

practices. Having had a good deal of exposure to various forms of Christianity over the years, I was well prepared for some of the experiences I had at each of these communities, and not at all for others.

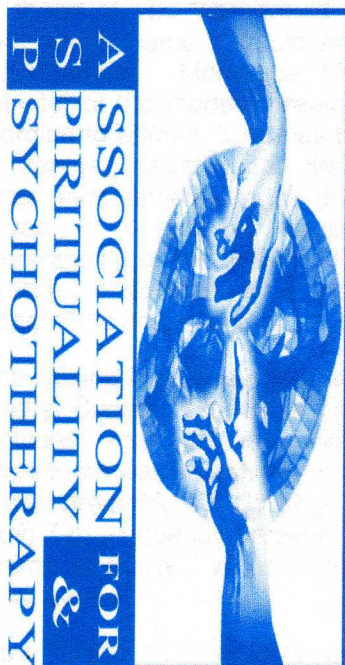
The visit to the first community came about one morning when I was driving through a very small town and saw an interesting tent that had been set up in a field. Architecturally it resembled a yurt with clear plastic arched windows. As I got closer I saw a sign indicating that it was to be the site of a revival meeting. Having heard interesting stories about "tent revival" meetings, but never having actually encountered one, I was intrigued. As I parked my car and walked across the field to the tent, I was warmly greeted by a man who emerged from it. He invited me in and introduced me to the pastor, one of two other adults who were in the tent at the time, along with three children. I explained that I was visiting from Maryland, had never seen a real tent revival before, and so came to have a look. The pastor and I engaged in some brief conversation and he invited me to come back in two hours, at 11:00 AM, to join them for a service. I thanked him for the invitation, hedged on making a commitment to return, and left.

My hedging had to do with fear-based ambivalence. On the one hand I was fascinated with this opportunity to experience a form of worship that was unique to me. On the other hand, I was fearful that I might do something that I would regret or at least feel foolish about. I imagined that I might be hypnotized or otherwise psycho-spiritually manipulated into "giving my life to Jesus" in some emotional outburst. I worried that all of my spiritual explorations and practices to date had left still relatively unconscious a deep longing for communion with God that could get activated in this context and then acted out. At a more mundane level I was worried about being a racial minority if I were to return at 11:00 AM, since the people I had met at the tent were all Black and I am White.

In the end my curiosity overcame my fear and I returned for the service. Although I arrived a few minutes early, the services had already begun. Upon entering the tent my fears about being a racial minority vanished. I was in fact a racial anomaly—the only white person in this small gathering of perhaps 25 persons of color. A woman was already preaching enthusiastically, and the small group was reacting to her enthusiastically

## PSYCHOSPIRITUAL DIALOGUE

"The integrated pathway of spirituality and healing in psychotherapy"



### A Tale of Two Sanghas: A Field Study By John Rhead

While spending four days in rural Georgia attending an intensive psychotherapy workshop recently, I had the opportunity to visit two religious communities that highlight the importance of subtle differences in the approach to God. At least superficially, both communities could be categorized as Christian, and subcategorized as Southern Baptist. My visits to each were not planned in advance, and the fact that the two visits occurred within three days of each other seems serendipitous in terms of the opportunity to compare the experiences of joining them in their

