

The SEARCHLIGHT

Association for Research and Enlightenment, Incorporated

VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA

Vol. IV

October, 1952

No. 24

AMERICAN MYSTICISM, THE FUTURE OF RELIGION IN THE UNITED STATES

By Thomas Sugrue

A lecture given March 26, 1952 at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel, Hollywood, California, opening the Fifth Western Conference of the Association. In words of former King Edward the Eighth, "at long last I may say a few words of my own." I thank Hugh Lynn Cayce for his kind words, but he didn't say the things he used to call me back in college when I'd waken him up at three o'clock in the morning and say, "Son, if you know what's wrong in the world, why don't you do something about it?" We've been trying to do something about it ever since then. One of the things that a human being learns in life, though, is that when what he believes he can accomplish in five years as he goes out of college, usually takes him twenty-five. 'We both thought that within five years after we got out of college we'd be doing what we're doing here tonight, but considering the obstacles which we ourselves put in the way, as well as the barriers put up by the rest of the society, I think we're lucky to have made it at all.

I would like to speak just a word before I go into the problem of American Mysticism, about the woman I love, the woman for whom in a sense I have given up whatever throne there is in the world: let's call her, for convenience, the White Goddess. Lately, I have run into some books by a woman who is one of her representatives, a woman now

dead, but whose name when she Lived was Simone Weil. She was a French Jewess. She was not handsome and she did not take good care of herself. She wandered around among the Socialistic and Communistic theories of her time.

She suffered from migraine headaches, and one day, in the middle of one of them, she was listening to the Gregorian Chant; she fell into the presence of God and found out that she was a natural mystic. She died at the age of 34 because while working for the Free French Government in England she refused to take more food into her frail body than was allowed by the Germans to her people in France. She perished of malnutrition. The little things that she wrote, the essays, the notes, are now being printed, and those who read them are finding out as I found out - that there has come back into the world that luminous kind of mind which sees God, sees man, and sees the world, and writes about all these as if they were one. The three of them are, in reality, the great trinity with which you live and with which I live. For too long we have been living in a duality - I and the world. We have had only two things to deal with, the world's opinions and our own, - the world's standards, and what we can do to adjust to them, so that we will be thought well of by those outside our own reality, without

reference to the Absolute which lies behind us, the Absolute from which we are different because we are limited.

Reading such books as "Waiting for God" and "The Need for Roots" by Simone Weil, I feel as if finally the world is becoming the sort of place in which I can be comfortable, because the trinity has returned to it. It's very much like the experience I had a few years ago in the state of Israel. I went there because I had to find out whether the return to history of the Jews was something meaningful for the spiritual destiny of mankind, - as well might be with Jews, - or whether it was just another nationality on the wrong side of the Mediterranean, another Balkan State that would make trouble. After six months, I felt that there had come back into the world of politics and economics and society the eternal triangle of God and man and the world.

There is the great book called the Bible. There is no greater book. It is a wondrous piece of objective art, because it gives the plot of man exactly as it happens. There is God in that story. There is man in that story; and there is the world. God wrestles with man to try to get from him the treasure that he lost there, sometime back. The world tempts man to hide from God and enjoy himself. All through the book this story goes on, and anyone who reads it knows and feels that this is his own life. But when he picks the novels of our day, they are quite different. They are dual - the

man and the world. There may be some with the ideal of God, but I've never read a modern novel in which it wasn't purely selfish and subjective desire for peace of conscience rather than peace of mind.

Mysticism is a word as misused as the word American, yet it has in it a kind of feeling which never gets too far away from its basic meaning. The same is true of the word "American". In the Orient, for example, people take it for granted that an Americans are adolescent - millionaires who are sex-mad. There's a lot of truth in that. How many Americans do not worship youth and do not want to stay young? How many of them aren't trying to make more money at whatever they're doing, and how many don't join in the Hollywood ideal of going down the street with a prettier girl or a more handsome fellow? It is curious how our daydreams, which we never express in writing, sort of drift through the air and get into the minds of other people. Americans are also supposed to be, in the eyes of the rest of the world, a people who are engaged in a new kind of imperialism. We aren't going to spend even as much money as the British did to run the world. We're going to capture it in a more simple way. We like our comfort and don't want to develop, as the British did, a colonial system, whereby we will have a lot of people living in various parts of the world and at lot of troops stationed here and there. So we're going to do the job through business.

We're going to capture the world by converting its inhabitants into customers for Coca Cola, records by Bing Crosby, and "B" motion pictures. That's what foreigners think about us, because we've never given them the best of our civilization; we've never given them the best of our society, and when we go abroad we ourselves by taking too much money and by asking too many foolish questions. There are millions of people who, if they heard the phrase "American Mysticism", would laugh, because their understanding of mysticism and their understanding of Americanism, are such that the two could not possibly come together.

Let's look and see what this combination means. Every human being is concerned, in reality, with only one thing, and that is his own idea of himself. But he is concerned with it in two directions. He is concerned for what others think of him and he is concerned for what God thinks of him. Depending upon which of these opinions he values most, he is one or another kind of a person. Pythagoras has a simple drawing to illustrate this. We study it in school as the 47th problem of Euclid. It proves that the square of the hypotenuse of a right triangle is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides. If you take the vertical line as your spiritual drive and if you take the horizontal as your worldly and egotistical urge, and if you take the hypotenuse as the result, you will have yourself. If the vertical is very low and the horizontal

is short, then the hypotenuse will lay close to the earth. If the vertical is quite high and the horizontal is short, then the hypotenuse, which is you, will lie more closely to the spiritual.

As you work at this, your eventual goal is another symbol, which you know much better. It is the cross of the crucifixion, in which finally one arm, which is you, the ego, the world, lies across that vertical which is the law and the will of God. When you are nailed to it, voluntarily, and you die, that part of you which belongs to the vertical is resurrected, and Christ rises from you as the son of man becomes the Son of God. There never has been another kind of religion for mankind. That is all we have and that is all we know in one form or another. The triangle is our work and our goal is the Crucifixion. It is exemplified in our own religion, the Christian and the Judaic. Melchizedec, the King of Salem, initiated Abraham. In Hebrews, we find:

"For this Melchizedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, King of Peace. With out father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually."

It was after Abraham knew

Melchizedec that two tremendous things happened in his life. He gave to his people the sign and symbol of the circumcision, which meant that the sacred fire of life in each one of those persons was dedicated to the service of God, and thereafter the greatest effort of those people would be to build that fire from the base of that vertical and send it spiralling upward until it was transmuted and changed and would glow and be seen as a halo.

The purpose of man in this earth is to move the center of his consciousness from the level of creativity at which he is born to the level of spiritual creativity at which he passes out of the earth plane. The Hindus have it in their yoga and they express it through the chakras, which we call the endocrine gland centers. The Bible describes it as the ladder of Jacob, and it is described in other systems in various ways. I like the way it is explained in the old story of the Hindu rope trick - the trick everybody is supposed to have seen but nobody really has watched, where the fakir takes a rope from his basket and throws it up into the air. The rope straightens and a little boy climbs up it and pulls it up after him. That's a nice little story; the trick can't be done. It's a beautiful symbol of what happens - man throws this rope of his aspirations into the air and then puts his little soul at the bottom of it, and climbs up the rope. He pulls the rope up after him, and, according to the Hindus, he then is relieved of the necessity to reincarnate again and doesn't have to

take on another body. In the Western world we considered it the movement from the circumcision to the halo. How does one go about it? Well, everything you study about religion has to do with it, hasn't it - with going up the rope in some way, getting the sacred fire lifted. It's all part of a system which tries to convince you to leave one level of pleasure behind you, at the promise of another, and it's always difficult, because the handhold that you have on the rope is safe and the one above is treacherous.

It's very hard to convince some people that giving in a charitable sense will bring them more pleasure than receiving. It's very hard to convince people that loving can be more ecstatic at the level of the spirit than it is at the level of the flesh. So we have systems of ethics and systems of law and systems of morality whereby we say thou shalt not, because we have come to believe that in forbidding a thing, pressure is put on a person and he is squeezed, so that eventually he finds himself at that higher level of pleasure. That idea has led us into many, many traps.

One of the most tremendous of those traps is Puritanism. There are many reasons for this. I must mention, for example, the early tendency in Christianity to deny absolutely the creative level of the body in one grand and glorious leap was going to get up to the top, where the halo dwells. Unfortunately it is not possible to do it, yet Puritanism says it can be done. Thus instead of using the subtle

and wise psychologies of the East, which tell us how to go gradually toward this goal, Western mysticism has made the mistake of thinking that by using the lash and the hair-shirt, and the girdle set with knives, that this can be accomplished. But the problem is to get everybody moving, however slowly, in the proper direction. This calls for the technique of preaching charity, and the corporeal works of mercy, and of asking people to be honourable, and to give themselves one to another in love, and to join in marriage with the ideal that in physical love they lay themselves on the altar of life, so that the fire of love itself will levitate them together to a higher kind of creativity.

Abraham when he started this technique had one other trial. It had to do with Isaac, his son. He loved Isaac too much, and he was beginning to forget God. There was coming into his life personal attachment - love on a possessive level, love on a sentimental level. So God demanded that he go right to the edge of killing this boy - and then, of course, it wasn't necessary to kill him, because the only death that God was interested in was the death of that selfish lover that had grown up in Abraham. That has become part of Puritanism, that false, kind of possessive love, the denial of the real basis of physical love, the guilt complex about it. This has tended to play up romantic and sentimental love, and to elevate love of mother for son, father for daughter, love of country, love of institutions,

love of anything that doesn't involve you in that unfortunate guilt. These things have come into our Western society, as nothing less than set of perversions. We deny the sacred fire by which we shall ascend to heaven. How then can we move toward heaven? Can we attempt to hold and to crush, and to possess the people we love? In so doing we tie ourselves more firmly to the earth. Every way that we may liberate ourselves and move to the higher level of creativity we seem to have perverted and it's mostly ignorance that's done it.

That's why religion has become today extremely static in its institutional forms. The great sin that it has committed is procrastination. Theologically it has more or less condoned putting off the effort to lift the fire up to the higher level. It has put off the journey to heaven until after death, which is the greatest mistake you could make, because life is the means to that end. Life is the laboratory where it must be found. You cannot find the Kingdom of Heaven after you die, you seek it here. Here you find it. Here you win it. How then, is it possible for you to do anything about it if you spend all your life trying to make yourself successful in the eyes of other people, and in the standards of society? You put off this business of squaring yourself with God until you die, and then when you die you expect to meet some fellow with a piece of paper and a pencil, who says, "Now look here, Jones, according to our records you stole a

certain amount of money from the First National Bank in 1928, and you got away with it. You know we have the record here." And you say, "Oh dear, I'm sorry, I'm sorry." "Well," he says, "you've got to go down and sit on that seat and suffer 2500 degrees of heat for seven years, and then we'll let you into heaven."

I wonder whether anybody left in the world is capable of believing that sort of thing. If it was meant to be believed at all it was only as a way, a literary way, of dramatising something quite real. You know that you actually can burn with 2500 degrees of heat. When your conscience assails you, as a matter of fact, you go through all the purgatory it is possible to go through. When you recognise your own mistakes and sins, you burn. You know that time is an illusion, and that you can go through an eternity of suffering almost in an instant. There is the judgement following death, but the achievement and the work are done here. In the Western world that restless, driving creative energy, which is denied as a spiritual force, has a way of expressing itself which has made the society in which we live. It leaked out on a horizontal basis. It leaked out through the industrial revolution. It leaked out through the Renaissance; it leaked out in such a way that materialism and science became the gods of our world.

Then it showed how magical it really is. Having built ourselves a tremendously comfortable society, being in a position where we are

condemned for having followed Lucifer and wrested the world away from God, we find that very energy prompting us to push on and discover what we would also have found if we had sat upon the ground with our legs crossed and looked, within ourselves. We discover that the world is an illusion, that it is made up of electrons, and electrons are made up of electricity, and electricity is spiritual energy dancing attendance upon the Divine Mind, which creates form. Having come to that discovery, we are faced with the fact that with this secret we can pull a trigger, drop a bomb, and blow ourselves up. Or we can take this newly discovered Secret and give it to the rest of the world as our contribution to the destiny of man, and, by so doing, in one great act of redemption make up for all our strange perversions, and by this redemptive act recognise that we have been wrong.

If we thus accept our new discovery of absolute reality as truth and begin to fashion our mysticism out of this knowledge of God, we shall have found through our scientific discovery what the genius of Eastern civilization discovered through examining man's inner self, his inner mind.

The genius of our civilization is that we discovered this truth by looking with our eyes and feeling with our fingers in all that is outside of ourselves. What does this tell us now? That by both methods of looking toward the absolute frame of reference

which lies within us we find, Truth, and that they are both the same.

We are pieces of consciousness which fell out of God's consciousness. We were given free will, and, having been given free will, we made at one time a decision or a choice which suddenly made us different from every other thing and from God himself. The first act of free will that any soul makes immediately conditions the second act, and the second act conditions the third, until finally the soul is caught in the web of its own decisions. Then it is necessary, having made so many mistakes that it is trapped and limited, to begin very very cautiously to be careful in choosing from the remaining alternatives, in order to find the way back out of the labyrinth. But when the way back is found the soul is wise. That is its reward. It now chooses as God chooses, but from knowledge, not instinct. It becomes part of the law which keeps the universe in balance, and in so doing it becomes part of that harmony and that beauty which all during its exile is called love.

When as a man it met a girl and somehow together the two plugged into the harmony of the universe them, they said they were in love, and they were. Whenever it heard beautiful music it said "It is lovely." It always subconsciously realised that the tremendous drive of God's will operating through the universe is the force called love. Whenever by its own free will the soul departed too far from that love, it experienced pain,

which is only, physically speaking, the opposite of love. To caress the arm of someone you love gives the pleasure of love to that person.

But rub a little harder and you can bum the skin with friction. It's a very delicate, thin line, which separates those facts of whether you are expressing your will or God's will, and that's why the first and the greatest of the seven deadly sins is pride. Pride is that tricky part of the intellect which makes it possible for you to rationalise what you want to do, and make it seem what God wants us to do also.

We are now in the United States faced with this problem - we've become, through our extension on the horizontal plane, the richest and the strongest nation in the world. We have what everybody else wants, on a purely physical level, but what we really have to give everybody is not goods but this knowledge we have discovered. The fact that if you go through the hardest matter, if you cut your way through rock, you will find yourself faced with illusion, with electricity, with the mind of God at work - this is what we must give.

What we need to do with our kind of mysticism is to compare it with all other forms of mysticism in the world and say, "Look, brothers, we have all found the same thing." You in the East gave us your techniques for peace of mind, and they were the basis of our religion, and we still follow them when we are well enough in our spirit to do so. We have found the

same thing as you, so we shall give it to you, and if you use it you will it, which is peace of body. You need all these ideas that we have for resuscitating land that is wasted, for rotating crops, for educating all people so that they will be able to live more sensibly in the world, and be able to appreciate the thought and ideas and the culture in the world, so that they will be able eventually to govern themselves sensibly and to bring about in their lives those few things which seem to us God meant for all creatures to have, security of the body and dignity of the person." Perhaps our destiny in history is to be a coordinating factor between the East and the West. We've gone all the way around the world now, starting from China and ending in China. Out here in California, in 1910, an Irishman named O'Boyle trained secretly an army of Chinese revolutionary soldiers. They were ferried across the Pacific, and under Sun Yat Sen they provoked a revolution in China, bringing about the fall of the Manchu Dynasty. Thus he managed finally to get around the world. He started with a plow and he ended with democracy.

In that same year of 1910, in Palestine, at the mouth of the Jordan River where it comes out of Galilee, some Jewish idealists from Europe started a collective agricultural settlement, which was the first effort made to bring the fruits of the West back to the East. It seems coincidental that in the very year that we ended our East to West migration, we

started,back, and in starting back West to East, we did it by the same channel - the Jewish people, who seem in their psychological pattern to combine both the East and the West, both the meditative and contemplative types of mind.

Those new Jewish pioneers took with them to the East irrigation, fertilisers, rotation of crops, and all our sociological ideals of living comfortably without giving anyone any more reward than another, and living in a kind of company whereby in the evening each does what he wants to do and becomes what he wants to be - a philosopher, or a scientist, or an artist. Out of that settlement, for example, in that little state of Israel, have come novelists, poets, doctors, scientists, musicians, painters, all out of people who work by day on the soil and who never use money in that little place which can be seen from the Mount of Beatitudes where Jesus put down the law for the inner life, these people of Israel fifty years ago began something we call Point 4 — resuscitation of wasted lands and of static societies.

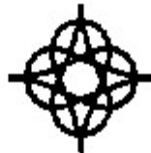
They started the United Nations. They gathered Jews from all over the world, and those Jews gave up their culture, gave up their languages, and revived Hebrew. They started a Marshall plan. Jews all over the world contributed money for the purchase of those lands. The Arab leaders are not anti-semitic. They don't dislike Jews; they themselves are Semites, and they have lived with Jews all their lives.

What they dislike is the West. What they dislike is Western society, which is coming to the East to give the fruits of the West to their unfortunate people, who are 98 percent illiterate, who are suffering 100 per- cent from malnutrition and endemic diseases, who own nothing, because 1/2 of 1 percent of the population own everything. Those Arab leaders do not want this new great revolution which is our revolution, not only of our century but the next. They do not want it to roll from the West to the East and bring the fire of life once again to that part of the world which has been asleep for so long.

But the mysticism of America, the mysticism of the United States, the future religion here in this country, is to do that. We have sectarianism because our formal religions are dead, and they are dead because they have procrastinated and put off the journey toward heaven. We must recognise a new kind of religion and we must take it as our unifying factor. The destiny of the United States, as the beginner of the next age, is the unifying element in our religious life. We must take the evidence of our laboratories as proof

that we cannot procrastinate, that we must do something about our spiritual destiny. It is foolish to think that God ever waits. He is eternal and He is One, and it is our business to get going toward Him.

His Son, the Mind, which throughout creation keeps things in balance, which expresses itself in love, pursues us always. He will never let us go. There is no escape either by the individual or by the group or by the nation, or by humanity. The mysticism and the future of America's religious work lies in the acceptance of this fact. We have run as far away as we can from God, and we find ourselves face to face with Him still. We must save the world now in order to save ourselves. In the long run groups aren't important, nations aren't important, the world is not important. Only the individuals composing it are important; only the souls of those individuals matter. They must journey through all experience, until in wisdom they accept the law of God, knowing that by obedience to this great harmony of the universe they will dwell forever in the presence of love.



NOTE: This has is a REPRINT of a former monthly publication of the Association for Research and Enlightenment, Inc.