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Journal of the Committee of Southern Churchmen

# KATALLAGETE



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FALL 1980

## KATALLAGETE

Journal of the Committee of Southern Churchmen

FALL 1980

Volume 7, Number 3

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## NOTICE

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UNSYSTEMATICS 24387. YOU MAY ANSWER ALL OR SOME, OR NONE, OF THE FOLLOWING.  
(This was our final exam, more or less).

1. Is there such a thing as a theologically indefensible proposition?
2. How many different ways can you spell Schillebeeckx?
3. Has the Church always taught anything? Explain and be specific.
4. Reflect on the Seven Deadly Sins. Describe how you have integrated these into your life. Be specific ~~(and why?)~~ <sup>and why?</sup>
5. Who wrote the Summa Theologica? ~~(and why?)~~ <sup>(and why?)</sup>
6. Why is Simon Stylites important in the history of Eccentric Spirituality?
7. Compare the discernment process of Ignatius with that of Sherlock Holmes.
8. Does K. Rahner believe in verbs?
9. Which does not belong to the group?
  - a) Rahner, Kung, Howdy Doody, Dulles, Schillebeeckx
  - b) Ecclesiology, Christology, Mariology, Phrenology, Eschatology
  - c) Esther, Dolly Parton, Ruth, Judith, Sarah
  - d) bishop, cardinal, priest, deacon, cowboy
  - e) John XXIII, Malcom X, Paul VI, John Paul I, John Paul II
10. Construct on a single legal size sheet, ~~a mockup of the Trinity.~~ <sup>a construct should take in account the writing of John of St. Thomas, Thomas of Aquin, Thomas the Apostle, and ~~one~~ <sup>one</sup> Thomists.</sup>
11. Chart the progress of a mystic ~~climbing~~ <sup>climbing</sup> Dante's Mount of Purgation from the inside.
12. Discuss recent continental developments in astrology, Christology and the lynchpin theory of the universe.
13. Make an ethical critique of a hypothetical proposal to establish a papal sperm bank.
14. The great powers have loosed a nuclear war. Discuss the following propositions;
  - Use of hard tack for a shelter liturgy is for the duration, valid but illicit.
  - A rack of shot guns at the shelter door will enhance the chances of Christian survival.
15. If the head quarters of the western church are at Rome and Geneva, where are its hind quarters? ~~Illustrate.~~ <sup>Illustrate.</sup> ~~of Normal Vincent Peale.~~
16. Taking in account the ~~view~~ <sup>view</sup> that Christ had everything going for him and blew it, refute the Servant Songs of Isaiah.
17. If transcendental meditation grew immanent, would its practitioners disappear down a black hole inspace? Interview ~~at~~ <sup>at</sup> least five t.mers. on this question.
18. In light of the protestant theology of the 60s, discuss the congruance of the neo gothic towers of NY's Riverside Church. If God is indeed dead, has the church buried him standing?

4/1980  
from Daniel Berrigan

# ABOUT THIS ISSUE...

## CHRIST CAESAR/CAESAR CHRIST

The political season has been described by responsible and intelligent observers as "unseemly." They indict the political quality displayed by the two (or the three) leading presidential candidates, the hypocrisy of their official platforms, and the crisis of the two-party system. A few more words may be in order about the season which has become politically unseemly, and for some Christians, blasphemous. In turn: television, the parties, and the primaries; the draft registration; the political passions that unite new-re-second-born-Christians with mainline Christianity.

In 1952 President Harry S. Truman dismissed political primaries as "eyewash." He was right. In 1952. The primaries are now irrevocably woven into the power of television locked into the political processes. Nothing is "real" politically unless it makes television news. Politics is geared to that media. Television presents politics to the eye and soul of the public. We understand what we understand about politics from television items collected as merchandise, displayed to consumers, paid for by advertisers. Television primaries put before the electorate (and for those who choose not to elect) a media choice every four years offered up by the Parties' personalities.

The primaries with a vengeance since 1960 determined themselves by television. By 1980 they were not "eyewash" but politics life's blood. The primaries are "open" to any citizen of any political orientation — female or male, black, white, bronze, yellow, polka-dot.

Why then do the candidates look like each other? (Candidates ought to be required to wear name-bars like the ones issued to the police and the Army.) The media-connection again. The primaries are open to everyone regardless of... so long as they have \$1 million up-front and therefore connected with the experts in media and in fund-raising. The imagination withers at a genuine, grass-roots campaign in the 1980 primaries. Maybe the 1980 primaries are 1984. Recollect their names and their faces (you might remember their faces but not their names, or their names and not their faces.) Their sex. Their color. Their connections. The result is the process. Consider the results (Anderson, Carter, Reagan in alphabetical order). No media shouts about racism, sexism, and all the other -isms that are alleged to corrode our society.

A case in point: Congressman Dellums, a "candidate" at the Democratic Party's episode in Madison Square Garden last month. The Congressman, for reasons not explained by intelligent and responsible observers, did not campaign in the New Hampshire, Wisconsin, Florida and the other primaries open to anyone, regardless. . . . Congressman Dellums elbowed his way onto the dias of Madison Square Garden to the embarrassment of the Party's leadership and more-or-less loyal (that is, the Kennedy) opposition. Angry, black, an elected Representative to the Congress of the United States, a member of the Party who could not be denied a few wrenching, awkward moments before a nation hostage to network television.

No screams or comments about Racism! Sexism! from media or delegates. After all, the primaries had been reformed. *Vox Populi* with a vengeance! No question about Sexism! Racism! in the primaries. But why not?

Because Watergate proved that the system worked and the reformed, open primaries demonstrated "the lesson of Watergate." Along the way, cranking up into the primary season in 1980, came a most popular topic among liberal-to-radical symposia, conferences, magazine articles: "Racism and the Resurgence of the Klan." Here we go again. It's the redneck in a sheet with a twelve-gauge that threatens the democracy Watergate proved and the primaries confirmed. The Klan that is responsible for New York's South Bronx, Chicago's Westside, Miami's Liberty City, Los Angeles' Watts. Not the economies of the economy. Not the "solution" to the energy crisis in obscene profits to the oil conglomerates to cut down domestic fuel consumption. Not inflation, unemployment, depression. Not television. Not the stranglehold the corporate enterprise holds on the political system. Not the threat of nuclear catastrophies. None of these. No. Rednecks in nightgowns, venting their frustrations at the workings of the political process in obscenities and wanton, isolated acts of violence. "The Klan" has no candidate, because it has no "system" and exists because it is not a part of the system of American life and politics in 1980. Educated and sophisticated people believe that "Racism and the Resurgence of the Klan" is the threat that compromises democracy. Otherwise, the system moves as oiled machinery. And it does. The candidates who merit television news deplore the Klan (Reagan's foolish comments about Carter's campaign kickoff in Tusculumbia, Alabama—the comments are like Carter's kickoff, a media-event non-event in pristine formulation). Lord help us. Where have the passionate cultural and political reforms and liberations of the Seventies brought us? To Anderson and Carter and Reagan. No cries of Sexism and Racism at the political processes, only cynical jockeying by reform/liberation causes to cut a pound or two of flesh from candidates that in the end will weigh a ton on most of us, victimized into believing television news. Meanwhile, symposia, conferences, journalistic issues on "Racism and the Resurgence of the Klan."

Consider well. No call here to return to "the smoke-filled rooms" of the Twenties and Thirties and Forties to choose political leadership filtered through the political system. The egg cannot be stuffed back into the chicken. There are no "smoke-filled rooms" in 1980. And Evermore. No political wheeler-dealers today, but money and media experts. No smoke from the big black cigars (progress progresses, liberation liberates). The gathering scented by smoke from funny little tightrolled brown

cigarettes in antiseptic Hyatt Regency Suites, Valium with Club Soda, plastic spooning yogurt, finger-eating-bean-sprouts—under orders of the Parties' leaders to decide the candidate. After all, we are what we eat or swallow or inhale. (Was it Feuerbach or the AMA who said it?)

Loose talk of NOTA. None Of The Above. How does one Nota? At this writing (the first week in September) gossip persists that near twenty percent of those required did not register for the draft at the post offices. The Administration reports that over ninety percent registered, final data to come later, after the election. There are calls for an "audit." The registration was yet one more media event by this Administration. On the one hand an inept and ridiculous effort to warn the Soviets and the Persian Gulf states, on the other hand a fat carrot to a hawkish Congress festering under Carter's political ineptitude, facing re-election on the tails of four years lost meeting the "crises." The registration: no pseudo-event. It compelled millions of young men and their families and friends to perform a political act in an environment heavy with cynicism about politics generally and this Administration particularly. The shallow, near huckster quality of the decision to legislate registration was recognized by more than the radicals. (Carter's Administration has clearly surpassed Nixon's for manipulation of pseudo-events into media-events for political purposes. So effective, and so flagrant, that even CBS Evening News, guardian of our political morality, on several broadcasts during the Spring and Summer, documented Carter's timing of political pseudo-events on television to enhance his political fortunes in the primaries. What CBS Evening News did not discuss was the implications of their willing participation in the manipulation.)

Radical as well as legally oriented, conservative organizations, institutions, foundations, publications, some of them religious, seem committed to defend the non-registrants, to attack the law as discriminatory on grounds that include but are more inclusive than "sexist." (I heard recently a local television commentator, an articulate and intelligent person who prepares the "commentary" carefully. He argued that to his satisfaction, no one had explained why any "draft" in this nation was not in violation of the constitutional provision against "involuntary servitude.") Who knows? Those weeks at the post offices in July could be the priority in 1981, whatever the face of the Administration. What to do about the non-registrants? The current administration whines before

Congress, "we are in the business of registering men not putting them in jail." What if those who do not register in 1981 are higher percentage points than those failing to register in 1980? Law is law. Its on the Books in 1981.

What to do? Poker-playing metaphors abound. So does Humpty-Dumpty and Paper Tiger (the one that strikes the jugular of the Kissingers and Brzezinskis). A massive federal program of prison construction, along the way easing unemployment, the miscreants building their own cells? The Attorney General appeared before network television news to warn that the Law would be enforced. That means enforced *across-the-boards*: justice-is-blind. Might not that jail scions from otherwise exempt political and corporate families to share the cells (if not the bunks), stamping license plates and cleaning barn manure with the tough ones from rural and urban ghettos? Or might we expect a crack-down on the mainline legally oriented organizations which are primed to support the non-registrants? No option this, whatever the face of the Administration in 1981. There are only so many federal courts and nine justices of the Supreme Court, and the Chief Justice is Warren Burger. Fouled up—and its hard to see otherwise, given Congress, the Supreme Court, and the faces of Anderson and Carter and Reagan how it could not be fouled up—the draft registration could be for the 1981 Administration a mini-American version of the worker's strike on the Communist Party in Poland.

"You have sowed the wind, you have reaped the whirlwind," Hosea reminded his nation's leaders and people. The draft registration is an ongoing and concrete event legislated into our lives. The Thirties and Forties were one thing about the Draft: the ghost of the notion of the war-to-end-all-wars. The Eighties are something else: the war-to-end-all. We'll see.

Another wind sowed into whirlwind is this nation's relationship with Iran since 1945, Prime Minister Dr. Mohammed Mossedeg in 1952 to Shah Mohammed Riza Pahlavi to the Ayatollah Khomeini. To the Hostages. Drained to the limits by the President and television's network news, these tormented folk and their families languish, Hostage not only to the Ayatollah. The system of world politics today is hostage to Hostages. The Zbigniew Brzezinski's of the USSR, the Chinese People's Republic, and Guatemala, Saudi Arabia, if not Cuba and Israel, must anguish in their decision-making; their citizens made hostage to this or that bishop, ayatollah, party chairman, prime minister. Strategic even nuclear raids on specific targets? No. That will not "free" hostages. No more "Raids on Entebbe". The Ayatollah has escalated the madness of contemporary world politics a notch, maybe

even two or three. The use of force, even nuclear force is, after all, a technical consideration. If the technical variables fall in favor of *nuclear* force, then nuclear force. It was a technical decision that kept nuclear weapons out of Vietnam, just as it was a technical decision to use the A-Bomb against Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. The Carter Administration's notorious Directive Fifty-nine is a technical matter. When the technical pieces fall into place, then Directive Fifty-nine, and the war-to-end-all.

"This is the most religious of ages" Ellul reminds us. The use of nuclear force has always been a religious as well as a technical determinate in the chancelleries of nuclear powers. Nuclear weapons answer "ultimate" questions when politics is the only reality. President Carter and Secretary of Defense Brown are on the nuclear continuum begun under the squash courts at Stagg Field at the University of Chicago in December, 1942. All honorable men: Sachs, Fermi, even the sainted Einstein, then at Alamogordo Air Force Base, New Mexico, under Oppenheimer. Then Hiroshima, Nagasaki blessed by Air Force chaplains. A frightening aura of religion has been with atomic weapons and nuclear power from the beginning. From the very beginning.

Everything is politicized and we live in the most religious of ages.

The Hostages, the Ayatollah and the unseemly political season of 1980 evoke a theme *Katallagete* raised in 1968: "Up To Our Steeples in Politics." Iran today seems "Up To Its Minarets in Politics." And this nation's steeple-politics (dating from 1620) may be an unwitting force in the contemporary Iranian situation. No *mea culpa* here. The evidence builds of the United States' involvement in the overthrow of Prime Minister Dr. Mohammed Mossedeg in 1952, in the return and billion-dollar sale of armaments to Shah Mohammed Riza Pahlavi in succeeding decades. Why did the Shah need war-tools in such abundance? Why did this nation serve his main supplier? Who had in mind what? Nixon dispatched CIA Director Helms as Ambassador to Iran when Helms' "going got tough" domestically. Carter visited the Shah in an obscenity of political and ceremonial pomp and circumstance twelve brief months before the Shah's exile from Teheran. The Ayatollah Khomeini returns and Iran is "Up To Its Minarets in Politics." Who knows what the Ayatollah and his circle learned from us in their decades of exile in France. Upon return, everything, from oil production, marriage, international law, is religious. The Hostages are not released because they are religious, not political hostages. The World Court, the normal channels of international diplomacy mean nothing. It was not

stupidity but desperation that led the Carter administration (specifically Brzezinski) to use Billy Carter to speak to the Libyans about the Hostages.

Who can fault the Ayatollah's political conduct in the light of our current unseemly political situation? Is it the other (Iranian) side of the same coin?

"Up To Our Steeples in Politics." No doubt back to 1620. Consider only the heritage since the end of the Second World War: religion and politics moved a path that has altered the history of Western Christianity. Revivalism using Billy Sunday's methods of the Twenties was refined by the mass-media, moralistic and political in their content and ambition. The Reverend Dr. Billy Graham may



not have spawned the development but his successes are the model. Golf and football and prayer breakfasts with Presidents fell on soil prepared since 1620 and 1945, not only to evangelicals and fundamentalists, but to mainline liberal Protestants and Catholics. I heard it a few weeks ago from a gracious and sophisticated feminist: "We've got to get our best people, including Christian people, into politics." It is insane to throw stones at the new-re-second-born Christian today and ignore the virile work of mainline liberal Protestantism to become "politically relevant" after the Second World War. The "social action" agencies of the denominations' headquarters and the curricula of

the seminaries convinced themselves that the Gospel of Jesus Christ was relevant to the agenda of politics, and they demanded a-piece-of-the-action. And got it. Ministers entered politics because they were ministers—"our best people in politics." The political agendas of Kennedy, Humphrey, McGovern, Nixon, Carter became the witness of Christianity in "A World Come of Age." We throw stones when backed into a corner. So here we are, the new-re-second-born Christians more effective and therefore more dangerous, doing what the liberals of the Fifties and Sixties tried and failed to do. Who's to fault the re-born for their success? Their conviction is the same as mainline liberals in the Fifties and Sixties, yet both have escalated the conviction into a new reality. Religion is serious only politically. The reverse is now the reality: politics is real only when religious.

Grant the mellowing of Dr. Graham on talk-shows and "Laugh-In" and his television Crusades. Dr. Graham is currently against the bomb in Dick Cavett interviews. Grant the disillusion and distaste and cynicism in some of the hollers and backroads and ghettos that greet the political moralisms of the media evangelists. A burlesque of the faith. These folk gave up two decades ago when the mainline tried to transform their heritage into mainline bourgeoisie Christianity, with budgets, the five-point grading program, internal organization related to the denomination's bureaucracy in Atlanta, Richmond,

Nashville. The mainline is bankrupt in the hollers and backroads and increasingly in new-re-second-born suburbia because their guiding agenda sought to make the hollers and backroads into their own image. Grant also for lower-middle and low income Christians the matters of television (whether Graham or Falwell or "Eight is Enough" and NFL Football) are the escape-hatch from the drudgery of shop, station, typewriter, lathe, insurance forms, bureaucratic records. (The declining quality of network television is a god-send to the crusading television evangelists: The evangelists bring a continuity and a reliability the network's schedule fails to provide.) Grant also a curious look at the foundations of Christianity by "cultured despisers," reading Barth, Tillich, Bultmann, Ellul, watching the New Pope, disillusioned with the identification of Gospel of Jesus Christ to a political agenda however noble the cause.

All this provides the point of the Ayatollah's counterpoint. Western Religion (main-line liberal, new-re-second-born, the Marxist-oriented liberation Christianity) is reduced to the expression of a series of moral imperatives that the political order legislates and enforces. Any pattern of moral behavior (full-employment, tax initiatives, tax reform, abortion, anti-abortion, gay, anti-gay, family, free-love, we know the issues from the bulk-mailings): our religion demands Caesar make laws to enforce moral judgments. Christ is Caesar or not Christ. It's The Grand Inquisitor all over again.

No concern for the Sacred Texts or the meaning of the Sacred Texts for the Spiritual Life. The Texts are not Sacred but weapons in the political arsenal to destroy opposition. No concern for the meaning of the Texts about the implication of sin for the political ordering. No. On both sides we hear it: sin is bad moral conduct. Not the Sacred Texts confession that sin is a fundamental *No* to the grace of God. Instead, abortion, non-abortion, SALT II, the family, Taiwan, evolution, tax reform, inflation: the Texts are to be used, not heard. If our days were not so filled with tragedy and death, we should

laugh. Not smile, laugh. Kierkegaard understood. Liberals their agenda, new-re-second-born theirs, liberationists theirs, evangelical theirs, inerrants theirs. Moralists all. The Ecumenical Age is upon us: morality is the essence of Christianity, legislated by politics. Caesar is Christ or not Christ.

The new-re-second-born may pull it off. Reagan is re-born. Carter is re-born. Anderson may be. They pander to the re-born's fears and fascinations in Convention and Crusade that Christianity is morality. There is no excuse for our anger at the Iranians shaking their fists of political morality before television in Teheran or Washington, when our thousands in football stadiums scream before television, arms and fingers chopping, "Jesus is Number One." Bumper stickers "I'm a fan of Jesus."

The times are unseemly for political observers. For some Christians they are blasphemous when Christ is made a moral-political agenda. When Christ is Christ only if Caesar. When Caesar is Caesar only if Christ.

There is the "notorious case of incest" that Paul faced in the congregation in Corinth, "a kind that is not found even among pagans." That is, "pagans" too know something about "morality." We do well to listen to Paul. He may know something about Christ we do not know or have not heard. That Christ's life and death and resurrection did not herald a moral code to be imposed by Caesar. That Christ's resurrection called the Christian's vocation into history. His body, the Church, to anticipate, foretell, anticipate and so live His resurrection as that Kingdom to come, to judge and reconcile our systems. "From the first to the last *this* has been the world of God."

Christ as Caesar is Caesar as Christ. The Christ of the Gospel lived and died and was resurrected to reconcile us from that blasphemy. □

JYH

Julius Lester

## FALLING PIECES OF THE BROKEN SKY

*...the entire Universe will be broken into a thousand pieces in the general ruin, that chaos will return and will vanquish the gods and men, that the Earth and Sea will be engulfed by the Planets wandering in the Heavens. Of all the generations, it is we who have been designated to merit this fate, to be crushed by the falling pieces of the broken sky.*

-Seneca-

I have been depressed for more than a year. It isn't obvious and the sadness, submerged like a hidden underground stream, doesn't intrude on dailiness or stifle my many joys.

When I was younger, my depressions were an intense melancholy, immobilizing me until they dissipated as mysteriously as they came. I will not awaken one morning to find this one gone as if it were a dream, felt but not remembered.

Besides being an emotional affliction, a depression is also a hollow in the land. Its root meaning is "to strike." That is what I feel. I have been struck, so fearfully that I have fallen into a hollow in the land, where I lie gazing at the sky and measuring its broken pieces.

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It has been more than a year now that I have been studying the Holocaust. If reading about it has so numbed me, I cannot imagine what it was like to have lived in it, or through it.

I have been struck by grief and mourning for the six million murdered Jews. I did not expect to feel this.

I did not expect this mourning for my innocence.

It is odd being black these days. Perhaps that was so always and I never noticed. Black people have ceased to exist, and we pretend we are still here.

I'm not sure when we disappeared. Maybe it happened one night while I was watching a rerun of "Police Woman." I don't know where we went or where we are. If I did, I don't know if I'd go looking for us. Somebody better untie the bloodhounds, though. Black folks has disappeared and ain't nobody even filed a Missing Person's report with the FBI.

I realized all this one evening while watching various black leaders on television and saw that they all looked like business executives who'd just signed an exclusive contract to sell frozen yogurt in Tibet. All of them, that is, except Jesse Jackson, who looks like he should've been one of "Charlie's Angels."

I listen to the black leaders on TV, read their words in the newspapers as they talk about the economic depression (that's a sho' nuf' hollow) in the black community, the high rate of black unemployment; I hear them beating the drum and slapping out the old familiar rhythms to accompany their chants about the effects of racism. But unlike the sixties, white folks don't dance The Guilty when they hear that tune now. They just pat their feet and say, "That's an Oldie but a Goodie," and walk on out of the room, popping their fingers to the beat.

To tell the truth, I can't blame 'em. I'm a little tired myself of hearing black political leaders sing the blues. If I want to hear the blues, I'll listen to Bessie Smith or Lightnin' Hopkins. At least they'll make me feel better.

The final proof that blacks have vanished from the face of the U.S. of A. is in the presidential candidates. (Not only would I not buy a used car from any of them, I wouldn't even accept a free toothpaste sample. Everytime I see George Bush, I feel like pulling a dollar bill out of my pocket and yelling, "I'll buy a bottle of that snake oil, fella!"). The candidates don't even make-believe that they want the black vote. Back in the good ol' days when white folks still danced The Guilty, even Richard Nixon *pretended* he wanted black votes. When presidential candidates don't even pay lip-service to black folks, it is clear: We must not exist.

This March the National Black Leadership Conference met and was offended that none of the candidates responded to invitations to address the conference. But why should a candidate come? Black leaders haven't realized that the problems confronting blacks are not black problems anymore. High gasoline prices, unemployment, inflation, the threat of war affect everyone equally.

The NBLC met and put forward a black agenda for the eighties, as if blacks have a separate future and fate. The fact that black men are mayors of cities like Los Angeles, Detroit, Washington, D.C., and Atlanta is sufficient proof that there is no black agenda, because there aren't any blacks. The *Newsweek* account of the conference said it all with its headline: "Is Anyone Listening?" No. You can see a ghost, but you can't hear one. (I started to say "spook," but that would've been a bad pun and racially offensive.)

An intellectual and moral stagnation pervades black America today. That standard of leadership established by Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Martin Luther King, Jr., has not only been forgotten; it is not even remembered. At any major black gathering today, Coretta King is trotted out like the dowager queen to open the proceedings and bestow her blessing. (I keep waiting for Andy Young to kneel before her so she can tap him on the shoulder with a sword.) Then, Vernon Jordan, Jesse Jackson and Andy come out in turn to prove that not only is the emperor naked, but when he talks, he sounds like Alice in Wonderland.

Blacks no longer have leaders. We have stars, who in the absence of spiritual vision offer sex appeal. Jesse Jackson ranks *numero uno*, and heads an organization called Operation Push, which sounds more like something General Patton would've called a three-pronged attack across the Rhine. The very name of Jackson's organization is instructive, however: People United to Save Humanity.

Such arrogance is ludicrous. (He should be locked in a room and forced to listen to all the old recordings of "Amos and Andy.")

The other current star is Andrew Young, the former U.N. Ambassador, now the darling of the Third World. Suave, sophisticated with enough of the "down-home" touch to make him irresistible, Young was the symbol of black achievement in the seventies. That should let you know what bad shape we're in. Being Ambassador to the U.N. is to be nothing more than the Secretary of State's mouthpiece. For blacks Andy was the most powerful black in America. Just goes to show how little some people understand what *real* power is about in this country. (The first characteristic of power is that you can't be fired.)

With no leadership, many blacks have atrophied into the pose of the Angry Victim, constantly decrying racism and threatening a retribution they cannot deliver. (With the price of gas what it is, we can't even afford to *make* a molotov cocktail.) The suffering endured by our slave ancestors has degenerated into racial self-pity.

I grieve for my childhood. That's strange, because I do not have many childhood memories, happy or sad. What I grieve for, then, is not the loss of idyllic happiness.

I think of my childhood and where I see myself shooting marbles in the backyard on a summer day in 1944, I see also now another child being shot. Where I see myself holding my mother's hand, feeling secure and whole as we walk down the street, I see also now another child, holding its mother's hand, walking into Auschwitz.

I feel now that something was done to me in the innocence of my childhood, something done to me but on the bodies of Jews. I am alive and so many are not who should be. I feel as if my childhood has been taken from me. How can I dare have a childhood when one million Jewish children were murdered in their childhoods?

I am struck by guilt. But I was a child. I did nothing. That is true. I am not guilty, and yet, I carry an uneasiness I cannot ignore. Perhaps it is that after Auschwitz, after Hiroshima, innocence is not possible. I am alive and so many are not who should be. Innocence can be no more.

The Holocaust is the record of the unimaginable evil of which we as humans are capable. To be innocent is to believe that we would never have taken part in a holocaust. To be innocent is to believe that we are too moral, too good, too decent to do what the Germans did to the Jews.

To be innocent is to deceive oneself about what it means to be human.

It is odd being black these days, because when blacks care only about what is good for the race, they are insisting

on innocence. When blacks persist in defining themselves as victims fighting a racist oppressor, when they persist in adopting alternate poses of anger and self-pity, they wrap themselves in innocence. That is what the Germans did.

The anti-Semitic statements by black leaders after Andy Young's resignation last August were disturbing because they were a malevolent assertion of innocence. Jews and Israel were blamed for Young's resignation, when Young himself was responsible. The most casual observer of the political scene knows that if the Ambassador to the United Nations reports lies to the State Department, and the lies are uncovered, that Ambassador must resign. Why, then, did blacks blame Jews? For what guilt were Jews made scapegoats?

Is it, perhaps, the guilt and self-hatred which comes when a people no longer have a vision of the future, when a people no longer have a leader who embodies the rich traditions of the past, a firm stance in the present, and a promise of tomorrow? Is it the guilt which comes when a people betray their dreams of what they want for their children, dreams articulated eloquently in the sixties by Malcolm and Martin, dreams which gave meaning to the lives of every black in America?

Where are those dreams today? Can one find them in the flickering strobes of discos? Does Willie Stargell carry them in his batting gloves and on his tape of "We Are Family"? Can a people truly dream if they do not know already what Jesse Jackson leads them in chanting: "I Am Somebody"?

Andrew Young became the carrier of vague dreams and yearnings. He had been close to King: he was the first



black elected Congressman from the South since Reconstruction. Yet, it is forgotten now that when President Carter offered him the U.N. ambassadorship, I don't think there was one black leader who wanted him to accept. No one wanted him to be the official spokesman for

U.S. foreign policy at the U.N. No one wanted him to be a mouthpiece of imperialism.

Yet, Young brought a new flavor, a black flavor to the diplomatic position. He called the British the worst racists in the world; called former President Ford a racist; called the Ayotollah Khomeini a saint. Scarcely a month passed that Young was not in the headlines for speaking frankly.

Unrecognized, however, was that Young brought only a new *style* to his position. He did not bring a new substance. His style was black; the substance was United States imperialism. By his style he captivated blacks and angered whites. The attacks on Young from the press and Congress insured that he would become the new symbol of leadership for blacks. There is no better way of making any black into a leader than for whites to attack him.

For the first time in American black history, a person appointed by the President was, also, the pre-eminent black leader. During the sixties, this alone would have caused Young to lose all credibility in black America. During the seventies, blacks were seduced by his appearance of power, his proximity to power through his relationship with Carter.

It is no wonder that when Young was forced to resign, blacks were hurt and angry. They had betrayed themselves. They had sold the finest in their history—that impulse to create a new America, articulated by Douglass, Du Bois, and King—for a big desk in the outer office of the sanctuary of power. In the sixties we knew that nothing of value was in the trappings of power, because we felt within us an awesome power to change America. In the seventies, we knew only impotence and accepted a big desk as compensation.

Jews were blamed for Young's resignation, because Jews, as a persecuted minority, have the ultimate symbol of power—a nation. Because of that nation and its successes in defending itself, Jews have a pride of self blacks can scarcely imagine. Black pride does not sit on a foundation of a 4,000 year old continuous tradition, or on the soil of a nation. Black pride exists as compensation for the most terrifying feelings of helplessness and inferiority, and chanting "I Am Somebody," seeing black faces in school texts, or blacks on TV are not substitutes for a true identity. Black identity exists more because it is denied us than from what we affirm.

When black leaders blamed Jews, it was the final proof of black self-betrayal, because anti-Semitism is an integral part of Western life and culture, with roots extending back to the Gospels.

If anti-black racism is evil when espoused by Jews, anti-Semitism is evil when espoused by blacks. Black Christian ministers who sing "We Shall Overcome" with Yassir Arafat cannot be allowed to hide behind their innocence, their willful ignorance of what they were doing. It is time that blacks take seriously the evil we do, because, as Shakespeare said, it is that which will live after us.

"You must not allow yourself to be tainted by evil, yours or anyone else's," Elie Wiesel was told at age 14 when he entered Auschwitz. That is a definition of human responsibility, namely, we must live in a state of awareness of our own evil. It is easy to see the evil done by others, and if we see only that, we see only the good in ourselves. That is how the world becomes divided into an *us* against a *them*, and an Olympic hockey game takes on the intensity of a holy war. (I wonder if Parsifal would've bothered if he'd known that the Holy Grail was a hockey puck.)

From the black anti-Semitic response to the Young affair, younger blacks have learned that it is O.K. to be openly anti-Semitic. Last autumn, here at the University of Massachusetts, a black student wrote several anti-Semitic columns on the editorial pages of the student newspaper. Black faculty and students were undisturbed, because the prevailing philosophy today is that it is impossible for the victims of racism to be racists.

This is innocence degenerating into obscenity, because it is justification for murder. When you think you can do no wrong, you are incapable of doing good. When blacks persist in defining themselves as victims (though they watch "Ten Speed and Brownshoe" on the biggest SONY known to man), they make a covenant with self-righteousness. Nothing smells like the self-righteousness of the oppressed. They raise their pain aloft like it's a banner announcing the opening of a new shopping mall, and marching down the street, they shout, "Black! Black! Black!" As if that were anything but a color in a dime-store paint set.

But what safer way to preserve one's innocence than to identify yourself as victim. Anytime a people drape pain around their necks like gold medals, the days of danger have arrived.

When Rabbi Hanina the Great came up from Babylon, he wanted to know when he reached Israel, so he picked up stones as he walked, weighing them in his hands. As long as they were light, he said: "I have not yet arrived in Israel." Eventually, the stones were heavy in his hands and he said, "These can only be the stones of the land of Israel." And he kissed them and quoted: "For your servants have desired its stones."

I used to think of my soul as a bird with broad wings that could hold the tiniest wisp of wind. Now I know: My soul is a stone, broken from that mountain of pain which began when my ancestor, the Old African, felt beneath his shackled feet the rough boards of the slave ship, turned and looked for the last time at the landscape of Africa and knew he would not see it ever again. (I wonder, when I go to Africa and lift the stones, will I know

when I come to the Land from which the Old African was stolen.) My soul is a stone—black, with a texture as rough as scars that never healed, as heavy as the sobbing which can never be quieted. Thus are the souls of all my people, but not until we lift that stone will we come to our Self.

But how does one lift a stone that weeps? You can't, not until you open your ears and listen to the crying.

I know now that inside me there is a screaming, and I remember a childhood destroyed by fear. I remember the violence that hurled itself at me everytime I rode a bus and couldn't understand why I was not "good" enough to sit in an empty seat at the front. I remember not knowing why I was not "good" enough to eat at a lunch counter or restaurant, and why, at filling stations, there was a separate restroom for "colored," and sometimes it was the weeded field behind a pile of old tires. I remember that survival meant never looking a white man in the eye, never looking a white woman anywhere, always saying, "Yes, sir" and "No, sir." I remember hearing my father called "boy" and feeling his anger in the house for weeks afterward.

And I remember trying to make myself invisible, learning to walk in my body as if I were not there, learning to be in the world so that no one would notice my presence, not even me. It was a fear making me question my very existence, because my very existence was questionable. I was not "good" enough, because I was born not "good" enough. I carried a disease for which there was no cure, but I would not be taken out of my misery by death. I would be taken further into it by life.

I remember the pain, not mine but ours, because that pain was present in the jokes I heard the grown-ups tell as compensation for their non-existences. That pain was evident in the weekend neighborhood violence and the deaths. I felt the pain in my father's sermons and the congregation's shouted responses, which everyone called "getting happy." There was the old man who "got happy" and jogged up and down and around the aisles of the church; the woman who always shouted and threw her purse from the fifth pew all the way into the choir loft; and there were those who flung their arms back and forth, knocking hats off women, hitting the ushers seeking to control them. But I felt the pain as well as the exhalation which comes from the release of pain. It was the Sunday ritual, allowing the members of my father's church to return and survive another five days in the white world.

I sat in church, looking at the stained glass windows with their portraits of a haloed Jesus holding a lamb, Jesus walking on the water, Jesus with his arms outstretched to me. I sat in church and stared at the cross above the altar. I would look at the pictures of him in Sunday School literature, the crown of thorns pressing drops of blood onto his forehead, the blood dripping from the wound in his side, the nails through his palms and feet.

How do you lift a stone that weeps?

Come to Jesus, Daddy would preach. He will carry your

burden and make it light. Jesus will wash away your sins and make you white as snow. Maybe if he'd said white as a cloud, I would've responded. But white as snow, cold as snow, forbidding as snow? I was being invited to die in Jesus Christ and be reborn.

I would look at that broken, bleeding figure on the cross, and shake my head, no. Why should I give my sins to Jesus? They were my sins. It was my task to mediate them. To give one's sins to Jesus felt like the effort to preserve innocence. "To put oneself under somebody else's cross," Jung wrote, "which has already been carried by him, is certainly easier than to carry your own cross amid the mockery and contempt of the world."

To carry my cross. To lift my stone. To live with the suffering that comes to me, whether as a consequence of my actions or being born black.

To live with the suffering that comes to me, because I was born.

How do you lift a stone that weeps?

You reach down and pick it up.

I am weary of black students talking about black pride and black consciousness, as if the sun rose in one and set in the other. In classes now I ask them, "What is black?" They look at me as if they have final confirmation of how crazy they suspected I was. But I persist. "What is black?" They never know, of course, and when I tell them that black was invented by whites, I threaten their very lives. It is sad, but blacks today need racism to know who they are.

I begin to wonder if I am growing bitter in middle-age. I don't think so. I am tired of illusions, though. I am tired of people who think that the human soul is synonymous with racial identity, people who think the word "soul" has meaning only when it is before "food."

One day soon I will tell black students the real truth: There is no such thing as black culture. (It's a good thing I got tenure.) Of course, fifteen years ago I would've been angry at anyone for saying that. That's what whites have said for centuries, but they said it as "proof" of black inferiority. Presented that way, blacks had no alternative but to assert the contrary with as much vehemence as possible.

To speak of black culture is to assert a political definition. Political definitions are limited because they speak only to political realities. The affirmation of black culture is useful and necessary propaganda. However, when propaganda is believed to reflect human reality, it becomes not only misleading but dangerous.

To say that black culture does not exist doesn't say much, really. Few ethnic groups in America have a distinct culture. The Chinese, Japanese, Native Americans, Hispanics, and Jews are the only groups that come to

mind. The rest of us exist within or have access to various subcultures, but our culture is American.

The *Britannica* states that culture "consists of language, ideas, beliefs, customs, codes, institutions, tools, techniques, works of art, rituals, ceremonies," etc. By this criteria alone, it should be obvious that, at best, blacks have a sub-culture. In none of the areas mentioned do blacks have a cultural expression wholly distinctive and separate from American culture. Black culture is a variation of the prevailing culture. The same is true of the culture of many white ethnic groups in this country.

On the deepest level, culture is "brought into existence by the ability to symbol," i.e. what makes humans distinct from animals is the ability to create symbols. One piece of wood attached horizontally to a longer, vertical piece ceased to be two pieces of wood and became a cross, a symbol of a religion. Culture then is a "system of things and events whose essence cannot be comprehended by the senses alone."

In the history of human evolution, culture was created when men and women ceased having merely sexual relations and married, when "social relationships between parents and children...brothers and sisters became moral obligations." Culture was born when human existence and the objects surrounding that existence were invested with life and meaning.

Access to culture on this profound a level was historically impossible for blacks. The systematic eradication of African culture in the lives of the slaves insured that, at best, blacks could have only a marginal culture, one fashioned from the tattered remains of the old and upon the totality of the new.

Rather than feeling shame that we do not have a culture, pride should be taken in the fact that the Old Ones fashioned a new kind of musical expression, a different way of using the English language, a manner of dressing, speaking, and dancing that was and is unique. However, the importance of these should not be exaggerated. A people need more than Stevie Wonder, Aretha Franklin and Ray Charles to have a culture. Black religion does not possess a unique message, but brings a unique expression to the Christian one. Black English is not a language, but one version of the English language. It is useful for its emotive qualities, but is no more unique in this respect than the white Southern dialect.

That blacks exist as a sub-culture within American culture will seem, to all too many blacks, like a defeat. Perhaps this is why so many young blacks have adopted Swahili or Arabic names and joined the Islamic faith. This phenomenon has its roots in the teachings of Elijah Muhammad and the Nation of Islam and is the ultimate admission of black feelings of inferiority. It is a fleeing

from the pain and anxiety of being black in America. It is a futile attempt to superimpose a political definition of self on the human reality of self. It is doomed to fail because no people can deny themselves and their experience and survive whole.

This turning of blacks to the Third World, the Arab world and Islam is at the root of the anti-Semitic responses to Young's resignation. When blacks identify with Palestinians, a people with whom they share nothing—language, history, or historical experience—they are turning away from that which would give them life—their suffering—and are plunging blindly and mindlessly into innocence—the appearance of life wherein only death is found. Blacks have forgotten how to symbol their suffering, that is, invest it with sacred meaning.

At one time we knew, because the Old Ones created spirituals and the blues. How paradoxical the blues are: A man or woman sings about how godawfulbad they feel, and everybody feels better. The journey into suffering teaches us compassion. Fear of suffering teaches anger and vengeance. The journey into suffering is an affirmation and assertion of life. Fear of suffering creates self-pity and an identity of one's self as oppressed.

I am bewildered by young blacks. They are in a state of perpetual anger at racism, seeing it everywhere. (I wonder when the full moon will be attacked for being white.) They are naive enough to expect racism to disappear. That is innocence, too. Racism will not disappear. Neither will injustice, poverty, sexism, anti-Semitism, or any of the other hurtful things of this world. It is as Jung wrote: "Evil is unavoidable [and we] never quite get out of sinning... This is a fact that has to be recognized."

To say that racism will not disappear is not to be passive in the face of it. Not at all. But we must lower our expectations of what is feasible in this life and cease expending life's precious energies in anger at racism and affirm our souls.

The Old Ones never placed white people as much at the center of their lives as blacks today. Too many blacks live their lives in reaction to whites. I would think that would be boring. But anger has become identity.

One day I stopped a black student after class, because I had wearied of his predictable, time-consuming and tedious outbursts of anger in class. I asked him to tell me why he was so angry. I explained my years of growing up, the sitting at the back of the bus, having beer cans and whiskey bottles thrown at me from passing cars at night,

being stopped by police, etc. "What confuses me," I concluded, "is that you're more angry than I ever was. What have white people done to you?" "Oh, nothing," he said immediately. "In fact, I've never had any problems at all in my dealings with whites." "Then what are you angry about?" I asked, incredulous. "I'm angry about what white folks *might* do," he said seriously. I looked at him and I had no choice. I laughed.

I like stones. I used to collect them. The last time I moved, however, I found myself carrying a box of stones up from the basement. So, I don't collect them anymore.

I don't need to, though, now that I have realized my soul is a stone, impenetrable and eternal.

That is all I have in these days of falling pieces of the broken sky. It is enough.

My soul became a stone when I stopped believing that God is Love, when I stopped believing that God can be known by history. My soul became a stone when I realized that God needs us.

God's fate is inseparable from our own, asserted Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polnoy. God created everything by the Word, except humanity. Into us He breathed His own spirit. God is dependent on us to care for that portion of His spirit He has given us as our birthright.

If that is so, and it is, then, the evil within us is from God, too. Are we afraid to recognize this because, if God is not the *Summum Bonum* we have made Him to be, if He is not transcendent in knowledge and power, if His fate is truly with our hands, we are responsible for God's well-being. "My Me is God," wrote St. Catherine of Genoa. In Judaism, *tikun olam* is spoken of, that is, the repair of the universe, the work of God and us.

If God and I are covenanted, then He suffers, too. Only when I accept my suffering do I accept God. In the acceptance of suffering is the strength to resist my capacity for evil, or as it is called in Judaism, *yetzer ha-Ra*, the evil inclination. If I make suffering sacred, out of that suffering comes the bridge I cross to others, and to God. To remember my suffering prevents me from acting on the *yetzer ha-Ra* and restores one of the broken pieces to the sky.

I cannot be delivered from the *yetzer*; to ask God to "deliver us from evil" is to ask for innocence. It is the denial of our humanity in an imperfect world, a world that can never be brought to perfection.

R. Abbahu said: God mourned only over the heart of man, as one does who has made something bad, and knows that he has not made a good thing, and says, "What have I made?" So God said: "It was I who put the bad leaven in the dough, for the *yetzer* of the heart of man is evil from his youth." God grieved over man's heart.

That is the antidote to evil. We must grieve over our hearts. We must grieve so loudly that our grief becomes a prayer. We must utter no words asking for forgiveness, but let our grief be our forgiveness. If God grieves over our hearts for creating us with the *yetzer*, then, surely, we must grieve for God for having created the *yetzer*.

We have lost the capacity to recognize evil, and if we do, our response is one of guilt. How many whites have I met who stand before me in a fulsome pride acknowledging their guilt as racists? I would like to crush them. To be guilty at one's capacity for evil is to preserve innocence. It is one way of thinking that one has been delivered from evil.

There is none. This is where today's Christianity, with its one-sided emphasis on the *Summum Bonum*, on a pure and sinless Jesus, with its definition that God is Love, delivers us to the very evil from which we are asking to be delivered.

Evil is. That is the unmistakable message of the Holocaust. Look and see what evil is capable of. But we sit on pews, our eyes riveted on the murder of the Son of God, and say our rosaries, pray at the Stations of the Cross, sing Amazing Grace and jog up and down the aisles. We cannot see evil because we want only the good.

Evil is, however. Until we accept this, we cannot accept ourselves as humans. We cannot accept God as God.

In the *Mishna Berakhot* are these words:

A man must recite a benediction for evil, just as he recites a benediction for good. For it is said: "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." "With all thy heart"—with thy two wills, with thy will to good and thy will to evil.

God is to be loved with the *yetzer ha-Ra*, too. Can I truly love God if I omit from that love my capacity for evil? If God loves me by His grief, then it is with my grief that I love God.

Do we not live in a time of grieving? Isn't that what we are called to by the Holocaust? We are not called to "understand" the Holocaust. We are not called to speculate on the concept of God after Auschwitz. We are not called to be rational in any way. We are called to grieve, to recognize, acknowledge and bring into our souls the evil that is.

I would hope that the Church would, for its own sake, institute a Holocaust Remembrance Day, a Day of Remembrance for black slavery, a Day of Remembrance for Wounded Knee. These would not be political observances, but the ritualizing of grief, a creating of the symbols needed to transform meaningless suffering into sacred expression.

I would like to hope, but I don't. For the Church to do any of this, it must face the anti-Semitism and racism and sexism coursing through the veins of Christian history. The signs are not promising: The Church will preserve its innocence by sanctioning the spilling of even more blood somewhere in the world, and will use the slop of situation ethics to make evil appear good.

Yes, we shall be crushed by the falling pieces of the broken sky. Forty years ago it was one of every three Jews in the world. Tomorrow it will be all of us.

I believe that is what will be, and tonight, before going to bed, I will go into the room of my youngest son, stand for a moment and watch him sleeping as only a six-month-old can sleep. I will look at him in grief, not because the falling pieces are going to crush us. I do not fear that, for myself or him. What is to be is only just. Innocence will be avenged.

I will look at him in grief, because that is my legacy to him. To him and the other three children, I will pass this stone that weeps, this stone that bleeds.

In the morning, when he awakes, crying, I will think: Yes.

Yes, my child.

Yes. □

Jacques Ellul

## ANARCHISM AND CHRISTIANITY

That anarchism and Christianity are the most irreconcilable enemies is so established that it seems strange to try to reconcile them. Anarchism's war cry is "neither God nor master." Anarchist thinkers have made anti-Christianity, anti-religion, and anti-theism their fundamental points of doctrine. While one could say that Marx's atheism (or anti-theism) is strictly subordinate since he deals with the question by neglect rather than by intention, the "against God" is of major importance to the anarchism of Proudhon, Kropotkin and Bakunin. True, Marx analyzes religion at length and demonstrates that every revolution must also be waged against religion's particularly alienating form of ideology. Nevertheless, this is not the essential direction of his thought.

On the other hand it is self-evident that Christianity not only respects authorities but also considers authorities to be necessary. Everyone knows that Christianity is a doctrine of order! Certainly Calvin considered any order to be better than anarchy, the most terrifying transformation of

a society. For Calvin the worst tyrant would clearly be preferable to the absence of civil powers—a condition in which each would become a wolf towards the other and the sin of each would manifest itself against each and against all, without a single limitation or check. That is, the belief of man as radical sinner completely contradicts the idea of *an-arché*. [Ed. note. *An-arché*, from the Greek *arché*, the originating, primal or highest principle of order or authority. *Arché* moved into English in words archaic, architect, archangel, archbishop. The prefix *an*, in Greek and English, indicates a negation or reversal or denial of the primal, originating or highest principle of order or authority. *An-arché* is the absence or overcoming of order or authority. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, *anarchism* assumed a political reference, indeed, became a political movement, discussed in this article.]

So there is rejection on both sides. For Christianity, a more determined rejection of anarchism than of socialism, whatever its tendency (and I do not have in mind only the idealistic, utopian, romantic socialism that pleased many Christian thinkers so well). Scientific socialism, for example, continues to attract Christians: it too is a doctrine of order and organization. It seeks to attain justice. It cares greatly for the poor. When it speaks of freedom it is a well-regulated freedom. If the idea of the disappearance of the State is entertained by the extremists it's a minor point of doctrine—surely a small matter compared to the great egalitarian transformation that has penetrated fully and easily into the perspective of current Christian thought. The State will become moribund later on, much later on, and so the doctrine of the disappearance of the State is not bothersome to Christians.

Conversely, socialism is ready to accept a host of good qualities in Christianity: love for others, search for justice, service, and the importance placed on a social *plan* (and not merely an extraterrestrial one!). And socialists are ready to recognize Christians as brothers and sisters on the road. "Those who believe in heaven and those who do not believe in it..." After all, people can do the same thing together even if they have different faiths. It works for Christians too. It is the theory of "part of the road," caricatured a little: "...since we both desire a society with greater justice, fraternity and equality, let us travel together on the part of the road that leads to it. You see, our faith in God is not bothersome; it has no influence at all on our ideology regarding that society we work toward (which is the same as yours), nor on the political means we use to attain it. We shall part company *afterwards*, when we have achieved our objective, when we are in that society. Then we Christians will reaffirm the importance of faith in Jesus Christ."

It is obvious that this arrangement is impossible between anarchists and Christians. When anarchists make the destruction of religion virtually the centerpiece of the revolution (without which *no* revolution is possible), and the other cannot conceive of a society without pre-established order strictly maintained...well, what can be done?

No doubt the current trend of atheist Christianity makes things easier. If Christians have decided to kill God, one half of the journey is finished. The anarchists have little to add, and should be quite satisfied. The good prophet Jesus, pacifist and defender of the poor, never bothered the anarchists. On the contrary! Christians today not only abandon the hideous dogma of original sin—the radical evil which is in us—but they construct another complete *theology* (if one can call it that). This theology argues that the sole objective of the "God" (so-called, but this "God" does not live) of the Bible is the Kingdom of Humanity—the realization, accomplishment, blossoming of our potential. This fulfillment is what, due to a cultural error, has so far been called the "Kingdom of God".

That done, both parts of the journey are complete. Anarchists can accept Christianity, and Christians can participate in anarchy. The curious thing is that the connection fails to take place. This is because neither Christians nor anarchism are attractive to each other, and because today to be a socialist (or even a Marxist) and a Christian raises few if any eyebrows (at least in France). Today no one thinks of conjoining anarchism and Christianity.

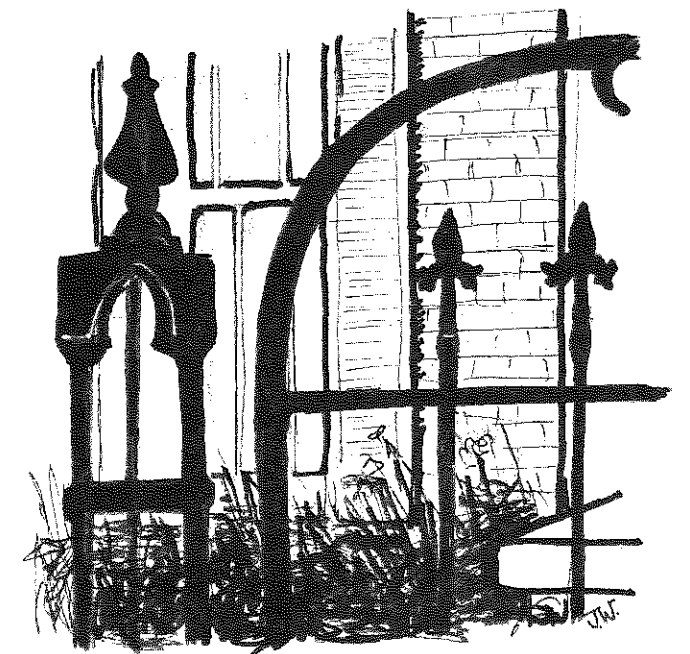
I think there is a small complementary obstacle: for anarchism there is still the Church. Although this is not a bothersome factor in the relationship between Christians and socialists (one institution always gets along with another institution; church and party: the same thing), here it is a "nonconforming good". [tr. "*obstacle redhibitoire*," a legal term meaning a taint in a product which renders the sale null and void.] It is true that some Christians are ready to make even this small sacrifice. And we know that an important faction is doing everything it can to destroy the Church by demonstrating that the Church is a wart on early Christianity which, along the way, it deformed totally. But this is not sufficient to reassure and convince the anarchists. It takes a long time for a judgement like this to penetrate the mass audiences.

Christians see a much greater obstacle: politics. The Christians who are engaged in the theological overhaul to which we have alluded are politically Leftist, even extreme Left. But they do not really know what anarchism is. About twenty years ago, a sociologist who was making a survey of the political leanings of French Protestants and who knew perfectly well that I was an anarchist classified

me as a Rightist, not far from the monarchists for that very reason. To the "good" Left of the Marxists, anarchists are false brothers, dreamers, unscientific people. Indeed, Marx condemned Proudhon and Bakunin. Anarchists are Rightists because they hold freedom as their pivotal imperative (freedom being the virtue of the Right in France, perhaps elsewhere, since 1945). Anarchism has gilded its coat-of-arms somewhat only to fall into Leftism and thus be condemned by the serious Left. *Organization* is the mark of the serious Leftist; it is the coherent tactic, which presupposes a chain of commands. It is efficiency. How could Leftist Christians not accept these criteria? Whereas anarchists...? No, disorder cannot suit Christians, for how does one separate anarchy from disorder? Thus, rejected by both traditional and Leftist Christians anarchism remains without any relationship to Christianity.

With the Christian abandonment of God, the Personal God, with their reduction of Jesus to a historical model of humanity, with the advent of the reign of Humanity, with their expansion of humanity's power and the suppression of the church, the final desolating thing is that nothing is left of Christianity but the name of Jesus. I shall not engage here in a theological debate on this affair. My refusal is not due to any kind of traditionalism on my part. It is due to a lack of seriousness on the part of those theologians who literally will say anything just to be in fashion.

In what follows I would like to sketch another mode of rapprochement between anarchism and Christianity which I believe will abandon none of the biblical message. On the contrary, it seems to me that biblical thought leads directly to anarchism, and that this is the only "political anti-political" position in accord with Christian thinking.



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One must first try to account for the critique against Christianity, religion and the church brought by the anarchists of the nineteenth century (resumed by twentieth century anarchists without being either renewed or enriched!). Bakunin best summarized the question in his book *God and the State*:

...God being everything, man and the real world are nothing. God being truth, justice, the good, beauty, power, life, man is the lie, iniquity, evil, ugliness, impotence and death. God being master, man is slave. Incapable of finding justice, truth and eternal life by himself, man can do so only by divine revelation. But he who speaks of revelation speaks of revealers...who will be recognized as God's representatives on earth...and who of necessity exercise absolute power. All men owe them passive and unlimited obedience, for no terrestrial justice can prevail against divine reason. God's slaves, men are also slaves to the church and to the state insofar as the state is consecrated by the church...Christianity has understood and realized this better than all other religions. That is why Christianity is the absolute religion, and the Roman Church the only consistent and logical one.

[Excursus: One clearly sees here the point at which Bakunin is influenced by his cultural environment. What he reconstructs as a deduction from the general to the particular is in fact the fruit of a completely inverted process: the Roman Church is the support of the State. He argues that it is the most authoritarian and anti-liberal structure ever: this is what he gathers from history. He calls on history to prove the accuracy of what he says about God. Therefore Christianity (of which Catholicism represents the extreme) is authoritarian and anti-liberal; and so are all religions, of which Christianity is the most evident. And from thence he passes to the Religion, and finally to what is the object of religions: God who is the authoritarian master and the inspiration of the whole. That is the development of Bakunin's reasoning which he inverts to make it philosophical and justifiable.]

...The idea of God implies the abdication of reason and of human justice; it is the most decisive negation of human liberty and necessarily borders on man's slavery in theory as well as practice...

If God exists, man is a slave. Yet man can and must be free. Therefore God does not exist. I defy anyone to get out of this circle.... The contradiction is: they (Christians) want God and humanity. They obstinately insist on combining two terms which, once separated, can never meet again without destroying each other. In one breath they say "God-and-man's-freedom, God and dignity, justice, equality, fraternity, men's prosperity" without caring about the fatal logic by virtue of which God is of necessity the eternal, supreme, absolute master if He exists, and man is slave. Yet if man is slave, neither justice, equality, fraternity nor prosperity are possible. They insist, contrary to good sense and to all historical experiences, in depicting their God as animated by the tenderest love for human freedom. A master, no matter what he does and no matter how liberal he shows himself to be, is no less a master. His very existence necessarily implies the slavery of all who find themselves subservient to him. Therefore, if God existed he would have only one means to serve

human freedom; to cease to exist. Loving human freedom, jealous for it, and considering it to be the absolute condition for all we adore and respect in humanity, we quote Voltaire and say, "If God existed, he would have to be abolished."

To my mind, this is the best summary of anarchist thought on the issue of God and freedom.

[Excursus: I must be precise and state that when I speak here of anarchism I refer mainly to the anarchism of the great classics, but also to the active groups of the Jura Mountain Federation and to anarcho-sindicalism. I do not refer to nihilism, a rather deviant branch of anarchism. I don't wish to reject the nihilists and the violent anarchists, but they pose a complementary (not central) problem in the relationship between Christianity and anarchism. The problem of violence is essentially a problem of means, not of the focal point of the question: an-arche, the absence of authority.]

To this there should be added of course all the texts of Proudhon on authority (God being the one on whom all authorities rest) on the formula of laws copied from the Decalogue (containing the general idea of the revolution) and on the Church's role denying the freedom of inquiry. On the other hand, the entire scientific position taken by the anarchists of the second half of the nineteenth century should also be taken into account. They sought to prove the non-existence of God, beginning with the developments in science. (For example S. Faure, R. Reclus.)

But all this is relatively unimportant. What strikes me in this anarchist affirmation against God, religion and Church is its circumstantial, dated character. It seems to me that their reproaches and attacks are tied to precise events in the history of Christianity. At the center of Christian theology is the confession of God. Since the thirteenth century many Christian theologians have insisted on the attributes of God's power. God is, above all and exclusively, the All-Powerful, the King, the Absolute Autocrat, the radical Judge, the terrible One. When anarchism declares, "neither God nor master," this God is the target. He is in effect the one who precludes human freedom: we are but toys in God's hands; we have no possibility to be; we are damned *a priori*. One can understand that a doctrine which affirms humanity's dignity cannot accept that. In the final analysis, it is the Creator who not only is at the beginning but who regulates everything, who distributes both the good and the bad, misfortunes and blessings.

It is very strange that the Biblical God, the God of Jesus Christ, could have been so deformed. Jesus, who claims kinship with Yahweh chose the life of non-power,

radically so. The God of Jesus chose to be revealed to the world by an incarnation in the infant in Bethlehem's stables. So the definition of the biblical God's incarnation in our time and space, our history, is love. From the Exodus, the action of this biblical God is liberation: God is above all and foremost our liberator. If God condemns sin and the powers of evil, it is because they are alien to us. In the Old Testament, where the power of God is often stark, this power is never, never mentioned alone: every proclamation of power is associated with and often encompassed by a proclamation of love and of pardon, an exhortation to reconciliation, and an affirmation that this power of God works in our favor, never against us. It is as false to present the biblical God as the All-Powerful One as it is to paint God as an old bearded gentleman sitting on clouds. Yet when I say this I refuse to go through the same shenanigans of the death-of-God theologians, who annul ninety-nine percent of the biblical text which, cultural or not, does not cease speaking primarily of God. It is God's life, not our experience, which is the center of the Biblical message. I restrict myself here to rehabilitating the Biblical text from a classic theological distortion.

I shall not spend much time on a second point: the confusion between religion and revelation, or between religion and Christian faith. All that is becoming known well enough. It is quite true that the anarchist critics of religion ("opium of the people," etc....Marx's formula, which was much more strongly presented by the anarchists) are accurate about religion. But they fail to touch the essentials of the Christian faith.

Thirdly, it is accurate to say that in Christianity, in its historical expression of religion—the All-Powerful God—became the support of established order. Here again we encounter an extreme deviation, due in part to the institutionalization of the Church, which ceases to be the assembly of the faithful, of people united by the sole tie of love and becomes instead "organization" and consequently "power." This deviation is also due in part to dogma becoming dogmatism. It is a problem of hardening on both sides. Truth possessed (which thereby ceases to be truth) leads to judgment and condemnation. Love institutionalized produces authority and hierarchy. And although the Church was no doubt once a happy and joyous consequence for people who—assured of their salvation—united to manifest God's love, it became a structure possessing authority and truth and claims to represent God's power on earth. "No salvation outside the Church" means, first, that all those who acknowledge being saved by Jesus Christ assemble to return thanks (that is, outside of Him there are no people who live their faith!). This then comes to mean that all those who are outside the structure of the Church are damned! A grave inversion.

Finally it is quite true that the Church became the support of the establishment, of political powers and of social

organizations. We all know those points when the Church turns coat time and again to accommodate the reigning authority and to become the strongest ally of any government—provided that that government has become legitimate in the judgment of the world. While this was not always true, it is true more often than not. One also knows the monstrous uses made of Christianity by the bourgeoisie to maintain the social order and to keep the workers subjugated.

All these errors, deformations, heresies (oh yes! heresies!) and deviations bordering on anti-Christianity have always existed as ways to interpret biblical revelation. They were accentuated after the Reformation, and became dominant in the eighteenth century. In other words, the dominant event is the bourgeoisie's transformation of theology, Church and Church-society relationship. The anarchists' attacks on God, the Church and religion are strictly correct, on condition that the God in question was the God remodeled by this very particular theology of Church-become-Power, and by the peculiar and capricious association of Church and social and political power following the sixteenth century. This theology to support this Church-State relationship is in no way an expression of biblical Christianity: indeed it is a contradiction. The roots are, rather, time after time in the theological heresy of a God conceived exclusively as the All-Powerful. The error of the anarchists and of Marx was to believe that they were face to face with Christianity itself, whereas they encountered merely its bourgeois metamorphosis. By adhering to this judgment they have overvalued those very features—be they in the early Church or during the Middle Ages—which confirm their point of view, instead of considering them only one among many other possibilities. For example, the death of Ananias and Sapphira are evidence that the apostles were terrible dictators. The Inquisition became the symbol for the medieval church. The construction of cathedrals was seen as the symbol for the enslavement of poor people crushed by the clergy. Everything that was real regarding love and joy and Christian freedom the anarchists overlooked, joyfully. In other words, the anarchists—justly fighting against the Christian totalitarianism and authoritarianism of the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries—had a totally false view of the fundamental reality of Christianity and the God of Jesus Christ. Our task now is to rectify this anarchist error.

The absence of God, atheism, is in no way an essential condition of anarchism. The presence of the God of Jesus

Christ is the essential condition for the deliverance of humanity. Negating and banishing the God of Jesus Christ is the failure of all of our so-called liberating revolutions, which each time ends with greater enslavement. When left to ourselves and not given a manifestation of freedom, an experience of freedom, and a point of departure for freedom which radically transcends us, we inevitably produce our own slavery. Freedom conquered by humanity becoming absolute is the ineluctable establishment of dictatorship. Only when we are related—that is, relative, not claiming equality to the Transcendent, are we truly human. Only then are we bestowed the gift of freedom which relatives all our pretensions and therefore our efforts to dominate each other. But being relative, that is, human, cannot occur unless we meet the Eternal not on our terms but on the terms of the Eternal. We can never, in other words, make ourselves “relative” to the Transcendent so long as we insist on the absolute proclamation of Our Kingdom. We receive our humanity from the Transcendent, freeing love of the God of Jesus Christ. We shall return to this point in our final section.

The deviation from Christianity gave the anarchists an opportunity for an accurate and telling critique. But they never understood that their attack was against a deviation, not the reality (even though sometimes a *lived* reality!) or the truth of the biblical revelation. Rather, they challenged a socio-theological formulation of God and not the God of the Bible and of Jesus Christ. I maintain that there is the God of the Bible and of Jesus Christ.

## II

We must now examine the other side. We begin with the biblical data. What does the Old Testament teach about political power?

On the one hand, political power per se is *always* contested referring to Nations. The regular theme is: these kings, they are gods, idols. They will be destroyed as testimony to their weakness. At the time of the Babylonian captivity, for example, when the prophets say that the people of Israel should work for the good of the *society* in which they now find themselves, there was no question of supporting the king of Babylon. The kings of Assyria and Egypt are considered instruments manifesting God's wrath; they themselves have no legitimacy whatsoever. Elisha is sent to anoint the new king of Syria; this means only that this king will be God's scourge to chastise Israel. This king in no way profits from any alliance with or sup-

port from Elisha. (Cf. my *Politics of God, Politics of Man*.) Never does the government of a foreign people appear legitimate or salutary. At best the government is a *necessity*. There is no alternative. The only relation to political authorities is that of conflict. Nothing but persecution, war, devastation, famine and evil can be expected from these kings. Joseph and Daniel are the only two examples of collaboration between a representative of Israel and these foreign kings. But one should not forget that Joseph, who draws his brothers into Egypt, has by his success produced only the slavery of the whole of Israel! (It doesn't matter if the *facts* are accurate! We are studying here only the way Israel depicts political authority in Scripture. The complete evolution must be considered: it is only after receiving a “favor” or after a temporary “alliance” that Israel is inevitably led into slavery, domination and ruin).

The second example is Daniel. (The same observation obtains: it doesn't matter if Daniel never existed and that the story is pure fiction: indeed that would make the narrative even more illustrative!) Daniel, great visionary and interpreter of dreams is in favor of Nebuchadnezzar, but the hazards of such favor are known: because he does not bow before the king on the subject of faith, he is thrown into the fiery furnace (authority must make itself adored!).

[Excursus: It must also be noted that Joseph, as well as Daniel, has been called into the presence of authority for very ambiguous reasons: both are the king's diviners. The authority considers them to have a relation to a mysterious power (and not at all to the truth) and so considers them to be capable of enlightening political authority through magic and sorcery. In other words, God's gift is monopolized and transformed into its opposite. Political authority cannot recognize the true God for what He is. It can only use Him accidentally for its own reinforcement. What a strange spotlight on the alliance between Church and State in the modern era.]

Darius throws him into the lion's pit: authority is indeed dangerous and devouring. To participate in political action and reflection on the governmental level is an enterprise which necessarily endangers true faith, and otherwise can lead only to the proclamation of the *end* of political authority, to its destruction. One must not forget that Daniel prophesied nothing but misfortune to the various kings he served. To each he announced the end of the reign, the destruction of the kingdom, the death of the king, etc. Consequently, Daniel is the negator of authority even while serving that authority temporarily.

One could say that all this can be explained by the fact that the people in question are “Nations”—enemies of Israel, peoples not elected by God, pagans and idolaters—and that Israel's wholly negative judgment on these authorities was an obvious one.

So we must now examine the monarchy in Israel. I have written about the significance of the monarchy (Cf. particularly, “La conception du pouvoir en Israel,” in *Melanges en l'honneur de M. Brethes de la Gressaye* (1968).) Not to repeat this study, I shall indicate the main outlines and conclusions.

The principal text is certainly the institution of the monarchy in I Samuel 8. Prior to these events Israel was a people without political organization, “governed directly by God.” Whenever necessary, God sent a “judge” as a temporary, charismatic, occasional chief. But Israel demanded organization, a political authority, a king in order to become more efficient, *to be more like other peoples* who had kings. Samuel fights for a long time to prevent this treason against God. But God ends up giving in to His people's disobedience, declaring, “By giving themselves a king they have rejected *me*.” The recital is very detailed and complex, but it can be broken down into three component parts: political authority rests on defiance; it is a rejection of God; it can only be dictatorial, abusive and unjust (Cf. II Samuel 8:10-18).

Political authority is established in Israel in conformity with and imitation of the surrounding environment. The first king is Saul, the mad, the delirious king. God, by His grace and as an exception, chooses David to succeed Saul, and makes David His representative. But this is a single ray of light attesting to the fact that God can draw miraculous good from human evil, for Solomon, admirably suited for exercising power, ends by being radically corrupted by power. His accumulation of riches and women, his construction of independent political power, his creation of cities, etc., are considered the normal components of political authority. But they are also elements of Solomon's alienation from God and they finally produce his rejection, with clear indications that it was the exercise of political power that corrupted this man who was originally so wise, good and humble.

Finally, two distinctive features must be mentioned. The Chronicles' account of the succession of the kings of Israel and Judea give a very strange evaluation of authority. All those kings who, according to objective history, were “great” kings are systematically (and I insist on this *systematically*: it is indeed the sense of the evaluation of political authority, even more significant if it does not correspond to the facts!) presented in the Biblical account as bad kings: idolatrous, unjust, tyrannical, murderous. These were the kings who set up better organization, made conquests and enriched the people. In other words, they

exercised their power *normally*. The judgment of “good” kings is reserved for those who, historically, were weak, lost their wars, were bad administrators, lost their wealth... This could signify either that the only authority one can in the end accept is the weakest authority, or that if a statesman is faithful to God he is necessarily a bad statesman and *vice versa*. The consistency of these biblical judgments is too great to be anything but extraordinary, indeed unique. No nation in the world has produced a single chronicle or historiography expressing this orientation. Rather, it is always the successful king who is everywhere rated great and legitimate.

A final brief comment: detailed analysis of the coronation procedures and of the names used to designate the kings demonstrates that the king is never anything but the acting, temporary and accidental sign for the One who is to come. He is defined by this “to come”. The king in coronation festivities has no importance. He is merely a surveying stake, a stone placed in a waiting position. God delivers political authority to the degree that it is the preliminary image of the ultimate perfection of the Messiah and of the kingdom. Political authority never has any value in and of itself. On the contrary, it is even denied, challenged and condemned on each occasion it claims to exist either as political authority or anything else other than a sign of the One to come. Political authority, in other words, has no other value than that which it draws from what is to come (an event that will come!) and what it signifies (which is unknown!) There is no validation of political power whatsoever in the Old Testament. On the contrary, it is forever contested.



In the New Testament, two lines of thought can be seen: one favorable to authority (represented by the famous text from Paul: "there is no authority except from God": Romans 13:1), and the other, much larger one, hostile to authority and represented by the Gospels and Revelation. It is very strange that, since Constantine, the Church has, in an almost redundant fashion, based its "theology of the state" on Romans thirteen and the parallel texts from the Petrine Epistles.

Jesus' attitude towards political authority in the Gospels is a radically negative one. He himself refuses to exercise a juridical type of authority. He counsels his disciples not to imitate the kings of nations ("kings and governors have dominion over men; let there be none like that among you..."). He refuses to become king or to participate in the political conflicts of his time. It is very significant, in this regard, that there were both Roman "collaborators" (Matthew) and Zealots, the violent anti-Roman patriots (Judas, Simon) among his disciples. He knew quite well the resistance party and refused to join it. He held political authority up to derision. Consider the famous and interesting affair of the two coins found in the mouth of a fish, an occasion to talk about tax. This is the sole and unique miracle of this type, bordering on the exorbitant, done precisely to demonstrate that the duty of paying taxes is simply ridiculous! He submits himself to Caesar's jurisdiction, giving not one hint of recognition to Caesar's legitimacy. Caesar's is the jurisdiction of power, nothing more.

Two points need to be refined: the famous saying, "Render to Caesar..." in no way divides the exercise of authority into two realms. It is incredible to draw from these words the notion that heaven, the spiritual, the emotions, are God's realm, but that Caesar is wholly qualified to exercise authority over people and things in this world. Jesus' words mean no such thing. They were said in response to another matter: the payment of taxes, and the coin. The mark on the coin is that of Caesar; it is the mark of his property. Therefore give Caesar this money; it is his. It is not a question of legitimizing taxes! It means that Caesar, having created money, is its master. That's all. (Let us not forget that money for Jesus is the domain of Mammon, a satanic domain!) As for "...that which is God's...": how could a pious Jew in Jesus' time possibly understand "that which is God's" in any way but *everything*? God is the Creator, the master of life and death, the one on whom everything depends. The phrase means: Caesar is legitimate master of nothing but what he fabricates for himself, and that is the province of demons!

As for the other formulation, "My kingdom is not of this world": this says explicitly that Jesus will not exercise political authority. But in no way does it suggest that Jesus recognizes the validity of political authority. On the contrary. There is the kingdom of God, and all authority exer-

cised outside of that is wicked and must be denied. Nevertheless, Jesus does not represent a-politicism or spiritualism. His is a fundamental attack on political authority. It is not indifference concerning what politics can be or can do. It is a *refusal* of politics. Jesus is not a tender dreamer gliding in the sky "above politics." He challenges every attempt to validate the political realm, and rejects its authority because it does not conform to the will of God. Indeed, this is given precise confirmation by the account of the Temptations. The third temptation in Matthew's account is the one in which the devil shows Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and tells him, "I will give you all these things if you prostrate yourself and adore me." Jesus responds with a refusal to adore him.

[Excursus: I am in complete disagreement with the exegetes who wish to reduce this text to the problem of adoration: that is, what Jesus rejects is not political power but adoration of Satan.... The text is clear: Jesus does not shatter the rapport between authority and adoration. He implicitly admits that if he would adore Satan, Satan would give him all the kingdoms of the earth. Consequently he does not challenge the satanic character of authority.]

He does not refute what Satan says. He does not tell him that these kingdoms and political authorities are not Satan's. No. On the contrary, he is in implicit agreement. Satan *can* give political authority but the condition for exercising political authority is adoration of the power of evil. That is the consistent and unique teaching of the Gospels.

This point is carried to its ultimate conclusion in the book of Revelation. [Cf. my commentary *Apocalypse* (The Seabury Press: 1977).] Here political authority (temporarily represented by Rome, although *Revelation* envisions not only the Roman Empire) is the monster that rises from the sea and perfectly symbolizes political propaganda. But political authority is also represented at the beginning of *Revelation*, with the red knight who holds the sword (his sole function is to wage war, exercise power and kill) and, at the end of the book, with Babylon, which at one and the same time concentrates political and financial power and the administration of the city. We encounter here a consistent line in the Scriptures of the negation of political authority and testimony to the fact that it has neither validity nor legitimacy.

[Excursus: I want to emphasize the fact that the lesson given in this collection of texts is not a situational one. The first Christians did not express their anti-politics, their an-

archism, because they were persecuted by or opposed by political authorities. Theirs was a fundamental stance. Everything is from the beginning centered on the fact that two political authorities combined to crucify Jesus. How better express the radicalism of their opposition! If, however, one maintains that these stances are simply the responses of the first century Christians to their "situation in the Roman Empire"—and nothing more than that!—then everything in the Gospels and in the life of Jesus must be considered situational! For example, his teaching on the Law, or the Parables on the Kingdom, etc., is strictly speaking situational! And the New Testament—indeed the whole of Scripture—is reduced to a guidebook of ideology and political propaganda, not the Herald of Good News (the Gospel) for everyone, Christ and Caesar alike.]

In opposition to this, we have the texts of Paul's letter to the Christians in Rome and parallel texts in the New Testament. But among the latter, we must distinguish between those texts which speak only of praying for authorities (a service to render to them, perhaps linked to the problem of *exousiai*, to prevent them from falling into the hands of demons) and the authorities which demand obedience and submission. At any event, the only text which seems to offer an over-all basis for submission to authorities is precisely Paul's letter to the Christians in Rome, specifically the early verses of Chapter Thirteen. These passages, like so many of his writings, seem to me to be Paul's answer to a particular circumstance faced by the congregation of Christians in Rome. (We are reminded of the circumstances confronting Paul with the congregation in Corinth: eating meat sacrificed to idols, virginity, etc.) Of course, these texts from Paul, even though they are occasional, must be seen as bearers of a word of God. But not in a literal way, certainly not as Paul writes to the Christians in Rome in Chapter 13.

It seems to me that these verses should be placed in the milieu which I have already described. Specifically: what is the common attitude of the Christians of the first generation. To reject political authority (not merely the "worship" demanded of Caesar) immediately leads to the refusal, for example, of military service. Paul's verses seem to me a reaction against the extremist of the anti-political position, against *an-arché*. Paul says "Don't exaggerate, don't take refusal to extremes. For authority ultimately comes from God who has reduced the magistrate to the role of servant, even if the magistrate continues the claim as master."

The good in society, Paul is saying, is certainly not God's word. All the same, it is not negligible. . . . and it is guaranteed by the Judge. Consequently, these words from Paul do not seem to me to offer a basis for "a universal

theology of political power" granted them in the history of the Church. Rather, these texts seem to be warning against the excesses of Christian freedom concerning political power. The Christian, Paul is saying, does not seek the suppression of all power in all societies—granted the Christian is free, independent and critical of political power. The Christian must always proclaim the limited duty of political power—never accepting it as a divine institution, but also never judging it, as was done in Paul's time, as solely the work of the devil! Granted that his words are in the context of a specific situation (Christians in Rome in the first century), Paul gives us an orientation about the ethics of freedom which remains valid, but not as a theological foundation of political power. Specifically, we know there was in the Christian congregations rejection of military or any service to the Empire. It seems to me important that Paul does not mention this opposition in these texts to the Christians in Rome when he writes about political authority. Instead, he grants that Caesar (the magistrate) holds the sword. But he refuses to say that Christians must or as Christians are able to hold the sword. To me, this means that the obedience Paul recommends to political authorities does not go so far as bearing the sword of the magistrate. That is, Paul accepts the general opinion of the Church.

Moreover, to this interpretation of Paul in Romans Thirteen, we must add the reminders which K. Barth and F.J. Leenhardt have offered. The notorious verses of Romans 13 must be read in the context of the letter of Paul to the Christians in Rome. That is, in chapter twelve, Paul speaks of love, and gives in succession a number of applications. He closes the chapter speaking of love for one's enemies (if your enemy is hungry, feed him, etc...) and immediately after the seven verses on authorities that open chapter thirteen, Paul returns again to the theme of love, showing how love contains all the commandments. Then he digresses about the end of time (13:11-14) and returns to love in chapter fourteen when he speaks of tolerance of the weak. That is, the verses on authorities are included in his teaching on love. I would go so far as to summarize them this way: "Love your enemies. Naturally, we all believe that the authorities are our enemies, however, we must also love them." But as in each case that he studies (the Church, joy, enemies, the law, the weak in faith, etc.) he gives a specific reason for this love of the other, he does the same thing for the authorities and it is in this perspective that he writes the famous "there is no authority except from God." Incidentally, Paul's negative formulation should be stressed, and not the formulation which has later been given: *omnis potestas a Deo* (all power comes from God) which seems to express a principle! Paul is not expressing a principle. Therefore, this text, in my opinion, should be reduced to what it is, that is, not the last word on the question of political authority, but an attempt to apply love in a Christian setting in which the authorities were hated.

Thus what one can draw from both the New and the Old Testaments is a fundamental challenge to all political authority. There is no legitimate political authority as such. Political authority and organization are necessities of social life but *nothing more than necessities*. They are constantly tempted to take the place of God, for the magistrate or king infallibly regards themselves as authority *per se*. This power must be contested, denied and constantly challenged. It becomes acceptable only when it stays within its humble status, when it is weak, when it serves the good (which is extremely rare!) and truly transforms itself into the servant of humanity (since it is already the servant of God!). But the customary judgment that the State is legitimate only when it is not tyrannical, unjust, violent, etc. is thereby reversed. In reality the State is illegitimate and must be destroyed unless it is the servant of all—and truly so, not just as a rhetorical image!—and effectively protects the good of all.

In this brief essay, I cannot run through the evidence that documents the complete reversal of the biblical testimony by the Church in history. Anyway, that's well-known. That aside, the fact is that the characteristic biblical teaching has never disappeared in the Church, and this can be documented. Yes, the Church, transformed into a Power, taught the contrary. But throughout the history of the Church movements have appeared that we ought to realize as an-archistic because, beginning with the anchorites and up to Tolstoy and Berdyaev, they have reaffirmed the *impossibility* of the State in a variety of ways. No doubt these movements seemed bizarre and were considered so especially by the Church. But they all witnessed to a profound truth about Christianity (sometimes by heresies exacerbated by the Church's opposition): as anarchists they were not the capricious protestors against this and that specific authority or this and that particular political corruption. Rather, they were the representatives of the teaching and even of the word of God.

Berdyaev seems to have been the last (*On The Slavery and the Freedom of Man*, 1938; *The Realm of the Spirit and the Realm of Caesar*, 1946) to show the incompatibility between the Gospel and the State. He demonstrates the opposition between the ethics of the Gospel and the ethics of the State's power: when it is a choice between serving the State or refusing it, then the State proclaims an ethics that is clearly contrary to the Gospel. Berdyaev shows the opposition between responsibility (the center of the Christian life in the world) and power. He underlines the cor-

ruption provoked by political power. He accepts the well-known formula: "Power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely." The State's salvation and prosperity does not represent the collective and still less humanity's salvation and prosperity—such an identification is an abominable falsehood. Instead, the State's prosperity always implies the death of innocents. "The law of the State is that in order to save the State even the innocent must be sacrificed....The death of a single man from among the least of men is an event more important and more tragic than the death of a State or an Empire. It is unlikely that God notices the death of the greatest kingdoms, but the death of one man does not escape him...." So Berdyaev.

The connections between Church and State are one form of the relation of Christ's spirit to Caesar. But Jesus Christ has put us against the wall and we must choose, not try to be reasonable, or conciliate! The Church time and again has committed treason in relation to the State. Becoming partner to the State it has turned the State into another Church. Christianity's sin in history is to have recognized and accepted the State, no matter what form that State took and no matter who the incumbent authority. "Recognition of the divine authority of the king is transformed into recognition of the divine authority of the people, later into the authority of the proletariat. Sovereignty and the divine character of power exist in equality!" "It is the sovereignty of the State that must be denied." So Berdyaev.

I have written more than once that there is no fixed Christian position on political power. In reality, the sole political Christian position conforms to Revelation: the negation of power, the total, radical refusal to accept its existence, and the fundamental contesting of whatever form it takes. And I do not say this because of an orientation towards a kind of Spiritualism, or an ignorance of politics, an a-politicism. Certainly not! On the contrary. As a Christian one must participate in the world of politics and of action. But one must do so to reject it, to confront it with the conscientious and well-founded refusal that alone can put into question, or even prevent, the unchecked growth of power. Thus Christians cannot help but be only on the side of anarchists.

But then, do Christians bring something peculiar to this partnership? Something specific? Are Christians like the others, or do they—like the anarchists—have a particular service to render? In effect, it seems to me that

Christians have an important role to play here, on three different levels. First of all, anarchists live in illusion because they think it is *possible* to effectively abolish authority and to eliminate successfully all the sources of power. They fight to win, to prevail. Christians should be more realistic. We live in a world which has always been subjugated by power in one way or another. I know quite well that this is not a sufficient argument. One can always begin a new epoch, it is not necessary to believe that what has always been will always be. Right. But it is a leap into the unknown. We can no longer believe today the absolute article of the anarchist creed of the past: the inevitability of progress. There is no necessary movement from an inferior to a superior form of society. Nowhere is anarchism, the society of the free, guaranteed. There is every chance that it will never be established. But then the anarchist, when told this, stops in discouragement and says, "Well, then what's the use?" This is the point the Christian should intervene. When measured against the grace of God, all human action is strictly relative. Nevertheless, humans must act—not for absolute success (which can only occur in the Kingdom of God) but because love expresses itself in the relative. "If you have been faithful in the small things, I shall give you the large ones." That is the promise given to us.

But one must also understand that the love of man and woman, for example does not reside in the grand, spectacular, ceremonial declarations, or in the magnificent gestures, or in the erotic paroxysms, but rather in the thousands of humble signs of concern for the other that quintessentially express the truth that thou counts for more than I. Therefore, we must not be discouraged if our anarchist affirmations do not lead to the anarchist society, do not upset society, do not destroy all structures. And that too would be a manifestation of power which could only lead to a very specific restructuring of the authority of power.

What does all this mean? Simply this: political authority in its essence tends to grow indefinitely. It has no reason at all to limit itself. No constitution, no ethics, can prevent political power from becoming totalitarian. It must encounter, outside itself, a radical negation based on the opposition of those intending neither to conquer authority (and so undertake political activity) nor to exercise it for the good of others (and so be politics). It must be those representing an intransigent moral conscience and an effective force of opposition. The permanent struggle of this group—which is not a class, not organized in advance, not a sociological entity—is itself the struggle for the freedom of others. There is freedom only with the winning of freedom. No authority can grant freedom to us. Challenging power is the only means to bring about the

realization of freedom. Freedom exists only to the extent that this rejection of power is strong enough, and to the extent one does not allow oneself to be seduced by the idea that surely freedom will come tomorrow if...No. There is No Tomorrow. Freedom exists Today or never. It exists when we shake an edifice, produce a fissure, a gap in the structure where for one moment we can find our always-menaced freedom. But to obtain even a small amount of free play in the interior of the system one must manifest total and radical rejection. Every concession to power permits the totality of power to rush in. That is why the anarchistic position is conceivable. It maintains this free play which permits freedom. But we cannot delude ourselves with the vain hope of completely destroying this power and of reconstructing an ideal and fraternal society....the day after tomorrow!

I already know the anarchist's disillusioned words, "So that's all it is! Only that." Yes! "That's all." That is to say that, today, by our refusal, we will not permit the crack to be totally refilled so that we can still breathe free air. It is the passage from the anarchists' disdainful "only that" to the "that's all" full of hope which the Christian should allow the anarchist to realize.

There is a second role Christians can play at the anarchists' side. For most anarchists, people are by nature good and are corrupted only by society or rather by power. If there be criminals, it is the State's fault. It would seem necessary to believe in this original goodness of humanity in order to have hopes of installing an anarchist society. We must spontaneously act for the good of all, we must not seek to encroach on the territory or freedom of our neighbor, we must discipline our passions and our fury, we must be willing to work voluntarily for the collective, we must not disturb the peace...otherwise anarchy would be what it is accused of being: simply a disorder, a frightful war of individuals. As far as I know, Bakunin is the only anarchist who had the courage to pose the hypothesis that we are evil, and he drew from it consequences that are critical to his plan for the organization of society.

But one must take a further step. One must admit that not only can there be people occasionally who are not able to live in anarchy, but, on the contrary, that we are normally unable to do so. One must start from this reality, and here Christians should be the most realistic. It is not power that leads the subject to wickedness. It is ourselves who want to be slaves and thus rid ourselves of the difficulty of living and turn to authority. In so doing we encounter

the appetite for power in the other. The desire to abandon oneself and the will to power are exact corollaries. It is in this setting of reality that anarchism should be proclaimed. Again it is their word of hope: "nevertheless, in spite of." "In spite of this reality about people, we want to destroy power." Here is the Christian hope in politics.

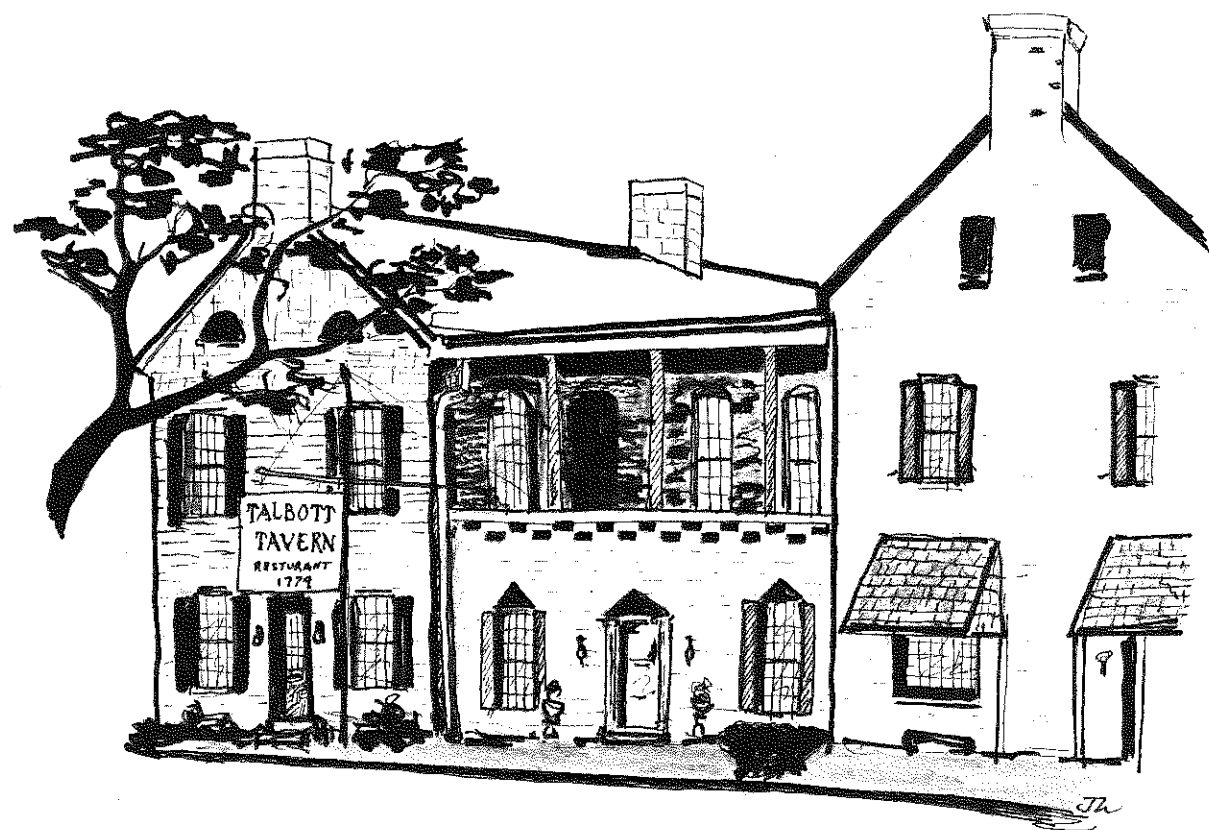
Assuredly this is not sufficient. That is, when face to face with the evil which is in us—not the moral transgressions of disobeying current morality, but the evil which is a sickness unto death and which leads us to be slave and tyrant—there are only two options. Either one organizes a repressive system which puts everyone in place, which establishes patterns and norms of behavior, which punishes anyone who oversteps the boundary of the small amount of freedom doled out. (That is, the justification for the power of the State.) Or, one works to transform humanity—the Christian would say conversion—in such a way that renders us able to live with others and serve others as an expression of freedom. That is the expression of Christian love, of the love of God for us manifested in Jesus Christ.

Anarchists have clearly seen the necessity for such a transformation. They hoped to achieve it through education, through pedagogy, but that is clearly not enough.

The anarcho-syndicalists hoped to achieve it through battle: the human qualities of virtue, courage, solidarity and loyalty are forged in combat against authority—a battle to be waged with the weapons of truth, justice, authenticity (and I would easily add non-violence). Without these weapons one perverts the fighter and fails to prepare him to enter the anarchist fraternity.

Yes. But there is need for a more profound motivation. These two pedagogical methods need to root themselves in a more fundamental truth. A more essential conversion is needed, from which all the rest becomes possible, and which permits us to be courageous despite all the setbacks.

This is precisely where the work of the Gospel is found for the anarchists: the Gospel's witness that there is a possibility for freedom—just where the most amorphous, servile of us, or the most tyrannical, victorious of us—seem to be immune to any change of any kind. For we too, slave and tyrant, are loved by God in Jesus Christ and are not outside the possibility of living in the truth God discloses before us. I believe that this contribution of the Christian faith is essential to anarchism, for it reveals a unity in practice along with a conformation in theory. □



## HANDMAIDENS FOR THE QUEEN: A CALL FOR WOMEN THEOLOGIAN

*Fleming Rutledge*

My subject is *theology*.

Thirty or so years of experience as an active participant in the life of the church have convinced me that the average person does not experience a rush of adrenalin to the central pump when theology is mentioned, either in the seminaries or in the parishes of the land, and I believe this is a lamentable state of affairs. If I can do something, if I can do anything, to communicate the incomparable excitement of the study and practice of theology to a few sisters and brothers along the way, I will consider my life to have been supremely worth living.

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These remarks are addressed especially, though not by any means exclusively, to women. I have in mind those women who know themselves to be in some way called by God, who are struggling at the same time with a multitude of voices summoning them in various directions, who are considering what their specific vocations might be. To you these words are particularly directed, for it is my intention to invite men and women, but especially women, to a noble calling—that of *theologian*.

Words of submission and obedience are very much out of fashion in today's main-line, liberal seminaries. And yet, as Mary, the mother of Jesus, referred to herself as the *handmaiden* of the Lord, and the *lowly* handmaiden at that, I make bold to appropriate that title of handmaiden as part of my title, and to declare that there is a shortage in the land—the queen is in dire need of more handmaidens.

Why theology should have been called the *Queen* of the Sciences and not the *King*, I have not the slightest idea. Perhaps male devotees of all sorts need to have a "she" enshrined in their lives, whether "she" be a ship or a science; but let that pass. What is at stake is not the gender of theology, but the great need of the church for more people, and especially for more women, to serve in her ranks precisely as theologians—not as "enablers" or "facilitators" or "change agents", but as *theologians*, handmaidens of the Queen of the Sciences, servants of the divine Word.

Perhaps the first thing we need to look at is those words *handmaiden* and *servant*. Rather obsequious, don't you think? Certainly not appealing to today's Christian women who feel strongly called to shake off the fetters of oppression. And yet if there is one thing certain in this world it is that every human being will serve something or somebody, whether it be an ideology that one wholeheartedly espouses, or the tyrannical demands of an overdeveloped superego, or the current credo of be-yourself-and-do-your-own-thing, or the gross national product. Sometimes the choice will be voluntary and sometimes it will be involuntary, but you will be serving something, and the question is, *what?* or, *whom?* In every generation, the people of God must gather again at Shechem to hear anew the words of Joshua,

*Choose here and now whom you will serve: The Gods whom your forefathers worshipped beside the Euphrates, or the Gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living. But I and my family, we will serve the Lord.* (Joshua 24:15)

For what it is worth, I know myself to be a woman of countless faults and sins who has nevertheless by God's

grace been called not only to serve the Lord but also, most wonderfully!—to the service of his Word, which is the proper task and responsibility of theology. It is my aim to testify that in this service is freedom, freedom such as no other master or mistress in this world can provide.

Before I go any further, I need to linger over a certain point. As Paul says in the third chapter of his letter to the Christians in Rome, there is no distinction—every mouth is stopped, the whole world is held accountable to God. The theologian may speak only as a forgiven sinner. Confession precedes polemics. In fact, theological polemics is a peculiarly dangerous enterprise; in no other sphere is a posture of self-righteousness more impermissible, yet the temptation to indulge in it is very great, being commensurate with the magnitude of the issues at hand. This *caveat* being posted, we proceed with the boldness of the justified.

For the sake of clarity, let me propose that there is a great deal of endeavor going on under the name of theology that isn't theology at all. That doesn't mean that it is *not worth doing*; it just means that it is *not theology* and should not be called theology. You will understand that I am insisting on a rather narrow definition. This is not an easy thing to do in an age which prides itself on its breadth, its scope, its tolerance—narrowness, indeed, is considered today to be a vice of a particularly disagreeable sort. But insist we must, if we are to give theology the honor it deserves. My grandmother, who was a brilliant, witty, widely-read woman, used to take great delight in saying "Don't call me broad-minded!" Someone (I forget who) has said that the purpose of opening the mind is not so that any and everything can rush in, but so that it may be closed again on something solid. Broad-mindedness, all too often, can be a cover for sloppy thinking and, indeed, for a kind of laid-back disengagement that is the *opposite* of the active sort of love and involvement called for in highly polemical pages of the New Testament Epistles.

I have saved a *Peanuts* comic strip. The first frame shows Snoopy sitting on top of his doghouse, typing furiously away. The second frame depicts Charlie Brown walking up to Snoopy and saying, "I hear you're writing a book on theology...I hope you have a good title". Snoopy, of course, does not bother to look up, but as he continues to type we see him saying to himself, "I have the perfect title—*HAS IT EVER OCCURRED TO YOU THAT YOU MIGHT BE WRONG?*"

Theology serves the truth—not an abstract truth, to be sure, but the One who says "I am the way, the truth, and the life". If we are in the service of truth, we must be prepared to combat error; if theology serves the light, it must continually seek to banish darkness. Theology must not fear to suggest, *YOU MIGHT BE WRONG*—not because the theologian is an arrogant person but because theology is the servant of the Word of God.

The most radical characteristic of the sort of theology I am talking about is its basis in the Word of God over against the words of the ever-shifting culture. Theology, insofar as it is faithful to its living subject, continually brings the judgment of God to bear on human activity even as it liberates and strengthens. Theology is continually on its knees, so to speak, before God (that is its humble aspect) and at the same time taking arms against the universal human tendency to be wrong (that is its confident side). It is fairly typical of modern church people to have the humility and the confidence exactly backwards, so that contemporary theology is found shaking its fist at God while bowing before the latest trend in the culture.

I realize this raises all kinds of questions, and I should now like to attack them head-on by quoting a couple of sentences from a letter I recently received from a friend. This letter was written in response to a speech I gave in which I stated that the greatest temptation facing teachers and preachers today is a loss of confidence in the God of the Gospel. My correspondent replied as follows:

I think that the greatest single temptation facing teachers and preachers of the Gospel is *not* a loss of confidence in God, but rather, the greatest temptation is, and always has been, idolatry, specifically the idolatry of assuming to speak the final word for God.

Since I hear this everywhere I go, I think it is well worth examining.

In Christian theology, everything depends on the starting point. Where does theological knowledge come from? Most people today, at least most people in the circles I move in, would say that it comes from human experience. Most of their preaching and teaching centers on their personal experience, or the personal experience of others whom they know.

It is my conviction, however, that this is both dangerous and unbiblical. Dangerous, because personal experience is so subjective and relative a thing, and unbiblical, because the virtually unanimous testimony of the Old and New Testaments is that human experience is a *response* to God's originating activity, not itself a source of knowledge

about God. The human response may be affirmative or it may be negative, but it always has the character of response, never of origination.

Where then does theology begin? Where does our talk of God have its source? I have already raised a number of questions, all of which are intimately connected to this issue about the starting point for theological work:

—why is theology called a "science"?

—what does it mean to be "in the service" of theology?

—how is theology to be distinguished from its counterfeits?

—does the theologian distinguish truth from error? That is, does the theologian dare to suggest that someone may be wrong?

—is theological confidence possible for preachers and teachers, or is it idolatrous?

The way in which we answer these questions will depend on our starting point for doing theology. If we construe our theology from human experience, it will be precisely that—"our" theology, "my" theology, "your" theology—and nothing more. If this is the case, then yours is as valid as mine, and indeed, more so, from your standpoint. But if we stake our theological claims on *God's intention that we should have knowledge of Him*, then the picture looks very different indeed.

First of all, theology is a *science*, according to the classic definition, because its mode of investigation is appropriate to that which is being studied. Theology derives its nature from its living subject. Theological language is derived from the word of a *God who speaks*; knowledge of God is possible because God *wants* us to know Him, and that is the fundamental fact underlying all theological inquiry whatsoever. I am making a sharp distinction here, you will notice, between *religious questing*, which is common to all humanity, and *Christian theology*, which is a very specific form of investigation bound to the nature of God Himself. Christian theology, in the final analysis, is possible only as a gift of God, the God who knows us before we are able to have a thought of Him (Psalm 139:16) and that is why the Christian theologian continually finds herself overwhelmed with gratitude and amazement that such an enterprise is possible at all.

The source of theological knowledge is found in the decision of God to make Himself known to His creatures. Thus the Word of the Lord came to Jeremiah:

*I will become their God and they shall become my people. No longer need they teach one another to know the Lord; all of them, high and low alike, shall know Me, says the Lord... (31:33-4)*

*I will betroth you to myself to have and to hold, and you shall know the Lord... (2:20)*

Again and again we are told that knowledge of God is impossible for us unless God grants it to us—not only knowledge of God but true knowledge of ourselves:

*Such knowledge is beyond my understanding; writes the Psalmist, So high that I cannot reach it... (139:6)*

Christian theology begins in a dual proclamation:

*No one ventures of himself to approach me, says the Lord...*

*I will Myself bring him near and so he shall approach Me. (Jeremiah 30:21)*

That, I submit, is a superior epistemology, one of which the preacher and teacher need never be ashamed. *I myself will give them the wit to know me, for I am the Lord (Jeremiah 24:7)*. Thus theology seeks not her own glory, but that of her Lord; thus the theologian may laugh at herself, and even forget herself entirely, so absorbed does she become in the knowledge and love of God. That is the way freedom lies.

It is time now to speak specifically of *women* in the service of the divine Word. When I was in seminary there was a lot of nonsense being perpetrated about women in theology, and there were even times when it looked as though some women were collaborating. It was being said that the old forms of theology, being male and oppressive, had to go, in order to accommodate women's special needs and women's special gifts. I am sorry to say that, more often than not, these special needs and gifts were described in lachrymose position papers by guilt-ridden white male liberals whose own "special need" seemed to be that of joining us on the bottom rungs instead of reacting to us like *true* equals, able to hold our own in the rarefied precincts of dogmatic theology. To be quite specific, it was said that, whereas theology had been verbal and analytical, women were non-verbal and intuitive, and therefore theology would have to change in order to admit women to its hallowed ranks. In my opinion, this is like saying that the physical requirements for firefighters should be drastically altered in order that more women might be admitted; never mind if the building burns down.

Let no man rejoice secretly in what I have just said. Any women who is even remotely sensitized can instantly tell the difference between a man who is truly secure in the company of a competent, independent woman and a man

who is not, and no amount of male lip service to women's issues can disguise the difference. I address myself, again, primarily to the women. Theology (real theology, not its pallid imitations) is an exacting discipline. It does indeed require rigorous, analytical work. And because it originates in the Word of God, it does involve language; it cannot simply be mimed or danced or emoted. Women, there are voices all over the place saying that we can't do that kind of work! Entire courses and even departments are being redesigned so that our supposed inability to think abstractly and express ourselves forcefully (politely called our "intuitiveness" and "non-verbal"-ness) will not be exposed. Is that what women want? My own answer to that is a resounding *No*, and I truly hope there will be many women who will take up the challenge, who will enter upon the study and the teaching and the writing of theology in the confidence that if God is truly calling us to this noble discipline, *He will give us the wit to pursue it*. But I do not believe we can look for any loopholes just because we happen to be women. Theology will continue to take its bearings from its living source, not from shifting movements in the culture. Dorothy L. Sayers once remarked:

*I am occasionally desired by congenital imbeciles and the editors of magazines to say something about the writing of detective fiction "from the women's point of view". To such demands one can only say, "Go away and don't be silly". You might as well ask what is the female angle on the equilateral triangle.*

Sayers would be the first to agree that the same thing goes for theology as for detective fiction. There has been too much said about "the woman's point of view" on theology. The best thing for women to do is enlist in her service, and the best thing for men to do if they want to help us is to quit patronizing us and stop weakening the theological teaching of the seminaries and the churches and join us, shoulder to shoulder, in the greatest enterprise known to man or woman — the saying and the re-saying, in each new generation, of what salvation in Jesus Christ means for the church and the world.

There are many areas in which serious work of this kind needs to be done. I will mention four.

#### First, *exegesis*:

William Stringfellow tells how he sat down with a Sunday-School class of tough street kids, gave them all a copy of the Epistle to the Romans, and went to work on the text by asking, "What does this say?" Not "What does this mean to you?" or "What are your feelings about this passage?" or "How does this relate to your life-situation?" but the much more uncompromising question "What does this say?" Behind this question, of course,

lies a commitment in faith—namely, Stringfellow's own conviction that God speaks in the sacred text, that He really does have a Word to say to us, and that He will enable us to find out what it is if we open our hearts and minds to Him, expecting to be addressed. Stringfellow goes on to tell of the months of struggle, with the kids and with Romans! and the ultimate conversion of the gang leader. (See *Count It All Joy*, Eerdmans, 1967, pp. 62-71.) My point in telling this story is that theology must begin in the inquiry, "What does God say?" not "What do I think?" or "What do I feel?" or "What vibes do I get?" This work, which is exegesis, can be excruciatingly difficult, risky, and painful, but it must become a daily habit for the serious theologian.

#### Second, *the tradition*:

Paul Holmer says in his *The Grammar of Faith*, "It is risky not to know others who knew God." This means not only sitting at the feet of the apostles, which is what we do when we reflect on the Scripture; it means immersing oneself in the work of the saints and theologians who followed the apostles. This requires years of study, and, indeed, will continue to the end of one's life. This may prove to be difficult for many women, since most of the great masters have been men; but if God really is calling women to be theologians, then we must be willing to overlook some of the mistakes that His servants have made, just as we hope our friends will overlook our mistakes. Not to read Tertullian because he thought women were especially prone to sin, not to explore Augustine because he was (partly) wrong about sex, not to learn from Athanasius because he didn't say "spokesperson" is self-defeating, and plain silly besides.

#### Third, *the newspaper*:

When I say "the newspaper," I have in mind Karl Barth's famous dictum about the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other. The newspaper represents every form of human endeavor on the human scene. The trick is keeping the two in balance. Most preachers and teachers today seem to be almost all newspaper and hardly any Bible—texts are thrown into their sermons at the last minute, like footnotes to what has already been said. Many conservative evangelicals, on the other hand, make very little effort to show how the Biblical message is related to the political and social life of our time. Theology is not served by either of these extremes. It is in the continual dialogue between Bible and newspaper that theology is done.

#### Fourth, *language*.

Nothing is more characteristic of the Christian faith than the prominent place it gives to the written and spoken word. Few factors present a greater threat to the in-

tegrity of theology in our day than the terrible things that are happening to the English language. I give three examples.

From Russell Baker's column in the *New York Times*:

*The American language, like the American dollar, seems to be losing vitality. The evidence is everywhere. The once brisk American spoken by politicians has decayed into a tongue that can only be called "mushmouth." The young cult of sociology, needing a young language, has invented one. There are many dead languages, but the sociologists' is the only language that was dead at birth.*

*A particularly grievous example is the decline of American in the baseball industry. Until quite recently the language spoken by baseball's practitioners and hangers-on crackled with terseness, vibrancy and metaphor. Now it is becoming as arid as the tongue of the Federal bureaucrat and shows alarming signs of drift toward the mumbo-jumbo jabber of sociology.*

*"Ryan has good velocity and excellent location" is a sentence that was actually uttered by a baseball man on television one night this year. Before baseball American became so desiccated, the sentence might have been:*

*"Ryan is throwing smoke and nicking the corners."*

*This may not be poetry, but in competition with "Ryan has good velocity and excellent location", it is pure Shakespeare. It is enough to make a man pine for Dizzy Dean, who having been struck on the foot by a batted ball, waited on the mound while a doctor examined him. "This toe is fractured," the doctor said. To which Dean replied, "Fractured, hell! The damn thing's broken."*

And, this reprint in *The New Yorker* from the catalogue of one of our theological institutions:

*Applied Theology 142. Sociology of Religion and Teaching.*

*This is a macro/micro humanistic approach to the sociology of religion containing four components: (1) Examination of historical paradigms; (2) Field studies of radical sociological change in religious states; (3) Analysis of social-cultural continuities and discontinuities, derived and underived religious posturing, dimensions of tension, crisis confluence and synthesis in cross-cultural states; (4) A correlation of sociology enabling the student to distill transcendent processes as well as to develop a more cogent language of religion in the context of educational goals. —Harvard Divinity School catalogue. 2/26/79*

At which point *The New Yorker* editor adds, "Those who pass go straight to heaven."

Thirdly, I quote this fine sentence from a lecture I recently heard: "Human activity is part of the divine intention." I was in the process of writing it down even as I was listening to it being said, when I suddenly realized the lecturer had marred it by adding "-ality" to the word "intention," so that her beautifully uncluttered "divine intention" became an ugly and unnecessary "divine intentionality." This tendency is epidemic; instead of "method" we must have "methodology", instead of "mode," "modality." "Societal" has replaced "social," and the latest abomination is "directionality."

I have my own theory about this. I believe our preaching and our theological writing is bad because we read too much sociology and psychology and not enough literature. If we read Flannery O'Connor or Walker Percy (both Christian writers, by the way) before we wrote our sermons, we would not be so likely to succumb to psychobabble. We all need to re-read Amos Wilder on the subject of *Early Christian Rhetoric*, so as to forswear forever the barren rhetoric of the human potential movement and the graduate business school.

To sum up:

Scrupulous exegesis, knowledge and love of the tradition, imaginative and humane attention to the daily news, clear and vigorous language—these are the tools of the theologian. The great discipline of theology has been in decline too long. There is no higher vocation in the church today than the pursuit of "the most thankful and happy science!" (Barth). I do not believe it has ever been shown that women cannot be called to such a task, even though American women with Ph.D.'s in dogmatics are as rare today as women priests were ten years ago. There has been no lack, these past thousands of years, of women who have worshipped God with their hearts, bodies, and spirits. Why not hope and pray and trust that this, our own age, will bring forth women who are equally devoted to the mind's worship of God, which finds its truest fulfillment in the service of the divine Word which is theology?

Let us remember, last and first of all, that the science of God begins in silence and humility before His face. "To have knowledge of God you must fear Him and you must also love Him" (Holmer, *Grammar of Faith*, p.25). The pursuit of theology in the fear and love of God is a liberating and joyful activity, and the most relevant enterprise that there is.

*...Make thy paths known to me, O Lord;  
Teach me thy ways.  
Lead me in thy truth and teach me;  
Thou art God my saviour.  
For thee I have waited all the day long,  
For the coming of thy goodness, Lord...  
The Lord is good and upright;  
Therefore he teaches sinners the way they should go...  
If there is anyone who fears the Lord,  
He shall be shown the path that he should choose...  
The Lord confides his purposes to those who fear him,  
And his covenant is theirs to know.  
My eyes are ever on the Lord,  
Who alone can free my feet from the net. (Psalm 25)*

# THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV AS TEACHERS OF CHRISTIAN FAITH

Donald Nicholl

The Karamazov brothers are the best teachers of religion in the late twentieth century; better, I am certain, than contemporary theologians. *The Brothers Karamazov* is at its best in *sobernost*, in the community of *seekers*. It has been my privilege to receive instruction from *The Brothers Karamazov* in such a community and I came to realize that the novel is a most wonderful way of raising religious issues in the minds and hearts of contemporaries. More important, I am convinced that *The Brothers Karamazov* cannot be appreciated if it is read in isolation. It must be read in community, each sharing insights into the meaning of this profound statement with other members of the community. After all, there is something dissonant in reading a book in isolation whose theme is "each is responsible to all." When Dostoyevsky published the novel, it appeared in installments in a monthly journal and the segments were often read aloud in the families of subscribers to the journal. Moreover, Dostoyevsky himself read portions to his second wife before she transcribed the words for publication. He frequently offered public readings of chapters to large audiences. Like everything else that is worthwhile, *The Brothers Karamazov* is meant to be shared in community.

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The two communities I have read Dostoyevsky's novel with during the past year were a class of students at the University of California, and the people at the Penny University. The Penny University is held in *Cafe Pergolesi*, at the end of Pacific Avenue in Santa Cruz. It is named for similar gatherings in eighteenth century Italian coffee houses where, for a penny, customers could join in discussions. At Santa Cruz's Penny University, sessions are held at five o'clock every evening when a professor talks for half an hour. After the talk, anyone can take part in the discussion, which goes on amidst hissing espresso machines and moving customers.

Needless to say, these groups brought different interests and backgrounds. The students at the University of California were all between eighteen and twenty-three, drawn almost entirely from prosperous families and committed to studying *The Brothers Karamazov* for credit to finish degrees. Those in the *Pergolesi* were of all ages and kinds. Some very young, some grandmothers and grandfathers, some veterans of the Vietnam War and others of the Second World War. One day a couple of psychology professors dropped in; the local flower seller was almost always in attendance, and at a later date two Steinerite priests appeared. Each was present out of interest. When they saw no point in what was being said, they simply walked out; there were no external sanctions.

Yet the problems of studying *The Brothers Karamazov* were very similar for the two communities. As one sceptic

said when he saw more than fifty students signing up for the degree class, "how on earth can you have a discussion involving fifty people?"; in regard to the *Pergolesi* gathering, "how on earth can you hold a discussion with no guaranteed clientele and no assurance that the people will have read the text?" The solution adopted for both communities was similar, and one that I imagine can be more generally applied. You put a number of slips into a hat, each slip having the name of a character. You ask each member to draw a slip and make them responsible for that character, making sure the group does not misunderstand or misrepresent his or her character. It is helpful to have a number of miscellaneous slips; for example, a geographer and a chronologist. The effect of this is much the same as that of the prospect of imminent death; it marvelously concentrates the mind. The member responsible for the character reads the novel with unprecedented intensity, and comes to feel a genuine sense of responsibility that justice is done to his or her character. When a group is sharing so intense a reading they notice details on such a scale that all become aware of the superficial manner in which they have been reading.

After listening to contributions from the geographer and the chronologist, I am forced to wonder if many of the novel's critics could pass a simple examination in the geography of Skotoprigonevsk, or on the time sequence of the story. Such details cannot be dismissed as insignificant pedantry. An example that our geographer brought home forcefully: reconstructing the geography of Skotoprigonevsk, Alyosha is the mediator in a deep sense of the word, moving between the monastery and the Karamazov home, or between the Suishkin cottage and Katerina's drawing room, always reconciling. The chronologist pointed out that the Devil appears to Ivan at the very moment when Smerdyakov dies and this brought an awareness to us about the meaning of "synchronicity". A prolonged and lively discussion followed as to how the notion of synchronicity is related to the sense of what *kairos* means in the Holy Scriptures—the time of the Lord. We came to the conclusion that if we open our eyes in the manner in which Dostoyevsky intended we realize that each moment is the Day of the Lord because the kingdom is always amongst us.

This brings me to a truth about *The Brothers Karamazov* which I have seen no one mention, the novel's consummative power within Dostoyevsky's own life, itself the supreme reason why the novel is such a perfect medium for discussing religion. Throughout his life Dostoyevsky was striving to make a breakthrough out of one prison after another and at the end of forty years he made the final breakthrough by *The Brothers Karamazov*. Dostoyevsky knew various prisons: literally in the Peter

and Paul Fortress and the camp to which he was condemned at Omsk. Metaphorically he was imprisoned by his gambling, in nineteenth century scientific positivism, in his passion for Suslova (with whom he had a painful, abortive affair in the 1860's), his sense of guilt towards his natural father, his "little father," the Tsar, and his Heavenly Father. His outrage at such imprisonment and his protest against it is nowhere more eloquently expressed than in *Notes from Underground*, where he says of the Job's Comforters who came to the Underground Man, "They'll call out to you, why protest? Two and two do make four. Nature doesn't ask your advice. She isn't interested in your preferences, or whether or not you approve of her laws. You must accept nature as she is with all the consequences that implies, so a wall is a wall, etc. etc."

"But good Lord, what do I care about the laws of nature and arithmetic if I have my reasons for disliking them, including the one about two and two making four? Of course, I won't be able to breach this wall with my head if I'm not strong enough. But I don't have to accept a stone wall just because it's there and I don't have the strength to breach it." Significantly, at the time he was gathering himself to write *The Brothers Karamazov* Dostoyevsky was absorbed in reading the Book of Job, the story of how one man protests against the imprisoning walls of traditional religion and eventually breaks through to a new, deeper awareness of God. He breaks out of "God" into the freedom of God. It is equally significant that Dostoyevsky was intrigued at this time by the work of the mathematician Lobachevsky, who showed that we need not condemn ourselves unto the two-plus-two-equals-four prison of Euclidian geometry. There are alternative geometries if only people have the courage and imagination to protest the constricting walls of Euclidian geometry and break through them.

In fact, Dostoyevsky's life is the story of how he wrote himself out of one prison and into another, each breakthrough being punctuated by the publication of a memorable work: *Poor Folk*, *Crime and Punishment*, *The Possessed*, *The Gambler*. Yet each breakthrough led him towards the ultimate prison walls: those constituted by his own supreme gift, his psychological insight. Theodore Reik said Dostoyevsky "knew more about human psychology than the whole of the International Psychoanalytical Association put together." This is true. But it is also true of him, as of us all, that our greatest gift or blessing is also our greatest curse unless we can get beyond it. This is evident in Dostoyevsky's case through the incredibly skillful way in which he shows how most of us, most of our lives, are caught in psychological mechanisms. We imagine, for instance, that we are freely and selflessly loving someone, and then something happens and we find ourselves hating that same person for no apparent reason—as though a control button inside us had simply been switched. What was love becomes hate; what was humility becomes pride; what was compassion

becomes cruelty; and what was revenge becomes compassion. The psychological laws controlling the mechanics are depicted by Dostoyevsky with unparalleled and unerring skill. In the end, his characters only break through one set of prison walls to face a yet more inexorable set until one comes to the ultimate set, the one that proves to you by Euclidean reasoning that your very desire to break through is itself the wall, and is even more immovably subject to mechanical laws than any of the previous ones.

This would have been Dostoyevsky's legacy had it not been for the miracle of *The Brothers Karamazov*. There is something miraculous about Dostoyevsky's integration and consummation of those terrible experiences—his mother's death, his father's brutal murder at the hands of his serfs, himself celebrated and then cruelly dropped by the literary establishment, enduring mock execution, years in the prison camps and the deaths of his children. To these must be added his gambling fever, his torture at the hands of Suslova, his fortnightly epileptic fits and his emphysema. In the midst of all this he was forced to pay off his brother's debts and support one improvident relative and hanger-on after another. One must agree that any psychologist or sociologist who knew the "laws" of their science would conclude that there was no earthly hope for any individual in the midst of that turmoil.

Yet we know that it is not the psychologist or the sociologist, or even the theologian, who had the last word, but Dostoyevsky himself—or, more exactly, God speaking through him. Only in this way can we account for the miraculous achievement and also explain why, once *The Brothers Karamazov* was completed, Dostoyevsky had nothing more to say and do on this earth, and so he died. I do not believe that there could have been a sequel to the novel. It may well have been that Dostoyevsky's plans included the further adventures of Alyosha, but after the funeral feast for Ilyusha there was nothing left for him to say. Dostoyevsky's situation was like that of a believer in the Orthodox Church who has come to church with plans for going on a pilgrimage right after the service. At the climax of the liturgy, he realizes "this is it," *Tat van asi*. Why should he go anywhere now? Here and now it is, "this is reality." In like manner, it was right and fitting for Dostoyevsky to die once he had completed his work. As one critic has observed, it is well that he never went on to write the projected second volume "because otherwise not only Russian literature but also Russia and mankind would have exploded and evaporated." As in many other respects, so also in this one, *The Brothers Karamazov* matches that other great work of psychological integration and spiritual consummation, Dante's *Divina Commedia*. Dante, too, faced every painful experience of his life, and

by writing them into the *Commedia*, managed to achieve personal integration. The achievement of the wholeness and holiness of the great artist is simply the inner aspect of the process by which a great work is achieved that manifests wholeness and holiness to humankind. It will be remembered that Dante was also finishing the final cantos of the *Commedia* in his very last days, and according to his sons those manuscript pages were only found by a miraculous intervention after his death.

The reader of the *Divina Commedia* accompanies Dante on his long journey through hell and purgatory and finally moves into the clear light of paradise, breathing deeply, taken further and further into the empyrean, finding then that breath of God which moves the sun and the stars and the human heart. So, too, the reader of *The Brothers Karamazov* is led through Dostoyevsky's own hell and purgatory into the clear air.

In Dostoyevsky's earlier writings, we are in the world of the underground man who cannot break out from the fetid, tuberculosis-ridden, dark, gloomy prison of the modern industrial society where there is scarcely a blade of grass to be seen; in *The Brothers Karamazov*, along with Alyosha, we are delivered from that world:

"His soul, overflowing with rapture was craving for freedom and unlimited space. The vault of heaven, crudded with softly shining stars, stretched wide and vast over him. From the zenith to the horizon the Milky Way stretched its two arms dimly across the sky. The fresh, motionless still night enfolded the earth. The white towers and golden domes of the cathedral gleamed against the sapphire sky. The gorgeous autumn flowers in the beds near the house went to sleep till morning. The silence of the earth seemed to merge into the silence of the heavens. The mystery of the earth came into contact with the mystery of the stars. Alyosha stood, gazed and suddenly he threw himself down upon the earth. He did not know why he was embracing it. He could not have explained to himself why he longed so irresistibly to kiss it, to kiss it all, but he kissed it weeping, sobbing, and drenching it with his tears and vowed frenziedly to love it, to love it forever and ever. 'Water the earth with the tears of your gladness and love those tears', it rang in his soul. What was he weeping over? Oh, he was weeping in a rapture even more over those stars which were shining for him from the abyss of space and he was not ashamed of that ecstasy. It was as though the threads from all those innumerable worlds of God met all at once in his soul and it was trembling all over as it came in contact with other worlds."

The parallel between this passage and Dante's last words, "*L'amor che muove el sol e l'altre stelle*," ("The Love that moves the sun and the other stars.") is so striking as to leave no doubt that the Italian poet and the Russian novelist had each experienced the same touch of God's integration.

In the novel, of course, Alyosha's rapture is a realization of the truth in Father Zosima's homily:

"Many things on earth are hidden from us, but in return for that we have been given a mysterious inward sense of our living bond with the other world, with the higher, heavenly world and the roots of our thoughts and feelings are not here but in other worlds. That is why philosophers say that it is impossible to comprehend the essential nature of things on earth. God took seeds from other worlds and sowed them on this earth and made his garden grow, and everything that could come up came up, but whatever grows is alive and lives only through the feeling of its contact with other mysterious worlds; if that feeling grows weak or is destroyed in you then what has grown up in you will also die. Then you will become indifferent to life and even grow to hate it."

Clearly the opening into this spiritual world, including this earth transfigured, is by way of the gate of forgiveness, as surely in *The Brothers Karamazov* as in the *Divina Commedia*. As Father Zosima says in introducing the passage just quoted, "My young brother asked forgiveness of the birds: it may seem absurd, but it is right nonetheless for everything, like the ocean, flows and comes into contact with everything else. Touch it in one place and it reverberates at the other end of the world." Nor is this revelation lost upon Ivan, the character in the novel who seems irredeemably lost in the city of Euclidian logic with its unyielding rectilinear pavements and asphyxiation. To Alyosha he says, "I want to live and I go on living even if it is against logic. However much I may disbelieve in the order of things, I still love the sticky little leaves that open in the spring, I love the blue sky." It is as though Ivan were the unhappy orphan that Dostoyevsky had in mind when he wrote in his Journal, "Children must be born on the soil and not on the pavement...a nation should be born and sprout on earth, on the soil upon which corn and trees grow. There is something sacramental in the earth in the soil." For Dostoyevsky the heavens opened when he bowed down and kissed the earth.

I am convinced the pilgrimage that brought a wholeness, an integration, to Dostoyevsky's life came easier to the two communities with whom I read *The Brothers Karamazov* than to professional literary critics. The subject before us is the transfiguration of life's experiences by God's work—Dostoyevsky's life and our own. The critics, the Soviet ones in the van followed by the Western ones, usually concentrate on technical questions about the use of different voices, choice of imagery, plot and subplot, etc. as if to deliberately focus on the secondary matters and to avoid the all-important question, which my companions asked straight away and never ceased to ask. That is, "What is it all about?" Once we ask that simple yet fundamental question, we begin to realize that *The Brothers Karamazov* is about everything. In answer to the question, for instance, one in our group said, "It is all about humiliation"; another said "it is all about money"; another said "it is all about

food"; yet another thought "it is about fools for Christ" (*iurodivi*). To another the killing of the father was central. For someone else, the refrain, "each is responsible for all" was the crucial theme in answer to the nihilistic slogan of Ivan Smerdyakov that "everything is permitted" once you get rid of God. Another maintained that the novel presents us with a theology of faces.

Of course, each was correct. There is a whole theology of faces embedded in *The Brothers Karamazov*. One has only to remember Father Zosima's account of what terrible fate he had seen in Dmitry's face and how he had sent Alyosha to Dmitry in the hope that Alyosha's "brotherly face" might help to save him from that fate. And he did this partly because Alyosha's face had always reminded Zosima of his brother's face, which in his memory had served as a guide upon the path of his precious monastic calling.

Perhaps the most memorable of all passages for a theology of faces occurs in Zosima's exhortation to the monks: "Every day and every hour, every minute, examine yourself to make sure that your appearance is seemly. You pass by a little child, you pass by spitefully with foul language and a wrathful heart; you may not have noticed the child, but he has seen you and your face ugly and profane will perhaps remain in his defenseless heart. You may not know it, but you have perhaps sown an evil seed in him and it may grow." Here the reference to the seed stirs our memory of the verse from St. John's Gospel which stands at the head of the whole novel, "Verily, verily I say unto you, 'Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.'" This same verse of the Gospel had been quoted by Zosima in an earlier section of the discourse. Although this is the only instance in the novel when these words of Scripture are quoted again, the theme returns as if the verse itself is a seed which has fallen into the ground and is hidden there to burst forth with the fullness of truth on occasion. Once is at the end of the novel, at Ilyusha's funeral, when we realize that the precious seed is Alyosha himself and that he has already brought forth much fruit in the transfigured children. I use the word "transfigured" advisedly because in his reference to the face, Dostoyevsky sometimes uses the word *obraz*, which is also the Russian word for "icon," the basic constituent of *preobrazhenie*, "transfiguration."

There are many instances where the face is a means of salvation, as when Grushenka says to Alyosha, "But I have looked at you a hundred times before today. I began asking everyone about you. I couldn't forget your face: I carried it in my heart." Later in the novel, it is the appearance of Alyosha which drives away the Devil from Ivan—"You did drive him away," says Ivan to his younger brother. "He vanished as soon as you appeared. I love your face, Alyosha. Did you know that I loved your face?" Redemption always remembers the face, described in

Alyosha's own failure to do so. Rakitin is trying to drag him down the path of perdition, apparently with success—"and suddenly his brother Dmitry's face flashed through his mind, but only for a fraction of a second, and though it did remind him of something, of some urgent business which must not be put off for a moment, some duty, some terrible obligation, this reminder made no impression on him, did not reach his heart, and immediately slipped his memory and was forgotten. But Alyosha remembered this long afterwards." He failed to hold the face in his heart, and slipped further down that path to perdition. Again, Dostoyevsky makes the connection between the face and the heart and remembrance. One sees the similarity with traditional Orthodox teaching on the prayer of the heart: It is essential that the Jesus Prayer move from the lips to the mind and then descend from the mind into the heart. The same is true of the remembered face.

There is that stunning moment in the court, at Dmitry's trial, when the public prosecutor says to Alyosha,

"And why are you so absolutely convinced of your brother's innocence?"

"I couldn't but believe my brother. I knew he wouldn't lie to me. I could tell from his face that he wasn't lying to me."

"Only from his face, is that all the proof you have?"

"I have no other proof."

"And you have no proof whatever of Smerdyakov's guilt except your brother's words and the expression on his face?"

"No, I have no other proof."

This passage has a finality that reverberates with Jesus' appearance before the Grand Inquisitor or, indeed, His appearance before Pilate. Whereas members of the established order, whether priests or governors or lawyers or doctors or police are reduced to grubbing around for proofs of truth and for evasions of truth, Alyosha is able to go straight to the truth, unerring, by his brother's face.

Alongside those in our communities who stressed the significance of a theology of the face, others insisted that the novel is about *humiliation*, the way humility is ultimately the only way to recover from a deeper humiliation. "Bowing," said one of our Buddhist companions, who practices bowing as a spiritual exercise, "this novel is about how to become humble through bowing." And certainly the deep meaning of humility is revealed by Father Zosima prostrating himself at Dmitry's feet "with full conscious deliberation, even touching the ground with his forehead." The terrible consequences of false humility resulting in further humiliation is displayed in Katya's bowing deeply before Dmitry, going down on her knees at

his feet—"with her head touching the floor." Between the extremes of these bows are many others in the novel—some half-bows and some failed-bows, each filled with hidden meaning, each answering Dmitry's question—"Dmitry stood still for a few seconds as though thunderstruck: the elder had bowed down to him—what was it all about?"

It became clear, in an unspoken fashion to each of us reading the book, that humiliation is an experience we had all undergone. How right Dostoyevsky was to put his finger on humiliation as an endless source of bitterness that never dries up throughout one's life—unless the bitterness can be transformed into sweetness through humility and forgiveness. Otherwise, every character in the novel, the elder Karamazov and Zosima and Smerdyakov and Alyosha, sets in motion an inexorable cycle of humiliation and revenge, followed by demands of honor which disguise shame and seek justifications in claims of dignity bolstered by contempt for others. The cycle of humiliation continues.

There are fifty sections or more in *The Brothers Karamazov* where the infliction or the memory of humiliation keeps the wheel of fate bearing the characters upon a cycle of bitterness. Indeed, there is a sense in which this theme runs throughout the whole of Dostoyevsky's writings, as it does throughout his life, from the publication of *The Double* in 1846 through *The Insulted and Injured* in 1861 to *The Adolescent* in 1875, on the eve of his beginning to write *The Brothers Karamazov*. In 1875, despite all the prison walls he had broken through, Dostoyevsky seemed unable to make the final breakthrough out of the psychological prison—where events are mechanically determined—and into the world of the spirit where all relations grow in freedom.

That breakthrough occurred in writing *The Brothers Karamazov*. This is not to say, of course, that his earlier writings were in vain (though each of them is incomplete in the way that all preparatory work is incomplete) but rather that through his previous writings he had been gathering the weight of his experience into one point, a center of integration through which the meaning of his past life might flow. No writer could characterize the Devil as Dostoyevsky does, in unerring fashion, as he appears in Ivan's nightmare as his own perfect double. Consider the irony: Ivan, all intellect and good taste, and proud of it, complains that the Devil sent him is so stupid and vulgar. As Ivan's double, the Devil says, "You are hurt first of all in your aesthetic feelings and, secondly, in your pride. How could such a vulgar devil come to visit such a great man?" Again, what terrible energy is released as the double comes closer and closer to Ivan, evermore threatening

the nearer he comes! At the same time, the closer Ivan comes to accepting the Devil as his double, the closer the double comes to vanishing forever in a whiff of smoke:

"I forbid you to speak of the Grand Inquisitor!" cried Ivan, coloring all over with shame.

"Well then, what about the Geological Upheavals, remember? That was a lovely poem."

"Shut up or I'll kill you."

Dostoyevsky had begun work on this scene thirty years earlier when he composed *The Double*; even then he held in his hand the thread that would lead him out of the maze of psychology if only he would hang onto it. That thread is given in the words of Petrushka, "Good folks live honestly. Good folks live without falsity, and they never have doubles... Yes, they never have doubles. God doesn't afflict honest folk." Put another way, when the double vanishes one becomes honest and integrated. Then, as Alyosha says over the exhausted Ivan, "God will conquer." Only God can overcome the shadow, the double, in the light of His simplicity.

This gift of discrimination by which a person can distinguish between the reality and the shadow, between the true and the false, is a gift which finally enabled Dostoyevsky to represent the presence of a "fool for Christ", a *urodivi*. The first intimation of such a fool for Christ appears in Maria Timofeyevna and another in Makar Ivanovich. His most ambitious attempt at depicting a character as a fool for Christ is Prince Myshkin in *The Idiot*. That attempt was a failure. Dostoyevsky realized it was a failure, significant because it explains the next stage of his effort to integrate foolishness for Christ's sake into his own being and into his writing. In *The Brothers Karamazov* all the characters who make any claim to be fools for Christ—old Karamazov, Mikhail, and Father Ferapont, are portrayed in such a way as to make a mockery of the claim. It is as if Dostoyevsky sought to illustrate the truth of St. Seraphim's warning that only those who are exceptionally firm in intellect and character should undertake foolishness for Christ.

One might maintain that by the time he came to write *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoyevsky had ceased to admire *urodstvo*, but to readers with even faint perceptiveness this is clearly not the case. *The Brothers Karamazov* is permeated with foolishness for Christ in the same way that a room is permeated with the smell of a perfume when the alabaster jar containing the perfume is shattered: instead of being confined to one place, the per-

fume is now everywhere; it has become normal. This is why Dostoyevsky underlines the health and "normalcy" of Alyosha as compared with the sickness and angularity of Myshkin—he intends to have Alyosha undertake the normal vocation of a man, marriage, which Prince Myshkin was incapable of. Integration is becoming whole and holy so that in the end there are no bits of experience left sticking out at an angle, unassimilated. Once this is recognized it is possible to see that *The Brothers Karamazov* is indeed "all about" foolishness for Christ, beginning with the time when Alyosha returned to Skotoprigonevsk not knowing why, and continuing with Zosima's refusal to duel and Dmitry's refusing to explain to the court why he did not return to Gregory; and, finally, in Alyosha's childlike behavior with the children. The perfect fool for Christ is someone who is regarded as just a fool (not for Christ, which is an ennobling role) but just a normal person being a fool.

In this respect, of course, Father Zosima is just a fool. Father Ferapont is a fool for Christ: The people "had no doubt that he was a fool for Christ; it was the very fact of his being a fool for Christ that fascinated them." To underline this, Dostoyevsky makes us aware of Ferapont's rude speech, abrupt manner, his perception of evil spirits. Perhaps the most important and cunning characterization is given when he has Ferapont say, "I am thinking of giving up their bread, for I don't need it at all, and going away into the woods and living on mushrooms or wild berries. They can't give up their bread here, and so they are still in bondage to the devil."

What a contrast here with Father Zosima! When Father Zosima began to stink in his coffin, one of the monks said, "He was not strict in fasting. He allowed himself sweet things. He took cherry jam in his tea. He loved it. Ladies used to send it to him." Dostoyevsky draws attention to the fact that sectaries and false exemplars throughout the ages have always regarded food with suspicion, whereas the true faith tells us to find comfort in food. It is astonishing to discover the occasions someone takes food and feels better. On the way to Lake Street, Alyosha "took out a roll he had brought from his father's and ate it on the way. This restored his strength." When Dmitry returns from his exhausting expedition to Ilyinskoe, "he suddenly realized that he was terribly hungry. While the horses were being harnessed he ordered an omelette. He ate it at once, ate a huge chunk of bread, ate a sausage which happened to be available, and drank three glasses of vodka. Having thus fortified himself, he felt much more cheerful and his heart grew light again." The culminating illustration of how food is sacred comes in the final scenes. The theme of bread is taken up once again with Ilyusha's request that a crust of bread be crumbled on his grave so that the spar-

rows might fly down upon it. But the point of the illustration comes with Kolya's saying: "It's all so strange, Karamazov. Such sorrow, and all of a sudden—pancakes! The ways of our religion are so unnatural." Alyosha does not reply immediately, but in the near last words of the novel says to Kolya, "Don't get upset that we are going to be eating pancakes. It is an ancient custom, age-old and it is absolutely right."

There is something to be said, therefore, in support of those who affirm that *The Brothers Karamazov* is about food, as well as a theology of faces or a therapy for humiliation. Perhaps the most comprehensive vision is the one which sees the novel as an invocation to remembrance. This is to be expected when we realize how deeply Dostoyevsky was influenced during the time he was writing the novel by that strange and wonderful man, the mystic philosopher Nikolai Fyodorov. Dostoyevsky wrote of Fyodorov: "I have so thoroughly absorbed his thoughts that they seem to be my own." Fyodorov believed that the root of human misery and alienation was *forgetting*, and above all in *forgetting the dead*. The task of humanity is to remember one another so intensely that the resurrection of the dead is a present reality. This reverberates like the guiding theme from the beginning until the end of *The Brothers Karamazov*. The early pages of the novel explain that Fyodor Pavlovich, the Karamazov father, abandoned his son Dmitry "because he simply forgot about his existence," and then soon afterwards "forgot and abandoned" his other sons, Ivan and Alyosha. Here is the first forgetting, the monstrosity of a father forgetting his sons. In the same pages we have a liberal forgetting. Miusov, a distant relative, makes the noble gesture of becoming Dmitry's guardian, but "it so happened that having settled permanently in Paris he too forgot all about the child, especially when the February Revolution broke out, which made such a strong impression upon his mind, and which he could never forget for the rest of his life."

Forgetting is a flaw which affects not only the wicked in the story. Alyosha almost comes to grief through forgetting. On returning to the monastery where he finds Father Zosima ill, Alyosha reproaches himself bitterly for having forgotten his elder through this preoccupation with the Karamazov imbroglio. His subsequent forgetting entailed yet more fateful consequences. He forgot Dmitry after his conversation with Ivan, and for the rest of his life could not imagine how he could have done so, when he had known a few hours earlier how vital it was for him to find Dmitry and head him off from his fate. On two later occasions he forgets Dmitry, because (as we showed in a previous quotation) he does not allow the memory of Dmitry to reach his heart. Again, he forgets the 200 rubles that Katya had given to him for Alyosha's father.

Meanwhile Alyosha's brother Ivan helps to seal Dmitry's fate. Ivan goes to Smerdyakov to find out what Smerdyakov had said to Katya that made her doubt Dmitry's guilt, and then he forgets to find out. "Good Lord!" Ivan cried suddenly, and his face darkened with anxiety. "Yes, I'd forgotten! Still, it makes no difference now"—but of course it makes all the difference, and the reader knows this. Similarly, the reader knows how crucial it was for Alyosha to have remembered—not forgotten—Dmitry's puzzling gesture that pointed to the little bag hung around his neck, in which were the 1500 rubles which could substantiate his story. "How could I have forgotten it?" says Alyosha. "How could I have forgotten it?"

We, the readers, can answer Alyosha's question for him in words taken from the text. They are the words of the grieving peasant woman who has come to Father Zosima seeking consolation for the loss of her child, Alexey. "I have forgotten everything I have and I don't want to remember." People forget because they don't want to remember.

If *The Brothers Karamazov* contains a severe warning against forgetting, it is even more a poem in praise of the beauty of remembrance. In the very first pages where Fyodor Pavlovich and Miusov are so monstrously forgetful, we learn by contrast that although Alyosha was only three years old when his mother died, nevertheless he remembered her all of his life. And a few pages later, Dostoyevsky evokes for us the moving image of Alyosha's mother, "just as though she were standing alive" before us on a quiet summer's evening by an open window and the slanting rays of the setting sun, turned towards the icon and praying to the Virgin to protect her child. This evocation reverberates throughout the novel, as when Father Zosima says, "From the house of my parents, I have brought nothing but precious memories, for there are no memories more precious than those of one's early childhood in one's own home, and that is almost always so if there is any love and harmony in the family at all. Indeed, precious memories may be retained even from a bad home so long as your heart is capable of finding anything precious."

Then there is that moving moment in court when old Dr. Herzenstube (a man of *Herz*, or heart) is struggling to convey to the jury what it meant to him that Dmitry should have come back after twenty three years to thank him for a pound of nuts given in the name of *Gott der Vater, Gott der Sohn* and *Gott der heilige Geist*:

"And then I remembered the happy days of my youth and the poor boy without boots in the yard. And my heart turned over and I said, 'You are a grateful young man, for you have remembered all your life the pound of nuts I gave you in your

childhood.' And I embraced him and blessed him and I wept. He laughed but he also cried, for a Russian often laughs when he should be crying. But he cried. I saw it, and now alas!"

"I'm crying now, too, German. I'm crying now, too, you dear old man!" Dmitry suddenly shouted from his seat.

All of which leads to the final scene of the book, Alyosha's speech to the boys at the stone, after Ilyusha's burial. This scene represents the consummation through remembrance of everything that has gone before in the story, but for Dostoyevsky personally it is the final integration of more than fifty years of intense living. Moreover, because it is a hymn, a hymn of praise, this chapter cries out to be read aloud. And it is at this point that reading the novel aloud in *Sobornost*, as opposed to reading it in isolation, makes all the difference in the world. We know the Hasidic warning about not writing stories down because then they can be taken away and read in isolation, in a cold and scoffing way, whereas it is only in warmth of heart that truth can flow from one human being to another. I have realized this truth since hearing two experts on Russian literature sneering at this last episode in *The Brothers Karamazov* as sentimental. One of these scholars spoke for them both when he said scornfully, "Karamazov and his boys! The redemption of the world through a boy scout troop."

None of us, who had shared in reading the episode aloud at the Penny University, could have spoken such crass words. The conclusion is a hymn to the sacred power of remembrance, bringing together all those elements in the novel which had been transfigured in the course of the story: the earth, the humiliated, fools, birds, bread and children and the human face. The refrain of the hymn once heard can never be forgotten. It is repeated some twenty five times within the space of two pages, the injunction to *remember* and not to forget, sounding antiphonally through Alyosha's speech and the boys' chorus in reply: "Let us agree here at Ilyusha's stone never to

forget, first Ilyusha, and, secondly, one another...I'm sure you will remember that there is nothing higher, stronger, more wholesome and more useful in life than some good memory, especially when it goes back to the days of your childhood, to the days of your life at home. You are told a lot about your education, but some beautiful, sacred memory preserved since childhood is perhaps the best education of all. If a man carries many such memories into life with him, he is saved for the rest of his days. And even if only one good memory is left in our hearts, it may also be the instrument of our salvation one day."

After joining in this hymn and hearing Alyosha's concluding invitation to go along hand in hand and eat pancakes in memory of the dead—"for it is an ancient custom, age-old, and it's absolutely right"—there was nothing left for those of us who had read *The Brothers Karamazov* together in the *Cafe Pergolesi* than to go and spend the evening eating pancakes together. Indeed it may well be that the test of whether a person has understood *The Brothers Karamazov* is whether one goes and eats pancakes with friends when completing the reading.

In truth, one never finishes reading it. As Pere Congar said, "Every theologian should read at least the episode of the Grand Inquisitor once every year just to keep on the way of truth." I would argue that if what I have written holds some truth and *The Brothers Karamazov* really is the best book for raising religious issues in our age, our theologians should be instructed to put away their own treatises for a year and spend the year's lectures in *lectio divina* with their students over *The Brothers Karamazov*. It might help some of them personally, following in Dostoyevsky's footsteps, to achieve integration. Those who now see no meaning in the Holy Trinity might learn from Dr. Herzenstube that *Gott der Vater, Gott der Sohn* and *Gott der heilige Geist* can be found in the gift of a bag of nuts. □

# EPILOGUE TO *The Devils of Loudun*

Aldous Huxley

...was an honest man, who probably believed what he said. Which only shows how extremely cautious one must always be in the matter of believing believers.

*The Devils of Loudun*

If Katallagete has tried to put anything into focus these past fifteen years, it is the idolatry of so much of our culture, especially the most seductive and elusive idols, the religious and political one, fusing into one: Politics is Messiah.

We were struck by this "Epilogue" by Aldous Huxley to *The Devils of Loudun*. The book is a compelling recital of the strange events in the town of Loudun at the time of Cardinal Richelieu: the mass hysteria in a convent of Ursuline nuns who believed themselves possessed, and the execution of the priest they accused of sorcery. In telling the story, Huxley examines the beliefs of those days and illustrates their similarity with our own. *The Devils of Loudun* is a history, but it is also, as Huxley described it, a parable: in the main characters and events, he shows the ambiguity of religion in society: from the destructive to the sacred.

Huxley included this Epilogue to elaborate the concept of self-transcendence; added as "an amplification of Chapter 3," that chapter is essentially a discussion of mysticism.

Huxley's concern is that we recognize the need for mature spirituality, and nourish it in a world where too many are in his graphic phrase, "merely muscular Christians." In *Grey Eminence* (1941) Huxley warned:

A totally unmystical world would be a world totally blind and insane. From the beginning of the eighteenth century onwards, the sources of mystical knowledge have been steadily diminishing all over the planet. We are dangerously far advanced into the darkness.

Aldous Huxley (1894 - 1963) was a novelist, essayist and commentator. Among his most well known works are *Crome Yellow*; *Those Barren Leaves*; *Ends and Means*; *Brave New World*; *The Perennial Philosophy*; *Island* and *The Doors of Perception*.

Without an understanding of man's deep-seated urge to self-transcendence, of his very natural reluctance to take the hard, ascending way, and his search for some bogus liberation either below or to one side of his personality, we cannot hope to make sense of our own particular period of history or indeed history in general, of life as it was lived in the past and as it is lived today. For this reason I propose to discuss some of the more common Grace-substitutes, into which and by means of which men and women have tried to escape from the tormenting consciousness of being merely themselves.

Alcohol is but one of the many drugs employed by human beings as avenues of escape from the insulated self. Of the natural narcotics, stimulants and hallucinators there is, I believe, not a single one whose properties have not been known from time immemorial. Modern research has given us a host of brand new synthetics; but in regard to the natural poisons it has merely developed better methods of extracting, concentrating and recombining those already known. From poppy to curare, from Andean coca to Indian hemp and Siberian agaric, every plant or bush or fungus capable, when ingested, of stupefying or exciting or evoking visions, has long since been discovered and systematically employed. The fact is strangely significant; for it seems to prove that, always and everywhere, human beings have felt the radical inadequacy of their personal existence, the misery of being their insulated selves and not something else, something wider, something in Wordsworthian phrase, "far more deeply interfused." ... What matters is the awareness, if only for an hour or two, if only for a few minutes, of being someone or, more often, something other than the insulated self. "I

live, yet not I, but wine or opium or peyote or hashish liveth in me." To go beyond the limits of the insulated ego is such a liberation that, even when self-transcendence is through nausea into frenzy, through cramps into hallucinations and coma, the drug-induced experience has been regarded by primitives and even by the highly civilized as intrinsically divine.

In modern times beer and other toxic short cuts to self-transcendence are no longer officially worshipped as gods. Theory has undergone a change, but not practice; for in practice millions upon millions of civilized men and women continue to pay their devotions, not to the liberating and transfiguring Spirit, but to alcohol, to hashish, to opium and its derivatives, to the barbituates, and the other synthetic additions to the age-old catalogue of poisons capable of causing self-transcendence. In every case, of course, what seems a god is actually a devil, what seems a liberation is in fact an enslavement. The self-transcendence is invariably downward into the less than human, the lower than personal.

Like intoxication, elementary sexuality, indulged in for its own sake and divorced from love, was once a god, worshipped not only as the principle of fecundity, but as a manifestation of the radical Otherness immanent in every human being. In theory, elementary sexuality has long since ceased to be a god. But in practice it can still boast of a countless host of sectaries.

There is an elementary sexuality which is innocent, and there is an elementary sexuality which is morally and aesthetically squalid. D.H. Lawrence has written very beautifully of the first; Jean Genet, with horrifying power and in copious detail, of the second. The sexuality of Eden and the sexuality of the sewer—both of them have power to carry the individual beyond the limits of his or her insulated self. But the second and (one would sadly guess) the commoner variety takes those who indulge in it to a lower level of subhumanity, evokes the consciousness, and leaves the memory, of a completer alienation, than does the first. Hence, for all those who feel the urge to escape from their imprisoning identity, the perennial attraction of debauchery and of such strange equivalents of debauchery.

In most civilized communities public opinion condemns debauchery and drug addiction as being ethically wrong.... But when we pass from drug-taking and elementary sexuality to the third main avenue of downward self-

transcendence, we find, on the part of moralists and legislators, a very different and much more indulgent attitude. This seems all the more surprising since crowd-delirium, as we may call it, is more immediately dangerous to social order, more dramatically a menace to that thin crust of decency, reasonableness and mutual tolerance which constitutes a civilization, than either drink or debauchery.... When left to itself, a society generally manages to come to terms with its favorite poison. The drug is a parasite on the body politic, but a parasite which its host (to speak metaphorically) has strength and sense enough to keep under control. And the same applies to sexuality. No society which based its sexual practices upon the theories of the Marquis de Sade could possibly survive; and in fact no society has ever come near to doing such a thing.... Against excessive sexuality, as against excessive drug-taking, societies seem to be able to protect themselves with some degree of success. Their defense against crowd-delirium and its often disastrous consequences is, in all too many cases, far less adequate. The professional moralists who inveigh against drunkenness are strangely silent about the equally disgusting vice of herd-intoxication—of downward self-transcendence into subhumanity by the process of getting together in a mob.

"Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." In the midst of two or three hundred, the divine presence becomes more problematical. And when the numbers run into the thousands, or tens of thousands, the likelihood of God being there, in the consciousness of each individual, declines almost to the vanishing point. For such is the nature of an excited crowd (and every crowd is automatically self-exciting) that, where two or three thousand are gathered together, there is an absence not merely of deity, but even of common humanity. The fact of being one of a multitude delivers a man from his consciousness of being an insulated self and carries him down into a less than personal realm, where there are no responsibilities, no right or wrong, no need for thought or judgment or discrimination—only a strong vague sense of togetherness, only a shared excitement, a collective alienation. And the alienation is at once more prolonged and less exhausting than that induced by debauchery; the morning after less depressing than that which follows self-poisoning by alcohol or morphine. Moreover, the crowd-delirium can be indulged in, not merely without a bad conscience, but actually, in many cases, with a positive glow of conscious virtue. For, so far from condemning the practice of downward self-transcendence through herd-intoxication, the leaders of church and state have actively encouraged the practice whenever it could be used for the furtherance of their own ends. Individually and in the co-ordinated and purposive groups which constitute a healthy society, men and women display a certain capacity for rational thought and free choice in the light of ethical principles. Herded into mobs, the same men and women behave as

though they possessed neither reason nor free will. Crowd-intoxication reduces them to a condition of infra-personal and anti-social irresponsibility. Drugged by the mysterious poison which every excited herd secretes, they fall into a state of heightened suggestibility, resembling that which follows an injection of sodium amytal or the induction, by whatever means, of a light hypnotic trance. While in this state they will believe any nonsense that may be bawled at them, will act upon any command or exhortation, however senseless, mad or criminal. To men and women under the influence of herd-poison, "whatever I say three times is true"—and whatever I say three hundred times is Revelation, is the directly inspired Word of God. That is why men in authority—the priests and the rulers of peoples—have never unequivocally proclaimed the immorality of this form of downward self-transcendence. True, crowd-delirium evoked by members of the opposition and in the name of heretical principles has everywhere been denounced by those in power. But crowd-delirium aroused by government agents, crowd-delirium in the name of orthodoxy, is an entirely different matter. In all cases where it can be made to serve the interests of the men controlling church and state, downward self-transcendence by means of herd-intoxication is treated as something legitimate, and even highly desirable. Pilgrimages and political rallies, corybantic revivals and patriotic parades—these things are ethically right so long as they are *our* pilgrimages, *our* rallies, *our* revivals and *our* parades. The fact that most of those who take part in these affairs are temporarily dehumanized by herd-poison is of no account in comparison with the fact that their dehumanization may be used to consolidate the religious and political powers that be.

The final symptom of herd-intoxication is a maniacal violence. Instances of crowd-delirium culminating in gratuitous destructiveness, in ferocious self-mutilation, in fratricidal savagery without purpose and against the elementary interests of all concerned, are to be met with on almost every page of the anthropologists' textbooks and—a little less frequently, but still with dismal regularity—in the histories of even the most highly civilized peoples. Except when they wish to liquidate an unpopular minority the official representatives of state and church are chary of evoking a frenzy which they cannot be sure of controlling. No such scruples restrain the revolutionary leader, who hates the *status quo* and has only one wish—to create a chaos on which, when he comes to power, he may impose a new kind of order. When the revolutionary exploits men's urge to downward self-transcendence, he exploits it to the frantic and demoniac limit. To men and women sick of being their insulated

selves and weary of the responsibilities which go with membership in a purposive human group, he offers exciting opportunities for "getting away from it all" in parades and demonstrations and public meetings....

In the course of the last forty years the techniques for exploiting man's urge toward this most dangerous form of downward self-transcendence have reached a pitch of perfection unmatched in all of history. To begin with, there are more people to the square mile than ever before, and the means of transporting vast herds of them from considerable distances, and of concentrating them in a single building or arena, are much more efficient than in the past. Meanwhile, new and previously undreamed-of devices for exciting mobs have been invented. There is the radio, which has enormously extended the range of the demagogue's raucous yelling. There is the loudspeaker, amplifying and indefinitely reduplicating the heady music of class-hatred and militant nationalism. There is the camera (of which it was once naively said that "it cannot lie") and its off-spring, the movies and television; these three have made the objectification of tendentious phantasy absurdly easy. And finally there is that greatest of our social inventions, free, compulsory education. Everyone now knows how to read and everyone consequently is at the mercy of the propagandists, governmental or commercial, who own the pulp factories, the linotype machines and the rotary presses. Assemble a mob of men and women previously conditioned by a daily reading of newspapers; treat them to amplified band music, bright lights, and the oratory of a demagogue who (as demagogues always are) is simultaneously the exploiter and the victim of herd-intoxication, and in next to no time you can reduce them to a state of almost mindless subhumanity. Never before have so few been in a position to make fools, maniacs or criminals of so many.

Drugs, elementary sexuality and herd-intoxication—these are the three most popular avenues of downward self-transcendence. There are many others, not so well trodden as these great descending highways, but leading no less surely to the same infra-personal goal. Consider, for example, the way of rhythmic movement. In primitive religions prolonged rhythmic movement is very commonly resorted to for the purpose of inducing a state of infra-personal and sub-human ecstasy.

Intimately associated with the ecstasy-producing rite of rhythmic movement is the ecstasy-producing rite of rhythmic sound. Music is as vast as human nature and has something to say to men and women on every level of their being, from the self-regarding sentimental to the abstractly intellectual, from the merely visceral to the spiritual. In one of its innumerable forms music is a power-

ful drug, partly stimulant and partly narcotic, but wholly alterative. No man, however highly civilized, can listen for very long to African drumming, or Indian chanting, or Welsh hymn-singing, and retain intact his critical and self-conscious personality. It would be interesting to take a group of the most eminent philosophers from the best universities, shut them up in a hot room with Moroccan dervishes or Haitian voodooists, and measure, with a stop watch, the strength of their psychological resistance to the effects of rhythmic sound. Would the Logical Positivists be able to hold out longer than the Subjective Idealists? Would the Marxists prove tougher than the Thomists or the Vedantists? What a fascinating, what a fruitful field for experiment! Meanwhile, all we can safely predict is that, if exposed long enough to the tom-toms and the singing, every one of our philosophers would end by capering and howling with the savages.

This raises a very important and difficult question. To what extent, and in what circumstances, is it possible for a man to make use of the descending road as a way to spiritual self-transcendence? At first sight it would seem obvious that the way down is not and can never be the way up. But in the realm of existence matters are not quite so simple as they are in our beautiful tidy world of words. In actual life a downward movement may sometimes be made the beginning of an ascent. When the shell of the ego has been cracked and there begins to be a consciousness of the subliminal and physiological otherness underlying personality, it sometimes happens that we catch a glimpse, fleeting but apocalyptic, of that other Otherness, which is the Ground of all being. So long as we are confined within our insulated selfhood, we remain unaware of the various not-selves with which we are associated—the organic not-self, the subconscious not-self, the collective not-self of the psychic medium in which all our thinking and feeling have their existence, and the immanent and transcendent not-self of the Spirit. Any escape, even by a descending road, out of insulated selfhood makes possible at least a momentary awareness of the not-self on every level, including the highest. William James, in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, gives instances of "anaesthetic revelations," following the inhalation of laughing gas. Similar theophanies are sometimes experienced by alcoholics, and there are probably moments in the course of intoxication by almost any drug, when awareness of a not-self superior to the disintegrating ego becomes briefly possible.

But these occasional flashes of revelation are bought at an enormous price. For the drugtaker, the moment of spiritual awareness (if it comes at all) gives place very soon to subhuman stupor, frenzy or hallucination, followed by dismal hangovers and, in the long run, by a permanent

and fatal impairment of bodily health and mental power. Very occasionally a single "anaesthetic revelation" may act, like any other theophany, to incite its recipient to an effort of self-transformation and upward self-transcendence. But the fact that such a thing sometimes happens can never justify the employment of chemical methods of self-transcendence. This is a descending road and most of those who take it will come to a state of degradation, where periods of subhuman ecstasy alternate with periods of conscious selfhood so wretched that any escape, even if it be into the slow suicide of drug addiction, will seem preferable to being a person.

What is true of drugs is true, *mutatis mutandis*, of elementary sexuality. The road runs downhill; but on the way there may occasionally be theophanies. The Dark Gods, as Lawrence called them, may change their sign and become bright. In India there is a Tantric yoga, based upon an elaborate psychophysiological technique, whose purpose is to transform the downward self-transcendence of elementary sexuality into an upward self-transcendence. In the West the nearest equivalent to these Tantric practices was the sexual discipline devised by John Humphrey Noyes and practiced by the members of the Oneida Community. At Oneida elementary sexuality was not only successfully civilized; it was made compatible with, and subordinate to, a form of Protestant Christianity, sincerely preached and earnestly acted upon.

Herd-intoxication disintegrates the ego more thoroughly than does elementary sexuality. Its frenzies, its follies, its heightened suggestibility can be matched only in the intoxication induced by such drugs as alcohol, hashish and heroin. But even to the member of an excited mob there may come (at some relatively early stage of his downward self-transcendence) a genuine revelation of the Otherness that is above selfhood. This is one of the reasons why some good may sometimes come out of even the most corybantic of revival meetings. Some good as well as very great evil may also result from the fact that men and women in a crowd tend to become more than ordinarily suggestible. While in this state they are subjected to exhortations which have the force, when they come once again to their senses, of posthypnotic commands. Like the demagogue, the revivalist and the ritualist disintegrate the ego of their hearers by herding them together and dosing them with plenty of vain repetition and rhythmic sound. Then, unlike the demagogue, they give suggestions some of which may be genuinely Christian. These, if they "take," result in a reintegration of broken-down personalities on a somewhat higher level. There can also be reintegrations of personality under the influence of the posthypnotic commands issued by a rabble-rousing politician. But these commands are all incitements to hatred on the one hand and to blind obedience and compensatory illusion on the other. Initiated by a massive dose of herd-

poison, confirmed and directed by the rhetoric of a maniac who is at the same time a Machiavellian exploiter of other men's weakness, political "conversion" results in the creation of a new personality worse than the old and much more dangerous because wholeheartedly devoted to a party whose first aim is the liquidation of its opponents.

I have distinguished between demagogues and religionists, on the ground that the latter may sometimes do some good, whereas the former can scarcely, in the very nature of things, do anything but harm. But it must not be imagined that the religious exploiters of herd-intoxication are wholly guiltless. On the contrary, they have been responsible in the past for mischiefs almost as enormous as those brought upon their victims (along with the victims of those victims) by the revolutionary demagogues of our own time. In the course of the last six or seven generations, the power of religious organizations to do evil has, throughout the Western world, considerably declined. Primarily this is due to the astounding progress of applied science and the consequent demand by the masses for compensatory illusions that have an air of being positivistic rather than metaphysical. The demagogues offer such pseudo-positivistic illusions and the churches do not. As the attractiveness of the churches declines, so also does their influence, so do their wealth, their political power and, along with these, their capacity for doing evil on a large scale. Circumstances have now delivered the churchmen from certain of the temptations, to which, in earlier centuries, their predecessors almost invariably succumbed. They would be well advised voluntarily to deliver themselves from such temptations as still remain. Conspicuous among these is the temptation to acquire power by pandering to men's insatiable craving for downward self-transcendence. Deliberately to induce herd-intoxication—even if it is done in the name of religion, even if it is all supposedly "for the good" of the intoxicated—cannot be morally justified.

On the subject of horizontal self-transcendence very little need be said—not because the phenomenon is unimportant (far from it), but because it is too obvious to require analysis and of occurrence too frequent to be readily classifiable.

In order to escape from the horrors of insulated self-hood most men and women choose, most of the time, to go neither up nor down, but sideways. They identify themselves with some cause wider than their own immediate interests, but not degradingly lower and, if higher, then only within the range of current social values. This horizontal, or nearly horizontal, self-transcendence may be into something as trivial as a hobby, or as precious

as married love. It can be brought about through self-identification with any human activity, from running a business to research in nuclear physics, from composing music to collecting stamps, from campaigning for political office to educating children or studying the mating habits of birds.

Horizontal self-transcendence is of the utmost importance. Without it, there would be no art, no science, no law, no philosophy, indeed no civilization. And there would also be no war, no *odium theologium* or *ideologicum*, no systemic intolerance, no persecution. These great goods and these enormous evils are the fruits of man's capacity for total and continuous self-identification with an idea, a feeling, a cause. How can we have the good without the evil, a high civilization without saturation bombing or the extermination of religious and political heretics? The answer is that we cannot have it so long as our self-transcendence remains merely horizontal. When we identify ourselves with an idea or a cause we are in fact worshiping something homemade, something partial and parochial, something that, however noble, is yet all too human. "Patriotism," as a great patriot concluded on the eve of her execution by her country's enemies, "is not enough." Neither is socialism, nor communism, nor capitalism; neither is art, nor science, nor public order, nor any given religion or church. All these are indispensable, but none of them is enough.

Civilization demands from the individual devoted self-identification with the highest of human causes. But if this self-identification with what is human is not accompanied by a conscious and consistent effort to achieve upward self-transcendence into the universal life of the Spirit, the goods achieved will always be mingled with counterbalancing evils. "We make," wrote Pascal, "an idol of truth itself; for truth without charity is not God, but His image and idol, which we must neither love or worship." And it is not merely wrong to worship an idol; it is also exceedingly inexpedient. The worship of truth apart from charity—self-identification with science unaccompanied by self-identification with the Ground of all being—results in the kind of situation which now confronts us.

Every idol, however exalted, turns out, in the long run, to be a Moloch, hungry for human sacrifice. □

## REVIEWS

### METAPHYSICS

Vine Deloria, Jr. *The Metaphysics of Modern Existence*. Harper & Row, 1979. \$8.95

The problem the book review establishment has with Vine Deloria, Jr., is the subject of his writings: he cannot be pigeonholed as merely a "militant" Indian writer. When the popular interpretation of his writings had him in that niche, *Time* ranked him one of the twelve great religious thinkers in the world. Then Deloria produced a book to prove that he deserved that distinction and the book review establishment systematically ignored it.

It was not an unexpected development. In the first sentence of *The Metaphysics of Modern Existence* Vine Deloria Jr. observes that it will be deemed "strange" by readers of his previous works that his earlier, *We Talk, You Listen*, or *God is Red*, were a "prelude to a book on metaphysics." That does not mean that there is an evolutionary relationship in his writings—a maturity of thinking. He might have written this book as his first. It happened that his judgment of the priorities moving the Indian viewpoint while the iron was hot (and the pressure of making a living) ordered it this way. Nevertheless, it is a natural sequence.

For those who think of Deloria as an Indian advocate good at providing guilty whites with welcome jabs at the insanity of our culture and the policies of institutions ranging from the Department of Interior to the Ford Foundation, this book will never make sense. Indians who believed he was a red John the Baptist preaching with

3 x 5 notecards about a return to tribal orthodoxy as an alternative to Western culture will also be disappointed.

Deloria struggles in this book for a resolution to an issue implied in his previous works: how to alert the West—red, white, black and all the rest and especially the educated ones—that the popular answers to the meaninglessness of life are moving us toward a neo-feudalism of corporate state-church theism more exacting in orthodoxy than the Puritan Church and less tolerant of aberrant behavior than the most dictatorial states, East and West. While *Metaphysics* is a more optimistic book than most of his readers would expect, Deloria demonstrates that the alternative to a dramatic restructuring of theological and scientific thought is out-and-out barbarism: a consequence of a world where "making sense out of the world [is] a matter of intellectual supermarket shopping and...the slickness and glitter of slogans [are] sufficient."

Most of us are repelled at the word, "metaphysics." "Metaphysics" is a leper in the modern vocabulary. Metaphysics for Deloria is a prophetic call to re-examine the structure of our existence. Our generation has perverted its vocation into a desperate search to escape from reality. Why did Deloria bother? Why did he use the tools of metaphysics as prophesy to get our attention?

There is no way short of reading the book to answer these questions. There are hints that ease the reading and understanding of the book. A good place to begin, for example, is in Chapter XII, "Our Transforming

Institutions," where Deloria in one paragraph describes the nature of the modern Caesar and demonstrates the utter folly of believing the "reality" that having a born-again Christian or wayward Catholic or right-wing cowboy in the lead chariot makes one iota of difference in Caesar's behavior.

Qualifications for federal employment reflect a view of the world that is less flexible than the criteria for becoming a member of a church. Surveillance over the personal beliefs and behaviors of an individual, and attempts to discern the person's probable understanding of reality and its social components, are efforts to ensure that a particular view of the world be perpetuated as a government function. The government in this sense resembles an organism that seeks to ensure its health by hunting down and eliminating or neutralizing possible cancers within itself. It no longer behaves as an impartial objective structure designed to express the wishes of the constituency but takes on the ominous task of determining personal values and reshaping beliefs. (pp. 127-128).

Following a theme familiar to readers of his previous books, Deloria scores the scientific establishment for having "taken exactly the opposite tack from theology. Rather than being frightened by the plenitude of modern knowledge, scientists seem to fear the knowledge of ancient peoples." For his part, Deloria is certain that astrology makes more logical sense than the theory of evolution and has fewer gaping holes in its explanations. It makes sense. Deloria is not captive to the eighteenth century "scientific revolution" that "substituted a rather pale 'nature' for God but preserved the question of origins..."

The result of the eighteenth century is a social system where the ruling elites "assume that with proper motivation groups of people can be inspired to 'better their lot.' When this ideology combines with the already prevalent transfer of wealth — creating opportunities to government licensing and largess, we have the potential for a totalitarianism transcending anything experienced by ancient peoples."

Deloria finds scant hope—yet he holds out some—that theologians and scientists, caught as they are in their culture, their professional dogma, and the rat race

of chasing grants, will ever again be interested in reviving metaphysics, i.e., figuring out what it means to exist. To be.

This is Deloria's attempt to take us as far as he has come. The book is a question: is anyone taking the metaphysical issue seriously? That is, who we are, where we are going, revealed by who we are, where we have been? The book is a review of current literature, an attempt "to place the collective thoughts of these people into one consistent exposition of an alternative way of conceiving reality." Deloria has read most of them, de Chardin, Lovejoy, Tillich. Yet he concentrates on the "emerging dissident literature." Jean Francois Revel (*Without Marx or Jesus*) rates well; so does Immanuel Velikovsky, the scientist villified for his theory of catastrophism. There are several others.

Deloria's *Metaphysics* contributes to the small body of literature indicting the bankruptcy of our current philosophy, theology and, if not especially, science. Moreover, he observes that those with guaranteed salaries, tenure and other opportunities might be doing something more useful than to endorse or rescue wandering youth and the rest of us into the latest fad thought or yoga exercise of the week or health food.

If this volume is to be faulted, there are few that Deloria himself did not recognize in the Introduction. Some work on syntax (the editor's error). A student of the philosophy of history ought to note that Deloria missed opportunities by not considering the work of Croce, Dilthey, Berdyaev, Lowith, among others—writings Deloria knows.

Maybe Deloria has not read Karl Barth as a metaphysician: take the Christology from Barth and we're still four lengths ahead of the game of metaphysics today. My hunch is that Barth knew what he was doing. He was a great metaphysician. Vine: read Barth. Editor: reconsider *Metaphysics*, starting with Barth's.

This is a good book. □

Narke



Journal of the Committee of Southern Churchmen

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