

## RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

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vision background of mass fantasy. The tendency of the new revivalism to reflect, and perhaps even shape, popular consciousness is also found in its leaning toward the charismatic—a belief in special powers to heal, to communicate in unknown tongues, to experience ecstatic self-renewal.

The vigor of the new revivalism shows, among other things, that what Americans want is not a religion attuned to politics and social causes but a religion of immediacy and feeling. It rejects the intellectualism that has characterized much discussion of religion in recent years. The new revivalism, says Edwards, “announces the coming of religion-as-lifestyle . . . as packaged illusion.” Jesus is not the judge and renouncer of the world, he is simply “a helping friend, a friend with magical powers.” All that is required is to “smile, be happy, praise the Lord—and be sure of your place at the Rapture with Pat Boone, Johnny Cash, and the World Action Singers.”

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## OTHER NATIONS

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### *La Dolce Vita*

“The New Class” by Mauro Lucentini, in *Commentary* (Nov. 1976), 165 E. 56th St., New York, N.Y. 10022.

Italy has become the first major Western nation to produce a “New Class,” a “self-appointed, self-serving state elite,” of the kind described by the Yugoslav intellectual Milovan Djilas.

This New Class, says Lucentini, American correspondent for the Milan daily *Il Giornale Nuovo*, is the product of close cooperation between the Communists and the dominant left wings of the “Center-Left” parties that have ruled Italy for almost 15 years. A “miracle of political subtlety” has permitted these two, ostensibly hostile, elements to cooperate in transferring assets from private hands to the state and in distributing them among the New Class in the form of jobs, privileges, and subsidies.

The public payroll in Italy, poorest and least productive of the Western industrial nations, is 10 times as large, in proportion to its population, as that of the United States. “More than half of the total Italian labor force has already retired on official pension plans,” Lucentini reports. “Most Italian art, most Italian education, most of Italian culture is financed by the government and serviced by political proteges.”

With a strong boost from the “economic miracle” which saw Italy prosper in the late 1950s, the New Class grew strong when the Socialist Party was allowed into the government in 1961. As a result, a “full-fledged client system was initiated, with all bureaucratic and para-governmental positions, down to the last errand boy, being shared

**OTHER NATIONS**

among parties." In 1970, the creation of 20 new regional authorities produced an instantaneous doubling of the bureaucratic structure.

The New Class dominates the communications media through control of the state broadcasting monopoly, which distributes millions of dollars worth of jobs and salaries under a rigid formula based on relative party strength. Education and culture are virtual fiefdoms of the New Class. If the Communists ever achieve power in Italy, says Lucentini, one can safely predict that they will become the "guarantors" of this comfortable elite and that "the corrupt, nepotistic aristocracy that has been formed in Italy would settle down to its final and undisturbed reward."

*Coca-Chewing:  
Nature's Remedy*

"Andean Coca Chewing: A Metabolic Perspective" by Ralph Bolton, in *American Anthropologist* (Sept. 1976), 1730 New Hampshire Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

For years, outsiders have made repeated attempts to halt coca-leaf-chewing by the Indians of the Andes, despite the lack of convincing evidence that the habit is any more harmful than drinking coffee.

A body of mythology has grown up around coca use, says Bolton, an anthropologist at Pomona College. The Incas are said to have prohibited its use by any but priests and nobles. In modern days, it has been regarded as a serious medical and social problem because of its presumed psychological effects. But in the amounts ordinarily consumed by the Indians, coca produces no euphoric effects. "Indians do not chew coca to become stoned," he writes.

Native explanations for the coca habit are chiefly physiological. Habitual users almost invariably say that coca provides them with energy for work, while reducing their feelings of fatigue; it keeps them warm and helps alleviate their hunger.

Bolton argues that coca-chewing is a response to chronic low blood glucose concentrations among Andean Indians. In a manner not yet clearly understood, coca tends to impede lowering of blood glucose levels for several hours. With data collected from a small sample of moderately hypoglycemic (low blood sugar) subjects, he was able to show that they regularly consumed significantly more coca than subjects with normal blood sugar. Blood glucose levels are partially determined by nutritional factors, such as low protein, and Indians whose diets are high in carbohydrates and low in animal protein tend to chew more coca than those who eat eggs or meat every day.

While Indians chew coca for various reasons, the evidence suggests that coca may be critical for the adaptation and survival of some hypoglycemic Indians under conditions encountered at high altitude. Past campaigns by national and international agencies to abolish its use in Peru and Bolivia have failed. But if future efforts succeed, "the cultural and biologic consequences could be devastating."