

A discussion between His Holiness Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, The Abbot of Downside and Robert Kee broadcast on B.B.C. Television, Channel 1, in 'MEETING POINT' July 5th, 1964. Produced by Oliver Hunkin.

'Most westerners, caught up in the tensions of to-day, say they have no time to sit and meditate. But what are they missing?' Radio Times. 5th July, 1964.



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Early in 1964, His Holiness Maharishi Mahesh Yogi was invited by the British Broadcasting Corporation to take part in a televised discussion about the simple system of meditation which he teaches. Maharishi was most pleased to do so. What follows is a verbatim transcript of his meeting with the Abbot of Downside under the Chairmanship of Robert Kee.

MEETING POINT (THE MAHARISHI AND THE ABBOT)

Recorded from transmission BBC 1: 18.15 5th July 1964

Kee The Maharishi Mahesh Yogi is a teacher from the Himalayas, and he brings with him an allegedly very simple technique of meditation which enables man to do away with all his inner conflicts and tensions both individually and in society as a whole. This technique of meditation, it appears from the Maharishi's published sayings, doesn't involve any sort of abandonment of worldly desires or any monkish withdrawal from life at all. Nor are any physical exercises involved in it or any sort of self deprivation or abstinence.

Now in America, this teaching of the Maharishi has been hailed as a non-medicinal tranquiliser, and an improvement on sleeping pills. It's been noted there that people who practise it look younger, and even get on better with their relatives. But the Maharishi contends that these are but ordinary side effects or by-products of his teaching, and that the important thing about his teaching is that it enables the ordinary man to get in touch with that Kingdom of God, which Christianity teaches is within everyone.

Now, it's this particular aspect of the Maharishi's teaching, that we're going to examine this evening, and we are very fortunate to have the Abbot of Downside Abbot Butler, to help us do so. But first of all we will go into the practical side of the Maharishi's technique. Now first, Maharishi, could you tell me just how you arrived at this technique, what brought you to it?

Maharishi I would say a very systematic teaching of my Master in India.

Kee Who was your master?

Maharishi He was Jagad Guru Shankaracharya Swami Brahmananda Saraswati, a very great saint in the Himalayas, hailed by all the people.

Kee He is a Hindu saint?

Maharishi Yes, a Hindu saint, but what I think is the essence of every religion, is really the same—to enable every man to rise above conflicts and anxieties and sorrows and sufferings in life, and to live a peaceful and joyful and harmonious life.

Kee Well, whether it is or not exactly the same in every religion is what the Abbot can help us about, in a minute. But could I just ask you a little more about the practical side of your technique. Can anyone learn it?

Maharishi Everyone can do it, because it doesn't need doing, it only needs allowing the mind to fathom more joyful regions of one's own inner personality.

Kee Are there any physical requirements at all?

Maharishi No, no. Well, one of course, that the nervous system should be intact, a disabled nervous system won't do, otherwise any ordinary common mind will be able to meditate properly and alleviate all his tensions and anxieties, and this, as you said in the introduction, is just by enabling the mind to fathom the inner Being of man, whose nature is blissful, the mind coming into that blissful Being which is the Kingdom of Heaven within; Christ said "the Kingdom of Heaven is within you." So that process of going within is very simple and anyone can do it.

Kee You say anyone can do it, and it is very simple, could you just give us some idea of how one sets about doing it?

Maharishi How one sets about doing it? One thing is common in all the people. And that is, every mind wants to enjoy more. From a field of lesser happiness, to a field of greater happiness, everybody's mind goes. This is one common factor by nature in every mind—all the people, every man wants to enjoy more. Now, the joy that the mind experiences in the outside world is much less than that which it experiences in the subtler field of thinking. As the mind goes nearer to the field of Being it experiences increased charm and this increasing charm at every step towards the subtlety of thought draws the mind on automatically. We don't have to concentrate and make attempts to go to that field of Being. Only, we have to allow the mind to go that way, and the mind goes.

Kee But this sounds like a very advanced state of thought and mind control, surely you can only learn this sort of thing after a great deal of discipline and preparation?

Maharishi Oh no. No discipline is necessary to enjoy a more melodious music when we are listening to an ordinary radio.

Key Could you for instance teach me, in a short period of time, to adopt this system of meditation ?

Maharishi That I teach to every man individually. We can talk about the theory of cholera. But when we have to give the injection, we have to examine every man, and then do it. Giving the injection is very simple, but it has to be given to every man ; like that, although the whole process of meditation is very easy to learn, and easy to teach, it does need every man to learn it and every individual to be taught separately.

Key Now, you've now been talking to me for five minutes or so, do you think you know enough about me to be able to teach me the system.

Maharishi I think I have to talk to you more about your likings and dislikings, and what you have been doing ; and may be you have been doing some meditation, and thereby straining something. Because these days there are lots of meditations, and people call it deep meditation and all that. But it only remains more of a strain than of release of tensions. People many times sit quiet. Just sitting quiet is no meditation. Those who do this sitting quiet for a long time, they'll find their mind becoming dull. Many people take something and think about it. Say—think of God, thought of God, that they call meditation. They may call it meditation, but it keeps the mind on the surface of the conscious thinking level, as if exploring the lake on the surface. But the meditation that I talk of is getting to the depth of the ocean.

Key Yes, it sounds marvellous. And you keep saying that it's very simple, easy for us to achieve, but could you just give some hint of how we could achieve it ?

Maharishi We take a thought. We take a thought, and we allow the mind to experience the subtler state of that thought. Now in order to understand the subtler state of thought, I would say a thought starts from the deepest level of consciousness, as an air bubble starts from the bottom of the sea, and as it comes up it becomes bigger and bigger and bigger ; coming up on the surface of the sea, it explodes and we appreciate it as a bubble on the surface. Like that a thought starts from the deepest level of consciousness and it becomes bigger and bigger as it comes up. Coming up on the conscious level of thinking it is appreciated as a thought. And from here we go to speech or action. So action, thought, and then the source of thought. The source of thought is that which we call the Being. So we have these three states of life; Being as the basis of thinking, thinking as the basis of doing ; field of doing, field of thinking and field of Being. By exploring into the subtle regions of a thought, we explore the source of thought, and the source of thought is the Being whose nature is bliss.

Key Would you say this Being is also God ?

Maharishi You could say yes, because they say God is all bliss, God is merciful; and then Christ said, "First seek ye the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Heaven, and then all else will be added unto thee." So when the mind explores the region of the Being, the whole of the subconscious mind, in terms of modern psychology, the whole of the subconscious mind becomes conscious, as if the thought wave on the surface of the ocean of mind contacts the deepest level of the ocean and thereby the man begins to use his full potential. This is very important.

Kee It seems to me though, really what you are saying is that by a simple almost mechanical technique I can show you God.

Maharishi Very right, very right, mechanical, because now we are in the mechanical age, this mechanical age—and then these mechanics are easy, because at every step of the subtlety of thought, the charm is increasing, the charm is increasing. So this increasing charm draws the mind automatically. That's why we say to enjoy the grace of God we don't have to do anything, just begin to enjoy, because it is the grace of the Almighty and Merciful.

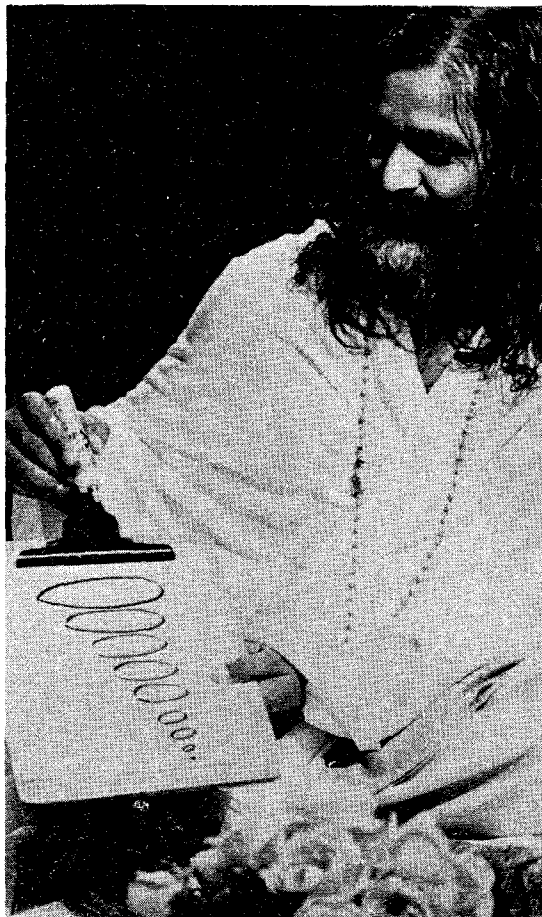
Kee So what you are really claiming is that you can show any man in a very short time, God.

Maharishi We could put it that way—no harm.

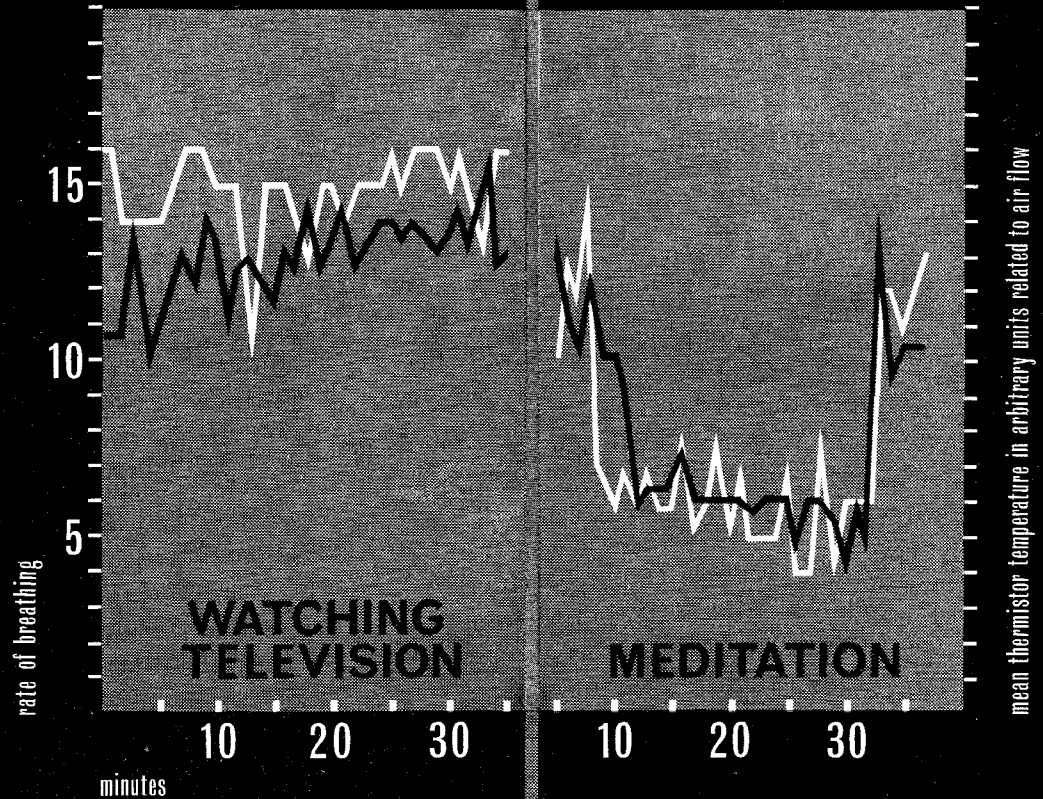
Kee Well we —

Maharishi We could put it that way, and then in terms of modern science, we can very easily enable a man to begin to use his full mental potential, and thereby be more proficient in his activity, in thinking and in doing.

Kee Well it's quite clear, that whatever in fact may be happening in the mind, as a result of your technique something certainly happens physically because we have this chart here, which shows what happens in two different states; one of them normal activity and the other in meditation such as you teach. Now, on the left we see the rate of breathing in the white line, the number of breaths per minute, taken on the left in a normal situation, and the black line on the left in a normal situation is showing the amount of breath taken per minute. If we switch over to the right we see that in your meditation there's a very sharp fall from a normal situation to a very low rate of breathing, very few breaths per minute and a very small amount of air is taken in. Unquestionably, this is a most dramatic fall and change in the



physical condition. But what I would like to suggest is that it is quite possible to achieve these remarkable physical states and, together with them, remarkable accompanying mental states by completely other means, such as drugs or hypnosis. And I'd like to ask I think the Abbott at this point, where really he sees the religious content in all this—if at all.



Abbot Well, I think that of course the great difficulty that the Maharishi and I would find in discussing these matters is that we both have our separate vocabularies, and they come from the different traditions in which we've been educated and grown up.

But I must say that I can only sympathise enormously with what he has to tell us about the importance of the recovery of what I suppose we, at any rate, would call the contact with God, voluntary contact with God. And we have to bear in mind that it's part of our own Christian tradition that we were made for that union with God, which must be a union within us, and for that very reason our heart is restless until it comes to rest in God. I think when we use the word "heart" there we mean something like the depths of our Being, such as the Maharishi speaks of. But, I would like just to—I hope this isn't too much of a digression—I'd like to revert for a moment to what the Maharishi has said to us about his own Master. Your own Master, Maharishi, he lived for many years in solitude and meditation?

Maharishi Yes, yes, certainly. A long time; I think about sixty-seventy years he lived in solitude.

Abbot And it was at the end of that time that he began to take disciples —

Maharishi Yes, yes.

Abbot Teach them. You too were with him for some time —

Maharishi For about thirteen years.

Abbot Thirteen years. And then you came out to teach.

Maharishi When I got this simple technique of relieving tensions and relieving suffering in the minds and hearts of the people, I thought we could—why not make an attempt to relieve the suffering from this generation in which we are born, so I started the Spiritual Regeneration Movement, and within these four years it has gone very gracefully and very effectively in about twenty-five countries.

Kee Abbot, could I ask you whether you in fact, believe that it's as — or could be as easy to find God as the Maharishi suggests?

Abbot Well, that is one of the things which worries me very much about this. I think that for some people it may be so. But this is offered as a universal technique for everybody and I think it's our own experience in the west that for the ordinary person it's a long and sometimes a rather painful struggle before they reach those heights or depths of union which, it seems to me, that you're speaking about Maharishi.

Maharishi The fact is, Abbot, that from centuries in the past we have been told that it is very difficult, and God is far away somewhere in Heaven, even though our scriptures keep on telling us "Kingdom of Heaven is within you, Kingdom of God is within you". Even then not receiving this message from the scriptures, we have been emphasising other parts of the message of our prophets, and that has complicated the presence of Almighty and Merciful God to every man. Now I think it should be high time for us to revive and emphasize this teaching of Christ "the Kingdom of Heaven is within you"; and having the Kingdom of Heaven within you, you have no right to suffer in life, you have only to enjoy the grace of God, and it's there, and to enjoy just dive deep within yourself, and to dive deep within yourself just follow the thread of the process of thinking, get to the subtlest state of thinking, and that is blissful. Experience shows it's a joy in meditation, it's not that after long practice people experience those joys; I think hundreds of thousands of people by now in these five years have experienced that when they meditate they begin to feel happy, inside some happiness comes.

Kee But, Abbot, isn't there more to Christianity than just this state of bliss. I mean, surely the whole doctrine of Christianity is that suffering is extremely important in it, and that you even achieve redemption through suffering; whereas, the Maharishi suggests that suffering is unnecessary and even undesirable.

Abbot I would have thought that that was one of the great difficulties in the whole situation. Because, after all, suffering is not something which we human beings go out to seek, suffering comes to us —

Maharishi Exactly, exactly, unasked and unwanted.

Abbot It's unwanted, but it's extremely real, it's part of our existential situation; and it is not terribly helpful, perhaps, if you got somebody who has some chronic painful disease, or someone who has been bereaved of a person that he loves very much, to say well, suffering doesn't matter. It seems to me that one's got to give them —

Maharishi No, no. We can't, we can't say suffering doesn't exist or it doesn't matter. What we can do is give him something so that he becomes happy and more energetic, more capable of not feeling the suffering. No doubt about the suffering.

Abbot No, the suffering is there but there's a way of meeting it I think.

Maharishi There's a way of meeting it, and there is a way of living life so that suffering doesn't come.

Abbot Yes, yes.

Maharishi And this is it—morning and evening meditation. And even physically, as the chart has shown, the whole inner mechanism comes to rest. And when we give rest to the machinery working all the time inside, then it has lesser chances of getting diseases and all that. So if we are regular in meditating morning and evening, even physically, we create a situation of normal health ; mentally we are cheerful, more energetic. So we are happy in ourselves, and vibrate peace and happiness and harmony for all others.

Kee Well, Abbot, the Maharishi rather suggests that you “lead the good life” by, first of all, through his technique finding the “Kingdom of God within you”, but isn’t it Christian teaching that you really find the “Kingdom of God” by leading a good life, isn’t it the other way round ?

Abbot I think there’s an interaction you know, I think there’s an interaction between the two, that probably it is the distant vision of the “good life”, or of union with God, which may first make a man revise his own behaviour and examine himself ; and then as he tries to put order into his own life, his own external activities and the direction which he’s given to his desires, then the vision begins to become a bit more real, and so one profits from the other. But there is one thing which I would really like to ask you about, Maharishi, if I may, because I think that you would not entirely reject the statement that the condition which is reached in meditation is a condition in which we find God.

Maharishi Yes, yes. That is the only way to find God. The only way to find God.

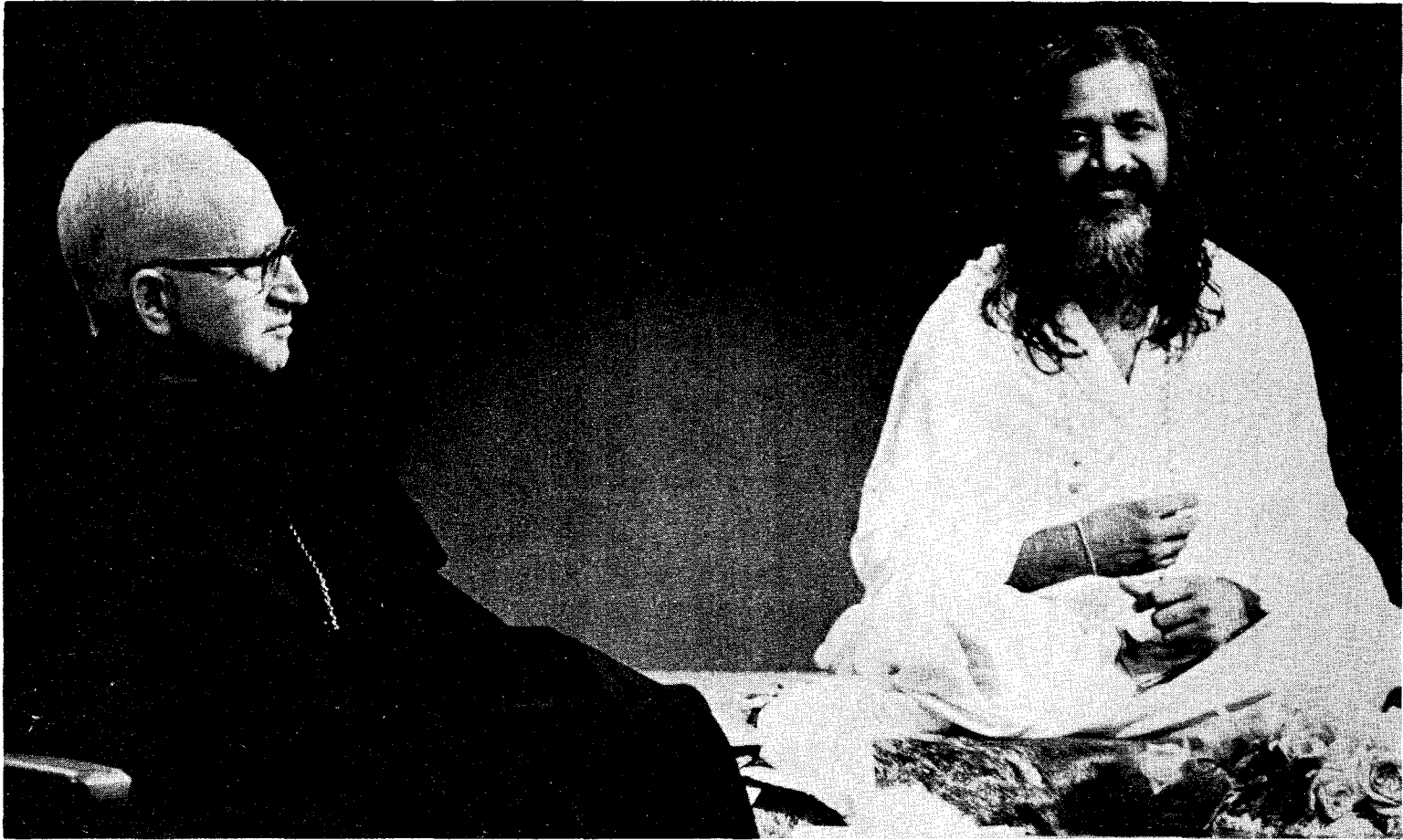
Abbot Well now, would you accept, with whatever reservations, the Christian conception of that as a union of love with God, that it’s a resting in God by a love which is our main and greatest desire, and in this union we find satisfaction of that desire ?

Maharishi Very good, very good. Because it is the love—it is the love of God or love of bliss, or love of happiness, and that takes the mind naturally to descend down to the state of Being.

Abbot Now, what I really wanted to come on to is this ; that we hold that this which is, from a human point of view, a man’s quest of God, and this is the way which you have described for reaching God, is the other side of God’s quest of man. that there is a deeper truth, that God, in his mercy, is seeking man, not for any good that God can get out of it, but because He wishes good to man.

Maharishi Very good, very good. This is His Merciful Almighty nature, that He has presented His grace to the fullest extent in the heart of everyone, and He has made man inseparable from His grace. Only the man has just to begin to dive, and then really begin to live the grace of God through all—through everything.

Abbot The very important thing for us, I think, is this; that we should feel, in our union with God, that it is not something which we've achieved by our own efforts,



but it is something which God has given us as a gift of love, and we should be extremely grateful to Him and not say well, I have found a clever technique, or by my own efforts, I have reached this stage, but it is God that has brought me here.

Maharishi Fine. Very good. It's always good to put to God all our achievements and feel happy over it, and thank Him. But, as you rightly said, it's not out of our efforts, but minimising the effort. We in meditation, don't make an effort. We allow the mind to get into these more effortless states, because in experiencing the subtlest state of thought, effort is less and less, and less, and less, and then no effort, absolutely no effort. That is why it is said that not out of our effort, but out of the grace which draws the mind towards greater happiness at every step, that we accomplish the realization of God. Very right.

Abbot Well, we've got to let grace act, in other words.

Maharishi And grace acts. We have only to allow ourselves to begin to receive it.

Kee Maharishi, I'm very struck by the apparent similarity of approach between you and the Abbot, but of course the basis of your meditation technique is the Hindu religion, isn't it?

I'd like to ask you —

Maharishi The basis of my meditation is the desire of mind to go to a field of greater happiness, the innate tendency of the mind to go to a field of greater happiness; and the Being is of blissful nature. The Being is blissful, and the mind travels to a field of greater happiness.

Kee How important has the life of Christ Himself been to you in your teachings?

Maharishi I loved His teaching: "the Kingdom of Heaven is within you", and then what you have to do is—"first ye seek the Kingdom of Heaven then all else will be added unto thee."

Kee Yes, but you say, in your writings and in your speeches, that man shouldn't suffer, whereas Christ, as it were, the whole point about him was that He suffered, wasn't it?

Maharishi No, no, no. Christ never suffered. Man, with his suffering vision saw that He was suffering.

Kee Abbot, could you comment on that.

Maharishi We see something with red spectacles and then we say everything red, everything red. So man, from his suffering level, saw that His Saviour was suffering, but Christ in Himself never suffered. His message was of bliss.

Abbot I think we've reached a point here at which there is a difference between the two traditions. After all, in our own sacred books and the Gospels, we are told that Christ, on the eve of His crucifixion, prayed to His Heavenly Father that He—we were told that He was "sorry unto death", and that He prayed to His Heavenly Father, "Lord, if it be possible, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Now, I think that that is an indication—we take it certainly as an indication—that He really did suffer, but that He chose to suffer.

Maharishi I would interpret it in this way, that Christ, at the time of His end, reviewed the purpose of His coming on earth, the purpose of His being sent. He came here to rob the people of their misery and suffering. But when he reviewed, no, the work was not fully done, and that's when He appealed to the Father, "that you sent me for some specific work, I see the work is not yet done, so why have you forsaken me?" But if you can, alleviate that, so that my purpose of coming here may be fulfilled, and my message of Kingdom of Heaven within could reach every man, and allow every man to dive within himself and be happy in life". So, He came to make the world happy, and because His work was unfinished—that's why He might have appealed. And then later on He said, "Ah, it doesn't matter, let Thy will be done, I'm coming."

Kee Could I ask you a very fundamental question? To what extent really do all religions believe the same thing only expressed in different terms? Or, to what extent is there something unique about the Christian belief?

Abbot Well, I think we've got to take this starting point—I'm speaking now from the Christian point of view—that we believe, of course, that God, who is infinite love and infinite mercy, has spoken to man in Christ; that Christ is the word of God to man. Christ in His historical existence lived at a given date and time—two thousand years ago in Palestine, but He was also the one who lightens all men. Therefore there is a light in all men which will lead them. But we hold that if that light is followed faithfully that that is the preparation for the receiving of the full Christian gospel. The full light comes when you see Christ, not only in this hidden self within, but in His historical existence, and what He's done for mankind, uniting the body and the soul aspects of religion in one.

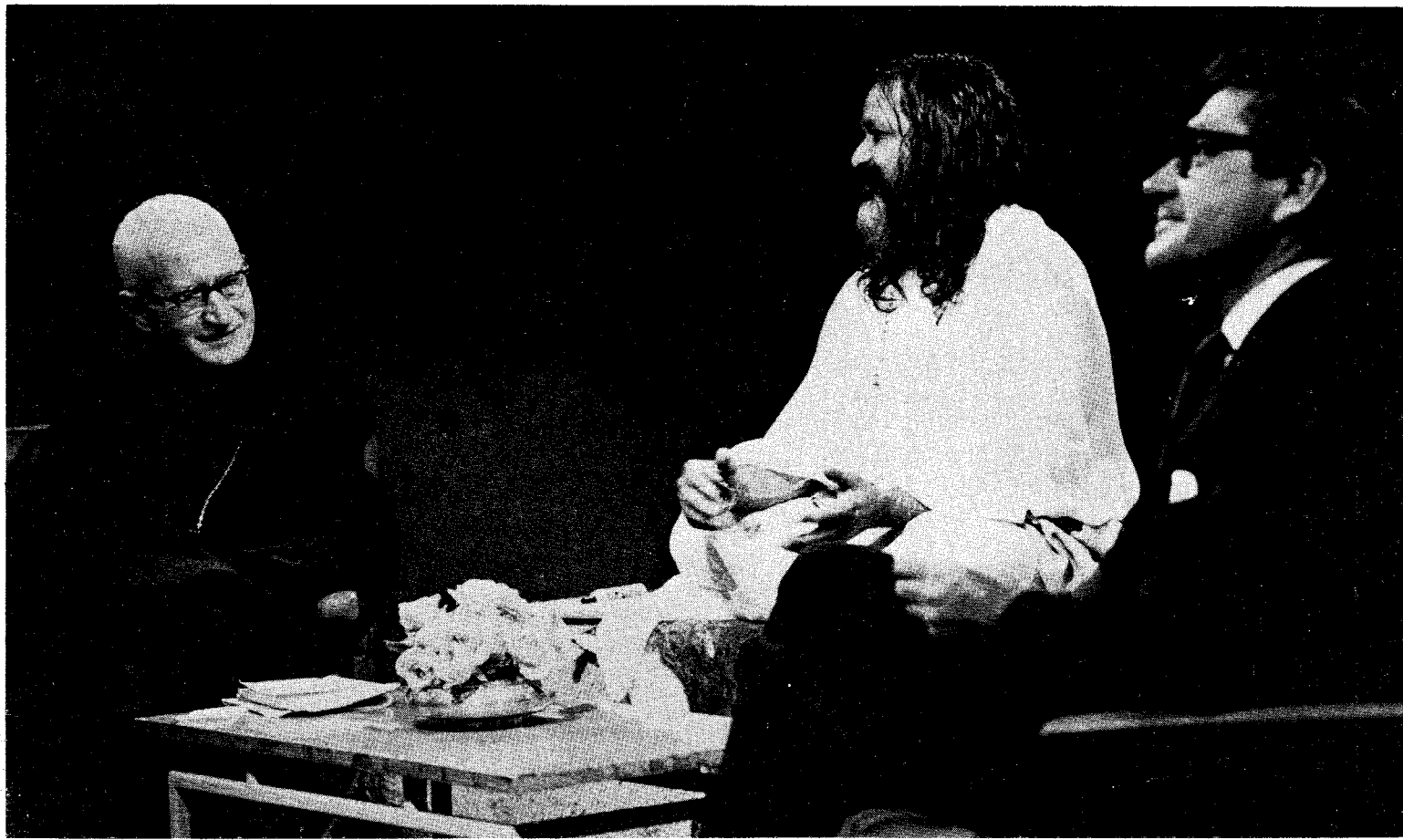
Kee Would you regard the Maharishi as a heretic?

Abbot I don't think I'd regard him as a heretic, because, technically speaking, a heretic to us is one who has seen the Christian light and has rejected it either wholly or in part. Now, therefore, nobody who is faithful to his own lights should be called a heretic; and I would be far from suggesting . . . (General laughter).

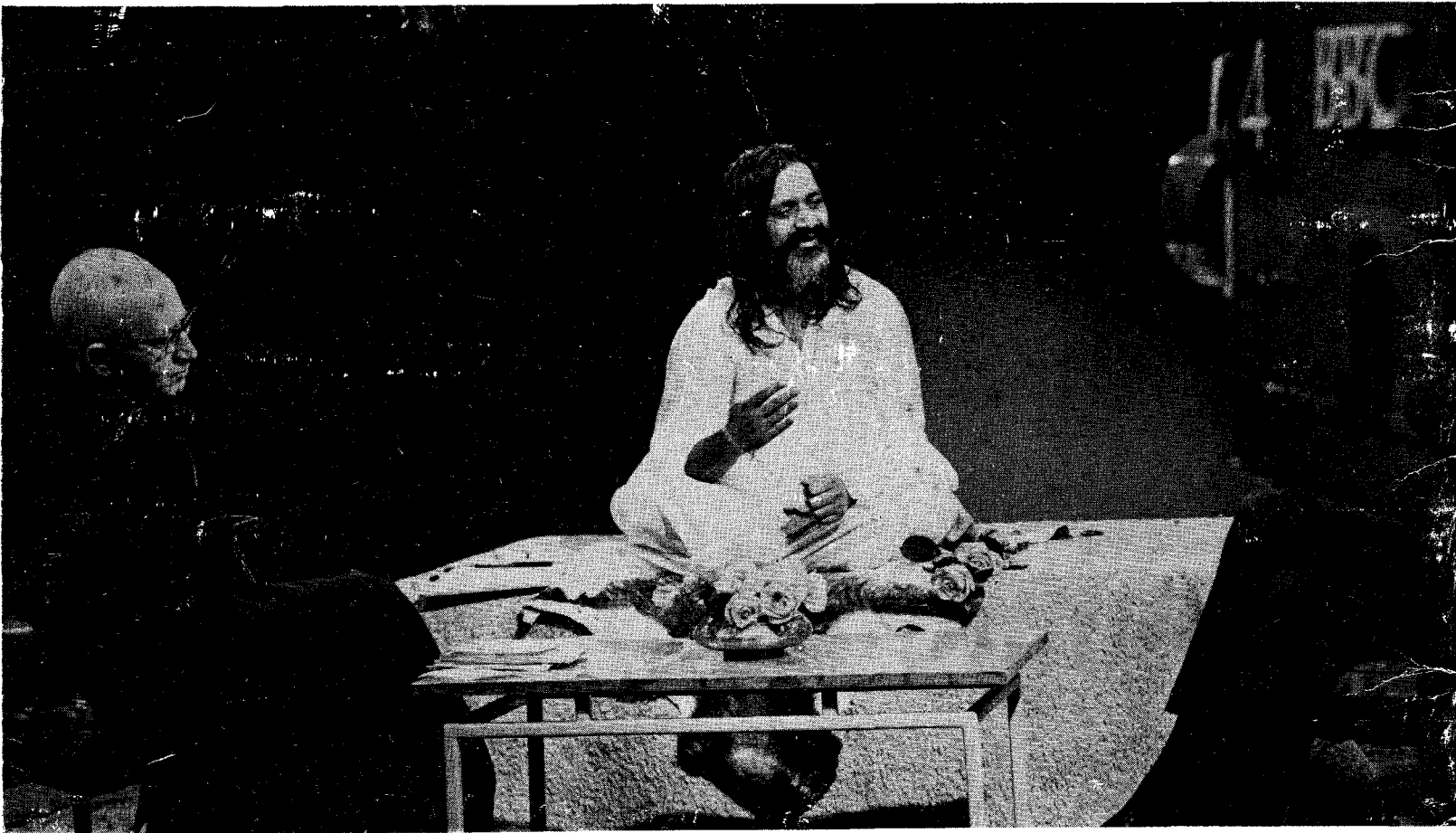
Kee So there is an important Christian light—truth about religion which you think the Maharishi hasn't seen?

Abbot Indeed, indeed. Yes, I think there is, which to my mind would complete the picture which he's given us.

Kee Well, thank you both very much—Maharishi, and the Abbot. Well, I think there's an unquestionable echo in a lot of what the Maharishi has said, of that ground or depth of our Being, which the Bishop of Woolwich and other modern Christian theologians have identified with God. Now, clearly, at a time when all religions are going through a stage of self-examination, and particularly perhaps the Christian religion, I think it's probably important that all religions should come together, if only to find out how much they are apart.



Photographs by courtesy of the B.B.C.



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