"Inter-Faith Dialogue" (poem)

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Inter-Faith Dialogue

*Jesus was a Capricorn.*
—Kris Kristofferson

And a plagiarist. Pilfered
his material sometime
after the temple—
Mary and Joseph crazy
till they found him, beardless
among the beards—
and before the Jordan—
John still with his head if not
his right mind. Jesus
hung up the leather vest
of right livelihood,
dropped his dad’s hammer
onto the olive wood table,
hitched a caravan to Sarnath
and became a Buddhist.

In the neighborhood he’d made
people nervous, always looking
right into them, his primal
right mindfulness awkward
at parties. But now Gautama’s
hard-earned dharma
with an Aramaic spin might
do the trick, might play well
on that mount outside town.

And it did. Until it didn’t.
Noble Truth Two became the ones
about the ravens and sparrows.
Right intention: thou shalt not even kill
with the vague hate in thy heart.
And his emptiness? Could’ve inspired
the Heart Sutra himself: “He has not
been made to tremble, has overcome
what can upset.” Rabbi, Bodhisattva—
six of one, half a dozen the other.
Son of God. Son of Man.
Had his own *Dhammapada.*
When the soldiers showed up, all hell didn’t break loose. That came later. Instead, the healed ear of right action. The right speech of saying nothing at all. Lotus lily of Kusinagara, of Skull Hill.