



The Subud Boston

newsletter

Newsletter of Subud Boston Inc.

November/December 1996 Volume 4 • Numbers 11/12

Editorial

Clifford Geertz, in his book, *Islam Observed*, says that, "...religion is not the divine, nor even some manifestation of it in the world, but a conception of it. Whatever the really real may be really like, men make do with images of it..." Religion is not God, it is only an image we make up in order to be able to think about God. In Islam and in the Tanakh, as the Old Testament is called in Hebrew, idolatry is the great sin: the worship of images. But when Moses asked God who He was, the response was, "I am". God remained undefined and outside of the confines of our understanding or image making ability. In Genesis it is we who are made as images of God. Idolatry is perhaps the sin of imagining that God is the image of ourselves.

Is there any point to learning or thinking about God if all our thoughts are inadequate and perhaps morally wrong as well? Yet Bapak has told us that we should each follow our own religion, that the latihan will bring us to the reality of our religious faith.

Ramadan is moving backward around the seasons and this year it begins immediately after Christmas. Soon the two festivals will overlap. This has brought me to a minor crisis point. Am I a Christian or am I in Islam or what? Bapak told us that Subud was not a religion but that the latihan would enable us each to find the true meaning of our own religion; but what about those of us who were raised in a secular world where the closest we had

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The Meaning of Advent

Michal Brownell

In the Christian church Advent marks the start of the cycle of Feasts and the beginning of the Church Year. Advent was originally the word used for the festival day itself, referring to the "advent" of Christ. It is the same word the Romans had used for the accession of an emperor. Later, monastic tradition introduced the practice of observing a strict regime of self restraint before the joyous celebration of the festival. Called the Fast of Elijah, monks in Ireland remembered the forty days and forty nights the prophet spent wandering in the wilderness by living on a diet of bread and skim milk. Monks in Gaul and Greece and throughout Christendom devised different ways of observing a period of preparation for the advent of Christ. These practices spread from the monasteries and became incorporated in the life of the greater Christian community.

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Chairperson's Corner

Lorena Kreda

What does true surrender mean? Perhaps if I were older and wiser I'd be able to offer insights into questions such as this, but since I am still young and foolish I can only ask them. It's possible that this question doesn't really have an answer, and that's the whole point. Maybe it's the kind of thing that loses its essence in the process of being quantified. I do feel that, with age comes a certain peace about things like this if we're open and patient enough to receive it. Since I lack the benefit of years, you'll have to bear with me as I continue to struggle with questions such as this.

It's tough, I think, to have a driven, conscious, thinking mind coexist with a truly surrendered soul. These notions seem mutually exclusive. I've recently become more aware of this motivational dichotomy through separate conversations with two Subud sisters.

The first conversation was with Laura White, and we were talking about individual talents and how for some people these become dramatically apparent through the latihan. I have always secretly hoped that my true talent(s) would be miraculously revealed to me through practicing the latihan. I actually didn't even expect to have to "practice" the latihan very diligently. I wanted (somewhat arrogantly, I'd say) this knowledge to come to me instantly. The key word

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ADVENT, continued from page 1

Today, Advent is the period beginning four Sundays before Christmas. It is meant to be a time of preparation and fasting, marked by austerity. In the church there are no flowers, little use of the organ, no *Te Deum laudamus*. All these austerities remind the congregation of the dark emptiness that existed before the arrival of the Light. This can be a time for Christians to prepare themselves for the future as well as a time to recall the past; a time to make space within themselves to receive Christ.

Though it starts the cycle of feasts, Advent itself is a fast, a time for the development of inner quiet as well as a reduction in the variety and quantity of food that is eaten. According to Brigitte Barz in her book, *Festivals With Children*, the Greek word *parousia*, usually translated as *Second Coming*, also means *presence, being with, or present*. Like Mary, Christians wait patiently for Christ to be born within them. Times of quiet reflection and self discipline help create a calm space for Christ's love to enter in. Barz recommends reading the parables in Matthew 25 and the Tolstoy story *Where Love Is, There Is God*. Δ

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is "want." I don't understand what surrender truly is, but I'm quite sure that "wanting" is very likely exactly what it isn't.

The second conversation that helped crystallize this dilemma for me was a discussion Andrea and I were having about the question of meeting that special person whom you think you can deal with for the rest of your life. Andrea reminded me that God has a plan and there's a reason for the way things are. It feels awkward to me to articulate those words myself, "God has a plan." I'm realizing that my faith in God is much more academic in nature than practical. I still very much want to be in control of what I do while I simultaneously acknowledge that there must be a creative power in this universe that is higher than the human.

What I see now as the crux of this problem is the issue of responsibility.

Growing up I was always held accountable for what I did and from that learned a deep sense of responsibility, not only for my actions, but for the consequence of those actions. The natural extension of this philosophy is to feel responsible for my life situation—everything from the career path I follow to my marital status. To let God have any control (and therefore responsibility) for these things is in direct conflict with this deeply ingrained mode of operation.

I have a hunch that this quandary can be resolved, for there must be a great many highly responsible people who have truly surrendered to the Will of God. Maybe submission to God's will needs to be the larger context within which we can become responsible human beings. For myself, I think I've tried to do the reverse, that is to make my knowledge and overall responsibility the context within which I try to find space for God. I've stuck God on the shelf labeled "Things too difficult to understand right now," as if one day I'll be able to figure out what God really is. Attempting to understand God is to make God smaller than myself. There are many things in life which I need to let go of and not feel so responsible for. In the gradual process of doing this, maybe surrender will just be. Maybe there are some things that just are, and then there are other things which are cognitively understood (and maybe there are other categories too).

Accepting this distinction and the things that are left in the "to be understood" pile is the challenging part. Δ

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come to belief was our belief in Santa Claus?

I have decided that for me it is time to claim my own culture and my own religion, such as it is, so this year for the first time, I will not be fasting for Ramadan but have chosen instead to follow the Christian calendar of festivals, and fast during Advent and Lent. Whatever way you are celebrating this year, Kenneth and I would like to wish you a merry Christmas and joyous Ramadan.

Cassidy Δ

Subud New York Moves In

Vernon Contessa

As most of you probably already know, Subud New York has finally taken possession of their new Subud house. Although the former synagogue is still in the process of being refurbished and is far from finished, the group held their first “official” latihan and group meeting there on Sunday, October 27th. Starting at ten in the morning and lasting well into the afternoon, about 50 of us met for latihan followed by testing sessions followed by a pot luck lunch followed by more latihan and testing. A powerful experience was had by all and I would like to share some of my own impressions of the significance of this building with you.

At the moment most of the interior walls and ceilings are new—as yet unpainted; sheetrock and the floors are new—raw, plywood awaiting the installation of new carpeting. Here and there you can still see exposed heating ducts and wiring in the process of being upgraded. Everywhere there are tools, scaffolding and debris from the renovation effort.

Despite all of this when I first entered the building I was immediately impressed by the size of the available spaces. On the upper level of the building is a very large room with a beautiful high tiered ceiling and a large stage at the far end. The walls have multiple backlit openings which used to have stained glass in them, but which will now have translucent screens installed. The lower level of the building consists of a room almost as large. The downstairs ceiling is lower, but still quite high, and there is a separate kitchen area with storage rooms and restrooms in the hallway. This is a superb space; it can easily accommodate several hundred people comfortably for latihan.

Following our morning latihan the men tested a few questions about the significance of the building for Subud New York, Subud in the USA, and Subud in the world as well as what our personal roles should be in supporting this project. The testing was powerful and everyone received something to the effect that the acquisition of this building is really of great importance to all levels of the Subud organization. I personally felt that this is indeed a BIG accomplishment for Subud New York—and for Subud in the world. This is the beginning of the fulfillment of Bapak’s hope for us, that we should all be able have suitable places for latihan worthy of the admiration and respect of the public. New York is certainly one of the world’s great cities and, through the Grace and guidance of Almighty God and the hard work and courage of the folks who made it happen, Subud is now able to confidently show its face there. We should really give praise and thanks to Almighty God for giving us this opportunity to have a positive presence in

such a place and we should all lend whatever support we can to the New York brothers and sisters who are working so hard to make this a lasting success for Subud.

There is still much work to be done to finish the renovation of the building both inside and out. Some of this work is still being done by contractors. There is a special kind of positive energy high which seems to come only when Subud people come together to work on something really important and this building project does have that energy. I got a tremendous hit just being there for the first latihan and I plan to participate as much and as often as I can. This project deserves our support and participation. △

Holiday Dinner at the Bristol Family Lodge

December 22 from 2–5 P.M.

Samuel (Jim) Mattimore

In the spirit of continuing our work in the community, some of us have decided to become involved in putting on a holiday dinner and entertainment show for the families at Bristol Lodge. In the course of our day of service at the house several of us tossed around the idea of becoming more involved with a place in the community where we could offer services. Bristol Lodge certainly fits this criterion. Jillian and I talked about wanting to do something there beyond our current legacy of stained decks and clean cellar—which, by the way, were a tremendous accomplishment and greatly appreciated. We decided that it would be fun to nourish the spirits there as well, and so the idea of a holiday dinner was born.

We would welcome any participation on any level from anyone. Our current thinking is to offer a meal for parents and children and some type of entertainment for the kids. We would also like to give small presents to the children if we have enough money. This is a work in progress so please call with your ideas and contributions. Food, money, and time will be greatly appreciated.

The event is scheduled for December 22 from 2–5 P.M.—That’s a Sunday. We’d love to invite anyone who wants to to participate. Call Samuel Mattimore at (508) 877-9306

Dates to Remember

December

- 7** Christmas Party at Hensleys
- 16** Helper/committee meeting
- 22** Christmas party for Bristol Family Lodge
- 25** Christmas, no Latihan

January

- 5** Dessert night
- 6** Helper/committee
- 10** Ramadan begins (maybe)
- 23** Helper/committee
- 26** Winter meeting and potluck supper, meet at 5 o'clock, eat at 7 o'clock!

Birthdays

November

- 2** Lisa Gorman
- 2** Mayer Kirkpatrick
- 5** Hillel Natanson
- 26** Walt Thornton

December

- 14** Maria Contessa

- 27** Marcella Cooke
- 31** Vivianna Mason
- 11** Peter Baptiste
- 11** Kenneth Henderson

January

- 17** Frank Poole
- 17** Sharif Horthy
- 20** Mitchell Ziegler

Newsflash

Kenton and Larissa Hensley would like to announce that they are expecting a baby in the beginning of April. They don't know the sex and they plan on being surprised. No names yet either. Kenton says that he plans on doing it the traditional way with cigars and the jitters, waiting to find out if its a boy or a girl.

Ramadhan Information for 1997

(These are approximate dates.)

- According to our calculations, Ramadhan begins the evening of January 9th—cleanse your body then, and start fasting on the 10th.
- This year the Lailatu Qadar (Night of Power) will probably fall on either January 30, February 1, 3, 5, or 7. "The real date is known only to God"
- Idul Fitri should fall on February 8th or 9th. It is the celebration at the end of Ramadhan. It is also the beginning of a new year and is traditional to exchange forgiveness with all one's friends and relatives for errors and offenses that may have been committed.

We are putting out the Ramadan flyer for the Boston group again this year. It has details of the fast. If you want one, send us a self addressed stamped envelope (or some cash)

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