

The Realization of Leon Wood

*Circa 1978, Richard Rose wrote about the principles, benefits and difficulties involved in forming and maintaining a spiritual group. His treatise called **The Grand Work of the TAT Society** contains the following section, which serves to introduce Leon Wood:*

“Wood was one of the men who I met that convinced me that he was truly enlightened. However, his system was discouraging to almost everyone he met. He insisted upon having people repeat and study the Lord’s Prayer. Now the Lord’s Prayer is basically part of the structure of organized Christianity, which is identified as being in the group called the Believers. Now the strange truth is that [Wood] himself came upon his Realization while clinging to the Lord’s Prayer for counsel and guidance. He had an opening of the mind as a result. It seems only fair to assume that if [Wood] is going to transmit, it will be done by the same leverage that was used upon him. But this is not true; each man blooms from a different catalyst. The only thing that the enlightened men have in common is that which they find. So that it is better to encourage an inward search, without demanding to find for the student an exact formula or discipline.”

Robert Martin, who met Richard Rose in 1943 and later became a lifelong friend, wrote the following accounting in his autobiography. The initial meeting between Martin and Wood occurred in the autumn of 1959.



About this time I met Leon Wood. For some time, Frank Pena had been telling me of this strange man whom he thought to be unusually advanced spiritually. For some reason, I was not anxious to meet him. Perhaps it was just because I was in one of my cycles of heavy boozing, and every special act became a burden.

One day, I finally agreed to go with Frank and meet Wood. Wood was a big portly man, about six two and very well fed looking. Not my idea at all of an illuminated person. He looked like a bank president, whom we all know can never become enlightened. He was of white Anglo Saxon protestant background. English in fact. He had a rather reedy high-pitched voice, out of place in such a large frame. Going with this, however, he had a very mild growth of facial hair. I mean shaving would be no problem for him, and he kept clean shaven. His eyes were a luminous grey. His permanent expression, no matter what was said or done, was a pleasant half smile. His hair was becoming a bit sparse, and was blond with a scatter of grey. At this time he was about 44.

There was nothing striking about my first meeting with Wood. In addition to Frank and myself, there were three other people visiting Wood that night. Wood did some elementary and unsuccessful hypnotic experiments with an attractive lady in her thirties. There was some discussion that I no longer remember. Nothing significant occurred. When Frank and I were leaving, Leon said to me, “I’ll see you again, Bob.” Of this I was in considerable doubt.

But thoughts about Leon kept intruding in my mind during the next few days, so I did go back to see him. Again, nothing particular occurred, but when I left that evening it was with a profound

certitude that Wood *was real!* I was absolutely sold on his account of a Cosmic Consciousness experience, which he had undergone several years previous, and knew that he remained in a strange transcendental state of awareness even now.

Now, I and a dozen others went to see Wood at every opportunity. He didn't say anything profound. In fact, I had much more knowledge of spiritual philosophy than Wood. He apparently was unacquainted with mysticism until he had his experience. Since then, he had picked up a smidgen of knowledge from some of the people—like myself—who hung about him like bees about honey. But we knew he was much more than we.

Wood, like RS, had seemingly reached his experience from a launching pad of trauma and despair. He had been having unbearable quarrels with a shrewish wife. Working as a used car salesman, he was a total failure at selling cars. Personal bankruptcy loomed to greet him as “life begins at 40.” He had never paid any attention to religion, but now, in desperation, he began to read the New Testament. He came upon the place where Jesus gave the Lord's Prayer to his disciples. Leon was inspired to try this. What could he lose? So in the evening, when he retired to the couch where his wife had relegated him, he practiced the Lord's Prayer. He didn't rattle it off quickly, which seemed useless to him, but turned it into a deep prolonged concentration so that it took him many evenings to get through it once. In fact, many evenings were needed to get through the phrase, “...forgive us our trespasses.” Here, he went back and surveyed his entire life to become keenly aware of the nature of his trespasses and their causes.

After a couple weeks of this nightly effort, he was sitting at his old beat-up desk in the little sales office at the used car lot, when he was plunged into an abysmal pit of melancholia. He put his head down on the desk. He felt like his life was oozing out from his body and running over the floor. And then...with explosive suddenness he was no longer aware of office or of body. The incredible ‘I WHO AM!’ pervaded his awareness, and a voice, as in the Bible, said. “Be still, my son, and know that I am God!” And it was Christ speaking.

From that day on, he never found his way back from this vision of the universal form. He never went to work again. For a couple of weeks following the initial experience, he stayed in bed, using the flu as an excuse. Eventually, he was able to function some in this world. Everything about him in this new world was viewed with one eye looking through a telescope in reverse to the usual way, so that what was seen was diminished, and occupied only a small portion of one's field of vision. Pursuing this analogy, it is as though his other eye remained ever fixed on the indescribable vision of God manifest.

In this condition he needed care. A circle of people seemed to spontaneously grow up about him. Ladies saw that there was always something easy to eat and drink in his refrigerator, or he might have starved. Men, on leaving of an evening, stuffed money in a jar to care for his other needs.

One rare evening I was the only visitor. Wood and I had just had some green tea that I had prepared for us. We had been having some rather light conversation. I was talking, as usual, and looking at Wood, who sat in his favorite armchair. My words gradually slowed down and became progressively elongated. Before I finished my final sentence, my words seemed to spin off into nothing. A deep stillness, so thick and rich you could cut it with a knife, filled the room.

Wood's eyes were intent on me, and his perpetual enigmatic smile. Effulgence suffused his countenance. A luminescence from within him spread outward and transfigured the entire room. Peace and glory held me. And then Wood lifted up his hand to shoulder height and said quietly. "Sometimes the power gets this deep in here." And indeed, it was as though a billowing essence half filled the room. I saw his transfiguration as clearly and as visually as one sees a lamp, but I knew it was a different kind of light. Ever after this, I have known that portrayal of saints with haloes is not just a symbol to indicate their holiness, but is because they have often been seen this way.

With Leon Wood, it was always Jesus, but, he assured me, that if he had been born in the orient, it might have been Krishna or Buddha that he communed with, and it didn't make any real difference, as these were but personal masks of a fantastic impersonal Reality. If I felt more comfortable with Buddha, he said, by all means hang on to him.

One other item about Leon before we move on. A friend of mine, Dr. Theine Wah, who worked at the research institute was a Hindu from Burma and a good physicist. He was also a Marxist-oriented agnostic. He had a rather dim view of what I called spiritual philosophy. I got him to go with me once to see Leon Wood.

Dr. Wah was astounded. He said he felt a force about Wood, like a magnetic force acting on a nail, that seemed to vary with the distance. The nearer he got to Leon the more powerful he felt this force. He had never experienced anything like it. Wah would never go back to see Leon again.



In the summer of '63, Leon Wood traveled to Akron twice to visit me. Each time, I had a number of people there who might be interested in this story. [Rose] was there each time, and on both visits we made a long night of it.

It was after these sessions that Rose told me that Leon Wood was likely the most advanced person he had ever met. Wood rang true for Rose's intuition.

Wood, however, was having problems. He thought other people might make use of the Lord's Prayer in the manner that he had, and also come through, as he called it. He worked this plan out in detail, and called it the Lord's Prayer Therapy. But no one was coming through thereby. As I recall, going through the scheme once took about two weeks. During his visits Wood prevailed on me to try this. I did so, with no spectacular results. [Rose] thought that the special anguish that Wood had before he came through, was as important a factor as his use of the Lord's Prayer, and the lack of such a shock was what prevented the system from working with others.