



From

“Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future”

By Fr. Seraphim Rose

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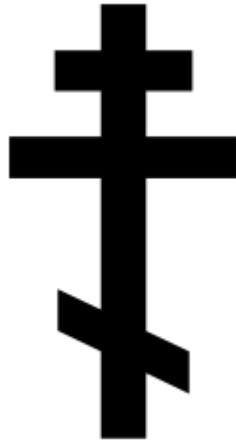
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The Monotheistic Religions. Do We Have the Same God that Non-Christians Have?

by Father Basile Sakkas

"THE HEBREW AND ISLAMIC PEOPLES, AND CHRISTIANS... these three expressions of an identical monotheism, speak with the most authentic and ancient, and even the boldest and most confident voices. Why should it not be possible that the name of the same God, instead of engendering irreconcilable opposition, should lead rather to mutual respect, understanding and peaceful coexistence? Should the reference to the same God, the same Father, without prejudice to theological discussion, not lead us rather one day to discover what is so evident, yet so difficult — that we are all sons of the same Father, and that, therefore, we are all brothers?"

Pope Paul VI, La Croix, Aug. 11, 1970

On Thursday, April 2, 1970, a great religious manifestation took place in Geneva. Within the framework of the Second Conference of the "Association of United Religions," the representatives of target religions were invited to gather in the Cathedral of Saint Peter. This "common prayer" was based on the following motivation: "The faithful of all these religions were invited to coexist in **the cult of the same God**"! Let us then see if this assertion is valid in the light of the Holy Scriptures.

In order better to explain the matter, we shall limit ourselves to the three religions that have historically followed each other in this order: Judaism, Christianity, Islam. These three religions lay claim, in fact, to a common origin: as worshippers of the God of Abraham. Thus it is a very widespread opinion that since we all lay claim to the posterity of Abraham (the Jews and Moslems according to the flesh and Christians spiritually), we all have as God the God of Abraham and all three of us worship (each in his own way, naturally) the **same God**! And, this same God constitutes in some fashion our point of unity and of "mutual understanding," and this invites us to a "fraternal relation," as the Grand Rabbi Dr. Safran emphasized, paraphrasing the Psalm: "Oh, how good it is to see brethren seated together..."

In this perspective it is evident that Jesus Christ, God and Man, the Son Co-eternal with the Father

without beginning, His Incarnation, His Cross His Glorious Resurrection and His Second and Terrible Coming — become secondary details which cannot prevent us from "fraternizing" with those who consider Him as "a simple prophet" (according to the Koran) or as "the son of a prostitute" (according to certain Talmudic traditions)! Thus we would place Jesus of Nazareth and Mohammed on the same level. I do not know what Christian worthy of the name could admit this in his conscience.

One might say that in these three religions, passing over the past, one could agree that Jesus Christ is an extraordinary and exceptional being and that He was sent by God. But for us Christians, if Jesus Christ is not **God**, we cannot consider Him either as a "prophet " or as one sent by God, "but only as a great imposter without compare, having proclaimed Himself "Son of God," making Himself thus *equal* to God!" (St. Mark 14:61-62). According to this ecumenical solution on the supra-confessional level, the Trinitarian God of Christians would be the same thing as the monotheism of Judaism, of Islam, of the ancient heretic Sabellius, of the modern anti-Trinitarians, and of certain Illuminist sects. **There would not be Three Persons in a Single Divinity**, but a single Person, unchanging for some, or successively changing "masks" (Father-Son-Spirit) for others! And nonetheless one would pretend that this was the "**same God**"

Here some might naively propose: "Yet for the three religions there is a common point: all three confess **God the Father**! "But according to the Holy Orthodox Faith, this is an absurdity. We confess always: Glory to the Holy, Consubstantial, Life-giving and **Indivisible** Trinity." How could we separate the **Father** from the **Son** when Jesus Christ affirms ***I and the Father are One*** (St. John 10:30); and St. John the Apostle, Evangelist, and Theologian, the Apostle of Love, clearly affirms: ***Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father*** (St. John 5:23).

But even if all three of us call God **Father**: of whom is He really the Father? For the Jews and the Moslems He is the Father of men in the plane of **creation**; while of us Christians ***He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ by adoption*** (Eph. 1:4-5) in the plane of **redemption**. What resemblance is there, then, between the Divine Paternity in Christianity and in the other religions?

Others might say: "But all the same, Abraham worshipped the true God; and the Jews through Isaac and the Moslems through Hagar are the descendants of this true worshipper of God." Here one will have to make several things clear: Abraham worshipped God not at all in the form of the unipersonal monotheism of the others, but in the form of the Holy Trinity. We read in the Holy Scripture: ***And the Lord appeared unto him at the Oaks of Mamre... and he bowed himself toward the ground*** (Gen. 18:1-2). Under what form did Abraham worship God? Under the unipersonal form, or under the form of the Divine Tri-unity? We Orthodox Christians venerate this Old Testament manifestation of the Holy Trinity on the Day of Pentecost, when we adorn our churches with boughs representing the ancient oaks, and when we venerate in their midst the icon of the Three Angels, just as our father Abraham venerated it! Carnal descent from Abraham can be of no use to us if we are not regenerated by the waters of Baptism in the Faith of Abraham. And the Faith of Abraham was the Faith in Jesus Christ, as the Lord Himself has said: ***Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day; and he saw it and was glad*** (St. John 8:56). Such also was the Faith of the Prophet-King David, who heard the heavenly Father speaking to His Consubstantial Son: ***The Lord said unto my Lord*** (Ps. 109:1; Acts 2:34). Such was the Faith of the Three Youths in the fiery furnace when they were saved by the Son of God (Dan. 3:25); and of the holy Prophet Daniel, who had the Vision of the two natures of Jesus Christ in the Mystery of the Incarnation when the Son of Man came to the Ancient of Days (Dan. 7:13). This is why the Lord, addressing the (biologically incontestable) posterity of Abraham, said: ***If ye were the children of Abraham, ye would do the works of Abraham*** (St. John 8:39), and ***these "works" are to believe on Him Whom God hath sent*** (St. John 6:29).

Who then are the posterity of Abraham? The sons of Isaac according to the flesh, or the sons of Hagar the Egyptian? Is Isaac or Ishmael the posterity of Abraham? What does the Holy Scripture

teach by the mouth of the divine Apostle? *Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed: which is Christ* (Gal. 3:16). *And if ye be Christ Is, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise* (Gal. 3:29). It is then in Jesus Christ that Abraham became a *father of many nations* (Gen. 17:5; Rom. 4:17). After such promises and such certainties, what meaning does carnal descent from Abraham have? According to Holy Scripture, Isaac is considered as the *seed or posterity*, but only as *the image of Jesus Christ*. As opposed to Ishmael (the son of Hagar; Gen. 16:1ff), Isaac was born in the miraculous "freedom" of a sterile mother, in old age and against the laws of nature, similar to our Saviour, Who was miraculously born of a Virgin. He climbed the hill of Moriah just as Jesus climbed Calvary, bearing on his shoulders the wood of sacrifice. An angel delivered Isaac from death, just as an angel rolled away the stone to show us that the tomb was empty, that the Risen One was no longer there. At the hour of prayer, Isaac met Rebecca in the plain and led her into the tent of his mother Sarah, just as Jesus shall meet His Church on the clouds in order to bring Her into the heavenly mansions, the New Jerusalem, the much-desired homeland.

No! We do not in the least have the same God that non-Christians have! The *sine qua non* for knowing the Father, is the Son: ***He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me*** (St. John 14:6,9). Our God is a God Incarnate, ***Whom we have seen with our eyes, and our hands have touched*** (1 John 1:1). The immaterial became material for our salvation, as St. John Damascene says, and He has **revealed** Himself in us. But when did He reveal Himself among the present-day Jews and Moslems, so that we might suppose that they know God? If they have a knowledge of God outside of Jesus Christ, then Christ was incarnate, died, and rose in vain!

No, they do **not** know the Father. They have conceptions about the Father; but every **conception** about God is an **idol**, because a conception is the product of our imagination, a creation of a god in our own image and likeness. *For us Christians God is inconceivable, incomprehensible, indescribable, and immaterial*, as St. Basil the Great says. For our salvation He became (to the extent that we are united to Him) conceived, described and material, by revelation in the Mystery of the Incarnation of His Son. **To Him be the glory unto the ages of ages.** Amen. And this is why St. Cyprian of Carthage affirms that he who does not have the Church for Mother, does not have God for Father!



May God preserve us from the Apostasy and from the coming of Antichrist, the preliminary signs of which are multiplying from day to day. May He preserve us from the great affliction which even the elect would not be able to bear without the Grace of Him Who will cut short these days. And may He preserve us in the "small flock," the "remainder according to the election of Grace," so that we like Abraham might rejoice at the Light of His Face, by the prayers of the Most Holy Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary, of all the heavenly hosts, the cloud of witnesses, prophets, martyrs, hierarchs, evangelists, and confessors who have been faithful unto death, who have shed their blood for Christ, who have begotten us by the Gospel of

Jesus Christ in the waters of Baptism. We are their sons — weak, sinful, and unworthy, to be sure; but we will not stretch forth our hands toward **a strange god!** Amen.

Father Basile Sakkas

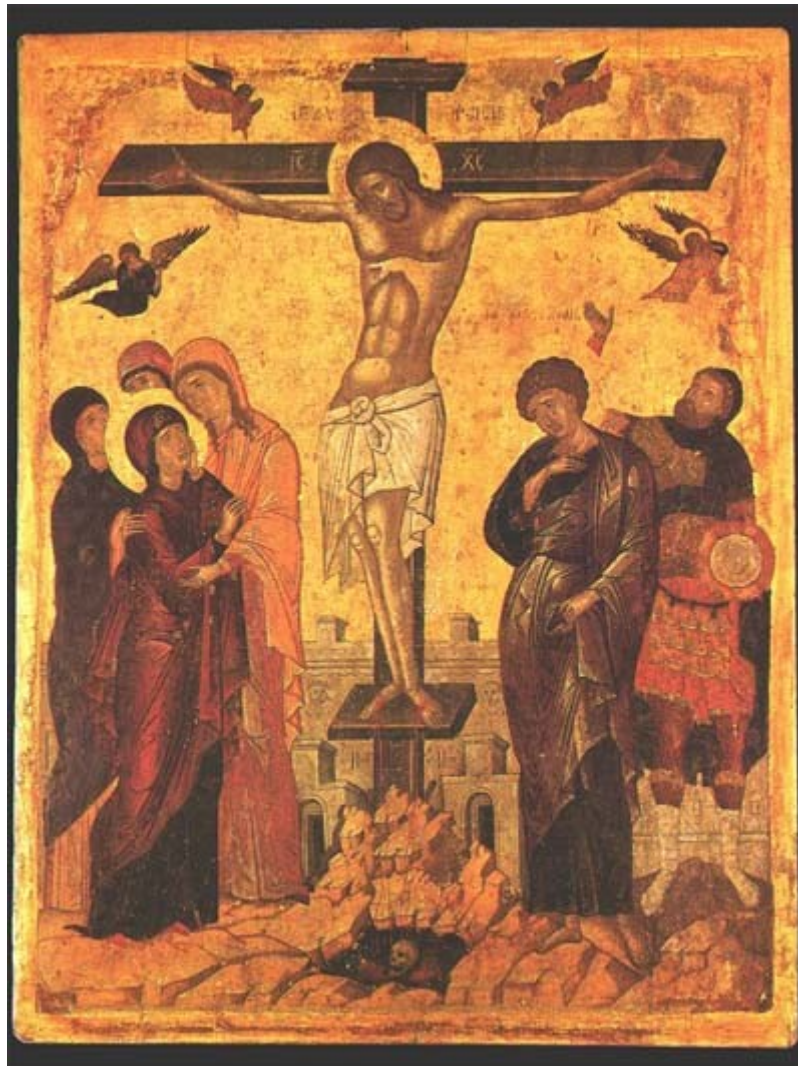
La Foi Transmise, April 5, 1970

They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not.

Deuteronomy 32: 17



The goddess Kali



Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.

Hinduism.

The Power of the Pagan Gods.

Hinduism's Assault Upon Christianity.

All the gods of the pagans are demons (Psalm 95:5).

The following article comes from the experience of a woman who, after attending high school in a

Roman Catholic convent, practiced Hinduism for twenty years until finally, by God's grace, she was converted to the Orthodox Faith, finding the end of her search for truth in the Russian Church Outside of Russia. She currently resides on the West Coast. May her words serve to open the eyes of those Orthodox Christians who might be tempted to follow the blind "Liberal" theologians who are now making their appearance even in the Orthodox Church, and whose answer to the assault of neo-paganism upon the Church of Christ is to conduct a "dialogue" with its wizards and join them in worshipping the very gods of the pagans.

The Attractions of Hinduism.

I was just sixteen when two events set the course of my life. I came to Dominican Catholic Convent in San Rafael (California) and encountered Christianity for the first time. The same year I also encountered Hinduism in the person of a Hindu monk, a Swami, who was shortly to become my guru or teacher. A battle had begun, but I wasn't to understand this for nearly twenty years.

At the convent I was taught the basic truths of Christianity. Here lie the strength of the humble and a snare to the proud. St. James wrote truly: ***God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble*** (4:6). And how proud I was; I wouldn't accept original sin and I wouldn't accept hell. And I had many, many arguments against them. One Sister of great charity gave me the key when she said: "Pray for the gift of faith." But already the Swami's training had taken hold, and I thought it debasing to beg anyone, even God, for anything. But much later, I remembered what she had said. Years later the seed of Christian faith that had been planted in me emerged from an endless sea of despair.

In time the nature of the books that I brought back to school with me, all in plain covered wrappers, was discovered. Books like the **Bhagavad Gita**, the **Upanishads**, the **Vedantasara**, the **Ashtavakra Samhita**... In part my secret was out, but nothing much was said. No doubt the Sisters thought it would pass, as indeed most of the intellectual conceits of young girls do. But one bold nun told me the truth. It's a very unpopular truth and one that is rarely heard today. She said that I would go to hell if I died in Hinduism after knowing the truth of Christianity. Saint Peter put it this way: ***For by whom a man is overcome, of the same also he is the slave. For if, flying from the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they be again entangled in them and overcome, their latter state is become unto them worse than the former. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of justice, than after they have known it, to turn back from that holy commandment which was delivered to them*** (2 Peter 2:19-21). How I despised that Sister for her bigotry. But if she were alive today I would thank her with all my heart. What she told me nagged, as truth will, and it was to lead me finally to the fullness of Holy Orthodoxy.

The important thing that I got at the convent was a measuring stick, and one day I would use it to discover Hinduism a fraud.

The situation has changed so much since I was in school. What was an isolated case of Hinduism has developed into an epidemic. Now one must have an intelligent understanding of Hindu dogmatics if one is to prevent young Christians from committing spiritual suicide when they encounter Eastern religions.



The appeal of Hinduism is full spectrum; there are blandishments for every faculty and appeals to every weakness, but particularly to pride. And being very proud, even at sixteen, it was to these that I first fell prey. Original sin, hell, and the problem of pain troubled me. I'd never taken them seriously before I came to the convent. Then, the Swami presented an "intellectually satisfying"



alternative for every uncomfortable Christian dogma. Hell was, after all, only a temporary state of the soul brought on by our own bad karma (past actions) in this or in a former life. And, of course, a finite cause couldn't have an infinite effect. Original sin was marvelously transmuted into Original Divinity. This was my birth right, and nothing I could ever do would abrogate this glorious end. I was Divine. I was God: "the Infinite Dreamer, dreaming finite dreams."

As for the problem of pain, the Hindu philosophy known as Vedanta has a really elegant philosophical system to take care of it. In a nutshell, pain was maya or illusion. It had no real existence — and what's more, the Advaitin could claim to prove it!

In another area, Hinduism appeals to the very respectable error of assuming that man is perfectable: through education (in their terms, the guru system) and through "evolution" (the constant progressive development of man spiritually). An argument is also made from the standpoint of cultural relativity; this has now assumed such respectability that it's a veritable sin (with those who don't believe in sin) to challenge relativity of any sort. What could be more reasonable, they say, than different nations and peoples worshipping God differently? God, after all, is God, and the variety in modes of worship make for a general religious "enrichment."

But perhaps the most generally compelling attraction is pragmatism. The entire philosophical construct of Hinduism is buttressed by the practical religious instructions given to the disciple by his guru. With these practices the disciple is invited to verify the philosophy by his own experience. Nothing has to be accepted on faith. And contrary to popular notions, there aren't any mysteries — just a tremendous amount of esoteric material — so there simply is no need for faith. You are told: "Try it, and see if it works." This pragmatic approach is supremely tempting to the Western mind. It appears so very "scientific." But almost every student falls right into a kind of pragmatic fallacy: i.e., if the practices work (and they do in fact work), he believes that the system is true, and implicitly, that it is good — This, of course, doesn't follow. All that can really be said is: if they work, then they work. But missing this point, you can understand how a little psychic experience gives the poor student a great deal of conviction.

This brings me to the last blandishment that I'll mention, which is "spiritual experiences." These are psychic and/or diabolic in origin. But who among the practitioners has any way of distinguishing delusion from true spiritual experience? They have no measuring stick. But don't think that what they see, hear, smell and touch in these experiences are the result of simple mental aberration. They aren't. They are what our Orthodox tradition calls **prelest**. It's an important word, because it refers to the exact condition of a person having Hindu "spiritual experiences." There is no precise equivalent to the term **prelest** in the English lexicon. It covers the whole range of false spiritual experiences: from simple illusion and beguilement to actual possession. In every case the counterfeit is taken as genuine and the overall effect is an accelerated growth of pride. A warm, comfortable sense of special importance settles over the person in **prelest**, and this compensates for all his austerities and pain.

In his first Epistle, Saint John warns the early Christians: ***Dearly beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits if they be of God...*** (4:1).

Saint Gregory of Sinai was careful to instruct his monks on the dangers of these experiences: "All

around, near to beginners and the self-willed, the demons are wont to spread the nets of thoughts and pernicious fantasies and prepare moats for their downfall..." A monk asked him: "What is a man to do when the demon takes the form of an angel of light?" The Saint replied: "In this case a man needs great power of discernment to discriminate rightly between good and evil. So in your heedlessness, do not be carried away too quickly by what you see, but be weighty (not easy to move) and, carefully testing everything, accept the good and reject the evil. Always you must test and examine, and only afterwards believe. Know that the actions of grace are manifest, and the demon, in spite of his transformations, cannot produce them: namely, meekness, friendliness, humility, hatred of the world, cutting off passions and lust — which are the effects of grace. Works of the demons are: arrogance, conceit, intimidation and all evil. By such actions you will be able to discern whether the light shining in your heart is of God or of satan. Lettuce looks like mustard, and vinegar in color like wine; but when you taste them the palate discerns and defines the difference between each. In the same way the soul, if it has discernment, can discriminate by mental taste the gifts of the Holy Spirit from the fantasies and illusions of satan."

The misguided or proud spiritual aspirant is most vulnerable to **prelest**. And the success and durability of Hinduism depends very largely on this false mysticism. How very appealing it is to drug using young people, who have already been initiated into these kinds of experiences. The last few years have seen the flowering and proliferating of Swamis. They saw their opportunity for fame and wealth in this ready-made market. And they took it.

A War of dogma.

Today christianity is taking the thrusts of a foe that is all but invisible to the faithful. And if it can, it will pierce to the heart before declaring its name. The enemy is Hinduism, and the war being waged is a war of dogma.

When Vedanta Societies were founded in this country, around the turn of the century, first efforts were directed to establishing that there **was no real difference** between Hinduism and Christianity. Not only was there no conflict, but a good Christian would be a better Christian by studying and practicing the Vedanta; he would understand the real Christianity.

In early lectures, the Swamis attempted to show that those ideas which seemed peculiar to Christianity — like the Logos and the Cross — really had their origin in India. And those ideas which seemed peculiar to Hinduism — like rebirth, transmigration of the soul and samadhi (or trance) were also to be found in Christian scripture — when it was properly interpreted.

This kind of bait caught many sincere but misguided Christians. The early push was against what might be called "sectarian" dogmas, and for a so-called scientific religion based on a comparative study of all religions. Primary stress was always on this: there is no such thing as difference. All is One. All differences are just on the surface; they are apparent or relative, not real. All this is clear from published lectures that were delivered in the early 1900's. Today we are in great danger because this effort was so very successful.

Now common parlance has "dogma" a derisive term. But this scorn could not have originated with those who know that it refers to the most precious heritage of the Church. However, once the bad connotation became fixed, the timid, who never like to be associated with the unpopular, began to speak of "rigid dogma," which is redundant but bespeaks disapproval. So the attitude was insidiously absorbed from "broad-minded" critics who either didn't know that dogma states what Christianity is, or simply didn't like what Christianity is all about.

The resulting predisposition of many Christians to back down when faced with the accusation of holding to dogma has given the Hindus no small measure of help. And aid from within had strategic advantages.

The incredible fact is that few see that the very power that would overturn Christian dogma is itself

nothing but an opposing system of dogmas. The two cannot blend or "enrich" each other because they are wholly antithetical.

If Christians are persuaded to throw out (or what is tactically more clever) to alter their dogmas to suit the demand for a more up-to-date or "universal" Christianity, they have lost everything, because what is valued by Christians and by Hindus is immediately derived from their dogmas. **And Hindu dogmas are a direct repudiation of Christian dogmas.** This leads us to a staggering conclusion: **What Christians believe to be evil, Hindus believe to be good, and conversely: What Hindus believe to be evil, Christians believe to be good.**

The real struggle lies in this: that the ultimate sin for the Christian, is the ultimate realization of good for the Hindu. Christians have always acknowledged **pride** as the basic sin — the fountainhead of all sin. And Lucifer is the archetype when he says. "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will ascend above the clouds; I will be like the Most High." On a lower level, it is pride that turns even man's virtues into sins. But for the Hindu in general, and the Advaitin or Vedantin in particular, the only "sin" is not to believe in yourself and in Humanity as God Himself. In the words of Swami Vivekananda (who was the foremost modern advocate of Vedanta): "You do not yet understand India! We Indians are Man-worshippers after all. Our God is Man!" The doctrine of mukti or salvation consists in this: that "Man is to become Divine by realizing the Divine."

From this one can see the dogmas of Hinduism and Christianity standing face to face, each defying the other on the nature of God, the nature of man and the purpose of human existence.

But when Christians accept the Hindu propaganda that there is no battle going on, that the differences between Christianity and Hinduism are only apparent and not real — then Hindu ideas are free to take over the souls of Christians, winning the battle without a struggle. And the end result of this battle is truly shocking; the corrupting power of Hinduism is immense. In my own case, with all of the basically sound training that I received at the convent, twenty years in Hinduism brought me to the very doors of the love of evil. You see, in India "God" is also worshipped as Evil, in the form of the goddess Kali. But about this I will speak in the next section, on Hindu practices.

This is the end in store when there is no more Christian dogma. I say this from personal experience, because I have worshipped Kali in India and in this country. And she who is satan is no joke. **If you give up the Living God, the throne is not going to remain empty.**

Hindu Places and Practices.

In 1956 I did field work with headhunters in the Philippines. My interest was in primitive religion -particularly in what is termed an "unacculturated" area — where there had been few missionaries. When I arrived in Ifugao (that's the name of the tribe), I didn't believe in black magic; when I left, I did. An Ifugao priest (a munbaki) named Talupa became my best friend and informant. In time I learned that he was famous for his skill in the black art. He took me to the baki, which is a ceremony of ritualistic magic that occurred almost every night during the harvest season. A dozen or so priests gathered in a hut and the night was spent invoking deities and ancestors, drinking rice wine and making sacrifices to the two small images known as bulol. They were washed in chicken blood, which had been caught in a dish and used to divine the future before it was used on the images. They studied the blood for the size and number of bubbles in it, the time it took to coagulate; also, the color and configuration of the chicken's organs gave them information. Each night I dutifully took notes. But this was just the beginning. I won't elaborate on Ifugao magic; suffice it to say that by the time I left, I had seen such a variety and quantity of supernatural occurrences that any scientific explanation was virtually impossible. If I had been predisposed to believe anything when I arrived, it was that magic had a wholly natural explanation. Also, let me say that I don't frighten very easily. But the fact is that I left Ifugao because I saw that their rituals not only worked, but they had worked on me at least twice.

I say all this so that what I say about Hindu practices and places of worship will not seem incredible, the product of a "heated brain."

Eleven years after the Ifugao episode, I made a pilgrimage to the Cave of Amarnath, deep in the Himalayas. Hindu tradition has it the most sacred place of Siva worship, the place where he manifests himself to his devotees and grants boons. It is a long and difficult journey over the Mahaguna, a 14,000 foot pass, and across a glacier; so there was plenty of time to worship him mentally on the way, especially since the boy who led the pack pony didn't speak any English, and I didn't speak any Hindi. This time I was predisposed to believe that the god whom I had worshipped and meditated on for years would graciously manifest himself to me.

The Siva image in the cave is itself a curiosity: an ice image formed by dripping water. It waxes and wanes with the moon. When it is full moon, the natural image reaches the ceiling of the cave — about 15 feet — and by the dark of the moon almost nothing of it remains. And so it waxes and wanes each month. To my knowledge, no one has explained this phenomenon. I approached the cave at an auspicious time, when the image had waxed full. I was soon to worship my god with green coconut, incense, red and white pieces of cloth, nuts, raisins and sugar — all the ritually prescribed items. I entered the cave with tears of devotion. What happened then is hard to describe. The place was vibrant — just like an Ifugao hut with baki in full swing. Stunned to find it a place of inexplicable wrongness, I left retching before the priest could finish making my offering to the great ice image.



The facade of Hinduism had cracked when I entered the Siva Cave, but it was still some time before I broke free. During the interim, I searched for something to support the collapsing edifice, but I found nothing. In retrospect, it seems to me that we often know something is really bad, long before we can really believe it. This applies to Hindu "spiritual practices" quite as much as it does to the so-called "holy places."

When a student is initiated by the guru, he is given a Sanskrit mantra (a personal magic formula), and specific religious practices. These are entirely esoteric and exist in the oral tradition. You won't find them in print and you are very unlikely to learn about them from an initiate, because of the strong negative sanctions which are enforced to protect this secrecy. In effect the guru invites his disciple to prove the philosophy by his own experience. The point is, these practices do in fact work. The student may get powers or "siddhis." These are things like reading minds, power to heal or destroy, to produce objects, to tell the future and so on — the whole gamut of deadly psychic parlor tricks. But far worse than this, he invariably falls into a state of prelest, where he takes delusion for reality. He has "spiritual experiences" of unbounded sweetness and peace. He has visions of deities and of light. (One might recall that Lucifer himself can appear as an angel of light). By "delusion" I don't mean that he doesn't really experience these things; I mean rather that they are not from God. There is, of course, the philosophical construct that supports every experience, so the practices and the philosophy sustain each other and the system becomes very tight.

Actually, Hinduism is not so much an intellectual pursuit as a system of practices, and these are quite literally — black magic. That is, if you do x, you get y: a simple contract. But the terms are

not spelled out and rarely does a student ask where the experiences originate or who is extending him credit — in the form of powers and "beautiful" experiences. It's the classical Faustian situation, but what the practitioner doesn't know is that the **price may well be his immortal soul.**

There's a vast array of practices — practices to suit every temperament. The chosen deity may be with form: a god or goddess; or formless: the Absolute Brahman. The relationship to the chosen Ideal also varies — it may be that of a child, mother, father, friend, beloved, servant or, in the case of Advaita Vedanta, the "relationship" is identity. At the time of initiation the guru gives his disciple a mantra and this determines the path he will follow and the practices he will take up. The guru also dictates how the disciple will live his everyday life. In the Vedanta (or monistic system) single disciples are not to marry; all their powers are to be directed towards success in the practices. Nor is a sincere disciple a meat eater, because meat blunts the keen edge of perception. The guru is literally regarded as God Himself — he is the disciple's Redeemer.

At base, the many "spiritual" exercises derive from only a few root practices. I'll just skim over them.

First, there's idolatry. It may be the worship of an image or a picture, with offerings of light, camphor, incense, water and sweets. The image may be fanned with a yak tail, bathed, dressed and put to bed. This sounds very childish, but it is prudent not to underestimate the psychic experiences which they can elicit. Vedantic idolatry takes the form of self-worship — either mentally or externally, with all the ritualistic props. A common aphoristic saying in India epitomizes this self-worship. It is **So Ham, So Ham**, or "I am He, I am He."

Then there's Japa, or the repetition of the Sanskrit mantra given to the disciple at his initiation. In effect, it's the chanting of a magic formula.

Pranayama consists in breathing exercises used in conjunction with Japa. There are other practices which are peculiar to the Tantra or worship of God as Mother, the female principle, power, energy, the principle of evolution and action. They're referred to as the five Ms. They're overtly evil and rather sick-making, so I won't describe them. But they, too, have found their way to this country. Swami Vivekananda prescribed this brand of Hinduism along with the Vedanta. He said: "I worship the Terrible! It is a mistake to hold that with all men pleasure is the motive. Quite as many are born to seek after pain. Let us worship the Terror for Its own sake. How few have dared to worship Death, or Kali! Let us worship Death!" Again, the Swami's words on the goddess Kali: "There are some who scoff at the existence of Kali. Yet today She is out there amongst the people. They are frantic with fear, and the soldiery have been called to deal out death. Who can say that God does not manifest Himself as Evil as well as Good? But only the Hindu dares worship Him as the Evil."

The great pity is that this one-pointed practice of evil is carried on in the firm conviction that it's good. And the salvation that is vainly sought through arduous self-effort in Hinduism can only be wrought by God through Christian self-effacement.

Evangelizing the West.

In 1893 an unknown Hindu monk arrived at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago. He was Swami Vivekananda, whom I have mentioned already. He made a stunning impression on those who heard him, both by his appearance — beturbaned and robed in orange and crimson — and by what he said. He was immediately lionized by high society in Boston and New York. Philosophers at Harvard were mightily impressed. And it wasn't long until he had gathered a hard core of disciples who supported him and his grandiose dream: the evangelizing of the Western world by Hinduism, and more particularly, by Vedantic (or monistic) Hinduism. Vedanta Societies were established in the large cities of this country and in Europe. But these centers were only a part of his work. More important was **introducing Vedantic ideas into the bloodstream of academic thinking. Dissemination was the goal.** It mattered little to Vivekananda whether credit was given to

Hinduism or not, so long as the message of Vedanta reached everyone. On many occasions he said: Knock on every door. Tell everyone he is Divine.

Today parts of his message are carried in paperbacks that you can find in any bookstore — books by Aldous Huxley, Christopher Isherwood, Somerset Maugham, Teilhard de Chardin, and even Thomas Merton.

Thomas Merton, of course, constitutes a special threat to Christians, because he presents himself as a contemplative Christian monk, and his work has already affected the vitals of Roman Catholicism, its monasticism. Shortly before his death, Father Merton wrote an appreciative introduction to a new translation of the **Bhagavad Gita**, which is the spiritual manual or "Bible" of all Hindus, and one of the foundation blocks of monism or Advaita Vedanta. The Gita, it must be remembered, opposes almost every important teaching of Christianity. His book on the **Zen Masters**, published posthumously, is also noteworthy, because the entire work is based on a treacherous mistake: the assumption that all the so-called "mystical experiences" in every religion are true. He should have known better. The warnings against this are loud and clear, both in Holy Scripture and in the Holy Fathers.

Today I know of one Catholic monastery in California where cloistered monks are experimenting with Hindu religious practices. They were trained by an Indian who became a Catholic priest. Unless the ground had been prepared, I think this sort of thing couldn't be happening. But, after all, this was the purpose of Vivekananda's coming to the West: to prepare the ground.

Vivekananda's message of Vedanta is simple enough. It looks like more than it is because of its trappings: some dazzling Sanskrit jargon, and a very intricate philosophical structure. The message is essentially this: All religions are true, but Vedanta is the ultimate truth. Differences are only a matter of "levels of truth." In Vivekananda's words: "Man is not travelling from error to truth, but climbing up from truth to truth, from truth that is lower to truth that is higher. The matter of today is the spirit of the future. The worm of today — the God of tomorrow. The Vedanta rests on this: that man is God. So it is for man to work out his own salvation. Vivekananda put it this way: "Who can help the Infinite? Even the hand that comes to you through the darkness will have to be your own."

Vivekananda was canny enough to know that straight Vedanta would be too much for Christians to follow, right off the bat. But "levels of truth" provided a nice bridge to perfect ecumenism — where there is no conflict because everyone is right. In the Swami's words: "If one religion be true, then all the others also must be true. Thus the Hindu faith is yours as much as mine. We Hindus do not merely tolerate, we unite ourselves with every religion, praying in the mosque of the Mohammedan, worshipping before the fire of the Zoroastrian, and kneeling to the cross of the Christian. We know that all religions alike, from the lowest fetishism to the highest absolutism, are but so many attempts of the human soul to grasp and realize the Infinite. So we gather all these flowers and, binding them together with the cords of love, make them into a wonderful bouquet of worship."

Still, all religions were only steps to the ultimate religion, which was Advaita Vedanta. He had a special contempt for Christianity, which at best was a "low truth" — a dualistic truth. In private conversation he said that only a coward would turn the other cheek. But whatever he said about other religions, he always returned to the necessity of Advaita Vedanta. "Art, science, and religion," he said, "are but three different ways of expressing a single truth. But in order to understand this we must have the theory of Advaita."

The appeal to today's youth is unmistakable. Vedanta declares the perfect freedom of every soul to be itself. It denies all distinction between sacred and secular: they are only different ways of expressing the single truth. And the sole purpose of religion is to provide for the needs of different temperaments: a god and a practice to suit everyone. In a word, religion is "doing your own thing,"

All this may sound far-fetched; but Vivekananda did an effective job. Now I'll show how successful

he was in introducing these Hindu ideas into Roman Catholicism, where his success has been the most striking.

Swami Vivekananda first came to America to represent Hinduism at the 1893 Parliament of Religions. 1968 was the 75th anniversary of this event, and at that time a Symposium of Religions was held under the auspices of the Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago. Roman Catholicism was represented by a Dominican theologian from De Paul University, Father Robert Campbell. Swami Bhashyananda opened the meeting with the reading of good-will messages from three very important people. The second was from an American Cardinal.

Father Campbell began the afternoon session with a talk on the conflict of the traditionalist versus the modernist in modern Catholicism. He said: "In my own university, surveys taken of Catholic student attitudes show a great swing towards the liberal views within the last five or six years. I know that the great Swami Vivekananda would himself be in favor of most of the trends in the direction of liberal Christianity." What Father Campbell apparently didn't know was that the modernistic doctrines he described were **not Christian at all**; they were pure and simple Vedanta.

So there will be no question of misinterpretation, I shall quote the Father's words on the modernists' interpretation of five issues, just as they appeared in three international journals: the **Prabuddha Bharata** published in Calcutta, the **Vedanta Kesheri** published in Madras, and **Vedanta and the West**, published in London.

On doctrines: "Truth is a relative thing, these doctrines and dogmas (i.e., the nature of God, how man should live, and the after-life) are not fixed things, they change, and we are coming to the point where we deny some things that we formerly affirmed as sacred truths."

On God: "Jesus is divine, true, but any one of us can be divine. As a matter of fact, on many points, I think you will find the liberal Christian outlook is moving in the direction of the East in much of its philosophy — both in its concept of an impersonal God and in the concept that we are all divine."

On Original Sin: "This concept is very offensive to liberal Christianity, which holds that man is perfectable by training and proper education."

On the world: "The liberal affirms that it can be improved and that we should devote ourselves to building a more humane society instead of pining to go to heaven."

On other religions: "The liberal group says: 'Don't worry about the old-fashioned things such as seeking converts, etc., but let us develop better relations with other religions.'"

So says Father Campbell for the modernistic Catholics. The modernist has been led like a child by the generous offer of higher truth, deeper philosophy and greater sublimity — which can be had by merely **subordinating the living Christ** to modern man.

Here, then, we see the spectacular success of Hinduism, or Swami Vivekananda, or the power behind Vivekananda. It's made a clean sweep of Roman Catholicism. Her watchdogs have taken the thief as the friend of the master, and the house is made desolate before their eyes. The thief said: "Let us have interfaith understanding," and he was through the gate. And the expedient was so simple. The Christian Hindus (the Swamis) had only to recite the **Vedanta philosophy using Christian terms**. But the Hindu Christians (the modernistic Catholics), had to extrapolate their religion to include Hinduism. Then necessarily, truth became error, and error, truth. Alas, some would now drag the Orthodox Church into this desolate house. But let the modernists remember the words of Isaiah: ***Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!*** (Is. 5:20-21).

The Goal of Hinduism: The Universal Religion.

I was amazed to see the inroads that Hinduism had made during my absence from Christianity. It may seem odd that I discovered these changes all at once. This was because my guru held dominion over my every action and all this time I was, quite literally, "cloistered," even in the world. The Swami's severe injunctions kept me from reading any Christian books or speaking with Christians. For all their pretentious talk that all religions are true, the Swamis know that Christ is their nemesis. So for twenty years I was totally immersed in the study of oriental philosophy and in the practice of its disciplines. I was ordered by my guru to get a degree in philosophy and anthropology, but these were only avocations that filled time between the important parts of my life: time with Swami and time with the teachings and practices of Vedanta.



Swami Vivekananda's mission has been fulfilled in many particulars, but one piece is yet to be accomplished. This is the establishing of a Universal Religion. In this rests the ultimate victory of the Devil. Because the Universal Religion may not contain any "individualistic, sectarian" ideas, it will have nothing in common with Christianity, except in its semantics. The Word and the Flesh may be fires in the stove and the chimney, but the Universal Religion will be a total conflagration of Christianity.

The point of all this is that the Jesuit priest Teilhard de Chardin has already laid the foundation for a "New Christianity," and **it is precisely to Swami Vivekananda's specifications for this Universal Religion.**

Teilhard de Chardin is an anomaly because, unlike traditional Roman theologians, he is highly appreciated by scholarly clergy who, in charity, I believe don't have any idea what he is talking about. Because Teilhard's ideas are to a great extent plagiarisms from Vedanta and Tantra gummed together with Christian-sounding jargon and heavily painted with evolutionism.

Let me quote one example from him: "The world I live in becomes divine. Yet these flames do not consume me, nor do these waters dissolve me; for, unlike the false forms of monism that impel us through passivity towards unconsciousness, the pan-Christianism I am finding places union at the term of an arduous process of differentiation. I shall attain the spirit only by releasing completely and exhaustively all the powers of matter... I recognize that, following the example of the incarnate God revealed to me by the Catholic faith, I can be saved only by becoming one with the universe." This is outright Hinduism. It has a little bit of everything in it — a recognizable verse from an Upanishad and pieces from several of the philosophical systems along with their practices.

In a press conference given by Father Arrupe, General of the Society of Jesus, in June of 1965, Teilhard de Chardin was defended on the grounds that "he was not a professional theologian and philosopher, so that it was possible for him to be unaware of all the philosophical and theological implications attached to some of his intuitions." Then Father Arrupe praised him: "Pere Teilhard is one of the great masters of contemporary thought, and his success is not to be wondered at. He carried through, in fact, a great attempt to reconcile the world of science with the world of faith." The upshot of this reconciliation is a new religion. And in Teilhard's words: "The new religion will be exactly the same as our old Christianity but with a new life drawn from the legitimate evolution of its dogmas as they come in contact with new ideas." With this bit of background let us look at Vivekananda's Universal Religion and Teilhard's "New Christianity."

Second, its foundation is evolution. In Teilhard's words: "A hitherto unknown form of religion — one that no one could yet have imagined or described, for a lack of a universal large enough and organic enough to contain it — is burgeoning in men's hearts, from a seed sown by the idea of

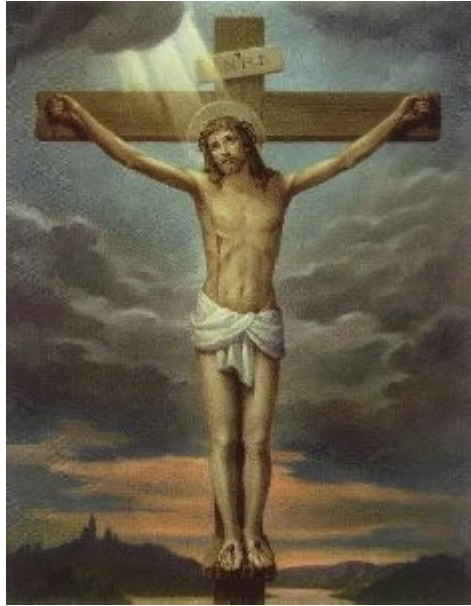
evolution." And again: "Original sin... binds us hand and foot and drains the blood from us" because "as it is now expressed, it represents a survival of static concepts that are an anachronism in our evolutionist system of thought." Such a pseudo-religious concept of "evolution," which was consciously rejected by Christian thought, has been basic to Hindu thought for millenia; every Hindu religious practice assumes it.

Third, the Universal Religion will not be built around any particular personality, but will be founded on "eternal principles." Teilhard is well on his way towards the impersonal God when he writes: "Christ is becoming more and more indispensable to me... but at the same time the figure of the historical Christ is becoming less and less substantial and distinct to me." "My view of him is continually carrying me further and higher along the axis of hope!)." Sad to say, this non-historical "Christ" spirit is Hindu orthodoxy, not Christian.

Fourth, the main purpose of the Universal Religion will be to satisfy the spiritual needs of men and women of diverse types. Individualistic, sectarian religions cannot offer this. Teilhard believed that Christianity did not fit everybody's religious aspirations. He records his discontent in these words: "Christianity is still to some extent a refuge, but it does not embrace, or satisfy or even lead the 'modern soul' any longer."

Fifth and final, within the Universal Religion (or New Christianity) we are all wending our way to the same destination. For Teilhard de Chardin it is the Omega Point, which belongs to something that is beyond representation. For Vivekananda it is the *Om*, the sacred syllable of the Hindus: "All humanity, converging at the foot of that sacred place where is set the symbol that is no symbol, the name that is beyond all sound."

Where will it end, this deformation of Christianity and triumph of Hinduism? Will we have the Om, or will we have the Omega?



A Fakir's “Miracle” and the Prayer of Jesus.

By Archimandrite Nicholas Drobyazgin

The author of this testimony, a new martyr of the Communist Yoke, enjoyed a brilliant worldly career as a naval commander, being also deeply involved in occultism as editor of the occult journal *Rebus*. Being saved from almost certain death at sea by a miracle of St. Seraphim, he made a pilgrimage to Sarov and then renounced his worldly career and occult ties to become a monk. After being ordained priest, he served as a missionary in China, India and Tibet, as the priest of various embassy churches, and as abbot of several monasteries. After 1914 he lived at the Kiev Caves Lavra, where he discoursed to the young people who visited him concerning the influence of occultism on contemporary events in Russia. In the autumn of 1924, one month after he had been visited by a certain Tuholx, the author of the book *Black Magic*, he was murdered in his cell “by persons unknown,” with obvious Bolshevik connivance, stabbed by a dagger with a special handle apparently of occult significance.

The incident here described, revealing the nature of one of the mediumistic “gifts” which are common in Eastern religions, took place not long before 1900, and was recorded about 1922 by Dr. A.P. Pimofievich, lately of Novo-Diveyevo Convent, N.Y. (Russian text in *Orthodox Life*, 1956, no. 1.).

ON A WONDROUS early tropical morning our ship was cleaving the waters of the Indian Ocean, nearing the island of Ceylon. The lively faces of the passengers, for the most part Englishmen with their families who were travelling to their posts or on business in their Indian colony, looked avidly in the distance, seeking out with their eyes the enchanted isle, which for practically all of them had been bound up since childhood with so much that was interesting and mysterious in the tales and descriptions of travellers.

The island was still scarcely visible when already a fine, intoxicating, fragrance from the trees growing on it more and more enveloped the ship with each passing breeze. Finally a kind of blue cloud lay on the horizon, ever increasing in size as the ship speedily approached. Already one could notice the buildings spread out along the shore, buried in the verdure of majestic palms, and the

many-colored crowd of the local inhabitants who were awaiting the ship's arrival. The passengers, who had quickly become acquainted with each other on the trip, were laughing and conversing animatedly with each other on the deck, admiring the wondrous scene of the fairy-tale isle as it unfolded before their eyes. The ship swung slowly around, preparing to moor at the dock of the port city of Colombo.

Here the ship stopped to take on coal, and the passengers had sufficient time to go ashore. The day was so hot that many passengers decided not to leave the ship until evening, when a pleasant coolness replaced the heat of the day. A small group of eight people, to which I joined myself, was led by Colonel Elliott, who had been in Colombo before and knew the city and its environs well. He made an alluring proposition. "Ladies and gentlemen! Wouldn't you like to go a few miles out of town and pay a visit to one of the local magician-fakirs? Perhaps we shall see something interesting." All accepted the colonel's proposition with enthusiasm.

It was already evening when we left behind the noisy streets of the city and rolled along a marvellous jungle road which was twinkling with the sparks of millions of fireflies. Finally, the road suddenly widened and in front of us there was a small clearing surrounded on all sides by jungle. At the edge of the clearing under a big tree there was a kind of hut, next to which a small bonfire was smouldering and a thin, emaciated old man with a turban on his head sat cross-legged and with his unmoving gaze directed at the fire. Despite our noisy arrival, the old man continued to sit completely immovable, not paying us the slightest attention. Somewhere from out of the darkness a youth appeared and, going up to the colonel, quietly asked him something. In a short while he brought out several stools and our group arranged itself in a semi-circle not far from the bonfire. A light and fragrant smoke arose. The old man sat in the same pose, apparently noticing no one and nothing. The half-moon which arose dispelled to some extent the darkness of the night, and in its ghostly light all objects took on fantastic outlines. Involuntarily everyone became quiet and waited to see what would happen.

"Look! Look there, on the tree!" Miss Mary cried in an excited whisper. We all turned our heads in the direction indicated. And indeed, the whole surface of the immense crown of the tree under which the fakir was sitting was as it were gently flowing in the soft illumination of the moon, and the tree itself began gradually to melt and lose its contours; literally, some unseen hand had thrown over it an airy covering which became more and more concentrated with every moment. Soon the undulating surface of the sea presented itself with complete clarity before our astonished gaze. With a light rumble one wave followed another, making foaming white-caps; light clouds were floating in a sky which had become blue. Stunned, we could not tear ourselves away from this striking picture.

And then in the distance there appeared a white ship. Thick smoke poured out of its two large smokestacks. It quickly approached us, cleaving the water. To our great amazement we recognized it as our own ship, the one on which we had come to Colombo! A whisper passed through our ranks when we read on the stern, traced out in gold letters, the name of our ship, Luisa. But what astounded us most of all was what we saw on the ship — ourselves! Don't forget that at the time when all this happened cinematography hadn't even been thought of and it was impossible even to conceive of something like this. Each of us saw ourselves on the ship's deck amongst people who were laughing and talking to each other. But what was especially astonishing: I saw not only myself, but at the same time the whole deck of the ship down to the smallest details, as if in a bird's-eye view — which of course simply could not be in actuality. At one and the same time I saw myself among the passengers, and the sailors working at the other end of the ship, and the captain in his cabin, and even our monkey "Nelly," a favorite of all, eating bananas on the main mast. All my companions at the same time, each in his own way, were greatly excited at what they were seeing, expressing their emotions with soft cries and excited whispers.

I had completely forgotten that I was a priest-monk and, it would seem, had no business at all participating in such a spectacle. The spell was so powerful that both the mind and the heart were silent. My heart began to beat painfully in alarm. Suddenly I was beside myself. A fear took hold of

my whole being.

My lips began to move and say: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner!" Immediately I felt relieved. It was just as if some mysterious chains which had bound me began to fall away. The prayer became more concentrated, and with it my peace of soul returned. I continued to look at the tree, and suddenly, as if pursued by the wind, the picture became clouded and was dispersed. I saw nothing more except the big tree, illuminated by the light of the moon, and likewise the fakir sitting in silence by the bonfire, while my companions continued to express what they were experiencing while gazing at the picture, which for them had not been broken off.

But then something apparently happened to the fakir also. He reeled to the side. The youth ran up to him in alarm. The seance was suddenly broken up.

Deeply moved by everything they had experienced, the spectators stood up, animatedly sharing their impressions and not understanding at all why the whole thing had been cut off so sharply and unexpectedly. The youth explained it as owing to the exhaustion of the fakir, who was sitting as before, his head down, and paying not the slightest attention to those present.

Having generously rewarded the fakir through the youth for the opportunity to be participants of such an astonishing spectacle, our group quickly got together for the trip back. While starting out, I involuntarily turned back once more in order to imprint in my memory the whole scene, and suddenly — I shuddered from an unpleasant feeling. My gaze met the gaze of the fakir, which was full of hatred. It was but for a single instant, and then he again assumed his habitual position; but this glance once and for all opened my eyes to the realization of whose power it was that had produced this "miracle."

Eastern "spirituality" is by no means limited to such mediumistic "tricks" as this fakir practiced; we shall see some of its more sincere aspects in the next chapter. Still, all the power that is given to the practitioners of Eastern religions comes from the same phenomenon of mediumism, whose central characteristic is a passiveness before "spiritual" reality that enables one to enter into contact with the "gods" of the non-Christian religions. This phenomenon may be seen in Eastern Meditation" (even when it may be given the name of "Christian"), and perhaps even in those strange "gifts" which in our days of spiritual decline are mislabeled "charismatic.."

Other Eastern Religions.

Eastern Meditation Invades Christianity.

As an answer to the question of the possibility of a "dialogue" of Orthodox Christianity with the various non-Christian religions, the reader has been presented the testimony of three Orthodox Christians who confirm, on the basis of Orthodox doctrine and their own experience, what the Orthodox Church has always taught: that Orthodox Christians do not at all have the "same God" as the so-called "monotheists" who deny the Holy Trinity; that the gods of the pagans are in fact demons; and that the experiences and powers which the pagan "gods" can and do provide are satanic in nature. All this in no way contradicts the words of St. Peter, that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is acceptable to Him (Acts 10:34-5); or the words of St. Paul, that God in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness (Acts 14:16-17). Those who live in the bondage of satan, the prince of this world (John 12:31), in darkness which is unenlightened by the Christian Gospel — are judged in the light of that natural testimony of God which every man may have, despite this bondage.

For the Christian, however, who has been given God's Revelation, no "dialogue" is possible with those outside the Faith. Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?... Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord (2 Cor. 6:14-17). The Christian calling is rather to bring the light of Orthodox Christianity to them, even as St. Peter did to the God-fearing household of Cornelius the Centurian (Acts 10:34-48), in order to enlighten their darkness and join them to the chosen flock of Christ's Church.

All of this is obvious enough to Orthodox Christians who are aware of and faithful to the Truth of God's Revelation in the Church of Christ. But many who consider themselves Christians have very little awareness of the radical difference between Christianity and all other religions; and some who may have this awareness have very little discernment in the area of "spiritual experiences" — a discernment that has been practiced and handed down in Orthodox Patristic writings and Lives of Saints for nearly 2000 years.

In the absence of such awareness and discernment, the increasing presence of Eastern religious movements in the West, especially in the past decade or two, has caused great confusion in the minds of many would-be Christians. The case of Thomas Merton comes immediately to mind: a sincere convert to Roman Catholicism and Catholic monasticism some forty years ago (long before the radical reforms of Vatican II), he ended his days proclaiming the equality of Christian religious experiences and the experience of Zen Buddhism and other pagan religions. Something has "entered the air" in these past two decades or so that has eroded whatever remained of a sound Christian outlook in Protestantism and Roman Catholicism and now is attacking the Church itself, Holy Orthodoxy. The "dialogue with non-Christian religions" is a result rather than a cause of this new "spirit."

In this chapter we shall examine some of the Eastern religious movements which have been influential in the 1970's, with special emphasis on the attempts to develop a syncretism of Christianity and Eastern religions, particularly in the realm of "spiritual practices." Such attempts more often than not cite the Philokalia and the Eastern Orthodox tradition of contemplative prayer as being more kin to Eastern spiritual practices than anything that exists in the West; it is time enough, then, to point out clearly the great abyss that exists between Christian and non-Christian "spiritual experience," and why the religious philosophy that underlies this new syncretism is false and dangerous.

“Christian Yoga.”

Hindu yoga has been known in the West for many decades, and especially in America it has given rise to innumerable cults and also to a popular form of physical therapy which is supposedly non-religious in its aims. Nearly twenty years ago a French Benedictine monk wrote of his experiences in making Yoga a "Christian" discipline; the description that follows is taken from his book.

Hindu Yoga is a discipline that presupposes a rather abstemious, disciplined life, and is composed of breath control and certain physical postures which produce a state of relaxation in which one meditates, usually with the help of a mantra or sacred utterance which aids concentration. The essence of Yoga is not the discipline itself, but the meditation which is its end. The author is correct when he writes: "The aims of Hindu Yoga are spiritual. It is tantamount to treason to forget this and retain only the purely physical side of this ancient discipline, to see in it no more than a means towards bodily health or beauty." To this it should be added that the person who uses Yoga only for physical well-being is already disposing himself towards certain spiritual attitudes and even experiences of which he is undoubtedly unaware; of this more will be said below.

The same author then continues: "The art of the yogi is to establish himself in a complete silence, to empty himself of all thoughts and illusions, to discard and forget everything but this one idea: man's

true self is divine; it is God, and the rest is silence."

This idea, of course, is not Christian but pagan, but the aim of "Christian Yoga" is to use the technique of Yoga for a different spiritual end, for a "Christian" meditation. The object of the Yoga technique, in this view, is to make one relaxed, content unthinking, and passive or receptive to spiritual ideas and experiences. "As soon as you have taken up the posture, you will feel your body relaxing and a feeling of general well-being will establish itself in you." The exercises produce an "extraordinary sense of calm." "To begin with, one gets the feeling of a general unwinding, of a well-being taking hold, of a euphoria that will, and in fact does, last. If one's nerves have been tense and overstrung, the exercises calm them, and fatigue disappears in a little time." "The goal of all his [the yogi's] efforts is to silence the thinking self in him by shutting his eyes to every kind of enticement." The euphoria which Yoga brings "could well be called a 'state of health' that allows us to do more and do it better on the human plane to begin with, and on the Christian religious, spiritual plane afterwards. The most apt word to describe it is contentedness, a contentedness that inhabits body and soul and predisposes us... toward the spiritual life." One's whole personality can be changed by it: "Hatha Yoga influences character to the good. One man, after some weeks of practice, admits he no longer knows himself, and everyone notices a change in his bearing and reaction. He is gentler and more understanding. He faces experience calmly. He is content... His whole personality has been altered and he himself feels it steady and opening out; from this there arises an almost permanent condition of euphoria, of 'contentedness.'"

But all of this is only a preparation for a "spiritual" aim, which begins to make itself felt in a very short time: "By becoming contemplative in a matter of weeks, my prayer had been given a particular and novel cast." Becoming extraordinarily calm, the author notices "the ease I felt in entering into prayer, in concentrating on a subject." One becomes "more receptive to impulses and promptings from heaven." "The practice of Yoga makes for increased suppleness and receptivity, and thus for openness to those personal exchanges between God and the soul that mark the way of the mystical life." Even for the "apprentice yogi" prayer becomes "sweet" and "embraces the whole of man." One is relaxed and "ready to tremble at the touch of the Holy Ghost, to receive and welcome what God in his Goodness thinks fit to let us experience." "We shall be making our being ready to be taken, to be seized — and this is surely one of the forms, in fact the highest of Christian contemplation." "Every day the exercises, and indeed the whole ascetic discipline of my Yoga, make it easier for the grace of Christ to flow in me. I feel my hunger for God growing, and my thirst for righteousness, and my desire to be a Christian in the full strength of the word."

Anyone who understands the nature of prelest or spiritual deception will recognize in this description of "Christian Yoga" precisely the characteristics of those who have gone spiritually astray, whether into pagan religious experiences or sectarian "Christian" experiences. The same striving for "holy and divine feelings," the same openness and willingness to be "seized" by a spirit, the same seeking not for God but for "spiritual consolations," the same self-intoxication which is mistaken for a "state of grace," the same incredible ease with which one becomes "contemplative" or "mystical," the same "mystical revelations" and pseudospiritual states. These are the common characteristics of all who are in this particular state of spiritual deception. But the author of Christian Yoga, being a Benedictine monk, adds some particular "meditations" which reveal him as fully in the spirit of the Roman Catholic "meditation" of recent centuries, with its free play of fantasies on Christian themes. Thus for example, having meditated on a theme of the Christmas Eve mass, he begins to see the Child in the arms of His Mother: "I gaze; nothing more. Pictures, ideas (associations of ideas: Saviour-King-Light-Halo-Shepherd-Child-Light again) come one after the other, march past... All these pieces of a sacred puzzle taken together arouse one idea in me.. a silent vision of the whole mystery of Christmas." Anyone with the slightest knowledge of Orthodox spiritual discipline will see that this pitiable "Christian yogi" has fallen handily into a trap set by one of the lesser demons that lie in wait for the seeker of "spiritual experiences:" he has not even seen an "angel of light," but has only given way to his own "religious fancies," the product of a heart and mind totally unprepared for spiritual warfare and the deceptions of the demons. Such

"meditation" is being practiced today in a number of Roman Catholic convents and monasteries.

The fact that the book concludes with an article by the French translator of the Philokalia, together with excerpts from the Philokalia, only reveals the abyss that separates these dilettantes from the true spirituality of Orthodoxy, which is totally inaccessible to the modern "wise men" who no longer understand its language. A sufficient indication of the author's incompetence in understanding the Philokalia is the fact that he gives the name "prayer of the heart" (which in Orthodox tradition is the highest mental prayer, acquired by very few only after many years of ascetic struggle and being humbled by a true God-bearing Elder) to the easy trick of reciting syllables in rhythm with the heartbeat.

We shall comment more fully below on the dangers of this "Christian Yoga" when noting what it possesses in common with other forms of "Eastern meditation" which are being offered to Christians today.

“Christian Zen.”

An eastern religious practice on a more popular level is offered in the book of an Irish Catholic priest: William Johnston, *Christian Zen*. The author starts from basically the same place as the author of *Christian Yoga*: a feeling of dissatisfaction with Western Christianity, a desire to give it a dimension of contemplation or meditation. "Many people, discontented with old forms of prayer, discontented with the old devotions that once served so well, are looking for something that will satisfy the aspirations of the modern heart." "Contact with Zen... has opened up new vistas, teaching me that there are possibilities in Christianity I never dreamed of." One may "practice Zen as a way of deepening and broadening his Christian faith."

The technique of Japanese Zen is very similar to that of Indian Yoga — from which it is ultimately derived — although it is rather simpler. There is the same basic posture (but not the variety of postures of Yoga), breathing technique, the repetition of a sacred name if desired, as well as other techniques peculiar to Zen. The aim of these techniques is the same as that of Yoga: to abolish rational thinking and attain a state of calm, silent meditation. The sitting position "impedes discursive reasoning and thinking" and enables one to go "down to the center of one's being in imageless and silent contemplation" to "a deep and beautiful realm of psychic life," to "deep interior silence." The experience thus attained is somewhat similar to that achieved by taking drugs, for "people who have used drugs understand a little about Zen, since they have been awakened to the realization that there is a depth in the mind worth exploring." And yet this experience opens up via new approach to Christ, an approach that is less dualistic and more Oriental." Even absolute beginners in Zen can attain "a sense of union and an atmosphere of supernatural presence," a savoring of "mystical silence"; through Zen, the state of contemplation hitherto restricted to a few "mystics" can be "broadened out," and "all may have vision, all may reach samadhi" (enlightenment).

The author of *Christian Zen* speaks of the renewal of Christianity; but he admits that the experience he thinks can bring it about may be had by anyone, Christian or non-Christian. "I believe that there is a basic enlightenment which is neither Christian nor Buddhist nor anything else. It is just human." Indeed, at a convention on meditation at a Zen temple near Kyoto "the surprising thing about the meeting was lack of any common faith. No one seemed the slightest bit interested in what anyone else believed or disbelieved, and no one, as far as I recall, even mentioned the name of God." This agnostic character of meditation has a great advantage for "missionary" purposes, for "in this way meditation can be taught to people who have little faith — to those who are troubled in conscience or fear that God is dead. Such people can always sit and breathe. For them meditation becomes a search, and I have found... that people who begin to search in this way eventually find God. Not the anthropomorphic God they have rejected, but the great being in whom we live, move, and are."

The author's description of the Zen "enlightenment" experience reveals its basic identity with the

"cosmic" experience provided by shamanism and many pagan religions. "I myself believe that within us are locked up torrents and torrents of joy that can be released by meditation — sometimes they will burst through with incredible force, flooding the personality with an extraordinary happiness that comes from one knows not where." Interestingly, the author, on returning to America after twenty years in Japan, found this experience to be very close to the Pentecostal experience, and he himself received the "Baptism of the Spirit" at a "charismatic" meeting. The author concluded: "Returning to the Pentecostal meeting, it seems to me that the imposition of hands, the prayers of the people, the charity of the community — these can be forces that release the psychic power that brings enlightenment to the person who has been consistently practicing zazen." We shall examine in the seventh chapter of this book the nature of the Pentecostal or "charismatic" experience.

Little need be said in criticism of these views; they are basically the same as those of the author of Christian Yoga, only less esoteric and more popular. Anyone who believes that the agnostic, pagan experience of Zen can be used for a "contemplative renewal within Christianity" surely knows nothing whatever of the great contemplative tradition of Orthodoxy, which presupposes burning faith, true belief, and intense ascetic struggle; and yet the same author does not hesitate to drag the Philokalia and the "great Orthodox schools" into his narrative, stating that they also lead to the condition of "contemplative silence and peace" and are an example of "Zen within the Christian tradition" ; and he advocates the use of the Prayer of Jesus during Zen meditation for those who wish this. Such ignorance is positively dangerous, especially when the possessor of it invites the students at his lectures, as an experiment in "mysticism," to "sit in zazen for forty minutes each evening." How many sincere, misguided false prophets there are in the world today, each thinking he is bringing benefit to his fellow men, instead of an invitation to psychic and spiritual disaster! Of this we shall speak more in the conclusion below.

Transcendental Meditation.

The technique of Eastern meditation known as "Transcendental Meditation" (or "TM" for short) has attained such popularity in a few years, especially in America, and is advocated in such an outrageously flippant tone, that any serious student of contemporary religious currents will be inclined at first to dismiss it as merely an over-inflated product of American advertising and showmanship. But this would be a mistake, for in its serious claims it does not differ markedly from Yoga and Zen, and a close look at its techniques reveals it as perhaps more authentically "Eastern" than either of the somewhat artificial syncretisms, "Christian Yoga" and "Christian Zen."

According to one standard account of this movement, "Transcendental Meditation" was brought to America (where it has had its most spectacular success) by a rather "unorthodox" Indian Yogi, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, and began to grow noticeably about 1961. In 1967 it received widespread publicity when the popular singers known as the "Beatles" were converted to it and gave up drugs; but they soon abandoned the movement (although they continued to meditate), and the Maharishi hit his low point the next year when his American tour, together with another convert singing group called the "Beach Boys," was abandoned as a financial failure. The movement itself, however, continued to grow: By 1971 there were some 100,000 meditators following it, with 2000 specially-trained instructors, making it already by far the largest movement of "Eastern spirituality" in America. In 1975 the movement reached its peak, with about 40,000 trainees a month and upwards of 600,000 followers in all. During these years it was widely used in the Army, public schools, prisons, hospitals, and by church groups, including parishes of the Greek Archdiocese in America, as a supposedly neutral form of "mental therapy" which is compatible with any kind of religious belief or practice. The "TM course is one especially tailored to the American way of life and has been sympathetically called "a course in how to succeed spiritually without really trying"; the Maharishi himself calls it a technique which is "just like brushing your teeth." The Maharishi has been strongly criticized by other Hindu Yogis for cheapening the long tradition of Yoga in India by

making this esoteric practice available to the masses for money (the charge in 1975 was \$125 for the course, \$65 for college students, and progressively less for high school, junior high school, and very young children).

In its aims, presuppositions, and results, "TM" does not differ markedly from "Christian Yoga" or "Christian Zen;" it differs from them chiefly in the simplicity of its techniques and of its whole philosophy, and in the ease with which its results are obtained. Like them, "TM does not require any belief, understanding, moral code, or even agreement with the ideas and philosophy"; it is a technique pure and simple, which "is based on the natural tendency of the mind to move toward greater happiness and pleasure... During transcendental meditation your mind is expected to follow whatever is most natural and most pleasant." "Transcendental meditation is a practice first and a theory afterwards. It is essential at the beginning that an individual does not think intellectually at all."

The technique which the Maharishi has devised is invariably the same at all "TM" centers throughout the world: After two introductory lectures, one pays the fee and then comes for "initiation," bringing with him a seemingly strange collection of articles, always the same: three pieces of sweet fruit, at least six fresh flowers, and a clean handkerchief. These are placed in a basket and taken to the small "initiation room," where they are placed on a table before a portrait of the Maharishi's guru, from whom he received his initiation into yoga; on the same table a candle and incense are burning. The disciple is alone in the room with his teacher, who is himself required to have received initiation and to have been instructed by the Maharishi personally. The ceremony before the portrait lasts for half an hour and is composed of soft singing in Sanscrit (with meaning unknown to the initiate) and a chanting of the names of past "masters" of Yoga; at the end of the ceremony the initiate is given a "mantra," a secret Sanscrit word which he is to repeat ceaselessly during meditation, and which no one is to know except his teacher. The English translation of this ceremony is never revealed to initiates; it is available only to teachers and initiators themselves. It is contained in an unpublished handbook called "The Holy Tradition," and its text has now been printed by the "Spiritual Counterfeits Project" in Berkeley as a separate pamphlet. This ceremony is nothing but a traditional Hindu ceremony of worship of the gods (puja), including the deified guru of the Maharishi (Shri Guru Dev) and the whole line of "masters" through which he himself received his initiation. The ceremony ends with a series of twenty-two "offerings" made to the Maharishi's guru, each ending with the words "To Shri Guru Dev I bow down." The initiator himself bows down before a portrait of Guru Dev at the end of the ceremony and invites the initiate to do likewise; only then is the latter initiated. (The bowing is not absolutely required of the initiate, but the offerings are.).

Thus the modern agnostic, usually quite unawares, has been introduced to the realm of Hindu religious practices; quite easily he has been made to do something to which his own Christian ancestors, perhaps, had preferred torture and cruel death: he has offered sacrifice to pagan gods. On the spiritual plane it may be this sin, rather than the psychic technique itself, that chiefly explains the spectacular success of "TM."

Once he has been initiated, the student of "TM" meditates twice daily for twenty minutes each time (precisely the same amount recommended by the author of Christian Yoga), letting the mind wander freely, and repeating the mantra as often as he thinks of it; frequently, one's experiences are checked by his teacher. Quite soon, even on the first attempt, one begins to enter a new level of consciousness, which is neither sleep nor wakefulness: the state of "transcendental meditation." "Transcendental meditation produces a state of consciousness unlike anything we've known before, and closest to that state of Zen developed after many years of intense study." "In contrast to the years that must be spent to master other religious disciplines and Yoga, which offer the same results that TM proponents claim, teachers say TM can be taught in a matter of minutes." Some who have experienced it describe it as a "state of fulfillment" similar to some drug experiences, but the Maharishi himself describes it in traditional Hindu terms: "This state lies beyond all seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, and tasting — beyond all thinking and feeling. This state of the unmanifested,

absolute, pure consciousness of Being is the ultimate state of life." "When an individual has developed the ability to bring this deep state to the conscious level on a permanent basis, he is said to have reached cosmic consciousness, the goal of all meditators." In the advanced stages of "TM" the basic Yoga positions are taught, but they are not necessary to the success of the basic technique; nor is any ascetic preparation required. Once one has attained the "transcendental state of being," all that is required of one is twenty minutes of meditation twice daily, since this form of meditation is not at all a separate way of life, as in India, but rather a discipline for those who lead an active life. The Maharishi's distinction lies in having brought this state of consciousness to everyone, not just a chosen few.

There are numerous success stories for "TM," which claims to be effective in almost all cases: drug habits are overcome, families are reunited, one becomes healthy and happy; the teachers of TM are constantly smiling, bubbling over with happiness. Generally, TM does not replace other religions, but strengthens belief in almost anything; "Christians," whether Protestant or Catholic, also find that it makes their belief and practice more meaningful and deeper.

The swift and easy success of "TM," while it is symptomatic of the waning influence of Christianity on contemporary mankind, has also led to its early decline. Perhaps more than any other movement of "Eastern spirituality," it has had the character of a "fad," and the Maharishi's announced aim to "initiate" the whole of humanity is evidently doomed to failure. After the peak year of 1975, enrollment in "TM" courses has steadily declined, so much so that in 1977 the organization announced the opening of a whole new series of "advanced" courses, obviously devised in order to regain public interest and enthusiasm. These courses are intended to lead initiates to the "siddhis" or "supernatural powers" of Hinduism: walking through walls, becoming invisible, levitating and flying through the air, and the like. The courses have generally been greeted with cynicism, even though a "TM" brochure features a photograph of a "levitating" meditator (see Time Magazine, August 8, 1977, P. 75). Whether or not the courses (which cost up to \$3000) will produce the claimed results -which are in the province of the traditional "fakirs" of India — "TM" itself stands revealed as a passing phase of the occult interest in the second half of the 20th century. Already many examples have been publicized of "TM" teachers and disciples alike who have been afflicted with the common maladies of those who dabble in the occult: mental and emotional illness, suicide, attempted murder, demonic possession.

In 1978 a United States Federal court came to the decision that "TM" is indeed religious in nature and may not be taught in public schools.* This decision will undoubtedly further limit the influence of "TM," which, however, will probably continue to exist as one of the many forms of meditation which many see as compatible with Christianity — another sad sign of the times.



Maitreya

The “New Religious Consciousness.”

The Spirit of the Eastern Cults in the 1970's.

The three kinds of "Christian meditation" described above are only the beginning; in general, it may be said that the influence of Eastern religious ideas and practices upon the once-Christian West has reached astonishing proportions in the decade of the 1970's — In particular America, which barely two decades ago was still religiously "provincial" (save in a few large cities), its spiritual horizon largely limited to Protestantism and Roman Catholicism — has seen a dazzling proliferation of Eastern (and pseudo-Eastern) religious cults and movements.

The history of this proliferation can be traced from the restless disillusionment of the post-World War II generation, which first manifested itself in the 1950's in the empty protest and moral libertinism of the "beat generation," whose interest in Eastern religions was at first rather academic and mainly a sign of dissatisfaction with "Christianity." There followed a second generation, that of the "hippies" of the 1960's with its "rock" music and psychedelic drugs and search for "increased awareness" at any cost; now young Americans plunged wholeheartedly into political protest movements (notably against the war in Vietnam) on the one hand, and the fervent practice of Eastern religions on the other. Indian gurus, Tibetan lamas, Japanese Zen masters, and other Eastern "sages" came to the West and found a host of ready disciples who made them successful beyond the dreams of the westernized swamis of preceding generations; and young people travelled to the ends of the world, even to the heights of the Himalayas, to find the wisdom or the teacher or the drug that would bring them the "peace" and "freedom" they sought.

In the 1970's a third generation has succeeded the "hippies." Outwardly quieter, with fewer "demonstrations" and generally less flamboyant behavior, this generation has gone more deeply into Eastern religions, whose influence now has become much more pervasive than ever before. For many of this newer generation the religious "search" has ended: they have found an Eastern religion to their liking and are now seriously occupied in practicing it. A number of Eastern religious movements have already become "native" to the West, especially in America: there are now Buddhist monasteries composed entirely of Western converts, and for the first time there have appeared American and other Western gurus and Zen masters.

Let us look at just a few pictures — descriptions of actual events in the early and mid-1970's which illustrate the dominance of Eastern ideas and practices among many young Americans (who are only the "avant-garde" of the youth of the whole world). The first two pictures show a more superficial involvement with Eastern religions, and are perhaps only a leftover from the generation of the 1960's; the last two reveal the deeper involvement characteristic of the 1970's.

Hare Krishna in San Francisco.

"ON A STREET BORDERING Golden Gate Park in the Haight-Ashbury section of San Francisco stood the Krishna Consciousness temple... Above the entrance to the temple were the two-foot-high wooden letters 'Hare Krishna.' The large storefront windows were covered with red and orange patterned blankets.

"The sounds of chanting and music filled the street. Inside there were dozens of brightly-colored paintings on the wall, thick red rugs on the floor, and a smoky haze in the air. This smoke was incense, an element of the ceremony in progress. The people in the room were softly chanting barely audible Sanskrit words. The room was nearly full, with about fifty people who all appeared to be young sitting on the floor. Assembled in front were about twenty persons wearing long, loose-fitting orange and saffron robes, with white paint on

their noses. Many of the men had shaved their heads except for a ponytail. The women with them also had white paint on their noses and small red marks on their foreheads. The other young persons in the room appeared no different from other denizens of the Haight-Ashbury, costumed in headbands, long hair, beards, and an assortment of rings, bells, and beads, and they were also enthusiastically participating in the ceremony. The ten or so persons sitting in the rear appeared to be first-time visitors.

"The chanting ceremony (mantra) increased in tempo and in volume. Two girls in long saffron robes were now dancing to the chant. The leader of the chant began to cry the words (of the chant in Sanskrit)... The entire group repeated the words, attempted to maintain the leader's intonation and rhythm. Many of the participants played musical instruments. The leader was beating a hand drum in time with his chanting. The two swaying dancing girls were playing finger cymbals. One young man was blowing a seashell; another was beating on a tambourine... On the walls of the temple were over a dozen paintings of scenes from the Bhagavad-Gita.

"The music and the chanting grew very loud and fast. The drum was ceaselessly pounding. Many of the devotees started personal shouts, hands upstretched, amidst the general chant. The leader knelt in front of a picture of the group's 'spiritual master' on a small shrine near the front of the room. The chanting culminated in a loud crescendo and the room became silent. The celebrants knelt with their heads to the floor as the leader said a short prayer in Sanskrit. Then he shouted five times, 'All glories to the assembled devotees,' which the others repeated before they sat up."

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This is one of the typical worship services of the "Krishna Consciousness" movement, which was



founded in America in 1966 by an Indian ex-businessman, A.C. Bhaktivedanta, in order to bring the Hindu discipline of bhakti yoga to the disoriented and searching young people of the West. The earlier phase of interest in Eastern religions (in the 1950's and early 1960's) had emphasized intellectual investigation without much personal involvement; this newer phase demands wholehearted participation. Bhakti yoga means uniting oneself to one's chosen "god" by loving and worshipping him, and changing one's whole life in order to make this one's central occupation. Through the non-rational means of worship (chanting, music, dance, devotion) the mind is "expanded" and "Krishna consciousness" is attained, which — if enough people will do it — is supposed to end the troubles of our disordered age and usher in a new age of peace, love, and unity.

The bright robes of the "Krishnas" became a familiar sight in San Francisco, especially on the day every year when the immense idol of their "god" was wheeled through Golden Gate Park to the ocean, attended by all the signs of Hindu devotion — a typical scene of pagan India, but something new for "Christian" America. From San Francisco the movement has spread to the rest of America and to Western Europe; by 1974 there were 54 Krishna temples throughout the world, many of them near colleges and universities (members of the movement are almost all very young).

The recent death of the founder of the movement has raised questions about its future; and indeed its membership, although very visible, has been rather small in number. As a "sign of the times," however, the meaning of the movement is clear, and should be very disturbing to Christians: many young people today are looking for a "god" to worship, and the most blatant form of paganism is not too much for them to accept.

Guru Maharaj-ji at the Houston Astrodome.

By the fall of 1973 a number of Eastern gurus of the newer school, led by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi with his "TM," had come to the West and gathered a following, only to fade from the public eye after a brief reign in the glare of publicity. Guru Maharaj-ji was the most spectacular and, one might say, outrageous of these gurus. Fifteen years old, he had already been proclaimed to be "God," his family (mother and three brothers) was the "Holy Family," and his organization (the "Divine Light Mission") had communities (ashrams) all over America. His 80,000 followers ("Premies"), like the followers of Krishna, were expected to give up worldly pleasures and meditate in order to attain an "expanded" consciousness which made them perfectly peaceful, happy, and "blissed out" — a state of mind in which everything seems beautiful and perfect just the way it is. In a special initiation at which they "receive the knowledge," disciples are shown an intense light and three other signs within themselves, which later they are able to meditate on by themselves. In addition to this "knowledge," disciples are united in believing that Maharaj-ji is the "Lord of the Universe" who has come to inaugurate a new age of peace for mankind.

For three days in November, 1973, the "Divine Light Mission" rented the Houston Astrodome (an immense sports arena entirely covered by a dome) in order to stage "the most holy and significant event in the history of mankind." "Premies" from all over the world were to gather to worship their "god" and begin the conversion of America (through the mass media, whose representatives were carefully invited) to the same worship, thus beginning the new age of mankind. Appropriately, the event was called "Millenium '73."

Typical of Maharaj-ji's convinced disciples was Rennie Davis, leftist demonstrator of the 1960's and one of the "Chicago Seven" accused of inciting riots at the 1968 Democratic National Convention. He spent the summer of 1973 giving press conferences and speeches to whoever would listen, telling America: "He is the greatest event in history and we sleep through it... I feel like shouting in the streets. If we knew who he was, we would crawl across America on our hands and knees to rest our heads at his feet."

Indeed, the worship of Maharaj-ji is expressed in a full prostration before him with one's head to the ground, together with a Sanskrit phrase of adoration. A tremendous ovation greeted his appearance at "Millenium '73," he sat atop a tall throne, crowned by an immense golden "crown of Krishna," as the Astrodome scoreboard flashed the word "G-O-D." Young American "premies" wept for joy, others danced on the stage, the band played "The Lord of the Universe" adapted from an old Protestant hymn.

All this, let us say again — in "Christian" America, this is already something beyond mere worship of pagan "gods." Until a very few years ago such worship of a living man would have been inconceivable in any "Christian" country; now it has become an ordinary thing for many thousands of religious "seekers" in the West. Here we have already had a preview of the worship of Antichrist at the end of the age — the one who will sit in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God (2 Thes. 2:4).

"Millenium '73" seems to have been the peak of a Maharaj-ji's influence. As it was, only 15,000 followers attended it (much less than expected), and there were no "miracles" or special signs to indicate the "new age" had actually begun. A movement so dependent on media publicity and so much bound up with the popular taste of a particular generation (the music at "Millenium '73" was composed mostly of the popular songs of the "counter-culture" of the 1960's) can expect to go out of fashion rather quickly; and the recent marriage of Maharaj-ji to his secretary has further weakened his popularity as a "god."

Other of the "spiritual" movements of our times seem to be less subject to the whims of popular fashion and more indicative of the depth of the influence which Eastern religions are now attaining in the West.

Tantric Yoga in the Mountains of New Mexico.

In a grassy meadow at the 7500-foot elevation in the Jemez mountains of northern New Mexico, a thousand young Americans (most of them between the ages of 20 and 25) gathered for ten days of spiritual exercises at the time of the summer solstice in June, 1973. They arise at four a.m. every day and assemble before sunrise (wrapped in blankets against the morning frost) to sit on the ground in rows in front of an outdoor stage. Together, they begin the day with a mantra in Punjabi (a Sanskritic language) in order to "tune in" to the spiritual practices that are to follow.

First there are several hours of kundalini yoga a series of strenuous physical exercises, chanting, and meditation aimed at acquiring conscious control of body and mind processes and preparing one for "God realization." Then there is the ceremony of the raising of two flags: the American flag and the "flag of the Aquarian nation" — this "nation" being the peaceful people of the "Aquarian Age" or millenium for which this cult is preparing — accompanied by the singing of "God Bless America" and a prayer for the American nation. After a vegetarian meal (typical of almost all the new cults) and lectures on spiritual and practical subjects, all prepare for a long session of tantric yoga.

Tantric yoga has been little heard of and almost never practiced in the West up to now. All authorities agree that it is an extremely dangerous exercise, practiced always by male and female together, that evokes a very powerful psychic energy, requiring close supervision and control. Supposedly, there is only one master of tantric yoga living on the earth at any one time; the exercises at "Solstice" in New Mexico were led by the "Great Tantric" of our days, Yogi Bhanan.

All, dressed identically in white, sit down in long, straight lines, men opposite women, packed shoulder-to-shoulder down the lines and back-to-back with the next line. About ten double lines stretch out from the stage, each 75 feet long; assistants make sure the lines are perfectly straight to assure the proper "flow" of the yogi "magnetic field."

The chanting of mantras begins, with special chants invoking a departed guru who is Yogi Bhanan's "special protector." The Yogi himself, an impressive man — six feet four inches tall with a great black beard, dressed in white robe and turban — appears and begins to speak of his dream for "a new beautiful creative nation" of America which can be built by the spiritual preparation of people today; the tantric exercises, which are a key in this preparation, transform people from their usual "individual consciousness" to "group consciousness" and finally to "universal consciousness."

The exercises begin. They are extremely difficult, involving strong physical effort and pain and evoking strong emotions of fear, anger, love, etc. Everyone must do exactly the same thing at the same time; difficult positions are held motionlessly for long periods; complicated mantras and exercises must be executed in precise coordination with one's partner and with everyone in one's own row; each separate exercise may take from 31 to 61 minutes. Individual awareness disappears in the intense group activity, and strong after-effects are felt — physical exhaustion and sometimes temporary paralysis, emotional exhaustion or elation. Further, since no one at "Solstice" is allowed to converse with anyone else, there is no opportunity to make rational sense of the experience by sharing it with others; the aim is to effect a radical change in oneself.

Following afternoon classes in such subjects as Oriental arts of self-defense, practical medicine and nutrition, and the running of an ashram, there is an evening session (after another meal) of "spiritual singing;" Sanskrit mantras are sung to current folk and "rock" music, "rock festival" and "joyful worship" in a foreign tongue are joined together — part of Yogi Bhanan's effort to make his religion "native American."

The religion described above is a modern adaptation of the Sikh religion of northern India, joined to several practices of yoga. Called the "3HO" (Healthy Happy-Holy Organization), it was founded in 1969 in Los Angeles by Yogi Bhanan, who originally came to America to take up a teaching position

and only incidentally became a religious leader when he discovered that his courses in yoga appealed to the "hippies" of southern California. Combining the "spiritual" search of the "hippies" with his own knowledge of Indian religions, he formed an "American" religion that differs from most Eastern religions by its emphasis on a this-worldly practical life (like the Sikhs in India, who are mostly a merchant class); marriage and a stable home life, responsible employment, and social service are required of all members.

Since its foundation in 1969, "3HO" has expanded to over 100 ashrams (communities which serve as gathering-places for non-resident participants) in American cities, as well as a few in Europe and Japan. Although externally it is quite distinct from the other new Eastern cults (full members of the cult formally become Sikhs and thereafter wear the characteristic Sikh turban and white clothing), "3HO" is one with them in appealing to ex-"hippies," making an "expanded" (or "universal" or "transcendental") consciousness its central aim, and in seeing itself as a spiritual "avant-garde" that will bring about a new millennial age (which most groups see in astrological terms as the "Aquarian Age").

As a cult that advocates a relatively normal life in society, "3HO" is still just as much a "sign of the times" as the Hindu cults that promote an obvious "escapism;" it is preparing for a "healthy, happy and holy" America totally without reference to Christ. When convinced and "happy" Americans speak calmly about God and their religious duties without mention of Christ, one can no longer doubt that the "post Christian" age has come in earnest.

Zen Training in Northern California.

In the forested mountains of northern California, in the shadow of immense Mount Shasta — a "holy" mountain to the original Indian inhabitants, and long a center of occult activities and settlements, which are now once again on the increase — there has been since 1970 a Zen Buddhist monastery. Long before 1970 there had been Zen temples in the larger cities of the West Coast where Japanese had settled, and there had been attempts to start Zen monasteries in California; but "Shasta Abbey," as it is called, is the first successful American Zen monastery. (In Zen Buddhism a "monastery" is primarily a training school for Zen "priests," both male and female.).

In Shasta Abbey the atmosphere is very orderly and businesslike. Visitors (who are allowed to take guided tours at restricted times, but may not fraternize with the residents) find the monks or trainees in traditional black robes and with shaved heads; everyone seems to know exactly what he is doing, and a clear sense of seriousness and dedication is present.

The training itself is a strict five-year (or more) program which allows graduates to become "priests" and teachers of Zen and to conduct Buddhist ceremonies. As at secular schools, trainees pay a fee for room and board (\$175 a month, payable in advance for each month - already a means of weeding out unserious candidates!), but the life itself is that of "monks" rather than students. Strict rules govern dress and behavior, vegetarian meals are eaten in silence communally, no visitors or idle conversations are allowed; life centers about the meditation hall, where trainees eat and sleep in addition to meditating, and no non-Zen religious practices are allowed. The life is a very intense and concentrated one, and every event of daily life (even washing and toilet) has its Buddhist prayer, which is recited silently.

Although the Abbey belongs to a "reformed" Soto Zen sect — to emphasize its independence from Japan and its adaptation to American conditions of life — rites and ceremonies are in the Japanese Zen tradition. There is the ceremony of becoming a Buddhist, equinox rites celebrating the "transformation of the individual," the ceremonial "feeding of hungry ghosts" (remembrance of the dead), the "Founder's Day" ceremony of expressing gratitude to the transmitters of Zen down to the present master, the festival of Buddha's enlightenment, and others. Homage is paid by bowing down before images of Buddha, but the primary emphasis of the teaching is on the "Buddha-nature" within one.

The Zen Master at Shasta Abbey is a Westerner and a woman (Buddhist practice permitting this): Jiyu Kennett, an Englishwoman born of Buddhist parents in 1924, who received Buddhist training in several traditions in the Far East and "ordination" at a Soto Zen monastery in Japan. She came to America in 1969 and founded the monastery the next year with a few young followers; since then the community has grown rapidly, attracting mostly young men (and women) in their twenties.

The reason for the success of this monastery apart from the natural appeal of Zen to a generation sick of rationalism and mere outward learning - seems to lie in the mystique of "authentic transmission" of the Zen experience and tradition, which the "Abbess" provides through her training and certification in Japan; her personal qualities as a foreigner and a born Buddhist who is still in close touch with the contemporary mind (with a very "American" practicality), seem to seal her influence with the young American convert generation of Buddhists.

The aim of Zen training at Shasta Abbey is to fill all of life with "pure Zen." Daily meditation (at times for as much as eight or ten hours in one day) is the center of a concentrated, intense religious life that leads, supposedly, to "lasting peace and harmony of body and mind." Emphasis is on "spiritual growth," and the publications of the Abbey — a bimonthly journal and several books by the Abbess - reveal a high degree of awareness of spiritual posing and fakery. The Abbey is opposed to the adoption of Japanese national (as opposed to Buddhist) customs; warns of the dangers of "guru-hopping" and falsely worshipping the Zen Master; forbids astrology, fortune-telling (even the I Ching), astral travelling and all other psychic and occult activities; mocks the academic and intellectual (as opposed to experiential) approach to Zen; and emphasizes hard work and rigorous training, with the banishing of all illusions and fantasies about oneself and "spiritual life." Discussions on "spiritual" matters by young Zen "priests" (as recorded in the Abbey's Journal) sound, in their sober and knowledgeable tone, remarkably like discussions among serious young Orthodox converts and monks. In intellectual formation and outlook, these young Buddhists seem quite close to many of our Orthodox converts. The young Orthodox Christian of today might well say: "There, but for the grace of God, I myself might be," so convincingly authentic is the spiritual outlook of this Zen monastery, which offers almost everything the young religious seeker of today might desire — except, of course, Christ the true God and the eternal salvation which He alone can give.

The monastery teaches a Buddhism that is not "a cold and distant discipline," but is filled with "love and compassion." Contrary to the usual expositions of Buddhism, the Abbess emphasizes that the center of Buddhist faith is not ultimate "nothingness," but a living "god" (which she claims to be the esoteric Buddhist teaching): "The secret of Zen... is to know for certain, for oneself, that the Cosmic Buddha exists. A true master is he or she who does not waver in his certainty of, and love for, the Cosmic Buddha... I was overjoyed when I finally knew for certain that He existed; the love and gratitude in me knew no bounds. Nor have I ever felt such love as came forth from Him; I so want everyone else to feel it too."

There are presently some seventy priest-trainees at Shasta Abbey and its "branch priories," chiefly in California. The monastery is now in a state of rapid expansion, both on its own grounds and in its "mission" to the American people; there is a growing movement of lay Buddhists who make the Abbey their religious center and often come there, together with psychologists and other interested persons, on meditation retreats of varying lengths. With their publications, counselling and instruction in California cities, a projected children's school and a home for the elderly — Shasta Abbey is indeed progressing in its aim of "growing Zen Buddhism in the West."

Towards Christianity the Abbess and her disciples have a condescending attitude; they respect the Philokalia and other Orthodox spiritual texts, recognizing Orthodoxy as the closest to them among "Christian" bodies, but regard themselves as being "beyond such things as theologies, doctrinal disputes and 'isms," which they regard as not belonging to "True Religion" (Journal, Jan.-Feb., 1978, p. 54).

Zen has, in fact, no theological foundation, relying entirely on "experience" and thus falling into the

"pragmatic fallacy" that has already been noted earlier in this book, in the chapter on Hinduism: "If it works, it must be true and good." Zen, without any theology, is no more able than Hinduism to distinguish between good and evil spiritual experiences; it can only state what seems to be good because it brings "peace" and "harmony," as judged by the natural powers of the mind and not by any revelation — everything else it rejects as more or less illusory. Zen appeals to the subtle pride — so widespread today — of those who think they can save themselves, and thus have no need of any Saviour outside themselves.

Of all of today's Eastern religious currents, Zen is probably the most sophisticated intellectually and the most sober spiritually. With its teaching of compassion and a loving "Cosmic Buddha," it is perhaps as high a religious ideal as the human mind can attain — without Christ. Its tragedy is precisely that it has no Christ in it, and thus no salvation, and its very sophistication and sobriety effectively prevent its followers from seeking salvation in Christ. In its quiet, compassionate way it is perhaps the saddest of all the reminders of the "post-Christian" times in which we live. Non-Christian "spirituality" is no longer a foreign importation in the West; it has become a native American religion putting down deep roots into the consciousness of the West. Let us be warned from this: the religion of the future will not be a mere cult or sect, but a powerful and profound religious orientation which will be absolutely convincing to the mind and heart of modern man.

The New "Spirituality" vs. Christianity.

Other examples of the new Eastern cults in the West could be multiplied; each year finds new ones, or new transformations of old ones. In addition to the overtly religious cults, the last decade especially has seen an increase of secular "consciousness cults," as one popular newsmagazine calls them (U.S. News and World Report, Feb. 16, 1976, p. 40). These "mindtherapy" groups include the "Erhard Seminars Training" established in 1971, "Rolfing," "Silva Mind Control," and various forms of "encounter" and "biofeedback," all of which offer a "release of tensions" and a "tapping of the hidden capabilities" of man, expressed in a more or less plausible 20th-century "scientific" jargon. One is reminded also of other "consciousness" movements that have become less fashionable today, from "Christian Science" to "Science of Mind" to "Scientology."

All these movements are incompatible with Christianity. Orthodox Christians must be told absolutely to stay away from them.

Why do we speak so categorically?

1. These movements have no foundation in Christian tradition or practice, but are purely the product of Eastern pagan religions or of modern spiritism, more or less diluted and often presented as "non-religious." They not only teach wrongly, not in accordance with Christian doctrine, about spiritual life; they also lead one, whether through pagan religious experiences or psychic experiments, into a wrong spiritual path whose end is spiritual and psychic disaster, and ultimately the loss of one's soul eternally.
2. Specifically, the experience of "spiritual quietness" which is given by various kinds of meditation, whether without specific religious content (as is claimed by "TM," some forms of Yoga and Zen, and the secular cults) or with pagan religious content (as in Hare Krishna, the "Divine Light Mission," "3HO," etc.), is an entrance to the "cosmic" spiritual realm where the deeper side of the human personality enters into contact with actual spiritual beings. These beings, in man's fallen state, are first of all the demons or fallen spirits who are closest to man. Zen Buddhist meditators themselves, despite all their cautions about spiritual "experiences," describe their encounters with these spirits (mixed with human fantasies), all the while emphasizing that they are not "clinging" to them.
3. The "initiation" into experiences of the psychic realm which the "consciousness cults" provide involves one in something beyond the conscious control of the human will; thus, once having been

"initiated," it is often a very difficult thing to untangle oneself from undesirable psychic experiences. In this way, the "new religious consciousness" becomes an enemy of Christianity that is much more powerful and dangerous than any of the heresies of the past. When *experience* is emphasized above doctrine, the normal Christian safeguards which protect one against the attacks of fallen spirits are removed or neutralized, and the passiveness and "openness" which characterize the new cults literally open one up to be used by demons. Studies of the experiences of many of the "consciousness cults" show that there is a regular progression in them from experiences which at first are "good" or "neutral" to experiences which become strange and frightening and in the end clearly demonic. Even the purely physical side of psychic disciplines like Yoga are dangerous, because they are derived from and dispose one towards the psychic attitudes and experiences which are the original purpose of Yoga practice.

The seductive power of the "new religious consciousness" is so great today that it can take possession of one even while he believes that he is remaining a Christian. This is true not only of those who indulge in the superficial syncretisms or combinations of Christianity and Eastern religions which have been mentioned above; it is true also of an increasing number of people who regard themselves as fervent Christians. The profound ignorance of true Christian spiritual experience in our times is producing a false Christian "spirituality" whose nature is closely kin to the "new religious consciousness."

In Chapter 7 we will take a long and careful look at the most widespread current of "Christian spirituality" today. In it we will see the frightening prospect of a "new religious consciousness" taking possession of well-meaning Christians, even Orthodox Christians — to such an extent that we cannot help but think of the spirituality of the contemporary world in the apocalyptic terms of the "strong delusion" that will deceive almost all of mankind before the end of the age. To this subject we shall return at the end of this book.



A New World Order:

**One Religion
One Government
One Currency
One Leader**



O sing unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD, all the earth. Sing unto the LORD, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people. For the LORD is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are demons: but the LORD made the heavens. Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. Give unto the LORD, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength. Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts. O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth. Say among the heathen that the LORD reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice Before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.

Psalm 95

And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed...

And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against

his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

