

Benjamin Creme (1922-2016)

Benjamin Creme (born December 5, 1922 in Glasgow; deceased October 24, 2016) was a Scottish artist and painter, millenarist, UFO believer, →Theosophist, medium, and the world's foremost prophet of the return of →Maitreya-Christ. According to a short autobiographical account in his *The Reappearance of the Christ and the Masters of Wisdom* (2007 [repr. 1980], 8-17), Creme had experimented since his late teenage years with autohypnosis, meditation, and energy devices (such as a self-built Reichian "orgone accumulator"), claiming to have achieved numerous extraordinary experiences and capabilities, such as sensing distant atomic tests. In the 1950s he sympathised with UFO movements and became president of the →Aetherius Society from 1957-59. Creme was influenced by the theosophical idea of "masters of wisdom" who guide mankind from distant realms and communicate telepathically with chosen individuals. He claims to have been contacted by one of these masters from 1959 onwards and to have established a permanent telepathic link with this master in 1972. In 1959, Creme also received a telepathic communication that the return of the world saviour Maitreya-Christ would be imminent, an idea he was already acquainted with through Alice Bailey's *The Reappearance of the Christ* (1947) which he had read in the early 1950s. Yet, it was only in 1975 that Creme fully accepted the role as Maitreya's prophet, began to establish groups of followers, and publicly announced Maitreya's return as the spearhead of the →New Age of Aquarius. In 1982 Creme founded the organisation →Share International to support this mission; he was chief editor of the *Share International* magazine until his death in 2016.

Creme declared numerous dates for the return and/or public appearance of Maitreya-Christ (Creme was obsessed by the idea that Maitreya would give a global television interview), the most important ones being July 19, 1977; June 21, 1982; June 11, 1988; end of December 1997; January 14, 2010. During the public announcement in 1982, which was witnessed by more than 90 reporters in Los Angeles, Creme claimed that Maitreya-Christ lives in the Brick Lane area of London and will "come on the world's television channels, linked together by satellite. [...] He will establish a telepathic rapport with all humanity simultaneously" (Creme 1986, 23). While raising serious media interest at first, Creme became the subject of increased mockery over the years. Nonetheless, the British *Share International* websites continue to list

further appearances of Maitreya, indicating dates, durations, number of people involved, and their respective religious beliefs (Share International no date). Apart from these appearances, Maitreya delivered in total 140 telepathic messages to Benjamin Creme between 1977 and 1982, which hold a prominent spot in the teachings of Share International (Creme 1992).

Between 1975 and 2016, Creme published 17 books which have been translated into seven languages, gave numerous public lectures and over 300 radio and television interviews, and instructed the so-called "transmission meditation" all over the world. During this group meditation, which is Creme's main practice, he claims to "transmit" the spirit of Maitreya and other masters of wisdom into the minds of the participants, a process which he also calls "overshadowing". Even though Christian authors such as Charles Upton, Troy Lawrence or Constance Cumbey pronounced massive polemics against Creme, claiming that he was a false prophet and antichrist, Creme acquired a substantial community of followers. Numerous books by Creme's followers outline their experiences and encounters with Maitreya – who may materialise at any time and in any shape to the true believer, also as shades, colours or handprints on photographs, or as crosses or patterns of light on building walls (e.g., Peterson 2001, Schumacher 2011).

Bernd-Christian OTTO

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