in this interdependent and organic manner. In relation to the cosmic Christ, the resurrection of Jesus Christ can thus be seen not only a sign of the new creation, but also as its inauguration. Such an assertion is based on the understanding that since the body of Christ is part of the one cosmos, which is a continuum or interrelated system, his resurrection has consequences for the whole of reality. Wong emphasizes Fr Bede's understanding of the resurrection of Christ in relation to this point as follows:

Through the instrumentality of the glorified Christ, the Spirit took possession of matter and the entire creation, initiating the process of transmutation of the cosmos into a new creation (1996:5).

Thus, Fr Bede's cosmic christology is intrinsically linked to his view of the universe as consisting of three interrelated and interdependent dimensions. A more in-depth and technical discussion of the science, philosophy and psychology (through which Fr Bede expressed his views) will take place in the section that follows.

C) A new vision of reality.

As stated above, Fr Bede views the universe as consisting of three interdependent and interrelated dimensions, namely the physical, the psychological and the spiritual (Griffiths 1989:278). These categories are generally accepted within the framework of Hinduism. However, what makes Fr Bede's spirituality stimulating is that he not only draws on Hinduism to substantiate and explain his view of reality (thereby making his views acceptable to the eastern mind), but he also makes use of the predominant expression of the West, science, to get his point across. Many have found this to be a very attractive element in his spirituality. Through marrying elements of eastern mysticism with aspects of the new science in the west he is able to appeal to a much larger audience. It is true that Fr Bede only drew selectively on elements of eastern mysticism and western science in articulating his marriage of East and West. Regardless of this selectivity, Fr Bede's resultant spirituality is more balanced than either a purely eastern or western spiritual perspective. His spirituality aims to show how insights and developments in the new science relate to the three categories of reality referred to in eastern mysticism.

This section will discuss this complementarity between science and mysticism. In doing this, an outline of Fr Bede's views of science, biology, psychology and the perennial philosophy

will be given. Accordingly, the knowledge gained from this discussion will serve as valuable insight into how Fr Bede relates his understanding of the cosmic Christ.

Fr Bede believed that the world was on the verge of a new age (Griffiths 1989:9). This new world order, or new age, would come as a result of two things. Firstly, it would come as a result of a collapse of the current, inadequate, world-view (Griffiths 1989:295). Secondly, it would come as a result of a 'new vision of reality'. That is, a new view of humanity, creation, and spirituality in the areas of science, biology, psychology and religion that would come to pervade all levels of society.

As was briefly mentioned above, Fr Bede felt that the largely accepted Newtonian/Cartesian view of reality was inadequate to address the complexity of reality as physical, spiritual and psychological (1989:9). However, Fr Bede was optimistic at some developments in western thought over the last hundred years, and particularly the later half of the twentieth century. He believed that the inadequate materialist view of reality was being undermined and challenged by developments in science particularly, but also in psychology and spirituality.

The sections below will briefly sketch some of these understandings of reality from science, psychology and religion and will then go on to discuss the positive elements that Fr Bede saw taking place in these fields, and how they can affect one's vision of reality. Naturally Fr Bede's investigations in this area impacted upon his cosmic christology.

i) Science.

The materialist philosophy that has pervaded our society has its roots, as outlined above, in a view of the world as purely matter, functioning simply as a complex mechanism. A primary source of this world-view can be traced to the philosophy of Rene Descartes. His philosophy in turn is based upon Aristotelian philosophy with its belief that all human knowledge is based on evidence received from the senses (touch, taste, hearing, smell and sight). Descartes took this materialist view of reality further in being the first person to make a complete separation between mind and matter. Aristotle had maintained that the human person is a body-soul, the soul is the form of the human body and so the person remains an integrated whole (cf. Griffiths 1989:12). Descartes on the other hand said that all matter, including the human body, is extended outside of the mind, that is, separate from the person, completely separate from the mind. There is a radical subject/object distinction between the mind and the world. The mind looks out on the universe extended outside of the person.

Following along these lines it would be possible for a person to study objectively all things outside of him or her self. Descartes, as a mathematician, believed that through mathematical calculation one could come to a perfect understanding of the universe. For him the universe was merely a complex mechanism, governed by mathematical laws and principles which, once discovered, could explain all reality.

This view maintains that each person is a separated, self-contained, thinking reality (*res cogitans*) over against the material reality (*res extensa*) (cf. Griffiths 1989:13). Francis Bacon, the English philosopher, took this notion a step further. He said that the goal of science was not only to understand the universe, but to control it by applying the principles

discovered in scientific and empirical investigation. Galileo made the next important contribution to this world-view by adding that mass and motion were the main characteristics of matter. Thus, since mass and motion are measurable, all matter could be measured quantitatively. The *res extensa* (material reality) is thus quantitative, allowing it to be measured and studied objectively. Aspects of reality such as faith, beauty and emotions began to be regarded as subjective and of no scientific value. Since this view held that they had no scientific value they began to have less value, generally, in western society, which was largely regulated by mechanistic and reductionist principles.

The next major contribution to this world-view was that of Isaac Newton, whose model of science is still accepted by many today. Newton said that reality could be explained in terms of a number of laws (especially concerning mass and motion), such as gravity, that governed all creation. For Newton all reality consisted of concrete objects moving in space and time.

Fr Bede says,

Measurement of mass, motion and other properties, and their interrelationships, provided the model of the universe for the succeeding centuries ... the method of Newtonian mechanics was so highly successful and yielded such impressive results it became extrapolated into metaphysics. It was assumed that philosophically Newtonian physics provided not only a complete picture of reality but the only picture of reality (1989:14-15).

The result of this world-view was the exclusion of anything that was not objectively quantifiable. It is from this purely mechanistic understanding of creation that our materialistic approach to reality comes. In its most extreme form there is no longer a need for belief in God since all of creation is seen to be regulated by laws and principles that are purely mathematical. Moreover, it has often been maintained that if a person could discover these laws, and then learn how to manipulate them, that person could ensure the smooth

running of nature, and the contentment of human persons. In a general sense this is often regarded as a common view amongst groups such as the Marxists. However, in less stringent forms this world-view can be seen to permeate almost all of western society in subtle ways.

Such a view of reality is clearly inadequate. In the West it is becoming increasingly obvious that mechanism is far too simplistic to describe the whole of reality. Fritjof Capra's book The Tao of Physics (1975) has been significant in spreading awareness of this. Recent discoveries in quantum physics have shown that the material universe is not so much a mechanism as "a field of energies in which the parts can only be understood in relation to the whole" (Griffiths 1989:17). Thus, the universe is more accurately likened to an organic, living entity (like a cell), rather than a mechanistic system (like a clock).

For Fr Bede, David Bohm's theory of implicate and explicate orders gives a much more complete reflection of physical reality than the Cartesian/Newtonian model (Griffiths 1989:18). Bohm's view is that all material reality is an explication of a vast number of implicate orders. He maintains that underlying the explicate order there is a "deeper order of existence, a vast and more primary level of reality that gives birth to all objects and appearances of our physical world" (Talbot 1991:46). Hence this world-view would hold that what we perceive as physical reality is not a number of separate self-contained objects (as in the Cartesian/Newtonian world-view) but rather, reality is a dynamic whole, an explication of the undivided whole that is in a perpetual state of flux⁹ (Bohm 1980:185).

What Fr Bede found so significant in this view of reality is its emphasis on the unity and interconnectivity of created reality. There is in this view, a sense of non-duality, of all of reality being one,

... behind the explicate order the implicate is always present, so in that sense the whole universe is implicated behind every explicit form (Griffiths 1989:18).

This notion of the implicate and explicate orders is also referred to as the 'holomovement' by Bohm (Keepin 1993:34). He says that the structure of reality can be likened to a holograph. In holography the photographic record is not two a dimensional record of an object as in traditional photography. Rather, a holograph is a set of interference patterns made by splitting a laser beam and reflecting some of the beam of the object, before reuniting it with the rest of the beam on the photographic plate. When a laser beam is directed onto the photographic plate a three-dimensional image of the object appears. What is more remarkable is that if the laser beam is directed on only a small part of the holograph the entire image still appears, although less distinctly (Keepin 1993:34). In an analogous manner holography suggests how all of (explicate) creation is a manifestation of an ever-changing (implicate) reality. The explicate order is also constantly in a state of change since it continually comes out of, and moves back into, the implicate order. Furthermore, this theory holds that each part of creation contains within it the whole.

Theologically this is significant, as it could imply that we are living in a universe that is not separate from ourselves. We ourselves are the universe, the universe is us. We are an explication of the one ultimate reality. There is a fundamental sense of interconnectedness between all persons and all of creation. We are one, one with the Creator, all creation and ourselves. Fr Bede related this idea to Ken Wilber's early work on the 'spectrum of consciousness', where at the deepest level a person is one with all reality (cf. Wilber 1975). Wilber's model will be discussed in greater detail in section iii) below. What is noteworthy

in this view of reality, as it relates to Fr Bede's cosmic christology, is that not only does it affirm cosmic unity at a deep level (implicate), but it also affirms differentiation. As Teilhard de Chardin would say, "Unity differentiates"¹⁰ (cf. Lyons 1982:165). In the explicate order there are different manifestations or explications of the one implicate reality. As a person I am an explication (an individual) of the implicate (collective) reality. While Fr Bede never used Beatrice Bruteau's understanding of identity, there is a great deal of resonance between Fr Bede's use of the implicate and explicate orders in showing how unity differentiates, and Bruteau's view. She says that identity no longer depends on negation of the rest of creation. A person is not an individual or differentiated from the rest of creation in saying "I am I insofar as I am not you" (Bruteau 1990:128). Rather, differentiation comes from the implicate order. Our individuality comes from the One, the Source, the Ultimate Reality in and behind all creation. In this new view of reality a person could say, "I am I in so far as I am in you and you are in me".

Both Fr Bede and Bruteau's views are radically different from the Cartesian/Newtonian view of reality in that there is interdependence and interconnectivity and all of material reality is pervaded by, and finds its explanation in, the transcendent reality (Griffiths 1989:11). Fr Bede affirms this as a positive development, in that the mechanistic model of reality is being replaced with a living or organic model (1989:278)¹¹. However, he does grant that materialism is "correct" in so far as it recognises the material basis of reality, and that science within that model has made great advances through exploring a material view of reality (1989:278-279). Thus, while Fr Bede does use the word "correct" in reference to materialism, his intention is not to suggest that it is entirely correct, since he refers on numerous occasions to materialism as flawed (cf. 1982:9). Rather, his suggestion is that materialism is correct only in so far as it recognises "the material basis of reality, and science

has explored this basis further than has ever been done before” (1989:278-279). Here one can again see the integrative and transcendent aspect of Fr Bede’s spirituality. He affirms that which is of value in materialist science, but also points out that one needs to move beyond it in order to move closer to the truth of reality. Consequently he goes on to say that this age, dominated by individualism, science and capitalism, is flawed in that it has lost sight of the sacred within and behind the material world (1989:279). Once again what Fr Bede advocates, as was seen in the section on cosmic and historical revelation (see Chapter 3 A (ii)), is a balance that recognises both material and spiritual reality.

ii) Biology.

One of the consequences of the reductionist and mechanistic views of reality has been an attempt to explain life in terms of physics and chemistry alone (Griffiths 1989:20). However, Fr Bede agrees with Rupert Sheldrake that even though molecular biology has made some pertinent discoveries, it is not comprehensive enough to explain the main features of life. This inadequacy becomes particularly apparent in relation to the process of morphogenesis, that is, the development of new forms of life, and their regulation and regeneration, in relation to morphogenetic fields (1989:20). Therefore, Fr Bede notes that Sheldrake has made a significant contribution to the new vision of reality with the introduction of the notion of ‘formative causation’ or morphogenesis (1989:20).

The theory that has dominated biology up to now has been a form of neo-Darwinianism. It asserts that the evolutionary development of organisms can be accounted for in terms of random mutations, Mendelian genetics and processes of natural selection. Fr Bede, following Sheldrake, questions this neo-Darwinian view. Fr Bede’s aim is to argue in favour of

returning to a view that recognises the presence of God in creation. He does this by questioning how random mutation can account for the complex process of electrons and protons being organised to form atoms, which in turn form molecules and ultimately how the organisation of molecules can form cells which become plants and even more highly developed self conscious human persons. Sheldrake, as a biologist, puts forward the hypothesis that although the universe is made up of fields of energy, these fields of energy cannot alone explain the Universe. Thus, in conjunction with these fields of energy, there must be some formative cause or power. It is these fields or powers that Sheldrake calls morphogenetic fields.

The Greek word *morphē* means form, hence 'morphogenetic' is that which produces forms. (Griffiths 1989:20).

Morphogenetic fields, also referred to as morphic fields, can be likened to the Aristotelian notion of soul or 'entelechies' that give form to substance (Sheldrake 1996:350). From this assumption Sheldrake moves on to suggest that the universe is made not only of matter, but also of form. Matter is potential energy; it has no existence of itself. Matter only has the potential to exist. Sheldrake's assertion is that matter is structured in the universe by form, what Aristotle would have called *eidos* (meaning shape or form). Sheldrake suggests something similar, in saying that matter is being organised by morphogenetic fields (Sheldrake 1996:350). An animal is an animal because it is matter that is organised within a particular morphogenetic field, while at the same time it is also in resonance with other similar organisms. So the universe, in this view, can be seen as developing through two forces working together. Firstly, there is energy or matter that has no structure. Secondly, there is form or the morphogenetic fields that give structure to the universe.

Within the context of this study, this is theologically significant as it could suggest that all of creation is dependent on the order or form of the cosmos for its meaning and structure.

Sheldrake says that, “[b]odies of all kinds derive their physical activity and material existence from the flowing energy within them... they are pervaded by spirit...” (1996:353).

Fr Bede agrees with Sheldrake’s thesis on form and matter in saying that,

The whole creation, from the smallest atom to the furthest star, is a manifestation in space and time, in multiplicity and change, of that unchanging One.... From the first beginning of matter, through all the stages of evolution, of organic growth and consciousness, the Spirit is structuring these forms, moulding them by her inherent power (1982:193).

A view such as this goes a long way towards restoring an awareness of the sacred within the cosmos. For Fr Bede the cosmic Person is the source and form, as well as the sustainer, of all creation. A discussion on the significance of a rediscovery of the sacredness of creation will take place in Chapter 5 A (ii).

iii) Psychology.

A third aspect of importance within this new paradigm is its implications for the understanding of the human psyche. For Fr Bede, a connection between science and psychology comes from the work of Teilhard de Chardin (cf. Griffiths 1989:25). Teilhard’s view shows a connection between the evolution of consciousness and the evolution of the cosmos. In discussing this connection he uses metaphorical language to describe material reality. He speaks of two forces that operate on creation. They are the radial and tangential. For him there is a centre out of which the world moves. At every moment of time there is, as

it were, a sphere and the particles on that sphere are governed by a tangential force that corresponds to forces spoken of in physics, such as gravity and electromagnetism. The tangential forces are forces that organise order in matter. Along with this there is also a radial force that encourages an evolutionary outward movement to higher levels of reality. The radial force, according to Teilhard, is 'spirit' and he speaks of it in terms of Christ-consciousness (Griffiths 1989:26). The point towards which all of the cosmos is evolving in consciousness is the "Christ-Omega" (Teilhard de Chardin 1965:167). Lyons comments on Teilhard's evolutionary view saying that:

Creation, incarnation, and redemption constitute the one movement, which Teilhard calls 'pleromization'. It is a movement towards the 'pleroma', the fullness of being, in which God and his completed world exist united together (Lyons 1982:156).

Thus, as the universe matures, the strength of this radial force increases in intensity. Hence the universe is emerging into consciousness constantly as it evolves. Fr Bede recognised this understanding (of an evolution of consciousness in the universe) as a link between science and psychology within the ambit of his view of reality (Griffiths 1989:26). In our present state our consciousness is relatively rudimentary, but there is an increasing discovery that human consciousness can develop beyond its current level to a level that Teilhard calls 'hypermental', and Sri Aurobindo¹² calls the 'supramental' consciousness, that is, a level of consciousness and experience that is beyond the personal and mental. Fr Bede describes such consciousness as transpersonal and transmental (Griffiths 1989:27). He says that with this level of consciousness we discover within ourselves "the ground of the whole structure of the universe and the whole scope of human consciousness" (1989:27).

This is a psychological breakthrough beyond mere mental consciousness to the supramental; it is a discovery of the ground of all creation, the Ultimate Reality sustaining the whole universe. Consciousness of this reality is nothing new. While such a consciousness of the ultimate reality sustaining the whole universe cannot be directly equated to the supramental, it must be mentioned that this form of consciousness is nothing new. As is stated in Chapter 3 A (i), such forms of consciousness predate Christianity and can be found in those early religions that are identified with cosmic revelation. Fr Bede records examples of how early Indian philosophers in the Vedas referred to *rita* (*r ta*) as the cosmic order that underlies the whole of the universe. This led them to see in Brahman the ground of all existence and in the Atman, the inner self, the ground of all consciousness (Griffiths 1995:x). Fr Bede notes with interest that there was a similar experience, referred to as nirvana, that took place in Buddhism at roughly the same time.

Gautama Siddhartha, the Buddha, piercing through the outer worlds of the senses, which is always subject to change and decay, was able to experience the transcendent mystery of *nirvana*... the passing away of all phenomena and the awareness of the void (*sunyata*), that which remains when all images and concepts have been surpassed and the mind dwells in the silent depths of its original being (Griffiths 1995:xi).

Experiences such as these, of which there are many more than mentioned here, give strong credence to the notion of cosmic revelation. The same cosmic Lord that is revealed in all of nature is the cosmic Lord that is revealed within the human soul. This assertion substantiates Fr Bede's approach to using multiple disciplines in articulating his world-view, since it shows a correlation between his understanding of interconnectivity in the cosmos as expressed in science, and in this psychological view of consciousness. The common ground articulated in both of these disciplines is that the whole universe is in each of us, implicated

in a multitude of layers. This united state of the whole cosmos is thus not only a physical reality, but also a psychological and spiritual reality.

As stated earlier (Chapter 3 C (i)), within the mechanistic and reductionist world-view there is a psychological distinction between the self and creation. Hence, we think of the rest of the universe as outside of and apart from ourselves. The new science however suggests a different reality. Karl Pribram, a friend of David Bohm, was the first to use an understanding of holography as a metaphor for reality (see Chapter 3 C (i) for a discussion on David Bohm's use of holography in relation to his quantum theory). He related holography to psychology. His suggestion is that we receive vibrations of light, sound and matter into our brains and then, as in the case of the hologram, we project a three-dimensional image of the world around ourselves (Griffiths 1989:31). This does not mean that the world does not exist. The energy is real and it is this energy that projects on our brains. What is suggested in this hypothesis is that the way in which we perceive the world depends on our level of consciousness. A greater consciousness will lead to far truer perception of reality. Jung was the first psychologist to propose something similar to this when he referred to the collective unconscious. Fr Bede mentions Jung's view in saying,

We have inherited from the past archetypes which are structured forms or patterns of organic energy, in which the unconscious reflects its experiences (Griffiths 1989:32).

Within the discipline of psychology, Fr Bede was particularly fascinated by the work of Ken Wilber and his explanation of consciousness. Wilber's notion is that human consciousness is a multi-levelled manifestation or expression of a single Consciousness, just as in physics the

electro-magnetic spectrum is a multi-banded wave (Wilber 1975:106)¹³. Thus as conscious beings we are manifestations of the one Ultimate Reality at different levels, depending on which level we identify with on the 'spectrum of consciousness'. The spectrum ranges from identity with God, others, self and the world through several gradations or bands to the drastically narrowed sense of identity referred to as egoic consciousness (Wilber 1975:106). At the deepest level the person's consciousness is identical with the Absolute and Ultimate Reality of the universe, known variously as *brahman* or *tao* or the Godhead.

On this level, man is identified with the universe, the All - or rather, he *is* the All... In short, man's innermost consciousness... is identical to the ultimate reality of the universe. (Wilber 1975:107-108).

Such an understanding of consciousness was used by Fr Bede to show that cosmic unity is more than just physical or biological and that essentially all of creation is interconnected at every level. Relating the above view to the scientific stance of David Bohm, it can be said that we are the explication of the one implicate reality, interconnected with all creation and with God. However, the way in which people perceive this unity depends on their state or level of consciousness. All creation is always one. However, some aspects may seem separated from the self because one's conscious development may be at a lower level on the spectrum of consciousness. An example of this would be a person that is on the existential level. Here the person makes a distinction between self and environment. One sees all creation as outside of, and separate from, who one believes one is. This is that person's state of consciousness; it is the way in which he or she will perceive him or herself in relation to creation.

While Ken Wilber's own theories have evolved since Fr Bede's death, the discussion above serves to give some indication as to what role Fr Bede saw the human psyche taking within his view of the cosmos. The discussion above is of significance in understanding Fr Bede's theology of the cosmos, in that it clearly displays his view that all creation is united to (not separate from) its Creator. All persons can know that they are one with God, one with the world and one with others and Self. Through meditation and other spiritual disciplines the individual can reach the level of Supreme Identity. Protestant tradition affirms the fact that we are *simul justus et peccator*, that is, at once justified, one with God, creation and self, yet through our sin we cut ourselves off from that supreme consciousness and we experience reality at a lower level. From the above it is clear that non-dual consciousness of the cosmos, at the level of supreme identity, is an essential element in Fr Bede's spirituality. However, some level of duality is present, and even necessary, at lower levels of consciousness in order for the cosmos and society to function (e.g. to be able to differentiate different persons and places as unique and different is a necessary duality for the functioning of society).

iv) The perennial philosophy.

The next important element that shapes Fr Bede's cosmic christology is what is referred to as the perennial philosophy. Until the sixteenth century there was a universal philosophy throughout the civilised world that was known as the "perennial philosophy" (Griffiths 1989:10). According to Fr Bede (1989:11) this universal wisdom prevailed from about 500 AD until about 1500 AD.

This philosophy was based on the belief that all of the cosmos was pervaded by, and could find its explanation in, a transcendent reality. Gradually however, as shown in Chapter 3 A

(i) above, a mechanistic and materialistic view of reality began to take over, which led to the eradication of the perennial philosophy (Griffiths 1989:11). This eradication took place mainly in the West. To a large extent the perennial philosophy was maintained in the cultures of the East.

The psychologist, Stanislav Grof, suggests that the reason for this is that the eastern mind-set is far more open to a cosmic consciousness and creative intelligence as primary attributes of existence (Grof 1984:4). The advantages of this view of reality are numerous. For instance, whereas the materialistic view of reality sees humans as highly developed animals or thinking biological machines, the perennialists see humans as one with the whole universe and its transcendent creator; humans are regarded as essentially divine (Grof 1984:4). Materialistic science is reductionist, seeking to alleviate human suffering by sociological and psychopharmacological means. The perennial philosophy, on the other hand, is far more spiritual, seeking to liberate the spirit of the person. Fr Bede did affirm that western science and materialism had done much to alleviate physical suffering, but they had neglected genuine spiritual and emotional fulfilment (1989:279). He remarked that cultures such as those of the East, that have maintained the perennial philosophy, have had a much stronger emphasis on spiritual liberation (Griffiths 1989:279). However, their struggle was that they often failed to offer practical solutions for the problems of everyday existence. Fr Bede's suggestion was that there needs to be a combination of the positive aspects of the perennial philosophy with the positive aspects of western science in order to have a holistic existence, meeting the needs of body, mind and spirit (Griffiths 1989:281).

Once again, one is able to observe some characteristic elements of Fr Bede's spirituality emerging from this discussion. Firstly, there is his emphasis on recapturing the sense of the

sacred in creation. Secondly, one is able to identify his desire to see a marriage between the positive aspects in eastern and in western culture that would move human consciousness to a higher level of truth, a truth that transcends any one cultural or religious approach to the complexity of reality.

D) Conclusion.

This section of the thesis has given an overview of the philosophical and theological background from which Fr Bede develops his cosmic christology. It has shown that Fr Bede drew upon a number of disciplines in order to understand and express his experience of reality as sacred and interconnected. It is important to remember that Fr Bede draws upon the insights of these concepts and philosophies, not because he believes they are able to express fully the truth of the cosmic Christ that he has experienced, but rather because they are able to give further insight and truer linguistic and conceptual expression to his spiritual experience. All of the areas discussed above have gone through significant changes since Fr Bede's death. I am certain that he would have found these subsequent theories and discoveries stimulating and challenging. However, the above discussion is sufficient to illustrate Fr Bede's use of, and reliance upon, a multiple of disciplines in conveying his spirituality.

The next section will discuss aspects of Fr Bede's theology of the cosmic Christ.

CHAPTER 4: Between two horizons: Aspects of the cosmic Christ in the spirituality of Bede Griffiths.

For the salvation of those who are good, for the destruction of evil in man, for the fulfilment of the kingdom of righteousness, I come to this world in ages that pass (Bhagavad Gita quoted in Griffiths 1987:66).

The above quotation is taken from the Bhagavad Gita with reference to Hindu concept of incarnation where an *avatara* (meaning a descent of God into the world) enters creation (cf. Griffiths 1987:66). Christianity and Hinduism both place emphasis upon God becoming 'incarnate', entering into the created world. Naturally, for the Hindu and Christian, investigating such similarities can be mutually enriching in an attempt to gain a broader understanding of the mystery of God in creation.

In this section of the thesis aspects of Fr Bede's cosmic christology will be examined in some detail. Areas will be pointed out in which Fr Bede draws on Hindu theology in order to enrich his understanding and expression of his christology. Since one cannot directly transfer Hindu and Christian theologies into each other without encountering considerable philosophical and conceptual difficulty, there will also be a focus on areas of divergence between Fr Bede's cosmic christology and understandings of the cosmic Person and incarnation that are found in Hinduism. Another important area to be covered will be Fr Bede's understanding of the relationship between the cosmic Christ and created order.

Thus, this section of the thesis will examine how and why Fr Bede chooses to use the language and concepts of Hinduism to express and articulate his experience of the person and work of Christ. In addition to this there will be some discussion on how Fr Bede views the differences between the person of Christ and incarnations in other religious traditions

(particularly Hinduism). Firstly though, it is necessary to gain some insight into Fr Bede's approach to, and understanding of, the doctrine of the cosmic Christ as it has developed within Christianity.

A) An examination of the manner in which Fr Bede understands and utilises traditional cosmic christology.

Cosmic christology has a long and rich history in the Christian tradition. Before pointing out some of the significant ways in which the doctrine developed, it is useful to examine briefly the term 'cosmic Christ'.

Within Christian doctrine this term is used to refer to a particular understanding of the person and work of Jesus Christ. The adjective 'cosmic' is derived from the Greek word *κόσμος*, which refers to the whole of the universe or created order. As will be seen below, the notion of the cosmic Christ is used to explain the manner in which Christ is related to the whole of the created order. A further emphasis in cosmic christology is that Christ's relationship with the created order stretches beyond human and earthly affairs. This means that the cosmic Christ has a broader significance than the historical view of the person of Jesus Christ that confines his significance to one period of time, one geographical area. The doctrine of the cosmic Christ has significance that stretches beyond one particular culture or religion or planet. In essence the doctrine of the cosmic Christ affirms that Christ has significance for the whole of the cosmos or created order and not just for the Christian faith and those who adhere to it.

Of course this doctrine has developed over a long period of time and continues to do so. The doctrine of the cosmic Christ, in its earliest Christian form, can be traced back to the New Testament. The Epistles, and particularly the writings of St Paul, contribute and bear testimony to the development of this aspect of the doctrine of Christ (cf. Colossians 1:15-18; Ephesians 1:10)¹⁴.

The Church Fathers further developed the New Testament understanding of the cosmic Christ, and ingrained it in subsequent Christian doctrine. One of the earliest explicit articulations of cosmic christology amongst the Church Fathers comes from Origen (c.185-c.254 AD) who writes, in reference to Revelation 22:13, that

... God the Logos is the Alpha, the beginning and the cause of all things, the one who is first not in time but in honour.... Let it be said that, since he provides an end for the thing created from him, he is the Omega at the consummation of the ages. He is first and then he is last, not in relation to time, but because he provides beginning and end (Origen quoted in Lyons 1982:130-131).

Thus, in Origen there is already a clear understanding of all of creation having Christ as its source and goal. Christ is the one who recapitulates all of creation in himself. Gregory of Nazianzus (d. 389 AD) also expressed an understanding of Christ as being present in the whole of the cosmos. He writes succinctly that, "Christ exists in all things that are" (in Fox 1988:75). By the time of Thomas Aquinas the theology of the cosmic Christ had developed further. Building upon the central idea of *theosis* or divinisation, as found in the Eastern Fathers, the stress in cosmic christology was not only upon the notion of Christ as present in the whole of the cosmos, but also that through Christ's incarnation the whole of the cosmos is able to share in the divine nature of God.

Each creature is a witness to God's power and omnipotence; and its beauty is a witness to the divine wisdom.... Every creature participates in some way in the likeness of the Divine Essence.... The Incarnation accomplished the following: That God became human and that humans became God and sharers in the divine nature (Aquinas quoted in Fox 1988:75).

Of course the development of cosmic christology continued in various stages throughout Christian history, and still continues today. In recent times a significant contribution to the doctrine of the cosmic Christ has come from Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Teilhard's view, like Origen's, brings together an understanding of Christ and the evolutionary nature of the cosmos, in a manner that shows the cosmic Christ not only as the source and sustainer of all that is, but also the ultimate goal of all creation. What is a notable further contribution from Teilhard is his suggestion that the cosmic aspect of Christ is far more significant than had previously been acknowledged in the Christian faith, in that Christ actually has a third nature, that is, a cosmic nature. Teilhard writes: "This third nature of Christ (neither human nor divine, but cosmic) – has not noticeably attracted the explicit attention of the faithful or of theologians" (Teilhard quoted in Fox 1988:77). Lyons comments further on Teilhard's contribution to the doctrine of the cosmic Christ.

As the one who holds all things together, Christ exercises a supremacy over the universe which is physical, not simply juridical. He is the unifying centre of the universe and its goal. The function of holding all things together indicates that Christ is not only man and God; he also possesses a third aspect - indeed, a third nature - which is cosmic (Lyons 1982:153).

From the preceding discussion on the development of this doctrine one is able to extract three seminal emphases that have arisen (although not chronological, or linear, emphases). Firstly, from biblical and natural revelation comes the understanding of Christ as the source and sustainer of the whole cosmos. Secondly there is the bridging of the radical distinction

between creator and creation, leading to the notion that Christ is present in all creation – and by his presence he sanctifies and divinises the whole cosmos. The third aspect is the understanding that the whole of the cosmos has Christ as its ultimate goal.

What is of importance for this thesis is the way in which Fr Bede uses and understands the term cosmic Christ as well as the way in which he emphasises it. Even though the section above shows that the doctrine of the cosmic Christ developed throughout Christian history, it has been greatly neglected in recent centuries. This is largely as a result of the impact of Newtonian science and its impact upon the western world-view. Thus Fr Bede's emphasis on this aspect of christology serves as an essential corrective within the Christian faith.

Moreover, what makes his cosmic christology so insightful and valuable is his emphasis on the primacy of experience. However, this also presents some challenges to his readers since the communication of experience is never able to convey fully the depth and complexity of the experience itself. It is because of this challenge that this thesis has suggested that Fr Bede is constantly moving between two 'horizons'. The one horizon is that of his experience of the cosmic Christ – an element that arises from the mystical influence of Hinduism on his faith. This experience is beyond completely accurate doctrinal and philosophical expression since it is primarily mystical in nature. The other horizon is that of Fr Bede's expression and articulation of his experience using words and concepts that can convey only partly the mystery of reality.

One of the primary struggles in Fr Bede's cosmic christology is his desire to communicate both the unity and distinction that exist between creation and creator. Language is unable to express fully the experience of true unity in distinction without weakening the emphasis on unity when stressing distinction. For the Christian, creation, including human persons, and so



also to some extent the incarnate Christ, is not merely a manifestation of God (as in the case of an *avatara* in Hinduism). Rather, creation differs in its very nature from God who created it. Creation differs in its nature from God in that its nature is that of the creation of a creator God. Yet, at the same time while there is distinction between creator and creation the two are not separate from each other.

This problem leads Fr Bede to use the term cosmic in two senses. The first way in which Fr Bede uses the term cosmic, in reference to his cosmic christology, has strong ties and links to the Christian faith and its doctrines, while this second usage of the term has a range that stretches beyond conventional Christianity.

Firstly, he uses the term cosmic in the sense of the created order or cosmos. Of this creation he writes:

But for the Christian there is a creation, which is not simply a “manifestation” of God, but a real creation in the sense which has been explained, which differs in its very nature from God, that is, which has a created being which is essentially different from the being of God (Griffiths 1973:53).

Thus, on one level when Fr Bede speaks of the cosmos in relation to Christ he is referring to all that has been created by the creator and is distinct in nature from that creator. The dilemma that arises from this distinction is that if taken to the extreme it could suggest a radical separation between creator and creation. However, Fr Bede uses his cosmic christology to overcome this difficulty. He does this by emphasising the fact that while God is distinct from creation, God, in Christ, is also within creation. Reflecting on his own experience of this reality Fr Bede writes that “God is to be seen in the earth and in the whole creation” (1992:96). Thus, when he refers to the cosmic Christ in this sense, he is referring

to the continuing creative and sustaining activity of Christ as present in creation. "In him and through him and for him all things are created and in him all things hold together" (Colossians 1:16). In short, this usage of the term has primarily to do with the relationship between Christ and material reality.

Fr Bede employs the term cosmic Christ in a second manner. Here he speaks of the cosmic Christ who is "beyond space and time, is totally one with the Father, the creator God, and so is also present in creation" (1992:96). This is the transcendent element of his cosmic christology, and here Fr Bede moves from using the notion of the cosmic Christ in relation only to material or physical reality to further include the psychological and spiritual aspects of reality. In relating and expressing this aspect of his experience of the cosmic Christ, Fr Bede draws on a wide range of disciplines, cultures and religions. It is because of this second understanding of the cosmic Christ that Fr Bede has been able to encounter, and be encountered by, people of others faiths and cultures. He maintained with passion that the cosmic Christ, in this broader usage of the term, is "present in all religion", and that "Jesus died for all humanity without exception" (1992:96).

Taking his usage of the cosmic Christ further, in this second sense, Fr Bede sees Christ not only as having significance for all physical reality, but also having significance for all reality, physical, psychological and spiritual (cf. Griffiths 1992:96-97). The key to the cosmic Christ's significance for all reality is to be found in Fr Bede's emphasis on the transformation of the cosmos. In line with other cosmic Christologies Fr Bede emphasises that Christ, through his incarnation, life and ascension, is constantly bringing the divine life of God into creation, and drawing the cosmos into the divine life of God. The cosmic Christ is that Person that holds all creation together and creates it moment by moment. This

transformation, in Christian terms, as it is found in Fr Bede's spirituality, is influenced by Teilhard de Chardin's evolutionary view of the cosmos as moving towards 'Christ consciousness' – the goal of all creation (cf. Griffiths 1989:92-95).

In concluding this section on the way in which Fr Bede approaches and utilises the notion of the cosmic Christ, it must be noted that neither of these two uses, the Christian nor the mystical, or spiritual, usage, expressed above, are novel. As mentioned in the introduction to this section, the understanding of Christ as creator, sustainer and goal of the whole cosmos (spiritual, physical and psychological) has become a common understanding within cosmic christology. However, there are two things that make Fr Bede's cosmic christology particularly valuable and significant. The first is the primacy of experience, in this case experiencing the cosmic Christ. Well-formulated doctrine must always be understood as an expression of a far greater reality, a reality that can only be experienced beyond the confines of language and human reason. This leads to the second valuable contribution that Fr Bede makes to continuing development of cosmic christology: Fr Bede shifts the boundaries of contemporary Christian doctrine, as will be shown below, by moving beyond the confines of the traditional language and philosophy associated with christology and drawing on a wide range of disciplines, religions and cultures to communicate and express his experience of the cosmic Christ.

The next section of this chapter will examine in detail the way in which Fr Bede has enriched his cosmic christology by relating it to, and expressing it through, Indian (and particularly Hindu), cultural and religious expressions.

B) Christ in India.

As the passage in the introduction illustrates, the concept of incarnate deity is nothing new to India. In fact modern Hindus tend to say that every age has an incarnation. According to Fr Bede the most renowned incarnation at present is Satya Sai Baba (1987:67). At a later stage in this chapter there will be a discussion on some significant differences between the Hindu and Christian concepts of incarnation. Here however, one needs only note that incarnation, in a broad sense, is not strange to India.

It is interesting to note a theological shift that took place within Fr Bede. Initially, it was Fr Bede's intention to go to India in order to establish a Benedictine monastery, and in so doing take Christ to India. However, upon his arrival in India he discovered that Christ was already there in a very real sense, not only through the Church, but also present in the lives of very many devout people. So, instead of going to India merely to impart and share his faith, Fr Bede came to a new discovery of God, the Church and Christ by allowing the rich presence of Christ in India, its people and religion, to influence him (1982:7). Valiaveetil suggests that Fr Bede builds his Indian christology on the basis of "the deepest experience of the Absolute in the Hindu and Christian traditions" (1997:9). Accordingly, Fr Bede is able to draw on the strengths and insights of both Hindu and Christian spirituality and doctrine in expressing his experience of the Absolute. Valiaveetil notes the complementarity that is of value in such an approach when writing:

The Hindu experience springs from the contemplation of the cosmos, from the human experience of the physical and the psychic world.... The Christian experience of the Absolute has its basis in the Person of Jesus Christ (1997:9)

Commenting on the worth of his experience in the East, and how it has enriched his spirituality and theology, Fr Bede writes that when

... the Christian faith is seen from the Oriental perspective, another aspect of Truth contained in the original revelation is disclosed (1982:26).

Arising from his developing discovery Fr Bede interpreted and expressed the doctrine of Christ in the light of eastern linguistic and theological concepts; in this process he came to realise more fully the extent to which Christ was truly present in India (cf. Griffiths 1984:218-223 for an early account of Fr Bede's awakening to the presence of the "Unknown Christ of Hinduism").

The East has a different understanding of God, and would therefore be expected to have a different understanding of the second person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ. In India Fr Bede discovered an ethos of God-consciousness that permeates all life. In essence this understanding maintains that all of the cosmos is sacred, an emphasis that became an essential element in the formulation of his cosmic christology (1982:15-16). In a broad sense knowledge of God in the East is far more intuitive, and much less rational, that is the norm in western theology. This is in part because knowledge of God, in the East, is much more a matter of experiencing God than a matter of doctrinal formulation concerning God. As a sannyasi in India Fr Bede's cosmic christology was fundamentally influenced by this mystical approach as he came to discover and incorporate his discoveries and experiences into his theology.

The next section will focus on the most significant influence from Hinduism on Fr Bede's cosmic christology, that is, the notion of the cosmic Person.

C) The cosmic Person – *purusha*.

To some extent Fr Bede's relationship with other religions was influenced, as a Catholic, by the stance of the Second Vatican Council which held that the "Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in other religions" (in Griffiths 1992:96). Thus in accordance with the widely-accepted position of the Second Vatican Council Fr Bede had a positive view of other non-Christian religions¹⁵. The opening passage of *Lumen Gentium* states:

In Christ the Church is a kind of sacrament, that is to say it is a sign and instrument of the intimate union with God and the unity of all mankind (in Gaybba 1981:87).

This notion of the Church as a sacrament that has universal significance for all people and faiths is not that far removed from Fr Bede's understanding of the person and work of Christ as "mythical symbol" with efficacy for all people and all of creation (Griffiths 1983:129-130 see also Chapter 3 A (i)). However, as will be shown, Fr Bede went far beyond the official stance of the Second Vatican Council on other religions. It is certainly clear from Fr Bede's later works that he viewed Christ as significant for all religions. In his early works he maintains that all religion contains truth leading up to Christ, in much the same way that Clement of Alexandria saw Greek philosophy as a *praeparatio evangelica* (a preparation for the coming of the Gospel). Fr Bede writes:

Thus there is a solid tradition according to which Christianity, that is to say the mystery of Christ and the Church, can be said to have existed from the beginning of the world. It is present in creation, because the whole creation finds its meaning and its purpose in Christ, who assumes the whole material universe in the life of God. It is present in all history, because Christ comes as

the 'fulfilment' of history and reveals the nature of human destiny. Above all, it is found in the different religious traditions of the world, because in them this 'mystery' is gradually unfolded... [in these religions] we have so many 'prophecies' as it were of the mystery of Christ. (Griffiths 1984:220).

Here again one is able to detect the significant influence that Teilhard de Chardin's cosmic christology had on Fr Bede's theological and spiritual development. Teilhard maintained that Christ is the 'omega', or goal, of creation, and as such, the goal of all religion (cf. Teilhard de Chardin 1965:54-56). Lyons gives a synopsis of Teilhard's view, in saying that according to Teilhard, "the world has only one goal of creation, Omega, the supernatural goal, which is Christ" (Lyons 1982:158). As stated earlier (Chapter 3 C (iii)) Teilhard's view is evolutionary. Lyons suggests that for Teilhard the transformation of the Cosmos (cosmogogenesis) can only be fully expressed in Christic transformation (expressed as Christogenesis) (1982:155). Valiaveetil observes that Fr Bede's view of the evolution of consciousness finds resonance with both Teilhard's notion of the 'omega point' and with what Sri Aurobindo¹⁶ calls the 'gnostic being' or 'superman' (1997:9). In his writings Fr Bede adopted aspects of both Aurobindo's and Teilhard's evolutionary models for the transformation of creation particularly in relation to the evolution of consciousness (cf. Chapter 3 C (iii)).

So as the universe continues to evolve, the relative importance of the tangential force decreases while the importance of the radial force increases. The radial force for Teilhard is spirit and he speaks of it as Christ-consciousness. As the universe matures the intensity of this radial force of Christ-consciousness increases exponentially, being continuously contributed to and reinforced by all the centuries of consciousness in the universe (Griffiths 1989:26).

Thus, for Fr Bede, as for Teilhard de Chardin, the cosmic Christ is both the source and goal of all creation. However, with regard to the significance of the cosmic Christ for religion, Fr Bede often made use of an illustration (quoted below) to explain his view.

The Christian mission is to help other people grow but also to learn from them so that our Christian faith grows too.... Our aim is the deepening of our own faith which then becomes more open to others. This is not easy, and everybody has to answer the question themselves. I like the illustration of fingers and the palm of the hand. The fingers represent Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Christianity. Buddhism is miles from Christianity, and each has its own position. If you try and mix them, taking a bit of Hinduism or Buddhism and adding Christianity, that is syncretism. But if you go deeply into any one tradition you converge on the centre, and there you see how we all come forth from a common root (Griffiths 1992:96-97¹⁷).

From the above it is clear to see that Fr Bede's understanding of religious development fits into the broad 'perennialist' understanding of all religion as originating from a common source. For Fr Bede Christ is this source, as he notes, "Christ is ultimately the source of all religion. He is behind it all" (1992:97). Such an understanding is complex in that it needs to incorporate an understanding of Christ as the true source of all religion that predates the Christian faith. It is in this regard that Fr Bede's understanding of cosmic or universal revelation is so important (cf. Chapter Three).

Fr Bede upholds the understanding that the mystery of Christ has existed since the foundation of the world (see quotation above from Griffiths 1984:220). The theological starting point of this notion is to be found in the teaching of the Apostle Paul. According to Paul the whole creation takes place "in Christ", "For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (Colossians 1:16-17). This means that we cannot properly think of anything apart from

Christ, as Fr Bede insists (1992:97). It is Christ who gives existence and meaning to all that exists. Here Fr Bede is speaking of the pre-incarnate Christ, the *logos* spoken of in John 1:1-2 and a multitude of other New Testament texts.

Thus far the discussion of Fr Bede's understanding of the cosmic Person has focussed only on the insights that can be gained from Christian theology¹⁸. An essential element to understanding Fr Bede's cosmic christology is a discussion of the way in which he relates the above-mentioned aspects of Christian doctrine to the Hindu doctrine of the *purusha*. The word *purusha* can be translated as 'man', 'cosmic man', 'cosmic person' or 'archetypal person' (cf. Griffiths 1989:128).

The idea of an archetypal or cosmic Person is developed in Hinduism, although it can also be found in Buddhism and Islam. The Rig Veda states, "this purusha is all that has been and all that will be, the Lord of immortality" (in Griffiths 1989:128). Furthermore, the Rig Veda says that the *purusha* is both immanent in, and transcends all, creation. "One fourth of Him is here on earth, three-fourths are above in heaven" (quoted in Griffiths 1983:74). Fr Bede suggests that the one fourth of the *purusha* that is immanent on earth manifests everything that is, including human persons. The three fourths are the dimension of "his being above in heaven" (1983:75). As such the *purusha* is both the person from whom all creation comes and the one who sustains all creation.

Fr Bede suggests it is very probable that Jesus identified himself with the primordial or cosmic Person in saying "... before Abraham was I am" (John 8:58).

The primordial man was before Abraham and before all men, and I think it is very probable that Jesus is identifying himself there with this primordial or heavenly man, who is prior to all creation. (Griffiths 1989:120).

Fr Bede takes this notion further, as do many New Testament scholars, in saying that Jesus identifies himself with the Son of Man figure from the Book of Enoch. This book was written a short time before Jesus and was almost certainly in circulation during Christ's earthly life. Accordingly, Fr Bede notes that it is highly likely that its contents would have been familiar to Christ. In the Book of Enoch the Son of Man appears and is identified with the "Ancient of Days" who is the primordial or cosmic Person who existed before creation (cf. Griffiths 1989:120). The Book of Enoch also says that the Son of Man was hidden from the world and would be manifest at the end of time. This links him with the Son of Man image that is to be found in the book of Daniel.

In Daniel, the Son of Man is said to have existed from the beginning but would come at the *eschaton* or fullness of time. The Son of Man in Enoch is also viewed as the promised Messiah who was to come. Fr Bede feels that this further corroborates the idea that Jesus would have viewed himself in these terms as the primordial person, the Son of Man and the transcendent Messiah who was to come (Griffiths 1989:121). This is in line with the fact that in the Gospels Jesus never speaks of himself as God. His most common designation of himself is Son of Man.

Another remarkable insight that comes from the notion of *purusha* is that of the sacrifice of the cosmic Person. At the beginning of time the *purusha* is sacrificed and his limbs are scattered over the world. In ritual sacrifice *purusha* is gathered together and becomes one

again. According to Fr Bede this has a profound correlation in the concept of Adam and the Son of Man. St Augustine said that "Adam, at the fall, was scattered over all the earth" (quoted in Griffiths 1983:75). Fr Bede's commentary on this is that humanity

... was once one, one with nature, one with himself, one with God. And then when he fell he was scattered and divided. The atonement means that God comes into this divided universe and gathers those scattered pieces together and in his sacrifice reunites mankind. He brings all persons together in his Person (1983:75).

Just as the *purusha*, or cosmic Person of the Vedas, once sacrificed is made whole again, so too one can see this taking place in the Christian concept of atonement. God enters the universe and gathers divided and scattered persons and makes them one in his Person.

Augustine writes, "In the end there will *unus Christus amans seipsum* - One Christ loving himself in all his members" (quoted in Griffiths 1983:75). Jesus is the lamb that was slain before the creation of the world, as with the Hindu concept of the *purusha*. Fr Bede says that it is in this regard that Jesus sees himself as the Son of Man. As suggested in the book of Daniel, the Son of Man is the one that comes at the end of time to fulfil God's plan for the unity of creation (1989:118). The cosmic Person who comes in the fullness of time to be a sacrifice, is the one that makes all reality, the entire cosmos, whole again.

Fr Bede's cosmic christology further draws on the widely accepted view that Jesus identified himself with the 'suffering servant' of Isaiah 53 (1989:119). Jesus is not only the Son of Man that comes on the clouds of heaven (Matthew 26:63-64), but also the suffering servant that gives life to the world. Jesus speaks of himself as a representative of all people

(Matthew 25:40), just as the suffering servant of Isaiah is representative of Israel. Jesus is the *purusha*, the cosmic Person, the one who is before all creation, yet who comes at the end as the Son of Man to redeem all creation. He is the suffering servant who gathers all things up under One head (Ephesians 1:10), taking all that is scattered and divided and making it One.

This section has shown how Fr Bede's understanding of the doctrine and work of Christ is enriched by the Hindu doctrine of the *purusha*. His theological formulation goes a long way towards expressing the doctrine of Christ in a manner that would be far more acceptable to the eastern mindset. He comments:

In India there is today an attempt to create an Indian Christian Theology. We seek to express our Christian faith in the language of Vedanta as the Greek Fathers expressed it in the language of Plato and Aristotle. Purusha will be one of the key words in an Indian Christian Theology (1983:76).

His contribution to an innovative christology cannot be discounted in this regard. Fr Bede's approach and sensitivity to the culture and religions of the East can serve as an example to theologians and Christians in many parts of the world who are attempting to form a faith that is inculturated. The significance of these steps will be discussed in some detail in the next chapter of this thesis.

D) Christ and creation.

For Christians the doctrine of the incarnation is central to understanding Christ's person and work. The second article of the Nicea-Constantinople Creed (381 AD) expresses this clearly in presenting a synopsis of the Christian doctrine of the person and work of Christ. It says (in paraphrase) that Jesus is the only Son of God, begotten from the Father. More than that, Jesus is true God from true God, creator of all things. It also affirms that for the salvation of creation Jesus became a human person, being born of the Virgin Mary.

This section will discuss how Fr Bede interprets the incarnation in his cosmic christology, and highlight new insights of this aspect of Christian doctrine, as well as the significance of it for our faith. This will be done under a number of separate headings.

i) Jesus: Self-knowledge of the Father.

The archetypal man is said to have been created (or in this case begotten) in the image of God. Fr Bede deals with this notion of Christ as the image of the Father (or God) in his explanation of the Trinity as *saccidananda* (1982:190).

Within the context of *saccidananda* Fr Bede says that the Father is *sat*, meaning True Being, the source of all that exists. Everything that exists does so in the Being of the Father who is the source of all exists. The Son is *chit*, meaning knowledge. As such the Son is the knowledge of the Father and exists within the Being (or mind) of God.

The Holy Spirit is *ananda*, the bliss of love between Father and Son and Son and Father, uniting each to the other and to creation. Returning to the notion of the Son as *chit*, Fr Bede expresses this understanding in saying that the Son as knowledge of the Father is, "... Being reflecting on itself, knowing itself, expressing itself in the eternal Word" (Griffiths 1982:190). All creation comes into being through the manifestation of the Father in the Son. Within Fr Bede's Indian Christian theology the Son would be

... *Saguna Brahman*, Brahman 'with attributes', as Creator, Lord, Saviour, the Self-manifestation of the unmanifest God, the personal aspect of the Godhead, the *Purusha* (1982:190).

Within traditional christology the Son is said to be the image of the invisible God, or the *eikon tou theou*, to use the words of the New Testament (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4). Jesus is not the Father. He always remains the Son, even though he is of one substance with the Father. Christian doctrine would suggest that Jesus is the *morphē tou theou*, the manifestation, the form or the nature of God as spoken of by Paul in Philippians 2:6. Fr Bede points out that the word *morphē*, form, is from the same root as the Sanskrit word *murti* (Griffiths 1989:122). This means Jesus is the image or form of God, the Self-Knowledge of the Father through whom all creation comes into being. When the Source of all reflects on Self, it expresses Self in the form of an eternal Self-Knowing and Self-Revealing word, the *logos* of John's Gospel (cf. John 1:1-3). Thus Jesus the *logos* of God can be likened to the *purusha* of the Bhagavad Gita, as the Self-knowledge of the source with attributes (*saguna brahman*), that is to say the son, with attributes, is a reflection upon the source who transcends all

reasonable human description and characterisation (*nirguna brahman*) (cf. Griffiths 1982:190). Fr Bede suggests that Colossians 1:15-17 points this out quite clearly.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities, all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things and in him all things hold together. (New International Version).

He suggests that this conception of Jesus as the cosmic Person or cosmic Lord, “who is God’s self-manifestation to the world, gives us the key to the New Testament understanding of the relation of Jesus to God” (1989:124) and as such enriches our understanding of both Christ and the Trinity.

Valiaveetil observes of this aspect of Fr Bede’s cosmic christology that, “In Christ’s consciousness of unity with the Father we have the basis of Christian Advaita. It is a non-dual experience, but an experience of unity in distinction, of oneness with difference” (1997:8). Here again one can see where Teilhard de Chardin’s theology has influenced Fr Bede’s. Fr Bede sums up his view of Christ’s unity in distinction with the Father in the following manner:

... here [in John 17:21] Jesus reveals this inner mystery of his oneness with the Father. This to me is the climax of it all, that this Son of Man, this man knows Himself in this unity with the Father. He can say, “I and the Father are one.” And that is the mystery of unity in distinction. This is the point that is generally missed. Jesus does not say, “I am the Father.” That would be pure advaita, pure identity, but he says rather, “I and the Father are one,” which is unity in distinction... And he also says, “I am in the Father, and the Father is in me.” That is the proper way of expressing the advaita in Christian terms (Griffiths quoted in Valiaveetil 1997:8).

Thus, it can safely be said that for Fr Bede the Trinity seen within the framework of Christian advaita reveals the mystery of unity in distinction, as Fr Bede understood it. Jesus' very identity is advaitic, and this non-dual relationship is cosmic in that it extends to all creation. Fr Bede expressed this notion in saying that

... the Word is the self-expression, the self-knowledge of God, and the Spirit is the self-communication of His being. And just as God knows Himself in the whole creation he has made, so He loves Himself (in it). The Spirit is present in the whole creation... In a real sense, we are loved into existence by God (Griffiths in Valiaveetil 1997:8).

Therefore, to sum up, in his identity as self-knowledge of the Father, the cosmic Christ reveals the true nature of unity in distinction. In this relationship we see truly the reconciliation of the One and many, the cosmic significance of the Son's filial unity with the Father.

ii) **Jesus: God of God.**

The Council of Nicaea, in 325 AD, affirmed the doctrine that Jesus is fully God and fully human in one person, one *ousia* (person) in two *hypostaseis* (natures). While Fr Bede (1989:113) agrees with the outcome of the council, he emphasises the proposition of many biblical scholars, who maintain that Jesus is not presented as fully God in the New Testament.

Fr Bede holds that the New Testament does not start from the premise of Jesus as God, but from the premise of Jesus as human. He also shows that Jesus never speaks of himself as God, rather he refers to himself as the Son of Man, which in Hebrew and Aramaic is practically equivalent to man (or human) as has been suggested above

(1989:113). He goes further in saying that it is only after his death that his disciples begin to ask the question who this Man was and interpret his life and message in the light of the Jewish tradition. Thus, Fr Bede notes that it is only at the end of the New Testament period that the disciples begin to refer to Jesus as God; and that the assertion that Jesus is Lord is based on reflection upon Christ's person and message and particularly upon his resurrection (cf. Griffiths 1989:113-114). Moreover, Fr Bede cautions that an unqualified use of the word 'God' in relation to Jesus can be dangerous. He feels that it could cause a great deal of confusion, particularly if seen from the perspective of other religious traditions (1989:114). For the Muslim to say that a man, Jesus, is God, would be the 'ultimate blasphemy'. Such an assertion would associate a creature with the creator and thus deny the absolute transcendence of the one God. This is the one extreme. For the Hindu there is also danger, in that the Hindu may take the notion of Jesus as God to the other extreme. Fr Bede sums up the difficulty with this concept in relation to Hinduism in saying that for a Hindu "there is no difficulty in speaking of Jesus as God since in Hinduism every human being is potentially divine and anyone who has realised his divinity is entitled to be called God or *Bhagavan*" (1989:114).

Thus, the Hindu may have no problem with seeing Jesus as an *avatara*, an incarnation of God. However, here a major problem arises for the Christian when the incarnation of Christ is related to the Hindu notion of incarnation. Unlike an *avatara*, Jesus is not merely one of many forms in which God has appeared on earth. As will be discussed later, Jesus is *the* incarnation of God.

However, to return to the discussion of Jesus as fully God and fully human, Fr Bede held that in the New Testament Jesus is not precisely God in an unqualified sense. He is, as mentioned in the section above, the Word of God, the Image of God, the Self-revelation and manifestation of God, “who is reflected in the whole creation and brings the whole creation back to God” (1989:126-127). The nearest that the New Testament comes to saying that Jesus is God, is to be found in the prologue of John’s Gospel. Here it says that the Word (*logos*) who became flesh both was God (*theos*) and was in relation to God (*pros ton theon*) (Griffiths 1989:127). It is important not to misunderstand what Fr Bede is saying about Jesus being God. What he says is that it is

... therefore perfectly correct to say that Jesus is God, but always with the qualification that he is ‘God from God’, that is, he receives the Godhead from the Father, which is what characterises him as the Son; and furthermore he is not simply God, but God in man and man in God. (Griffiths 1989:127).

Fr Bede’s understanding of the cosmic Christ as the Self-revelation of the Father thus emphasises both the nature of Christ as God of God, and his full humanity as a person. In many respects this aspect of Fr Bede’s christology shows how he maintains traditional thoughts on the person of Christ. Hence, the cosmic Christ that Fr Bede experienced and the Christ of whom Fr Bede speaks is not foreign to Christianity and its doctrine, although in some other places, his expression of the doctrine of Christ does transcend the boundaries of traditional Christian doctrine, through his use of Hindu theological concepts and language.

iii) **Jesus in history and his full humanity.**

The next essential element in Fr Bede's cosmic christology is the relationship between Christ and history and how this shows that Christ is fully human. As argued above, Jesus is God of God who enters into creation, once, in the concrete historical context of human history. This derives from the fact that the Christian tradition comes out of the Hebrew faith with its concept of time. The Hebrew tradition has an understanding of time as linear. There are certain historical events that are of fundamental importance to the Hebrew faith (Griffiths 1983:175). An example is the historical importance of the Exodus from Egypt, going through the desert and into the promised land. According to this linear view of time, all time moves according to a divine plan, towards an end (*eschaton*). It is held that God reveals God's self not only in nature, but also in history, in relationships with particular historical groups and people and in the events that take place in their lives (cf. Wong 1996:2).

In this sense Christianity derives from the historical event of Jesus Christ who was born in a particular time and place, lived and died.

This is what is specific in the Christian mystical experience. The absolute reality is experienced as revealed in Christ, in the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth. It is not an experience of absolute reality revealed in the Cosmos, in the cycle of time in nature, nor in the human Self, the psychic being with its capacity for self-transcendence, but in a historic person and a historic event (Griffiths 1983:179).

The true significance of this is that God is fully incarnate in a historical person, Jesus Christ. God enters fully into our human experience. The bible points out that Jesus knew pain and suffering, as well as joy. He knew the limitations and restrictions, as

well as the weaknesses, of human nature. These human attributes and experiences are an important distinction between notions of incarnation in Christianity and Hinduism (cf. Chapter 4 D (iv)). Christ enters into creation fully as a human person. He was “one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus overcame the sin and weakness of humanity both as the historical and the cosmic Person. He brings all things together in himself (Ephesians 1:10), and in the resurrection takes all of creation into the Godhead once and for all. Fr Bede maintained, as most Christians do, that this was a once-off event that cannot be repeated (Wong 1996:3).

This is a key distinction between Christianity and Hinduism. Fr Bede employs the notion of ‘symbol’ to describe the historical significance Christ event.

The death and resurrection of Christ is a unique event. In one sense it is a mythological event, an event of supreme symbolism. It is a sign of God’s salvation for the whole creation and the whole of humanity (Griffiths 1983:125).

Essential to understanding how the historical work of Christ functions as a symbol of salvation is an understanding of the difference between historical and cosmic revelation (see Chapter 3 A (i)). Fr Bede sums up the difference as follows.

The fundamental difference between the Hebrew and the Hindu Revelation is that the latter is the revelation of God’s work in creation, and the former is the revelation of God’s work in history, the history of a particular people (1983:120).

Rama and Krishna are thus mythical symbols that have a universal meaning for all creation, and they belong to cyclic time. By contrast, Jesus is a symbol who reveals

God as rooted in history and creation. He is a human person, a part of the created order. Fr Bede says that the life, death and resurrection of Jesus are events of supreme symbolism in that they serve as a sign of God's salvation for all of creation and the whole of humanity (1983:125). However, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus are not only important as a sign of salvation. These aspects are important as an historical event in that not only do the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ have a message of salvation for the whole cosmos, they also have a concrete effect on history.

The divine life penetrates history, time, suffering, and death, and then raises history and time and suffering and death into a new creation, a new order of being in which these things are not lost, not destroyed, but transfigured (Griffiths 1983:127).

God becoming fully human, in the person of Jesus, is a symbol of the new creation. As God enters history in human form he divinises creation, sanctifying it by His human presence. As the fully human Jesus is ascends into the Godhead he completes this act by reuniting creation to its source and taking matter into God. This is only possibly through God taking becoming fully human and entering history.

iv) **Buddha, Krishna and Christ.**

The earlier section entitled, 'Christ in India', pointed out that incarnation is not a foreign concept to India. Modern Hindus would say that every age has an incarnation or *avatara*. In fact many gurus in India proclaim themselves to be avatars. Fr Bede cites Satya Sai Baba as a contemporary example of just such a person, who claims to be the supreme *avatara* beyond Jesus, Buddha and Krishna (Griffiths 1987:67). In

classical tradition however, there are only ten avatars, the final (tenth) one being Kalki who comes at the end of the world to bring all things to a conclusion (Griffiths 1983:124). It is worth noting that Christ would be regarded as an *avatara* by most modern Hindus. Perhaps we could then speak of him as the final *avatara* among others? Fr Bede would say no.

The Hindu doctrine of the *avatara* and the Christian concept of incarnation are in fact very different in many ways. Fr Bede says, firstly, an *avatara* is based on a myth rather than history (1987:67). The fish, the boar and tortoise are all mythological figures. Even Rama and Krishna are only semi-historical. Fr Bede says there may have been historical persons, Rama and Krishna, but as avatars they are more like Hector or Achilles, the heroes of Greek epics. They may have existed as people, but the stories that have grown up around them are legendary rather than historical (1987:67).

A further difference between Christ and Krishna has to do with the strong moral emphasis in the Judeo-Christian traditions. Valiaveetil notes that Krishna is known for the quality of ecstatic love and for “somewhat questionable behaviour toward the Gopis which seems to show him in an immoral light” (1997:9). However, in the historical person of Christ there is no such moral ambiguity. Jesus Christ represents the epitome of moral perfection and holiness, which is widely viewed by Christians as a primary characteristic of God himself. Fr Bede says:

The love of God was revealed in Christ not in poetry, but in history. It was shown not in ecstasy, but in self-giving for others, in the surrender of his life on the cross (1976:83).

The third, and most significant difference between incarnation and *avatara* is that the concept of *avatara* is a theophany rather than in incarnation (as understood in Christian terms). A theophany fits comfortably into a cyclic notion of time. In India time is conceived as moving in cycles. The world comes from *brahman*, goes through all the cycles of life and in the end it returns to *brahman*. Then the cycle starts again. In this view of time there is no real beginning and end, no finality. Each time righteousness declines the *avatara* appears temporarily and then disappears when his task is complete. Thus the *avatara* appears again and again on earth in some form or another, throughout the cycles of time (Griffiths 1983:124-125).

For the Christian, the whole point of the incarnation is that Jesus came at the end of the age to bring all things to completion (Ephesians 1:10). There is finality in this event. It is an event that takes place in history. Christ is God incarnate, not merely a theophany. In contrast to the cyclic view of time, the Judeo-Christian view is linear. All things progress towards an end, the *eschaton* where history is fulfilled. The incarnation is part of this plan and takes place in history.

The *avatara* is conceived as a *lila* (play) of God. The Christian could never speak of the terrible suffering of the crucifixion of Christ as *lila*¹⁹ (Griffiths 1987:69).

However, it must be noted that *lila*, as understood in the context of the Gita, does refer to the purposeful activity of God. Such a view would be more consistent with the Christian understanding of the redemptive work of Christ (cf. Griffiths 1987:69, 87). Nonetheless, the Hindu and Christian emphasis on history and the Hindu understanding of it, in relation to the activity of God, highlight an important

difference. For Christians, history has a definite meaning and purpose, not only in the events themselves, but also in the sequence or chronology of events. The purpose, meaning and plan of history are fully revealed in the human Person of Jesus Christ and the events of his life, death and resurrection. Jesus is indeed God become fully human, unlike Krishna, Buddha and other avatars who are theophanies. The difference here is that Jesus is fully human – with all that that means soteriologically, and the Hindu avatars are not. Jesus is God who brings fulfilment to God's plan for humanity and creation (Griffiths 1987:69).

E) Conclusion.

Fr Bede's cosmic christology is a central aspect in his spirituality. It is the axis around which he discusses the relationship between creator and creation. It also forms the foundation of his desire for interfaith encounter leading to the goal of mutual enrichment by transcending boundaries and hindrances between faiths. Creating such common ground between the faiths is clearly in line with his understanding of Christian advaita. Wong comments on the importance of Fr Bede's cosmic christology in the following manner.

The special goal of the Incarnation, according to Bede, is to lead humans into a new state of consciousness and relationship with God, that is, to participate in Jesus' filial consciousness and his intimacy with the Father. This is the source of a Christian advaita.... The distinctive nature of the Christian revelation, its historical and world-affirming character, has been constantly upheld by Bede, while the advaitic mystical experience of the Trinity, or Saccidananda, has been presented as the profound common ground for dialogue with Hinduism. These various aspects can be found in the person of Jesus Christ (1996:6).

There is a great deal that one can learn from this innovative approach to the doctrine of Christ. I believe that this understanding of the doctrine of the cosmic Christ emphasises, in a profound way, *inter alia*, the manner in which Christ not only creates, but also permeates all creation with his divine presence. He is truly the one who creates, and holds all things in being (cf. Colossians 1:16-17). Fr Bede also shows the importance of God's plan in history, while not denying the universal significance of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In concluding this section, I believe that the application of various doctrinal and philosophical insights that come from Hindu philosophy and religion have once again proved extremely valuable in giving new insight into the formulation of the doctrine of Christ. Viewing Christ as the cosmic Person, in the Hindu sense, as *purusha*, gives broader insight into the nature and work of Christ. Drawing a distinction between *avatara* and Christian incarnation helps to focus more acutely on the importance of a normative act of salvation in Jesus Christ. Struggling with the notion of Jesus' filial qualification as God helps to cement the notion that the Father truly is *sat*, the source, from which all things come, and the Son is *chit*, the Self-knowledge of the Father. Fr Bede's own words best encapsulate the cosmic significance of the doctrine of the cosmic Christ as it relates to varying cultures and faiths:

It is true that Rama and Krishna also have a universal meaning, just as Buddha's Enlightenment has a meaning for all humanity. But the life and death and resurrection of Christ have not only a meaning for all, but also an effect on history.... Here history has assumed a universal meaning... an ultimate purpose, in that death, resurrection, ascension, and final glorification (Griffiths 1983:128).

CHAPTER 5: The contribution of Bede Griffiths' cosmic christology to spiritual experience and theological discourse.

This section of the thesis suggests some ways in which Fr Bede's spirituality contributes both to the way in which Christians live out their spirituality and to the way in which they articulate, theologically, this lived reality. Spiritual experience, and the articulation of that experience are two essential elements of his spirituality. The introduction to this thesis makes the point that it is the man, Bede Griffiths that makes his spirituality unique and valuable. Thus studying the man and his experience can offer some insights into the discipline of Christian spirituality. Because of his pioneering courage, his ability to integrate seemingly contradictory cultures and philosophies, and his strong desire to enliven the faith-life of others through sharing his spiritual experiences, Fr Bede's spirituality has a lot to offer those who are seeking.

The importance of his spirituality will thus be discussed under two categories namely, the contribution of his spirituality to (A) practical spiritual experience and (B) theological discourse.

A) Spiritual experience.

The preceding sections of this thesis have aimed to discuss aspects of the development and content of Bede Griffiths' cosmic christology. These sections have sketched the way in which Fr Bede was able to bring together seeming opposites such as science

and religion, and the “personalism of Christianity” and the “nondualism of Hinduism” (Bruteau 1996:xiii) through his life-long spiritual search and theological development. What makes Fr Bede noteworthy as a theologian, although he did not consider himself as such, is that his theology was formulated through reflection on spiritual experience. Thus as Chapter Two suggested, an essential aspect of any discussion of Fr Bede’s spirituality has to deal with more than his writings and talks. It should also attempt, in some way, to understand the man and his spiritual life.

Chapter Two said that Fr Bede, as a westerner, adopted many eastern ideas and concepts in his faith in order to achieve a balance between East and West. On the video “A human search: the life of Fr Bede Griffiths” (1993) one hears numerous corroborations from ashramites and colleagues suggesting that Fr Bede’s own life, as a Christian *sannyasi* in India, was a model of the ‘marriage of East and West’ that he so often talked about. Fr Bede is said to have had a unique way of imparting his spirituality to the whole of the human person, both rationally, through his many writings and lectures, and intuitively through his monastic lifestyle at ‘Shantivanam’ (Forest of Peace) Ashram. Fr Bede’s lived spirituality, which included his writings and talks, was able to capture both heart and mind. In this regard His Holiness the Dalai Lama writes of Fr Bede:

I therefore have much admiration for the life-long work of Father Griffiths for inter-religious understanding, and for helping people open their hearts and minds to gain a sense of peace and utility to further the cause of goodwill among all peoples (in Bruteau 1996:xi).

This section of the thesis aims to show in what way Fr Bede's cosmic christology is able to make a contribution to the lived spiritual life of others.

i) The importance of a contemplative lifestyle.

From the discussion presented in the preceding chapters it has been shown that Fr Bede's spirituality and faith are predominantly experiential as apposed to being largely speculative. By this it is meant that his theological discourse stems from, and flows back into, his spiritual experience. For him, the symbols and concepts of religion and philosophy are useful tools for expressing the reality of a life lived in consciousness of the Centre, the cosmic Christ. In other words, for Fr Bede, a contemplative lifestyle in which one seeks to deepen one's consciousness of God was much more important than having an articulate and theologically accurate explanation of one's spirituality. Theology is not an end in itself; it is merely a means towards expressing the end. As was pointed out in Chapter 2 A, Fr Bede's approach to his spirituality was contemplative in nature from before his arrival in India right up to his death. Furthermore, Fr Bede said that it was this contemplative experience, this consciousness which is beyond "all religion" and "every scripture and creed" (Griffiths 1982:42), that gave him insight into reality as it is, and as such allowed him to speak of it to others.

When the mind in meditation goes beyond images and concepts, beyond reason and will to the ultimate Ground of its consciousness, it experiences itself in this timeless and spaceless unity of Being. The Ultimate is experienced in the depth of the soul, in the substance or Centre of its consciousness, as its own Ground or Source, as its very being or Self (Atman). This is an experience of self-transcendence, which gives an insight into Reality (1982:27).

Thus, for Fr Bede the lived consciousness of the non-duality between creation and Creator, and the experience of the cosmic Christ, were important aspects of his spirituality, and his theology was an articulation of this spirituality. One may go as far as to suggest that Fr Bede was himself a sign or image of the Real. Or, stated more aptly in the words of James Conner, Fr Bede as a *sannyasi*, truly became a sign of the reality that he is (1996:96).

As far as Fr Bede's cosmic christology is concerned, it is Fr Bede's experience of the person of Christ that informs and shapes his spiritual life. Chapter 3 A (i) and (ii) suggested that Fr Bede's experience can be characterised in two ways, or along two horizons, as Chapter 4 A suggests. Firstly, his experience of Christ was specific, in that it was an experience of the saving and revealing Christ of Christianity. However, Fr Bede also articulates a second kind of experience of Christ that is more general. This second kind of experience suggests that Christ is of broader significance than the understanding of Christ in the Christian faith, and as such is of cosmic or universal significance. However, whether general or specific, it was a mystical experience of the person of Christ that drew him beyond the supposed dualities between God and self.

Jesus was taking us to the point where we go beyond all dualities, and the marvellous expression of it is in the Gospel of St. John: "that they may all be one as Thou, Father, in me and I in Thee, that they may be one in us." Jesus is totally one with the Father and yet he is not the Father. It's a non-dual relationship. It's not one and it's not two. It's the mystery of love. Love is not one, and it's not two... When two people unite in love, they become one, and yet they have their distinction. Jesus and the Father have this total communion in love. And he asks us to become one as he is one with the Father, total oneness in the non-dual being of the Father. That's the Christian calling (Griffiths quoted in Valiaveetil 1997:8).

From what Fr Bede wrote it is clear that his christology is rooted in a very deep experience of God that is testified to in both the Christian and Hindu traditions. Both of these religious traditions emphasise being taken into God, that is, the breaking down of dualities. However, where the Christian tradition differs is that it emphasises that this experience of God is a Trinitarian experience. Fr Bede regards Jesus as a *jivanmukta*, that is one who is intimately in communion with the Father, so much so that he can say “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30) (for a more detailed discussion of Fr Bede’s understanding of Jesus (the Son) in relation to the Father, see Chapter 4 D (ii)). In this, Jesus is not only communicating his experience of his unique relationship to his Father, that is that Jesus and the Father are one, but Jesus is also communicating his filial distinction from the Father. Consequently, Jesus maintains his identity, as the Son of the Father, while affirming that it is this filial identity that makes him one with the Father. Fr Bede articulates his conscious experience of the trinity further in asserting that Jesus was only capable of knowing of his identity and relationship with the Father through the work of the Holy Spirit within him. Fr Bede explains:

... in Jesus that capacity to receive the Spirit of God was without limit; he received that fullness of the gift of the Spirit. In this experience of the Spirit he was able to know himself as the Son of God, as sharing in the divine nature, as expressing the very Word of God.... In this knowledge of himself as Son, he was able to know the Father, not in part but in fullness. He knew himself as the “only Son”, the One who alone knows and expresses in fullness the mind of the Father (Griffiths quoted in Valiaveetil 1997:8).

Thus, in Jesus we see what God desires for all humanity. Jesus was a particular human person who lived in a particular place. However, his intimate communion

with the Father, through the Spirit, reveals his unique identity. Jesus had completely given himself over to the indwelling Spirit and in so doing he had achieved perfection in God. Thus, according to Fr Bede's cosmic christology, Jesus achieved what every human is meant to discover and be, that is, true identity with, and lack of separation from God through intimate communion (cf. Griffiths 1983:187-188).

This emphasis from Fr Bede's cosmic christology thus not only shows Jesus as the aim of the spiritual life, but also shows him as the perfect example thereof.

Furthermore, it is valuable in that it challenges Christian spirituality to move beyond an unbalanced emphasis on morality, to mysticism as a valid gauge of spiritual maturity.

ii) The relationship between Creator and creation, and the effects of this relationship for eco-human well-being.

Fr Bede's amazing ability to live out, and talk about, the non-duality between creation and Creator is an further notable aspect of his cosmic christology. Chapter Three of this thesis discussed the largely prevalent mindset in the West that views creation as purely materialistic, without any sense of the sacred (cf. Griffiths 1982:9), while Chapter Four gave some insight into the mindset of the East that so emphasises the mystical that it often neglects the physical (cf. Griffiths 1982:180). In this light of these shortfalls, Fr Bede suggests that East and West need each other in order to survive and flourish. What is required is a balance between the philosophies and spiritualities of both East and West, that is, an ability to identify and deal with

concrete human, social and ecological concerns, without disregarding the essential role of spirit in wholeness.

Within this context Fr Bede's organic approach to nature is extremely valuable in that it seeks to overcome the dualities presented in a purely mechanistic model of reality (Griffiths 1989:281). His suggestion is that

... we have to learn to see ourselves as part of the physical organism of the universe. We need to develop the sense of the cosmic whole and of a way of relating to the world around us as a living being which sustains and nourishes us and for which we have responsibility. This will give rise to a new understanding of our environment and will put an end to this age of the exploitation of nature (1989:282).

Non-dual consciousness of the cosmic Christ is essential to such a shift.

Consciousness of the cosmic Christ not only awakens one to the fact that Christ is the creator and sustainer of all that exists, that is, the transcendent Christ, it also awakens one to the reality that Christ is part of the created order through his incarnation into matter, has sanctified creation through his resurrection, and has taken matter into the Godhead through his ascension. Thus, through Christ the

... divine life penetrates history, time ... and then raises history and time ... into a new creation, a new order of being in which these things are not lost, not destroyed, but transfigured (Griffiths 1983:127).

This spiritual insight is not unique, yet the way in which Fr Bede arrives at it gives rise to some fresh insights. Fr Bede's insight into the manner in which the cosmic Christ creates and sustains creation stems both from widely accepted Christian

doctrines in this regard and also from his acceptance of the cosmic mystery of the Upanishads.

Fr Bede suggests that the saying *tat tvam asi* “Thou art That” is a key to understanding the way in which mystical union with God changes one’s view of all of reality and as such also of creation. He suggests that this saying, like the saying *aham brahmasmi* “I am Brahman”, is often misunderstood and in fact sounds like blasphemy to many Christians. The problem is real in that without a mystical understanding of these sayings, and so too of the reality that they describe, one could quite easily come to this incorrect conclusion by regarding the sayings (and the truth they speak of) as blasphemous. Fr Bede is at pains to point out that even Jesus only calls himself God in a qualified sense (see Chapter 4 D (ii)). While Christians believe that they are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26), and strive to become more like God (in Christ (Romans 8:29)), they still maintain a distinction between themselves as creation and God as transcendent Creator. The third mahavakya, or Great Saying, from the Upanishads is *sarvam khalvidam brahman asti* (All this world is Brahman), or “All this world is God”. Taking these three sayings literally, without the mystical insight from which they stem, would indeed seem to suggest an understanding of God that is quite different to that contained in the Christian tradition, and even Hinduism. However, Fr Bede notes that what is really being emphasised in these sayings is the truth that “I, in the deepest centre, the ground of my being, am one with Brahman, the source of all creation” (Griffiths 1983:57). As suggested by Fr Bede’s views of the new science, and developments in transpersonal studies, the mystical realisation is that the source of a person’s being, the centre of the person, is contained within that One true Self – contained within God.

When you say "I am Brahman," *Aham Brahmasmi*, what you are saying is that in the inner depths of my being, beyond my ego, beyond my conscious self, I am one with this inner Spirit which is also the Spirit of the universe. In Christian terms you have discovered yourself in God (Griffiths 1983:60).

Thus, such consciousness is an awakening to true identity that is non-dual. It is important to point out again at this stage that this does not mean that a discovery of one's true identity as being 'one with God' is a loss of individual identity. Fr Bede often used Teilhard de Chardin's notion of union that differentiates, or unity in distinction to make the point that true individual identity can only be found in God, the true Source (cf. Valiaveetil 1997:9). The Indian christology that Fr Bede developed at Shantivanam is rooted in an experience of God found in both the Hindu and Christian traditions. According to Fr Bede, both of these experiences are ultimately *advaitic* in nature (cf. Valiaveetil 1997:9). However, Fr Bede was able to develop the notion of *advaita*, and the way in which unity differentiates, further than it is presented in Hinduism, by relating it to the Trinitarian experience. Within the Trinity, as in the world, there is not a simple unity, or monism, where everything is 'melted' into one, and so loses its identity. Rather, in the Trinity there is a unity in distinction. The Son is the principal, and clearest example, of unity in distinction, being fully God, yet distinct as Son. In Jesus we see complete union with the Father, yet it is precisely that union with the Father that gives him his identity as the Son of the Father. In relation to this statement it is important to note that one's true identity is not simply swallowed up by that of the rest of creation. However, there is also no duality between self and the rest of creation. As shown earlier in Chapter 3 C (ii), Fr Bede believed that all of creation is interdependent and interrelated. This idea, along with the notion presented above, serves to further emphasise both unity and

distinction in the cosmos. As an aside, it is interesting to note that Fr Bede's first awakening to the mystery of God comes through an experience of God in nature (cf. Griffiths 1979:9-12, see also Chapter 2 A). His awareness of the divine in nature remained, and grew within him, throughout his life.

Contemplatives are often criticised for being over-concerned with the interior life at the expense of the world around them. This section argues that such criticism cannot be applied to Fr Bede. Before discussing this statement it is necessary to give a brief explanation of the term, 'eco-human well-being'. This phrase was coined by Paul Knitter with reference to social and ecological responsibility and how that leads to well-being (cf. Knitter 1995). It displays an awareness that 'well-being' is not only a human concern, but that all of creation has a need for wholeness. Because the term encompasses both people and nature, which are interconnected, it will be used in this section of the thesis.

How can Fr Bede's consciousness of non-duality between creation and creator, stemming from his contemplative spirituality, relate to eco-human well-being? Firstly, his spirituality gives rise to a new experience of the mystery of God and creation. That is, his spirituality in general, and his cosmic christology in particular, emphasise the facts that: firstly, God is not separate from humanity, or any part of creation, and secondly, that the true Self of the human person (*atman*) is not separate from the Self of the rest of the universe (*brahman*). Thus, if I am not separate from creation and Christ the creator and sustainer (i.e. if there is no objective duality or *dvaita* between my self and the Source from which all created reality stems) and I choose to exploit creation, am I not exploiting myself, and ultimately Christ? The

same can be said for human relationships and the structure of society. Any society or system that sets out to exploit others is ultimately exploiting Christ himself.

Accordingly, it is proposed that Fr Bede's spirituality gives a very clear motive for striving for eco-human well-being.

Thus, Fr Bede's spirituality gives insight into the value of a spiritual life lived in such a manner as to overcome the dualities that often lead to separation: the kind of separation found in many societies between people and God, people and people, and people and creation, that results in exploitation and abuse.

In the preceding sections it has been noted on a number of occasions that Fr Bede longed for a balance between East and West, between the contemplative depths of eastern spirituality and the active concern for material reality found in the spirituality of the West. The following quote shows Fr Bede's understanding of how the person and work of Christ affects our material world:

Jesus therefore was a man, in whom body and soul were pure instruments of the indwelling Spirit. In him the destiny of man has been fulfilled. But this inevitably has an effect on the whole cosmos. The universe is a psychosomatic unity, a space-time continuum in which each part depends on every other part as an integrated whole. Whereas in this universe, as we know it, there is conflict at every level and body and soul are in conflict with one another, in Jesus, this conflict has been overcome, body and soul have been restored to unity with the Spirit, and a power of unification has been released in the world. In this sense we can say that the death of Jesus, the free surrender of his life on the cross to his Father, was a cosmic event (1983:187-188).

Thus, as pointed out in Chapter 4 D (ii) and (iii), the soteriological significance of Christ reaches to all levels of the cosmos. Moreover, one can further say that in a

universe in which each part depends upon every other part – a universe that is still evolving towards true Christ consciousness – any activity that exploits creation in any way stunts to evolutionary process. As one's unity with Christ grows more and more one is able to overcome the conflicts that wreak havoc in creation and in so doing move closer to the destiny of all humanity, that is, blissful unity with God and creation.

Having seen two significant ways in which Fr Bede's cosmic christology can contribute towards a lived spirituality this chapter will now move on to highlight some ways in which Fr Bede's christology can contribute to theological discourse.

B) Theological discourse.

Many theologians²⁰ are becoming increasingly aware that speculative reason and philosophical discourse are limited sources for discovering and expressing the revelation and will of God (cf. Schneiders 1990:17). There are an increasing number of theologians who are of the mind that spirituality serves as a valuable source for the development and furtherance of such systematic theologies. The sections that follow show how Fr Bede's spirituality is able to make a valuable contribution to the way in which we 'do theology', that is, to theological methodology.

i) Theological methodology.

This thesis has already made the point a number of times, that Fr Bede's spirituality is primarily a spirituality based on mystical experience of God. It needs to be kept in

mind that he was first and foremost a monk, and only a theologian by virtue of the fact that he desired to share his experiences with others, and so had to articulate them in theological language. Yet, it is precisely because of this experiential emphasis that his spirituality is so valuable within the context of theological methodology.

There is no doubt that the spiritual awakening, and subsequent discovery that is taking place in many disciplines, is making an impact upon the sciences, social sciences and related fields. Whereas in the past any form of subjectivity within the sciences was frowned upon, there is today an increasing awareness that the subject is intimately involved in, and radically affects, the process of discovery. While this recognition is not solely as a result of the greater spiritual awakening that is taking place in the West, there is no doubt that this awakening has affected academic methodology. In theology in particular, the role of human experience is no longer discounted when it comes to the formulation of doctrine.

A number of theologians, notable amongst them being Raimundo Panikkar and Ewert Cousins, are affirming spiritual experience as a primary source of theological formulation. Cousins writes about his own theological methodology that,

In a basic way, spirituality is experiential; it is bound up with praxis, specifically orthopraxis. As such it should provide material for theological reflection. At the same time spirituality should be enriched and guided by theology. In this book I am viewing spirituality as experience... and theology as reflection upon experience (1992:59).

In a similar way Fr Bede has offered a great deal of insight into the importance of experience and reflection thereon, which forms the basis for articulation of the experience in theological terms. In short, he showed, through his own methodology

how to move from spirituality to theology. Within the context of Fr Bede's cosmic christology and his emphasis on the universal significance of the person and work of Christ, such an experiential methodology is extremely valuable.

One can cite Panikkar's thoughts on inter-religious encounter as an example of why a methodology of orthopraxis is valuable and necessary in the current pluralistic world context. Panikkar suggests that a theological methodology based on experience and praxis is the only way in which claims of the universal significance of Christ will be considered by a non-Christian. His argument is based on the fact that inter-religious dialogue has often failed because of the starting point of theological dialogue. When persons from different religions meet to dialogue theology they are discussing philosophical concepts, religious symbols and associations. This process is mediated through understanding and can often be hindered by a lack of adequate language and different understandings of what is essential and what is consequential in their discussion. As such Panikkar asserts that the only place that true encounter can take place between religions is at the place where they truly meet. He suggests that place is an experience of the unknown or universal Christ that is present in all true religion (1988:126). Within the context of Christianity and Hinduism he writes the following:

Christianity and Hinduism both meet in Christ. Christ is their meeting point... we cannot 'prove' this statement rationally. We can only try to show ... that they do not meet at any other point... the true meeting point of religions does not belong to the essential, but to the existential sphere. Religions may meet in my heart, and not in my ideas (Panikkar 1988:127-132).

The point of the above quotation is simply to illustrate the necessity of spiritual experience as a starting point for theological discourse. It is not my intention to

grapple with Panikkar's views on the relationship between Christianity and Hinduism. Rather, all that needs to be noted is that Panikkar's assertion on the validity of spiritual experience is very similar to Fr Bede's own views. This is not surprising since they were colleagues and spent a good deal of time together in India. Panikkar affirms that religions cannot truly hope to meet through discourse or reason, neither in concepts of God, but only *in* God. Everything in existence exists within God. However, as Fr Bede asserts many times, the link between God and all things is Christ from whom all things come and in whom all things subsist (cf. Griffiths 1983:75; 1989:118-127). It is from this common experience of the mystery of the Absolute, from different backgrounds and traditions, that one can begin to formulate and articulate a more accurate an inclusive theology.

Abhishiktananda, a precursor of Fr Bede (see Chapter 2 A), who also emphasised the primacy of spiritual experience, sums up this view best when he writes:

India's secret will be transmitted in the Church only very secondarily by means of the word, writing or university teaching. Rather, what is at issue here is more like an ontological transmission, from depth to depth, soul to soul, in the great silence. Words and writings do not reach to the *depths* unless they already spring from the depths of the individual from whom they issue (1983:72-73).

What is important to note is that within such an understanding of theology there is an attempt to move beyond what is located in the intellect. In other words, there is a realisation that the human mind could never fully capture the mystery of God in Christ, and that sound theological methodology needs to be open to the fact that speculative and reasoned outcome will always fall short of the reality it is attempting to describe.

Faith has to do with what cannot be seen. But even though faith is located in the intellect, it far surpasses it; and the intellect, even when enlightened by grace, is unable to comprehend the whole mystery.... It is precisely in transcending even the highest reach of the human mind, in passing beyond all symbols and expressions of itself, that faith reveals itself in its essential purity. This is the essential "void" in which alone the human person is open to and able to hear the eternal Word (Abhishiktananda 1984 a:199).

While Fr Bede's contemplative desire was not as intense as that of Abhishiktananda, he still adhered to the same principles of passing beyond words and symbols in order to move closer to the truth. However, Fr Bede's approach had an integrative aspect to it in which he emphasised that one does not reject what one transcends but integrates it (cf. Griffiths 1982:42-43; 1983:53-61).

The key benefits of such a theological approach are twofold. Firstly, such an approach recognises the fact that ultimately all theology is mediated through the experiences of human persons in relation to a transcendent Reality. Furthermore, his methodology does not undermine the importance of human experience within the discipline of theology. Secondly, this method of theology recognises as a basic premise that language and concepts can never fully contain or explain the mystery of God. It is here that I believe Fr Bede's theological approach is particularly valuable, not only for theology in general, but particularly for interfaith encounter, and in relating the Christian faith in cultural contexts that are foreign to its underlying theology and philosophy. This leads to the next significant contribution that Fr Bede's cosmic christology has to offer theology.

ii) Theological language employed in formulating doctrine.

The previous section maintains that experiences of Reality need to be communicated through the use of language and concepts. Traditionally the Christian faith has attempted to explain its truths through the language of the Christian scriptures, the tradition and symbols of the church, and the philosophy of the Greek Fathers as expressed in the language of Plato and Aristotle. However, as is pointed out in Chapters 2 A and 4 C, there is a growing realisation that for the Christian faith to be universally acceptable it needs to have an open dialogue with the cultures, philosophies, concepts, and religions of the rest of the world. Fr Bede suggests that,

Christianity no less than the other religions of the world is required to undergo a death and resurrection, if it is to enter into genuine dialogue with other religious traditions and become adapted to Asia and Africa (1984:222).

While the image of death and resurrection is a somewhat extreme one, Fr Bede's cosmic christology is very valuable in that it illustrates how he draws not only from the richness of the language used in the Christian tradition, but also from the vast treasures of the language and philosophy found in the religions and culture of the East (cf. Griffiths 1983:76). There is a sense in which one could say that his traditional Christian roots, as found in the Catholic Church, had to undergo a death when he left England, and we reborn over the years he spent in India (see Chapter 2 A).

Clearly, Fr Bede's approach, that seeks to inculturate the Christian faith through encounter and dialogue with the religions of the East, would prove valuable in many other contexts, such as the African one. Encounter and dialogue with other religions in this context refers not only to superficial encounter and dialogue but to a mystical encounter that goes beyond the doctrines and philosophies of the particular faiths concerned, to the reality they seek to express and represent. From this common mystical experience of true unity, authentic dialogue and mutual enrichment can flow (see the discussion in the previous section). Thus, Fr Bede's 'marriage of East and West' is valuable in terms of cultural reciprocity and the subsequent linguistic and conceptual categories that can be added to the Christian faith in order to help it to be born into new and different theological contexts. However, current trends show that Christianity faces an added challenge of seeking to discover and articulate a fuller truth through encounter with people of other faiths. In this regard Fr Bede writes:

It is no longer possible today for one religion to live in isolation from other religions. For many this presents a real problem. Each religion has been taught to regard itself as the one true religion and to reject all other religions as false, so that to enter into dialogue with other religions is not easy.... We begin to realise that truth is one, but that it has many faces, and each religion is, as it were, a face of the one Truth, which manifests itself under different signs and symbols in the different historical traditions (1982:25).

Thus, Fr Bede affirms that true encounter and dialogue can be valuable as means through which one can come to a fuller understanding of the truth about God and reality, both of which transcend the categories and forms that we tend to attach to them in our various religions. In the face of a myriad of truths, one's absolutes tend to become relative, and one discovers greater truths and more effective language and symbols through which to communicate them. Fr Bede's own spiritual experience is

a prime example of how inter-religious encounter can enrich one's theological vocabulary through an exposure to a vast array of "different signs and symbols" – such as the doctrine of *purusha* that Fr Bede adapted to Christianity through his encounter with Hinduism (see Chapter 4 C).

C) Conclusion.

Fr Bede is regarded by many as a spiritual pioneer (cf. du Boulay 1998:288). Rajan puts this point across so well in using the metaphor of exploration. He writes:

Swami Bede is a sannyasin engaged in space exploration! In this technological age when the scientists are engaged in exploring the outer space, Swami Bede is engaged in exploring the inner space, the space within his own heart (Rajan 1989:114).

Just as explorers in outer space have much to offer from their discoveries in outer space, so too does Fr Bede from his explorations in 'inner space'. This section has shown how Fr Bede's spirituality of experience affirms and enriches the views of many theologians, that true theology can only stem from mystical experience. Secondly, this section argued that such experience is beyond one particular religion or culture, yet it can be transferred into, and expressed through, the language and concepts of many cultures in order to give a broader and more meaningful expression of the truth.

CHAPTER 6: Conclusion.

This thesis has investigated aspects of Fr Bede Griffiths' cosmic christology as they arise from his spirituality. The basic argument of this research has been that his cosmic christology is insightful and valuable because it stemmed from his spiritual experiences as a sannyasi in India.

The argument was presented and developed in the following manner. Firstly, there was a discussion on some significant events and experiences in Fr Bede's life, showing how these influenced and developed his spirituality. The finding of this section of the thesis was that Fr Bede, as a Christian sannyasi, sought to move beyond language, sacred texts, rituals and concepts of faith, and Christianity in particular, in order to gain a mystical experience of God – who is beyond names and forms.

Having experienced the cosmic Christ as the source, sustainer and goal of all creation, he desired to share his discovery with both Christians and Hindus. In order to express the mystery of the cosmic Christ that he had experienced, Fr Bede had to rely on concepts and language that came from the theologies of Christianity and Hinduism.

In particular, he expressed his cosmic christology by drawing on three areas of philosophy and theology. Firstly, his christology was informed by his understanding of revelation. These insights came from both eastern and western understandings of revelation. Secondly, it was informed by his understanding and experience of reality as being physical, psychological and spiritual. This area of his thought was strongly influenced by the Hindu understanding of reality. Thirdly, it was informed by insights he gained from the 'new scientific' paradigm, as well as selected aspects of quantum physics, biology, transpersonal psychology and the perennial philosophy. This

portion of his thought was particularly influenced by scientific advances and discoveries being made in the West. One of the notable findings in this section was Fr Bede's desire to have East and West complement each other by overcoming deficiencies in their respective world-views. The next step in the argument presented aspects of Fr Bede's cosmic christology that were innovative and useful, because they illustrated the way in which Fr Bede drew upon traditional Christian theology, as well as on innovative expressions of the cosmic Christ that arise from his contact with Hinduism, in order to express his experience of the cosmic Christ. The primary finding of this section was that Fr Bede's cosmic christology found expression on two 'horizons' or levels. Firstly, he spoke of Christ in Christian terms, drawing upon the traditional doctrine of the cosmic Christ, constantly showing the relationship that Christ had to the Christian faith. However, he also sought to express the idea that the cosmic Christ has a much broader significance than one religion. In articulating this aspect of his christology he drew upon the theology of the cosmic Person as found in Hinduism. Having discussed the manner in which Fr Bede expressed his experience of the cosmic Christ, the argument concluded with a discussion of the significance of Fr Bede's cosmic christology. The research in this area found that his christology was of value in two fields, namely, spiritual experience and theological discourse.

In addition to the above, it needs to be noted that what makes Fr Bede's spirituality so significant is the way in which he lived and embodied the spiritual ideals that he taught.

In 1993 Fr Bede was given the John Harriott award for outstanding work in religious communication. Sadly, du Boulay records in her biography that Fr Bede did not feel

that he had fully succeeded in conveying his message (1998:288). Many of those who knew him would disagree with Fr Bede's judgement on himself. Even some who did not have the privilege of knowing him personally would disagree with this judgement of himself. His teaching and example were able to reach beyond his death to a small university town in South Africa where they affected and impacted on one theology student's life and subsequent ministry significantly.

His life and spirituality were groundbreaking in many regards, and on many occasions ahead of their time. The 'National Catholic Reporter' wrote: "Even at age 86 and on the edge of death Benedictine Fr Bede Griffiths was still running so far ahead of the pack that his life's momentum will quicken him for many springs to come" (quoted in du Boulay 1998:288). Many conservatives, both Christians and Hindus, have been critical of Fr Bede's lifestyle and teaching. On the other hand, many less conservative Christians and Hindus regard him as "one of the great religious prophets of modern times" (du Boulay 1998:288). I believe that the Camaldolese official statement after Fr Bede's death best sums up why Fr Bede's life and spirituality are able to offer so much to contemporary Christian spirituality:

The radiance of personal presence was the best commentary on his theories of interfaith relations... he was an example of the practice of interfaith dialogue and study as a way of realizing the highest Christian ideals of holiness and of mystical union with God (in du Boulay 1998:289).

His lived example of an integrated spirituality of East and West is even more significant when one considers it in the light of Karl Rahner's assertion which was quoted in the introduction to this thesis: "the Christian of the future will be a mystic or he or she will not exist at all" (quoted in Schneiders 1990:677).

It is in this regard that Fr Bede's cosmic christology has so much to offer. It has been shown in the preceding chapters that his cosmic christology stems from his spirituality as a Christian monk in India. The insights gained from eastern, and in particular Hindu, culture and philosophy, which so radically affect his cosmic christology, come from his own ability to integrate East and West within himself.

In a world of increasing pluralism where information and ideas are so easily shared, where contact between differing cultures and religions is becoming far more frequent, there is bound to be significant change to both Christian doctrine and spirituality.

Here Fr Bede's cosmic christology serves as a good example of how one can enrich and develop one's own spirituality and theology by integrating different religious and cultural paradigms (cf. Chapters 3 and 4). Raimundo Panikkar, in his tribute to Fr Bede, suggests that it was Fr Bede's person, and particularly his tolerance and vision that helped him to formulate such a well balanced spirituality. Panikkar encourages his readers to use Fr Bede's spirituality as a sound basis upon which we can "go forward and take our own further steps into the future" (1996:33)

What are some possible further steps? Firstly, as is shown above, there is a need to follow Fr Bede's example of living out an integrated and contextually honest spirituality and such integrity is costly. As has already been mentioned in this section, many were critical of the way in which he transcended the normative boundaries of Christianity and Hinduism (cf. du Boulay 1998:292). Regardless of this Fr Bede showed, through his spirituality, the wonderful depth of insight that can be gained when one is prepared to challenge accepted norms in the quest for a greater truth. The

truth that he sought, as illustrated in his cosmic christology, is beyond the confines of one culture or religion. It is a truth that is of universal significance and value.

Venturing into such relatively uncharted Christian spiritual territory takes courage, yet it is worthwhile. It is this kind of courage that is required of those of us who are to take further steps in following Fr Bede's example.

Building on the example of Fr Bede's inculturated spirituality is another vital 'further step'. This is particularly valuable in areas where faith has tended to run alongside, or in opposition to, indigenous culture (such as Christianity in Africa and South America). If the Gospel is truly to have global significance there is an urgency for its proponents to engage honestly with the culture into which it is entering. Fr Bede soon realised that the Gospel would only have significance and efficacy in the life of the Hindu person if it was made more acceptable to the Hindu way of life.

The Church remains cut off by all its habits of thought from those deep sources of spiritual life and thought which have moulded the character of the Indian people for four thousand years. Unless some means is found of making contact with these sources, there seems to be absolutely no hope (except by a miracle of grace which we have no right to expect) of Christianity making any deep impression on the mind of India (Griffiths 1984:89).

The courage to engage honestly with other cultures should be applied to Christianity in places such as Africa, South America, and many other areas of the world where western culture and religion may seem foreign. What is required is a reciprocity of cultures and a critical evaluation of both positive and negative aspects of the generally accepted 'cultural packaging' of Christianity in relation to the culture with which it is

engaging. Fr Bede writes of his own experience of this process of inculturation in India saying,

It is in this witness to Christ, through a life lived in intimate union with him, which we believe to be the work of the monk in India today. Ultimately, a Hindu will not be convinced by arguments, but by a life in the closest intimacy with God (1984:47).

Such sincerity is exemplary to the contemporary Christian who seeks to live out an honest and culturally sensitive faith.

Finally, I would like to highlight the manner in which Fr Bede drew on a wide range of disciplines in order to enrich his spirituality and increase his ability to express accurately his experience. Of particular importance is the way in which Fr Bede's spirituality has been used as a springboard for the bridging the gulf between science and religion. Of late there has been a great deal of research in the area of the interface between science and spirituality. Fr Bede was one of the pioneers in this area, even before it was popular to study it. However, there is a great deal more to be discovered such discoveries will enrich both science and religion.

These abovementioned 'further steps' are merely three among many that I believe can arise from the example of Fr Bede's spirituality as seen in his cosmic christology. The three are: the courage to seek the truth, the desire to be enriched through encounter with different cultures and religions, and an engagement with a wide array of disciplines outside of theology.

Shirley du Boulay pays a fitting tribute to the contribution that Fr Bede's spirituality has already made in the lives of many. I feel that the following quote goes some way towards showing the true significance of Fr Bede's cosmic christology, as it arises from his spirituality.

Bede's vision was for all humankind, but it is of special importance to Christians. Through his own great longing to reach the reality beyond the opposites, the mystical union that he was convinced lay at the heart of every religion, he helped today's Christian to realise that it is possible to follow a mystical path and remain within the institutional church. In his humility and confidence of the truth of his experience he challenged the Church and left an image of an inclusive Christian for the future, once more his own example, his courage, inspiring others to follow his instincts.... He was like yeast, leavening the flour and water of institutional religion, seeing its point of transcendence where all is one and where all is love. In his life and thought, Bede Griffiths eventually found the meeting place between the opposites. His whole life and thought culminated in the knowledge that beyond the opposites, beyond the darkness, was 'that Great Person, of the brightness of the sun' (1998:292).

¹ For an excellent biographical synopsis of Fr Bede's life see the article by Sr. Pascaline Coff O.S.B at <http://www.bede-griffiths.com/bio.htm> .

² C.S. Lewis and Fr Bede struck up a lasting friendship during Fr Bede's time at Oxford. Over the years they corresponded with each other on many occasions. Both Spink (1988) and du Boulay (1998) refer to this friendship and the effect it had on Fr Bede's life and spiritual development.

³ Christopher Dawson (1889-1970) was an Oxford-educated historian and a Catholic in faith. He was author of such works as: *The Age of the Gods* (1927); *Progress and Religion* (1929); *Enquiries into Religion and Culture* (1933); *Religion and the Modern State* (1935) and *Beyond Politics* (1939) (cf. <http://members.nbci.com/dawson.htm>).

⁴ Abhishiktananda, previously known as Dom Henri le Saux, was a co-founder of Shantivanam Ashram (together with Fr Jules Monchanin). Abhishiktananda was far more deeply attracted to the advaitic ideals of Hindu mysticism than Fr Bede. While Abhishiktananda and Fr Bede did not always agree on the manner of the relationship between Christianity and Hinduism, and particularly the mystical life, Fr Bede was significantly influenced by Abhishiktananda both through his person and his prolific writings. Abhishiktananda left Shantivanam before Fr Bede's arrival in order to deepen his mystical spirituality.

⁵ It will be shown in the section that follows (2 B, (i) and (ii)) that this aspect of Fr Bede's spirituality stems from his life as a sannyasi.

⁶ The details of this particular aspect will be presented in Chapters Three and Four.

⁷ This thesis only points out specific areas in which Fr Bede's christology was influenced by the work of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. For a succinct examination of the overall impact that Teilhard's theology had on Fr Bede's theology see: Hale, R 2000. "Teilhard de Chardin and Bede Griffiths". *The golden string: Bulletin of the Bede Griffiths Trust* Vol. 7 No. 2.

⁸ As will be seen in Chapter 2 section C, Fr Bede found a great affinity between his view of reality and that of David Bohm, the quantum physicist. Bohm wrote, "The entire universe is basically a single, indivisible... but flexible and ever changing, unit" (Bohm in Russell 1985:135, see also Bohm 1980 and 1993, Keepin 1993).

⁹ Along with Bohm 1980, see also Keepin 1993 and Talbot 1991:43-48 for a more detailed discussion of Bohm's theory of the implicate and explicate orders. The intricate technical details of this view are not a necessary component in furthering the argument that Fr Bede finds this view of reality more acceptable than the Newtonian/Cartesian world-view. All that is necessary to note at this point is that Bohm's view overcomes the imposed dualities on matter that arise from reductionist science and metaphysics.

¹⁰ A discussion of the concept of “Unity that differentiates” in relation to Fr Bede’s Christology will take place in Chapter 5 A (ii).

¹¹ While Fr Bede would not have been aware of developments in ‘Quantum computing’, there have been some significant advances in this area of late. Of particular interest to this research is the notion of interdependence and interconnectivity that is gaining greater acceptance. Paul Davies writes concerning a comment by David Deutsch:

A quantum computer, by its very logical nature, is in principle capable of simulating the entire quantum universe in which it is embedded. It is therefore the ultimate virtual reality machine. In other words, a small part of reality can in some sense capture and embody the whole. The fact that the physical universe is constructed in this way—that wholes and parts are mutually enfolded in mathematical self-consistency—is a stunning discovery that impacts on philosophy and even theology. By achieving quantum computation, mankind will lift a tiny corner of the veil of mystery that shrouds the ultimate nature of reality. We shall finally have captured the vision elucidated so eloquently by William Blake more than centuries ago:

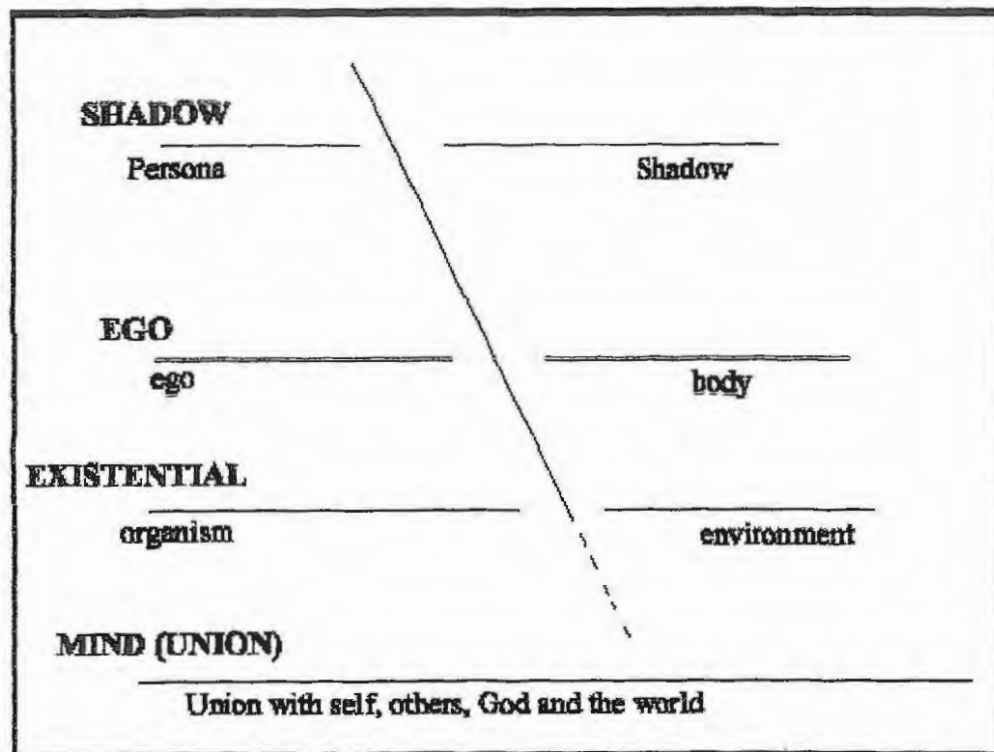
*To see a World in a grain of sand, And a Heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand, And eternity in an hour.* (2000:
<http://www.science-spirit.org>).

¹² Fr Bede was greatly influenced by Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo was a political activist and spiritual master who first came to prominence in India during India’s struggle for independence from the British. Sri Aurobindo balanced social action and mystical contemplation in his spirituality (see also footnote 20 below). The following quote of Sri Aurobindo illustrates aptly his views on the evolution of consciousness.

There is an evolution of the consciousness behind the evolution of the species and this spiritual evolution must end in a realization, individual and collective, on the earth (in Judith, A 1996. “Sri Aurobindo”
<http://www.gaiamind.org>).

¹³ Wilber explains his theory of pluridimensional consciousness by using the spectrum of consciousness. The spectrum of consciousness is a

... pluridimensional approach to man’s identity; that is to say, each level of the Spectrum is marked by a different and easily recognized sense of individual identity, which ranges from Supreme identity of cosmic consciousness through several gradations or bands to the drastically narrowed sense of identity associated with egoic consciousness (Wilber 1975:106).



Adapted from Wilber 1975.

¹⁴ Matthew Fox gives a detailed discussion of the biblical roots of the doctrine of the cosmic Christ, both in the New and Old Testaments, showing how it developed from the Old Testament understanding of the relationship between creation and Creator, to the more technical understanding of creation in, through, and for Christ, as found in the Epistles. See Fox, M 1998 The coming of the cosmic Christ : The healing of Mother Earth and the birth of a global renaissance. San Francisco: Harper Collins. (pp..83-107).

¹⁵ For a good synopsis on the stance of the Second Vatican Council in relation to religious pluralism see Gaybba 1981:77-104.

¹⁶ Sri Aurobindo also had a view of consciousness as evolutionary (also see footnote 13 above). Judith comments on Sri Aurobindo's view in the following manner:

To him, the underlying thrust of the entire phenomenal world is a spiritual evolution in consciousness toward a situation in which all material forms will reveal the indwelling spirit. He postulated several states of consciousness, such as the Overmind, Intuitive mind, Higher mind, and Illumined mind. These states he saw as interconnected and revealing different levels of reality and unity. Normal waking consciousness is steeped in individualism, while the higher states reveal an ultimate unity. Psyche or soul was the manifestation of the divine as it occurs within individuals, for the purpose of reuniting with the universal (Judith, A 1996. "Sri Aurobindo" <http://www.gaiamind.org>).

¹⁷ See also The space in the heart of the lotus: Bede Griffiths a Benedictine in India. 1993. MTI Films, where Fr Bede uses this illustration.

¹⁸ This thesis has pointed out only those aspects of Christian theology that have directly informed Fr Bede's cosmic Christology. For a far more detailed and broader discussion on cosmic Christology and its significance for Christian theology see Lyons, JA 1982 The cosmic Christ in Origen and Teilhard de Chardin. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹⁹ It needs to be mentioned, in order that the reader is not misled, that Fr Bede was well aware that the Hindu concept of *lila* had a greater meaning and significance than 'fun and games'. He writes:

... all activity is a *lila*, a play of God. This is the view of Ramakrishna. The great mother is playing, and all that goes on in this world is her play. By itself that is hardly satisfactory for it means that all the suffering of the world is ultimately meaningless. The concept of *lila*, however, can also be interpreted in the way towards which the *Gita* is working and which the modern Hindu certainly supports, namely that this *lila* of God has a meaning and purpose. In this view God is not merely at play but is purposefully active in the world.... This is consistent with the Christian understanding of the activity of God. The Crucifixion reveals that suffering is redemptive (1987:87).

²⁰ Sandra Schneiders, in her article Spirituality in the academy. (1990) names a number of theologians who are convinced that only theologies that are "rooted in the spiritual commitment of the theologian and oriented towards praxis will be meaningful in the Church of the future" (1990:17). These include theologians such as, Karl Rahner, Mary Collins, Charles Curran, Margaret Farley, Gustavo Gutierrez, Monika Hellwig, Hans Kung, Bernard Lonergan, Rosemary Radford Reuther, Edward Schillebeeckx and Dorothee Soelle. The names of Raimundo Panikkar and Ewert Cousins, although not mentioned by Schneiders, can also be added to this list. In keeping with this line of argument one can cite Gustavo Gutierrez, the liberation theologian, who writes that it is from spirituality "that liberation theology emerges... [spirituality] represents... a deeper penetration of the very wellspring from which this kind of theological thinking flows" (Gutierrez 1988:xxxii).

Appendix A: A glossary of Sanskrit terms.

<i>acharya</i>	teacher. Often the head of an ashram.
<i>advaita</i>	non-duality
<i>aham brahmamsi</i>	I am Brahman (God)
<i>ananda (ā nanda)</i>	pure joy, bliss
<i>ariti</i>	waving of lights and incense
<i>ashram</i>	abode of ascetics, place of spiritual work
<i>ashrama</i>	stage of life, stages of the spiritual journey
<i>atman</i>	God within each person, Spirit
<i>atyesthi</i>	death ceremony
<i>avatara</i>	incarnation, descent
<i>avidya</i>	ignorance
<i>brahmachari</i>	moving in Brahman, a student
<i>brahman</i>	the Absolute, God
<i>brahmavidya</i>	knowledge of God
<i>bhakti</i>	devotion
<i>bhakti marga</i>	the way of devotion
<i>chit (cit)</i>	consciousness
<i>darshanas</i>	philosophies
<i>devas</i>	shining ones, gods
<i>dharma</i>	the law of life
<i>diksa</i>	ceremony of initiation
<i>dvaita</i>	duality
<i>grhastha</i>	householder

<i>jivanmukta</i>	one who has attained liberation during his lifetime. A person who is one with God
<i>jivatman</i>	individual soul
<i>jnana marga</i>	the way of knowledge
<i>karma</i>	action, work
<i>karmamarga</i>	the way of work
<i>lila</i>	the play of God, God's purposeful activity in the world
<i>mantra</i>	prayer or sacred word
<i>maya</i>	creative power, magic, illusion
<i>moksa</i>	final liberation, salvation
<i>murti</i>	image or form
<i>nirguna brahman</i>	God without attributes
<i>nirvana</i>	state of liberation in Buddhism
<i>om</i>	the sacred syllable, symbol of Brahman, the creative word
<i>parabrahman</i>	the Supreme Spirit
<i>paramatman</i>	the Supreme Spirit
<i>puja</i>	sacrifice
<i>purnam</i>	fullness
<i>puranas</i>	mythological stories
<i>purusha</i>	man, cosmic Man, cosmic Person, archetypal Person
<i>purushottaman</i>	the Supreme Person
<i>rishis</i>	seers

<i>rita</i>	the order of nature
<i>rsis</i>	duties associated with the <i>asrama</i>
<i>sadguru</i>	the true guru
<i>saguna brahman</i>	God with attributes
<i>samadhi</i>	the final ecstasy. Death
<i>samsara</i>	the wheel of life
<i>santana dharma</i>	eternal religion
<i>sannyasa (samnyā sa)</i>	renunciation
<i>sannyasa diksha</i>	the ritual initiation into sannyasa
<i>sannyasi</i>	a monk
<i>sat</i>	being
<i>shakti</i>	the power of God
<i>shanti</i>	peace
<i>shantivanam</i>	forest of peace
<i>shiva</i>	name of God, the destroyer and regenerator
<i>tapas</i>	self control, penance
<i>vanaprastha</i>	forest hermit
<i>veda</i>	knowledge, sacred scripture
<i>vedanta</i>	the end of the Vedas, philosophy
<i>vishnu</i>	name of God, the preserver

(Based on glossaries of terms in Griffiths 1983:133-136 and Rajan 1989:275-280).

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