



The Bede Griffiths Sangha Newsletter

Volume 3, Issue 3

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The Bede Griffiths Sangha is committed to the search for truth at the heart of all religions

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Editorial

Many of the contributions in this edition of the Newsletter reflect ways in which our contemporary Christian tradition is enriched by an encounter with the spiritual wisdom of the east.

Such encounters can only be made with an open mind and heart. It is important to see beyond one's preconceptions and conditioning, and even, perhaps, what one sees as irreducible truth.

Father Bede's article on the Church, the concluding part of which we publish this month, is so helpful in pointing out that much of what we take as unchangeable and absolute in the church is in fact the product of specific historical and cultural processes.

As we become aware that those things we once thought were absolute and unchangeable are actually relative and historically conditioned, we can then be open to the possibility of new understandings, drawn from other traditions. For any one of you this might include, for instance, Vanya's chakra meditation on the Lord's Prayer, Elizabeth West's reflections on the Eightfold Path of Jesus, or Brother Martin's teaching on the story of the Garden of Eden.

Brother Martin's reflection on the story of the Garden of Eden, and on Jesus as the second Adam, has the immediacy and freshness of Zen, passing beyond the formulations of doctrine and conceptual thought to a call to the direct experience of reality. The story of the Garden of Eden is the story of humanity forgetting it has its existence in God, and thereafter seeking to become like God.

Jesus did not invite his listeners to think about the Kingdom of God, he invited them to experience the Kingdom of God, in the here and in the now. As the Vietnamese Zen Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, says, 'The kingdom of God is *now* or never!'

Father Bede was clear that this exposure of the biblical tradition and Christianity to Advaita, or non-duality, is as important at the beginning of the third millennium as was the exposure of early Christianity to Hellenic thought at the start of the first millennium.

Namaste

Adrian

The Sangha Council

As this edition of the Newsletter goes to press, the first meeting of the Bede Griffiths Sangha Council will be meeting in Oxford.

The Council was established earlier this year and will take responsibility for steering the Sangha and its activities in the future. The Council will not only make sure the Sangha works on a prac-

tical level, but will reflect on the role of the Sangha which is part of the spiritual legacy, here in the West, of the founding fathers of Shantivanam.

If you would like to receive copies of the papers coming out of the Council, or if you would like to be a member of the Council please do let us know. We want it to be as inclusive as possible.

The Church (concluding part)

By Father Bede

The third and concluding part of a talk given by Father Bede at Osage Monastery, Oklahoma, USA in June 1992

The earliest Councils of the Church were councils of bishops. The Council of Nicea in 325 AD was the first ecumenical council where bishops from all over the world were present, and don't forget, the pope was not present at Nicea or any of the early councils. So you can see how the whole thing began to develop. From the councils of bishops, the provincial council we called them, then the ecumenical councils and the pope not calling the council, the emperor calling the council, not the pope. The pope wasn't even present at them but all the decrees of the council were communicated to the pope and every eastern patriarch would send in his name to the pope, he would be appointed but he was in communion with Rome and that was very important. This situation lasted up to the end of the fifth century and I think this is still a model for the church.

I wrote an article for the Tablet years ago saying that we should go back to the time of the patriarchs and that instead of having patriarchs we should have bishops' conferences from North America to South America, Africa, Europe. The Pope could be head of the council of Europe and Australia and Asia and that would be aligned with the ancient patriarchs if they would appoint bishops, they would manage all of it but they would always have a point of reference to Rome you see and they would always be in communion with Rome, that would be the ideal.

So, that was the situation after the fifth century and then came the Dark Ages, the invasion of the barbarians. Rome and Constantinople grew more and more apart, they couldn't even correspond with one another and the climax was reached in the 9th century when the Pope appointed Charlemagne as emperor. Until that time the emperor of Constantinople was *the* emperor, so there was only one emperor, but by the 9th century there was a rival emperor from the West, and

so you had an emperor in the west and emperor in the east, and the pope in the west and the patriarchs in the east. By the 12th century the division became complete and they finally separated and they've never been able to join again, which is a great tragedy on both sides. And we still hope and pray for it. But the result of that was that by the 12th century Rome was completely separated from the Eastern churches and stood alone as the only patriarch with the result that more and more of the whole business of the church went to Rome. The Roman curia and cardinals were invented at that time by the way; that all came with Gregory VII and Gregory VIII in the 12th century. This central organization was tremendously efficient apparently; they had innumerable officials and all the money came into Rome where there was a genius for organization.

So the Roman church became the most powerful thing in Europe by the 12th century terms of power and money and even armies, they had their own defenders. And above all, it was absolutely seen as *the* See of Peter. St Peter was living in the Church of Rome, and the idea was you went to Rome to be at the feet of Peter, to kiss the tomb of Peter and so on. It was a tremendous power it had. A pilgrimage to Rome was one of the great desires of people's lives. So from that time onward the Roman church becomes the organizational centre of the church, the eastern churches have gone you see, and all the western churches are now totally controlled from Rome and bishops were all appointed from Rome. So you can see the system which we know began to come into being from the 12th century and we have had it since that time.

Now the next thing of course was the Reformation in the 16th century. Rome was extremely corrupt by this time don't forget. It was Pope Adrian VI who wrote an extraordinarily interesting thing -I had it copied out once -saying that corruption of every kind had come into this holy see and that all sorts of disorders of every kind were prevalent, and the source of it all was

the Roman curia. So everybody knew, it was a scandal you see, and there were terrible things happening. But there were saints as well, don't forget that, they still went on. And so the Reformation had a tremendous part to play. Luther and many other people went to Rome and there were two main reactions: one said all this can't be divine and they left the church; the other reaction was, as I heard a devout Catholic say, well if this sort of thing can go on in the church it *must* be divine. The result was that northern Europe as a whole practically, separated from southern Europe. It was partly racial you know, you see, the Latin people, the Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, French, the southern Germans and the Poles staying with the Church. Of course it was not purely racial but these people accepted Rome and then the others broke away from it. And we inherit that division now.

But the effect was that in the 16th century, with the Council of Trent, Rome reacted against all of this by closing in. In the early days it was very open to the taking in of new ideas, very creative and so on. In all the Middle Ages this creative thought was going on. And then all this battering from Protestantism and the Reformation made the church close in and became what they call the fortress, and like a fortress it had to be defended. So the whole catholic theology became a polemic against Protestantism and then of course later against agnosticism and atheism. There were attempts to reconcile with the eastern churches, but these also were abandoned. So we inherited this fortress church, which went on past the 19th century with the first Vatican Council, and it only began to break down in the present century you see. And many of us, or many may remember the fortress church. It was there right at the beginning of this century and for some people it goes on today actually. It's still a fortress you have to defend against all these enemies which are heard about all the time.

And the second Vatican Council was amazing. Pope John XXIII simply broke open the whole of this fortress you see and opened it up, and let in the fresh air as they said, and enabled the church to recover its tradition. Mind you it caused a lot of confusion naturally at the time and still does, but it left the church open to the whole tradition from the beginning. And I feel now

we're in a position to see how the church grew from the time of Jesus through all these stages, and how the Holy Spirit remains in the church from the beginning. The Spirit was given by Jesus to the Apostles, it was carried on through all the churches and it's carried, I think we have to say, in all the churches in some way or other. And certainly within the Church of Rome, the Church of the apostles Peter and Paul, which has had this unique vocation. You can't deny there has been an extraordinary charism given to the Church of Rome through all these centuries which remains at the present day.

The way Raymond Brown put it is helpful. He says that Jesus founded a community which was destined in the course of time under historical circumstances to develop into the church which we know - the hierarchy, the sacraments, the dogmas, the law and so on. It's an evolution from the original church and I think you can say the Holy Spirit guided it but in historical circumstances, conditioned by history. Everything from the sacraments down to its laws are from God, given by the Holy Spirit, and expressed under historical, cultural limitations and conditions you see. So we have to recognize the conditioning but also recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit which really is present in the church.

And that is why however far wrong we may go, we still believe in spite of it all that the Holy Spirit is there. I would say that anyone who wants to convert may be scandalized by many things in the Church but they will always find the Holy Spirit if they are really looking for it. I say that for myself, I found it and so I think the original remains. Jesus committed the Holy Spirit to his disciples and without fail it has continued in the Church and we can always find it there. But it is found under the load of historical circumstances which have conditioned it in the present and which continue to, and can always change. The institutional Church is always changing under historical conditions. We can watch it grow through history through all the centuries, and if we watch its progress today we can see it is always changing, developing, adjusting as Newman saw it, to human situations but still preserving the essential truth of the Holy Spirit. That is all I would say!

The Garden of Eden (part 2)

Brother Martin Sahajananda

Concluding Brother Martin's article on the teaching of the story of the Garden of Eden.

The consciousness of humanity after the fall

Now the consciousness of humanity is no longer the consciousness of unfolding but the consciousness of becoming. The spiritual life of humanity is no longer the spirituality of unfolding but the spirituality of becoming. It is this spirituality of becoming which has been communicated from generation to generation. And it is this spirituality of becoming that has become such a burden to the humanity. Humanity has taken a wrong path. A path that will not take them to the destiny that it wants to reach. It is the blind leading the blind.

The effect of desire on the image and likeness of God

The desire to become does not affect the image and likeness of God, for it is created by God and no sin can affect the image and likeness of God. This is the gift of God's unconditional love to the humanity. If desire cannot affect the image and likeness of God, what does it do? Sin, or the desire to become, is like the creation of a bubble on the water of the image and likeness of God; humanity forgets its original nature, which is, as it were, the water, and identifies itself with the bubble. The bubble is the ego which creates its object, God, outside of itself, and which creates means and ways to reach its object. All the ways, all the means and all the religions are the creation of the ego; they are the creation of that bubble on the water. All the ways and means and religions have their foundation in the bubble for in the image and likeness of God there is no place for means, ways and religions. If the bubble is broken then all the ways, the means and the religions fall away. The bubble is an artificial creation; it has no permanent reality. It is born out of ignorance. After the fall humanity no longer experi-

ences God in the image and likeness of God, but in and through the ego, the bubble.

So there are two ways of experiencing God. The first is the experience of the image and likeness of God, an immediate and direct experience of God. The other is through the ego, an indirect, objective experience of God.

Jesus enters the fallen state of humanity

Jesus enters into this fallen state of humanity and takes the history of humanity back to the beginning. Jesus takes humanity back to the original state.

Jesus' experience of the Kingdom of God or the original state

As God Jesus enters into the fallen human state and as man he has to enter into the original state of humanity. And this happened to him at the time of his baptism. The heavens were opened and the spirit of God comes upon him and he discovers that he is the Son of God. We cannot imagine the heavens being opened because heaven is always open. It is the human heart that has closed in itself and separated itself from the light of the heavens. When the bubble of the ego is broken down then one sees the light of the Sun entering into oneself and discovers one's real identity in the presence of God. We can say that the first humanity came out of the Garden of Eden with the desire to become, by creating an ego. But Jesus by breaking the ego re-entered into the Garden of Ego, into the original state of humanity.

This experience is to discover one's true self

Jesus describes this entry into the original state as a discovery. He uses parables to describe this experience. The Kingdom of God is like a man who found treasure in the field. He buried it, went home, sold

everything and bought that field. What happens to a person who discovers his or her real self is just what happened to the man who found the treasure in the field? The treasure he found was so infinitely greater than what he had, he sold everything and bought that field. So also a person who finds his or her original self realises the infinite value of what he or she had found that they joyfully give up the life of the ego, which is nothing in comparison to the real self.

Again Jesus says that the Kingdom of God is like a merchant in search of pearls. When he finds a pearl of great value he sells everything and buys that pearl. The pearl of great value is our real self, which is the image and likeness of God. The thing which he gave up was the ego, which is insignificant in comparison to the real self.

The Kingdom of God is like a net thrown into the sea. When it is brought to the shore, it is full of good fish and bad fish. The fishermen took the good fish and threw away the bad ones. Maybe the original parable might have been like this: The Kingdom of God is like a net thrown into the sea. When they brought it to the shore they found a big fish; they were so happy they took the big fish and throw away the small ones. So also it is what happens to a person who finds the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is like a big fish so they happily throw away the small fishes.

So discovering our original self is discovering the hidden treasure, the pearl of great price, the big fish. It is a sudden, unexpected and joyful experience, which calls for an immediate decision. The decision is a choiceless choice because the fact is very clear. To find one's true self is to be in a situation in which there has to be a choiceless choice - if there is a choice then a person would enter into conflict.

Humanity has taken the wrong direction

After discovering the real or original self of humanity Jesus discovered that the humanity is not living from its original self but from the artificial self created by desire. The real self is buried under the artificial self. The water is under the bubble, but humanity does not know it. Jesus also discovered that God had created

humanity to unfold (and discover its real self) but that humanity had taken the wrong path of 'becoming'. He also realised that this path of becoming cannot bring humanity to the destiny that its wants to reach. So he announced his good news, 'The Kingdom of God is at hand, repent'. God is within you, God is around you, God is everywhere, stop your movement of reaching him and then you will find that you are already in God.

Jesus discovered that humanity was like a fish in the sea ignorant of its being in the sea, searching for the sea. He announced to humanity 'you are already in God'.

The Teaching of the Story of the Garden of Eden

1. There is suffering in the world
There is dissatisfaction or unfulfilment in this world
2. The cause of suffering is the desire to become
"I want to become like God" etc
3. The cause of desire is ignorance
Thinking that "I am like God" although I am already like God.
4. The cause of ignorance is forgetfulness of one's true nature
It is like falling into sleep or dream.
5. Humanity is inter-connected. All our choices affect the others either positively or negatively.
When Eve chose to eat the fruit she also chose for her husband; she chose for the whole of humanity.
6. God created humanity in his/her image and likeness.
7. Humanity was naked, desireless and empty of ego and psychological time.
8. Humanity lived in the universal presence of God in the Garden of Eden, which is the land of grace, land of unfolding, land of unconditional love of God and the land of harmony and eternity.
9. God told humanity to listened to all the voices except that voice which tells them that they are not like God. He told them this because they were already created like God.
10. But humanity listened to the voice of becoming,

and fell from the land of unfolding to the land of becoming, from the land of eternity to the land of time, from the land of desirelessness to the land of desire, from the pathless land to the land of paths (ways, means and religions, avatars and incarnations), from the land of grace to the land of effort, struggle and suffering.

The Teaching of Christ

1. There is suffering in the world
“Come to me all you that labour and who are burdened of heart (suffering), I will give you rest (peace). Take my yoke (my way of life) upon you and learn from me for I am meek and humble of heart (egoless, desireless and naked) and you will find rest (peace) for your souls. For my yoke (my way of life) is easy and my burden (way) is light”.
2. The cause of suffering is the desire to become like God.
3. The cause of desire is ignorance.
4. The cause of ignorance is forgetfulness.
5. The consequence of forgetfulness is the beginning of *time*, of desire, of becoming, of paths, ways, means and religions and of suffering.
6. Jesus announced his good news saying, “*The time is fulfilled*”. ‘In me *time* has come to an end. The *movement* of time, of desire, of ignorance, of forgetfulness, of paths, ways, religions and of suffering has come to an end. Everything that time has produced has come to an end. I have re-entered the land of eternity, of grace, of unfolding, of wakefulness, the Garden of Eden, by refusing to eat the fruit of becoming. I have re-opened the gate to the land of eternity to everyone.’
7. I have discovered that “*the Kingdom of God is at hand*”. ‘God is everywhere. We are all living in God and moving in God and have our being in God. God is like the infinite ocean and we are all like fish in the ocean. There is no way to God. There is no distance between God and humanity. There is no one in the world who is not in God and no one can go outside God. I walk in the universal essence of

God. “*I am in the Father and the Father is in me*”.

8. “*Repent*” ‘awake from your sleep, from your dream, from your forgetfulness, from your ignorance. Remember your original self. Stop this artificial movement of time, of desire, of becoming. Discover your real self. To discover your real self is like discovering the treasure in the field or finding a pearl of great value.
9. This waking from sleep is easy for those who are poor, meek, merciful, pure of heart, peacemakers and those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.
Jesus takes humanity not only to the original state of the Garden of Eden but beyond it. The story of the Garden of Eden tells us that God has created humanity in his/her image but Jesus says:
10. Human beings are *not creatures* of God but they are *sons and daughters of God*. They have the possibility of entering into the heart of God, saying, ‘I am the Father (God) are one’. *God is not our creator but God is our Father*. This was the revolutionary teaching of Christ to the Jewish tradition.
11. ‘*Believe in the Good News*’, that you are in God, there is no way to God and that you are not creatures but sons and daughters of God and you have the possibility of realising that you and God are one. You have the possibility of saying, “*I am the way, the truth and the life*”. There is no truth in the religions and their doctrines. Truth is the human person. Human being is the truth. *The Sabbath is made for humanity and not humanity for the sake of the Sabbath*. Religions are made for the sake of human beings, and not human beings for the sake of religions. *Human beings are greater than the religions*. Realise this truth for yourself through repentance or rebirth. Then your life in this world will be life of unfolding, of sharing in love and communion.

On the Love of God by Father Bede

Extracts from letters to a friend

The following are extracts from letters written by Father Bede to Winifred Dearden, a friend living in England

Winifred writes *“Over a span of forty years it has been my great joy and privilege to receive letters from Father Bede giving consolation and encouragement whenever needed and answering questions on subjects like re-incarnation, sin, guilt and the love of God.*

I found the idea of this Love as that of an all-forgiving Father very difficult to grasp and believe, so perhaps others experiencing the same diffidence might be helped to read to relevant parts of two of Father Bede’s letters on this subject.”

Father Bede writes:

...’One has to relax physically and mentally and let go of everything – guilt, fear anxiety and resentment – let everything go until one is completely empty. It is best to simply attend to the breathing and become perfectly calm and quiet. If you have any problems with the image of God as the father of Jesus, it is best to let all such images go. God himself is without form: he has no image and cannot be conceived. Above all, the idea of an angry God who is going to punish you must go. All these are psychological projections. One must go beyond all such projections including the image of Jesus. Jesus in Himself, in his inmost being is beyond all images. Everything must go until you reach a state of pure selfless inner peace without image or thought.

If you can stay with this, it will gradually come to life and you will find that you are in the presence of infinite Being which will gradually reveal itself as infinite love. The last judgement is a judgement of love. God is love and to encounter Him as he is, is to encounter absolute love. All your sins and failings are nothing in the face of this forgiving love. They are due to your ‘Karma’. All failures, sins and sufferings are due to the working out of this Karma. You have to let them go and trust yourself to the love which created you and redeemed you and waits to receive you into its embrace like the father in the parable of the prodigal son. Guilt and fear are your enemies.

(November 2nd 1989)

...’The great thing to realise is that all that is negative in the past, all our faults and failings can become positive once it is accepted and surrendered to God. We have got used to the idea that we are sinful and that God punishes us for our sins. But in reality God is Love and everything we suffer can become a means to open us to this Love. When we look back on the past we can learn to recognise that God was present in all we suffered and in all the mistakes that we made. One must get rid of the obsessive sense of guilt and sin and remember that God is compassion.

When the Pharisees wanted to have the woman taken in adultery stoned, Jesus said, ‘Neither do I condemn you’. We must remember that we are dealing with unconditional Love. All that is required of us is self-surrender of the good and the bad alike. It is this total surrender which changes everything and this is what we learn in meditation. To be free of oneself, of one’s ego is the one essential condition; and when we make this surrender we realise for ourselves that God is Love.’

(March 14th 1990)

Satsang with Father Bede

Thoughts on Old Age

This article is from a Satsang with Father Bede held at Osage Monastery, Oklahoma, USA in 1992. It is reprinted courtesy of www.bede.griffiths.com

Q: Father Bede, would you share a few words of wisdom about 'aging', given that people are living so much longer today?

I've been asked to speak about old age, and as I'm now 86, I think I'm qualified to speak about it. And I should say to begin with, that the last twenty years of my life have been probably the most creative and most enriching of all. And so, perhaps this will be an important message, because many people seem to think that old age is a falling away, a gradual breaking down, but as for me it's been a continual renewal.

I like to think of human existence in three stages: the first stage, called the stage of *adolescence*, is the gradual growth of physical maturity for the first twenty years and during that time the mind and the character are beginning to develop, sexual desires are awakening and the person comes to the border of maturity. The next twenty years, 20 - 40, are the stages of *psychological maturity*; the capacities which have been developing in adolescence come to flower, and normally the person marries, has a family, they take work, find a profession and they develop all their different powers for sport, for arts and poetry and all the different aspects of life.

Now most people think that is the end of life and the aim is to prolong that period as long as possible into the fifties or the sixties. And when that begins to decline, your faculties begin to decline, you can't do what you did before, you begin to think you're failing, and so old age is a gradual senescence, a gradual loss of power.

And I want to suggest the opposite, that the third stage of life should normally begin in the forties. That 20-40 yrs. is an intermediate period, it's not final, and that the final period begins more or less in the forties so it's been prepared before when not merely the physical and psychological, but the *spiritual* powers begin to develop, and for many people today this dimension has been lost—that beyond the physical and psychological there's nothing to expect.

But the spiritual is precisely the part which transcends the physical and psychological and opens us to the eternal, so as we enter into the third phase, we begin to discover the transcendent capacities in our nature—that we're capable of transcending the body and transcending the mind and discovering the deep source of all reality.

I like to think of the first millennium, 500 - 600 B.C., as a time in human history when humanity awoke fully to this dimension. It's been present before, from the beginning actually, it slowly emerges in the first stage and it begins to emerge properly in the second, but only in the third stage, which it dramatically reached in the first millennium, does it break through. So everybody should, in the forties, begin to break through to this third phase, where the spirit is open to the transcendent, the infinite, the eternal, the one reality, whatever name we like to give to it.

So old age should be the flowering of the whole personality, and in a deep sense, I think I could say, we're not fully human persons until we enter into the third phase, the phase of the spirit. And everything indicates that at that phase we go beyond space and time. The first stage, the physical, we're growing in space and developing the body; the second phase we're growing in time and developing the various faculties of the mind and so on; in the third stage, we're transcending space and time, discovering the whole order of eternity and infinity and the whole which embraces all these other parts and other elements in our lives.

So the real aim of life is to prepare for the third stage, for the awakening of the spirit, was present, mind you, in the very earliest stage and can flower at an earlier stage. Some people at a very young age awake

to the spirit, others during the more mature period discover something of it, but for everybody I feel, the possibility is there of discovering it in the third stage. And that is where mystical experience begins, but not only mystical experience, but a whole way of seeing life, of seeing yourself, of seeing your whole existence in a new concept, in the light of a whole which embraces all your previous experience.

So that really opens up hope to people because many people seem to be hopeless, that in old age there's nothing more to expect except the gradual decline. But the shedding of the body which takes place at the end of the third stage, is simply the final stage; the body has grown and matured, it's come to it's fulfilment and now it's ready to go. And when the body is shed then the soul, the psyche, has a greater freedom, and is able to unite with the spirit in a more meaningful way, and the whole personality, the whole being finally passes and reaches it's fulfilment, not in this world of space and time, but in the eternal world which is the world of reality. So that's the hope of the future.

Satsang is a Sanskrit word meaning the coming together (sangha) of those seeking God, Truth, Being (sat)



*The Sangha Trip to India
January 2nd— 21st 2001*

*There are a few places left on the Sangha
Trip to Southern India, visiting
Shantivanam Ashram, Chidambaram,
Tiruvanmalai, Mahabalipuram and other
sacred places. If you would like to come
please contact*

*Soul of India Tours on +44(0)1902 561485
or Adrian and Jill on +44(0)2217 752871*

The River of Life

At first, you're unaware of the river. Just standing still on the bank
Then something happens, makes you notice something missing.
Is it the movement? Freshness? A sense of you being apart-separate?
You begin to be aware of the river.

It is wide, deep and strong. It has shallow beaches.
You begin to wade, unaware of the depth ahead.
Each step feels right, and you stop. But something calls to you after a while,
"Come deeper, there's more!"

You wade out. But soon you feel the current.
You feel scared, but you can't go back.
You are overwhelmed, aware of your weakness,
And inability to fight. You have no choice now, you are carried.

The river is swift, and it drags you under.
You fight, knowing it's no use.
The river has you now, and it never stops.
You're drowning, dying.

The precious air you breathed on the bank,
is leaving you.
Your clothes are ripped, and torn away from you.
You are naked and without air.

All you had is gone, and there is only one thing left to do.
Let go. Loose your life.
You let go of life, of what you thought was life.
But the river is life.

Then you realise that death wasn't death, you weren't life.
Now you are in life, one with the river.
You are life.
Flowing, fresh, strong. Soothing, lapping, sweeping.

You realise, those on the bank.
Are wading, swimming, drowning.
They don't realise.
That life was death, and death is life.

They stand still and watch it pass by.
With eyes that don't see.
Hands that don't touch.
Lips that don't feel.

Only when they are One,
will they fully see.
One will be all, as all are one in the River.

Jon Bott

A Chakra Visualisation on the Lord's Prayer

Vanya Orr

I had been meditating on the Chakras. Then one day I was thinking that the Lord's Prayer might be a mantra. I tried to take it down through the Chakras. Other people may find others ways and experiences but this was mine.

Our Father: the Eternal being of God in the Crown Chakra.
I experienced this as a wide shallow stemmed glass of light. I opened the stem to allow the light into the next chakra.
 Which art in Heaven

Opening the stem to allow the light into the throat chakra.
 Hallowed be thy name

Opened to the heart chakra
 Thy kingdom come

Opened to the spleen chakra – to do with will. (This is the great borderland between higher and lower consciousness and unconsciousness, heaven and earth).
 Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven

Opened to the sacral chakra. (This is about trust and fear. It is water and I couldn't relate this until I saw in the Bible the stories about bread were also related to sea and storms).
 Give us this day our daily bread
Open the stem of this chalice to the root chakra (this is the crown chakra of the animal kingdom and if we trespass there?)...

Forgive us our trespasses.

Returning up the left side:
 As we forgive those who trespass against us

The sacral chakra – this is the chakra where we are tested
 Lead us not into temptation

The spleen chakra - there is a wonderful visualisation of taking a sword and cutting connections and negative emotions which enter here.
 Deliver us from Evil.

The heart chakra (back with the Kingdom!)
 For this is the Kingdom

The throat chakra
 The power
Brow chakra
 And the Glory

Crown Chakra
 For ever and ever
 Om

A Letter to God

Dear God

I'm running round the park of life
 trying to cope with all the strife
 straining sinew, catching breath,
 keeping just ahead of death.

How much effort must I make
 how much of your medicine must I take to
 keep the spiritual dogs at bay
 and ensure I do not lose my way.

I run the high ground and hope you will
 help my bursting heart to still,
 stop me sinking into the mud
 and return me to where first I stood.

Trying to beat this switchback ride
 is not longer for me a thing of pride
 I sweat and ache in every bone,
 no sign from you—I feel alone.

You have put me on a rocky track
 I have no way of going back,
 the path you set me I am pursuing
 So I hope you know what you are doing!

Notes and Queries

Happiness Here and Now: The Eightfold Path of Jesus Revisited with Buddhist Insights.

By
Elizabeth West

A Medio Media Book, Continuum International Publishing, 125 Strand, London WC2R 0BB (2000). £ 7.99

One might expect to find a book so titled among the instantaneous enlightenment courses found on the shelves of the New Age section of our large bookshops! But this is of a different genre.

The author is offering us a new perception of the very heart of Jesus' 'way' of living a Godly life - as expressed in the eight Beatitudes of Matthew's Gospel - with insights from the Buddhist tradition in which she is well versed.

This is not, as she warns us, a book to be read straight through. It is about spiritual practice, not theory, and the author's style is clear and uncomplicated. Each Beatitude is to be pondered over. (Indeed an eight-day retreat could usefully be based on the book.) Because she is dealing with be-attitudes, she draws a great deal on practical psychology. Each chapter ends with exercises to do and questions to reflect upon.

It is not surprising, therefore, that throughout the book, she reminds us that if we are to draw upon these riches it will be through the regular practice of meditation - in the eastern understanding of that word. (She particularly recommends the mantra method taught by Dom John Main OSB.)

For readers with less familiarity with the riches of other religious traditions there is a chapter giving a clear explanation of the different levels of inter-faith dialogue, and, as an appendix (better read as a preface) is a simple over-view of Buddhism in particular.

For me, one of the most valuable contributions of the book comes amid reflections on the last Beatitude: the reminder that beliefs and dogmas can never embody the reality - Ultimate Truth - that they attempt to express. This book restores spiritual experience to its rightful place in Christian life and it will be of great value in helping Christians to shift the centre of their spirituality from heart to heart.

Adrian B Smith

Christians Awakening to a New Awareness

CANA (Christians Awakening to a New Awareness) is a group founded by the Bridge Trust. In its Spring 2000 Newsletter it writes:

"the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining" (1 John 2.8)

'Moving into the new century there has been an intensification of the desire to leave the old behind, to free ourselves of old restraints and old concepts on the global scale, on the personal, and perhaps most relevant here, in our spiritual life.

I came across this the other day: "Sufism has always recognized the principle according to which the Divine Revelation, transmitted by the great mediators, takes on different forms corresponding to the different aptitudes of the humans groups called on to receive them."

It indicates the scale of the task that lies ahead. We feel the need, we see all the signs that the old formulations of Christianity are way out of touch with people now. We even suspect that the churches have distorted God's message. Yet we feel that if only the message of Christ could be given in a fresh, clear and more appropriate form, He is still the Way to the Truth.

Just how radical will the new formulation have to be? Do we need a new language?

Will there have to be a new revelation?

What part will the Bible play?

Will there be liturgies, priests, churches?

Will the sacraments still apply?

The new formulation must include awareness of the teachings of other faiths, for so many have felt their truths and benefited from their practices. No faith can be isolated from the others: we are partners, making the journey alongside each other. It must include the awareness of our responsibility to creation and particularly to the planet Earth, as creatures made from her substance and living within her body.

We know that it must be based on equality of the sexes and the valuing of different qualities and abilities. And it needs to stand firm on issues of peace and justice for every human being."

You can contact CANA through the Chair, Janice Dolley at 'Wychwood' 20 The Chase, Reigate Surrey (Tel 01737 762261)

IF not delivered please return to:

The Bede Griffiths Sangha

Beech Tree Cottage

Gushmere

Kent UK

ME13 9RH

For further information contact

Adrian Rance & Jill Hemmings

+44 (0) 1227 752871

+44 (0) 1227 750082 (fax)

arance@msn.com

www.bedegriffiths.com



*Again we have news of members and friends
who are ill. You may like to remember
Susanna Tieze in your prayers; also Chris
Lines, Winifred Dearden, Jeanette Seagar
and Ken Knight. We are putting you all in
the light*

Future Sangha Events

The Sangha Winter Retreat, St Peters

Grange, Prinknash Abbey Nov 3rd – 5th

2000 *There are still some places left. Phone*

Adrian and Jill on 01227 752871

Spring Retreat 2001, The Rowan Tree

Centre, The Skreen, Builth Wells, Powys.

4th—7th May 2001. Booking forms will be sent

in the December mailing.

Summer Seminar at Park Place Pastoral

Centre, Wickham, Hants. July 13th—15th

2001

A Sangha member has a cottage to let in mid-Wales.

Ideal for a long retreat or sabbatical. Oct 1—June 1

2001 Contact David James (Estate Agents)

01874 624757

Regional Contacts

**The following members have offered
to act as regional contacts for the
Sangha**

Gosport, Hants Sue Howse

01795 528601

Taunton, Somerset Valeria Ives

01823 432468

Guildford, Surrey Therese O'Neill 01730

814879

Oxford Olive Norton 01865 242227

Essex Chris Collingwood

0181 504 4476

SE London Hilary Knight 0168 986 1004

East Scotland Angelika Monteux

0122 118 67251

East Kent Jill Hemmings & Adrian Rance

01227 752871

W Sussex Gillian Maher 01444 455334

Exeter Joan Uzzells 01392 276825

Glasgow Steve Woodward 01355 224937

Belfast Sighle Mary O'Donoghue 01232

287471

As a regional contact person you don't have to do more than pass on messages, but if you wanted to arrange local Sangha days then that would be great! We have lots of Sangha members in Australia—would anyone be willing to be the contact person?