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ST KOSMAS CATECHETICAL SCHOOL

THE ORTHODOX SURVIVAL COURSE

*Lecture Six: “New Religious Consciousness”*

**Preface: From Fringe to Mainstream**

1. What started in the 1950’s as eastern cult ‘fringe’ movements have become mainstream: promoted by popular celebrities, politicians, and generally accepted into every area of life. What was inconceivable 60-70 years ago is completely realized today.
   1. The New Age movement and the “new religious consciousness” it brings is paving the way for a “new enlightened man” that will enter into the “ancient wisdom” of a pantheism that will eventually encompass all religions.
      1. All religions are a path to “the divine” and a “new universal religion” is expected to be accepted worldwide (and will bring an end to all suffering, war, famine, sickness, etc.).
2. These movements are Chiliastic in nature, believing:
   1. That man is not fallen
   2. That he is ultimately perfectible through evolutionary processes
   3. And that by elevating his religious consciousness, he can realize that he is in fact divine, a god, and actualize the Kingdom of God on earth.
3. These movements gathered mass followings and as they rose, the Christian churches emptied. Therefore, their growth is due to a spiritual vacuum caused in modern Christian America, where youth are dissatisfied with Christianity.
4. These cults, or cults like them, continue to gain popularity today.
5. The gurus that came to America gained great popularity beyond their wildest dreams or that could have ever been realized in India or their native countries.

**The Spirit of Eastern Cults**

1. Post WWII youth dissatisfied with Christianity welcome the invasion of eastern cults from India in search of “peace, tranquility, and increased awareness.”
   1. The culture is hungry for a savior (though not Christ), a way for man to move past the bloody 20th c.
2. What began as an intellectual pursuit of eastern cults by the Beatniks in 1950, was followed by an infatuation with gurus and cults among the hippies of the 1960’s.
   1. The “sages” that flood in from India, Tibet, Japan, etc., find already willing and eager disciples amidst this generation looking for “increased awareness” at any cost (ie, drugs, psychic phenomena, etc.).
   2. Travel to the Himalayas, to ashrams, or to the feet of local gurus became a fad in search of world freedom and peace.
3. By the 1970’s, we see a generation plunge more deeply and seriously into eastern cults and devotion to gurus and swamis.
   1. In this generation, the rise of “native” eastern cults begins to take place in America.
4. A few portraits of actual gurus or their followings in the 1970s and ‘80s:
   1. Hare Krishna and “Krishna Consciousness”
      1. Started by A.C. Bhaktivedanta in 1966
      2. Unlike cults of the 1950’s and 60’s, this demands a full participation and life change. (new names, new diet, initiation, etc.)
      3. Union with one’s chosen “god” through Bhakti Yoga.
      4. “Krishna Consciousness” is attained through non-rational worship (chanting, dancing, devotion, music, etc.).
      5. If enough people attain this consciousness, the world’s disorder will be repaired and a “new age” of peace, love, and unity will usher in.
   2. Guru Maharaj-ji and the “Divine Light Mission”
      1. Arrived in fall of 1973 with the practice that would be popularized as “transcendental meditation.”
      2. 15 years old and proclaimed to be God, “Lord of the Universe,” and amassed at least 80,000 followers who believed he had come to usher in a new age of peace for mankind.
      3. Demanded full initiation, the changing of one’s life, and the giving up of worldly pleasure.
      4. Required meditation techniques were promised to help gain an “expanded” consciousness which would make followers perfectly peaceful, happy, and ‘blissed out.’
      5. Initiation rituals included exposure to bright lights and “three signs” they’d see in themselves.
      6. Big event: Millennium ’73 at the Astrodome
      7. Politicians even promoted him.
   3. Bhagwan Shree Rajnessh (Osho)
      1. Proclaimed “godman” and leader of the Rajneesh Movement
      2. Expanded Hindu practices with various other neo-movements and included western philosophies. Rejected all traditional belief structures as “supressive” of what he emphasized as important of meditation, mindfulness, love, celebration, courage, creativity, and humor.
      3. Later rejected the idea of giving up of pleasure or material goods.
      4. Rooted in India but came to America in 1981 due to rejection from India’s ruling party and the fact he owed $5 million in taxes.
      5. His followers built an enormous compound, took control of local governments, organized mass food poisonings, made assassinations plans for politicians.
      6. Promoted the creation of a “new man” through his spiritual practices merged with science. New man “would no longer be trapped in institutions such as family, marriage, political ideologies and religions.”
         1. Advocate of population control through abortion and eugenics.
      7. Ten commandments: 1. Never obey anyone's command unless it is coming from within you also.; 2. There is no God other than life itself.; 3. Truth is within you, do not search for it elsewhere.; 4. Love is prayer.; 5. To become a nothingness is the door to truth. Nothingness itself is the means, the goal and attainment.; 6. Life is now and here.; 7. Live wakefully.; 8. Do not swim-float.; 9. Die each moment so that you can be new each moment.; 10. Do not search. That which is, is. Stop and see.
   4. Norman Paulsen on the “Brotherhood of the Sun.”
      1. Direct disciple of Paramahansa Yogananda who started “The Brotherood of the Sun,” now “Sunburst Farms,” to actualize his teacher’s vision of a “World Brotherhood of Colonies.”
      2. Teachings are a mixture of various forms of mysticism, Christianity, and based in the practice of “Kriya Yoga.”
         1. Yogananda describes Kriya Yoga, "The Kriya Yogi mentally directs his life energy to revolve, upward and downward, around the six spinal centers (medullary, cervical, dorsal, lumbar, sacral, and coccygeal plexuses) which correspond to the twelve astral signs of the zodiac, the symbolic Cosmic Man. One half-minute of revolution of energy around the sensitive spinal cord of man effects subtle progress in his evolution; that half-minute of Kriya equals one year of natural spiritual unfoldment."
      3. Paulsen taught:
         1. At the center of each person is a pure self, which he says is the “consciousness of Christ”
         2. The realization of this self is practiced through meditation.

**Eastern Meditation Invades Christianity**

1. We do not worship the same God as those in eastern cults, this is very obvious to any serious Orthodox Christian. If we have this awareness, we must have discernment in attempting to draw parallel lines between eastern cult practices and genuine Christianity. Unfortunately many Christians today do not understand the reality of these movements and have allowed the spirit of eastern cults into their lives.
2. “Christian Yoga”[[1]](#footnote-1)
   1. Hindu Yoga has become popularized through cults and also supposed physical therapy which has supposed non-religious aims. Thus there are two pitfalls which are equally deadly:
      1. Religious:
         1. To use Yoga as a way to meditate, enhance your “Christian” experience,” to relax in order to enter into prayer, etc.
      2. As Physical Therapy or Exercise:
         1. To think that Yoga can be divorced from its religious context and thus be able to be adapted and practiced safely.
   2. Both of these pitfalls are spiritually dangerous and can lead to spiritual deception (what the Fathers call “prelest”).
3. “Christian Zen”
   1. Christians seeking new forms of “prayer” because they are dissatisfied with their own traditions.
   2. Zen seeks to abolish rational thinking and attain a state of simplicity that brings calm and a state of silent meditation.
   3. Syncretic. There is no distinguishing between evil and good.
4. “Christian” Transcendental Meditation
   1. Became very popular rapidly in America, (the fast food of eastern meditation)
      1. Quick initiation and experience
      2. Does not require any belief
      3. Promises new states of consciousness
   2. Those who experience this first receive all sorts of gifts: healing of families, overcoming addiction, etc., but later many experience the same traumatic effects as those who dabble in the occult: mental and emotional illness, suicide, attempted murder, or demonic possession.

**The ‘Leaven’ for A New Age**

1. 1975: banner year for the “New Religious Consciousness”
   1. Designated by Alice Bailey to publicly disseminate the secret teachings of spiritualism and the Theosophical movement.
2. The New Age movement is mapped out well by ex-Orthodox or avowed enemies of Orthodoxy.
   1. Helen Blavatsky: Medium and Occultist, founder of the Theosophical society (1875), Alice Bailey, Nicholas Roerich (author of Agni Yoga), Teilhard de Chardin (the evolutionary thinker), and H.G. Wells.
3. The new age movement is not a “conspiracy theory” as one may be quick to categorize it, because the movement does not necessarily need to be making secret plans behind doors, but rather that it is a demonic plan and certain figures become demonic mouthpieces.
4. Some principles from the above mentioned names:
   1. Firstly, the New Age seeks to usher in a utopia. It is a utopian scheme to end all poverty, war, disease, pollution, etc.
   2. It is the union of all religions, but a reversal of Christian theology.
   3. A “new dawn” for man, to be initiated into the “ancient wisdom” that predated Christianity.
   4. A New Age Messiah: “The Christ” (Jiddu Krishnamurti)

1. Read “[HIDDEN FIRE: ORTHODOX PERSPECTIVES ON YOGA](http://orthochristian.com/80417.html)” by Dn. Joseph Frangipani [↑](#footnote-ref-1)