



# The Golden String

Vol. 3 No. 1

BULLETIN OF THE BEDE GRIFFITHS TRUST

Summer 1996

## CREATIVE LIFE THROUGH PRAYER AND MEDITATION

Swami Sahajananda (Br. John Martin)

There are two ways we can live our life: one is creative life and the other is mechanical life. Mechanical life is a life of repetition. It is fixed once for all. The past entering the present and being projected into the future. Creative life cannot be defined because the moment we define it it is no longer creative but becomes mechanical. It can only be described negatively. We can say what it is not rather than what it is.

The life of Jesus is a perfect example of what creative life is. His life was a creative response to life situations. The Scribes and Pharisees wanted to catch Jesus so they asked him very tricky questions. 'Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar?' they asked him. Their motive was to catch him. If Jesus replies positively saying that you should pay taxes to Caesar, then they can accuse him of being the enemy of the Jews because he is asking them to obey the emperor and be subject to him. If he replies negatively, saying not to pay taxes to Caesar, then they can accuse him of being the enemy of the emperor. In both ways Jesus will be caught. But Jesus replies 'Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and give to God what belongs to God'. This is not a mechanical answer because it does not come from the past, from the memory. Nobody had given this answer before in the history of humanity. So it is not a mechanical answer. It is a creative answer which comes from beyond the memory and which is appropriate to that particular situation.

(Continued on page 2)

## Inside This Issue

Creative Life (Swami Sahajananda)	1
The Bede Griffiths Collection at GTU	1
The Development of the Church (Bede Griffiths)	3
The "Eye" in Meister Eckhart (Wayne Teasdale)	5
<b>Reviews:</b> Bruteau, <i>The Other Half of My Soul</i>	6
Stidsen, <i>Hocking's theory</i>	7
Olivelle, <i>The Asrama System</i>	7
Teasdale & Cairns, <i>The Community of Religions</i>	8
Bede Griffiths Activities	9
N	e
	w
	s

## MY DEAR DOM BEDE: THE BEDE GRIFFITHS COLLECTION AT GTU

Lucinda Glenn Rand, Archivist

It was in fall 1994 that I received a message from Robert Hale. He was speaking for a Trust which held the papers of Dom Bede Griffiths. Would the Graduate Theological Union Archives be interested in receiving this collection? The Graduate Theological Union is a consortium of nine seminaries (three Catholic - Franciscan, Dominican, and Jesuit - and six various Protestant), plus ten affiliated centers and institutes which include, for example, the Center for Jewish Studies, Institute of Buddhist Studies, Center for Women and Religion, and Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences. It is situated in Berkeley, California with close ties to the University of California at Berkeley. There is one common library, a consolidation of the nine separate seminary libraries, forming the largest theological library in the western United States.

The GTU Archives, reflecting the mission of the institution, collects in the subject area of ecumenical and inter-religious activity, evidence of ethnic plurality, and women in religion. This saves the record, and keeps the memory, of important work in the world, of persons and organizations which seek to minister to those who are hurt, forgotten, powerless; or seek a more full understanding of human and divine motivations and interactions.

When I met with Fr. Hale to discuss bringing the collection to the GTU Archives, I had never heard of Bede Griffiths. But it is the nature of my work, that one becomes not only knowledgeable about the subjects of collections, but connected to them as well. My connection to Bede grows from the immersion in the material found in his collection - his papers, articles, books, videotapes, audiotapes, correspondence to him and from him: things personal, things business; seeing him in moods of compassion, frustration, elation, and vision; concerned with the minutiae of daily life and with the fullness of God in the universe.

As the months went by after Fr. Hale's initial visit, he kept me abreast of the travels of this remarkable collection, from India to Australia to California. It was a great day when the boxes arrived at the Archives. When opened, they smelled strongly of incense and of what, never having been there, I imagine India to be. Not everything can be listed here, but the boxes contained along with other rich materials, a great deal of correspondence to Bede, including

(Continued on page 2)

---

## The Golden String

---

### **Creative Life**

(Continued from page 1)

When they brought to Jesus a woman caught in the act of adultery and asked him a similar question, once again he responded in a completely unprecedented and creative way. If we repeat these answers today, they are no longer creative answers but mechanical answers.

In order for this creativity to manifest in and through the movement of the mind, the movement of the past has to be relaxed or silenced. Spiritual practice is to relax or to silence the movement of the mind, which is the movement of the past or memory. We can also say it is to relax the movement of the *ego*, the separated personality. The movement of the ego is the mechanical movement, the past entering into the present and the present going into the future. This is the movement of repetition. As long as this movement is not silenced or relaxed, creativity cannot take place. It is very important that this movement be relaxed or silenced, and not fought with, not controlled, nor suppressed, because these methods create violence in the mind so that relaxation or silence is not possible. Humanity has developed as many techniques as possible in order to relax this movement so that we can enter into the state of creativity. Rituals, dance, music, prayer, meditation and even drugs have been used to silence the mind. I wish to comment on two long-tested methods of silencing the movement of the ego. One is Prayer and the other is Meditation.

The essence of *prayer* consists in relaxing the movement of the ego. In order to allow the creative life to manifest in and through us, the unconditional relaxation of the ego is necessary. Jesus has told us how to do it. "Thy will be done" is the essence of this unconditional surrender. When the ego discovers its true nature, that it is mechanical, repetitive, then it relaxes unconditionally so that the real life which is creative can manifest in and through us. A person has to be completely naked - according to our image and likeness of God. In this nakedness or emptiness there is not even an awareness that we are living a creative life or that God is living in us. "As long as you are aware that you are praying you are not praying" said a desert father. Even the awareness of ourselves praying creates a duality between God and ourselves. In the deepest prayer there is no dualistic awareness. That is spiritual poverty. "Blessed are you poor in the spirit for yours is the kingdom of heaven", says Jesus. To be spiritually poor means to be egoless and empty.

The essence of *meditation* also consists in relaxing the movement of ego or mind. There are an infinite number of meditation techniques: breathing techniques, mantra techniques, concentration techniques, etc. The purpose of all these techniques is to relax the movement of the mind or ego. In Zen they use koans to silence

the movement of the mind. The master will ask the disciple, 'what is the sound of one hand clapping?' The mind knows

### **Bede Griffiths Collection**

(Continued from page 1)

copies of letters from C.S. Lewis. Through his correspondence, one can feel the love of the letter-writers for Bede, and his for them. (The correspondence file does have certain time restrictions - letters prior to 1970 are currently open for research.) There is a file folder with a heading in Bede's hand marked "Personal" which includes material on his publications over the years, such as correspondence with publishers and reviews of books. One box contains copies of material relating to Bede from the Prinknash Abbey Archives. The Abbot has graciously given permission for full access to these copies. Again, in a file of rich materials of Bede's life as a British monk, is a series of letters from Bede describing his journey to India and early years there before settling at Shantivanam. There is a large collection (though most likely not complete) of copies of Bede's articles, letters to the editor, and interviews, filed in chronological order, 1935-93. Through these, one can follow, in concert with the correspondence, the development and expansion of Bede's thoughts, theology, and vision.

Since that initial donation of materials, others have made welcome contributions to the collection. Fr. Douglas Conlan has sent materials relating to Bede's trips to Australia, and from Sr. Pascaline Coff came copies of videotapes she has collected at Osage Monastery. Br. Wayne Teasdale has contributed books and videotapes, as has Sven Rhode in Sweden. Contributors have sent both material directly of Bede, i.e. correspondence, audiotapes or

(Continued on page 3)

---

the sound of two hands clapping but does not know the sound of one hand clapping. So naturally it comes to silence.

In awareness meditation, the mind creates an observer to watch it unconditionally. This observer is like a mirror, like an empty sky who watches the movement of the mind unconditionally. In this unconditional observation the mind is not fed through reactions and thus naturally relaxes. Since the observer and the observed are two aspects of the mind, when the observed - which is the movement of the mind - relaxes, the observer also relaxes. In this relaxation there is no ego, only emptiness in which creativity manifests.

Thus the essence of prayer and meditation consists in relaxing the movement of the ego. But there is also danger that prayer can create an ego called *prayer* ('I am praying') and meditation can create a *meditator*. So in real prayer there is no awareness of praying and in real meditation there is no awareness of meditating. There is only emptiness and nakedness which is an essential condition to give birth to creativity and creative life. .

■ |  
— .

videotapes of talks, etc.; or material related to Bede, i.e. books about his theology, discussions of his influence on one's life, descriptions of Saccidananda, etc. Contributions of material of Bede's or relating to Bede are still most welcome, and indeed sought by the GTU Archives, for inclusion in the collection. It is terribly important to have the most complete record possible of the blessing of Bede's life and thought. The more complete the record, the more complete his memory, and his vision for the world.

The collection now totals four and one half linear feet of material, and has been organized according to the standards of the archives profession for preservation and accessibility to researchers. The material was transferred to acid-free file folders placed in acid-free boxes, and shelved in a secure, environmentally stable storage room. A complete guide has been written for the collection which gives a short biography of Bede and lists the contents of the collection by file folder. It is cataloged on the GTU Library on-line catalog. The catalog record also appears in the database for the University of California-wide library system, and in RLIN, a national library database. The GTU Library is now developing a website for the internet which should be accessible in early 1997. When the website is on-line, the record for the Bede Griffiths Collections will be on the internet. The GTU Archives' policy is to allow access to all open collections to all interested persons, honoring any restrictions placed on the materials for reasons of privacy or confidentiality. The Griffiths collection is available for use by researchers. Research can be scholarly or it can be for one's personal interest.

Interested persons who wish to inquire further about the collection, either as a potential contributor or as a researcher, can contact me, Lucinda Glenn Rand, Graduate Theological Union, 2400 Ridge Road, Berkeley, California, 94709: telephone, 510-649-2507, fax, 510-649-1417. All are welcome to come to the Library Monday - Friday, 8:30-4:30. Long-distance researchers too are welcome. There are, however, necessary staff and time limits to services provided. Photocopies can be made and sent, though there are limits to the number, plus copying and postage fees will be assessed. I will be pleased to talk to anyone with an interest or a need, and seek to accommodate them in the best way possible.

The Bede Griffiths Collection is rich in the papers and tangible products of Bede himself, but more than that. The materials exude a spirit which words can hardly express, but a spirit which encompasses a great and unfaltering faith, a universal heart, an unending hope for wholeness, and the true return to the center.



---

## HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHURCH (Concluded)

**Bede Griffiths**

From the time of Jesus' resurrection the disciples received the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Luke places it at Pentecost; maybe that was the dramatic moment, but it goes on continuously. The Holy Spirit is given whenever the disciples open themselves to God in Christ. This is where the church comes into being; this church is the church of the Holy Spirit. Here the Pentecostals are correct.

All you can say about Jesus and about the gospel is only a kind of outer covering of the reality which can't be said. You can't express the Holy Spirit, you see; it's a hidden mystery. The gospels and epistles are attempts to put into words this hidden mystery which can't be put into words. You always have to refer back to this hidden mystery, and it is Jesus himself. We don't know him as he was, and we never will until the end, when we will know him as he is. We know him only through the veil of the gospels and the epistles. That is the veil where it is most transparent, then it gets thicker and thicker as time goes on.

Jesus founded, then, what I would call the eschatological church, the church of the Spirit, that we call the mystical body of Christ - which is eternal. Everyone who enters this church is taken up into the life of the Holy Spirit in Christ and the Father, which is eternal life.

The institution begins once Jesus has departed, and the disciples begin to organize. Baptism was introduced. Based on Jesus' ritual meal with his disciples, and upon the last supper at which the bread and wine were given a new significance - "*this is my body*" - the eucharist developed. This began as an *agape* - a sharing of food and drink - and gradually became the eucharistic ritual that we know. The *agape*, however, continued all through the first century; when it began to get disorderly, they had to organize it properly, as always happens. And so the ritual of the eucharist came into being.

It gradually became clear that leaders were needed in the church to be in charge of eucharist and baptism, and of the teaching. And so presbyters and bishops were instituted. By the end of the first century, practically every church had its presbyter bishops, either known as presbyters or as bishops, and toward the beginning of the second century one of the presbyter-bishops was appointed as the head and he became the bishop of the local church. Others kept the name of presbyter. That's what we find in St. Ignatius of Antioch: every church he writes to has one bishop as its head, appointed by an apostle.

Pentecost Day were some Jews from Rome who went back. What about the Church of Rome? We don't know who founded it. Perhaps

(Continued on page 4)

***Development of the Church*** (Continued from page 3)

founded it. Perhaps among the disciples dating from Pentecost Day **ecost Day were some Jews** and started a church there. In a letter of Clement written at the end of the first century in the name of the Roman Church, there is no mention of a bishop. Probably there was no bishop at Rome at that time. Peter and Paul were both martyred at Rome in the sixties - this is certain both from documents and from archaeology - and they were seen as the spiritual founders of the Church of Rome. The Roman Church was founded upon the apostolic preaching of Peter and Paul, and upon their witness to the gospel by their lives. As a result - and as the center of the empire - Rome became more and more seen as the center of all the churches.

There's a wonderful text of St. Irenaeus, who died about 180 AD, in which he says, if you want to know the true church, go to Rome, which was founded by the glorious apostles Peter and Paul - not Peter alone - for there the true faith is always preserved by the faithful from all parts of the world. As the present Pope once said, the Church of Rome should be a *center of reference*. It hasn't got to rule everything, but everybody should be in touch with it. That's what it was in the second century - for the Eastern churches as well. The popes never appointed bishops in the Eastern churches. There were five patriarchies: Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, Later Constantinople, and Rome. The bishop of Rome was the patriarch of the West and he appointed bishops in the West. The other patriarchs appointed bishops in their own patriarchies, and the pope never interfered in matters of government or doctrine in the East unless there was a dispute and an appeal was made to Rome.

As the church began to organize itself with bishops, the bishops began to meet in councils. When they wanted to get all the bishops together - in the fourth century - there was convoked an *ecumenical* council - that is, of all the churches of the Roman Empire - of the world as they knew it. These councils were called by the emperor, not by the pope. The Council of Nicea in 325 was the first ecumenical council. The pope was not present at any of the early councils. He sent two presbyters to represent him, and they were given a place of honor. The decisions, however, were made by the Eastern bishops - at Nicea, at Ephesus and at Chalcedon.

With the Dark Ages, and the invasions of the barbarians, Rome and Constantinople grew further and further apart. The climax came in the ninth century, when the pope appointed Charlemagne as emperor, so that there were now two emperors - one at Constantinople in the East and a rival emperor in the West. The division grew to the point of a complete separation between the two churches, and they have never been reunited - a great tragedy on both sides. In the twelfth century, Rome was completely separated from

the Eastern churches and stood alone as the only patriarchy of the Western church. The Roman Curia was invented at

that time, and the college of cardinals. The organization was centralized and very efficient.

By the twelfth century, the Roman church had become the most powerful institution in Europe. It was seen as *the* See of Peter - Peter was living in the church of Rome. The system that we know now began to come into being there in the twelfth century.

By the time of the Reformation, the Roman church had become corrupt. With the schism, northern Europe became separated from southern Europe. We inherit that division. With the Council of Trent, Rome reacted against the Reformation by closing in - while during the middle ages there had been a great openness to new and creative ideas. With the shock of the Reformation, the church closed and became a fortress. The whole of Catholic theology became a polemic against Protestantism. We inherited this fortress church; it has only begun to break down in this century.

And then came the Second Vatican Council - an astonishing event. Pope John XXIII simply broke open the whole of this fortress and let in the fresh air. The church has been opened up to the whole of its tradition, right from the beginning. Now we are in a position to see how the church grew from the time of Jesus through all these stages, and how the Holy Spirit has been present in the church from the beginning. The Spirit was given by Jesus to the apostles and continued in all the churches. I think that we have to say that the Spirit has come down in each of the churches in one way or another. We can't deny, however, that the Church of Rome, the church of the apostles Peter and Paul, has exercised an extraordinary charism down through all these centuries and continues to do so today.

As Raymond Brown writes, Jesus founded a community which was destined in the course of time, under specific historical circumstances, to develop into the church we know, with its hierarchy, sacraments, dogmas, law and so on. We have to recognize both the historical conditioning and the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit throughout this whole development. All of it comes from God, but under all these cultural limitations. Anyone who is willing to be changed, though they may be scandalized by many things in the church, will always find the Holy Spirit there if they are really looking for it. I found it myself; the Spirit that Jesus committed to his disciples 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 its present form. The institutional church is always changing under historical conditions - always changing, developing, adjusting - as Newman saw it - to human situations while it preserves the essential truth of the Holy Spirit.

■ |  
- -

## THE "EYE": MEISTER ECKHART AND THE EAST Wayne Teasdale

Meister Eckhart, like most mystics, delighted in paradox. His paradoxes and metaphors often got him into trouble with church authorities, but what he was attempting to convey was actually too subtle for his theological accusers in Rome to comprehend. He was always expressing mystical experiences, intuitions, and insights, applying them to the spiritual life of individuals.

Eckhart had much to say about the nature, reality, and destiny of the soul. His views have their resonances in Hinduism and Buddhism. One of his paradoxical metaphors related to the soul occurs in Sermon Twelve of the German series (for a good translation, see Bernard McGinn's edition, *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, New York, Paulist Press, 1986, pp.267-270). There, Eckhart likens the soul to an "eye", and associates its essential activity with the sense or faculty of sight.

The act of "seeing" Eckhart has in mind is no ordinary kind of seeing. It is "sight" operating on a much more ultimate level. It is the "seeing" that is a "perceiving" of the Divine Reality itself. Here is how the Meister puts it: "*The eye in which I see God is the same eye in which God sees me. My eye and God's eye are one eye and one seeing, one knowing and one loving.*" (p. 270)

This passage contains a double paradox, one involving God and one involving us. Now if God is pure spirit, he has no eyes: he has no need of eyes or a body. Similarly, how can we "see" God with our "eye" if he is a pure spirit beyond all form, and how can we "see" God and still live? Obviously, there is something more at work here. The "eye" in question is a metaphor for something much more profound.

Let us try an experiment. Whenever "eye" occurs, let us substitute the personal pronoun *I*. Thus we have: "The *I* by which I see (or know) God is the same *I* by which God sees (and knows) me. My *I* and God's *I* are one seeing, one knowing and one loving." That is better and closer to the meaning, and yet I think we can do even better, or make it much clearer.

Let us interpret the personal pronoun "I" as itself a metaphor for consciousness, that is, self-awareness. This should not be difficult since the pronoun implies self-awareness or self-consciousness. It would then read: "The self-awareness (or consciousness) by which (or through which) I know and see God is the same Self-Awareness (or Consciousness) by which God knows and sees me." Our consciousness in its self-awareness is the medium through which we know or "see", love and are one with the Divine, the Godhead. My self-awareness and God's Self-Awareness are the same Consciousness.

There is only Consciousness, and God is this Consciousness in which we have a share. In it our "seeing", ~~knowing~~, and

---

The Bede Griffiths Trust Board (North American) will hold its first meeting at New Camaldoli, in Big Sur, California, August 23-25.

---

loving are one, or are in union through God's Self-Awareness.

The *Mahavakyas* or "great utterances" of the Vedas and the Upanishads are essentially making the same point as Eckhart is in Sermon Twelve. Something similar can be said of Buddhist mysticism as well. While Buddhism denies the existence of a self and does not speak of God, it does see consciousness as the permanent reality, and it does have an understanding of Ultimate Reality. It regards the Absolute as impersonal or non-relational, but it definitely maintains that its nature consists in consciousness, however we may grasp the meaning of that term. Although Buddhism does not care for the notion of self, since it equates it with human life which is impermanent, it does accept consciousness as the nature of the mind, and this consciousness is permanent.

Eckhart's metaphor of the "eye", his deep view of the soul as consciousness - but a consciousness that is unsurpassably mystical as the hidden ground of union between the person and the Divine or Ultimate Reality - is thus consonant with Hindu and Buddhist views. His teaching shows how these great mystical schools come together, and by doing so, contributes to the reconciliation of all religions and cultures. Thus Eckhart becomes a significant resource in this work of convergence as we enter the third millenium.

The person's self-consciousness united to the Divine's is what Eckhart means by the term *vunkelin*, the *soul-spark*, the uncreated and uncreatable something in the nature of the soul, the *grunt* or ground where both God and the soul have always been one. It is similar to the *atman* in Hindu mysticism. The *atman* is also one with the *Brahman*, or the transcendent Godhead, the Source of the universe and all reality, life and being. In the Upanishadic depths of Hindu mysticism, in the first *mahavakya* or "great utterance" that sums up the spiritual wisdom of the Vedas and Upanishads, we are told, "*Brahman is Consciousness.*" Then we are told that *Atman is Brahman.*" The third *mahavakya* proclaims, "That art Thou," or "You are That Consciousness yourself," while the fourth "great utterance" declares boldly, "*I am Brahman,*" or "*I am God.*" Eckhart will also make this announcement: "*I am God,*" but then he qualifies his astonishing statement by adding, "and yet God is not me." So we are given a further paradox to chew on. What Eckhart means is that each one of us is God, but then God in its hidden, transcendental reality is infinitely more than any of us, even all of us taken together.

■ |  
—

**BOOK REVIEWS**

**The Other Half of My Soul: Bede Griffiths and the Hindu-Christian Dialogue, Compiled by Beatrice Bruteau.** Quest Books, 1996, 372 pp + bibl, \$16.00 paper. **Rev. by George F. Cairns**

Since I am a relative newcomer to Fr. Bede's work, my review will reflect the perspective of many people who are just coming to know about him. First I shall make some overall comments, and then offer a more personal response. The organizing principles for this collection include: personal memories of Fr. Bede; appreciations of his and others' work encouraging Christian Vedanta encounter; descriptions of his spirituality and its development by his disciples; the development of his work on feminism, and the relationship of science and ecology to religion. Beatrice Bruteau has done exceptionally well in weaving these strands into the constricting form that is the linear narrative of a hard copy book.

This volume provides an excellent introduction to the major themes that animated Fr. Bede and his followers. I found the current bibliography of both primary and secondary sources on Fr. Bede, compiled by Jesu Rajan and Judson Trapnell, very helpful to grasp more fully the extent of Fr. Bede's work and his influence. An annotated bibliography, however, would be a welcome addition to this rich set of resources.

My experience of reading this book is that of being invited to a celebratory party, with fascinatingly rich conversations taking place in many locations. As is usual in such situations, I found myself particularly resonating with certain of these conversations.

Odette Baumer-Despeigne's "meditation on the Lord's Prayer" both provided me with a sense of what it was to be in communion with the great teachers at Shantivanam and also provided me with a new reading of this prayer as a way of initiation that is profoundly helpful for deepening my journey in Christianity and in helping me to more deeply encounter my Buddhist and Hindu brothers and sisters.

Fr. Thomas Keating's description of the ecumenical process finding common theological ground is of extraordinary importance. I find the term "meditative technologies" particularly appealing as a counter to the current culture of "absolute relativism" that seems so popular in many theological circles and which has led to a disembodied spirituality and theology. To emphasize the search for such bases of spiritual practice that embrace all of humankind provides new opportunities for interfaith encounter and also encourages an empirical/ phenomenological dimension to spiritual practice that can engage the contemplative conversation with that of science.



Br. Wayne Teasdale and Paul Knitter both provide additional helpful descriptions of the development of the current context for interfaith encounter, Teasdale from a contemplative *praxis* model and Knitter from a resonant theological *praxis* viewpoint. Both also see the importance of *orthopraxis* (Knitter explicitly and Teasdale implicitly) rather than orthodoxy as an important if not primary value to shape further inter-faith encounter.

Judson B. Trapnell examines multireligious experience and mysticism. He succinctly surveys the constructionist/perennialist, mediator/meditator debate and shares Fr. Bede's wisdom on a middle ground based in the mystery of the Trinity and expressed in interfaith encounter as unitive pluralism. He also helpfully details important heuristic implications of Fr. Bede's work — engaging in a meditative practice, engaging with others within interfaith contexts, and ultimately opening to self-transcendence — needed if the deepest apprehensions of what it is to be a human being are to be experienced.

In the final three chapters of the book, the conversation between Fr. Bede and Fr. Matthew Fox, and the essays by Rupert Sheldrake and Fr. Tom Berry, all point to the truly global implications of Fr. Bede's work.

Fr. Bede and Fr. Fox weave together the themes of a new theology that is more universalist, feminine and earth based. They seek to recover deep dimensions of the Christian tradition that have largely been pushed to the periphery during the modern period. They show how the marginalized voices of the feminine, the non-western and the earth spiritualities will have an impact on the dominant culture.

Rupert Sheldrake echoes, elaborates and extends these themes by examining the organic underpinnings of the pre-modern scientists, and exquisitely shows how such themes leapfrog the modern into postmodern science with great congruence. What emerges is a spirit filled world which requires an organic world view that is enhanced by both empirical and mystical ways of knowing. He is literally laying the groundwork for 21st century science. It is good to see the resonances of this conversation in the themes of feminist, primal peoples', and non-western ways of knowing.

Fr. Thomas Berry extends these themes to a planetary evolutionary analysis, urging a movement into a new epoch of planetary development. He rightly argues that we need to co-evolve a new myth in listening to another vast, marginalized community, *all of non-human creation*. To deeply listen to this community requires that we embody the themes detailed throughout this work. A *metanoia* is required if we are to hear and act within this new story. It requires that we become more fully human in all of our diversity: of gender, class, race, location, culture and religion.





**The Community of Religions: Voices and Images of the Parliament of the World's Religions, edited by Wayne Teasdale and George F. Cairns, Continuum, New York, 1966, 255pp, \$17.95 paper. Rev. by Bruno Barnhart**

This book, appearing three years after the Parliament, brings the energy of that historic event into the present. It offers a good digest of the Parliament to those who missed this pivotal event. To those who did attend or follow the Parliament's proceedings, it offers a synthetic grasp of the complex event and its significance. The writings gathered here express both the vitality and the vision that characterized the Parliament. This collection is arranged in five great sections. The first and shortest sketches the event's historical context. A second part includes four personal expressions of the experience and significance of the Parliament. Part Three includes eight "major presentations" of the week. Seven of these pieces express the diversity of religious traditions present at the Parliament. The fourth section, "Models for the Future", consists of five projections of the further development of that which the Parliament has initiated.

→

---

**The Asrama System** (Continued from page 7)

*sannyasi* (male) or the *sannyasinin* (female) have but one obligation: to go in quest of the Absolute, to wander in utter simplicity, at the mercy of others for food, shelter and all.

India has known this system for thousands of years and, in a very real sense, this is what characterizes the *sanatanadharma*, the "eternal religion" as Hinduism is called. These asramas must be seen in relation to the caste system known as *varnas*. There are also four essential castes: *Brahmana*, or priestly, *Ksatriya*, or the military class, the *Vaisya*, the business caste, and the *Sudra* class, or the untouchables, who are really the workers. The relationship of the asramas and the *varnas* is called *Varnasramadharma*, the "duties of caste and asramas," and this is virtually another name for Hinduism.

What Professor Olivelle's study clearly demonstrates is the way this institution of the asramas has changed through a continual process of interpretation by the exegetes, theologians and legal minds of the Brahmin caste. He concludes that historians of religion cannot possibly understand any religious tradition unless they grasp the importance of the hermeneutic process carried on by theologians, exegetes, legal scholars, etc.

I have felt for some time that Christianity would do well to incorporate the wisdom of the four stages into a Christian vision of life.

■ |  
— |

The fifth and final part, "Visions for the Future", looks farther across the threshold of the approaching millenium.

An Epilogue, "Continuing the Dance", is a lively conversation on the Parliament and its significance between Jean Houston and the editors. Two useful appendices conclude the book: the initial *Declaration Towards a Global Ethic* and a list of resources for interfaith dialogue (books, audio and video tapes, and organizations). Several of the articles, by planners and coordinators of the Parliament, help to give a concrete historical framework to the more impressionistic and reflective pieces.

Richard Hughes Seager's historical view of the two parliaments of 1893 and 1993 is incisive and profound. He brings us, at the outset, into the midst of the social, economic, political and religious movements which have changed the world decisively during the past hundred years.

Among the authors who offer perspectives for the future in the later parts of the book, some describe initiatives already in progress - the continuing Parliament, The *Declaration Toward a Global Ethic*, the *Peace Council*, the *Metropolitan Chicago Interreligious Initiative*. Others, including Ewert Cousins, Beatrice Bruteau, David Steindl-Rast, Paul Knitter, Wayne Teasdale and Thomas Berry, project long-term developments and the deeper processes which are shaping them.

Ewert Cousins spoke at the Parliament of a movement from the *First Axial* emergence of a personal consciousness - and birth of our current religious traditions - to the birth of a *global* consciousness in a *Second Axial* Period now dawning. Beatrice Bruteau, recognizing that we have now become a *planetary parliament*, examines the advances in communication which this new context demands. Following Michael von Bruck, she suggests that the interreligious conversation may move into a new phase as we learn to see the apparently opposing views of our different traditions not only as complementing but as *implying* one another.

Paul F. Knitter's brilliant and impassioned essay on *pluralism and oppression* brings together the Parliament's two great imperatives to communion, horizontal and vertical: vertical, however, in the sense of a spirituality which moves - with the Spirit in our time - not toward transcendence but toward *incarnation*. The community of religions and of peoples can only be achieved on the common ground of humanity - known in the voice of the oppressed.

This human ground, I believe, is mysteriously one with the *earth* itself. This one earth is manifest anew in the movement of *global* convergence which gathered the religions together in Chicago. From this earth sound the voices - often unwelcome - of the poor. It is this earth that we recognize, late, as our common, endangered home. The Parliament signals not only the birth of a community of religions in our time, but the recognition of this new revelation - common and convergent - *from the ground*.

■ |  
— |

## BEDE GRIFFITHS ACTIVITIES

**SHANTIVANAM** An Ashram Satsangh was organized from May 10th to 13th this year to commemorate the 3rd anniversary of the *mahasamadhi* of Swami Bede Dayananda. The theme of the Satsangh was *The Role of Christian Ashrams in Promoting Ecumenical Unity and Interreligious Dialogue*.

The Satsangh began and concluded with the eucharist, celebrated by Fr. Christudas. Inaugural reflections were given by Acharya John Sachidanand. He asserted that the *contemplative* consciousness and peace-culture that characterize Indian ashrams need to be integrated with the *communitarian* dimension of Christian life in order to make Christian ashrams agents of ecumenical unity and inter-religious dialogue. Religions, he said, can come together on the basis of contemplative consciousness and prophetic action. Further sessions were devoted to personal sharing by the participants. They suggested that, rather than conducting such a program each year, it will be more useful to organize a week-long program every three years, undertaking serious studies and reflections on the three founders of Shantivanam and their contribution to the church and to the world.

**ROME** On May 13, Fr. Bede's anniversary was celebrated at the Camaldolese monastery of San Gregorio al Celio. Fr. Thomas Matus, in the first presentation, spoke of the significance of the taking of a *new name* in the traditional religious ways - as is still done today in many Catholic religious communities. Fr. Bede himself followed the tradition of the Hindu *sannyasi*, for whom the new name corresponds in some way to a particular attribute of the Absolute. He chose the name of *Swami Dayananda*, that is "Bliss of Compassion". Fr. Bernardino Cozzarini then presented some of the principal ideas that Bede Griffiths expressed in his beautiful book, *Return to the Center*. The gathering was concluded with the eucharist, celebrated in the style of Shantivanam which integrates several expressive elements of the local religious tradition that have been accepted by the Indian Church. If the occasion for this brief encounter was the anniversary of Fr. Bede's death, the deep motivation is the determination of the monastic community and its friends to carry forward his teaching.

**OSAGE MONASTERY** (Sand Springs, OK) We celebrated the third anniversary of Fr. Bede's *mahasamadhi* on Sunday, May 12th this year, with a buffet supper followed by a conference by Fr. Bruno Barnhart, OSB Cam, on *Contemplative Prayer and its Significance according to the Teachings of Bede Griffiths*. About 45 persons from the surrounding area, ashramites and retreatants and the monastic community gathered for the celebration. Creative vespers in the monastic chapel followed. On Saturday, May 11, Fr. Bruno gave a presentation to the O+M community on *The Rebirth of Christian Wisdom*, again in

close harmony with the teachings of Bede Griffiths.

Shirley Du Boulay, biographer-in-process of Fr. Bede, will visit the Bede Griffiths Center at Osage Monastery from July 14-19, to glean more more details from letters, articles, and first hand experiences of those who saw the man, the monk and the mystic during the last 20 years of his life. Fr. Bede visited Osage and offered the first Eucharist in the Forest before any buildings were erected. He visited us on four other occasions, offering Mass on exactly the same spot but now within a kiva facing East. He wrote several times that O+M was the most peaceful place he ever knew.

**BIG SUR** The Third annual **Bede Griffiths Retreat** at New Camaldoli, July 19-21, featured talks by three members of the Camaldolese community: Br. Cyprian Consiglio, *Christian Meditation: Return to the Center*, Fr. Joseph Wong, *Jesus Christ in Bede Griffiths' Hindu-Christian Dialogue*, and Fr. Bruno Barnhart, *Contemplation in the Vision of Bede Griffiths*. Two Bede Griffiths films were shown, and Br. Cyprian led the group in chanting some of Bede's favorite upanishadic verses.

**RUSSILL PAUL** Russill gave a benefit concert for our Benedictine Retreat Center of St. Paul's Priory in St. Paul, Minnesota in October, 1995. During the same visit he also presented a beautiful reflection day on *Shabda Yoga: The Path of Healing and Wholeness*. Russill touched over a hundred people with his loving, joyful presence. After the last selection at the concert, no one moved: everyone sat in pure silence for over ten minutes. This experience of the *Sounds of the Heart* led us to the silence of the Word within, the Divine stillness. (Sr. Virginia Matter OSB)

**ROLAND ROPERS** The German edition of *The Universal Wisdom* will be presented at the International Book Fair at Frankfurt in early October 1996, and launched with a broad advertising campaign. In November, I will publish the following book in German and English concurrently: *A Spiritual Journey with Bede Griffiths - the Man, the Monk, the Mystic*, with about 200 color photos of Bede Griffiths and the Ashram. Together with German Television we have started to produce a film on Bede Griffiths with material which is so far unpublished. The book and a video of that TV-film will be sold as a package.

I will be giving lectures on Bede Griffiths this year in New York, Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, London, Vienna, Salzburg, Colombo and Madrid to promote the spiritual heritage of Fr. Bede. We are publishing articles on Bede Griffiths in various newspapers and magazines. On the grounds of our clinic we have refurbished a "Bede Griffiths contemplation hut" which can accommodate about 30 people for meditation. I will be giving a lecture at the Buddhist-Christian conference in Chicago (Jul 27 - Aug 3).

■ |

