

a site for which he painted *Triptych*. Rothko wanted the lighting to be based on the skylight that he had in his New York studio. Johnson thought otherwise, and eventually withdrew from the project. Even Ashton thinks that Johnson's plan was superior to that which was put into place. Lighting wasn't his only concern: Rothko wanted the walls and the floor of the chapel to be

like those in his studio. The works, seemingly, could not be lifted from the environment in which they were created without suffering tremendous traumas from the dislocation. Taking these requirements into account, it's almost as if Rothko was merely talking to himself. Perhaps the viewers were, then, meant only to overhear him. Is it art or merely self-indulgence? □

God need not be compromised in any way by membership in one of the world's major religions (Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism); neither is affiliation with one of these a sine qua non of the authenticity of the love existing between God and his human son. The lover of God inevitably feels a strong kinship with anyone else who also loves him, and has a natural respect for the formal expression of that love, even if it differs from his own. All that is necessary is that it be sincere, and strong enough to allow the divine hand to work through it to transform one's life.

The foregoing is meant to provide a frame of reference in which to consider the objections that must be raised concerning the remarks about the Self-Realization Fellowship made by Mr. Steven Hayward in *Chronicles of Culture* (December 1983; p. 41). In his article "Self-Actualizing Mammon" Mr. Hayward fastens on the physical appearance of one of the shrines of this organization and, finding said appearance not to his liking, proceeds to draw some rather unfortunate conclusions about the real nature of the organization itself. It is regrettable that he did not try to learn something about Self-Realization Fellowship before condemning it. If he had, he would surely have sensed the depth and singlemindedness of the devotion of its members to God, and to the keeping of his laws here on earth. He would also certainly have appreciated the reasonableness and stability of its teachings, and would thus have felt the kinship that one lover of the spirit feels for another. Instead, he rather smugly tried to hurt this church, and in so doing put himself in the unenviable position of doing violence to what is holy.

I sincerely hope that Mr. Hayward will take the time to become familiar with what the Self-Realization Fellowship is really about. I am certain that after an investigation he will conclude that it is indeed an ally in the cause of righteousness, deserving of his apologies and his respect. □

POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

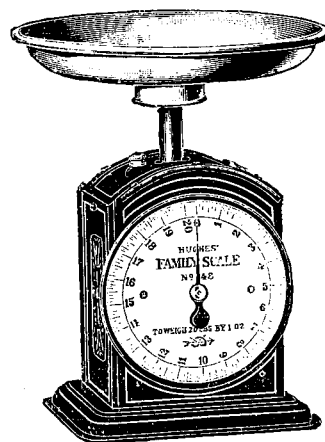
On Self-Realization

by B.J. Bryant

Anyone who contemplates life in our country today would undoubtedly concede that these are difficult and threatening times, both for individuals and for the nation as a whole. What seems encouraging is that many people are beginning to understand how outward difficulties—too numerous to mention, but all springing from selfishness and hatred—are the inevitable consequences of our inward deficiencies: particularly the loss of the moral compass resulting from not enough love for God. As a result of this realization, people are more inclined to scrutinize their own behavior as they go through the tests and trials of their lives than to simply blame others for the world's problems. If people truly loved God more, they would make ever more devoted efforts to attune their lives and actions with his will: defend his purposes against ideologies hostile or indifferent to him, and rigorously cultivate their own higher natures to please him. As people strive to develop this love for him, they come to be very protective of the values and institutions which allow our country to safeguard it, and develop

a deepening sympathy for other countries and religious heritages which are struggling, in their own ways, to do the same. Most importantly, they begin to experience an ever stronger desire for a direct, intimate, intensely personal relationship with God.

This is obviously a very private matter, and every person who sincerely seeks God does so on his own, whether or not



he belongs to one of the world's major religions, or to any other formal religious organization. Each person who is blessed with real faith, or the desire to develop it, knows intuitively that the one who created him is certainly capable of responding to his heart's call in a way that is as unique as he is. Obviously, the uniqueness of one's relationship with

Mr. Bryant belongs to the Self-Realization Fellowship.

Mr. Hayward Replies:

I should like to apologize to Mr. Bryant if he finds my remarks impertinent or somehow impious. While I appreciate the spirit of Mr. Bryant's reply, there is nevertheless much in what he says with which I must sharply disagree. However, though I did not deliberately intend to offend anyone, I fear that Mr. Bryant is among those who find strong judgments of any sort offensive.

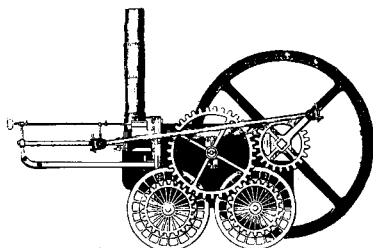
Mr. Bryant writes eloquently of the need to nourish one's inward spiritual journey toward God, giving but one qualification for our love for God: "All that is necessary is that it be sincere." Now, sincerity is the modern virtue *par excellence*. It should be noted that the rise of sincerity as a moral virtue roughly corresponds to the decline of respect for religious institutions and traditional morality. In the modern world, sincerity, not obedience to any moral code or authoritative tradition, is held to be the key to authentic moral and spiritual life.

However, sincerity offers us no moral guidance or discriminating principles whatsoever. I have not yet heard anyone suggest that the Ayatollah Khomeini and his followers are insincere, but I certainly don't feel any "kinship" with those particular lovers of God, and I am sure Mr. Bryant would join me in abhorring that sort of fanaticism. But if measured by sincerity, how does Mr. Bryant discriminate between the authentic and inauthentic? The problem is inherent in the modern approach to religion that stresses technique over substance. The entire spectrum of "self-realization" teachings, whether Krishnamurti, the Bagwan, or Paramahansa Yogananda, is extremely ambiguous and gives off a faint whiff of gnosticism. What is the cause of evil in

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the world? We're never quite told explicitly, but it has something to do with our lack of proper meditation, our neglect of our "infinite potential," our "inward journey toward perfection," our "oneness with God." Only insincerity is original sin.

When wretched from context and transplanted in the West, Eastern religions take on a strange form. No longer bound up with the indigenous culture,



Eastern religion becomes technique and seeks to absorb elements of Western thought. In addition to homogenizing other major religions—which have contradictory and mutually exclusive doctrines—Self-Realization thought adopts Cartesian dualism in a particularly militant form: we can only directly

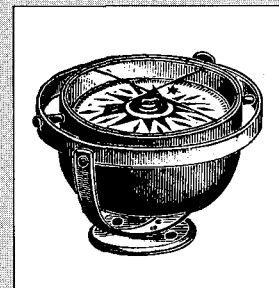
experience Truth when we have transcended our dependence on the "fallible senses." "Truth" is realized through the "inward journey," but when truth is made so highly subjective, the "inward journey" becomes rather like peeling an onion: if you go far enough there's nothing there.

This lack of theological integrity is, I think, reflected in the appearance of the "Self-Realization Fellowship Lake Shrine." In seeking to be an ersatz Garden of Eden, a hospitable place of meditation, the shrine lacks the grandeur and thematic unity of a cathedral, mosque, or pagoda. The first time I saw it I thought it was a converted miniature golf course. To be sure, there are Presbyterian churches that look like drive-ins, but the vacuity of Self-Realization teachings is demonstrated by its inclusion of shrines to other major religions—no Hindu shrine in India would do this—and by the gnostic vagueness of Paramahansa Yogananda's teachings. Mr. Bryant will no doubt be upset again, but then, he wouldn't want me to be insincere, would he? ☐

LIBERAL CULTURE

The Pied Five-fers of Mondale

For years leaders of various "rights" groups have promoted the enforcement of quotas based on race, gender, and other considerations as the best means of ensuring social justice. The actual results of such an approach were revealed recently by a campaign strategist for Walter Mondale, who said that in their efforts to fill the various quotas stipulated by the National Democratic Party for its convention delegates, they are "going for a lot of two-fers and three-fers," by which he meant single individuals who can be "counted" in two or three special-interest categories. Thus, the strategist, observed, "in the perverse way of these things, black males will be underrepresented, proba-



bly," because they only "count" one way, while "it will be to everyone's advantage to find black, female delegates" because, as "two-fers," they "count" twice.

Of course, white males don't "count" at all. So what do we do with Mr. Mondale himself? ☐