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Nudity and Spirituality by the Rev. Jaye Byrd

a wide, deserted stretch of beach. sunny summer day, and you're gazing on blue-green ocean shimmers in the noonday sun, and white-capped waves are rol-[magine the following scene: It's a bright, an endless procession to The

straightacross the golden sands, towards the foamy surf. You feel a delicious chill strip off strip off all your clothes, and run roundings, you look quickly up and down Overcome by the beauty of your cold of the seawater and the gentle ocean by the summer sun, meets the tingling all over your body as your flesh, warmed Sur-

smelling the scents of the outdoors, one's To the Church of Ecstasy, that moment --the mingling of Water, Fire, Earth, Air, ceiving the gifts of perception. It is nothing less than a state of grace, per-Nature-given senses are wide open, reof your surroundings, listening to the body granted for this passage through the world. Feeling the elements play on Uniform, Social Identification, Money and Flesh and Spirit -- is holy. Stripped of haps the most basic mystic experience of all. salty tang of seawater and sweat, and voices of wind and water, tasting the your bare skin, seeing the natural beauty Inhibition, you stand before Nature in the

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> regions. We adorned our bodies only for protection from the elements, and for world naked, and saw little reason to gild For the human body is the original temple of the Divine. Our ancestors entered this protection from the elements, and were minimal or nonexistent, even in cold ceremonial or social display. too far back in human history, clothes Nature's lily of flesh with adornment. Not

As civilization developed, so did clothing. fied, and clothes designated caste and previously been content to be mere hu-Societies became more complex and stratiman beings. were enforced on people who Through garments, "social identi-

Nudity, however, never quite went away. More often than not, it was the mark of the mystic and the spiritual rebel.

lent life by wandering the country "sky-clad," a practice adopted by the Buddha early in his career. ic Jain sect still live the simple, nonvionude yoga has a long history in East West alike. Members of India's ascet-

channeled the Gods in the altogether, and Medieval European "witches" (Natureduced nude sun worship Medieval European "witches Akhenaton and his sonal reveiry. loving pagans slandered as "Satanists" honored the Great Mother in naked seaancient Egypt, Classical Greece's the to the Nile Val-Delphic Oracle great pharaoh Nefertiti intro-

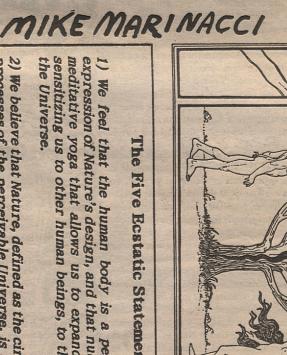
Doukhobors, a mystic Russian Orthodox movement, brought the idea into the 20th century when hundreds of their male and of a simple, God-centered life. And the was returned to the Jews, King David nude, and when the Ark of the Covenant a ceremonial belt. Even the Judeo-Christian tradition, often their persecution by worldly authorities female members marched naked to protest promoted social nudity as a vital element like the Carpocrations and the Adamianis danced merrily in the street wearing only Saul spoke Jehovah's prophecy in the boasts its naked, ecstatic figures. as uptight Early Christian sects and repressive, King

> By that time, the West was in a serious spiritual crisis. The Industrial Revolution, and its accompanying Calvinist starved its adherents of bodily ecstasy tion, and its accompanying Calvinist theology of prudery and repression, had Anglo-American capitalist empire. manticism to Beat, periodically erupted in reaction to the dour meanness of the and joy. "Bohemian" movements, from Roproduced untold wealth, yet had also

images of the counterculture: love-ins, Hair, body-painted hippies dancing ecstatically. It was nothing less than a a permanent Young people, reacting to centuries of grey Puritanical hypocrisy, doffed social mental use of plant chemicals) has become the body as sacred (along with the sacraand joy, and the revived pagan ideal of mass movement back to Edenic innocence restrictions en masse, and with them, their clothes. Think of the dominant Finally, the dam broke in the 1960s. part of modern world cul-

if we are again on the verge of something great. "The 90s will make the 60s look like the 50s," goes the slogan, and we at the Church believe that will be true for costumes, taking off our clothes sheds and constructive one than angry rhetoment indeed, and a much more enjoyable tive to ourselves...a revolutionary stateso useful to our Rulers, and so destrucand its simple, sensual pleasures. the movement to re-spiritualize the Body made during those years. But it seems as backlash against the changes and gains ric, clenched fists and brandished weapthe fears, defenses, and social identities world where Since then, we've endured a decade-long so much is tied up in our in a

beautiful and good, and deserve Universe, the Earth, and our bodies are ourselves of the simplest truths of all: the commune with the Elements, and remind outside in Nature. Free from clothes, we when covered, tunes us into the pure Too, intelligence both within our cells, and yoga. kindness, love and respect. being nude is a powerful meditative . Just...feeling, in a way one can't



The Five **Ecstatic Statements**

- sensitizing us to other human beings, to the Earth, and to meditative yoga that allows us to expand spiritually by expression of Nature 1) We feel that the the Universe. s design, and that nudity is a form of human body is a perfect, beautiful
- processes of the perceivable Universe, is the highest and holiest Power, and we seek to live in harmony with It. 2) We believe that Nature, defined as the circumstances and
- expansion of spiritual consciousness through whatever means they wish, so long as the means do not interfere with 3) We assert that human beings have the right to seek the the rights of others.
- and love towards others is the primary goal of our spiritual path, as it allows us to see the Divinity inherent in all path, as it allows us 4) We maintain that the development of sensitivity, kindness
- our loving, pleasurable approach to spirituality! and experience, and invite all who share our beliefs to join 5) We celebrate the vast diversity of human form, culture

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Bridge. Take #29 or #38 Baker Beach, San Franci (East end; towards Summer Solstice Celeb June 25, 1994, © High Noon In the Bay Area? Join us 8 SO CA MUNI.) lden Gate bration! for a...

All 'Heads & Kind People Welcome!



