

ADM.FAC. from Willis.....c: Gabe Campbell
20 May 74

Rental policy: allow known competitors of Christianity? Specifically, ARE?

As a theological watchdog (the "orthodox" function of the Christian theologian) I bark when I smell a stranger, as I am programmed (as all good watchdogs are) to assume that strangers are enemies (which of course some turn out not to be). As for renting to antiChristian organizations (and I include competitors among antiChristians, especially competitors claiming to be Christian!), I have three objections: (1) Integrity-stewardship, (2) influence on our clientele, from tacit approval of such organization(s), and (3) public image, including flak from alumni....But is ARE competitive with Christianity and therefore anti-Christian? The below is a visualization of my yes. Even if I prove my case in your eyes, however, there will be counter-arguments--including secular ecumenicity--for renting space to any and all human-potential and social-change agencies (e.g., Esalen and the Communist Party): I am not prejudging the actual rental policy, and could live comfortably with either decision....Last night I phoned, long-distance, a psi authority (expert on psychic phenomena), and this memo is written partly in the light of that conversation. All quoted material is from the ARE's "Edgar Cayce and the A.R.E. Study Group: An Adventure in Soul Growth" and "Introductory Brochure."....I'm helping Ken Woodward get things together for a major article on "Consciousness" (following up on his excellent NEWSWEEK feature article on exorcism). One thing sure: millions are getting help out of consciousness groups (of which ARE is one type) that are nonbiblical, and I'm against folks getting help that way, I think. I say I think, because the alternative explanation may apply: (1) The orthodox explanation is that the demons are imitating the Holy Spirit; (2) The alternative explanation is kenotic: God, in his desire for the wellbeing of his creatures, humbles himself (Phil.2) into incognito helpfulness even to the death of his image-glory (which, indeed, finally will thus appear all the more glorious). I do not prefer the latter explanation; but, giving me pause, it makes me generous.In the following visual, the numbers refer to the subsequent commentary.

	CHRISTIANITY	CAYCEISM
1 deity	YHWH-Jesus-Spirit	Creator-Mind
2 ontology	theocentric	psychocentric
3 scriptures	Bible	The (Cayce) Readings
4 the new society	Church	Study Group (etc.)
5 religion-type	theistic	gnostic
(The remaining categories are those in Streng, et al, WAYS OF BEING RELIGIOUS.)		
6 the problem	sin	ignorance, unawareness
7 the answer	biblical "salvation" in its full psychosocial meaning	enlightenment (which is the "E" in "ARE"); harmony
8 the means as appropriated individually	repentance/faith-commitment to God in the Spirit through Jesus, Servant-Savior-Son, + relevant action-in-world ("relevant" both to the biblical covenant commitment and to the world)	interiority under guidance of The Readings, + praxis
9 the means as expressed socially	participation--in, through, and beyond the Church/churches--in "the sufferings of Christ" (the struggle for justice, peace, joy)	vague spin-off social values, as in all individualistic religion

COMMENTARY ON VISUAL

Since Gabe Campbell initiated this conversation between ARE and us, this memo responds to his 26 Apr 74 to me. It's a cold, public way of answering a private letter, and thus a mode appropriate to my cold feelings about ARE. (Gabe, an excellent pastor and good friend, will appreciate in this statement the humor as much as the bite. Nothing I know of on God's earth Gabe and I disagree on except that he's a psi freak. And I'm not sure I should disagree with him on that; if I were sure, this memo could be shorter. There's so much I'm not sure of, but nothing I'm not definite about; and the less sure I am, the longer it takes to state the definiteness.)...In the Commentary, "GC" is Gabe, whose letter talks not about rental but—worse!—"joint programs."

1. Attention-centering is not on God but on interiority, as in the dogma with which the brochure begins: "All men must (sic!) find within self...."—thus making psychonarcissism inescapable (vs. other forms of narcissism: athletic, cosmetic, intellectual, etc.). The world-picture consequent upon this introjection is not biblical but brahmanic-orphic-(perhaps)jungian: locus, stage, space are at least unbiblical, and the Bible gets sucked into this interior space (gnosticizing hermeneutics). For this, EC with his "psychic ability" is oracle—not Jesus with his prophetic message and divine person. (*All quotes unidentified henceforth are from the flier.) Mind-religions talk about "spiritual laws" more than about God, and sure 'nuf ARE does—with EC as discoverer of these "spiritual laws," the revelation resident in The Readings (on which compare Eddyism's bible, Christian Science's KEY TO THE SCRIPTURES, i.e. clues on how to pervert Scripture with gnosticizing exegesis).
2. On this category (as well as the others), the Commentary on category #1 has already touched. We have to do here not with the biblical creation-metaphysics but with soul-metaphysics, as in GC's phrase "prayer as the conscious focusing of mind energy" (whereas biblical prayer is always communion with God, i.e. interpersonal, not intrapersonal—an ellipse, not a circle). Thus we have not resurrection (extension of creation) but reincarnation (implicate of immortality of that unbiblical thing, the "soul"). It follows that history is relatively—compared with the Bible—unreal, as in all Eastern-hemisphere religion (and in an American extension thereof, viz. N.Eng. Transcendentalism and its extension in mind cults such as Christian Science). Where history is taken seriously, its center is EC not JC: EC as evolved farther, rather than Jesus "for us" dying and rising. (Here the myth doesn't correspond with the reality. EC had his psychic power from a child, but ARE preaches you can have it "as a natural result (sic: not "emergent" or "discovery") of spiritual evolvment" (and this: "psychic ability may result from the spiritual search").
3. Of course, given Cayce's only minor differentiation from his parental culture and his being "unschooled" (brochure), The Readings use the Bible; but, as in all pseudoChristian cults, e.g. Mormonism, the literary deposit from the founder controls, provides filter and lens for, the Bible (never the other way 'round, or the cult wouldn't exist). (When this process goes farther, as in Islam vis-a-vis the Bible, we have a full-split-off new religion.) A sad instance of this is in the flier's perversion of the gospels' quote, "The kingdom of heaven is within"—which, besides being gnosticized, is referenced not to Matthew but to The Readings (254-101)! If you were to look it up in Matthew, you might not get the straight poop on how to interpret it; looking it up in the ARE scriptures gives you "a safe way for soul growth."
4. Thus also, while in the NT the new society is the Church (the new covenant community in Jesus), in ARE it's the study group, etc., under ARE auspices, focusing not on Jesus and the biblical eschaton-as-historical-fulfilment but (as, to give a parallel, Preston Harold's THE SHINING STRANGER and THE SINGLE REALITY) on the ghoulish exhumation of a dead and—except by his cult following!—

unresurrected sensitive (or "psychic"). (For a good though conservative account of the degenerative effect, in history, of this occult orientation, see McCandlish Phillips' THE BIBLE, THE SUPERNATURAL, AND THE JEWS, World/70.)

5. Because of the liberal use of the Bible to reinforce EC's gospel (delivered to him, I suppose, by demons imitating God-Jesus), ARE religion seems theistic. But so did the gnosticism the NT combats, otherwise it would not have been the insidious threat to the gospel that it was, especially when wedded with (as so much current gnosticism is) charismata. GC is into both psi and the charismatic movement; and the fact that he's a Christian minister (1) deepens the illusion that this religion mix is compatible with Christianity and, on the positive side, (2) provides a social-control factor to keep his psi/char freaks from drifting away from the Church, or at least the church. (Contrast, in D. Min. recent papers, Keith's and Esdras' papers on the charismatic movement.) A full religion relates hot and cold; in ARE, Eastern metaphysics is (philosophia perennis) the cold pole, and the group-charisma the hot. I agree with GC that ARE is not in "the fringe occult": it is in the center occult, the great historic stream of gnosticism, which early Christianity resisted yet (as GC alludes to) used images from ("all things to all," as Paul put it). I agree further than ARE pushes (brochure, p.6) "no specific philosophy, religion" (and assert that by that very fact it is not Christian, but a competitor with the specific religion called Christianity); but it does push a specific type of religion, namely mentalism (mind-cult or gnosticism). GC's letter shows what this does to Christianity: what Jesus taught "is potentially available in (sic!) all of us"--a human-psychic-potential notion alien to and enemy of NT, and a notion that makes understandable that salvation is not grace coming upon us by action of God but "focusing of mind energy" by our own action--an action called "prayer"! We face here an eidetic mentality foreign to the Bible, creating an eidomachy in which one must yield to the other; and here, in ARE and GC, the Bible loses. If you want to remain faithful to ARE, better stick with "the material of the Association."

Biblical religion is mainly Streng #s 1,2,6, somewhat 5, less 4; ARE is #s 3,4, somewhat 5. (WAYS OF BEING RELIGIOUS, Prentice-Hall/73.)

6. No further comment.

7. The biblical answer is the being-revealed glory of God as a gift; ARE's answer (to use the title of its two-volume work which is "the basis for study"), A SEARCH FOR GOD (my underlining). Doubly distant from the Bible, this search is (1) individual rather than collective (collectivity being represented only in group dynamics), and (2) inner, rather than through costly disciple-action in the world ("to turn within, to know thyself"). (Dorothy Payne witnesses to the further drifting from reality that often occurs when older single women get hooked on this kind of religion.)

8. Of course ARE says praxis, not just introspection and group-participation; otherwise, it wouldn't be a religion. But the inner positive feedback the devotee is to look for, as reward, is "harmony," "a balanced life," "spiritual growth" through this "safe way," self-satisfaction rather than the interpersonal satisfaction of the "faithful servant" of God who lives theocentrically and theonomously, not psychocentrically and autonomously.

9. There's little to say about this element, beyond what I've said on the visual. The devotee is to expect to see differences in personal behavior in "home...church...office." Society, however, is relatively unreal--relative to (the brochure cover) "the mind, the soul, the soul's mind," on which EC obsessively centers. Jean McArthur, supersensitive on whom recently (at my suggestion) Ken Woodward did a major article, told me that her greatest temptation, as a faithful Christian (Catholic), is to enter too much into trance--which EC did more than once a day for 40 years! Diverts attention from Jesus. Pushes privatism, to neglect of public responsibility/accountability.