

# FREEDOM AND AUTHORITY

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CLS—ISPCK—LPH

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## FOREWORD

I am grateful to the three theological Seminaries of the Lutheran Church in America. They gave me a sounding board for some of these ideas, in the form of an invitation to give the Hein Lectures for 1968.

I am even more grateful to students, to Blacks, and to women, who are in the forefront of the movement for human liberation. They gave me some of the ideas and much of the inspiration.

My debt of gratitude to St. Gregory of Nyssa is far greater. It was from him that I first learned what freedom means. Nicolas Berdyaev and Vladimir Lossky led me to this seminal thinker of the 4th century who is so astoundingly contemporary.

This does not mean that I am not grateful to all my western teachers. I learned certain ways of thinking from them, though not so well, I am sure. They also goaded me to discover the Eastern tradition by their very ignorance of it—an ignorance which, when coupled with a certain parochial smugness, could not but elicit a strong reaction in a sensitive soul.

But that is not the attitude in which I submit these modest pages to my readers in both East and West. It is an invitation to dialogue, to experiment, and perhaps to a true liberation of man in both East and West.

*Kottayam, India,*

—PAUL VERGHESE



## PREFACE TO THE INDIAN EDITION

This edition adds some material, of special relevance to the Indian situation, to the book published in the U.S.A. with the title: *The Freedom of Man*. Actually most of the original material had come out of lectures to western audiences, and I had not sought to analyse the situation in India.

Three chapters have been specially added—i.e. Ch. II on *What about the East?*, Ch. VII on *Gregory of Nyssa and the Sages of India*, and Chapter X, *An Indian Postscript*. There have been other shorter additions.

We Indians have practically lost the art of systematic thinking. We read a lot; we can quote freely; but to do some of our own reflection seems difficult in all the sciences and also in theology. Perhaps, however, it is a good thing that we do not spin out a theology that goes out of fashion every few years. We need some concrete person or institution, rather than a system of thought, about which we can form a judgment. Even the Marxists in India have found that Indians are not attracted to Marxism as a way of scientific thinking. Only when the Party becomes committed to certain proximate and manageable goals does it attract people.

And yet there is an ideology, a coherent set of ideas, behind all the three Marxist parties in India. It may not be evident to or understood by all the members of the parties, but major decisions are often taken on the basis of these ideologies.

The Christian Church in India needs more than statements on national development or other socio-economic issues. It needs a community with a commitment to certain proximate and manageable goals, and an ideology undergirding, controlling and correcting its programme of life and action.

The proposal of this book is that something like that should soon be attempted, despite the apparent failure of the Christian Ashrams. The ideology itself, created with a measure of freedom, with understanding of the human condition and situation,

and at the same time fully making use of the catholic Christian tradition and the spiritual riches of traditional Indian thought and experience, will have to come out of the life of this community.

This book is only an invitation, not a blueprint, for building such a community.

—PAUL VERGHESE

## INTRODUCTION

Ancient patterns of authority are fast breaking down. Anyone can see that. The temptation is to bemoan this, rather than to understand.

Those of us who belong to the middle generation—the balding generation—are perhaps the most threatened. We would do anything to shore up 'Law and Order'. As if that were more important than Man!

Something is happening to us as human beings. The crumbling structures are both a threat and a call to fresh endeavour.

Children no longer obey parents. Wives do not submit to husbands. Employees are disobedient to their managers and employers. Are not the three basic relations of which the New Testament speaks all going to pieces?

And now laymen do not obey priests or bishops, students do not obey their teachers, even soldiers are beginning to defy the commands of their officers.

Command is today the least effective way to make the other do one's will. One could try hidden persuasion or open bribery with much more effect, even in the home. You could coax with promises of reward or appeal to the other's sense of achievement—but command by authority, that is dying out everywhere. Arbitrary command provokes but rebellion in most cases.

Good or bad? At least not so bad as we may think, I venture to suggest.

The same thing is happening in the field of faith or dogma. Once we used to believe things because the Church told us so, or the Bible told us so. Now we want to know why one should or should not believe anything. We want to sift the evidence for ourselves and make up our own minds.

Judging by the results, there seems to be legitimate cause for some alarm. God dies for many. Ethical systems collapse almost completely. Nothing can be believed except what is the result of scientific experiment. Man becomes desiccated

and one-dimensional. Acquisitiveness and aggression reign supreme. If religion or the older generation had a little more authority, we could set some of these matters straight, some of us think.

This crisis of authority touches both the Christian Church and human society at their very foundations. The Church's dogmas and canons have long been overdue for revision. But mankind itself is groaning in deep pain, waiting for a new world to be born. A fresh understanding of authority and freedom may hasten the process of that birth. It is in that hope that this slender volume is presented.

The argument in this book is that human growth is a process of which the central element is the dialectic between authority and freedom. *All historical human existence is under some pressure to interiorize what is good in certain patterns of authority, to discard the authority structure with all its freedom-hampering elements and to move on to a greater degree of freedom by developing new structures of authority which foster human freedom.*

That judgment is based on certain presuppositions. First that man is created good, and meant to be the sum of all good. Second that good that is compelled or forced is not really good, and therefore that freedom belongs to the very heart of the good. Third, that such a combination of freedom and the good is ultimately what we call love, but love itself needs certain structures within which to develop, which are the structures of a freedom-fostering community that embraces all mankind.

These are essentially Christian assumptions. But they can be tested in the life of man anywhere. This book is therefore not just meant for Christians. We hope it has a wider interest.

The first chapter is a sample survey of *some* contemporary patterns in the western quest for an indubitable authority. All of these, the book submits, are bound to fail, because man is not expected to have an indubitable authority in historical existence. Even Christ is not such an authority who would tell you what to do or what to believe. The freedom of man is much too precious for that.

The Christian Church has been much too authoritative and has too often failed to foster freedom. This accounts partly for the great contemporary reaction against authoritarian forms of Christianity and the rise of new forms of quasi-religions which



seek to embody some of the values of Christianity without accepting their foundation.

In the third chapter, the attempt is made to delineate certain types of authority and freedom. Confusing these various types in ordinary discussion can lead only to various impasses in thinking. This chapter is quite lamentably sketchy, and open to severe criticism by those who have come to regard Augustine as nearly infallible. The criticisms may not be justified. In that case, western scholars could show us why they are not just. But if there is some truth in them, then western theology would do well to take a second look at Augustinian thought.

In the fourth chapter, we highlight the positive aspects of pragmatism, namely the inseparability of knowledge and action, and deplore the intellectual pseudomorphosis of Christianity. Here we refer to the Cappadocian theological concept that worship and ethics constitute the true setting for the knowledge of God rather than the conceptual grasp.

In the fifth chapter we present a summary of one Christian's attempt to grasp the relationship between God, the World and Man. St. Gregory of Nyssa, despite his eclipse in western intellectual life, seems still capable of correcting many of Augustine's deviations. He has a fresh and amazingly contemporary approach to the whole thing, except perhaps for the fact that human history plays but a limited part in his world-view. But at least science and technology get better justice at his hands than at Augustine's. His conceptions of a dynamic universe and of the freedom of man still sound quite exciting. For him authority can be an impediment to human growth. He has grasped much more deeply than anyone else the Pauline insight that good enforced is not good at all.

The sixth chapter is an excursus on the problem of evil.

We hope our reader is not turned away by the time we come to the end of the seventh chapter which attempts to relate Nyssa to Sankara and Ramanuja. Only in the eighth do we attempt to come back to the question of freedom in a contemporary context. There a sketchy prognostication of the last third of the 20th century is attempted in terms of the liberation of man. This chapter became out of date as soon as it was written. The pace of liberation has been too fast for any writing to capture it in any up-to-date manner.

The ninth chapter tries the impossible—to light a lamp to show the way forward. But people have to walk on this way for some distance before they can even be sure that this is the way forward.

The tenth is again an Indian postscript.

The conclusion is simple. The way forward lies in hopeful, faithful, loving experiment. What is proposed here is merely the terms of the experiment, the equipment required for it, the question to be posed, the controls necessary. The book is not the answer. It is only an invitation to experiment.

Perhaps it is less—just an invitation to dialogue about an experiment. May be the experiment needs to be set up differently. The hope is that better minds than mine will apply themselves to the problems of freedom and authority—both within the Church and in humanity as a whole—as well as of the negative deviations and false reactions in Christian thought.

The East needs the West just as much as the West needs the East. The ecumenical movement has not yet broken through the middle wall. The intention of this book is not polemic, but provocation, an ancient pedagogic trick taken from the bag of Jesus.

But only one who loves can be permitted to provoke, even for the sake of communication. If that love is recognized, much in this book can be forgiven, and some of it illuminate.

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## AUTHORITY IN CRISIS

## The New Quests

*Nowadays the great traditions of the churches have often become nothing more than a futile attempt to restore their irrevocable past, side by side with a broad-minded adoption of all kinds of modern thought.<sup>1</sup>*

Karl Jaspers

That was said in 1930, as a critique of the then prevailing liberalism in Christian thought. Despite the interregnum of Barth and Br nner, that situation is basically still there.

The Church is essentially uncertain about herself. Neither is she always taken seriously even by her own faithful. Official Christianity sounds ludicrously unintelligent and seems utterly unappealing to the moral conscience of mankind, even to many who have not yet given up their Christian faith.

Attempts are made here and there in the western tradition, both in the churches and outside, to rehabilitate Christianity in a modern guise, or at least to find a significant alternative for it.

Here we shall deal with only five sets of these attempts which can be indicated by slogan words like:

- (a) Secularisation and Pragmatism
- (b) The Ontological Disillusionment and the Existential Stance
- (c) God's Death and the Hermeneutical Quest
- (d) The Future of Belief and Belief in Future
- (e) The Liberal Humanist and the New Marxist.

## A. SECULARIZATION AND PRAGMATISM

No doubt secularization is a slogan word; yet it evokes many rich and varied thoughts. Once it meant the liberation of institutions and thought from ecclesiastical control. Today

<sup>1</sup> *Man in the Modern Age*, Doubleday, 1957, p. 152.

it means much more—among other things an emphasis on the autonomy of man, a reaction against ontological patterns of thought, and a refusal to deal with any other world than the one which we now inhabit.

A very penetrating, though in some respects unsatisfactory, analysis of this movement in western thought can be found in Carl-Friedrich Von Weizsäcker's Gifford lectures of 1959-60, published under the title: *The Relevance of Science*.<sup>2</sup>

Weizsäcker's book offers a brilliant historical analysis of the cosmogonical and cosmological speculations of man in myth and philosophy—though his range is quite limited when it comes to non-western or patristic thought. He soon comes to Descartes, Newton, Leibniz and Kant as the quartet that initiated our own 'age of reason'. The first three at least pretended that they 'needed' God to explain the existence of the universe. Kant too 'needed' God—but not for his universe known by 'pure reason'. It was only to explain the moral law within, not for the stars above, that Kant needed his God. The universe known to science (through our senses) is ultimately not the creation of God, but rather something produced by 'the *a priori* forms of intuition and categories of the perceiving and knowing mind'<sup>3</sup> of man.

Here open secularization really begins, according to Von Weizsäcker. The argument from design for the existence of God was summarily dismissed by Kant. God is no longer a necessary appendage to the universe. Science is born, the umbilical cord which connected it with the Christian civilization having been cut by the sharp razor of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*.

But God is not quite dead yet. For there is still that gap between the 'physical' and the 'organic' sciences where He can hide. Life cannot be explained by the 'physico-chemical laws of nature'. Biology seems to deal with purposive existence—which it calls evolution—a directed process. Biology deals with the 'history' of nature, not merely with its physico-chemical description. There, in that purposive directedness, lies a slight but significant possibility to slip in God unawares. Bohr, Heisenberg and Pauli are unwilling yet to assert that life can

<sup>2</sup> London, 1964.

<sup>3</sup> C. F. von Weizsäcker, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

be explained by known physico-chemical laws. Von Weizsäcker nods agreement, but then continues to ask: but when the laws that explain life will be known, what else could they be but physico-chemical laws? No, that gap can hardly hold God.

What about astronomy? Aren't there some gaps there where poor God could make a last-ditch stand? As far as our little telescopes go (i.e. a mere one hundred million galaxies beyond our own) we find these spiral nebulae, these circular discs each containing some one hundred thousand million stars, most of them very ordinary ones like our own sun. But what lies beyond the one-hundred million galaxies? Nobody knows at the moment. Our glasses are not powerful enough to find out. Can't we put God somewhere beyond the scope of our telescopes? We are all intelligent enough to know that that trick does not work either. Von Weizsäcker agrees with intelligent little you and me. The gaps of space cannot hold God.

What about time? Isn't that about the best 'place' for us to put God—beyond time—in that 'eternity'? Oh! blessed eternity—which no scientist can touch, since he is only concerned with the time-space universe! That looks like a fair ploy. 'God who inhabiteth eternity'—that sounds much better than 'God who dwelleth beyond space'.

Besides, Von Weizsäcker tells us that he knows the age of the universe.<sup>4</sup> Somebody knows how much time there has been or when time began! The answer is  $x(10)^9$  years<sup>5</sup>, or to put it in simple language—a few thousand million years. I don't believe it, but the experts tell me that fifteen thousand million years is about the age of the oldest star around. I don't know if some of the stars which were older died of old age or not.

The universe is finite (cosmic curvature of the Einstein hypothesis) and expanding at a measureable rate. So we can calculate when the big bang began which set the expansion going—exactly  $x(10)^9$  years ago—i.e. the same age as the oldest stars in the universe. So before that there was not time—only that thing which banged (what was it and where did that come from?). Von Weizsäcker does not think there is much to Fred Hoyle's continuous creation theory. It is simply an ingenious but conservative metaphysical hypothesis. It is empirically much

<sup>4</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 146.

<sup>5</sup>  $x$  can be anywhere from 10 to 30.

more respectable to believe that the universe began at a given time, or that time began a given number of thousands of millions of years ago.

Science now regards it right to say that the universe had a beginning in time or, as the Fathers said, that the beginning of the universe is the beginning of time, and time has not been infinite.

Is it not legitimate then to ask the questions: what was there before the universe began, and who caused the universe to be? Von Weizsäcker says that empirically both questions are meaningless because *unanswerable*. The scientist now becomes a dictator and tells us that we cannot put God in that gap beyond time. And we have reluctantly to agree that we cannot think of time beyond the beginning of time where we can put God.

So the 'God of the gaps' is finally driven out of his last ditch. He vanishes into thin air. The world is ripe for 'secularization'.

### *The Concept of Secularization*

Von Weizsäcker regards the contemporary world as 'largely the result of a secularization of Christianity'.<sup>6</sup> Science, to him, is the child of Christianity—an orphan child, he thinks. He cannot see how the notion of the 'laws of nature', so fundamental to science, could have arisen from the Platonic understanding of matter as formless chaos. Science's notion of the 'law of nature' could have arisen only from the Christian doctrine of creation. God made matter, and God imposed upon it certain laws which it unwaveringly obeys. It is in that belief that science was born.

But science is no longer based on the notions that God made matter and that God laid down certain laws which matter has to obey.

Before science came of-age, the Christian thought the world was finite, and that God was infinite. Later when God was dispensed with and secularization began, the world became infinite, almost absolute. In our time the world is again becoming finite, and secularization which has been settling down to be a form of dogma, is itself becoming open to re-examination. Absolutes are no longer affirmed. Everything is now relative,

<sup>6</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 126.



functional. Meaning can now be found only in terms of the use and operation of things, not in terms of their 'being' or 'substance'.

Secularization itself, according to Von Weizsäcker, is a largely ambivalent process. The dialectic within the medieval catholic synthesis held together the conservative and radical tendencies of Christianity in fruitful, living, mutual tension. Now that synthesis has broken apart. Secularization drove official Christianity into a conservative extreme, and the same process wrenched the non-Christian world away from the Church into a radicalism which no longer remembers that its values were drawn from Christianity.

But what is secularization? It is a secularized affirmation of what Von Weizsäcker first expresses in traditional Christian language:

The gods of nature have been vanquished by the God whom Christians call Our Father; therefore man, as God's son, has received power over nature. As he is son and not servant, he is free, and his freedom includes the freedom to act against the will of his Father, the God of love. He can now subject the world to himself, and secularism does precisely this.<sup>7</sup>

That is Gogarten's answer, developed by Von Weizsäcker. Apart from the fact that it is much too Monophysite and perhaps Unitarian in regarding God the Father, rather than Christ the God-Man, as the Victor over the gods of nature, the statement quoted above is full of logical and theological difficulties and inadequacies. The above is as far as Von Weizsäcker went in this first series of lectures. He is neither a theologian nor a philosopher by training. It is as a scientist interested in philosophy and theology that he has spoken. And we must respect his heroic effort to diagnose what is wrong with our age. But he himself would claim that his diagnosis is not final. I therefore suggest that, stimulated by him we should move on to a more accurate diagnosis of our time.

Von Weizsäcker started his series of lectures with a more provocative and perhaps more profound set of statements:

1. Faith in science plays the role of the dominating religion of our time.

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<sup>7</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 178.

2. The relevance of science for our time can, in this moment of history, only be evaluated in terms that express an ambiguity.<sup>8</sup>

A religion has to have, according to western sociologists, common faith, an organized Church, and a code of behaviour. Von Weizsäcker accepts this definition of a religion, which I know does not apply to the non-Christian religion I know best—namely Hinduism, which has none of these three.

Belief in science according to Weizsäcker is the faith of modern secularism. The association of scientists is its priesthood, and the ability to use technical and mechanical apparatus its code of ethics.

That certainly is an over-simplification. The rejection of the Christian knowledge of God and the Christian pattern of ethics, however, can in large part be explained by the fact that a new quasi-religion has been on the rise in the West for the last three hundred or so years, which is imperceptibly replacing classical western Christianity, which latter was itself a highly stylized and fundamentally altered form of the original faith of the Church.

The current crisis for the knowledge of God and for Christian conduct is the consequence and symptom of Christianity being challenged by a new religion. The crisis can be adequately faced only by a proper understanding of this new religion and by going back to the sources to recover the original genius of the Christian faith, for the new religion itself is a reaction from a distorted version of Christianity which has prevailed in the West ever since the 8th century.

### *The New Religion—American Pragmatism?*

The New Religion of the West, it seems to me, is quite inarticulate, and disorganized, without a clear dogma or body of belief. But then what is belief? We will let one of the high priests of the New Religion speak:

What...is belief? It is the demi-cadence which closes a musical phrase in the symphony of our intellectual life. We have seen that it has just three properties: First, it is something that we are aware of: Second, it appeases the irritation of doubt; and third, it involves the establishment in our nature of a rule of action,

<sup>8</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 12.

or say for short, *a habit*. As it appeares the irritation of doubt, which is the motive for thinking, thought relaxes, and comes to rest for a moment when belief is reached. But, since belief is a rule for action, the application of which involves further doubt and further thought, at the same time that it is a stopping-place, it is also a new starting-place for thought. That is why I have permitted myself to call it thought at rest, although thought is essentially an action. The *final* upshot of thinking is the exercise of volition, and of this thought no longer forms a part, but belief is only a stadium of mental action, an effect upon our nature due to thought, which will influence future thinking. The essence of belief is the establishment of a habit, and different beliefs are distinguished by the different modes of action to which they give rise.

That was Charles Sanders Peirce, writing in the *Popular Science Monthly* in 1878.<sup>9</sup> And Peirce, that eminent exponent of Pragmatism, is one of the clearest spokesmen for the new religion whose holy land is America. There are three prime elements in modern Pragmatism, as enumerated by Morton White :

- (a) *its hypotheticalism*—a statement can be tested for its truth value only if it can be translated unto a hypothetical form, i.e. an if-then form ;
- (b) *its operationalism*—no statement can be meaningful if in the hypothetical form of that statement, the 'if' clause does not refer to a human operation, something that an experimenter does ;
- (c) *its experimentalism*—a statement can be tested for its truth claim only if the 'then' clause specifies some result which can be observed or experienced.

This is basically the methodology of science. It was Peirce who clarified it and made it a general principle applicable to all truth-claims. Peirce was not concerned about 'truth' in its ontic or metaphysical sense. His interest was in 'meaning', that word being understood in a strictly operational sense.

What is reality for Peirce? That which is opposed to fiction or that which corresponds to a repeatable experiment producing the correct operational results every time.

<sup>9</sup> Vol. XII, Jan. 1878, pp. 286-302. Text in Morton White, *The Age of Analysis*, Mentor Edition, 1958, pp. 141-142.

In Peirce we see the close relation between faith, knowledge and action. Faith itself is inseparably linked to knowledge. Faith is the passing over from uncertainty to certainty, the relaxation of thought from its tension to know, the rest to which the intellect returns after its quest.

But the rest is possible because knowledge has already charted the right course of action. The tension occurred not merely because of curiosity, but because of the need to know which operational pattern was best. In other words faith itself is ethical—it is the restless quest to know what the right action is.

The pragmatic method has a double consequence :

1. a trend away from deductive logic, from first principle and categories of reasoning, from necessities and axia, towards things, their operational relations, their function, their end, their utility, consequences, and value ;
2. a trend towards understanding truth itself not in terms of that which *is* (ontic or ontological) but in terms of that which helps us to get into more satisfactory relation with other parts of our experience.

In other words, it is a wrong diagnosis of our time to see the new religion of the world as 'scientism,' 'rationalism,' 'materialism' and so on. Its name, if name it we must, is, 'anti-rationalism,' or 'pragmatism'.

Let us not erect the bogey-man of scientism, as many theologians are prone to do, and continue our worship of the scientific method by abjuring the demon of 'scientism'. The 'Scientific Method' is but an aspect of our basic pragmatic orientation which consists in two propositions:

1. *Meaningful knowledge is that which makes a difference in the way I deal with reality.*
2. *Meaningful conduct is that which affords me the satisfaction of a more rewarding relationship to the empirical reality which I experience.*

These definitions of the 'true' and the 'good' are best exemplified in William James and John Dewey, again two great pragma-

tic pundits that America has produced. John Dewey put forward his main propositions thus :

Judgements about values are judgements about the conditions and the results of experienced objects, judgements about that which should regulate the formations of our desires, affections and enjoyments.

Ethics is then the art of judging those things as of value which have a relation in existence to what we like and enjoy. The choice is never between good and bad, but always between two goods. And their comparative merits can be ascertained only by knowing their respective relations to other goods.

This model of knowing and doing, i.e. the pragmatic, functional, approach to truth and ethics, seems to me the heart of what I call, in no derogatory sense, the American philosophy of life. This in fact is the dynamic 'new religion' spreading throughout the world. It is not rationalistic or materialistic. On the contrary, it is anti-intellectual, pragmatic, existential, this-worldly. This new religion is the true genius of the process we call secularization. It is essential that we approach this new religion without prejudice, to see what in it belongs to our heritage as Christians, and where the distortions are.

#### B. THE NEW RELIGION THAT FAILED— THE ONTOLOGICAL DISILLUSIONMENT AND THE EXISTENTIAL STANCE

The new religion of our time, American Pragmatism, continues to be very much on the upswing. It may come down with the collapse of the present economic pattern in the world in which the West occupies a dominant position and is able continuously to produce and to appropriate more and more of the world's goods. The economic system of western dominance is the matrix of Pragmatism as a successful universal philosophy of success.

The understanding of the crisis of our time for knowledge

and action may be helped by some knowledge of the other movement in western spirituality, vaguely and incorrectly known as 'Existentialism'. Here too, the movement was anti-intellectual, anti-systematic, subjective. It did not start out that way. Phenomenology and the search for a fundamental ontology, even when centred in the subjective, individual consciousness, were neither anti-intellectual nor unsystematic. Kierkegaard was anti-intellectual and anti-system. But he was only one of the parents of modern existentialism. The mother was the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger. And Husserl's quest was for intellectual certainty through careful mapping out of the whole region of consciousness. Heidegger's concern is primarily with 'being'—not with 'existence'. He analysed existential '*dasein*' and propositional truth only as a step on the way to the analysis of 'being' and 'truth' as such. In other words both Husserl and Heidegger are primarily ontological in their orientation. Heidegger questions the assumption of 'current' philosophy that truth is simply an adequate correlation between fact and proposition. For Heidegger, truth is a quality of being. And being is truth that transcends. His central question 'Why are there any beings rather than no being at all?' remains a challenge flung in the face of pragmatists and functionalists, which they continue to ignore.

For Heidegger truth is an openness, an 'overtness', an '*erschlossenheit*' of beings towards the being of man. This *discovery* or *un-veiling* (revelation) which is truth comes as a result of thought. Truth is a language event. Heidegger is thus not anti-intellectual. 'Existence' for him does not mean what it means to Jaspers and many others—the ethical endeavour of man, in the context of his world, on behalf of his self. It means rather the position in which man stands outside the realm of concealment and asks the question: 'Why is there any being rather than no being?'. That is where human civilization began—in that stance and in that question. In other words, 'truth' is neither in a correct proposition nor in the correspondence between fact and statement, but rather in that overt or open or unconcealed relationship of man to being, where he stands outside the realm of concealment, and allows 'being' the freedom of being itself, i.e. of opening itself up to him. Truth is thus a relationship of unconcealedness between the

knower and the known, not a correlation between fact and statement. But truth is also knowledge of *das Seiende im Ganzen*, of things in their totality of relationship, the knower himself included in that whole. Man's relationship, his *Gestimmtheit* or his 'attunedness' to the whole is decisive for truth. That *Gestimmtheit* inescapably includes such elements as dread, anxiety, joy, sadness and so on, and these affect the shape of truth in so far as they colour the openness of man to being.

The openness of man to beings or beings to man is of course not complete. The unconcealedness includes a measure of concealedness. All revelatory relationships simultaneously include openness and hiddenness. In this sense truth is never complete or final, and when it is taken for such, it becomes untruth. Truth must thus always include both the openness and the concealedness. When one of these is allowed to pass into oblivion it becomes untruth. Oblivion of what is unveiled as well as of what remains concealed, and error of judgment constitute two forms of untruth. The tendency to take a partial truth for the whole, a common ground of error, is but an aspect of the first form of untruth, namely oblivion of what is veiled and what is unveiled. It seems to me that here Heidegger gives a good definition of heresy.

I have dealt at some length with this very un-American system of speculative reasoning in a great western thinker simply to contrast it with Anglo-American pragmatism. Heidegger leaves us in no doubt that his is no common sense or ordinary language philosophy. In fact Heidegger says so in so many words in his seminally important essay: *What is Metaphysics?* Common sense and philosophy are opposed to each other by nature. Common sense clings to the facts and seeks one's own interests, forbidding questions which are inconvenient or difficult. Philosophy deals with a transcendent relationship, of openness and concealedness in 'ex-sistence' to things in their totality of mutual relationships.

The Pragmatist would immediately counter with the question: 'What difference does your philosophy make? If you cannot show us the pragmatic difference it makes, then it is meaningless.' To this Heidegger would answer that his question is the most momentous question that man can ask. It makes all the difference in the world to human existence and civilization,

though it cannot be experimentally programmed to yield the hypothetical formula 'if X is done then Y will follow'.

It introduces and brings about an altogether new attitude of man towards his own life and all the things around him in the universe, owing to which he can know himself and the things in an 'objective' way and can build up a historic world of civilization, guided by a sense of his position in the whole.<sup>10</sup>

To summarize, then:

1. The dominant religion of the age is pragmatism rather than materialism or rationalism or scientism.
2. Secularization and pragmatism are correlated to each other and are behind the present crisis of authority in the western world.
3. There are other alternatives to Anglo-Saxon pragmatism in the western world, and Martin Heidegger represents one such significant alternative.

That other European ideology, vaguely grouped together under the term the *Existential stance*, will always have a function to fulfil in human thought as an aspect of it. When it claims, however, to be a whole way of dealing with the problem of authority it misleads. The most existentially oriented of contemporary thinkers are themselves the products of tradition, even when they repudiate and react against that tradition, as for example in the case of Sartre. Sartre is patently a Franco-German ex-Catholic. So is Heidegger an Indo-German ex-Christian. The existentialists have not escaped the problem of authority. They have only demonstrated that tradition can be authoritative in two ways—positively and negatively.

All the three European forms of contemporary western thought, Phenomenology, Existentialism and Logical Analysis, are searches for new ways of authenticating truth. They all have a common element—the search for certainty through the search for the right method. Modern philosophy as well as theology seeks authority in the right method of getting at truth. Is there a special method for theology? Or do we simply adopt the methods of contem-

<sup>10</sup> Werner Brock in his introduction to Martin Heidegger, *Existence and Being*, Gateway edition, Chicago, 1949, p. 166.



porary secular thought? That is an important question to which we shall revert later.

### C. GOD'S DEATH AND THE HERMENEUTICAL QUEST

#### *The Death of God*

William Robert Miller has provided us with an excellent anthology<sup>11</sup> of the Death of God Movement, which now seems to have passed its peak. The claim that Christianity has been superseded by something more 'spiritually' advanced seems to have been constantly argued in the West, at least ever since the Enlightenment. Lessing (1729-1781) said that 'Christianity has had its day.' The French Revolution (1789) dethroned Christ in the West and sought to replace him with Reason. Sigmund Freud wrote about 'the future of an illusion'. Kierkegaard laughed at the ludicrousness of official bourgeois Christianity. By the beginning of our century, Europe, once solidly Christian, had a majority who had no formal continuing relation with the organized Church, though many were still being baptized as Christians.

The dogmas of the Church and her moral precepts were so widely debated, that it became obvious to many people that there were two sides to every issue. The majority chose the painless way of non-committal. They were still interested in listening to broad liberal values like education, progress, and social justice. A 'non-dogmatic affirmation of general kindness and good fellowship, with an emphasis rather on the service of men than on the fulfilment of the will of God' became characteristic not only of European Churches, but also of Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis and other clubs in America and elsewhere.

The heroic efforts of the great Neo-Orthodox giants Barth and Br nner have not, in the long perspective, sufficed to stem the tide. Only reason can dethrone reason, and Barth tried the big stick to scare Reason away. A few Christians may have agreed to ignore reason for a while, but reason has proved herself bigger than the big stick of Barth.

Comfortable, bourgeois, middle-class western Christianity as well as some forms of authoritarian Christianity both seem to

<sup>11</sup> W. R. Miller, (Ed.), *The New Christianity*, Delta, New York, 1967.

have ceased to count in the intellectual main-stream of the West. There was a conscious attempt on the part of a few young western theologians to create a more radical form of Christianity. One could quickly mention a few converging contributions, beginning with Bonhoeffer's *Letters from a Nazi Prison*. But there is a pre-history to this 'new Christianity', which according to William Robert Miller begins with William Blake (1757-1827) himself. Blake certainly was no pragmatist. On the contrary, he argued that if we had only the senses and reasoning power, we would simply 'repeat the same dull round over again.' It is the poetic and prophetic character of the mind that makes it possible for us to be genuinely creative. 'The Poetic Genius' is the true man. It is these geniuses who create new religions, according to their differing cultural experiences and weaknesses. All religions are therefore essentially the same. Their point is liberation from the slavery of external rules by genuine inner creativity.

And when He (Christ) humbled himself to God  
 Then descended the cruel rod  
 If thou humblest thyself thou humblest me  
 Thou also dwellest in Eternity  
 Thou art a Man, God is no more  
 Thy own humanity learn to adore.

(From Blake's *Everlasting Gospel*, pp. 52-54) <sup>12</sup>

Yes, that is the heart of the thing :

Thou art a Man, God is no more  
 Thy own humanity learn to adore.

Then came along Schleiermacher, out of his German pietism, reducing the religion of 'inwardness' to a psychological understanding of it as *Gefühl* (feeling) and *Erlebnis* (inner experience). No longer was there a need for a God 'out there' or 'up there', but he was very much the 'beyond in our midst', in our hearts, in our feeling, in our experience.

When Nietzsche came on the scene, the Blakean notion of internal psychic energy, and Schleiermacher's *gefühl*, became blended and transformed into the assertive will of man. Belief implies submission to power and authority, the loss of genuine

<sup>12</sup> Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

human freedom. Christian dogma and Christian moral precepts are merely crutches for the weak. Dogmas and precepts survive because men need them to lean on.

But Nietzsche did not let Europe go with the mere charge of submissiveness. Tranquillity, passivity and submission to authority soon provoke, according to Nietzsche, the reaction of restlessness, activism and aggression. And Europe starts on its great evangelistic mission—that of enslaving others to its own slave morality.

Thomas Altizer, the most philosophically oriented of the Death of God theologians, draws heavily on Blake and Nietzsche. Neither of these were atheists in the ordinary sense. Nietzsche's contention that God is dead is difficult to grasp. For he held, as Altizer and Hamilton have held, that the death of God was an event that took place recently.

.. If the world as we experience it is a creation of our minds and senses, then God was an actual component of that universe as man had previously perceived reality. But to Christian man this God became the terrible and mysterious power that stood over against him, judging and condemning him, a God 'whose very sacrality is absolutely opposed to the life and immediacy of man's existence in the world'<sup>13</sup>

Or in Nietzsche's own more dramatic words :

God degenerated, into the contradiction of life, instead of being its transfiguration and eternal Yes ! God as the declaration of war against life, against nature, against the will to live ! God—the formula for every lie about the 'beyond' ! God—the deification of nothingness, the will to nothingness pronounced holy !<sup>14</sup>

It is this God whom Nietzsche's madman pronounced dead. But, says Nietzsche, (European) mankind was not ready at the end of the nineteenth century to hear the news of the death of God :

'There never was a greater event—and on account of it, all who are born after us belong to a higher history than any history hitherto !'<sup>15</sup> Thus spake the madman. His hearers

<sup>13</sup> Thomas J. J. Altizer, *The Gospel of Christian Atheism*, Philadelphia, 1966, p. 93.

<sup>14</sup> *The Antichrist*, Sect 18, quoted by Altizer, *op. cit.* p. 93.

<sup>15</sup> Nietzsche, *The Joyful Wisdom*, Eng. Tr. in Miller *op. cit.* p. 139.

were surprised. So the announcer throws his lantern on the ground, smashing it to pieces. 'I come too early,' he then said, 'I am not yet at the right time. This prodigious event is still on its way, and is travelling—it has not yet reached men's ears.'

Our new theologians Altizer and Hamilton thought 60 years was about time enough to see if the world was ready to hear the news of the death of God. They must be just as disillusioned, despite first impressions, seeing that the world of the last third of the twentieth century is not very much more ready to hear this news than was the Europe of the last decade of the Nineteenth.

And yet, it is that pitiable parochialism in all this that should give pause to one. Is this the Christian God—the one who is so weakly sovereign that he wants an enslaved humanity? Or does it belong to a particular tradition of Europe—that of Augustine, Luther, Calvin and Barth? We shall seek to show in a later chapter that there were significant alternatives in Christian history to this jealous, petty, freedom-hating God, whom western civilization has created and now wants to murder, but is not quite able to.

### *The Hermeneutical Quest*

The mainstream of the Protestant Tradition is not deeply impressed by the Death of God episode. Altizer's book *The Gospel of Christian Atheism* was criticized by Robert McAfee Brown as 'not a gospel. . . . not Christian. . . . not atheism.' Harvey Cox, author of *The Secular City* and despised by Death-of-God Hamilton as nothing more than 'pop Barth' has advanced what seems a more intelligent critique of the Death of God Movement. Altizer and Hamilton lack a sufficient eschatological horizon and that is what is usually wrong with all liberal theologies. Cox, a good pragmatist, thinks 'heaven' is still necessary as 'the Copernican point of perspective from which renewal and insight emerge'.

The mainstream of theology nowadays proceeds within narrow and manageable confines. Problems of Being and Becoming are usually beyond the theologians' competence. They prefer to take concrete questions like 'Who was the historical Jesus? What is the canon within the canon for interpreting the Bible?'

Parallel to the secular man's quest for certainty, whether through the common-sense philosophy of pragmatism or the

phenomenological speculative quest of Heidegger, and not uninfluenced by these, proceeds the hermeneutical quest of Protestant theologians.

While the Pragmatist and the Phenomenologist are following what they regard to be an infallible method, the Christian quest involves three realities—the man, the book and the method. The method being sought for is to get at the authoritative man through the authoritative book. No common sense method can help us understand the man or the book. We have to work hard at the analysis of the book through the form-critical and historical-critical methods in order to confront ourselves with the Man Jesus as he was.

One school, led perhaps by Oscar Cullmann, thinks that we should take the whole Bible, i.e. as defined by the Canon of the Old and New Testaments, as witness to Salvation history at the centre of which stands the Man Jesus. The other and more recent school, led by Ernst Käsemann, thinks that the book as a whole is not revelatory, and that we have to have a canon within the Canon, like the principle of justification by faith, in order to understand the proclamation about the Man Jesus in its central significance. Both men stand in the Reformation tradition of *Sola Scriptura*. Both of them also imply that the basic revelatory event took place around 2,000 years ago in the life of Jesus, and that God has *ceased* to perform *new* acts which are qualitatively of the same order as those witnessed to in the Bible.<sup>16</sup>

All these men affirm not only a basic message or kerygma which is contained in the Bible, but also that it is always obscured by later traditions of interpretation. The faithfulness of these later interpretations is to be tested by the original kerygma, and all the labour is being expended to get at this original kerygma. The interpretations are already in the Bible itself. That is what makes the search for the original so laborious.

The newer squabbles that are springing up within the tradition-furrowing process of the hermeneutical investigators seem to relate to the question of the locus of this kerygma—whether it is to be sought in the preaching of the post-Easter Church, or in the self-consciousness of the pre-Easter Jesus? More recent investigators like R. R. Niebuhr, Wolfhart Pannenburg

<sup>16</sup> See Dietrich Ritschl, *Memory and Hope*.

and Jürgen Moltmann seem to insist on certain fundamental points :

- (a) Any technique of historical investigation that *a priori* rules out the possibility of a physical resurrection of the body cannot do justice to the resurrection tradition which is central to the post-resurrection kerygma.
- (b) The isolation of a pre-Easter Jesus without the resurrection from the post-Easter kerygma is inadequate to account for the *fact* of the resurrection tradition which gave birth to the kerygma in the first place.

In other words, we are being brought back to the normal situation in which the evidence cannot by itself generate faith in the risen Lord, but the more arrogant claims of the historical method to discredit the witness to the Resurrection stand on the same level as the mocking of unbelievers like the wise men of Areopagus and philosophers like Celsus in the second century.

But the hermeneutical discussion within Protestantism has not yet posed the fundamental questions of authority. For example, even when the historical-critical-archaeological investigation has finally unearthed the historical Jesus or the kerygmatic Christ, whether pre- or post-Easter, are we not confronted with the same choice as the contemporaries of Jesus and the Apostles? Are we expecting the result of our investigation to be authoritative to the unbeliever? Certainly not. The hermeneutical quest is seeking authority for the preaching of the Church and not for the faith of the unbeliever.

But why preach Jesus? Why not preach 'peace of mind' or 'love thy neighbour'? Why not just 'involvement in history'? as many contemporary preachers are already preaching, following the pragmatic method, and not raising questions about Jesus? Yes, what is the authority for picking Jesus rather than Socrates or Gandhi or Martin Luther King? If you answer—because the Bible witnesses to Jesus, then we must ask again, why the Bible? What makes the Bible authoritative?

The current hermeneutical quest is thus not likely to yield answers to the fundamental question—How do I know God and His Universe? How do I mould my life? These are the

essential theological and ethical questions and they do not seem to be tackled forthrightly by theologians.

And in the ecumenical dialogue there can be no other questions which are as primary as these.

The current crisis for Christian knowledge and action should drive us on to look for a Christian epistemology that comprehends the pragmatic and the phenomenological-speculative ways of knowing and doing, and yet goes beyond them to what is specifically Christian in knowledge and action.

The smaller questions to which the hermeneutical quest is currently addressed seem to be quite meaningless if the one fundamental presupposition of the authority of the Bible is itself in question. This is so not only to the unbeliever, but to many a 'conservative' Christian like the present writer, who seeks to be faithful to the authentic tradition which never assumed the *Sola Scriptura* principle that the hermeneutical quest so naively presupposes.

#### D. THE FUTURE OF BELIEF AND BELIEF IN FUTURE

Parallel to the Honest-to-God, Death-of-God tempests in the Protestant tradition, there has been a minor storm in Catholic circles over Leslie Dewart's *The Future of Belief*<sup>17</sup>. He is too much of a Catholic to say that God is dead. He would simply 'de-supernaturalize' God by liberating our conception of God from its classical Greek moorings in a static notion of 'nature' and 'being'. The philosophy of Thomas Aquinas is metaphysical, and therefore, 'Greek' or hellenistic. It uses the classical dialectic between two opposing principles—transcendence and immanence—in its conceptualization of God. His Being is transcendent, His Becoming is immanent.

The difficulty with this concept is not merely the insoluble academic questions it generates. It is irrelevant to the issues of life today. Modern unbelief is at least in part due to this irrelevance.

The 'new life' which Christ brought, which is also called 'Grace' was opposed to the 'old life' which it replaced. But the old was conceived in terms of a static nature. So the new

<sup>17</sup> *The Future of Belief: Theism in a World Come of Age.*

was conceived, not as un-natural or non-natural, but as super-natural. This 'super-natural grace' was then conceived as something totally unrelated to the world of nature—'an insubstantial ectoplasm flowing from above, a spiritual coin issued by God *ex opere operato* and certified as legal moral tender by the decrees of Providence'.<sup>18</sup>

As the emphasis on supernatural grace grew, the immanence of God in the world came to be overlooked, and God became more and more remote, no longer He who is present in the world and in man.

Too much of a gap between God and Man makes God inaccessible.

To sum up: the transcendence of the genuinely immanent God means this: if the God we find always *here* is not to vanish into thin air, if he is not to become an idol, if he is not to be reduced to the totality of being, and if he is not to be explained away as the becoming of the world or the projection of man—in a word, if the God who is actually *here* within being is the God of Christian tradition, it follows that he is not to be conceived as being.<sup>19</sup>

Dewart has been devastatingly criticized by his fellow-Thomists, and enthusiastically welcomed by others both Catholic and Protestant.

He has been criticized by Fr. Lonergan for his faulty epistemology or theory of knowledge which seems to deny the validity of propositional truth as an adequation between the knowing subject and the known object.

The present writer would venture the suggestion that much of Dr. Dewart's well-merited criticism of classical western theism would have been enriched by a knowledge of what the so-called Greek Fathers actually said about the God-Man-World relationship. This Patristic view we shall sketch briefly in a later chapter.

Harvey Cox, who is an enthusiastic supporter of Dewart, criticizes him for not taking sufficiently into account the new eschatology, the hope in future, now characteristic of much Marxist and liberal Protestant thinking. Let us say a word about 'Futurology' here.

<sup>18</sup> Leslie Dewart, 'God and the Supernatural' in *Commonweal*, Feb. 10, 1967, reprinted in *New Theology* No. 5 (ed. Martin E. Marty and Dean G. Peerman) New York, 1968, p. 152.

<sup>19</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 155.



### *Belief in Future*

The future now becomes a substitute for the transcendent God. A spatially transcendent God is quite difficult for western thought. 'Temporal transcendence', when depersonalized, can do all the functions that Harvey Cox wants from his heaven as a Copernican stance. And here the German Marxist Philosopher Ernst Bloch shows the way in his monumental *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (written between 1938 and 1949). Like Karl Barth, Bloch was also an exile from Nazi Germany. His book was published only in 1959.

Bloch is an atheist and a Marxist by conviction, a Jew by origin and early training. Like Karl Marx, Jewish Messianism shapes and influences his fundamental categories throughout. His *Principle of Hope* has created quite a stir in German intellectual circles, both Christian and Marxist. The avantgarde theologians of Germany today, as well as Harvey Cox of America are all avid Blochists. Dr. Wolfhart Pannenberg, Professor of systematic Theology (Protestant) at the University of Mainz, Fr. Johannes Metz, Professor of Fundamental Theology, (Catholic) at the University of Münster, and Dr. Jürgen Moltmann (Protestant) who taught recently at Duke University, the notable Trio of German Theology today, agree in commending Bloch as the new source of philosophical inspiration (replacing Heidegger) for Christian theological reflection.

For the atheist Bloch, the Bible is of central significance for mankind, in providing man with an eschatological consciousness. The prophetic movement in the Old Testament has set man on the way to living towards the future in expectancy and hope. Man as such is open towards the future. The new categories for his thinking are 'possibility', 'the new', 'futurity', the ontology of the 'not-yet-being.'<sup>20</sup>

Jürgen Moltmann's *Theology of Hope* follows this line of Bloch in a Christian context. Eschatology is the *logic* or science of the things to come at the end. But how can you have a science of things which have not yet come into being?

Christian eschatology is therefore not descriptive, but expressions of hope uttered on the basis of faith in the promises of God. It denies and negates the power of the present and the past.

<sup>20</sup> See Bloch's later book *Philosophische Grundfragen Zur Ontologie des Noch-Nicht-Seins*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1961.

in order to create a new future according to the promise. Hope thus contradicts experience, hoping against hope. The resurrection contradicted the Cross. Hope contradicts the present shape of reality. The task of hope is to radicalize the tension between good and evil, between joy and suffering, between peace and war, between life and death, and to look to the absolute future of Christ for a universal and transcendent resolution of this discrepancy between what is and what ought to be. 'With God all things are possible.' The Christian hope is squarely based on the Cross and Resurrection. That is what distinguished it from Bloch's *Hoffnung*. And it is to base it on the Cross and Resurrection that these young German theologians have set about to re-establish the belief in the Resurrection as a historical event. The hope of resurrection is based on the event. Without that hope we are in basic discontinuity with the primitive Church. The Resurrection of Christ is the first-fruits of the Resurrection of Man. Life beyond death and the hope for it belong to the essence of Man and where this is denied, man's being becomes stunted.

For these new theologians the Resurrection of Christ is not merely a faith-event or a *pro-me* event as it was for Bultmann. It has universal significance for the whole of mankind. And this is the reason why these theologians are all the more anxious to dialogue with all men. Alas, they are inadequately equipped to converse with the majority of men in Asia, Africa and Latin America or even in the Latin countries of Europe. But they can hold converse with their nearest cousins of the Jewish-Marxist heritage in Europe. And to this new Marxist element we shall now turn.

## E. THE LIBERAL HUMANIST AND THE NEW MARXIST

Humanism, like Socialism, is a generic concept. It includes all forms of thought in which Man and the full development of his capacities are the central concern. Of course in general all humanists believe that the full development of man was possible and to be sought and striven for.

The idea of Development seems thus to be central to all forms of humanism. Today this notion plays a key role in secular

thinking. The world itself is being classified into 'developed' and 'developing' nations.

Economic development is regarded by most as the irreducible minimum of all development, and by many as the first stage in human development. But the difficulties of the notion of development itself become apparent when we consider what in addition to economic development should constitute the substance of human development.

In UNESCO discussions one hears two different terms often proposed—'spiritual' development and 'cultural' development. But neither 'spiritual' nor 'cultural' can be unanimously or universally defined.

The Liberal Humanist today is committed to two things at least—the unity of mankind and faith in the future of man. But how are we to envisage that future and plan social engineering to achieve that future? That is where controversy begins. The liberal humanist conceived the future of man in somewhat simple terms—man should be peaceable, cultured, refined, interested in aesthetic enjoyment, in art and literature, in music and sports, and fairly comfortable and secure. There should be no violent upheavals, but by education and lawful change within a democratic structure we should be able to advance towards a just, peaceable and creative society. There should be a pluralistic, permissive, tolerant social structure, allowing full play for all the human freedoms—of association, of opinion, of religion, of the press, of conscience, and so on. This is the kind of humanism that is implied in the United Nations Charter of Human Rights—a lofty, gentle, benign, pleasant, refined, set of principles for universal application. Many of our intellectual leaders in the world subscribe, at least with the tops of their minds, to those worthy ideals, even when they find them difficult to practise in their private or public lives.

This liberal humanism has increasingly become the butt of ridicule and scorn at the hands of the more hot-blooded revolutionary thinkers, such as the political left-wing in Latin America, the Black Power leadership in the U.S.A. and so on. The liberal humanist is accused of complacency and unwillingness to initiate radical change. His liberal ideas only help to give the glow of morality to a system that is basically corrupt and dehumanizing.

It is here that the Marxist humanist comes in both as a critic

and as a pioneer. This is comparatively new even in Marxist circles, but it is the major indicator of vitality in European Marxism which is already becoming flabby and sluggish.

The developed Marx was himself rather averse to the line which later Marxists like Gorki and Rosa Luxemburg had once followed, namely the quest of the spiritual. Marx thought that any playing up of the religious and the spiritual would lead to unhealthy compromise with the establishment of religious reaction. The first priority was the economic emancipation of the proletariat.

But now that such economic emancipation is more or less assured in many European countries, some Marxists are making bold to go behind the developed Marx to the younger Marx and his manuscripts of 1835-1847.

One of his earliest essays written at High School (the Trier Gymnasium) in 1835 is published under the title: *Reflections of a Youth on Choosing an Occupation*. His guiding principle is 'the Welfare of humanity' and he insists that individual man can attain his fulfilment only by working for the benefit of the whole of humanity. His ideas while in Gymnasium and at the University seem to be the usual ones of Hegelian idealism. He was a baptized Christian, and though in touch with the development of radical biblical criticism remained very positively disposed towards Christianity in its Hegelian version.

By the time he wrote his doctoral dissertation on 'The Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature', he had turned against the God of Hegel and of the oppressive Prussian State. He turns away from the absolute State to the common people, from the ideal to the real, from the visionary to the pragmatic or at least activist.

The shift from the ideal state to the principle of democracy led to the formulation that in democracy man does not exist for the State. Only when the democratic state is achieved will the alienated absolutist state wither away. The idea of political alienation soon leads to the idea of full human emancipation. Religion itself becomes an aspect of man's alienation from his own reality. Belief in God as a transcendent Creator on whom man is dependent serves only to deny the significance of man. Atheism therefore is a necessary prelude to the affirmation of Man.

But alienation continues to plague man. He works to create a political organization, wealth and culture, but all three get out of his hand, and stand over against him as alien powers controlling his activities and enslaving him. In his 1844 Manuscripts<sup>21</sup> he warns against 'society' as an abstraction over against the real concrete, human person as a social being.

This is the warning that many European Marxists are now beginning to take quite seriously—Erich Fromm has done us the great service of editing a series of such essays from European Marxists entitled *Socialist Humanism*.<sup>22</sup> Most of the writers are from the smaller socialist countries like Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, where there is an agonizing reappraisal of what passes elsewhere for Marxist orthodoxy.

These writers emphasize one point—that Man was the centre of Marx's concern and therefore that anything that dehumanizes, whether in communist countries or in the West, is an enemy of man. Personal freedom is a value which cannot be subordinated to any collective interests. Strict planning destroys individual initiative and makes men the tools of the planners. Technological progress, if it dehumanizes, is not good. One generation cannot always be expected to sacrifice for the sake of future generations, especially if such sacrifice is decided upon by the ruling class and not by the people.

What does this new Marxism amount to in practice? It throws up as of first priority the question: Who is Man? What should he become in a technological civilization of the future? How do we gain control of the dynamics of this technological civilization in order that it becomes a tool in the hands of man with which to forge his own future, rather than a threat to his free existence?

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<sup>21</sup> A very useful collection of these and other early MSS is provided in English by Lloyd D. Easton and Kurt H. Guddat, (ed & tr.) *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*, Doubleday Anchor, New York, 1967.

<sup>22</sup> Doubleday Anchor, 1966.

## WHAT ABOUT THE EAST ?

We have sampled several approaches in the West, both Christian and secular, to find a sure ground for knowledge and action. We have suggested that none of these have been successful in showing us the way. We could multiply instances of other western approaches. The present writer is convinced that none of the present approaches are adequate to take us to the right road.

What about the East—Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, or other? Are there any rays of light or discernible road-signs? I am afraid the answer has to be very brief, but mostly negative. There is of course a renaissance in all the three great religions, a justified reaction against an aggressive western Christian missionary movement. There is no reason at all for us who live in the midst of these renascent religions to believe the immodest pronouncements of Prof. Theodore van Leeuwen<sup>22a</sup> that religion as such is doomed. That is only wishful thinking on the part of some evangelical Christians who are too dangerously alienated from the depths of the Christian tradition by the impact of modern secular thought.

These religions are not going to collapse in the face of the advancing road-roller of a superficial technocratic civilization. The urban-technological paradise has already gone sour, and only a few middle-aged theologians still living in the Barth-Kraemer era can afford to cling to such illusions.

The religions are treasure-houses of the deeper experiences of mankind in encounter with the depth dimension of reality. These treasures are held by them in a form not readily relevant to some of the questions posed by a greedy and acquisitive modern world, but that does not mean that only what is relevant to the greedy and acquisitive 'modern' world is truth.

Western civilization may very well come back east some day to explore these treasure-houses once again, as they once came

<sup>22a</sup> *Christianity in World History.*

to plunder our physical wealth. That seems inevitable, for the springs of creativity are fast drying up in the West.

But what about us in the East? Are we at a creative period in our own history? Do we have access to our own treasure-houses? I am afraid this is the most tragic part of our story.

Sardar K. M. Panikkar is right in saying that the Vasco da Gama era of western dominance in the non-western world was a crisis in our history—a break with the past. But this break with the past does not mean the end of the old great religions of the non-western world, as Dr. van Leeuwen would like to assume. Dr. van Leeuwen himself admits that it is mostly among primitive and uncivilized peoples that Christianity has made some headway.<sup>22b</sup> European Christianity has failed to convert the masses of people who lived in a Hindu, Buddhist or Muslim culture, precisely because of its aggression, its association with greed and acquisition, its lack of awareness of the dignity of man even when he is not Christian.

The point here is the tragic story of our own failure as non-westerners. We should have been awakened from our own dogmatic or undogmatic slumbers by the rude impact of this aggressive civilization. But what we have done in general is to be drawn into the vortex of the struggle between various western ideologies—mainly three, i.e. (a) Catholic or Evangelical Christian, (b) Secular liberal humanist and (c) Marxist-Leninist. Of these the second, i.e. liberal humanism, seems to be the most pervasive force among Asians in general. Our education, health, government, journalism, and most other common activities are pale imitations of out-dated western liberal humanist models. The third ideology is effectively operative today in Asia, mostly among people of Chinese and related backgrounds—People's China, North Korea, North Vietnam etc., where there already existed a long tradition of secularity.

The most significant and spectacularly vital Asian society is no doubt that of China. The most heroic in its defiance to and resistance of the West is of course North Vietnam—a real hero, but not a martyr, at least not yet. There is something impressive in these two spectacles of our era—Mao's China and Ho Chi Minh's Vietnam. China, North Vietnam and

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<sup>22b</sup> Arend Th van Leeuwen, *Christianity in World History* N.Y., 1964, pp. 269 ff.

North Korea are the only three countries in Asia which have succeeded in stiffly and effectively resisting western imperialism. One has to take into account the fact that the ideology that directs these nations and galvanizes their resistance is a purely western product. This fact, at least on the surface, gives credence to Prof. van Leeuwen's theory that only the ideologies of the West are live options for the non-western world today.

Even Japan, which has effectively copied the West and reached an equally high level of economic production and acquisitive barbarity as the West, had to do it by using the methods and ideas that lay behind the apparent success of the West. What is more, these are the four nations in Asia who have deliberately set out to deny their Eastern heritage, to root it out and replace it with a new ideology from the West.

If one takes the Arab, Hindu or Buddhist countries, one sees how the ideologies that spring from Islam, Hinduism or Buddhism are inadequate to cope with the realities of today or to offer an effective resistance to an aggressive and exploiting West. Only those who adopt a western ideology like Marxism or Socialism of some kind are able to galvanize and organize society for resistance to colonialism and for determined productive efforts, even within Islamic or Hindu society, and then make the subterfuge of pretending to find the roots of this new ideology in their own tradition.

One feels therefore that there is some truth in Dr. van Leeuwen's stricture of Asia's indigenous culture as 'already consigned to the past and doomed to become out of date.'<sup>22c</sup> And if we accept his argument, there is nothing for us to do except to adopt the methods of western secular civilization 'in order to catch up with the West.'<sup>22d</sup>

It seems to the present writer that Dr. van Leeuwen's words have already proved to be too short-sighted and out-dated. The idea that all religion is doomed and that the secular ideology has triumphed *ueber alles* seems no longer fashionable even in the West. More perceptive men are able to see secular civilization as a wave that brings a measure of inter-dependence among the world's peoples, drawing them all into a common vortex of history, but as hardly capable of showing the way forward.

<sup>22c</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 424.

<sup>22d</sup> *ibid.*, p. 424 *supra*.



Religion has always been a very nebulous word. The present writer has no need to defend Religion against the prophets of doom and gloom, precisely because he has no idea what religion in general means—not to speak of being committed to the defence of religion in general. One does have, however, a certain open commitment to truth, and the secular interpretation of reality seems today as much mistaken as certain religious interpretations of reality.

Whenever the West opposes two concepts to each other, trying to defend one over against the other, past experience has taught us that we ought to be careful. This famous religious-secular dichotomy seems to belong to that same spurious series of dichotomies like nature-supernature, nature-grace, predestination-free-will, this world-the other world, reason-revelation, and so on.

If we are speaking about reality, one has to say that both secular ideologies and so-called religious ideologies are attempts to come to terms with the reality of Man and with the reality which confronts Man. No view of man and reality can be free from some set of assumptions about reality and its knowability or dealability. All of them are attempts on the part of man to get hold of reality by knowing it in order to shape it. The totalitarian claims of some 'secularist' theologians are in the same spirit and attitude as the all-knowing evangelical fervour of an aggressive and explosive West of the Christian era. It is only the label which has changed. What is being peddled is still an ideology that purports to save man, but ultimately domesticates him in a world which can be controlled and exploited by the West.

At the present time, it is true that it is a secular ideology, i.e. Marxism-Leninism, that has become a strong tool in the hands of Asia to resist the West. This phase will probably continue for some years, during which time China will gradually become the one rallying point of the dispossessed of the earth in their collective struggle against the exploiting consortium of Europe, America, Australia, Japan and South Africa.

But history changes quickly and in unexpected directions. The meek shall inherit the earth if they are faithful. The fact that the leader of the meek today is Chinese Communism does not mean that it will always be that way.

The Church is not concerned merely about proximate goals.

Its sight extends far into the future, and like a wise house-holder, she brings things new and old out of her treasure-house. And she may be better able to do it in a small and unpublicized way, if she will seek to dig deep into the Christian treasury of Tradition, and keep its eyes open at the same time to the past, the present, and the future, of the *whole of mankind*, and not just the secular West; the plea that the past of the non-western world is doomed and therefore that the past and present of the West can alone determine the future of the rest is a form of western hybris that we should resist with all our strength.

### The Failure of the Christian East

But the failure has not been merely not to respond to western aggression. What have Eastern Christians done at any time in the realm of creative thought about the destiny of mankind?

The earliest opportunity to apply itself to this question came to the universal Church only with the beginning of the Constantinian era, i.e. after 330 A.D., which period coincides with the Byzantine era or the period of the great East Roman Empire which lasted from the founding of Constantinople in 330 to the Fall of Constantinople in 1453—one of the longest lasting Empires of history.

What did this Eastern Orthodox civilization create and bequeath to history? The compass of the present volume does not permit an adequate treatment of this question. The first point to be made in brief is to insist that Byzantine civilization is not as eastern as it is sometimes thought to be. It was a Eurasian, not a European civilization. Modern Istanbul regards itself as part of Europe, but after all it has always been on the European frontier, a western outpost from which a Syro-Greek civilization was shaped.

The Greeks are essentially Europeans, no matter which side of the Aegean they lived. And Byzantium is the civilization of European Greeks and Romans, though significant contributions were made by Syrians, Egyptians and even Persians. Its greatest role, according to Sir Steven Runciman, the great Byzantinologist, was to have served as a buffer between Europe and Islam for almost a thousand years—a bulwark behind which Europe was able to develop the Renaissance and through it contemporary

civilization. Equally important were the contributions of Byzantium in the realms of architecture, art, music, and in the conservation of classical culture in general. Without Byzantium neither Islam nor the West could have attained to the high levels of culture to which both were able to ascend.

Even in the realms of ideas and spirituality, the contributions of Byzantium are not insignificant. Without Byzantine neo-Platonism much of the deeper Christian spirituality of the West (especially the spirituality of the Low Countries which produced men like Ruysbroek, Gerhard Groote and Thomas á Kempis, and the Spanish mysticism which produced a Teresa of Avila) could never have arisen. But then without Byzantium the Moghul civilization is also unimaginable.

For a thousand years this Syro-Byzantine city of Constantinople served as the cultural and intellectual centre of European civilization. True, it was luxurious, indolent, unchivalrous, deviously clever, but without it Europe could never have come out of its barbarism. All significant and still enduring early Christian thought came out of Byzantium—Athanasius and the Cappadocians, without whom neither Augustine nor Aquinas could have built their theological systems.

Byzantium shaped the Slavic culture, which still dominates Eastern Europe. Bulgaria, Russia, and Yugoslavia as well as Rumania are still seeped in Byzantine culture. The Slavic Alphabet and East European Christianity were creations of Byzantium.

Contemporary Communism is practically unimaginable without the intellectual ferment of 19th century Russia, directly contributed by a vigorous movement of Eastern Christian radicals, who had become dissatisfied with Tsar and Church alike.

Islam itself received its architecture, music, philosophy and historiography from Byzantium. Indeed Byzantium has made its contribution to the entire world until, to use Runciman's words.

On May the 29th, 1453, a civilization was wiped out irrevocably. It had left a glorious legacy in learning and in art; it had raised whole countries from barbarism and had given refinement to others; its strength and its intelligence for centuries had been the protection of Christendom. For eleven centuries Constantinople had been the centre of the world of light.<sup>22a</sup>

<sup>22a</sup> *Byzantine Civilization*. Meridian, New York, 1958, p. 240.

Byzantium was a synthesis—a synthesis of East and West. The fact that it finally failed should be noted and the causes of this failure further analyzed. All civilizations are bound to fail when their inner vitality oozes out in indolence, luxury and love of comfort.

But Byzantium was only one manifestation of the Oriental-Semitic heritage in Christianity. On the periphery of Byzantium flourished other traditions of Eastern Christianity—the Egyptian, the Syrian, the Persian, the Armenian and so on. These never achieved the cultural synthesis afforded by a Christian empire. And that may very well be their special contribution. With the exception of the Ethiopian and during certain periods the Armenian, these Oriental traditions never enjoyed the protection of the palace. They remained struggling traditions, not settled traditions. Today these too have failed, since no tradition could keep up a struggle indefinitely without some popular or royal support.

There remains, however, a Byzantine and Oriental tradition that could be revitalized, if only Christians saw the point. Syro-Palestinian Christianity, which inspired Byzantine and Roman Christianity, was by these same two imperial civilizations ruthlessly suppressed. The Semitic tradition took history seriously, yet refused to accept a historicism that domesticated the transcendent. This is what needs to be recovered, a relation-tension between the historical and the transcendent which refuses to settle for one while neglecting the other.

This tradition has no temptation to triumphalism. It remains unknown and unsung, yet guarding its treasures in chests to which the key seems to have been lost. Even its custodians are unable to open it and have access to its treasures, not to speak of sharing it with others.

It is this Syro-Palestinian or Asian tradition of Christianity, fully open to Semite and Greek alike, but with roots in the Palestinian vision of Christ and the Apostles, that inspired the great Eastern Fathers. The heritage is still there, and a key can be manufactured, thanks to the techniques the West has given to us. The writings of the Cappadocians who achieved the great synthesis between Alexandria and Antioch within the categories of Greek thought are now open to us and should be explored.

But this Syro-Palestinian tradition needs the assistance and

encouragement of others to achieve its own intellectual and spiritual renaissance. Eastern Byzantine Christianity has failed primarily because God allows no triumphalist tradition to triumph for a long time. Eastern Semitic Christianity, Syro-Palestinian, deeply influenced by Alexandrian theology and Greek culture, still holding in essentials the ancient tradition of Christ and the Apostles, with a non-triumphalist heritage, could be a small and quiet renovating force in the world of today, if it could revitalize its own life, especially in the context of India today.

## TYPES OF AUTHORITY AND FREEDOM

Authority and freedom are both words of imprecise meaning. This chapter seeks only to clarify some of these meanings.

## Ten Types of Authority

(1) *Authority as arbitrary power over others:* This type of authority comes from a feudal society. The King, the Emperor, Caesar, had absolute authority to make other people conform to his will. In our own times, it is the dictator who typifies this kind of absolute sovereignty, i.e. the power to demand unquestioning obedience from his subjects.

One of the besetting errors of Christian thought has been to conceive God's authority in these terms. Even today when we despise the man who seeks to exercise arbitrary authority, our theologians speak of the sovereignty of God as if it is always the case that God's task is to command and man's to obey. This destroys the dignity of both God and Man, and we will have to come back to this point later on.

(2) *Authority as institutional structure:* The clearest instance is the army. The centurion in St. Matthew's Gospel (8:9) says to Christ: 'I too am a man under authority, having soldiers under me.' As an officer of the Roman army, he functioned within a clearly defined authority structure. He is under authority; he carries out the orders of his superiors. He also exercises authority; he can command his soldiers.

This hierarchy of command is very useful in a society organized for defence of the Roman Empire and its expansion. It was to be a mammoth tool of the Caesars. Individual freedom was not of much use within the army. Unquestioning and instantaneous obedience is what makes the army efficient.

Here authority, though arbitrary, becomes mitigated by being geared to a public purpose.

But clearly when the military pattern of organization is extended to civil government or the administration of the Church, it becomes totally vitiated. And yet, the temptation seems to be there always.

(3) *Authority to do particular things*: Here we can imagine the authority of Government officials (Police, tax-collectors, or magistrates) as well as the authority of ordained ministers of the Church (preaching, administration of the sacraments etc.). In this latter case, it would be a basic misunderstanding of ministerial authority in the Church to compare it with civil authority, and to see the priesthood primarily in terms of authority.

(4) *Authority for truth*: When I say 'I can tell you on the best available authority that the earth came into being X million years ago', I use the word authority to mean something else than the capacity to do or to make others obey. I mean that I have not personally examined the evidence for the statement and am perhaps not quite competent to judge its adequacy. But those who have done so, who have the knowledge and competence necessary for it, and whose judgments are generally reliable tell me that such and such is the case. I accept their judgement, at least tentatively, until I am told otherwise on better authority. Most of our knowledge is of that kind. How do I know that the earth moves in an orbit about 93 million miles distant from the sun or that the population of India is more than 500 millions? I have neither measured nor counted these myself. In fact a great deal of education consists in accepting knowledge which is the result of other people's investigations.

(5) *The Authority of Experience*: This is the kind of authority which is most convincing to the rational mind. In science it is the experimental method which is the basic source of authority, though science cannot be understood simply as the gathering of knowledge by experiments.

But even in the matter of experience, a distinction should be made between private experience and a repeatable, demonstrable, public experiment. The authority of private experience does not have compelling authority except for the one who experiences it. But both in private experience and public experiments, there is a chain of reasoning which interprets the meaning and significance of the event. Experience by itself is not authoritative,

but only in combination with logical reasoning and the clarification of alternative possibilities. We should not say that experience has any authority apart from its interpretation. But it is one thing to question the facticity of the experience and another to challenge its interpretation. Both the facticity of the event and the validity of the interpretation are necessary to establish the authority of experience. (This is particularly true in the case of the Cross and Resurrection.)

(6) *The Authority of Persuasion*: Persuasion has been recognized from early times to be one of the most effective sources of power. The demagogues and rhetoricians of history were those who had developed the capacity to make other people do what they wanted by appealing to reason and emotion. Persuasion has never really been a fully rational process. Some of the basest emotions of men as well as some of the noblest were often appealed to. Even today the advertising industry specializes in this kind of persuasion. Persuasion is more authoritative when it is hidden.

(7) *The Authority of the Collective*: There are certain socially accepted ways of believing and behaving which become the 'right' thing to do, even when they have no essential rationale behind them. 'Keeping up with the Joneses' is a clear case of the authority of the collective. So are many convictions and beliefs acquired from our general concourse with fellow-members of our society, in school, college or adult life. Sometimes it is a particular class that is authoritative. At others, it is a religious or political institution that determines our values and beliefs.

(8) *The Authority of 'Success'*: In our competitive societies, success itself gives authority. The Japanese, for example, at the end of the Second World War were willing to reject many of their own cultural values and adopt many western values, primarily because they had 'failed' and the Americans had succeeded. This accounts also for the authority of a sports or movie star in matters of politics or economics.

(9) *The Authority of Tradition*: Certain mores and values are inherited from our forefathers and often acquire a peculiar sanctity on account of their antiquity. Tradition is the way in which a community is conditioned to think, to act and to worship. It is closely tied up with the community's historical identity.



Much of our religious and cultural practices and beliefs derive their authority primarily from tradition.

(10) *The Authority of Sanctity of Personality*: Especially in oriental societies, though not only in them, one finds that a sanctified or holy man of God commands great respect and his authority in many matters is at least theoretically recognized. Mahatma Gandhi of India was such a clear case whose authority did not come from any official position he had or from his capacities for persuasion. To a lesser degree Albert Schweitzer used to wield some such authority for the West, though admiration rather than emulation was also the usual western response to him.

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This list was not meant to be exhaustive, but was intended to show the variety of meanings the word has. And there are other types of authority which we need to refer to here, which are of particular importance in the sphere of religion.

(1) *The Authority of a book or scribal Authority*: All the great religions of the world have one or more books which they regard as authoritative. The Old Testament for the Jew, the Qur'an for the Muslim, the Bible for the Christian, the Vedas and the Upanishads for the Hindu, the Zend-Avesta for the Zoroastrian, the Dhammapada for the Buddhist,—why even modern religionists like the Mormons and Christian Scientists have their 'scriptures' which are held in high respect as a unique book, uniquely authoritative.

And usually there is always an official class of interpreters of the Scriptures—the scribes of the Jews being a clear example.

(2) *The Authority of Spiritual Power*: All religions recount some heroic or miraculous acts of their founder demonstrative of his spiritual power and his direct contact with God. The religious leader wielded personal authority, not merely because of the sanctity of his personal life, but by his charismatic personality which demonstrated extraordinary power not available to ordinary men. This was true not only of the founders of religions, but also of their propagators. The lives of the Apostles, as well as of later Christian missionaries who evangelized other parts of the world, are full of miracle stories, even as late as in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Religion does not spread by ordinary authority of persuasion or arbitrary power, though these have often helped immensely. Even sanctity of life has not been the most immediately effective source of the dynamic of religious expansion. The element most lacking in all religions today is this numinous, extraordinary, charismatic power which carries conviction neither by compulsion nor by persuasion.

Jesus himself is witnessed to as having exercised this authority both in his teaching and in his dealing with men. It was not simply a question of miracles. St. Matthew's Gospel (7: 29) says 'He taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.'

In other words Old Testament authority was a combination of the authority of the scriptures and that of the official magistratum which taught according to certain set rules of hermeneutics or exegesis. This is the kind of authority still exercised in the Christian Church, with less and less effect. The Bible and the Hierarchy, or the Bible and the Professor (or Pastor) belong to the first type of authority—the authority of the book and its official interpreter.

Jesus' authority seemed to have been self-authenticating, though by no means irresistible. He taught with authority (*exousia*). He acted with authority in forgiving sins and casting out demons.<sup>23</sup> He was not a slave to the book or to the rules, but he discerned and decided what was right and taught it, did it. His authority was a free authority, not an aspect of hierarchical authority such as in the army. His freedom was also his authority.

### The Dialectic of Freedom and Authority

The dialectic between authority and freedom is a delicate one to unravel. Only in the case of arbitrary authority can we say that authority on the part of the commander is opposed to freedom on the part of the one who has to obey, whether he be slave, soldier, or religious addict. Arbitrary authority uses the

<sup>23</sup> 'The son of Man has authority (*exousia*) on earth to forgive sins.'—(Mt. 9: 6).

'To me is given all authority (*exousia*) in heaven and earth. Go ye therefore....' (Mt. 28: 18).

other will (of the one who obeys) as an extension of its own will and thus denies all freedom to it. The other will is simply a tool or an instrument, to be used according to the will of the commander.

In persuasive authority, however, an appeal is made to the other will to exercise its freedom to initiate its own action in the direction proposed by the persuader. The other will has to respond in freedom, not merely give unquestioning compliance. The difference between demagoguery and true persuasion is that the latter respects the autonomy of the will of the other. Only persuasive authority can genuinely foster freedom in the mature.

Alfred North Whitehead often draws our attention<sup>24</sup> to the great insight of Plato towards his more mature years, i.e. in the *Sophist* and in the *Timaeus*, that the divine element in the world is a persuasive agency and not a coercive one. Whitehead says: '*This doctrine should be looked upon as one of the greatest intellectual discoveries in the history of religion.*'

What Whitehead means is that only a God who uses persuasive authority would be respecting the freedom and dignity of man. Perhaps he found the Puritan God of early New England a little too overbearing. It was still the God of the Old Testament, the God who thunders. There is something very arbitrary about Yahweh. He certainly was no mild and persuasive agency. When he gave the Ten Commandments, did he try to persuade the people of Israel with reasonable arguments why it was philosophically untenable, or not in the best interests of man, to murder or bear false witness? Did he not rather shout: 'I am Yahweh your God. Therefore thou shalt not . . . etc'? When Yahweh demanded from Abraham the sacrifice of his only son, the son of promise, did he try to persuade Abraham by gently disclosing the reasons why He made that demand?

Job wanted to have a persuading God, a God ready to debate, with whom he could argue dispassionately about justice in the world (Job 23:3ff). But when God actually appeared, he is arbitrary, he commands, he questions, but he does not persuade. And all Job can do is to forget about the debate, and repent in dust and ashes (43:5-6).

Neither would Luther and Calvin have conceived a mild and persuasive God—especially Luther. His is the God who thun-

<sup>24</sup> See e.g. *Adventures of Ideas*, Mentor, 1955. pp. 90ff.

ders and sends forth lightning. He makes the mount smoke and burn. When the sound of the trumpet blows loud and strong, who can stand the presence of Yahweh without fear and trembling?

Whitehead's remark about Plato's insight would hardly apply to the God of the Old Testament. But how would it fare in the case of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ?

Apparently Kierkegaard did not like the benign God in Hegel. He wanted to reinstate the scaring God of the Old Testament. Faith is generated only in the context of an unreasonable demand from God, as in the case of Abraham. In fact God's demand is so arbitrary that it not only suspends the ethical, but even contradicts his own perpetual commandment: 'Thou shalt not kill.' Martin Buber criticizes Kierkegaard for relativizing the ethical by the latter's unqualified praise of Abraham going to sacrifice his young son in response to a demand from God.<sup>25</sup>

Kierkegaard would reply that what God demands is the ethical, and that God's demand cannot be evaluated by some extraneous absolute ethical norm.

But is not the absolute ethical norm 'Thou shalt not kill' also instituted by God? Is not God demanding disobedience by making two contradictory commands? Kierkegaard would reply that it is the sovereign God who lays down the general ethical norm and who demands the 'teleological suspension of the ethical' in a particular context, and therefore that obedience has to be rendered in the context. It is not to everyone that God makes a demand that goes beyond the absolute norm. Only the 'Single One', the chosen one, is so isolated and tested.

That kind of contextualism leaves many questions unanswered. How am I to know for sure that the demand for the teleological suspension of the ethical comes from God, and not from my own passions and desires? How am I to recognize the voice of God amidst the cacophonous medley of voices that is the 20th century? If, for example, the revolution demands that in the teleological perspective of the welfare of man, I should murder my fellowman, can I take it to be the same voice of God that spoke to Abraham and demanded the slaughter of his only son?

On the one hand, I must confess, there is something of the

<sup>25</sup> *On the Suspension of the Ethical*. Essay in Martin Buber, *Eclipse of God*, Harper, 1957, pp. 115 ff.

Nazi in all of us. We want an arbitrary dictator as our God. We admire naked and irresponsible power, albeit secretly. That perhaps, was the secret of the great influence that Barth once had.

But then sooner or later, and often sooner rather than later, the reaction sets in. We find this arbitrary God too much of a meddler, as the Roman people invariably found their Caesars to be. Then we plot to murder our God by downright atheism or 'Christian atheism'.

The problem of the authority of God is the problem of the freedom of man. It is when we find human freedom leading us into evil, as it did in the case of Nazi Germany, that we immediately invoke an arbitrary God who denies freedom to man. Thus we seek to escape responsibility by laying down our freedom and making God a slave-driver. If not God, perhaps de Gaulle. . . .

### Freedom and the Individual

Perhaps by far the most serious deviation in classical western Christian theology is the underplaying of man, his dignity and his freedom.

And here a major share of the responsibility goes to Augustine—that amazing fountainhead and towering genius of the western intellectual tradition, both Christian and secular.

Augustine is not a doctor of the universal Church, let us make that quite clear. The Eastern tradition has consistently refused to take his views as suitable for Christian teaching—though many of these did infiltrate into the Eastern tradition, but never under his name. He is neither Father nor Doctor for the Eastern Church. Not that we regard him as a heretic, nor do we minimise his spiritual and intellectual achievements. It is simply that he does not teach within the authentic tradition. His innovations are often misleading. And his understanding of man as totally sinful, without any capacity for good in him, could be understood only as a pious confession of human frailty, but not as a matter of faith to be taken wholly seriously.

We should, of course, understand Augustine in his context, in order to do him justice.

His fundamental preoccupation, from his very youth, was with the problem of evil—evil in the world, evil in the self. That was the central question in a disintegrating Roman Empire. The philosophers and the theorists wrote in praise of reason and freedom, the classical values of hellenic civilization; but the reality of the Graeco-Roman Empire of the fourth century was that it was crumbling, mainly due to moral evil—lack of moral fibre in the emperors, the prefects, the guards, the senators, the people. The will of man had gone flabby and wicked, sensuous and aggressive. It was in the will that evil was regnant. But whence this evil?

There were two answers readily available, and Augustine tried Manicheism first—for nine years. Manes or Mani, the founder of Manicheism (Ca 215-275), was a Persian philosopher, who taught a kind of Bahaimism which was popular among intellectuals. It was a liberal religion which regarded Jesus, the Buddha, the Prophets, and Manes himself, as men sent by the Lord of light to liberate the original particles of light which Satan has stolen from the Kingdom of light and later hidden in the evil human body.

Satan himself according to Mani was an eternal principle of evil—an evil god of darkness opposed to the good God of light. Release of the good in us would come through ascetic practices and even vegetarianism. Augustine tried it for nine years. No good particles of light seemed to have been released from his body—until the grace of God came in Christ.

There and then he decides two things—first there are no particles of light hidden in man; if he is to be good, the good has to come from outside, by the Grace of God, by the hearing of the Word, by baptism. Man is totally evil. And there is no second god of evil.

In his earlier works as a Christian he is most concerned to defend the sovereignty of God over against a second god of evil, and to find the source of evil somewhere else than in the good God.

There the second answer—that of the Cappadocian fathers, which he got either through Jerome and Ruffinus or through Ambrose—came to his aid. St. Gregory Nazianzen (329-389) had clearly taught:

Believe that evil has neither substance nor kingdom, whether

unoriginate or self-existent or created by God; it is our work and that of the evil one, which befell us by heedlessness, but not from our Creator.<sup>26</sup>

His colleague St. Gregory of Nyssa had put it even more explicitly:

No growth of evil had its beginning in God's will. Vice should have been blameless were it inscribed with the name of God as its maker and Father. But evil is, in some way or other, engendered from within, springing up in the will at that moment when there is a retrocession of the soul from the good.<sup>27</sup>

Nyssa had clearly stated, in the same work, that evil springs from human freedom, that God did not make man do evil, but that man did it of his own free will. But evil has no substance. It is the lack of good. It is an eclipse of the good, a shadow.

Augustine also takes over the Cappadocian argument against the evil God of the Manichaeans. Evil is finite. If this God is capable only of evil and not of good, then he is not free, therefore he is neither God nor eternal.

Having thus denied an unoriginate eternal principle of evil, Augustine had to speak of the freewill of man in order to explain the origin of evil. But in his later controversy with the Pelagians, some of these anti-Manichaean writings on freewill were used by his enemies against his own doctrine of Grace. Hence his withdrawal, towards the end, of the emphasis on freewill<sup>28</sup> and his settling down to regard human freedom as a neutral, medium kind of good, not central to human nature.

Unfortunately, on the other hand, he regards evil itself as central to human nature. For had he not fought with all the Manichaean weapons against concupiscence in his own soul, only to see himself fall again and again, evil having been ineradicably entrenched in his nature? Evil lies in *natura mea*.

The whole of humanity is a *massa damnata*, a lump of sin out of which no movement towards the good can come. The vaunted virtues of hellenic philosophy—reason and freedom—

<sup>26</sup> Oratio In Sanctum Baptisma. 40 : 45, Patrologia Graeca 36 : 424 A.

<sup>27</sup> The Great Catechism: V. Eng. Tr. in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series Two, Vol. 5, p. 479.

<sup>28</sup> See *Retractationes* I : ix.

are themselves in bondage to sin. Desire precedes thought. The will goes before the mind, deflecting and distorting it. *Partum mentis praecedat appetitus*. It is love that decides which way the mind goes. Love has only two choices—Jerusalem, city of God (heaven), or Babylon, city of the earth (the crumbling Roman Empire). The *natura mea* inclines me always to Babylon, the worldly city, the secular city. Only the grace of God coming from outside the *massa damnata* can lift my love up to Jerusalem.

Augustine thus dramatized what is an authentic biblical insight:

The desires of the flesh are against the spirit, and the desires of the spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would (Gal. 5 : 17).

In over-dramatizing these words of St. Paul, Augustine laid the foundations for an idea deeply entrenched in western culture—that evil or sin is an integral part of human nature. What was a phenomenological observation in St. Paul is made ontological in Augustine. For St. Paul, sin is an enemy that has come into humanity from outside.<sup>29</sup> We are freed from sin by Christ, and are not to yield ourselves to it, says St. Paul.<sup>30</sup> For Augustine it becomes a central reality and a basic pre-occupation.

It may be useful, even if presumptuous, to see where the basic distortions of Christian teaching, stemming from St. Augustine, are impinging upon us today. If the following remarks appear too sweeping in relation to Augustine, it would still be useful to acknowledge that they are real deviations.

### Five Distortions

(1) *A low View of the Incarnation*: Augustine's Manichaeic background shows through in his incapacity to take the flesh of our Lord sufficiently seriously. Monophysitism and Manichaeism are country cousins, and the one usually brings the other along. Regard the flesh, the body, matter, as evil, or even inferior, and one has already begun the deviation from Christian truth.

<sup>29</sup> *Romans* 5 : 12—Sin entered the world.

<sup>30</sup> *Romans* 6 : 11 ff.



When Augustine says, for example, about our looking at Christ, that 'it is better that you do not see this flesh, but picture to yourself the divinity'<sup>21</sup> he is probably not a monophysite, and is simply following an early line of Athanasius. But the following quotation, which could be duplicated, reveals a deeper distrust of the flesh, of the world, of time-existence, and therefore of the Incarnation itself:

There is one thing that is transitory in the Lord, another which is enduring. What is transitory is the Virgin birth, the Incarnation of the Word, the gradation of ages, the exhibition of miracles, the endurance of sufferings, death, resurrection, the ascent into heaven—all this is transitory. . . . Whoever desire to understand God the Word, let not flesh suffice them, because for their sakes the Word was made flesh, that they might be nourished with milk.<sup>22</sup>

This playing down of the Incarnation is at the root of many problems in contemporary theology, including its over-eschatological orientation. Even the new theology of hope is based on a *promise*, as in the Old Testament, not on the fact of the Incarnation, which is the true starting point of the Christian faith.

(2) *A low View of the World:* As a consequence of his low view of the Incarnation, Augustine undervalues this world. Or the converse might be the case. This comes out most clearly in the radical polarity he poses between Jerusalem, the city of God, and Babylon, the city of the earth. Babylon is the creation of sinful man in his love of the world. It is the flowing river of time where nothing is permanent. It is something to escape from, for

It flows . . . it glides on, beware, for it carries things away with it.

But Jerusalem is otherwise:

O holy Sion, where all stands firm and nothing flows! Who has thrown us headlong into this (Babylon)? Why have we left thy Founder and thy society? Behold, set where all things are flowing and gliding away, scarce one, if he can grasp a tree, shall be snatched from the river and escape. Humbling ourselves, therefore, in our captivity, let us 'sit upon the rivers of Babylon',

<sup>21</sup> Sermon CCLXIV : 4.

<sup>22</sup> In Ps CIX : 5.

let us not dare to plunge into those rivers, or to be proud and lifted up in the evil and sadness of our capacity, but let us sit, and so weep.<sup>33</sup>

And that attitude is precisely what modern theology reacts from. We cannot refuse today to plunge into the flowing waters of time, there to be involved in the torrents of politics and economics, of race and war, of all that touches the welfare of man. The Incarnation has taken place in this Babylon. Jerusalem is here, at the very heart of Babylon. We cannot escape into a heavenly and static Jerusalem, however much we may be scared of the flowing stream of time. In fact the Church is the place of abiding in the midst of the torrent, the Jerusalem in the midst of Babylon.

Augustine's idea of the two cities comes up in the western tradition in various ways—nature and super-nature, nature and grace, world and Church, law and Gospel, the two kingdoms of Luther, reason and revelation and so on.

It is this basic dualism and the failure to regard the two as interpenetrating that has caused much of today's secular reaction. Modern man refuses to accept a flight from the world of time into the unchanging immobility of a static heaven.

(3) *A low View of Man*: Thirdly, because Augustine is tempted to regard Christ's humanity as but a means, an instrument, a vehicle, and not as something permanent and valuable in itself, he entertains a *low view of Man*. Only if we remember that it is a Man who sits at the right hand of the Father as Lord of all, can we have an adequately high view of the new humanity. This Augustine is unwilling to accept. Man still can do nothing of himself. Whatever he does on his own is *eo ipso* wrong and sinful:

Man is not anything of such kind that, having come into being, he can as of himself do anything rightly, if He who made him withdraws Himself from him, but his whole good action is to turn to Him by whom he was made, and to be made just by him, and pious and wise and happy.<sup>34</sup>

This childish dependence of man on God is what Nietzsche caricatured as the slave morality. It is an affront to human

<sup>33</sup> In Ps CXXXVI. 3,4, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

<sup>34</sup> *De genesi ad litteram* VIII: xii: 25, 27, *op. cit.*, pp. 306-307.

aligntly, and certainly not the view which Christ and the Apostles hold about Man. The 'world come of age' cannot brook this insult to mankind. It is not the Christian Gospel which undermines man in order to exalt God. It is too petty a god who can have glory only at the expense of the glory of man. The Augustinian ideal of Man as God wants him is a beggar:

A beggar is he who ascribeth nothing to himself, who hopeth all from God's mercy. Before the Lord's gate he crieth every day, knocking, that it may be opened unto him, naked and trembling, that he may be clothed, casting down his eyes to the ground, beating his breast. This beggar, this poor man, this humble man, God hath greatly helped. . . .

The assumption of polarity between the interests of God and those of man is perhaps responsible for the reactions of 'secular theology' and 'death-of-God' theology.

(4) *Preoccupation with the Individual*: Fourthly Augustine's soteriology was focused too strongly on *the individual man* and *his deliverance from personal sin* (original and actual). Sin was further misunderstood as primarily located in concupiscence, the love of Babylon, the city of earth.

Of course, Augustine was not an 'individualist'. He has much to say about the body of Christ and about the corporate character of the heavenly Jerusalem—the Church.

This soteriology leads to two errors. First, by concentrating on individual sin, it takes our eyes off the evil entrenched in society itself. If only individuals are to be plucked out from the flowing stream of time and placed on the safe rock of Jerusalem, then the campaign against social injustice has very little significance. But if the kingdom of God has to be manifested in human history, then there has to be more than individual saints. Society itself has to be 'saved'.

Secondly, by concentrating on Salvation from sin, we are caught in a negative view of salvation. The Image of God view of salvation, as taught in the Eastern tradition, makes the demand that the unlimited goodness of God has to be concretely manifested through the corporate righteousness of man on earth.

Our secular theology moves away from individual and other-worldly holiness to a corporate and this-worldly holiness.

Perhaps we are overdoing the denial of personal holiness and other-worldly sanctity. We need, however, to recover from a

one-sided view of salvation as that of the individual from his sin. We need today a positive view of salvation which uses human freedom to discern and create new forms of social and personal good.

(5) *A low View of the Sacraments*: Fifthly, and this has already been implied, Augustine's devaluation of the body and therefore, of matter, is reflected in his low view of the sacraments.

Leave then abroad both thy clothing and thy flesh, descend into thyself; go to thy secret chamber, thy mind. If thou be far from thine own self, how canst thou draw near unto God? For not in the body, but in the mind was man made in the image of God.<sup>35</sup>

Gregory of Nyssa would not agree, as we shall see later, that the body has nothing to do with the image of God. This underplaying of the sacraments as '*verbum visibile*', an accommodation to our weak bodily nature, of the purer word, which must be invisible, has Manichaean antecedents.

Without the recovery of a richer sacramental view, we cannot recover a theology that takes the Incarnation seriously. The world is good, the body is good. Without the body, there are no senses; without the senses, the human mind knows nothing. Christ has taken his body into heaven. Matter is the medium of the spirit. In fact matter itself is spiritual—so the eastern fathers would argue.

If theology has to do justice to technology and culture, a higher view of the sacraments is necessary. This is not the place for an elaborate excursus on the topic, for the very word *sacramentum* is alien to the eastern tradition.

\* \* \* \*

These five fundamental deviations which have their origin in Augustine are pointed out, not to show the superiority of one tradition over the other, but in order that we may all correct each other and be corrected by the authentic tradition. We started on this line with a discussion of Augustine's great fear of freedom.

But behind that fear lies a deeper failure—the failure to understand Man as made in the Image of God. No adequate solution to the problems of authority and freedom can be discerned until the meaning of the Image is more fully grasped.

<sup>35</sup> In *Joan. Evang.* XXIII, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

## DEVIATIONS AND DISTORTIONS

## Authority and the Freedom of Man

It is quite easy to assume that some form of authority is necessary for man, and then to proceed with the question—*which authority?* Here we need to question the assumption itself. For behind the very notion of authority there lies Kierkegaard's vexing question of the 'starting point'.

If I say that I believe in Jesus Christ, someone can very well ask me: 'On what authority?'. I may answer either 'For the Bible tells me so' or 'The Church tells me so'. This can provoke a further question—'On whose authority do you believe the Bible or the Church?' And the series can be carried through *ad infinitum*.

If on the other hand I say, 'Because I have experienced that Jesus Christ delivers me from the power of sin', I am resorting to a private experience as my authority which cannot be checked publicly, and cannot therefore serve as authority for anyone else. The same is the case if I say, 'Because the Holy Spirit convinces me inwardly that the testimony of the Bible is true.'

Another possibility is brazenly to argue for the immediate authority of the pragmatic method, as Barbara Ward does ingeniously in her book *Faith and Freedom*.

Since . . . the western mind has in the last century become more and more accustomed to think of proof in the pragmatic terms of modern science—a thing being 'true' if it can be shown to work—it is perhaps worth remembering that even here in the sphere of pragmatic proof, faith and science conform to a similar pattern and claim a comparable validity.

Barbara Ward puts the following words into the mouth of the 'Saint':

We, the scientists of Goodness, tell you that if you will take the raw materials of your all too human mind and body and process them through the laboratory of detachment, humility, prayer and

neighbourly love, the result will be the explosion into your life of the overwhelming love and knowledge of God. Do not think that you can know God except by hearsay unless you submit yourself to this experimental process, any more than you can produce nuclear fission without an Oak Ridge or a Harwell. But we promise that if you experiment in this way and carry the experiment out under clinically pure conditions—as it has been in the life of the best and purest of mankind—then the result is scientifically certain. The pure of heart shall see God. That statement of fact is as experimentally certain as that  $H_2O$  is the constitution of water, and it is proved by the same experimental reason.<sup>36</sup>

Coming from a Roman Catholic, this is surprising. She does not invoke the authority of magisterium or tradition. And it raises two questions: (a) What happens to the doctrine of 'prevenient Grace' necessary for faith? Is this not too Pelagian? Can we simply by doing certain things force the vision of God? Can the vision of God too be reduced to an if-then formula? Or is it a free gift?

(b) Are we reducing God to the level of the Q.E.D. of a laboratory experiment, thereby bringing him within man's controlling power?

There is a point of great significance, however, in the lady's words. Her basic intuition is right, that the theoretical-cognitive is inseparable from the practical-ethical-cultic. That separation has taken place in our Christian history, and the current crisis is at least in part the consequence of this breach between the cognitive and the ethical-cultic.

But the breach already took place ages ago. However much we may disagree with Harnack's analysis of the development of dogma as a basic distortion of the Church's spirituality, we have to concede that the over-development of theology and speculative philosophy in the Christian West can at least in part be attributed to the alienation of thought from life and worship.

### The Pseudomorphosis of Christianity

The second century of our era already witnesses to this *pseudomorphosis*. Not so much in the writings of the Apologists who tried to accommodate Christian truth to Greek Philosophy.

<sup>36</sup> *Faith and Freedom*. Image Book, 1958, p. 282.

It was more in the fight against heresy, and particularly against the Gnostic and Arian heresies that the undue emphasis on 'right teaching' begins to go on a dangerous deviation.

Pseudomorphosis is a term which comes from mineralogy. Different elements in crystallizing assume varying geometrical shapes—sphere, cube, cone and so on. It is observed that such crystals of various minerals are seen in the rocks. Imagine one of these crystals disintegrating in due course of time, leaving an empty space in the rock, say in the form of a cone. Into this empty space later on comes a solution of another mineral which normally crystallizes as a cube. But it has only the space of the cone available to it. So contrary to its 'nature', it takes a conical shape. This is pseudomorphosis. Spengler draws our attention to this phenomenon occurring also in the field of values and ideals.

It is possible to argue, with Leslie Dewart, that Christianity underwent something of a pseudomorphosis in the second, third and fourth centuries. But the process was not a simple assimilation of hellenistic categories by Christian apologetics or theology.

It was in the struggle against the Gnostic heresy that Irenaeus developed the notion of Apostolic succession for the right teaching, a notion first advanced by the Gnostics themselves.<sup>37</sup> But this particular brand of Gnosticism against which Irenaeus was contending had itself undergone a pseudomorphosis.

The Gnostic tradition had its origin in the mystery cults of Asia, and when it confronted the hellenistic culture of the early Christian centuries, it was certainly influenced by the *grundmotifs* of that fermenting cultural milieu. The central *motif* of the age was the quest for a salvation which was to be brought into our world by a transcendent being. Men of the late Roman Empire were world-weary, yearning for deliverance of the soul from the crushing burden of the body and the world in which it was imprisoned. The body and the world were material, evil, transient, and confining. The need was to escape into a spiritual world—good, permanent, and liberating. This general religion of the time Hans Jonas calls 'a dualistic, transcendent religion of salvation'.<sup>38</sup>

Gnosticism came into this milieu, emphasizing *gnosis*, not

<sup>37</sup> See Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Bk. III, 2 ff.

<sup>38</sup> Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, 2nd ed., Boston, 1963, p. 32.

rational knowledge of dogmas, but a secret, revealed knowledge of God, the soul and the world. It was a supra-rational knowledge, supernaturally *revealed*. The revelation itself took place not in simple instruction, but in a solemn cultic act. The revelation was an act of encounter, not the passing on of knowledge. It was a saving encounter, for the knowledge acquired is mystical, uniting the knower and the known. The knower is transformed by the knowledge, because it is a new relation and gives a new identity to the knower. The knowledge is not there to be shaped into dogma and transmitted to others as propositional truth. Others too must acquire the knowledge through the mystical encounter.

Now, it was not in this form that Irenaeus encountered the gnosticism of Valentinus and Basilides, Cerinthus and Marcion. Gnosticism itself had been hellenized into a system of speculative dogmas. Or at least that is the form in which he has written about it. And these Christian gnostics, who had made a new product out of elements from Hellenism, Christianity and Oriental mystery religions, claimed the authority of a secret tradition stemming from the Apostles for what they taught.

Gnosticism, in its hellenized, pseudo-intellectual form, was thus an internal problem of the Christian Church.

As opposed to the Gnostic claims about what the Apostles taught Irenaeus and Hippolytus had to produce different sets of propositions as the real body of knowledge handed down by the Apostles.

One cannot say that this was a clear case of pseudomorphosis. For Irenaeus, being an Asian himself, was fully aware that the truth could not be reduced to propositional formulae. But he had sown the seed for a doctrine of authority which was later to work havoc in the life of the Church—that the truth is to be formulated out of the Scriptures and by the magisterium of the Church.

In Origen, that prolific genius of Alexandria, we find this pseudomorphosis further advanced:

Just as there are many among Greeks and barbarians (referring probably to the various schools of Gnostics) alike who promise us the truth, and yet we gave up seeking for it from all who claimed it for false opinions after we had become convinced that we must learn the truth from him: in the same way when we find many



who think they hold the doctrine of Christ, some of them differing in their beliefs from the Christians of earlier times, and yet the teaching of the Church, handed down in unbroken succession from the Apostles, is still preserved and continues to exist in the churches up to the present day, we maintain that *that only is to be believed as the truth which in no way conflicts with the tradition of the church and the apostles.*

'But the following fact should be understood: The holy Apostles, when preaching the faith of Christ (*fidem Christi*) took certain doctrines, those namely which they believed to be necessary ones, and delivered them in the plainest terms to all believers, even to such as appeared to be somewhat dull in the investigation of divine knowledge. The grounds of their statements they left to be investigated by such as should merit the higher gifts of the spirit, and in particular by such as should afterwards receive through the holy Spirit Himself the graces of language, wisdom and knowledge. There were other doctrines, however, about which the apostles simply said that things were so, keeping silence as to the how or why; their intention undoubtedly being to supply the more diligent of those who came after them, such as should prove to be lovers of wisdom, with an exercise on which to display the fruit of their ability'.<sup>30</sup>

The Christian faith appears here to have been reduced to a set of formulated doctrines, with a few unclarified doctrines left behind by the Apostles in order that later theologians may have something to chew on.

### Knowledge and Ethics

Equally superficial is Origen's understanding of the relation between doctrine and ethics. Ethics is a consequence of a doctrine—namely 'the doctrine of the righteous judgment of God, a doctrine which, if believed to be pure, summons its hearers to live a good life and by every means to avoid sin.'

This encyclopaedic mind of ancient Christianity shows no depth of perception in the understanding of human free-will either. The main difference between living beings and inanimate beings lies in this: living beings cause motion from within, inanimate objects have to be moved from without. Movement from within living beings is caused by images in consciousness

<sup>30</sup> *On First Principles*, Eng. Tr. G. W. Butterworth, Harper, 1966, p. 2.

creating an impulse. Rational animals are different from the *aloi* (beasts) in that the former can judge between the various images and therefore be selective in their effective impulses. It is the freewill which chooses which impulse to follow. Education is the capacity to regulate one's impulses and to discern in dispassionate wisdom which impulses are good and which bad.

Thus man's freedom consists in the capacity to regulate one's impulses. Origen is here in the great tradition of Hellenism which exalts both reason and freedom, making them inseparable, though reason always precedes the ethical will.

Origen thus escapes at least in part from the intellectualist pseudomorphosis of Christianity by positing a fairly high role for human freedom, albeit limited by the providence of God. Free-will is never alone in acting, but without human freedom certain actions cannot be explained. The planting of the crops and the watering are the work of free-will, but it is not the free-will that gives the increase, but rather, God.

It is, then, neither in our power to make progress apart from the knowledge of God, nor does the knowledge of God compel us to do so, unless we ourselves contribute something towards the good result.<sup>40</sup>

### The Cappadocian Fathers

Origen developed also what was later to become a disastrous weapon in the hands of the Arians, the method of using proof-texts to demonstrate the truthfulness of doctrines. Christ and the Apostles had used texts from the Old Testament—but that was mainly to establish the identity of Jesus as the Messiah foretold by the prophets, not to prove doctrines. Doctrinal speculation of this kind had its precedents in the Apologists of an earlier era. But they never had the influence in the Church which Origen's writings had.

When we come to the Cappadocian Fathers (St. Basil, St. Gregory Nazianzen and St. Gregory of Nyssa), we find the right synthesis between the biblical realism of Antioch and the speculative genius of Alexandria. Cappadocian theology is a magnificent blend of the Gospel with elements of Hellenic philosophy,

<sup>40</sup> *On First Principles*, III : 6, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

oriental mysticism (direct awareness of God's majesty, love and holiness), Antiochian realism and Alexandrian theoretical speculation. It still amazes us by its rich contemporaneity.

On the matter of the relation between knowledge and ethical action, it is St. Gregory Nazianzen who makes the position clear. His fundamental affirmation is that knowledge of God is dependent on ethical maturity. He who does right alone can know the truth. Unlike Origen, Nazianzen affirms the primacy of the ethical:

Not to everyone, my friends, does it belong to philosophize about God; not to everyone—the subject is not so cheap and low—and I will add not to every audience, nor at all times, not on all points; but on certain occasions, and before certain persons, and within certain limits . . . It is when we are free from all defilement or disturbance, and when that which rules within us is not confused with vexatious or erring images.<sup>41</sup>

This is a basically biblical insight. St. Paul says the same in his prayer for the Colossians (1:10), that they may 'lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.' Growth in the cognitive is correlated to growth in the ethical. To put it differently, the creatively ethical (bearing fruit in every good work) is an aspect of the knowledge of God.

Here is an important answer to the questions: How do I know God? How do I live my life? The two questions are inseparable, and the answers to both have to be sought simultaneously. Sound Christian teaching has to keep the two together. This is what the pastoral epistles<sup>42</sup> call 'sound teaching' (*hygiainouse didaskalia*). It is healthy and health-giving teaching that helps man grow to the fulness of his stature. Faith itself grows only by 'works'. A guilty conscience leads to the shipwreck of faith as the Epistle to Timothy says (2:19).

It is only in our doing that our knowing is clarified, confirmed and augmented.

St. Basil says in his letter to Maximus the philosopher:

We are delighted to find you not slothful in your attitude towards the first and greatest of virtues—love towards both God and neigh-

<sup>41</sup> *First Theological Oration*. III. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Series Two, Vol. VII. p. 285.

<sup>42</sup> See Titus 2:1, 2, 8.

bour. We hold as an indication of the latter, your tenderness for me, as a proof of the former, your enthusiasm for knowledge. That everything is contained in these two is known to every disciple of Christ.<sup>43</sup>

Pseudomorphosis sets in when the knowledge of God is separated from the love and worship of God and from the love and service of fellowmen.

For the Cappadocians, however, the ethical could not be separated from the cultic. The two together constituted holiness, which was the true matrix of the knowledge of God. Holiness is not merely a matter of ethical purity. It involves transfiguration of the very being of man into the likeness and image of God; it is in worship that man becomes transfigured and therefore enabled both to be ethically good and thus to know God.

By worship is meant, however, much more than being gathered together to hear the word of God. That is only one aspect, the preliminary stage, of the worship of God, open to Christians and non-Christians alike.

True worship is access into the presence of God, which follows the hearing of the word, and is open only to the baptized.

The Eucharist is not merely a means of grace, or a *verbum visibile* as Augustine taught. It is the supreme and central act of the Church, which is the authentic milieu for the knowledge of God. Here the veil between God and man is torn in the broken body of Christ, and we lift up our hearts to where Christ stands at the right hand of the Father.

How do we know God? In this act of the community, where the veil is drawn aside, where the community, united with Christ and with each other by the spirit, gives itself in Christ to the Father, and the Father gives himself to us in Christ.

That is revelation—an event, not a body of knowledge, not a book. Revelation is face-to-face encounter with God in love, calling him Abba, Father. And it takes place supremely in this act of the Eucharistic offering and communion. And true knowledge of God can take place only in the encounter—not in theology.

The Revelation of God is not an act which closed either with the Ascension or with the death of the last Apostle. It is not an

<sup>43</sup> Roy J. Deferrari. Tr. St. Basil, *The Letters*, Vol. I.

event of the past recorded in the Bible, which we then study by analytical—critical examination of the texts.

The unveiling that took place in Christ continues to this day in the encounter of the Eucharist. The Bible has its honoured place in that encounter. Theology can hold the torch to that encounter. But neither of them nor even the personal encounter of pietism and fundamentalism, can take the place of the rendezvous which Christ himself established, when he said: 'Do this until I come.'

### **The Cappadocians and the knowledge of God**

The Cappadocian Fathers make four fundamental assertions which seem to be of the greatest possible importance for the facing of the current crisis in authority in the Church.

(1) **Worship and Ethics, the Love of God and the Love of Man**, together constitute the only milieu in which there can be a true knowledge of God and therefore authentic theology. Theology cannot be spun out in the professor's study.

It has to come out of the life of worship of the Church and out of the life of Christians in the world. St. Basil is explicit on this point.

I repeat, knowledge is manifold,—it involves perception of our creator, recognition of His wonderful works, observance of His commandments and intimate communion with Him . . . Thou shalt put them, it is said, before the testimony, and I shall be known of thee thence . . . The statement that God shall be known from the mercy-seat means that He will be known to His worshippers. And 'the Lord knoweth them that are His', means that on account of their good works He receives them into intimate communion with Him.

Or again :

If it (the mind) has yielded to the aid of the spirit, it will have understanding of the truth, and will know God. But it will know Him, as the Apostle says, in part; and in the life to come more perfectly. . . . We say that we know our God from his operations, but do not undertake to approach near to His essence.

The current crisis of authority can be overcome, not by a new theology, but by the self-authenticating quality of life cen-

tered in quickened Eucharistic worship and selfless service to fellowmen in the context of current issues. It is a difficult balance to maintain in our contemporary world. And yet where it is practised, a quality of authenticity enters the picture and draws men to it. A striking example of this kind of spirituality is the Protestant monastic community of Taize in France, or the Catholic communities of the Little Brothers and Little Sisters of Jesus. Here we see the alienation of theology from worship and ethics being gradually overcome.

(2) The Cappadocian Fathers insist also that God in His essence is basically incomprehensible, and to pretend to have conceptual knowledge of him is dishonest. Here the Nazianzen flings a taunt even at Plato for having pretended to have known God:

To conceive God is difficult, to express him in words is impossible, says a Greek teacher of divinity<sup>44</sup> quite cleverly, I think, with the intention that he might be thought to have apprehended him, since he says it is difficult, but he can evade the responsibility of giving expression to the conception, since that is admitted to be impossible. But according to me, to express him in words is impossible, to conceive him mentally is even more impossible.<sup>45</sup>

Gregory insists that God has not made himself incomprehensible out of jealousy. Incomprehensibility belongs to his very essence as pure, undetermined, free being.

What God is in nature (*physis*) and essence (*ousia*), no man has ever yet discovered, or can discover. Whether it will ever be discovered is a question which he who will may examine and decide.<sup>46</sup>

He thinks that such knowledge is possible only in ultimate union with God.

And yet we Christians are guilty of having falsely claimed to know about God and to be able to teach our knowledge of God to all and sundry. We need to come back to a confession of our ignorance, for the sake of honesty as well as to reduce the credibility gap between Christians and non-Christians. This will also preclude the cheap evangelization of adherents of other faiths with our superior knowledge of God—so arrogant and so repelling.

<sup>44</sup> Plato in *Timaeus* 28E.

<sup>45</sup> *Second Theological Oration*; IV (PG XXXVI. Oratio XXVIII).

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* XVII See Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers. Series II, Vol. VII., p. 294.

(3) The Cappadocians insist that God cannot be located in time or space, inside or outside the universe. It would be a great insult to the intelligence of our fourth century Fathers to accuse them of having believed in a God 'up there' or 'out there'. Gregory Nazianzen, after having established by strict logic that God is not a body, goes on to ask:

Is He nowhere or somewhere? If he is nowhere (i.e. not in space) then some questioning soul may demand—how can he then be said to exist? For if the non-existent is nowhere, then that which is nowhere may perhaps also be non-existent. But if He is somewhere, He must be either in the universe or beyond the universe. If *in* the universe, He must be either in part or in the whole. If in some part, then he is circumscribed by the part which is less than Himself; but if He is in the whole universe, then He is circumscribed by that which is greater than the universe, namely that which circumscribes the universe. For the universe is place, and no place is free from circumscription.<sup>47</sup>

If, after having read these words written in the fourth century, we assume our Fathers to have believed in a three-storey universe with God dwelling on the upper floor, that reveals little more than our own naivete and sad parochialism.

(4) Despite his unlocatability and incomprehensibility, he can be known by us, not in his *ousia*, but in terms of his *energia* or operations in our world. One has to purify oneself by worship and obedience in order to gain this knowledge. St. Basil makes this clear in his letters 234 and 235. St. Gregory of Nyssa has this to say in the Great Catechism:

And so one who rigorously explores the depths of the mystery receives in his spirit a mysterious and moderate apprehension of the teaching of God's nature. But he is unable to explain with logical clarity the ineffable depth of this mystery. For example, how can the same thing (i.e. the trinity) be capable of being numbered, and yet reject numeration? How can it be observed with distinctions and yet be apprehended as a monad? How can it be distinct in personality yet same in substance? . . . For it is as if the number of triad were a remedy in the case of those in error as to the one (the Jews) and the assertion of unity for those whose beliefs are dispersed among a number of divinities.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>47</sup> *Oration XXVIII* (Second Theological): 10.

<sup>48</sup> Chapter III. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series Two, Vol. V, p. 477.

## FREE GOD AND FREE MAN

## God, Man and World in Gregory of Nyssa

St. Gregory of Nyssa, Father of the Universal Church, has been neglected by western students and almost rejected on various false charges—Platonism, Origenism and Semi-Pelagianism. The recovery of this father and his teaching seems to be the *sine qua non* for western theology, whether Catholic or Protestant to regain its equilibrium and its sense of direction. He is more than merely an antidote to many of the Augustinian distortions in western theology. He can give us the ground-work for a theology that does justice to contemporary humanism and our interest in science and technology.

No doubt there is much of Plato and Origen in him. Pelagius probably read St. Gregory, but if our reconstruction of Pelagius' arguments is correct, then he did not understand the depths of Gregory. As for Platonism and Origenism, Gregory has filtered them through the authentic tradition of the Church, and gives to us the only kind of theology there is—the Christian tradition interpreted and enriched through the categories and concepts of the philosophers and Church fathers with a few creative contributions here and there.

Two excellent studies have been made of St. Gregory's thought by French-speaking scholars. They seem to be capable of greater penetration into eastern thought than their Anglo-Saxon colleagues. This is not to overlook the value of Gregorian studies by Werner Jaeger<sup>49</sup> and Hans von Balthasar.<sup>50</sup>

These studies in French, which appeared about the same time as Jaeger's great work, have not been able fully to take into account the fruits of Jaeger's more definitive edition. Yet they provide in a brief compass, and in relation to two of St. Gregory's key

<sup>49</sup> *Two Rediscovered Works of Ancient Christian Literature, Gregory of Nyssa and Macarius*, Leiden, 1954; *Jaeger et al-Gregorii Nyssemi Opera*, Vols. I-VIII, Leiden, 1952.

<sup>50</sup> *Presence et Pensée, Essai sur la philosophie religieuse de Grégoire de Nysse*, Paris, 1942.



concepts, an overview of his thought. Jerome Gaith's *La Conception de La Liberte chez Gregoire de Nysse* was published in Paris in 1953 in the series *Etudes de Philosophie Medievale* edited by Etienne Gilson. *L'Image de Dieu chez St. Gregoire de Nysse* by Fr. Roger Leys S.J. was published in 1951 (Paris, Desclée de Brouwer).

### Augustine and Nyssa

Apart from Augustine, St. Gregory of Nyssa was among the boldest of Christian thinkers. Augustine worked with the categories of human sinfulness and divine sovereignty, and therefore emphasized the huge *gap* between God and Man. Nyssa on the contrary saw the freedom of man as the central element to which everything was to be related, and therefore looked for the same freedom in the very essence of God, and so sought for *common ground* between God and Man.

In the Augustinian West, God and Man are essentially hetero-natural. In the Gregorian East, God and Man are essentially connatural. The two emphases have both their place in the authentic tradition. But western theology is too one-sided in its traditional emphasis on God's sovereignty and Man's submissiveness. These concepts of the West are also to be found in the more inclusive eastern tradition, but they are adequately balanced by the notions of the freedom and kingship of Man.

In a Greek society fettered by its notion of *heimarmene* (fate), Gregory's emphasis on freedom as the basis of human virtue was not without its hellenic antecedents. But by positing freedom in God, Man and the universe, Gregory has forged for us a fresh way to come to terms with reality which seems particularly appropriate to our time.

Augustine saw only the depraved state of fallen man and created a pessimistic anthropology out of that. Gregory saw the tension between man as he now appears (disintegrating and desperate) and what he really is by virtue of his creation. Mankind dreams constantly of becoming something other than what it now is. This nostalgia for home points to his true nature. He is now in bondage to something which is not his real nature.

Freedom means attainment of that dynamic and true nature of man.

St. Gregory's writings are addressed to two different types of readers—one to the literate masses and the other to the philosophically trained elite. In the latter class come definitely two of his brief but difficult works—*On the Soul and the Resurrection* and *On the Making of Man*. Equally philosophical, though somewhat longer is his *Life of Moses*. It is in these three works that Gregory reveals his more original and bold thinking. He seems to be afraid of offending the common people by placing such dangerous ideas before them. But even in his boldness he is aware of the limitations of human thought, the incapacity of the mind of man to penetrate the mysteries of the universe. He therefore often fails to develop some of his ideas systematically. So much the better for us, for that may be the reason why they still sound so fresh and contemporary.

What is even more problematic is that much of what Gregory teaches goes against the grain of what is regarded as authoritative Christian teaching in the West. On the question of original sin, for example, it is difficult to reconcile Nyssa's ideas with those of Augustine. But the latter have unfortunately become authoritative for the West.

Nyssa has to be seen and read with fresh vision—not within the categories of western theology. The grandeur and misery of man, his royal destiny and his pining away in bondage, the presence of evil and the fact of change, the need for alienated man to become true man—these are the themes of his choice.

### **The Freedom of God and the Freedom of Man**

There is no way of coming to terms with the freedom of man except by treating it in relation to the freedom of God Himself. To presuppose a measure of conflict between God's grace and Man's freedom, or between God's sovereignty or predestination and man's freedom seems to me to be the basic error of western theology.

If man is created in the image of God, argues Nyssa, then he should have all the good things in the prototype, and among these the most important, freedom from necessity, independence

and sovereignty (autonomy).<sup>51</sup> If man is in the image of God, then either God must be mortal and sinful like us, or else we have to become immortal, free and holy like him. There is no other alternative. And therefore the negation of the liberty of man is the negation of the freedom of God. If man does not become free, God would be bound. The liberation of man thus takes on an urgency and the character of an imperative.

Is God free? The freedom of God is studied by Nyssa in terms of his transcendence and his immanence. The Stoic regarded God as totally immanent. For Aristotle the Pure Act is totally transcendent. The unmoved Mover of Aristotle's metaphysics has no relation to this world, for it neither creates the world nor knows it. It moves the world by the world's attraction towards it (*eros*). The same is basically true of Plato and Plotinus.

But for Plotinus at least the universe is an emanation from the the One who remains immobile, as the light comes from the sun 'who does not move'. As the fire generates heat, so the One has generated the universe.

St. Gregory has obviously learned from all of them but when he sets forth his doctrine of God, it is something more than a mere synthesis :

God, being the Unique Good, in a simple non-composite nature, ever beholds himself, and never subjects himself to change according to the impulsions of his will, but eternally wills that which he is and is always that which he wills.<sup>52</sup>

All of it can be traced back in bits and pieces to Neo-Platonic writers. Hellenistic metaphysics lies behind this conception of God. But what is important here for Gregory is God's independence of the universe. Unlike the Stoic God who as the soul of the universe cannot exist apart from the cosmos, Gregory's God is totally transcendent, totally free of the created order.

But then where did the material universe come from? Is it outside God or in God? Either it is outside God, in which

<sup>51</sup> *eleutheros, adespotos* and *autokrates*. See *Patrologia Graeca*, 44 : 184 B, 45 : 101 D, 46 : 524 A.

<sup>52</sup> PG. 45 : 609 B.

case it is co-eternal with God, or it is in God, in which case God himself is material, for how can the immaterial contain the material?

That is really a tough one. And Gregory's answer is more comprehensible to 20th century man with his advanced knowledge of physics, but must have been quite difficult for his contemporaries. It is a simple answer: Matter itself is spiritual; or as we would today say—matter is a mode of energy.

And what is the source of this energy, which now appears as matter? Gregory wrote at a time when Julian the Apostate had reinstated polytheism in the Empire, and when Manicheeism with its (negative) affirmation of matter as eternal and as the source of evil was having its heyday in Asia Minor. Both polytheism and Manicheeism are affronts to the freedom of God, for they present powers opposed to God over whom he has no control.

### Evil and Freedom

The existence of evil was the fact from which Manicheeism took its start. To explain the presence of evil in the world and in man was a challenge to any sensitive and enquiring mind. Augustine was forced to acknowledge the presence of freedom in the creation, simply because he too had to explain the origin of evil. But he conceded freedom reluctantly. And when his own anti-Manichean writings about freedom were used against him by the Pelagians, he had to underplay freedom even further.

Gregory disposes of the problem of the existence of evil as an affront to the freedom of God by a dramatic and courageous intellectual step which Augustine found very helpful in his own thought. Gregory's answer to the problem of evil goes in three steps:

- (a) Physical evil cannot really be regarded as evil
- (b) Moral evil has no ultimate reality
- (c) Explain moral evil as the absence of good.

By physical evil Gregory means the inequalities among men for which they are not responsible. But those, he suggests, insofar as they are not the consequence of an evil will, cannot be

regarded as evil. Moral evil, on the other hand, has its own reality—as sin, vice, injustice. But these are actually the absence of righteousness, virtue, justice. They are privations in being (state of sin) or refusals to be (sinful acts). It is a negation of the true being of man. The being of man is created, but not its negation. Only that which is created exists, for creation is the will of God as we shall see below. That which is the negation of creation is therefore ontologically non-existent. “That which is not, has no reality, and that which has no reality is not the work of the one who has created reality.”<sup>152a</sup>

But moral evil is a moral reality, insists Gregory. It is an act of a will that is free. The will of an evil God, say the Manichaeans. But if this God is capable only of evil, he is not free. And if all his acts are evil, i.e. privation of good, then he himself represents the privation of being. And if he is not free, then he is not God. Moral evil can come only from a created being, free and capable of both good and evil.

This drama of evil is not a mere hallucination. It is the arena of the true liberation of man. The point here is that God’s freedom is not limited by the presence of evil.

We have summarized Gregory’s answer to the problem of evil somewhat too briefly to satisfy anyone. Gregory’s perception of the nature of evil offers much to a modern mind dissatisfied with Augustine’s categorical denial of any good in man and with the vision of man as totally evil.

It is unfair to accuse Gregory of some form of semi-pelagianism, since Pelagius himself got his basic ideas only through a misunderstanding of Gregory. Gregory does not deny the fact that man is sinful or evil. But he would categorically reject the allegation that human nature is evil. For, after all, nature is that which is given to a being by its creator, and that which constitutes his true and fully developed being. Gregory would say that human nature is not only good, but that it is the *perfection* of all good, and also that that good has to be a free good in order to be perfect.

In other words if we use the word ‘nature’ in its strict sense, nature is that which a new-born being is destined to be. The acorn has the oak tree as its nature, something that the seed could become, given the necessary combination of soil, water,

<sup>152a</sup> PG 45 : 32 C. D.

air etc. It may fail to reach its destiny. So also human nature is man's destiny to become a full human being. And for a full human being the decisive factor is that he is to be in the image of God. The nature of man is thus the image of God—not sin or evil. Pelagius never grasped this philosophical aspect of Gregory's thinking, and argues with Augustine on a purely ethical basis. The thinking of Pelagius and the thinking of Gregory do not belong to the same level, and it is thus unfair to understand Gregory in Pelagian terms.

Evil is of course there, the consequence of the decisions and actions of a created being free to choose between good and evil. It is primordial in creation, but not eternal. Evil is prior to man, and has come to man from the outside. It does not belong to his nature, for nature is what man was created with, and that creation being an act of God cannot be evil.

Evil, which is external to the true nature of man, has come to him from outside as St. Paul says (Romans 5). Human freedom opened the door to evil, and evil became lodged within human existence. Evil cannot be eradicated without the assistance of the grace of God. Sin has gained mastery over man and man has become a slave of evil, unable to liberate himself.

Liberation, however, from this enslavement to evil can be only part of the total development of man. The salvation of man is not to be understood merely in a negative sense, as deliverance from sin and death. Sin (moral evil) and death (loss of being resulting from moral evil) are enemies to be vanquished. Man must become capable of doing good (opposite of sin) and should possess being which is not subject to death.

But these are both negative ways of understanding salvation. Gregory would say that evil is an element in the arena of human existence which can enhance human freedom. True freedom comes, however, not merely in the negative struggle against evil, but in the heroic and worshipful process of striving to create the good in every situation. The fact that evil is there not only as the enemy of the good we would create, but also falsely taking on the form of a good (pleasure, comfort, security, glory, honour, power etc.), ensures that our choice of the good is a genuine act of freedom, i.e. that the good is chosen in a strenuous mood and despite the difficulties, rather than by an easy habit in which no decision or choice is required.

Evil can thus help the growth of true humanity in freedom, by demanding difficult and strenuous choices from man—to choose the good in situations where it is much easier to choose the evil. It is in the struggle against evil that man develops true freedom—against evil within one's own self as well as in the structures of society and in other persons and situations.

But evil cannot be ultimate, for then evil would be eternal. Evil exists as the manifestation of being which refuses to become what its destiny indicates, and thereby inevitably moves towards non-being. Evil is being-towards-death, and ultimately when death itself is removed, then evil will also have been removed, for death is the consequence of evil.

### **The Incomprehensibility of God as an Aspect of His Transcendence**

For Plotinus, as for Origen who follows the same line, the incomprehensibility of God is an accident of our minds, due to its being locked up in a material body. But Gregory's original contribution lies in the fact that he makes this incomprehensibility an essential element of his transcendence. Whoever 'Dionysius the Areopagite' may have been, he too agrees with Nyssa against Plotinus in his understanding of divine incomprehensibility as belonging to God's essence. Nazianzen would say that his incomprehensibility (which is also his transcendence) is the only thing we can know of God's essence.

The failure to grasp this truth adequately is at the root of all the errors of Origen, which led to so many diverse heresies including Arianism and Sabellianism. For Origen God was, as for Plotinus, simple, One, Spirit, the source and origin of all intellectual and spiritual nature.<sup>53</sup> He thought he knew God, as Plato thought he did. The Cappadocians and Pseudo-Dionysius insist, on the other hand, that no concept, no created intelligence, can comprehend God.

In fact St. Basil would insist that not only God, but even created beings cannot be comprehended in their essence, in their

<sup>53</sup> See the vibrant criticism of Origen's Hellenism by a recent Eastern Orthodox Scholar in Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, London, 1957, p. 32.

*ding-an-sich*. It is only the properties of the object that we can conceptually grasp. Their essence remains beyond knowledge. This would hardly be acceptable to Husserlian Phenomenology. But the Cappadocians regard the awareness of the final incomprehensibility of God and his creation as itself a gift of grace, an experience of deep and foundation-shaking reality.

In Nyssa's *Life of Moses* we are told that the higher we go up Mount Zion towards the presence of God, the clearer becomes the absolute incomprehensibility of the divine nature. But that spiritual ascent is itself a rich experience which remains conceptually ineffable. Without that deep and disturbing awareness of the incomprehensibility of God, too many of us have dared into the realm of theology, making statements about God at random, without restraint. We theologians created a God in our own image, or perhaps in the image of our glorious Caesars and Napoleons, and it is this God who has recently died. *Requiescat in Pace!*

### **Do we not know God by faith?**

Gregory's answer to the above question would be: 'If you mean knowing the essence of God, no.' For God dwells in light unapproachable, beyond the abyss of darkness, where even faith cannot penetrate in knowledge. Faith helps only to see the mysterious and hidden inaccessibility of God's essence and yet to trust in him who reveals his presence but not his essence. It is not just space and time that hide us from him; they are but symbols of an inner alienation of man from his constitutive reality. By faith the alienation is broken, but God remains incomprehensible.

### **The Freedom of Immanence**

God's immanence, according to Gregory, does not contradict his freedom. Here is another of his truly original contributions. But in order to grasp his notion of free immanence in the creation, we have to come to terms with his very notion of creation.

As has been said earlier, creation is not an emanation from the essence of God. It is not an extension of his being, but



a product of his will. It is this will that constitutes the principles (*aformas*) the causes (*aitias*) and the energies (*dunameis*) of all created things. Matter and its various forms are thus, so to speak, the concretizations of the divine will. It is God's will that is the very being of creation. And God is immanent in creation by will, not by *ousia* or essence. But because it is the dynamic will of God who is freedom, the creation itself is dynamic and free.

Gregory was an out-and-out evolutionist in his doctrine of creation already in the fourth century. *In the Soul and the Resurrection*, he puts the following words in his sister's mouth:

Scripture informs us that the Deity proceeded by a sort of graduated and ordered advance to the creation of man. After the foundations of the universe were laid, as the history records, man did not appear on the earth at once, but the creation of the brutes preceded his, and the plants preceded them. Thereby Scripture shows that the forces of life blended with bodily nature according to a gradation, first it infused itself into insensate nature, and in continuation of this advanced into the sentient world, and then ascended to intelligent and rational beings. <sup>54</sup>

The world is good. Gregory has no doubt about it.

This will (God's) which as in its power to do all things will have no tendency to anything that is evil (for impulse towards evil is foreign to God's nature) but whatever is good, this it also wishes, and wishing, is able to perform, and being able, will not fail to perform, but it will bring all its proposals for good to effectual accomplishment. Now the world is good, and all its contents are seen to be wisely and skilfully ordered. <sup>55</sup>

The 'how' of Creation Gregory recognized to be perennially problematic, in fact beyond the reach of the human intellect. Says St. Macrina:

Reason cannot see *how* the visible comes out of the invisible, how the hard solid comes out of the intangible, how the finite comes out of the infinite, how that which is circumscribed by certain propositions, where the idea of quantity comes in, can come from that which has no size and so on. <sup>56</sup>

<sup>54</sup> NPNF, Series Two, Vol. V, 441 B.

P. G. 46: 60 A. One of the remarkable capacities of the Cappadocians in general was to use literal interpretation where the Scriptures clearly meant that, and to demythologize at the same time concepts like Creation, Fall, Heaven, Hell etc.

<sup>55</sup> *The Great Catechism*: I NPNF Vol. V. 476 A.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

Or earlier :

In order, then, to avoid falling into . . . these absurdities, which the enquiry into the origin of things involves, let us, following the example of the Apostle, leave the question of *how* in each created being, without meddling with it at all, but merely observing incidentally that the motion of God's will becomes at the moment of His choice a reality, and the intention becomes at once realized as a nature.<sup>57</sup>

God's immanence in creation should thus not be misunderstood as the presence of his *ousia* in the cosmos. It is because the very *ousia* of the cosmos is the will of God, that we speak of immanence at all. This immanence by will does not imprison God in creation. He remains free.

But his will is a dynamic will. It is constantly in motion towards a goal, a purpose. Why this purpose is not immediately achieved is also a matter of God's choice. He has willed it so. Despite the fall and the consequent coarsification of material existence, the material creation is still moved by the will of God towards its God-appointed destiny. Human history itself, says Gregory, is in movement towards a point, when the succession of birth and death shall cease, and humanity will be reconstituted in the Resurrection. To this we shall revert later, when dealing with God's immanence in man.

### Man, the Image of God

Gregory insists that the 'chief end of man' is more than merely beholding God and enjoying him: 'God has made us not simply spectators of the power of God, but also participants in his very nature.'

This *koinonia* with God, this belonging by our very structure to the nature of God, sounds blasphemous to many western thinkers. And yet this is the soul of the eastern tradition: 'God became man that man may become God.' If not by creation, at least by the Incarnation we have been made participants in God's nature.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>57</sup> *On the Soul and the Resurrection* : NPNF., Vol., V: 458 B.A.

<sup>58</sup> *Theias koinonoi phuseos*, 2 Pet. 1 : 4.

Not because, as in Plotinus, the soul is an emanation from God, but rather because God has in his freedom chosen to impart this grace to man.

For it is in order to manifest himself that God has made man. Not because he needed to do it; but in his super-abundant love and freedom he chose to create a being like himself, in whom he would reveal himself. Gregory insists that this very creation, was an act of free grace. The Incarnation completes it. But the Incarnation itself is possible because in the very creation there is a connaturality and even proportionality (a quantitative term which should normally not be used in this connection) between God and Man.

This, of course, would be unbearable to those brought up in the early Barthian tradition. A choice has to be made between early Barth or Basil and Gregory of Nyssa.

There is here no identification, *a la Sankara*, between God and Man. God remains free and transcendent. Man is part of the creation, but to be distinguished from the rest of creation by the fact that he alone is created in the image of God.

God is immanent in Man in a manner different from that in which he is immanent by will in the creation. For man was not created in exactly the same way as the rest of creation. God said, 'Let there be light' and there was light. In the case of man, it was not the *word* of God, but the deliberative counsel of God (Let us make man in our image) and consequently the *hand* of God which moulded him, and the *breath* (spirit) of God which was breathed into his nostrils. It is still a free immanence of the transcendent God which does not bind God. Yet it is a special kind of immanence. Man is aware of this presence within him, though enfeebled by the environment in which he has come to be. But there is in man, *pace* Barth, an inborn knowledge of God, a deep desire to behold him, and even to become like him, which is his true vocation. Man need not, however, go entirely out of himself, to know God, for God is also the 'beyond in our midst', at the depths of our very being. 'He who has purified his (inner) eye, he who has purified his heart, sees in the beauty of his own self the image of the divine nature.'<sup>59</sup>

<sup>59</sup> PG 44 : 1272C.

Jerome Gaith has drawn our attention to the fact that for Gregory the prefix *meta* (as in metaphysical) has always two meanings—both 'beyond' and 'in the interior' 'above and in the depths', for it denotes both the transcendent and the immanent aspects of God.<sup>60</sup>

But this immanence of God in the soul of man is not a static fact, it increases and decreases, in the measure in which the soul opens itself up to and approaches the transcendent freedom of God.

### God and Man

Gregory does not take the transcendence of man too lightly. The following passage demonstrates how realistic he is about the intellectual capacities of man, even in the pre-Kantian fourth century.

The creation can never, by its intellectual efforts, get out of itself, but it remains enclosed in itself. Whatever it sees, it is itself that it sees,—even when it imagines that it has attained to some transcendent object. It constantly seeks to go beyond itself, in its knowledge of being, to jump beyond the gap (*diastema*) but it never really succeeds. For in each object that it discovers with the mind it discerns always also this inherent gap (distension) in the understanding of its nature, this gap (distension) is nothing but the creation itself.<sup>61</sup>

But this excellent good which we have learned to seek and to cherish being beyond the created order, is also beyond the intellect. For how can our understanding, travelling across the multiplicity caused by the distension of creation, be able to grasp the undistended nature through temporal analysis by which it always seeks to grasp the antecedents of all it finds? Of course, it can by its incessant activity go beyond all the objects of its knowledge, but to lift itself beyond the very category of time is beyond its means, for it cannot take its stance outside of itself, nor can it escape its set limits or even time itself.

The human intellect, at this point, is somewhat like a man who finds himself at the extreme point of a jutting promontory.

<sup>60</sup> Gaith, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Heidegger's questions about the being of beings.

Let us imagine a deep red rock, slippery and precipitous. It is a mountain of immense height and at the summit, there is this narrow jutting promontory standing over a vast abyss. What would be the experience of a man who advances along the edge of this slippery rock, and suddenly finds no place to set his foot or get a hold for his hand? That would be the experience of a soul, who in intellectual pursuit of the non-temporal and the non-spatial, leaves the *terra firma* of finite things. Having neither place, nor time, nor measure, nor anything of that kind to hold on to, reason seeks to grasp the ungraspable and is seized by dizziness (*hilligia*). Not knowing where to turn next, reason comes back to that which is familiar, and is happy to believe simply that the Transcendent is other than all that it knows.

That is why, when the discussion gets beyond what can be discussed, it is time to stop . . . and to follow the example of the great souls who have spoken about God himself. Who shall speak of the marvels of the Lord? and 'I shall speak of thy works!.' 'This generation shall praise thy works'. So in the discourse about God, when the enquiry turns to the divine essence, it is time to stop; if on the contrary it takes for its object some beneficent energy of which the knowledge comes down to us, then we can praise its power, recount its miracles, describe its works, and thus make use of the discourse.<sup>62</sup>

Gregory should not therefore be accused of taking God too lightly by proposing connaturality between God and Man. The actual finitude of man is by no means overlooked.

All that we can know of God is what he does, his energies, his action. There is some point therefore in contemporary theology focussing on the acts of God and on the God who acts. That emphasis does not come merely from the activist tempo of our age. It has genuine patristic roots. But to claim that in Jesus Christ God has completely revealed himself and therefore to conceive God in terms of the Incarnate Jesus Christ, may at best be unwise, at worst blasphemous. It is one who has known Jesus Christ who says to us:

One does not know God except in terms of our incapacity to apprehend him.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>62</sup> From the conclusion of the VIIth homily on Ecclesiastes (PG 46 : 729-732).

The above translation is from the French of Fr. Leys.

<sup>63</sup> *Contra Eunomium* I : 373.

Christian claims to a special channel or source of knowledge of God, whether it be in the historical Jesus or in the scriptures, should therefore be quite suspect. God's transcendence and freedom remain, even after the Incarnation. The incomprehensibility of God has not been abrogated in Jesus Christ. Only the Christian who has experienced both the vertigo consequent on trying to conceptually know God and the awareness of our incapacity can truly worship the Free, Transcendent God.

### **The Knowledge of the Transcendent**

If God is so utterly and radically transcendent, then what knowledge of God is possible?

Blessed are the pure in heart  
For they shall see God.

The VI discourse on the Beatitudes is the *locus classicus* of Gregory's understanding of the knowledge of God. What is available to us is the knowledge of man, and through the image in ourselves, we can see a reflection of the glory of God. That is why no knowledge of God is possible until the image is made pure. By making man what he ought to be, we can begin to see who God is. When man becomes 'pure in heart', i.e. devoid of all evil, then he begins to see God. Only holiness (sanctity) can lead to the knowledge of God, not theology.

### **The Incarnation**

And that is the point of the Incarnation, the Church and the 'Sacraments'. Jesus Christ is born that he may die; for he lived before he was 'born', so he could not have been born in order to live. The death of Jesus was not the consequence of his birth, the birth was accepted in order that he may die and dying overcome death in man. His body in which he was born was taken out of the same lump as our bodies, and in the resurrection of his body our bodies too shall participate.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>64</sup> *The Great Catechism*, XXXII, F.T.N.P.N.F., Vol. V., p. 499.

But he is the pure image too. In Jesus Christ the God-Man the identity of God the prototype and Man the image become merged. In Jesus Christ the image was an undistorted mirror of the archetype.

By Faith and Baptism we ourselves are united to this original image, and we become partners in his resurrection-life. The Eucharist is the continuing participation in this resurrection-life.<sup>65</sup> The Eucharist as the Body of Christ gradually transmutes us into itself. This continual deification, as it advances in self-discipline, prayer and acts of love towards fellowmen, makes us also transparent to Deity. That alone is the true knowledge of God.

For that change in our life which takes place through regeneration will not be change, if we continue in the state in which we were. . . . For what you have not become, that you are not. 'As many as received him', thus speaks the Gospel of those who have been born again, to them gave he power to become the sons of God. . . . If, then, you have received God, if you have become a child of God, make manifest in your disposition the God that is in you, manifest in yourself Him that begot you.<sup>66</sup>

Holiness of life comes when God begins to manifest Himself in us. And in such manifestation through the image, according to Nyssa, we know God.

### The Unity of Man in the Image of God

This aspect of Nyssa's thought which we have just discussed should sound so strange in modern western ears, that it would take a total spiritual reconditioning even to listen to it adequately.

There are other aspects of the Image of God and the freedom of Man in Nyssa's thought which should be readily acceptable even to many secular minds.

To do justice to Gregory's thought, one has to begin with what may appear as far-fetched and even weird—his conception of the two creations of man, and in that connection with the notion of the *Pleroma* or fullness of Man.

<sup>65</sup> *The Great Catechism*: pp. XXXVII. 504 ff.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, XL,—N.P.N.F., Vol. V, pp. 507-508.

'The first creation' is of the whole of man, of humanity, i.e. of Adam. Adam is man, as species, not as individual. Gregory knows he is speculating and does not advance this as authoritative Christian teaching. He merely invites us to consider it, and begs leave 'to place it in the form of a theoretical speculation before our kindly hearers.'

In saying that God created man the text indicates, by the indefinite character of the term, all mankind. . . . the name given to the man created is not the particular (the proper), but the general name: thus we are led by the employment of the general name of our nature to some such view as this—that in the Divine foreknowledge and power all humanity is included in the first creation. . . . For the image is not in part of our nature, nor is the grace in any one of the things found in that nature, but his power extends equally to all the race, and a sign of this is that mind is implanted alike in all: for all have the power of understanding and deliberating, and of all else whereby the Divine nature finds its image in that which was made according to it: the man that was manifested at the first creation of the world, and he that shall be after the consummation of all are alike, they equally bear in themselves the Divine image.<sup>67</sup>

The corporate nature of mankind is what is in the image of God. The separation into male and female and into individuals does not belong to the ultimate or original nature of man. There is no marriage in heaven, the scriptures teach us. There is no individualism there either, let us hope.

One can easily dispose of this peculiar idea of Gregory by ascribing it to Plato or Plotinus, or Philo. But why does this careful Christian thinker, who rejects so much of Plato and Plotinus, stick to this one?

It seems to be closely linked with his notion of the Trinity. In his essay *On Not Three Gods*, he says in effect: There is one human nature, but many men. We say there is one *ousia* in God but three *hypostases*. But there are not three Gods. The problem is that, according to Gregory, it is an abuse of language to say also that there are many men. Luke is a man, but not every man is Luke. Stephen is a man, but not every man is Stephen. Yet the man in Luke and Stephen is the same. They belong to the same nature. Man is the collective name for all. Plural in manifestation, yet the human entity is one corpus.

<sup>67</sup> *On the Making of Man*, XVI, 16, 17 N.P.N.F., Vol. V, 406.



The parallel between the Trinity and mankind may not be entirely appropriate. Yet primarily man is one and only secondarily many individuals.

In our own time, the unity of humanity and the priority of the corporate nature of man begin to become apparent. Gregory's statement of the issue may be inadequate. And yet in developing an anthropology relevant to our time we cannot ignore the notion of the primordial and ultimate unity of mankind. What God has foreseen and provided for mankind he has provided for the entire human race as it extends in time and space, 'from Adam to parousia' as the liturgy phrases it. From the perspective of eternity where past, present and future appear co-temporally or trans-temporally and where all space converges into a point, mankind is one and indivisible, even as God whose image it is.<sup>68</sup>

Sexuality is the source of individuality. It was not in the original creation. It will disappear in the ultimate state of man. *Contra* Barth, Gregory insists that the Image does not include sexuality.

### Mankind in History

But sexuality, and consequently individuality, are not evil. They have their role to play in human historical development. Sexuality is the means which God provided in anticipation of human sin, and therefore of death, in order that mankind may multiply and attain to its *pleroma* or fullness. Birth is thus the consequence of death, which in turn is the result of sin, and sexuality is necessary for birth and the full growth of mankind.

If death and birth are thus the consequence of sin, temporality may also be seen in the same light, for what is temporality except fixed duration between birth and death?

The break-down of the original unity of mankind thus appears as the current history of birth and death, of individual existence. Both are signs of the Fall, and the redemption of man has to lie beyond both.

<sup>68</sup> Hans von Balthasar has a slightly different explanation of Gregory's view of the fullness of humanity: 'Human nature as a spiritual entity is a concrete universal in which innumerable individuals participate, the one being unthinkable without the other, all ideas being also at the same time entelechy' cited by Leys, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

But yet that redemption comes only through temporal existence, through individual existence, through birth and death. The *pleroma* or the fullness of humanity is now to be achieved—quantitatively through birth and death, and qualitatively through individual achievements.

In the original creation, there was no interval, no gap, no distance, between genesis and fulfilment, but in this historical existence, sin has introduced the interval (the *diastēma*), the distance between what is and what ought to be. Both the individual and the race as a whole, has now to overcome temporality, gradually regaining the original unity and perfection.

Obviously, for a modern theology this is Gregory's weakest point, it would at first appear. What he has to say about history does not amount to very much. Modern man needs more place for history in his understanding of redemption.

But let us understand Gregory further in his context before beginning to reconstruct our own 'theology' for our time, out of the inspiration that he provides.

### **The Destiny of Man and the Penultimacy of Hell**

Time and sexuality are to pass away, the final destiny of man is to be one, eternal, immortal, in the Resurrection. Then the *pleroma* or fullness of humanity will appear as Christ's own body, and that will be the completion of our deification. All evil is to be driven out. Eternal hell has no place in the final *denouement*, which is the total victory of good and the total banishment of evil. Evil had a beginning. It cannot be eternal. It must be banished in the end. The end of evil is the end of all that is to end, so that the good can endure.

Hell may have a penultimate function of purifying of those who are still mixed with evil, but Gregory would have thought it rather Manichaean to regard evil and, therefore, hell as eternal and ultimate.

### **The Structure of Freedom as Apatheia**

The Freedom of Man has certain functional aspects which it will be useful to clarify. We have already referred to two of these, namely (a) absence of sexuality, and (b) incorruptibility or immortality, or freedom from birth and death.

The third functional element of human freedom which Gregory calls *apatheia* may best be translated 'spiritual spontaneity' rather than passionlessness. Strictly speaking, in Gregorian vocabulary *pathos* stands for all that detracts man from the good. 'The impulse which, with the participation of the will, goes from good to evil, is *pathos* properly so called.'<sup>69</sup> But Gregory uses *pathos* also in another sense, namely to denote our 'tunics of skin', our mortal bodies, and *apatheia* thus stands for deliverance from evil as well as for deliverance from the 'body of this death' as St. Paul calls it.

*Apatheia* has a positive sense as well. It is participation in the divine plenitude and spontaneity. It is to have equilibrium without losing dynamic force, to be able to move according to will and not be pushed from outside.

For the Stoic *apatheia* meant the equilibrium of pure dispassionateness, the absence of all desire. For Gregory, on the other hand, man being made for the enjoyment of both the intelligible and the sensible worlds, the sheer absence of desire will not constitute freedom. The second chapter of *The Making of Man* waxes poetically eloquent about all that God has made on earth for man's enjoyment.

The rich and munificent Entertainer (the Creator) of our nature, when he had decked the habitation (the earth) with beauties of every kind, and prepared this great and varied banquet, then introduced man, assigning to him as his task not the acquiring of what was not there, but the enjoyment of the things that were there, and for this reason he gives him as foundation the instincts of a two-fold organization, blending the divine with the earthy, that by means of both he may be naturally and properly disposed to each enjoyment enjoying God by means of his more divine nature, and the good things of the earth by the sense that is akin to them.<sup>70</sup>

Thus *Apatheia* for man is not dry asceticism, but the capacity to enjoy life in both its dimensions, the spiritual and the sensible, but without losing one's equilibrium or becoming subject to the desire for sensual pleasures. Corporeal enjoyment is to be intergrated into 'spiritual' enjoyment, not replaced by it. *Eros* is to be integrated with *agape*, not denied.

<sup>69</sup> PG 44: 192B.

<sup>70</sup> N.P.N.F., Vol. V, 390.

The three kinds of *apatheia* are all different. That of God comes from plenitude of power and good, from the infinity and indivisibility of a pure spirit. That of the angels is angelic, not related to the enjoyment of the things of this earth. That of Man is a harmonious equilibrium of two opposing tendencies, one pulling up and one dragging down. It is a dynamic equilibrium, not a static passionlessness as in Stoicism. It is the continuous tension of the human spirit to find its true mode of being as the mediator between heaven and earth.

### Freedom as *Parrhesia*

*Parrhesia* as a Greek word has no English equivalent. In classical Greek it means frankness, forthrightness, courage, freedom of speech, fearless openness. In the New Testament the word plays a special role, as a consequence of the power of the Holy Spirit. In Mark 8 : 32, it was the Spirit that gave Jesus the boldness to say that the Son of Man must be killed. When Peter contradicted the bold words of the Spirit, (for Jesus spoke the *logos* with *parrhesia*, says the text) he was sharply rebuked. In Acts 4 : 13 Peter and John speak with *parrhesia* as a result of Pentecost.

But *parrhesia* means also bold access into the presence of the Sovereign. In Eph. 3 : 12, we have boldness (*parrhesia*) to enter into the presence of the sovereign God because of the Spirit. In Hebrews 4 : 16 and 10 : 19 we are asked to draw near to the throne of grace with *parrhesia*. So also in I Jn. 3 : 21 and 5 : 24, a clear conscience gives us *parrhesia* in relation to God.

This is also the meaning of the word for Gregory. A clear conscience, and the presence of the Spirit, make it possible for us to turn boldly and spontaneously towards God, and to enter His presence. This free access to God belongs to the original image and the regaining of it is part of his liberation.

To join the heavenly choir, to sing and to dance without worry and anxiety, to rejoice and again to rejoice—this is true liberty. The very nudity without shame of Adam and Eve belongs to this *parrhesia* and this freedom. Sin makes Adam and Eve hide when God comes to visit them. To be free means not to need to hide from God or from each other. Man's alie-

nation from God and from each other, as well as from his own creations—this is sin. Freedom means the spontaneity with which we can deal with each other and with the creation, and the freedom with which we can rejoice in the presence of God.

*Apatheia* and *parrhesia* are not unrelated to each other. A clear conscience, a simple spontaneity, and a bubbling joy characterize both. This is the freedom of the image for which man longs.

### Freedom as Theoria

If God is inaccessible and incomprehensible, how can we have freedom of access into his presence? Only because his presence extends into our world, not by *ousia* but by *energy*. It is in this energy that we are united with God and behold God. And again let us not forget that the cleansed and purified image is itself a mirror in which we can behold God in the interior of our very being.

*Theoria* is the capacity to behold God, not face to face, but as in a mirror. He who is the true image, Jesus Christ, himself became that mirror when he was transfigured on Mount Tabor. To behold God and to rejoice in him is the very nature of the soul. *Apatheia* and *Parrhesia* are correlate with *theoria*.

### Further Analysis of Freedom

The freedom of man, so central to Gregory's thought, has so far been analyzed in relation to God. Now it is time to see it in relation to the reality of the created order.

There are five characteristic words which Gregory uses to denote the freedom of man in this sense: *adoulotos*, *adespotos*, *autokrates*, *autexousios* and *eleutheros*. These words, often interchangeable, should be taken in their totality to understand the nature of man's freedom.

*Adoulotos* and *Adespotos* are negative words, of political origin, denoting the free citizen in the Greek republics. Not the slave of another, not having a master—that is what they literally mean. Not someone who can be treated as a means to an end, as an instrument or tool for someone else, that seems to be the meaning in context. If God is free and sovereign, then the image must also be treated as free and sovereign.

The third term *autokrates* means the same thing as sovereign. Literally it means ruling and acting out of one's own power—a title reserved for the Emperors. To be able to exercise power without external constraint, to be an uncaused cause, that would be the meaning in context. *Autexousios* means essentially the same thing—having authority in himself, not acting on someone else's authority, not forced to act by necessity.

*Eleutheria*, the classical word for freedom, essentially means the absence of constraint, either external or internal, freedom from all enslavements and bondage to forces outside oneself including the law, sin, death, etc. and also from the tyranny of the passions of the flesh. This freedom can only in part be realized on this earth, so long as we are in the flesh.

This unequivocal affirmation of the sovereignty and dignity of man is peculiar to the eastern tradition, it seems. This freedom is what is distinctive of man and defines his nature—not original sin, or even being a creature, as it often is in the western tradition. Man, despite his sin, is by nature in the image of God, and that is his destiny as well.

What happens to the doctrine of Grace, if man is that independent? Gregory never seems to have raised that question. Was he then a Pelagian before Pelagius? Hardly—for the notion of grace as the goodwill of God acting within a lump of humanity which is totally evil, would have been abhorrent to Gregory. For Augustine his doctrine of grace was the natural corollary of his assumption that fallen man was totally evil and that no movement toward the good could come from it.

Pelagius, as we have suggested, must have learned from Nyssa, but was not deep enough to see where the real difference between Nyssa and Augustine lay.

### **Some further elements of the Image relevant to our time**

It is best simply to list these aspects of Gregory's thought in summary fashion:

1. Man is made to rule, to be a king over creation. 'Our nature was created to be royal from the first', says Nyssa. God is king. So is his image. It was made

to rule the rest. It participates in God's kingship 'in rank and in name'.

2. Man is potentially capable of all good. In fact, Image of God is shorthand for 'capable of all good'.
3. God is love—Man, as he conforms to God's image, manifests this love as the basic good. God is wisdom and power. So is Man; wisdom, power, and righteousness are aspects of the good.
4. Man is born destitute of natural weapons and protective covering unlike the animals with brute strength. This is not a deficiency, but this means both that he has to develop his mind and that man has to gain control over other animals and things by his mind. He can use his mind to control and use his environment, but also to make weapons and tools, clothes and shoes.
5. Man walks upright. This is part of the dignity of the image. It denotes his sovereignty. It also liberates his hands to become the instruments of his reason. The animals use their hands (forepaws) to support their bent head. Man's use of his hands is part of his rational nature, along with speech and thought.
6. Man has mind and reason. These are an aspect of the image, for God too has mind and reason. So is man's capacity for art and music. But the mind cannot be limited to just the brain or the heart, but extends over the whole human person. A healthy body and an active mind belong to the purity of the image.
7. The mind operates by the senses, and though it is something other than the senses, it is impossible to locate or to understand. The invisibility and incomprehensibility of the human mind is an aspect of the incomprehensibility and invisibility of its archetype—God. But in the case of man, soul and body have the same origin and are integral to each other in this life.

8. Man is not only in the Image of God, but he recapitulates in himself the cosmos—he is a microcosmos. He is also integrally related to the cosmos, not merely a prisoner in it. It has been said by wise men that man is a little world in himself and contains all the elements which go to complete the universe.<sup>71</sup>

Gregory further interprets this in *The Making of Man*,<sup>72</sup> to draw an analogy between body, soul and spirit in man and the vegetative, animal and spiritual kingdoms in creation. Thus the redemption of man implicates the redemption of the whole of creation.

Gregory of Nyssa provides us thus with an alternate structure within which to shape a Christian 'ideology' adequate to our time. We need not fall into the dualism of the two cities—one of the earth and the other of God. Nor do we need to regard man as totally evil. Neither is it necessary to behold salvation by grace as something which happens primarily in and to the individual.

The adoption of such an alternate structure of Christian thought has many implications which are most significant for man's pursuit of his God-given destiny.

Take, for example, our understanding of the status of non-Christians in the presence of God (and also the related question: what difference does being a Christian make?). Within the Augustinian framework it is practically impossible to see how any non-Christian born after the time of Christ will have any choice but that of perishing eternally. When Augustine's contemporary Nectarius of Calama pointed out that some non-Christians seem to be more 'virtuous' than many Christians, Augustine simply ignored the argument by calling the virtues of the pagans but 'splendid vices'. This was consistent with Augustine's frame of thought, which regards man as totally evil, and Christ and membership in his Church as the only channel for grace.

In Gregory's way of thinking, creation itself is an act of grace on the part of God. For what is grace after all? When God

<sup>71</sup> *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, N.P.N.F., Vol. V, p. 433.

<sup>72</sup> VIII: 5, *Ibid.*, pp. 393-394.



does something out of His free and abundant love, that is an act of grace. And creation is just as unmerited as redemption.

Seen in this perspective, even fallen man, in so far as he exists, exists by grace. If he were totally evil, he would not exist, but become pure non-being. Not merely man in his fallen state, but even the material and animal creations owe their origin to the grace of God, continue in existence by that grace and participate in the redemption in Christ by the same grace. All creation is to be redeemed and recapitulated in Christ. If even the non-human creation is to participate in the redemption achieved by Christ, what reason do we have to think that non-Christian humanity will perish totally and completely?

This line of argument which ensues from St. Gregory's thought is not to be confused with Origen's universalism. Origen's creation was composed of a fixed number of souls. Gregory's creation is a material-spiritual complex in which man, with his material body and corporate existence, is master. It is this whole universe with the whole of humanity that Christ came to redeem.

This again should not be assimilated into the old worn-out categories of thought and understood in the sense 'Everybody will be saved, because God is good'. Neither everybody nor everything will be saved. To be saved means to attain to deathless and evil-less being. Mankind and the creation are destined to attain to this deathless and evil-less being. But not every man, nor the whole of any man, not the whole of everything.

Only that which has become good can endure. That which is evil must experience dissolution and death. This means the evil in Christians as well as non-Christians is destined to be burned by fire. But that which is well-pleasing to God—be it Christian, non-Christian, animal or material, art or music, act of kindness or thought of love—cannot perish. It will be gathered up into the Kingdom. It is already there.

If this is the case, then being a Christian would make no difference at all, and the preaching of the gospel would be in vain, some may fear. Here again a proper solution of the problem is dependent on the categories we use. We may be used to think of people in terms of 'saved' or 'unsaved', though such categories are no longer used even by theologians these days. Our theological traditions, especially in that hideous era

of Christian thought which was called the modern missionary era, often made that equation the basis of its thought: 'Christian equals saved; non-Christian equals unsaved'. So the Christian mission had as its objective to transform non-Christians into Christians.

There is, however, a more Christian way of thinking about what it means to be a Christian. A Christian is one who has been initiated into the community of the Spirit, a community which is itself existing on behalf of the whole of humanity, and by its being transfigured is becoming an instrument of transfiguration for the whole of humanity and in fact for all of creation.

This understanding of Christianity does not say: 'all religions are essentially the same—different roads leading to the same goal, namely God'. It does see the Incarnate ministry of Jesus Christ as the centrally significant event for all of humanity and for all of history, but does not confine all the activity of Christ and the Holy Spirit to the Church as separated from the rest of humanity.

It is possible to see the grace of God operating in the whole of creation. One must warn here against the tendency to assimilate these thoughts into the familiar western categories of 'natural law' or 'natural revelation'. Those categories have their roots in the basic dualism generated by Augustinian thought between nature and grace or between nature and supernature.

*The frame of thought of the present writer is supplied by the conviction that the creation itself is a consequence and manifestation of the gracious will of God, and, therefore, that the grace of God is present and active in the whole of creation. Without grasping this it will not be possible to come to terms with the ideas expressed here.*

The acceptance of this axiom removes the barrier from the way to seeing the gracious activity of God in every aspect of creation—in other religions, in anti-religious movements, in the life of animals and birds, even in the movement of 'inanimate' matter which too is animated by the creative and gracious energy of God. This does not, however, mean that everything is all right, or that we do not have to make judgments between various religions or values. In the life and teaching of Jesus Christ is still the norm and criterion for such evaluation. But this

norm cannot be applied in some impersonal, objective, scientific, way. It can be applied only by communities and individuals who are being transfigured into the image of God. The criterion is as much a subjective transformation of the judge as the objective teachings and example of our Lord.

The liberation of man spiritually from his anxieties and insecurities is a primary condition to gaining perspective on other religions and so-called secular phenomena. A theological framework which aids in this liberation, without forcing us to sacrifice the fundamental Christian affirmations, as the 'secular gospel' of yesterday was asking us to do, needs to be examined in all seriousness by all intelligent Christians, even if theologians may take a couple of decades to catch on to it. Theological liberation, in a truly transcendent sense, not in the false secular sense, is an integral part of the liberation of man, especially Christian man.

## CHAPTER VI

### FREEDOM AND EVIL

Evil, however shadowy it might appear philosophically, lies at the heart of created reality. It gnaws continuously at that heart. It is corrosive, sly, destructive, malign, powerful and massive.

The questions of its origin, its nature and function, its scope and power, and its ultimate destiny cannot be left to the philosophers and their theoretical solutions alone. They have to be dealt with, here and now, where and when they confront us, with equipment, power and wisdom adequate to meet the massive and malign strength of evil. Only the pressure to deal with evil can provide the occasion for the true exercise and development of human freedom.

The nature of evil is related to its origin. Its origin is in freedom. Creation itself was vested with this freedom by the Creator who has imparted his own freedom to it.

The universe is free. This implies the element of personality in the universe. Only persons can be free, because freedom is the power to cause actions without being caused by other uncontrolled forces. Understanding, will, and the capacity to act belong to the essence of personality as well as of freedom. These capacities are not limited to human beings, though in our experience we can see these three elements in a developed state only in man. But animals too have a measure of will and the capacity to act. A dog sometimes understands more than human beings do, though the mental process involved may be less conceptual and more intuitive. Animals have strong wills, which come into conflict with each other. A snake or a horse has both will and the capacity to act. Do trees and plants have understanding, will, and the capacity to act? This is a debatable issue, but not on philosophical grounds. It is the botanist and the biologist who should give us the answer. And that answer, as I understand it, cannot be totally negative. Experiments have shown, though not yet conclusively, that plants react to music and loving care. The scope of their

understanding, will and capacity to act may be quite limited but the rudimentary existence of these three personal qualities in the vegetable kingdom cannot be easily denied.

A scientist who is also philosopher and poet like Teilhard de Chardin would hold to the view that matter itself has a measure of freedom to act and has a will which is operative in it. This again has not yet been established, but we know that while matter at the medium level of aggregation follows predictable paths and therefore can be said to be unfree, at the micro-level and the macro-level it manifests patterns of unpredictability and self-imposed direction. At the micro-level, the behaviour of elementary particles in their individuality transcend time-space rules and escape accurate prediction. This principle of indeterminacy can be understood as a pointer to the existence of freedom at a most rudimentary level. At the macro-level also the process of evolution of the material world itself has shown jumps and mutations which cannot be charted according to any known rules.

The point of all this is to take the concept of freedom and personality beyond the limits of the specifically human. The Christian affirmation is that matter itself is created with freedom and that its destiny is ultimately to share in the freedom of human beings. As St. Paul declares in his letter to the Romans:

The creation itself shall be liberated (*eleutherothesetai*) from its enslavement to disintegration, into the freedom (*eleutheria*) of the glory of the children of God. (8: 21).

The material creation is in now bondage to corruption and dissolution and is to be reconstituted to become free and participate in the fullness of being, which means freedom and the good.

But there is another level at which freedom exists, of which our science can tell us but little at present. The Christian tradition affirms that there are beings other than those we can see in the material creation, which are created free. The New Testament, picking up some concepts which came into the Jewish tradition rather late in its history, calls them angels, demons, 'rulers, authorities, cosmic powers of darkness, evil spirits of the realms beyond' (Ephesians 6: 12). Sometimes the New Testament assigns the leadership of these created

beings to one evil being called variously 'The Enemy' (*Diabolos* or Devil, Mt. 4 : 1ff), 'The Ruler of aerial authority' (Eph. 2 : 2), the Tester (Mt. 4 : 3), etc. In the Book of Revelation he is called 'the Huge Dragon, the Ancient Serpent, the Devil, Satan, the Deceiver of the whole inhabited earth' (12 : 9).

These are unfamiliar and strange concepts. Some people try to explain away these biblical passages by means of various psychic phenomena like schizophrenia. But schizophrenia is only a name and does not explain anything any more than the idea of demon-possession. Demon-possession is a disease of the psyche or soul, and thus a psychological ailment in which the integrity and reality of the person is destroyed, by a split personality facing a phantom world.

The discussion here is not about demon-possession but rather about an order of beings in creation opposed to the good, committed to evil. It is not possible for us to conceptualize this idea within our present structure of logical reasoning. The insight however should not be thrown away simply because the language in which it is clothed seems archaic.

Evil has an existence 'prior' to the appearance of the human species. Evil is not purely human. There is more than the evil in individual human beings and in their collective structures. This primordial evil has its origin in the freedom of the created order.

What is the nature of this Evil? It is opposed to God; therefore it is opposed to the good, for that reason it is opposed to its own being, for all created being was created good. Evil is thus a contradiction in the created order, a contradiction that is capable of destroying itself and reducing the creation to non-being. Creation is given this freedom—that of choosing the being given to it and therefore continuing in being, or of rejecting what is given, namely being and the good, and thus choosing its opposite namely non-being and evil. Only in free choice does good really become good.

But if Creation were to go into non-being as soon as it chooses evil, then evil would have had no existence at all, for at the moment of becoming evil it would have ceased to be, being non-being. Those free beings who choose to reject the being given to them choose non-being, but there is an interval between the act of choice and the full realization of that choice. It is

in this interval that evil has power. If evil did not have this possibility freedom would not be as real as it is today.

Evil, i.e. created being which rejects its own contingent being, and seeks to be being-in-itself opposed to the good which is the source, ground and condition of true being, thus becomes alienated from God, and therefore groundless, anxious, guilt-ridden, self-contradictory and disintegrating.

Man appears in this created order, at the heart of which is freedom, and out of that freedom, the pervasive power of evil. He cannot by a simple act of choice choose the good. He comes into existence in a world where evil is regnant, and that evil asserts its power over him.

It is this truth that was distorted by Augustine, based on a misunderstanding of St. Paul and Psalm 51, into the doctrine of original sin. Augustine had experienced the reality of this power of evil over him and over other human beings. Human will and human power were not powerful enough to extricate themselves from the reign of evil. This is a true biblical insight—the basic incapacity of man to overcome deep-rooted evil in oneself. One can say that the bondage is so overwhelmingly powerful that fallen man is not free at all. Pelagius had failed to sense deeply the reality of this evil, and had too facilely taught that all the *posse* (possibility or power) that God had given to man was still in man's power, even after the Fall.

But Augustine's fundamental error lay in his affirmation that not a trace of the *posse* or power given by God to man in creation remained in him, and therefore that he was totally evil. His more pathetic error was perhaps in teaching that human beings are born sinful *because* each human being, even the child of saints, is born out of a lustful and sinful act—the act of procreation. It is a pity that he understood the humble poetic confession of the Psalmist in that sense :

Behold, in iniquity was I given birth  
In sin my mother conceived me (Ps. 51 : 5).

Fortunately, even though some of the Reformers followed this Augustinian doctrine of original sin, namely that man is sinful because his origin is in the sinful act of procreation, very few churches or theologians hold to this view today.

Our concern here is with the other teaching that in man there is no trace of the original good given to him in creation. The biblical and theological basis for this doctrine has not yet been shown. When St. Paul says, 'all have sinned and come short of the glory of God' (Rom 3 : 23), it does not mean either that all are equally evil, or that there is nothing but evil in man. For is it not the same St. Paul who said a few verses earlier :

... God, who will reward each accordingly to what he has done. To those who by patient perseverance in doing good works seek manifest excellence, worthiness, and incorruptibility, he will grant eternal life. To those, however, who through factions or contradiction fail to abide in the truth, and commit themselves to unrighteousness, wrath and fury. Affliction and constrictive distress upon each human soul that practises evil, to the Jew first, but also to the Gentile; manifest excellence, worthiness and peaceful existence to all who practice the good, to the Jew first, but equally to the Gentile. For God is not partial (Romans 2 : 6-11).

Certainly this passage would have been meaningless if St. Paul had thought that there was no trace of a good possibility either in the Jew or in the Gentile.

Humanity as a whole has failed to become what God expects of it. All men are sub-standard. But this does not mean that man is totally evil. Such a teaching is unworthy of the Christian tradition, except in self-deprecatory prayers addressed to God, where the prayer expresses an attitude more than a statement of brute fact. 'I am a sinner. There is no good in me.' But even in the very moment of making that confession, we enter a philosophical contradiction.

For, if that statement were true, then I am speaking the truth, and that is a good thing in me at this moment—which contradicts my statement that there is no good in me. The very fact of confessing the truth of total sinfulness, if total sinfulness were a fact, would contradict that fact. If however this statement is not true to fact in every respect, then it has to be qualified as a theological statement, though as a confession it may still have a certain value. The fact of the matter is that very few people who make such a confession really believe literally the second part of that confession.

That all men (except Jesus Christ) are sinners is true to the Christian tradition. But to say that there is only sin or evil



in man and that no good can ever come out of man is not an authentically Christian theological statement.

But what we have said so far does not add up to the statement that man is a free being. Man in his fallen temporal existence languishes in bondage, is subject to death and disintegration, and were it not for the decisive intervention of God in Jesus Christ, the whole race could have moved headlong into non-being as totally evil. In other words total evil, though not phenomenologically true of man, could have been his 'eschatological' destiny, had it not been for the Incarnation.

Created man, and along with him the whole creation, had this freedom—that of being totally good or totally evil. To be totally good is to have fullness of being, and to be totally evil is to go into total non-being. Augustine and Calvin, when they insist on the total depravity of man apart from Christ, should have been speaking of this eschatological or primordial destiny of man, rather than about man as a phenomenological being. When however, such an eschatological statement about man is misinterpreted in a purely historical-temporal sense to say, for example, that outside of the Christian Church where the grace of God operates through faith, there is only sin, one distorts completely the meaning of the Incarnation and of the work of the Holy Spirit in the fallen creation.

The Incarnation has radically affected the status of the fallen creation. This change of status does not apply to the Church alone. The Church is the bearer of certain special gifts, the privileged community of access to God the Holy Trinity in Eucharistic worship, the community with a specific message from God which no one else can authoritatively proclaim, the community in which the Holy Spirit is specially present, the community entrusted with a ministry for and a mission to mankind. But the creation itself has changed its status with the Incarnation. It is still the fallen creation at the heart of which there is the corrosive presence of evil and non-being. But at the heart of the same fallen creation there is also the Son of God who became a part of that creation, and is destined to reconstitute that creation in Himself.

This is the context in which the Christian has to understand the problems of freedom and evil, and not in the distorting categories of original sin and saving grace. A fallen creation

in which the Son of God was incarnate provides a framework for Christian theology much richer than the individualistic notion of total depravity and sovereign grace, neither of which are biblical doctrines.

In this wider context of a fallen creation which the Son of God has assumed into himself, what is our understanding of the roles of freedom and evil?

Some things can be said about it from a Christian perspective. What is evil?

- (a) It is opposed to the good, therefore opposed to God, or vice versa.
- (b) It is a contradiction of the true being of beings, because all created being was created good, but free also not to choose the good.
- (c) Because evil contradicts its own true being, it becomes alienated or separated from the source, ground and condition of its being. Thus alienated, evil being is no longer true being, but being-towards-death, or being moving towards non-being.
- (d) In the process of movement from created being towards non-being, a free being at whose heart is evil is able to assert its will against the will of God. There is in this created order a created being who has radically rebelled against the good, and creates, by his God-given power and freedom, a kingdom of evil. He is the one who is called the Devil, the Diabolos, the Enemy, the Adversary, the Antichrist. He is not a force, but has understanding, will and the capacity to act, though all of these are inclined against the good and the true.
- (e) Evil is a regnant power. It rules in the lives of men, their individual or corporate existence, in persons, in families, in social, economic and political structures, and even in the Church of Jesus Christ. It is so powerful that human power is unable to prevail against it. In the fallen creation, sinful man is unable to struggle against it and liberate himself. In this sense man is not really free and is in need of liberation.

Without the Incarnation the human struggle against evil would have been futile, fruitless, frustrating. Whatever good there is in man would never be able to prevail decisively against the power of evil, though there have been heroic struggles against evil even before the Incarnation, some of which have partially and temporarily succeeded, but the good was always beaten back by evil later on.

In Jesus Christ the central battle of freedom, that between the power of good and the power of evil, has been fought on behalf of Man and decisively won. The first Johannine epistle says: 'You are now grounded in God, my little children, and have overcome them (i.e. the powers of Antichrist), for the one who operates in you is superior to the one who operates in the cosmos' (John 4:4).

This is the new context of freedom. Christ the Victor now operates through man, to overcome evil in man as well as evil in the cosmos. The man that fights against evil in himself and in the world is the New Man, the humanity in which Jesus Christ has become incarnate. This is the humanity which is united with God Himself in Christ.

This fight against the power of evil is carried on at various levels, all of which are related to the Incarnation in different ways.

The primary level is the Church. This sounds incredible when we look at the Church as we see it today. But the Church is not composed of merely the Christians living today. It is a reality that pervades the whole of humanity, from Adam to the last day. The Church's membership cannot be limited even to the number of baptized from the time of Christ till this day. All those from the very beginning of humanity to the very end of historical humanity whom it has pleased God to take into His Son's body are members of the Church. Not all of the actions of this body, the Church, against the power of evil, are carried out in history. The departed are engaged in a struggle against the power of evil 'in the heavenlies' as St. Paul puts it. This is one of the practical implications of the biblical teaching about Christ's descent into hell. The struggle has been joined both in history and in the trans-historical realm in a decisive way.

It is through this struggle that freedom has to grow. The two

struggles are of one piece—that beyond the veil and that this side of it. This is also the reason why freedom is not merely a socio-political matter. Liberation from social, political and economic enslavement forms an important part of man's attainment of freedom, but only a part.

The pursuit of freedom as the central project of man is recognized by those who believe in free enterprise, by the Marxists, and by existentialists. But freedom is understood in partial ways by both. The capitalist and the existentialist have this in common that they give the priority to the individual and his freedom. The capitalist prizes economic and political freedom of the individual, and along with it a series of other freedoms like that of expression, association, conscience, and religion. When all individuals are free, a natural and unstructured harmony will ensue, as the most radically capitalist among them believe. The existentialist also revolts against the encroachment on his individuality and freedom by church, state or mass society, and wants to make himself a free decider and actor.

One of the most fascinating individualist interpretations has come from that brilliantly gifted anti-Christian, Jean-Paul Sartre. It is, of course, a tragic interpretation of freedom, but this very tragic character gives it a certain depth which is lacking in other existentialist views. 'Liberty is terror.' 'Man is condemned to freedom.' 'To be free is to be futile.' Man seeks the firmness and stability of being-in-itself, but all he can have is consciousness or being-for-itself, a very unreliable and intangible grasp on reality. Everything in consciousness is subject to change the next moment, and man's deep yearning for being-in-itself becomes a '*passion inutile*'. 'Man is the being who aspires to be God,' says Sartre towards the end of his monumental tome on *Being and Nothingness*. But God, i.e. a conscious being who has both being-for-itself and being-in-itself in perfect stability and control, is a contradiction, and does not exist. So man's desire is vain and unattainable. Man desires to be *ens causa sui*, a being who is the cause of himself and does not owe anything to anyone else, but it is a fruitless desire, for no such being can exist, says Sartre.

Freedom, for Sartre, is the transparent awareness of this fact about oneself, the acceptance of it and the purging of our consciousness from all its self-delusions (*mauvaise foi*), the setting

aside of all personal desires as vain and unattainable, and therefore jumping into political activity in order to drive out all pretension and create a society of transparent souls.

The foregoing paragraphs in no sense do justice to the conceptual complexity of Sartre's view of freedom. What we can note here is the profound influence of Christianity on Sartre's thinking. Most of his basic notions are adaptations from or reactions against medieval scholastic thought and the thought of the Enlightenment in Germany and France (Descartes, Husserl). Sartre owes much to Kierkegaard, the nineteenth century Christian existentialist. One does not exaggerate if one says that almost all the creative ideas that are operative in western secular thought are taken over from the western Church's tradition, either by adaptation or in dialectically antithetical reasoning.

This could be said of Marxism too. The ideology of Marx can be squarely located within the western Judaeo-Christian tradition. Communism owes much more to the Church than it is able to recognize. Their basic notion of freedom as liberation from oppression, injustice and exploitation is the fundamental Jewish idea of Salvation. That was what the exodus from Egypt—the constitutive event of the People of Israel—was all about. But modern western man got this notion from the Christian Church which had conserved this Jewish tradition, though she seldom practised what the tradition demanded.

Here we see the double sense in which the Church is the primary level of the Holy Spirit's fight against evil. In the early stages of the Church's history, it fought directly against the mass society of that time and its values which were disintegrative and evil.

Evil was never absent from the bosom of the Church, as we see from all the petty quarrels and wranglings that tore the Church from its very beginning. But it was the Church that stoutly opposed the values of conformism, comfort, sensual pleasure and egoism, and created a new set of values which assisted in the development of a humanity with great moral fibre to resist the blandishments and enticements of evil, and thereby promoted genuine freedom.

On the other hand the Church, in order to conserve certain values or aspects of the good that it prized, sacrificed certain other aspects of the same free good. Authority for knowledge

and action become constrictive and destructive of the freedom of man. It is in the reaction against this constriction that our secular civilization was born. The freedom of man asserted itself against the authority that sought to suppress it.

The Church's role in relation to freedom has thus been ambiguous. On the one hand it has espoused, maintained and deepened certain values like unselfish love, the concern to relieve suffering, the teaching about justice, the unity of mankind, and the dignity of man. On the other hand it has suppressed many aspects of the good, by stifling human creativity in thought and action, in siding with the oppressor and the exploiter, in causing and promoting wars, in persecuting heretics and forcing people to join the Church, and in many other ways.

The co-existence of these two factors lies behind our affirmation that both evil and the spirit of the Incarnate Lord are at the heart of reality and at the heart of the Church community itself.

What has now happened is that the negative, or freedom-suppressing elements in the Church's practice have caused a secular reaction which is equally ambiguous, and while it fosters certain values which had been neglected by the Church, it also oppressively suppresses some elements of the good which had previously been affirmed by the Church.

There is no reason to say that the Incarnate Christ and the Holy Spirit are not active through this very reaction. For Christ assumed the whole of humanity, and while the mode of his presence in the Church may be significantly different from his presence elsewhere, there is no reason to insist that Christ cannot be present outside the Church which is His Body. The Spirit too is given in a special way to the Church. But the Spirit is not to be confined to the Church. He was there when creation began and He is the One who leads it to its destiny.

Certain values of freedom, especially the autonomy of man, science and technology, the campaign for peace and justice, the struggle for the dignity of man and the unity of mankind, and other aspects of the freedom of man are now in the open world not confined to the church community. Here too Christ and the Holy Spirit are actively engaged in the fight against evil. But evil is equally at the heart of this secular civilization and continues to distort its values and hamper its growth towards

freedom and the good. It closes the eyes of man to the transcendent dimension of man, and seeks to enclose him in a historical world, alienated from the knowledge of God, who is the source, ground and condition of being for all being. This alienation from the transcendent dimension is a corrosive factor at the heart of reality and has to be fought against.

The battle has to begin in the Church itself where the transcendent dimension is being fast lost. Nietzsche and Sartre are two of the truer voices of a civilization that feels deeply this alienation from God. 'God is dead', Nietzsche's madman cried. 'Man is useless, for there is no God', says Sartre.

The battle against being shut up in a historical world can begin in the Church not through conceptual skirmishes against secularism, but by an authentic recovery of Eucharistic community in the Church, a community where God is personally present and where man enters the presence of God without alienation. It is in this community that the fight against evil going on behind the veil becomes experienced in the communion of Saints.

The development of freedom has to be in the fight against evil—evil in the Church and evil in the world in which we live. This fight against evil was the original ethos of Christianity. Until the Constantinian settlement, the Church was a struggling fighting community that carried on the fight which Christ had won against the Adversary. But after Constantine, when the official Church tended to become tired of the struggle and began to settle down and enjoy the fruits of the struggle, (like the leaders of the Indian National Congress after independence) the fight had to be taken up again by the monks who fought the battle with the devil in the wilderness, and became the missionaries and martyrs of the Church for many centuries.

We are now tempted to confine this struggle to the socio-economic and political realms alone. The Christian should join the fight against evil in these two realms, for he knows the truth of what the writer of the Epistle to the Ephesians said :

For our wrestling is not against visible flesh and blood, but against the dominions, against the authorities, against the cosmic rulers of this darkness (of evil), against the spirits of evil in the heavenly realms (Eph. 6 : 12).

The wise Christian knows that this is the decisive battle for the freedom of man, his own and that of others. But this struggle

is never against an external enemy alone. Evil is at the heart of the Christian person himself, and if he forgets this, he can very quickly become an instrument of evil, in the very process of the fight against evil. If evil is not overcome within ourselves by the discipline of prayer and fasting, then we run the risk of being sucked into the side of evil by the sly, malignant, massive power of evil. This is why a Christian ethic which is a pure socio-political ethic can soon become demonic.

Evil is a power, sly, deceptive, dishonest to the core. One has to be very careful to see that it does not deceive us and enslave us unawares. But as man grows in love, wisdom and power, more conformed to the freedom of God, then he becomes truly free, and free to bring evil to an end.



## GREGORY OF NYSSA AND THE SAGES OF INDIA

Does this alternate view of an Asian Christian thinker (Gregory of Nyssa) have any affinity with characteristic Hindu views? In seeking to answer this question one immediately realizes the wide range of views in Hinduism. The most useful thing would be to compare it with the classical *Advaita* of Sankara first and then with Ramanuja's *Visistadvaita*. References may occasionally be made to other Hindu thinkers.

We could ask the question at five distinct levels (a) the nature of ultimate reality, (b) the nature of man, (c) the relationship of the world to ultimate reality, (d) the nature of final fulfilment, or the nature of freedom (*Kaivalya*), and (e) the nature of authority.

## I. The Nature of Ultimate Reality

The Hindu *Upanishads* agree that God is beyond cause and effect, beyond space and time, beyond beginning and end, beyond definition and comprehension. The *Mandukya Upanishad*, the classical text used by Sankara, calls ultimate reality 'the supreme good, One without a Second'. Sankara would agree with Nyssa that ultimate reality is beyond being, simple, without attributes, and completely free. Sankara's *Aparokshanubhuti* puts his view of Brahman most succinctly :

The Universal Atman, Brahman (is) ever-existent and self-illuminated, unique and one, free from all conditions, having as its nature existence, conscious intelligence and joy (*sat, chit* and *ananda*).

Compare this with Gregory's statements :

That (God's) nature is unnameable and unspeakable, and we say that every term either invented by the custom of men or handed down to us by the scriptures, is indeed explanatory of our conceptions of the Divine nature, but does not include the signification of that nature itself.<sup>72a</sup>

<sup>72a</sup> Eng. Tr. *On Not Three Gods*, NPNE, Series Two, Vol. V, p. 332.

The existence which is all-sufficient, everlasting, world-enveloping, is not in space or time, it is before these; and above these in an ineffable way, self-contained, knowable by faith alone; immeasurable by ages; without the accompaniment of time; seated and resting in itself, with no association of past or future, there being nothing beside and beyond itself. . . . It is above beginning, and presents no marks of its inmost nature: it is to be known of only in the impossibility of perceiving it. That indeed is its most special characteristic, that its nature is too high for any distinctive attribute.<sup>72b</sup>

Where Gregory would probably disagree fundamentally with Sankara is in his positing absolute identity between the Creator and the creation. But let us not forget that for Gregory, who fully accepted the doctrine of the Trinity, ultimate reality was not only beyond attributes, but also even beyond number.

Gregory would have agreed with Ramanuja in the latter's criticism of Sankara for placing *jnana* (knowledge) above *karma* (action) and *upasana* (worship). Nyssa would have preferred to see all three as forming one integral whole, and not merely stages on the way to union with God.

One may be tempted to say that it was because Hindu or Buddhist rituals of Sankara's time were so corrupt that he had such a low view of worship. But this would not be the truth. For Sankara the problem is that both action and worship are possible only in the context of the illusion of dualism. In action there has to be a subject and an object, which does not exist in ultimate reality. Nor is there worshipper and worshipped. Such a point of view would be totally unacceptable to Nyssa who emphasizes both aspects of the Christian tradition—our union with God in Christ and our distinctness from God as of creatures from the Creator.

Ramanuja on the other hand would be more in the line of the Stoics where the cosmos is the *sarira* or body of God. He is mainly immanentistic regarding the supreme Brahman as the 'inner Ruler' of all entities whether spiritual or material. Ramanuja's immanentism is however, significantly different from that of the Stoics, who could not conceive of the Logos apart from the cosmos. For Ramanuja's while 'all things visible

<sup>72b</sup> Eng. Tr. *Against Eunomius*, Bk. I, *Ibid*, pp. 69-70.

and invisible' constitute the *sarira* of Brahman, the whole cosmos does not contain his being, nor is he dependent on them :

Brahman—essentially antagonistic to all evil, of uniform goodness, differing in nature from all beings other than itself, all-knowing, endowed with the power of immediately realizing all its purposes, in eternal possession of all it wishes for supreme bliss, has for its body the entire universe, with all its sentient and non-sentient beings—the universe being for it a plaything as it were—and constitutes the self of the universe.

For Ramanuja, Brahman is capable of reabsorbing the whole cosmos into itself and then again causing the cosmos to appear by its will. It is at this point that Gregory's originality comes to the fore. He would agree with Ramanuja (who lived several centuries later) that it is by will that God brings the universe into being. But the creation is not out of God's own being, not *ex ousia autou*, but *ex nihilo*. The universe is not God's body in Christian thinking, though it is destined to become in some sense the Body of Christ when he would have finally recapitulated all things in himself. We have to remember here that Christ is not exactly the same as God or the Logos. It is to the incarnate Christ that we ascribe both the Church and the cosmos as his bodies. The incarnate Christ is integrally a part of creation as well as the Creator. This kind of thinking must be quite difficult for Hindus.

For Ramanuja the cosmos is the Body of Brahman, *Brahman* in its caused state. For Sankara the cosmos is *Brahman* misunderstood by *avidya*. Sankara regards the cosmos as caused by *Brahman* only in the sense that a rope on the road at dusk may appear like a snake and cause ignorant people to react as if it were a snake. For Ramanuja creation is a real extension of Brahman and not mere illusion. For Gregory however it is not an extension of God, but something which comes into being from the will or energy of God and not from his being.

## II. The Nature of Man

The same range of differences appear also with regard to the relation between God and Man. For Sankara *Atman* is *Brahman* and nothing but *Brahman*. For Ramanuja *Atman* is a mode of Brahman as *Purusha*. *Atman* is a caused effect of *Brahman*, but

caused not in the sense of a rope 'causing' a snake, but in the sense of milk causing butter-milk.

Ramanuja, however, makes the same distinction as Gregory in his idea of the two different ways in which Brahman causes souls and matter. Brahman caused souls by a limited *parinama* or change in terms of contraction of intelligence and becoming subject to pain and suffering; whereas matter is caused by Brahman through not mere limitation, but by substantial change into an essentially different condition.

One important difference between Gregory and Ramanuja at this point is that for Ramanuja there are only three categories—*Brahman*, *Purusha* and *Prakriti* whereas Gregory uses five; God, man, animals, plants and inanimate matter. For Gregory there is a basic distinction between man and the rest of creation, not just between sentient beings and inanimate matter.

But Ramanuja comes close to Gregory when he describes man as composed of Body, Soul and Brahman, Brahman being the real subject of the Body and Soul. He does not leave the soul of man completely passive, at the behest of the *Paramatma*. The *Jivatma* has its own freedom, for otherwise the scriptural commands and injunctions would have no meaning. How then can *Brahman* or *Paramatma* be the ruler of the soul or of *Jivatma*?

Here comes Ramanuja's doctrine of grace and freedom :

The inwardly ruling highest self promotes action in so far as it regards in the case of any action the volitional effort by the individual soul, and then aids that effort by granting its favour or permission (*anumati*) ; action is not possible without permission on the part of the highest self.

For Ramanuja *Paramatma* and *Jivatma* are joint holders of individual existence, and the two have to act together, *Brahman* or *Paramatma* of course always having the upper hand in acts of good, whereas when the tendency is towards evil acts, Brahman simply lets go in order not to hamper freedom. Thus the soul of man is a *visesha* or *Prakara* or an attribute of *Brahman*. When the soul is fully released from its *avidya* and therefore from its gross body, it then is completely in accordance with the will of Brahman. Only the released soul is fully conscious of itself as undivided and perfectly united with the supreme self as its

*prakara* or mode. It then becomes free from evil and almost identical with Brahman.

Why almost? There is still some difference between *Brahman* and the released soul. *Brahman* remains Creator, i.e. the one who causes and rules the world. This activity is not shared even with the released souls. The supreme bliss of the released soul consists in the direct intuition of *Brahman* and, being released from *Karma* and *Samsara*, perfect harmony with *Brahman* destroying all desire for experience within *samsara*.

But these are not the same differences as we have in Gregory's thought between creation and Creator. The difference for Gregory is not in that the Creator can do certain things which the creature cannot. No, potentially man is capable of all that God does. But man's being will always be a derived being, whereas the Creator does not owe his being to anyone else, being the source of his own being. This is the fundamental and primary difference between Creator and creature. The second difference is that man's being is in the state of becoming (not God's being as some Process Philosophers hold) and therefore man has yet to become what he is. Whereas God, willing what he is and being what he wills, has no need of becoming.

Here are two major differences between Hindu thinking and Christian thinking. Christian thinking insists on a fundamental distinction between Creator and creature. Even Ramanuja is not able to recognize or articulate this fundamental difference in terms of self-derived or other-derived being. Secondly Christianity insists that man's existence in time is not a mere illusion, a dream that has only to be dispelled. It is in time-existence that man becomes a free chooser of his own being, and what happens in history has thus eternal significance. This positive evaluation of history should not be misunderstood in terms of western historicism or process philosophy which try to make excessive and exclusive claims for history at the expense of the trans-historical and the trans-spatiotemporal.

### III. Relation of God to the World

Ramanuja becomes despicable to Sankarist Advaitins at the point where he posits change (*parinama*) in ultimate reality in order to explain the origin of man and the world. It is Brahman

itself that undergoes *Parinama* or change to cause souls and then undergoes another mode of *parinama* to cause the material world which is his *Sarira*. To attribute change to ultimate reality is abhorrent to the Indo-hellenic tradition of religious philosophy, and even Christian theology has had to invent the category of 'becoming without change'<sup>72c</sup> in order to explain how the changeless Logos could *become* flesh.

But Ramanuja is certainly much too crude at this point, from the perspective of philosophy. Ramanuja's explanation of Brahman expanding itself to cause the cosmos is hardly respectable philosophy, even from the perspective of most Hindu philosophers.

Sankara is at this point definitely much more profound. He does not deny the reality of the external world. In fact he attacks the *Vijnana vadins* who held that the external world was caused by our mental states—the *drsti-systivada*. His doctrine is *Mayavada* which is a very sophisticated way of stating that the Brahman-cosmos relationship is a mystery, and that the cosmos has only a qualified reality (reality which is qualified or *badhitam* is not ultimately true).<sup>72d</sup> The *vyavaharikasatta* or pragmatic reality that the world has is a projection of Brahman, a *lila* or creative play of an artist. Sankara would be horrified both by the pantheism of Ramanuja and his *vivartha-vada* which holds that Brahman changes himself into the realities of the external world and individual souls. But if Sankara had known about Gregory of Nyssa's view of creation as the projection of God's will, he might at least have listened to the view with respect. For here in Gregory too the cosmos has no ultimate reality and will cease to exist when it ceases to be the will of God that the cosmos should exist.

Some of my Hindu friends pose at times a more difficult question. Does not the Christian doctrine of creation imply that God changed from an acosmic (*aprapancha*) God into a cosmic (*saprapancha*) God? This question arises only when Christians not properly trained speak of the creation as if it were an act in time, so that one could speak of the time before

<sup>72c</sup> A creation of Philoxenos of Mabbug, a Syrian writer of the fifth century.

<sup>72d</sup> Students should be warned against a simplistic interpretation of Sankara's *Mayavada* or texts like *Jagad-mithya*. *Mithya* means only lacking in ultimate reality.

the creation and the time after the creation. In Gregory's teaching the beginning of creation is the beginning of time, so much so that there is no time when the creation was not. It is only if God is resident in time that the question arises of his changing from one state to another.

Now if my Hindu friends were on the contrary to ask me how God the Logos could change permanently into a human being (for this is what Christian teaching holds, as against the Hindu *Avatara* concept of a temporary self-limitation) then I become philosophically tongue-tied. For while I do insist that the Logos became in the incarnation something more than what he was before, I do not affirm that the Logos changed in such a way that he was no longer what he was before. Here in the Christian concept of the incarnation, rather than in that of the creation, is the real philosophical difficulty for Hindus.

In his view of the relation of God to the created world Gregory is essentially akin, to Sankara—at least more akin to Sankara than to Ramanuja. For Gregory too creation has only qualified reality, and whatever being it has is contingent upon the playful will of God which is free to make the creation cease by ceasing to will its existence. For both Sankara and Gregory the world is not ultimately real. Their main difference lies in this that while for Gregory historical existence has definite meaning for eternity, for Sankara *Samsara* makes no difference to the nature of the *Jivatma* as identical with *Paramatma*.

#### IV. The Nature of Final Fulfilment

Sankara was resolutely opposed to all forms of dualism or pluralism. He refused to accept any otherness between ultimate reality and the cosmos. Neither would he accept the plurality of souls as affirmed by Ramanuja's *visistadvaita*, Kapila's *sankhya* or Patanjali's *yogasutra*.

Precisely because of this absolute non-dualism, Sankara's notion of *kaivalya* or ultimate liberation becomes total identity with *Paramatma* with no trace of a distinction left. It is an experience to which one attains in this life itself—not a future hope—i.e. the awareness that I am Brahman and that my nature is neither that of agent (subject) or enjoyer (object), nor it ever was, nor ever will be. *Brahmavidya*, *Parāvidya*, or *atmavidya*,

whatever you call it, is not a matter of *becoming* but of *realization*. It is not an ontic development that is needed, but an epistemological or semantic development. The end is knowledge, *vidya* or *jnana*, through hearing (*sravana*), reflection (*manana*), and ethical discipline i.e., transcending the three *gunas* of *tamas*, *rajas* and *satwa* to become *gunātita*.

What is the content of this ultimate liberation in Sankara? Some of its elements bear striking resemblance to the views of Gregory of Nyssa. Sankara's notion of *akrodha* or passionlessness is an exact parallel of Gregory's *apatheia* which has the same meaning. Sankara's *vasana-nāsa* or destruction of instinctive drives as part of human fulfilment is a notion central to Gregory's thought.

As the Gita says:

Verily happiness consists in the freedom of the senses from thirst for sensual enjoyment, and the thirst for objects. This last is misery indeed. For while there is thirst (even for enjoyment) there can be no trace of happiness; we cannot so much as smell it (*Gita Bhashya* II-66).

But freedom in Sankara is natural to the soul, not something acquired by self-discipline. All that discipline does is to eliminate the *adhyaropas* or false attributions to the self, and reveal the true self. There is no becoming here, only a clearing up.

At this point we notice some of the more fundamental differences between Hinduism at its best and Christianity at its philosophical best.

- (a) For Sankara, *moksha* is a state of *consciousness*. For Gregory it is an *ontic* status.
- (b) For Sankara, there is total identity between the ultimate Reality (God) and the *jivatma*. For Gregory, the basic distinction remains though there is union between the creation and the Creator.
- (c) For Sankara there is neither body nor action nor speech in the liberated state. For Gregory there is a material body which has been transfigured, which comes to man in the resurrection. Matter itself is redeemed.
- (d) For Sankara historical reality does not contribute anything to ultimate reality. For Gregory our actions and being in history have significance for eternity.



Perhaps one should remind oneself here that for Gregory there is a qualification to all his affirmations, namely that these are attempts to capture within our current conceptual categories realities which transcend time and space and therefore time-space logic. Non-dualism as in Sankara appears a philosophically cleaner structure, but Sankara is also making the mistake of speaking about transcendent reality in non-transcendent conceptual language. His absolute non-dualism implies that number itself is an ultimate category, even though he wants to abolish all other numbers except the number one. But even the nature of number escapes our conceptual comprehension, and if Sankara had occasion to read the Cippadocians, he may have respected their view that number itself is a time-space concept, and therefore that ultimate reality should be beyond enumeration as well. If this is so, then any insistence on monism has but limited value, for even monism or *advaita* uses categories that belong to *Samsara* like *one* and *two*.

For both Sankara and Gregory individuality is only a lower level of reality, an appearance which has to be transcended to get to reality. For Gregory it is because the whole of mankind as a single reality was created in the first instance that he regards mankind as *one* reality which in its totality was created in the image of God. For Sankara it is the absolute identity both of the non-human world and of men with ultimate reality that becomes the basis of denying individuality.

For Sankara it is a philosophical dictum that there can be only one simple reality and nothing else, though experience confirms this for him. For Gregory, however, God-head itself, while remaining simple and undetermined, is to be understood as a Triune unity in which all the three units manifest in themselves the whole of the God-head and not just one-third of it. This differentiation which is not a division into parts 'within' the God-head, appears in a similar but not identical way also in the case of mankind. Mankind is one, but not divided into so many individual parts. The unity of mankind itself defies comprehension in time-space categories, for it is a primordial unity belonging to the very act of creation.

So regarding the final fulfilment, one finds two ideas in Gregory. One is that when the individual man by his disciplined life of worship and virtue finally by the grace of God beholds God,

he beholds Him only in a mirror, i.e. in the mirror of his own soul, where God himself is reflected in the true image. This is not to say that God and man are unqualifiedly identical, but at the same time identical in the sense in which an original and its image are identical. This view has some affinity with *Visistadvaita* but should not be assimilated to it. In Sankara, on the contrary, there cannot be an 'other', and so the original-and-image dichotomy would be rejected by him as dualistic. For Gregory the image or man, has no reality in itself, even in the stage of fulfilled *theosis* or divinisation. The being of the image is still a derived being, contingent upon its being related to and reflecting the original.

But Gregory's second idea that it is the whole of mankind as a single entity that reflects the image of God, introduces a qualification to the idea of individual *theosis*. It is not just my unity with God that becomes manifest in the final fulfilment. I see also that I am one with other men in all ages and all times, though this is not an undifferentiated unity in which all distinctions are drowned. The whole of mankind, however, still retains an otherness from God, though they are in God (since there is nowhere else that anyone or anything can be).

For Sankara when *Avidya* disappears and knowledge comes, all distinctions disappear. There is no longer God and his other. There is no longer the distinction between individuals. There is no longer the external world. For Gregory as for the authentic Christian tradition in general, however, the distinction between Creator and creation remains even in the final fulfilment. Also the rich multiplicity of individual lives is not abrogated. Nor does the material world disappear, for it is transfigured into a new heaven and a new earth, and there is a bodily resurrection.

The underlying concept of final liberation, *kaivalya* or salvation in Sankara and in Gregory have thus much in common, but what distinguish the two are more significant. Gregory affirms differentiation and otherness both in the God-head and in the Creation, whereas for Sankara pure non-dualism is the ultimate and no differentiation can be tolerated. Neither does matter have any significance, nor does individual or personal qualities any meaning, in the final fulfilment, for Sankara. For Gregory both matter and the personal qualities are integrated into a rich and diverse final fulfilment.

## V. The Nature of Authority

Sankara is fascinatingly modern in the matter of authority. So is Gregory. Both of them seem to be much more relevant to modern man than many modern thinkers. Sankara clearly marks out the realm in which the scriptures or Tradition (*Sruti* or *Smriti*) can be authoritative—namely only in the knowledge of spheres of existence beyond the reach of our senses (*Thaittiriyaopaniṣad bhāṣya* II-6; *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* 2 : 3 : 1). But even more illuminating is his *pramānavākya* on the test of scriptural authority.

The test of the authority or otherwise of a passage is not whether it states a fact or an action, but its capacity to generate certain and fruitful knowledge. A passage that has this (capacity) is authoritative and one that lacks it is not (*Bṛihadāraṇyakaopaniṣad bhāṣya* I-4-7).

This is a very free attitude towards scripture and its authority. Gregory of Nyssa is probably less free in relation to scriptural authority and would not make self-authentication a final test of scriptural authority.

Gregory would not draw the line too neatly between what can be known by the senses and what can be known through the scriptures. To make them two different spheres and methods of knowledge may be intellectually neat, but we who know the consequences of separating theology and science into two watertight compartments cannot be very enthusiastic about Sankara's neat solution. We would prefer Gregory's solution of positing a dialectic between empirical knowledge and scriptural wisdom, the one illuminating and deepening the other in a continuous dialectic. It is from a careful study of scripture informed by a wealth of secular knowledge that Gregory could arrive at a rudimentary theory of evolution<sup>72c</sup> in the 4th century.

The self-authenticating quality attaches, in Gregory, only to an informed and perceptive interpretation of scripture, not to scripture itself.

To those who are expert only in the technical methods of proof a mere demonstration suffices to convince; but as for ourselves,

<sup>72c</sup> See for example his *On the Soul and the Resurrection* in which the dialectic is used practically throughout.

we were agreed that there is something more trustworthy than any of these artificial conclusions, namely that which the teachings of Holy Scripture point to ; and so I deem that it is necessary to inquire, in addition to what has been said, whether this inspired teaching harmonizes with it all.<sup>721</sup>

But the manner in which both Sankara and Gregory use scripture is far from slavish. They are controlled by it, but only as the railings of a bridge control one's passing over the bridge. Neither the bridge nor the railings are the master of man. Man, with the aid of God, is the master, though he is assisted and guided by the scripture and by the tradition as a whole.

### Conclusion

That affinity is there between Sankara and Gregory, there can be no doubt. They belong essentially to the same way of thinking, though Sankara is much more rigorous in his logic than Gregory. Gregory's thought operates within the framework of the Incarnation. Sankara's absolute non-dualism finds no place of significance either for history or for matter or even for personal existence. Once all differentiation is excluded the two central doctrines of the Christian faith—the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation—become impossible. There is no way of expressing the Christian faith in Sankara's terms.

Yet it is impressive to note that Gregory himself would not claim any absolute finality for any of our theological conceptions, since they are after all conceptions, i.e. attempts to hold within the limits of the human mind a reality that transcends it by far.

He would himself admit that our conceptual knowledge of God is a weak and inadequate apprehension of the unknowable. In that sense, he may sympathize with Sankara's rigorous efforts to state the non-dualist view of ultimate reality, but Gregory would go on to question even Sankara's view as little more than a human conception and therefore woefully inadequate.

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<sup>721</sup> *op. cit.*, NPNF, Vol. V, p. 442

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE LIBERATION OF MAN

Where is man going ?

Wherever he goes, he better start where he is.

The last third of the twentieth century is where he seems to be. The second half of this century has been, so far at least, the half-century of the liberation of man.

Will it also be the half-century of man's attainment of freedom ? For freedom is surely more than liberation. It includes man's becoming man. Liberation only places us on the threshold of freedom.

Since mid-century liberation has taken at least six forward steps, and thus brought mankind closer to the threshold of freedom.

#### Political De-colonization

Our half-century began with political de-colonization. The Philippines, India, Burma, Pakistan, Ceylon and Indonesia were among the first to break loose. Gandhi, Nehru, Jinnah, Soekarno and others became the symbols of a new hope of human dignity for all. A decade or so later, Africa followed suit. Emancipation brought a wild excitement and a new vitality to the depressed people of the dark continents. 1500 million people broke their political chains, and marched with a new confidence into the wide arena of world reality.

In the light of continuing economic enslavement, political emancipation proved a heady wine that brought on the headaches that often go with the sobriety of the morning after.

#### Movement against White Superiority

And yet this step of emancipation soon led to the second—the awakening of negro self-consciousness in the Afro-American peoples. The sit-ins and the bus boycotts snow-balled to be-

come Black Power and the defiance of white superiority. It was again the son of man waking up to snap the shackles that bound him.

### Revolt against Socialist Dictatorship

The third movement begins to break another bond—that of socialist dictatorship. Yugoslavia pioneered. Hungary tried to break her fetters, but was mercilessly re-bound. So was Czechoslovakia in more recent times. But the real liberation is going on in another quarter—in the realm of ideas.

It began perhaps in 1956 with the revolt of the Polish and Hungarian Marxist writers. Gomulka's apparently effective repression of the revolt in Poland was however not by any means the end of the story. Polish writers continued to insist, even on 14th March 1964, on the point made by the Young Marx in 1842: 'The free press is the manifestation of the vigilance of spirit of a people, the expression of their self-confidence, the link that relates the person to the State and to the world'.<sup>73</sup> The letter of the 34 Polish writers against censure led only to further intimidation and repression.

The writers have refused to give up. In other socialist countries, including Russia, open letters from writers began to appear. The new martyrs of literature become the heroes of the socialist underground.

In February 1968, the Polish writers again spoke up when the Government forbade the continuing performance of the play 'Dziady'. The extraordinary session of the Writers' Association Conference on February 29th saw a bold resolution against government censure received with furtive but widespread applause. Many senior writers spoke out with unprecedented audacity against the 'creatures in dotage' who suppressed the dignity of Polish literature. M. Gomulka, whose formal education did not go far beyond the primary level, soon took repressive measures against the intellectual rebels, charging them with anti-Soviet and anti-Party activities.

In the Soviet Union itself a whole new mode of communication has sprung up. On the face it does not appear subversive or revolutionary. The Russian who comes across this under-

<sup>73</sup> *Rheinische Zeitung*, July 1842. See also the issue of Jan. 1845.

ground literature (*Samizdat*) can however read between the lines a critique of contemporary Soviet Society that is both trenchant and perceptive. This typed literature copied and distributed from hand to hand establishes links between human beings that confirm each in his or her own opposition to the Communist establishment. Some of it is obviously the airing of private gripes. Much of it, however, has a cumulative effect in reinforcing a widespread network of opposition to the current regime. Leonid Brezhnev, in his address to the 24th Congress of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union (April 1971), made it clear that he was aware of this resistance and was going to deal with it firmly. No doubt we are going to see a time of even greater restriction on personal liberties in the Soviet Union, which would go hand in hand with a more abundant supply of consumer goods. On the other hand, there can be little doubt that the thaw has to come sooner or later, when Communism itself will enter a new phase in seeking and achieving the liberation of man.

There is a new vitality in the literature of the Communist societies, which because it is an upsurge of human freedom, cannot be ultimately repressed.

One is not naive enough to think that all who revolt against Communist dictatorship do so on behalf of authentic freedom. Many may be already too much attracted by the successes of the bourgeois West which they would like to emulate. But there is no doubt that the two great historic structures denying human freedom—the Roman Catholic Church and the Communist Party—are both having earth-tremors which forebode at least an eruption if not a major quake.

### **Revolt against Ecclesiastical Authority**

The last bastion of authority has been the Roman Catholic Church. The authority of the Pope as Pastor Universal was considered beyond question by intelligent Roman Catholic theologians until a few years ago. Even after the Vatican Council Pope Paul VI had managed to assume an authoritarian role which seemed to go against the spirit of the Council. When however, he boldly, with incredible audacity, spoke up in his

*Humanae Vitae* against the practice of artificial birth control, the world-wide reaction to it seemed to promise a new upsurge of intellectual and moral freedom within the bosom of the Catholic Church. Catholic bishops and theologians are now openly encouraging disobedience to papal authority.

### Revolt of Youth

A fourth and perhaps most significant chain that is being broken is that of the authority of the older generation. Youth in revolt has never been so radical and so powerful. Student rebellions were first introduced into politics, in the present writer's memory, by the Quit India Movement in India in 1942. Students were encouraged by political leaders to protest against colonial oppression. Now that protest has grown in a quarter-century to proportions that alarm the political leaders as much as university administrators. 1967-68 saw student protests in Argentina, Belgium, Berlin, Brazil, Britain, Colombia, Congo Kinshasa, Czechoslovakia, France, West Germany, East Germany, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Japan, Korea, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mexico, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Pakistan, Poland, South Africa, Spain, Tunisia, Turkey and U.S.A.

The most significant of these may be the American, the French and the Polish-Czechoslovakian protests. The events in France that began with the student revolt at the University of Nanterre on March 22nd 1968 were regarded by the French as the most important political development since 1871, if not since 1848. Students were taking to the barricades again in their fight against an oppressive establishment. May 11, 1968, saw Paris rocked to its foundation by student revolt. It is a revolt against the magistral authority of the Professor and the Administrator, a demand for freedom for the student to choose what he should learn and how he should live while in university.

The Student Revolt has already begun to fulfil the predictions of some of its adverse critics. It was essentially, or at least in large part, a bourgeois revolt, and two of the characteristics of a comfortable middle-class bourgeoisie are their love of comfort and their lack of staying power in the face of adverse circumstances. In the U.S. for example there was a new up-



surge of revolt following the speech and action of U.S. President Nixon extending the Vietnam war to Cambodia and Laos. American students expressed considerable naivete in fondly hoping that a few demonstrations, a few letters and cables to Congress, and a few more liberal democrats in Congress would end the war in Indo-China.

The student protest as a whole has lacked any adequate structure or clearly defined goals which could inspire and harness the energies of the majority of the student population. Few students are prepared to risk their careers or to jeopardize their own stake in the establishment. Unwilling to pay the price of sacrifice and suffering, unable to create structures for the changing of society, unprepared to discipline themselves in and for a tough struggle with the powers of injustice and dehumanization, the student protest in its present form shows little promise for the future. But there are new forms emerging.

Youth have begun to pioneer in certain significant directions—especially the communes and the counter-culture syndrome.

The communes are experimental communities of young and older couples, mostly from the city, who seek to break out of the frontiers of the nuclear family by joining a voluntary community that includes males and females of all ages, old people as well as children, in order to provide some more intimate community support for the individual, and greater capacity to contain and overcome tensions between individuals through the ability of the small community to provide alternate relationships which ease out the tension and a third-party presence which can prevent the tensions from breaking out into aggression. There is also an element of romanticism in the communes, a sort of 'back to nature' attitude reminiscent of Rousseau. The viciously polluted spiritual and physical atmosphere of the city today makes the desire to escape from the city more understandable than in Rousseau's time. But the facts—(a) that not all people can afford the luxury of leaving the city and (b) that the communes often attract people who are seeking to escape not only from the city but also from their own distorted selves—create difficulties in seeing in these communes the essential elements of the way forward. They are significant, however, as a protest against the urban-technological civilization and as a search for more spontaneous community.

The Indian student protest reveals two clear differences from similar movements elsewhere. The present author, who is basically sympathetic with the student protest and seeks to understand it from within rather than as an external critic, finds these two features discouraging.

First is the obvious triviality of some of the demands. Students go on strike or demonstrate boisterously in support of unreflected demands like easier examinations or fee concessions. In some parts of India there is the sad situation that all sorts of concessions can be squeezed out of the authorities by a sufficiently unpleasant demonstration. The economic and social frustration of educated people in our country renders violent protest against the total system justifiable and understandable. But when that frustration is expressed through demonstrations which are merely occasions for showing off the aggressive might of organized student power it becomes counter-productive in that it creates a negative attitude towards student demonstrations in general on the part of even the educated and the frustrated. A more serious set of demands designed to reveal the true locus of the socio-economic malaise of our society would have been welcomed even by some of those who are responsible for administering the present educational system and are deeply concerned about a radical change both in the social structures and in the pattern of education.

The second major weakness of the Indian student protest is its too close liaison with the political parties. The modern student protest is a phenomenon of Indian origin, initiated by the Indian National Congress in the interests of the country's liberation. But the liaison of student groups with political parties becomes much too often purely a partisan power struggle just as it is in the selfish political struggle in adult society. There is some pressure by student organizations on the political parties which sponsor or support them for internal reform within the party structures. But too often such pressure becomes part of a power struggle the basis of which is personalities rather than issues. On some occasions the various student organizations collaborate in joint protest. But more often they seem to be more of a reflection of the rotten social structures than a serious attempt to change them.

It is a pity that our student and youth protests are not even

good imitations of western protests, but are expressions of frustration and sometimes show irresponsibility and lack of seriousness beyond the measure where it is easy to condone.

### Revolt of Women

'Women's lib' as it has come to be called, sometimes affectionately, at other times glibly with a superior smile from uncomprehending males, is potentially one of the most liberating movements of our time. Women are more than half of mankind, and there can be little doubt that in social, political, and economic organizations, the males have generally been at the helm. Exceptions could be pointed out in the form of matriarchal societies in certain tribes or the 'market mummies' of West Africa who play a dominant economic role. The fact remains that these are exceptions. The rule is still male domination in public decision-making and in the use of economic and political power. Neither do women Prime Ministers in India, Ceylon and Israel disprove the general rule.

But it is not without significance that it is in Asian and African societies that women are able to come to the top more easily than in western countries. In some western countries like Switzerland and Belgium, women were until recently still lagging behind their non-western sisters in achieving the right to vote.

The women's liberation movement often claims that the oppression of women is as old as human history. This is true only in the same sense that most other forms of oppression and exploitation of one class of human beings by another are as old as humanity. It is the social conditions peculiar to an individualistic urban-technological civilization and that strange phenomenon of the nuclear family which goes with that civilization that have thrown into relief the oppression of women as a class. Small wonder, then, that in the West, the movement for women's liberation dates from the earlier half of the nineteenth century when the urban-technological civilization began to blossom and the nuclear family forced one man and one woman to work out their relationships without the checks and balances provided by the larger family unit composed of at least three generations and several cousins and in-laws.

The 1840's were also the period of revolt against the exploit-

ation of women and children as cheap labour in the most appalling conditions provided by the factories of that time. Women's liberation then was part of a revolt against a new middle class, male, bourgeois establishment that was coming into a dominant role in the West during this period. Male intellectuals were ready at hand to provide men with the ideological structure necessary to justify their continued domination and exploitation of women. Everything the domineering male middle class wanted for itself could be *reified* (made into things) and even woman began to become 'property'.

The revolt of western women in the mid-nineteenth century failed to enlist support from even a significant minority of women, and male chauvinism as expressed in the writings of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer triumphed for the moment. These two, along with less well-known writers like Otto Weininger, were among the most blunt and blatant in their antifeminism, but subtler forms of the denigration of women appeared in much of the literature of the time. Today the mass media have become the most effective instruments in blotting out the voice of the woman's liberation movement, or else in caricaturing and lampooning it and seeking to render it innocuous. Of course any passionate movement of revolt is certain to provide plenty of material for funny cartoons or uncomprehending satire.

The tendency to glorify masculine manhood continues to be prevalent in our time in the writings of Hemingway, D. H. Lawrence, and even Kazantzakis, the apostle of freedom. The great attraction that the idea of violence and aggressive action holds for many minds in our time could also be related to this exaltation of virility and adventurousness.

Perhaps the fact that women's liberation as a movement originated in America has its own significance. Though the Fascist regimes of Hitler and Mussolini were even more violently aggressive, these dictators had taken care to see that no movement of any kind of liberation would raise its head within their domain. America combines large-scale violent aggression with a great measure of personal freedom which was totally absent in the Fascist regime. It is not inconceivable, therefore, that as in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, it is the women who finally force the dominant male Athenians and Spartans to agree to lay down their arms.

The women's liberation movement holds within it the germs of perhaps the most significant psychic revolution in the history of mankind. The human psyche is mainly a creation of history. In the case of man and woman, there has been a division, not merely of labour, but also of virtues. But the labour and the virtues were not unrelated to each other. Biology and society worked together to assign certain tasks to women, like child-rearing and house-keeping, while men were to be food-gatherers and fighters for defence or aggression. The so-called 'female' virtues of passivity, compassion, tenderness, and even imagination came to be regarded as non-masculine, while aggression, domination, acquisition by force, adventurousness and ruthlessness become exalted as 'male' virtues.

We thus live in a world made by men who regard these latter as the high values. Who else but women can teach men again that compassion and tenderness, poetry and imagination are human virtues and not merely feminine? The effect of the women's liberation movement may eventually be that as more and more women begin to assume their legitimate share of the responsibility for making public decisions, the value-system of both female and male humanity will undergo some drastic changes hard to predict at present. It may also entail a radical change in human consciousness in general, paving the way for building a genuinely human society with justice and peace for all.

In India, one should not make the mistake of taking the way of the West in this matter. For we have a double standard in our treatment of women. On the one hand we have the aristocracy of cultured, active women, very far in advance of their western sisters, both in their dignity and poise and in their capacity for genuine leadership. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Mrs. Bandaranaike of Ceylon are by no means solitary exceptions. We have the tradition of a distinguished series of women leaders in society, of queens and generals, of statesmen and teachers, and of spiritual leaders. But the majority of Indian women have been pushed to the background in society, and a social system in which most of the decisions are taken by males has kept Indian women largely confined to the home.

This has been true also in the Christian Church, where women's work has been largely confined to teaching and serving. It seems essential that a fuller role in administration and decision-

making has to be taken by women in the Indian Church in order that their gifts of charity and imagination may bring some change to the power-crazy and unimaginative structures of authority in Indian Church and society today.

It will be a mistake, however, if the Indian woman, who still far surpasses the western woman in dignity, charm, spontaneity and the full acceptance of the distinctiveness of womanhood, were to imitate the women's liberation movement in the West. While she may be less disciplined and capable of hard work than her western sister, she is less afflicted with the frustrations of western women in a competitive capitalist society, where the terms of economic and social competition are set entirely by men, and where one has to become ruthless, crafty, acquisitive and aggressive if one is to succeed in the rat-race of economic competition and the struggle for political authority. The Indian woman has a certain authority of her own, coming out of her maturity of judgment and long tradition of silent suffering. This dignified and deep, non-assertive, authority needs to be conserved and augmented in all women, so that the whole of society becomes more dignified and balanced.

There is a need for the liberation of woman in India too, for masculine unimaginativeness and pedantry are dangers to the society in India as to society in the West. But it is to be hoped that the struggle for the liberation of women will be carried out without going through some of the more ludicrous and undignified phases of the western movement of women's lib.

These six revolts against authority—against political colonialism, against white supremacy, against socialist dictatorship, against the intellectual establishment, against ecclesiastical authority, and against male domination are all six far from consummated. Only when these movements of our half-century attain full force and courage can we say that we are reaching the threshold of freedom. We are still in the negative phase of freedom—that of liberation from bondage.

Even at that point there are issues still to be clarified. There is an intellectual task to be accomplished before mankind can march forward to the attainment of freedom. As the French say, in 1789 the people took the Bastille. On May 13, 1968, they 'took the word' (*la prise de parole*) in the 'capture' of the Sorbonne by student radicals. The days of detached academic

neutrality are over, they claim. Mankind through a limited number of pioneering youth, is swung into an upsurge of the poetic consciousness. Words now come from the heart, charged with feeling, not numbed with cerebration.

For the moment this poesy, this creative use of the word, remains a cry of protest more than a picture of the future. But in that seed of protest are the genes and chromosomes that shall determine the future in large part.

### Some Common Misconceptions

#### *Law and Order*

First there is the protest against the absolutization of law and order. At its more superficial level, the three candidates of the American Presidential election of 1968 had all to use this guarantee of law and order as their central platform in appealing for the votes of the American public. And it is not merely in economically well-established societies that we see this inordinate regard for law and order even at the expense of the claims of justice and dignity. In less developed countries like India, where the forces of linguistic and communal parochialism threaten to rend the hard-won unity of the nation, the cry for a strong police seems to sway the public.

At a more sophisticated level, people like Professor André Philip of France have been arguing that revolutions belong to the past, and if in the underdeveloped countries some people are still dreaming and talking of revolution, they will soon be cured of it when they become more advanced like European societies.

He seems to argue that the technological era does not permit wholesale revolution, but can only promote piecemeal change. First there is the element of cost. The machinery of production has been put up at such great cost, and to ask for it to be overthrown by revolution is foolish, according to Prof. Philip.<sup>72a</sup> Secondly technology in itself implies a built-in machinery for

<sup>72a</sup> See his article 'The Revolutionary Change in the Structure of European Political Life' in Z. K. Mathews Ed. *Responsible Government in a Revolutionary Age*, New York and London, 1966, pp. 115-129.

change. And our technological society will therefore need no revolutions.

How utopianly bourgeois a dream that is! The way in which bourgeois love of comfort and therefore of law and order distorts human reasoning seems simply incredible. Whatever be the cost, when men are being destroyed in their freedom and dignity by a system, that system has to be overthrown, for no system is as valuable as man. To bring in the issue of cost is perhaps symptomatic of what is happening to human values in western society. However much built-in machinery for change a technological society may have, the use of such machinery is in the hands of those in power. The oppressed cannot simply wait till those in power feel well-disposed enough to do some research into their problems, and propose some remedies at minimum cost to the holders of power.

This absolutization of a particular system of law and order is one of the great idolatries of western liberal and conservative alike.

Planned change within the given structure of law and order, sometimes romantically termed 'change by constitutional means', does take place in all societies whether in Russia or America, Cuba or Korea. To cease to change would be to ossify and die.

But constitutional change cannot always unseat a class from the throne of power. In many Latin American countries, for example, it is becoming increasingly clear that the political machinery is completely controlled by the economically dominant class, often allied to North American investors. North American exploitation of the economy of Latin America favours this ruling class while it progressively impoverishes the masses. Those who control economic and political power cannot be expected to introduce the necessary changes by constitutional means which would in effect deprive them of their power. To justify such a political and economic structure in the name of law and order is to reveal a bestial insensitivity to the sufferings of the oppressed and exploited.

The Christian faith affirms that the present structure of law and order is a human creation, and is not to be absolutized. It should be questioned, examined, and if found to be an oppressive idol, should be overthrown, even if that brings the roof of



the temple over our heads. This is the spirit of the student protest.

Law and order as a structured pattern of living indeed seems to be God-given; but no particular system is. Even the revolutionary and the guerilla has his own law and order. No society can long survive without some form of law and order.

The particular system of law and order in which we live, if found inadequate to the needs of fostering human freedom and dignity, will have to be overhauled. An alienated system of law and order, over which man is powerless and which continues to dictate to him against his own better judgment, certainly has become demonic.

### *Violence*

A second intellectual error persists in our societies in relation to the issue of violence and non-violence.

By violence we mean the use of excessive strength against the will of another to produce injury or damage to person or property.

The word 'revolution' creates many negative reactions in people's minds mostly because of its association with violence. But revolution need not imply broken skulls, machine guns and blood-baths. We speak of the industrial revolution, the technological revolution and the cybernetic revolution, when all we mean is a radical change in the means of production and distribution. These revolutions entail a chain reaction of sweeping change in human social relations and living conditions.

What most men fear seems to be political revolution. Here we mean the application of force to change the seat of power against the will of those in power. Not all political revolutions are violent in character. The Greek military junta took over power in 1967 with a minimum of skull-breaking and blood-baths. It was a revolution, even if the junta in power remains a reactionary force in most respects.

But the application of excessive strength to cause injury or damage to persons and property need not always be clearly visible. Damage can be done to human persons by a system which on the surface appears non-violent. Such damage is more subtle because we can more clearly see and more readily react against physical damage to human bodies and property than we can

against damage to the dignity, freedom and humanity of people. The excessive power used is not physical but economic and technological.

Most of our present systems of political and economic organization are oppressive and destructive of human dignity. Violence is endemic, built into the system, wherever big business or the landed aristocracy concentrates power in its own hands and uses that power to control the government of the people. Wherever justice is denied to the weak, wherever the dignity of man is violated, wherever people are forced into the slums or reduced to sub-human standards of living, in such societies violence is entrenched in the system itself. Constitutional change may be inadequate in such cases to deal with the problem in its fundamentals. Violent revolution or the forcible overthrow of those in power against their will may be the only means available for redressing the violence endemic in the system.

To refuse to support such revolution on the ground that violence is not Christian involves us in the dilemma that by our very refusal we are supporting the systemic violence. We are in such a case confronted with a choice between two evils. Here a sensitive Christian conscience finds it difficult to make an easy decision that would keep his hands clean.

The Christian, however, cannot be so naive as to think that simply by choosing to apply violence against the violent system, one has found the solution to the problem. Violence has its own nemesis, as we so well know these days. It is not possible to use hatred and violence as tools of regaining self-esteem and dignity, without having a price to pay. It is much cleaner to die as a martyr in the course of a revolutionary struggle than to win that struggle and ascend to the seat of power. For in the very application of violence to others, one becomes changed within oneself. One does violence to one's own dignity in the process of applying violence.

The prophets of the Old Testament were sometimes violent in their denunciation of the oppressor and the exploiter. God himself is violent in his retribution of justice as we see it in history.

The Christian revolutionary has to exercise severe self-discipline in order to be fit to enter the revolutionary struggle. Certain elementary principles have to be observed.

He should be pure in his motivation. He does not enter the struggle either to escape from the complications of his own personal life, or to wreak a personal vendetta on individuals or the class in power which has done him wrong. His motivation has to be participation in God's compassion for the oppressed and the downtrodden, and a genuine desire to see a just society in which even the erstwhile oppressor, properly chastened, can play his part in dignity.

He cannot seek power for the sake of power or for lording it over others. He has to share the poverty and suffering of the oppressed, and to sacrifice his own property and comfort for the sake of the revolutionary struggle. This is where the Christian liberal often becomes a hypocrite—in the inconsistency between his profession of solidarity with the poor and his practice of a level of living not within the means of the poor.

Even after coming to power in a victorious struggle, the Christian has to continue to be unsparing of himself, and to remain disciplined, willing to undergo hardship for the sake of building up a society of justice. He refuses to accept privilege and comfort as the prize for his unselfish efforts. He continues to be a cross-bearer to the very end, always willing to forego his own interests in the interest of the people whom he serves.

The decision to enter a revolutionary struggle thus involves for the Christian a momentous decision to walk the way of the cross to the very end, expecting neither comfort nor applause in return for his sacrifice.

One thing seems clear. We are essentially wrong if we assume that we can walk into the heaven of freedom without a struggle. The smooth comfortable passage to a utopia through technology and constitutional government is a bourgeois liberal dream which has no Christian content. The whole Gospel is the message of a continuing battle with the forces of evil. The principalities and powers ranged against the Prince of Peace will not be conjured away by parliamentary speech-making, democratic electioneering and technological jugglery. They are determined to stay entrenched and give battle till the end when the day of the Lord shall dawn.

*The Urban Paradise*

A third mistaken assumption underlying much of our thinking as Christians is that the kingdom of God is some form of an urban-technological civilization, a 'secular city' spread world-wide.

Our age is already being called, among other things, the 'post-city age'. The traditional city is fast disappearing. Our pragmatic approach to life had once thought that a world-wide network of interconnected cities would be the cure for most of our social ills. *'The City is Dead—Long Live the City'* is the title of a publication (1966) of the Centre for Planning and Development Research at the University of California, Berkeley. The city is a spatial entity, spatially organized. But communications have been developing so fast that geography is almost being overcome. The urban-rural distinction is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain. A kind of national urban society seems to be emerging in most western countries as well as in Japan. We may be on the way to building a planet-wide cosmopolis. Some form of an international community has already begun to take shape. Many regard themselves not as permanently belonging to any particular city or nation, but as citizens of the world sharing in a cosmopolitan culture. The planet is their city and nation. These men are already the ordinary men of tomorrow, when the world will be just one great city.

Rarely does one hear a questioning of this line of optimistic thinking. The society of the girded loin, a nation of universal conquistadores, we are out to build a brave new world, where we shall all live happily ever after. In this urban-technological paradise we will all be 'free'—i.e. able to say 'I am my own man' and 'I can do my own thing'. This unusual blend of universal urban-technological collectivism and a stupendously romantic individualism often form the substance of our notion of salvation.

What we have perfected is technology, and it is technology on which most men, most places, most times, rest such vague hopes as still stir. It is now in or almost in our hand to feed lavishly, clothe, and render 'literate' the world, to live in virtually instantaneous, ubiquitous, 'communication', to annihilate nearly all physical distance, to command more energy than we can use, to engineer mood and perhaps perception at will, to write such genetic prescriptions as we wish, to make such men as whim may dictate.

The universe capitulates. We are everywhere triumphant. But a premonitory smell of cosmic Neroism is in the air, and the cry of 'stop the world; I want to get off' has become, whether absurd or not, pervasive and insistent.<sup>74</sup>

Not as pervasive and insistent as one wishes, you may like to say to the Dean of the Centre for the Study of Democratic Institutions in Santa Barbara, California. Most intellectuals, especially theologians, continue to be naive and utopian in their hopes of the secular city and the technological paradise. Mastering facts by research, planning, programming, engineering, executing, evaluating, renovating, we merrily march our way to progress, only to find that we have lost ourselves along the way.

And that is what the 'hippie' is protesting against. Freedom does not come by the mere external control of reality. The hippie knows it almost as well as did St. Gregory of Nyssa in the 4th century. One has to 'find one's head', to *be*, to make sure that one *is*, even when one has stopped doing and started resting.

Man cannot *be*, just by doing, and by doing it for one's own advantage, and by doing what others expect of us or force us into doing. In our search for freedom, we have to seek more than the control of external reality. We cannot afford to lose ourselves in the process of gaining mastery of the universe.

For what benefit is it to man, if he gains the whole cosmos while losing his own soul? Or what can he provide as substitute for his own soul? (Mt. 16: 26).

'Being one's own man' calls for more than 'doing one's own thing'. St. Gregory of Nyssa had already made clear that any mastery of the universe unaccompanied by a mastery of one's own self, cannot lead to true *eleutheria* or freedom. Only when the *hegemonikon*, or the ruling element within ourselves, is in full control of our minds and bodies, do we genuinely taste freedom. It is this aspect of freedom which is now in danger of being neglected even by theologians. The sub-conscious, unconscious and conscious elements of fear and anxiety, guilt and aggression,

<sup>74</sup> John R. Seeley, 'Remaking the Urban Scene: New Youth in an Old Environment', in *Daedalus*, Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Fall 1968.

boredom and purposelessness need to be overcome in order to regain authentic humanity. The kingdom of God is much more complex than the secular city and the urban-technological paradise.

### *A Necessary God?*

A fourth prevailing misconception in much of our theological reflection relates to our attempts to find a relevant doctrine of God. The God of the gaps, of the 'necessary hypothesis', is of course dead or dying. There is a new tendency to affirm that God is nothing more than simply the destiny of man. Hegel had suggested that God is becoming, that he is in process of evolution, within the time-process. This is now translated into more secular terms to suggest that it is man who ultimately becomes God. A Marxist atheist like Roger Garaudy would say that what Christians call their God is nothing but the exigency in man to become born as truly man.

In theology itself man-language and God-language are becoming quite interchangeable, the former tending to replace the latter. The difference between many so-called 'atheists' and some so-called 'believers' is, in Garaudy's happy phrasing, simply that for atheists there is no externally guaranteed promise of human fulfilment, while for believers there is such a promise.

If the freedom of man requires that he be liberated from subservience to an external God, there are two possibilities. For secular man it is man's accepting full responsibility for his own existence and for the shape of the world. For many Christians, it is to have God as the depth or ground of our own being, so that it is God in us, operating through our thought, will and action, who finally shapes the destiny of man.

It is in this attempt to capture God within human immanence that there lurks a great danger for human destiny. Here we are in a sense pushed back to Schliermacher's immanent God and the resultant superficial liberalism. We need to maintain the otherness of God and divine immanence in some form of dialectical tension, not conceptually resolved, but maintained in a cultic milieu. Without that cultic acknowledgment of both divine otherness and his union with us in the Eucharist, we become reductionists and, at that point, become sub-Christian, which means also sub-human.

We cannot achieve any adequate conceptual formulation of this dialectic between the otherness and the 'in-us-ness' of God. The only adequate vehicle for maintaining it is in the Eucharistic act, which itself should not be reduced to some facile notion of a Lord's supper where the 'Lord' gives a banquet to all comers. It remains a mystery, and its character as a mystery, which brings the otherness of the trans-temporal and the trans-logical to the historical and the conceptual needs to be maintained through proper discrimination. Else it is reduced to the level of the banal, as the Bible has already been so reduced through its indiscriminate use by all according to the whim and fancy of each.

To maintain the dignity and majesty of God against his despisers and the would-be trampers of his glory is a pre-condition for maintaining the dignity and majesty of Man. When God becomes reduced to the level of empirical or even transcendent man, then empirical man's dignity and freedom can be too easily trampled upon by other men.

The mystery of the cosmos and man—realities subsisting within the trans-spatio-temporal world of intra-trinitarian reality, maintained trans-conceptually in the Eucharistic rhythm of the Church—this may appear utter nonsense to many minds; but those who have experienced this world can only pray, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do or say.'

These four protests—against absolutization of any given system of law and order, against the condoning of systemic violence by the condemnation of revolutionary violence, against the reduction of the kingdom of God to an urban-technological paradise, and against the reduction of God to a radical immanentism—have within them indications of the way forward. And these we must pursue. None of these are automatic processes, like the six processes we listed earlier in this chapter. These call for the utmost human vigilance. The protests are much too feeble today to be heard widely. In fact the four errors are so widely proclaimed and so facilely accepted by many who have clear minds. Most modern theology makes at least two and sometimes all four of these errors. The theologians absolutize law and order or at least make it a higher priority than justice; they condemn or condone violence without qualification and without grasping its complexities, they are over-optimistic about

the possibilities of our urban-technological civilization, and they do not see the relevance of the transcendence of God and the transcendence of man which is dependent upon it.

### **The breakthrough in Genetics and Space Exploration**

The liberation of man was confronted with new possibilities when the earth and its atmosphere as confining boundaries for human existence were broken through in the space research achievements of the last third of our century. The earth with its field of gravity was no longer to be the sole domain of man's existence. Man's most common dream—to float in space without being held down by gravity—was no longer a mere dream.

Of course we have not yet got very far beyond the earth and its satellite, but it is conceivable that within a short time man would have set foot on other planets in the solar system. Once that is achieved, man cannot be expected to stop with the solar system. Theoretically there is no reason why man should not wander around to inter-stellar space and to other planetary systems belonging to other stars.

This breakthrough has consequence for the human consciousness which goes far beyond the idea of geographical conquest. Our children are growing up with a world-view quite different from the one with which our own generation did. It will be easier for the man of tomorrow to be liberated in his consciousness from a confining geocentrism and to conceive of man's vocation as extending far beyond the confines of this earth.

His consciousness will soon have also to grapple with some of the problems connected with the nature of space itself. What is space? Is it really uniform and bounded as we once thought? Is it in a constant or inconstant state of expansion? Does it have a centre and a periphery? Where are we ourselves and our little solar-system located in terms of these centre-periphery axes? Is there some way of man transcending space itself, so that all space appears to him as 'here' rather than divided into 'here', 'there' and 'elsewhere'?

The same or similar questions are sure to be put by the consciousness of man in relation to the nature of time. Space and Time, the two great mysteries (i.e. logically inexplicable entities which cannot be conceptually grasped through our normal space-time categories) which form the warp and woof



of the background of our existence will themselves soon be seen by man in a fresh way, thus marking another stage in the liberation of man.

For man is, in the Christian vision, a visitor in time-space. The earth is not his natural or ultimate habitat. His home is heaven, the presence of his Father and Maker, God. And it is essential for the true liberation of man to develop a state of consciousness in which time-space is seen also as a laboratory given to man to experiment with reality or as a training ground for developing certain skills necessary for life in a totally different milieu. This is not to say that historical existence is meaningless. I do however mean that historical existence is meaningless by itself. History, like man, has to derive its significance from a realm outside of itself. Time-space does not belong to the ultimate nature of reality, but only to its phase in relation to the mind of man at a somewhat primitive stage of its development.

Perhaps it is quite stupid of me to find the significance of our contemporary achievements in space exploration, in these misty realms of the consciousness of man. Why not see these more concretely as the conquest of larger tracts of real estate to be dominated and used by man as he feels restless on this overcrowded planet? Yes, of course. Why not? But then I am neither a real estate dealer nor am I obsessed by ideas of geographical expansionism.

The breakthroughs in science and technology could be viewed either from the perspective of their commercial value or, more wisely, in terms of how they are used to transmute the environment of man and thereby man himself.

Technology has now made that astounding breakthrough of the elements of the genetic code, which open the way to shape the mind of man by direct action on the tissues that bear and generate the mental processes. DNA\* the magic substance of the genes which contains the coded instructions for the growth and development of each organism, has now been isolated and its structure analysed.

The most spectacular aspect of the genetic breakthrough is the prospect of genetic surgery which can not only remove inherited imperfections at the level of the genes, but claims

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\*DNA—short for deoxyribonucleic acid.

ability even to 'create' superman to order by doctoring up the genes—bigger and better brains, eyes, ears, hands or whatever else you choose.

This is all neither fable nor science fiction. A real possibility is opening up to man the full brunt of which man has still not faced. *Future Shock*, as a much discussed book is titled, will be painful for humanity, for the future is full of shocking possibilities. The possibility of feeding in information or language skills directly into the brain, of simulating unheard of pleasures by electronic stimulation of certain parts of the brain, the possibility of aggression control by electronic impulses, even the possibility of creating life by chemical synthesis—these are possibilities that stagger the mind and, when realized, would confront man with choices that are so momentous and yet so far beyond the present level of the maturation of human wisdom to undertake, that they may very well paralyse man into a shock of cynical irresponsibility.

The Christian faith, especially if one conceives of man as made in the image of God to inherit all the power, love and wisdom at the disposal of the Creator, does not allow man to be staggered or shocked by these possibilities, nor does it advise him to run away from them. Every new possibility that opens up before man confirms his basic faith that God wants to hold back nothing at all from His children. Everything that God can, man can also, except be one's own creator.

The only problem is that there has to be some co-ordination in the growth of power, wisdom and love. The development of power and knowledge is what the breakthroughs in science and technology bring to man. But knowledge is not in itself wisdom. Wisdom is the capacity to discern what is truly good. The development of this capacity has not yet kept pace with the growth of power—a disequilibrium capable of destroying man.

Here is the most pressing demand on the Church—to produce human beings who are nurtured in a loving community of the spirit, who have both access to the power provided by science and technology and are also able wisely to control and guide the use of these in the best interests of mankind and its future as the bearer of the image of God. A new breed of human beings has to be produced who are completely at home in the world of science and technology, whose consciousness is not

limited by the dogmatism and superstitions of a false scientism, and who are able to develop an open consciousness, with true wisdom and love.

The genetic breakthrough poses many moral issues some of which have been clearly brought out in Paul Ramsey's *Fabricated Man*. The importance of these moral questions for which there are no easy answers is being recognized by the creation of societies and institutes for the study of moral issues rising out of the new genetics and new technology.

There is a tendency among many to decry the efforts at genetic mutation and at artificial creation of life as 'tinkering with the sacred'. This attitude seems to counsel a kind of complacency with the way things are. Man cannot remain stationary without becoming stagnant and deteriorating. He is meant to explore all, but he must also learn to love all and live with all in wisdom and grace. All this is part of the freedom of man.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE WAY FORWARD

One respects words. Otherwise one could not have come this far. But words have certain limits. A reality, in order to happen, does not always first take shape in words and then take flesh.

This book does not presume to show the way forward for overcoming the crisis of authority and for developing genuine human freedom at the same time. For if the essence of free humanity could be put down in words before it actually comes into existence, then it would be neither free nor therefore human. For man's authentic existence has to be lived out first before it is described.

Yet words have a job—to stand by and serve, without dictating. And the following words may be taken as invitations to experimentation, not as formulae for conceptual resolution of these problems.

We need to seek liberation from the intellectual pseudo-morphosis of Christianity which took place long ago. The martyr was the earliest missionary. And he was no word-monger but a blood-spiller who spoke the powerful language of life and death. So was the monk who followed the martyr once the persecutions came to an end. His way of life was prophetic and eschatological, and so he became by his very life and power a missionary. The monk did not peddle a pot of message, but by severe contempt of the values of a smug society he paved the way for a new world, built on discipline and self-control.

What about the layman and the laywoman who have today come into the missionary inheritance of the martyr and the monk? We clergymen have given them a lot of words. They need to create something more vital than words in order to have an effective ministry as the new martyrs and monks of our era. They should, especially the young among them, have to show, like the martyr, the total abandon of personal interests and, like the monk of the fourth century, show their contempt of the values of a decadent society by creating a new one in daring and pioneering.

Problems of authority and freedom are thus problems of pioneering, not merely of conceptual clarification. The following conceptual statements are then made as suggestions to create the kind of authority and freedom that can only be lived.

### The Replacement of the King by the Shepherd

This is the most dramatic insight in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Today we have seen the last of the kings: Royalty as an institution has had its day. If there still remain a few kings and sheikhs, little du Valiers and big Francos, they belong to a by-gone age.

But it would be a mistake to assume that arbitrary authority is now being replaced by 'persuasive' authority. That is a comfortable luxury for bourgeois Platos and Whiteheads. What is increasingly coming into prominence is the authority of the shepherd.

There is a tendency to identify the shepherd too easily with the bishop, and to regard the sheep as very sheepish indeed. The analogy is not to be pressed at the point of the sheep. The Old Testament made much of the shepherd—a very unhellenic tradition.

The shepherd *par excellence* is God himself. Yahweh is called the shepherd of Israel.<sup>75</sup> In him Israel finds her security, protection, providence and affectionate care. In fact Yahweh is Israel's shepherd-king. He does appoint another shepherd in his place to look after the people. Moses was the first such shepherd. When Moses was getting too aged to feed the sheep on behalf of Yahweh, he says to the Lord,

May Yahweh the Lord of the spirits of all flesh appoint a man over the community, who shall lead them in going out and coming in, who will take them out and bring them in, lest the community of Yahweh become like a flock for which there is no shepherd (Numbers 27 : 16-17).

Joshua becomes thus the shepherd of Israel. Shepherd or Pastor in the Old Testament certainly does not mean priest; it means rather the civil ruler. Ezekiel's prophecies against

<sup>75</sup> Gen. 49 : 24; Ps. 23 : 1; Ps. 80 : 1; Is. 40 : 11; Is. 44 : 28.

the shepherds of Israel (34 : 24 ff) are directed against her civil rulers. What are the charges against them ?

Thus says Adonai Yahweh  
 Hoi, shepherds of Israel  
 Who have been tending your own selves  
 Should not shepherds tend the sheep ?  
 You eat the fat, you put on the wool,  
 You slaughter the fatlings, but the  
 Sheep you do not tend,  
 You have not strengthened the weak  
 You have not healed the sick  
 You have not bound up the crippled  
 You have not brought back the strayed  
 You have not sought the lost ones  
 With brute force and harshness you  
 Have ruled them  
 So they were scattered  
 And became a prey for all wild beasts.

Here we see clearly that Israel went wrong in regarding law and order rather than welfare as the primary duty of the state.

Ezekiel goes on to say that the sheep themselves have become unjust due to the lack of good Government.

Thus says the Lord God to them (the flock): 'Behold, I, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. Because you push with side and shoulder, and thrust at all the weak with your horns, till you have scattered them abroad, I will save my flock, they shall no longer be a prey; and I will judge between sheep and sheep. And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken.' (Ezekiel 34 : 20-24. R.S.V.)

The messianic expectation in Israel was thus closely connected with waiting for the 'Good Shepherd' who will not only feed his flock, but would also protect the weak sheep against the fat and mighty within the flock. In the 10th chapter of the Fourth Gospel, Jesus claims to be the Messiah as Good Shepherd.

The qualities of the Good Shepherd in John 10 go far beyond the tasks of the welfare state, while including welfare. There is warm personal relation between the ruled and the rulers (He calls his own sheep by name, and they follow). The good shepherd

finds pasture for the sheep, and defends them against wolves to the point of self-sacrifice.

It is at the moment impossible to conceive a governmental structure which will embody all these principles. But our task is to establish at least experimental communities where the shepherdly pattern of rule replaces that of arbitrary authority.

The authority of the devoted and self-sacrificing leader is still a reality even in this democratic age. The way forward to the healing of humanity lies primarily through the recovery of this type of authority in communities, and eventually in the whole world.

### **The De-cerebration of faith and knowledge**

Quite apart from the pseudomorphosis of Christianity or perhaps, as a remote consequence of it, the western mind has preoccupied itself with the *forms* of knowledge, and not with wisdom. Perhaps it was a quest for certainty. Only by knowing how we know can we know how certain that knowledge is.

And there were only two forms of knowing—through the senses, or through the mind. The first approach leads to Empiricism in epistemology; the second to Rationalism. In both true being becomes identified with the forms of knowledge—either the state of consciousness or the forms of cognition. When this identification raises unanswerable questions about the nature of the 'thing-in-itself', we deny ontology and metaphysics altogether, and retreat to a functionalist-existentialist fortress. There too we are uncomfortable. And we make sorties into tactile knowledge—body-contacts, experimental investigations and so on; or else we escape into the pure inner world which can be created by drugs or psychedelics.

Man's freedom demands that we move out of this fortress. Modern youth is impatient with the functionalism of the traditional technological civilization.

Vladimir Soloviev wrote already in the last century about the dangers of cerebration. First one hypostasizes abstract predicates; then one doubts their reality. The next stage is to question the reality of all being except one's own consciousness.

But trying to get hold of the true being of beings with our

rational minds is like seeking to catch the water-fall in a sieve. For, as Nyssa has shown, the true being of all that exists is nothing less than the dynamic will of God. And we cannot grasp that will in our concepts.

The major weakness of the Christian faith has been its attempt to cerebralize it, to formulate it, and to hold it in words. But faith is a relation to the being and will of God. It cannot be reduced to words and concepts which we can control. Words can only stand by and serve. Man must come to terms with reality in the act of worship. There words have a role to play, but a quite limited role. Cerebration is part of celebration, but cannot replace it.

The de-cerebration of faith and knowledge can come only in acts of worship which go beyond the verbal and the conceptual. Worship must thus involve the use of the whole body, of things and actions, of emotion and will, and of trans-conceptual expressions of aspiration and exultation.

The liturgy of the Eucharist has to be recovered in all its original completeness—the mind (conscious and unconscious), the will, the emotions, the body, the senses, all being equally involved. The corporateness of humanity, living and departed, history, present and future, has to be experienced in worship. The kingdom as that which transcends and comprehends the spatio-temporal has to be tasted in worship. Only thus can man move towards the fullness of freedom.

Our 'new' forms of worship remain banal in their verbality, in their lack of appeal to the body and the will, in their self-conscious individualism, in their imprisonment in the concerns of the immediate present. A richer and fuller worship is the *sine qua non* for holding the Christian faith alive and moving towards freedom.

### **A new awareness of a universal tradition**

The West, much more than the East, has acquired a very negative attitude towards tradition and the past. Tradition is so full of errors and crimes, that it is easier to forget the past and set one's sights on the future. This is particularly so for the Church, because the past reveals so many arrogant false



claims, so much imposition of blatant error on others by force, so much suppression of freedom, so much silly dogmatism.

And yet the recovery of an authentic tradition, with a conscious acknowledgement of past errors, seems absolutely necessary both for the recovery of credibility and for a dynamic approach to the future. Perhaps it is unsettling to be aware of one's errors in the past; for then one may become less cocksure about the future. And yet without mitigating that cocksureness, we may be repeating the history of false claims even in the future. By becoming less cocksure, the West may be unable to hold its position of leadership, but it may in that process open itself more to unsuspected dimensions of truth.

It should be possible for the West to find a *via media* between an absolutely self-confident messianism and a totally self-abdicating, hand-wringing, withdrawal. That can be done by honest self-evaluation and self-awareness with humility and openness towards other civilizations and cultures.

That is what true tradition is—an awareness of both what is good and what is bad in one's own racial-cultural past—not a false glorification or total condemnation of it.

The whole of humanity needs a common tradition, one that belongs to the whole of mankind. Tradition now acts divisively.' Each race and sect and nation and linguistic group seeks to defend its own tradition over against others. The full freedom of man demands that we unite our traditions and hold the whole thing, with all its successes and failures, as our common heritage.

No true vision of the future of humanity is possible without the acknowledgement of the past of humanity as belonging to all of us together. A major battle to be won for the freedom of man is the creation of a common human history which makes all human beings capable of saying 'we' in terms of that common history. No particular tradition can be fully trusted, except in the context of an openness to the sum-total of human experience, culture and wisdom.

The question of authority here receives a new perspective. Here I am, an Indian, a member of an Eastern Orthodox Church, trained in the western system of education. I inherit thus three traditions—the cultural spiritual heritage of India, the religious-spiritual heritage of Eastern Christianity and the

conceptual formation of western civilization. If I had to choose one of these to the exclusion of the two others, I would have been that much impoverished. How do I then find my way? Can I first make a comparative study of two or three religious traditions and then choose one of them on the basis of externally testable superiority? Hardly. The Hindu and Buddhist religions belong to my cultural heritage. Hinduism has its own scriptures as has Christianity. Hindu seers and thinkers claim with at least as much sincerity as Christian theologians and clergymen that their scriptures are uniquely authoritative and convey a special revelation from God unavailable through ordinary human thought and experience.

Faced with two rival and exclusive claims to divine revelation, how do I choose? What external criteria can help me decide? I do not think there is a valid answer to that question. A number of predilections and circumstances have led me to a choice—specifically for Eastern Christianity as my primary commitment.

But precisely because I hold the whole human experience as my heritage, I cannot be exclusive in my adherence to Eastern Christianity. I have learned much by being open to both western Christianity and Hinduism, as well as to Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, secular humanism and Marxism. All these belong to my tradition. But I cannot trust my own judgment as a criterion. So I do not remain in a floating relation to all my heritage, but have consciously chosen one limited heritage, from which to receive my perspective on other parts of my heritage. This I do by belonging to a community and accepting its heritage as a perspective-granting criterion for evaluating and living out other aspects of my heritage.

I cannot claim any neutral authority for my choice. My own experience confirms that I have made the right choice. But then I know others who have made a different choice in similar circumstances and I cannot claim that their experience gives them no confirmation of their choice.

In other words, choices are made, not on the basis of an objective external authority, but rather on the basis of a set of predilections and circumstances.

It seems idle to claim an objective criterion on the basis of which anyone can choose between the Christian Bible and Hindu scriptures. If such criteria are offered, they are usually derived from the tradition which one has already chosen.

The adherence to a particular tradition and a religious community is thus a risk for which we have to accept responsibility. No one can really remain a 'gliding philosopher' for all his life without serious disintegration of personality. Commitment to one particular tradition makes it easier to be open to the wealth of all traditions.

Genuine freedom is not only not lost by such commitment. One begins to feel free to deal with all the rich variety only when one is secure within one tradition. Those without such security become either incredibly fanatic, or rather sadly eclectic and therefore unfree.

The authority we thus accept is primarily that of God as he reveals himself in the life of a community. The scriptures of that community bear witness to that experience of the community with God. The experience of the community is primary; the experience of individuals in that community is secondary. The scriptures bear witness to both; but the scriptures themselves cannot be understood or evaluated without membership in the community and participation in its experience. Hence the impossibility of objective comparative study of the various religions by looking at their scriptures.

The scriptures are by no means exhaustive of the experience of the community. They are only a standard by which that wealth of experience can be measured and understood. It is the collective mind of the community that stores the experience. The scriptures are a mnemonic device for the community, a criterion by which the community can itself check and correct its memory.

Authority for faith and conduct thus is not in the scriptures. It is in the life of the community. But it is very flexible and open kind of authority, to be corrected by the sum-total of experience, by openness to reality wherever it manifests itself, and by growth in maturity of understanding and judgment.

That is why Tradition has always to have an eschatological dimension and orientation. Tradition is not backward-looking. It appropriates the past in order to be more adequately open to the future. Tradition is always a reaching forward to direct vision, to unmediated knowledge, and to the consummation of love. Loyalty to tradition without openness to present reality and expectant yearning for the future, can be stifling and des-

destructive of human freedom. But an openness to future without an awareness of the past is bound to be superficial and therefore enslaving. The community of the spirit lives out of the past towards the future in the present. There freedom grows, for the spirit is freedom.

### **The Disciplined Community**

True growth of freedom demands a disciplined community. Belonging to a large Church or religious group does not provide one with all that is necessary for human growth.

The family is the primary small community for all human beings. It is there that the basic human elements of conscience, self-control and discipline as well as the capacity for love are acquired.

The family provides the child first with the security of love which makes creative spontaneity possible. Where the child does not experience this security and love, it will be restless and anxious, unable to enter into relationships with anyone, threatened by the very encounter with others.

It is also in the family that conscience and self-control are acquired. First the parent acts as monitor for the child in many matters of conduct including toilet and feeding habits, which the child does quite mechanically in the early stages. Slowly the child gets the notion of right and wrong, and begins to exercise self-control in toilet and feeding habits as well as later in more complex moral decisions.

The school, the Church, the club, the professional group—all these communities teach more and more habits of self-regulation and principles of conscience to the adolescent and the adult.

Today the need seems to be for a community which by providing a framework can help man to acquire genuine internal and external freedom in a more systematic and consciously directed way than these randomly run institutions of society can.

More repression of passions cannot give us victory over our passions, we have learnt to our cost in the last century. Today there is a reaction against repressive moral codes as destructive of genuine freedom. Herbert Marcuse reminds us that our

whole civilization suffers from our repressive tendencies which generate acquisitiveness and aggressiveness.

Marcuse criticizes Freud for asserting that civilization can be built only by the methodical inhibition of the primary instincts—the inhibition of sexuality and the repression of the destructive instincts. It is through these two basic repressions that individual and social morality is born, according to Freud. And that morality is the basis and dynamo of our civilization.

Marcuse would argue that this civilization develops compensatory aggressiveness and acquisitiveness, precisely because of such repression.<sup>76</sup> Knowledge and work become oriented towards struggle, conquest, and domination of one's environment. Objective reality is resistance, and action and knowledge are ways of overcoming the resistance. The ego itself thus becomes oriented towards aggressive domination.

In this overemphasis of the male-principle of aggressive domination, the complementary female-principle of receptivity and gratification are overlooked and frustrated. Our present revolt against arbitrary authority may be seen partly as a revolt against the structure of society which is based on the principle that the strong man establishes his ego by aggressively dominating the other and making the other an adjunct of one's own ego.

Marcuse would argue for the possibility of a civilization in which ego-formation itself takes a different pattern—a 'non-repressive civilization' coming out of a 'non-repressive development of the libido under the conditions of mature civilization.'<sup>77</sup>

The strict adherence to the 'reality principle' on which modern western civilization is built has however not completely eliminated the other aspect, the 'pleasure principle' which continues to function, unrepressed, in human phantasy. Out of this phantasy is born art, which is a feeble and largely ineffective critique of the reality principle.

But phantasy, imagination, says Carl Jung, and Marcuse agrees, is the matrix of all future human possibility. Phantasy both recaptures the ancient past and freely creates the distant future. The reality principle intervenes to deride as utopian imagination's creations of the future. Yet phantasy continues to day-dream.

<sup>76</sup> See H. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilisation*, Vintage, New York, 1955, pp. 96ff.

<sup>77</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 126.

Marcuse argues, somewhat convincingly, for elimination of at least the 'surplus repression' now used for aggressive domination, and thus for achieving a balanced synthesis between the reality and the pleasure principles. He thinks this can be done when mankind is no longer organized for labour, but labour is automated and organized for mankind.

This excursus into the complicated theories of Marcuse was necessitated by our demand for a fresh form of discipline for a community—not authoritarian and repressive, not based purely on the 'performance' or 'reality' principle. Marcuse would agree with most of us that we need to increase our production in order to assure abundance for all. But productivity itself need not enslave man and make him an adjunct to the machine. Production, when fully automated, can become play.

Can we conceive a disciplined community where work is play, where the reality principle and pleasure principle are mutually reconciled, where repression is released into sublimated expression, where authority is mutual and shepherdly, where freedom flourishes?

Perhaps not as easily as Marcuse proposes. He argues primarily for a 'non-repressive sublimation' of sexuality as the first stage towards a new civilization. This would also mean a de-centralization of sexuality from the domination of genital contact to a more polymorphous enjoyment. He thinks also that work itself, when no longer based on repression, can be turned to libidinous pleasure. He thus argues for a 'non-repressive libidinous civilization'.

There is no need to wonder why Marcuse becomes the pet prophet of the younger generation. They too sometimes feel that the culture of repressive restraint unnecessarily denies them the simple pleasures of sexuality. They see no rational ground for the Victorian system of morality still so widely professed.

But in the disciplined community whose purpose is to enhance and nurture human freedom what sort of a discipline do we propose?

Of course, the pattern of such a community can emerge only through direct experimentation. And principles such as those enunciated by Marcuse should be examined carefully before we experiment with them.

We can agree with Marcuse at least about the stifling and

distorting effects of excessive repression. And he himself often claims that it is only 'superfluous repression' that he is opposing.

Strangely enough the whole development in the field of clinical psychology is away from excessive permissiveness and 'non-directiveness'. It is becoming clinically clear that man requires external restraint and direction in order to grow into full maturity. The total neutrality and non-interference of the analyst is now understood to be derived from the values of a bourgeois-liberal culture.

On the other hand the simple monastic rules of poverty, chastity and obedience are inadequate for the discipline of the new community of freedom.

The following are merely some pointers to aid experimentation.

There should be a balance, though not a strict parity, between the following elements in the Christian community that we have in mind :

- (a) social control and personal initiative
- (b) work and play, drudgery and the dance
- (c) productive labour and relaxed leisure
- (d) corporate and personal prayer and worship  
on the one hand, and humour on the other
- (e) study and artistic creativity
- (f) separation from society and direct involvement in it
- (g) fasting and feasting
- (h) mutual acceptance and honest criticism.

Experimental communities will have to question the accepted norms of society by practising values freely and wisely chosen by it. International and interracial communities, with a minimum commitment of at least three years' membership and a core of people committed for life to each other, are the best. They will certainly want to question both the productivity principle and the reality principle of our civilization. They would not shirk work, but will seek to make work itself a joyous thing. They will learn strict and joyful repression of the instinctual drives in man—not for the sake of productivity, nor for

domination of others, but for control of oneself, without which there is no freedom. They would at the same time also be able to enjoy food and drink and the simple pleasures of life on occasion, without a sense of guilt.

They will probably have a 'leader', possibly on a rotation system. They will not all be of the same age or sex. Ideally, there could be celibate communities and married communities within one complex.

As for sexual morality, especially in western societies where the social relations between the sexes have become more evolved, it should be possible for the celibates as well as the married couples and their children to form a free and dignified society of human beings where mutual respect and love can enable each to sublimate his or her drive to sexually exploit each other.

This sublimation need not be in terms of a genitofugalization of sexuality into polymorphous or pansomatic expressions. It could take the much more creative form of hard toil, personal sacrifice for the poor and the oppressed, profound worship and prayer accompanied by fasting and above all, love. Love for children, love for the weak and the exploited, compassion for those who are the oppressors and exploiters—all these are methods of sublimation which have stood the test of time.

Non-repressive sublimation of the sex instinct is possible. In fact there can be no genuine growth into freedom without overcoming the instinctual drives of the libido.

The real danger lies in that self-control becoming so obsessive as to make one forget the outside world or other human beings towards whom all our emotional energy has to be directed in love and compassion.

Christian faith also teaches that a tensionless existence is not given to Christians on this earth. The proposed community will not be a paradise on earth without any tensions or failures and explosions.

Yet the renewal of society does not seem possible without experimental communities of this type who create new patterns of sane human existence and sane and authentic human personalities.

Discipline externally provided and freely interiorized is an essential component of human freedom. All the student and youth protest of our time is crying out for channels of creativity.



Disciplined communities organized with imaginative freedom seem to be capable of providing such channels.

It is important, however, to guard against the tyranny of structures. Structures are created by us for our training. They are to be discarded as early as possible and new ones assumed for more intensive training of human freedom and creativity. If on the other hand we absolutize any structure or pattern of community, we may soon be enslaved by it and lose the freedom we thought we had gained.

The growth of freedom calls for eternal vigilance. In fact this vigilance is the true Christian eschatological attitude. We are never allowed to settle down on earth or go to sleep. 'Watch!' That is what Christ demands of his disciples.

The creation of several experimental communities in several places and diverse circumstances, with some measure of community among the small communities may be part of our way forward.

All such communities will be directly oriented to the problems of humanity and not be simply inward-looking. Yet even in their engagement in the affairs of the world, they will be capable of the disengagement of worship in the joy of freedom, where they can close the portals of history and enter into the eschaton where that history is already fulfilled.

### Conclusion

We began this enquiry into the dialectic between authority and freedom by an evaluation of several movements in our times.

We suggested that most of these were attempts to solve the issues on an intellectual plane first.

We have dealt with some misapprehensions even on the intellectual plane.

We have insisted that ultimately the solutions have to be worked out in experimental communities.

At this stage we mean primarily Christian ecumenical communities. Not that non-Christians will not be able to experiment successfully. If they succeed, we should learn from them. But as Christians we have a special responsibility to pioneer in

experimental community living. For that is what it means to be the light of the world.

But such communities cannot at the moment be composed predominantly of white westerners. We might need to include Christians from other lands and cultures, who bring with them a different spirituality. Perhaps since most non-western Christians have acquired a semi-western spirituality, it may be necessary to include Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists and humanists who bring a non-western element into the Christian community. One has seen too often how Christians who constantly talk of de-westernization of Christianity are the least capable of themselves being de-westernized.

Such a community cannot create authentic human freedom without the aid of structures. Unstructured life cannot produce freedom, *pace* Marcuse. But structure itself has to be discardable, and one has to be fully vigilant not to be enslaved by it. A structure is something which we must create in order to train ourselves. But we must also be capable of destroying what we create when it becomes a threat to us.

There is a general kind of form for this structure which is suggested by the tradition of the Church. This is where authority comes in—to suggest forms for structures, and thus to keep us within the structures.

The scriptures, the Eucharist, the Fathers of the Church, the liturgical year prescribed by the Church, the fasts and offices proposed by the Church, the decisions of the Councils—all these are raw materials for building structures of authentic existence. Their authority should never become tyrannical. But without these, we may be experimenting in ways destructive of true freedom and authentic humanity.

There is no need to bewail the breakdown of authority in our time. That is the only way we can be made to understand and accept authority as a form for freedom. Finally, there is no necessary conflict between freedom and structure. Authority is only an aspect of structure. Such authority can take any of the forms described in the second chapter. But all of them are only protective frames for the growth of freedom. Freedom should outgrow all structures. For the full-grown saint, neither the scriptures nor the tradition are any longer necessary. But during his period of growth to sainthood they were necessary.

He might have made shipwreck of his life if he had experimented entirely on his own.

Authority, whether it be of a book, of a spiritual superior, or of a community, belongs to the early stages of the growth of human freedom. We cannot easily dispense with them and expect man to grow to the fullness of his freedom. Even young people who are most in revolt have a nostalgia for authentic authority and they need this authority.

Whether in the Church, or in Education, this new type of self-authenticating, self-effacing, self-sacrificing authority which comes from the combination of disciplined power, love and wisdom alone can show the way forward.

But in the end, all authority is discardible. It is like the wooden frame necessary for making reinforced concrete. Without that frame the concrete cannot take the desired shape. But the frame itself has no value once the concrete has solidified and cured beyond danger of distortion.

Man is born to be king. His vocation is to rule, not to be ruled, ultimately. He is in the image of God. But he must grow to that image in freedom; i.e. by developing freedom through wise use of the structures of authority. The structures should, however, never be allowed to enslave him, or distort love and justice in the community.

Because Man is born to be king, government is man's business, and the business of all men. That is why ultimately no man should be subject to the authority of another. All men should play their part in governing or controlling society and its common activities.

The man who is born to be king is everyman, or rather the whole of mankind. There is no true freedom for man until the whole of mankind becomes liberated and is able to rule. The ultimate freedom of man in history would be when all have become free and mature, needing no authority, all committed totally to the welfare of mankind, and all using their disciplined power, love and wisdom for the whole of mankind.

There is no stopping place short of that. That end, however, like the horizon, will constantly keep receding. Man is a quest for freedom: freedom that goes on questing throughout history, for He who was truly free entered that history 2000 years ago and has started a work which he will also bring to completion.

The end itself is beyond history. It is trans-temporal—that means it is not just the last generation that will see the end.

We are moving on to the trans-temporal beyond the veil. There freedom takes new shapes and beckons to new horizons of fulfilment.

The march of freedom is ceaseless for it is the march towards the being of Him Who created the world in freedom, Who dwells in unapproachable light, Who is Freedom.

## AN INDIAN POSTSCRIPT

This book was first written for western readers, and speaks mainly in their terms. For us here in India there are a number of additional questions.

The first question is : In what way is this 'disciplined community' of which we speak different from the Ashrams that we have or had in recent history ?

Quite clearly there are affinities. In a sense the book is a plea for a new kind of Ashram.

Let us remember first that the Christian Ashrams in India and Ceylon were patterned after the Hindu Ashrams of Tagore, Gandhi and Aurobindo (Shantiniketan, Sevagram and Pondicherry).

Tagore's *Visva-Bharati*\* was meant as a new educational venture, to provide personality formation in disciplined community along non-western lines. It was an attempt to revive the ancient Hindu patterns of shaping human beings, in order to keep our Indian identity in the face of the onslaught of a destructive and pernicious western civilization. Rabindranath's personal impress gave *Shantiniketan* its shape. The cultivation of artistic sensitivity to the beauty of life through art, poetry and literature as well as manual labour held the centre. There was an aristocratic flavour even in the asceticism of *Shantiniketan*. It also looked back to the ancient pattern of education in India; not merely the *Gurukul*, where the students lived with the teacher and shared his entire life, but also the universities of Nalanda and Takshasila, which were also in effect a community of many *Gurukuls* put together.

Gandhiji's Sabarmati Ashram was also an attempt to train human beings in the ancient Hindu ascetic ideals of moral purity, a controlled and controlling will, and sacrificial service. It organized these ideals around the general goal of national independence. It was later disbanded and Sewagram founded near Wardha.

\*Actually a subsidiary activity of *Shantiniketan*, the Ashram proper.

Aurobindo was interested in a culture which was open to the West, but would be based on the ancient wisdom of the Indian sages. It combined the Gandhian and the Tagorean approaches, the artistic and the ascetic, but was willing to adopt many things from the West including science and technology. The community was more international than the other two, thanks to the presence of the Mother. The central orientation was man's transcendent aspirations—'for God, light, freedom and immortality' as Sri Aurobindo himself put it. The manifestation of God in matter—Aurobindo's idea was an echo of Gregory of Nyssa.

In addition to these three better known Ashrams we have the Ramanasrama near Tiruvannamalai, led by that supreme genius of Indian spirituality—Ramanamaharishi. Ramana's was a different style, that of total detachment from the affairs of the world, characteristic of Advaita Vedanta. He was not averse to social service and educational activities. But the realization of *Kaivalya*, the perfect union of the self with the Self—that was the domineering motif.

We have also Ramakrishna Mutts, the Theosophical Society in Adyar, and many other Hindu Ashrams. An Indian experimental community will have to learn from all these, both from their successes and from their failures.

But what about the Christian Ashrams? There were so many of them, each centring around one charismatic personality. Christukula Ashram, Tiruppattur (Dr. E. F. Paton, also Dr. Jesudasan), Christa Sishya Ashram, Tadagom, near Coimbatore (Bishop Dr. Pakenham-Walsh), the CPSS Ashram, Poona (Fr. Jacob Winslow), Bethel Ashram, Tiruvalla (Sr. Edith Neve and Sister Rachel Joseph), the Kodaikanal Ashram Fellowship (Dr. Keithahn) and several others. In each of these a non-Indian has always been the major personality around whom the Ashram has begun and grown. Precisely for these two reasons, namely first that the institution loses its vitality when the charismatic non-Indian personality disappears, and second that the central figure is not an Indian, most of these Ashrams have failed to take root in Indian soil.

There are other Ashrams like the Christavashram, Manganam, the Christa Santhi Sangh in Khatmandu, the Christa Panthi Sangh in Sihora, which are of Indian origin, mainly on the

initiative of Syrian Christians with Anglican or Mar Thoma Church affiliation. It is interesting to note that these Ashrams have had to struggle against two fundamental difficulties. The first is 'conflict of personality'. Indians, especially Syrian Christians, are very poor at creating genuine community. Either they idolize the leader and blindly follow him without expressing their own personality, failing to create a corporate personality, or else they become individualists and quarrel with each other.

The second difficulty stems from the evangelical western theology on the basis of which they have to operate. The Perumbavoor Ashram, for example, was founded for 'preaching the Gospel, carrying on educational work and social service'. The Manganam Ashram also had the ideal of preaching the Gospel and social service. This activist, evangelistic pre-occupation distorts the personality of the Ashram.

Western Christian monastic movements have also been facing some new problems. The number of vocations has suddenly begun to fall. Many monks and nuns have begun to think that they were being exploited as cheap labour by the Church. The activist monastic ideal would appear to be in crisis. It would therefore seem essential, especially in view of many prevailing misunderstandings, to do a cursory examination of the origin of the monastic ideal in Christian history.

The idea that Christian monasticism first arose in Egypt is being seriously questioned today. The monastic ideal antedates Christ in the Middle East, and is now seen to have deeply influenced Jesus himself through the communities around the Dead Sea (Qumran). Whether Jesus was a member of one of these monastic communities before he began his public ministry is at present a matter for speculation only. Scholars are agreed that John the Baptist could very well have been a member of one of these communities. The teaching of Jesus, as well as the early pattern of the Church's organization, shows remarkable affinity to the Qumran Cave communities. John was an ascetic who probably left his community and went into the wilderness for a solitary life of stricter asceticism and self-control. Jesus himself might have spent some time in these communities of the desert and learned from them, about the need to abolish the temple and build a human temple, about the need for a new

baptism of initiation, about a kingdom of light and righteousness, about a battle in the wilderness with the forces of Satan, about the struggle between the children of light and the children of darkness, about the temporary or apparent success of darkness over light only to be annulled by the enduring triumph of light over darkness; these are ideas of Jesus directly traceable to the Qumran documents.

One of the easiest ways to misunderstand monasticism is to start with contemporary western monasticism and then work one's way back to Antonine or Pachomian monasticism in Egypt as the source of it all. If Benedictine monasticism is taken as the standard, the salvation of one's own soul might very well be found to be the underlying motive.

If we start at the other end, we find some paradoxes. The first is the basically anti-clerical temper of monasticism. The Qumran monks were so opposed to the Temple in Jerusalem and the priesthood, that they regarded both as directly in the service of the devil. Almost all the monks of Egypt were laymen. The worst thing that could happen to a monk, short of falling into grievous sin, was to become a priest or a bishop.

In a sense early monasticism, especially in the fourth century, was a loud protest against society in general, and particularly against 'ontocracy'—the uneasy alliance of Church and State dominating the ordinary people as in Constantine's Byzantium.

These elements of non-conformism, anti-institutionalism, the rejection of that worldly glory and comfort which to this day dominates the liberal-bourgeois church, and severe criticism of the easy mores of ordinary society constituted the values of the monk, and it is these that we need to recapture again in our time. A weakened manhood, a set of cheap values, an insatiable thirst for variety of experience, the incapacity to build or enjoy any lasting relationships, these are the diseases of our society today as then. Our much bragged-about post-Christian world is sick unto death, and needs some non-conformist pioneering.

But there was more than non-conformism and social protest in the witness of the monk. It is too much of an oversimplification to say that his ideal was the salvation of his own soul. In fact the Christian monastic ideal had been profoundly influenced by the Stoic ideal of *apatheia*. Excesses of asceticism, demon-



strative spiritual athleticism, self-tortures and endurance tests—these were characteristic of both eastern and western monasticism at certain periods. Those are the stories about monks that have come down to us, because they are the more interesting. But thousands of monks did attain a high measure of composure and self-discipline without any fanfare or demonstration.

The ideal of *apatheia* underwent a substantial transformation when it moved from Stoicism to Christian monasticism. It was no longer a quest for dispassionate aloofness without anger or pity, but a compassionate reorientation of the passions. The passions are attractions that draw us against our will to a million different goods, none of them ultimately good, and therefore none of them ultimately satisfying. The Christian monastic effort was an attempt to bring these senses with their passions back under deliberate control, so that they can be reapplied to worship and human compassion. Thus *apatheia* is both an aspect of freedom (liberty from bondage to the pressure of the passions) and a stage on the way to fullness of freedom—the capacity to control one's senses and desires, and to direct them to freely chosen ends.

Social protest and self-control together would however not constitute the genius of Eastern Christian monasticism. Its essence lies rather in two other elements, both of which seem to be equally unpopular in our modern times. But the kind of community that is here proposed, if it is to be faithful to the Christian tradition to a greater degree than the Christian Ashrams have been, would have to take these two aspects fully into account.

The first is the consciousness of being engaged in a struggle against the devil. Does that sound naive and old-fashioned? Well, I do not believe that the Devil has any real being. In fact the Devil is the negation of all being. He is in essence negation or non-being. But the Devil exists. It is possible to exist without being, i.e. as non-being. This has been made very clear to us by Jean Paul Sartre in his *Being and Nothingness*\*. The Devil is a personal, created will which has the capacity to resist God who is truth (being) and love (the good). The Devil's basic characteristic is to lie and hate. And his name is 'Legion'. He is fragmented and multiform, coming into every

\*Eng. Tr. by Hazel Barnes, N. Y. 1966, p. 812

love and every form of truth, to gnaw at its heart and to reduce it to untruth and hatred. That is why the Book of Revelation calls him and his 'beast' 'that which was (i.e. created) and is not (i.e. non-being) and comes up out of the abyss (of nothingness)' (Rev. 17 : 8; see also v.11).

The early monk was engaged in a battle—a battle against the Devil on his own territory, symbolized by the barren desert and the jungle. As Christ was taken by the Spirit into the wilderness to be engaged in a forty-day fight with the devil, the Asian and African monks left the city (not that the devil is not there) to go and beard the lion in his own den, the desert. The new monastic community proposed here has to be aware of an evil will in the universe which desires our non-being. We have to fight against it.

The late Professor Paul Eudokimov describes the three major (among many) manifestations of the Devil (a) Parasitism, (b) Imposture and (c) Parody.\* Monasticism, the Ashram movement, or even the community we are proposing, would have to guard against these three and other forms of evil or non-being, if it is to develop human beings in truth and love and freedom.

The Evil One lives as a parasite on the being created by God, forming a monstrous outgrowth, a demonic ulcer. Impostor, he dissimulates the divine attributes, substituting equality for resemblance. 'You shall be like God'—as his equals. Finally, jealous counterfactor as he is, he parodies the Creator and constructs his own kingdom without God, as an inverse imitation.

Evil, for the Church Fathers, was not a problem to be philosophically resolved, but a power to be realistically combated. And the monk was a fighter against evil—evil in his own self, evil in society and in other men. But the conquest of evil in one's own self is already victory over evil, and to engage in a combat against social evil, without overcoming it in one's own self as many Christian activists seem today to be doing, is to give oneself as a tool for the devil in our very social activism.

The monk insists on the priority of victory over evil in self before victory over evil in the world. This was the pattern of Christ also. He fought the Devil and his temptations in

\* *Les Ages de la vie spirituelle*, Desclee de Brouwer, Paris, 1964, pp. 80 ff.

private, with fasting, self-discipline and prayer, before he began his public ministry. And even during his public ministry, as Luke the Evangelist tells us, he spent whole nights in disciplined prayer, in order that he may be able to fight the devil during the day, and cast out demons with power.

The early monks did not always get to the public ministry by their own free will. Often they were dragged into it. But even Simeon Stylites, the pillar-monk often lampooned by moderns, had a huge public ministry, the effectiveness of which came from his attainment of *apatheia* and spiritual freedom.

This, it seems to me, was one point where our Ashram movement in India had a wrong conception of the relation between the Ashram life and the life in society. They were too quick to make the jump to social activism, without first developing an adequate degree of *apatheia* and spiritual freedom. Fight the devil we must, but first in our own selves, in order to be free to fight him elsewhere.

A second central element in the early Christian monastic movement was its eschatological orientation. In a Byzantine society which, like ours, was too easily tempted to identify the kingdom of God with historical kingdoms, the monk registered a strong protest, and denied the values of a glittering society where the Church had begun to share in the false and empty pomp and splendour of the State. He stood as a finger pointing to the transcendent kingdom, whose values were not comfort and pleasure, gold and silver, flattery and praise, publicity and position, but rather love, joy, peace, patience, longsuffering, spontaneity and simplicity. Our Christian Ashrams did succeed in embodying some of these values of the kingdom, but precisely because they became too quickly too involved in publicity and social action they did not have opportunity to develop these qualities in a fully authentic manner. There was a fear that a hidden life is a useless life. Unless one marched right into society and talked or did something, one was not being sufficiently evangelistic. It is this fear of irrelevance that was the bane of the Christian Ashrams in India. It made even the apparent simplicity and renunciation of Ashram inmates a contrivance for more effective evangelism, and therefore inauthentic. The capacity to remain unknown, unacknowledged, uncommended may be one of the highest expressions of spiritual freedom.

Even when one does not see what immediate effect one's life, work and prayer have on the life of others, one can remain peaceful, trusting in the justice of God. This is not quietism, but simply a deeper faith. It seems some of our Ashram inmates came very close to developing this quality, but more often these were the non-Indians.

There were two other difficulties with our Christian Ashrams—their intellectual limitations, and their lack of full access to the depths of the Christian spiritual tradition. There were few men among the Christian Ashram inmates who had anything like the intellectual capacity necessary to cope with either the range of Christian thought in the history of the Church, or the secular intellectual search of modern man for meaning and significance. They were in touch with the English tradition which has a reputation for its pragmatic-moralistic orientation. The Ashrams had generally no access either to the continental European or to other non-Anglo-American ways of thinking. It seldom followed the secular currents of thought in philosophy, education, and sociology. It never produced any substantial Christian literature of any kind. It was also closed to the depths of the eastern tradition, which of course cannot be known by the mere study of books. It needs to be said here that at this point the blame for this failure is to be placed squarely at the doors of the Syrian Orthodox Church in India, which itself still remains somewhat closed to the truly creative and dynamic depths of the oriental Christian heritage. There was no Syrian Orthodox theologian in India capable of appropriating the depths of the eastern tradition and communicating it to other Christians. One notices a poverty of deep eucharistic worship in the Christian Ashrams of India, which only those who have experienced a richer tradition can be fully aware of.

This is not to say that the Christian Ashrams in India have been a total failure. There are many lessons to be learned from their partial failures, and something like the Christian Ashram, needs to be reinstated—perhaps a cluster of three Ashrams, sharing in the life of each other as much as possible—one evangelical, including all the Protestant churches which are in communion with each other, another Orthodox and a third Roman Catholic. The partial separation is necessary since the traditions of spirituality and the canons of eucharistic communion

are so different. But there must be a common library, a common work programme, a common intellectual pursuit, and perhaps even a common financing, though this last can lead to a lot of tension and misunderstanding. The three communities should, if possible, have some non-Indian element in it which can fulfil certain catalytic functions. But it may be wiser to increase the non-Indian element in small doses, in order not to be inundated by the particular concerns and interests that non-Indians may bring with them. It is important to assimilate as much as possible of Indian spirituality, especially the control of body and mind through Yoga (without necessarily accepting all the philosophical presuppositions behind various systems of Yoga).

This probably raises a second question in the minds of some of my friends. Are we proposing a kind of quietist place, unrelated to the aspirations of the Indian people for justice and dignity, to the plans of the government to develop the economy, in short to the mission of the Church in contemporary India?

Well, no. But I do insist that Indian Christians need to be liberated from their missionary brain-washing. Could they not give a simple cup of cold water to the thirsty without thinking about the 'missionary obligation of the Church'? Why not do good and be good just because the good is good and not in order to have an impact on others? It is part of our unfreedom that we feel that we can act only under the compulsion of some sort of a 'missionary obligation' or command, or when we can measure our impact in some quantifiable category.

It seems necessary for the health of this community that it does not *seek* to influence anybody or change society, or shore up the Church, or redeem humanity, or establish social justice, or promote national development. All of these external purposes cannot be brought in as a criterion by which to evaluate the effectiveness of the community. As external criteria, these or any others are bound to interfere with the authenticity of this community. The community should not stand in need of justification or approval at the hands of the Christian or non-Christian public. Neither should it seek constantly to arouse antagonism by a great deal of verbal criticism of others. That kind of Christianity which feels self-righteous through vocal criticism

of others can destroy the authenticity of the community I have in mind.

It will engage in all kinds of activities, but will be under no external pressure to do so. In fact it will be best if the community braces itself from the beginning to be misunderstood by others, especially by the social activists and social vocalists, as well as by the establishment in the churches.

The community's activities will have to come out of its own deep convictions, but not for the sake of feeling 'missionary' or 'effective'. Such actions will be authentic actions springing out of the true being of the community, even if they fail to achieve anything.

The community will be judged by itself, its awareness of God's will and purpose, its deep loyalty to Christ, rather than by the number of visitors it attracts, or the amount of publicity it gets in the local press.

This is an essential aspect of Christian *apatheia*, this indifference to external approbation, while being open to constructive criticism from all.

Such an approach raises a third question in the minds of some. What then does it achieve? The answer is: It seeks to achieve nothing but to be loyal and faithful to the new being given to it in Christ. It cannot set any particular achievement either as its motivating goal or as evaluating criterion.

This kind of freedom requires of course a fresh theological orientation to freedom, a new liberation from 18th century or 20th century imperialist missiology, and a new certainty grounded in a life of intimate communion with Christ in the Eucharist and in prayer. One cannot write at length about such a community. One can only invite to an experiment.