

# Letters to the Editor

One should thank Gustavo Polit for going to such length to point out various confusions, oversights, errors, incomprehensions, and biases which he finds in our note responding to his and Patrick Moore's letters.<sup>1</sup> While some of Polit's remarks arise from misunderstanding, and with many of them one can agree (so comprehensive is their scope), he does identify genuine disagreement between us. As for misunderstanding: One does not overlook the origin of modernity within Christendom, though this was not because of a lack of genuine gnosis within the Church, as again, Jean Borella has amply documented (*Guenonian Esoterism and Christian Mystery*). The point was simply that Christianity has in fact borne the brunt of the modernist attack: and in fact, has the persistence of *jnana* prevented the ongoing modernization of India? Again, one does not reduce the universal metaphysical Order to the formal orders as Polit fears: this would amount to eliding the Uncreated order and the formless spiritual order of Creation! And then, it is no intention of ours to diminish the scope and authority of spiritual intellect merely by referring it to the metaphysical orientation of spiritual life as evoked by Mr. Lakhani's editorial in Volume 30 of *Sacred Web*.

As for agreement: when Polit says that metaphysical doctrine can vary only in 'formulation', while its Truth stands invariant over temporal events, this is in essence what we had argued earlier, regarding the distinction of doctrinal gnosis and the ultimate gnosis it symbolizes. When he says that he certainly does not aim to correct the dogma of the Trinity, we most

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<sup>1</sup> [*Editor's Note*]: The letters of Patrick Moore and of Gustavo Polit appeared in Volume 30 of this journal, at pp. 191-198 and pp. 198-206, respectively. Mr. Rinehart's note appeared Volume 31, at pp.149-153.

sincerely thank him, whatever to the contrary may appear in his remarks. Also he is right in pointing out the distinction between the Trinitarian *dogma* and various theological interpretations of this dogma which have developed within the Church—a distinction we had not made clear. And finally, one is in complete agreement when he says that:

any believer can at least respect sincere religious faith in contrast to the rampant unbelief and materialism in the modern world, and acknowledge that Heaven is good and merciful and free to save whomever it wishes, knowing as well that “Heaven knows its own”. ... What men can and ought to do is respect the faith and piety of people of all the great religions and their civilizations—of all “men of good will”— and hence also the necessary providential differences between them ... (166,167)

When it comes to the metaphysical interpretation of the Christian dogma of the Trinity, however, we are in genuine disagreement. Polit refers to the ‘anti-metaphysical opinion that the *Hypostases* are neither substances nor modes ...’, adding that ‘there is absolutely no earthly reason why Christian opinion could not be mistaken here or there, all the more so in that the opinion pertains to theological doctrine, and not to metaphysical doctrine.’ Leaving aside the question of the authority of ‘earthly reason’ in matters of divine revelation, the opinion here singled out goes to the heart of the dogmatic assertion, not merely to theological explanation: the Uncreated is One *and* Three, thus *Triune*, as defined in a logic of paradox (cf. The ‘Athanasian Creed’) that rules out the possibility of interpreting the Three *either* as independent substances/essences, *or* as metaphysically subordinate modes of the One. With the mention of *paradox* we come to the root of the disagreement in question. Polit says that ‘theological trinitarianism comprises several paradoxes... In truth, only metaphysics can adequately render a full, coherent, and profound account of the reality of the Trinity’, meaning a *logically* coherent account, free of paradox. The Christian perennialist Philip Sherrard, in his *Christianity: Lineaments of a Sacred Tradition*, notes that ‘of the many factors which can contribute to radical divergencies in the formulation of metaphysical doctrine, one of the most crucial—and one of the least recognized—is the role accorded to logic... in determining the very premises—the primordial data—of the doctrine itself.’ (76) Sherrard asserts that ‘the idea of the Trinity as presented by the doctrinal masters of the Orthodox Christian tradition cuts directly across the correlation between the order of logic and the metaphysical order...’; (85) and that indeed ‘for the doctrinal masters in question the Absolute not only

transcends the logical order ... but cannot be typified (short of crucially misrepresenting it) in terms other than those which violate the laws of logical consistency and non-contradiction'. (84) The argument here is that the dogmatic symbolism of the Holy Trinity, derived from revealed Scripture by intellections inspired by the Holy Spirit, itself comprises the primordial data, the very premises, of a metaphysical doctrine.

The modalist or Sabellian interpretation of Meister Eckhart's understanding of the Trinity is commonplace among those interested in fitting it to a more or less Vedantic formulation of metaphysical doctrine, or even a modern rationalist one. Wolfgang Smith, in his book *Christian Gnosis*, and in several letters in this publication, has clearly explained the non-modalist reading of Eckhart, for those who are willing to contemplate it. And C. F. Kelley, in his volume *Meister Eckhart on Divine Knowledge*, confirms the embedment of Eckhart's metaphysical thinking in the dogmatically orthodox understanding of the Trinity derived from Scripture and Creed. Kelley quotes Eckhart: 'God is unrestricted knowledge and understanding, and knowledge is the foundation of his isness (*istigkeit, esse*). For as St. John says: "In the Principle (*in principio*) was the Word [*Logos, Intellectus*], and the Word was with God, and God was the Word.'" Kelley comments that 'this principial understanding of God-as-Intellectus becomes a new starting point in pure metaphysics.' (174) The same author, in a passage quoted in Sotillos' review of the book (*SW* 31:144), adds that for Eckhart, 'Although God is nondual and uncompounded in his limitless being, he is nevertheless God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, and these are not three Gods, but one God.'

Moreover, with regard to the distinction of esoteric and exoteric aspects of the sacred traditions, which is brought to bear on the present discussion by assigning the dogma of the Trinity to the exoteric, here too the Christian tradition presents a 'stumbling-block'. In his study of Christian initiation, 'The Veil of the Temple', Marco Pallis observes:

All three evangelists stress the fact that the veil parted "from the top to the bottom", as if to indicate that the parting was complete and irremediable and that henceforth no definable boundary would exist between the "religious" side of the tradition and the mysterious or, if one so prefers, between the exoteric and esoteric domains. (*Ye Shall Know the Truth*, 36)

In other words, the essential dogmas of the Trinity and the Incarnation are not so easily to be set aside as exoteric expressions requiring

esoteric rectification in order to be understood rationally and without paradox—even though the dogma of the Trinity asserts that the Infinite and Absolute Principle is Triune, and the dogma of the Incarnation states that the uncreated Essence of God is hypostatically united with the created nature of Jesus in the Person of the Son of God. Pallis refers in this connection to the ‘particularity of the Christian tradition, namely its *eso-exoteric* structure’. (*ibid.*, 37)

So there is a genuine disagreement here, involving something more than a muddle of errors and biases—a genuine difference of doctrinal perspective. With regard to the testimony of James Cutsinger on the orthodoxy of the modalist interpretation of the Trinity, we must respectfully disagree with Dr. Cutsinger as well; taking note in passing that his position has caused him, at least once, to contradict publicly the teaching magisterium of the Orthodox church, in the person of Bishop Kallistos Ware, on a question of spiritual practice having to do with the uniqueness of the Christian case. (*Paths to the Heart*, 245) As we have previously pleaded, it is not helpful to have the spiritual authority of Christian tradition contradicted by perennialists, on top of several centuries of modernist attack. But after all, disagreement is disagreement, and the modalist perspective has its rights; which brings us to our final point, the right to respectful disagreement.

Gustavo Polit takes issue with our statement of respect (we did *not* say ‘reverence’) for Frithjof Schuon followed by our disagreement with certain of his views on Christianity: Polit describes this as a ‘blow’ which ‘sweeps away an entire aspect of the Schuonian corpus’. But we do not intend our disagreement as a ‘blow’, and we are very sure the Schuonian corpus survives our disagreement intact, and will long inspire ardent defenders. Our ‘conciliatory conclusion’ reflects an understanding of certain commonalities in the several doctrinal formulations of the universal metaphysical Order—commonalities of orientation toward spirit, and God, amid the temptations and hostility of our world. This is not a matter of mere ‘sentiments’: whatever differences of formulation distinguish the Christian, Vedantic, or Sufic metaphysical doctrines, they all point the mind, and by degree, also the soul and the body, toward spirit and God. Moreover we have a Common Word to love Him and one another: but we can still disagree!

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## Frithjof Schuon and the Christian Doctrine of the Holy Trinity

In response to Mr. Rinehart's letter,<sup>2</sup> let me say first that I concur completely with his final point, which is that he has the right to a respectful disagreement. I think he has accurately identified the points of disagreement, in particular his solidarity with Sherrard's view, cited in his letter, that "the idea of the Trinity as presented by the doctrinal masters of the Orthodox Christian tradition cuts directly across the correlation between the order of logic and the metaphysical order" and therefore that "for the doctrinal masters in question the Absolute not only transcends the logical order ... but cannot be typified (short of crucially misrepresenting it) in terms other than those which violate the laws of logical consistency and non-contradiction."

Sherrard's chapter is a critique of René Guénon's formulations of metaphysics—he nowhere mentions Schuon—and Sherrard goes on to apply the criteria of his critique to the question of the doctrine of the Trinity. Sherrard's views on this matter are countered in various places in Schuon's works, perhaps most evidently in his chapter "Transcendence is not Counter to Sense" in the book *From the Divine to the Human*. Very importantly, however, in that chapter, Schuon concurs with the Christian tradition in affirming that "the entire doctrine of the Word constitutes a system of points of reference at the level of the one metaphysics, and in this sense it is possible to speak of a metaphysics that is Christian in its formulation..." Where there is disagreement with Mr. Rinehart, perhaps, is that Schuon also says, "but what one cannot do is to claim that there exists an explicit metaphysics and an epistemology incumbent upon all Christians and that are contrary to all the other doctrines of the same kind."

One important misunderstanding seems to be that Mr. Rinehart believes that Schuon considers the doctrine of the Trinity to be an exoteric doctrine: "Moreover, with regard to the distinction of esoteric and exoteric aspects of the sacred traditions, which is brought to bear on the present discussion by assigning the dogma of the Trinity to the exoteric...In other words, the essential dogmas of the Trinity and the Incarnation are not so easily to be set aside as exoteric expressions." Now certainly Schuon nowhere has suggested such a thing. Schuon has

<sup>2</sup> [Editor's Note]: This letter from Gustavo Polit, and the subsequent letter from Professor Cutsinger, are in response to the preceding letter from Mr. Rinehart.

characterized the entire Christian tradition as an esoterism in relation to the exoterism of the Law. This is clear from the Gospel. The tradition, however, is a “relative esoterism” in the sense that on the one hand it is a message of inwardness which transcends the legal prescriptions of the Jewish tradition, but on the other hand this relative esoterism can in turn be contrasted with the pure or “absolute” esoterism of the Vedanta, for example, which however has its analogues within Christianity as well as in other traditions. In other words, the tradition as a whole can be characterized as a relative esoterism, while at the same time it harbors or has harbored examples of gnosis, such as Eckhart, Scotus Erigena, Dionysius Areopagite, and Angelus Silesius, to speak only of Western Christianity. As for the doctrine of the Trinity, it could never be characterized as “exoteric”; it has nothing whatever to do with the sphere of action and legal prescription, but refers to a divine Mystery, namely that of the Three Persons in the One God, hence it refers to uncreated, divine, and therefore metaphysical reality. It is, of course, absolutely integral to the entire Tradition, from the simplest believer to the loftiest gnostic. Moreover, Schuon nowhere disagrees with the Ecumenical formulations of the Trinity. The Councils had the very difficult task of having to formulate a divine Mystery in dogmatic terms, terms that would preserve the real distinction between the three Persons while at the same time preserving monotheism, namely the unique divine Essence or Substance of the Persons. Schuon never contests that this formulation of three distinct Persons and a unique divine Substance (*ousia*) corresponds to a concrete reality, namely a reality at the degree of pure Being, the ontological degree of the Real, which of course is an uncreated reality. The idea that God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are not three Gods but only One God is the Mystery, and it is apparently “illogical” or contradictory. Theology does not wish to resolve this Mystery rationally, to be sure; that is why it declares it to be a Mystery.

Metaphysically, however, there is no difficulty, and it is not resolved by “logic” or by mere reasoning, that is to say, by a deduction from premises, but rather by metaphysical insight into the nature of Being. Metaphysically, pure Being is conceived as the primordial self-determination of the absolute Essence, and therefore it is unique and also necessarily possesses a personal character. This is clearly affirmed in the Bible: “I

am that I am” and not “We are...” And “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is One Lord.” When Christ affirmed the greatest Commandment and when he taught the Lord’s Prayer, he did not speak of the Trinity. And the Nicene Creed states, “I believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible” (*Book of Common Prayer*). Latin: *Credo in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotentem, factorem caeli et terrae, visibílium ómnium et invisibílium*. This is monotheism. Christianity, however, further specifies that this One Person is also, eternally and indivisibly, Three Persons. It is crucial that neither side—the unique divine Substance and Personality and the Triplicity of the *Hypostases*—be denied. Theology, as mentioned, with good reason deems this a dogma and a Mystery. For metaphysical science—which operates not with discursive reason but with the intuitive Intellect—without denying its quality as a mystery, that is, without denying the intrinsic illimitation of God—Being is an intelligible reality that reveals itself, in respect of the Trinity, as a Substance—an *ousia* which is of a personal nature—comprising three substantial modes that are necessarily also personal. In this specific sense modalism is not a metaphysical error. It is obvious nonetheless that theology cannot accept this formulation, for it seems to try to “explain” a divine Mystery rationally, thus risking exposing it to profane discussion and debate and inevitably to error. Metaphysically, however, there really is no difficulty in conceiving that the Divine Person is one and that it also comprises a plurality of perfectly distinct modalities that are also necessarily personal and hence substantial. This is even analogously the case (of substances inhering in one substance) on the infinitely lower plane of physical light. For example, light is colorless in itself, while at the same time it is refractable into distinct luminous colors: thus light is a luminous substance which comprises modalities that are also in turn separate substances, each quality-color being completely distinct from the others, yet all of them are equally luminous. At the same time, the colors are comprised indistinctly in the colorless light.

To further forestall any misunderstanding that Schuon is a proponent of Sabellianism pure and simple, it is worth recalling that Sabellius did indeed teach, in agreement with the orthodox view of the Church, that God was single and indivisible, and further specified that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three modes of the one divine Person. With this

simple formulation Schuon would agree, but solely on condition that this “modalism” be conceived correctly, metaphysically speaking, and thus without identifying with Sabellius’ erroneous interpretation of the meaning of the three Persons (*Hypostases*) as mere “masks” (Gk: *prosopa*; Latin: *personae*) of the one Person. Thus Schuon never affirms nor would he agree with the Sabellian “reduction” of the Son to the Father.

The theological difficulty arose because it was considered that the idea of “modes” contrasted with the correct idea that the Trinity had to be conceived of as three distinct Persons, and not modes conceived as mere “masks” of the one Person. Schuon agrees with the orthodox view that the Trinity is a triplicity of real and distinct Persons; but he also affirms that in truth, metaphysically, the idea that the Hypostases are distinct personal modes of the one Person is not intrinsically erroneous nor is it contradictory, and moreover that it corresponds to a metaphysical reality. However, he also agrees that theology could not have dogmatically fixed this metaphysical interpretation, assuming it was tacitly understood in the first place, and that the Councils were not wrong in rejecting the modal formulation, precisely because it can be conceived erroneously, as in the case of Sabellius. More specifically, Sabellius erred in conceiving the Trinity as a successive revelation of the one Person in several guises or personas. The Church rightly rejected this temporal and developmental modalist conception which contradicts the intemporal reality of three distinct Persons of the Trinity. For Schuon, to repeat, the Persons are distinct Persons in the one God, in accordance with the orthodox and traditional view: as he has noted in another but related connection, the relation of the Sonship of God confers on that Person a real substance, otherwise the relation would be a mere abstraction, just as for Sabellius it is a mere manifestation or mask or *persona*, a view completely at odds with all the Schuon has written concerning not only the Trinity but also the Christic mysteries.

The “paradoxes” of trinitarianism (enumerated by Schuon in the chapter “Evidence and Mystery” in the book *Christianity/Islam* and in the anthology *The Fullness of God*) do not refer to the apparent “illogicality” of Three Persons or Hypostases in one *Ousia*, but rather to the fact that this ontological reality is theologically deemed absolute in the sense of the absoluteness of the Divine Essence, whereas it is

absolute only in relation to created reality and relative only in relation to the Essence. What is contrary to metaphysical truth is the affirmation that God can be differentiated distinctly on the same plane of reality as His absolute and infinite Essence. The distinction between the two degrees of Divine Reality is the crucial metaphysical truth of which Eckhart was very clearly aware, and which Schuon also expounds. To repeat, it is certainly not a question of “two Gods,” but of two degrees of the one Divine Reality. It is this idea of the relative reality of the ontological degree in relation to the Essence which separates pure esoterism or gnosis from relative esoterism. It is obviously not a notion that can be integrated into theology, which after all is there to defend the dogmas for the religion as a whole, hence for everyman, and which depends entirely on preserving the distinction between the Creator and the creature, a duality which is transcended, however, along with all differentiation and distinction whatsoever, in the infinite Essence. The ideas of universal relativity and the degrees or gradation of reality, along with that of the pure absoluteness and ultimately sole reality of the Divine Essence, are what characterize the metaphysical outlook of gnosis and which distinguish it from theology generally, although there is no doubt that theology in Christianity comprises implicit openings to gnosis, as Schuon has affirmed. To repeat what was in the previous letters, the fundamental distinction in theology and in religion generally is between the Uncreated and the created; the fundamental distinction in metaphysics is between the absolute and infinite Divine Essence (comprising the Trinity indistinctly), and the “relative Absolute”, which is the ontological degree of God as Person and Creator (comprising the Persons of the Trinity distinctly). In other words, metaphysics conceives a necessary distinction within the uncreated order itself, in virtue of the mystery of universal relativity, which is a consequence of the infinitude of divine Reality. It is this key distinction—that of *Gottbeit* and *Gott* in Eckhart, and that of the Supreme and Non-Supreme *Brahma* in Vedanta—which lies at the core of the intrinsic non-duality of the Real. In his sermon *Intravit Jesus in quoddam castellum*, Eckhart says, regarding the Godhead, that “God himself never casts a single glance therein...inasmuch as He possesses the modes and properties of his Persons...When He is the absolutely simple One, without any mode or any property: He is not there in the sense of Father, Son, or Holy Spirit,

but He is nonetheless a Something (*ein waz*) which is neither this nor that."The "neither this nor that" inevitably reminds one of the Vedantic "*neti, neti*" in relation to *Atma*.

Thus it should now be clear that Schuon concurs with the orthodox view that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, are not three Gods, but one God, and that he further specifies that the three Persons are distinct Persons in the one indivisible and uncompounded pure Being of God, while dilated infinitely in the transcendent absoluteness of the Supra-Personal Divine Essence. In Schuon's words, "Concerning the transcendence of Beyond-Being, it is necessary to emphasize that in reality this transcendence is absolute plenitude, so that it could not possibly have a privative meaning: to say that the Trinity is surpassed therein means, not that the Trinity is abolished in its essentials, but that it is comprised—and prefigured in respect of its ontological or hypostatic projection—in Beyond Being in a way which, while being undifferentiated, is eminently positive; in the same way as the Vedantic *Sat-Cbit-Ananda* which, although it corresponds to an already relative vision, is nonetheless ineffably and supereminently comprised in the pure absoluteness of *Atma*."

One last point. Schuon never said that gnosis did not exist in Christianity. That would be impossible given the well-known presence of gnostics in the Church and given the most profound dimension and meaning of the Christian tradition. What he has said is that gnosis has had a somewhat difficult existence and has not been fully accepted or integrated in Christianity given its basic character as a Way of Love, and the predominance of theology in matters doctrinal—which is a different thing altogether. Not for nothing was Eckhart forced to retract his more daring formulations. Schuon's point is that had gnosis and hence the purely metaphysical outlook been more in evidence and operative in the Christian world it would have been all to the good, and that its somewhat problematic existence and occasional suppression therein has had negative consequences.

Having said all this, I wish to affirm and concur with Mr. Rinehart's view that there can be cordial disagreement between us given our solidarity in the Spirit.

*Gustavo Polit*  
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### The Holy Trinity: No contradiction between Traditional Christians and Perennialists

In professing their belief in the Trinity, what traditional Christians are saying is that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all, and equally, divine: each is to be regarded, therefore, as uncreated, eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, *etc.* Whatever can be truly said of God can be truly said of each of these three distinct Persons. Nevertheless (odd as this may sound) only the Father is God as such, as is attested in the opening apposition of the Nicene Creed: “I believe in one God, the Father almighty, creator of Heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.”

This is a point insisted on with special force by the Orthodox East, though in fact, being the clear teaching of the Ecumenical Councils, it is—or should be—the common heritage of all traditional Christians. “Greek theology attributes the origin of the hypostatic ‘substance’ [of divinity] to the *hypostasis* [*i.e.*, the Person] of the Father, not to the common essence. The Father is the ‘cause’ (*aitia*) and the ‘principle’ (*archê*) of the divine nature that is in the Son and the Spirit” (Father John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology* [Fordham, 1974], 183). St. Irenaeus speaks of the Father as having “two hands”, the Son and the Spirit, a metaphor meant to convey the unity of the common essence but also a certain hierarchy among the Persons who share that essence, and thus to reconcile the two sayings of Christ: “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30), and “the Father is greater than I” (John 14:28).

The Father’s “monarchy” (as it is called) is emphasized by a number of Patristic authorities, as for example by St. John of Damascus: “The Father derives from Himself His Being, nor does He derive a single quality from another. Rather He is Himself the beginning and cause of the existence of all things both as to their nature and mode of being. All then that the Son and the Spirit have is from the Father, even their very being.... Through the Father, that is, because of the Father’s existence, the Son and the Spirit exist” (*On the Orthodox Faith*, 1.8). The same emphasis can be seen in the letters and sermons of the Cappadocians. According to St. Basil the Great, for example, “God who is over all alone has one special mark of His own person (*hypostasis*), His being Father and His deriving His person from no cause; and through this mark He

is peculiarly known" (*Letters* 38.4); and St. Gregory the Theologian adds: "For us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things" (*Orations* 39.12, quoting 1 Corinthians 8:6); and again: "Unity having from all eternity arrived by motion at Duality found its rest in Trinity. This is what we mean by Father and Son and Holy Spirit" (*Orations* 29.2).

It is of course important to avoid any simplistic "mapping" of the Christian Deity, in which the Father's supremacy might be misleadingly pictured as a static pre-eminence. Yes, the Father is "greater" than the Son and the Spirit, and this in a sense "solves the problem" (as a Muslim friend once said) of relating or reconciling the Christian and Islamic conceptions of God; Christians will still insist (as they must) on "associating" the Second and Third Persons with the First Person, referring to them all as *homoousios* ("of the same essence"), but this can be done in a way which nonetheless protects the Father's primacy and sovereignty and which is thus consistent with the prohibition in Islam against *shirk*. (I have spelled all this out at some length in my article "Disagreeing to Agree: A Christian Response to *A Common Word*", which is available on my website<sup>3</sup>). At the same time one must remember that Christian trinitarianism is not unlike Hindu non-dualism. The advaitist teaches that the Supreme Reality is "not two", which is not quite the same after all as saying that it is merely "one". Similarly, the Christian theologian teaches that Divinity is "three", but this does not mean that it is not also "one". It simply means that the unity is dynamic in character, as expressed in the doctrine of *perichoresis* or *circumincessio*, whereby the Persons are said to share in the common essence or substance of Divinity precisely by interpenetrating and "giving way" to each other. Perfect *tawhîd* for the Christian is thus a matter of *henosis* ("union"), not *hen* (arithmetical "oneness").

Needless to say, there is nothing modalistic or Sabellian in this perspective: the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are not simply the dramatic roles of some transcendent Actor; on the contrary, they are eternally distinct centers of conscious Selfhood. Nor does this way of envisioning God require the Christian to suspend his use of reason, resorting instead to a "logic of paradox": the Divine is both one and three, it is true; but it is not one and three in the same respect, as the Fathers make clear. I have the greatest admiration for the work of Philip Sherrard,

<sup>3</sup> [*Editor's Note*]: the website link is <http://www.cutsinger.net/>

but on this point I believe him—and Mr. Rinehart—to be mistaken. I would also caution Mr. Rinehart when it comes to his use of the term *magisterium*. It is quite misleading to think that there is a single teaching authority in Orthodoxy comparable to that in Catholicism. If one insists nonetheless on using the word, one must make a special effort to prescind from the institutional and propositional connotations it must inevitably have for Western ears. His Eminence Metropolitan Kallistos (Ware) would be surprised, and not a little appalled, to think that his public comments should be construed as it were *ex cathedra*; he and I have spoken at length of these matters, and though he disagrees with my understanding of Christ in relation to non-Christian religions, he readily acknowledges that what I have written on this subject is a legitimate Orthodox *theologoumenon*. Christian perennialists need not, and do not, contradict traditional Christians, nor traditional Christians Christian perennialists.

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