

# Universal Life Friends Letter <sup>47,</sup>

SEPTEMBER 1982, #4

OUR PAGES ARE YOUR LETTERS

U.L. Friends, 753 44th Av.  
San Francisco, CA 94121

The "Universal Life Friends" are a small and informal correspondence group within the Universal Life Church. We meet mostly mostly by sharing our letters with each other in a publication called the "Universal Life Friends Letter", coming out every month or two.

We are essentially a non-sectarian group but we take as our motto an old Quaker saying: "There is that of God in every one". We understand this to be a fundamental truth, found not just in Christianity, but in one way or another in all religions. We also believe this to be a truth harmonizing perfectly with the fundamental belief of the Universal Life Church: "As an organization we have no traditional doctrine. We only believe in 'that which is right'. Each individual has the privilege and responsibility to determine 'what is right' as long as it does not infringe on the rights of others. We do not stand between you and your God". The UL Friends as a group have no further doctrine, although as individuals we may take it on from there, each in our own way. This puts a big emphasis on individualism, but we would equally emphasize that we be friends, and share more with each other.

For our "subscription fee" we ask that you write us a letter now and then, sharing your religious concerns and insights with us. We will then publish it in our "UL Friends Letter". We will try to include everything we receive. In general letters should be of a religious nature, but we understand this in a very broad sense, so a poem, a drawing, or a bit of humor might be quite appropriate. Some might write in the spirit of Quaker silent worship, and define that in a very traditional sense. That would be great, but we have no intention of being so restrictive. Most of us are far too inhibited about such already. Zen letters, Sufi letters, Hare Krishna letters- all are welcome. Furthermore let us not be too concerned about spelling and such. We don't want to be paralyzed into perfection. We also volunteer to type your letters for you, if that is your wish, but they should be clearly legible. We do have some space limitations, so letters should be of a reasonable length.

It is our hope and belief that our letters will somehow help us open our hearts to each other, and be every bit as deep and meaningful as the spoken word. Hopefully too more than a few deep friendships might develop in this way.

To protect your privacy, we will not print your address unless you give us permission. If necessary you can write someone in care of us, and we will forward.

High amongst its rocky shores,  
To be alone, at heaven's doors,  
Of jet black rifts amongst the stones,  
And the melting snows that Paradise owns.  
Seeing heaven's reflection beneath my feet,  
Is the Amethystine Gem, my thirst, it greets.

.... I hope all the friends are finding themselves. I would like to share in this letter, a discovery I made about a year ago, in the quest of equilibrium. All major religions are made up of two opposite, but complimentary elements. And all other divisions exaggerates one of these two elements. These two elements are theism, and atheism. Theism, in dealing with religion is obvious. Atheism, may be a bit harder to understand. However, atheism is merely "no-Theism", no-God, no-Personal God. And therefore, as in the Two Great Commandments, told by Jesus, a person is to love God, and love man. And in Buddhist scriptures, there are two routes through which one may reach Nirvana. To be an Arhat and the Bodhisatva. In both cases, the first terms deal with the relationship of an individual with God. And in the second cases, the terms deal with an individuals relationship with others. (no-God)

In the major religions, the development of two paths takes place when there is an imbalance, and reaction to this imbalance. For within the individual, both ways should exist. It is the classical arguement of faith and works in determining "salvation", "escape", "release from justice". (This filters down even to prison life, where incarceration is meant to rehabilitate (faith) and or to punish (works).) It is then obvious, that most of humanity is lopsided on the side of works, and atheism, simply by the way societies treat their prisoners. This is substantiated by the fact that there are almost 2 Roman Catholics for every Protestant, in Christianity. Roman Catholicism being dependent on works, and Protestantism being dependent on faith. This is similar to the Buddhist Mahayanist, corresponding to the Catholic of Christianity, and the Hinayanist (Theravadin) to the Protestant. And similarly the Mahayanists are prevalent today.

Depending on the evolution of a religion, there are many concessions between the two elements. And the individual, like so many of us, will have a hard time entering into established denominations. And if we do, in general, we find that they fall short of expectations. Therefore, I believe most of us write to the letter, expressing karmic influences that we are experiencing. And this is good. Communication is so lacking in today's society. Lets continue to grow, and find Self.

Explaining the two elements, as a part of a balanced system, leads me to monism. Shankara attempted to describe monism in terms of "higher" and "lower" relative truths. For me, it is good to remember that Truth transcends events. But without events, Truth cannot be manifested. Once again faith and works. It is our idea that the Universe is out of balance, but in truth, it is in Balance. It is our senses that fool us, because it is so easy to depend on them, to define Reality. So, in finding out, what was, is, and will be true, is that the inner experience of being one with the Absolute, has always been true, and freedom is the result.

TAT TVAM ASI

Robert C. Finch

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Dear Friends:

I think "U.L. Friends" is like the early "SEEKERS". There was so much persecution about religious beliefs, tithing etc. in England under Puritanism, the English monarchy, Calvinism Cromwell, etc.. The Baptists and Seekers had a lay ministry, often itinerant, of which John Ryan was an outstanding example. A Seeker was an inquirer as a seeker for truth, a member of an English sect in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century who claimed to be seeking the true church and categorized as an "unstructured" church. The Seekers had discontinued the historical forms of worship and sacraments, waiting for God to reveal to them the true way. George Fox expressed this as "The inner light" which is to be found within every man. See "The England of George Fox (Hist. of Quakerism)", by E. Russell.

As for the "Association for Research and Enlightenment" (I have mentioned it before), this was the work of Edgar Cayce's search to understand his unusual gift to tune into Universal Consciousness, thereby helping others overcome physical and emotional ills. Cayce was a deep student of the Bible, and people came from all over just to sit in on his Sunday Bible School lessons. The "Search for God Groups" were born out of the nationwide clamor to know more about the Bible lessons conducted by Cayce. Cayce is regarded as the greatest mystic of modern Bible students. He died about 1945, after saying "The world needs so much to know about God in these times". It is a non-denominational group.

The statement below is a very careful description of how need for Bible Study classes grew out of Edgar Cayce's Sunday Bible Classes, and how the "Manual for Guidance" was prepared for those who wanted the opportunity to learn but could not attend Cayce's Bible classes in Virginia Beach.

U.L. Pageonne

ASSOCIATION FOR RESEARCH AND ENLIGHTENMENT- SEARCH FOR GOD STUDY GROUPS

In February 1931, a Norfolk group of people who had been attending Sunday afternoon lectures, asked Edgar Cayce how they could better study his work. He said he would give a reading to outline the way. Seventeen people met and received the first of a total of 130 readings, lessons on disciplines having to do with spiritual laws, which spanned 11 years. Members were required to study, test, apply & live truths before the readings would permit them to move forward. Lessons which seemed easy at first glance, took on depth and challenge when it came to living them.

These readings resulted in two volumes, A Search for God I and II. These books taken from verbatim transcripts of Cayce's readings, present the lessons with personal testimonies about the application of those lessons in individual daily lives.

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Study groups are spiritual workshops composed of people of all ages and from all walks of life attempting cooperatively to understand and apply the philosophy of the readings in order to test the validity of that philosophy. Combining periods of reading, discussion, prayer and meditation, the study groups work with principles Cayce described as spiritual laws and observe the changes in themselves. The groups are comprised of around 3-10 people. One person moderates, and rotation of leadership is encouraged. Groups usually meet in homes of members at a time convenient to them.

Individuals in the study group program accept these ideals & purposes:

- 1) To encourage each individual to meditate and pray alone and in groups.
- 2) To show by practical application how each may know his relationship to God and his fellow man.
- 3) To help each member live a balanced life.
- 4) To read the broad areas of information found in the readings that will help to awaken him to a more spiritual and useful life.

50. Study groups are designed to stimulate inner motivation, awaken individual psychic perception and encourage self-discipline. Work with a group brings recognition of the individual's personal responsibility; he begins to require of himself (rather than others), understanding and obedience under law.

The A.R.E. study group is not an encounter or therapy group and does not advocate drugs, mechanical or chemical devices to achieve breakthroughs to the unconscious. There is no outlay of money, only a desire to learn, share and grow.

The study group program has a spiritual purpose based on the belief that many are ready to understand Jesus' statement, "Behold the kingdom of heaven is within."

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Rev. Ed Vaisvilas  
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Greetings in the Lord!

I am currently involved in prison ministry. Actually the prisoners are children who for some reason or another were tagged as deviants in our society. The beauty and simplicity of child being wasted by putting them into an institution.

I'm a priest, Catholic of course (wink!-- the wink is copied from a dear friend). Religion in this world has become so complex. Rules and more rules on how to be a so-called good person. After all the rules are made and studied, it boils down to only one fundamental thing..... L-O-V-E!

My work in the prisons take me many times into the political arena. The whole concern is to make aware the goings-on within the system. The prison is SUPPOSE to rehabilitate, but in actuality it heightens aggression thus its a failure.

Let us pray for the world to be at peace; that we might accept each other as brothers; that we might share what we have; and most of all, that we might love and through our example, it might spread like wild fire.

God bless you all real good.

Your friend in the Lord,

Father Ed



and between men and women of goodwill in the nation, God willing, in the World.

Please note the first 10 of the "1001 Ways..." to begin to establish right relations. Some might think those ten ought to be "on tablets"...and they can surely be applied by AND TO ALL CONCERNED ... "outsiders" as well as "authorities"...

We would welcome your thoughts, ideas, contributions... with a goal of "1001 Ways"...it's "a long way to go, and a short time to get there".

The "ceremonious letter" (dated September 2, 1982) extends thanks, from the men inside our prisons, to the people of goodwill who have expressed interest in the intended work of the Men of Goodwill "Behind the Walls". The list is by no means complete, and by this letter, we extend our collective thanks to you as well.

It is our hope to create a "Friends of Prisoners (Planetary)" letter, from outside goodwill organizations TO the men inside. It is somewhat a matter of "reverse psychology"...in that we do not "publish" names and addresses of the men inside; rather, by such an act (as your letters) of express goodwill, explaining how your group is working toward spreading more goodwill in the lands, the men can contact you directly, network your "message" behind the walls, and "be there" if you bump into any "unlooked for problems". We would welcome receiving your letter by December 1, 1982, if you are so inclined and concerned, and could use a little more support in your efforts!

Can you imagine what Bright Holidays could be created by such a gift of love and such expressions of Goodwill?!!! What a Christmas Tree that could be! By that time, we may have succeeded in obtaining authority approvals for the men to function as a PRIS-UNAN GOODWILL UNIT OF SERVICE/Networkers/Messengers of Goodwill in a few institutions, all in preparation for the NEXT NATIONAL CRIME MORATORIUM/WEEK OF PRAYERFUL GOODWILL

JANUARY 1-7, 1983

We've only been "in operation" one year! And we are making haste -- slowly. Recognizing that money, rightly used, is an expression of God/GOOD in action, we are working on those matters at present. Your prayers that sufficient money flows through this work are welcome. We also plan to publish a "BIG BOOK...of letters, FROM PRISON, WITH LOVE", so, as the little cartoon says, "Yes, we are open, but don't expect much --YET"!

"We aim to please and we may surprise!"

"LET LIGHT AND LOVE AND POWER RESTORE THE PLAN ON EARTH"!

"In God We Trust"

PRIS-UNAN  
PO BOX 1517  
REDONDO BEACH, CA 90278

With Love, Light & Prayers  
and The Will-To-Good!

ROBIN L. HOOD & THE MERRY MEN

The winged creatures are singing and fluttering their wings. The crickets are leaping and chirping. The frogs are croaking and jumping. The bees are busy extracting the sweet nectar from the gorgeous and beautiful blooming flowers. The trees likewise, are extracting nutrients from Mother Earth to produce delicious fruits and to make shade and shelter for the cattle and wild life. Vegetation is flourishing to produce a multiplicity of food for man, bird, and beast. The cattle are lowing and the horses and burros are neighing. The coyote howls and the dogs are barking. The great lion's roar reverberates through the jungle growth, a symbol of the Almighty.

The vast ocean and the streams are constantly moving to prevent stagnation. The fields are laden with grain and vegetables. The limbs of the fruit trees are bending with delicious ripened fruits. The landscape is a mass of colorful flowers and the grass is a verdant green. The air is filled with the fragrance of myrrh, lilac, and jasmine. The sun is rising in the east to bestow its munificence upon the earth's inhabitants. The moon and the stars pour forth their effulgence to dispel the darkness of the night. The wild geese are moving northward, as Spring is in evidence everywhere.

The voice of evil men called prophets and priests, falls by the wayside and becomes as the mumblings of infants in the presence of the mighty words and deeds of Nature. Nature triumphs and prevails, triumphs in the nocturnal music of the whippoorwill, The cry of the hyena, the barking of prairie dogs, the weird warning of the rattlesnake. The metamorphosis of the caterpillar and tadpole. The grandeur of Spring and the invigorating breezes of Autumn. The roar of the wind, the majesty of motherhood and filial love. The miracle of birth and the cry of the infant.

continued

With all the blue ethereal sky,  
 And spangled heavens, a shining frame.  
 Their great original proclaim.  
 The unwearied sun, from day to day,  
 Does his Creator's power display,  
 And publishes to every land,  
 The work of an Almighty hand.

Soon as the evening shades prevail,  
 The moon takes up the wondrous tale,  
 And nightly to the list'ning earth,  
 Repeats the story of her birth.

While all the stars that round her burn,  
 And all the planets in their turn,  
 Confirms the tidings as they roll,  
 And spread the truth from pole to pole.

What though in solemn silence all move round,  
 This dark terrestrial ball?

What though no real voice, nor sound,  
 Amidst their radiant orbs be found?

In REASON'S ear they all rejoice,  
 And utter forth a glorious voice,  
 Forever singing, as they shine,  
 THE HAND THAT MADE US IS DIVINE.

This is the Word of God; the Word of the Almighty.

The voice of NATURE. The voice of the universe. We need no  
 other word of God, nor can there ever be any other.

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Editor's Note: The above is a selection from a book Rev. Richards is writing. It is in the spirit of a kind of "Pantheist's Bible". A.C.D.



## INTRODUCTIONS

Dear U.L. Friends:

I'm interested in sharing in the "U.L. Friends Letter". I've enclosed a copy of our "Freedom of Religion Letter", gleaned from books I have that were printed in the 1800's.

Sincerely, Rev. E.A. Baker

### FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Throughout all of history, religious freedom has been coveted and fought for with unbelievable sacrifices. Our own great country, The United States of America, was created by people seeking freedom.

Thomas Jefferson, in his epic revision of the Virginia laws, introduced a bill establishing religious freedom for the Virginians. It became a model for the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. Jefferson considered it of equal importance to the Declaration of Independence. Although he was baptized in the Church of England, he was not in accord with their beliefs, and felt it was not right for the Virginians to be forced to support the Church of England. History tells us that Jefferson, as well as Benjamin Franklin were Deists, believing that God created the world and set it in motion, subject to natural laws, and that man with the power to reason could understand and use the natural laws. They felt that protection of man's right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness were worthy goals.

In a letter to Mr. Adams, dated January 1817, Jefferson, in reply to a question concerning his religious beliefs, wrote -- "Say nothing of my religion: it is known to my God and myself alone." He was so covetous of religious freedom that in the establishment of the University of Charlottesville, he was not willing that any religious faith whatever be taught in the university as a part of its instruction. Although he never disapproved or criticized anyone's beliefs, and attended and supported his wife's church financially, the Christian people of the times raised a cry of disapproval. The late 1700's and early 1800's was a time of great religious fervor and change. America was stretching its wings on the wave of freedoms guaranteed by the Bill of Rights (the first ten amendments to the Constitution of the United States) which was ratified on December 15, 1791. The Unitarian Association was one of the first recognized liberal churches in America although its history goes back to the 1500's in Europe. In history books published in the 1800's the word "Unitarian" was used in describing some of the leaders who were not actually affiliated with the organization. In 1822, for instance, Thomas Jefferson said, "The population in my neighborhood is too slender, and is too divided into other sects to maintain any one preacher well. I must therefore be content to be a Unitarian by myself." When the Unitarian movement became active Jefferson believed that it would grow and eventually become a major religion in the United States. Today, the Unitarian Universalist Association numbers their congregations only a little over 1,000 and the membership at 180,000.

Joseph Priestley in 1783 said "I would earnestly exhort all serious Unitarians, who cannot with satisfaction, or indeed with good conscience join in worship with Trinitarians to form themselves into separate societies, though their numbers in any place should be ever so small, or even though there should be no more than a single family in a place." A book published in 1898 by The Woman's Temperance Publishing Association contains a quote of Frances E. Willard -- "It seems to me that by nature all spiritually disposed people (and with the exception of about 6 months of my life I was always strongly that) are Unitarians, and my chief mental difficulty has always been, and is today after all these years, to adjust to the idea of Three in One, and One in Three."

Throughout all history, even without religious freedom, small groups have formed with their own ideas and beliefs. Albert Peel said "Has there ever been a time when the church counted for as much as when it met in houses and barns and the dens and caves of earth?" Methodism was built upon weekly gatherings usually directed by a layman, where small groups of individuals shared religious life, removing religion from the isolation of the pulpit. The Essene community connected with the Dead Sea Scrolls were clusters of devout people who drew apart from their Jewish world to live a communal life on the shores of the Dead Sea.

The religious fervor we are witnessing today has been compared to the movement of the early 1800's. We are living in a world of new technologies for communication, changing modes of living, trying political and social times -- times when it is difficult to hold onto your own personal beliefs with conviction. Times when it is extremely important to protect our freedom, not only religious, but other freedoms as well. The first amendment to our constitution was meant to guarantee religious freedom to all future generations of the United States. It is important to know and value our first amendment which guarantees our right to believe as our hearts direct us. The first amendment reads --

**FREEDOMS, ASSEMBLY, PETITIONS** -- Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Although Thomas Jefferson was known and respected for his many, varied accomplishments, his epitaph expressed the accomplishments for which he most wanted to be remembered --

"Here was buried Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of American Independence, of the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom, and father of the University of Virginia".

## The Divine Cat

I wonder if Jesus, while here on this earth  
 Had a little pet cat, or a kitten from birth  
 A calico, tabby, or an all-over grey  
 Would have lightened His burdens on every day

I know if He did, that little cat knew,  
 "This Man is Jesus, the King of the Jews;  
 He won't leave me lonely, or even unfed  
 As long as He lives"-- that's what the cat "said!"

Oh, what an honour, for a feline friend  
 To be here with Jesus from beginning to end  
 How glad she would be to follow the Man  
 From hither to Yon, all over this land.

I'm afraid that He didn't, for why would our Lord  
 Not have mentioned His little pet cat in His Word  
 To show that a man could have such a friend  
 Whether he stayed at home, or wherever he went?

And why would He pray in the Garden, alone,  
 Since from the Disciples our Saviour had gone,  
 When Hee could hear the purr of His little cat  
 To ease tension and soothe Him, wherever He sat?

No, I'm sure that He didn't; it e'er would have been  
 At the side of my Saviour, no matter the scene  
 When He rode into town and was welcomed with palms  
 Or He stood at the ocean and ordered it calm

Then on that sad day Jesus went to the cross  
 Would have followed along, ne'er forsaking her "Boss"  
 And on the Day that was so filled with gloom  
 This little cat would have guarded His tomb

But when He arose, as had been prophesied  
 Then, only then, would this kitten have died;  
 The reason? Just one; it would have to be love  
 And she would have followed our Saviour above!

If you have a cat, then I'm sure you can say  
 How much your pet means to you from day to day;  
 And I guess you can tell what it would have been worth  
 When Jesus was here, below, on this Earth!

Dr. Ross H L Bowen  
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LETTERS RECEIVED

57,

Dear U.L. Friends:

Let me tell you about my friend who died.

She took pride in demanding pleasantness from herself and others. She started the first public Kindergarten in California. She did fine weaving, basketry, learned Latin flower names, flew a plane, and loved to eat goodies. Her seaweed cards sold well at one time. She loved bright colors, fussing over people, and being fussed over.. She said that she never got any attention at all until she was ninety, when her last sister died. She did not mention her griefs unless asked. We laughed a lot together. She noticed that she and my dog wore the same hairdo.

When she was dying, and could no longer talk, she whispered "thankyou" or "You're wonderful" and tried to smile. She was a small alchemist who turned ninety nine years of life into love.

I told her I believed in reincarnation. I wish she could have believed too. It is hard to watch brave people die who are afraid to die,

Ellen Gillis

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UNIVERSAL LIFE FRIENDS LETTER, NEWS & NOTES

1. Well, here we are at issue #4 and not so terribly late. The next issue is planned for early November, so please get your letters to us promptly.

It would be very helpful if in writing you would note if all or only some of your letter is meant for publication. Often there seems to be a personal note to the Clerk included, and it is difficult to know whether to publish it or not.

2. We will send copies of this issue to several Quaker Centers and maybe a few libraries. Your suggestions about such would be greatly appreciated.

3. The ULC newspaper seems to have slowed down to 2 issues per year. Also several of you have written expressing your concern about its quality. I phoned Modesto and voiced our concern. I was asked when it was that I had submitted something to them for publication. A good question.

4. As might be hoped, a personal level of correspondence is beginning to occur among us. Although such is not necessary, it certainly does add another most welcome dimension. Also there are a few of us who even include our little group in prayer and meditation. Anyway thoughts of goodwill are not too plentiful these days, so the more we can spread around the better.

Clerk, A.C.D.