

new religious movements

# up-date

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## EDITORIAL.

Once more we have decided to edit Up-Date issues 3 and 4 as one publication. We are forced to do so because of the pressures of time and money.

Mark Albrecht is still the editor of Up-Date, even if he operates from the Western side of the Atlantic, but from the beginning of the new year Neill and Linda Duddy will take over in Århus. We welcome them as part of the team and express our gratitude to Mark for his time with us. We miss him a lot.

From the rich variety of articles from this issue we shall mention first of all the two important interviews, one with prof. Agehananda Bharati, currently professor of anthropology at Syracuse University, New York, USA. He is widely reconized as the leading authority on Tantric Hinduism. His opus magnum The Tantric Tradition is a must for all students of hinduism and of new religious movements. Mark Albrecht and Johannes Aagaard interviewed him in March 1980 in Århus.

Mark Albrechts article on Gnosticism, past and present, can be read as an introduction to following interview with the living master Charan Singh, but the questions posed have a wider dimension and is an attempt towards a definition of the main trend of the new religiosity.

The following article by Carol Schellinger is a penetrating look into the world of TM. It contains a never-before published account of what really goes on behind the scenes of Maharishi's levitation and flying campaign, the Sidhi programme.

John Weldon's analysis of Erhard Seminar Training (est) gives a critical appraisal of a fast-growing and influential "human potential" movement. Frances Adeney's piece titled "Educators Look East" gives a survey and critique of one current trend in education wich is of concern to many parents. It is a reprint from RADIX by permission.

James Björnstad writes about the Way International and the pseudo scholarship of Victor Paul Wierville, Wich is becoming accepted all over the world as a possible interpretation of Christianity. This analysis should be of help to those who question that opinion.

Neill Duddy, the coming international editor, proposes a practical, theological model for discerning how and when the new religious movements are theologically aberrant. We take this as a start of a wider discussion on this pertinent question.

Finally we bring some coments and reviews.

UPDATE INTERVIEW: AGEHANANDA BHARATI

Update: In your book The Tantic Tradition, you have said that there are two elements that are common or indigenous to all Indian religion; one is the concept of transmigration (or reincarnation or metempsychosis,) and the other is the idea of some Absolute which undergirds or underlies creation. I'd like to talk about these two things in order. First of all, reincarnation: How old is this idea and where does it come from?

Bharati: In its present form, the way people talk about it today, it is of course quite old, but it's not as old as people hope it would be. You have only a vestigial or marginal mention of something like transmigration in the older sections of the Veda. There is the first complete mention, although very brief, in the Bṛihadaranyaka Upanishad, which is quite old, but the real assumptions having to do with transmigration comes in the Puranic age, at the time the Puranas were composed, and then of course through Buddhism. So you might say that it reached a state of common acceptance, I would think, around 300 BC, but not earlier. Karma was never stressed as a unique, unicausal explanation for human events. There was always an intense competition between this view and others like curses and luck, and when Islam came, this became reinforced by the notion of kismet (fate.) But in pre-Islamic texts you find the word bhagya, which means something like fate - it means good or bad luck. And that of course is pre-Islamic. On the grass-roots level, on the folk level, the notions of karma are rather weak. They are systematized in some texts; of course, they are much stronger in Buddhism and Jainism. So it is old, but in its highly articulated form it is not so old. The way that it's talked about now, that's recent, that's the Theosophical Society.

U: What about early Greek thought and Plato - do you find it there?

B: Earlier than that. Pythagoras - but again, it's not elaborated. You find traces of a metempsychotic statement in Pythagoras, which is older than Socrates. But it was never taken too seriously, and also it was not commonly accepted and did not become part and parcel of the Greek religious system at any time.

U: I have seen a real discrepancy between the Hindu and Buddhist views of reincarnation. Would you agree?

B: Of course. The Buddhist doctrine is based far more on this assumption. It figures more importantly in the sermons of the Buddha; since Buddhism is atheistic, it has very few competitors. You explain human suffering on the basis of desire and the chain of dependent origination, the twelve-fold chain, which extends over many lives. In other words, the basic statement of Buddhism is in the pratitya-samutpāda, the statement of dependent origination, the chain of twelve links, which starts with desire and goes over various life forms, back to desire again in a reel. So that of course does not extend over one lifetime, but goes over many

lifetimes - in other words, the Buddha took transmigration for granted, and it was well established at that time in Indian thought. That was one thing which no indigenous Indian religion ever disputed. The question is one of stress. It is more highly emphasized in Buddhism and less emphasized in classical Hinduism, although it is more emphasized in later Hinduism, especially the Bhakti cult starting in the 14th century.

U: My understanding, and correct me if I'm wrong, is that the Buddhist conception of reincarnation is more like one candle flame lighting another, whereas the Hindu theory is the idea of the transfer of skandhas or personal identity traits.

B: No, there are no skandhas in Hinduism; skandhas are Buddhist, but the similes which are used are unimportant. In fact, I think that if you took a contemporary Buddhist or a contemporary of the Buddhist teachers in the subsequent centuries they would have agreed that this is a very different way of talking about it, but it is essentially the same thing. But it is not the same thing metaphysically, because what transmigrates for the Hindu is the jiva, which is an actual ontological existence, whereas for the Buddhist it's just a wave that takes a different shape, and there is no existence behind it. So there's a very basic metaphysical difference, but in the mind or the perception of the people, I don't think there is a difference. For the Buddhist followers there is a radical difference, but I don't think it is important; it's not important to the ordinary people.

U: But it certainly is not the personality of Albrecht, Aagaard, or Bharati which is transferred?

B: Well, how could it? There is no personality in Buddhism. In other words, it's like a billow in the ocean which just sort of moves on. It's not really a different thing, it's just a different name. The Buddha says "nāma-rūpa," what changes is the name and the form, there's no essence, it's without any essence. But people confuse nāma-rūpa with essence as though it existed. And wisdom originates once you get rid of the notion that nāma-rūpa has any essence to it. It is asara, it has no essence. It is very much opposed to the Hindu idea that it (the soul) exists or is permanent. It might migrate, of course, when you get closer to salvation; then it is realized as being something rather different. It exists; it has existential status, whereas in Buddhism there is no ontology.

U: For the record, would you define ontology?

B: Ontology is a philosophy which asserts the actual objective existence of the objects it talks about.

U: The proponents of reincarnation often say that it is the only real system of justice in the universe. Do you agree?

B: Well, I would put it this way: That's an ad hominem argument, but I would think that if you compare it with the Judaeo-Christian or Islamic or Mediterranean stuff, it seems to me ethically less implausible. In other words, if you have to postulate an outside agent, then it seems to me that it sort of removes the responsibility from the individual. Not only that, but unless you decide

on an act of faith, it's a highly harassing notion that I shouldn't be in control, that I shouldn't be responsible for the things that happen to me. So in that sense, in my reading and in the reading of many of my monastic colleagues, the real value of the transmigration system is an ethical explanation. In other words, it's a sort of an ethical theodicy. Also, the other points made by opponents to Christianity, starting with Vivedananda, is the question: "How can you be held responsible for finite acts in an infinite sense?" To which of course, the missionaries of that time would say, "Well, you know, since God is infinite, therefore the result is infinite." That doesn't make sense to the Hindu, it's a logical soap.

U: It seems to me that the problems with reincarnation are that since the personalities are extinguished in Buddhism and to a pretty large extent in Hinduism also, (B: But not until they reach moksha) they can't remember their former lives. Let me give you an example, OK? Let's use that perennial example of evil, Adolf Hitler. The classical explanation in terms of reincarnation is that Hitler will have to be reincarnated six million times as a person or a demon or whatever. The problem with this is that let's say Hitler comes back and is re-born in 1947, and he's born as a deformed baby. So the mother and the father suffer from this and the child of course suffers, so the waves of Karma that spread out from this reincarnation of Adolf Hitler are exponential - they continue to increase. Not only that, but Adolf Hitler doesn't really pay for his own sins, because he as a personality is extinct. So fundamentally, in reincarnationist philosophy, he gets away with everything he did.

B: No, no. He's not extinct at all, he just doesn't remember, that doesn't mean that he's extinct. After all, nobody denies that he was in the womb of his mother and yet he doesn't remember it. That doesn't mean that he's extinct. If everything is extinct which you don't remember, then we never exist. You don't remember what you did at the age of one. That is just not an argument.

U: You don't think so?

B: I know it.

U: You think it isn't.

B: You don't know what you did in your mother's womb, but obviously you were there. If memory is the criterion for previous existence, then there's no criterion at all. Memories are short - they usually go back to the age of 4 or 5 or so. The point is that in most legal systems, you are accountable for things that you didn't know were wrong. But you are also accountable if you don't remember, except for that kind of phoney idea of calling in the psychiatrist to state that the man is incapable of telling right from wrong. There's no such thing, everybody is accountable.

U: Well, let's use another example. Suppose you punish children for something that is wrong, and then they understand, they get whacked on the bottom because they've done something wrong. They associate the punishment with the previous act, whatever it was. In reincarnation, we don't remember our previous lives.

Almost all reincarnationists will acknowledge that you don't remember your previous lives, at least in any kind of detail, so you don't know what you're being punished for.

B: Yea, but you know, it's supposed to be prophylactic. If something bad happened to you, you know something went wrong in your last life. So in the future you'll avoid any such possibilities by improving your lifestyle.

U: You think so?

B: Well, if you believe in reincarnation, then you think, well, I've got cancer, so there must have been something very wrong with me, so I'll have to be more careful in the future.

U: Well, OK, but let's take it a step further. What about the moral outworkings of this? India, I think we'd all agree, is a prime example of this. The idea that the beggar or the leper is working out his or her karma, so let them lay. Is this right? Does this help the world?

B: Well, it doesn't help the world, but if you are charitably disposed, then it is your karma to be charitable, and the leper's karma to be helped out by a charitable person. So it works every way, it's so wide and open that everything fits in. Suppose there is a leper colony and there are no nice people around. The lepers work it out, it's their karma. Now, there's a leper colony that's surrounded by the disciples of Mother Theresa, and they're all helped, so everybody works out his karma. Some lepers have a better karma because Mother Theresa is around, others have a worse karma because she's not around.

U: But it seems that everybody's concerned with working off bad karma. Does anybody generate good karma? And why then does not bad karma engulf the world?

B: Because it's balanced by good karma.

U: But there's so little good karma

B: Oh, there's lots of good karma.

U: Then how would you define good karma?

B: Any action that is proper within the context of the definition of what's good in every different society. In Hindu society there are laws formulated by Manu, what proper action is for the proper social situation. People usually conform and conformity is morality, that's what morality means, some kind of conformity. So therefore, what we see of things - there are maybe 500 murders a day in New York City, but there are 11 million non-murders. So obviously the good karma people don't talk about, because it's not so interesting.

U: Just because you don't kill someone - that's good karma?

B: Relative to killing it's better karma. The abstention from violence is better than violence by any count.

U: That's a new concept to me, because in the reading I've done on this, good karma is only that which is a purely and truly selfless act.

B: No, no, not at all. That's a wrong reading. I don't think you find it in any of the traditional texts of Hinduism. That's all Chinmayananda wisdom, etc.

U: No, I get it from the Hitopadesa.

B: Well, the Hitopadesa is OK if it's a good translation. It's a late text, it's tales of people, which is a highly ornate kind of literature.

U: Are you familiar with Ian Stevenson and the other research that has to do with past-life recall?

B: No, not with Stevenson. These things may be historically verified, but it's all accident; the fact that a person remembers something doesn't mean that it really exists. That's quite basic.

U: A final thing on reincarnation. My understanding of it is that it is totally deterministic and free will doesn't enter in.

B: Yes, I think that's right. Free will is a Christian invention. So therefore it doesn't exist (in Hinduism and Buddhism.) It's not even Greek. It's a totally foreign idea packet. And examined linguistically, it would be very difficult to a Sanskrit pundit who does not know English or other European languages.

U: You have said before that you lean toward reincarnation.

B: As an ethical explanation, a kind of theodicy, sure.

U: Do you expect to be reincarnated?

B: Of course not! Sannyasins are not reincarnated. It's our last life. Once you're a monk, it's all gone, but I don't think it's all very important, you know?

U: I know.

B: But I think that for me it's an ethical postulate - I don't think it's really true. I don't think there is any such thing, I think it's all nonsense.

U: So you don't think you have lived before in a previous incarnation?

B: Of course not. Ridiculous! But it's a very good idea. If I ask myself how come I'm luckier than other people in many ways and that I'm rather near-sighted - my locomotion is rather clumsy, and in that way I'm worse off than you - then of course I say well, maybe in my last life I chased a girl too fast or something like this, that's OK, it's a good ethical explanation, but that doesn't mean that I think it's true.

U: I'd like to go on to the second point that you mention in The

Tantric Tradition, the the idea of the Absolute that undergirds all creation, a sort of metaphysical foundation. Obviously we can't call it God...

B: That's right, you can't because it's not a Creator.

U: What term would you prefer for this Absolute - Godhead?

B: Don't use an English word, use the Sanskrit, say "brahman," it's as easy as that. Or atman-brahman or whatever you call it. There are many other words, but they are all synonyms of brahman.

U: What does it mean?

B: Probably from the word br̥hat which means "big, expanded, or large," or maybe from bru, which means "to speak."

U: Now, this Absolute, this brahman, is totally impersonal.

B: Yes, that is correct. It's impersonal; it's defined in later days as satyam-sivam-sundaram, that which is true, existent - sivam, which is benevolent, and sundaram, which is "beautiful - that's adjectival. The nominal classification is called sat chit ananda. It exists ontologically, it's "chit," it exists mainly as consciousness, and it's "ananda," it's bliss. i.e., "being-awareness-bliss." But these are late, they're post-upanishadic, the first mention of sat chit ananda you find is in a commentary on the Bhagavad Gita in the 13th century, so it's pretty late.

U: If the Absolute is totally impersonal, then how does personality or personalities arise from it?

B: That Absolute manifests itself to itself in a playful act. It says in the Veda, "This Absolute was alone." Then it says, "May I be many, may I come forth." Once this decision has been made, in a playful act, like with a magician, things are let go and then they're on their own.

U: Just like the (Hellenistic) Gnostic cosmogonies.

B: Of course, very similar. There may even have been some connection. but I wouldn't say for sure, we really don't know. Also there's another possibility, that the human mind automatically works in that way, conceptually. So it's possible that is indeed a replication of something abstract becoming concrete, and therefore you see the similar modes and ideas in various parts of the world, totally unconnected. People get similar ideas if they sit down and have enough food to digest and think, which they do; that's what specialists do.

U: Another area I would like to zero in on is the problem of evil and suffering, and would like to trace it back to cosmogony. Where did the first wave of karma come from?

B: There is no first wave. It's a repetition of the four yugas, the four world ages. It's a cyclic development in various stages. There's a predominance of the positive forces in the Sattva yuga, and then these decline and the negative forces take over. In the end of the Kali yuga, there are only negative forces; toward the

end of the Kali yuga, in which we are now, there is a total abundance of bad karma, that's why it collapses. Then, of course, the whole thing rushes up and starts afresh. This is what is called the "days and nights of brahman."

U: So, in the beginning, there was just a sucking void, the universe without anything, and then creation gushed forth.

B: You can actually read the texts like this. The initial purusha has no form, but once it decides it wants to become many, then it takes the form, approximately, of a human being.

U: What makes it decide?

B: Lila. It's own playfulness. It's bored - well, that's my reading. It's part of the presentation that it manifests at all times, but it also becomes manifest at certain times, cyclically.

U: So it takes a few billion years?

B: Yes, in fact, they give you a number, enormous, with many, many zeroes.

U: So then everything will get re-absorbed back into the original state and eventually manifest itself again?

B: That's right.

U: And this isn't different from the light and dark ages of the four yugas?

B: No, these are parallel statements; the one is mythological, the other cosmological. But they can basically be reinterpreted, like writing variations of the same theme.

U: There wasn't a time before, when everything was in a pre-mordial state of equilibrium?

B: Yes, which was the end result of all these things that happened before. It's eternal.

U: Is brahman synonymous with creation?

B: There's no creation. There's no word for that at all. The word "creation" means that you have to have a personal agent. At the basis of it you must have a Creator in order to have a creation.

U: These questions have all been for the purpose of laying a foundation for discussing the questions of evil and suffering. As I understand it, evil and suffering as we perceive it here are just a "parentheses" around the phenomenal universe, or an integral part of this universe.

B: You have to be very careful. In Buddhism, evil and suffering is the only existence.

U: The only existence?

B: It's the base - sabbam dukkham - everything that exists is suffering. And that's the big difference. Among the four sublime truths of the Buddha, two are that everything is suffering and everything is impermanent. There is a possibility to get out of it and there's a way to learn it, by meditation. If there's any ontological hint at all in Buddhism, the only ontology is dukkham, which is "suffering." It's far more radical than Hinduism.

U: Since this cycle goes on and on, over and over again, and everybody despises suffering and can't tolerate it -

B: So everybody has to become a Buddha, and the Buddhas are as numerable as the grains of sand along the ocean, as the later texts say.

U: But, seeing as this whole thing gets laundered over and over again, isn't this eternal despair?

B: No, because the individual can pull out.

U: Can he, though?

B: Only through meditation.

U: Who says? The problem is that the foundation of the universe is cracked.

B: No, no, there's no foundation. You realize that this thing doesn't really exist. So long as you think it exists, you suffer; so long as you attach yourself to these elements, which might even look pleasant at times, that is dukkham, that is suffering. Now, the Buddha was far more radical, he took it to its last possible conclusion; but the Hindus, they didn't think it was so bad after all - there's an underlying principle (in Hinduism) with which you can variously identify. You can step out from suffering by dis-identifying yourself with the agents that give suffering, namely the mind, the body, the senses, etc., by withdrawing it to the big universal being, which has no suffering, because it has no thought. Where there is form and name, there is suffering.

U: Well, it seems to me - this is my western approach to the whole problem - I'm a Christian, so I tend to think in theological terms, but it seems that this whole idea of a brahman, Absolute, or undergirding structure, if it can't ever control itself, it's just an eternal problem of unbelievable dimensions.

B: Look, since it is the agent, and the only agent, there's no question of control.

U: So everything is out of control!

B: It's not out of control! It is control itself, but what is there to control? Nothing else exists.

U: Well, there are alternatives.

B: But not if you talk within that system.

U: Right. So then let's talk within that system. Don't you

think that such an idea of ultimate reality 1) Can't "control" itself, and 2) Is whimsical and capricious?

B: No, it is neither. No adjective applies, because it has no qualities. Since it is nirguna, that means it has no qualities; you cannot ascribe qualities. What you use is "quality" language, when you talk about control and whimsical, that applies only to a modified or qualified existence.

U: The whole problem is - well, the Apostle Paul put it thus in the book of Romans: "The whole creation groans in travail." To him it was a temporary condition, but here I see it as a permanent condition.

B: Permanent, in a cosmic sense. Once you see that the lila of the Absolute defines itself as various or millions of beings. But it has the possibility of reverting to itself at any time. You just have to snap out.

U: But then it can't "control" itself, so it will burst out again.

B: That is just its own play. It is not subject to any outside lawgiver, it is the law and it is the lawgiver. It spews out - the very clever example which the Upanishads give is that the relationship of the brahman to the universe is that of a spider to its web, its own substance. It is something else, but it's of its own matter.

U: To get back to a subject that you brought up before - the only way to get out of this system is through reversal - get a guru and meditate.

B: Yes, nivritti. Pravritti is spreading out and nivritti is going back to the first cause.

U: But, since it's all lila, a big cosmic game, how do you know you're not being tricked? How do you know you're not going to be reincarnated as a slug?

B: You may well be. But the answer is to sit down and meditate, then you break through the sluggishness, and the humanness and the divineness until you go back to your own real essence, which has no such problems.

U: OK, that's what the texts say, that's what the tradition says. Suppose you spend 60 years in Rishikesh, sitting among the boulders of the Ganges meditating, and you think for sure that you're going to make it this time, then you finally die and you get "up there" and there's some big guy looking at you with a bad expression on his face...

B: There's no such thing! You die and you start again next time and you start exactly where you left off; you'll be re-born again in Rishikesh and you'll do better.

U: My point is that even a guru who presumes that he's achieved moksha, maybe has had a big trick played on him, because brahman is a trickster - he's full of lila.

B: That's all right. But then the guru himself, since the guru is God, he is on the way to realizing that he himself is that lila-player, the problem doesn't arise to the extent that he identifies himself with the string-holder of the puppets, that he is that himself. That doesn't rile him at all, and he may even enjoy it.

U: But there's no real guarantee, then, that any yogi is going to achieve liberation.

B: Of course there's no objective guarantee. Of course not. How could it be? Because the people who achieve liberation, samadhi, tell us they are there? How do we know?

U: So it's really spiritual calisthenics.

B: Well, whatever it is. But I've known some people who I suppose might have reached whatever there was to be reached. I myself have had some glimpses of it, although it didn't last very long. But I suppose what I experienced and what many other people have experienced that lasted for about two or three minutes might also last for a very long time, or maybe forever - who knows?

U: And it might not.

B: So what? That's the risk you have to take. That's the risk you have to take with any religion.

U: OK...and a final point along this line. It seems to me that the Hindu and more particularly the Buddhist concept of liberation is somehow synonymous with the western atheist's concept of death.

B: No, certainly not. Because in the western atheistic concept you have the idea of total extinction. Because the western situation does not postulate a situation in which there is eternal consciousness. Whereas the idea in Buddhism, especially, is that total cessation of desire, total cessation of any attachment means non-existence. But death in the West is not non-existence, death comes after existence. All the ideas of existence and non-existence lapse in the person who has achieved nirvana; nirvana means fading away, quite literally, or being blown out, like a candle.

U: Is that any real answer to the questions of life and death, just to say that your personality is blown out?

B: Life and death are not important to the practicing Buddhist

U: It must be important or they wouldn't perform all these austerities and practices...

B: They don't want to be born, they don't want to die, they don't want to get sick in between, so they step out of it and say "We think we are sick because we think there's 'we.'" We think there's an ego; what you have to destroy is the ego." That you can't do by good deeds, because then you'll get a better and bigger ego...a funeral director's ego, or a Maharaja's ego, or whatever. So the trick is to destroy the ego notion, the ahaṅkāra, the ego-maker.

U: But the personality does totally cease to exist?

B: The personality destroys itself only through the proper ways of meditating on the knowledge that everything is momentary, that nothing lasts. Once you postulate anything that lasts, like a soul or a dot, or a brahman, you're in trouble. That's the Buddhist answer - that's why they skate away.

U: In your mind, is that soteriological end a fulfillment of life?

B: It's a matter of taste. At one time, everybody became a Buddhist in India, including kings and princes. It's lasted outside India, very strongly so, so it has seemed attractive to many, many people. Certainly to more people than in Europe.

U: Since we're Christians, I'd like to present a counterpoint to this and get your thoughts on it. Do you find the idea of a personal God and forgiveness of sins offensive?

B: I wouldn't say offensive; I'd say that I don't find it relevant to my own way of handling my own situation, and I would think that people who think and act similarly to me would feel the same way. But don't forget that in the Bhakti cults in India, you have all that, it's all there. Samarpana, dedicated to Vishnu or Shiva, says, "forgive us our trespasses" - quite literally, it's all there. That's why we've got so many possibilities in India. These teachings are there, but they're not very highly respected, they don't have much prestige. But they've been there for a very long time.

U: For how long?

B: Well, I'll tell you, there are certainly roots of Bhakti in the Bhagavad Gita that are pretty old, about 4-500 BC. That's very old indeed.

U: Is it possible that it would have been influenced by Jewish thought?

B: No. What Jewish thought? Where do the Jews talk about forgiveness?

U: All through the Old Testament - for example, the Psalms of David, ca. 1,000 BC.

B: All right, but no - these people didn't travel. The Jews and the Indians were the only people who didn't travel. Everybody else travelled, but they didn't. No way. Look - independent origination - people get similar ideas. Nothing could be more different than the ancient Judaic mentality and the ancient Indian mentality.

U: Then the idea of a personal God and forgiveness is generally pretty alien to Indian religion?

B: No, not at all. Not to the south Indian Bhakti cults, the Vaishnavas. But it is to the elitest undercurrent of Indian thinking, which I would identify with, but there are any number of people who are very powerful, like Prabhupada, who believe in a

personal attachment to a personally conceived God who actually can cancel your karma. It's all there, we have it in the Tamil scriptures, not in Sanskrit, but in Tamil.

U: How far back does that go?

B: That's not really old, about 14th century AD.

U: Could that possibly have been influenced by Christianity?

B: Not necessarily, because it traces right back to its own scriptures. All these people are very careful to trace everything back to the Indian scriptures.

U: Let me put forth my personal understanding of God and evil and the whole problem, in a Christian counterpoint to what we were discussing before. God has allowed evil to exist because of some sort of free will; this is how I approach the problem. God created people to live in a love relationship with him, and love is not really possible without free will, which carries with it the possible abuse of free will...

B: Have you heard the saying, "Don't multiply entities beyond logical necessity?" That was William of Ockham, who was a Catholic saint and a great scholar. I think that applies to Christianity itself, because why do you have to postulate all these things in order to make things applicable to your own personal life? It means you have to postulate a God, you have to postulate free will, and forgiveness. All this you can undercut completely if it's simply an Absolute where you can manipulate yourself in and out of it. It makes matters much easier. Of course, if you feel ethically inclined, you have all these ethical things, like the legal texts and the moral texts in India.

U: Well, as a postulate, I suppose you can postulate it, or you can assume that it is based on reality and revelation.

B: All right, but then that takes me back to my ontological fallacy. Reality in revelation is reality in relation to those who confuse the strength of their experience with ontological reality, and there's no bridge to that at all. The fact that Moses saw God in the burning bush doesn't mean that God exists, it means that Moses had a very strong, powerful imagination. And a great following - he was a charismatic, so people followed him. You listen to what a great man says, that's universal.

U: So obviously, no one can prove or disprove that their religion is right and someone else's is wrong.

B: Yes, it's not scientific, because it can't be verified.

U: Do you think Hindu or Buddhist philosophy can in any way be syncretized with Judaeo-Christian thought?

B: No. Well, it can, but at great compromise to any of the four, by selectively ignoring basic teachings. The swamis do it all the time; it's very profitable.

U: About Jesus and his "lost years," between the ages of 12 and

30 - do you know of any evidence that Jesus did travel in the East, as proponents of various mystery schools contend?

B: No, certainly not, because there's absolutely nothing in Jesus' teachings - and that has been studied by people who know that stuff better than I - which does not follow entirely from the Judaeo-Hellenic tradition, available within 400 miles.

U: What about this idea that reincarnation was formally taught, or at least accepted in the early church, and then was thrown out at the Council of Nicea or Constantinople? From my study of church history I find nothing like this.

B: Nothing. You know what Swami Vivekananda says? "Jesus was an advaita because he said 'I and the Father are one.' " It's very nice, but it's ridiculous. It's a totally different input. As for the notion that reincarnation was thrown out of the early church, I've never heard of it.

U: Do you have a good word or phrase that would sum up Hindu and Buddhist philosophy? A variety of labels have been used, such as occultism, pantheism, monism, dualism, neo-gnosticism, eastern mysticism, etc.

B: My own term is the best one. I think Hindu and Buddhist philosophy have a stratified reality. There are different levels of reality, which is unthinkable in Greek or any other western tradition. In other words, there's a total truth and there's a sort of ephemeral truth. And the two don't even have to interact, they sort of stand side by side and you can cut them one way or the other. There's the unimpeachable total truth and there's also the relative truth, in which everything else happens. You have the first expression of this in the Samkhya system. The purusha and the prakriti: the purusha is a total witness, that's the only way it works. He witnesses everything that happens in prakriti, which is nature. The relation is catalytic; the purusha is a catalyst, but he doesn't do anything. It's a dualistic system, but it was reinterpreted very early in a monistic sense, in the sense that you divide reality into secondary truth.

U: Do you see a real difference between dualism and monism?

B: It's not unbridgeable, as we've seen in the history of Indian thought. And the tendency has always been to do away with dualism and move into monism, with the permissibility of developing monotheistic or polytheistic systems, which was done. All the Bhakti cults are monotheistic, and highly so.

U: In describing Indian religiosity, we're looking for a term which somehow should communicate what is the general trend in Indian thinking, and you responded positively to the parallels with the gnostic understanding of life.

B: That's right, but the gnostic form as I know it is not really an active force in the West now, except for the specialists.

U: Well, that's the point. I think that we are coming into a situation now after the Constantinian era, where the old gnostic doctrines are coming back. The same things the church

fathers were struggling with.

B: You mean the old fathers like Basilides, Origen, Tertullian, Athanasius and Irenaeus?

U: Yes. They were tackling problems that forced them to some formulations that you may debate, but the questions they dealt with are coming back. First of all this double reality, split level religion, you may call it. Would you call this reality gnosticism?

B: Why not? I know very little about it, but there's a colleague of mine at Columbia, Elaine Pagels, who wrote a book about it. (The Gnostic Gospels) So that's possible, but I don't quite see how you want to make this operational. Would you see it as a kind of addendum to the Judaeo-Christian world view, or an alternative?

U: Reading the old fathers always presupposes that you somehow have the same questions, to which they wrote the answers. Therefore, I think that a reading of the fathers on these points up till now has not really been relevant. I think we can read the fathers in a much more relevant way if we read them in this present context.

B: Possible, but much wider - it would then straddle the East and the West.

U: Yes, it would really be a dialogue that was cut off when the state church came in.

B: Well, it was cut off by the concept of anathema, which doesn't exist in Indian religion.

U: What about "eastern mysticism" - do you find that offensive?

B: Quite offensive. I call that "drifting into eastern wisdom chatter." When people stop thinking in grammatical terms, you get into this eastern mysticism drivel. I find that very difficult to stomach. I don't think eastern mysticism is very attractive. But I think it's of psycho-experimental importance, it's one of those things that you can do to skim confidently over your problems, which I find very helpful.

U: Your term "psycho-experimental," that's also a very western term.

B: Yes, it's an etic (scholar's) term. It's a difference between the statement of the texts and my critique of them.

U: You are an initiate of an advaitic school, but you don't really care for advaitic philosophy, as you have said. Why?

B: I think, first of all, it doesn't really generate a sense of humor. It's also very dry, and the trouble is, the great pieces of Indian art and music were composed in spite of monism, not because of it. But monism is a good, solid guideline for the kind of meditation I enjoy. But I think it's drudgery, I think it's very bad philosophy.

U: In what way?

B: For me, philosophy is to solve problems. In monism, there are no problems. The problems are of a linguistic sort.

U: Could you give us a one-sentence or one paragraph summary of your own summum bonum?

B: My own personal philosophy? I think that the modern mind has to work on several levels. At one time I called it syncretistic parallelism. By that I mean that you live the religious life by whatever form of meditation, which is purely private and not communicable, and you lead whatever social and active life you choose. The two don't meet, even schedule-wise, because you do them at different times of the day. I enjoy the meditation, but I think if you try to make a bridge between the meditation and the philosophy, you're in great trouble, because it bars you from doing good philosophy. I follow Nagarjuna, the Brahmin who converted to Buddhism in the 2nd century, who said, "I do my meditation, which is Buddhist, but for the rest of it, I enjoy dismantling people's arguments." This is what I call "parson skinning." Part of his philosophy was that he hated the ministers, therefore he developed a very strong dialectical way of doing away with these arguments. I find this enjoyable too. This means also Hindu and Buddhist parsons, incidentally. But it's easier to do away with Christian and Muslim parsons, because there are so many postulates there; the Hindus and Buddhists don't make so many ontological claims - How can you fight something which you don't even claim is there?

U: If you would have found some form of Christian meditation, i.e. the medieval system of Bernard of Clairveaux, etc., that might have met your needs at an earlier time, might you have embraced that?

B: I may have, but it's not very likely because of my feelings about fatherhood, which is very essential in Christianity. If you could cut that out, perhaps.

U: Why do you have such an aversion to fatherhood?

B: I don't know. The point is that the Jews got terribly nervous and excited over the fact that sexual intercourse creates all these responsibilities. I don't find that very important. I don't think fatherhood is very important at all. I think woman is far more important, the mother is more important. Men are a dime a dozen; one shot of sperm has millions of spermatozoa in it. Yet to this, a historical and social accident, you attach an immense weight of responsibility and sternness. I find that very unattractive and it also leads to machoism, which is very strong in all these religions.

U: I can understand that a lot of people have a problem with their fathers, or their mothers for that matter. Many people just plain hate their parents.

B: There's lots of people that hate everybody!

U: As I see it, Christianity is the redemption of this whole

syndrome, of fallen humanity and fallen fatherhood. Here we have God as Father in a sense that is totally at odds with all the things that are wrong with human fatherhood. We have a God who loves us unconditionally - the Greek agape concept - and he's gone to the extreme of giving himself totally for us.

B: But then why preserve the word - why insist on the word fatherhood?

U: I really don't know, but that's the word that Jesus used. Because God is personal, I suppose.

B: Well, that's bothersome. If a meaning becomes obsolete, you can change it. That's what has happened in the history of human languages thousands of times. If it becomes redundant, why use it?

U: In the eastern tradition, you have this idea of "guru as God." Do you find that this is equally offensive?

B: Of course. To me it is offensive, but the point is that you don't have to have a guru, except that most people need one. I don't regard myself as most people. Ramana Maharishi, who most people regard as the quintessence of advaitic philosophy, never had a guru.

U: Do you regard your guru as a father?

B: No, we're buddies. I see the guru as a transmitter. He transmits the mantra, because there has to be some link to the tradition. Of course, you can sort of superimpose father or anything else you want on it.

U: When I was in India, it dawned on me that this idea of "guru as God" is a bit of dissembling in itself. What is really meant is "guru is greater than God." God is the trickster, God is the trap, lila. Guru saves you from God.

B: That's a western way of putting it. You can try to say it in Hindi, but you can't, it doesn't make any sense.

U: The Radha Soamis said it.

B: That's the pizza effect.

U: You said that you saw tantra as having "ecumenical" possibilities for the future of the human race. Could you elaborate on that?

B: Yes. Because it's the one form that quite cogently and articulately says that ethics are not its concern. Whereas in all the other exotic forms of Hinduism and Buddhism, ethics and religion are completely mixed. So the tantric says that you do your thing, you achieve moksha (liberation) but as far as your social or ethical life goes, there are other rules that you conform to or follow. But they are not part of the religious packet. Therefore, such yoga is closest to my conception of religion.

U: So you think it embodies some hope of ecumenical acceptance?

B: Ecumenical hope of the acceptance of intellectual and moral choice, going parallel with a very intensive, high-risk kind of meditation, which is interesting, as people are becoming more and more high-risk oriented.

U: What about moral choice? Do you believe in moral choice?

B: Well sure, but moral choice is based on some moral system. In my estimation, you have to make your own decision - that's what I mean by moral choice.

U: You said before that we are heading toward the end of the Kali yuga.

B: No, no, there's about 75 million years yet!

U: But we're on the downhill slide?

B: Kali yuga means downhill slide. The Kali yuga is far more interesting. When I was a boy, they told me that you go to heaven, play a harp and eat honey. Good lord, I'd at least like to eat a salami.

U: Do you think the world is getting any better?

B: Sure it is. But it takes a while. It goes in spurts.

U: Do you have any sympathy with the "new age" consensus that we're about to enter the Age of Aquarius, etc.?

B: It's very attractive, it's OK; I don't think we're entering anything, but people have to make their decisions.

U: Are you optimistic about the world?

B: I'm optimistic about the possibility of individuals being able to - as the British said - muddle through.

U: Well, more than to muddle through...what about attaining moksha?

B: That's a private affair. I'm talking about socially muddling through and sort of making the best of it without stepping on too many people's toes.

U: It seems that most people don't muddle through very well.

B: That's possible.

U: In India they don't always muddle through too well.

B: Only two nations have survived, the Indians and the Chinese. They're the only nations that have muddled well. They have survived after a very long time. Where are the Romans, the Gauls, the Teutons? The Chinese and the Indians are still there, uninterrupted, muddling.

## GNOSTICISM, PAST AND PRESENT

An examination of the parallels between Radha  
Soami teachings and Hellenistic Gnosticism

By Mark Albrecht

In recent issues of Update, we have frequently used the terms gnostic and neo-gnostic as words describing a particular thought system which serves as the lowest common denominator of Hinduism, Buddhism, occultism and other esoteric traditions.

The word gnostic itself comes from gnosis in the ancient Greek language and basically means "knowledge" or "to know." This knowledge is not so much a learning of factual data in the scholarly sense as it is an intuitive and existential apprehension of the deeper truths of Divinity and Cosmic Law. This gnosis is usually attained through some variety of mystical experience, in which the adept attains experiential union with the purportedly divine cosmos.

This world view, which finds its only real opposition in Judeo-Christian thought, can be traced back to the early pantheistic speculations of the Hindu Vedas, perhaps ca. 1000 BC; beyond that, it may find historical expression even earlier, in the primitive forms of Shamanism (tribal religions of magical rites.)

However, the well-known Hellenistic Gnosticism made famous by the gnostic cults of the early Christian era was significant in that it represented the first attempt to syncretize these elements with Judeo-Christian thought, which resulted in a protracted theological battle for the Second and Third Century Church. This fight, which has continued on and off for some 1800 years, has come to a head again today with the advent of the current religious pluralism and its resulting confusion.

Hellenistic Gnosticism was also important because it presented the first major theological challenge to the early church and helped formulate Christian dogmatics. It even forced the codification of the New Testament canon, since the Gnostics has set forth their own set of "inspired gospels." The church eventually won its hard-pitched battle against Gnosticism, but not without a number of casualties and painful but valuable lessons. The problem of various gnostic sects and teachings has arisen continually throughout the history of the church, but has now entered the mainstream of western life with renewed

vigor, and is vying for supremacy with Christianity in what appears to be a rather expanded re-run of the original clash.

One of the most interesting groups in this regard is the relatively recent Radha Soami religion of north India, which was established in 1861 and has numerous outreaches in the West. In this fast-growing movement, a number of Hindu and Sikh elements have been blended with a revival of Hellenistic Gnostic speculations. There is also a strong tendency to syncretize Radha Soami teachings with Christianity through de-contextualized quoting of the New Testament and the publication of several Radha Soami commentaries on the Gospels. Some of these gnostic parallels are so striking that it is possible that the Radha Soami founder, Soamiji Maharaj and his successors, may even have had access to early Gnostic texts, or perhaps secondary sources such as the church father Irenaeus, who described the Gnostic system in detail in his writings.

First, a general overview of the ancient Gnostic system should be given.

There were two basic schools, the Persian Gnostics, who were dualists, and the Syrian or Alexandrian school, who were more monistic. There were also many variations and splinter groups, since one of the hallmarks of Gnosticism was speculation, and each new theory tended to give rise to a new group. Irenaeus said of them, "Every day one of them invents something new, and none of them is considered perfect unless he is productive in this way." Like all other speculative esoteric traditions, they were also extremely syncretistic, attempting to subjugate all forms of religious expression to their form of "final knowledge."

The philosophic basis of the Hellenistic Gnostic systems was grounded in cosmogony, i.e., the explanation of the origin of the universe. In the Persian school, there were two eternally equal and counterbalancing forces, usually represented as The Light and The Dark or good and evil; creation began when these two poles came into contact.

However, the Syrian school's monistic version is more typical of modern day gnostic speculations, and especially of Radha Soami. According to a creation treatise written by the notorious Gnostic Simon Magus, "God," who was referred to as "The Root" or "The Unfathomable Silence," inadvertently stirs and thinks or reflects upon itself. This reflective process causes a thought to be formed, which immediately creates an imbalance in The Root, and the thought (female principle) becomes detached from the thinker (male principle.) Through progressive deterioration of the thought, she takes on a personality of her own, and creation both springs from her and clings to her in attachment. The creation then emanates down through the succeeding regions or spiritual spheres, the last

(and worst) being the earth.

Similarly, Radha Soami teaches that the absolute being is Anami Purush (meaning "without name.") Before creation, Anami Purush was in a state of highly polarized self-absorbed consciousness. Suddenly an uncontrollable "commotion" began in Anami Purush and a sound was emitted - "SOAMI" - ("everything is within me"). Further sounds and vibrations followed, and the universe unraveled itself through a series of emanations that were divided into grand divisions or lokhs. Each lokh became darker (less spiritual) as if the light from Anami Purush dimmed in intensity. Here too, the positive pole of Anami Purush is male and the negative pole or manifestation is female.

A second common area of teaching concerns the resulting cosmology, i.e., the way the universe is now that it has been created. The Gnostics taught that there were a number of spheres of descending spiritual complexity, each ruled by a god or demon called an archon. Our planet was ruled by a demi-urge who was despotic and evil and usually associated with Yahweh of the Old Testament. These cosmic spheres acted like magnetic force fields, pulling souls into them and away from The Root, the true home of all bliss, which lay beyond the emanations of the spheres.

Likewise, Radha Soami postulates the existence of a number of spheres of spiritual activity, the previously mentioned grand divisions and lokhs. Here too, each one is ruled by a god, including the entire pantheon of major Hindu gods. These gods exert spiritually magnetic forces which tend to keep the soul from advancing to the higher spheres unless one has access to esoteric knowledge, which is, of course, available only through initiation into Radha Soami.

A third area of similarity are the teachings on anthropology. The ancient Gnostics were well known for their deprecation of the body and the created realm, and because of this, they ran into opposition from the Greek philosophers. They divided the human being into body, soul (mind) and spirit. The former two were looked upon as creations of the demiurge and viewed with contempt - "Woe, woe, unto the shaper of my body!" - as a typical Gnostic text reads. The spirit was believed to be a spark of the divine and had to be freed from the body like a bird is set free from its cage.

Again, we find almost the same situation in Radha Soami. Man is a bird in a cage, with the body and mind trapping his spirit, which struggles to fly to the higher regions. Therefore the world is seen as negative and the aspirant

must withdraw his senses from the consciousness of the world. The mind is seen as an imprisoning agent, the same terminology used by the ancient Gnostics. According to Radha Soami doctrine the devotee must perform spiritual surgery by detaching the spirit from the mind.

A fourth area of common teaching centers around eschatology and salvation. In Hellenistic Gnosticism, a transcendent savior who is an incarnation of or messenger from The Root enters the world periodically to impart saving gnosis to the chosen. The adept would then travel up through the spiritual spheres, running the gauntlet past the archons, evading them by means of magical rites and secret passwords. If he had learned the esoteric practices correctly, he was successful in negotiating the dangerous obstacle course and was reunited or merged with The Root, which was supposed to be of identical essence with the human spirit. Parallels with the Brahman-atman teachings of Hinduism are also seen here.

Predictably, Radha Soami teaches a similar system of salvation. The presence of the living master, a perfected man who ostensibly lives in constant unity with God, is essential. He imparts knowledge and secret teaching after initiation. Radha Soami literally means "the path back to Soami." This path is a winding one, whereby the devotee passes through the lokhs and grand divisions until he reaches the Divine, where a merging takes place, "like a wave disappearing in the ocean." Each spiritual region or lokh has sensory characteristics such as sound, smells, colors, feelings, etc. The devotee must familiarize himself with these characteristics in order to identify the respective lokh when his spirit is "soul travelling" outside of the body. This soul travel is attained via a mystical alteration of consciousness through meditation. Radha Soami recommends three to six hours of meditation daily.

Similar to the secret pass words used by the Hellenistic Gnostics, Radha Soami employs the use of mantras to designate the sounds of the various spheres, as well as the sounds of musical instruments like the flute and bagpipe. Use and/or recognition of these sounds is necessary for advancement through the lokhs. However, not all souls advance all the way back to God. Some may be hindered along the way and stop at a particular level, retaining their personality.

Radha Soami is striking because of the detailed parallels between it and Hellenistic Gnosticism, yet it is not a unique case of Twentieth Century gnosticism. Neo-gnosticism raises its head in many shapes, forms and varieties, such as the hundreds of new age groups (see Update, Vol. V, no. 2, Aug., 1931), but usually

has the following common features:

1. A monistic or pantheistic theology which is always some modification of Hinduism, Buddhism or Hellenistic Gnosticism.
2. The logical inference of this is that humanity is Divine, since we are a conscious part of the Divine Universe.
3. A salvation system in which the adept or devotee strives to become experientially one with the Divine through meditation, yoga, or ritual. This is really the summum bonum of gnostic holiness: You are God, and the sooner you realize and achieve it, the better.
4. The final element common to the great majority, if not all neo-gnostic systems is syncretism, the belief that all religions are really saying the same thing, but in different languages. The focus of attention is often on Christianity, and frequent attempts are made to point out that Jesus really taught the above gnostic doctrines. The church's consistent and historical claim to exclusive truth is usually seen as a threat and/or stumbling block to the unification of world religion.

Finally, it should be noted that the conditions that gave rise to Hellenistic Gnosticism are very similar to those of today. The expansion of uniform civilization and language that was brought about by the formation of Alexander the Great's empire tended to break down traditional social, political and religious frameworks, unifying the Mediterranean area as a cosmopolitan entity. However, this also led to disorientation for many, and there was an uprooting, merging and mixing of religions, philosophies and ethnic groups. Hellenism promoted a syncretistic milieu, and from this crucible Gnosticism was forged.

The Twentieth Century has produced a similar situation, although greater in both scope and intensity. The early church responded quickly to the Gnostic challenge, considering its inexperience and lack of developed theology. The Twentieth Century Church has the lessons of history and a developed theology behind it, but it remains to be seen whether or not modern Christianity can recognize and effectively counter Contemporary Gnosticism with the same vigor and theological precision as the Church of the Fathers.

## UPDATE INTERVIEW: CHARAN SINGH

In January, 1981, members of our tour group to India were the guests of the Radha Soami Satsang in Beas, India. During our four days there we were received most cordially by the leaders and members of the ashram; rarely have we experienced such hospitality (and excellent food) as in Beas. The spiritual master, or guru, of the group, Charan Singh, graciously consented to two interviews, which have been condensed here. Singh presides over the largest of the Radha Soami sects; while the exact membership of Radha Soami - Beas is not known precisely, it is believed to be close to one million, which includes numerous outreaches in the West. The interview speaks for itself - in diplomatic language, it was "frank and cordial," i.e., our points of difference were discussed head-on, without talking around the areas of disagreement. We are thankful to Charan Singh and his aides for their cooperation and courtesy. Further details on Radha Soami are contained in the May, 1981 issue of Update.

### Interviewed by:

Johannes Aagaard, Denmark  
 Mark Albrecht, USA  
 Brooks Alexander, USA  
 Friedrich W. Haack, Germany  
 Moti Lal Pandit, India  
 Steve Scott, England  
 Caryl Williams, England

Aagaard: May we begin by asking your understanding concerning Radha Soami and the Christian faith? Are they two exclusive beliefs, or is it possible to be Christian and a Radha Soami?

Singh: I would like to make this clear to you. Radha Soami faith is not a religion. It's just a way, a path, leading back to the Father. It is immaterial whether you are a Hindu, a Christian or a Muslim, or any other religion. Because for us, the teaching of all the mystics is the same. There is no difference in their teachings at all. No mystics, no saints, come here to create a new religion. They all come to unite us with the Lord. You see, it is only the people, after the departure of the mystic, who try to make their teachings into some kind of a religion. They become very rigid in their dogmas, in their attitude, just to hold the masses, hold the people. But if we would go deep into the teachings of any mystic, they have the same spiritual teaching to share with us, the same path to show to us. We are concerned only with this. We are not concerned with any religion at all.

Albrecht: As a student of theology, I find it hard to understand this. You speak of God and of spirituality, and yet say that you're not religious. I find this a contradiction in terms. Could you explain this to me?

Singh: I don't know what your concept of religion is. If the real meaning of religion is to unite the soul back with the Father, then that would be the literal meaning of religion, that which unites the soul back to the Father. Then, of course, we are all following a religion. But if you give it any name or shape, as a Muslim, as a Hindu, as a Christian, or as a Buddhist, then we (Radha Soami) are no religion at all.

Albrecht: So you could define it as a science as well?

Singh: Yes, you could call it a science or a faith. What we mean to say is that the teaching of Christ is exactly the same as that of any other mystic. Whether Nanak, whether Persian mystics, or any other Hindu mystics, they have the same message to give us. The rituals and organizations are different, because they are created. But the teachings of all the mystics is actually the same. And we are more concerned with the teachings of those mystics, so we don't confine ourselves to any particular so-called religion.

Aagaard: We have just been to Rishikesh, and have interviewed about 20 different sannyasins, saints, gurus, and babas of various sorts. After this experience we find it very difficult to uphold this understanding that all saints are saying the same thing, because nearly all of them were basing their attitude on the concept that the world is not real, and you have to withdraw from it and only live as a spectator, without engaging in it.

Singh: Didn't Christ say that?

Aagaard: No, Christ did not say that. But in Rishikesh they are saying it.

Singh: Christ also said the same thing. You will read in the Bible, "The world is a bridge, build over it."

Haack: What is this teaching that all the mystics of the world teach?

Singh: I will tell you the gist of it. There is one God, and there is a necessity to go back to him. Without going back to our Father, we cannot escape from births and deaths. The Lord is nowhere outside, he is in every one of us. And the path leading back to the Father is also the same. In our body the seat of the soul and mind is here at the eye center (third eye.) Our whole consciousness operates from here out through the senses, the nine apertures. Through these we are attached to this whole creation. And this is bringing us back to the creation each time after death.

Albrecht: You mean reincarnation.

Singh: Yes. Christ said, "if you build your treasure in the world, you come back to the world; if you build it in heaven, you go back to heaven." If you are attached to this creation, you come back to this creation. If you are attached to the Father, you go back to the Father. So, unless you withdraw this consciousness back to the eye center, we don't come to the door of our house. Our spiritual journey starts from the eye center, upward. So we have to withdraw our consciousness back to the eye center. And after that you have to travel with that light and sound within. That is why Christ said, "If your eye is single, your whole body is full of light." We have to open this eye and see that light. With the help of that light, we have to find our way back to God. Christ said that spiritual worship pleases the Father. And that Spirit, that Holy Ghost, that Word, that Logos that is in every one of us is here at the eye center. Indian mystics have given Indian names, Christ has given his own name, Persian mystics have given their own name, but those who have travelled within on that path, they have the same message to give. They are not bound by any ritual, by any ceremonies; they don't have anything to worship outside of themselves, they only worship him within.

Haack: In the Bible there is a special ritual given by Christ. It's the Lord's Supper, which is practiced by the followers of Jesus Christ.

Singh: These rituals have come later on. These rituals have never been performed by Christ himself. They have come later on. That was the blessed food that he distributed to his disciples. It was no ritual at all.

Aagaard: The last night before he was betrayed?

Singh: Yes. He blessed the loaf of bread.

Aagaard: He did say, "Take, eat, this is my body..."

Singh: "This is my body," this is, you see, what he said. "Unless you taste my blood and my flesh, you cannot be part of me." This is not the blood and flesh of the physical body, it is the spiritual body. You do not taste the blood and flesh of the spiritual body. They are spirit, the Holy Ghost. He said to his disciples, "You have come into me and I have come into you." No physical body can come into anybody else's physical body.

Aagaard: We speak about a spiritual body in Christian theology, that's correct. In the Christian tradition, the spiritual body, as far as I have understood it, is the body of believers in which the Holy Spirit lives, as in a temple. A community of believers is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Singh: That Holy Spirit is within every one of us, here at the eye center.

Aagaard: Why exactly at the eye center?

Singh: Because the seat of the soul and mind is here at the eye center. "If the eye be single, the whole body is full of light."

Aagaard: Yes, I know that verse, but I have not understood it like that.

Singh: And that light is the body of Christ. That light comes from the radiance of his spiritual body.

Alexander: Jesus seems to teach, and his followers definitely believe, that the basis of returning to the Father was forgiveness of sin, and that Jesus' death somehow was critical to establishing this forgiveness.

Singh: You see, what is forgiveness? Forgiveness of what?

Alexander: Speaking in biblical terms, it was forgiveness of sin.

Singh: Sin of individuals. You see, there is something standing between me and the Father. Unless that is forgiven, the soul cannot go back to the Father. That block is our sins, our karmas, our actions of past lives. Unless all that is forgiven, the soul cannot go back to the Father. It cannot shine, it cannot become whole. So we have to meditate, to seek that forgiveness.

Alexander: My question was, that in Christianity, or the biblical view of things, that forgiveness was based upon Jesus' death.

Singh: You have to work yourself, to seek the forgiveness of the Father. Jesus has told you of a path. He has given you a teaching. He has shown you the way. You have to find that path, the way, and seek the forgiveness of your sins before you can go back to the Father. He said, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." Repent from what? You don't know what you have done (in past lives). How can you repent if you don't know what you've done?

Williams: Why don't we know?

Singh: No question of why, but we don't know how we have offended. A child has not hurt anyone; he is all love. Why doesn't he see God? We have gone through many years, so we can see what we have done. But what about the child? This is because of his past karmas, past sins. Those sins have become our master, and we have become their slave. Our soul has become the slave of those sins.

Williams: Following through on what you've just said, you realize the sins are in your past lives. So how do you achieve forgiveness for them?

Singh: You see, all these sins have relationship to the mind. The soul is dominated by the mind. Mind is a slave of the senses. Being a slave of the senses, mind commits sins. And soul is dominated by the mind. So soul has to pay for all those sins. Unless the soul gets a release from the mind, soul can never become whole, soul can never shine. So we are to withdraw the consciousness to the eye center and attach ourselves to the divine light within. When mind is attached to that, it doesn't come through the senses at all. So when mind comes back to its own source, soul gets release from the mind. All the burden is lifted from the soul, the soul shines.

Williams: So then, after you've meditated and got forgiveness, then the reincarnation stops. So then what happens after you die?

Singh: You go back to the Father. It is only our karma and sins that are pulling us back to this creation. When they are all finished, nothing can pull us back to this creation. If you are able to burn off your karmas by meditation during this lifetime, then you don't have to come back.

Albrecht: Regarding this question of karma, where did the first wave or impulse of karma come from? Did it begin within the Godhead itself?

Singh: It begins the moment we have become part of this creation. Then the Lord has projected himself into this creation. As you read St John, he said there was the Word before the creation, and the Word has made the creation. There is no difference between the Word and God. So before that, it was the creative power only, which you can call God. And that creative power has created the creation. So he has projected himself into the creation.

Albrecht: But that presents a moral and ethical problem. This creation is imperfect and fallen; there is evil in society and suffering in the world. Now, if this karma came from God, or was projected or emanated from his essence, then that implies that God is imperfect.

Singh: No, God is not imperfect. But God has created this world imperfect. Unless the world is imperfect, it cannot exist. The moment anyone becomes perfect in the world, he goes back to the perfect one. We are only here as far as we are imperfect. And the point of our meditation is to become perfect. Christ said, "Go and sin no more, lest something worse befall you." Once you are on the path, you are in the process of becoming whole, perfect. Otherwise you will have to come back to this life again. But you have to become a shining example to others, then they also will follow you.

Pandit: What is the object of this human life?

Singh: The object is to make ourselves perfect and go back to the Father. If you want to help society, that's a very different problem. So many reformers have

come, so many mystics and saints have come, and has the society been reformed? You cannot remove the thorns from the world, but you can wear shoes so they will not affect you. The society will always remain the same. This world will always be imperfect; it will remain imperfect. But we can become perfect in this creation. We can wear shoes. You cannot solve the problems of the world, but you can rise above the problem; it doesn't affect you at all.

Pandit: So you come to the position of the Gita, where he who is a great yogi is above attachment.

Singh: Yes. He is not affected by what is happening around him. He must be a spectator.

Haack: So God is playing his own play in us?

Singh: Yes, we are all puppets. We have no freedom - absolutely not.

Williams: Well then, why does one meditate?

Singh: Because he wants us to meditate. We are not needed. If we had a free will, we would not have a part in his creation. Who would like to be away from the Creator and a part of this miserable creation? Did we have free will to come to this creation?

Haack: What does this mean? Can't we do anything?

Singh: Absolutely not. Christ said, "Even the hairs on the body are numbered." How would you explain that? Would a few hairs less or more make any difference to you? He says even they are all numbered - even that little insignificant thing. We have limited free will, conditional free will, but not absolute free will.

Haack: Not absolute free will - only God has that.

Singh: That's what I'm saying. There is no absolute free will. We have conditioned free will.

Aagaard: Does it mean that if we get rid of these conditions by means of meditation, then we will have gained our free will?

Singh: No. Then you'll go back to the Father and you'll be living in his will. The question is: What is "you?" What you yourself call you is an ego, a mind. And when we limit the ego, the mind, then it is soul, which is a drop of the divine ocean. The purpose is to become one with the Creator, not to stay separate from the Creator.

Pandit: Is this unity in terms of identity or in terms of union?

Singh: Call it anything. It's just a way of explaining it. You lose your identity and yet you are separate from him. You lose your identity, you just become one with him.

Pandit: As my arm is my body, yet it is an arm...

Singh: Yes, that's right. You see the waves in the ocean. They are part of the ocean, and yet you can say that they are different; but they are also the same

thing.

Haack: Am I no longer aware of my own existence if I am one with him?

Singh: Who wants to be aware of his own existence? It is only the ego who wants it. Lover always wants to become one with the beloved. Who wants to be a drop and not the ocean?

Haack: I take my "I," my human existence and identity, as a wonderful gift from the Creator himself, not to withdraw into extinction.

Singh: You see, I will tell you. Lord worships himself through us. We are just puppets. He pulls us from within. Unless he shows us that path, that way, we can never go back to him at all. We are blind. A blind man can never get out of the darkness unless someone with eyes leads him out of the darkness. So Christ said, "My sheep recognize my whistle."

Haack: Yes, but I think it's different. When I see the light, I see it coming from the cross on Easter morning. I wouldn't find this light within me or in the third eye or anywhere else.

Singh: Excuse me, what is this cross?

Haack: It was a cross, actually in Golgotha in Jerusalem, made out of wood...

Singh: This cross was not made out of wood.

Haack: I think this cross was made of wood, and the death on the cross was a real death, and the light is coming from Easter morning, in which death was broken. It is guiding me, but it is guiding me from outside.

Singh: You feel it is from outside, but actually it is from inside.

Aagaard: Could we get some help to understand this "inside" a little more? It is inside the head, connected with the internal senses or internal sound? An internal name of God?

Singh: Yes, but there is no particular name of God.

Aagaard: is it connected with the breathing somehow?

Singh: No, it has nothing to do with your breathing. It is the consciousness that matters. It has to be here. Somewhere in the Bible it says, I don't know if it is Old Testament or New Testament, "Be still and become God."

Albrecht: No. God says (in the Psalms) "Be still and know that I am God."

Singh: Yes, that's right. What is this state? You have to be still here at the eye center. And then you are capable of becoming God, to follow that path and lead to the destination.

Aagaard: Is it also connected with inner nectar?

Singh: Yes. Same thing. You call it nectar, you call it living water, you call it spirit or Holy Ghost, the holy fire, they are all different names. You see, I am describing the characteristics of that particular entity.

Aagaard: And that which is described by all those words, what is that essen-

tially?

Singh: That is the creative power. That is what is mentioned by St. John as Word.

Aagaard: Is that life force connected with the kundalini?

Singh: No. It has nothing to do with kundalini. Nothing to do with physical things at all.

Pandit: In the Christian mystics, like St. John of the Cross and Theresa of Avila, they believe that experience is dependent upon the grace of God. But, they say that they do not meditate to get union with God, or salvation, because they are already given that by Christ. There is not an emphasis on withdrawal for the sake of self-salvation or withdrawal from the world. How do we bridge these differences?

Singh: They are all the same. There is no difference. Their way of expression is different. Same thing, same philosophy.

Pandit: But they believed that God was transcendent, that he created ex nihilo out of nothing, not out of his projection or emanation.

Singh: This is what St. John says. Nothing has existed before the Word. The Word has created the world, and the Word and the world are the same thing. This is misunderstood in the western countries, I'm sorry to say. Also, meditation is misunderstood in the western countries. They think that it is to repeat some mantras. This is no meditation at all. Meditation is to withdraw the consciousness to the eye center, and to be with that divine light, that divine sound that is within. That is meditation.

Alexander: One more question concerning Christ's death. You have said that forgiveness is necessary before one can return to the Father, but that this forgiveness is not based on the death of Christ, but upon our meditation and becoming perfect.

Singh: No, no. His grace is there, his help is there, he has shown us the teaching, the way.

Alexander: Right. But I'm speaking of his death, as an atonement for sin. If the forgiveness of God is not based upon Christ's death, then what meaning does Christ's death have? What meaning does Christ's crucifixion have for the Radha Soami teaching?

Singh: I personally think that if Christ had not been crucified, his teaching would have gone unheard of. He would have gone unknown in this world. Many saints have come and gone, nobody knows anything about them. For them, whether on the cross or in the body, is nothing. They are one with the Father.

Aagaard: Then how is the resurrection understood?

Singh: What is your concept of resurrection?

Aagaard: It is that Jesus Christ was bodily killed, and rose again on the third day, in this world, as that Holy Spirit which brings forgiveness and new life to all mankind.

Singh: Then where did he go after that?

Aagaard: He went and sat at the right hand of God the Father, as we confess in the creed. And from there he'll come again.

Singh: My concept is: His disciples saw Christ within themselves, his radiant form.

Williams: For forty days after the resurrection, his body was seen on earth by many people.

Singh: People saw his spiritual body. But that body is not made of this matter.

Williams: But he actually ate food on the beach.

Singh: That is what it looked like. But if they tried to catch it (his body) They would not be able to.

Scott: Thomas touched him.

Singh: I don't know about the history, that is what my concept is. So the master always stays alive for the disciple, in the spiritual body.

Scott: You quoted two passages from the words of Jesus, and there are some other passages very close to those two passages. You talk about the inner light. Jesus said, "If the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness." You talked about Jesus as Shepherd, and he talks about himself as being the only shepherd. And he talks about other teachers being thieves and robbers. Do you think Jesus was deliberately misleading people, or was mistaken? How do we put these things in context?

Singh: People are twisting his teachings, I am sorry to say. He said there's a darkness within every one of us, and light comprehended it not. We cannot see that light because there's a darkness within, not anywhere outside. Everyone needs guidance. Christ got his guidance from John the Baptist. He said there is a man who has come from God whose name is John.

Scott: So John was Jesus' teacher.

Singh: Yes.

Scott: I see.

Singh: Absolutely. We may or may not accept it. You try to go a little deeper into the Bible.

Haack: I get the strange feeling that we will have to throw out all of St. Paul's letters which are in the New Testament. They say that there is only one light for the world, Jesus Christ...

Singh: You don't have to go after St. Paul. Go after the teaching of St. John, St. Matthew, St. Luke. They are the ones who received direct teaching from Christ. Nobody took direct notes on what Christ said. Therefore we cannot take a verse like "the only son" - it might have meant "only the son" - that is, the way of all the mystics. I have written a commentary on Saint Matthew. I understand it, but I don't say I'm any authority on the Bible, because that's not my background, as you see.

Aagaard: What kind of yoga do you practice? Does it have similarities with hatha yoga or kundalini?

Singh: No. Hatha is only for health, not for spiritual benefit. Ours is the Surat Shabd Yoga, that of the life stream.

Aagaard: May we also call it sahaj, the "easy yoga?"

Singh: Yes, that is the meaning of sahaj. We are already at the middle of the hill at the eye center. It is not necessary to come all the way back down again to get to the top, so we start at the eye center. Then you need the constant guidance of the teacher once you are on the path. Otherwise there can be many mishaps.

Alexander: I get the impression that the initiation involves more than simply revealing information about the techniques, but that there is an actual transference of power of some kind which produces a change in the disciple.

Singh: That's right. The master is necessary for that. You see, this is why Christ went to John the Baptist.

Alexander: For initiation.

Singh: For baptism. It's the same thing.

Aagaard: Is there any conflict between initiation and different religious convictions? Would there be any conflict with the Christian faith?

Singh: No. There 's no difference at all. It is a spiritual practice.

Aagaard: What would be the conditions for initiation?

Singh: First of all, one must understand the philosophy. Then he must feel the pull to follow it and then we must prepare ourselves for meditation. We must abstain from meat, eggs, alcohol, and have good sound moral character.

Haack: If I receive the initiation from the master, you mean it won't work unless I abstain from meat, eggs and beer?

Singh: Yes, it will not benefit.

Pandit: From reading your books, it seems that one must have experience to understand the system.

Singh: You see, the real conviction comes only by experience. Satisfaction of intellect gives the start, but it doesn't lead you anywhere. Satisfaction of the intellect will give you the faith. Faith will give you practice. Practice will give you experience. Intellect can get in the way, so you cannot have the experience at all. Intellect can be satisfied, but conviction can only come through experience.

Williams: My intellect seems to be very dissatisfied. The God that you speak of in your books appears to have the nature of an extremely cruel being. I can't reconcile this with the Christian concept of God, or a loving concept of God the Father. Why should I spend my whole life meditating to go up to the Father when he appears to be a cruel person who is pulling all these strings...

Singh: Where do you get the idea from our literature that he's cruel?

Scott: From a book Message Divine, p. 61. It's dealing with the master-disciple relationship. It says: "If God is kind, good and well. If he is not, it doesn't matter. Without the master's grace, the mind gets depraved. Without the master, none can tread the path of spirituality, nor can one gain true knowledge. Without the master, the helpless individual soul keeps on wandering in the darkness of ignorance. I shall renounce the Lord, but I shall not give up my master."

Singh: This is a translation of a poem by a mystical saint. It is about a loving son playing with the father. It's the way of expression of love to his father by a loving son, loving devotee. That ultimately says God and master are one. But he says God was always there, but I never knew anything about him until I met the master. God was within me, God was within every particle of the world. But I knew nothing unless I met my master. So through him I know God's greatness. To me, my master is great, because he has revealed the greatness of the Lord. Nothing against God. If you read the whole text, you see. Through the grace of the master, I am released from birth and death. God is not cruel. He has put me in the prison, and due to the master, I have been released from this prison. The Lord has separated me from him, but Master's greatness has put me in touch with the Father. It is nothing against the Father, we are only showing gratitude to the master, nothing else. You see, I'll tell you. Your free will has been conditioned by the karmas of the past lives. Now you are a victim of those karmas, you can't get out of that. You have no more free will. You have sown certain seeds and you have got to go to the fields to cut the sin crop.

Williams: How do I know what seeds I sowed?

Singh: You know nothing. But you have sown certain seeds.

Williams: But how can I control what I did in the years before when I didn't even know who or what I was?

Singh: That's the purpose of the meditation. Christ said, "Repent, the Kingdom of God is at hand." We can't repent for what we don't know.

Williams: But can't I repent from this day, from this life, where I grew up from a child and know what I've done?

Singh: You can only repent in the sense that you won't like to do anything that you think is bad, from this point on. But still, you don't know what you have done in the past.

Williams: The Christian attitude is that the moment we were born, we started off with a brand new soul and we were brand new creations from a loving Father.

Singh: Christ said, "You take birth with your sins." In the Bible it says that you will have to come with your sins, along with your sins. Original sin. This is the concept of original sin - the sins you have committed in past lives. You have to come along with them. They have become your master. You have become their disciple.

Albrecht: I've done a lot of thinking about reincarnation, and the fundamental problem that I see is, let's say for example, that I was Billy the Kid, a notorious outlaw and murderer in the USA in the last century. Now, I have no recollection of that at all, but if I am his reincarnation, then I will be

suffering for all the things that Billy the Kid did. Well, I have no connection with Billy the Kid, no recollection or recognizance of that life. Why should I pay for his sins? This seems to me to be both illogical and unjust.

Singh: What is "you?" Is it the body, made up of elements, or is it the soul?

Albrecht: I believe that I am a combination of my body, mind and spirit, or soul.

Singh: Who gives life to this body and soul?

Albrecht: God creates the soul.

Singh: Yes, and all sins are concerned with the soul. And through the body you have to pay them. Now it is you in this body, then it was that person. The same soul. Soul never dies, and Christ said it is immortal.

Albrecht: To me, my soul is connected inextricably with my personality. Not with Billy the Kid's personality, or anyone else's.

Singh: No, no. Billy the Kid, you see, is in that particular body. But soul can be the same. The same soul that was in that body, now it has come in this body along with all the original sins, those sins which were committed by him then.

Alexander: Are you saying that the soul does remember?

Singh: No, no. It may not remember anything. But the same soul comes along with those sins in this body now, and is paying for those sins through this body. It is only a garment.

Albrecht: OK, but who determines which soul goes into what body? Is there a great computer in the heavens?

Singh: The Lord.

Aagaard: I have a text here which troubles me. It's from Sar Bachan. "Ram (which is the name for God here) who creates, preserves, nourishes and destroys the three worlds, lays claim to the soul. He separated the soul from its real form, subjected it to birth and associated it with various enemies within and without. Then why worship such a possibility? So one should turn to the sat-guru, by whose grace the soul can escape the snares of such an enemy and attain the region of eternal bliss." So, God is an enemy?

Singh: Here it is speaking of the negative path.

Aagaard: But he creates it.

Singh: Yes, I'll tell you. God has given his own creation, and it is governed by Kal, what we call the negative power. What might be called Satan.

Aagaard: Is Ram, or God, the same as Satan, then?

Singh: Yes. God preserves, creates and destroys in his various aspects.

## MY INVOLVEMENT WITH THE INTERNATIONAL MEDITATION SOCIETY

by Carol Shellinger

In the summer of 1972, when I was a 19 year old student, I attended an "introductory lecture" about Transcendental Meditation given by the International Meditation Society in San Francisco. I was shown graphs depicting the results of "scientific" tests done on people while practicing TM. I was told that TM would improve my health and mental capacity. I was told that it was all very scientific and that it wasn't a religion. I paid the student fee which was \$45 at the time. (It's now \$150 for students, \$200 for adults) I received my initiation or instruction in the technique about a week later.

I was surprised that although the ritual surrounding the instruction was florid and lengthy, the actual instruction took only a short amount of time and seemed extremely simplistic. It consisted only of repeating a secret word, or mantra, which I was to tell no one about. I was also surprised that before the initiator told me the mantra, she knelt before an altar with a picture of an Indian "holy man" on it. She gestured for me to do the same and when I didn't, she continued with an Indian chant and a complicated ritual involving the waving of incense and the sprinkling of rice and water over the fruit and flowers which I had been asked to bring as an "offering."

When I asked about the picture of the Indian on the altar, I was told that he was Guru Dev, Maharishi's teacher, and that the ceremony was for the benefit of the initiator. It was a personal thing for the teacher and I shouldn't concern myself with it. Although we were always told that TM wasn't a religion, I found that as I began to work for the organization, or "movement," as they called themselves, that most initiators kept these little altars in their bedrooms and did their little puja ceremonies often. Many of them said that they felt that he (Dev) was a deity.

At any rate, I found the meditation to be calming, although looking back on it, I don't know if the same effect couldn't have been achieved by just closing my eyes and resting for twenty minutes twice a day (the prescribed time.) I continued to meditate faithfully and to go to the center where I had been initiated. I was told by the initiators that TM was the best possible method, that there was no other method of relaxation or meditation as good as TM. We were discouraged from doing other things like Zen, kundalini

yoga or T'ai Chi because they would "interfere." Although this meant giving up things I was also interested in, I made the sacrifice because I thought that the "scientific evidence" concerning TM was so convincing. Now I realize that it really wasn't very valid because most of the experiments were done by people who were meditators themselves, some of them very high up in the movement and therefore biased. But I believed the initiators when they said that TM would be the answer to all my problems.

#### The First Residence Course

I was told repeatedly that my progress would be sped up if I were to take a weekend "residence course." I saved about \$50 from my job as a dishwasher in the college cafeteria, and in the spring 1973 went to a residence course in Marin County, California. There I learned the process of "rounding" and the movement's theory of "evolution and enlightenment." Rounding meant doing extra meditations - between four and six per day instead of just two. In between meditations we did breathing exercises (pranayama) and yoga postures (asanas.)

It was explained that this accelerated the process of "elimination of stress" from our nervous systems. We were cautioned that this intense purification, or "unstressing," as it was called, might bring about emotional upsets, i.e. nervousness, depression and nightmares. For this reason, the rounding courses were held in secluded places, as far away from civilization as was practical. We were told that contact with the outside world, or "worldly activities" could be harmful to our delicate conditions. We were asked not to make telephone calls, watch TV or read materials other than those we could buy or borrow from the movement. Books such as Maharishi's commentary on the well-known Hindu epic Bhagavad Gita were available. We also had the opportunity, if we wished, to take a vow of silence for a period of time.

The time was structured for us: meals, meditations and meetings. In the meetings I learned about evolution and enlightenment. They taught that the human mind and body is capable of functioning on a level unknown to most people, and that stress, both physical and mental, had been accumulating over a lifetime, blocking total perception. The only way to "catch up" on the stresses, to get rid of them faster than they built up, was to practice TM. After a certain amount of time (in most cases 5-10 years) the nervous system would be totally pure, and a state of enlightenment or "cosmic consciousness" would be stabilized. This state was described as one of "total bliss." a person would still have emotions, but no problems; not even the death of a loved one

could take away that feeling of bliss and pure joy. This sounded great to me. Something that could make you totally happy, a panacea for everything. It became my main goal in life. My other goals - to be a great artist, marriage, etc., seemed stunted by the magnificent possibility of enlightenment.

### "The Science of Creative Intelligence"

While attending a week-long residence course the next year, I heard more about the SCI (Science of Creative Intelligence) course. I was told that not only would SCI speed up my "evolution," but that it was actually necessary in order to really achieve enlightenment, because both knowledge and experience were needed for growth. I was graduating from college that summer, and for my graduation present I asked for the tuition money to attend a one month SCI course in Cobb, California. I found the course very inspiring. SCI taught us that there was an absolute intelligence "force" that had created everything, and that we could contact that force only through TM. When we achieved a state of enlightenment, we would be in contact with that force eternally. This sounds like the way people commonly describe God and salvation, but it was presented to us in such a scientific way, using examples like the quantum field theory of physics, etc., that I accepted it without question. But what was really exciting to me was to learn about Maharishi's "World Plan." He wanted to teach everyone in the world TM by creating thousands of initiators and world plan centers throughout the world. One initiator per thousand people, one center for every million people; it was to take four years to complete.

We were told that being a TM teacher was the most important thing a person could do for the world. It was more important than dealing with certain problems such as war or illness or poverty, because TM actually changed people's consciousness, and if everyone's consciousness was transformed all the other problems would disappear and the world would enjoy an "Age of Enlightenment." I had always wanted to do something for the world, something of importance. My major in college was filmmaking and I had hoped to make films about social problems, but that goal was swept aside by the end of the SCI retreat. My future was crystal clear: I would become a TM teacher as soon as possible and use my filmmaking abilities to help the movement spread TM throughout the world. Most everyone else on the course was similarly inspired and also decided to become initiators.

We were told that it would take three months to become a teacher. The course was in Europe and cost \$1400. I was just out of school with no job, and I knew

that my parents would not like it if I asked them to let me live at home while saving money to become a TM teacher. But I was told of an alternative which seemed to be perfect. I could go to work at Maharishi International University (MIU) in Fairfield, Iowa. The movement had bought a bankrupt college campus there and were trying to start a university based on the principles of SCI; I would get room, board, and a small salary (\$25/month.) For every two days I worked there, I would get one day of teacher training free. I figured that if I worked there for six months, I could go to the three month teacher training course for free. They didn't tell me what kind of work I would be doing there, but they said it was a likelihood I could get to work on the video crew which made tapes of the classes.

I returned home to Los Angeles to tell my parents of my decision to work at MIU. They were upset. My father had hoped to get me a job at the local UHF television station through one of his friends. It was a wonderful opportunity for someone my age and he couldn't understand why I wanted to give it up. My mother thought I had been sucked into a spiritualist cult. She felt that the organization conflicted with her religious beliefs and was heartbroken that I was moving so far away to work for them. We had a big fight with a lot of angry words and when I left I didn't write or speak with her for a year. This also happened to other friends of mine in the movement, but we were told that what we were doing was important and we shouldn't let narrow-minded parents stand in the way of our bringing in the Age of Enlightenment.

#### Nine Months at MIU

When I arrived at MIU in the fall of 1975, I found that the length of the teacher training course had been lengthened to nine months. The credit system was also changed. Instead of working two days for one free day of teacher training, we had to work three days. This meant that I would have to work nine months instead of six for the first three-month course, do an unspecified amount of unpaid work for three months and then find funds for the final three month segment. I was naive enough not to see the injustice in this. I had spent all my savings on winter clothes and plane fare and wasn't on speaking terms with my parents, so I was stuck anyway. I was assured, however, that all this volunteer time would make me so strong and stable that by the time I got to teacher's training I would not only have the makings of a great teacher, but might even be ready to slip into enlightenment right there on the course. "It had happened to others," they said. So I settled in for my nine month stint in spite of the fact that there was no written or even verbal guarantee

that I would be allowed to go to teacher's training. If the Board decided I wasn't ready to go I couldn't get my \$1400 back and it would be "held" for me until they decided I was ready.

My first several months there went well. At first there was a small crew of staff, students and teachers preparing the campus for the student body that was coming from the old campus in California. The campus was a mess and we all worked overtime scrubbing toilets and floors and grills in the cafeteria. Everybody pitched in, even the teachers, and I felt there was a wonderful feeling of comradeship, of people working together for something they believed in. This spirit continued for a while until the campus got settled, policies came into effect, and a structure began to emerge. Then I began to see that everyone wasn't being treated equally. There were privileges for certain people: better housing, jobs, food, segregated eating areas, reserved seating for certain events, etc., depending on one's status as a teacher or non-teacher, sex, and race. I was put to work in the kitchen, first as a vegetable preparer, then as a cook.

I gradually came to feel that the kitchen staff was being treated unfairly. Numerous health and labor laws were being violated. For example, we usually weren't allowed to take our breaks and had to stand on uncovered cement floors. This disturbed me and when I brought it to the attention of the head of the department, he said that the movement was trying to save money and we all had to sacrifice. I injured my back in a fall in the kitchen and the work just seemed to get harder. I was getting a lot of sore throats and the constant pressure to work harder and faster and get the food out to 700 people was making me tense.

The room was extremely hot and steamy. We worked with giant industrial dishwashing machines that were so noisy that they left my ears ringing in spite of the earplugs. The trays of dishes and silverware that had to be picked up were very heavy and my back injury flared up and wouldn't heal. I was in constant pain. I begged to be transferred, but I was told that since I couldn't type I would either have to stick it out or quit entirely. The pain in my back, a skin rash on my hands as a result of wearing wet rubber gloves, the constant noise and pressure to keep up with the stacks of dishes brought me to the point of nervous exhaustion. I felt like a failure, I criticized myself for not being as good a worker as the others, although there was no one as small and frail as me working in the kitchen.

But worst of all was my confusion about what the organization was doing to the staff. Other people were afraid to complain, afraid they would be fired as so many others had. I felt it was my duty to do something, not out of animosity, but out of love for the movement. I asked for rubber mats for the workers to stand on, real headset industrial earplugs, a fan in the dishroom, etc.

One day I was called into the office by the head of the kitchen department. I had only two weeks left of my nine months. I had been accepted for the first three month teacher training course and had arranged a ride to the retreat in northern California as we weren't given air fare. The department head told me that this was my last day of work. He said I was being fired, but that he wouldn't put that on my record, he would just put "terminated," which of course meant the same thing. I would have to vacate my room and leave the campus in three days. I sat there in a total state of shock. I asked him why and he said because I had been so negative that I was "infecting" the other workers and creating stress. He had never warned me about anything like this before and I had always been a conscientious worker, so I was very surprised. I told him my situation - that although I had enough credit for the course, I had no cash and had to wait two weeks for my ride. He said that wasn't his problem. The head of housing said the same thing and warned me that people would soon be coming to clean my room and I'd better move out or I'd have to start paying rent.

I was in a state of physical and mental exhaustion. One day I had been a part of a world-wide family, sharing a glorious goal, under the loving protection of Maharishi. Now I was treated as if I didn't exist. I packed up my belongings and stored them in a friend's room. There were a lot of empty rooms and every night I would take my bedding and sleep in one, making sure I got up before the cleaning crew arrived. Friends who worked in the cafeteria brought food for me. I didn't dare walk around the campus. I spent most of my time crying, accusing myself of having failed, or not having worked hard enough, not having sacrificed enough. My friend was having a problem getting his car fixed, and it seemed as if his departure had been delayed. I couldn't stand it anymore, so I swallowed my pride and called my father and asked him to loan me money for air fare. I then flew to California and stayed with friends until the teacher's training began.

#### The Three Month Teacher Training Course

Finally I was taking the course that I had been working and waiting for for a

year. Everyone had told me how wonderful it would be. It was being held in the mountains at an old resort the movement had bought, and I was looking forward to a vacation after my nine months work at MIU, as well as the learning environment. I wasn't prepared, however, for the structure of the course. There was hardly any free time or time to relax. Every moment was structured with classes and study groups - from after breakfast until 9.30 at night. There was usually about seven hours of class time per day, most of it spent watching video tapes, often the same ones over and over again. The rooms weren't air conditioned and we were not allowed to do any outside activities such as listening to music, getting exercise or reading of outside materials, except for the few minutes of prescribed yoga postures. I became so weak and flabby at the end of the three months that I found it difficult to lift my suitcases. The movement insisted on conservatism and conformity in all aspects of behavior and appearance; when I discovered that I would have to make serious changes in my lifestyle, I raised a few questions about this and was told to suppress all individualistic tendencies. The course administrators saw that I was a questioner and not a conformer. At the end of the course I was told that I would be "on probation" at my local center in Los Angeles.

#### The Death of My Mother

When I returned home for the first time in a year, I found that my mother was in critical condition in the hospital. I hadn't spoken or written to her since going to MIU. During that period she had been heartbroken because of my "joining the TM cult." She had been drinking heavily and it affected her liver. She developed a rare liver disease with symptoms similar to leukemia. She was the kind of person who couldn't stand hospitals and we thought she might get well if she could be at home. My father had developed a duodenal ulcer and had to discontinue his job with the city. I decided to stay with my mother, take care of her, and put off my work at the TM center. For the next six months until her death I fed her, changed her bed pans, read to her and listened to her fears about death.

When she died, I felt so guilty for having let the movement come between us; I felt responsible for her death. I felt like a complete failure - I would never have what it took to become a TM initiator, I told myself. I had failed my mother, the movement, and myself. I was very tired and depressed and went to the doctor for a check-up. He told me that I had hypoglycemia, probably as a result of stress and not getting enough protein for a year. Although the movement serves no meat now, they did when I was working for them. (Only fish

and chicken, no pork or beef.) It was available but there was a definite attitude perpetrated by the teachers that meat eating was harmful to evolution and that it would fall off as one became more evolved, and that of course an enlightened person would eat no meat at all. Most of the people at MIU were vegetarians and I followed their advice; however, the vegetarian protein there was limited. Nuts and cheese were rarely served and the grain casseroles were usually not complete proteins. So I followed the doctor's advice and began to eat meat again, hoping it wouldn't spoil my chances of becoming enlightened.

### Seeking Psychological Help

After my mother died, I didn't have the heart to go back to the movement. I felt that I would just fail again because there was something wrong with me, so I started seeing a psychologist. The doctor told me I was living in a dream world. I kept waiting for this state of cosmic consciousness instead of living life as it really was and meeting the challenges of doing things that would bring me tangible results. She was a good therapist, but I was afraid to let go of my "faith," as I didn't know what I would replace it with. When she suggested that Maharishi might not be perfect and infallible, as the movement said he was, that he might just be "ripping me off," I became very upset and frightened. I wasn't able to accept what she said until after the disillusionment of the Sidhi course in 1979. I therefore quit therapy after a few years and was only \$1700 poorer.

### The "Lost Years"

The next several years seem almost like a blank. I was aware that I was growing older and still not further ahead in a career. Although I wasn't working for the movement, I still believed in its principles and my main goal in life was still the attainment of cosmic consciousness. I went to meetings at SRM, the Spiritual Regeneration Movement, and listened to lectures on the spiritual side of the movement - life after death, reincarnation, angels, the nature of God, and what the world would be like in the Age of Enlightenment. I took a few film classes and worked for some temporary help agencies doing mostly clerical and sales work. I was always careful to avoid jobs that I considered "stressful." I had now been meditating five years and looked forward to the time when I would be enlightened and would automatically reap the benefits of career and friendships. I remembered all the slogans which had encouraged us to make cosmic consciousness our priority above all else, e.g. "Water the root and enjoy the fruit," and "Capture the

fort and enjoy the territory."

### Introduction to the Sidhi Course

In the fall of 1978, I took a weekend residence course at the Capital for the Age of Enlightenment at Pacific Palisades. Most of the lecture time was spent encouraging the "rounders" to apply for a two month in-residence course. It was called the Sidhi Course and cost \$3000. I had been hearing about the course for several years at SRM. I had seen the giant posters on the wall with photos of the sidhas "flying," and I had seen Maharishi on the Merv Griffin and Dick Cavett TV talk shows telling how he was teaching meditators to levitate. The sidhi course was supposed to teach ancient Indian "super powers." There were "sidhis" for enriching certain qualities such as friendliness and health and there were more sidhis for things like knowledge of the structure of the universe, seeing objects that were out of view, walking through walls, becoming invisible, supernatural strength, and of course, levitation.

The course, which was open to people even below the initiator level, including associate teachers like myself, was supposed to enable one to overcome gravity as well as some of the less supernatural sidhis like "friendliness." We were told that we would be able to contact the Absolute (the source of the creation of the universe) on a deeper level than regular meditating had allowed, and this would allow us to "have the laws of nature at our disposal." The first stage of levitation or flying consisted of "hopping." We would sit on foam pads and practice the technique and find ourselves lifting off the pad a foot or two and landing a short distance ahead. The next stage would be hovering. We would actually remain in the air for a few seconds, and eventually for extended periods of time. The final stage would be actual flying.

We were told that the phenomena of flying was the result of a very powerful experience, and it was the purifying effect of that profound contact with the Absolute which was the important thing. Eventually we would be skilled flyers and would be able to use it as a means of locomotion. We were shown slides of giant golden-roofed domes being built at MIU in which people would fly together. Maharishi had ordered platforms at various levels for people to fly onto and stairs coming down from the platforms in case people should become frightened after landing and want to walk back down.

When I first heard about the levitation in 1975 or 76, I wasn't sure if I

believed it or not. But over the years a lot of my friends took the course and when they came back they said that they could indeed levitate. After a while there were so many urging me to take the course that it seemed easy to believe them. About six thousand people had allegedly taken the course and I couldn't believe that they were all lying.

I finally decided to take the course for two reasons. The first one was that if I could levitate, it would prove that everything Maharishi said about evolution was true, and I might be able to get my skeptical family and friends to meditate. But the main reason was that the technique was supposed to be so powerful that the more one practiced it, the more one would have access to "the field of all possibilities," that is the field of the Absolute, from which everything is created. One would have to merely desire something and it would happen. The most skilled would be able to materialize objects, an apple being a common example. But even before that advanced stage, a person would have an incredible amount of control over nature.

We heard testimonials and stories of people who had "desired" things - a successful new business, an inheritance, etc., and had had them fulfilled. My sense of social consciousness was also inspired when I heard about the "Maharishi effect." It went like this: when people meditated, their brain waves became coherent. This coherence would effect those around them, and sidhas were so powerful that one sidha levitating was equal to 100 meditators practicing TM, especially when it was done in a group. Sidhas were being sent to various parts of the world such as Iran and Thailand to stop wars and famine by the presence of their coherent emanations.

I couldn't afford to go to the course, but once I took it, money would be no problem, as all my desires would be spontaneously fulfilled, so I should look upon it as the most important investment of my life. The next course was starting in two weeks, and they said that there was still room for me. I sold my car, stereo, and some other things, gave up my apartment and job and stored my belongings.

### The Sidhi Course

The two month course was held in four two-week sections, called blocks. We had to apply at least two weeks before the start of the course, and there was no guarantee that the blocks would be offered one right after another. I didn't know if I'd be gone for two weeks, four weeks, six weeks, two months, or if the course would be interspersed over several months.

The blocks had to be taken in consecutive order and some people had to wait a year to get them all. I was hoping that I could do them all at once, as I would have to stay with friends in between and it would be hard finding a job not knowing if I would have to quit it in a few weeks. Unfortunately, we weren't notified of acceptance to the course until a day or two before it was to begin. I wasn't told this and spent over \$50 calling the various centers around the country to find out if I would be going.

When I got to my first block at Cobb, California, I found that the movement had changed drastically since I had worked for MIU. The men and women were separated at Cobb, and I learned that most other course locations were either male or female exclusively. The structure of the organization was now called the World Government because the movement considered itself responsible for the consciousness of the entire world. The TM teachers now had titles like Initiators, Governors, Executive Governors and Ministers. The ministers were announced as "The Honorable so and so," and Maharishi was called "His Holiness." All the women wore Indian saris almost all the time, even in the snow in New York where I took the second half of the course.

The first day of the course we all had to sign a paper called an "agreement." It was very long, written in fine print, and said a lot about what the organization wasn't responsible for. For instance, it was specified that if we had to leave because of illness, we would get our money back, but if we were asked to leave because we were somehow upsetting the smoothness of the course, our money would not be refunded. We also had to swear not to tell anyone about the instructions or even the schedules, i.e., what time we ate lunch or how many meditations we were doing. The paper said nothing about our rights or even what we could expect from the course, and I was refused a copy even after I asked several times.

When we were told our schedule and the rules of the course, I could see why my friends had been so vague about what the course was like and why we had to promise not to talk about it. Every minute of the day was set for us. Sometimes we could find a few minutes in the day to bathe or do laundry, but the rest of the time was to be spent watching repetitive tapes in tiny dark rooms, meditating, eating the strictly vegetarian meals, or taking the mandatory "walk and talks" with our "partners." That was the only physical exercises besides the simple yoga postures. We were supposed to be with our group, or someone from our group at all times in order to cultivate "group consciousness" so we all would be successful at levitating. We were told that we must "walk together, talk together, be of one mind together,"

and that if somebody unbalanced the "group coherence," our chances of getting off the ground would be lessened. We weren't allowed to take walks alone and we had to appear for every meal and sit with our group at the assigned table.

This regimen made me feel kind of "batty" after a while. People need some time to be alone and just think, and the only time I was alone was when I was trying to get in all my meditations before meals or trying to get enough sleep between the evening and morning meetings. I started sneaking away during the walk and talk periods to spend some time by myself and I sometimes read during the many hours of video tape time because I had seen most of the tapes before and found them very boring. At the end of the first week I was told that I was bringing "roughness" to the group by doing these things and I wouldn't be allowed to continue unless I followed the rules. It was so structured and monotonous that I felt like my mind was turning to jelly. Others were expressing these feelings too and we were told that the course would become more interesting as it progressed, and that the final fourth block, when we would learn to levitate, would be wonderful. It had been hard enough getting into the course to begin with and many people had been rejected because they had taken something like Werner Erhard's est or had been in psychotherapy. (I didn't put my therapy on the application form.) So, I decided to conform to the program as best I could even though I felt like a zombie.

We completed the first two blocks there and had paid for the third and were waiting for it to begin when we were told two days before its start that it had been cancelled. They said there weren't enough people to maintain a proper "group coherence," but they wouldn't say why they hadn't told us this much earlier, before we had all paid our \$750 for that block. Everyone was very upset and some of the girls cried. We were told to go home and to keep applying until there was a course with enough people; they said that they planned to offer them more frequently over the Christmas season.

I went back to Los Angeles and kept applying every week, again making a lot of expensive long distance phone calls. Finally, after a month, I was told that it looked like they would have enough people for block three on January 5th. They told me to call back every day and check. Three days before the course was to begin I called them and they told me that it was to be held in New York State instead of Cobb. I was warned that there were usually more people who wanted the course around the holidays, and if I missed this one I might have to wait until summer to finish. However, they also said that they

couldn't guarantee that there would be a block four immediately after the block three, so I might have to return to California and reapply again.

I decided to fly stand-by and take a chance on being able to stay for the fourth block where the powerful levitation technique was taught. That was the real point of the course, which all the other blocks were building up to, and I was anxious to reap its benefits and be in a stable situation so I could look for a job and an apartment. I told them I did want to take it and would try to get a stand-by flight on Saturday morning, as that was the day the course started. But they said that I still wasn't accepted, that I would have to get my center to recommend me again, since it had been a month in between courses. I frantically tried to contact the governors from my center who were away on vacation. I finally got through to the appropriate authority but they didn't let me know I was accepted until the night before the course began. I later found that almost everyone else in my course had to undergo the same type of treatment after having paid in advance and calling long distance for a month. I was saddened that such inconsiderate and self-righteous people were now in control of the movement. It was certainly very different than when I had started TM.

#### The Truth About the Levitation Sidhi

We finished the third block at South Fallsburg, New York, and enough of us could stay to make the fourth block possible. Those of us who had the money to stay had to encourage and cajole those who didn't to somehow get the money or there wouldn't be the required amount of students. One girl had sold a Persian rug her late father had given her, and another girl borrowed the money. We were so excited to finally get the flying sidhi. Everyone had been waiting for years and suffering the frustration of hearing how wonderful it all was without ever being able to see it. It was a solemn secret. Flyers could only fly with other flyers, and no one, not even spouses, could watch unless they had also completed the course.

A few days after the fourth block had begun, we learned the technique. After a puja ceremony in the "Hall of Knowledge," we saw a video tape of Maharishi and he gave us the instructions. Then we all went to the "flying room," a large room with thick foam pads on the floors. We were instructed to do the regular TM technique for a few minutes and then start the flying technique when a timer rang a little bell. We were told to keep our eyes shut, to avoid the temptation to watch, no matter what we heard going on around us. Only when a person had begun to fly could they open their eyes, and then only when

they were flying, so they could see where they were going.

Throughout the course I had experienced alternating periods of faith and skepticism regarding the flying. We had seen many pictures of meditators hopping, which was the first stage of flying; they usually sat in a cross-legged position, and the photos caught them in various stages of the hop, the highest point being one or two feet in the air. We had been told that the reason that the technique wasn't shown to the public was that when Maharishi first brought it out it had been shown to some reporters, and they said that the phenomenon could be achieved just by someone exerting their muscles and wrenching themselves off the bouncy foam padding. So the movement challenged the reporters to bring in some non-meditating gymnasts to see if they could copy the movements. But even when they weren't able to, the reporters were still cynical, so Maharishi decided that the world wasn't yet ready for this knowledge.

Other students sometimes remarked or joked about whether or not the whole thing was a fraud. Sometimes we joked that we were being brainwashed or hypnotized by subliminal suggestion in the hundreds of hours of tapes that we had to watch. One day some of us snuck into the flying room when it wasn't being used. The foam was very bouncy and I tried to make myself hop up in the air as I had seen in the pictures. I was able to lift myself off the foam, but wasn't able to get very high in the air and it took a lot of strenuous effort. The fact that I couldn't simulate what I had seen in the photos renewed my faith that it wasn't a matter of brute physical force.

When we received our instructions, I was surprised. I had imagined the technique would involve some sort of physical attention, but it was only a mental process similar to the regular TM meditation. We were given two phrases to repeat mentally. Unlike the "meaningless" sound of our mantra, these phrases had meanings which were directly related to the idea of levitating. We were told not to concentrate on the idea, but just "innocently" think the words. When I expressed surprise that such a simple process could allow us to levitate, I was told that the meditations and tape viewing of the past six weeks had been "culturing the Absolute in our consciousness." We were now at home in "the field of all possibilities." The laws of nature were now supposedly at our disposal, so that merely thinking of a desire, in this case levitation, would be sufficient to make it happen.

As we entered the flying room, we felt that this was the most important day of

our lives. Soon we would be able to fly with our friends in our local centers and achieve the "Super Radiance Effect." This was the idea that, using theories from quantum physics, Maharishi had "proven" that when sidhas flew together, the beneficial effect was squared. That is, 100 flyers together was equal to the effect of 100 squared, or 10,000. This would maximize their powerful influence of coherence and positivity in the environment and provide the basis for the creation of an ideal society, bringing invincibility and all possibilities to their community, their nation and the family of nations. We were going to save the world!

It was also a tangible way to prove that all these things that Maharishi had been saying all these years was true. If we could levitate, we could know for sure that enlightenment was possible, and we could become enlightened in this lifetime. Then when we died we would have a choice - we wouldn't be forced to be reincarnated into an unenlightened body and live a life of struggle and ignorance - we would have a choice to come back as an enlightened being or take the option of going to the planets where the enlightened souls go, which was like heaven. Not only that, but it would prove to my skeptical family and friends that TM was true, and more importantly, they might embrace TM and thus their souls would be saved.

With all this in mind, I sat down on the foam to meditate with the other girls. After our regular meditation, the timer rang a little bell, signalling that it was time to start using the "flying sutra." No sooner had I thought the sutra once, than I heard the girl next to me begin to breathe very heavily. I felt a burning sensation in the pit of my stomach, and one side of my face began to twitch uncontrollably. One eye fluttered open and shut in a violent, spasmodic manner. Another girl started to breathe quickly, taking in air in loud, painful gasps. The first girl who was sitting right next to me began to quiver. My vision was blurry without my glasses, but I could see her out of my fluttering eye and I could feel the vibration on the foam. As her painful panting increased and became faster I was gripped with fear. I felt strange sensations inside as if my torso might explode and the twitching grew more violent. Then the panting of the girl next to me seemed to peak and she hopped forward rapidly about two or three times. She didn't go very far off the foam, and it seemed as if she was being hurled forward. She was sitting cross-legged and her head seemed to lead. When she stopped hopping she settled into the foam with a long sigh as if exhausted. By then the twitching had stopped and I was able to close my eye, but I could hear crying coming from the girl who had hopped. I started crying too. I felt as if something powerful had been hap-

pening, as if I were being pulled off the foam, but I had been frightened and resisted it. We all sat there until the ring of the bell, and no one else hopped, although there was some more heavy breathing.

We went upstairs when the time was up and told the ministers that only one of us had lifted off. They said not to worry, that we still had two more weeks to practice and that all of us would probably get off before we went home. The next day we tried again. I kept my eyes shut and I didn't feel anything as powerful as the first day, although there were some sensations. I could hear the first girl breathing and hopping, and squeals coming from another. Each day for the remainder of the course we would talk to the ministers about what was happening. As more girls began to hop they expressed concern that they didn't really feel like they were levitating, but that they were using their own muscles to push themselves off the mat. The ministers said "of course we were using our own muscles, but what did we expect - that some little angel was going to come and pick us up?" But we should realize that it was indeed levitation because we weren't making a conscious effort to use those muscles, it just automatically happened when we used the mantra. As time went on, it would become smoother, less "gross," and we would be lifting off with seemingly no muscle effort, and eventually we would actually fly.

This didn't seem right to me, so I decided to leave my glasses on and watch. I watched the first girl hop and it didn't seem so special. She had gotten used to it, and although she would still pant before hopping, it wasn't quite as violent. But what did catch my attention were the movements and sounds coming from another girl who looked like she might be the next one to get off the ground. She was sitting in a cross-legged position. Her torso began to move upwards rhythmically as if being pulled up by her shoulders. Her face became flushed and she began panting rapidly and moaning in a very sexual way as if she were going to have an orgasm. Her moans became like cries and it was actually quite embarrassing and even frightening because it was so extreme. (Later, when several of the girls told the ministers that they were having intense sexual feelings while hopping, they were told that it was normal and nothing to worry about, that it would go away.)

I continued to watch her. Her shoulders were now jerking up forcefully and it looked as if she were going to pull herself off the foam. But then the bell rang and she had to stop and lie down. She started sobbing. The next time she did get off the foam. She underwent the same things as before only this time the spasm of her shoulders and torso became so violent that she succeeded

in lifting her feet and bottom off the foam several times.

To see it confirmed my worst fears. What was happening here wasn't levitation, as we had been led to believe, or as most people or the dictionary would define it. I had seen some films about "speaking in tongues" and other such things in a psychology class in college, and I realized that this hopping was in the same category. It was an involuntary muscular spasm brought on by autosuggestion and religious fervor.

I lay down on the floor for our ten minute rest period in a state of shock. I felt much like I had when I was kicked out of MIU; my whole reality had been knocked out from under my feet. It was like discovering the world was flat instead of round. If they were lying about the levitation, then they were lying about everything else. I was tempted to rationalize - perhaps it would be more like levitation when we had more practice. But I just couldn't make any more excuses or justifications for TM. I was now finally and totally disillusioned. The last two weeks were horrible. At first I felt like I was going crazy. Everything I had been basing my life on for the past six years no longer made sense. I didn't know what to think or what I would do with myself now that I had lost faith. For a while I felt like I was living in a limbo world.

At that point a lot of things that my psychologist said came back to me. That made it easier to admit the fact that I was wrong, that I had been a fool. So many of the things she had said that I had ignored now made sense. I realized that I was going to have to start living a different kind of life, taking responsibility for whether I was happy or sad, instead of blaming it on karma and waiting for the miracle of cosmic consciousness. I felt like a big fool and sucker for having paid all that money (\$3000) to learn to levitate, not to mention all the other money, volunteer work and heartache.

At first I thought, "Well, that was an expensive lesson, but now you know that it will never happen again." I wanted to be sure that I really took responsibility for my foolishness. I think I wanted to force myself to feel the pain and humiliation so that I would never let myself do something like this again. But after a while I thought - why shouldn't the TM movement accept their responsibility too? They had made a lot of promises, taken a lot of my money, labor and loyalty and they hadn't delivered. I had given them six years of my life and they had cheated me. I decided while I was still there that I would take some kind of legal action. I had to stay until the end of the

course because I had made plans to stay in New York City, but I couldn't arrive there before a certain date. I didn't tell anyone about my feelings except my "buddy." (We all had to have a buddy so that we wouldn't be alone.) I didn't tell her about my intentions to sue, but I did tell her that I thought the hopping was just the result of muscular spasms. She hadn't gotten off the ground either and was also skeptical.

Of the eight of us on the course, five "got off" and three didn't. My buddy and I noticed that it seemed like the most faithful ones got off first (the first three) and that the last two might have been faking (that is, exerting the force consciously.) We speculated that levitation à la TM might have something to do with a person's suggestibility. I stopped using the flying sutra because I thought that the technique was harmful, and just continued on until the end of the course. I was afraid they would make me leave and I had no place to stay in New York at that point.

I didn't voice my opinions with any of the other girls except my buddy, because even though they probably wouldn't have believed me I didn't have the heart to try to break someone else's faith. I had seen the movement for what it really was. When I stopped making excuses for them I could clearly perceive all the ways in which they were mistreating people. They were very, very self-righteous and operated on the principle that "the end justifies the means." I began to fear that if I threatened to expose them, I might not get out of there alive. I told myself that was silly, but I didn't want to take any chances, so I kept quiet. I even sat on the stage with the others on our graduation night. It was very ironic to be feeling such sadness and bitterness on a day which was supposed to be the happiest and most important of my life.

## THE STRANGE WORLD OF EST

By John Weldon

"I don't care how much of this is crap. It's changed my life."

- est graduate<sup>1</sup>

Erhard Seminars Training (est) founded by Werner Erhard, is an intensive sixty hour seminar of psychological indoctrination designed to restructure a person's world view. Started in 1971, the est organization has had a substantial impact for such a short history. San Francisco magazine has stated that:

Est is making a serious bid to affect basic American institutions, and Werner Erhard's increasing influence has many people concerned. They see an effective, growing organization that has a strong political base.<sup>2</sup>

Presently, there are well over 200,000 est graduates. Werner Erhard has initiated an instruction program which he hopes will yield an additional 90-100 trainers by 1983.<sup>3</sup> Since nine trainers had taught 160,000 in the years 1971-1979, est seems to be preparing for a tremendous expansion.

There have been numerous federally funded est seminars at the elementary school level in the US for both children and teachers. Nearly ten per cent of the educators in the San Francisco Unified School District are est graduates. Erhard states, "The real thrust and goal of est is to put it in education."<sup>4</sup>

Est has been involved in giving seminars to prison inmates, and Erhard feels it's very important to train the police force as well.<sup>5</sup> He pays special attention to members of the clergy: they receive a 50% discount. Since est is profoundly affecting the life of thousands of people, we need to examine the multimillion dollar est business and see just what it is that people are paying \$350 for.

Werner Erhard was born as Jack Rosenberg in 1935. He changed his name after leaving his wife and four children in 1960 (he made amends eleven years later.) He also ran an automobile dealership under the name of Jack Frost, and has been involved in several businesses, one of which the State of California filed two lawsuits against. The State charged that the Grolier Society, Inc. used lies and trickery to persuade people to buy its encyclopedias, and won both cases. Erhard was a sales supervisor for the company.<sup>6</sup> During his stay with Grolier, he met several people in the San Francisco human potential movement, one of

whom was Dr Leo Zeff, an LSD researcher and now on est's advisory board, who led Erhard into Scientology. Erhard was also closely associated with Alex Everett, founder of Mind Dynamics, a self-hypnosis mind control enterprise. Mind Dynamics also was sued by the State of California for fraudulent claims, although both Erhard and Everett had left the organization by that time.<sup>7</sup>

About three years after leaving his family, Erhard had a radical life-transforming experience of enlightenment while driving his car down Highway 101 in California. This was to eventually culminate (via other transformations and research) into the seminars training. W.W. Bartley's biography of Erhard indicates extensive psycho-spiritual dabbling on Erhard's part prior to starting est.<sup>8</sup> He studied or became involved in numerous disciplines; besides the aforementioned Scientology and Mind Dynamics, there was Zen Buddhism, (Erhard has made trips to the East to study with Zen masters), hypnosis, Subud, yoga, Silva Mind Control, psychocybernetics, gestalt, encounter therapy and trans-personal psychology. Est is the fruit of his "conversion" experience and personal research into these and other disciplines.<sup>9</sup>

#### THE EST EXPERIENCE

Est is not concerned with giving people a temporary "high" that will wear off eventually. Erhard states, "We want nothing short of a total transformation - an alteration of substance, not a change in form"<sup>10</sup> and "All we want to do is change the notion of who you are."<sup>11</sup> Est wants it all - your mind, your life, your soul. And it is often successful. Why does est work? Why do so many people say that it radically changes their lives? The experience transforms people because it uses intensive, and at times fairly brutal and cruel physical and mental conditioning. The individual undergoes a conversion episode where the "old" way of viewing reality is supplanted by the est way. The seminar is designed to change a person's epistemology (i.e. their way of viewing reality) radically and permanently. People are conditioned to the point of what we may call "epistemological vulnerability" and the est philosophy is then provided as the answer and the truth about life and how to live it. As one est trainer put it:

We're gonna throw away your whole belief system... We're gonna tear you down and put you back together.<sup>12</sup>

One graduate remarked, "Certainly we had been worn down to the point where we were ready to accept it."<sup>13</sup>

People don't generally know what is in store for them when they go to the seminar. Graduates are held to an agreement they make during the training not to divulge any of the techniques of the seminar. If they did talk about it -

the tensions, the harassment, the deliberately foul language, and the trauma that you might be subjected to - many others probably would not attend. As it is, the "secret" elements of the training can't help but arouse curiosity. Est is successful despite its many negative aspects because of the impact of its program which destroys one way of looking at the world (the average way) and substitutes another view in such a manner that the people undergo a genuine conversion experience with new psychological insight about themselves. Through various techniques, defense mechanisms and role playing are broken down and confronted, often in a very cold manner. People's reactions vary: some weep, some get sick, some beg for help and get none. Some become psychotic.<sup>14</sup> The experience is as intense as it is dependency producing; that is, the person who goes through so much suffering or trauma wants to make the experience "worth it all" (they have also paid plenty of money) and is much more inclined to "take the message." Est doesn't change everybody at the seminar, but it seems that the most susceptible are those who are sensitive, psychologically or spiritually insecure, or "searching."

The seminar combines psychological insight and confrontation with a method of allowing emotional release and a sort of self-acceptance. Est combines the positive - common sense psychology - with negative aspects such as authoritarianism and manipulation. Psychiatrist Joel Kovel remarks:

In sum, est has discovered how to compress and intensify the basic psychotherapeutic maneuver of breaking down the defenses. From one side, haranguing and privation are battering resistance, while from the other the group experience leads a person to dissolve his or her individuality, and its stubborn arrogance, and to psychologically merge with the others in the room. The very size of the group, along with the technique of est, tends to keep those others in a rather undifferentiated state, hence promoting a sense of union with them. The result for the individual is a state of openness, receptivity - and weakened discrimination. Into the gap steps the est philosophy, embodied by the trainer, and behind him, Werner Erhard. <sup>15</sup>

The ultimate philosophical-religious system that undergirds est is very similar to the advaita school of Hinduism. The est conversion gives its subjects a conviction that they are, in an ultimate sense, in control of their lives and circumstances, no matter what those circumstances are, since they, as "God," created them. No matter how erroneous, the belief that you are the Creator, and in control of whatever happens to you, can be a security-producing factor. To become convinced that you are It, the Divine, can give one a false impression that one's life has been stabilized, enhanced and improved. This narcissistic ego stimulation, is, in part, responsible for the

est impact.

When Erhard speaks of responsibility, it is in the sense of acknowledgement of one's authorship of all situations; that is, as the Creator, but not in any moral sense. Est supporter Marcia Seligson, who is a well-known spiritual journalist, elucidates how this idea of divine control (responsibility) affects her life:

I run my body, it doesn't run me. I'm in charge here... Personal responsibility is a potent force indeed, the sensation that one is the cause of one's life. For me, it is the focal wisdom of the training and becomes even more solidified as the weeks and months go by. To the extent that I embrace and own the principle, my life seems to be, in truth, clear and simple and in my grasp; to the degree that I still hang onto my victim beliefs (i.e. that things outside my life control me), things don't work too well... 16

During the Guest Seminar for Leaders Program (for graduates) "you get to experience moving beyond your limits, to the point that you realize that, in fact, you have no limits."<sup>17</sup>

What is ironic is that the world view implanted by est is even more meaningless than what most people began with. It is held onto because there is nothing to go back to. That has all been done away with via the training. Fortunately, many trainees see est for what it is, and do not allow themselves to be intimidated into a more meaningless philosophy of life. But many others do not, and this is of concern. Est has a great potential for misuse. As one est brochure puts it, "Graduates have reported that the results of the trainings do not wear off."<sup>18</sup> Before going into specifics, we first need to document the est philosophy.

#### THE EST PHILOSOPHY

"I am here to explain what can't be explained,"<sup>19</sup> says Erhard, revealing the following words of his "rule book":

#### RULES ABOUT LIFE 20

by  
Werner Erhard

1. Life has no rules
- 2.

Est seems to be a distillation of a number of eastern and mystical philosophies, particularly in its denial of evil in the world.

Life is always perfect just the way it is. When you realize that, no matter how strongly it may appear to

be otherwise, you know that whatever is happening right now will turn out all right. Knowing this, you are in a position to begin mastering life. 21

and

As you can see, this universe is perfect. Don't lie about it. You're god in your universe. You caused it. You pretended not to cause it so you could play in it. 22

and

What you're doing is what God wants you to do. If you keep saying it the way it really is, eventually, your word is law in the universe. 23

Another key concept of est is the idea of the illusion (or maya) of the world. The goal of most yoga in Hinduism is to get the person to realize that he or she is not a body. The body, the self (ego) is unreal. The real person is Self, Brahman, the Absolute. The sport or game of the impersonal Brahman (its lila) is to make us think we're something that we aren't; that is, a separate body and personality. Erhard explains the est effect:

So the de-identification happens at all levels. The person de-identifies with his mind, de-identifies with his body, he de-identifies with his problems, he de-identifies with his maya, he begins to see that he is not the Play. 24

Marcia Seligson recounts the final hours of the seminar:

The final point, arrived at after six hours of dissertation and questions, is that there is no objective reality, only reality by agreement, which is illusion, and that the sole reality is the experience that I create. 25

According to Erhard, my Self equals your Self equals the same Self. All is One. "Self is all there is. I mean, that's it. To pay attention to personality is to pay attention to an illusion."<sup>26</sup>

#### THE EST EFFECT AND ITS POTENTIAL FOR MISUSE

Although we have briefly discussed est's effects and their potential for misuse in our last section, there are further important est effects that need to be noted. First, in many cases, the est experience seems to result in a distortion of common sense. Marcia Seligson notes that initially she was skeptical - after talking with est graduates and hearing Erhard, she had thoughts about Hitler, mass hypnosis, cultism, Charles Manson, and the like. She said, "It didn't seem just cuckoo, it seemed damn dangerous," and "As far as I was concerned, est was the biggest ripoff...and I would expose it." After the est training, we find that her initial impressions have undergone

a transformation: "I think that est has been one of the truly powerful experiences of my life. And I love Werner Erhard."<sup>27</sup> She is now a member of est's advisory board.

Est is a subjective experience and people can "get" different things from it. "Getting it" is the term used by estians to describe what they learn from the seminar. Prison inmates are made to "get" that they enjoy being in prison; rape victims "get" that this is their way of inducing sympathy.<sup>28</sup> Since each of us created our own circumstances, we must have wanted this or that to happen to us. As "God," we create our own life-conditions. To recognize this means to take "responsibility" for them.

There seem to be some things in common that people get from the seminar. The following statements by est graduates show the impact that it can have. By and large, these elements recur in the literature: selfishness, fatalism, nihilism, hedonism, apathy and moral relativism.

Marcia Seligson says, "The differences I can measure in myself are mostly attitudinal. Nothing overwhelms me as before: nothing seems tragic or permanent."<sup>29</sup> A businessman coldly states, "I take responsibility for the people that let me step on them, and I don't feel guilty."<sup>30</sup>

Adeline Bry, author of Est: Sixty Hours that Transform Your Life, reports on another est graduate -

During the training, she got that she was frigid. She subsequently left her high-status and well paying job to work full time producing pornography films. 31

About a dozen books have been written about est and they sometimes contain personal accounts by its graduates. Following are some good samples.

Jane: "It certainly isn't nearly so important for me to be right anymore as it used to be...What is important to me is what is happening to me right now. And I don't give a f--- about tomorrow." 32

Hans: "I am so lazy these days...I don't care that much if people don't buy my work...that is their problem...For the first time I am running into a problem about paying the rent. And it doesn't really bother me. A lot of people (est grads) are seeing their marriages break up, and they consider that as making their lives work." 33

Jesse: "Recently my father criticized me for not responding after my uncle died. He thought I should have telephoned my aunt or sent a card. 'You don't even care,' he said. 'I don't care,' I told him." 34

Dan: "I know that things are going to be the way they are. The est training tells you that what you have to do about things is nothing. The only thing there is is right now. I experieced

no sadness when I was told that my father had died. That was okay. That is one of the things that makes life easier, things aren't significant. Nothing is. I got that my father's death really wasn't significant. Things have lost their significnace, so I probably don't notice a lot of things. I just notice my life is working a lot." 35

What Dan is really saying is that the burden of normal social responsibilities and customs is now lifted from him. He is a lot happier being unconcerned about life's problems because he now believes that they really don't matter. As he says, nothing is significant. Another graduate, Dale, reports his personal belief about est as simply "dangerous." He tells of a friend who had suffered difficulties in school after taking est:

He had a "so what" attitude and flunked out of school after his second quarter. Est teaches you that if you have problems, you've chosen to have them. My friend must have thought that he had chosen to have problems at U.C....but he never had any trouble before he took est. 36

The following dialogue by an est trainer during a session illuminates the est world view. It is reported by graduate Robert Hargrove.

"So when you experience the truth, you know it's nothing but an illusion!"

"Then how did all this stuff (the universe) get here?" someone asked.

"It never did," the trainer said. "In the illusion that we call reality, there's no cause. It's effect! Effect! Effect!"

"Well, who created the universe?" Charlie asked.

"In your universe, you're God," the trainer said. "You cause it and pretended not to cause it so you could play in it. And there are at least as many universes as there are people on this planet. It all comes out of your point of view." 37

In other words, it's all an illusion, but by agreement, one plays the game or takes responsibility. Then, as "God," one can do whatever one wants without thinking that there are any real consequences for his or her actions. A person can "play the game" (live in the world) with immunity; therefore it wouldn't really be wrong to break laws, only improper, since they are social agreements. In est, nothing is really immoral in an absolute sense.

The concept of keeping agreements is used to persuade people to stay at the seminar for the entire four days. Since about 80% of the effect is "gotten"

on the fourth day, people have to be kept there somehow. So est paradoxically appeals to the moral notion of holding to an agreement. This seems to be rather dishonest manipulation and the people make the agreement before they are told what will happen to them. One elderly woman who was shocked at the brutality of the trainer's language, said that "if the doors hadn't been locked and if she hadn't made an agreement," she would have left.<sup>38</sup> This woman should have left. The next morning she was back singing a dirty song through the microphone while the audience gave her a standing ovation. Her integrity was compromised. The woman's mistake was to keep such an agreement in the first place. In est, the trainers manipulate the trainees through guilt and human weakness. Once you know something is wrong, you shouldn't stay around to watch it infiltrate your life - you should get up and walk away. Unfortunately, the level of control that est trainers exert over the audience is so great the hardly anyone leaves, despite the offer of a refund which is made several times (if they will leave at that point.)

Est, along with Transcendental Meditation and all the other groups with a Vedantic base, has serious social implications, as we have observed. People care less about things once meaningful to them. They may use the philosophy to justify immoral behavior: If everyone agrees that Hitler was OK, then he was OK...and still is. Help the sick, the poor, the downtrodden? This is not fruitful, because as "Gods," the poor and sick have chosen those conditions to experience and play with. Who are we to interfere with their choice? This is not too different from the rationale behind the caste system in India, which sometimes justifies the deprived conditions of millions on the basis of karma and not interfering with dharma, or the will of the Divine.

#### BRAINWASHING

Est cannot be classified with the same type of brainwashing used by the North Koreans during the Korean War. That in part utilizes torture and extreme and continued physical-sensory deprivation. However, the 1960 college edition of Webster's New World Dictionary defines brainwashing as if it were defining est's methodology: "To indoctrinate so intensively and thoroughly as to effect a radical transformation of beliefs and mental attitudes."

Perhaps implicit in this statement is the idea of involuntary confinement, something not true of est. People do choose to go to the est seminars, however inadequately informed they may be. Many people do, however, see it as brainwashing. Mark Brewer, writing in Psychology Today, comments on the

techniques:

Such efforts, of course, are commonly known as brainwashing, which is precisely what the est experience is, and the result is usually a classic conversion. 39

In the same article, San Francisco State professor Richard P. Marsh presents the case for est. He says est is not brainwashing, but he defines brainwashing as the attempt "to confuse by sudden reversals of logic, to frighten and humiliate a captive subject subject in order to break his will and insinuate forcibly into his mind the belief system of his captor." From what we have observed, he is for the most part describing est. Other writers also say est is brainwashing and that the est techniques are similar to those described in William Sargent's book Battle for the Mind: A Physiology of Conversion and Brainwashing.<sup>40</sup>

William Greene, author of Est: Four Days to Make your Life Work, remarks:

Everyone goes through a tremendous emotional upheaval. During that upheaval, the belief systems of the trainees are very often cast aside. 41

Heck and Thompson state, "A major step in the est training is negating any pre-existing belief system."<sup>42</sup>

The question of brainwashing seems to depend on the degree of force and coercion used to effect this change in belief system. The evidence seems to indicate that est should be labelled a mild form of brainwashing, or at least intensive indoctrination. Even pro-est writers have acknowledged the controversy. For example, Luke Rhinehart notes that, in his mind, the most substantial argument against est so far is "that the training is a form of brainwashing," although he feels that this is not the case.<sup>43</sup> Even Erhard says that the est techniques are "mind blowing": "You give it (the mind) something that it's incapable of handling."<sup>44</sup>

Intellect alone cannot easily withstand the onslaught of the training.

Intellectual attackers often become yielded converts. Dr Kovel remarks:

The most sophisticated judgment is no match for such seminar conditions - which indeed make their effect felt, not on the intellect, but on the soft space that yearning occupies behind the mask of reason. Numerous people who have undergone est tell how they attempted to dispute the trainer, only to become confounded and yield. What such reports leave out is that the most powerful intellect necessarily becomes puerile under the conditions of the training. It is like playing tennis with your side of the court under water. 45

Let this writer say that he has no quarrel with any positive and psycholog-

ically healthful aspects that might be found in est, nor with the obvious sincerity and good will of many est graduates. But one must ask that they look where the philosophy leads. The main concern is the overall world view which est imparts.

### EST AND RELIGION

Erhard claims that est doesn't interfere with anyone's religious beliefs, but says that "Had I been in any religious order, or any church or monastery, I definitely could not have done any of this. It would have been heresy."<sup>46</sup>

On another occasion Erhard solidified his position:

For instance, I believe that "belief" in God is the greatest barrier to God in the universe - the single greatest barrier. I would prefer someone who is ignorant to someone who believes in God. Because the belief in God is a total barrier, almost a total barrier to God.<sup>47</sup>

and

To pay attention to personality is to pay attention to illusion or effects. That's all there is, there isn't anything but spirituality, which is just another word for God, because God is everything.<sup>48</sup>

Although a Christian believer would be told that est would not interfere with his religious beliefs, this is not true. The est belief system is designed to destroy the validity of the Christian world view. Est is supposedly non-religious, but since its purpose is to alter one's epistemology and instill a monistic or pantheistic belief in impersonal divinity, est qualifies as religious. In the est philosophy, Christianity is detrimental and harmful to growth and enlightenment. William Greene states: "In est training you are God...Therefore you cannot look to any supreme being for special treatment, goodness, or award."<sup>49</sup>

Erhard himself states,

We've been conditioned to look for answers outside ourselves. But that's not what people get from us. What they get is an experience of enlightenment, which is different from the belief system called salvation. If I get the idea that God is going to save me, therefore I'm alright, that's salvation; if I get the idea that nothing's going to save me, therefore I'm alright, that's enlightenment.<sup>50</sup>

Hence, est and Christianity function on two entirely opposite principles. Est is a system of "self-salvation" that appeals to the human ego and imagined personal divinity. Christianity recognizes only an agent outside of humanity, Jesus Christ, as its sole instrument of salvation. Erhard

teaches self glorification; Jesus teaches self sacrifice.

### SO WHAT?

The est graduation booklet states, "Obviously the truth is what's so. Not so obviously, it's also 'so what.'"

Let Erhard and his est graduates say "so what" to all the evil, greed, hate and suffering in the world. Let him play his game as God, telling us of our divinity while millions starve to death. Let him preach a belief that robs people of their values, morals and dignity in the name of enlightenment.

How valid are the words of Isaiah:

Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and shrewd in their own sight! 51

Perhaps the attitude that est can instill in a person is best displayed by an est graduate who wrote to Psychology Today in response to a critical but perceptive article: "In response to Mark Brewer's article on est - so what?"<sup>52</sup> Since non-estians aren't enlightened, they cannot possibly speak with authority on est. Erhard displays the same attitude as his convert:

So est is evil, what's the point?  
Yea, I got that, now what? 53  
So what?

Erhard goes on to say to his graduates:

Another thing. You do not have to accept any of the responsibility for any of the evil in this organization, nor do you have to make anyone else responsible. Everybody is absolved of having to be responsible for any of the evil. I have already taken 100% of the responsibility, so no one else needs to take any. I have already acknowledged being 100% causer and creator of every speck of evil in this organization - as matter of fact, in institutional and organization. I am telling you that I am 100% responsible. That's not manipulation, that's my experience. I am willing to have created all the evil in the est organization. I am willing to and experience that I have. 54

Finally, Erhard states paradoxically,

It's not my experience that people come out of est with this kind of, you know, "everything is alright, it'll all turn out alright." It is alright and it will turn out alright, and in the meantime, there are things that are outrageous, and about these things, it's appro-55  
priate to be outraged.

Outraged? Indeed.

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## EDUCATORS LOOK EAST

By Frances Adeney

Twenty-five first graders lie in motionless silence on the classroom floor. The teacher intones soothing phrases to aid relaxation. Within moments, the meditative journey begins. The children imagine the sun, shining its brightest, radiating intense light toward them. They gaze directly into it, and despite its strength, the sun's brightness doesn't hurt them. Then, in their mind's eye, the children are told to bring the sun down, down from the sky and into their own body. Its light pulses from the head, down into the chest regions, further and further until their body is ablaze with light. Now picture yourself doing something perfectly, says the teacher. Keep watching yourself being perfect. This is your light, your intelligence, your sun. Your whole body becomes a beam of light. Experience yourself as a pure light beam. Next the children are instructed to imagine the sun slowly going out of them, back into the sky, leaving them full of light. The teacher tells them to see themselves as full of light. Now they contain all the light in the universe. With that light, the teacher says, they now feel at peace - they are perfect. As they return from this fantasy journey, the children are reminded that they are intelligent, magnificent, and that they contain all the wisdom of the universe within themselves.<sup>1</sup>

Imagine this incident taking place in a Los Angeles public school classroom, for that is exactly where it is happening, among other places. The guided imagery lesson is one of the techniques used by Dr Beverly Galyean in her system of "confluent education."

Gaylean, project developer of two federally funded programs of confluent education in the Los Angeles Public Schools, describes confluent learning as a holistic approach using feeling, thinking, sensing and intuition. Basic subjects are taught with introspective techniques. Each child is encouraged to draw on her or his past experiences and fertile imagination in solving problems, doing creative writing, etc. The child is seen as more than a blank slate on which to inscribe the multiplication tables, spelling lists and classroom rules. The child's feelings and evaluations of situations are considered important. Learning through the five senses as well as taking intuitive leaps in problem solving are encouraged. "Confluent education," says Galyean, "is really using processes to open up information that comes directly through the senses or intuitive insight; at the same time, aligning that information with the skills of analysis, understanding and communication."<sup>2</sup>

Her idea sounds promising. Yet that "expanded view of learning" is linked inextricably to a set of eastern/occult assumptions. It is to these beliefs that Galyean attributes the strengths of her system of confluent education. That kind of thinking is based on the following premises:

1. In essence we are not individuals, but part of the universal consciousness, God or spirit which has manifested itself in the material world. At its base, this universal consciousness is love. Realizing this essential unity, and experiencing oneself as part of it, is a major goal for a child's education.

2. Because each person is part of the universal consciousness which is love, each contains all the wisdom and love in the universe. This wisdom and love is "the higher self." "My mind already knows how to spell these words," children are told to say to themselves.<sup>3</sup> In teaching a sense of self-worth and self-confidence, children are directly told that they are perfect, all-loving and all-wise. "I am a perfect person and student" is an expression which children are instructed to repeat to themselves frequently.<sup>4</sup> The child can tap into this universal mind and receive advice, information and help from it. This is usually done through meditation and contact with "spirit guides."

3. Each person creates his or her own reality by choosing what to perceive and how to perceive it. As we teach children to focus on positive thoughts and feelings of love, their reality will become that. This is an assumption that the physical world is an illusion, that what we perceive is in our minds. That is, the truth of anything is not in its external existence, but in our subjective experience of it. Therefore, all of the students' activities are positive, and they are taught to "get in touch with their magnificence."<sup>5</sup> The reality of evil is thus denied.

Galyean sums up her beliefs by saying, "Once we begin to see that we are all God, that we all have the attributes of God, then I think the whole purpose of human life is to re-own the Godlikeness within us; the perfect love, the perfect wisdom, the perfect understanding, the perfect intelligence, and when we do that, we create back to that old, that essential oneness which is consciousness. So my whole view is very much based on that idea."<sup>6</sup> Those assumptions are very religious in nature, instructing children about the nature of God and the solution to the human predicament. Intuition becomes a spiritual tool, a way to tap one's "higher self," a way to touch the universal consciousness of which we are all a part, Galyean claims.

How did such an approach arise and in what way did it come to be offered in public schools which purportedly do not allow religious practices to become part of the curriculum?

The malaise of the public schools in the U.S. is well known. Low achievement, truancy, vandalism and general indifference cause many parents to place their children in costly private schools. As children from concerned families disappear, public school teachers often face large classes weighted with culturally disadvantaged and distressed children.

The history of failing public education is long and involved. Certain events stand out, however. The early 60's saw many educators discouraged with the ineffectiveness of rote learning. Memorizing math facts or lists of vocabulary words left children unable to think through problems, discover patterns, or make generalizations. Their knowledge was piecemeal, fragmented and superficial. To counter this, teachers began using more inductive methods. The "new math," for instance, was an attempt to help children discover how base 10 mathematics works. Why two plus two equals four, understanding division as a process, discovering the underlying assumptions of arithmetic - these were the goals of the new math. Gifted children thrived on inductive "discovery" methods. Average or struggling students were overwhelmed. Memorization of basic math facts, which although boring is necessary for efficient work, was neglected. Students who didn't catch on to the new approach were left with virtually no math skills at all.

Another method to make education more relevant to children took the form of revised reading texts. Minority cultures and children's experiences in them began to be highlighted. Environments other than middle-class suburban settings appeared in reading texts. Real-life problems that face children, such as loneliness, going to a new school, or facing a neighborhood bully were presented. The sterility of "Dick and Jane" material was effectively challenged. Such changes were important steps in creating a less artificial, more integrated learning experience for students.

But the emphasis on the inductive method had been too heavy. Low achievement in math and reading led agitated parents to demand a "back to basics" approach. Positive movement toward integrating learning with childhood experiences, and emphasis on discovering meaning took second place as necessary basic skills were again stressed. As often happens in such situations, the pendulum swung too far. Rote learning and its inherent fragmentation is once again becoming entrenched in public schools, particularly in the early grades.

Recently a number of new methods have been introduced to teachers seeking to cope with mounting classroom pressures while providing a full, relevant education to children. One such approach is confluent education. Developed by Dr George

Isaac Brown as a way of integrating effective (feeling) and cognitive (thinking) modes of learning, confluent education presents exciting possibilities for teachers on the public school treadmill.<sup>7</sup>

As an educator, I attended two conferences this year which included confluent education workshops led by Dr Galyean. In February the society for Accelerated Learning and Teaching sponsored a convention, "Education in the 80's." Well over three-fourths of the participants in Galyean's sessions were public school personnel. The Mandala Conference, a huge gathering of New Age proponents, sponsored four days of education workshops at their annual convention in San Diego last August. Hundreds of public school educators participated in this eastern-oriented program. At both conventions, participants responded enthusiastically to Galyean's workshops, voicing no criticism of the program or its ties to eastern/occult philosophy.

Here, after all, is a system that addresses many of the weaknesses of public education. Galyean emphasizes the child's "discovery" in learning, she understands the unique worth of persons, she utilizes the richness of the child's personal thoughts and experiences. Mutual respect can grow in a classroom where a child is listened to and cared for. Creative processes can be developed in a flexible setting where the "right answer" is not the only goal. Educators are naturally attracted to such a system.

Dr Brown, in his book, Human Teaching for Human Learning, describes various techniques of the confluent approach, all of which move toward a richer, more personal learning experience for the child. His approach does not rest on eastern or occult assumptions, nor do his techniques draw upon these traditions. Although one might question Brown's humanistic presuppositions, he clearly demonstrates that an eastern world view is not essential to the confluent approach.

Galyean's system of confluent education, however, relies heavily on meditation techniques as well as a forthright proclamation of Hindu and occult beliefs. Children meditate daily. They are taught to visualize a light within them which contains all knowledge and all love, and to which they can turn for insights and power. First graders are introduced to "spirit guides" although Galyean remarked that "Of course we don't call them that in public schools. We call them imaginary guides."<sup>8</sup>

These guides are presented to the children in this way: each child lies down on a large sheet of paper and the teacher draws around their body. The child's

own form is then cut out. Next the child is instructed to fill in this form, not with their own characteristics, but with that of their best friend. After coloring the drawings in this way, the pictures are displayed in the room for the duration of the school year. Notice that a transference from drawing themselves to making this image of their best friend is made. During the year, when the child needs comfort or advice, the teacher directs them to "Ask your guide." Now the picture becomes a source of information, "someone" to go to in trouble.<sup>9</sup>

It is distressing to see a healthy emphasis on understanding children's feelings and developing their creative potential marred by the infusion of eastern-occult religious ideas. Good teachers have always been in tune with effective areas of the child's personality. They have encouraged children to use past experiences and imaginary happenings in creative expression. An extremely rich language and reading program can be developed from children's own experiences. Classwork becomes exciting, spelling loses its drabness, math becomes meaningful when it is personalized in this way. Developing a curriculum that enhances a child's creative abilities is a much needed task for educators. It need not be tied to a world view that postulates all things as a manifestation of cosmic consciousness.

In an interview with Dr Galyean, I asked if she thought her religious ideas were necessary for a confluent education curriculum. She responded, "The system of confluent education as I work with it is totally dependent on that view because my whole philosophy is that learning is acquiring the skills of looking within and discovering what information is inside you that you need to know, to grow and become perfect."<sup>10</sup> Galyean's view of confluent education, then, while stressing creative learning and a person-centered approach, necessarily includes eastern-occult spiritual technologies of meditation, spirit guides, experiencing "past lives," and other religious concepts.

In a pluralistic society we cannot ask the public schools to teach children about Jesus Christ. On the other hand, we do not want to see advances in education wedded to untrue religious concepts and practices. Frustrated teachers are being presented with valuable insights and ideas. But these ideas are being tied to a religious philosophy which is a separate package altogether.

Perhaps most important, it is incumbent on us to teach our children how to think. Analysis and logical, consistent critique has become a lost art in much of western society. If our children are to embrace the Christian faith, they must understand why it is the most cogent choice; why it is true. They need to be able

to analyze what they read and what they see on television. What assumptions are being made, how strong is the logic in the proposition, what propaganda techniques are being used - is there a hidden message? With these tools, young people will begin separating for themselves religious assumptions from personal feelings, from facts, and so on.

The public schools are in distress. Confluent education is one new approach that is getting exposure among teachers across the country. A balance of thinking and feeling and a stress on the whole person may do children who are taught in this way some good, Yet much confusion and harm will be perpetrated if confluent education stresses a view of the world which neglects the Creator and Savior. Such a view is totally unnecessary to a healthy, stimulating curriculum.

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NOTES:

1. From a guided imagery meditation presented at the Confluent Education Workshop by Dr Beverly Galyean, at Educ. Workshops, Mandala Conference, San Diego, CA, Aug. 4, 1980
2. Radix interview with Dr Galyean by F. Adeney, Aug 6, 1980
3. "Meditating With Children: Some Things we learned," by Dr B. Galyean, A.P. Newsletter, Assn. for Humanistic Psychology, Aug-Sept., 1980, p. 16
4. Ibid., p. 17
5. Radix interview
6. Ibid.
7. Human Teaching for Human Learning: An Introduction to confluent Education, by Dr George Isaac Brown, (An Esalen Book) NY: Penquin Books, 1971, p. 3
8. "New Dimensions in Education in Education - Confluent Learning," plenary session at conference, Education in the 80's, presented by the Society for Accelerated Learning, San Francisco, Apr. 25, 1980
9. Ibid.
10. Radix interview
11. Dr Galyean, Educ. Workshop, Mandala Conference

## THE PSEUDO SCHOLARSHIP OF VICTOR PAUL WIERWILLE

BY JAMES BJORNSTAD

"The 'Doctor' says..." is a typical authoritative reply given by members of The Way International headquartered in New Knoxville, Ohio, USA. If it is not given verbally, it certainly is present in that member's mind. The "Doctor" referred to is Victor Paul Wierwille, founder and teacher of this cult which denies the Trinity, the deity of Jesus Christ, the personality and deity of the Holy Spirit, salvation only by faith in Jesus Christ, and other doctrines which are clearly taught in the Bible.

The "Doctor's" oral and written teachings are absolutely authoritative, and they comprise the "first pure and correct interpretation of the Word since the First Century, A.D." This is the understanding given to members of The Way. Referring to this, one ex-Way member reported that "He was driving along one day and God told him, 'You are the only person who can interpret the Bible correctly. You are the only one who understands.' That's what we were taught."<sup>1</sup>

This authority can also be seen in his writings, which appear to be more than simply those of a man. In Power for Abundant Living, we read "not all that Wierwille writes will necessarily be God-breathed."<sup>2</sup> In his book The New Dynamic Church we read "If you think this is just Victor Paul Wierwille writing or speaking to you, you will never receive. If you knew that what I am saying to you (in this book) are words which the Holy Ghost has spoken and is speaking to you by me."<sup>3</sup>

Who is the "Doctor?" Victor Paul Wierwille was born Dec. 31, 1916. He grew up in a stern fundamentalist Christian home, but had doubts about the basic Christian doctrine of the Trinity. His quest for truth ended on Oct. 5, 1942 when God's voice spoke to him and told him He would teach him the true New Testament doctrines. Wierwille tells us "I was praying...and that's when He said He would teach me the Word, as it has not been known since the First Century, if I would teach it to others."<sup>4</sup> This experience is the basis for the authority and teaching we have noted above.

What are the "Doctor's" credentials? The Way's literature tells us that Wierwille attended the University of Chicago Divinity School, Moody Bible Institute and Princeton Theological Seminary. One is led to conclude that Wierwille received his doctorate from the last school, which is not true.

Actually, Wierwille received his B.A. degree from Mission House College, Plymouth, Wisconsin, in 1938 and a Th. B. from the same school in 1940. In 1941 he received his Th. M. degree from Princeton Theological Seminary. He was ordained in the Evangelical and Reformed Church (now the United Church of Christ) on June 29, 1941, and pastored St. Jacob's Church, Payne, Ohio, from 1941-44 and then St. Peter's Church in Van Wert, Ohio. In 1948 he received a Ph. D. degree from a reported degree mill, Pike's Peak Bible Seminary (now the Evangelical Bible College and Seminary in Chicago), a fact not generally stated in The Way's literature. The "Doctor" gives the appearance of solid, undeniable scholarship in his lectures and writings by referring to the biblical languages, church history, and by complex and novel translations of the Bible. Since members of The Way accept everything Wierwille says and writes as absolute truth, it is no wonder that one hears reference to "The Doctor says...", and usage of

Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic in demonstrating their points. They sound like Wierwille. Because of this, it is necessary to show that his scholarship is really a pseudo-scholarship, and that the "Doctor" is not the theological authority he has them believing he is.

#### Biblical Languages

In his use of the biblical languages, either Wierwille is ignorant of certain factors in this area, or else he purposely misuses this area to support his preconceived theology. The following are a few of the examples that could be given.

Example #1 - Wierwille writes: When it comes to a study of the Greek noun pneuma, translated "spirit", a difficulty presents itself; the word pneuma is never capitalized.<sup>5</sup> Here Wierwille fails to note that the earliest manuscripts, referred to as Uncial manuscripts, were written totally in capital letters, i.e., FORGODSOLOVEDTHEWORLD. Wierwille is well aware of Uncial manuscripts. He teaches about them in session 4 of the PFAL (Power for Abundant Living) Course, which contradicts his above statement regarding the Holy Spirit.

Example #2 - Wierwille writes: "When we consider the Greek words pneuma hagian without the article 'the,' as seen in more than 50 passages in the critical Greek texts of the New Testament, we discover that these words<sup>6</sup> are never once used in the sense of 'The Holy Spirit' who is God, the Giver." Here Wierwille fails to understand an elementary rule in the Greek language that articles are frequently missing before appellatives of persons or things of which only one of the kind exists, such as God, Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Example #3 - Wierwille writes: "Our accepted English meaning of the word 'complete' does not convey the proper emphasis in this phrase of the Scriptures: 'And ye are complete in him.' Aramaic better expresses the phrase with clarity. In Aramaic there are four different grammatical forms to show the intensity of a verb."<sup>7</sup> Here Wierwille uses the Aramaic to make his point without noting that the Peshitta text he is using is a different dialect from that spoken in Jesus' day and that the Peshitta is an Aramaic translation of the Greek and Hebrew manuscripts. In translating the Aramaic, Wierwille is translating the Aramaic (which is a translation of the Greek and Hebrew) into English, when he could simply be translating the same Greek and Hebrew.

Example #4 - Wierwille writes: "The word 'translated' ('translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son') in Sanskrit is 'citizenship'. He rescued us out from among the exercised power of darkness and gave us citizenship."<sup>8</sup> Sanskrit ceased to be a spoken language before the time of Christ. Not until<sup>9</sup> the 19th Century A.D. was the Bible (portions of it) translated into Sanskrit. Wierwille uses a 19th Century text, which ultimately is a translation from the Greek, when he could use the earliest Greek texts. The Greek provides the most accurate understanding, since the more languages that are involved, the greater the possibility for loss in accuracy.

#### Biblical Interpretation

In his interpretation of the Bible, Wierwille changes scripture, ignores the context, inserts his own rules, makes arbitrary judgments and statements and does a host of other things to support his authority and prove his preconceived theology.

Example #1 - Wierwille tells us that the Gospel of John was written to present the true nature of Jesus Christ.<sup>10</sup> Yet in the first 18 verses, Wierwille adds some 80 words to clarify (or correct) what John has said.<sup>11</sup> For example,

Wierwille translates John 1:3 "All things were made by him (God); and without him (God) was not anything made that was made."<sup>12</sup> Wierwille justifies this translation by saying that "him" is the pronoun autou controlled by the closest associated noun, which is "God."<sup>13</sup> Despite Wierwille's rule, the context demands the subject to be the Word, Jesus Christ, and thus the passage should be translated "All things were made by him (the Word or Jesus.)"

Example # 2 - Wierwille writes: "The records of baptism in Acts, the book which records the events of Pentecost and immediately thereafter do not mention water at all, thus to say there is water involved in baptism can only be private interpretation."<sup>14</sup> Here Wierwille seems to be unfamiliar with Acts 8: 36-39 and 10:47.

Example # 3 - Wierwille writes: "Do you want to have the power of His might in your life? Then you must speak in tongues. Of all the spiritual abilities from God, the ability to speak in tongues is the only one the Bible mentions that will build up the believer."<sup>15</sup> Here Wierwille appears to be unfamiliar with I Cor. 14:3,4,5,12,and 26, which teaches that tongues is not the only gift which builds up the believer.

#### Church History

In his use of church history, Wierwille presents a false picture in order to support his preconceived theology.

Example #1 - Wierwille tells us that no one during the first three centuries of church history believed that Jesus Christ is God or in the Trinity.<sup>16</sup> A cursory reading of church history would reveal to any honest person that the creeds and church fathers in the first three centuries clearly affirm the doctrines of the Trinity and the Deity of Jesus Christ.

However, if one looks for Wierwille's doctrine of Jesus Christ in church history, one would find it identical to Paul of Samosata, who was Bishop of Antioch from 260-272 AD. Paul of Samosata saw Jesus as uniquely created by a form of divine insemination, and that is why his teaching was denounced and rejected at several synods. The historian Eusebius wrote that his "false doctrine (was) clearly shown before all, and he was excommunicated from the catholic church under heaven..."<sup>17</sup>

Example #2 - Regarding the Council of Nicea in 325 AD, the council that specifically declared Jesus Christ to be "true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one substance (homoousion) with the Father..."<sup>18</sup> Wierwille has his own interpretation of what really happened: "...Constantine invited all the bishops of the Christian Church to Nicea (which is now Nice, France) in May, 325, AD. ...The council consisted of approximately 220 bishops who were almost exclusively from the Occident. Constantine, who was in control of the proceedings, used his political power to bring pressure to bear on the bishops to accept his theological position...Two hundred of the 220 bishops signed this creed, although it was truly the work of a minority."<sup>19</sup>

Anyone who takes the time to look at the available books on church history will quickly note the only facts that Wierwille has accurately presented is the date and the fact that two Arian bishops, Theonas and Secundus, refused to sign and were excommunicated. Wierwille says that the council took place at Nice, France, when in actuality it was near ancient Constantinople (which is now Istanbul, Turkey.) He says "approximately 220 bishops" were present, in which he relies on only one of the manuscripts of one source, while the vast majority of historians record 318 bishops. He fails to mention that more than

1,500 elders, deacons and others from all over Christendom (not just the Occident) were present. These met together in prayerful deliberation and search of the Scriptures for more than three months. Political expediency was not the case. In effect, Christendom as a whole reaffirmed what was the accepted historic view in the first three centuries - Jesus Christ is Deity, the second person of the Triune God.

#### Conclusion

When one considers the above examples of the 'scholarship' of Victor Paul Wierwille, of which many more could be given, one can only conclude that he has gone to considerable length to research and distort the evidence, as he has to support his pre-conceived theology and his authority. Certainly he knows better in some issues, and has seen what the evidence really says in others.

Our hearts go out to the members of The Way who follow the pseudo scholarship of Victor Paul Wierwille. Thus, in order to get members to honestly consider what you are presenting, it may be necessary to unmask the "scholarship" of Victor Paul Wierwille.

Our concern is also for the Christian Church, that it will learn from such groups as The Way the importance of solid biblical teaching, which will serve both as the preventive medicine and also as the antidote.

#### Notes:

1. "The Way seemed right, but the end thereof...an interview with two cult defectors," Joel A. Mac Collam, Eternity, Nov., 1977, p. 25
2. Victor Paul Wierwille, Power for Abundant Living, p. 83
3. Wierwille, The New Dynamic Church, p.116
4. Elena Whiteside, The Way: Living in Love
5. Wierwille, Receiving the Holy Spirit Today, pp 1-2
6. Ibid., pp. 3-4
7. Wierwille, The Bible Tells Me So, p. 94
8. Ibid., p. 57
9. From information supplied by the NY Bible Society and the American Bible Soc.
10. Wierwille, Jesus Christ is Not God, p. 16
11. Ibid., Ch. 4
12. Ibid., p. 91
13. Ibid.
14. Wierwille, The Bible Tells Me So, p. 135
15. Wierwille, Receiving the Holy Spirit Today, p. 43
16. Wierwille, "The Origin of the Three-in -One God," in Jesus Christ is Not God
17. Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Vol. VII, p. 29
18. Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol III, p. 623 ff.
19. Wierwille, Jesus Christ is Not God, pp. 23-44

## A SIMPLE QUESTION

BY NEIL DUDDY

In consideration of the growing number of aberrational Christian groups, as well as overtly non-Christian groups that identify with Christ, laypeople need a practical, theological model for discerning when and how such groups are theologically aberrant.

The model I am proposing here is a simple one that helps Christians determine why groups such as the Unification Church or the Way International are outside the parameters of historical Christianity. Other models have been offered to help Christians detect socially aberrant and authoritarian groups, but a discussion of them is beyond the focus of this article.

In order to determine why teachings are not true to the biblical record, a Christian must first understand what the cardinal doctrines of Christianity are. One undeniable treasury of those foundational truths is the Apostles' Creed. In simple yet assertive language, the creed affirms that 1) God created humanity and the universe; 2) Jesus Christ, the righteous and Divine Son of God, suffered and died for a fallen world to reconcile creature and Creator; and 3) The resurrected Lord Jesus will return for his people and will establish his kingdom.

Those three primary planks in the platform of the Christian faith form a basic confession that the four major Christian movements in Church history - Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant and Anglican - have held in common. Obviously, all of those themes are interrelated. To omit or deny one theme results in a denial or deletion of the total foundational truth. For example, the Trinity is not explicitly addressed in the Apostles' Creed. Yet, to deny Christ's Divinity on that basis would be a false inference that denies the concept of the Trinity which is strongly implied in the language of both the creedal and biblical texts. Consequently, such deviation is easy to identify.

Underlying the three points of creedal agreement, however, are almost two millenia of debate and difference of opinion on other theological topics that we may call secondary beliefs. A belief is deemed secondary when it falls outside the explicit intentions of the biblical authors. For example, certain accepted varieties of church government, modes of baptism, theories of atonement or eschatological scenarios are recognized by Christians as matters of preference, not indicators of genuine faith or apostasy. Such topics of secondary value have not been effectively used as criteria for biblical faith.

The distinction between the primary truths of Christianity - as found in the Apostles' Creed - and secondary beliefs is indispensable when examining the theological beliefs of Christian aberrations. Christian aberrations may or may not draw attention to their departure from the doctrines affirmed in the Apostles' Creed. Therefore, Christians must also be alert to three basic means by which those groups tamper with the cardinal affirmations of Christianity.

The first and most common mechanism is linguistic manipulation. Christian aberrations frequently redefine the biblical words, such as those used to describe creation, the person and work of Christ, and his return. While this practice leaves the language of a primary truth intact, it so changes the content so that the resultant teaching is distinctly unorthodox. This linguistic manip-

ulation is clearly seen in Victor Paul Wierwille's book Jesus Christ is Not God (in which he affirms the authority and inspiration of Scripture.) For Wierwille, founder of The Way International, Jesus is simply a man who fulfilled a holy purpose as the adopted "son of God." Yet Wierwille persists in calling Jesus "Lord," a title which, for the biblical authors, denoted the Divinity of the resurrected Christ. Ostensibly, Wierwille believes in a substitutionary atonement by the man Jesus, but he rejects orthodox Christology. He retains the term "Lord" as meaning human savior, but restricts its meaning. His theology therefore rejects the biblical person of Christ while it attempts to affirm Jesus' life's work. Because Wierwille says he is committed to Scripture and uses biblical language, he has attracted a large number of Christians to The Way.

On the other end of the spectrum is Rajneesh, who, although he would never call himself a Christian, is another example of one who quotes heavily from scripture. In his case, he imports an eastern world view in interpreting it. A quote from his four-volume set about the sayings of Jesus (titled Come Follow Me) illustrates this point:

Christ-consciousness, Buddhahood, enlightenment, are various names of the same ultimate realization, the same state of knowing. The knowing of enlightened masters such as Christ or such as Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh is the same. Only the language indicating it differs. Each speaks in the language appropriate to those being addressed. Christ spoke in the language of the Jews of nearly two thousand years ago. Bhagwan...speaks in the language of us today. And because he speaks from this same Christ-consciousness as Jesus, he is able to explain Christ's teachings in a way no theologian can, in a way no one who speaks from knowledge and not from a deep, inner knowing can.

While Rajneesh does not attract many Christians, he nevertheless communicates to an ever-increasing audience a Hindu-Buddhist theology, using biblical language. Thus, proclaiming the Gospel to a Rajneesh sannyasin (devotee) can be a case of speaking past each other while using the same words.

A second, easily detected way of changing the primary truths of Christianity is by padding the biblical record with apocryphal stories. Although some of those stories parallel biblical truth in some respects, many extra-biblical anecdotes contradict the cardinal tenets of Christianity. Such stories may be part of the group's public image or exist as private oral traditions for advanced disciples to learn. Many gurus present their Hindu world view through stories about the life of Jesus. Sai Baba devotee Richard Bach, the well-known author of Jonathan Livingston Seagull, has produced "The Missing Years of Jesus" for Baba, a film that describes how Jesus learned eastern wisdom in India and prepared for his Palestinian ministry in the Orient. Another example is an oral tradition within the Unification Church, which entirely retells Jesus' role of redemption in light of their belief that his messianic reign was incomplete. According to their theology, Jesus should have married Judas' sister, sired perfect children, siezed a political triumph in Rome, and brought about the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

A third, less obvious (but very effective) way that Christian aberrations "adjust" primary truths is by their elevation of secondary beliefs to the position of primary truths, the results of which are twofold. First, the value and importance of the primary truths are muted or downplayed, if not erased. A Christian's tolerance of this mechanism depends on the frequency of and reasons for its occurrence in the movement. For instance, a number of dispensationalist churches in America require their members to profess specific eschatological beliefs above and beyond the creedal affirmations. Other groups add more than

one secondary belief to the basic core of Christianity which their members must affirm. Although biblical Christians are involved in groups such as these, they should be cautioned that an abundance of elevated secondary beliefs can obscure their understanding of basic Christianity.

Second, the secondary beliefs (i.e. the areas of speculation and diverse interpretation) do not have the strength to support a Christian world view. An example from the Unification Church will serve to clarify this point. Unification Church members believe that humanity fell from grace in the Garden of Eden. (Belief in fallen humanity is a primary truth related to the purpose of Jesus' ministry.) They insist, however, that the fall was sexual - an interpretation of the event that is sometimes recognized as a secondary belief. Certain Unification apologists defend their view by citing Augustine, who believed in a sexual fall. Augustine, however, acknowledged that his interpretation was not a primary truth of the Christian faith and that many genuine Christians did not believe in a sexual fall. Whereas Augustine's belief in a sexual fall was of secondary importance, it is a primary truth in Unification thought, from which many other beliefs originate. Unificationist views on society, family, and the work of Christ rest on the supposition of sullied sexual relations between Adam and Eve and Satan.

Belief that this negative act in history can provide the intellectual foundation for positive social structures is simply mistaken. If ideas of ideal culture appear anywhere in the first three chapters of Genesis, they appear in the cultural mandate of a pre-fallen garden, not in the fall itself, as Unificationists propose. When a group raises such a secondary belief to the level of primary truth, it is indirectly saying that the cardinal beliefs of Christianity are inadequate for its theological and social goals.

Although there is often a fine distinction between a movement's orthodoxy and aberrance, we have seen that Christians have an adequate repository of primary truth in the Apostles' Creed to use in deciding on a group's biblical fidelity. Coupled with a knowledge of the methods that Christian aberrations use to alter the affirmations of the Creed, the Christian is well equipped to assess the value of participating in any one of the growing number of such movements. The fundamental theological reflection of any potential recruit should be a simple question: Does this movement affirm or misuse the cardinal truths of historic Christianity?

## THE MASTER WILL NOT SPEAK AGAIN.

By Jens Johansen.

On June the 1st, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh left Bombay in a Pan-Am Jumbo-jet, heading for United States, leaving behind him a stunned and perplexed flock of sannyasins, who until then had been living and working at the Shree Rajneesh Ashram, the centre of an orange pilgrimage of thousands.

Before leaving his disciples, Rajneesh had entered, what was called a final stage of his work: Silence,-a heart to heart communion between the Master and his sannyasins,

The confusion lasted for a couple of months. Rajneesh, it was told, had gone to USA, to receive medical treatment for asthma, diabetes, and a slipped disc. Some Indian newspapers supposed that Rajneesh was dying, or that a coup de état had taken place, or that Rajneesh was fed up with being a guru.

In the intermediate period, until the ashram in Poona was closed, new people took over: Swami Anand Teerta was in charge of the initiation of westerners, and a never before heard-of Indian initiated Indian seekers.

In that period the Dialog Centre received an article from a German newspaper, allegedly a letter from Rajneesh, "A message from the other world", explaining, that he had resigned. In itself the article was a brilliant analysis of the mind of a "Bhagwan", that is not at all "divine",- merely less than human. It has not been possible to receive comments on the article from the Rajneesh-movement.

During summer, events escalated. The information we received was at the beginning confusing and contradictory, but slowly a pattern is taking form.

Rajneesh is said to be getting better. He has received medical treatment. That, fresh air, rest, and American food has changed his physical condition, the core of disciples around him claim. "He is slowly getting able to walk again", Swami Shayyamuni, head of the PR department in Montclair, said.

The Arizona Daily Star, in an article, Sunday, August 23, 1981, said that, "An Indian cult leader, who advocates free sex and opposes mar-

riage, has married an American disciple", supposedly to receive American Citizenship. "A spokeswoman for Rajneesh, identified as Ma Sunita, denied the report. "The Arizona Daily Star said.

International Herald Tribune, in the October 13, 1981 issue said: "Last July 10, a little more than a week after Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh abandoned his once-thriving ashram at Poona, India, for one in Montclair, New Jersey, his dedicated followers, some of whom regard him as a god, bought 64.228 acres (25.691 hectares) of rocky, hilly ranchland straddling Wasco and Jefferson counties in central Oregon. The buyers - sannyasins, or disciples, from the guru's Chidvilas Rajneesh Meditation Center in Montclair - paid \$ 6 million for the land, a quarter of it in cash, and leased 17.000 more acres from the U.S. Bureau of Land Management."

It seems that the Bigmuddy Ranch is planned to become the new central ashram of the Rajneesh movement. German "Der Spiegel " in issue 38, 1981, said that a group of 40 selected "swamis" and 18 "ma's" are working at the farm at the moment. They have erected a house, which serves as a home for the guru, who is reported to be living with his disciples at the farm.

The main force behind the establishment of "Rajneeshpuram" (Rajneesh-city) is an American disciple, Sheela Silverman, who ten years ago established a Meditation Centre in New Jersey. She is also head of the Foundation that owns the new Rajneesh-city, where the guru is staying: guarded or hostage.

A number of sannyasins have expressed interest in working at the new centre, but a clear message has been given from Ma Anand Sheela: "Message for friends who have been working in Poona and in the centres around the world. We are all looking forward to the whole family being together soon, and until this is possible, nobody should feel disconnected from Bhagwan. Please always feel free to write or phone us and we can advise what is possible.

Always be sure to let people know not to come here before being invited or project at hand will fall through.

It is wonderful that people are able to put their energy into the Centres and help Him in this way.

Each one of his sannyasins is a Buddafield and everyone is part of Him, so enjoy the present situation as it is."

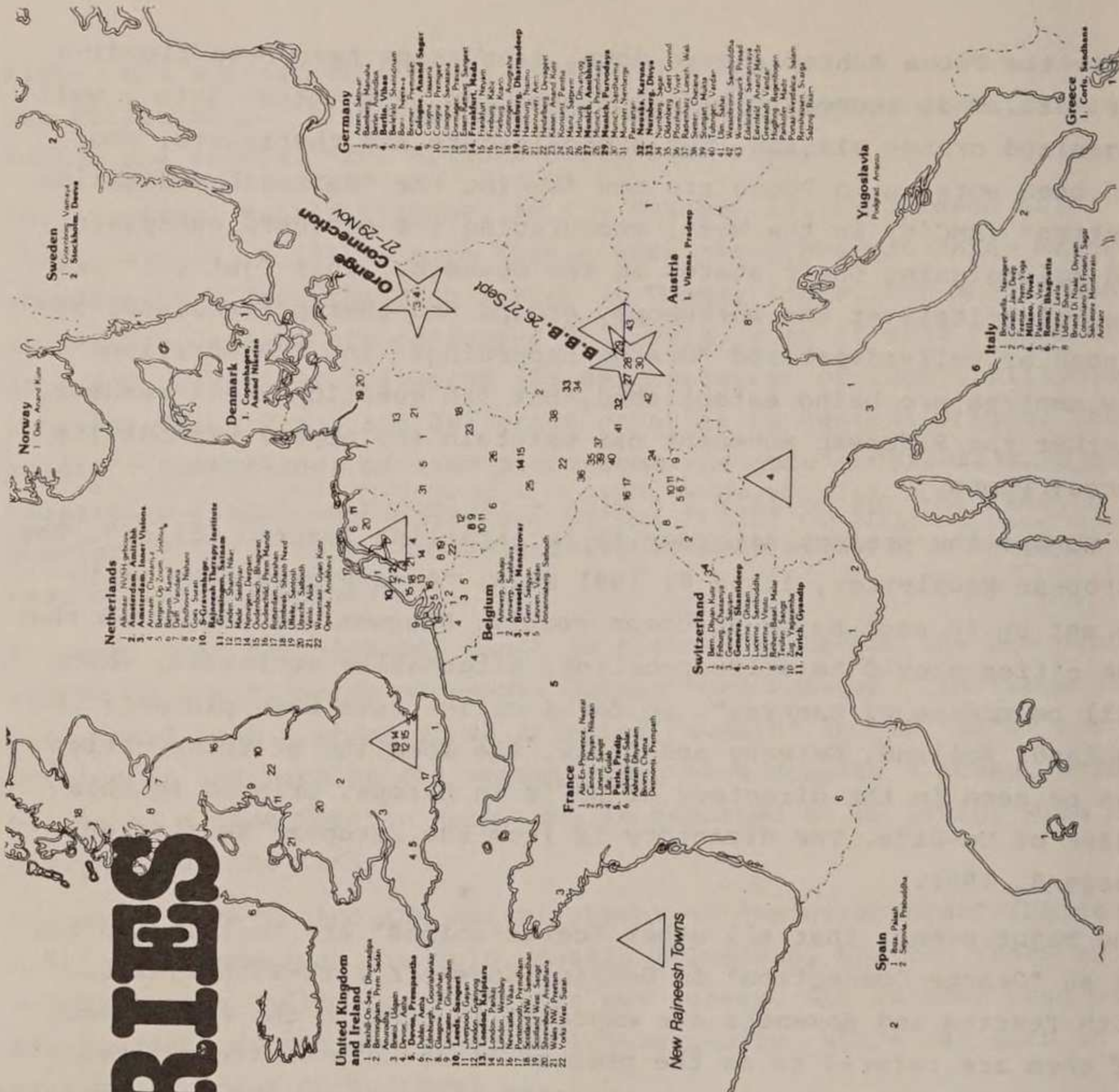
Buddhafiield, Rajneesh European Newsletter, issue 9, Nov. 1981.

Since the Poona Ashram closed down, sannyasins have been flooding the West. What seemed to be a collapse has been turned into a well organized orange mission. The group-leaders and therapists, who had been working in Poona are now founding the "Rajneesh Meditation Centres" (RMC's) in the West, encouraging the confused sannyasins, and maintaining their status in the movement. This "jet set" are the celebrities at the workshops, groups and therapy-sessions, arranged as well-advertized "Orange Happenings" and "Celebrations". New centres are being established, -but the question still remains, whether the Rajneesh movement can maintain its appeal without its Mecca: Poona.

In Europe the present strategy is to establish "Sacred Cities". The European Newsletter, issue 8, 1981 says: "A sannyasin city is to be set up in each major European county. Bhagwan has suggested that the cities should be selfsupporting, alternative societies, which will be models of sannyas". So far 4 cities have been planned: in England, Holland, Germany and Italy. The location of these cities can be seen in the directory of RMC's in Europe, printed in this issue of Up-Date. The directory is from the European Newsletter, issue 8, 1981.

The major event, that all other "celebrations" are building up to, is an "Orange Connection" in Berlin, November 27th-29th 1981.1. Both Teertha and Somendra are expected to come to the event. Both of them are referred to as the present leadership of the movement. Both are expected to address the 5000 sannyasins, who are expected to come to Berlin. The Master? "The Master will not speake again.."

# DIRECTORIES



"The time has come when thousands of communes can erupt, explode all over the world. And that's what I am intending to do by creating so many sannyasins and sending them back to their countries: so that thousands of communes start functioning.

"I would like to create a chain of communes all around the world so that this commune does not remain only one oasis in the vast desert but becomes interlinked with many communes. That type of interlinking has never been done before; that will be new.

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh  
 This map is updated to include those centres which have been selected to start a new Rajneesh town & the 2 major events of this month. Keep the information flowing.

ORANGE SPLIT

BY SWAMI ANAND SUBHUTI

The following article, from the Rajneesh Foundation Press Office, is a reply to an article which appeared in the May, 1980 issue of Update.

It was with a good deal of sympathy that I read the report of a "former sannyasin" in the May, 1980 edition of Update describing her experiences while meditating at Shree Rajneesh Ashram in Poona, India.

She relates how she went deeply into the ashram's meditation and therapy programmes and had several profound experiences of altered states of consciousness. But after a while she became aware of a psychological split developing between what she calls her "old I" and her "new being." She became alarmed and decided to quit. She concludes with a warning that this inner split can be dangerous for people from western countries, and advises them not to choose Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh as their spiritual master if they wish to remain in society.

That is her viewpoint. On the other hand, Bhagwan has made it quite clear that his sannyas is not for people who wish to escape the world. Giving his sannyas a new name, a mala and orange clothes, he sends them out into the marketplace of life to find the still and silent center within themselves.

"I don't tell my sannyasins to escape from the world," he explains. "I tell them to live in the world and yet not be of it."

Out of 200,000 sannyasins worldwide, more than 99% are living and working in western society, not as misfits and drop-outs, but as hard working professionals with good jobs and good salaries. Sannyasins, in fact, have no difficulty in mixing meditation with western materialism. So what went wrong in the case of this former sannyasin?

If she had gone to Poona and not experienced anything, her negative attitude could be more easily understood. But it is clear from her story that something did happen. On several occasions she had very deep experiences, but it is not difficult to read between the lines and feel the fear which came over her when she found her old identity disappearing and something new emerging from deep inside herself. These experiences were part of the problem.

In fact, she became so alarmed at this inner split that she ends her story by declaring that it is safer to stick with the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's Transcendental Meditation than to get involved with sannyas.

In a sense, she is right. It is safer to do TM, for the simple reason that TM is useless. It is neither transcendental or meditation. At best it is a kind of psychological aspirin - a mental sedative that bores the mind into a temporary state of peace by the endless repetition of a single word or phrase.

Bhagwan is bound to be more dangerous because his meditations actually work. He is an authentic Master. He is not at all interested in making us contented, sleepy, secure. His whole effort is to wake us up. It is a battle between the awakened one and the unawakened crowd. "You are all Buddhas," declares Bhagwan, "however fast asleep and snoring. Let me be your alarm. It is time to awaken!"

There is no doubt that waking up can sometimes be an unpleasant experience, particularly if one is engaged in beautiful dreams. There is no getting away from this fact. We are too closely identified with all these dreams, which we have carried since childhood. We think we are these dreams, and when they start disappearing, we start to become afraid.

At this point, there are only two alternatives. One can either retreat from the Master and stop the process of awakening, or one can trust the Master and let it happen. Not that one knows what is going to happen. One simply trusts. It is a gamble. All sannyasins are gamblers, because they are constantly giving up the known for the unknown.

To pass through an identity crisis in the presence of a Master is an amazing experience. Each awakening brings joy, relief, delight. Another burden has been removed; one feels lighter, happier and deeply grateful to the Master. One is simply bathed in his love, his being.

And once you have seen the total falsity of the "old I" there is no going back. But it is really up to each individual to make the choice. If you really want a Master, Bhagwan is that. If you just want to fool around, stick to TM and other sedatives. As an ancient Sufi mystic once remarked: "Better never to have started. Once started, better to finish it."

## SCIENTOLOGY RESPONDS

The following response from Ole Richter of the Church of Scientology in Denmark is printed regarding our articles on Scientology in the May issue of Update (p.45).

There has truly been a court case in the US against some of the leaders of the Church of Scientology. Almost 2,000 years ago a similar case was brought against a man in Palestine - and look now and see who really won. His followers were persecuted and harassed and derogatory words were brought into use against them. However, people of good faith who speak the truth always win in the end. Always. So the Church of Scientology just goes on as before, expanding its help to other people. Our purposes are so true that Scientology will survive and expand even if all but ten Scientologists in the world were in jail. Our technology is so widely published in millions of books in more than ten languages and our successes in helping individuals so widely known that we cannot even be forced back, only moved forward fast or slow.

Regarding the item "Canadian court rules on legal harassment," it was discovered too late during legal procedures that a smear campaign can be covered against any prosecution by "immunity of a constituent in his communication to his MP." So, to save time, we just paid the 60,000 Canadian peanuts. And the precedent will be short, because "evil intention" will be covered in future laws. So certainly something good came out of this.

NEW LEADERSHIP IN SCIENTOLOGY.

By Jens Johansen

From Scientology in Denmark we have received a press-release, saying that Scientology has made changes in the top-leadership of the organisation.

Jane Kember, who is one of the 11 convicted Scientologists, has been dismissed from her position in Guardians Office. Scientology in Denmark welcomes this report, even though they up to this moment have asserted the innocence of the 11 convicted Scientologists, who have been described as victims of a conspiracy.

More interesting is it to see that a William Franks has been appointed to the position of "Executive Director International". According to the information given by Scientology, L. Ron Hubbard resigned from that position in 1966, supposedly withdrawing himself from any administrative responsibility in Scientology. One may wonder, who has been signing the Policy-Letters of the organisation with the name of L. Ron Hubbard since then.

If this move is not an up-dating of the real circumstances around the person of Hubbard (we have not seen any new pictures of the man since 1974), it might be an attempt by Hubbard to protect himself against the outside world.

Paulette Cooper has informed us that her lawyer has got jurisdiction over Hubbard in her Boston suit. Among others she said:

"A judge ruled that we didn't have to find him to serve him but could serve him by "publication", meaning putting a notice in the newspaper and having it sent on his telex wires all over Scientology that I had just served him".

It seems that Scientology is back to old policy again. Their public statement as referred above states that the changes were made because of a drift away from "tried and true Scientology policy", i.e. "PTS and SP Detection, Routing and Handling", so after a period of an attempted low profile with relation to external critics Scientology might show a more true face in the future.

## CHRISTIANIZING TM

Bradley Hanson: The Call of Silence. Discovering Christian Meditation.  
Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis 1980.

by Arild Romarheim

This is an impressive, personal account by Lutheran professor of theology, searching for a kind of meditation which is practicable and fruitful for himself as a Christian. He finds what he is seeking for through a christianizing of TM. He replaces the mantra he got in the TM initiation with "Abba" (Father), and experiences great spiritual benefits through this meditative practice.

He is critical to the Hinduistic features of Maharishi movement, that is the philosophy of Maharishi. But he believes that the meditation technique itself is not necessarily Hinduistic.

At this point he reveals some superficial evaluations, without taking into consideration the fact that most mantras are names of Hindu gods. He does not seem to be really acquainted with the initiation ceremony as a sacrifice and adoration to Hindu deities, a ceremony which is compulsory to all meditators, according to the TM movement. (This "Holy Tradition" ceremony is published i.e. in the book Transcendental Misconceptions by the earlier TM-teacher, R.D. Scott, San Diego 1978 (see also "Up-Date Vol. IV, issue 1/2 May 1980 p.21-24.)

According to Bradley Hanson christianizing of Tm is possible. On his way towards a distinct knowledge of what this meditation is like, he discovers its congeniality with ancient traditions of Christian meditation. He refers to "The Cloud of Unknowing" by an anonymous Englishman from the 14th century, and to the writings of Thomas Merton, the great Trappist monk of our own century. He also refers to the Jesus-prayer of the Orthodox Church. More significantly, Hanson's meditative technique is what the Trappist call "the prayer of simplicity" or active contemplative prayer, as distinguished from higher "infused contemplation". The Christian "focuses on one thought, and it is the Christian who actively directs the intellect and the will towards God and brings the mind back towards God when distractions occur". Apparently, this is similar to the functioning of the mantra within TM. God - and the name of God (e.g. Abba) - functions like a mantra, being a means for neutralizing distractions. Unwanted thoughts are eliminated by thinking the mantra softly over and over again. And the result

is relaxation. Hanson asserts in his book that through christianizing this mantra technique, you get far more than relaxation, namely a deep rest in the grace of God, the merciful Father. It opens the door for a more unselfish prayer to God, not only as means of the fulfillment of petitions but as adoration to Him for what He is. Hanson accuses the Protestant tradition of being too afraid of this "repeating-a-word"-meditation.

At the same time he is critical of aspects of the Christian meditative tradition. He stresses the link between meditation and action. He also says, and this is important, I think, that meditation is not necessarily beneficial to everybody. But to some it is, and should therefore be more commonly practised, according to Hanson. In addition to the spiritual blessings, he also mentions the physical and mental benefits you get from meditation.

Summing up, this is a thought-provoking book. Seen from a theological point of view, I think it inspires confidence. Firstly, because it is an honest confession of the author's own stumblings and findings, and at the same time a personal confession of the basic Christian thoughts. Secondly, because this process of "christianizing" elements from other religions may be found in the early Christian tradition. The christianizing of the Greek "logos", the "unknown god" and the pagan feast of "the Unconquered Sun" (Christmas) are such examples.

This process of integrating non-Christian elements into Christian tradition implies the risk of syncretism. The crucial point is what platform the integrator is standing on. If the centre is God in Jesus Christ, the pagan elements become really transformed into something new, when put into relation to this new centre. In the meeting between TM and Christianity the main danger is, I think, that Christianity may be getting a new centre (becoming non-Christian): That is, I may be selfishly using God as a means for my own spiritual enjoyment. This has always been the danger of mysticism. Hanson has avoided that danger, I think.

If the early Christians had merely tried to vanquish the pagan rituals and customs, they would probably never have succeeded. Rather, they made a twofold approach: The rejection of what was inconsistent with Christianity and the christianizing of what was compatible with the Christian faith. Perhaps today's Church has something to learn from that kind of spiritual strategy.

BOOKS ON NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS:  
HALF A MILLION COPIES IN PRINT

Munich - 500,000 copies of the books written by the evangelical pastor Friedrich-Wilhelm Haack are now in print. They are published in the Munchener Reihe by the Evangelical Press Union (Evangelische Pressenverband.)

"This anniversary is celebrated with mixed feelings," said a spokesman for the publishing house, Paul Rieger, at a reception. "The success of these books, sold in such volume, which inform a broad audience about the new religious movements, also reveal a deep wound in society. One is left with a crisis of meaning: in the industrialized nations of the West, something is beginning to slide." According to Rieger, the new religious movements show that "a true need of youth is answered in an unsatisfactory way."

When it comes to informing concerned parents and youth about the dangerous practices of the movements, there is a close ecumenical cooperation between Lutherans and Catholics, according to Haack's Roman Catholic colleague.

As an expression of appreciation for his successful informative work, the director of the publishing house, Hans-Joachim Pfalzgraf, gave the author, F.W. Haack, a copy of the 17 publications in leather back.

(Translated from a German press release.)



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