

MOVES TOWARDS SEPARATENESS AND RECONCILIATION:  
AN ANALYSIS OF THE RITUAL ACTS OF FIVE RELIGIOUS GROUPS

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ABSTRACT

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An ethnographic account, based on the writer's fieldwork over a period of four years (1976-1980), is presented for each of the five religious groups. Although the focus is the ritual act itself, mention and analysis is included of those aspects of the ritual drama which are peripheral but play an important supporting role in relation to the act itself, i.e., setting, music, verbal practices and body language of the participants.

In addition, a comparison of the strategies employed in each ritual act to effect the movement of individual participants and, at the same time, to effect the undisrupted continuity of the ritual act itself is offered for examination.

## PREFACE

From September 1975 until May 1977, I was privileged to be a part of the research team of students working on the project entitled "A Comparative Psychological and Sociological Analysis of New Religious Movements in the Greater Montreal Area." The project was funded by a grant from the Quebec Ministry of Education. Professors Frederick Bird and William Reimer guided the project. In order to offer some sort of comparative look at the data which was being collected on the neo-Pentecostal ritual practices of the Roman Catholic and Anglican Charismatic groups, I volunteered to cover the Sunday evening Pentecostal ritual act, that of the altar call.

During the course of this fieldwork, I became interested in how the Pentecostal altar call, the Pentecostal ritual action par excellence, managed to survive and draw people to itself every Sunday evening. What sort of powerful ritual action incorporating a fundamental Christian gospel message was able to draw close to four hundred people every Sunday evening in all kinds of weather? Why weren't people flocking to Evensong at Christ Church Cathedral in the same way? What made the ritual act work so well? Was it the setting, music, entrance welcome, preaching, infant-care centre, singers that did it? And if not, then how did these contribute? As I looked for the answers to these questions, I became interested in asking similar ones of the three other groups which I was assigned to cover by the project: the Anglican prayer groups (one traditional, one quasi-Charismatic), the Sri Chinmoy, and the Spiritualists. And this thesis is in response to the questions

I asked.

In addition to that of Professors Bird and Reimer, I gratefully acknowledge the help of my colleagues on the research team, all of whom shared with me their insights, fieldnotes and research techniques: Susan Bernstein, Scott Davidson, Elizabeth Sanduk, Paul Schwartz and Bill Wheeler. For their patience, encouragement and friendship, I thank Fred Bird and Frances Westley.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

It is in order for me to describe and present a brief history of each of the religious groups with which this paper is concerned; this, so that the reader may become familiar with the actors or participants before the dramatic action, in this case the ritual action, begins.

#### Sri Chinmoy's Disciples

Guru Sri Chinmoy, whose Montreal followers I studied in the winter of 1978, resides in Jamaica, New York. When he arrived from India in the early sixties, he worked initially as a clerk for the United Nations Organization and later began to hold lunchtime meditation sessions for other U.N. employees, in a gesture for world peace. Sri Chinmoy traces his religious development to Shankara via Sri Aurobindo, and has now established himself as the spiritual leader of approximately 700 disciples (The Message of Sri Chinmoy, Vol. 2, No. 9 [September 27, 1975], p. 26).

Chinmoy's writings reflect a guru-disciple relationship which takes up the idea of the family, with guru as head:

In a family, the eldest member knows much more about the father than the youngest member knows. The father discusses family problems and the world situation with the eldest son, not with his little children ....

and

... the spiritual Master is like the eldest member of the family. He knows all about the Father and he knows where the Father is. He tells the little ones that he can take them to the Father ....

(Pamphlet "Canada Aspires, Canada Receives, Canada Achieves," 1974)

As Guru, Chinmoy becomes a human avatar, according to Bird's typology, in a Devotee Group. As we shall see during the ethnographic account of the Chinmoy ritual practice, Sri Chinmoy becomes a human locus of sacred power, someone through whom the Sacred expresses Omnipresence (as is suggested in the second quotation above). For the disciples, during their meditation, Guru is occultly present; the success of their meditation depends on the extent to which their consent to his presence makes it possible for him to be present to them (according to the disciples, Guru can always "tell" whether or not he is "getting through" to a disciple during meditation). The form of access to sacred power then, corresponds to Bird's model, and is achieved through surrender and devotion.<sup>1</sup> Again, Chinmoy, in his own writings, emphasizes the importance of the Guru-disciple relationship. The following is an answer to the question of the continuance of his organization after his death:

Q. What do you think will happen when you have left the body?

A. It depends on how much my disciples receive while I am in the physical and whether they can keep a very good inner connection with me ... only a few ... only those who have a good connection with me will be able to spread the Light that the Supreme in me has been manifesting.<sup>2</sup>

During the months of my contact with this group (winter, 1978, spring, 1979), Sri Chinmoy's disciples in Montreal numbered eighteen, of which eleven were "boys," and seven, "girls"; the "boys" -- "girls"



designation is their own; it reflects their self-understanding as children of Guru.

At that time, their weekly communal meditation was held at the Sri Chinmoy Centre house, a well-appointed, twelve-room Tudor-style house located at the western end of Queen Mary Road in Hampstead. In addition to being the meditation and teaching centre for the community, it served as the residence for the Centre leaders (a husband and wife team) and two women disciples. The entire community was responsible for the rental on the Centre (\$700 a month), and responsible also for "serving," that is, helping the residents of the house in the upkeep of the grounds, for cutting the lawn and shovelling snow. Such activity is interpreted by Chinmoy as "service" and a certain number of hours is required per week of each Montreal disciple. During the time of my contact with the group, the owner of the house sent two letters of complaint to his tenants, the disciples. One letter concerned their failure to remove the snow from the roof and upper balcony; the other asked them to remove an abandoned car from the back yard.

The Centre leader read both letters to the disciples and all accepted them as fair and expressed no anger or annoyance; they mentioned that the landlord was very fair with them. Interestingly enough, they did not take responsive action. In April of that year, the warm weather finished the snow build-up; and in May, when my note-taking ended with this group, the abandoned car in question still rusted in the back yard. I include this incident in the introduction in order to indicate a little of what I found to be the submissiveness of the disciples to the Guru, or, by extension in this case, to the landlord, and at the same time, the passivity of the disciples in the face of

any action which is not directly ordained by Guru. In other words, the submissiveness can work by extension, but in terms of action, the disciples take it from Guru. Surrender and devotion belong to Guru; action depends on him. This parent-child theme will emerge again, especially during the focal ritual action of the group.

### The Anglicans

Both Anglican prayer groups I have analyzed in the following pages feed into and out of churches belonging to the Anglican Church of Canada; both belong to the Diocese of Montreal and are under the care of Bishop Reginald Hollis. At the time of writing, both churches are English-speaking, and White; both are located in the western part of the City, St. Cyril's in Notre Dame de Grace and St. Mark's in Montreal West; the former church is known as "high Anglican," and the latter as "low"; both designations being a reflection of the sort of churchmanship which characterizes each by consent of the clergy and the people. Generally speaking, "high" denotes an Anglicanism which veers towards ritual and form in the Roman Catholic sense before the Second Vatican Council; on the other hand, "low" denotes a movement away from ritual and distinctively "Catholic" formality in favour of more simplified liturgies, greater casualness in ritual, more lay participation.

The people of St. Cyril's and St. Mark's know each other through inter-parish celebrations such as the Easter Vigil and the Ascension Day supper which are sponsored by the Deanery of Western Montreal. A friendly rivalry exists between the parishes and much teasing about the different forms of churchmanship each parish prefers; this is expressed on occasion by the phrase "high and crazy, broad and hazy,

low and lazy."<sup>3</sup> Most members of the one parish would regard it as a penance to have to attend the Sunday services of the other.

(a) St. Cyril's, Housechurch

The idea for the group originated among the laity of the Parish during a week of Parish Mission which was conducted by a young and enthusiastic lay couple, from an Ottawa parish. Their enthusiasm about lay participation in prayer and study groups caught the imagination of about seven (two men, five women) members of the Parish, and after discussion with the priest, it was decided that a prayer group would form and meet on Wednesday evenings at the homes of members, by turns, and that it would be called "Housechurch." The designation "prayer group" was decided against by both clergy and laity as having about it an air of emotionalism and unchecked enthusiasm. The goings-on at St. Mark's prayer group by this time had filtered east in an exaggerated form and although at least two members of the St. Cyril's group wished to duplicate the enthusiasm, the others were fearful. It was therefore decided that "Housechurch" would consist of a celebration of the Eucharist according to the new rite rather than the Prayerbook rite, and that the emphasis would be on Bible study, with some prayer and singing. The decision to hold the meetings in private homes was expected to fill an expressed need on the part of certain parishoners to "share" in a way that the formal setting of Sunday services did not permit. As I shall attempt to point out later, this concept of "sharing" at St. Cyril's was interpreted, in this case, and expressed itself in a "sharing" of form (house setting) rather than content (exchanging individual experiences with other members of the group).

Although attendance at the Wednesday evening meetings rose to

about fifteen people, consisting of thirteen women and two men, on some occasions, the average attendance for the full year after its beginning was twelve (ten women, two men). During the second year, attendance dipped to an average of eight (two men, six women). Of this eight, about three women were regarded as "problems." By the Spring of 1980, the Rector, and the "problems" (two women and one man) were the only ones to attend the meeting. And the group did not re-assemble after the summer break.

In the Fall of 1980, through the Rector's suggestion, the group re-assembled on different lines, meeting on Tuesday evenings and similarly, at the homes of the various members. The parishioners who expressed an interest were divided into "teams," each of which was responsible for researching a theme during the week and presenting its findings to the group during the meeting. The Rector no longer assumed the lead role in the Bible study; and the "problems" were assimilated into separate teams. According to the last report, attendance has risen; the thematic presentations are interesting (e.g. "Prophets," "Kings," "Suffering"). Since Tuesday evening is not a convenient evening for the Rector, it often happens that he does not attend the meetings, in which case, of course, the Communion ritual does not take place. In its place, a spiritual communion is read and one of the men distributes the consecrated Host.

I hope to show in the following pages, what I think to be the reasons for the failure of the original "Housechurch" meeting arrangement.

(b) St. Mark's

The St. Mark's group originated in 1975, the inspiration of the

Rector, his wife and two other married couples who had experienced a strong sense of recommitment to their faith through contact with the Roman Catholic Charismatic group at St. Augustine's Church. This original "core" group of six people had as their aim a re-vitalization of parish life in terms of the interaction of its members in "sharing" and parish involvement, financial commitment and belief put into action. And this aim of revitalization was considered to be, in its achievement, the responsibility of the lay rather than the clerical membership.

In order to create enthusiasm, members of the St. Augustine's group were invited to come to speak to the most interested lay people. About four married couples constituted the first "core" group and this included the Rector and the Curate and their wives. The "Life in the Spirit Seminars" were suggested as a means of creating zeal on an individual level; Fr. Paul Sauvé encouraged the core members to seek the "gifts of the Spirit," especially the gift of tongues, which he demonstrated.

During the course of the first two years, a few members of the St. Augustine group attended the St. Mark's meetings in order to provide encouragement to the core members and also to provide a model for ritual behavior, especially during "sharing" sessions and sessions of "the laying-on of hands," and to offer prayer support during the course of the meetings. During these years (1975-77) attendance at the Wednesday evening meetings varied between forty and fifty, evenly divided between men and women. By 1978, the group had grown to about sixty people, with 20% turnover. Also during that year a division was created for the first hour of the meeting; one group (the largest) met, as it had originally, for prayer and sharing; a second group met with

the Curate for a lecture on Bible history (this group was created to fill the needs of some of the more conservative parishoners who did not feel equipped to deal with the enthusiasm and/or intimacy that was thought to characterize the first group); and, a third group met for the Life in the Spirit Seminars.

In 1979, the group began to dwindle in size. Although many factors contributed to this, the chief among them were (a) the retirement and relocation of the two most enthusiastic originators, a married couple who subsequently left the Anglican Church and began attending a Pentecostal Church, and (b) the replacement of the Rector by a priest whose churchmanship corresponded to a "high" rather than a "low" tendency, and who did not encourage lay leadership in the same way that his predecessor had done. An added difficulty for the group became the fact that the majority of those who attended had completed the Life in the Spirit Seminars, lost the initial enthusiasm of emotional response and were looking for something "new" to happen. By 1980, the group had become more of a Bible study group and was led and controlled by the Rector.

Both Anglican prayer groups, looked at in relation to Bird's typology, fall into the Devotee group, but unlike the Chinmoy devotees, they have a Deity which is transcendent (the triune God). Surrender and devotion to God through Christ and the Holy Spirit are stressed,<sup>4</sup> and the latter, especially through the mediation of the group, is seen as Initiator of that surrender and devotion.

#### The Spiritualists

My study of the Spiritualist ritual action took place at the

First Spiritualist Church of Montreal, a member of the Association of Spiritualist Churches of Canada. The oldest Spiritualist Church in Montreal, it was founded in 1931 by a Spiritualist minister from England, a Reverend Snooker. During the time of my study (1977-78), the weekly healing and prayer service took place at 5:00 P.M. each Sunday at 2186 Ste. Catherine Street West, near Atwater. This location is two-storey; the first floor houses a leather shop, and the second floor, the church. On the glass door leading from the street to the stairwell there is a sign in old English script which announces the name of the church. The average attendance at these services was about seventy-five. Most of the congregation on any given Sunday is middle-aged; no children attend, no babies, no young couples. The majority of people come alone. And the ratio of women to men is seven to one.

Generally speaking, for most Spiritualists, spiritualism is a way of life, combining philosophy, science and religion. The philosophy is contained in the Spiritualist precepts: the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, personal responsibility, compensation and retribution in the afterlife for all good and evil deeds done on earth, the continuous existence of the human soul and the idea of its progress, and, finally, the communion of spirits and the ministry of angels.<sup>5</sup>

In terms of the ritual I observed, it was the latter which came into focus at the climax of the service, when through the medium, contact was established between the people in the earth plane (members of the congregation) and the spirits who had proceeded, through death, to another plane.

In terms of Bird's typology,<sup>6</sup> the Spiritualists correspond largely to the Apprenticeship group in that the Sacred is perceived to

be within or in relation to multiple spirits.<sup>7</sup> The medium, with his or her access to the Sacred in terms of Spirits, provides the model who has mastered the "ordeal" (in the Spiritualist scheme, the ordeal would be development classes) and who has thereby achieved "certification" (the display of successful access to the Sacred which represents the climax of the ritual act). Members of the congregation, who have within them (this includes everyone) the inner potential for spirit-contact, are invited by example to take development courses and establish spirit-contact for themselves and others. As Bird puts it, "One can learn (it is believed) to tap this sub-conscious energy regularly by practicing a series of techniques and exercises ... and ... to learn these practices, one must pass through an initiatory ordeal in a tutelary relation to a master, much like an apprentice with a journeyman" (Bird, "Innocence," p. 14). The development courses, then, which include breathing exercises, visualization exercises and meditation, are mentioned at each Spiritualist meeting and are included in Spiritualist newspaper advertising. The teachers are, of course, those who are most successful in their access to the spirit-world, those who inspire the greatest confidence among those attending services, or those who are believed to have the greatest charisma.

Since the Spiritualists require mediums and healers, those whose gifts are most highly developed are in great demand. Spiritualist ordination to the ministry depends on the personal charismatic development of the person who wishes ordination. The Spiritualist organization does not recognize official charisma as having the power of personal charisma and therefore a new Spiritualist Church may open whenever a medium or healer has acquired a sufficient following to support one.



### The Pentecostals

As with the Sri Chinmoy group and the Anglican Prayer groups, the Pentecostals represent, in their reverence for the Triune God, a devotee group. Their altar-call ritual which I observed for a period of two years, 1976-1978, constitutes stage one of a type of initiation rite. In response to the altar-call, that climactic and most dramatic moment of the Pentecostal ritual act, a member of the congregation is invited to define his choice for God publicly by walking down the aisle to the altar and in this way, "a series of pledges are made which indicate not only the severing of relationships with persons or influences which might undermine devotion to this sacred reality (Christ Jesus) but also a commitment to a certain regime of ritual activity." (Bird, "Pursuit of Innocence," p. 13).

The ritual act of the altar-call takes place every Sunday evening at Evangel Pentecostal Church, 1235 Closse Street, Montreal. Unlike the Sunday morning service which caters mainly to families, this evening service draws a more single congregation, more adults and fewer children, and more non-Pentecostals. Attendance at the evening service varies from two hundred to three hundred people, depending on such variables as the weather or the drawing power of the preacher and/or musical group.

Evangel Pentecostal Church was begun in 1916 by a group of people who had become inspired by a preaching mission held in Montreal and conducted by Almee Semple Macpherson. Gathering first on Drummond Street, they moved to their present location on Closse in 1950.

Before beginning the ethnographic accounts of the ritual acts of each of the groups I have presented, I would like to introduce some of

the concerns which will be seen to emerge.

The first of these has to do with the individual participant in the communal ritual act. I became interested, during the course of my research with these groups, in the phenomenon of individual activity in the collective ritual. In each group, it seemed to be important that the participants behave in ways which demonstrate or "prove" that each one, independent of the others and on his or her own steam, has recommitted himself to the values, the belief system, the Being revered by the group as a whole. It would seem that this act must be voluntary rather than mechanical or coerced. This act must follow from an act of will on the part of the individual participant. Interestingly enough, it would seem that the group as a whole seems to be reconstituted and strengthened by these acts of individual dedication or re-dedication. For its survival, therefore, the ritual not only demands them, but provides for their occurrence. And each of the groups I have studied makes this "survival provision" in its own way.

It would appear that in taking these actions, individuals must (at least momentarily) be willing to act on their own, separated and isolated (at least theoretically and potentially) from all others since those others might choose not to act, at least not this week or at this time.

In this act, then, participants must confront themselves, alone, unsupported by the others (although greatly supported by others through the group milieu) in relation to the sacred ideals and Being of the group. And in order for this act to be truly individual and voluntary, the individual must use his own words and/or gestures; these may not be simply memorized or shared formulae recited in unison with the others,

as for instance in the Anglican Communion liturgy, or in the Sri Chinmoy group's unison chanting, even if these words and gestures are glossal-  
alic in form or even silent; more typically, as in testimonials, offer-  
ings and sometimes (although with variable success) in group discussions  
and hosting (St. Cyril's), individual actions occur in terms of stylized,  
expected patterns.

It will emerge that these individual acts of dedication and how  
they are provided for and incorporated into the group will vary from  
group to group. In some, the individual act is privatized (Chinmoy);  
in others, it is honoured publicly (Pentecostals); in another, the group  
then re-groups with the individual in an act of reconciliation (St.  
Mark's); and in another, the group re-forms (in relief) with no real  
reconciliation.

The point then, is that the affirmation and confirmation of the  
belief system of each group and its values requires an individual act;  
the ancillary point is that this act becomes the fuel upon which the  
group as a whole feeds and lives and is nourished. The antithetical  
point is that individual acts, when performed within a collective  
ritual, tend most often to be disruptive. And the question then becomes:  
How does this work? How do individual acts which tend, by nature, to be  
idiosyncratic and erratic and therefore out of harmony with the actions  
of collective rituals ... how do they nourish rather than starve group  
effectiveness and ritual effectiveness? The resolution is to be found  
in the strategies adopted by each of the groups I have studied. And in  
what follows, I shall attempt to show how each of the groups has chosen  
such a strategy.

— As a secondary concern in the thesis, and one which emerges from

the first, there is the matter of the appropriateness or fittingness of each of the groups' rituals to its goals (announced or unannounced). For instance, the announced goal of St. Cyril's housechurch is a Bible study and eucharistic celebration which will provide parishioners with more knowledge of their faith and each other. The unannounced goals have to do with informal socializing and hosting and also with the maintenance of the ritual setting, music, the pre-service conversation reflect and accommodate those goals. For the Chinmoy ritual, how does the separation of the sexes during meditation support the announced goal of occult contact with the physically absent Guru and the unannounced goal of pre-genital innocence? In the Spiritualist ritual setting, what is the fittingness of the religious tone to the announced goal of the worship of the fatherhood of God, and the unannounced one of legitimizing the personal charisma of the medium?

A tertiary concern in this thesis has to do with the nature of the ritual actions of each group as mysteries in themselves, mysteries which are open to ethnographic scrutiny and which, at the same time, are essentially out of its reach. During the course of my observations it has appeared to me increasingly that describing and analysing the ritual action in its various expressions within the groups was somewhat similar to describing the entrances to different gold mines. Although one can chart the patterns of movement and speech of miners, make a record of their songs and the frequency of their entrances and exits, the nature of their work and struggle and treasure (at least on an individual basis) remains hidden from view. The ethnographer can point to where the gold lies, but little more. The temptation is to suppose that the ritual activities of the groups can be reduced or confined to the language and

typologies used to describe them.

Against such presumption, the Sacred Presence, which is part of each group's self-understanding, stands guard. The observer, therefore, lacks entrance to that deepest part of ritual to which the ritual comings and goings point. In order to make a virtue of necessity, therefore, she must necessarily remove her shoes, suspending speculation on that holy and burning ground.

## CHAPTER II

### THE DISCIPLES OF SRI CHINMOY

#### The Sunday, 5:30 P.M. Meditation Ritual<sup>8</sup>

Since the Sunday Meditation of the Chinmoy group is a private affair, i.e. for the disciples only, my admission for observation and participation was negotiated privately with the Centre leader by interview. During the interview, according to what another disciple told me later, the Centre leader ascertained that I was sufficiently "spiritual" not to detract, vibrationally, from the group's communal meditation.

#### Pre-Service

Although the meditation ritual proper begins at 5:30 P.M. on Sundays, disciples may arrive at the Centre on Queen Mary Road throughout the afternoon. They let themselves in by the side entrance where the door is left unlocked for the purpose.

The young man who opens the door after my repeated knocking wears a white shirt and white slacks, and on his feet, white socks and no shoes. His hair is cut extremely short, unfashionably so, for the style accepted by most of his contemporaries in the world is longish. He greets me, but does so silently, with a nod, after which he returns to the small room in the basement where he has been meditating on the transcendental photo of Guru Chinmoy. This small room, like the one.

upstairs which will be used for the ritual meditation, contains photographs of Guru, the wall-to-wall blue shag rug, the low altar covered by a white cloth.

I hang my coat on the rack provided in the basement "hall," and remove my boots. The young man who opened the door for me is meditating, and in order not to disturb him, I tiptoe upstairs in my stocking feet and enter the kitchen. It is a peaceful room, very tidy and uncluttered. As I sit at the table in order to assemble my papers, a male disciple whose dress and hairstyle are identical to those of the disciple downstairs, enters and greets me in a friendly manner. He too does not converse with me.

The Centre leader who interviewed me initially, the woman of the married couple, enters and greets me. She mentions that many of the disciples will be absent from this evening's meditation because they have gone to New York to see Guru to gain inspiration by being in his presence.

On the kitchen table is a book, open at a page containing a list of names. I ask the Centre leader what the book is and she explains that the book is for attendance; Guru likes to have a record of who comes to the communal meditation, and whether there have been any visitors from other cities. He sometimes asks to see the book.

Also in the kitchen is another woman disciple who is busy cutting some whole-wheat raisin cake into squares for the prasad which ends the formal ritual meditation. While she does this, another disciple arranges red roses in two vases, one rose in one, two roses in another. Both women work quietly without speaking. Both are dressed in saris; neither wears shoes. In contrast to the hairstyle adopted

by Guru for the men, the women have long hair which they have worked into a single braid. Like a dark spine, it falls down their backs to the waist.

The dress of both male and female disciples is ritual dress. During the week, they dress as their daily lives in the world dictate. Preparation for the meditation also requires the disciples to shower or bathe. In addition to the bodily preparation, then, there is the preparation of prasad, flowers; in the meditation room proper (a front room, facing the street) other disciples are busy arranging the cushions on the floor, preparing the candles in their holders, replacing the incense (made in Jamaica, N. Y. by other disciples of Guru). They move about quickly and quietly. If they speak to each other, it is to inquire about some aspect of ritual. The emphasis is on silence: verbal and physical. They move carefully, avoiding physical contact with each other; no matter how many are busy in the kitchen, there seems to be no physical colliding, or interference with the work of another.

The key note of the pre-service, then, is preparation (physical and mental) getting the body ready to present to Guru, getting the mind ready to receive Guru. This preparation is up to each individual. The other type of preparation is communal, and has to do with the ritual proper, in terms of properties required for devotion (candles, incense, roses, prasad). In terms of communal preparation, there seems to be no official division of labour, no official designation for certain jobs; rather, the disciples seem to be able to participate in what has to be done. Whoever is there first assumes responsibility. The visitor, however, is not a disciple, and is not expected or invited to



participate in the preparation of the ritual or in the individual physical and mental preparation. She is required, through the dictates of unwritten rule (or simple good manners) to correspond to the atmosphere of quietness. The quietness on the part of a visitor, then, represents correspondence to an unwritten, but exemplified rule rather than a compulsory activity. Because of the non-verbal nature of the pre-service, the onlooker has only example to follow. She has been given nothing verbal to think about; no one has chatted with her, and no attempt has been made on the part of the disciples to convince her of anything. The only directives are contained in the silence and activity of the members of the group; and, something about the purposefulness, efficiency and solitariness with which the disciples move about during this pre-service discourage questioning on the part of the visitor. Of course, since the group meditation is open only to group members and those visitors who have been "interviewed" by group leaders, it could be argued that the self-understanding of the group needs no clarification by its members in terms of language. On the other hand, the fact of the presence of a visitor who is not a group member is a reality to which one would expect a community to respond.

There are two dynamics here: on the one hand, since the group does not differentiate explicitly between disciples and visitors (i.e. no exceptional activity, such as verbal expression in talking, explanations), the visitor is not made to feel different, no exceptions being made to account for her presence. On the other hand, since there is the reality of the visitor's not being a disciple, and therefore not being a participant at all in the pre-service, the visitor finds herself in an ambiguous position, "I am not a disciple, but they

don't treat me as a visitor in that they don't explain anything to me and they preclude questioning by the thrust of their behavior," or "Since I am not a disciple, there is nothing required of me; it's almost as though I am not here." Whatever the response, and it is ambiguous, the point is that the pre-service, with its lack of expressly verbal traffic raises, in this particular group, the following question: Is the non-verbal designation pre-verbal or post-verbal? Has the group the ability to tolerate highly individual activities such as speaking in terms of its belief system or, has the group outgrown the need to do so?

This question concerning words underlines the service-proper because in the ambiguity of the pre-service (the ambiguity in terms of adult communication among these disciples who refer to each other as boys and girls) lies the tone of the more essential (for my purpose) ambiguity contained in the ritual act itself, the problem of individual activity within communal ritual.

The pre-service is a preparation for the ritual itself, not only for the individual (both physically and mentally) but for the community (cushions, candles and prasad). As in the other types of service or ritual act I examine in this paper, the pre-service indicates the tonal qualities of the ritual act and these include the place of the individual act within the communal ritual. The pre-service, as we have seen, sets the tone for both: much attention is given to the physical preparation of the body in terms of cleanliness and dress, and the mental preparation which seems to consist in avoiding physical or mental contact with other members of the community. Each individual is preparing to spend time with Guru who will be present through occult

contact. The setting in which all this highly individualized activity transpires is communal in a very obvious way. The men dress in the same way, and so do the women; their hairstyles and clothing are such that the men resemble each other; so do the women. They could, by appearance, pass for members of the same family. The house in which the ritual transpires is a private family dwelling in a well-to-do residential area of the city. The attendance record underlines the importance of the presence of each individual member.

The differences between the Sri-Chinmoy pre-service and that of the Pentecostal or Anglican group where newcomers are welcomed verbally and engaged in small-talk, peculiar to each group, are marked. For the Sri Chinmoy group, there is the continued and uninterrupted behavior patterns which exist when no outside observer is present (an inside contact who left the group confirmed this). These initiate the observer into a wordless blank which she may fill however she wishes, depending on how Guru either draws or does not draw her (according to the disciple) to his path.

The pre-service, therefore, is a preparation for the service proper in several ways. Individuality is emphasized in the avoidance of physical or verbal contact with other members of the community (as though such contact somehow altered the individualness required for the service proper). Each individual is on his or her own within the communal setting. This emphasis emerges again during the meditation service where the value becomes personal occult contact with Guru and/or mother.

### The Setting

The setting for the meditation is as follows: A large, rectangular living room facing out on Queen Mary Road. The walls are white, and the windows which face the street are draped, wall-to-wall, with white, floor-length drapes which are closed. Since they are also opaque, no view of the outside is possible. For the meditation, the disciples will face the draped length of the room to gaze at one or the other of two black and white, blown-up photographs, one of the woman Ola Deva "sakti" of Guru Chinmoy, and the other of Chinmoy himself. Both photos are facial shots; both subjects are meditating. The disciples tell me that the photograph of Guru was taken while he was in a state of nirvalkalpe samadhi.<sup>9</sup> Both photographs are very large, about a yard in length and width; both are framed under non-glare glass. Since both are raised to above eye-level for someone standing, and since no other photographs or pictures hang on the walls, these two photographs (Ola on the left and Guru on the right) divide the room into two parts. Everything else in the room abides by this division.

Beneath each photograph is a small, armless boudoir chair; each chair is covered by a white sheet. In front of each chair, on the blue shag carpet, is a vase; each vase contains flowers, one rose in Ola Deva's, and two roses in Guru's. The roses are red and the vases are silver. Bridging the space between the two chairs and the two photos and the two vases is a long, low table covered with a gold-threaded white fabric. This is the altar. On top of the altar, in the centre is a bamboo container of multi-coloured dried flowers and spices; at each end, a brass candlestick in which a pink candle burns.

In front of the altar, two items: a plate containing squares of whole-wheat raisin cake for prasad, and a bowl of sand in which a stick of incense burns.

The room's dominating colours are white and bright pale blue; the walls and drapes and few chairs are white, and the floor is carpeted with wall-to-wall blue shag. With the exception of the few properties I have mentioned, and a few cushions of pastel yellow, white and pink, the large room is sparsely furnished, almost bare by ordinary living room standards.

The focus of the room is twofold: the photo of Guru and his chair, and the photo of mother and her chair. The altar which, at floor level, bridges the gap between mother's chair and Guru's chair, does not become a focus, but serves, rather, to underline the focus. In terms of their colours (white for the men, saris for the women), and also in terms of their spatial positions, the disciples, as they begin the meditation, confirm what they have created in the setting.

The setting, then indicates several points worthy of note for the ritual of this group.

The dominating white of the colour scheme and the pastel colours carry the idea of "purity" and "innocence." That the window is heavily draped, also in white, indicates that the world, as threat of impurity, is sealed off from the disciples and that they are sealed off from it. Symbolically, then, they cannot gaze upon the world's impurity (and thereby threaten their own); neither can the world look in upon their purity, thereby infecting it with its own.

The room, as mentioned, is effectively divided into two by the twin-focus. The division is sexual; Ola on the left, Guru on the right;

mother on the one side, father on the other; feminine on one side, masculine on the other. During the meditation, the disciples will position themselves on one side of the room or the other. The women will sit on Ola Deva's side of the room; the men will sit on Guru's side. In terms of the setting, the "bridge" offered by the long, low altar is not effective. If the altar were a high one, on a level, perhaps, with the photographs, its "bridging" would so complete as to "unite" the photographs into a symbolic union, at which point the altar itself would become the focus. But the altar is positioned between the two photos at a level of a few inches away from the floor. And because of this, the division extends into the ritual placement of the disciples during meditation, the separation of the sexes.

The disciples remove their shoes before entering the room where the meditation is going to take place. They assume positions on the floor, facing the draped window where the two photographs are situated. The men of the group sit on the side of the room which is Guru's (by right of the photo, the chair, the vase with the two red roses) and the women sit on the side which is dominated by Ola Deva's photograph and chair and vase containing one red rose (there is never any doubt that Ola's powers of spirit are in any way equal to Guru's; hence, the one rose; her position tends to be more honorary, as Guru's consort; according to the disciples, the relationship between Guru and Ola Deva is non-sexual).

The Centre leader and his wife sit closest to the altar. As might be expected, they sit not so much together as at either end of the altar; he, on Guru's side and she on mother's. What is significant here is that ritual focus is highly effective. One-half of the room is

separated from the other. This separation of the sexes is not unknown in ritual practices of various religions such as, for instance, the Orthodox Jewish ritual. But there, even though the sexes are separated, the focus of the ritual unites them. There is a point of union. In this situation, however, where the ritual focus is divided, where there is no point of union ritually, there is, in fact, no union at all. The established division (two photos) is not, in this case, established in order that it may be overcome in the ritual act and unite everyone together again. The Sri Chinmoy ritual act not only does not promise to overcome the division between men and women, it actually encourages a continued separateness or division. The tension is not overcome in the ritual act; rather, the ritual act confirms the tension; even fosters it.

#### The Service Proper

The entire room is very brightly lit, almost painfully, since the white walls, drapes, male dress reflect the light. The male Centre leader tells us in a quiet and deliberately clear voice that we shall begin the meditation by invoking OM seven times, SUPREME seven times, and GURU CHINMOY seven times. The leader begins chanting very slowly, letting each word echo into the silence. The disciples sit cross-legged on cushions, spines straight, their eyes raised to the photographs before them. Their eyes are open and staring. They assume the traditional prayer position of the hands with the palms upright and together; the tips of their fingers are level with their chins. Everyone's posture is the same.

The women gaze at the photograph of Ola Deva, whereas the men

gaze at that of Guru Chinmoy. (In private meditation, and likely even in the communal ritual, although ritual setting is divided into masculine-feminine space, male disciples may meditate on the photograph of Ola Deva, and females on Sri Chinmoy. Chinmoy is regarded as the god-realized master by his own admission. Therefore, among the disciples there is no hard and fast rule about gazing upon mother or Guru; a disciple is always free to do either, for either is thought of as proper for meditation; mother is regarded as the feminine counterpart of Guru. In actual fact, mother and Guru are not married; nor, according to the disciples, do they have a sexual relationship of any kind. It is interesting at this point to mention that during the first few evenings I attended the meditation in this house, the photograph of Ola Deva was not hanging on the white drapes. It had been removed because the Centre leaders were "not sure of you"; apparently, a great deal of public criticism had been leveled at Chinmoy's relationship with Ola Deva; the disciples said that the public had misunderstood the nature of the relationship between them. When the confidence of the group leaders had grown sufficiently (i.e. that I was "harmless," that my interest was serious), the photograph of Ola Deva was restored to its position on the drapes. And in that way, the problem of what I thought to be imbalance in the setting for the ritual was solved.

The fact that the formal and communal meditation of this group directs the attention of the women to the photograph of Ola Deva and the attention of the men to the Guru underlines a specific directive from Guru concerning communal relationships and the basic self-understanding of the group as a group, and that is: the disciples' idea of themselves as siblings in a family headed by father (Guru) and



mother (Ola Deva). The fact that no sexual relationship exists between the "parents" underlines, for the disciples, their status of spiritual children of a god-realized Guru. Being children in the family hierarchy, they are located on a lower level of importance than either father or mother. And this is reflected in the setting; the two photographs and the two chairs are higher than the disciples who sit on the floor. Since sexual activity is regarded as a response to what is termed "urges of the lower self," there is no room for genital sexuality among group members or outside the group. Guru and mother are the models for abstinence. Furthermore, since the men and women in the group refer to each other, following Guru's directive, as "girls" and "boys" in ordinary conversation, the individual disciples of both sexes are encouraged to develop sexual images of themselves which are pre-pubescent. The Centre leaders, who are married, are encouraged to develop a celibate marriage, "in time," the woman tells me, "for Guru understands how difficult abstinence is." Having children is discouraged, for, according to Guru, children detract from the quietness required for the spiritual life, for meditation and devotion. Guru maintains that there are enough children in the world, and that the work of his disciples will be to develop the spiritual lives of those already born.

The chanting causes the windows behind the drapes to vibrate. After the final note of the twenty-first chant has died, the group leader names a song which the group will sing. The song was written by Guru and is in Hindi. Its musical progression is simple and distinctly Oriental, which makes it difficult for Western ears to recall. The group sings together; there is no changing of posture, or of the

positions of hands or eyes. The singing, while fairly loud and clear, is studied and quiet rather than enthusiastic. And the comparison here between these people and the Pentecostals is obvious by way of contrast. Whereas the Pentecostals use communal singing as a ritualized way of rousing the congregation to feelings of communal belonging, the Sri Chinmoy disciples use it as a means whereby individual disciples can increase their devotion to Guru and thereby have a better meditation, "better connection."

During both the singing and the chanting, all eyes are focussed on the photographs. The disciples do not look at each other. Since each one is acquainted with the song, there are no books to pass out (as with all the other groups we are dealing with here), nor are there any numbers to call out, or signals to give. The Centre leader begins singing. The fact that I am an observer-participant does not cause anyone to interpret for me, or show me the music. In the case of this group, the singing becomes a means for individual ascent by occult connection to Guru. Therefore, the group is a help, not because one experiences the presence of Guru within a group, but because each one is pointed in the same direction towards Guru. It is like two types of nesting birds, by analogy: in one nest, the birds receive food from the parent bird and share it around and they're all well-fed and next to each other in warmth. These would be the Pentecostals (ritually speaking). And in another nest, the parent bird does not drop the food into the nest, but instead, stations himself more at a distance, so that each bird has to stretch itself to reach the food. The one who does not or cannot stretch is out of luck or, maybe he would be happier in another nest somewhere. This latter approach is more in keeping with

the Sri Chinmoy group.

The chanting, the singing seem chiefly individual ritual acts done in the company of the others. The reason for the communal ritual is Guru's -- he wants the members of his family to be together, to provide each other (in his absence) with company along the way.

After the chanting and the singing, there is a reading which consists of a selection from one of the two hundred books that Guru has published. The Centre leader reads three lines three times each very slowly, letting each word have its full place in the silence. The lines proceed as follows:

"The body requires poise  
The mind requires confidence  
The heart requires love."

During this reading, the disciples continue to gaze at the photographs; they do not look at each other; there are no verbal explanations; there is no discussion, no communal verbal exchange. Each disciple is expected to receive from the reading, a personalized message from Guru (since he wrote it and intended it for his disciples). How each disciple receives this message depends not on how well Guru has communicated the message; it depends, rather, on how "in tune" each disciple is, on how open he or she is to receiving it. Guru is the constant; the disciples are the variables; Guru's presence is never in doubt; the disciples' presence to him is always doubtful and distracted as is common in the parent-child relationship because of the distractibility of children.

The above readings are given not so much in order to be understood rationally as they are to provide a basis upon which the

individual can draw into the privacy of his or her own meditative practice. They are non-cognitive. The Centre leader reads them in a restful way, and the disciples are intended to hear them with "the ears of the heart." The tone and speed of the reading are conducive to individual meditation. The repetition is mantric. Although the reading is explicitly verbal, the above qualities indicate a pre-verbalness (in terms of rational or discursive thought) which has characterized the language aspects of both the pre-service and the service proper.

During the pre-service, as we have seen, language was conspicuous by its absence. During the first part of the service proper, the language consisted of names which were chanted. Singing transpired in a language which no one in the group speaks, and the reading consisted of a series of mantric sentences, brief, delivered in a musical, non-cognitive way, geared not so much towards informing or teaching the disciples as it was towards providing each one of them with a better disposition for making the occult connection with their Guru or mother (it is important to mention that disciples cannot meditate on both parents at the same time). Meditation by occult connection happens on a one-to-one basis, and depends on the desire for connection on the part of the individual. The group cannot help the disciple in meditation. To a certain extent, the desire of the group may help to spur the disciple on by example, just as the quietness of the group can provide a tonal setting for the meditation of the individual. A disciple who was upset or insincere, apparently would affect the "vibrations" of the tonal setting and would "infect" the meditation of others adversely, by the same token. In terms of the ritual act; we have reached the most important part, that part to which the majority of the time for the

ritual is devoted, and that is the silent meditation.

The meditation period of the service lasts half an hour. It is the part for which the other ritual activity, the chanting, singing, reading, have been the preparation. Since the entire service takes one hour, and since the meditation assumes half that time, we must assume that, in terms of time, length reflects what is of most value in the ritual act. The meditation is a more completely individual ritual activity than has occurred thus far. The disciples maintain their postures on the floor, backs straight, eyes gazing upward at either one or the other of the two photographs on the draped wall before them. And the aim is to establish occult connection through concentration and devotion, to Guru (or through mother to Guru) who will help the disciple realize God.

During the meditation, the greatest silence is observed. On occasion, someone shifts position, but since the setting is soft (rug, cushions, no shoes) and contains nothing that could make a noise, this shifting is never distracting for the others. There is no musical accompaniment. In contrast to the Pentecostals' focal ritual act, the altar call, and in contrast too to the eucharist as focal point of the ritual act in the prayer groups, and to the Spiritualists' mediumistic activity, where language, bodily movement, and a heightened sense of belonging or communality is accented, this ritual action in the Chinmoy group stresses the individual in his or her separate race to connect with Guru.

The case might be made, of course, in terms of the self-understanding of the group, for the meditation time as focus of the most intense communal connection, in the occult sense, to both Guru and

God, as the boys and girls of one father. But this does not hold up. For, in fact, each goes alone to the race to connect with Guru. According to the Centre leaders, Guru is able to tell by the quality of occult connection he maintains with the individual disciples (he sometimes meditates on them while they are sleeping) to what extent a disciple is sincere, devoted and growing. And from time to time, there is what could only be called a "purge" among the disciples during which some of them receive letters asking them to "leave the path." These letters issue from what Guru interprets to be a lack of zeal, a lukewarmness of devotion. Sometimes Guru summons certain individuals to New York in order to observe what is happening in the hearts of them. During these sessions, Guru meditates with his questionable disciples and picks up at close range the quality of their meditation, or lack of it. Interestingly enough, the disciples are usually called into his presence in groups, "the boys are going down next week, the ones who got letters" or "two girls received letters and are going down in two weeks to see guru." When a disciple receives a letter, it is understood that his or her loyalty or zeal is in question. Disciples who come under this sort of scrutiny usually accept with docility Guru's method of trying them. The Centre leader told me of one girl who received a letter, and who cried for nine hours and who afterwards received a phone call from Guru who re-established her in the path. Apparently he had found out her devotion by occult connection with her.

The meditation period, then, is the focal ritual act of this group. As I have attempted to point out, it consists of a mental retreat on the part of each individual. The meditator is cut off from other members of the group just as the room in which the meditation transpires is cut off

from the world outside. The meditation period carries to its ritually logical outcome the verbal, sexual and physical sense of individuality which characterized the pre-service, the chanting and reading parts of the service proper. In addition, the meditation, with the communal scheme of the group itself, serves as a "testing ground" whereby Guru perceives to what an extent a disciple is both willing and able to separate himself from the world, the group and even himself in an effort to connect with guru. Interestingly enough, when a disciple receives a letter of chastisement and possible exclusion from the path, he or she is not permitted to attend the meditation services with the rest of the community.

In contrast to the Pentecostals, the Anglicans and the Spiritualists, all of whom encourage lax members to increase their zeal or knowledge or faith by attending more group rituals than ever, Guru believes that a person who may not be living up to the demands of the path should spend time privately in order to review his or her commitment. Further, he believes that a lax disciple pulls down the consciousness of the others as the rotten apple in the barrel spoils the rest. Quite in keeping with the Chinmy thrust of "family" in terms of father, mother, boys and girls, the request that a disciple "reconsider" his "call to the path" can be seen quite simply as the threat of punishment of a judicious parent, dismissing the erring child from his presence. Forgiveness, if given at all, is given arbitrarily.

Once the meditation period of the service is over, the ritual moves back the way it came, in reverse order: reading, then singing, then chanting. The reading is usually a longer one than was given in the pre-meditation period. The group leader reads from a meditation

Guru has written and asks people to pass the book around so that all may read a paragraph. The following represent typical selections:

But I tell each and every one of my disciples that the mind you get from books, the mind you utilize while conversing with people, the mind you require in order to exist on earth, cannot take you even an inch towards God-realization. It is lame; it is blind; it is deaf. The mind is your enemy.

and

Girls are becoming women-perfection; boys are becoming men perfection.

and

Heart of humanity's changeless oneness with God.  
Heart is humanity's changing newness in God.  
Life is humanity's crying fullness in God.  
Life is humanity's smiling fullness for God.

This period of reading, like the first period is marked by quiet tones, the thoughtful vocal approach by each reader to each word, a marked slowness in the reading pace, a solemnity and gravity of expression. There is among the disciples a reverence for these words written by Guru. As with the singing, the reading does not take place in order to rouse the gathered community into group enthusiasm; nor is it intended to explain Guru's doctrine; it is not for the "mind" as understood by Guru, but for the "heart," that heart which in each of "the little ones" is in individual occult contact with Guru. Guru is not speaking to the group. He is speaking to individuals. In this sense, then, the idea of family in this group becomes little more than a promising metaphor for a ritual act which is highly individualistic and competitive. The family, in any operative intrinsic sense, is little more than a technique of humiliation (in terms of sibling rivalry, "who does Guru love best?") and social insulation (human drapes) from a world which is regarded as contaminating. When the spiritual chips are



down for the individual, or the disciple is in some sort of trouble, it can be only an indication of his or her inability to keep quality occult contact with Guru. And dismissal from the group is almost assured. Disciples are expected to have no priorities. Devotion to guru takes first place.

As I have mentioned before, sibling rivalry flourishes; this is partly because Guru tends to mix his metaphors. The family, as commonly understood, is a place where, in the final analysis, one can expect some safety and acceptance simply for being who one is. The Chinmy group fosters the image of family as safety under one father who is going to take his disciples to God. This is one metaphor. The other surfaces as competition, the family as a competing ground. From time to time, this metaphor is acted out in terms of a race. Guru has his disciples promote a "family run" of about ten miles, a sort of marathon in which all members of the family are expected to compete. Guru's idea, at these times, stresses the spiritual life as a race in which the fittest excel and others fall behind. It is in this sense that the competition carries over into the "safety" of the family and gets mixed into different messages. The member who keeps best contact with Guru is highly esteemed (and who knows who that is?) as opposed to those members who receive a letter questioning their devotion. Some are permitted to go on a winter holiday with Guru and mother; others are not; the one who features well in the race seems valued more by Guru than the one who does not; Guru loves best the one who can drop everything to go to New York when Guru calls, and he sings the praises of another who is a pop singer (Santana); he discredits the devotion of the couple who own the vegetarian restaurant and have six children because they

are not as free to express their devotion whimsically as he expects his disciples to do. The family metaphors seem inconsistent with each other; the love of Guru for the disciples shows itself to be highly conditional on, at least, to lack the balance provided by an equal influence by the unconditional mother-love in terms of family.

After the reading, there follows the period of singing which is similar to the singing period which preceded the meditation. And what was true of the reading period holds for the singing. The same attitude of devotion on the part of the individual holds. The singing is quiet, melodious, the language Hindi, the musical progression Oriental. The disciples sing with their eyes open and focussed on the photographs of either Chinmoy or mother. Although there are occasions during which the harmonium is used to accompany the voices, the singing is mostly a capella. The overall effect of the music is soothing; it sounds like a lullaby. Around verse three, the men continue singing the melody and the women provide the descant. The effect is very airy and light.

It is interesting to notice the contrasts involved in the various groups' uses of music as an accompaniment to the ritual act itself. At this point, however, the indication is that for the Chinmoy group, music serves to help each individual to maintain the necessary atmospheric conditions for continuing the occult contact with Guru.

After the singing, there is the chanting. In the first part of the service, each of the following was chanted seven times: OM SUPREME and GURU CHINMOY. And now, in the same order, the chanting is repeated in order to end the service proper. The final note of the service is the dying away of the name of Guru (rather than "Supreme" to

which or whom Guru is directing his disciples).

The final activity of the ritual is prasad. Each member of the group goes forward to the little low altar on which the plate of raisin cake has lain throughout the service, and takes a piece of the cake, carries it to his or her place on the floor and consumes it reverently, eyes down. For the disciples, this food is blessed or sacred because it has been present on the altar during the time of meditation and therefore, of the occult presence of Guru. No one distributes the food; there is no "official person" (i.e. priest or deacon or minister, even the Centre leaders do not assume official prerogatives; there is no "grace" said, no ritual words said over the food. But the disciples believe that Guru is present to it. Disciples do not wait until each person has some of the cake. They eat it on their own, in their own time, some quickly, some slowly. It is an individual affair.

For all intents and purposes, although it happens in the room used only for the meditation service, the taking of prasad does not have status as either a communal meal or as a direct contact with Guru. In order for it to have status, Guru would have to have held it and given it. As the empty chair is a reminder of his presence, so prasad is a reminder of his presence (and a token of Guru's indispensability). Had Guru blessed the food directly, he would distribute it himself. In this way, prasad, occurring as it does outside the boundaries of the ritual act (although still in the setting of the ritual) does not have the status of the Roman or Anglican Eucharist.

The pattern of the ritual act in the Chinmoy group is highly structured, rising and falling to and from the ritual climax:

MEDITATION

	Reading	Reading
Singing		Singing
Chanting		Chanting
15 minutes	30 minutes	15 minutes

Prasad cannot have ritual focus because Guru neither blessed nor made it. For in this group, the focus is always on Guru:

	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Focus</u>
	Chanting	Guru's name
	Singing	Guru's songs
	Reading	Guru's writings
SERVICE	Meditation	Guru's photograph
PRE-SERVICE	Preparation of self, room	Guru's occult presence
POST-SERVICE	Conversation	Guru's movements (holiday plans) Guru's birthday (card) Guru's approval (living arrangements)

The Post-Service

The disciples leave the room where the meditation has taken place and they move into the adjoining room. There is no furniture in this room. As the meditation room, it is white and is carpeted in blue pile. The disciples sit on the floor, the "boys" grouped together fairly casually, and the "girls" the same way.

The Centre leaders conduct a sort of business meeting during which plans are made for the upcoming bazaar which, the disciples hope,

will net them sufficient cash to finish paying the \$700 for this month's rent on the house.

Item two in the business meeting has to do with the shuffle of living arrangements. Two girls whom Guru has asked to "leave the path" are moving out of the house. Another girl is moving in, and still another is taking over the former's soon-to-be vacant apartment. All these arrangements have been approved by Guru whose permission was required to put them into operation.

The third item for discussion is the raising of funds for the Bermuda trip over the Christmas season. Guru has invited those disciples who have been with him for five years or over to accompany him and mother on the trip. The Centre leader, the young married man, has recently borrowed one thousand dollars from the bank so that he, his wife and a female disciple can go on the trip. The "junior" disciples look wistful at the mention of this event; they express envy that they have not been on the path long enough to be included, and look forward to the time when they will qualify to go along.

There is some general chatter and news about other disciples in Canada, and about sending a birthday card to Ottawa so that the Ottawa disciples can sign it and send it back (someone suggests, since the birthday is drawing near, that the Ottawa disciples could send it back by bus). Someone reminisces about something Guru once said about birthdays, imitating his Indian accent. Everyone laughs. A female disciple leans over to tell me that Guru's voice is the most tender and beautiful I could ever imagine hearing.

The post-service carries on several of the themes established during the service proper. The first of these is the focus on Guru,

on his approval concerning the living arrangements, on his birthday, on the upcoming trip to Bermuda (mother is already there getting things ready). Guru is all-important, and his "children" are subservient to him. So that they may have a centre in the approved style, a place where Guru and mother may stay when they arrive, the disciples engage in communal work such as bazaars which they hold in the basement of a neighbouring Anglican Church (St. Matthew's, Hampstead). These bazaars are planned and put on as a group, in addition to or outside the time of their regular individual employment. The disciples tend not to have jobs which demand a great deal of them in terms of fidelity, for Guru sees the "path" as the career; the disciples are not expected to be loyal to any job more than they are loyal to him. A female disciple who worked at a neighbourhood delicatessen and who could not get time off for the trip to Bermuda, quit her job. It was she who was co-borrower of the money for the holiday. Another case of the prior claim of Guru on the disciple's time arose for two disciples (a husband and wife) who owned a vegetarian restaurant. Guru asked them to leave the path because they did not choose availability to him in preference to running their restaurant. The fact that Guru tends to be whimsical about when he wants to see his disciples means that disciples must be ever ready to drop their lives in order to go to him. As one disciple puts it, "you have to be like a mountain goat on the path."

The fact that certain disciples are invited to go to Bermuda, whereas others are not, is a post-service echo of the importance the "children" place on connection (occult or through physical presence) with their Guru. All "children" belong to the community, but, as in any family, some have belonged longer than others; some are entitled

to certain privileges from which the others are excluded, and in the case of this group, some are entitled to more contact with Guru because they have "competed" well in terms of time. At the same time, the theme of child-disciple is again underlined (the parents go off on a holiday with the big brothers and sisters of the little ones who stay home).

Another reflection of the ritual act which occurs in the post-service is the emphasizing of sexual differences. The "boys" and "girls" group together casually, but separately in terms of sex. With the meeting in the hands of the married couple (Guru and mother symbols, in terms of their being a couple), and with the "girls" and "boys" gathered around, the communal family is complete.

The underlying agent for downward change is always present in this family. There is always a possibility that through some occult or human agency (for instance, the attendance list) a disciple might be asked to leave the path. It all depends on one's measure of devotion to Guru, interpreted as the willingness to take devotion away from other matters, e.g. one's job, and on Guru's information (natural — Guru often asks the Centre leaders about the performance or behavior of other disciples — or supernatural).

This is the tension, the secret, the promise and/or threat which is woven into the fabric of the Chinmoy rituals, and which undermines the effectiveness of the communal ritual. The father may at any time call the child, or dismiss the child, and the child may not be given the reason. Or, the father may keep the child, and the child the father. In terms of the Chinmoy ritual act, there is at no time a possibility that the child will grow up; his only recourse to that lack is to "grow away." Because there is no agency in terms of ritual

for handling such an event as "growing up," the disciple in his or her relationships within the group, remains a child-sibling, and in his or her relationship to Guru, remains a child. And Guru himself remains without a successor.



## CHAPTER III

### ANGLICAN RITUAL

#### Setting

The weekly Wednesday evening meeting of the group which St. Cyril's calls "House Church" takes place in the homes of members of the parish. By nature, the setting is informal.

Although the meetings are scheduled to begin at 7:30 P.M. sharp, people arrive anywhere from 7:15 to 8:00 P.M., which provides a large time span for considering the elements which comprise the preservice and setting. Although these meetings vary in setting and content, there are certain proto-typical tones and forms, and I shall attempt to present from field notes which I collected during 1978, fall and winter, an ethnographic account which remains faithful to these basics.

In terms of setting, then, I enter a private home in a middle class area of Montreal at 7:30 P.M. on a rainy autumn evening. I know the hostess who greets me and asks me how I like the rain. As I hang up my coat where the hostess has indicated, two women who have already arrived call out to me from the living room (where the service proper will take place) commenting on the rain, on who is coming, and on those who might not be able to come because of the rain. I sit down in the living room. The conversation continues in the same vein.

Dining room chairs have been added to those armchairs already in the living room in order to provide extra seating space. About twelve

people are expected to attend the meeting. On the coffee table are copies of the Bible, King James Version, for those who may have forgotten to bring theirs. The setting for the service is casual; people are comfortably seated; the chairs are situated for convenient exchange to all areas of the room.

In the hall area, in the archway to the dining room, the hostess has set up an altar for the part of the service which is Communion. She has covered a small table with a white cloth and at either end has placed silver candlesticks containing white candles.

Beyond the archway in the dining room, where the social part of the service takes place, the hostess has arranged cups and saucers, napkins and coffee spoons.

#### Pre-Service

Since the people who attend this group know each other and are members of the same parish, the pre-service tone is one of friendliness in its exchange of news about people and things, about parish activities, about the Christmas bazaar. Another focus during the pre-service is the hostess: her house, her possessions, and changes she has made in colour scheme or in the arrangement of furnishings. She answers questions, explains and comments, shows people pictures of her family. Much of the pre-service activity has to do with the post-service social time. And the hostess asks one or two of the women already present to help her cut some squares in the kitchen and arrange them on plates. There is some question about when to put the kettle on so that it will have come to a full boil by the time the Mass has ended; someone says "put it on at the offertory"; someone else says that she should put the kettle on after

she has received communion because a little waiting won't hurt. The issue is not serious in terms of their attention, and everyone talks at once.

The conversation begins to center on what could be keeping the priest, since he lives close by and hasn't far to come. Someone saw him during the afternoon. This leads to a discussion of how busy the priest is. At this point, someone asks what chapter of St. Luke we are at. Although this information is printed in the parish bulletin, no one seems to know.

The people's warden arrives and greets everyone by name. He asks after two members of the group, whether or not they are coming, whether or not they might be ill, or need rides, but no one seems to know. The people's warden telephones the two people in question. One is ill, and the other must be on her way because there is no answer.

The priest arrives, apologizing for his lateness. He is dressed in clerical shirt and collar. He explains that he has had car trouble. There is a lot of noisy laughter and affectionate teasing as the priest enters the room. He flops in a comfortable armchair which has been left vacant for him, with an air of mock and real tiredness. He places a black box beside him on the floor, then asks the hostess where the Mass will take place (although he must have seen the altar when he entered the house) and she tells him. He moves into the hall again, carrying the communion box which he then places near the altar. He admires the candlesticks. He opens the communion box. Inside are:

- three prayer lists (Anglican-world, diocesan and parish)
- 10 new-rite mass books
- 10 hymn books
- a silver chalice and paten
- one small jar of water

one small jar of wine  
a stole  
a purificator  
a lavabo towel  
a pyx ... the priest's host, several small wafers  
the linen

The priest takes the prayer lists and returns to the living room, leaving the communion box beside the altar. All the contents remain in the box. While this is going on (it takes only a moment or two) there is subdued conversation in the living room. When the priest returns, he again drops into his chair in mock weariness. Someone asks him whether or not he might be more comfortable in her chair, but he shakes his head. The pre-service ends. The time is 7:50 P.M.

Concerning the themes of separateness and reconciliation, the setting and pre-service of this prayer group have much to say. As with the other rituals we have examined, the setting and pre-service serve an almost prophetic function regarding ritual separation and ritual communality as they will be expressed in the ritual they precede.

In terms of setting, individuals are already known to each other as parts of a group come together in an informal setting. The chairs are arranged in a circle, rather than in rows, so that any official stage-party is precluded (cf. Spiritualists, Pentecostals) from taking setting-precedence, or physical precedence. The kitchen setting provides also an informal pre-service gathering place, but for the women only, and the activity concerned was preparation for the post-service. Since the climax of the service proper will be the Mass (the members of this parish term themselves 'high Anglican' or 'anglo Catholic'), it is typical of the settings of these prayer groups that the setting of the Mass be separate from the other settings in use for the other rituals of

the evening. Hence, the altar is created to stand in a place separate from the other settings. It is a formal altar, and with its white tablecloth and silver candlesticks, is created to resemble the one in the church proper rather than an informal, home effort. The formality, in terms of setting, separates it tonally from the other settings. It belongs to the climactic ritual and to ritual time, and, in the context of this prayer group, ritual time is the domain of the ritual people, the warden and the priest.

Although the casual setting in the living room does not allow for official people taking precedence, the formal altar setting requires a formal person. And he is the priest. He brings with him from the church the communion box, the communion vessels which are to be used for the Mass. The priest is the presider over ritual time, and as such, his precedence carries over into the other rituals of the evening. The people's warden, chosen by the priest, takes on the colour of precedence from the priest. And this precedence has been operative throughout the pre-service. We have seen it in the conversation. And it has formed the tonal setting.

Although this group meets for weekly Bible study and prayer, there has been a sense throughout the pre-service of the individuals being either uninterested in each other or passive concerning each other, and the subject of the evening's study. No one seems to know what the reading is and therefore no one has prepared, in a personal or independent sense, for the subject matter of the Bible study. The same thing is indicated concerning the regular member who didn't turn up. No one knew where she was. It was left to the priest's official, the people's warden, to find out. Therefore, even before the arrival

of the priest, there has been an introduction to separate parties within the group in a) the action of the warden in an official capacity; b) the existence of the formal altar; c) the lack of knowledge on the part of group members and the expectation that this knowledge will be brought by the priest (who is also the bringer of the communion box). Tonally, then, the informal setting in the living room becomes somewhat of a mixed message with the arrangement saying "reconciliation" and the tone saying "separateness" into official and unofficial parties.

The name of the meeting "house church" indicates a carry-over of church ritual into church ritual at home. The fact that the priest carries with him from church sacristy to home altar all the formal vessels for communion confirms this. It is conceivable that a home Mass could be celebrated (as other groups have done) using bread, wine and water of the hostess' household; but this alternative is not chosen. Again, in the supposedly informal setting, the formal boundaries are made very clear. The priest completes the setting in that he finishes the temporary home altar by providing those ritual vessels which make the altar a ritual setting rather than only a formal setting. And to carry this further, it is the presence of the priest which insures the completion of fulfillment of the home altar. When the official ritual person is present, the ritual time has arrived and the other rituals of reading and prayer which precede the Mass can begin. And not until. In terms of ordinary pre-meeting group conversation as I have described it above, the absence of the priest insured that there would be no talk about prayer or Bible reading, personal relationship to God or the church or, for that matter, to each other. By mystifying the priest as ritual person, guardian of the holy, the group members have ensured that

the holy, in turn, is tamed and bounded by ritual time. And it is the function of the priest, as ritual person, to keep the holy from leaking into ordinary time and ordinary people. In other words, while the priest is performing Mass or while he is present at prayer group, discussion of God, reading the scriptures, prayer, all these activities are acceptable; when the priest is not present, they are not. On occasions when the priest is out of town, the prayer group is cancelled.

The priest brings the group to silence and begins the meeting by asking the hostess to open with prayer.

Service: Part One

There is a moment of embarrassment as the hostess says that she forgot and is not prepared. The priest tells her to pray anything she thinks of, but she is unable, so he prays instead. Someone asks the priest whether it would be possible for there to be some sort of study group about the Anglican faith where her daughter-in-law could ask questions because she couldn't handle the daughter-in-law's questions. The priest asks her to write the questions down and he will answer them in a series of sermons. Someone else asks the priest a question about the ordination of women. The group attention is diverted to the warden who has brought his guitar and has begun to play a few notes. The priest says we'd better sing an opening song. And the warden distributes the song sheets. He says that we are going to sing a rebellious song so we can "get our hearts and heads into it." The song is: "to everything there is a time ... to everything there is a season ..." based on Ecclesiastes 3. People sing quietly, as though they are embarrassed. The warden sings enthusiastically.

The priest thanks Paul for the song, tells us the reading is from the sixth chapter of the book of Acts. Since there are eight people present, the priest divides the total number of verses by eight so as to see how many each person should read. He asks the woman sitting to his right to begin. People read with difficulty, perhaps because they are using Bibles with small print. Those reading from the King James version experience the greatest difficulty. When the reading has finished, the priest gives the group background regarding the language used by the Hellenistic Jews and the Jewish Christians; he points out that Acts 6 is traditionally interpreted to mean the beginning of the diaconate and asks us to compare it with the modern language.

The discussion of the passage tends to be weak on the side of the group, and strong on the side of the priest. The priest scolds the group for not doing as he calls it "your homework." The priest continues to present the historical background of the chapter, commenting on the culture of the time. And the Bible-study part of the meeting proceeds along the following lines:

Priest: I wonder if you get the thrust of what Stephen (edited by Luke) is saying?

(Silence)

What are the places mentioned by Stephen in the first part of the speech?

The priest tells the people where to look for the answers and they look them up, naming off the place names as they find them. He continues a line of questioning giving people sources to look up in their Bibles. Here is a typical sample:

Priest: What are the words of the Lord?

Someone: Take your shoes off?



Priest: Where was Moses standing?

Someone: In Mesopotamia?

Priest: Uh ... no ....

What would a Jew be taking his shoes off for? Why would that be strange? Remember the story of Naaman of Syria? He was told to wash himself and be healed. Well, Moses was standing on the soil. Now, in chapter seven, beginning with verse two, notice all the places that are mentioned ... where are those places? In the holy land? Mount Sinai?

No one knows ...

and the Priest continues: Therefore the point Stephen is making is that all these places were not in Israel ... his point was to get the Jews away from thinking that ... (he interrupts himself) ... what was the charge against Stephen? Does anyone know?

Rosemary: Going against Jewish beliefs?

Priest: No.

Warden: Blasphemy?

Daisy: What I want to know is why they're having so much trouble in Palestine right now.

Priest: Well, they've always had a lot of that.

I have difficulty hearing some of the responses to the priest's questions, because those sitting near the priest answer to him and not to the rest of the group.

Rosemary: The point is that God does not live in houses, does He?

Priest: Yes ... yes...

Rosemary: But God gave specific instructions for building temples, didn't He?

Priest: But you see, it doesn't matter.

There is general speculation as to what Stephen might have looked like. Some think that he must have been tall and blond; others imagine him to have been short and stocky. The priest continues talking. Two of the women seated on the sofa begin to laugh at something the cat is doing

with someone else's knitting.

Someone else, in a total non-sequiter wants to know why all Anglican churches can't be the same. There is general comment on this, mostly in terms of complaint as to why so many Anglican churches don't have the Eucharist every week.

Someone jokes about a local Roman Catholic parish that spent thousands of dollars to modernize itself after Vatican II. There is a general confirmation of the idea that at St. Cyril's we keep up a high standard of worship and no member of the group would go anywhere else for Mass; that we're well taken care of at St. Cyril's. Someone says that she doesn't understand why we do all the things we do at the high service, that no one has ever explained it to her. And she was brought up low church, but she came to the high church with her husband.

Priest: (winding up, raising his voice to stop the separate conversations which have begun to happen): We're not so far, ourselves, from the things Stephen talked about, e.g. identifying the church with a narrow tradition.

Margaret: But isn't the Queen the head of our church?

At this point, the priest begins a simplified explanation of Queen, land, culture, history, the Vatican and Italian States.

Someone says: Maybe as Christians, our element is not land at all, but water. Maybe we're supposed to be insecure, to walk where there is no security, like on water ... as he asked Peter to do.

Priest: Like the idea of doing the eucharist here in a home rather than in the church building.

There follows a general free-for-all conversation about whether or not the priest should face the altar or the people. The priest tells a story about a priest in Lennoxville who stands at one end of the altar and faces neither man nor God. There is much laughter.

Priest: Well, children, it's ten past nine.

Helen: And we've been here since seven thirty. It always goes so quickly.

The priest hands out the three prayer lists. Ruth says that she had the Anglican cycle of prayer book last time and that someone else should have a turn because if we have to pray for any of the bishops in Africa she can never pronounce the names anyway. Margaret takes the Anglican list. She asks the priest whether or not she should start. And he tells her she should. The prayers are read from the three lists. Then, there is a time for personal or spontaneous prayer. Helen prays for one of the members of the group who is going to court in the coming week. Someone else prays for a boy who is in a coma at the Children's Hospital. Paul prays for the woman who isn't here because she has the flu. It is interesting that this prayer, forecast by one of the women in the pre-meeting, is prayed at the ritually appropriate time.

An analysis of the reading or Bible study and prayer sections of the meeting confirm the earlier analysis of the pre-meeting time. The group dynamics are set up along the model of the shepherd and his flock, the priest being the shepherd in terms of office, in terms of information, in terms of the establishment of ritual beginnings and endings. The priest sets the tone for the reading and study (which the people refer to as the discussion period). There is, in fact, according to the data I have, no such phenomenon as discussion. What poses verbally as discussion is, in fact, a question and answer period in which the questions are initiated by the priest and answered by the people. In this case too, the questions do not often contain within themselves a clue to the type of answer the priest will accept as correct. For example,

the question above concerning where Moses is standing. The question has many possible answers, depending on the primary meaning of the word "where." This sets up what I call a mixed message question in which the questioner is in doubt as to which answer he really prefers, the correct one or the incorrect one. He wants the correct answer in order to speed him along on his line of questioning; on the other hand, the incorrect answer is useful in that it confirms that the flock requires continued teaching. Since the priest's question technique breaks up the group into individual respondents, it becomes important for each respondent to break his sense of isolation by attempting to connect with the priest by putting forward answers. In a sense, the priest becomes the legitimate group to which each member of the group splintered by questions aspires to belong. It is a frustrating business, and the frustrations emerge in one of several ways:

- a) silly or joking answers to the priest's questions. This connects the responder to the group by means of laughter;
- b) ignoring the exchange of questions and answers and connecting with another member of the group by starting a separate conversation;
- c) changing the subject by introducing something completely different, as Daisy did in her shifting the topic to modern Palestine.

Whatever choice the group member makes is rather less important than his aim in making it, which is to re-connect to a situation in which he or she experiences isolation.

Another thing which contributes to the isolation of the individual in the reading and prayer section of the meeting is this: wrong answers (which in this context is another way of saying answers which are unacceptable to the priest). This activates within any individual in the

group the "stupid child" syndrome which he or she may carry around in a personal archives from grade three or four. It is the teacher-pupil relationship at its worst. That the members of the group do not emerge from the reading-prayer section of the meeting with the sort of tooth-ache which Ionesco gave his pupil in "The Lesson"<sup>10</sup> is a tribute to the sociology of group recovery which transpires in the remainder of the meeting.

But, as with all coins, ritual ones included, there is another side to this one. And that is this: that the people who pay to support the church like to feel that the priest is earning his salary; one way to make him earn his salary is to make him work; therefore, the members of the group do not read the scripture reading in advance. They are busy with the world, with their jobs and families. They create out of the priest an authority by default. They get their money's worth. And if they're uninformed, at least they are uninformed together, which provides some sort of negative group solidarity. I would discount completely the theological argument concerning the preceding ritual behaviour that it acts out a legitimate model whereby the laity are the children of God and the priest, by virtue of his office, is the agent of God. And I would argue against this on the grounds that a ritual be judged by its fruits, and in this case, the fruits of the ritual are: a sense of isolation on the part of the individual ... a sense of group tension which seeks for relief in a childishness and giggling which is far from the Biblical childlikeness and the perpetuation of a feigned and encouraged ignorance on the part of an otherwise independent and responsible laity.

Service: Part Two

The ritual of the Mass is where the boundaries between clergy and laity, shepherd and flock, official group and unofficial group becomes highlighted and pronounced. As I have mentioned, the elements and species and vessels have been brought into this home from the church. The priest wears his stole and moves behind the altar. The warden stands at one side to act as server. Although the rite<sup>11</sup> used is less prolonged and formal than the rite in the Book of Common prayer, the priest abandons none of the ritual movements of crossing, genuflection and bowing and tapping his chest which are contained in the full length rite. Nor do the people. Both the paten and the chalice, ritual property of the fully ordained, are administered by the priest. The server does not assist in administration. Nor does the laity pass the host or the wine to each other as happens in other groups of this sort. The prerogatives of the priest are very clearly marked, as are those of the laity. Again, although the Mass itself is a ritual in which the clergy and people are reconciled to each other and God as a body, the acting out of this in the ritual exchange of the peace does not occur. And in this sense, the clergy and laity do not come together as one group; neither does the laity greet each other as members of a connected group. The priest dismisses us with his blessing: "the Mass has ended; go in peace to love and serve the Lord."

Post-Service

At this point in the evening, the meeting is officially over, although there is a customary post-meeting social ritual of refreshments. Some members of the group admit quite openly that this part of

the evening is what they come for: friendly chatter, a cup of tea, a piece of cake, and a chance to be brought up-to-date on parish news. There is nothing in the evening's meeting rituals to rival the enthusiasm of the post-meeting social hour. It might be posited that the meeting proper is so tense and frustrating and unrelated to the problems or daily concerns of the members, that the enthusiasm of the social hour is, in fact, relief that the meeting is "officially" over. This being the case, the people can resume control. They have endured what is "good" for them and can now enjoy themselves. It is something like having some candy after having swallowed one's spinach. People seem to come alive in terms of conversation in a way that they have not had an opportunity to do earlier on. Vida's day in court for her divorce is mentioned for the first time since its brief mention during spontaneous prayer. Many people present had no idea that her divorce had come up so quickly. Gone are the questions so hard to answer and the answers so hard to find. The priest is entertaining part of the group with stories about women priests. The warden confesses to me that these people are a dead bunch and that the whole thrust of the meeting should be different, that the priest has too much control.

A final analysis of the meeting of this particular group must include the idea that what happens in terms of ritual on Wednesday evenings reflects what happens in church during the main ritual of the week -- the Sunday morning sung Mass, with its absolute (strict) boundaries between clergy and laity, between sanctuary and chancel, between those who stand and those who kneel, between blessers and blessees. Wednesday evening is, in a home setting, a tonal if not physical extension of the formal Sunday meeting. And, in this sense,

everything that happens on Wednesday is microcosmic in terms of ritual action.

### St. Mark's

By way of contrast to the St. Cyril's prayer group, another Anglican prayer group which purports to be modern ritually meets in a more western section of Montreal on Wednesday evenings at the same time. Unlike St. Cyril's group, the St. Mark's group is large, upper-middle class and generally better educated. Most of its adherents are professionals rather than office workers. This prayer group, rather than being administered by a priest, is the concern of a group of people called a "core group." The group at large values a close personal relationship with Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, enthusiastic singing, and the experience of the Holy Spirit through the "gifts" (speaking in tongues, and the spiritual gifts of healing, teaching, etc.). Each September, the core group offers and conducts new group members through the "Life in the Spirit" seminars, in order to encourage individual and group spiritual growth. In contrast to the group at St. Cyril's, this group has decided (for the sake of convenient centrality) to hold its meetings in the church, meeting first for coffee in the parish lounge and then later for singing, Bible reading, discussion and prayer and, ultimately, Communion, in the chapel adjoining the church proper.

### Pre-Service

During the pre-service get-together over coffee, group members chat with each other; they joke a fair deal, and tease each other about losing or gaining weight (there are cinnamon buns along with the coffee), comment on vacations, the weather. Most members of the group



wear jewellery of a religious nature, crosses, and doves of various types. All the while, the five members of the core group who are present circulate enthusiastically, asking people how they are, paying special attention to the old, the handicapped, the one or two "odd" members who have special problems. They refer to and ask about people's problems (one's back, another's marriage), and put out requests for prayers for later on in the ritual; they ask "how is the Lord treating you?" Each member of the core group wears a cross on a leather strap or chain around his or her neck (2 men, 3 women). No cross contains a corpus. The priest is a member of the core group and so is his deacon, a woman. Neither priest nor deacon are distinguishable from other members of the core group by dress, although they both wear crosses.

Everyone is very friendly and concerned. The newcomer is welcomed with the zeal reminiscent of the ushers at the Pentecostal church, made to feel welcome, introduced to other members of the group, given coffee and a bun, shown to a chair. No one person seems to be the center of attention. Many people mention health problems, but for the most part, these people, again in contrast to the St. Cyril's group, are fashionably dressed and sun-tanned, even in February.

An analysis of the setting and atmosphere of the pre-service must include comment on the informality of the parish lounge, the friendliness, zest and gaiety and sense of togetherness which is created by a) the coffee and buns, a pre-service focus which is a forecast of the Mass service to occur later in the service, and b) the tonal mood which is to a large extent governed and controlled by the core group. The newcomer, as I have mentioned, is warmly welcomed, as is the member.

### Core Group

It will be useful at this point to clarify the origin and function of the core group as it exists at St. Mark's. The core group began when the prayer group became large enough to warrant some extra attention in terms of planning programs to fill the needs of the group. Originally, the core group was a group of five or six people whom the priest of the parish invited to meet with him during the week in order to pray for the prayer group. Those the priest appointed had in common: a) full commitment to the prayer group in terms of attendance, b) an enthusiasm which wished to see the prayer group grow in numbers (enthusiasm within this group is interpreted, often, to mean advanced holiness or closeness to Jesus and God), c) a certain popularity within the large group itself, and d) an accomplished handling of the Life in the Spirit language of spiritual gifts, prayer in public, facility of expression.

At present, the core group is no longer appointed by the priest; neither is it elected by the other members of the group. Rather, it evolves into officialdom by the recommendation of other core group members.

The group meets twice a week, once for an early "sharing" and breakfast meeting and another time, after the Wednesday evening prayer group meeting is over, in order to do the "planning" and "evaluating" of the evening's meeting. At one of the early breakfast sharing meetings, a prominent Roman Catholic Charismatic leader was invited to instruct the core group on praying in tongues, or at least instruct them about how to pray for the gift. Interestingly enough, although the group members wished to be able to speak in tongues and to lead the large group into the experience, they confessed that being Anglican,

they were hampered by good manners and couldn't bring themselves to do in public what in their hearts they felt to be illogical utterances. I mention this because it indicates a certain ambition to the "new holiness" on the part of the core group members, ambition which is bound to affect the large group even if the result is not expressed in terms of speaking in tongues.

Service: Part One

The first part of the service takes place in a small chapel which adjoins the church proper. The chairs are placed in a rather long oval. The priest and deacon, along with other members of the core group are seated throughout the oval, separate from each other. One of the original members of the core group opens the meeting with a prayer in which he asks the Holy Spirit to come down upon each individual, and to help each individual be receptive to the action of the Spirit.

After the prayer, another member of the core group, this time a woman, speaks softly about how we should all relax, and let the tensions of the day drain out of our bodies, that we should forget our troubles and let the Lord carry them all for us, and let Jesus take all the tension away.

Then, the "sharing" part of the meeting occurs, during which members who feel so inclined may say a little of what has happened to them during the week. It is understood by previous example, that what one shares should illustrate how Jesus has worked in situations. Someone tells an incident about finding a parking place in a hurry when he really needed one. Someone else tells about the Lord helping them to avoid a car accident. A woman who has been robbed mentions how she

laughed because the robbers couldn't take the living Spirit away from her, that the Lord's gifts can never be stolen. During the silence between stories members of the core group have attempted to encourage those who don't often speak during this part of the meeting, to speak. Two of the people who have spoken are core group members. The sharing part of the service is listened to attentively by all members of the group, and after each person has finished, there tend to be murmurs of agreement, or thanksgiving, or sympathy, or encouragement.

Someone from the core group asks the others to close their eyes, and relax while he reads a passage from the Book of Acts, chapter 6. Before he begins to read, he suggests to the group that they attempt to relate the passage to their own lives, so that afterwards, each person may "share" what he or she has thought or experienced.

After the reading, a member of the core group is the first one to mention what it is he thought as he heard the reading, and other members of the group at large participate after he has finished. About four or five members contribute to this part of the service, and the others cooperate by their affirmation and attention and silence.

In a few moments, the group enters the prayer section of the meeting, whereby members of the group pray for the needs of others, people known to them, absent members, world issues, personal difficulties, children. Many people pray, and in contrast to the group at St. Cyril's, the members of this group pray aloud with the facility which comes from practice in a ritual setting, a public setting.

The reading, sharing, prayer section of the meeting, by way of contrast to the Bible-study part of the service at St. Cyril's, does not exhibit the ritual exchanges between member and official party

which disconnects the members from each other and connects them exclusively to the official party. At St. Mark's, there are two dynamics:

- 1) the official party's authority is distributed and therefore ritually "weakened" to the point that the members of the core group become agents for the teaching of ritual action rather than ritual people strongly defined as such;
- 2) the content of the meeting, based as it is on personal response to life during the week rather than to the history of church and scripture, offers group members a way of connecting with each other which the members of the St. Cyril's group do not have. Since everyone in the group has experiences which can be interpreted in terms of the belief-system, the official core group has no ritual advantage in terms of specialized knowledge as does the official person of the priest at St. Cyril's whose group is uninformed scripturally. If members of the core group are not qualified for core group because of specialized or official charisma, then, at St. Mark's it is always possible that a group member, by exhibiting the appropriate skills and zeal may become a core group member. For the members of the St. Cyril's group, becoming an official person in the sense of becoming a priest, is out of the question (as is becoming a warden, since only men are appointed and the group is made up chiefly of women).

Service: Part Two

When it is time for the ritual of the Mass, the number of official persons narrows to one. Only the priest is qualified to celebrate Mass. Various lay people (not necessarily, but most often members of the core) may read the lessons or administer the chalice. The deacon, in addition to these functions, is ordained to read the gospel.

But it is to the priest that the consecration, the chalice, the paten, belong ritually. And so it is within any group whose ritual support system is sacramental. For where the Mass is celebrated, or valued as the climactic ritual, the sense of ritual space, the presence of the altar, ritual properties such as communion vessels, ritual language (the set liturgy and responsorials) are inevitably differentiated from non-ritual space, properties and language. And the same holds true of time. Further, where such a ritual is celebrated, a person possessing the official charisma is required for the ritual enactment.

When the Mass is celebrated at any group meeting, it becomes, whether or not it is meant to, the activity to which all other ritual activity will lead and through which all other ritual activity may be either justified or experienced. Despite the fact that several of the members of the group at St. Mark's say that the celebration of the Mass is not necessary to their meeting, or not really important to the meeting since the presence of "Jesus is everywhere," the comment does not hold true in fact. The fact that St. Mark's group is part of a larger group of a sacramental church is enough to insure that whether understood or not by its members, the prayer group rituals which precede the Mass are governed by the fact of the Mass. And this is true even when the Mass is not celebrated. I would suggest that the emphasis on informality of both official persons (priest and deacon), on informality in the pre-service serving of coffee and bread (an initial "low" mass, perhaps) are governed by the fact of the formal Mass because they represent an attempt to "dilute" beforehand the temporal, spatial and human ritual boundaries imposed by the ritual of the Mass. The fact that the priest did not participate in the reading, sharing and praying

sessions which preceded the Mass, for instance, is important, in terms of his being the official charismatic. Had the service not led into the Mass, the priest would not have needed to "hide." And again, the presence of the core group represents the same sort of dilution, this time a dilution of the official person's power into "weaker" units; units which are thin enough to spread throughout the larger group and not look imposing in their power. The fact that at St. Mark's, the rituals which feed into the Mass represent an attempt to de-ritualize seems indicated. That these attempts are intrinsically successful, or positively successful is a question as is the question of their being reactions against the formal ritual of the Mass. The routinization of the so-called non-liturgical language,<sup>12</sup> i.e. the language of the spirit, the gifts, the sharing, the lifting of hands in prayer, the ritual wearing of the crosses, even the lack of clerical shirts and collars among the clergy points to a formality of ritual, consistent in its attempt to avoid the traditional rituals. In this sense, the sub- or feeder rituals of the St. Cyril's group seem more consistently in keeping with the ritual they feed into than do those of St. Mark's. In the former, the power, in the last analysis, is vested in the official person, the priest; in the latter, the same thing holds true. In the former, all the feeder rituals are governed by the priest; in the latter, the feeder rituals are governed by the priest as found in five of the group members who have mastered a new ritual language and manner.

At first glance, it would appear that the sense of communality within the group at St. Mark's, especially in terms of pre-service and service until the Mass, is accomplished more thoroughly than it is in the service rituals of the St. Cyril's group. The comparison can be

made only in terms of the self-understanding of each group.

The value concerning communality at St. Cyril's is grounded on the idea that all are members of the Body in the large sense, that membership in the Body has little to do with experience, knowledge, but has to do with the idea that God, like the priest, takes care of one's needs, knows what it is necessary to know, feeds one the body of Christ. By way of contrast, through the zeal of the St. Mark's group, the value concerning communality has to do with an experience of togetherness in sharing and prayer and personal feeling of relationship with others. That this is the value is obvious during the St. Mark's post-service private core group ritual when the members of the core group get together to evaluate and size up the extent to which people felt part of the large group, its sharing and prayer.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE SPIRITUALISTS

#### A Look at the Physical and Tonal Aspects of Pre-Service

The setting for the Sunday afternoon services of the First Spiritualist Church of Montreal is located on the second floor of a two-storey building on Ste. Catherine Street West, near Atwater. The first floor houses a leathercraft shop. On the glass door leading from the street to the stairwell, there is a sign, conservatively and professionally printed which announces the name of the church. At the top of the stairs, there is a small carpeted lobby area containing a cupboard for coats and hats and footwear. A middle-aged gentleman, neatly but casually dressed (no tie) indicates the cupboard to me. When I am ready to enter the area where the service is held, he offers me a hymn-book. Other than comments we have exchanged regarding the weather, there is no conversation. He inquires neither about my health nor my church affiliation. Since we have not seen each other before, I am obviously a newcomer to the service. On this he does not comment. He does not welcome me to the Spiritualist Church; he does not find among the members who are already seated someone who will "see to me" in terms of where to sit or what to do. He is courteous and pleasant, and, unlike the Pentecostal ushers, uninquisitive. Although it may be a possibility to interpret this official "welcoming" silence as either

casual or unintentional, I prefer not to do so. On the contrary, since it is my premise that even the pre-service ritual feeds tonally and in terms of belief-system into the service proper, I prefer to analyze the entrance initiation as follows: since it is part of the Spiritualist theology that the individual is responsible for developing his or her spiritual powers, the emphasis rests on individual decision and effort. Since too, it is felt among Spiritualists that individual decision (i.e. for development) depends on an individual's state of "readiness" as opposed, in the Pentecostal scheme, to the power of the Holy Spirit whose grace can cut through an individual's state of unreadiness, it follows that the Spiritualists are in no hurry to push the individual to any decision or commitment he may, by effort of his own reason, be unprepared to make. Hence, then, the lack of over-welcome into community. To carry the interpretation one step further, and analysing the pre-service in terms of the climax of the service, it might be possible to say that "community" as such, or in the Christian sense of "the body" is non-existent. Through the medium, during the climax of the service, the individual (member and newcomer alike) may be invited (or welcomed to) further efforts in training or development by some spirit-world relative or friend. But not even at this point will the individual be welcomed into the concrete community for the sake of the community itself. Although the community can provide teaching in terms of development and mutual support, of itself it has no intrinsic value. The Spiritualist community, then, is a means to an end rather than (in the Christian sense) both the means and the end, the "members" and the "body" at the same time. Therefore, the Spiritualist usher does not emphasize either community or the newcomer's presence within it during

the welcoming ritual of the pre-service. If he did so, he would be contradicting the terms of the Spiritualist belief-system.

The Pre-Service places the individual within himself tonally, and within a physical community spatially.

The hall where the service transpires is long and narrow; the narrow end contains a stage area which is backed by blue velvet draping and fronted by the same. Access to the stage from the floor, where the chairs are arranged in long uninterrupted rows, is gained by a staircase of three steps along the left wall. There is no center access to or from the stage. The stage itself contains three well-spaced blond oak office armchairs, a pulpit with microphone, a pot of yellow chrysanthemums in front of the pulpit. To the side of the stage is a piano which will be used to accompany the hymn-singing. The stage contains no pictures, no religious symbols such as crosses, no literature or Bible. There is no communal focus or symbol. There is no symbol of worship. The chairs where the congregation sits are the usual stack-chair variety which are easy to place and rearrange. Throughout the hall there are only two items the eye finds on the wall. One is a traditional church hymn-board which is located on the right-hand wall towards the stage; the other, near the entrance, is a framed statement of the Principles of Spiritualism.

From the above description of the spatial setting of the church, it will be clear that due to the narrow aisles along each wall and the lack of access to or from center stage, there will not be any ritualized movement of members of the congregation to stage, or movement of stage party to congregation. Whatever the individual is required to do, he will not express it, or be asked to express it, by any drastic or

dramatic physical motion. In addition, the lack of objects (icons or symbols) associated with traditional worship, the objects which in other services lend communal focus to the worship and which can also arouse the religious imagination or emotion of the congregation, are missing. The absence of these tends to leave the individual alone with his own mental and emotional associations, whatever they may be, and during the service proper, this absence of extraneous properties leads the individual's attention to the stage, to the people who occupy it, to the ideas and actions that are expressed there. The few traditional properties, the blue drapery, the flowers, the pulpit, the hymnboard, are traditional enough to officialize or legitimize as worship or religion what it is that transpires on stage.

While the congregation is being seated and while those seated are waiting for the service to begin, the observer notes phenomena which echo the underplayed welcome and sense of privacy that marked the period of entrance into the building. Once seated, people do not chat to each other; no music is being played. People who arrive together tend to sit with each other, but in quietness; they do not assume postures of either meditation or prayer; they do not kneel; they do not read. Many people seem to come alone and sit alone, even though some of them nod in recognition to others seated nearby.

At the appointed time, the stage-party which, until now, has remained in a small room leading off the lobby area, enters and walks in single file along the left wall aisle and mounts the stage: three conservatively dressed women in their late fifties and a man in his sixties. Their entrance is unostentatious and calm and dignified. The stage party is seated; the four smile quietly at the congregation. As

one of the women moves to the piano, another walks to the pulpit and says: "Good afternoon, everyone." The congregation replies in unison, "Good afternoon." The congregation is asked to sing a hymn. We sing sitting down "light pours down from heaven and enters where it may ...". The singing is contained, and low in volume and enthusiasm.

The leader of the service explains that we are going to have a healing meditation, that we are to picture the people we wish to help, picture them in the best of health, with no thoughts of sickness. "We know that this works, and better if we are in harmony. We ask those in the spirit-world for betterment, perfect health, peace of mind." The leader reads a list of names, about twenty-five; her reading is slow and deliberate. "Shall we go into the silence and send them our thoughts?" Silence ensues for a moment or two. She continues:

... we send our thoughts to the healing spirits to ask for full health and if this is not possible, then for peace and betterment of mind. Help us to use Thy power. Grant that our peace be with ones in authority in this world, that the nations may find a better way, that understanding and sympathy may rule. We pray for all who come here for interest, knowledge, upliftment, help ... we pray for our workers (this is a reference to the Mediums whose "work" comes later in the service) ... in harmony and understanding with those who have gone before.

We sing another hymn, "He healeth me, O blessed thought, O words with heavenly comfort fraught ...."

In this opening part of the service, the sense of community is called upon in newcomer and member alike. The community is called together for purposes of "thought power" which is visualized as being "sent" in bulk to those who require, because of ill-health, an intensity of "healthy thinking." At the same time, as indicated in the prayer, the members of this spatial community are led to pray for the greater

social and political community in which they are situated, which exists outside the confines of this spatial area. And finally, the present community is, in the prayer, reminded of its connection with the community of spirit in the spirit-world, "those who have gone before." But, and this is important, at the same time that the sense of community on all levels is being confirmed, each individual is asked to go "into the silence" and to "picture them in the best of health," and in this way, because of this tension, the suspension of disbelief required for the full sense of total community is not achieved. As I have mentioned, I do not feel that this tension is incidental in terms of Spiritualist ritual; rather, it is essential, a requirement demanded by the belief system, or philosophy of Spiritualism.

After the healing part of the service, the leader asks the congregation to repeat together the declaration of principles adopted by the Spiritualists National Union of Canada. She qualifies her request: "I would ask that the members repeat these, and that those who are not members look at them with interest." The principles are as follows:

- 1) The fatherhood of God.
- 2) The brotherhood of man.
- 3) The communion of spirits and the ministry of angels.
- 4) The continuous existence of the human soul.
- 5) Personal responsibility.
- 6) Compensation and retribution hereafter for all good and evil deeds done on earth.
- 7) Eternal progress open to every human soul.

I isolate the above, this "creed" part of the service, and call it the second stage of the service proper because it re-settles the congregation into the reality of the spatial area and separates the congregation into two groups: members and newcomers. The latter, who from the entrance phase have not been in any verbal or active way

encouraged to suppose themselves members of the communal group, are now asked or invited to consider the beliefs of the communal group; the newcomers are not requested to recite the principles "in faith"; they are not asked to pray about or meditate on or accept momentarily or for ritual purposes this series of statements. On the contrary, they are asked to look at them "with interest," and the implication is that logic and intellect should go along with such looking. Therefore, community in time and space does not equal community of mind.

There is nothing hurried or coercive or emotional about the service leader's request; it is made with the dignity and control that have marked the tone of the service from the beginning. Principle number three will explain to the newcomer a little of the theological dynamics of the preceding healing-service phase of the ritual; principle number five will place the onus on him or her as an individual to assume care for any possible response; principle number seven will qualify him or her for membership in the Spiritualist community depending where his or her "interest" leads.

The "look with interest" suggestion of the credal phase of the Spiritualist carries over into the sermon phase which transpires next. The service leader introduces the speaker, the lone man of the stage party. He comes to the pulpit with the same dignity and control which the service leader has exhibited. He says; "Good afternoon, friends," to which the congregation replies, in unison, "Good afternoon." The following excerpts, in terms of their content, tone and emphasis, are typical of Spiritualist sermons:

In Ecclesiastes it says ... "Man's life is but a moment" ... Every year, our thoughts turn to the past year ... and further back. What effect did the events of the year have on us ... on

our families, our country, our world? During this year, may we realize that our lives are memories ... may faith banish anxiety ... may you know that you are walking the path of truth which will solve the deep mysteries of life.

Right now, all sorts of things are happening ... things which were foretold many years ago ... U. F.-O.'s, for example. Sometimes I think we've advanced too quickly. In the early 1900's, we tried to get off the ground with a six horse power thing and now it's a 10,000 horse power machine. Have we gone too far too fast? We advance materially, but what about mentally and spiritually? Can we draw any goodness into our own spiritual life by studying things we see, read, our conversations with others?

I can't help noticing the number of new books about that deal with spiritual matter. Veilikovsky, a Jew, noticed big gaps in history and brought down to earth a deeper understanding of all the miraculous happenings in the Bible ... that the plagues of the Egyptians were all the result of natural happenings ... and the idea that the gods of the Hebrew Bible were gods manufactured by the thoughts of the people.

... concerning the Bible and Spiritualism, spiritualism can better explain things ... saying instead of 'the Lord' says this or that ... 'spirit control' ... Instead of the orthodox understanding of the Bible, we must be able to apply our own reason .... Instead of being given a Saviour to take away our sins, spiritualism teaches that each individual has to deal with his own sins. I hope my back is strong enough to bear my sins .... If you read enough of history and its accounts, you always come to religious accounts. The medieval priests were a continuation of the mediums of the past. We must remember that each of us is a very small pawn ... we must get our faith in a higher power back ... we get it from faith in ourselves ... and then we are able to contact our own spirit power more frequently ....

... we have to be interested in young people ... and use our minds to influence people in government. We have to realize that we can contact spirit power to help us in our lives and in the world. I thank you. God bless you.

This sermon phase of the service has served to re-emphasize the tonal and theological themes which have been stated in the service so far. Beginning from the point of "man's life is but a moment," it places the congregation of individuals, newcomers and members alike, in a stream of history seen as progress. If material progress is possible, then spiritual progress is possible; the implication is that the individual, as part of this stream, can and must assume responsibility for the development of his talents, his "faith in a higher power," his



"mind." If "man's life is but a moment," then there is time pressure to get busy, as it were, before the moment ends. The analogy of the "progress" in terms of the airplane or technology in general is often used by Spiritualists in sermons. As the soul may progress in faith and power, so the intellect must "progress" in its interpretation of ancient stories, and re-interpret, in the light of science, stories (e.g. the "plagues of the Egyptians") which until our time have been inexplicable. According to the Spiritualists, reason demands this. Since each individual is seen as being responsible for his own actions or sins, then it follows that although the community can be of help to him in his struggles, the community or a focus of worship (e.g. Christ) cannot save him. One "gets faith" in a higher power by having "faith in ourselves" (as individuals). Faith is not a group affair. Its development is an individual responsibility. Casting our attention back for a moment to such a seemingly unimportant ritual detail as the controlled entrance ritual, it makes sense in Spiritualist terms as outlined in the creed and sermon that the usher, indeed, has a responsibility to the newcomer not to promise him even by hint, that he will be saved by being gathered into a warm maternal community who will take his "cross" upon itself, or do his work for him. For, in Spiritualist terms of reference, this can't happen. If the newcomer is to be "saved," he must save himself; if he is to develop faith, he must develop it himself. Although the community may offer to show him how, the community assumes no responsibility. What the community does, then, as evidenced in the sermon and the declaration of principles, is to present reasons, intellectual reasons, why the newcomer or individual should have faith, should develop his power of divinity. The reasons are logically

plausible and have to do with the concrete presence of the individual for his "moment" on the earth plane. By contacting the spirit-world and developing his power to do so, the individual can, by power of mind, contribute to the healing of other individuals, can influence "political leaders" in terms of thought harmony. At the same time, his soul will "progress" (see principle number seven). And, when he "passes to spirit," he will have already begun to earn his compensation (see principle number six). These are some of the reasons the Spiritualist community offers for the acceptance by the individual of its philosophy and practice. But the community offers more than reasons, much more. In keeping with its quasi-scientific bias, the community offers its own brand of proof. And the proof is believed to come from the spirit-world itself via the workers or mediums of the Spiritualist community. We now enter the phase of the service which represents the climax. During the climax, the individual is called upon to experience the results of development and practice within the Spiritualist community.

The leader of the service introduces this afternoon's medium, Mrs. Jones. The stage lights are turned out. Just prior to this one observes that Mrs. Jones is sitting quietly, with eyes closed and hands tightly clenched, an attitude of what seems to be intense concentration. After the lights are out, she moves to the pulpit and says "Good afternoon," and the congregation responds in kind. Then her work begins, her process of being the go-between from spirit to individual, of delivering messages from various people who have entered the spirit world to the earth-plane individuals who are concretely present in this time and this place above the leathercraft shop on Ste. Catherine near Atwater.

During this phase of the service, the "proof" phase, the tonal

quality of the ritual changes drastically. Gone are the controlled and reasonable and dignified and logical body and ideological languages. Gone are the rules of deportment which have governed the phases of service until now. The medium moves quickly from one side of the stage area to the other. She glances out over the audience in an agitated manner. Her hands flutter, as if groping for a correct word or sentence to transmit what is coming to her from the spirit-world. Her voice is loud and strident and strained as though itself responsible for correct and clear transmission of messages. She speaks at great speed, with few breaks to signify punctuation, seemingly in order not to lose a word of the messages which themselves come quickly and as though from a great distance. She claps her hands to punctuate; she snaps her fingers; she whistles as she paces back and forth across the stage. As we have observed quite the opposite kind of stage behaviour from the beginning of the service, we must conclude that this medium has indeed, in terms of speech and agitation, come in contact with a world other than the controlled and steady and knowable world of the earth-plane as we have known it in the auditorium previous to this point in the service.

She calls to someone towards the back of the hall:

May I come to you, please ... the lady wearing the green beret? Yes, to you. Thank you. Coming to you is very good. Yes. There is a vibration all around you. Do you have the fragrance of flowers around you at home? I smell flowers somehow, yes. Do you have an anniversary coming up? I have someone here ... what is it? Thank you. Something about a struggle. There is a man here who was paralyzed, do you understand? He is very close to you at this moment and tells me to tell you not to worry because towards the end of the summer, the trouble will be resolved, do you understand? Thank you. I have something about a child here. Do you know about a child who departed into spirit in her early teens? I'll leave that with you; the child is very happy and tells you not to worry about the house

because she tells me you worry too much and won't let go and relax at all, because this child is trying to tell you that ... yes, thank you, that you'd better relax because of your problem with blood pressure. Does that mean anything to you? Yes? Thank you. I'll leave that with you. Ah ... I must move on, yes, to you, Sir. I have someone here who has recently departed to spirit ... and you are puzzled by all the books you are reading at the moment, books on a new subject, and ... I see, it's difficult, all coming at once ... oh yes ... thank you ... sir, they're trying to help you on the other side but they say you're impatient about your progress ... they say all will be well.

Throughout this part of the service, the eyes of all are focussed on the medium. Her movements continue to be erratic and, in contrast to the controlled action we have seen earlier on the part of the stage party exciting. Her language is a constant flow between the spirit-world and the world of this hall. At times, she exhibits a tiredness and strain (through body language) as though the entire procedure required great effort on the physical, mental and emotional level. Occasionally, she sighs and drops her shoulders for a moment before she continues on to the next individual she "comes to."

The individuals in the congregation listen raptly to messages, turning in their seats in order to see the person to whom the medium is directing her attention, and then turning back to watch the medium. There is a quiet expectancy between messages as each member of the congregation waits to see who will next receive a message. Those receiving messages at any given time are very attentive. If they are sitting next to a friend, the friend may take notes for later examination. Usually the person receiving a message will respond initially with a "thank you" or "yes" and then continue some sort of brief response whenever the medium asks a question (although the questions of the medium to receiver often seem rhetorical in terms of the continual verbal flow).

The content of the messages may be summarized as follows:

- a) the individual is worried, anxious, puzzled, troubled  
the message says not to worry; help is present.
- b) the individual has made plans  
the message says that the plans will work out.
- c) the individual is seeking spirituality  
the message says that the individual is being guided
- d) someone the individual knows is in trouble  
the message says to go ahead and help the friend.
- e) incidental messages may contain facts, names, places which  
the receiver may identify for his personal reasons.

The general tenor of the messages is encouragement and hope in whatever undertaking the individual may have; the specific tenor is guidance from the world of spirit. There is never any hint of disaster or violence or malevolence; I have never heard a message come across in the form of a warning. The implicit invitation in all messages is that the individual develop his capacities to come in touch with the spirit world and therefore enter a development course which is usually offered one evening a week at the Church, i) to help the progress of his soul and ii) to help the progress of his fellowmen.

What the individual has witnessed on stage during the final part of this service is, at least in theory, possible for him. The power of contact with the world of spirit is power that the individual in the congregation may also have, provided he is willing to develop it. Spiritualist doctrine recognizes, according to Skultans, the universality of mediumistic or spiritual power in a latent, if not manifest form.<sup>13</sup> Since mediumistic power, then, is the currency in terms of which status within the movement is acquired, this climax of the service, this display of contact with the spirit-world, could be analyzed as indirectly

invitational. As invitation, this part of the service is the climactic and dramatic acting out of the call to self-responsibility, reasonable decision-making, and power which has been issued from the beginning of the service in less dramatic ritual action.

From the beginning of the service, the individual has been left to his own devices of reason and judgement concerning the principles of Spiritualism as presented in the declaration and concerning the theory as presented in the sermon. He has been seated within the spatial community; but, he has been reminded from time to time that without his reasonable, unemotional consent, he cannot be considered a member of the community. During the climax of the service, he may experience reception of a message from the spirit-world, and experience the message within a community for whom such messages are axiomatically true. Even if he should not experience a message himself, he at least will experience the effect of messages upon others in the same spatial setting. In addition, he will witness the power and prestige conferred on the medium who delivers the messages by the community in which he is situated. Any or all of these experiences constitute what amounts to a personal invitation to development of his own individual latent powers of spirituality. The call to reasonableness of the first parts of the service ground such an invitation in quasi-science. The acceptance of individual choice within all the reasonableness of the first parts of the service has served to assure the individual that he is under no threat of emotional coercion. The traditional church setting of the stage, the stating of the first two principles, the singing of hymns, the references to healing and harmony, all of these legitimize the concept of power by having it focus on what is "for the good and betterment

of all men." However erratic seems to be the behaviour of the medium during the message delivery, the tone of encouragement and hope as outcome remain positive and reasonable and worthwhile in both individual and human terms.

When she has finished her work, the medium goes to her chair on stage and sinks into it, exhausted. The leader of the service moves quietly and calmly to the pulpit and thanks the medium on behalf of the assembled people. The leader of the service tells us that those who did not receive a message this afternoon will most probably receive one during the week if they attend the mid-week Psychic Tea, or come next Sunday to the meeting. If anyone has a question, or wants to inquire about development classes, he or she is free to do so after the meeting. The leaders ask us to sing a hymn in order to close the service. We do "O Spirit, let me walk with thee, in paths of lowly service free."

During the post-service, there is much conversation among those who know each other. Strangers or newcomers are neither pursued in conversation nor questioned in any way. There is no official coffee-hour of any kind. The majority of those in attendance put on their coats and descend in twos and threes or alone and emerge onto Ste. Catherine Street.

## CHAPTER V

### THE ALTAR-CALL RITUAL IN THE EVANGEL PENTECOSTAL CHURCH, MONTREAL

In order to understand the altar-call ritual which takes place every Sunday evening at 7:00 P.M. at Evangel's evangelistic service, it is necessary to understand the physical environment in which the ritual takes place, and the emotionally-charged nature of the service which precedes the specific ritual. Concerning the former, I have added an appendix to this paper, a floor plan of the church. Concerning the latter, I shall describe a typical service, one which was especially successful in that the atmosphere created by the choir and orchestra, the ushers and counsellors, the participation of the audience and, most importantly, the atmosphere created by the preacher, resulted in an overwhelming response by the audience to the invitation to the altar — the altar-call. Since the week-by-week structure of the service varies very little in terms of sub-rituals, what follows can be taken as a model.

#### Pre-Service<sup>14</sup>

As I enter the lobby, I am greeted by an usher who shakes my hand and asks me how I am feeling tonight; he says he is very pleased to see me here again and expresses the hope that I shall come often. He smiles



very warmly. He is interested in what church I attend when I do not come here, and I tell him. He is familiar with the church, and asks after one of the parishioners (who happens to be ill). He says that he will pray for her, and mentions the healing ministry of Evangel Church and that as part of his work at Evangel, he visits people who are in hospital and has seen miraculous healings take place among the patients. Before he greets another person who has just arrived, he indicates to me the entrance to the church auditorium. Standing at the entrance is a woman whom I noticed last Sunday during the altar-call. It seems to be her function to minister to those who respond to the invitation, to ask them their names, to distribute copies of the Gospel of St. John to them. She greets me: "Bless you for coming, how are you tonight?" She smiles sincerely, and like the usher, establishes eye-contact with me, looking into my eyes rather than listening to my words for the answer to her question.

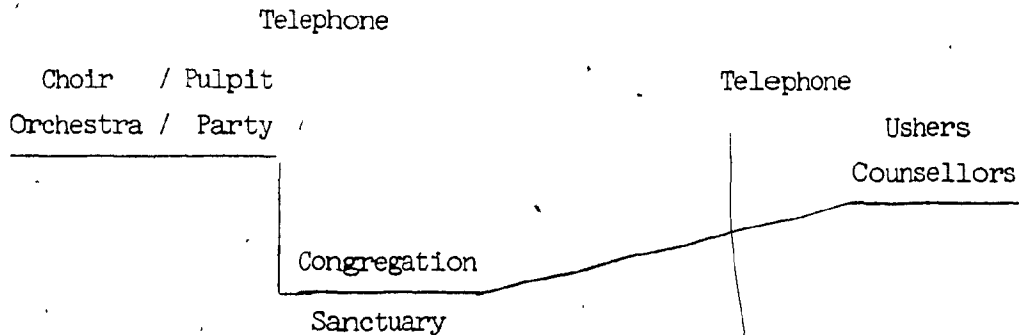
I notice Pastor Weller emerge from his office off the lobby, smiling, neatly dressed in a three-piece dark suit, white shirt and dark tie. He carries a Bible in his hands. He moves quickly, almost eagerly and excitedly down the steps leading to the lower hall. When the service begins, he will re-emerge with the pulpit party, and take his place on stage.

I take my seat towards the back of the auditorium. The people around me are chatting noisily among themselves; and I hear the electric organ playing a bright, quick version of "When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be ... when we all ... see Jesus ... we'll sing and shout the victory." The ushers move up and down the red-carpeted aisle distributing the programs for this evening's service.

The auditorium is well-lit, and busy with movement of people. On stage, the orchestra assembles and then joins in the hymn that the organist is playing. There is the air of a party here, an atmosphere of something-about-to-happen. For even now in the pre-service the tension of anticipation so necessary to the climactic nature of the altar-call exists. And the silent questions that the music already asks, that the ushers and counsellors are already preparing for are these: "Who will respond to the altar-call this evening?" and "Whom will the Spirit of God move to give his life over to Jesus?" and "How effectively will the Spirit work through the preacher, the music, the choir?" In other words, what will this experience be? And who will experience it? As I understand it, then, the function of the pre-service is to create the sort of friendly and secure excitement which may lead to any person's reception of the Spirit. The usher and the counsellor have established an almost familial security between themselves and the stranger. The friendly busyness in the auditorium has witnessed to the same; the organist, playing a hymn within the non-disturbing comfort of the major key has soothed the stranger; the speed at which she has played the hymn has created a certain sense of anticipation.

The choir files on stage, followed by the pulpit party who take their places in the chairs near the pulpit, stage front. The service is about to begin. If viewed spatially, in profile, we see the congregation parenthesized by two strong official groups, and parenthesized in such a way that they, the congregation, are located in a lower spatial location than those two groups. In Pentecostal terms, the place in the auditorium where the people sit is termed "the sanctuary." (It is interesting to note that the term "sanctuary" in Roman Catholic usage

denotes the high altar area to which the congregation is not admitted).



Service: Part One

The choir opens the service with a rousing, enthusiastic hymn: "Nothing is Impossible when you Trust in God." When it has finished, the junior pastor moves quickly to the pulpit microphone and announces hymn number 297. He reads the lines of the first verse: "His Joy Unspeakable and full of glory ... and the half has never been told." It is a lively and purposeful march; the congregation claps hands as it sings.

Junior Pastor: You're singing well ... the orchestra is playing well ... I don't know if we can get any better ... we can't speak about it, but we can sing about it ... it is our prayer that we can learn to speak that joy even better.

The congregation sings the chorus three times; an usher's voice leads us into a fourth singing. During the singing, several members of the congregation raise their hands above their heads, as do the members of the pulpit party. Between each chorus, members of the congregation call out: "Hallelujah ... praise God." Afterwards, the junior pastor says: "The Lord inhabits the praises of his people," and invites the congregation to pray, which some do, in glossalalia and in English. As the sound thickens, more and more voices join in until (in order to stop this period) the junior pastor says: "God is answering prayer

already before we ask." While he speaks, an usher moves up the aisle and hands some pieces of paper to the senior pastor, who, as we have been told, will "take us to prayer." The senior pastor looks through these papers as he comes to the pulpit, for they are evidently prayer requests. He says: "Thank you, Lord ... we rejoice in the congregation of the righteous ... we pray that lives will be touched tonight, souls changed tonight ... we pray for the preacher and the soloist."

The soloist sits at the piano and sings:

Dreams turn to ashes, so I ran to you, Lord ... something beautiful, something good ... all my confusion He understood ... He made something beautiful of my life.

and

How can you turn around and say that God is dead? If God is dead, then who's this living in my soul? He gives us shelter from life's stormy weather ... and love to keep us together ... there is a bridge you can cross if you will ... and the toll has been paid.

and

If we never meet again, friend ... if you have been faithful to God ... I'll see you in the Rapture some sweet day ....

In contrast to the march-like and enthusiastic congregational singing of this part of the service, the singing of the soloist represents a change of mood. Musically, the songs he sings are in the pop-tradition; they tend to be slow-moving, and written in waltz rhythm, itself a mode which creates a rather bittersweetness in the emotions of the listener. His songs have been intensely personal, almost testimonial in nature; their themes have concerned human temporality, loneliness, the existential condition resolved by personal experience of Jesus Christ, God.

The Service: Part One, then, has done two things: it has

carried the Pre-Service feelings of welcome, togetherness, we-are-all-one-family-even-if-we're-strangers, into expression in joyous communal singing and spontaneous communal prayer. It has encouraged personal bodily expression in gestures, clapping, the raising of hands. And secondly, through the soloist, this part of the service has introduced the theme of individual apartness, loneliness and personal experience. This latter theme, which is essential to the ritual of the altar-call, will be picked up and intensified in Service: Part Three when the invitation is given from the pulpit.

Service: Part Two

During this part, which I regard somewhat as an intermission, the pastors deal with church business and announcements. The ushers come forward to the altar and proceed backwards towards the lobby, taking the offering. The senior pastor outlines the events taking place at the church during the coming week. The junior pastor announces the "youth events" coming up. Visitors are welcomed and asked to raise their hands. The ushers, who have finished taking the offering, move once more up the aisles to distribute "welcome packets". (these contain pens, cards of introduction for those who want to see one of the pastors, and a welcome letter from the church, signed by the senior pastor) to those whose hands are raised. All the while, the organ plays a bright, jaunty chorus of a hymn. The enthusiasm of the chorus is continued as the senior pastor asks the congregation to rise and sing the chorus: "Amazing Grace" to the tune of "I love to go a-wandering."

This "intermission" besides being a necessary line of communication between the church administrators and the congregation, has brought

us out of the two emotional spheres established by Pre-Service and Service: Part One (the individual as welcomed member of family, and the individual as lonely, struggling human), and set us among the ordinary everyday world of meetings, money, time, and plans. In addition, while the congregation has remained seated, there has been an almost constant movement of ushers up and down the aisles (for the offering and the "welcome packets"). In a way, this movement may be regarded as "prophetic" in that it forecasts the later movement of people from their seats and down the aisles to the altar. During the Pre-Service, when the ushers distributed programs, they offered a similar example of what (hopefully) was to come. By this time, then, the congregation has become accustomed to the use of the aisle by reliable church officials. And, although the Church administrators may not have consciously arranged it so, as the congregation observes this ritual aisle-traffic, the aisle becomes a way, a focus of meaningful official activity for the especially appointed core-family. And, by invitation and, at present, by implication, it is a possible highway for others, both regulars and strangers.

Service: Part Three

By this time, the senior pastor has "dismissed" the choir and orchestra, who have come to sit in the "Sanctuary" for this part of the service. There is an atmosphere, now, of "settling down." Towards the end of Service: Part Two, people in the congregation have shifted to comfortable positions in their seats; bodily movement has subsided; communal singing is over (until the invitation). There is an air of seriousness. The pulpit party no longer uses the telephone connecting

with the lobby. The ushers are seated. Unannounced, the soloist moves to the piano and sings:

When I first heard of Jesus' love and grace,  
My heart was overwhelmed to think that He'd take my place ...  
I cried: "Lord, I'll go with you every step of the way  
That's all I can do, my debt to repay" ...  
I told Him I loved Him, it was easy to say ...  
But harder to prove it when temptation came my way ...  
I love Him too much to fail Him now ... or break my vow ...  
The years have drawn us closer.

And another waltz, very slow and languorous:

Left behind forever and ever without hope for eternity,  
missing out on the joys that the others have found ...  
dear Lord, don't let me be the one left behind ...  
when Jesus comes ...

These two songs contain themes which are meaningful to the (in Pentecostal terms) two types of people sitting in the congregation — those who have been converted (have given their lives to Jesus) and who, during the course of the week, have "back-slidden," and those who have not yet given their lives to Jesus. By necessity, everyone is included; and implicitly, everyone is challenged. The explicit challenge will occur during the altar-call. And, thematically speaking, the sermon is the aisle to that altar.

I shall give here excerpts from the sermon, quoting directly from my notes:

Thank you Lord for your Presence ... we didn't come here to speak a message to get people "all drummed up ... we ask your Presence to cover the congregation like a blanket, from front to back, all over this place, Lord, we ask your Presence to cover us ... O Lord, you have now taken control of this meeting ...

There are two soldiers in Viet Nam who climbed a hill and saw a woman with a rifle standing in front of a cave shooting. So they shot the woman and when they went into the cave they found a little baby there. One of the soldiers wrote a letter home saying that life was cheap. In the world today, life is cheap ... but we read, in the word of God about how highly Jesus regarded human life, how much He valued it.

I know a young man who was very involved in the church ... he had three beautiful children but he was leading a double life and now he's separated. And we're living in a day when men and women's principles are being compromised ... there is lots of concealment going on ... lots of covering-up and double lives ...

In I Corinthians 3, it says that each man's work will become manifest, and the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.

God says there's a ball game ... He watches us and keeps score. I serve a God that is great; that led the children of Israel out of the wilderness. But we are liars; we pretend that we're Christians, but we go out and live a life that is not Christian ... we go down the road.

It's time we stopped playing church; it's time that we stopped ... that we got on fire one hundred percent for God. He doesn't want you to be lukewarm. He wants you either hot or cold. If you're lukewarm, He'll spew you out of his mouth.

Are you fooling around with God? If you don't know God, if you haven't given your heart to Jesus, you're fooling around with God and refusing the love of Jesus. You're wasting His time and His love because you're using your life for your own purposes and not for the purposes of the God who created you and Jesus who died for your sins.

Without God, we are nothing. We can't play games with God. I'm talking about the Prince of Peace ... I'm talking about one who is the Prince of Peace ... the one who can take lives and remake them, who can take bad habits and change them ... the one who can heal you.

Jesus is concerned about your needs ... each one ... but it doesn't matter what your need is because Jesus is bigger than it is ... Jesus is bigger than your need ... I don't claim to be a good preacher, Lord ... but I'm relying on your Spirit ... We thank you for what's happening here right now, Lord ... the meeting is in your hands ... this church is in your hands and these people, all of us are in your hands, from the front row to the back ...

Is there anyone here who would like to walk with God in His strength?

The soloist has moved to the piano and has begun to play softly the tune "Now is the Hour." The altar-call is about to begin. The sermon has contained examples of people who have not been saved and



examples of those who have been saved but have "back-slidden." The preacher, a layperson from another town, has been persuasive and personal, and during the course of his preaching, tonally, he has both soothed and then provoked the congregation, outlining to them their shortcomings and always presenting the solution, acceptance of Jesus, reconciliation with Jesus. The preacher asks the congregation to stand. This is the final bodily preparation of the congregation to receive the invitation. For those who will respond, only one movement will be necessary to reach the aisle. The preacher eliminates the necessity for the responding individual to stand, by having us stand communally before he issues the invitation. Also, standing affords the respondent a little more privacy in that he will not have to stand up alone and be the only one standing in a seated auditorium.

The organist moves into place on stage and begins to play soft background hymn music; the dispersed choir picks up the cue and begins to sing "Just as I am, without one plea" and the preacher asks us to bow our heads and close our eyes and not look around. And the invitation begins.

The preacher says:

There is someone here tonight who doesn't know Jesus, who has been thinking to himself, "Lord, I don't know you but I know that there is a lack in my life ... something wrong in the way. I've been living under my own steam" .... Will that person raise his or her hand. Right now ... I know what you're thinking .... You're thinking that you want to know Jesus. Raise your hand so I can pray for you. Raise it now. Let me see your hand. Yes. I see that hand. And that hand. Praise the Lord. The Lord is working in this auditorium tonight and His Spirit is here.

Now as we sing the second verse, every head bowed, every eye closed, I want the people who raised their hands to step out into the aisle and come to the altar. Just like that. Just step out ...

At this point, this crucial starting point of the invitation,

the counsellors, both men and women who have gone from their seats to the lobby area during the moment the congregation was asked to stand, these counsellors begin to walk slowly and singly down the aisle towards the altar in order to be there to meet those who respond to the invitation. For a stranger to the ritual, these counsellors might be taken for those who have been "convicted" by the music and sermon and are going to the altar, admitting a personal need. This latter supposition would, for the unconverted, provide an example of others responding in a way that they might like to, that if they went out into the aisle and down to the altar, they wouldn't be alone. This, again, can be interpreted as an underlining of the atmosphere of community which was established during the Pre-Service and Service: Part One. The altar-call depends on the response of the individual to the Spirit (through music and preaching) but the acting out of the response, its dramatization in bodily movement towards aisle and altar is, through the counsellors' procession, a communal dramatization.

At the invitation of the preacher for the second time, three people from various points in the Sanctuary move into the aisles and proceed towards the altar. Two women and one man. At the altar, two lady counsellors meet the women, and a man counsellor meets the man. One of the women is crying and seems broken up and a lady counsellor puts her arm around her as she kneels. The preacher looks down and thanks God that people are responding to the call of the Spirit. He tells us that the Spirit is at work in every soul here, that there are many of us who want to come down to the altar just as these have, and he appeals to them to do so. The congregation continues to sing. The senior pastor rises from his stage chair, and lifting his hands, calls

out: "Praise God ... Hallelujah." The preacher enlarges the invitation to include "back-sliders":

There is a mother here who is worried about her daughter ... and God says that if you'll come to His altar now, right now, you'll be delivered from that worry ...

There is a man here tonight who has been fooling around ... you know what I mean by that, you know you do ... and if you come to the altar now, right now, Jesus Christ will deliver you of it ... Will you come?

God is real. We didn't come here tonight for a show ... we came to meet the living God ... and the Spirit of God is convicting you right now ... you've been trifling with God ... you've been trying to live a double life ... God is telling me that there's someone here who has serious eye problems ... and God says if you'll come, He'll meet you here and take those problems away from you. Come for a healing.

Throughout the invitation and its enlargement, people have been walking down the aisle to the altar. The lady sitting next to me asks me if I want to go, because if I do, she'll go with me. People walk down the aisle singly and in twos. We are still singing. At the altar, people kneel; some are crying and being comforted by counsellors and friends; others stand and pray aloud, in tongues, lifting their hands above their heads in praise, calling out "Hallelujah" and "Praise God." One lady sways, as if to fall, but she is caught from behind by a lady counsellor who helps her kneel. There are about fifty people at the altar, and the general noise of praise and crying. The congregation has long since opened its eyes and looked around. The organist plays strong, vibrant hymns, although still quietly. The preacher has descended the stage steps and now passes among those gathered at the altar, speaking to people, laying his hands upon their heads. The senior pastor, still on stage, calls everyone to come to the altar to be with those who have already come. This is a general and final invitation issued to the

community at large after the time of personal response has elapsed. He tells us that those who must go are dismissed, that he'll see us next Sunday. Some people join the others at the altar; some people wander out into the lobby area to chat with people they know, or pick up their children from the nursery. All structure and formality are gone now, and the meeting disperses. The singing and glossalalia rise in volume at the altar where there is a general melee, where respondents are being congratulated or instructed, or filling out the altar-call cards they have been given by the counsellors. These cards register the name of the correspondent, his reason for coming to the altar, whether or not he has come to be saved or to rededicate himself to Jesus.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

As I stated earlier, the focus and concern of this thesis is with the function and role of individual actions and experiences within the context of collective, corporate ritual services. I shall re-state the issues briefly:

Collective, corporate rituals largely involve patterns of speech and action undertaken in unison or harmony, often using speech codes which are restricted rather than elaborated:

What is more often found is a restricted code ... where prediction is possible only at the structural level. The lexicon will vary from one case to another, but in all cases it is drawn from a narrow range. The social forms which produce this code will be based upon some common set of closely-shared identifications self-consciously held by the members, where immediacy of the relationship is stressed. It follows that these relationships will be of an inclusive character. The speech is played out against a background of communal, self-consciously held interests which removes the need to verbalize subjective intent and make it explicit. The meanings will be condensed .... The major function of this code is to reinforce the form of the social relationship (a warm and inclusive relationship) by restricting the verbal signaling of individuated response.<sup>15</sup>

Individual, idiosyncratic actions and discursive, individualized speech patterns are discouraged (except occasionally on the part of members of the official parties, or ritual leaders of the groups), and they are discouraged because they tend to disrupt the common experience of the group feeling, the sense of oneness and harmony within the group. This becomes evident in a group such as St. Cyril's prayer group where

during the ritual act of the Bible study, all speech activity is in the hands of the official person, the priest. He gets all the lines. And his lines are all restricted. The lines allowed for from the rest of the people in the group are either one or two word answers or questions which either mirror image the priest's discourse or provide him with an entrance to a new discourse. No time is allowed in the ritual nor is any model given for a restricted code belonging to the laity. Therefore, when the laity speak, they tend to do so in elaborated code, and by doing so, they disrupt the group, thereby creating frustration on the part of the priest and the other members of the group. An example of this is the exchange between priest and the group on the subject of the martyrdom of St. Stephen, and the sudden introduction on the part of Daisy of her personal feelings of distress at the situation in Palestine at the present time. At another meeting, a woman introduced into a discussion of the relationship between the sisters Mary and Martha, a gruesome story about how she had got revenge on her own sister. And this was much to the embarrassment of the group. Had the same two "elaborators" attended the St. Mark's group, where elaborated speech patterns are not only given an airing in the sharing section of the ritual, but are actually transformed into restricted codes by the group itself (although this takes time) and used as a creative means of strengthening group solidarity, the same sort of frustration and uneasiness would have been overcome. The St. Mark's group, then, accepts as a given, the drive of the individual towards idiosyncratic acts and uses them to feed the collectivity.

With the Sri Chinmoy disciples we have what I shall call (after Bernstein, with a reversal) restricted and elaborated codes of silence.<sup>16</sup>

The restricted silence shows up in the pre-service silent activity, and then elaborated in the silence of the ritual meditation during which body movement ceases, and the disciple moves towards Guru, like a solitary swimmer, in his individual silence.

On the other hand, in the Spiritualist ritual action, the most highly developed individual becomes the one who is entitled to elaborated speech and action, both of which are represented in the least silent part of the ritual action.

The Pentecostals, whose ritual action emphasizes emotional response, in order to bring about reconciliation of individual (new-comer or back-slider) to the community, moves between sound (hymns) and silence (the individual weeping at the altar) in order to effect its work.

#### Sri Chinmoy Disciples

The ritual action of the Chinmoy disciples, as I have pointed out, emphasizes the relationship between disciple and Guru, rather than that which exists between the disciple and his or her community. The communal ritual seems to take place more for Guru (who likes to think of his "family" gathered together around him even though his chair is vacant) than it takes place for the disciples. Nothing transpires at the ritual act that could not be acted out by each disciple alone; in fact, since the disciples meditate regularly on their own, in the morning and evening, the communal ritual represents a group repetition of an individual act, since the individual can read, sing, eat prasada, chant alone. In this sense, the Chinmoy ritual differs from the others we have looked at here. The individual spiritualist requires the

services of the medium; the individual Pentecostal requires someone to preach to him and invite him to the altar; the anglican individuals require priests to celebrate the eucharist; each group requires some "official" person or people to manage the collective part of the ritual. For the Chinmoy disciples, however, the "official" person is absent (although the photograph is a reminder of his occult presence in the same way that his empty chair is the same sort of reminder).

What the collective ritual of the Sri Chinmoy groups asks of the individual is that he or she rededicates him or herself as a child of Guru, and as a sibling of the other members of the group. Therefore, the entire ritual action, from beginning to end, from pre-service to post-service, consists of such individual acts.

In the pre-service, the individual prepares himself bodily by bathing and changing into clothes (chosen by Guru for his disciples) which make him look like the other members of the "family" along a division of sex. In the preparation of the room for meditation, each individual child of Guru's and brother or sister of the rest does some contributing. In addition, each individual signs the attendance list. Each of these individual acts is dedicated to the service of Guru. Even during the reading, chanting, singing, the emphasis rests on the relationship of the individual to Guru by occult contact; at the same time, the individual is inevitably competing with the other individuals (brothers and sisters) for Guru's favour, attention, respect, love. In this sense, then, all acts are individual; they vary only in terms of intensity. The intensity is less when the individuals in the group are involved in action which is chiefly "family" (of which the individuals are girls and boys). And this lesser intensity exists in those parts



of the ritual which are most characterized by sound (chanting, singing, reading). The children are performing for their father (and mother) during the singing, chanting and reading. During the group meditation time, which takes one half hour, each individual is on his own to seek occult contact. During this time, it is the purity of intention of each individual which Guru the father sees; and it is during this time that the individual re-dedicates himself to Guru. That the meditation takes the time it does is significant, for the community, just as its communal ritual indicates, depends on contact with Guru for its existence. The essential movement of the Chinmoy ritual then is inward. After the chanting, singing, reading which seem to be "outward" but which are functionally (in that they are little more than preliminaries to "good contact" with Guru) inward-tending, the deep time slot of silence and rededication takes place.

With the Chinmoy group, the ritual movement seems fairly simple; nor, it seems so in contrast to the Pentecostal altar-call, for instance. Let sound mark ritual movement, for example. In order to stir the soup of congregation emotion, the Pentecostal ritual moves in a variety of ways through various sounds, in its use of the waltz (bittersweet) the march (triumphant), the dirge in a minor key (regret, repentance), the peaceful hymn in a major key (resignation and trust). All these movements act upon the emotions of the individuals attending the Pentecostal services, and by doing so, separate the individual from his sense of the group in order to put him into the sort of framework whereby he can later (having practiced being an individual in a ritual setting, having been "scoured" emotionally as an individual) make that move into the aisle in response to the altar-call. In the Chinmoy group, the music in

the singing and occasional accompaniment, is not varied, the tone remains the same, the language of the songs is not intended to convince the mind, but soothe the emotions rather than arouse them. As the Pentecostal heads towards the aisle (outwards from his seat and into community), the Chinmoy disciple heads inwards, away from community and into the inward presence of Guru.

In the Anglican groups I have examined, the ritual of the Eucharist provides an occasion for this separation-reconciliation. Each group makes use of the booklet The Holy Eucharist Rite Two of the Episcopal Church, which has been approved for use in the Anglican Diocese of Montreal. The feature of this liturgy is that it is written in everyday English rather than in the English of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. To the people of the St. Mark's group, the booklet is familiar since it is the one used during the Sunday Masses; for the people of the St. Cyril's group, on the other hand, the booklet is not as familiar since the Book of Common Prayer is used during the Sunday Masses. The booklet is used by the "house-church" of St. Cyril's for two reasons: the service is shorter and time is important in that all the rituals (meeting, social hour) must be included within a two-hour time slot. This is the first reason. The second reason has to do with the priest's conviction that St. Cyril's people should grow accustomed to some variation, and is therefore directive on the part of the priest. Neither priest nor people are happy about the use of the booklet; they often unite in criticism of the modern language and re-state their preference for the "old" language. The people of St. Mark's, however, prefer the use of the Rite Two because the language is the language they use every day; they feel they can "relate" to it better than they

can to the old-fashioned language of the Book of Common Prayer.

Despite the varying preferences, the ritual of the Mass remains, in terms of its order, the same, and includes a Penitential Rite:

The Deacon or Celebrant says: Let us confess our sins against  
God and our neighbour.

Silence may be kept.

Minister and People: MOST MERCIFUL GOD  
We confess that we have sinned against you  
in thought, word, and deed,  
by what we have done  
and by what we have left undone.  
We have not loved you with our whole heart;  
We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.  
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.  
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,  
have mercy on us and forgive us;  
that we may delight in your will,  
and walk in your ways,  
to the glory of your Name. Amen.

The Bishop when present, or the Priest, stands and says:

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins  
through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in  
all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit  
keep you in eternal life. Amen.

As the above confession and absolution represent the verbal ritual by which separation (The St. Mark's group is given less time during the silence than is the St. Cyril's group) and reconciliation is experienced. As I have already mentioned, the exchange of the peace and the reception of the Host represent the ritual body movements through which the individuals become connected to each other (the greeting of the peace) and to God in the Host (via the priest and/or his appointed deputies).

For both the St. Mark's and the St. Cyril's groups, the Mass (in terms of Anglican belief system) is the ritual focus. But, as we have seen, the Mass takes on different reconciliatory functions for each

group, and these functional differences are a reflection of what is emphasized during the ritual time which is not specifically Mass time.

The individual separation in the St. Cyril's group is provided for by the belief-system regarding official persons and non-official persons and their respective roles during ritual time (i.e. the general time during which the group members are together as a body).

The pre-service, which contains ordinary conversational exchange between members of one group, provides a limited sense of corporateness, partly because of the already existing parish background which the members share and partly because of shared focus in terms of official people, especially the priest. Interestingly enough, the presence of the official people (the warden, the priest) causes a separateness among members from that official party by reason of function (the warden makes the phone calls, the priest carries the communion box for the major ritual, and carries the keys, also, to ritual time). On the other hand, the presence of the official parties enforces a corporateness based on the receptive function of the non-official group members; in other words, in the presence of official parties who have certain ritual roles to play out, there must be witnesses for whom the roles may be played out, and in this case and in this time, the witnesses are the group members at large, the unofficials. This gives the parishioners who come to house-church, a strong corporate sense. Theoretically, it is possible for members of the group, or the group at large, to remove themselves (for instance, from the Bible study by permitting their attention to wander) and render the official party helpless by taking his job away. He may not teach if there is no one to be taught.

In this group, the separateness factor is present in the tension

between the priest and individual group members. This is well illustrated in the ritual exchanges between priest and individuals during the question and answer period. The priest creates a question which is ambiguous in the sense that it is open to several answers depending on the individual's interpretation. The individual attempts to answer; the extent to which the individual answers "correctly" (i.e. is able to give the particular answer the priest is looking for) will be the extent to which the tension between the individual and the priest will be resolved and the "separateness" between group members and the official party overcome.

There is a sense in which the ambiguity of the questions and the general difficulty experienced by individuals concerning the answers creates a sense of "togetherness" on the part of non-official individuals, especially in cases where many individuals have attempted without success to answer a given question. I have referred to this elsewhere as a negative corporateness, or corporateness by default. During the time of the group's meeting, this negative corporateness softens the burden of failure experienced by individuals who can't find the right answer. But, in the long-term sense, this quasi-reconciliation into the group does not promote group continuance. It isn't positive enough to do so.

The tension between the individual and the priest is resolved therefore, in the St. Cyril's group, during the Communion service. The group member and the priest achieve ritual reconciliation during administration and the reception of the host and the wine. To reinforce this, the priest breaks his large host into enough pieces for everyone in the group. Everyone participates in communion. No matter what the isolation has been between priest and parishioner, the reconciliation of the climactic ritual is always present in the story of the Mass, through-

priest, community, God.

The post-service social time expresses a reconciliation of another sort. Occurring as it does in private homes, this house-church gives rise to another sort of official person: the hostess. And this, it would seem, is where a more powerful dynamic of separateness and reconciliation takes place. As I have already pointed out, there is to no extent an emphasis on "community" in the sense that there is in the St. Mark's group. This is well illustrated symbolically in the St. Cyril's parish decision that the Peace ritual part of the Mass would not be acted out every Sunday, but just on special occasions (e.g. Christmas, Easter). It was felt that many became uncomfortable and distracted during the exchange; there were problems of ritual movement--the priest would have to "administer" the "Peace of the Lord" to the deacon, the deacon to the servers, the servers to the choir, the choir, in turn, to the congregation. And all of this required a certain amount of ritual time during which the congregation was standing, but inactive. In fact, one of the problems became that of restraining certain parishioners who "jumped" the Peace and began exchanging it with each other before the "arrival" of it from the Priest, deacon, server, choir.

The above will serve to illustrate, at this point, the importance of the hostess at house-church. In a sense larger than the ritual of house-church, its happening in someone's house is itself a reconciliation between individual parishioners who, from Sunday to Sunday, experience a sort of separateness from each other's daily experience.

As I have already pointed out, the social hour is the highlight of house-church, the time when the official parties of priest and warden "de-officialize," the time when the difficulties of question and answer

and spontaneous prayer are finished, and the "softer" ritual of the hostess' refreshments and ordinary rather than "religious" language may transpire. The hostess who, in the sense of the preceding rituals was an individual, becomes now an official person. Just as the individual members of the group have overcome a certain sense of isolation by entering her home, becoming familiar with her possessions, using her facilities, experiencing a welcome into her privacy, so now, they are reconciled to each other and to her by accepting her hospitality and helping her distribute the cups and spoons and cakes. It is another sort of Mass, and she, one of the people who experienced, perhaps, a sense of defeat during the ritual of the Bible question period, now becomes the focus of attention. Ritually, she becomes a cream and sugar priest, and for all practical purposes, redeems and reconciles the ritual divisions which have occurred during the evening.

This final activity which I have previously referred to as "post-service" becomes, in fact, the actual focus of ritual activity during the evening. It is interesting to note that the group at St. Mark's, whose ritual activity during the evening allows ample opportunity for the separation-reconciliation dynamic to operate (in welcoming pre-service with coffee, the "sharing" period) does not emphasize a post-service refreshment time. I would suggest that in terms of St. Mark's ritual set up, there has been an ongoing ritual provision for reconciliation between individuals and core individuals and priest. Since the St. Mark's focus of authority, in terms of the evening's rituals is not the priest, there is from the outset a lack of the sort of separateness-tension between priest and people that transpires at the St. Cyril's group. By distributing the authority among core members

(and by bodily and spatially distributing the core members among the individuals) there is no single focus of difference or separateness, and therefore, the separation is not so acutely experienced among members at St. Mark's. And because it is not, a post-service coffee time is not a ritual necessity.

In contrast to the separateness experience as created and perpetrated by the exchange between individuals and priest at the St. Cyril's group, the St. Mark's core group (whose function is priestly, not in the official sense, but in the unofficial and personal sense of charisma) has another way of ritually isolating the individual from the group in order to feed him/her back into the group. The core group does this by asking the individual to bring into the ritual activity his or her own personal experiences, those which have occurred during the preceding week and outside the boundaries of ritual time. At the St. Cyril's group, the individual was never required in this capacity EXCEPT during the post-ritual coffee time. At St. Mark's, the fact of the individual's separateness becomes a ritual asset. The ritual asks for that separateness, highlights it or brings it into focus by inviting the individual to speak of it. By so doing, the ritual (which began by a welcoming coffee time during which the individual was invited to experience community after a week without it) draws the individual back into his personal, separate world before the whole group. Ritually, therefore, isolation becomes in a sense a ritual value. The individual has an experience during the week, the experience is brought before the group, the individual learns by example of the core members to express his experience in restricted code, according to Schwartz's thesis,<sup>17</sup> and he learns to interpret his experience according to the belief system. This,



in turn, creates for him (and, by carry-over, the other individuals present) a new experience, one which is created by the group. Individual experience, plus interpretation according to communal belief system, plus expression in restricted code, equals new experience not only for the isolated individual, but for the other members of the group as well.

Therefore, the individual who is separated out during the ritual of sharing is thrown onto his own resources in order to bounce back and fall, like a newborn, into the hands of the community. This process becomes striking in the case of a newcomer who, after attending a few meetings, ventures into the isolation of submitting his own experience and ventures also into the attempt to express and interpret it according to the models he has had before him during his brief experience in the group. The first experience of this sort is often a profound one for the individual who goes through it, and he or she may cry or experience some bodily tension-releasing symptoms, in which case the other members of the group become expressively supportive. After the sharing ritual is over, group members with experience often comment to the "new" member (whose experience may be seen as an initiation) on how happy they were to hear what he had to say. Or they may pat him on the back, or touch him bodily in some way. These are all part of the ritual reconciliation, the reward for risking ritual isolation. There is another function of this ritual separation-ritual reconciliation, and that is, as I have mentioned earlier, the group feeder function. This ritual isolation-ritual reconciliation builds up the group, creates accomplishment among the members, fits more people for the tasks of the core group. In the case of the group at St. Mark's the ritual sharing was, even more than the Mass, regarded as the ritual where members were to the greatest

extent created and fed.

The dynamic in operation here is similar to the one which operates in the Pentecostal altar-call whereby the individual, isolated during points in the service by music, by official party, by the content of the sermon is invited to the ultimate isolation of the aisle and the altar, there to join with other isolated individuals and be born into the hands of older members of the belief system.

It is a successful operation, this ritual isolation-reconciliation. And, I believe, its success lies in the fact that it provides for the individual members of the group (and by example and leakage or carry-over to all members of the group as individuals) an experience. If the person brings from his week and places before the others in the group something that happened to him but didn't happen to them in that time or that place, he is offering them an experience of himself as an individual, "sharing" himself and his life with them. When they accept this experience (which they inevitably do) they witness the person attire it in the proper robes (language, interpretation) or they help him do this latter if the person is not accomplished. The experience is gathered into the group, absorbed, and it becomes group property, no longer individual property. And by extension, the individual also, preceded by his experience, carrying its train, is (for the ritual time) no longer himself but part of the others in a new way. And this, in our time of individual alienation on many social levels, is a heady experience, often an exhilarating one.

The emotions which accompany the reconciliation dynamic of the ritual sharing are handled later in the ritual of the Mass. At this point it will become clear why the ritual high point of the Mass

celebrated on Wednesday evening at St. Mark's is the exchange of the peace and not the reception of communion. The exchange of the peace is the ritual moment for the emotions generated by the "sharing" ritual are both expressed and ritually controlled. And I would suggest here that the ritual of the Mass "peace" in this case explains how the group at St. Mark's differs from the larger group at the Pentecostal altar: the group at St. Mark's has its enthusiasm at reconciliation guided by a formal liturgical ritual. During the exchange of the peace, a few moments are given by the celebrant in which the group can greet each other. The members of St. Mark's move among themselves, greeting each member with a kiss or a hug or a handshake. The language is confined to "peace be with you" (as spoken by the celebrant) or an approximate greeting. There is enough time for everyone to circulate. But the time, unlike the time at the Pentecostal ritual, is limited, for the celebrant must continue the Mass by going into the Offertory (see page 5, booklet). So, in this Anglican group, the enthusiasm is channeled into specific language, specific bodily movement. No one faints or swoons or begins to utter prophecies. There is no ritual moment provided for such events. There is no actively-expressed individual experience at this time for the St. Mark's people as there may be for the Pentecostal people. Therefore, the focus experience remains the sharing experience which occurred earlier in the evening.

That the sharing ritual provided the experience for the group members at St. Mark's, and the peace ritual, the expression of the reconciliation which proceeded from that experience, explains why the post-service ritual of refreshment and coffee are redundant for the St. Mark's people. By the time that all the isolation-reconciliation (and

expression of the latter) has occurred, a certain amount of emotional exhaustion has set in, and people are glad to wander into their varying degrees of privacy, or accept lifts from others. In this respect, both the Pentecostals and the St. Mark's people are similar. The post-service consists of a dwindling-down of energy; there is a general melee, and then a wandering away of participants, an air of the party having come to an end.

It is interesting to contrast these post-service rituals (or lack of them) to the post-service at St. Cyril's. For the St. Cyril's people, who as individuals have experienced continual separateness and no reconciliation during the rituals of the Bible study and Mass (I am not considering the "reconciliation by default" which may be experienced among the members of the group out of desperation at their own inability to grapple with the priest's ambiguous questions) the post-service refreshment time becomes the highlight of relief and reconciliation. As at St. Mark's, there is during the celebration of the Mass, the exchange of the peace; but, in contrast to the St. Mark's response to this ritual time, the people of St. Cyril's shake hands quickly and cursorily. There is no "warm" or effusive bodily expression; on the contrary, the ritual of the peace is usually accompanied by a certain embarrassment on the part of the individuals at St. Mark's, an embarrassment which is expressed by the hasty turning away of heads after the peck on the cheek. The priest greets the person to his right, and that person passes on the peace to the others. In this sense, the "administration" of the peace rather than its "exchange" takes place, and this, as I have already mentioned, follows the ritual pattern of those Sundays on which the Peace is acted out at High Mass in the Church itself. As a matter of

interest, in terms of the arrangement of individuals in the setting for the Mass In House Church, the members of the group stand around the home altar in a circle closed at the top by the priest who faces the group.

As one experiences the "dwindling-down" of enthusiasm during the post-service of the Pentecostals and the St. Mark's group, so, by way of contrast, one experiences some excitement as the St. Cyril's post-service ritual begins. And the question "Why is this so?" is not difficult to answer. Since the whole evening's rituals for the St. Cyril's individuals have consisted of separation in terms of "success" or "connection" (with or to) the official person and each other, and since the priest remained the keeper of wisdom (in the Bible study) and the individuals possessors of none, the individuals in the group have not had positive experiences of their own potency with others or within themselves. And in this case, even the ritual reconnection with the official person in the reception of the Host has not been enough to reconcile the individual with what, in terms of socio-religious ritual has been a separation experience from the pre-service on. And at this point, I suggest that the reconciliation offered by the post-service is not an authentic resolution of the ritual separation contained in the first parts of the service. Rather, it is a reconciliation which issues, as I began to suggest earlier, from separation on a parish level. So great is the enthusiasm of the individuals at the St. Cyril's group for the post-service of the house church that its authentic interpretation would run more in favour of "relief" than "reconciliation." During the service proper, as we have seen, there have been no times of ritual separation which have belonged exclusively to the specific rituals of house church. On the contrary, as we have also seen, the ritual separation which exists was a ritual separation in

terms of the official person of the priest and the unofficial persons of the parishioners. What we are in fact dealing with in house-church is a series of rituals which have no inbuilt ritual necessity for such events as separation-reconciliation. Since the ritual impact is a parish one which transpires most authentically on Sunday mornings, there is no particular emphasis on the part of the house-church group to augment its ranks. While the people who attend house-church are not explicitly invited to bring their friends (as are those at the St. Mark's group and the Pentecostal group) it is fairly understood that house-church is a parish event. Newcomers to the parish are invited via the parish bulletin to attend house-church. Several of the parishioners who attend house-church confess quite frankly that they like to visit someone else's house and give this as a reason for their attendance at house-church.

The lack of desire for new members, however it may point to lack of apostolic zeal on the part of the priest and parishioners, creates a sort of "evening at home with the family" atmosphere throughout which father and flock play out their customary and familiar roles. The fact that "mother" changes from week to week provides the experience, the variable for which the group tends to gather; this fact gives also, an experience of reconciliation of setting; but since this experience transpires on parish rather than house-church dependent rituals, it (the post-service) cannot be regarded as a bona-fide reconciliation ritual in terms of the rituals of the house-church itself. I would speculate that the experience of house-visiting grew dull in view of the fact that all homes had, during the two years, become familiar. The St. Mark's group and the Pentecostal groups are still thriving and growing.

There are many points from which the phenomenon of the Pentecostal

altar-call ritual may be viewed. As I have tried to make clear, the specific ritual rests for its effectiveness in terms of response upon the sub-rituals of music, audience participation, welcoming and preaching. The latter provide the social, emotional and mental ground upon which the altar-call must thrive.

Physical space, in which the sub-rituals transpire and grow into the altar-call ritual, has been most important. For spatially, the ritual reflects the Pentecostal theology of decision. To stretch Turner<sup>18</sup> a little, I might suggest that spatially, the congregation, once seated, exists in a liminal area, a sort of theological limbo (note spatial profile, above). The congregation sits between the altar (entrance to life in Jesus) and the lobby (entrance from/to life in mammon). Therefore any given member of the congregation, through his own choice and decision, may respond to the call of the Spirit and move into salvation/reconciliation with Jesus by going down the aisle to the altar, or, he may reject the Spirit/altar and move past the guardian ushers/lobby and back into mammon/street. Spatially, there is nowhere else to go in terms of the physical reality of the building as interpreted by the theological reality of the ritual. There is a "yes" or a "no." His very location in the sanctuary presupposes, in theological and ritual terms, that whichever direction the individual takes along the aisle, he will have made a choice. I speak here of the unconverted or the "back-slidden" person whose response to the altar-call is more ritually urgent probably than it would be, say, for those whose official duty it is to be functionally present at the service.

Socially speaking, in order to weigh the likely candidate's decision towards the "yes" rather than the "no," the church officials

welcome the individual, the stranger, the unconverted, into his liminal situation in the church space. In his spatially lowered position (that of child) he is, officially speaking, "protected" by the parent-like figures of choir/orchestra/pastor/preacher/stage on the one hand, and the usher/counsellor/lobby on the other. He is welcomed as an individual; he is shown to his seat; he is given programs; he stands when he is asked to; he sits when he is asked to; he greets his neighbour as he is bidden; he is entertained. In short, he is taken care of. As the service proceeds into the sermon, he is told who he is in the eyes of God; he is told what he might be thinking; he is preached to by a person who tells him they know how he feels, lonely, lacking, confused; most important, however, he is assured that the preacher, or soloist, once felt that way too, but have now found a solution in Jesus. He is invited to accept, on their testimony and invitation, that solution that they have accepted. And acceptance, solution, is as easy as walking down the aisle to the altar (reuniting with the parent who knows best). He is invited to be an "adult," to make a choice, to move from the sanctuary of one identity towards the altar of another, more significant, identity. If he chooses to say "no," which he is free to do, but not without warnings as to the dangers of trusting in a next-time, there is always the possibility that next Sunday, he will say "yes." For next Sunday, the ritual will take place again.

There is usually a great deal of emphasis during the ritual service on the idea that in addition to the person's making a choice, the Spirit/God/Christ is making a choice, issuing through the preacher a call to each individual. If an individual, therefore, feels like proceeding to the altar during the invitation, but for some reason



decides not to do so, it is implied that he stands on dangerous territory in resistance to Jesus/God. If God is calling him, through his feeling of conviction, and he will not respond, according to Pentecostal belief, his life is in peril. I have heard sermons which mention examples of people who were about to respond to altar-calls, but who did not, and who were subsequently killed violently on the way home from the meeting. There is always a strong immediacy about the invitation in this sense. People are cautioned "not to wait any longer."

From the point of view of the new religious movements, the altar-call ritual and response to it can be viewed in terms of the experience it offers to people as individuals, by way of inviting them out of the anonymity of the communal and into the dignity of personal action entailing rich personal benefits and rewards. In this sense, the entire service creates society in microcosm. Here, they sit together with, on the average, four hundred other people. The setting is communal and secure. As the service progresses, there develops, chiefly in the sermon and, in this case, the songs of the soloist, more and more emphasis on the individual, positively (how Jesus values each individual life) and negatively (you are lost; you are a sinner). Either way, the main point is that the focus is personal. The individual is invited to become strong, in Jesus; he is invited to become powerful, in Jesus: he is invited to participate in a unique experience, in Jesus. He is invited, therefore, to leave the herd in the sanctuary and come forward under the steam of his own legs, to "step out" and become special. There are rewards for this. He may experience faintness, joy, ecstasy, conversion, the spontaneous praising of God, the gift of tongues, and later, the laying on of hands, baptism by water, baptism by the Holy

Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit. The evidence of these "happenings," in terms of bodily gestures and utterances, which are sometimes prophetic, can be seen among others who sat beside him during the service and who are now gathered at the altar in response to the same invitation that he received.

The same thing holds true for those who may already be converted and have experienced such phenomena. For those who feel that their lives in Christ have become dulled by their own laxness or lukewarmness, response to the altar-call offers opportunity for reconciliation, i.e. an experience of renewal. It is this fact of experience, of something "happening" to the individual, that in my opinion accounts for the wide current appeal of the Pentecostal ritual. And in this sense, I see it as no coincidence that both the Roman Catholic and Anglican charismatic movements which are also currently undergoing wide popularity, have appropriated from the Pentecostal ritual and belief systems those aspects which strongly emphasize personal experience in Jesus, the power of that experience and its rewards.

#### The Spiritualists

A look at the pre-service part of the Spiritualist ritual act reflects the prevailing individual-communal posture taken by this group. Bird's "apprenticeship" typology, therefore, applies to the Spiritualist group because the Spiritualists see themselves as a group of individuals striving for "development" of their individual powers. As I have mentioned earlier, the "ordeal" which the "apprentice" must undergo is the development course; not surprisingly, the suggestion that the individual go into "development," or the mention of "development" classes occurs

frequently during the service, especially during the announcement and the mediumistic parts, and occasionally during the sermon. The pre-service sets the individual on his own, and holds out no promises of "community" as does the Pentecostal usher during the altar-call pre-service in the Pentecostal Church. Why?

Part of the answer lies within the ritual act itself. Since the Spiritualists are not going to ask the individual to "go out on his own" during the ritual act, as the Pentecostals are going to ask him to do (the aim of the Pentecostal usher during the pre-service is to make me feel secure enough to step out courageously and walk to the altar), it stands to reason that the Spiritualists will not build a communal "womb" by way of ritual from which the individual can later be "born." During the ritual act of the Spiritualists, the individual will not have to struggle to be born into a community of which he has already been made to feel a part. "On the contrary (to continue the metaphor) the Spiritualists must ensure that the individual remain non-communal during the ritual act because the multiple spirits who are not of the earth-plane communicate only with individuals, not with community, and in addition, communicate as individuals. Therefore, for the Spiritualists (as Fred Bird has quipped) "community" is replaced by "a brotherhood of individuals."

This explains the relative lack of body movement, speech or other action on the part of the individual members of the Spiritualist congregation. Individuals keep within their individual spaces. They do not extend themselves like the Pentecostals do, into communal participation. When the Pentecostals clap their hands, each individual is communicating himself to other members of the group as well as praising God

in terms of the ritual act of hymn-singing. When the Spiritualists sing, on the other hand, they do not extend themselves into either the surrounding space by their sound or their emotion. The ritual activity of hymnsinging for the Spiritualists has more to do with the desire on the part of each individual to understand, to make himself available to and for contact with the spirit-world, "light pours down from Heaven and enters where it may." Another function of the hymnsinging, in terms of the Spiritualist ritual act, is to provide some protective, structured bodily and verbal expression for the individual, not in order that he may leave that expression and step out as an individual the way the Pentecostals do, but so that he may have a framework into which he can fit the individuals from who may wish to come to him from the spirit world. There must be a context which is big enough to contain members of the spirit world.

By "denying" a sense of community within the spatial context of the ritual act, the Spiritualists are forced to adopt some means of providing the frame of reference, and the means they choose is traditional religiosity as expressed in certain of the physical props (hymnboard) creed (the Spiritualist principles) hymnsinging. As I have attempted to point out, the focus of the ritual act is not worship, as much as it is desire for contact. The religious setting for the ritual act denotes the creation of a religious framework for individual experience rather than a point of reference for worship; this is obvious in the lack of religious symbols in the Spiritualist setting. Unlike each of the other groups I have dealt with who make use of religious symbols (photos of Guru, for the Chinmoy disciples, the eucharistic elements and vessels for the Anglicans, and the Bible and altar for the Pentecostals), the

Spiritualists use religion to provide a wide enclosure in which they may receive through the medium, whatever it is that the multiple spirits have to say or give. In other words, a wide religious framework, undemandingly vague (the fatherhood of God) provides the sort of detached and distant interest within which the Spiritualists feel themselves free to develop their powers as individuals. In this sense, a strong and demanding communal sense would, for the Spiritualists, be just as restrictive. Their ritual, then, reflects this meaning of community, and each part of the ritual act stresses that despite what looks like communal singing, reciting, etc., each member is on his own.

The question at this point becomes: in terms of the voluntary, uncoerced act by which the individual re-commits himself to or the individual newcomer decides in favour of the values of the community as a whole, how do the Spiritualists, whose ritual act provides little sense of community and encourages individual development, create that ritual moment during which the individual is supposed to emerge? Where is the re-conciliatory moment in the ritual act? And the answer, of course, is found in the mediumistic part of the ritual act.

The value for the Spiritualists is the individual who takes upon himself the responsibility for developing his or her powers. And the Spiritualists provide "development" classes whereby through psychic training, the individual may fulfill this responsibility (Principle number five is quite explicit). In terms of the belief system, the spirits on the spirit plane are individuals who have "developed" by passing into another stage of existence. Since the Spiritualist value is a "developed" individual, then it makes ritual sense that any ritual speech or action, any idiosyncratic expression of either would be most

valuable when it comes from such a developed individual. And so it comes from the medium who has been through "development classes," who teaches development classes, who in apprenticeship terms has completed the "ordeal." (In a perhaps strange sense, the ultimate for the Spiritualist is to "develop" right out of the earth-plane and into spirit. One must die in order for this to happen).

The medium is the crucial person in the Spiritualist ritual act. The medium becomes the window through which Spirit can contact earth, individual spirit can contact individual member of the earth-plane congregation. She or he is the gate through which words from Spirit are passed to humans. Through the medium, Spirit comes to earth and calls to a specific individual in the congregation. Since the "call" includes the necessity of a response on the part of the selected individual (the medium makes the selection on behalf of the particular spirit who wishes to speak). The individual to whom the medium wishes to "come" says a few words in order to give the medium his "vibration" so that a clearer connection may be made with Spirit. The response code is, of course, restricted in terms of Bernstein's categories. But since the individual's voice is the only one audible for a few seconds of this response, we might say that this is the first time in the ritual act that an individual has been given the opportunity to act on his own. He is free to respond as he wishes, theoretically, for in practice, the responses of individuals to the "invitation" on the part of the medium are stock. They represent individual acts, but they are not the focus. For in this ritual act, neither the individual members of the congregation nor for that matter, the individuals from spirit, are the focus. The focus belongs almost solely to the medium, for she is really present in a way that neither

members of the congregation nor members of spirit are not present, in that she is the only individual who by using elaborated speech and bodily action, becomes differentiated and therefore, present as an individual. The medium is the only actor. Like a woman in labour, the medium struggles, gesticulates, mops the brow, gasps for breath, all in the "pain" of passing a spirit "message" to an individual waiting in the congregation. Having passed through the ordeal of development, the medium becomes an individual in the full sense of the word; she possesses the ability to contact and transmit Spirit (it is important to remember that Spiritualists consider each individual as capable of doing the same thing after development). As she or he has become a fully developed individual, the medium is entitled during the ritual act to such privileges as elaborated speech, elaborated action, and other departures from the rational and official behavior patterns which have characterized all previous parts of the ritual act. The medium is the individual par excellence, standing as mid-wife between two worlds, delivering Spirit into the hands of the human family:

multiple humans                      medium                      multiple spirits

And by the act of the medium (the medium "comes out" on stage) we have (by proxy, by implicit consent) the reconciling act which, in ritual terms, brings together the two "brotherhoods" of individuals. The medium does it for us. The medium shows us what or who an individual human is called to be.

Tell all the Truth but tell it slant --  
Success in Circuit lies  
Too bright for our infirm Delight;  
The Truth's superb surprise

As Lightning to the Children eased  
With explanation kind  
The Truth must dazzle gradually  
Or every man be blind —<sup>19</sup>

Emily Dickinson

There is something about ethnography that resembles the sort of telling it "slant" to which Dickinson refers in the above poem. Not that one avoids the Truth; but, especially about religious ritual acts, one finds that the drawn circle, the written boundaries, the ethnographic description cannot be closed, cannot contain the mystery or "truth." And this is because the religious ritual which expresses the mystery of the Sacred and the community with the one hand, hides and protects it on the other. In this way, the right hand does not fully understand the left. Part of the task of fieldwork, then, is to observe the movements of these hands and attempt to describe the places where they cannot touch, where the circle does not close around the mystery, that part of the house which rejects the stone.

This paper has been, partly an attempt to find out what sort of stones build a workable house, what sort of ritual actions and speech, and settings and accompaniments can provide people with a ritual act they can live in and grow in and, meet the Sacred and each other.

I would like to take a look at the ritual acts of the groups I have studied from two additional angles described by Fred Bird in his article "The Nature and Function of Ritual Forms: A Sociological Discussion." And these angles are: rituals as stylized, highly symbolic codes; and, ritual codes as scripts for drama.<sup>20</sup>

In terms of the first position, rituals as highly symbolic codes which provide participants with means of communing with the sacred



being of the group, the rituals I have studied reveal their several ways of accomplishing this. And no detail, it would seem to me, remains "uncoded" in the ritual acts. The movements of the body, the speech, the arrangement of the setting used for the ritual, the pre-service activity, the post-service activity, the spatial arrangement of the members of each group.-- all these "pieces" of the jigsaw of the ritual act contribute to and comprise the overall code. Thus, when the disciple of Sri Chinmoy bathes himself and changes his clothes in the pre-service, he is engaging in a symbolic ritual activity which is a model<sup>21</sup> of and at the same time is the model for his relationship to the Sacred through his Guru. The child makes himself physically presentable to the parent by cleaning his body, by wearing the clothes the parent has chosen. On an interior level, cleanliness has to do with worthiness; the disciple rids himself of devotion to anything else but Guru; he "cleans up" his life and becomes, interiorly, more of a "child" of the Guru in that the Guru can now "connect" with him more fully (the room now being clean and empty and therefore ready for Guru's occupancy through occult connection).

In the same way, during the pre-service, the speech of the Sri Chinmoy disciples reflect a similar code, and that is: silence. All the words are Guru's (as is reflected later in the service, singing, chanting, reading) and since in the pre-service, Guru is not "speaking," the disciples are silent. And the silence is actually a comment on speech, in that the parent's is important to act out, and the child's is not.

For the Pentecostals, the code differs, although as a devotee group, somewhat similar to the Chinmoy's, there are points of meeting.

The Chinmoy people are devoted as individuals to Guru. And their ritual codes have to do with personal action (the body) and individual contact with Guru (silent meditation). The Pentecostals, on the other hand, have ritual codes having to do with the relationship between community and God. And the ritual action of community is coded as group. And the currency of group exchange is speech rather than silence (although there is a moment of the Pentecostal ritual act which masks as silence during the altar-call, but which, in fact, represents group effort to be silent rather than a positive, active silence). Because of the Pentecostal concept of the sacred being, the group must reach out to God together and must receive God together (the Holy Spirit came to a group at Pentecost with tongues). The altar-call represents an initiation whereby the individual becomes part of this process. It is no surprise then, to discover that the ritual codes of the Pentecostals reflect a pre-occupation with groups in terms of speech and action. When the usher at the church entrance makes the individual welcome by expansive verbal greetings and a firm and friendly handshake, he is not preparing me for occult contact with Jesus; on the contrary, he is revealing the sort of contact his group has with Jesus (warm and friendly, firm and welcoming) and he is preparing me, an individual for the ritual act which will invite me to commune with Jesus in this way, and provide the setting for Jesus' communing with me (as one among many) in this way.

The St. Mark's Anglican group is closer to the Pentecostal group in its ritual code than it is to its Anglican counterpart of St. Cyril's. And the reason for this is the "sharing" thrust which, as ritual code is symbolic of the way in which St. Mark's meets or comes to the Sacred Being, and He to them. They go to Him together (as parts of a "sharing"

body) and He comes to them (His body of believers). The St. Mark's pre-service, which is similar to that of the Pentecostals in its expansiveness (hugs and handshakes and a great deal of verbal activity) reflects in code-form, the symbolic acting out of the relationship between the Sacred and the group in the familial "sharing" ritual act and the equally familial eucharistic ritual act whereby "unofficial" or unordained members of the group can distribute the bread and the wine.

The communion with the Sacred for the St. Cyril's group is again different from the means employed by the St. Mark's group (although since both groups are Anglican, one might expect some sort of agreement). Interestingly enough, I find more similarities between the symbolic codes of the Chinmoy people and the St. Cyril's group than I do between the St. Cyril's and St. Mark's group (notwithstanding the ritual act of the eucharist which, as form, may contain a code other than that pointed to theologically; i.e. a group may get hold of a ritual act and re-code it in terms of the dynamics of what precedes and follows it for that particular group). The pre-service of the St. Cyril's group is ritualized (in terms of speech and action) to accommodate the absence of an official ritual leader, the priest. Unlike the speech activity of the Pentecostals and St. Mark's group, the speech of the St. Cyril's people is hampered by the lack of an "official" speaker. Until the arrival of the St. Cyril's priest, the people present ritualize their talk around the hostess; when the warden arrives, he becomes the center of speech activity; and, finally, when the priest arrives, the speech can revolve around him and then die away and be taken over by speech forms proper to the content of the ritual activity which is Bible-study. By the same token, the Sri Chinmoy people, in the absence of an official person (Guru only [not

delegates] can be "official" in Weber's sense) choose silence rather than speech. As the St. Cyril's people, by their question and answer competitions (initiated by the priest) compete to "do well" and establish connection with the priest, so the Chinmoy people in their silence compete, as children, for a closer and closer occult connection with Guru. Guru is "priest" and Sacred Being at the same time; the Anglican priest is father and not the Sacred Being. The Chinmoy people have a shorter route to the Sacred, but more competition along the way (brothers and sisters). The Anglicans have, in the last analysis, or at least theologically, no competition. But since their ritual code is symbolic of the competitive ethos, there is a disharmony in terms of the eucharistic ritual act, which, as I have suggested, is why the communion service "fails" to bring the reconciliation required for the group to continue.

The Spiritualists, as I have already mentioned, choose one among them, a fully developed individual (in the Spiritualist sense meaning an individual at psychic capacity). And that one, in the mediumistic ritual act becomes the filling in the heaven and earth sandwich. The medium straddles two realms, two states of being and brings them together.

Looking at the pre-service of the Spiritualist group, as I have at the others, as symbolic code, we see that the "cool" and reserved treatment of the individual by the usher may be regarded as something more than just preparation for the individual's intellectual assent to Spiritualist agendas or principles. The reserve may have to do with illustrating symbolically our "helplessness" as an individual alone on the earth-plane without the contact with his or her counterparts,

friends, parents, guides in Spirit. Since the final ritual climax for the Spiritualists will be the actual contact with Spirit acted out in symbolic body language and symbolic speech patterns, the only elaborated code of either in the service the part of the Spiritualist activity leading up to this and following it must necessarily, by symbolic speech and activity codes, point out what it is like to be "restrained" to the earth plane. The message is, of course, that development classes will open access to the plane of Spirit, and therefore to elaborated speech and action horizons.

I would like to look at the second position I mentioned, that of ritual codes as scripts for drama. It strikes me as an intellectually nutritious angle from which to regard the ritual acts of the groups included in this study because it involves feeding from the social acts and the daily ritual acts contained in the authentic human round. It appeals to me, therefore, by way of adding a comment on the sense of productivity I have perceived within these various rituals, to follow them as scripts which act out the drama of birth. Each of the rituals I have had the privilege of studying for this paper, gives birth. Who is born? How does it happen? Who plays midwife?

For the Sri Chinmoy, whose metaphor of Guru-God-Father and disciple/devotee/child is well suited to examination from this angle in terms of what the ritual act reflects, the birthing process is essentially a secret one between Guru and disciple. As avatar, Guru is a creator of the disciple's spiritual life; and as avatar and father, he nourishes the spiritual life to which he has given birth. In this sense, Ola Deva becomes his feminine extension of symbol rather than the actual "mother" of the disciple. In ritual activity, Guru's name

is chanted, his songs sung, his word read. In the drama of birth and in keeping with the ritual act as birth, the script of the ritual, belonging to and being created by Guru, is the child, the disciple. As the songs, words and name of Guru are his "deeds," so are the disciples who sing, speak and chant them his "deeds," creations, children, boys and girls, the fruit of his labour. And this creation (through occult contact) is a continual process; it happens in meditation, during the silence of the occult contact and happens in the Chinmoy ritual act during the long silent meditation. In the meditation period, the disciples are recreated, laboured over occultly and mysteriously by Guru, and given re-birth. They emerge, new children, and follow the ritual steps back to the beginning. There is no mid-wife, just other boys and girls, divinely delivered.

The Pentecostals act out another dramatic birthing process whereby the community plays midwife, co-creator, co-labourer, co-deliverer along with the Holy Spirit. The individual consents to the entire process by coming to the altar-call service. The usher (as prophetic in terms of the outcome of the ritual) welcomes the individual on behalf of the community. From there, the individual is handed from person to person from emotion to emotion in terms of the ritual activities of song, prayer, sermon. This is all prophetic midwifery, for the same thing will happen after the "birthing." The "child" in this sense is the individual whose responses are formed emotionally by the group through communal models of speech and action (as I have outlined in the chapter on the Pentecostal ritual). When the ritual formation is complete, and the individual has been made aware of who he is in relation to the others (an outsider), he is invited to be "born." In terms of the drama, then, the sloping aisle

becomes the birth canal down which the prospective "newborn" is enticed, prodded, seduced. The community has done all it could, in terms of drama, to "grow" the individual, and, in terms of ritual action, all it could to help out with the "work" or "labour." And like every child about to be born, the individual's final thrust is taken alone. If and when he arrives at the altar, the team of counsellors who preceded him are there to welcome him into his new life. The community gives birth, the individual consents to it, and the community receives their child. Which is why the aftermath of the altar-call ritual is always festive, and the individual surrounded with loving attention.

For the Anglican groups, the drama follows similar lines. In the St. Mark's dynamic, there are (but to a lesser degree) echoes of the Pentecostal experience. And since for St. Mark's there is no altar-call, the "sharing" section and the eucharistic section of the ritual acts become the birthing zones. In the former, the individual who has "laboured" all week in a world which does not share the group's belief system and in which the individual experiences a sense of aloneness or isolation, can, by sharing, be born (again) into the hands of "his own people." The Lord creates him (during the week); he "labours" during the week, and alone, and again alone during the group ritual when he must be alone to "share." The group witnesses the labour and the consent to the birth, and then, by approval, receives the individual into itself. The group is the midwife, encouraging, receiving the newborn. And the Church, in turn, "feeds" and nourishes the newborn on the body and blood, the bread and wine of the Sacred Being.

The St. Cyril's group, however, run into ritual trouble because of the faults in their dramatic script. As we have seen (alas!) the

birthing process does not work out. Why? The answer is found in the fact that the St. Cyril's prayer group is a ritual surrogate (in a casual setting) of the main weekly liturgy held in the Church proper. If anyone is "born," therefore, he is "born" at the main event which is High Mass, and not at the family get together. Another sense of the St. Cyril's ritual has to do with the official authority (unlike the charismatic authority which is marked at the Pentecostal and St. Mark's groups) which pre-supposes that no one has to be "born," that everyone is "born" already, through the sacrament of baptism. The house-church ritual, then, fails to act out this authentic human drama. The St. Mark's Anglican group (despite the theological assent to re-birth through the sacrament of baptism) dramatizes in its ritual script the need of each person within the group to be "reborn" from time to time, and offers the "sharing" ritual as a dramatic way the individual can do this. That this "works" in ritual terms is indicated by the continued attraction of the group for its members and newcomers. The failure of the St. Cyril's group to continue its ritual speaks for itself.

There is, however, another perhaps oblique aspect to the St. Cyril's ritual's dramatic script, which will rescue its ritual act from what appears to be its barrenness, and that is the "birthing" during the post-service of the evening's hostess (after all her labours on the food and coffee). But, as we have explained elsewhere, this is not sufficient to be counted the ritual act efficacious.

When we come to discuss the Spiritualist group in relation to the dramatic ritual activity we move from the realm of individuals being born to that of worlds being born. And the focus is the medium.



At the same time that the mediumistic part of the service is climactic, it represents, for our present discussion, the time of multiple labours and multiple deliveries. The medium, as I have already pointed out, stands (a developed individual) at the narrowing of two funnels. One leads ~~out~~ into the setting where the ritual action is transpiring; the other leads beyond the setting to a setting on the Spirit plane. The function of the medium is to labour to deliver messages from individuals in Spirit. That the labour is difficult is evident from the highly elaborated speech patterns and bodily motions. The medium's entire body contorts; her words become sometimes incoherent as though too many people were standing in Spirit with messages.

Individuals on the Spirit plane must get through, as it were, and the dramatic script operates (at this point in the service) in writhing contrast to the calm and intellectual approach in which the quasi-scientific principles of Spiritualist belief were conceived earlier in the ritual action. The medium delivers spirit through "messages," and the other side of the script dramatizes the possibility of individuals on the earth plane (in the congregation) "delivering" to Spirit other developed individuals who will serve them as vehicles of contact. The medium, as I have mentioned previously, is an example of the "newborn" or developed individual.

As "newborn" into a greater awareness of and utilization of his or her capacities, the medium, during this part of the service re-calls in a dramatic way, the long labour in development classes which enabled her to be "born" to the community as their medium. And with all due regard for her struggles and labours, she drops exhausted into her onstage chair after her enactment.

To conclude, I wish to mention briefly, another angle from which contemporary religious groups and their ritual activities may be viewed. And that is: personal experience, the desire on the part of the individual members of the group for "something to happen" to them. This "something" is often referred to as "growth," "movement," "development," "occult contact," "sharing," "receiving a message," "meeting the Lord." These phrases have occurred throughout this paper and also throughout the many unrecorded conversations and comments of group members. The underlying similarity represents a sense of touch, of something "happening" or the desire for something to "happen" not only to the individual or group or subject, but from the Sacred.

The medium of the Spiritualists contacts a member of the congregation with a message from the Spirit. Something happens to the individual from the Sacred. During the sharing session at St. Mark's, a lady tells how her headache disappeared when she prayed; something of the Sacred has happened to her. When the Sri Chinmoy disciple emerges from his meditation "feeling good," it is not so much the emotion that pleases him but the sense that something of Guru or the Sacred has come to him, met him, happened to him. The individual who responds to the Pentecostal altar-call is told that Christ will be there to meet him at the altar when he comes. Christ is there. The Sacred happens to those who respond.

It is this desire for something to happen from the Sacred, via whatever community, setting, ritual speech and action, that the more successful ritual acts take into account. Working backwards, it is this desire, I believe, which emerges as the desire for meaning as individuals and the desire to express that meaning to others in some

sort of communal activity or life.

It is in this sense, that of the Sacred Reality, that the members and leaders of the groups I have studied, the individuals newcomers and old faithfuls, disciples, devotees, mediums, priests, hostesses, apprentices, gurus, ministers, singers, counsellors, converts, ushers, men and women, boys and girls, fieldworker and observer, become part of the "slant" that Dickinson refers to, the stones of the ritual house through which, because of which, and despite which the Truth comes and goes, dazzling us all. And we are born to Him gradually.

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Frederick Bird, "Initiations and the Pursuit of Innocence: A Comparative Analysis of Initiation Rites of New Religious Movements and Their Influence on Feelings of Moral Accountability," typescript, Concordia University, Montreal, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>The Message of Sri Chinmoy, Vol. 2, No. 9 (September 27, 1975).

<sup>3</sup>Conversation with Rector of St. Cyril's (March 19, 1978).

<sup>4</sup>Frederick Bird, "Charismatic Cults: An Examination of the Ritual Practices of Various New Religious Movements," typescript, Concordia University, Montreal, p. 30.

<sup>5</sup>Geoffrey K. Nelson, Spiritualism and Society (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 210.

<sup>6</sup>Frederick Bird, "Charismatic Cults," p. 33.

<sup>7</sup>Frederick Bird, "Initiations and the Pursuit of Innocence," p. 14.

<sup>8</sup>The account of this ritual activity is taken from a composite of field-notes gathered between September 1977 and April 1978.

<sup>9</sup>Nirvalkalpe samadhi is the disciples' term for the state of ecstatic bliss achieved by Sri Chinmoy during meditation.

<sup>10</sup>Eugene Ionesco, "The Lesson," translated by Donald Watson (London: John Calder, 1965), p. 28.

<sup>11</sup>The Holy Eucharist: Rite Two of the Episcopal Church, Christ Church Cathedral, The Diocese of Montreal, p. 8.

<sup>12</sup>Max Weber, The Sociology of Religion (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), p. 67.

<sup>13</sup>Vieda Skultans, Intimacy and Ritual: A Study of Spiritualism, Mediums and Groups (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), p. 73.

<sup>14</sup>What follows is taken from the field notes of October 17, 1976.

<sup>15</sup>Basil Bernstein, Class, Codes and Control, cited in Paul Schwartz, "Testimonial Speech and Ritual in Three New Religious Groups," M. A. Thesis, Department of Religion, Concordia University, 1977, p. 20.

<sup>16</sup>Paul Schwartz, "Testimonial Speech and Ritual in Three New Religious Groups," M. A. Thesis, Department of Religion, Concordia University, 1977, Chapter 1.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Victor Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage," Reader in Comparative Religion, eds. William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 338.

<sup>19</sup>Emily Dickinson, "Tell All the Truth," Final Harvest: Emily Dickinson's Poems. Selected by Thomas H. Johnson (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1961), p. 248.

<sup>20</sup>Frederick Bird, "The Nature and Function of Ritual Forms: A Sociological Discussion," Studies in Religion, Vol. 9, No. 4, 1980, pp. 388, 389.

<sup>21</sup>Clifford Geertz, "Religion As a Cultural System," Reader in Comparative Religion, eds. William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 169.

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EVANGEL PENTECOSTAL CHURCH

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FLOOR PLAN

Appendix I

