

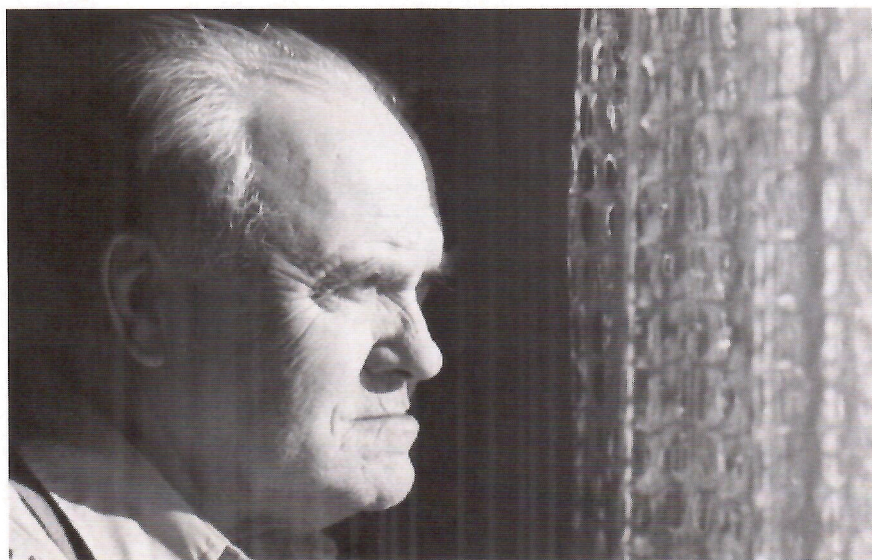
# New religions

Richard Bergeron, o.f.m.

*Father Richard Bergeron, born in Charlevoix Que., is a Franciscan and holds a doctorate in religion from the University of Strasbourg, France. He has been teaching theology at the University of Montreal since 1967. In 1982 he published in French a very successful book (511 p.) on the new religions in Quebec: Le Cortège des Fous de Dieu.*

*In the following articles, the author explains why the new religions are sprouting so fast in Quebec (300 since 1975). He then describes the two kinds of new religions : sects and gnosés. In contrast, he defines Christianity and proposes Christian attitudes towards the new religions.*

M.D.



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# *Why so many new religions ?*

During the seventies, Quebec society has seen, alongside of traditional christianity, a great number of new spiritual and religious moments crop up. What to make of this sudden hatching ? What need do these new religions want to satisfy ? What religious vacuum do they intend to fill ?

## **Need for meaning**

Up to the sixties, Quebec was a traditional society. In such a society the State and the Church are united so much so that religious values are recognized as civil values. Religion takes on secular functions and the State offers the Church all kinds of privileges.

In this set-up religion must offer society an interpretative framework so as to make life livable in spite of limit situations such as death, suffering evil, failure, etc. It must say what must be thought, and propose an intellectual framework that will allow one to understand and interpret all situations, even the absurd.

Religion must also propose a normative framework, and even impose values that must guide moral behavior and social action. In a traditional society, religion has to do with what must be done, how one must live and behave in all situations.

In the sixties, the Church and the State in Quebec became autonomous. The Church gradually left the public sectors she held : health, welfare, unions, culture, education. Civil society now works on its own and no longer refers to the sacred to establish its framework. It is no longer under the control of religious institutions and has scrapped the interpretative and normative framework the Church proposed.

This is the end of social unanimity ; the Catholic religion has lost its monopoly. It's the breaking up of the guidelines and rules set up by the Church. It's the birth of pluralism unlimited, pluralism of ideologies, departments, and life situations. The Church is no longer relevant or credible. Hence the rapid fall of religious practice, mistrust towards ecclesiastical institutions, suspicion in case of Church interventions and distrust in her representatives.

People are puzzled by this excessive pluralism. They no longer know what to think nor what to do. The Church has lost credit with a lot of people while civil society is unable to give ultimate meaning and answer the big questions : What am I ? Where do I come from ? Where am I going ? What's the meaning of life, suffering, love, death ?.

And still people go on suffering and hurting. And when one suffers, one needs answers more than happiness. So a thousand questions besiege the mind ; Why this misfortune ? Who's to blame ? What must I do in such a situation ? What did I do to God ?

This vacuum created by a discredited Church and State is filled up by the new religions which claim they have a revelation or secret doctrine that gives all the answers. They affirm brutally and allow no controversy or protest. They clearly tell the individual what he must believe or think, what he must do to break the deadlock and to fulfill himself.

### **Need of Security**

Our present western civilization is going through a deep crisis which is affecting its four principal components : capitalism, practical materialism, positivism and bourgeois individualism.

**Capitalism** and the economic system it stands for are losing a lot of their drive and are getting out of control. Inflation, unemployment, high interest rates, the energy crisis, the growing gap between rich and poor nations. All this tells us we are undergoing a crisis and makes us critical of modern economy.

**Practical materialism**, the twin brother of capitalism, has left a lot of people in the lurch. The rat race has turned sour for many. Material goods and comforts do not always deliver happiness. Instead of satisfying us, they have created in us a vacuum and deception ; they have confined us to production and consuming.

**Positivism** is a world view that does not rely on the spiritual to explain reality and assure the liberation of mankind. According to this doctrine, science and technology hold the true key in explaining the world and mapping the future happiness of man. But this fundamental axiom of modernism is profoundly shaken today. Science and technology no longer figure as agents of liberation. On the contrary they seem to turn against man. Destruction of nature, pollution, acid rains, alienation by machinery, nuclear threat : from every corner, the horrid spectre of human and cosmic holocaust is looming.

Lastly, **bourgeois individualism** also has shown up as a pledge of fake happiness. The quest for individual satisfactions, the pursuit of quick pleasures, the search for fast psychic and physical experiences (drug, sex), have not brought about happiness but loss of belonging and solidarity. Hence the terrible isolation of couples and people. Big cities, which used to guarantee liberty are shaking the citizens in bondage of crime, pollution, delinquency, poverty.

So the four pillars of modernism are badly shaken. Socially speaking the honeymoon is over : after the quiet revolution we are faced with the quiet disillusion. Many are boxed in by worries, fear, depression, anxiety. Suicides and depressions are playing havoc in the ranks of young people especially often haunted by the specter of despair. The present is full of problems and the future uncertain.

It's in this void between a shaken present and a hopeless future that new religions spring up. People are worried, anxious. In order to understand and tame the future, every man has his prophet (Nostradamus, Malachi, Daniel, Ezechiel), his magus (Papus, Gurdjieff, Twitchell), his guru (Rajneesh, Maharishi, Maharaji), his astrologer or his fortune teller. New religions come in to quiet anxiety and insecurity by defusing the future, by ridding it of its load of uncertainty.

## **Need of identity**

Present civilization has cut off man from the objective and social world. We are seeing a general loss of social values and goals. Hence come depoliticizing, non-militancy, non-protesting. This is the result of a process of personalization and centering on the "I" (insistence on the individual, individual rights, autonomy, liberty). The politics wave of the sixties has given way to a

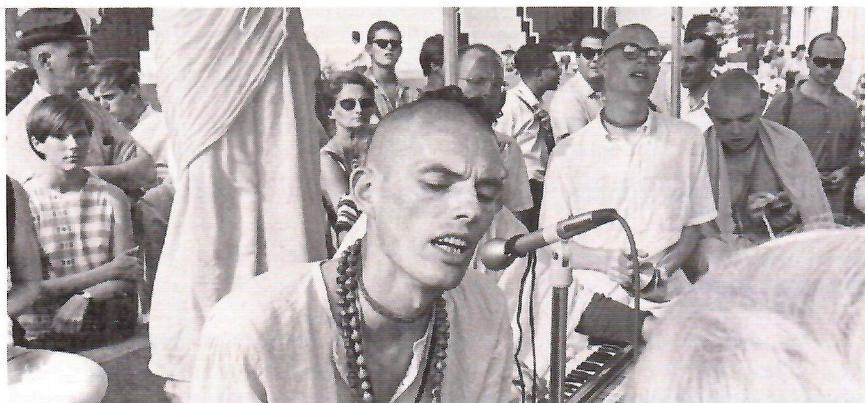
psychology and therapy wave. Psychic development has taken over from economic growth that was losing wind. Conscience of self has closed the mouth of socio-political conscience.

Alongside of this acute awareness of the "I" we are witnessing the human subject being reduced to an object, meaning society refuses to see in Man a center of conscience, liberty, spirituality. Man has become just a tiny wheel in the economic machinery, a number for the big business State. Human life is flattened out and choked in the hellish cycle of production and consuming.

This feeling of not existing as a subject, coupled with the exaggerated centering on the "I", ends up in a cruel blind alley. For the more attention the "I" gets the more aggravated the feeling of nonidentity becomes, and consequently the more the "I" shows up as an empty mirror, an open and vague structure.

This is where the new religions come in. They claim to fill in this interior vacuum and offer the individual a chance of recovering his self and his lost or broken identity. He feels he is becoming somebody, different from what the economic machinery has cast him to be.

And so the new religions fill in the space left deserted in the religious and social fabric. In filling these voids, they want to answer the need for meaning, security and identity.



*The new religions make up two great spiritual families, each having its own characteristics, as far as morals, dogma, mysticism, and ritual are concerned.*

## *Two kinds of answers*

The new spiritual and religious movements vary infinitely. At a first glance one feels lost as in a thick forest. Each group makes out it's unique, refers to an original revelation, builds its own vocabulary and doctrines and gives the impression it's alone of its kind.

But if one takes a closer look one discovers among certain groups, a family look, common traits, similar practices. In fact, the new religions make up two great spiritual families, each having its own characteristics, as far as morals, dogma, mysticism, and ritual are concerned. Each family brings to the need of meaning, security, and identity, a particular type of answer and submits its own spiritual way.

### **Sects, the way of pure faith**

The first way is that of pure faith, meaning it refuses the intrusion of intelligence in the act of believing. Faith becomes a shout, a jump into the abyss, blind trust, a pure decision that does away with any rational control.

The groups that propose the way of pure faith think that the Bible is the one absolute reality which demands of us complete trust, without any intellectual inquisitiveness. They consider the Bible their only source of reference, because they see in it literally the Word of God which they interpret along with the revelation or inspiration of the founder.

Among these groups of pure biblical faith we can mention the Mennonite Brothers, the Baptist Evangelical Church, the Pentecostal groups such as the Evangelical Center and the Temple of the Gospel ; the New Pentecostal sects as the Christian Tabernacle and the Temple of Revival ; the Apocalyptic sects as the Adventists, the Jehovah Witnesses, and finally the syncretic groups as the Mormons and the Moonists (Church of Unification).

All these groups of pure faith hold one basic conviction, i. e. the presence of evil everywhere in the world and universal corruption. This experience of a corrupted world, doomed to total destruction, underlies the approach to liberation and salvation these groups put before their followers. This evil world is not in accord with God's will.

The one way to flee the wrath to come is to turn to Jesus, to welcome him in one's heart, to recognize him as the personal Savior. Those who are converted to Him and decide to do God's will enter the sect. In this way they will avoid final destruction, for Christ will take them up to Him and they will reign on earth with Him for a thousand years during which Satan will be bound.

In coming over to Christ, the followers of the sects become members of the True Church. All groups of pure faith claim to realize the early Church, i.e. the Church of the pure, the volunteer recruits for Christ, the saved. There is no place for compromise, adaptations, interpretations. The Bible must be accomplished to a word.

The groups of pure Biblical faith are characterized as fundamentalists, enthusiasts, non sacramental, anti-ecumenical, missionary, and radical.

**Fundamentalism** shows up especially in the reading of the Bible. The groups of Biblical faith abstain from all interpretation. They take the Bible at its word, because they look upon it as dictated by God, like a telex of God to man, as a meteorite fallen from heaven. They maintain the Bible is up to-date on geology, botany, physics and will not be contaminated by the historical and critical study of the Bible.

While fundamentalism describes an approach to the Bible, enthusiasm designates a characteristic attitude of the experience of pure faith. Since pure faith refuses the calm intellectual stance, the experience it fosters is characterized by emotion, feelings, the impetus of the heart and affections, the immediacy of the spiritual experience; in one word, religious enthusiasm. Accent is placed on the will, the decision. The words do not try to explain, but to convince and fire up zeal; they are addressed to the heart rather than the intelligence: obeying without discussing matters, not understanding.

The groups of pure faith are non-clerical and **non-sacramental** communities. They are groups of laymen. One must not be taken in when they speak of bishops, pastors, priests, deacons. It is not a matter of the power of ordination; these words indicate only a function of authority and service. The groups of pure faith reject the sacramental principle. Even if they practice baptism by immersion and celebrate the Supper, there's no question of Sacraments as understood in traditional Christianity, i.e. as means of salvation.

**Antiecumenism** is also a characteristic of the groups of pure Biblical faith. These groups generally look upon the great established churches, especially Catholicism, as corrupted institutions because of either doctrinal errors and the lukewarmness of their members of historical compromises with the world and its prince, Satan. The Roman Church is in deep state of corruption. There's no hope of its reforming. So the followers of sects avoid coming into contact with the members of the Catholic Church, in order to protect themselves from contamination.

From antiecumenism to missionary zeal there's only a step that the groups of pure faith take easily : they do not look for dialogue, but for conversion. The mission is their foremost task. So they resort to all kinds of missionary and skilful techniques (radio, t.v., newspapers, door to door soliciting, rallies, shows, films, Bible study groups).

Lastly, the pure Biblical faith is known for its **evangelical radicalism**, voiced in terms of rigid morals, strict observance, moderation, temperance, and hygiene practices. No compromise must be made with the world, so one must keep aloof of society, dominant culture, social and political activities. Pure faith aims at a complete separation from this wicked world.

### **Gnostic sects, the way of absolute knowledge**

The groups that offer liberation by absolute knowledge find their fundamental symbols and seminal ideas not only in the Judeo-Christian tradition; but also in oriental mysticism, western esotericism, ancient religions (druidic, Egyptian, Amerindian), parapsychology, science or science fiction. These groups often resemble a medley of elements borrowed from the most diverse of religious, spiritual, therapeutic traditions. In these groups, Jesus is looked upon as only a master such as Bouddha, Krishna, Moses, Pythagoras, etc.

Among these groups which are very numerous in Quebec, we can mention the Universal White Brotherhood, the Rosicrucians, A.M.O.R.C., Eckankar, The International Gnostic Association, the Institute of Applied metaphysics, the Church of Scientology, Sri Chimmay Center, Dharmadatu, etc.

According to the way of knowledge, man, imprisoned in matter and illusion, can tear away from his fate, only by getting in touch with superior energy called "universal", "spiritual", "divine" "christic", "conscious", "mental", or "cosmic". The care of this spiritual approach, which consists in tapping divine energy, aims at bringing the individual into harmony with himself and the Cosmos, into absolute self-mastery, the principle of interior liberty.

Primacy is given to interior life, spiritual awareness and the exploration of one's mind and conscience. The follower is invited to meditate and to make psychospiritual experiments, in order to get to know himself or herself, for to know oneself is to know God and the Cosmos. In this approach to absolute knowledge, mention is made not of morals, but mysticism, not of faith, but knowledge, not of decision but experience, not of commitment but illumination, not of evil but ignorance, not of resurrection but reincarnation.

Here conscience is the big thing. Society keeps man or woman at a very low level of conscience. The freeing of latent energies and dormant potentialities is effectuated by the wakening of conscience. The expansion of the conscience makes direct contact with divine energy possible. To reach divine conscience is the end of this method. This conscience will be called "cosmic", "supranormal", "christic", "superior" "Buddhistic" "transcendental". Experiencing these states of conscience makes up perhaps the specific trait of the way of absolute knowledge.

One reaches the experience of the cosmic conscience by practicing certain techniques inspired by oriental religions or western therapies, primitive rites or esoteric sciences : meditation and breathing techniques, yoga, body postures, fasting, mantra, mandala, dieting, singing, dancing, martial arts, etc. All these arts and skills are used to enable the follower to reach the superconscience and bliss, called "illumination", "ecstasy", "peak experience", "satori", "nirvana", "clear".

In this experience of beatific conscience, true knowledge, which alone brings salvation, comes to fulness. This knowledge goes by all kinds of names : "christian science" "religious science" "cosmic science", "science of creative intelligence", "theosophy".

All the groups of absolute knowledge say they come at the twilight of evil time and at the dawn of a new era. Gone is the age of darkness, the kali yuga, the era of the Fish, the Church of Peter, the Church of Christ. Now is the golden age, the second coming, the era of Aquarius, the age of the Apocalypse, the spiritual Church of John, the invisible Church of the Spirit, the Millennium.

# *The Christian's view of the new religions*

For a Christian understanding of the groups of pure biblical faith and of absolute knowledge, we must not consider them only as doctrinal or moral systems, and still less as heresies or schisms. We must look at them as two unifying spiritual worlds.

## **Spiritual worlds**

By spiritual world we mean a set of values, feelings, ideas, principles, perceptions, — at the religious and cultural levels as at the social and existential levels — whose scope is at least virtually universal and that are capable of stirring the conscience of an individual, to the point of finding a wholeness of meaning to his destiny. The spiritual worlds provide a living space and a world vision that establish a mode of being in relation to time, the cosmos, men and divinity.

The distinctive note of a spiritual world is that it must be taken and thought of as a whole. It is not easy to enter another spiritual world with ideas already set and a panoply of rational arguments. Spiritual worlds are reached by experience and one can understand them only in approaching them humbly and communing in a similar experience. Otherwise one judges without having understood at all.

We cannot therefore evaluate the new religions on their consonance with a Biblical text, a dogma, an article of the creed or an element of the Church's structure. The only way to understand as Christians what is going on is to place oneself inside the spiritual world which makes up Christianity. The Christian spiritual world is not built around the pure Biblical faith nor absolute knowledge, but the love of God. Since God is love, Christianity must be essentially understood as the love of God glorifying Himself in men and creation, especially in Jesus, His beloved Son. So much so that there's only one commandment : to love God absolutely, i.e. with all one's heart, strength, spirit and one's neighbor as oneself. It's with this spiritual world in mind, built around love, that we must evaluate the other spiritual worlds.



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The spiritual worlds of pure faith or absolute knowledge oppose each other strongly and develop between each other an antagonism that can become wild. These spiritual worlds oppose each other, because they each represent the extreme poles of the religious experience. The way of pure faith speaks of morals, the way of knowledge speaks of mysticism ; the former is concerned with the letter, the latter with the spirit ; one speaks of a revealed message, the other of revealing experience ; the first proclaims salvation given all by God ; the second, a salvation brought about by man alone.

### **Coexistence and antagonism**

Even if they oppose each other as representing two aspects of religious experience, the sects of pure faith and the groups of absolute knowledge meet to oppose, each in its own way, the Christian spiritual world. All these groups are going to protest against the Church. They claim she is outdated or corrupted. Catholics must hurry to enter the true Church of the Saints, the pure, the chosen : the sect of knowledge groups.

The followers of the pure faith denounce the scandals, the errors, the compromises of the Church, while those of the knowledge groups protest against dogmatic formulations and the principle of a teaching authority, saying at the same time that Christianity of the Church is a thing of the past. At best, Catholicism may still be useful to the ignorant crowds ; the elite must seek out a superior christianity, spiritual, interior, secret. And one obtains it by the way of knowledge.

Moreover, by their fundamental principles, the religions of pure faith and of absolute knowledge corrode the main axes of Christian experience and undermine its formulation. At the beginning, the follower is not aware of this. In certain groups, especially those of absolute knowledge, an attempt is made to convince the newcomer that he can keep his former beliefs and be at the same time Catholic or a follower of Krishna of Eckankar. But at the end of the road, he has completely left his Christian spiritual world for the spiritual world of pure faith or absolute knowledge. Many Catholics get caught at the game and do not know how to prevent being caught by fallacious arguments.

Therefore, a Catholic cannot belong to a group of Biblical faith or absolute knowledge without straying sooner or later from the Christian spiritual world. On many occasions I have met followers of the new religions who keep on using the Christian vocabulary, but give it a meaning that has nothing to do with the spiritual world of christianity.

For example, the Incarnation, which means in Christianity that God takes on the human condition and nature, ends up by designating, in the groups of absolute knowledge, the fall of the spirit into the thickest matter. Christian resurrection ends up by meaning reincarnation ; the cross of Jesus is no more than a symbol of cosmic fullness ; Christ is but the divine element that makes up my deep self. All this leads to an unfortunate confusion detrimental to truth, since truth is always a principle of distinction.

### **Self questioning and challenge**

All this can teach us a lesson and make us attentive to what's going on in our Church ? If our own Catholicism uses the new religions as a mirror to look at itself, it will discover in its midst trends influenced by the pure faith (sectarian trends) and ideas tainted by the absolute knowledge (psychologizing and humanistic trends).

The sectarian tendencies show up in dogmatism, a latent refusal of theology, a rather fundamentalist reading of the Bible, religious enthusiasm and a pretension to experiencing the Spirit in an immediate fashion. We meet elements of this trend in charismatic groups, encounter groups, cursillo, etc. Psychologizing trends insist on the ego, the deep self, psychological integration (PRH, Meditation groups) while the humanistic tendency insists on Christianity as a way of wisdom and harmonizing different religions : "All religions are the same", according to some people.

So the new religions question us by holding up a mirror in which one can discover trends that may, in the long run, be obnoxious to our Christian experience. This is how the spiritual worlds of the pure faith and absolute knowledge offer a principle of providential discerning to Quebec Catholicism.

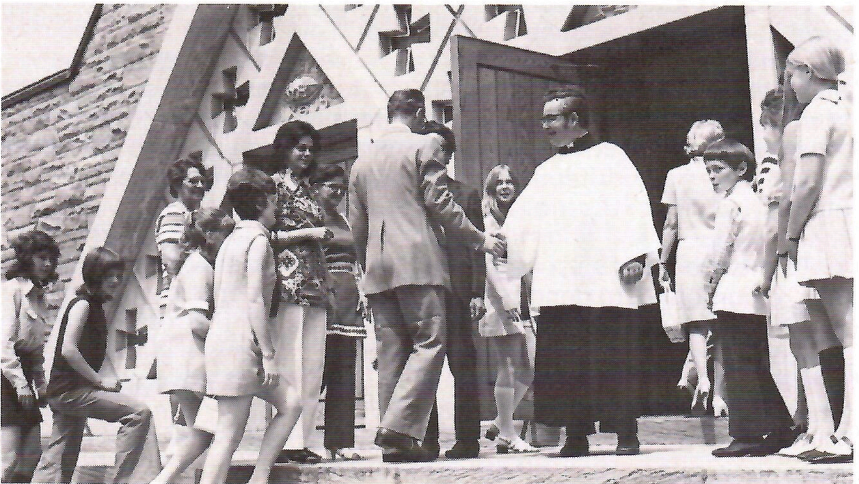
But the new religions challenge us in another way. They remind us of forgotten or neglected truths in our traditional Church (interiority, spiritual experience, brotherhood, the Spirit,

eschatology, etc.) This forceful reminder has already borne good fruit. There are always spots in our Christian experience, that are dozing or inexistent ; encountering the experience of another person can wake them up or bring them to life.

The new religions lastly challenge us by the question they throw in our face. Yves M. Congar writes : "In experiencing another spiritual world, it takes a long time just to reach the stage of questioning : a very long time of humility, of faithful and patient quest of feeling, of delay, of critique, of any apostolic or apologetic haste and of all claim of being right not to question one's faithfulness, but the superficial quality of our faithfulness, in precisely the name of the depth of the questions put to us and which are authentic".

This call for religious sympathy, which rests on renouncing all will to power, implies that something of the experiences of the other person has touched us. In this encounter, the faith of the Christian is bared to the other ; not only to his objections and questions, but deep down to his ideas, positions, and convictions. In this confrontation we accept to be seduced by the other and engage a debate with ourselves. This normally leads to a more lively faith.

Those are some elements that can help us look at the new religions as Christians.



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# ***A Christian Stance***

However marvelous it may be in the abstract and ideal world, a spiritual way can be more or less seriously distorted by the groups that propose it and by the followers that practice it. A spiritual way can even be used to bewitch others, rule and exploit them, or to build a pedestal on which to set one's own statue.

The way of pure faith and of knowledge may be realized with more or less fulness of deficiency in the various groups that claim to be its followers. In face of concrete systems and followers in the flesh, one is called upon to take a stand. The Christian stance we propose here is threefold : to be tolerant, critical and prudent.

## **Be tolerant**

We must learn to live with the new pluralism that surrounds us. Who among us has not a friend, a relative, a parent in any of the new religions ? Relationship between friends is often clouded by one belonging to a new religious group.

We must learn tolerance, this difficult virtue, for there is deep down in each of us a sleeping inquisitor. Tolerance towards the new religious groups is not easy, all the more so that they themselves are often intolerant and lay all sorts of charges more or less false against the Church. Tolerance is not indifference ; it is the virtue of conviction. It governs the relationships between two concrete beings, who have different or opposite convictions. Its motto : live and let live.

Tolerance shows up in the refusal of will to power. It does not seek to confound, to denounce the other person or to convert him or her to one's own views. Tolerance sees in the other person someone who is going through an experience ; this experience, the tolerant person seeks to know and understand beyond the doctrines the sectarian holds or the awkward acts he may commit. Tolerance is a friend of truth. It seeks to help the other person in his experience rather than hinder him in the way or turn him around. Who knows wither the experience will lead him ? I have seen followers of the new religions open up to Christ and true Christianity.

Moreover, the spirit of tolerance refuses to believe the ready-made judgment in which the new religions are often rigged out. A lot of gross accusations are hurled at them. These groups would be financial enterprises that feed on the credulity of simple people and their leaders would be spiritual bootleggers and merchants of God. To keep a hold on their followers, they would turn to physical terror, brainwashing and psychological manipulation. Faced with this religious supermarket, this spiritual pollution and this jumble of doctrines and ill-assorted practices, are we not right to say : Satan is at work here ?

A tolerant mind always remains critical in front of these coarse accusations. It requires proofs and favors the runner. In each of us there's an accuser we do not recognize and often the accusation has more to say about the accuser than the accused. In fact, the accusation reveals what the accuser wishes to prove, what he wants to justify and defend and what he has to gain in the exchange. The tolerant mind remembers that Jesus himself was called a seducer, a false prophet, and said to be possessed by the devil.

### **Be critical.**

Tolerance does not exclude critique, quite the contrary. This critique must deal with the eventual dangers and the methods employed by the new religious groups.

The first danger concerns the sorcerer's apprentices. The new masters claim a particular revelation, illumination or lucidity. Falling into the mouth of a wolf that exploits or abuses you, or in the hands of an incompetent leader who rushes you into a psycho-spiritual labyrinth that he has not fully explored, is no illusory danger. How can we discern a competent master from a counterfeiter ? This is all the more difficult as most of these masters come from abroad and their personal history is not known.

Added to the danger of incompetent masters are the psychical dangers. The newcomer is often introduced too rapidly into techniques and practices that alter his conscience and risk shaking up his inner structure. The follower may become a prisoner of his own experience and hence lose all critical sense and a chance of standing back to judge better.

One must be critical of the promises made by the groups and of the beautiful and enticing image they show off : warmth,

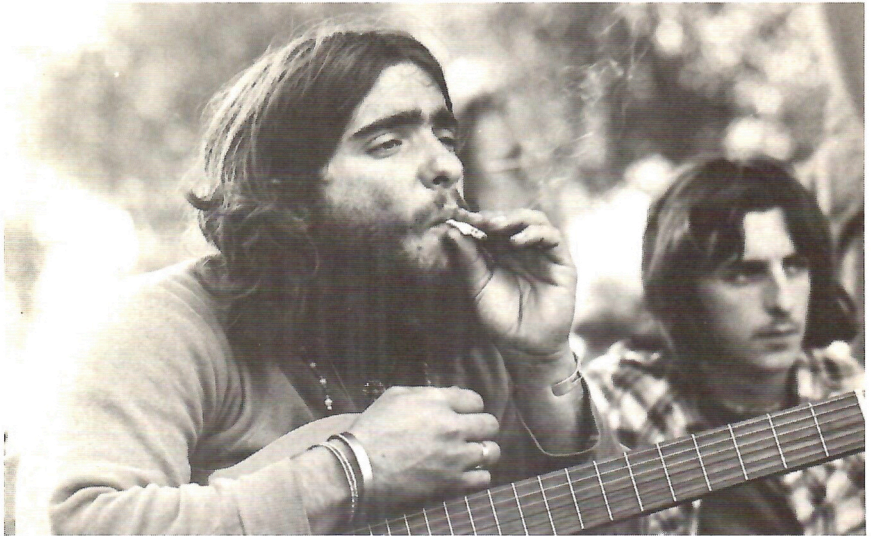
togetherness, brotherhood, harmony, zeal, openness. Behind this facade are hidden internal struggles, injustices, jealousies, power play, absence of controversy, impossibility of dissidence.

Nor must one be taken in by the subtle and skilfull but at times disguised and dishonest methods of publicity and recruiting to bring in people. These groups can offer personality and painting courses as well as movies, puppet shows or discussion and singing soirées. As to information sessions one must be forewarned ; most of the time they are sessions of recruiting. All is set to arouse one's curiosity and induce one to join up.

A critical mind is always on the alert, denounces all dissimulation and misrepresentation.

### **Be prudent**

One must not fall an easy victim to curiosity. One could, sooner or later, burn one's fingers. Many persons read just about anything ; they undergo all kinds of physical, psychological and spiritual experiences. They want to experiment with all sorts of techniques



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and think they can go through all this scotfree. But some day they are caught in the trap of their curiosity and imprudence. They creep away from the Christian spiritual world towards other spiritual worlds.

In each of us there are aspirations for pure faith and absolute knowledge. When one gets tired of unanswered questions, of searching for the meaning of things, one is then tempted to jump headlong into pure faith, throwing overboard rationality and interpretation. On the other hand, when one is tired of holding on to the mystery as an incomprehensible reality and to Christianity as a scandal, then one is inclined to slide into absolute knowledge by emptying the Cross of Jesus of its nonsense and reducing Christianity to human wisdom. Eventually one becomes a follower of one new religion or another.

There are moments in our lives when we are more vulnerable. We sometimes undergo periods of latent dissatisfaction and experience depressing or shaky situations. We can then become easy victims to new religions because of their nice promises. Physically, they can promise us healing ; socially, they can propose wider relations and better communications ; morally, they claim to rid us of our bad habits (drugs, alcohol, tobacco), of stress and to make us reach peace of mind. Psychologically, they promise to free us from our blocks, to develop our hidden potentialities and introduce us to a new level of conscience. Spiritually, we are guaranteed salvation and union with God. All promises capable of seducing someone who is unsatisfied with himself and life.

The first responsibility of a Christian facing the phenomenon of the new religions is to work at deepening his own Christian convictions. It is sad to see how many Christians ignore their own spiritual tradition and have a watered down image of Christianity. And this thousand-year-old Christian tradition full of unfathomable richness has been handed down by trustworthy witnesses. How distressing it is to see so many Christians drop the substance for the shadow and prefer a spiritual way so short on guaranties to a tradition that has stood the test of time !

The spiritual worlds do not exist in the heavens of abstractions ; they exist only in the concrete reality of life. So, as in all human situation, we must be tolerant towards them, without ever forgetting to use critical sense and be prudent always.