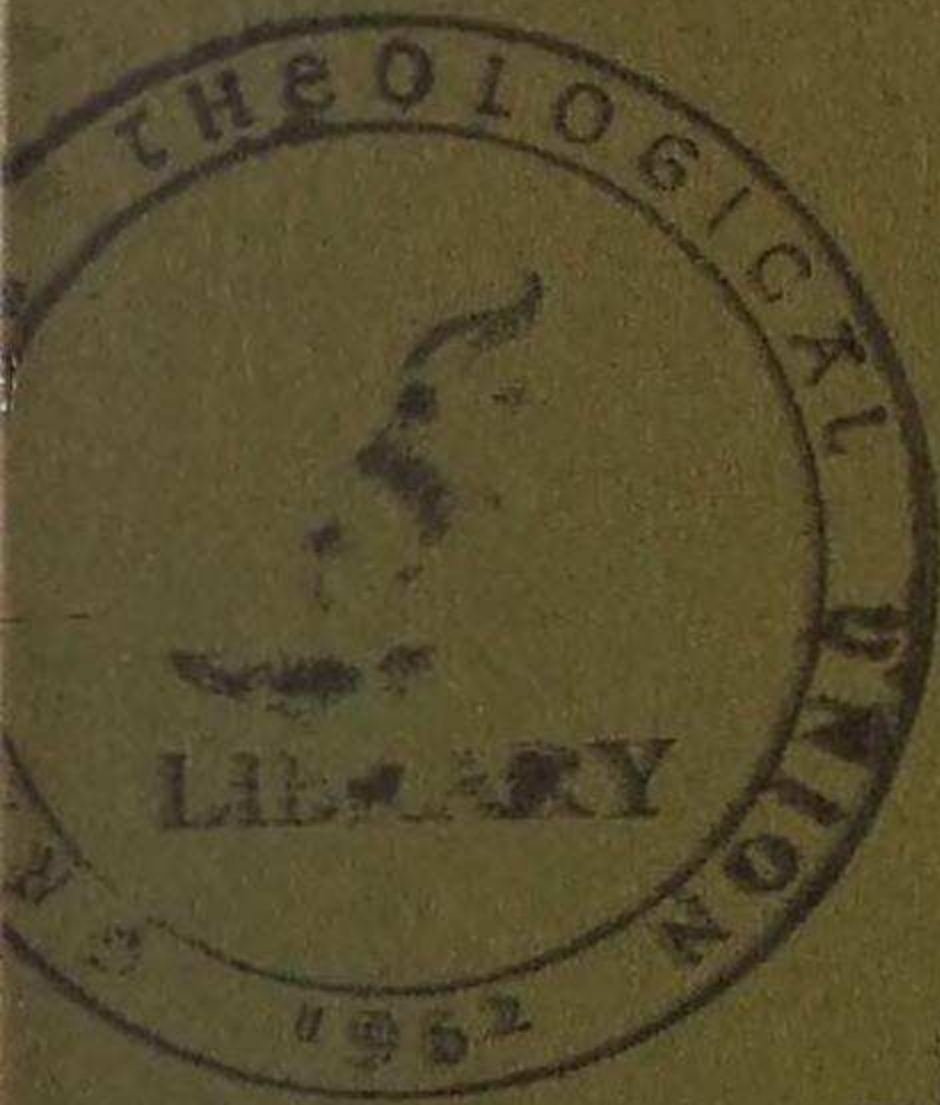


new religious movements

# up-date

AUG 20 1981

VOLUME V, ISSUE 2  
AUGUST, 1981



## RELIGIONS OF THE NEW AGE

### CONTENTS:

- 1 FROM THE EDITOR
- 2 NEW AGE SPIRITUALITY - A GENERAL OVERVIEW  
Mark Albrecht
- 6 A RANDOM SAMPLING  
Eddie Noonan
- 22 NEW AGE RESOURCES
- 24 EDITORIAL: FUZZY THINKING IN THE AGE OF AQUARIUS
- 29 MODERN SYNCRETIST MOVEMENTS  
Johannes Aagaard
- 37 BOOK REVIEW: THE AQUARIAN CONSPIRACY  
Heinz Zeit
- 40 WE HAVE READ...



## FROM THE EDITOR

This issue of Update concentrates on the so-called "new age" spiritual movements, an amazing variety and number of new religious groups, movements philosophies, techniques, and institutions. The first article, New Age Spirituality - A General Overview, is a survey of the phenomenon and also contains a report on what is probably the world's largest annual new age fair - London's Mind, Body and Spirit Festival, held in late June.

The following article, A Random Sampling, is a look at 20 typical and/or influential new age groups. The author, Eddie Noonan, a "veteran observer" of the new age scene, is a graduate student in theology from Massachusetts, USA.

Following this is a short resources section for those interested in following the burgeoning new age movement.

Our editorial is placed in the middle of this issue, since it is better understood in the context of having read the first two articles.

Dr Johannes Aagaard gives a concise conceptual and historical overview of modern syncretist movements in his article, Modern Syncretist Movements.

Our opinionated book reviewer, Heinz Zeit, analyzes Marilyn Ferguson's popular new age manifesto, The Aquarian Conspiracy.

Finally, we tie things up with our news and views section, We Have Read...

- Mark Albrecht, Editor

Correction: In our last issue we mistakenly stated that there were 12 acharyas who succeeded Swami Prabhupada, the Hare Krishna founder (p. 26.) ISKCON has kindly informed us that there were only 11.

## NEW AGE SPIRITUALITY - A GENERAL OVERVIEW

by Mark Albrecht

The Sixth International Festival for Mind, Body and Spirit, a spiritual extravaganza of amazing variety and proportions, was held in London the 20-28 of June. The event, which is probably the largest of its kind in the world, (100,000 attended) was a remarkable collection and display of the so-called "new age" religions, philosophies and speculative systems.

Held at the giant Olympia exhibition hall, there were a total of 165 separate booths, with people selling and promoting everything from religion to pyramid power and cow manure (literally.) Not all of the booths were occupied by people pushing religious philosophy, although such groups constituted the majority. There were also a multitude of psychic healing centers, individuals practicing "holistic" health, palmistry, tarot, aura readings, etc., as well as artists and craftsmen, health food shops, and a variety of other enterprises. There was also a mixed bag of political, social and ecological organizations; the centerpiece in the hall was a huge, painted globe erected by The Friends of the Earth, well-known ecological activists, who were celebrating their tenth anniversary.

Apart from the individual exhibitions, there was also a performing stage, which was always active with singing, dancing, and plays, a lecture room where the experts spoke in earnest about reincarnation, astrology, alchemy, numerology, dowsing, the secret life of trees, psychic detection, flying saucers and much, much more. Workshops were also held in which people could directly explore many of these phenomena by personal experience.

Most of the well-known new religious movements were not there, e.g. T.M., the Moonies, Scientology, Divine Light Mission and Eckankar, although the Hare Krishnas and Rajneesh were represented and quite visible. The majority of the groups and movements in attendance were representative of the growing subculture of "new age spirituality" - a term that has become common coinage in recent years.

This new age spirituality derives its name from the belief that humanity is about to enter a "new age" of spiritual awareness and harmony - the mythical and elusive Age of Aquarius. One popular new age figure (David Spangler of Findhorn in Scotland) defines new age as "fundamentally a change of consciousness from one

of isolation and separation to one of communion and wholeness." It may be further defined as a millennial or utopian philosophy which is both eclectic (drawing bits and pieces from diverse sources) and syncretistic (an attempt to reconcile all religious thought and doctrine by appealing to a lowest common denominator).

The sources that are drawn upon most heavily are Hindu and Buddhist philosophy, some forms of shamanism, (nature and spirit worship) assorted occultism, the Hermetic gnostic traditions, and modern psychology with its "awareness" therapies. Historically, the new age movement may be traced back about 100 years, with the founding of the Theosophical Society by Mme. Blavatsky in 1875. Her unique blend of Hinduism, Buddhism and occult speculation became a moving force by the end of the 19th century, and set the stage for the advent of the Hindu counter-mission in the West, spearheaded by such gurus as Swami Vivekenanda in the 1890's and Paramhansa Yogananda in 1920. Theosophy subdivided into a number of other movements, such as Alice Bailey's Lucis Trust and Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy; the simultaneous rise of spiritualism (alleged contact with spirit entities and departed souls) and psychic research also added fuel to the fire, and "esoteric" teachings of "ancient wisdom" with occult trappings suddenly acquired a strong following in western society.

However, it was not until the 1960's that the esoteric teachings, which had become firmly rooted after 75 years, began to grow swiftly and flower. In the last two decades, there has been a remarkable increase in the number of new religions, philosophies, metaphysical movements and cults. Some of them, e.g. The Unification Church, Scientology and Hare Krishna, claim exclusive truth and do not cooperate with other movements, but the great majority of the literally thousands of new groups share and participate in a loose network that has come to be known as the new age movement (sometimes also called the human potential movement.)

Despite the diversity, almost all of these groups share a common set of presuppositions about such basic theological issues as the nature of God, humanity, the world, salvation, and the problem of evil and suffering. Briefly, these assumptions are -

1. God - God is usually perceived in an impersonal sense, as law, energy, or creative force. The Judeo-Christian concept of a transcendent, personal God is usually discarded, or modified within a pantheistic or monistic framework.

2. Humanity - People are regarded as part of the Divine, or essentially God. Since the universe itself is divine, as pantheism and monism presume, each person is also a spark of the universal fire, or a wave in the divine ocean. The body is usually seen as a separate reality, a temporary dwelling.
3. The world - The world is often viewed as illusory, a temporary playground which one must not become attached to, since worlds and universes are continually re-cycled. Matter is but a gross manifestation or emanation from pure spirit, and will dissolve and reappear again an infinite number of times.
4. Salvation - Salvation (in the spiritual sense) is accomplished via enlightenment, or by being liberated from attachment to the world and the mind. In other words, realizing that you are really God - or a part of God - and then experiencing that unity through specific techniques and rituals. Some form of reincarnation is usually adhered to and the process of achieving salvation is dependent upon self-effort and usually takes many, many incarnations.
5. Good and evil - Goodness is usually synonymous with the aforementioned enlightenment, and evil is associated with ignorance - specifically ignorance of the soul's inherently divine status. Because of this, moral evil is usually spiritualized away - i.e. an "enlightened" person transcends the crude duality of good and evil and realizes that it is all part of the "cosmic balance."

Of course, not all new age groups would subscribe exactly to these five points of doctrine, but the great majority certainly would find themselves in general agreement. There are many other elements of a secondary nature that crop up frequently in new age thought, which will be described in the following two articles.

The one other fairly common feature that deserves mention here is that of spiritualism. A large percentage of new age groups claim to have contact with spirit entities and disembodied intelligences, and many were begun after the leader received messages from a discarnate source. Many of the pivotal figures in new age groups claim to be practicing mediums (people who enter into a trance state and allow a spirit to "take over" and speak through them.) Whether or not there is a reality behind this phenomenon is hard to determine, but suffice it to say that mediumship and spirit contact have been an integral part of human religious practice since time immemorial.

The arrival of the new age movement is not just a passing fancy or a manifestation of spiritual crankism. The elements of new age thought enumerated above

are rooted in an ancient world view, traditionally more at home in the Orient than in the West. The fact that many of the new metaphysical philosophies and spiritual groups are linking up in an intentional, international cooperative effort is quite significant. The London festival, and many others like it, however bogus some of it may be, certainly underscores the fact that new age philosophy is here to stay, and growing steadily in our increasingly confusing and fragmented modern society. People want spiritual answers, and they're getting them from the new religions; whether or not these answers are the correct ones to the questions posed by the human condition is another matter.

The following article surveys a small random sampling of new age groups represented at the London gathering. While hardly comprehensive, it touches on some of the larger and more influential groups and also describes some very typical smaller ones - enough to get a good idea of the type of philosophy and praxis espoused by the movement as a whole. There are literally thousands of such groups in the world today, encompassing everything from household communes to multi-million dollar corporations. Each year many more arise, claiming a new twist on old truth. Whether they are falling down from heaven, crawling up out of the pit, or are just harmless and imaginary contrivances, is a question that each person must decide. For those who are genuinely concerned about spiritual matters, the answer must not be pushed aside, for the new religions and philosophies are powerful and growing forces in the world today.

## A RANDOM SAMPLING

A BRIEF SURVEY OF 20 NEW AGE GROUPS FROM THE FESTIVAL OF MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT

by Eddie Noonan

### 1. Agnihotra - The Purifying Fire (Homa Therapy)

This group has taken the old Vedic rite of sacrifice to the fire-god Agni and adapted it to modern conditions. The practitioners maintain that pollution of the atmosphere has adversely affected the flow of prana, the life energy that pulsates through the cosmos. This, they claim, has caused a breakdown in normal processes, resulting in disease, confusion, and mental illness.

They say that this sorry situation can be rectified by the proper use of Agnihotra, in which cow dung, rice and ghee (clarified butter) are poured over a ceremonial fire in an inverted pyramid-shaped copper pot. The ceremony must be performed twice a day - within two minutes of sunrise and sunset - when certain energies in the atmosphere are said to be at their peak. This ceremonial burning must be accompanied by the chanting of prescribed Sanskrit chants.

When this is done in a precise and consistent manner, it is supposed to restore the balance of the prana and atmosphere in the surrounding area. The devotees say that "When Agnihotra is performed, we could say that we are applying a bio-rhythmic switch whereby we utilize the awesome tide of energies, electricities, and ethers to purify our mind stuff. Agnihotra is a material aid to higher tiers of consciousness."

### 2. The Anthroposophical Society

The Anthroposophical Society, which has been rapidly gaining momentum in Europe in recent years, was founded in 1913 by Rudolf Steiner, a native of Austria. Steiner was an ardent Theosophist, holding the position of secretary of the German sector from 1902-13, when he broke away to form his own movement.

Drawing heavily upon his scientific background as well as his Theosophical training, Steiner called his new system "Spiritual Science." He claimed to have perfected certain meditative techniques which gave him an understanding of other and earlier worlds, by which he divined the true origin and destiny of humanity. Through the application of his own authoritative insights and techniques of

meditation, his disciples came to share his world view and the movement began to grow.

At the core of Steiner's Spiritual Science stands the theory of evolution, both physical and spiritual. Each person is subjected to multitudes of reincarnations, until the prescribed number of human experiences bring the soul to perfection. The problem of imperfection stems from an ambiguous "fall" in which a war broke out between the spirits who lived on the sun (the Sun Beings) and those who lived on the moon (Moon Beings.) Some of the Moon Beings became "Luciferian Spirits" and subsequently exerted their influence upon the human race. Spirit beings thus play a large role in Steiner's philosophy. Through use of his meditation techniques, one is ostensibly able to see past lives and other realms, thereby gaining the knowledge to perfect the soul. Steiner claimed that his disciples could even "become capable of communication with individuals living in the spiritual world between death and new birth."

Steiner claimed that his system was "true Christianity" and that it was a completely Christ-centered philosophy. But, needless to say, his interpretation of the Christian faith was rather heterodox. The Gospels were seen as esoteric documents for the initiated only and Christ was the supreme example of human development, who all people should strive to emulate. Christ's true uniqueness, Steiner taught, was that he was the only person in all history who attained perfection in one incarnation. Because of this, he is the judge of the afterworld or the "Lord of Karma." What rose from the grave on Easter morning was not the glorified body of Christ, but rather a nebulous spiritual entity that Steiner called "The Phantom."

### 3. The Atlanteans

The Atlanteans are a small but typical new age group, blending a large variety of psychic and occult elements into a synthesis "in an effort to dispel fear and distrust and bring light to the planet."

The movement began in London in 1957 when a group of people began "receiving wisdom" through an "esoteric source" named Helio-Arcanophus, a spirit being who channelled messages through a medium. They took the name Atlanteans because they believe that they have revived the esoteric teachings that were propagated on the lost continent of Atlantis, thought to have existed in the area west of The Strait of Gibraltar before it sank into the sea several thousand years ago.

They believe that the original Atlanteans "lived in peace and harmony and had a full understanding of the spiritual forces that motivate the universe." Atlantis mythology is a common theme in occult and esoteric circles, although its existence has never been proved.

Their activities consist of holding public meetings and teaching courses on such subjects as spiritual healing, reincarnation, yoga and psychic forces. They state that their practice of occultism is the use of "thought" to control "those universal forces that exist and in themselves are neither good nor evil, but simply forces." They also publish a magazine, The Atlantean, and hold festivals four times a year at the equinoxes and solstices.

Their approach is basically pantheistic, patterned after the fundamental premises of Hinduism; God is defined as "an infinite creative thought force, a state of being in which all thought is in complete harmony." Through reincarnation and spiritual evolution, the universe is eventually reconciled back to the "creator." In many ways, the Atlanteans stand out as a composite example of a new age group: they trace their origins to "spirit communication," hold a modified oriental world view with beliefs in yoga, meditation and reincarnation, promote psychism and occultism, practice spiritual healing through alignment with "the forces," and promote syncretistic beliefs.

Or, as Helio-Arcanophus puts it in one of his "dictations" - "There are many paths to the Father/Mother God, and which path you select is not of very great importance since eventually they all reach the Godhead. You should follow that form of thought or belief which is best suited to your own approach to spiritual matters."

#### 4. Church Universal and Triumphant

Sometimes called the Summit Lighthouse, the CUT is based on the teachings of the spiritualist "I Am" movement (itself a spinoff from Theosophy) which flourished in the U.S. in the 1920's. Based on the teachings of "The Great White Brotherhood of Ascended Masters," CUT was founded in 1958 in Washington DC by Mark Prophet, on orders from "The Ascended Master El Morya."

The main tenet of the group is the belief that a pantheon of ascended (dead) spiritual beings guides human destiny and communicates through certain mediums such as Prophet. When he died in 1973, his wife Elizabeth took over as chief

message-giver and head of the growing movement, which has since become one of the best-known and most controversial in the U.S.

Ms. Prophet, who has assumed the title of "Guru Ma," regularly "stumps" (speaks) around the globe to elevate world consciousness and give spirit dictations. The organization also publishes enormous quantities of literature and books, including the weekly Pearls of Wisdom, which are the latest messages from the Great White Brotherhood. A relatively wealthy movement, CUT maintains a large and well-appointed headquarters on an estate called "Camelot" near Los Angeles, which also houses the Summit University.

Among the ascended masters who are said to regularly speak through Guru Ma are Confucius, Buddha, Mary, St. Francis, and, of course, Jesus. Despite the overtly occult synthesis of CUT, the organization claims to promote the true teachings of Jesus. Their book Climb the Highest Mountain, which is the summum bonum of Summit philosophy, contains some 700 biblical passages, all decontextualized and interpreted for the benefit of the reader. Christianity is thus reinterpreted within the broadest possible esoteric and pantheistic speculations, since the movement holds that "dogma and narrowness of belief is confining to the progress of the soul."

##### 5. Claregate College

This institution was begun in England in 1977 by Dr Douglas Baker, "B.A., M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P., F.Z.S.," who is described in their literature as poet, author, scientist and "devastating lecturer of international acclaim." He is said to be a graduate of Sheffield University's medical school, although he never registered as an M.D., preferring to use "natural energies" rather than drugs.

The college offers a degree they call the Bachelor of Metaphysics (B. Mph.), a two year course which includes study in many of the "esoteric sciences" such as esoteric healing, esoteric astrology, esoteric psychology, metaphysics, parapsychology, reincarnation, life after death, astral projection (out-of-the-body experiences), the third eye, materialization of objects, and the complete explanation of the origin of man.

While the enrollment figures are unknown, many of the students take courses by correspondence. Baker, who publishes the Esoteric Science Journal, claims

to be the author of 50 books on spiritual subjects, and speaks frequently to groups.

#### 6. The Christian Community

This group is a direct descendant of Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy. It was begun by a number of Steiner's disciples in Switzerland in 1922, apparently with his blessings. The Christian Community claims to be "Christianity reborn" and seems to have been as much a reaction against orthodox Christianity as it was inspired by Steiner's teachings. The founders of the movement were said to have felt "the growing irrelevance of orthodox church life" and have struggled to "overcome the straitjacket imposed on the church by its early thinkers." The community feels that Christianity is shut up in old institutions and needs to be born again: "It (Christianity) has a great future, because it has never been more than half understood in the past. The Christian Community has been founded for this purpose."

Needless to say, this "deeper meaning of Christianity" has certain predictably familiar characteristics. While the Christian Community claims that it doesn't have an official theology or articles of belief, they share most of Steiner's presuppositions, e.g. reincarnation, a pantheist theology, and Christ's semi-divine status as a perfected man. In fact, "Christianity reborn" turns out to be simply "Christianity reinterpreted" via the syncretistic speculations of the time, which found new impetus around the turn of the century with the advent of Theosophy, the Ramakrishna Mission, Alice Bailey and Annie Besant, all of whom taught a similar approach to Christianity.

The community practices a full array of "sacraments." They have a revised eucharist, "corresponding to that which has evolved in the Worlds of Spirit," baptism, confirmation, anointing, (death rites) sacramental consultation (counseling), marriage and ordination. The Christian Community is active throughout Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand. Since 1959 it has been headed by Rudolf Frieling.

#### 7. Da Free John and the Crazy Wisdom Fellowship

Formerly known as Bubba Free John, who started the Dawn Horse Communion in California in 1972, Mr Free John (real name: Franklin Jones) claims to be a spiritual adept who achieved samadhi (enlightenment) in 1970.

Free John is an interesting case, as he is one of the growing number of gurus raised and educated in the West. Born in New York in 1939, "Da" (his title) is said to have emerged from his mother's womb in a state of total enlightenment. He then "allowed himself to experience fully the suffering and delusion of ordinary human existence" (in other words, he was a normal child.) After graduation from Stanford University, he attended three Christian seminaries, then dabbled in Eastern thought before going to India, where he supposedly mastered all the spiritual refinements of the Indian traditions. Then, in September of 1970, "having fulfilled the traditional eastern and western approaches to life and truth, Da Free John spontaneously resumed the enlightenment condition he had known from birth. His body and mind were now completely realigned to infinite life, and he was fully capable of communicating that Divine Life to others."

His teaching is somewhat of a combination of Tibetan Buddhism and advaitic (radically monistic) Hinduism, as well as elements that also surface in Zen, e.s.t. and Rajneesh: "There is nothing to be attained, nothing," he writes. "The truth is perfectly and already your present condition." The Crazy Wisdom Fellowship, which replaced the Dawn Horse Communion, is the community of his disciples (mostly in California) who observe his teaching, which they describe by saying, "We appeal directly to the Radiant Transcendent Being or condition in which the world and all beings and states arise." Free John claims that his teachings are unique because he understands spirituality from both the eastern and western perspectives, presumably meaning without cultural or spiritual "baggage," and hence "transcends the conventional limitations of both occidental and oriental views of life." The Fellowship believes that there is no one true revelation or exclusively divine teacher, although Da seems to hint strongly that he knows something that the rest of them don't.

His disciples claim that he is "an unobstructed vehicle for the siddhi" (divine power) even though he is no longer teaching. As of January 1981, Free John disappeared (he is believed to be in Hawaii), "making a transition that usually occurs only when the Adept actually dies." He allegedly performs his transcendental spiritual work in seclusion "for the sake of the world." His many writings are now the focal point of the Fellowship - "Now the Way is complete; all necessary instruction has been given."

## 8. Findhorn

Findhorn is a spiritual community of new age zealots living in Scotland. Founded about 20 years ago by Peter and Eileen Caddy, Findhorn has become a sort of a pilgrimage spot for many of the spiritual seekers who are looking for the Age of Aquarius. It is a community that engages in farming, and attunement to nature spirits is central to their philosophy, which otherwise embodies standard new age assumptions.

Recently they have developed the Findhorn Communications Centre as a sort of clearinghouse for new age cooperation. Eileen "received guidance" to begin the centre's work, which stated that "the work of this center is to usher in the New Age; to raise the vibrations by the awareness of the Christ Consciousness within each one..." It is the conviction of the centre that the people who are spearheading the birth of the new consciousness have been operating in isolation. The centre, "aided by the growth of technology in rapid travel and global communications, must become a point of focus attuned to universality, around which these links can coalesce and become stabilised."

They provide information referral, media consultation, coordination of lecture tours, exchange programs, and administer the Onearth Network of Resource People. This is called "The Network of Light," and ultimately moves toward a time when "The Network of Light becomes so complex and interrelated that finally there will be no network, only a Planet of Light."

## 9. Inner Light Consciousness/Fellowship of the Inner Light

This group, recently founded by Paul Solomon, a former Baptist minister, is a curious mix of new age speculation, occult mythology, reinterpreted Christianity, and spiritualism. Solomon is a trance medium who is said to possess the ability to enter into an altered state of consciousness and give "readings" or "dictations" on any subject. He claims to be able to "tap into the Akashic Records" (ethereal data banks which occultists believe hold all knowledge of events and relationships, past, present and future) and thereby dispense divine wisdom. He frequently leads tour groups to places of "spiritual significance" - His latest advertisement for "the Mystery School Trail in England" says that "Here is the head-on meeting place of the western world's greatest mix of Occultism and Christianity - an outpost for the survivors of Atlantis, visited by the Holy Mother and Christ Child, final resting place of the Last Supper Chalice hidden by Joseph of Arimathea."

Inner Light claims to be "the most effective technique available" to change your life for the better. They teach a change that occurs "from within" instead of supposedly less effective forms of behavior modification which are taught through asceticism and other disciplines and therapies.

The Inner Light Consciousness method claims to enable one to:

- Change from victim to causality
- Experience and express pure joy
- Develop higher sense perception
- Experience dynamic meditation
- Experience full-time thinking
- Experience a separate reality at will

Solomon is a well-known figure on the new age circuit, appearing at many conferences throughout the world, speaking on sexuality, meditation, healing and the new age version of Christ Consciousness.

#### 10. The Lucis Trust

Founded by Alice Bailey in 1922, The Lucis Trust was formed to promote her peculiar type of esoteric Christianity, which was largely inspired by Theosophy. The purposes of the Lucis Trust are said to be "the establishment of right human relations" and to "promote the education of the human mind toward recognition and practice of the spiritual principles and values upon which a stabilised and interdependent world society may be based."

These spiritual principles were distilled by Bailey during her long career as an esoteric writer and philosopher, and are centered around her vision of universal Christianity. She writes that Christ, who is "person-presence-principle," stands at the center of human life, and that he is "the same great Identity" which all religions recognize, though under different names. Bailey wrote prolifically, systematizing much esoteric, Theosophically-oriented thought in her books. She popularized the terms "new age" and "Age of Aquarius" in her writings, in which she explored such subjects as the reappearance of the Christ, esoteric astrology, energy rays and spiritual initiation, telepathy and the etheric body, cosmic fire, white magic and "the consciousness of the atom." Bailey is one of the pivotal figures in the emergence and formulation of new age philosophy and contemporary gnosticism.

The Lucis Trust also acts as the umbrella organization for a number of subdivisions of the Trust:

-The Arcane School, created in 1923, which is a correspondence training school for meditation and other psychic disciplines, including a mail lending library.

-The Lucis Publishing Company, which publishes Alice Bailey's books and The Beacon Magazine.

-Triangles, founded in 1937, is a kind of "prayer group" in which three people form a "spiritual triangle" by uniting in "positive thought" to effect changes in the world. They frequently chant Bailey's Great Invocation, which begins with "From the point of Light within the mind of God let light stream forth into the minds of men. Let Light descend on earth..."

-World Goodwill, established in 1932, distributes literature and commentaries on the plight of the human condition.

-Radio Lucis, which "presents principles of the Ageless Wisdom in a form suitable for Radio broadcast."

#### 11. The Personal Integration Centre

This is a London-based fellowship which teaches psychic and self-awareness courses. While they are only a small group, they are representative of a large and growing number of similar schools and centers which teach occult practices and psychic development. They claim to be part of a "comprehensive network" of similar groups throughout Britain.

Most of the teachers are self-proclaimed spirit mediums and psychics who teach courses in various aspects of self awareness, such as meditation, astrology, tarot, mediumship, psychic healing, massage, reflexology, and aroma therapy (herbal medicine.) Their courses last six weeks and graduates can take advanced courses in occult philosophy.

#### 12. The Rosicrucians (A.M.O.R.C. branch)

The "Ancient Mystic Order of Rosae Cruxis" is the American branch of Rosicrucianism, and is also the largest and most influential. Founded by Dr H. Spencer Lewis in California ca. 1925, its alleged purpose is "to enable everyone to live in harmony with the creative, constructive cosmic forces." Attainment of this harmony includes almost every conceivable type of occult speculation and psychic practice, although the movement tends to identify most closely with the esoteric wisdom of ancient Egypt.

Although Rosicrucians claim to be a true science and "not religious," they point to the Pharaoh Akhnaton as "the first to declare but one God." Upon closer analysis, the one God that they speak of is simply "a more subtle intelligence - a subtle power within," which the Rosicrucians say they can "tap" via their methods of mind-alteration. While they maintain a fundamentally monistic world view, they concentrate on the development of the "siddhis" or occult powers, such as time travel, development of the psychic power of attraction, premonition, telepathic communication, etc., and teach seminars on such topics as reincarnation, mysticism, energy fields, ESP, psychic phenomena and the human aura.

Dr Lewis frequently waxed eloquent on "true Christianity" and produced two books titled The Secret Doctrines of Jesus and The Real Story of Jesus. PR literature for his books state that Lewis drew on secret sources known only to him to compile the true story of the life of Christ. The book maintains that Jesus' secret teachings were "privately preserved" in heretofore unknown archives which the author discovered in Palestine and Egypt: "The facts relating to the Virgin Birth, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension will astound and inspire you." While they may not be too inspiring to many Christians, they will certainly be astounding.

### 13. Silva Mind Control

"In 40 hours you can learn how to use your mind to do almost anything you wish!" So goes the introductory pitch of Silva Mind Control, founded by research scientist José Silva in 1955.

With an active work in 56 countries, SMC claims to have three million graduates and has been very influential in orienting many towards psychic and occult involvement. Silva claims that there is a special functioning level of the brain, where the mind operates on an extremely high intuitive, creative, and expanded capacity, which is called the Alpha level. The goal of SMC is to train the student to consciously live at this level of expanded awareness - "In short, to allow you to function as a superior person."

It is "sold" as a secular technique for relieving stress and bad habits, much like Transcendental Meditation. Like TM, it carries with it a number of gnostic spiritual presuppositions about humanity and the universe, which are decidedly new age and psychic in their approach.

#### 14. Scandinavian Yoga and Meditation School

Started by Swami Janakananda in Scandinavia about ten years ago, the SYMS teaches classical yoga in Europe, Britain and North America. Janakananda, a Dane by birth, was a disciple of Swami Satyananda in India in the late 1960's, where he received initiation into the Paramhansa Order.

SYMS carries on a vigorous public relations campaign in Scandinavia, maintains outreaches in Stockholm, Copenhagen, Århus, and Oslo, and has several retreat centers, the largest being in Sweden. They teach a variation of kriya yoga during their high-powered three month course, which involves a 20 day period of absolute silence and keeps outside contacts, including mail, to an absolute minimum. Janakananda's approach is based on hatha yoga, emphasizing ritual fetishes such as nose cleaning with a neti pot, asanas (poses), pranayama (breathing exercises), and bandhas (locks). Meditation takes several forms; the visual, with concentration on a yantra or a flame, the "inner silence," to calm the mind and contain thoughts, and the more advanced "ajapa jap," which is designed to "bring you in contact with your energy resources."

#### 15. The Sufi Order of the West

Traditionally, the Sufis have been known as the mystical wing of Islam. The Sufi Order of the West was founded in the early part of this century by Hazrat Inayat Khan in an attempt to integrate Hindu Vedanta teachings with more traditional Islamic Sufism. The result was one the most thorough-going syncretist movements in history, which has since been taken over by his son, Pir Valayat Khan.

Identifying themselves with the Chisti order of Sufism, the Order says that its "particular mission is to cohere religions finally into unity without syncretism," (!) but does not explain how this is possible, except to say that "all beliefs are valid." They claim to honor all religions, traditions and teachers, but their metaphysics are really based on a loose interpretation of the Hindu Vedanta. A Sufi is thus defined as one who loses the "false self" to discover the God within, a virtual re-statement of the Vedic Brahman-atman ideology.

They hold a universal worship service with all of the world's major religions represented at the altar, but with their meanings reinterpreted within the new age-esoteric tradition. Khan is a well-know speaker on the new age circuit and

the Sufis are noted for their excellent music and dance. They also teach meditation, dancing and esoteric philosophy, and conduct initiations into their brand of Sufism. They have a special healing order and maintain a large estate in New York called "The Abode of the Message."

#### 16. The Swedenborg Movement

The Swedenborgians are important and interesting since they are one of the few esoteric groups or aberrations of Christianity that have survived over the centuries. Begun by Emanuel Swedenborg, a scientist and son of a Swedish Lutheran bishop, around 1745, the movement was quite simply the result of Swedenborg's "direct perception of the spiritual world."

Whatever the content of Swedenborg's vision was, he interpreted it as a revelation from God and believed that his experience marked the birth of a new age and a mystical second coming of Christ, an event which he believed was embodied in his teachings. Founding a theological college in England, Swedenborg earnestly propagated the doctrines of his New Church, which were heavily influenced by spiritualism.

For instance, he emphasized spirit evolution after death, believing that all people went into the spiritual realms, or heaven, where spiritual growth continued regardless of what a person had done on earth. His theology was somewhat monistic; "the whole of heaven therefore functions as a man and is therefore called 'The Grand Man' - a concept which shows that there is a direct correspondence between the macrocosm and the microcosm."

The problem of evil and suffering is attributed to a reversal of the divine image, or what Swedenborgians call "evil love." The Bible, while affirmed as the inspired word of God, is thought to be correctly interpreted only through the writings of Swedenborg, especially his books Arcana Celestia (heavenly secrets) and Apocalypse Revealed. But the real key to understanding Swedenborgianism is, once again, spiritualism. The source of his arcane revelations were spirit beings who carried on "conversations" with him; he taught that all persons on earth are closely associated with a number of beings in the spiritual realm, through whom their inner desires and thoughts come, both good and bad. Ironically, he never seemed to consider the possibility that his revelations also could have had a quality as ambiguous as their source.

### 17. T'ai Chi Ch'uan

This ancient oriental practice, derived from the Taoist philosophy of China, was represented by the British T'ai Chi Association. Related to the martial arts, T'ai Chi was begun about 1,000 years ago by the Taoist monk Sogo Chang.

The concept of T'ai Chi came to Chang one day when he observed a fight between a small snake and a large bird. The snake, through its calmly rhythmic, passive motions, was finally able to overcome the much larger aggressive bird, who was intent upon eating it. Chang took this to mean that yielding overcomes unyielding, i.e. "by losing the ego or feeling of self-importance which makes you feel separate from the rest of nature, you can become one with nature." This process of becoming one with nature or the Tao (essential essence) is accomplished through the practice of T'ai Chi, which is meditation through slow, dance-like movement, which is described as not so much a series of techniques, but "a way of being natural."

T'ai Chi is taught by qualified instructors who have had this ancient art transmitted to them in an unbroken line from Chang. As the students spend time with the master, "their vibrations become more in tune with his, which are in tune with the Tao." This inevitably leads to becoming "one with the Tao" or enlightenment of the body, mind and spirit. The practitioner is then said to attain true health and happiness.

### 18. The Theosophical Society

Founded in 1875 by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, Theosophy is perhaps the most influential of all the modern esoteric movements, spawning scores, if not hundreds of smaller groups such as Anthroposophy, Lucis Trust, The Christian Community and the Indian master Krishnamurti.

Blavatsky, born in Russia in 1831, supposedly travelled throughout the Orient in her younger days, studying and collecting secret wisdom from such impenetrable places as Tibet. After founding the Society in New York, she moved to India for four years, establishing the international headquarters in Adyar, then moved to Europe, finally dying in London in 1891.

The publication of her manifold writings, of which the best-known and most influential is The Secret Doctrine, coincided with and fueled an upsurge in occult speculation in the U.S. and Europe. She became very popular and

controvertial in the decade before her death; after her passing, the Society continued to grow rapidly, and now carries on work in 60 countries. The Society's publishing house prints and distributes a very large number of books and publications on occult and esoteric subjects; their branches (lodges) are very active in all parts of the world, supplying speakers and lectureships, study groups and local lending libraries.

Theosophy is based on three fundamental propositions:

1. An eternal, omnipresent, boundless and immutable Principle (God.)
2. The universe as a boundless, eternal plane, manifesting itself in cycles - "the playground of numberless universes incessantly manifesting and disappearing."
3. The fundamental identity of all souls with the Universal Oversoul.  
All souls must go through a "pilgrimage" of reincarnation in accordance with cyclic and karmic law.

These principles - and many others - are elaborated on in exhausting speculative detail by Blavatsky in her writings. Despite the fact that she goes into such detail on all the ins and outs of spiritual law and worldly manifestation, the Society claims that it "teaches no dogma" - only that "There is no religion higher than truth," which is the Society's motto. It claims to be the distilled essence of "the light that shines through the many-colored lamps of religion. It is the thread of truth in scriptures, creeds, symbols, myths and rituals. The Divine Wisdom (Theosophy) is one, but the paths toward it are many."

The Secret Doctrine (which supposedly contains no doctrine) and Blavatsky's other volumes are taken as unadulterated truth by Society members, and the teachings are mostly taken from Hinduism and Buddhism, interlaced with Blavatsky's own speculations. In actuality, the claim to "teach no dogma" is a direct intonation against Christianity, which Blavatsky despised, and frequently railed against in her writings, often to the point of blasphemy.

#### 19. The Unitarians

The well-known Unitarians had their beginnings in 16th century Europe, when, in the wake of the Protestant Reformation, they denied the doctrine of the Trinity - hence the name Unitarian. Despite this, they remained within the loose framework of biblical Christianity until the last century, when they

broke all ties with Christian tradition and solidified their position as a group of "free thinkers."

They hold that a person can believe virtually anything he or she wants and still be a Unitarian in good standing. The Unitarians even welcome atheists and agnostics into their church. Fundamentally a group of humanists, they seem to be united on only two points - 1) No one anywhere has all the truth, and 2) an abiding dislike for Christianity and its "shibboleths" (worn-out beliefs), which often seems to come across as their real motivation for existence. A Unitarian leaflet states that "some Unitarians reject the label 'Christian' because they associate it with narrowness and bigotry."

Unitarians tread easily on "doctrine," but they do describe God in a pantheistic sense as "the infinite and eternal energy that manifests itself in all that is... unity with this energy, or power, is the concern of all religion." Such a credo certainly seems to reflect Theosophical influences and, ultimately, Hinduism. Jesus is seen as a normal man who was a profound revealer of spiritual light and love, and the New Testament may be altered or interpreted in any way that makes the reader comfortable. The Unitarians state that each person's own reason and conscience are "the ultimate authority about ultimate things."

## 20. The World Teacher

This group, which is based upon the teachings of Alice Bailey, claims that "The Christ" reappeared in the world on July 19, 1977, and is now living, as yet unidentified, as an adult man in a well-known country (believed to be England.) They believe that a mystic brotherhood called the Masters of Wisdom are now beginning to emerge from their "retreats" in the Himalayas to guide the world in a new age of synthesis, the Aquarian Age. Their head and leader is called The Christ.

The movement's spokesman, Benjamin Creme, who "became aware of his ability to act as a channel for energies" as a UFO cultist in the 1950's, has written a book explaining the situation, titled The Reappearance of the Christ and the Masters of Wisdom. Creme claims to have received special communications from The Christ via "the process of mental overshadowing and telepathic rapport" (mediumship) since September 6th, 1977. Through his telepathic

contact with the Masters of Wisdom, Mr Creme reveals bulletins and messages - "precise, up-to-date information" - about the reappearance of The Christ, who will soon become an international figure and reveal himself, probably in the Spring of 1982, according to Creme.

Creme points out that The Christ is not Jesus Christ. Jesus was a disciple of The Christ 2,000 years ago in Palestine and has now become one of the ascended masters; however, The Christ who Creme claims is now in the world (who is also called "Maitreya") is The Christ.

Just who is The Christ? To this question Creme answers further: "The Christ, from an esoteric point of view, is not the One and Only Son of God, but the Head of a Hierarchy of Masters, of whom Jesus is now a member. He is Divine in having revealed the Divinity innate in us all...The World Teacher made known in June, 1945 His intention to return to the world at the earliest possible moment...this time he comes Himself, as World Teacher for the Aquarian Age." It is said that The Christ is presently acting as spokesman for a certain community, and will publicly declare himself when enough people are responding to his teachings.

The members of the movement form "transmission groups" of three, based on Alice Bailey's "Triangles" concept and use Bailey's Great Invocation, followed by "third eye meditation" and the chanting of "OM". This supposedly puts them in contact with the Masters, who use them as channels for the energy which helps to quicken The Christ's influence and transform the world.

NEW AGE RESOURCES

A listing of periodicals and directories for those interested in following new age thought and developments

Alternative Institutions  
NLT Publications  
Box 9155, Rosslyn Sta.  
Arlington, VA 22209 USA

Become Magazine  
Box 24994  
Seattle, WA 98124 USA

Brain/Mind Bulletin (Marilyn Ferguson, editor)  
Box 42211  
Los Angeles, CA 90042 USA

Co-Evolution Quarterly  
Box 428  
Sausalito, CA 94965 USA

Common Ground (A must for new age research)  
1300 Sanchez St.  
San Francisco, CA 94131 USA

East-West Journal (A good, comprehensive publication)  
233 Harvard St.  
Brookline, MA 02146 USA

International Cooperation Council Directory (lists hundreds of organizations)  
7433 Madora Ave.  
Canoga Park, CA 91306 USA

Journal of Humanistic Psychology (Essential for psychology buffs)  
325 Ninth St.  
San Francisco, CA 94103 USA

Journal of Transpersonal Psychology (For the more overtly spiritual psychologists)  
PO Box 4437  
Stanford, CA 94305 USA

Leading Edge: A Bulletin of Social Transformation (Also Marilyn Ferguson)  
PO Box 42247  
Los Angeles, CA 90042 USA

National Network Mailing List  
PO Box 1492  
Eugene, OR 97401 USA

New Age  
32 Station St.  
Brookline Village, MA 02146 USA

New Age Book Review  
The Rainbow Cultural Foundation, Inc.  
PO Box 324  
Murray Hill Sta.  
New York, NY 10016 USA

New Games Resource Catalogue  
 New Games Foundation  
 PO Box 7901  
 San Francisco, CA 94120 USA

The New Humanity Journal  
 Johann Quanier  
 51-A York Mansions  
 Prince of Wales Dr.  
 London, SW 11 UK

New Life Magazine  
 159 George St.  
 London W 1 UK

New Periodicals Index  
 Mediaworks  
 PO Box 4494  
 Boulder, CO 80306 USA

New Realities (Formerly Psychic magazine)  
 680 Beach St.  
 San Francisco, CA 94109 USA

Re-Vision: A Journal of Knowledge and Consciousness  
 20 Longfellow Rd.  
 Cambridge, MA 02138 USA

Self-Reliance  
 1717 18th St. NW  
 Washington, DC 20009 USA

Seriatim: The Journal of Ecotopia  
 122 Carmel  
 El Cerrito, CA 94530 USA

Spiritual Community Guide  
 PO Box 1080  
 San Rafael, CA 94902 USA

Whole Life Times  
 290 Massachusetts Ave.  
 Arlington, MA 02174 USA

Yoga Journal (A comprehensive magazine on yoga, new age and eastern philosophy)  
 2054 University Ave.  
 Berkeley, CA 94704 USA

Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science  
 University of Chicago Press  
 11030 Langley Ave.  
 Chicago, IL 60628 USA

EDITORIAL

## FUZZY THINKING IN THE AGE OF AQUARIUS

## SOME THOUGHTS ON "ALICE BAILEY CHRISTIANITY"

One of the hallmarks of new age philosophy is the consistent and contrived attempt to reinterpret the life and teaching of Jesus Christ within an esoteric or occult framework. In fact, it would not be excessive to say that 90% of the new age groups actually go out of their way to give Christ prominent mention, while downplaying or attacking orthodox Christianity as an antiquated relic that has systematically suppressed Jesus' true teachings for 2,000 years.

This approach, which may be called "Alice Bailey Christianity," since she systematized these sentiments in the early part of this century, is based upon certain assumptions about Christianity which have no basis in historical fact. Principal among them are:

1. Jesus was a normal man who attained enlightenment by mystical asceticism and then became a Jewish guru who wandered about Palestine teaching vague and esoteric mysteries of "Christ Consciousness."
2. He was trained by the Essenes and other esoteric schools, and probably went to India and Tibet where he received final enlightenment during his "lost years" between the age of 12 and 30.
3. The Apostles - especially Paul - perverted Christ's teachings in their writings; his true or secret teachings are to be found in old gnostic documents and/or through contact with "ascended masters" and other spiritual beings.
4. The New Testament as we now have it is a jury-rigged compilation which was edited by a group of bigoted, ignorant and narrow-minded churchmen who did a quick cut-and-paste job on the Bible sometime after the 4th century.
5. The church was forced to convene several ecumenical councils (Nicea and Constantinople are usually named) in order to suppress gnostic doctrine and expell such notions as reincarnation.
6. True Christianity is based upon a realization that the universe is divine

and that people need to achieve enlightenment (not salvation) by realizing and experiencing their true and essential Divinity.

Before dealing with these issues individually, some general comments are in order. First, not everything that is called "Christian" is necessarily Christian. The "Christian Community" which grew out of Steiner's Anthroposophy may call itself that if it so desires; but they must realize that this is intellectually dishonest. Such groups cannot really expect to pass off their solipsistic world views as the restoration of true Christianity and go unchallenged. Such sentiments assume that the Holy Spirit disappeared 1900 years ago but has recently been re-discovered by the leader of the group in question.

Secondly, the genuineness of Christianity - or any other religion - must rest upon sound scholarship and historical bases, as well as textual and scriptural authenticity. For instance, it is impossible to understand New Testament Christianity apart from its theological, cultural and historical backdrop, Judaism. The Old Testament and the Jewish tradition were rigidly monotheistic, upheld a radical Creator-creation distinction, and did not engage in ascetic, pantheistic mysticism; impersonal monism and occult dabbling cannot be reconciled with the Old Testament's theology.

In understanding the life and teaching of Jesus, this Jewish background must thus be kept in mind while reading the Gospels. Also, the history of the early church, which is well documented, understanding apostolic succession, a process which took great pains to preserve Christ's true teachings, as well as development of the New Testament canon, must all be correctly understood if one is to determine what true Christianity is. Furthermore, later refinements, such as the formation of the creed and the development of Christian thought - also very well documented - cannot be summarily dismissed as the work of a few cranks. The evidence in support of orthodoxy is so entrenched and overwhelming that it takes a deliberate attempt to ignore and twist the facts in order to refute it.

Of course, such a refutation is not really a refutation; it is simply an emotional argument masquerading behind fabricated evidence. And herein lies the real tragedy: many people believe such lies and half-truths because they have forgotten how to think critically. The phenomenon of Alice Bailey

Christianity plays upon the theological (and logical) naivete, fuzzy thinking and intellectual laziness of pie-eyed and putty-brained spiritual seekers of our day. People allow the "esoteric teachers" to do their thinking for them. The teacher or guru says, "I'll tell you how it is. I've got the distilled essence of cosmic truth and a firm handle on Christ's true teachings, so you just have to listen to me. Never minding reading the Bible or studying church history, just listen to my explanation."

Granted, there is an "esoteric tradition" of sorts in Christianity, but it has been disorganized, sporadic and not very influential; it has always been refuted by orthodoxy, beginning with the battle which the early church fought against Hellenistic gnosticism. The Alice Bailey Christianity of the modern era which is promoted en masse by the new age groups and gurus reeks with intellectual dishonesty and drips with sloppy, bad and blatantly erroneous scholarship, not to mention intentional twisting of the facts. The unthinking acceptance of such muddled "evidence" is the greatest fault of the contemporary syncretist sentiment. Indeed, it would be nice if all religions and philosophies taught the same thing, but the fact is that they don't - a fact that even many scholars are incapable of recognizing.

The six points of esoteric Christianity mentioned earlier should be discussed here, although a full treatment would obviously fill an entire book. Nonetheless, a thumbnail apologetic will be offered.

1. Jesus was a Jewish guru. This assumption is without any foundation whatsoever in the Gospels. Jesus was a radical monotheist who taught salvation (not enlightenment) through repentance and the forgiveness of sin. The word "consciousness" is not found anywhere in the Bible, and any attempt to say that Jesus taught Christ Consciousness is totally unjustified.
2. Jesus spent his lost years in the mystery schools of the Orient. The fact is that no one knows where Jesus spent his lost years. That is precisely why they are called "lost." A reading of the Gospels shows that even if he did go to the East, he never taught anything resembling the esoteric doctrines of Hindu and Buddhist monism when he returned. Apart from that, there is no historical evidence to suggest that Jesus travelled outside of Palestine.
3. The Apostles perverted his teachings. People who make this claim know nothing about apostolic succession and certainly have not read The Acts

of the Apostles. Great care was taken in the early church to make sure that the Apostles were not teaching "a different gospel" from the one the disciples received. Paul relates that he was grilled at some length by the rest of the Apostles on the content of his teaching, since he had not been with Jesus during his earthly ministry.

4. The New Testament was edited after the Fourth Century. The New Testament was substantially complete by the end of the 2nd Century, and although it was not officially canonized until 397 at the Council of Carthage under Augustine, textual critics have shown that it was not tampered with in any major way. The gnostic gospels of the Second Century were rejected by consensus, and only because they were of spurious authorship and did not conform with the safeguarded apostolic teaching.
5. Special councils were convened to condemn esoteric teaching. The early ecumenical councils were called to deal with Christology, matters of ecclesiology and theological interpretation. Even the persistent gnostic heresy did not require a separate council to refute it; this was ably handled by the early church apologists such as Irenaeus. Reincarnation was never at issue in the early church.
6. True Christianity is based on the monistic notion of a "Divine Within." This bedrock of esoteric metaphysics is simply not found in the Old or New Testament and has always been rejected by the Judeo-Christian tradition. Although many new-agers frequently decontextualize scripture in an attempt to justify their error, (e.g. Luke 17:21 - "The kingdom of God is within you" - a possible rendering of the Greek, but a bad translation given the context, since Jesus was addressing the Pharisees) mystical concepts such as mindless meditation, existential enlightenment, yoga and reincarnation are utterly alien to genuine Christianity.

If one stops to consider the fact that nearly all the esoteric traditions and groups feel compelled to explain away the life of Christ and Christianity in this way, it seems a bit odd. Such consistent and systematic attempts at reinterpreting Christianity are not utilized by these same groups in regard to other religions and teachers, such as Buddha, Krishna, Mohammed or Confucius. Why don't these people just dispense with Christ and Christianity altogether and concentrate on their own teachings? The underlying motive for all these explanatory gymnastics seems to be quite evident: Jesus of Nazareth simply can't be ignored - his unparalleled influence over the centuries and continents has been too great. Perhaps, lurking at the bottom of all such gnostic

speculation about Christ is the fear that he really is what orthodox Christianity claims: the unique incarnation of the transcendent, living God, who conquered sin and death by his own sacrificial death - the living Foe of all spiritual error.

Whatever the motivations may be, Alice Bailey Christianity seems to be here to stay, and the Twentieth Century church needs to develop a concise and consistent refutation of it, for it is becoming a major theological challenge of our time, simply by sheer quantity of exertion.

It should be pointed out that the position taken by this writer does not constitute "narrow-mindedness" or "spiritual bigotry," although esotericists frequently resort to this sort of name-calling when they have run out of coherent arguments. All belief systems, including Christianity, need to be examined and challenged; for without critical appraisal, how are people to know what is true and what is false? Nor is our position to be equated with that of the Inquisition, another frequent accusation. We vigorously defend the right of any group to promote their philosophy, however absurd or erroneous it may be, but we also uphold our right to free speech and the prerogative to investigate, challenge and criticize religions, philosophies and world views. This is really the essence of dialogue - not just "being nice" - and we encourage feedback. Opposing views are welcome and will be given consideration.

- Mark Albrecht

## MODERN SYNCRETIST MOVEMENTS - A GENERAL OVERVIEW

By Johannes Aagaard

A major element in all syncretism is the attempt to adapt to a situation in which a number of religious options exist. The attempt to combine the different religious elements into a sort of synthesis is called syncretism.

As early as the 17th Century the term was applied to the ecumenical attempts of G. Calixtus, who developed an irenic approach to the different confessions and denominations of his time. In our generation the term syncretism is sometimes used polemically against the ecumenical movement and especially the World Council of Churches because of its irenic approach to the non-Christian religions.

Even in the mission of the church, attempts to adapt to or accomodate local traditions and religious customs have been characterized as syncretism, but are usually expressions of the process of indigenization or inculturation. The Indian theologian M. M. Thomas has spelled out an approach which he calls "christocentric syncretism." This approach is a polemical answer to those who reject responsible adaptations or inculturalization, but in fact his concept is a contradiction in terms.

Syncretism from a Christian viewpoint is only possible when Christ no longer remains at the center, but is seen as one of a number of living masters and religious saints. Syncretism in this meaning has become very popular in a series of modern syncretist movements, beginning during the last third of the 19th Century and reaching its climax in the period after World War II.

Modern syncretist movements consist of two mainstreams: 1) The western occult tradition, which has developed as a mix of all sorts of religious attitudes and concepts, all centering around mind power and mind control. This main stream consists of various sub-streams, of which the Theosophical, Rosicrucian, and overtly occult syncretisms are the most important.

2) The Oriental movements, which have developed as off-shoots from mainly Hindu expressions and have the usual Indian characteristics. They do, however, often mix with the western syncretist trends and create various eclectic systems, often with gnostic characteristics.

## The Theosophical Syncretism

The Theosophical Society dates from 1875, and its leadership was exercised by a couple of rather peculiar people. The founders were Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (HPB) (1831-1891) and Colonel Henry Steel Olcott (1832-1907.) Their successors were Annie Besant (1847-1933) and Bishop Charles Webster Leadbeater (1847-1934), whose title as a bishop came from the Theosophically-inspired Liberal Catholic Church, founded in England in 1916 by Leadbeater and James Ingall Wedgewood.

From the Theosophists arose Jiddu Krishnamurti, who was born in 1895 in India, and was adopted and promoted by Annie Besant, trained by Leadbeater and became the head of the "Order of the Star" or "Star of the East." This movement initially enjoyed a roaring success, but collapsed in 1929 when Krishnamurti stepped down from his throne and confessed his human nature.

This was not the first scandal within the movement. Already in 1885 it was proved beyond any doubt that the "miraculous" deeds which took place in the Theosophy headquarters in Adyar, India were the result of manipulation and swindle, and splinter groups appeared. The first of these were in the US, where William Quan Judge (1851-1896) and Katherine Tingley (d. 1929), started their own Point Loma, a sort of Theosophy, which was later headed by Herbert Lorenz Gottfried von Purucker (1874-1942.)

In Germany, Franz Hartmann (1838-1912) also reacted against the Adyar scandal and started his own Theosophical society within Germany. It developed along lines somewhat closer to the Christian tradition. The same is true for the Anthroposophical Society, founded by Rudolph Steiner (1861-1925), who had been the general secretary of the Adyar branch from 1902-13, when he struck out on his own and developed the Anthroposophical teachings together with Marie von Sivers (1867-1948.) Their center was, and is, the Goetheanum near Basel, Switzerland. Anthroposophy is a way of life, the religious expression of which is the Christian Community, founded by Friedrich Rittlemeyer (1872-1938) and Emil Bock (1895-1959), both of them being close disciples of Steiner.

Another offshoot from the Theosophical tradition is the spiritualism of Alice Bailey, (1880-1949.) The Lucis Trust, established in 1922, is the basis for a number of activities and groups such as the Arcana School, World Goodwill, and Triangles. The main ritual of these movements is The Great Invocation.

These Theosophically-inspired movements all share the same line of religiosity, which is syncretist at its heart. The teaching is often called "occult philosophy," a sort of modified monism which is adapted from Hinduism and Buddhism, and frequently promoted through an alleged spiritual brotherhood of "ascended masters" such as Master Koot Hoomi (K.H.), Djwhal Khul, Morya, Serapis Bey, Count Saint Germain, and often the "ascended master" Jesus Christ. From this spiritual heirarchy, called "The Great White Brotherhood," (often said to dwell in the ethers of the Himalayas) the religious leaders receive their supposed revelations. The masters speak through their mediums and reveal their master plans, world plans, secret books, etc., all of them syncretist in every possible way.

The Adyar Theosophy thus became a sort of Hindu-Buddhist spiritualism with some obliquely Christian elements spuriously added for effect. In the Esoteric School, which was the main interest of the leading couples, Tantric rituals were practiced, and the religio-sexual sort of tantric meditation became influential, bringing forward the kundalini ideology as part of Theosophy, i.e. the worship of the serpent power and arousing of the sexual powers in order to use them for achieving supernatural heights, or the so-called siddhis.

The tantric influence is watered down in the theosophical offshoots, but tantric elements are found here and there, including the specific psychology of kundalini with the meditation on the chakras, the supposed "seven levels of consciousness," which is the psycho-spiritual basis of the attempts to become superhuman or divine - which is really the heart of the matter.

In recent times attempts have been made both within the Liberal Catholic Church and The Christian Community to become more Christian and more acceptable to the ecumenical community. The real nature of these movements, however, are still clearly syncretist and spiritualist, and to some extent even overtly occult.

### Rosicrucian Syncretism

Many of the above movements originated from circles who were engaged in esoteric ritualism, and such connections are still quite normal. They all claim to be very ancient, but in reality are quite modern. Their relation to the various Rosicrucian orders are important. The first order was founded in England in 1865-66 by Robert Wentworth Little, and was called Societas Rosicruciana. In Germany, the above mentioned Franz Hartmann was also actively engaged in promoting the development of the Rosicrucians.

In the US, Harvey Spencer Lewis (1883-1939) created the AMORC, The Ancient Mystic Order of Rosae Cruxis in 1925, having its headquarters in San Jose, California. Another branch was created by Max Heindel (1865-1919), who was inspired by Steiner and more "Christian" than the clearly syncretist AMORC. A third branch is represented by Lectorium Rosicrucianum, the mystery school created in 1925, well organized and run from a center in Holland. It is probably more Hindu than the other two branches.

### Occult Syncretism

The third strong current within the modern syncretist movement is represented by the occult orders or lodges, which often came out of (or in some cases were the origin of) the previously mentioned movements. The most important of these are the following:

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, going back to 1887 and founded by Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers (1854-1918), who was married to an occult lady, the sister of philosopher Henri Bergson, whose elan vital is not unrelated to occult ideology. Mathers and his wife operated from Paris. William Wynn Westcott (1848-1925) and William Butler Yeats (1865-1938), the Nobel prize-winning writer, were two distinguished leaders in the Golden Dawn.

Its most notorious member, however, was Aleister Crowley (1875-1947), who considered himself to be the "Great Beast," "The Animal," "666," etc. He became the leader of the international order called OT0, Ordo Templi Orientis, the most overtly occult of all the movements. The mysticism of the Orient is here exploited to an extent which took a number of its members beyond all human limits and broke them down. Karl Kellner from Germany was one of the originators of the OT0 and transferred principles from India to Europe.

Crowley also used other orders, for instance Astrum Argentum and The Silver Star, and he operated for some years from a center in Sicily, called the Abbey of Thelema, in which occult and syncretist celebrations took place until 1923, when the center was closed down and Crowley was expelled. In Crowley, eastern tantric and yogic influences mingle with western occult traditions and prepared the way for other modern syncretist movements. Presently, the order Fraternitas Saturni and Ordo Novis Templi as well as the classical OT0 groups continue Crowley's tradition.

Similar but more philosophical expressions of syncretism are found in The Fourth Way, an order which is inspired by George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff (1877-1949). He influenced Peter Damian Ouspensky (1878-1947) and a number of other strong and competent minds such as John G. Bennett, Maurice Nicoll, H.B. Lindby and Colin Wilson, who all expressed occult and syncretist viewpoints in their writings. In 1955 they started the Gurdjieff Society, trying to adapt the strange teachings of their master to present life. This tradition itself acknowledges a "missing element" and is always on the lookout for some new master. Consequently, they have been open and cooperative and have sponsored such movements as Transcendental Meditation and Subud.

Subud, whose master "Bapak," i.e. "Father" came from Indonesia and acquired quite a few disciples in the western world from 1957 on, when the master arrived in England. The main point in Subud is probably the Sufi influence, which was also strongly behind Gurdjieff. The experience of power via meditation as well as various dances and movements includes elements from a number of religions.

#### Recent Western Syncretism

Strong elements of occultism are found in Scientology, founded by the present leader, Lafayette Ron Hubbard. In this movement, superhuman developments are promised as a result of the training. In Scientology, reincarnation, karma, and soul-travel are found as important ingredients of the syncretist mix of religious ideology and science fiction. Scientology itself maintains that its origins are to be found in connection with Buddhism, which, if true, seems to be more closely related to Tibetan occult Buddhism, with its emphasis on magic and mind power.

The same is true concerning Eckankar, in some ways an offshoot from Scientology; the movement is headed by Sri Darwin Gross, who took over in 1971 from the founder-master Paul Twitchell. However, the major part of this syncretist movement has been borrowed from the Indian religion Radha Soami, although the imagination of the two Eck-masters have contributed independently and to a large degree.

Similar movements under various names and with new masters are continually arising all over the world, mostly syncretist by nature and authoritarian by principle. Good examples are Arica, founded by Bolivian Oscar Ichazo, Synanon, with Charles Dederich, Esalen, with Richard Price, and est with

Werner Erhard as their respective leaders, are some of the more visible ones. Lesser known are the Church Universal and Triumphant, with Elizabeth Clare Prophet, (a Great White Brotherhood group) and the UFO-inspired Aetherius Society with "Shri Yogiraj" George King. For good measure, there is the White Eagle Lodge of Grace Cook and Christianity Without Religion, with Hugh de Cruz, as well as hundreds of others too numerous to mention. Almost all of these new religions espouse the same syncretist and neo-gnostic sentiments.

### Oriental Syncretist Movements

Modern syncretism finds many of its basic presuppositions in India. Syncretism is found at the very roots of Hinduism. The modern Indian versions of syncretism, however, are closely related to the struggle to overcome the divisions of caste and religion which have long separated the peoples of India.

The many reform movements within Hinduism have stressed the oneness of all religions and the unity behind the many modes of worship and names of divinity. "One Caste, One Religion, One God" has been the slogan for many such movements, such as Mahatma Gandhi's renewal. The alternative, however, is very often set forth as "a living master" who embodies truth and absolute authority. All religions are seen as partially true, but distilled truth is given by the living master. Without the living master there is no salvation or true enlightenment. This religious relativism has more often than not led to a new authoritarianism.

The Vedanta Societies, set up by monks from the Ramakrishna Math and Mission have launched a new era of modern Indian syncretism. Paramhansa Ramakrishna (1836-1886) and his mate, Sri Sarada Devi, who died in 1920 were a tantric couple, and the basis of the whole movement was and is tantric. Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) maintained this basis and described it in his many books, and in him the syncretistic mood of Ramakrishna is developed in a sophisticated way which goes far beyond its more primitive founder, Ramakrishna.

From the beginning in 1893, when Vivekananda arrived in Chicago, he and his movement were accepted and promoted by the Unitarians, a Christian offshoot which found many of its ideas in Vedanta. Since the Vedanta societies have remained under Indian leadership until this day, always directed by a swami sent from India, the tendency to endless schisms, which is a characteristic of the esoteric scene in general, has not hit the Vedanta societies. However, they are now rather weak in the western world and have lost much of their prominence, but they represent one of the first influential movements coming

out of the subcontinent. They have thus created the basis for many later developments.

Paramhansa Yogananda (1893-1952) and his Self-Realization Fellowship is a typical and highly refined form of Indian syncretism. It has become increasingly popular because of the autobiography of Yogananda, Autobiography of a Yogi, written in 1950-51. He claimed that his kriya yoga was an "airplane route" to enlightenment, which introduced spiritual technology and a quick sort of Hindu salvation, mixed with many Christian elements and much Bible quoting. The movement is now headed by Sri Mata Daya, the consort of Yogananda.

Paramhansa Sivananda Saraswati (1887-1963) is the third of the "great swans" (the meaning of paramhansa) from the East. A number of the modern gurus are his disciples, such as Satchidananda in the US, Vishnudevananda in Canada, Swami Sivalingam, who was very influential in Japan for a period, the convicted criminal Swami Omkarananda from Switzerland and the more genuine swamis Chidananda and Krishnananda, who are now the leaders of the Sivananda ashram in Rishikesh, India. The well-known Chinmayananda from Bombay is also a disciple of Sivananda.

Paramhansa Satyananda Saraswati is also a disciple of Sivananda, but has created his own empire. He lives in Monghyr, India, and runs the International Yoga Fellowship Movement and the World Congresses of Yoga. He has a number of prominent disciples all over the world.

Paramhansa Muktananda is also very active and is probably the strongest of all these contemporary gurus. His center is in Ganeshpuri near Bombay. He has been experiencing real success in the US in recent years, but had previously operated mainly in India. He is usually called Baba, as are many of the legendary saints from India, the most famous of whom is Sathya Sai Baba. He operates from a number of centers in India, especially Whitefield near Bangalore. He is enormously popular within India and claims millions of disciples. His type of syncretism is very influential and typical; he has produced a professional quality feature-length film on the lost years of Christ.

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, currently operating out of Poona near Bombay, is rapidly spreading his syncretism all over the world via many western disciples and a media campaign of books and tapes. He, as well as the other gurus mentioned above, are tantrics and use sexuo-religious techniques as well as other psycho-spiritual methods in the attempt to integrate all truths and all religions.

Many of these tantric movements are so definitively tantric and Shiva-centered that the term syncretism does not really fit. But some of the offshoots of these distinctly Hindu movements have developed into clear-cut syncretism, such as Transcendental Meditation, whose leader Maharishi Mahesh Yogi has probably contributed as much to the vague syncretist mood of modern times as anyone else. Through the TM meditation, which of course claims to be religiously neutral, a lot of Oriental concepts and attitudes are penetrating the minds of many modern people and cultural Christians.

Radha Soami Satsang already has a long history, although it is of relatively late vintage, started in 1861 by Soamiji Maharaj (1818-1878.) Since then a number of living masters have been governing this very influential movement, and it has split into at least four different branches. The general trend here is a mild, reformed syncretism, which takes people away from the external differences and leads them into the unitarian experience of God.

The Divine United Organization, formerly called Divine Light Mission, and headed by Guru Maharaj Ji, has its roots in the Radha Soami Satsang and has the same characteristics, but with an even stronger emphasis on the living master and his salvatory importance.

### Summary

Syncretist movements may be grouped in three main categories. First is the Mediterranean syncretism, which at the time before and after Christ created the extraordinary religious mixture of the Hellenistic world.

In the past century the Atlantic syncretism developed, creating the many apocalyptic and fundamentalist movements, which are still as a whole active today.

The syncretism of modern times could well be called the Pacific syncretism, for it incorporates into its synthesis religious elements found on both sides of the Pacific Ocean. The main areas are India and California, but its signs are found in all modern societies in which the plurality of modern religious life is found. How to live with that plurality is the great question to all parties involved. Are they to fight one another in religious wars? Are they to fuse into a coming world religion via further and more systematic attempts at syncretism? Or is a third possibility to be found? Such questions are the topics of modern missiology, trying not only to understand, but also to take a stand. The whole mission of the church of Christ is changing its nature in the face of this global syncretism, which makes coherent mission in all continents necessary.

## BOOK REVIEW:

## "GOD IS A VERB"

The Aquarian Conspiracy by Marilyn Ferguson

(Los Angeles: J.P. Tarcher, 1980)

"We are living at a time when history is holding its breath, and the present is detaching itself from the past like an iceberg that has broken away from its moorings to sail across the boundless ocean."

- Arthur C. Clarke

Science fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke may be overly dramatic, but certainly less so than the hyperbole of this book, in which the above quote appears. Yet, his metaphor is essentially correct: human history has accelerated to an alarming degree, and the accompanying stress and strain has resulted in a superabundance of speculative philosophies, hopeful cure-alls, and retreat into existential "bliss." Prominent among the many cross-currents of thought is new age philosophy, a sort of cosmic humanism, which, since it finds its roots in pantheistic musings some 3,000 years old, might better be dubbed "old age" philosophy.

Until now, no one has written a coherent manifesto that would embrace the many groups and systems that fall under the broad aggregate of new age thought. This book, however, is rapidly gaining acceptance as the definitive statement of this vaguely defined movement. Furthermore, it does not represent the "lunatic fringe" of the overtly occult-UFO-magical-Theosophy type groups. Rather, it speaks for the growing number of scientists, politicians, businessmen and educators who subscribe to this variety of cosmic humanistic optimism.

The author, a Californian, has been active in the "human potential movement" for some time and edits two newsletters (one scientific and one philosophical) which advocates this approach to life. The book is well documented and readable, with quotations from a surprisingly large number of world famous thinkers, past and present, who are new age in orientation. She enthusiastically traces the contemporary groundswell in pantheistic-humanistic philosophy through medicine, science, politics, sociology, ecology and economics; it is a virtual reference book on naive and utopian psycho-spiritual optimism.

The "conspiracy" that Ferguson talks about is the international network of people who are trying to bring in a new social order - "This benign conspiracy for a new human agenda has triggered the most rapid cultural realignment in history" - a statement that reflects her conviction that the new consciousness people are on the cutting edge of contemporary thought and action and are the only real hope to save the planet. She describes the new awareness as "evolving mind recognizing the evolutionary process."

This evolutionary process is basically a spiritual one, and she leaves no doubt that "traditional religion" (read Christianity) is a stumbling stone to evolutionary progress. Meditation, yoga, Zen and a host of other consciousness therapies like Werner Erhard's est and transpersonal psychology are heartily recommended as techniques to bring about this "paradigm shift." (i.e., an alteration of perception which usually is equated with conversion to an existential/gnostic world view.) She says that "The themes of transformation...at first were transmitted by alchemists, gnostics, cabalists and hermetics."

The book abounds with newly coined words and phrases which Time magazine once called "psychobabble and mellowspeak." For example, Ferguson is particularly fond of such esoterica as "personal transformation, profound shifts in perception, nonlinear understanding, segmented polycentric integrated networks, holograms, matrix, deliberate letting, whole-brain understanding and etherialization" - terms which are largely unintelligible even to native speakers of English.

All this psychobabble is merely a means of talking around the author's central thesis, which is nothing more than optimistic westernized monism (eastern monism is not so optimistic.) "The separate self is an illusion...when the self joins the Self, there is power. Brotherhood overtakes the individual like an army...This discovery forms strangers into kindred, and we know a new, friendly universe." She claims that spiritual or mystical experience "is the mirror image of science - a direct perception of nature's unity." God is merely "the organizing matrix;" an "absolute" similar to that of Oriental philosophy.

Instead of using the Sanscrit word maya (roughly translated as illusion), she speaks of a "holographic universe" in which our brains "mathematically construct 'hard' reality by interpreting frequencies from a dimension transcending time and space." In other words, we construct our own reality - good or bad.

In accordance with this fundamentally gnostic view, the problem of evil and suffering are swept under the great cosmic rug in typical fashion. By viewing all events as semi-fictitious creations of consciousness, moral anesthesia sets in and the unpleasant or horrible can be conveniently ignored. Ferguson says that "Human nature is neither good or bad, but a continuous transformation and transcendence...In the end we will see many of the darkest events in the context of a brightening historic picture, much as one stands back from a pointillist painting to get its meaning."

In all fairness, I must admit that her view of our world is not completely naive. While she glosses over the monumental problems of war, injustice, starvation and mass poverty that continually ravage most of our world with only a few banal sentences, the book does underscore the growing sentiments against technocratic intimidation, fast profit motives, garish materialism and human insensitivity. But she would have us believe that she and her new age chums are the only people who are really serious about or capable of effecting a genuine change.

In any event, this book is significant. Not because it puts forth any really new or original ideas, but because it consolidates these sentiments into a sort of manifesto which the new-agers can rally around. From a theological perspective, it represents the same old gnostic speculations with a monistic bedrock, dressed up in new age and psycho-scientific terminology. It rejects God as the personal, transcendent Lord of creation and erects the falsely deified self in his place. Towards the end of the book she quotes scientist Buckminster Fuller, who sums it all up with his famous little ditty:

"For me, it seems,  
God is a verb,  
Not a noun, proper or improper."

- Heinz Zeit

WE HAVE READ...

## NEWS AND BRIEFS

Not all new age "believers" are totally naive and unquestioning in their approach to the movement. A few are even asking some probing questions. One of them is Eric Utne, former editor of New Age Journal, who wrote in a 1975 editorial, "I am sick and tired of this growing can of worms we call the spiritual movement. For a year now, Guru Anybodyananda's followers have been sending me their master's latest PR garbage about the need for self-development through devotion and celibacy while the big cheese knocks up his lovely devotees and sends the ashram profits back to India. I'm tired of seeing pure and simple truths reduced to banal tautologies.

"The current national infatuation with the self is at once a sign of hope and an omen of despair...Spiritual seeking has clearly reached the proportions of a national trend...I ask myself, 'Are we at New Age Journal in the vanguard of a great social awakening, or are we blindly leading a rush to judgment? Are these times truly unprecedented, or is the New Age simply this season's version of life's same old soap opera? How can we gain a sense of history and a measure of common sense?' "

CHAOS IN POONA

Since Rajneesh entered into "the new and ultimate stage of his work" - silence - this spring, the entire Rajneesh Foundation and ashram has been teetering on some kind of a brink. From a mass of speculation and rumor, certain facts have come to light. For one, it appears that even his top disciples were totally unaware of what was happening from 24 March to 10 April, when Rajneesh totally disappeared from public view and gave no discourses or satsangs. On the latter date, Rajneesh allegedly broke the news of his "silent work" to Managing Trustee Ma Anand Sheela, who informed the rest of the leadership. The "historic announcement" of his silent work was then made public the following day.

However, this is the more or less "official version" of what happened between 24 March and 10 April. We can only speculate about the real facts, but it seems highly likely that Rajneesh was physically incapacitated during this

time, given other events that have occurred since.

He did not appear again in public until he began his silent meditations on the 1st of May. Then, one month later, he made a secret exodus from India, boarding a Pan Am flight to New York under mysterious circumstances. He was driven up to the plane at last minute and sequestered in the first class lounge with a handful of top aides and an oxygen tent. Seventeen other hand-picked sannyasins accompanied him in the economy section. Twelve tons of luggage, including his Rolls Royce and entire library, rumored to be one of the best private collections in existence, were also shipped to the U.S., for what looks like a semi-permanent move. He was apparently granted a visa on medical grounds after an initial rejection.

His illness seems to be real, but no one knows what it is for sure. Ma Prem Arup of the press office said on 10 June that "Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh left India for health reasons only." He is known to be an asthmatic and suffers from diabetes; the only exercise he gets seems to be a 100 meter round-trip stroll from from his Rolls Royce to his chair in the Buddha Hall, so one may presume he is not in glowing health. The most reliable reports indicate that he has some sort of spinal problem, perhaps sciatica or a slipped disc. Throat cancer has also been reported, although this is probably derived from speculation about his silence. However, he does talk. The ashram let it slip that his silence is only an official one for the benefit of the public. He has reportedly stopped reading, but he does talk to his aides in private.

In his absence, which has not been officially explained to the ashramites except for the brief medical statement, the Poona community of sannyasins is in chaos. They have begun winding up activities there, closing the bank and selling equipment. The ashram has been talking about moving for some time, and two possible locations have been mentioned, one in the Punjab and the other in the Himalayan foothills. However, the final location is still in doubt, particularly since Rajneesh will be in the U.S. for an undetermined period.

#### MOON'S PROBLEMS

Since the Unification Church lost the largest libel trial in British legal history, (Update, May, 1981, p. 44) their problems have continued. In Britain, the government announced on 24 June that it would seek an end to the charitable status of the church. If the government is successful, The Moonies will be removed from the Register of British Charities, which will force the church to pay taxes on their substantial income like any business.

In the U.S., the New York appeals court also ruled that the Unification Church must pay property taxes, because it is "inextricably interwoven with political motives," and said the group was "attempting to cloak politics and economics with the blanket of religious dogma." The same court also upheld a decision to deny academic accreditation to the Unification Seminary in Barrytown, N.Y.

Also in the U.S., the Immigration and Naturalization Service is reportedly carrying on an investigation that may lead to the deportation of Moon from the country. Reports indicate that Moon's wife, Hak Ja Han, who holds permanent resident alien status, may have entered the U.S. illegally by falsifying credentials on her application. If she is deported, Moon would go with her, since he entered after she had been granted residence, and was allowed to stay on the grounds that he was married to her. Formal proceedings, however, may take several years.

#### ANANDA MARGA HOLDS INDIAN CONCLAVE

Ananda Marga held a surprisingly large gathering near Calcutta in late May, with some 5,000 participants in attendance. The Indian government was quite concerned about the event, since they consider the Margiis a subversive group. It is reported that the government stopped and deported many foreign devotees who flew into Calcutta's Dum Dum airport. The conclave was called in connection with the establishment of a new Ananda Marga world center in Tiliala, a suburb of Calcutta.

#### LATE NEWS: RAJNEESH CALLS IT QUILTS?

As we go to the printer, we have received a news clipping from West Germany, titled "Message from the Other World," purportedly a letter written by Rajneesh.

According to the article, Rajneesh claims to have retired from the guru business, citing boredom and disillusionment with the mindless worship of his devotees. He says that he only wants to go incognito, shave off his beard, put on western clothes, take his money and live a quiet life - "go to a bar if I feel like it, just like anyone else." The letter is both melancholy and sarcastic - he laments that he felt trapped by the adoration of the masses of disciples, and also ridicules them for thinking that energy and power lay in the "ridiculous picture of me" that they wore around their necks. (Their malas)

The letter allegedly appeared in the August issue of a magazine called Transatlantik, but we have no way of knowing at this point whether or not it is genuine. We hope to have full details in the next issue of Update.

New Religious Movements Update is a quarterly magazine published by:

The Dialogue Center  
Kløvermarksvej 4  
DK-8200 Århus N  
Denmark

The Dialogue Center is an ecumenical Christian foundation existing for the purpose of research, information gathering and education concerning new religious movements and comparative religion. Update's editorial perspective is reflected by historical orthodoxy, as defined by the creeds of the Christian faith. Mark Albrecht, editor.

Editorial Board:

Dr Johannes Aagaard  
Århus, Denmark

Rev. F.W. Haack  
Munich, West Germany

Jens Johansen  
Århus, Denmark

Moti Lal Pandit  
New Delhi, India

Alexandra Schmidt  
Paris, France

Dr Arne Sovik  
Geneva, Switzerland

Dr Ken Swanson  
New York City, USA

Caryl Williams  
London, England

---

Subscription rates, per year:

Scandinavia: Paid by postal check account (giro): Dkr. 50

Europe (excluding Scan.): Paid by giro account: Dkr. 55 (DM 18; £4; HFL 20)  
Paid by check in Dkr.: Dkr. 65  
By check in other money: (DM 24; £5.50; HFL 27)

Other Countries: Paid by giro: Dkr. 65  
By check in Dkr.: Dkr. 75  
By check in other money: Dkr. 85 (US \$11)

Postal Check Account (giro): 7 18 31 51

Dialogcentret  
Kløvermarksvej 4  
DK-8200 Århus N  
Denmark

