



# The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization

The Whole Church taking the Whole Gospel to the Whole World

## Lausanne Occasional Paper 11 Christian Witness to New Religious Movements

The Lausanne Occasional Papers (LOPs) are historically important documents that have emerged from global consultations involving widely recognized evangelical leaders. The LOPs have been placed in the Lausanne Website to make more accessible and understandable the historical context and development of the various aspects of world evangelization.

*Report of the Consultation on World Evangelization*

*Mini-Consultation on Reaching Mystics and Cultists*

*held in Pattaya, Thailand from 16-27 June 1980*

### Prefatory Note

This report, Christian Witness to New Religious Movements, is one of a series of Lausanne Occasional Papers (LOPs) emerging from the historic Consultation on World Evangelization (COWE) held in Pattaya, Thailand, in June 1980. The report was drafted by members of the "Mini-Consultation on Reaching Mystics and Cultists" under the chairmanship of Mr. Peter Savage, who also served as International Co-ordinator of the pre-COWE study groups on mystics and cultists.

The major part of this report went through a draft and a revised draft, which involved all members of the mini-consultation. It was also submitted to a wider "sub-plenary" group for comment, but the responsibility for the final text rests with the mini-consultation and its chairman.

The report is released with the prayer and hope that it will stimulate the church and individual members in reaching this large segment of the population.

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### Introduction

New religious movements are springing up in the wake of worldwide religious ferment. In some cases, dying embers of old religions have suddenly burst into new flames. In other situations, religious "seed" transported, accidentally or intentionally, from one continent has taken root in another. Elsewhere traits from several religions are being mixed, blended, fused, grafted, and rearranged in every imaginable combination. Even nonreligious disciplines such as politics and psychotherapy are producing "religious" offspring. What does it all mean?

Many have seen in the growth of various new religious movements a hopeful sign of deep spiritual hunger. The Christian church, if it were guided by the Holy Spirit and the Word, could do much to lead those involved, their families and friends, to full repentance and new life in Christ. There is an element of opportunity

here which it dare not miss.

Others ascribe this emergence of syncretistic religions to an outbreak of a new satanic wave which must be understood in light of the warnings of Jesus Christ that in the end there will arise many false prophets: "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect" (Matt. 24:24, RSV).

Both points of view can be substantiated. There are thousands of groups of which there is no doubt that they are of satanic origin. But, praise be to God, there are also thousands of new church movements in which, in spite of syncretism, the Spirit of God is at work. Where one ends and the other begins will require discernment that only God can give.

This paper is a preliminary statement based on the contributions and insights of some 15 participants from various parts of the world who met for 16 hour-and-a-half sessions (plus several nights of writing and editing). We release it, in its present inadequate form, because those are the terms of our mandate. We have tried hard to understand. We have wrestled mentally, verbally, in prayer and fasting. We have struggled to express the glimpses of what we saw, which at best are but the tip of the iceberg. We are deeply aware of our limited experience. This paper certainly is not the answer. At best, it is a mere beginning. To understand fully what is happening will require years of diligent study by many of God's people in many parts of the globe. However, we pray that this limping effort may help Christian churches around the world to become aware of these new religious movements, stimulating them to try and understand their significance and, guided by the Spirit of God, to fulfill the Christian's responsibility toward them.

#### *Types of groups examined.*

- New religious movements in predominantly Christian settings.
- New religious movements imported from the East into Christian settings.
- New religious movements in traditional religious settings.
- Psychological self-realisation movements with religious overtones.
- Aberrant Christian groups:
  - those with Christian elements added to a non-Christian religious base
  - those with non-Christian elements which have been added to a Christian base
  - those with deviant doctrinal interpretation which arise within an otherwise Christian context.

### **1. Portraits of the New Religious Movements:**

#### **The "seed" and the "soil"**

With more than 10,000 different new religious movements in Africa, 500 in the U.S.A., 450 in Germany, 95 in the United Kingdom, and similar numbers in other parts of the world, we are faced with an almost endless variety of movements. The best one can do in a study of this nature is to present a series of brief "portraits" which illustrate something of this diversity.

#### *The Seed*

##### *a. Kimbanguism*

This was developed in Zaire, Angola, and adjacent areas among the Ba-Kongo, an ethnic group covering a wide area. They have a matrilineal society and before colonisation maintained considerable centralisation as embodied in the person of the "crowned chief." The colonial displacement created the potential for religious movements to develop around a prophetic head. Simon Kimbangu in 1921 filled the role. Born in 1889, he was educated at a local Baptist mission, where he acquired a good knowledge of the Old Testament. Following his failure in an exam, he broke with the church and to some extent opposed it. On March 28, 1921, he believed he was "touched by the grace of God" who revealed his vocation and gave him unusual powers. The miracles he performed were modelled on Christ's miracles; and his village, N'kamba, became known as the "New Jerusalem." The movement grew rapidly as pastors recognized in Kimbangu a "messiah" belonging to their own ethnic group. It motivated confidence and renewed the sacred bonds that had been destroyed by colonialism. The Belgians saw in the movement a nationalistic reaction and ruthlessly suppressed it. Kimbangu was deported to Shaba, imprisoned, and he eventually died in 1950. Despite suppression, the movement grew and developed a wide diversity of expression. It attracted people from Protestant and Catholic missions. Eventually Kimbangu's sons took up the leadership of the movement. Antagonism to it waned in the late 1950s. On September 24, 1959, Kimbanguism was given civic recognition and became known as *L'Eglise de Jesus Christ sur la terre par le prophete Simon Kimbangu* (EJCSK), the Church of Jesus Christ on the Earth through the prophet Simon Kimbangu. (Adapted from a paper by John Howell)

Today Kimbanguism represents possibly the largest independent church in Africa with more than three million adherents spread throughout several countries across central Africa. This group is today developing a trained leadership which is in the process of formulating its own theology. This seems to contain many Anabaptist elements. It currently is a member of the Evangelical Council of Zaire.

##### *b. Dehima*

Bague Honoyo was born August 10, 1892, in the south-central region of what is present-day Ivory Coast. Little is known of her early years until 1916, when she was given in marriage to a certain Gboga of Dajreu. The couple set up their first home within three kilometres of Dajreu; and, aside from one incident, the death of their only child within several hours after birth, their married life seems to have been happy and quite normal.

One evening in 1922, Gboga was warming himself outside the hut by the fire while Bague Honoyo was quietly preparing the evening meal. Suddenly she heard the roar of a panther and rushed outside, and discovered that both panther and husband had disappeared into the forest. The next day Gboga's skull was found by a group of searchers not far from the couple's home.

For twelve years Bague Honoyo remained as a widow in Dajreu, the village of Gboga, until one day in 1934 she decided to leave the area in order to seek the counsel of a certain Gballet Bebe living in Batreberi in southwest Ivory Coast. She stayed in Batreberi for quite some time, working as she had done for her husband back in Dajreu. One day while she was working in a manioc field, her hoe hit upon a bell which she presented immediately to Bebe, a former fetishist possessing great power and uncontested knowledge in matters requiring interpretation. Upon seeing and examining the bell, Bebe became convinced that it was indeed a "gift sent from God" and that Bague Honoyo had been chosen to "help all men of the earth." From this day on, Bague Honoyo began behaving like a mad woman, refusing all clothes except animal skins and speaking in many tongues. Bebe was eventually forced to inform Gboga's parents of Bague Honoyo's condition, asking them to retrieve their daughter-in-law.

Returning to Dajreu seemed only, however, to encourage her already unusual behaviour, for when she arrived, she began to heal the sick of the village and to demand that all who had fetishes should burn them. Also at this time, people wishing to harm their neighbours began to die. This caused so much fear in Dajreu that the villagers implored Bague Honoyo to leave immediately and return to Gagoue, her native village.

But in Gagoue the same events were repeated— healings, miracles, condemnation of fetishes, and rejection. This forced Bague Honoyo to flee once again, this time to the home of Zakpa Guema in Lobogrou, some 10 kilometres south of Gagoue. For nearly ten years, from 1942 to 1951, Bague Honoyo remained in this place ministering to the needs of her disciples who were growing rapidly in number, and refining what were to become the tenets of this new religious movement. Included in this body of teaching, officially referred to as "The Gospels according to the Prophetess Bague Honoyo," are the central beliefs that: 1) the original sin was a primordial crime committed by humanity against Mother Earth. One of the principal symbols of Dehima is the KU-SU or "Death-Tree" (a stripped palm tree stylised in the form of a cross); 2) sorcery and fetish practices must be condemned and eradicated; and 3) the African's servitude to the white man is only temporary—a Liberator is coming who will bring deliverance to the black man.

Current Dehima membership made up largely of illiterate, forest-dwelling peasantry, is estimated at 400,000. Present leadership resides in the Supreme Chief, Emile Likpe. He is supported by a highly organised clergy of some 100 bishops and over a thousand priests scattered across south-central Ivory Coast. (Adapted from James R. Krabill)

#### *The Soil: Sub-Saharan Africa*

The African setting with its tradition of prophets and mediums who specialised in getting answers to life's questions from the spirit-world (ancestors) is a truly fertile soil for the development of new religious movements. The prophet/founder is usually seen in the role of the traditional chief/king who functions as the mediator between the living and the dead. The latter are seen as mankind's most immediate link with the transcended, from which he draws power for group health, and human and crop fertility.

Colonial pressures and the aspirations for political independence have added fuel to the fire. On the other hand the Scriptures themselves, especially the Old Testament, which portrays a culture and a world view so similar to that of traditional Africa, provided convenient justification for syncretism (circumcision, polygamy, levirate, seers, sacrifice, etc).

#### *The Seed*

##### *c. Sokka-Gakkai*

This is an off-shoot of Nichiren Buddhism in Japan. It started about 100 years ago when Japan faced the Meiji revolution. After World War II, the so-called second revolution, it began to multiply rapidly. It is monotheistic, but emphasises ancestor worship. It promises its followers not only a better reincarnation in the next life, but also a happy, healthy life and material prosperity in the here and now.

It is best known for its militant evangelism in the process of which it has often resorted to force, but it also emphasises small-group discussions. Its rapid increase has paralleled the rise of the middle class. Currently it claims about ten million people as adherents.

In about 1965, Sokka-Gakkai formed a political party of the centre between the conservative and liberal parties. This party is now the third largest in Japan and has the declared purpose of ruling Japan according to its "reformed" Buddhist doctrine.

#### *The Soil: Japan*

The soil is basically animistic with both Buddhism and Shintoism being practised simultaneously. Two major themes characterised the current approach to life: the "return to the bosom of nature" and a pragmatic "this worldliness."

These two, together with the breakdown of many traditional values following World War II, make the Japanese people a fertile soil for cults that propagate happiness based on a materialistic consumer life-style.

#### *The Seed*

##### *d. Umbanda*

This is one of the many Afro-Brazilian cults. It is a syncretistic blend of African religion (brought by slaves) with Catholicism (brought by Portuguese colonists) and Kardec Spiritism. One could say that Umbanda is the "urban arm" of the Afro-Brazilian cults. It blankets the great urban areas, especially the "industrialized jungles."

"In order that their practises would not be prohibited and their suffering increased, the slaves resolved to 'absorb' the saints of Catholicism, placing them in synonymous positions with their own gods. Thus, the physical image (statue) of a Catholic saint began to represent a spiritual entity of African Umbanda. For example, 'Oxala' who is a pantheistic African god ("Orixá") became the supreme divinity of Christianity, Jesus Christ or God, (adapted from Willik, Valter, *Imagens de Jesus Cristo nos Cultos Afro-Brasileiros; Quem É Jesus Cristo no Brasil*, A.S.T.E. Sao Paulo 1974) To speak of the Afro-Brazilian cults is to talk about the very soul of Brazil—that which makes it unique. These cults were born under the whip of slavery. In the beginning, they constituted a mechanism for keeping alive a black identity. Much later, through the process of racial blending, it made its presence felt especially among the mixed races who were poor. This gave rise to the idea that "Macumba" is for the poor.

Today, this rather rigid social boundary has been crossed. The many expensive automobiles parked outside Umbanda centres and the presence of many high-class "women" in their services are testimony to its appeal to the upper classes. Even southern Brazil, with its large European immigrant population, has not remained immune to it.

#### *The Soil: Brazil*

In regard to race, one can say that Brazil is one of the major melting pots of the world. Indigenous Americans, Europeans, Africans, and Orientals have mixed freely. The racial blending is paralleled, if not under girded, by a tolerance for cultural and religious syncretism. The poverty of the northeast and the deprivation of the large-city slums have intensified the hunger of people for answers to their existential questions. On the other hand, Brazil's development potential has fueled an intense search for power, both terrestrial and supernatural.

Lost and unprotected in the urban anonymity, the Brazilian is able to find in Umbanda:

- *a family*: There is a community which welcomes him/her. It has a holy "father" and "mother" who offer guidance. All of this resembles the community he/she left behind when he/she came to the big city to get rich.
- *a doctor*: There is help for physical illness when he/she cannot pay a doctor, or when the national social security system does not meet the needs.
- *power*: Often made to feel cheap as a lowly manual laborer in the large city, he/she feels great self-worth by being able to command the spirits. By means of these spirits he/she can even interfere in the lives of others. It gives them a feeling of power.
- *logical answers*: Questions like: Where did I come from? Why am I here? Who am I? Where am I going? are answered. He even has "contact with the dead" and can find answers to other existential questions through this "contact."

#### *The Seed*

##### *e. Course in Miracles*

Is typical of a certain group of new aberrant religious teaching which recently emerged in the United States. The Course is not a cult, group, or movement in the normal sense. It is rather a series of three books (a 622-page Text, a 478-page Workbook for Students, and an 88-page Manual for Teachers). Together they constitute a powerful instrument for introducing the content of occult metaphysics in the verbal forms of biblical Christianity, altering the person's way of thinking.

The Course, it is said, was received by spirit dictation, without human authorship, between 1969 and 1975 after the transcriber heard an audible inner voice saying: "This is a Course in Miracles; please take notes." The anonymous transcriber (medium) said: "The writing . . . could be interrupted at any time and later picked up again. It made me very uncomfortable, but it never occurred to me to stop."

The language of the Course utilizes biblical terminology throughout, referring to God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, etc., and its "author" — "the voice" — claims to be Jesus. The real thrust of the Course is to help students discover their own inner guidance, "the spiritual voice that counsels one in all situations."

The content of the Course is a powerful corrosive to anyone who naively accepts it as a beneficial aid to Christian living. A few selections from the Course's teaching on the subject of sin, guilt, and forgiveness will suffice to reveal how much it twists Christianity.

"Forgiveness recognises what you thought your brother did to you has not occurred. It does not pardon sins and make them real. It sees there was no sin. And in that view are all your sins forgiven."

"My salvation comes from me ... When you realise that all guilt is solely an invention of your mind, you also realise that guilt and salvation must be in the same place. In understanding this you are saved."

"I am the means by which God's Son is saved, because salvation's purpose is to find the sinlessness that God has placed in me ... I am the god the world is searching for. I am salvation's means and ends as well."

"The oneness of the Creator and the creation is your wholeness, your sanity, and your limitless power ... You will offer miracles because you are one with God. Again, how simple is salvation! It is merely a statement of your true Identity. It is this that we will celebrate today."

A Course in Miracles has been for the last three years a runaway success among members of the "New Age" religious community. More recently, it has achieved acceptance in congregations of some mainline denominations, and a well-known Christian TV personality from California allowed the promotion of the Course to his vast audience of regular Sunday viewers. The Course in Miracles is helping to produce a significant shift toward an occult world-view among uncounted thousands who cannot be identified by any group affiliation. (A Course in Miracles is published by the Foundation for Inner Peace, Tiburon, California).

#### *The Soil. U.S.A.*

The appeal of new religious movements arises out of a "soil" which has the following characteristics: anxiety about the atomic threat to human survival, uncertainties brought on by the complexity of modern existence, a feeling of having been betrayed by leadership, an intense longing for transcendence, a breakdown of the family and neighbourhood groups, moral relativism with an accompanying feeling of lostness, a naive openness toward religious imports from the East, affluence, and consumerism. There are also failures in the church, resulting from the loss of scriptural authority due to inadequate biblical teaching, a sub-Christian gospel of success tinged by gross materialism, extreme individualism, a sterile liturgy and an overemphasis on doctrine, and a lack of proper setting for experiencing authentic Christian community.

#### *The Seed*

##### *f. The AAO*

AAO stands for "Aktions-Analytische Organisation." The book by Arthur Janov, *Der Urschrei* ("The Primal Scream") has been the main impulse in the founding of the AAO. Otto Muhl took Janov's concept out of its context of clinical psychotherapy and transformed it into the foundation of an alternative life-style. The fundamental principle of AAO is *Selbstdarstellung* ("the acting out of all impulses"). The adherents of AAO gather around one of their members and encourage him/her to act out all the secret wishes that the bourgeois society with its *Kleinfamilie* ("small family structure") and the constraining morality prevented him from doing until now. Instant applause by the group assures him that he is being completely accepted. Eventually this person is pushed by applause to reveal his/her innermost personality and to regress to the moment of birth. This is the new starting point for developing a new personality and socialisation. The group showers acceptance on this "newborn one" and leads him/her to "infinite freedom." No one can deny any request from another, including sexual relations. To assure that no one has privileges, all shave their heads and wear the same kind of overalls. Children who are born into the group are educated by a constantly changing string of persons in order to prevent them from developing an "authoritarian" relationship to any single person. The fall of mankind, they say, resulted from the development of authoritarian relationships. The movement is found mostly in German-speaking university cities. It is a youth phenomenon. The head of the group, Otto Muhl, is located in Vienna, from where he controls the rest of the movement by rather fascist means (e.g., the group leader of Munich is responsible for the total obedience of his group to the Vienna headquarters). The local leader watches all actions within his group by means of an extensive system of personal and telecommunicational supervision. There is no chance for personal privacy, or of private contact between individuals. The sophisticatedly handled applause-technique provides the leader with the tool to engineer all decisions, but still give the impression that the group has made them democratically.

#### *The Soil: Germany, Austria, Switzerland*

It is similar to that described for the U.S.A. We might add the following: The awareness of good and evil spirits of medieval times has been destroyed by scientific education and technology. People simply ignore all spiritual realities. On the other hand, the economic recovery (*Wirtschaftswunder*) after World War II has fostered a very materialistic, consumer-oriented life-style. The discipline of earlier times now expresses itself in seeking to project a "correct" image in public. Agents of TM capitalize on this feeling for correctness and parade around well-known hippies who now dress and behave "correctly." MIGRO (a large supermarket chain) offers a wide range of art, crafts, and self-improvement courses, including parapsychology with an occult intent. The unsuspecting student, with no experience in spirit discernment, is introduced to homeopathic medicine and various uncontrolled approaches to group dynamics. These often then become the actual "gates" into the occult.

#### *The Seed*

##### *g. Unification Church (UK)*

The self-styled Reverend Sun Myung Moon claims to have had a vision at the age of 16 in 1936 in which he was told he was to complete the unfinished mission of Jesus. Jesus was deserted by John the Baptist and rejected by the people, and so took the way of the cross as God's second best, accomplishing only man's spiritual salvation. His true mission was to marry and establish the kingdom of heaven on earth. To accomplish this and gain physical salvation, a new Messiah had to be born in Korea. Moon founded his Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity in Korea in 1954. It is now found in over 140 countries. It began in the United Kingdom in 1968 with its evangelistic force being boosted by 150 members from overseas in 1976, and a further 950 in 1978 for summer-long crusades. There are now over 1,000 members in 100 centres within the UK.

The members, known as "Moonies," spend a great deal of time selling literature and asking for money for "missionary causes" on the streets. They have sold fish, stationery, ginseng tea, plants, flowers, and candles. Fund-raising is understood as "buying back the world from Satan for God." Witnessing and fund-raising are two of their most important activities. Recently they have concentrated on house-to-house visiting and have run a number of community service projects. They continue to hold concerts, rallies, and cultural evenings. These activities are sponsored under more than 20 names. This has given rise to the charge that there is a great deal of deliberate deception.

Most Moonies are motivated by an intense personal devotion to Moon and a deep sense of gratitude for his having suffered for them. Some are attracted by the teaching of the "Divine Principle." This is a new interpretation of the Bible and current history, which can be very impressive and seem logical to the naive. They have a great vision of unifying all truth, religions, science, and peoples. However, many are drawn in by the tremendous love/affection and acceptance they receive upon arrival. Many say they were overwhelmed by it. The teaching programme and personal attention by established members was so intense they could not think for themselves. It represents an outlet for their idealism, and many testify that they get unlimited energy from God for the demanding and austere life. They receive their tasks as tests of faith. They trust Moon totally, to the point of leaving vital decisions, such as the choice of a marriage partner, to him. They appear sincere and disarmingly pleasant.

Many who have left the Unification Church have done so only with great difficulty. They complained of an excessive, distorted, artificial love. They felt driven by group and leadership pressures rather than by God. They felt the need to pay "indemnity" for their own sins and for those of their family. Their unhealthy loyalty to the leaders stemmed from fear and guilt.

It is similar to that described for the U.S.A. To this we might add: The United Kingdom is a complex of large impersonal urban centres characterised by bureaucracies and the loss of community. The result is depersonalisation and the loss of a sense of belonging.

Education is knowledge- and skill-oriented, without the balance of wisdom for living and the discovery of values. In general, the intellect is over-emphasised at the expense of emotional, psychological, and sexual development.

Society is divided by relativism and permissiveness and a dogmatic "laying down of the law," without giving any reason.

There is a growing reaction against the existing situation. Many, for example, express their opposition to factory farming by vegetarianism. In younger people the alternative life-styles tend to be much more deviant.

### *The Seed*

#### *h. Cargo Cults*

A dominant and constantly recurring theme in new religions and political movements in Papua New Guinea.\* In religious movements, especially, it frequently has millennial overtones. Almost every revival or change of leadership brings with it certain cargo promises or expectations. (\*Has been called Cargo.)

\*Cargo can be described as the expectation that the ancestors (angels) will return to Papua New Guinea in modern vehicles (ships or planes) and bring to the believers every kind of material goods now in the hands of whites, thus ushering in the millennium for the faithful.

#### *The Soil: Papua New Guinea*

The "soil" in which these "cargo" movements spring up again and again is based on the view that 1) this world is paralleled by another similar one, a world peopled by ancestors who have access to all goods and every means of production; and that 2) there is no basic dichotomy between the material and the spiritual.

White people have accumulated enough power (religious and otherwise) to induce their ancestors to bring the "other world" goodies to them. If the people of Papua New Guinea can bring their relationship with their spirit world (ancestors, spirits, God) in order, and if they are able to accumulate enough power to overcome "the principalities and powers of the air," then their ancestors will bring to them all these goodies and thus usher in the golden age which Christian eschatology calls the Millennium.

## **2. The Urges that Underlie the New Religious Movements**

### *a. The Religious Urge*

It has been correctly said that all people everywhere seek religious answers. If this is, indeed, a universal reality, we would do well to try and discover what in man's experience causes him to seek "religious" answers. At the moment, we are not ready to distinguish true from false religion, since both attempt to meet basic human needs.

What are the needs which religion meets or attempts to meet? William James (The Varieties of Religious Experience) claimed that all religions share two things: 1) the awareness that there is something "wrong" about human nature, and 2) that this "wrongness" can be overcome or corrected by making the right connection with a "higher" being or power.

James' insight into human nature matches the description of the human condition as God has revealed it in his Word. The Scriptures again and again state clearly that man lives as an "exile," far away from God, and that this separation or disharmony is also true of man's relationship with his fellows and with nature itself.

Death is an objective and unavoidable fact of life. No person can escape it, and no sane person tries to. Death is the sure end for every person alive. As the preacher of Ecclesiastes tells us: What all persons have in common with each other is the fact that they will all end in the grave.

Because death is the final and complete break of all our human relationships, the awareness that death is coming prevents us from finding satisfaction and fulfillment here and now. As this awareness of our certain death deepens, it intensifies our feeling of conviction about our current brokenness. It causes us to be unsure, anxious, and lonely. All religion in the final end is the attempt to come to terms with this brokenness, which constantly reminds us: You will die! It is only normal, therefore, for a person to seek a way out—a way that will give meaning to this life, in spite of the certainty of death. People in desperation reach for that which is "higher" than they are, seeking peace and assurance that their life does have some meaning. This is an attempt to make a religious response to his need.

The fact of sin is equally real, equally universal, and equally "objective. Paul not only affirms that we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23), but he also makes clear that there is a direct link between sin and death. He says that sin is the "sting" of death. Sin is easier to hide than death. People feel, therefore, that sin is not quite as real.

In Western societies, sin in one's life is likely to be experienced as guilt. In other cultures, the feeling connected with it is that of shame. But whatever the feelings about it, the fact remains that it is sin which separates us from God and our fellows. It is the wages of this sin—death—that will make the separation permanent.

As Christians we believe there is only one way to resolve the question of sin and the feeling of "wrongness" that everyone experiences. The sacrificial death of Christ for us is the means God has chosen to save mankind. However, not everyone is willing to accept God's remedy. Some people actually reject it. Jesus spoke about two roads, a wide and a narrow one. But he affirmed that only the narrow road leads to salvation. Those who refuse God's answer therefore invent a false one for their own, or follow a false one developed by someone else.

In many of the new religious movements in so-called Christian countries, one sees that God's remedy—Christ's sacrificial death on the cross for mankind—is pushed aside and methods of salvation based on works are substituted. The drives of fear and guilt that might have led a person to Christ are now used to pressure the person to work harder at earning his salvation.

In religions based on eastern religious philosophies, sin is usually explained away—it is said not to be real. Death is reinterpreted as rebirth or reincarnation. We may not like their solutions, but even false religions must somehow deal with the issues of sin and death.

In addition to offering solutions to man's inner problems of sin and guilt, the cults offer to many people attractive solutions to basic quests of those who feel fragmented.

### *b. The Quest for Community*

IT'S TIME WE STOPPED MERELY—analysing, categorising, dramatising, evangelizing, fantacising, generalising, harmonising, idolising, jargonising, legalising, memorising, minimising, modernising, neutralising, organising, paralysing, rationalising, scrutinising, sentimentalising, spiritualising, theologising, theorising, trivialising, verbalising the gospel of LOVE...

### ... AND TIME WE LIVED IT!

Open any fashion or woman's magazine in Britain today and see the articles and stories reflecting our greatest social disease: LONELINESS. Numerous offer advice. "Dear Aunt" agony columns, and specially set up magazine counsellors respond to the hundreds of letters they receive from people. These contain an endless variety of psychological or emotional problems, marital dilemmas, and struggles about the right or wrong of moral issues in our rapidly changing society. Gone are the days when these letter writers could have chatted about these concerns over the garden fence to a familiar neighbour, with the regular milkman, the friendly postman, the neighbourhood grocer, granny, grandpa, or some other member of the family. In the name of progress and automation, we have lost these traditional counsellors, and the supportive community they represent.

The fabric of our communities has been destroyed. Homes are breaking up in epidemic proportions. In fact, many parents have lost confidence in their own ability to maintain an adequate home. As a result, many delegate their parental responsibility to institutions such as boarding schools, church organisations, and summer camps. We are a transient people living in a world of rapidly changing life-styles resulting in disruption, both economic and personal. We feel uprooted, with no real sense of belonging. It is especially their emotional frustration which makes young people so vulnerable today. Perhaps this is the main reason so many are turning to the community and kinship offered by the new religious movements. People are genuinely attracted (and later held) by the warmth and acceptance the group extends. The communal life and common belief promise to give meaning to their existence.

A representative of the British Council of Churches Youth Unit admitted recently she sees much alienation in Christian youth who are in our churches today. She sees the sudden growth of local house-groups as an attempt to meet this need. She said, "They give fellowship, companionship, and genuine caring on several

levels. People feel that weekend conferences during which they eat together, communicate, share emotions and pray, meet their basic human needs." This reaffirms the observation that the human being is social by nature and not made to be alone.

Graduating students are especially vulnerable to the attraction of cult involvement for another reason. Many students do not want a job immediately upon leaving their studies. They look for some adventure in travel, self-improvement, or some form of voluntary service before "settling down."

Voluntary service organisations, missionary societies, and church bodies receive hundreds of letters a month from kids applying for overseas missionary posts for periods up to two to three years. Where these societies once sent graduates abroad, they are now looking for specialised staff with several years of experience. The new religious movements, however, do not look for degrees, experience, or specialisation – "only money" – which most of these middle-class students seem to be able and happy to supply.

When such drifting persons first encounter these new religious movements and the community life they offer, they are impressed. Upon meeting a member of one of these groups, the unsuspecting victim is shown tremendous warmth. Through friendly persuasion, he is encouraged to meet other members who likewise exude warmth, smiles, confidence, and certainty about their common belief and purpose. Ex-members testify about the strength of this pull. They felt emotionally "sucked into" the community. They recount how they were accepted completely and embraced in their entirety, despite the lack of confidence they felt about themselves at the moment.

One ex-member told of her long-standing embarrassment at not being able to sing in tune. The Moonies had encouraged her to sing in public and they showered her with praise, in spite of her poor performance. Another told of his anguish at not being able to speak in public due to a childhood stutter. His fellow cultists had applauded him loudly after he delivered a mediocre speech on stage. Every one of them expressed great ambivalence about going back to the cult community they had left, for fear of succumbing to that strong emotional pull again. They all spoke of the guilt they felt about rejecting their "new family," and of the deep loyalty they had felt towards the group. To the drifting and alienated young people, such a community provides a cause, a sense of belonging and worth, a supporting structure; and above all, simple answers.

### c. *The Quest for Authority*

Not all religious movements require the same level of commitment: Some are of the self-service supermarket kind. Individuals may:

- (i) pick and choose beliefs and practices. A little of this and some of that. "Weekending" only, perhaps. Drifting easily from one activity to another. There may even be no group, as such. But sampling may lead to deeper involvement.
- (ii) attendance at a course or short-term membership of a group may be expected and involve payment.
- (iii) more committed membership.
- (iv) total commitment to isolated and exclusive community with extreme authoritarian leadership. How much conformity is expected and applied to the whole of a person's attitudes and life will indicate the degree and extent of control of the group/leader.

Commitment to the group makes specific demands on members:

a) *Believe* - The new religious movements offer a comprehensive view of reality and "truth." They claim to have an answer to every question, to give hope for the future, and positive ways to achieve their ideals. Some groups inculcate their beliefs in an isolated and controlled environment. There is a kind of "thought-reform." In TM the overt beliefs of initiate and teacher are said to be of no importance. But in the Divine Light Mission, where the emphasis is on the experience, the "mahatmas" are careful to initiate only those whom they deem ready. The new belief system may require a whole set of new words and concepts. New meanings are given to familiar words, which may have to be absorbed at an extremely fast rate, giving little opportunity for genuine evaluation. Members may be discouraged from questioning anything. Doubts are said to be "of the devil."

(b) *Be changed* - Members have an experience that relates to the teaching they have been given which then confirms its truth for them. Sharing of experience and testimony may be very important. There may be pressure on members to speak in tongues, as, for example, in "The Way." In some groups, members have to change their name, dress, life-style, to underline the discontinuity. Voice and other more extreme changes of personality may also take place.

(c) *Behave* - Members may have to conform to a rigorous prescribed daily routine of domestic chores, fund raising, witnessing, worshipping. Dress, length of hair, etc., may also be subject to group norms or the command of leaders. Some groups may be very permissive. Others have a strict moral code (e.g., ban on sex, alcohol, drugs). Many groups operate on a form of utilitarian ethics: what is done for Krishna is good, what is not done for him is not good. The leader may make special demands on the members to test and intensify their loyalty (e.g., command by Charles Dederich of Synanon that all male members have a vasectomy). In general, spiritual growth is measured in terms of conformity to the group.

(d) *Be loyal* - Some groups may demand a promise of loyalty, especially never to divulge the secrets of the movement. Members are often warned of the serious consequences that follow desertion from the group: Satan will re-enter them, they may have an accident, or they will never be happy. These warnings may be given openly, or may be hinted at. Members who do leave are pursued by others zealous to win them back. In some cases, those who leave and those who seek to help them are subjected to abuse, threats, and harassment. Threats of death have been made, and, in some instances, carried out. Members are also told that it is better to commit suicide than to deny the cause or the leader.

### d. *Quest for the Transcendent*

The quest for experiencing the transcendent is not limited to religious contexts.

(i) *Transcendent Experiences (chemotherapeutic, psychological, and ontological)* - A drug trip produces hallucination, a prolonged sense of time and well-being, varying in intensity but giving a sense of enjoyment, peace, and personal satisfaction. An intense dance or highly erotic sexual experience may produce a leap into sublime ecstasy, of intense enjoyment, or complete fulfillment. The aesthetic experience of the beauty of the dawn, the uplifting of the spirit in the crescendo of the symphony, or the majesty of a lofty cathedral, can give one a unique enjoyment of being linked to nature ... overwhelmed by awe as one discovers oneself to be a part of the whole.

In a transcendent experience (focus on a deity or reality higher than oneself) there is a sense of sublime enrapture ... of being caught up... being filled by the gods ... lost in an ocean of being ... sense of ceasing to be ... silence ... often accompanied by intense pleasure, and in some cases simultaneously by pain.

We can attempt to define the parameters of transcendence by summarising the preceding experiences. They are not just more of the same. They tend to be peak experiences of a higher order. We cannot even speak of them as being better than anything we have experienced previously. They are unique ... something which cannot be reproduced or repeated. Such experiences have an intense impact on the person – illuminating, giving insight, and even producing personality change. One could say these experiences have a sense of making contact with the eternal to produce a "Now Moment" Eternity (Eckhart). In many experiences of the transcendent, the actual moment becomes an instant in which past and future disappear.

"Eternal experience, the now," is an apt description of such transcendent experiences. Outside of the intense moment, however, there is no commitment to the reality experienced, and no growth in the person himself. For those who have these immanent-transcendent experiences, eternity is to live from moment to moment, where remorse no longer drags us back into the past, nor worry pushes us into the future. It is a release to live in the present without the commitment to the past, present, or future.

It should be underscored that there are many ecstatic experiences of transcendence which are not sought as an end in themselves, but as a means through which to contact the deity or the forefathers. There is a need to be "caught up" into the world of the "ancestors" or "spirits," to be able to hear their own words of explanation about the recent catastrophe, the identity of the guilty person, or the solution to the vexing problem. In other contexts, these ecstatic experiences of transcendence are required for "charging" the power source, so that healing can be effected.

*(ii) Christian Experiences of the Transcendent*

As we survey the Christian world, we become aware that there are many rich and enriching experiences that are God-given for the benefit of both the Christian and the community. In fact, God himself calls us to know him—a real and enriching enjoyment (Philippians 4:4). The critical question, however, is: Are we able to discern between that which is truly of the Spirit of God and that which is satanic?

We may say that true Christian experience always occurs within the context of two poles: that of the Spirit of God and that of the Word. The Spirit will give us only those experiences that he, the inspirer of the Word, has described. Any other experience comes from the evil one.

The historical moment and/or the cultural context will tend to modify the way people understand and appreciate the depth of their Christian experience. Thomistic rationalism, which has plagued many Protestant expressions of the truth, has often reduced understanding of that truth to mere cognitive affirmation of propositions that Christian specialists in conceptual thought have expressed. Others, in other contexts, have emptied Christian experience of all verbal or conceptual context. Such mystical experience is to be seriously questioned. The Word is the light to the path. It is our Lord who insists that true Christian worship takes place within the framework of the "spirit" and the "truth." Again, it is a balance between the Word and the Spirit.

As we examine in Scripture the many enriching experiences of transcendence of men like Moses, Isaiah, John, Peter, Paul, we become aware of the basic criteria that underlie them.

(a) There is an awareness of the majesty and holiness of God that leads the sinner (be he just coming to Christ or a Christian of long standing) to a deep sense of mortality, of human impotence, and of the awfulness of sin within one's self. Once this has been confessed, however, there comes the overwhelming consciousness of cleansing and of forgiveness. In some cases, Christians are left speechless in their attempt to converse with God or describe the experience. The intensity of the experience is burnt into their heart, mind, and soul as an indelible mark of God's hand on their life. In most cases, however, these experiences are known in the context of personal communal worship, where words are part of the total experience. In this real sense, the Holy Spirit has been given the responsibility to create deep awareness of sinfulness in the person, especially of his unconfessed sins. In many cases, this awareness is produced within the aura of God's beauty, glory, and holiness.

(b) Deep Christian experience leads the person to accept, acknowledge, and live the truth that "Jesus is the Christ." It is the Spirit who gives us the ability to see with increasing clarity the biblical God-centred view of the world. Such experiences often accompany the reading of God's Word. It is he who gives the Christian a hunger for the Word and predisposes him/her to obey it. It is he who gives us that awesome sense of being in his very presence. In some cases, we may have a sense of being caught up (2 Cor. 12) and lost in the deep wonder of all that God is.

(c) The Spirit leads us to cry, "Abba" (Father), giving us an assurance that we are God's children (Rom. 8:15). Even more important is a deep sense of the reality of being intimate with God. He is no longer a far off deity that needs to be placated. He is with me and delights in conversing and working with me. It is therefore important to differentiate between a "Jesus trip" and an authentic Christian experience of Jesus. The former is focussed on the "high" and the latter on the commitment to the Lord.

(d) The Christian experience leads to a call or an intensified commitment. The Bible constantly emphasises that the Christian cannot remain on the mount of Transfiguration. There must be a return to the valley to minister, to serve, and live out what he or she has received. Conversely, if persons base their call on human needs, social pressure, or an inner psychological need, they will soon lose their commitment to the task. A commitment and a call, to be truly Christian, must be rooted in the Lord himself. In some cases this call is accompanied by an intense experience of transcendence, which remains as the life-long seal of God's call. Even in times of persecution, such experiences can fortify the Christian and give him the assurance of overcoming.

(e) Christian experiences lead the person to maturity. The work of the Holy Spirit integrates his innermost being and produces a growing inner harmony. Such a harmony need not be only intra-personal but also inter-personal. Relationships are healed, communities are edified. This inner harmony is enhanced in the light of the Lord (2 Cor. 3:18). Progressively, the Christian demonstrates in his person, life-style, and ministry the marks of a Christ-like life, expressed both within the Christian community and in the world at large. When the Christian resists the Holy Spirit's gentle influences and hides instead behind the mask of hypocrisy, he will tend to lose the beauty, enjoyment, and delight of the Lord's presence. Authentic Christian experience, whatever its intensity, fulfills the biblical criteria of being a gift of God and the work of his grace.

*e. The Quest for an All-of-Life Religion**(i) Search for holism in Non-Western Contexts*

The people, whose traditional religious experience took place within the context of a dynamic view of the world, as for example in Africa (cf. introduction to Reaching Traditional Religionists), usually have a holistic view of reality. As Christian missions from the West arrived with the gospel, an unrecognised, but very serious, clash of world-views developed. The missionary's perception was shaped by a mechanistic world-view. He brought with him his home system of healing and educating which was "scientific" and secularising. The missionary's God had for all practical purposes retreated from weather control, physical and mental illness, crop and human fertility, and from the "ordinary" secular affairs of people. As a result, African, Amerindian, and Asian converts found the Christian message, dealing largely with the sacred, covered only part of their concerns. The gaps in the Christian concern often led the believer to backslide in times of crises. The convert was forced to fall back on his old religion if he wanted a "religious" answer.

A well-educated African Christian recently said: "In terms of the biblical world-view, we Africans feel that we are the believers and that Westerners are the unbelievers who need to be converted." Missionaries, he said, are a real problem, because they too are basically unbelievers, but they use the language of believers.

As the spirit of independence burst upon the world scene, many people not only shook off the oppressing yoke of colonialism, but also the Western form of Christianity. They felt that it was time to stop being pseudo-Western, and to develop an expression of Christianity that was truly their own; and one which would meet the needs of the whole person in every aspect of his life. The result has been new religious groups springing up everywhere. Since they saw in the Bible a world-view similar to their own, many used biblical models to justify breaking away from mission-founded churches. Some maintained most of the imported expressions of Christianity and merely added from the local religion those items they felt were missing. Others, and this is by far the larger number, simply fell back on their pre-Christian methods of communicating with the supernatural. On the basis of dreams, visions, and prophetic messages, they validated many pre-Christian models. They launched many new church movements—more than 10,000 in Africa alone.

What are some of the needs that these people feel are not being met by Christianity in its Western wrapper? We list only a few of the many:

(a) More specific and personal messages from the supernatural.

(b) Divine concern and intervention in matters of illness and health, human and crop fertility, weather; and, especially, the decisions of life, such as: Whom should I marry? Shall I go to town or work in the fields today? Do I buy a VW or a Toyota?

(c) Manifestations of the power of God's Spirit in dealing with local spirit concerns. This involves accidental and hereditary witches, demon possession, the activities of avenging, and the alien spirits, etc.

(d) The development of worship styles that would meet local needs, employ local symbols, and make use of local resources: drums, music, dance, etc.

(e) The liberty to employ many models from the Bible, both Old and New Testament, which Western Christianity does not appreciate. Among these are: the city of refuge, the use of oils, many special vestments, prophets and seers, dreams and visions, ecstatic experience of the Holy Spirit, polygamy, food taboos, etc.

*(ii) Search for holism in the West*

The quest for a more holistic view of reality is, of course, not limited to those societies who operate on a dynamic view of the world. In many ways, the drug-culture in the West was a revolt against the constraints of the prevailing materialistic-mechanistic approach to reality. A similar dissatisfaction can be readily seen in the acceptance of Eastern (usually animistically based) holistic religious ideas. Young people reject especially the schizophrenic view of many Christians, who operate within the mechanistic model all week, but who, on Sunday, talk about the Holy Spirit. The African criticism of Western missionaries speaks to this point.

The author of "He Found Me" is an example of the younger generation who are struggling to develop a more holistic view. Likewise, some missionaries and other cross-cultural workers are deeply aware of the limitations of the mechanistic view which shaped their thinking. They are making a serious attempt to develop a more holistic outlook. Very few of them, however, have achieved the "freedom" of a fully integrated holistic world-view. Most of them still experience severe tension between the two. Paul put the longing into words when he said: "For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect, but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away ... For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood" (1 Cor. 13:9 & 12).

### 3. An Indictment

#### a. To the Christian Church

"Why do these millions of people find their emotional and social stability in these new religions? Why do they not flock into the established churches instead? Is it possible that these prophet-movements, indigenous churches, and syncretistic cults arose precisely because the churches in their life, mission, and theology were unable to offer these people the fellowship so badly needed in a time of social disintegration?" (Missionary to Africa).

The Christian church world-view is confronted with the growth of new religious movements. In some cases, they have Christian elements added to a non-Christian religious base. In others, they have non-Christian elements which have been added to a Christian base. In appearance, such new religious groups may differ greatly. They do, however, exhibit a fascination which in its depth seems to irradiate from the same mysterious force. In many of them, we are clearly dealing with demonic forces who have blinded even the believers. There are also renewal movements and new churches in many parts of the world that are either wholly or partly the result of the work of the Holy Spirit. These new religious movements express their faith in such different forms (sometimes quite syncretistic) that it is often difficult to recognise them as Christian. Biblical discernment is of utmost importance.

Why do young people not find better answers to their existential questions than those given by syncretistic or Eastern religious movements? It is difficult to find a clear-cut answer. The state of the churches in Western Europe, in North and South America, Africa, Asia, and Oceania is not monolithic. Even if the churches reflected the apostolic model of the New Testament, there still is no assurance that there would not have been any new religious movements. It must be remembered that the gnostic movement drew its followers from congregations founded and supervised by St. Paul and St. John. Since its very beginning, the church has been involved in a spiritual battle. It has been attacked from without and threatened from within by schisms, heresies, and false prophets. The church's task is to try the spirits to see whether they are from God. As history reaches its consummation, there will not be a decrease but an increase of pseudo-Christian counterfeits.

But as Christians, we cannot let our consciences rest. Satan can and does use human factors on the psychological, social, and educational level to mislead. Moreover, very seldom do our churches live up to their true calling in living their lives in the Spirit and fulfilling the ministry of the body of Christ. The church cannot claim complete innocence in regard to the tragedies experienced by many Christian churches and families who cannot retain the loyalty of their members.

The success in the West of modern youth cults like the Unification Church, the Children of God, or the Hare Krishna movement was the focus of a missiological seminar in Tubingen. The study found the major desires not satisfied to be:

- The desire for fellowship in a supportive community
- The search for life's meaning in an age of materialism and technology
- The need to experience the transcendent

It also found that the church seemed:

- to be unapproachable, bound by tradition and "ghettoism." Faith seemed to have been reduced to dry morality.
- to be sterile in its religious instruction. It kept students from experiencing the awe of God (Isa. 6).
- to have lost the authority of Scripture and thus its saving power.
- to be failing in its exercise of biblical authority and leadership wavering between dogmatism and "anything goes." This lack of direction has driven young people into the arms of "gurus."
- to be impassive in the face of injustice, oppression, and poverty.

The church should be involved in giving specific answers to these existential questions. It is sad to see that it has failed exactly in the task to which God has called it.

The readiness with which searching people commit themselves to completely different concepts of salvation is really a cry for true meaning which must not be ignored. It is a cry for the true "light of the world."

We cannot afford to ignore this cry. New religious movements listen and respond to it. False Christs and prophets appear in increasing numbers, just as Jesus predicted. Many feel that the current wave of "gurus" is the forerunner to the antichrist.

#### b. To Christian Mission

Many feel that it is important that more Western missions stop and take a serious look at themselves and their approach (cf. the call for a moratorium).

New church movements that split off mission churches make the following indictments:

- The churches from the West sent us a partial religion wrapped tightly in a Western wrapper that did not allow us to develop a truly contextualised Christianity.
- The missionary ambassadors preached and pushed the "gospel" of Western democracy, materialism, secularism, improvement in the "quality of life" (clothing, toilets, etc.), often confusing modernisation with Christian growth.
- Many Western missionary enterprises use money to control mission situations abroad. As a result, many of the newer churches have been severely weakened.
- Western sending churches have often been guilty of arrogance. They felt they had the "whole truth and nothing but the truth," and so they came to teach, not to learn. An African recently said: "Admonition should be a two-way street." This spiritual arrogance is especially marked in regard to syncretism.
- Sending churches from the West are often very sensitive about speaking to the sins inherent in certain social, political, and economic structures that condemn many to poverty and third-class citizenship. Could it be that missions are afraid of offending their financial supporters?

### 4. Strategy for Rescue, Nurture and Correction

#### a. An Apologetic to New Religious Movements

##### (i) Critique and Theological Challenge

One of our most comprehensive tasks for biblical Christians and members of the professing church is to manifest and declare the character of God accurately in the context of a fallen world.

Scripture makes it clear that this world is locked in a life and death struggle for man's soul. Evil and deception are real and suffering is universal. Jesus did not mince words when confronting spiritual falsehoods; he declared the Devil to be the Father of all lies (John 8:44). Jesus and his apostles reserved their harshest words for false prophets.

Believers are called the "salt of the earth" and are to uphold God's standards by practising righteousness, encouraging reconciliation, and speaking out against evil and falsehood. In Paul's letter to the Ephesian Church, he says that we should "have no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose [reprove] them" (Eph. 5:11). Paul did not indicate that this was a specialised instruction to experts within the Ephesian congregation. The whole church is called to the task of understanding and answering those individuals and movements which claim to have ultimate truth. Critical analysis, including the penetration of error's many guises, is often the first step in the process of proclaiming the truth (evangelism) and defining it (apologetics).

In presenting the gospel to a member of a new religious movement (or indeed to a committed religionist of any kind), the Christian is faced with two sets of tensions, each of which must be held in balance. Initially, there is the tension between challenge and compassion. It is obvious that Jesus did not hold sheer exposure of error as his first objective. His primary purpose in life (and, for that matter, of his suffering and death) was to proclaim the "good news" of God's love, mercy, and forgiveness. However, as C.S. Lewis observes, the news that one can be forgiven is only "good news" if one has already absorbed the "bad news" that one needs forgiving. In the case of certain religious movements, this tension goes beyond the general problem of presenting sin and the law as a backdrop to the message of grace. The cultist may have been indoctrinated thoroughly; in consequence, he already possesses (at least intellectually) systematic answers to the crises of life. At some point in evangelism, the member's faith in the workability of his false answers will have to be shaken and ultimately destroyed.

Secondly, there is the tension between spiritual warfare and human relationship. Paul urges us to the realisation that "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12). However, while it is not against flesh and blood that we wrestle, it is certainly in the context of person-to-person encounters that we critique and evangelize. It is common for non-Christians to equate Jesus' challenge of falsehood with some feeling of ill-will towards those who have believed the falsehood. We should prepare ourselves in advance to do battle against Satan's strongholds and expect him not to give up easily (2 Cor. 10:1-5).

Both of these tensions are summed up in Paul's admonition to the Roman Christians: "Don't be overcome by evil, but instead, overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21). With this admonition as a starting point, we can analyse two phases of the evangelistic task:

- The attitude with which we approach the religionist or spiritual seeker; the content of our proclamation vis-a-vis his entrenched belief system.
- We will discuss them by reflecting upon Paul's famous "Mars Hill Discourse." You will find it helpful to have the biblical text of Acts 17:16-34 open before you.

Initially, we notice that Paul himself experienced a sense of being challenged by the spiritual darkness with which he was surrounded.

"His spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was full of idols." Most of us would have reacted similarly. Such a response is entirely appropriate, for God is no more apathetic toward misrepresentation of his character than he is toward immorality or unrighteousness. Paul's spiritual conviction led him to present a counter-challenge to those *human* individuals who were effectively the moral and intellectual custodians of that darkness—the professional philosophers of Athens.

However, we also notice that there is a distinct shift in the apostle's attitude. Once he begins to speak to the philosophers on the basis of his common humanity with them, Paul shows himself to be remarkably sensitive to the legitimate elements of their spiritual search to know God. Paul allowed his provocation to move him but not to control him.

We do not have to approach a believer in the new religious movements as someone who incarnates the full evil of the spiritual forces which have ensnared him. On the contrary, we must begin by treating him as someone who has both a sincere motivation *toward* God and a sinful *rebellion* against God.

#### *Content of our Proclamation*

At the same time that Paul identifies with their yearning for truth, he underscores that idolatry is unable to satisfy the person's spiritual needs. He seizes upon the altar to the unknown god as a point of entry into their belief system.

Immediately, Paul introduces a positive message which summarises the focal point of divine revelation. In effect, Paul says, "You people are extremely sincere, and I honour that. But the fact is that sincerity isn't enough. Your man-made system is inadequate. The God who made the world cannot be honoured by means of your shrines. You still consider him to be 'unknown' but he has, in fact, revealed himself in Jesus Christ."

#### A Concrete Example

One way of finding a system's weak point is to deal directly with an individual's conscience. Conscience is that part of us that God designed to respond to the moral and ethical realities of his world. For example, at an appropriate point in a dialogue, the evangelist could ask: "How does your religion address the problem of evil in the world?" It may be helpful to express the issue in concrete terms, e.g., "At least eight million people are going to starve to death in Southeast Asia alone this year if something isn't done. How does your belief or your spiritual practise deal with that dilemma?" Needless to say, this particular question will not be appropriate in every case. Similar sympathetic dialogue, however, will enable the evangelist to discover the points at which the individual's conscience is speaking.

Many disciples of Hindu-based religious groups, especially those which incorporate some form of yoga discipline into their spiritual practice, would respond more or less as follows: "I have attained an expanded perception of reality from which I now understand that things are not as they appear to the limited consciousness of one such as yourself. I am able to see beyond the appearance of such illusory pairs of opposites as starvation and gluttony, life and death, etc. In fact, because I experience the truth that All is One, I am able to see that these people are paying off a necessary Karmic debt."

The evangelist should probably not then attack such an outlook for its callousness and apathy toward suffering. If he does so, he will move to their own ground. He will simply confirm the yogi's worst suspicions about the extremely low consciousness-level of Christian evangelists. He will also thus provide the yogi with another opportunity to take pleasure in his own superiority. Under these circumstances the lines of conviction become hardened, and fruitful dialogue becomes difficult or impossible.

A more fruitful approach might be to take a firm grasp on the yogi's own latent self-doubt and raise it to the level of an explicit challenge. People often make far-reaching philosophical claims that are not matched by experience. The foundation of spiritual experience on which their world-view has been built may be totally inadequate. In a caring and yet challenging way, the evangelist might ask, "Do you really experience that? Is it really a part of your daily routine (as starvation is for those who experience it)? Or is that just something you have been taught to say?"

This approach may not produce an on-the-spot conversion (though it is possible, and has happened). It will, however, open up further avenues for discussion.

#### *(ii) Spiritual Warfare*

In the development of our apologetic concerning the practises of new religious movements, we need to remember that theory, logic, and argument are not sufficient in and of themselves.

There are different levels of demonic activity. It is one thing to evangelize a "free thinker" and another thing entirely to evangelize an "umbandista" who has received an evil spirit.

In the case of evangelizing the latter you will be combatting not only a false argumentâ€”you will be combatting Satan. At the moment of confrontation, the person is likely to be possessed with the evil spirit, and thus lose his/her personal identity. In these cases, the action to take is exorcism.

There are five basic necessities:

- Be able to communicate a solid biblical argument, confronting false beliefs such as reincarnation and the like. This requires a basic understanding of Scripture and the false teachings.
- Be filled with the Spirit and clothed in the whole armour of God.
- Have spiritual discernment.
- Make sure you are supported by a group of praying Christians.
- Organise caring communities that offer pastoral support.

#### *(iii) The Need for Discernment*

How are we going to distinguish which of the new religious movements are Christian and which are not? Fortunately, God is the final judge! Nevertheless, as the Lord's ambassadors, Christians must decide whether people who believe the teachings of these groups and live by their practises are to be embraced as part of the family of God or to be evangelized.

We are faced with a multiplicity of movements ranging from overtly satanic through highly questionable groups, to those whose obedience to the Spirit of God is evident. How can we distinguish one from another? Our human resources are inadequate, but we have a God who knows. He has given us his Spirit, who is to guide us into all truth (John 16:8-13). Please note, however, the first concern of the Spirit will be to convict us of our own sin (see verses 8-11). Only when our channel is clear will he lead us into truth and give discernment.

God's Word tells us that "by their fruits you shall know them" (Matt. 12:33). In Deut. 13:1-5 we are reminded that a prophet is not of God if his teaching is contrary to Scripture. We are also told not to trust in that prophet whose signs fail to come to pass (Deut. 18:18-22). God has given us a number of criteria for discerning the spirits to "see if they be of God" (1 John 4:1-6). A sample of these follows:

- Is there a destructiveness about them or are they concerned with building up God's people (1 Peter 5:8-9)?
- Does their truth correspond with the truth of God, revealed in Scripture (John 16:13)?
- Does their conversation and subsequent change in life-style reflect the biblical models (Acts 2:37-47)?
- Do they use the words of Scripture to correctly teach what it affirms (2 Tim. 3:16-17)?
- Does the Spirit witness to our spirit that they are children of God (Rom. 8:16)?
- Is their life a reflection of the love of God (1 John 4:8-9)?
- Do they deny the Lordship of Jesus Christ in word or deed (1 Cor. 12:3 and 1 John 4:1-6)?
- Is their love for the brethren evident (1 John 3:14)?
- Do they love error instead of truth (2 Thess. 2:6-12)?
- Have they made a clean break with sin, and do they demonstrate a corresponding willingness to destroy idols, amulets, and fetishes (1 Thess. 1:6-10)?

#### *(iv) Social, Political and Legal Action*

There has been a lot of emphasis recently on the need for Christians to be much more aware of the issues in society around them, to take up those issues, and deal with them from a Christian standpoint. The new religious movements have been the subject of tremendous public interest. This should be a golden opportunity for a Christian contribution to radio and T.V., newspapers, and magazines. In many parts of the world these new religious movements are a rebuke to the consumer society with its materialist, status-seeking, dehumanising features. Much of the extreme hostility toward them comes from those who have vested interest in the very things that are being exposed, and who cannot listen to the rebuke. Christians need to discern this and accept the criticisms where they are justified. In the context of a balanced discussion, they should offer a truly Christian response to the many questions of beliefs and values.

Some Christians have been able to run public meetings and adopt this approach to good effect. This can be a real opportunity for low-key evangelism, but it is vital that we introduce our Christian convictions openly and sensitively. This avoids the complaint that people have been invited on false pretenses. It is a good contrast with the deceptive introduction of their beliefs by so many of the new religious movements.

Many of the "new age" religious groups in the West offer courses in self-realisation, personal enhancement, improvement in inter-personal relationships, etc. We need to expose the reality that, in the discipline of many of these movements, the self is lost. The so-called higher state of consciousness is, in reality, an attempt to destroy the human personality. The person is actually isolated rather than helped to develop a deeper love relationship with others.

Members of some new religious movements, and even many non-religious people, have an acute awareness of evil and injustice in the world. Too often Christians have had too superficial an understanding of sin. They see sin only on the private and personal level. They have no awareness of sin in the social and political structures. There is a more comprehensive view of the biblical doctrine of sin in Malachi 3:5, "Then I will draw near to you for judgement. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the orphan, against those who thrust aside the sojourner and do not fear me, says the Lord of Hosts." Both spiritual and moral dimensions are portrayed here. It also shows how sin affects our private lives and social relationships. Even the evils of the economic and sociopolitical systems are exposed.

In some parts of the world, people are more aware and concerned about these new religious movements and are ready to hear the Christian viewpoint. For example, in Germany, courses on "cults" are part of the school curriculum. Many in the academic world and those working in health, welfare, and social services are deeply aware of the problems created by these movements. These might be open to study and discuss them.

Those who get involved with the more extreme groups need to be ready to face opposition, harassment, vilification, and being taken to court. If there is evidence that groups harm the health of their members, or are financially and politically motivated rather than being genuinely charitable or religious, it may be proper to make this known to the appropriate authorities and challenge their right to tax-exemption and similar benefits. Government enquiries have also taken place in some countries. Any such approach is, of course, of very limited long-term value from the Christian point of view, but it is the Christian duty to protect the weak. Some Christians have given a very positive and warm commendation to the gospel by their stand on these matters.

Parents' groups have been formed in several countries in response to the often desperate sense of loss, worry, and helplessness that they feel when a child joins a cult. In France and Germany, such parents' organisations have official recognition and financial support from the government (see list in the Appendix). Joining and leading such groups has been a very fruitful source of witness with both relatives and ex-members becoming Christians. It has proven to be an area in which there can be extensive inter-church co-operation.

#### *(v) Alerting the Churches*

There is an urgent need for the Christian church to wake up to the challenge of the new religious movements. All too often it is ignorant of their presence and activities, and particularly how deceitful Satan can be in drawing people away from the truth. Pastors need to be well informed themselves and to plan to introduce teaching programmes for their adults and young people.

Major churches in every country should seriously consider supporting one or more full-time workers in this field, to do the necessary research and to develop the necessary teaching materials. Ministerial councils should try to establish a network of relationships so that information about need and resources can be shared. The goal of this network should be to disseminate information at the local church level. Every theological seminary and Bible college should include teaching on this vital subject.

Individuals should produce useful literature and contribute articles to Christian magazines and papers. They should also advertise the available teaching aids such as films, cassettes, and overhead projector transparencies. Agencies which prepare teaching aids are listed in the appendix. Many of them produce regular newsletters which help to keep church people informed.

*(vi) Responding to Relativism: A Key to Liberation*

The survey of the "soils" in which the new religious movements thrive showed that they grow best in those areas where traditional value systems are breaking down. Sad to say, the breakdown is very widespread.

The fact that Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism, Confucianism, Spiritism, and Christianity conflict in their values has caused many to feel that there are no absolutes. So long as people imagine that the experience of the transcendent offered by all religions is equally valid, there is nothing to stop the new religious movements from claiming to have the ultimate answer.

We now live not only in a post-Christian, but also, a post-Jim Jones age. Not even in the name of religion should any "guru" again violate the dignity of a follower and strip him/her of basic human rights. Many are crying out for justice, but few care enough to see that it is done. People long for ultimate reality. Unable themselves to distinguish right from wrong, people are ready to commit their lives to a leader who promises liberation from the tyrannies of the relative world. A leader such as Jim Jones did not bring his followers liberation. He subjected them to the oppression of the devil. We call upon all Christians everywhere to do all in their power morally and legally to set such captives free.

Except children be taught, they will grow up without a knowledge of the basic absolutes God reveals in nature (Rom. 11:20; 2:14-15) and Scriptures. Homes everywhere seem to be failing in this task. Children do not look to their parents for guidance. Education has been set adrift in the sea of relativism. Little wonder that the answers of the new religious movements sound so good to them.

If we allow relativism to undercut our ideals and reduce a sin to trivial fears, there can be no wholeness. We can liberate people from the oppression of the new religious movements only if we lead them to him who is the way, the truth, and the life. For the Christian, the Word of God and the example of Jesus form the basic source of instruction on how to deal with those who have come under demonic powers. He uses the truth to expose the lie.

*b. Preparation for Counselling*

In preparation for the counselling ministry we need to be aware of strategies Satan uses to deceive human beings. Many people think of the activity of Satan only as causing fear and destruction. Satan does tear down. He attempts to attack and disorganise God's kingdom, but at the same time he is actively striving to build up his own.

One of his approaches is to convince people that only God does things we consider good, like healing. Satan would like people to think that he does only evil. Thus when people see a healing, they will at once attribute it to God. Many do not recognise the fact that Satan can heal also. The Bible speaks of the possibility of demonic miracles, ". . . the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness . . ." (2 Thess. 2:9-10). It warns us that "Satan disguises himself as an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14).

The differences between a divine and a satanic healing can be seen in the consequences. The latter invariably produces demonic oppression, while the former leads to spiritual growth. The Christian counsellor should also know something about the long-range effects, should Satan gain access to an individual's personality. Exodus 20:5 teaches us that the occult sins of the fathers can have a devastating effect in the lives of their children. Counsellors from Indonesia report that people with severe psycho-spiritual problems may have to look for evidence of occult involvement as far back as their great-grandparents.

To begin with, the counsellor should check for possible natural causes of the person's specific symptoms. Is it just a physical illness or a psychological problem? If we can't find the answer within these perspectives, we begin to consider the possibility of demonic influence. The activities listed in Deut. 18:10-13 and the qualities of personality mentioned in Gal. 5:19ff are especially helpful at this stage as guidelines.

As soon as it has been established that one is dealing with a case of spirit possession, the evil spirit should be exorcised in the name of Jesus Christ! Sometimes it is wise to identify the evil spirit by name. Jesus asked the evil spirit, "What is your name?" (Luke 8:30). Once identified, he should be immediately exorcised. The counsellor should be careful not to get involved in a "private conversation" with the spirit. We should never give the evil spirit the slightest respect or show any feeling that one is impressed by its presence or power (Revelation 12:9ff).

Sometimes the counsellor will need to prepare him/herself through fasting and prayer (Mark 9:29). He must take on the whole armour of God if he hopes to defeat the attacks (Eph. 6:13ff) of the evil one.

When praying with the possessed person, the latter should be encouraged to participate actively. He should be encouraged to confess the sins that gave Satan access to possess his mind and body. It is of utmost importance formally and immediately to renounce any connection with the powers the victim may have obtained through occult means (1 Cor. 10:21). He should not only pray for deliverance but for God to keep him/her in his protective care. It is important for the victim to dedicate him/herself, spirit, soul, and body to the Lord. If not, the evil spirits may return (Luke 11:26).

*c. Rescue and Nurture*

The need for rescue: Many members find it extremely difficult to leave the new religious movements even when they want to. This could be because of the tremendous emotional pull of the group. It might also be due to a fear of facing family and problems from which they were running away in the first place. They may doubt their ability to cope with the uncertain ties of the real world and to make their own decisions. They may feel very guilty of being disloyal to the leader or fellow group members. They could even be fearful that in leaving the group they are denying God and falling back under the domination of Satan. They may fear accidents or illness. They may have been warned that desperate relatives will kidnap them and "deprogramme" them by violent means. There is, however, a clear need for a truly Christian approach to rescue, counselling, and nurture.

Prayer: Prayer is, of course, basic and central to any form of Christian activity. This is especially true for those trying to reach people whose minds the god of this world has blinded by false teaching (see 2 Cor. 4:1-6). Note also the points made in the sections on Spiritual Warfare, Evangelism, and Counselling. The Christian counsellor, the person leaving the group, the family and friends, all need continual prayer support at every stage.

Trust and Friendship: The principles mentioned in the section on Evangelism should be carefully noted and applied. If the member is confused, hovering between wanting to leave and fear of doing so, then one needs to be especially sensitive. He/she must be free to make his/her own decision to stay or leave. Fostering trust and cultivating friendship may take a great deal of time, patience, and care.

Family and Support Groups: Although one may establish contact with the group member on his own, it is important to enlist the support of family, friends, and others. It can be a source of tremendous help and encouragement for the family to be put in touch with the other parents who have been through the same experience. Contact with ex-members of the same or other similar groups can be helpful. All these people need to understand the group's beliefs and practices. They need to anticipate the needs and reactions of the returning member and the value of working closely together. In this situation, many members of the supporting group will recognise their own need and helplessness and may be very open to the gospel. They will value the prayers of other caring Christians and will often pray themselves. Many have come to know Christ through a crisis of this nature. If the member seems to be particularly confused or disturbed, a doctor or professional counsellor should be contacted.

The group may play on the parents' guilt in an attempt to convince them and their child that any trouble is their fault, and not that of the group. The family needs to look honestly at any failings, but also to be reassured. Some counsellors make a point of seeing the whole family together. It is important that the rest of the family show their love and concern for the group member. This attitude, if it remains constant, will prove that the love of the family is stronger than that of the group. Sympathetic, prayerful support from all concerned is vital throughout.

Rescue: Those who leave the new religious movements are often extremely suspicious and frightened. They may need a lot of reassurance and understanding. The member should be approached with gentleness, love, and respect. The group and its leader should not be scorned or attacked. This would only provoke a defensive attitude. It is essential to discover why he/she joined the group. There may be several reasons. Encourage them to talk about it. Personal warmth and acceptance, on the one hand, and a spirit of prayer to win the spiritual conflict, on the other, are the key factors. They are more important than logic and argument. However, one needs to have a good grasp of the group's teachings and to be able to answer these gently but firmly from God's Word. It may be important to press home a few simple points again and again, if the member's mind is confused. Be careful not to manipulate or threaten. While our hope and

prayer is that they should come to Christ, we need to be careful not to take advantage of this confused state. Our first responsibility is to encourage and help them make responsible decisions. Otherwise, we are guilty of violating their personalities in the way the group has. Given a sensitive lead, many will respond to the call of Christ (I Pet. 3:15-16).

Nurture: This work of nurturing can be extremely demanding. It requires time, patience, emotional resources, and spiritual energy. One needs to wrestle in prayer. Some religious groups will misrepresent and aim to discredit any who work against them. They may resort to personal harassment and intimidation.

The member who chooses to leave will need a great deal of help. He will need time to talk through his experiences with other ex-members. He will need a lot of counselling and guidance in order to recover his identity. He must be given the opportunity to do something worthwhile. Boredom at this stage is extremely dangerous.

Many find it difficult to make their own decisions. Patience and understanding are essential, but one should be careful not to impose on them. Eventually everything to do with the group should be clearly and formally renounced. All literature, pictures, cassettes, mantras, and sacred objects should be destroyed. It may be helpful for this to be done in a ceremonial way. A part of such a ceremony could be the presentation of a Bible. Even those who already have a Bible have found one given to them on such an occasion to be something special.

Those who become Christians will need help in learning to pray, to study the Bible, and to share in a caring fellowship. Many who join the new religious groups do so for idealistic reasons. They should be given an outlet to express such ideals in meaningful social or Christian service. It is important that they get their minds off their own needs and begin to think of the needs of others. Ex-members often are in a unique position to be of help. Care should be taken not to give them too much responsibility too soon. Even when they gain confidence and become effective helpers, they continue to need support.

*d. Correction* (Helping those in new religious movements who have made a basic decision for Christ)

The strategy discussed here concerns groups, often tribal, who have made their basic decision for Christ, but who express their Christianity in such different forms, often quite syncretistic, which may make it difficult to identify them as Christians.

Reaching the people in these new (Christian congregation, Zionist, Apostolic, Ethiopian, Israelite) church movements involves more than locating and counting them; more than recruiting missionaries and sending them; more than translating the Scriptures and teaching them.

First of all, it involves learning to see the world as they see it. It means understanding the questions they ask and helping them to find biblical answers. In many ways, these new religious movements understand the biblical world-view much better than those of us trained in Western sciences and theology. They are at home with the dreams and visions of the Old Testament and the spirit possessions of the New. They understand when Elijah and Jesus do not deny the existence of Baal or the demons, but demonstrate the greater power of God in power confrontations. When the Good News is expressed in such terms, they usually respond warmly and are quite ready to share their own experiences of a similar nature.

Further, a strategy to reach these new religious movements must include the awareness that such people usually have an organic view of their society. Just as their world is alive, so their tribe, clan, or family has a life of its own. Important decisions are corporate matters and must be made by the heads of the group. It should not surprise us that when people in these groups accept or reject a message, they do so as families or groups. We need to develop theologically sound strategies for leading such people to personal faith and growth in Christ without introducing the extreme forms of individualism that have alienated and dehumanised so many in the Western societies. On the other hand, personal experience is not only in the person's interest, it is in the interest of the corporate group. For example, in Asia and the West, mystic experience is often extremely personal and more or less for personal edification.

In Africa the experience is viewed as corporate, and any personal benefits are welcome side effects. The Corinthian church, for example, was warned about tongues as being basically personal; while in Africa the inspired message that comes out of an ecstatic experience tends to be group directed.

The corporate nature of most tribal societies in which these movements develop is a real asset in church growth. First, it serves as an effective means of sharing the Good News with others. When some members of the group—or even if the tribe as a whole—hear some "good news" or learn a new truth, they readily share it with others. When several families become members of an independent church movement, their neighbours and relatives soon hear about it. Networks of kinship, fictitious (totemic) kinship, friendship, and gossip soon make public what everyone is doing. Second, it provides new converts with an immediate understanding of the church as a living body. Concepts such as mutual responsibility, special gifts, and the functioning as a corporate body are all well known to them. Every significant event brings out the required group response. Wrong doing will produce social pressure for repentance, dancing, praying, etc.

If the outside helper comes from a local missionary-founded church, he may need assistance in understanding how much of the West his view of the Good News actually contains. He may need help in overcoming a judgmental attitude of superiority that has been prevalent in main-line churches in relation to independent church movements.

If the helper is a missionary from another culture, we need to be sure that his preparation has made him aware of the presuppositions of his own culture and world-view. He must be aware of his own biases in perception and behaviour. He also needs to be aware of the differences between his world-view and that expressed in the Old and New Testaments. This awareness should help him in his understanding of the group's world-view.

On a second level, the helper should be one who is able to help others to do a task. He should facilitate the work of others rather than to do the work himself (e.g., he plants the seed of a message rather than preaching the message himself).

The functions of mirror, source of alternatives, catalyst, friend of the court, culture broker, etc., that an outsider can fulfill have been described in detail elsewhere. Special consideration must be given to help the churches develop the gifts of discernment in regard to prophets, spirits, and syncretism.

Certain approaches have proven beneficial. Of these, we cite the following from actual experiences:

- There is real openness for ambulant biblical education of the leaders. Institutions tend to have a choking effect, but the bishops or founders of the groups invariably desire the upgrading of the knowledge and ministry of their prophets and preachers.
- There is readiness to co-operate and thus reduce some of the fragmentation and provide some checks on undesirable innovations.
- There is real openness in whole-man approaches which upgrade medical, educational, agricultural, and other practices thus encouraging the overall development of the whole life of a people.
- Some prophet-leaders are willing to put their rituals and symbols under the scrutiny of the Word. They are aware of the dangers of syncretism. Methods of Bible study to help avoid syncretism need to be developed. In an East African seminary, students review their tribal religion in detail before beginning the study of biblical theology. The reason is that when the traditional beliefs, practices, symbols, etc., become overt, they can much more readily be tested in the light of the Word of God.
- The Choco church in Panama invites unbelievers to the Bible study and tries to find cultural parallels to various biblical events in order to be able to test both traditional and Christian beliefs and practices. The result often is community wide change, thus eliminating the entropy that unchanged elements in a society tend to bring to a church movement.
- Practical teaching materials need to be developed that are based on local world-view. They should employ symbols and media that facilitate local communications (e.g., the New Life course developed for the Mapuche in Chile by Celadec.)
- Establish contact with other churches outside of their environment. The bringing of several prophets of such churches to Lausanne in 1974 resulted in at least a dozen requests from groups who wanted help. All asked for more Bible teaching. Several asked for other ministries, medical, agricultural, etc. One group asked for a special Bible Reader to be published which would include 52 passages the group wanted the church to study during the next year.

It has been suggested that twinning of churches from one region with a group of churches in another area of the world might be desirable. Such a relationship could involve exchange of workers, the sharing of resources—both material and personnel—etc. It is important that the "twinning" churches should be committed, under the exercise of spiritual discretion, to accept mutual correction.

In summary, our outreach must:

- recognise and accept their basic decision for Christ as valid. Be willing to work on felt needs as the group articulates them, or even better, those that pass the test of friendly discussion with outside sources of reference.
- try to avoid the establishment of the helpers' denomination but at the same time encourage wider contacts with other Christian groups.
- resist every temptation to make the group dependent. All programs of help should be timed and the helper's phase-out built into the programme planning.
- help the group to develop methods to personalise a decision for Christ that may originally have been made as a group. Develop the gifts of discernment, vis-à-vis prophets, spirits, and syncretism.

#### *e. Testimonies*

##### "He Found Me"

My spiritual environment as a child in Texas could be described as "lukewarm Protestant-religious." Although my father and mother had at least the basic elements of a Christian faith bequeathed to them by their parents, they had the rug pulled out from under it by the "scientific" world-view that was part of the package they bought along with their scientific education.

The only concept of Christ and Christianity that I received was that Jesus was a great moral teacher, and that we should all do our best to follow his teachings. But already in high school I lost all interest in it; and at the university, in the process of reacting against my intellectual environment, I acquired a fairly strong anti-religious bias. I became known as one of the "campus atheists."

After a reasonable period of such rhetorical jingoism, I decided that atheism was too extreme to be a respectable philosophical position, and became an agnostic instead. I then began to develop a strong consciousness of humanistic idealism; my desire was to engage myself in the forefront of a serious effort to deal with the question of international violence by joining the diplomatic corps. Unfortunately, as I moved into graduate school and began to work on a master's degree in international affairs, I underwent a great disillusionment. The more I studied the world sovereign-state system and its basis, the more I understood that in a world in which violence is the final arbiter of disputes, there can be no "peace" except that which is enforced by violence.

My "humanistic idealism" did not disappear overnight, but its scope decreased continually until I decided to switch to law. At the end of my second year in law school, the breakdown of my first marriage had reached the stage of a formal divorce. It seemed appropriate to take some time off and get a few things sorted out in my mind. I spent a year living with my parents in Connecticut. I commuted to New York, where I worked as an insurance adjuster. I returned to law school. My situation, at this juncture, was tailor-made for the drug scene. I was substantially without roots both internally and externally.

I began with peyote which was legally and readily available in Texas at the time. I quickly learned the technique of processing peyote into mescaline, and took the drug a number of times, with a variety of experiences—hallucinatory and otherwise—resulting. The most important immediate consequence of my experimentation, however, was that all of my naturalistic, materialistic, mechanistic assumptions about the nature of existence were shattered. And I became profoundly convinced of a spiritual reality which invisibly penetrated the visible creation which existed around, behind, and within the world we normally experience with our five senses.

I dropped out of law school at the end of my next-to-last semester and returned to New York City. Almost by accident, I discovered that there was a sizable colony of Austinites, mostly on the lower east side. I soon began taking frequent doses of LSD and developing serious interest in the Oriental mysticism that invariably seemed to go along with it. The tension created by the contrast between my exotic inner life and my mundane outer one, however, was too much for me to handle. In less than four months, on my way to the bank one day I decided to spend my check on a bus ticket to California.

I lived in California for about two years, mostly in and around Hollywood and Santa Monica. I worked at part-time and temporary jobs of various kinds; doing art on my own, and taking a lot of drugs. I was not yet involved in any kind of specific spiritual discipline or practice associated with the Eastern religions. But most of the reading I did was concentrated in the area of mysticism, psychic phenomena, and the occult. "Spiritual" subjects were in one way or another the dominant topic of conversation among most of the "acid freaks" that I knew.

In the meantime, important things were happening in other areas of my life. The year 1966 could, with some justification, be described as the year of my "initiation." Formally, I was initiated into the Maharishi's Transcendental Meditation, which I practiced consistently for something over half a year, and irregularly for several years thereafter. Informally, I was "initiated" (by the person who had been described as the "Henry Ford of LSD") into the esoteric basis of occult science. Specifically, I received the "gnosis" that consciousness is the fundamental basis of all reality and is the divine component within man. I felt that material "reality" is an illusion projected as collective hallucination by the consciousness of man.

At the same time, I was hearing reports from my hip friends that strange and wonderful things were happening in San Francisco. Haight-Ashbury was the place where the "consciousness revolution" was surfacing in a big way. That was the place to be. So I moved to Haight and to my surprise I found many of my Austin friends there. I was with "my people."

The idyll lasted only about nine months and then the rip-off artists moved in. So I moved out to another section of San Francisco close to "Chinatown" district. I was taking progressively more (and heavier) drugs until I settled primarily on methedrine (speed) as the drug of my preference. It appealed to me because under its influence I was enabled to do art work (especially painting) with a kind of furious concentration that I could never achieve on my own. The problem with speed was that I eventually reached the point where there were only two states of existence available to me. Either I was "wired" to a state of compulsive frenetic activity, or I was I "crashed" flat on my back in exhaustion. There was nothing in between. It didn't take more than ordinary common sense to see that that wasn't an intelligent or desirable way to live—even for a hippie.

So I began looking for an opportunity to move out of the city altogether. In the spring of 1968, I finally got it together with some friends who had access to a cabin on the Russian River in the Redwoods north of San Francisco. For a long time I did nothing but live quietly in the woods, beginning to "come down" from all the methedrine I had taken. I meditated frequently, smoked "grass" almost constantly, and just generally tried to get my head together. I gradually realised that the only really objective standard of evaluation that was available to me was the nature of my personal relationships.

The whole ambiguous and unsatisfactory story of my life came to a singular head one night in October, as I sat stoned and alone, staring into a fireplace full of ashes. I saw inescapably what my situation really was. I understood that despite all the "true things" I had discovered, I had never come close to truth. I knew that despite all the movements in my life, not only had I failed to "arrive"—I wasn't even really on the path.

What happened next seems (in retrospect) to be that God interpreted the whole situation as a prayer for help. The next day, due to circumstances over which I had essentially no control, I was removed from the social context where I was. I was taken into Berkeley and placed in the midst of an entirely new situation, among people who were strangers to me. In that unfamiliar circumstance, I was stripped of my stale social expectations. I had the opportunity to see—lived out before me in a concrete fashion—a caring relationship between real people that I recognised at once as The Answer to the anguish that I had wrestled with the night before. For the first time within my recollection, I saw a style of life that I could honestly say I wanted for my own.

But I didn't give up without a struggle. I poured out a whole forest of distorted images about Christianity. But these Christians were very tolerant of my groundless arrogance, and indulged my intellectual probings in a cheerful and willing spirit. For approximately a week, I hammered out the various conceptual issues of my own eventual satisfaction in a virtually nonstop conversation. I emerged at the end of that time recognising that, in fact, I had become a Christian in the course of the week without being able to put my finger on the day or the hour. My Christianity seemed less a profession than a rueful admission. I was joyful

at what I had found. But, in honest truth, I did not "find" the Lord. I wasn't really looking for him. I was looking for a way out. When I had exhausted my own resources, I realised that he had found me.

(The writer is working with an organisation that exposes cult error, takes legal action where necessary, and in general tries to rescue cult victims.)

#### "My Spiritual Pilgrimage"

I was born and raised in India in typical colonial fashion. My sister and I answered only when spoken to and were "respectable" in company like little "showpieces." Our family's club life with rounds of cocktail parties for golf, tennis, and other sport enthusiasts, were served by Indians. At a very young age I became sickened by our indulgent life-style. It seemed so unfair in comparison with the poverty of my Indian friends, the kids of our servants, and the servants themselves, who in many ways I considered to be my mother, brothers, and sisters. As a family we never mixed with Indians, unless they belonged to a special high caste or social class. I felt sickened inside many times at the superior role I had to play. I felt my parents and peers were always pressuring me to conform to standards I didn't believe in.

Raised as a Roman Catholic, I attended a Roman Catholic boarding school with very rigid rules. There were daily prayers and indulgences, High Mass every Saint's Day, Mass on Sundays, Benedictions, and Rosaries, with no explanation as to their meaning. However, I did draw real strength from the rituals at times of emotional crisis. I was sent to boarding school at five and from the age of nine to sixteen I saw my parents every two years or so. Being shifted from one set of "holiday parents" to another forced me to draw emotional security from the context I knew best—my school. But I also kicked at it with all the bitterness, resentments, hurts, and other internal injuries that I was not to understand until a long time after.

At sixteen I had become, to the onlooker, extremely independent and difficult to manage. When I was subsequently expelled from school, I interpreted it as yet another rejection from those who I believed loved me. All it did was harden me further.

I went to live with my parents, who were practically strangers to me. I knew they felt "let down" by my expulsion, and I felt guilty about my failure. Having disappointed them, I now tried to please. The next stage in their social requirements was a decent college education and then a suitable suitor. After a very expensive, lavish, and socially correct wedding, I could not meet the emotional requirements of marriage. I realised how hopelessly inadequate my commitment for the give and take of marriage was. When it failed, I began thinking about suicide. I no longer wanted to make amends to my parents. I wanted to run away to North America, where I didn't know anyone and couldn't embarrass anyone.

I adapted to the North American life-style very quickly. I was a fighter by instinct, outwardly confident and able. I set up my own agency in art, interior design, and graphics. I soon became involved in magazine modelling, fashion work, film work, and commercials. My "British" personality and accent came at a time when America was very impressed with "British" products, like the Beatles. I was soon to achieve more material comfort than I had known before. It quickly revived elements of social conscience I had not experienced since childhood. I looked for some sort of comfort in relationships, but the time spent with each partner seemed more fraught with problems. My American friends seemed able to understand themselves. I longed for a similar peace from my emotional turmoil. In this frame of mind I got "turned on" to drugs. I loved the experience, and it filled me with confidence and insight I had never felt. I seemed to understand everything. Everything made sense at last. My life-style revolved around this new journey, including a vegetarian diet.

My journey took me through the paths of Yoga, meditation, spiritual masters, and spiritual poetry. I read the various psychological and self-help technique books. Eventually I was in total confusion. Time stood still and yet went on into yesterday through eternity. Right and wrong no longer existed, only feelings of right and wrong. By what could I measure my feelings? Each of my friends had different ideas. We were all introspective. Wanting to get into ourselves more and more, we became lonelier. Externally, however, I gave others the impression of being on top of my career, my apparent love life, and my philosophy. But I myself knew it was a lie.

At this time I happened to be involved in the most important relationship I had encountered to date, but I was unable to make it work. This made me realise the hopelessness of my predicament. I did not have the faintest clue what "love" was all about.

At that time I was to see a love that completely had me spell-bound! It attracted me in such a compelling way that I wanted its warmth. A friend took me to a Bible class. I was totally unaware of what sort of gathering it was going to be, or I probably would not have attended. I congratulated the host at the end of his talk which had moved me deeply. With gratitude, he asked me how long I had been a Christian. My reply was, "All my life"! He had the insight to pursue. In an attempt to be polite and not reject his invitation to pray with him, I said words which I later understood were a commitment to Jesus, as my Lord and Saviour.

The next six weeks of my life were a mixture of tremendous struggles in releasing old concepts and fantastic ease and strength in the Lord. My Bible study was meaningful and the fellowship of recently converted charismatic "Jesus freaks" helped me grow. I committed myself entirely to the concept of living my life out for the Lord, and became involved in full-time evangelism in a Christian community in England. I had found love and community in my substitute family! I had a sense of purpose at last!

But I had other lessons to learn. My father died. Although I had no apparent allegiance to my family, his death affected me deeply. I realised how much I had depended on him all through my emotionally unsettled life.

The shock continued for months. I missed him horribly but would not let my mother know it, thinking this would help to console her. I did spend time with her at a time when she needed help. However, she seemed to blame me for many things: of being a constant source of grief to my father, of hurting him and her throughout his life, of never accomplishing what was expected of me. Marriage seemed to be the only solution.

Whatever the reasons were, I found myself married again. My only prerequisite was that he be a "Christian." My understanding of a Christian was naive. I thought all who professed Christ were born again. However, I found we were not united in spirit.

The next period of my life was most painful and extraordinarily complex. But it was also a time of learning and growth. Evangelical Christians showed me legalism, authoritarianism, and little compassion. There were Bible verses to point out "the sin in my attitude, my duty to be a submissive wife." The laying-on of hands, guilt, and condemnation were all part of a daily struggle for months. This was done in spite of my partner's physical brutality and mental manipulation. Of course, it can be argued that equal blame was mine in provocation. The issue, in retrospect, was not so much who was at fault, but that Christians failed to help us through this problem. They only accused, condemned, and victimized.

I have come out of my second marriage. I am deeply grateful to the Lord for the lessons learned. Nothing should substitute for the Lord. He can meet our every need: spiritual, emotional, physical, and psychological. He alone makes us whole. We are complete in him!

(The writer is now involved in rescuing and nurturing other young people who have been caught in these new religious movements.)

## 5. Conclusion

Rev. 12: 10-11 - Then I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, " Now God's salvation has come! Now God has shown his power as King! Now his Messiah has shown his authority! For the one who stood before our God and accused our brothers day and night has been thrown out of heaven. Our brothers won the victory over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the truth which they proclaimed; and they were willing to give up their lives and die. "

Rev. 7:9-10 - After this I looked, and there was an enormous crowd—no one could count all the people! They were from every race, tribe, nation, and language, and they stood in front of the throne of the Lamb, dressed in white robes and holding palm branches in their hands. They called out in a loud voice: "Salvation comes from our God, who sits on the throne, and from the Lamb!"

## Appendix A

### How to Use This Report in Your Church or Community

1. Study the report on your own; for additional resource material see appendixes C and D.

2. Find out how many movements operate in your own area. How many families are already involved? Are there any ex-members? Make contact with them.
3. Organise a study group with concerned parents, relatives, friends, concerned Christians. Study those sections of the report your group feels might be helpful. Study individual groups. See appendix for resources. If none available, commission someone to study the group (see questionnaire in the appendix). Many Rescue and Parent Groups will be willing to help you.
4. If there is a concern group for missions, let them study the church movements overseas. Your foreign students may well be members of or know groups intimately – maybe a missionary can help you.
5. Make a list of the alternative life-style groups in your area. Some of these may well be founded on a Christian base. Establish fellowship with them.
6. Develop your own "city of refuge," a caring group that could shelter, nurture, and counsel disillusioned members of these movements and help them to find Christ and a meaningful direction for their life.
7. Be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18) and walk in love (1 John 4:17-21).
8. A warning: Approach your study with humility (1 Cor. 10: 12). Be ready to accept reproof from these movements. Repent where necessary. God has promised he will match repentance with "compassion for your children" and "healing for your land" (2 Chron. 30:9 and 1 Chron. 7:14).

#### Appendix B

##### Questionnaire for Understanding and Helping

1. Questions one might use to identify and describe the main threads that run through these new religious movements:
  - a. What social structure and historical forces at work in each context have helped to give birth to these?
  - b. The "meaning systems" around which their "truths" are defined and understood. What is their view of the world from their perspective?
  - c. The normative structure that their system of beliefs demands from their members. What levels of commitment are demanded and given?
  - d. The question of community. What is their authority structure? How is it maintained? In what ways does it give security, comfort, strength, to the member?
  - e. The quest for healing, liberation, and reconciliation. What does each member find in it for himself/ herself? Holism? Self-realisation?
  - f. The instantaneous, present, and future utopias. What role does magic play? How is the future conceived? How is it brought into the present?
2. Questions one might use to identify and specify the ways the church in each context has been/has not been able to reach these groups and members within them with the gospel.
  - a. What forms have they taken? Individual/group; informal/ formal, etc. Have para-ecclesiastical structures been set up?
  - b. What facets of the gospel have been most stressed? Even as the gospel writers wrote for different audiences, so a person in a given context, will "hunger" after one or more of the key facets of the gospel.
  - c. What demands were made upon him/her in response to the gospel? What discipling steps were undertaken? Did he/she join a home, order, fellowship? In what ways was it structured?
  - d. What hopes for the whole future and his/her future were raised? Was he/she able to grasp a meaningful eschatology? Did it help him/her to cope with the future, his/her ambitions, his/her vocation, his/her involvement in the present in realistic terms?
3. What do all these lessons teach us for the formulating of meaningful strategies?
4. What specific strategies could be recommended that the churches, para-ecclesiastical bodies, study groups, could undertake in the coming decade?

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#### Appendix E

**Christian Research, Rescue and Information Services**

Note: The material in the original Lausanne Occasional Paper was too dated to be included.

**Appendix F****Parent Groups**

*Note: The material in the original Lausanne Occasional Paper was too dated to be included.*

**Appendix G****In Attendance**

Alexander Brooks	California, U.S.A.
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