

# PATHS TO THE HEART

SUFISM AND THE CHRISTIAN EAST

M. S. Umar

Despite the long and well-known history of conflict between Christians and Muslims, their mystical traditions, especially in the Christian East and in Sufism, have shared for centuries many of the same spiritual methods and goals. One thinks, for example, of the profound similarities between the practice of the Jesus Prayer among the Hesychast masters of the *Philokalia* and the Sufi practice of *dhikr* or invocation.

These commonalities suggest the possibility for a deeper kind of religious dialogue than is customary in our day, a dialogue which seeks to foster what Frithjof Schuon has called an inward or “esoteric” ecumenism, and which, while respecting the integrity of traditional dogmas and rites, “calls into play the wisdom which can discern the one sole Truth under the veil of different forms”.

The purpose of this conference, the first major event of its kind, is to promote precisely this more faithful and more inward kind of ecumenical discussion. Participants in the dialogue, who include some of the world’s leading authorities on Christian and Muslim spirituality, have been especially selected with this aim in mind. All of them are keenly interested in the mystical and contemplative dimensions of the world’s religions, and all are open to the insights of traditions not their own.

October 18-20, 2001 Internationally recognized spiritual leaders and scholars will gather on the campus of the Univeristy of South Carolina in Columbia, South Carolina for three days of presentation and dialogue concerning the mystical and contemplative dimensions of Eastern Christianity and Islam. Bishop Kallistos Ware, Lecturer in Eastern Orthodox Studies at Oxford University, and Dr. Seyyed Hossein Hasr, University

Professor of Islamic Studies at George Washington University, will present the key-note addresses,

The conference is free and open to the public, but persons wishing to attend are asked to please register in advance, and they are strongly encouraged to make arrangements for their accommodations early. Other speakers include:

**WILLIAM C. CHITTICK**

State University of New York at Stony Brook

“On the Cosmology of Dhikr”

**JOHN CHRYSAVGIS**

Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology

*“Paths of Continuity:*

*Contemporary Witnesses of the Hesychast Experience”*

**JAMES S. CUTSINGER**

University of South Carolina

*“Hesychia: An Orthodox Opening to Esoteric Ecumenism”*

**GRAY HENRY**

Fons Vitae Press

“Beads of Faith: St. Seraphim of Sarov in Sufic Perspective”

**Reza Shah Kazemi**

Institute of Isma‘âlâ Studies

“The Metaphysics of Religious Dialogue: A Qur’anic Perspective”

**ANDREW LOUTH**

University of Durham

“Evagrius on Prayer”

**HUSTON SMITH**

Syracuse University (Emeritus)

“The Long Way Home”

For further information and to register on-line:

[www.pathstotheheart.com](http://www.pathstotheheart.com)

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