

## *We are not free to call reality by just any name. The name we give it says our relationship to it.*

This paper is an attempt to define the phrase "faith in God." Three basic questions are considered: 1. What do we mean by the term "God"? 2. What does it mean to have "faith"? and 3. What are the alternatives of Faith?

It is necessary to begin with a definition of the term "God" because in our present age this word has no widely understood or accepted meaning. It has so many meanings for different people that it has largely lost its validity for communication.

### **I. THE REALITY OF GOD**

We shall begin by pointing to the fact of reality. Paul Tillich reminds us that the first fundamental fact that impresses itself upon us is that "there is something and not nothing." This is "the Ontological Shock," the recognition of reality. No one can deny reality and remain sane. Indeed, this is the basic test of sanity, to "be in touch" with reality. Reality is. We are and we live in a real world.

It appears to man that reality is also structured. It is not chaotic but has certain shapes and forms, certain recurring tendencies. This assumption is made by scientists (Einstein: "I cannot believe that God would shoot dice with the cosmos.") and is the basic foundation of the scientific

rose by any other name would smell as sweet?"

While such suggestions have some validity it just does not work out that way. Even apart from the questionable aesthetic values of praying such a prayer as "O Thou, great totality of reality, make us aware of our despair . . ." it does make a difference what one calls it. We are not free to call any reality by any name. The name given to a person, place, thing, or even to reality itself is partly an expression of one's relationship to it.

For example, the writer of this paper is known by many names according to the varying relationships he enjoys. His children call him "daddy." His parishioners call him variously, "Rev. Hardigree," "Mr. Hardegree," or "Joe," with each name an expression of subtle differences in the relationship. To his wife he is known affectionately by certain names that he does not choose to reveal. His parents and other relatives and friends of his boyhood call him Joe Joe (to distinguish him from his parental namesake). All of these various names have connotations of relationship that fit particular situations.

Continuing this illustration it may be pointed out that one is not free to call the

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by  
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method. It is assumed by every philosopher, theologian, and man on the street. Whoever makes a single plan for the future assumes a structural dimension to reality.

That reality is not just anything but is a particular thing is the first aspect of our theology. The second assumption, growing out of the first one, is that man encounters reality (in its objects and its structures) as he lives his life. He encounters it within himself as he is also a part of it, and he encounters it external to himself. He encounters the surface of reality empirically and he encounters the depth of reality. His life process is a discovery of and a participation in "the way things are" both essentially and as a result of essential aspects of reality interacting with one another.

Since man is a symbol-making creature who uses the symbols of words for the purpose of communication, he does not allow this reality to stay only vaguely described. He calls it by a particular name. That name is "God."

### **II. WHY CALL IT GOD?**

This brings us to the question about the name "God." Why do we call it that? Why not give it some other name such as "totality of reality?" Is it not said that "a

present writer by one of these names out of context. It is only within the context of the quality of relationship that one uses any of these names or other names in regard to him.

The point is that the word "God" has connotations of relationship which no other word has. Perhaps the outstanding connotation is the one of absolute seriousness. Even though this word is sometimes used in jest or profanity, it always carries the meaning of absolute seriousness (even in jest and profanity). This intrinsic dynamic of the word finds expression in Tillich's "Ultimate" being and "Ultimate" seriousness in terms of faith. The word "God" has an inner quality of meaning that expresses ultimate seriousness of relationship.

The reason that we call "the way things are," that reality of existence in which "we live and move and have our being," "God," is because we experience a relationship of utmost seriousness with that reality. Our life depends upon that reality and upon the quality of our relationship with it. To call it anything else is to use an illegitimate word, that is, a word that does not carry the full weight of meaning that is needed to express our relationship to the reality.

Let me summarize at this point by saying that "God" is our name for the essential reality of the way things are in all of its depth and mystery. To know God is to know life. To decide about God is to decide about the world. To relate to God is to relate to reality. To encounter God is to encounter reality. Let us turn now to a further analysis of the ways things are in order that we may more clearly define the God who is.

### III. AN ANALYSIS OF GOD—

#### A TRINITY OF EXPERIENCE

The basic givenness of the structure of reality that we call God can be abstracted into three parts in terms of human experience. This is somewhat artificial because any abstraction is something of a distortion. "Life is deeper and darker than any deep-sea dingle" says the poet Dylan Thomas, and to abstract for the sake of understanding always causes life to appear deceptively simple. But "as deceivers, yet true" we can find deeper understanding through the study of realistic abstractions from life itself.

The first reality of existence is the givenness of our own selves and the universe to live in. All creation is given itself and its world. Every human being is given his own life, his heredity, and environment. He does not choose to be born or to have the physical, mental, and emotional capacities that he has. He does not choose to breathe through his lungs, walk with his feet, or write with his hands. He does not choose his parents, race, time, or birthplace; these are given.

Theologically we say that God is that which gives us life and a yard to play in, the yard being both immediate and universal. We may like this or hate it (and we will discuss that later) but it is so. Our lives have content. This is creation. Our lives have limitations. This is finitude. God creates and limits us. We encounter God when we encounter our given being and the given being of our world, and we encounter God when we encounter our own limits and the limits of the world. Indeed, we are most particularly aware of God when we encounter the limits.

The second reality of life is that we, as human beings, are given freedom. The Existentialist philosophers have reminded us of this reality and have rescued the discussion of freedom from the sorry mess into which it had evolved. Once again it is generally accepted that man, in the living of his own life within the limitations of his finitude, is free to make decisions about his life and live accordingly. The concept of freedom is of supreme importance to any theology or anthropology (which are, as Calvin pointed out, two sides of the same coin). It is not possible to go very deeply into the subject here, but it is necessary to include it here as a vital part of the way things are, the reality of God. God is that which in creation gives us our freedom and in life encounters us within our freedom.

Freedom means that man has the power to decide to be or not to be. He can determine his own answer to life and its demands. He can choose what his life will mean and be. He has the power to end his life early if he wishes to do so. This freedom is at once magnificent and terrible for it is the possibility of salvation or destruction. It can result in good or evil. It is the freedom to destroy as well as to build.

Anthropologically it can be said that man is given himself in his finiteness and within his finitude he is free. Theologically it can be said that God is that which gives man his finitude and his freedom, and God is that which encounters man in his finitude and freedom.

Finally, we know that death is a part of the way things are. Every man and everything eventually perishes. The reality that brought us into existence, gave us the freedom to use or destroy life, finally kills us. Of course, this is a part of the dimension of finitude, but it has been left until now in order to give it special mention. To the natural man, living out his days in this world, the reality of life, death, and freedom, is the context of existence. All of life is lived in relation to the world and these realities. All of life confronts him, from outside of himself and from within his inmost being, with the questions, the demands, and the realities of the way things are. He is constantly asked the questions: Who are you? What is life?

What are you going to be? What are you going to do? How are you going to decide? What are you going to do about death?

You are asked to forget all speculation for a moment in order to let this reality sink in. For this analysis of life is an analysis of God, the God who really is, even if there are some who do not use this name to describe the reality. Some call it life, some call it fate, some call it "God" and some do not call it anything. But his is the reality of which we speak and relate to by identifying it with the word "God."

About the existence of God, as defined, there can be no question. Only the fool could say in his heart that there is no God when we define him in this way. Indeed, if one thinks it is possible not to believe in the existence of God, it is obvious that the object of that belief is not the God who is at all.

The first valid question of faith is: "What is God like?" The crucial question of faith is: "What do you think of the God who is?" This is the question of faith. This brings us to an analysis of faith and a consideration of the alternatives of faith.

### IV. FAITH IN GOD

Faith in God is nothing more or less than one's existential decision about the reality of the way things are. The word "existential" is used to indicate that the decision about reality is a commitment of one's whole being at the deepest level and not just an emotional or intellectual affirmation about existence.

The question of faith is this: When confronted by the God who is, (the reality of the way life is—finitude, creation, freedom, death), what is one's personal evaluation of this God? The answer is one's faith and is the source of the life one leads.

The answers given by men seem to be variations of the following:

#### A. IT IS BAD

One broad answer to the question of God comes from those who say that life, in its essential structures, is bad. These people do not like the way things have been basically created. Their reactions to this fundamental decision, however, vary in the following ways:

1. "I will courageously make the most of this sorry mess." This is the way of Stoicism. There is a great deal to be admired in the way such great Stoics as Marcus Aurelius courageously accepted what they considered to be the unhappy lot of being a human. This particular view is kept alive today by some (but not all) of the so-called "Atheistic existentialists" and by more men on the street than most ministers are likely to suspect.

Paul Tillich (in *The Courage To Be*) calls Stoicism the only real alternative to Christianity. Of all the answers to the question of life given by those who begin with the basic premise that "life is bad as it is given" certainly Stoicism earns the greatest respect.

2. The second alternative of action for man, after his basic assumption that life is bad, is to pretend that the way things are is not really the way things are. This is the answer of religion and is the birth of all idolatry. This answer can be expressed in this way: "I cannot believe that things are like they are. If I were God I would not have created them this way. It must be that I misunderstood God. Surely God must be different." This person then proceeds to create a God in his own image incorporating all of his own desires and hopes and then proceeds to fervently pretend that such a God exists.

Having decided that life as it is, is bad, this one decides that there must be a heaven where everything is to be made right. In this imagined paradise there are no class distinctions, no illness, no suffering, no sin, no wrong decisions, only an eternal bliss where everything is perfect (according to the criterion of perfection of the "believer.") It is interesting to note that in this paradise there is also a lack of two other things, freedom and death.

For these two are really at the root of the decision that the way things are is bad. It is bad that men are free and have the possibility of destruction and we desire a God who will not give us such an awful burden of freedom. While one is living he thinks that it is best to surrender

this freedom to a Church or to some other authoritarianism such as religious or moral law, a nation, a person, or a political or ideological party. Dostoyevsky's story of "The Grand Inquisitor" is a good example of this actuality.

This view considers death the supreme mark of wrongness in the way things are. The God of religion is invariably a God who will not allow people really to die. For religious man has decided here most of all that the way things are is horrible. He despises the God who would actually kill his creation. If he were God he would not let men die and since he is not God he creates his own deity along with a convenient doctrine of the immortality of the soul.

To sum up the religious answer, it can be said that the religious man begins with bad faith—that the ways things are is bad. Therefore there must be some other-worldly place where one can really live (since, of course, one could not possibly live in the here and now) where death is abolished. This is primarily the decision to escape from reality.

3. The third alternative to action after the basic assumption that life is bad is to give up (or, to give in). The beatnik, narcotics addict, alcoholic, suicide, and television addict fit into this category. Classically, this is represented by Epicureanism. "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow (or maybe today) we will die."

Underlying all of these alternatives, as we have said, is a basic decision of faith—that the God who is does not love us. There is something wrong with finitude, living in freedom, and dying. The three alternatives to action, courageously accepting this terrible lot like the Stoics, giving up like the Epicureans, or pretending that it is not true, like the Religionists, only confuse the picture. For underneath what appear to be great differences of attitude is the same basic faith—namely, that God hates us, or at least cares not at all for us. In non-theological language this same attitude is expressed this way, "Life is Hell," (which is not non-theological language after all).

## B. IT IS GOOD

Obviously there is another major alternative. Not another alternative to action (although that is a part of it but another Faith-Alternative. It is to believe that life, as it is essentially given, is good. That which is, loves us, and the gift of the way things are is an expression of that love. That is, it is good to live as a finite man, in freedom, in the time and circumstances of one's given life. It is all right to die when the time comes and one does not need to conjure up alternatives to death which only exist in one's imagination.

This is not to say that to have this faith means one always, in every moment, feels this way, but that one's basic faith decision is that the God who is, is good, and there is no need to create another God to rescue us from reality.

There is much to be said about the content and structure of life of the man of "good" faith, the one who accepts the givenness of reality and his responsibilities within it, but that would have to be developed in greater length than can be devoted to it here. However, the picture should be clear concerning the basic alternatives of faith. One either loves and accepts the basic structures of reality or one hates them. One is to love God; the other is to hate God.

## V. THIS VIEW OF FAITH AND THE BIBLE

Let us examine this analysis of faith and see how it compares with Biblical religion. The Bible states in the beginning that Original Sin (universal sin) begins with

man's "wanting to be like God, knowing good and evil." Since some knowledge of good and evil is necessary to all men, if the moral life is to be taken with any seriousness at all, this statement can only refer to man's decision to be his own authority concerning good and evil. That is, man himself has the tendency to call good evil and evil good. Man is tempted (and it seems that he inevitably succumbs to this temptation) to decide that the givenness of the structures of life are bad, instead of accepting them as good since they are of God; and to decide that many things which are evil, resulting from the destructive use of man's freedom, are good.

To love the way things are does not mean that one is to baptize all happenings and call them good. There is good and there is evil. But the man of good faith tries not to confuse the given structure of life which is good with the evil which proceeds from the good structure. In this sense God is indirectly responsible for evil, but is not directly the structure itself. Thus, it is good that man is free, that he can choose, and that his choices have consequences for either good or evil. An evil deed remains an evil deed. One should work in opposition to the evil deeds of men (and the evil deeds of one's own doing) and one should work within the structures of the given for the improvement of society, that is, to bring society more closely in accord to the givenness of reality (including the dimension of justice).

For justice and love are also a part of reality and thus become a structure of God. Man has the responsibility of dealing with the dynamic, evolving, emerging dimension of reality. But the life of responsible involvement with reality and with good and evil is in itself good to the man of faith. He does not have to succeed or fail to make his salvation. His salvation is the responsible living of his own life as it is given to him to live.

The story of Job is a good Biblical illustration. Job could not understand why things were developing in the way they were. He was tempted by his wife to "curse God and die." Although he was sorely vexed and did succumb to cursing the "day wherein I was born" he refused to curse that which had caused what had happened to happen. Instead he never really varies from his first remarks in chapter one: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." In the King James Version we have an incorrect translation but a theologically valid statement where Job says, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him; but I will maintain mine own ways before him." Job is at once maintaining two important doctrines of faith: It is all right to die, and one must remain a free man.

One can understand Jesus of Nazareth as a man who sought to bring a new vision of life (God). He tried to help people (through teaching, healing, and example) to understand the meaning of freedom. He was born at "the right time." Any time for him was the "right time." He was not afraid to die, at least not at the base of his being, although he did experience the anxiety of death common to all men.

He seemed to trust the structure completely. When his time came, he suffered and died. It appears that he lived and died in freedom. He trusted the God who was, even though he was unable to see exactly how reality would emerge following his actions.

In his teaching he agreed that the thing for a man to do is to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." Surely this meant to love the essential structure of true reality.



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When we turn to the writings of Paul we find that he was obsessed with two main themes: 1. The relationship of responsibility and freedom (two sides of the same reality) and 2. with death.

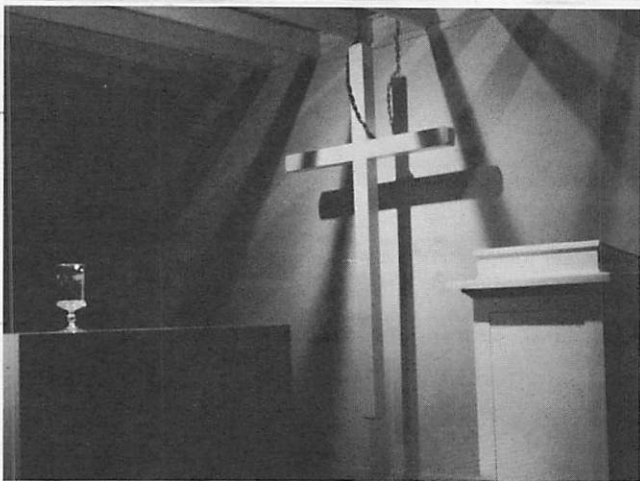
## VI. SUMMARY

The premise of this paper has been that there are only two genuine faith-alternatives. You either love life or you do not. You either accept it as a good gift and live in it, or you reject it as good and try to find some alternate answers. Everyone, therefore, makes a faith-decision before God, even though some do not know his name and others take this name and apply it to some creation of their own fervent hopes.

This definition of faith cuts across both religious and non-religious variations on the theme. There are religious people and "atheists" who hate life (God) and there are similar people on both sides of the theological fence who love life (God).

This act of faith is inescapable. You are either for life or against it. There is no in-between. You love it, accept it with all of its awesome responsibilities and tragic possibilities, or you reject it, either courageously, religiously, or weakly. To love it is to live (Eternal life—life with the quality of redemption), to hate it is to lose it.

How people come to their faith and especially how peo-



The picture above is of the chancel of the chapel of the Community Christian Church of Norman, Oklahoma. The chapel is an example of the creative use this congregation has made of the old mansion which serves as their gathering place. The area of the house now used for the chapel was originally a four car garage.

ple change from one faith to another is a great mystery. Theologians have called the transition from hate to love of life the miracle of "prevenient grace," which reality seems to convince some of its own goodness. It does seem to "just happen." It cannot be proven to men that reality is good. It can only be witnessed to by those who really believe it and proclaim it through the living of their lives accordingly.

## Third Oklahoma Seminar Held

Under the leadership of pastor Lloyd Mardis, the Community Christian Church of Norman, Oklahoma, was host to a Laos House Mobile Seminar March 6-8. Twenty-five persons studied the basic seminar under the direction of Robert Bryant and William Smith. Twenty-one of the participants came from Oklahoma cities: nine from Shawnee, nine from Oklahoma City, two from Tulsa, and two from Norman. Dr. and Mrs. Jon Rupp of Utrecht, Holland, and Mrs. Lucy Powell of Salt Lake City, Utah, completed the group. Dr. and Mrs. Rupp are spending a month in the United States in special studies related to the problems of man in industrial society. Mrs. Powell is administrative secretary for the Holladay Community Church in Salt Lake City. The unique facilities and organization of the Norman church make possible the transporting of the total week-end program to Oklahoma.

On Sunday evening, March 8, a meeting was held for all Oklahoma alums of Laos House. More than forty alums and friends were present.

## West Texas Alums Meet

On March 16, Laos House alums and friends from Ozona and San Angelo met in the St. Luke Methodist Church in San Angelo. George Ricker is the pastor. The group heard a report on developments and plans for the Laos House program and studied the sermon, "Loneliness and Solitude," from Paul Tillich's recent book, *THE ETERNAL NOW*.

The following evening a group of alums and friends in Midland met in the home of Mr. and Mrs. R. A. Estes for supper and conversation. Robert Bryant and James Wagener represented the faculty in these meetings.

Since last October monthly Provocational Dialogues have been held in Corpus Christi, Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio. In December monthly meetings began in Austin also. Discussion materials for the session have included study papers ("Cracks in the Cornucopia" by Kytte, "Forbid Them Not" by Ruth Robinson, and "Loneliness and Solitude" by Tillich), a movie (*FIVE FINGER EXERCISE*) and a play (*THE ZOO STORY* by Albee). The April Dialogue will center on a selection from the gospel of John ("Once I Was Blind," John 9:1-40).

## letter to laymen

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# letter to laymen

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## CREATIVITY

We are incorrigible anthropomorphists. What we cannot transmute into configurations pleasing to touch or smell, sight or hearing, logic or dream, does not captivate us. We can grasp the universe only by means of those patterns of logic and intuitions which grew out of the rhythm and motions and harmonies of dance and music, poetry and drama, painting and sculpture, which, in turn, grew out of the rhythm of breathing and lovemaking and the discipline of primitive magic and craftsmanship. We see the universe in our image and there is no reason to assume that another creature would see in it anything remotely resembling our vision. Goethe says that the eye could not perceive the sun if it were not "sun-like." We may go one step further and add that the sun could not be seen by us as we actually see it, if it were not in some way "eye-like."

Our thoughts and senses, motions and emotions, have imposed upon the universe a shape that enables us to recognize ourselves in it, to cope with it and to *accept it as a home and a challenge*. This archetypal effort which is dimly repeated by every child is fundamentally an aesthetic labour, an erotic creation. The result is *beauty* which strikes us as "truth" when it is useful and as beautiful when it is life-enhancing—and Keats' "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" may be nearer the metaphysical bone than we had thought.

The discipline of beauty humanizes the world we live in and humanizes us by persuading us of the "truth" we discover in the patterns we have imposed. Since "truth" can be seen as an aspect of beauty, it is understandable that it should become most persuasive, alive and relevant, when it strikes us as beautiful, graceful and hopeful. As long as "truth" lacks gracefulness, it has not yet attained its full humanizing power, it is still immature, not yet "realized."<sup>1</sup> The "realization" of truth-beauty I call *incarnation*, and it is achieved—however transitorily—whenever the truth touches us as self-authenticating and adequate and the beauty as intimation and revelation. Nothing can preserve us from the abstractions of intellectualism, moralism and aestheticism, from the divorce between the "is" and the "ought," duty and love, except the continued effort to achieve incarnation, to discover and recover the truth that charms and the beauty that compels.

If the striving after beauty is the human quest par excel-

<sup>1</sup>I do not want to maintain that our senses have not first been conditioned by the universe of our experience. All I want to say is that this conditioning was, as far as we can judge, a unique process and need not have led logically or inevitably to the kind of sensibility which is now, for better and for worse, the glass through which we see—darkly or not so darkly according to our taste and expectation. <sup>2</sup>To "realize"=to give reality as well as to apprehend clearly.

lence, the quest by reason of which we have become and remain man, it is important to make this truth persuasive. For, unfortunately, our understanding of beauty is deeply coloured by our puritanical, utilitarian, industrial heritage. Far from seeing beauty as our supreme achievement and task, the revelation of our stature, we think of it as luxury, indulgence, as something not vitally necessary for the business of living. "Seek first all things, and the kingdom will be added unto you" is an axiom few of us dare to contradict in word or deed. So let us have a look at the artist, the wrestler with beauty and truth, and see whether his work reveals to us something that is essential, necessary to our life.

## the promise of wholeness and loveliness

by werner & lotte pelz

### THE ARTIST

#### 1. Beauty as Transfiguration

Beauty, as many might admit, has nothing to do with prettiness, with making things smooth, nice and comfortable. It is never just a means of entertainment and relaxation. It is severe, searching, disturbing as well as joyous, frightening as well as invigorating.

Beauty is most nearly itself—closest to its archetypal wrestling with chaos—when it takes up and *transfigures* what is in itself unlovely, or when it imposes on the inchoate outburst of joy the painful discipline of form and reflection. Most things of beauty—like most children—are born out of suffering which is part of the joy which bestows upon the gift the dimension of achievement. Beauty as the transfiguration of the human dilemma can be experienced most powerfully in the art of tragedy. E.g. in the *Oresteia*, one of the earliest and greatest works, Aeschylus succeeds, by his intense, sympathetic insight into the human heart, in transforming a sordid tale of family intrigue and vendetta into

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a drama of universal redemption. (The fact that we find it hard to see the *Oresteia* as a petty vendetta is the measure of his success.) In *King Lear* Shakespeare succeeds in reaffirming the dignity of a foolish, old man, in the face of a pitiless terror let loose largely by his own foolishness, and encourages us to believe that a man, even a foolish man, can remain or, rather, become a king, "every inch a king," in spite of the combined heartlessness of men and nature. Ibsen in his *Master Builder*, John Gabriel Borkmann, even in his *Hedda Gabler* or *The Wild Duck*, Shakespeare in his tragedies, make us aware of the great possibilities of life by presenting to us people who tried, however inadequately, to "realize" some of them.

Another miracle of transfiguration can be seen in such paintings as *e.g.* the late self-portraits of Rembrandt, where the beauty is a pitiless and disciplined searching for the sheer, naked truth; or in the terrifying honesty of vision of a Breughel, a Goya, a Gruenewald or a Picasso in his *Guernica*. Why should a naturalistic account of an execution, a crucifixion, strike us as beautiful? What is it that enabled Schubert to transmute his grief and misery into works like the "Death and the Maiden" quartet or the "Winterreise"? What enabled Mozart to translate his despair into the "Requiem"? How is it that even disgust and loathing can be changed into the stinging beauty of satire?

## 2. Beauty as Discipline

Beauty is disciplined passion. Passion without discipline becomes destructive. Discipline without passion is senseless and can become equally destructive.<sup>4</sup>

Where passion and discipline are welded together in an act of creative energy, something hard, timeless and exhilarating is born. (This holds good in marriage and friendship—which are creative activities.) The more intense the experience, the more insistent the urge to delimit, circumscribe, tame. All art is symbolic, has the gracefulness of sustained power—like the movements of a tiger—suggesting the presence of untapped energy. Dante had to impose upon his burning vision the almost crippling discipline of the *terza rima*; and only the hardest material could brake and contain the passion of a Michelangelo. Music, the most Dionysian of human expressions, calls for an almost mathematical discipline. Where, as *e.g.* with Bach, supreme craftsmanship joins supreme spontaneity of inspiration, the result is a beauty of which one is not likely to tire.

Beauty is a disciplined joy, the incarnation of gratefulness, the reminder that every achievement is a gift and that every gift wants to be "achieved." The great impressionists illustrate this point well. How lightly, joyfully and almost casually everything seems to be achieved here. Every canvas seems to be an effortless burst of praise, immortalizing anything from a sunset to an old pair of boots. Yet we know that

behind that lightness of touch lies a lifetime of asceticism, a ruthless self-criticism, an almost despairing sincerity. Think of Monet wrestling with light for seventy years, of Degas triumphing over his failing sight, of Cezanne wrestling for years with an "insignificant" hill and the atmosphere around it; and all of them bequeathing to us a moment immortalized, and teaching us to appreciate how many moments worth immortality there are in our life.

## 3. Beauty as Function

Finally, there is the beauty of function, of sheer adequacy, of simplicity, clarity, usefulness, the discipline of eliminating the superfluous and the superficial, of discovering creatively the unifying formula. That beauty is the tough discipline of the craftsman, the scientist, the mathematician and the engineer. A jet plane, a steel bridge, a modern block of apartment flats, a car, a machine or a factory, might perform a similar civilizing function as did the cathedral of old. On the other hand, it is almost always true that ugliness—except the ugliness of the trial-and-error stage—is the symptom of a moral as well as aesthetic breakdown. The fact that we still tolerate so much of the squalor inherited from the Industrial Revolution, *e.g.* lightless factories, monster mills, overcrowded slums, cramped schools, and even now perpetuate it, though in more hygienic forms—*e.g.* subtopian suburbs, unimaginative office blocks, vulgar hoardings and still more vulgar newspapers—is never simply a sign of aesthetic insensibility, but of moral and social decay.

## LOSS OF WHOLENESS

It is therefore surprising how often the moralist has neglected to discuss the formative power of beauty and the creative activities which sharpen our appreciation of it. Plato seems to have remained the only one among the great who was convinced of the profound influence of beauty on the shaping of a man's life. An exploration of the conditions that enable man to grow in imagination and sensibility should be a vital aspect of any moral inquiry. There were times when that seems to have been understood. The Athens of Pericles comes to mind and perhaps the Florence of the Medici. But beauty cannot be recovered. For beauty is alive, the formulation of a living experience, changing with the changing times which it reflects and transfigures. It expresses our striving after wholeness and our partial success.

The failure to understand beauty as the demand for wholeness and health may be responsible for the fragmentation of our experience and life. We are not—like the lilies—shaped by an inevitable unfolding of our innate capacities, but largely by outward routine and circumstances. Away from his work, from the chores of house and car and garden, modern man is pathetically at sea and at the mercy of many voices promising "salvation," "distraction from distraction by distraction." Like the daily paper, his life is a jumble of impressions, vicarious experiences and chatter. His responses are almost entirely conditioned by the "mechanical" requirements of his situation. He does not say to mountains, "be

<sup>4</sup>Just as the fact that we no longer experience the sea as the beginning of shapeless terror and the mountains as haunts of demons, but appreciate both as beautiful, is a measure of our success.

<sup>5</sup>It is no accident that the actions of the over-organized, over-efficient, bureaucratic modern state sometimes reflect the barbaric outbursts of an Attila and Jenghis Khan; that in the very heart of Europe a Hitler could arise; that the worst practices of his Gestapo were used by the paratroops of France; that the majority of over-industrialized Englishmen and Americans love to indulge in torture and sadism at least vicariously; that the prospect of nuclear war and the actual preparations for it leave our imagination almost undisturbed.

moved into the sea." He does not know how to grow in heart and mind and tenderness, he wants to "get on." He does not seek the fulness of life but a higher income, not joy but happiness. (He often finds what he seeks.) He does not long to become himself, but to be acceptable in the eyes of his neighbours and superiors. "Blessed are you when all men speak well of you and heap honour upon you." He does not want to think and feel, but to conform, to find without seeking, to be answered without asking. He does not want to commit himself, wants to be left in peace, even at the price of war. He is suspicious of the absolute compulsion of an inner purpose and clings with pride to the routine demands of his position. He does not think of himself as the centre of a very particular world he has to humanize and make responsive to his aspiration—"all things are possible to him who believes"—but feels at the mercy of an impersonal and comfortable necessity. Unfortunately this does not correspond to the organic necessity of life. So we feel frustrated and escape from the consciousness of our fragmentation into mechanical entertainment, observance, ritual and prayer, which fragments us even more.<sup>5</sup>

Some astronomers try to explain the universe as the result of a cosmic explosion hurtling a myriad worlds away from each other at ever-increasing velocity. It would be interesting to know in how far they were influenced in forming their theory by the psychological realities of our age. "Things fly apart, the centre will not hold." (Compare the accelerating process of specialization in fields as varied as the study of physics, theology or Shakespeare.) Do we accept this state of affairs as fate or challenge? Do we resign ourselves to it as inevitable—trying to find a niche for our life and prejudices in one of the hurtling worlds—or do we feel called to create a new *universe*?

## INTIMATIONS AND RETURN

The world is too much with us and might easily persuade us to accept fragmentation as our modern condition, if it were not for those haunting experiences which make us aware of another power at work in us. I am thinking of those recurring moments that compel us to discern or, at least, to yearn, for a meaning and a pattern, an organic unfolding of "eternity." We suddenly find ourselves absorbed, pulled together, directed and justified. We do not fret. We want nothing beyond what we have and what is promised in what we have. We desire nothing except the life we live, only more of it. A real encounter, an unreserved response and surrender, the contemplation of a thing or a face or an idea, the act of creation or procreation or perfect receptivity when "you are the music while the music lasts," are experiences which cannot be exorcised however fleeting and unproductive they may be. Measured in terms of light years and technical efficiency, they are insignificant. But it is

equally true that light years and the wonders of technology are insignificant when measured against those experiences. For their sake, if only we had the courage and the faith, we would gladly give all.

"What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?" is not a religious statement. It is an existential fact and we all know it. But if we look at the pearl of great price too long, we are not likely to give for it all we have. If we return once too often to the field with the forgotten treasure, we are likely to be discovered before we have decided on the purchase—and we shall try to persuade ourselves afterwards that we have dealt wisely.

Beauty, whether it lures us into creation or procreation, into embracing a person or a task, requires committal. We have to base vital decisions on very inconclusive evidence, and all we can ever know is that we shall make a mess of our furrow, if we look back after having put our hand to the plough. The decision to heed the intimation is all the more difficult, since we are deeply involved in the process of dehumanization. We have got used to taking the priority of peripheral problems over the actual business of living for granted. The vast technological superstructure fascinates us by the tidiness of its complexity, by its clear-cut objectives. It has become a refuge from the real tasks of living. But creation, like birth, is untidy, unpredictable, its consequences cannot be contained. They may master us and change us and we shall not know into what until it has happened. (Of course, the machine, too, changes us. But it is subtler than our children and leaves us under the illusion that we are the master.)

Furthermore, we are afraid to turn from the oppressively tangible securities of the "machine," of mammon, to the elusive—perhaps illusive—moments when our life seemed justified, rounded and open, but also profoundly insecure—for such moments are not at our bidding. We have waited too long for such a turning to be easy. Yet I am convinced that nothing except the reactivated desire to look first for the *kingdom*, to become, like the lilies, a joy to oneself and others, to be the liver of one's life, can save us from final disintegration. Life presses toward fruit, seed-bearing fruit, and by creativity I understand the effort to channel all our life-juices into something that expresses us and yet has life in itself.

The movement beauty requires will not necessarily take us into the desert, it need not lead to iconoclasm and return to the handloom or the potter's wheel—although it might. It is certainly not a turning away from this world, an escape into obscurantism or utopianism. It is a wrestling with the most earthy realities of the present situation. But it is a decisive turning—"costing no less than everything"—from the peripheral to the centre, from the slavery of sheer proliferation to the mystery of growth.

The cost is great, because creation needs much time. (The machines leaves us little.) It takes us into many culs-de-sac

<sup>5</sup>Puritanism and libertarianism, aestheticism and vulgarity, pure scholarship and pure opinionating are equally inadequate responses to the almost forgotten promise of wholeness.



and sucks its best nourishment out of failure and heartbreak. But careers are straight and lubricated and cannot tolerate the waywardness of gestation. Creativity grows out of much meditation, introspection, chasing of moods and changes of mind, out of intense efforts to gain sympathetic insights into men and things. The modern corporation—whether of state or church, of political party or industry—is happiest with those who do not think too much, do not change their mind and do not urge others to change it. In other words: Those that want to follow the “vision,” the “call,” the intimation, must be ready to be considered cranks, failures and useless by their fellow men—and to accept the fact that they will often look upon themselves as such.

As our creative energies continue to shrivel, two consequences will ensue: First, the world will become progressively denuded and inhuman. We shall no longer see it in our own image and shall end by having no image of ourselves. Our affections will become tied to emptiness, death and horror. Secondly, as we forget to fulfill the function of our life, to bring forth fruit, we shall gradually lose the capacity to understand growth, the mother of all parables. The world of the spirit will become two-dimensional and opaque—as a television screen—and we shall be unable to understand it—and ourselves—as a parable. We shall have become irretrievably “uneternal.”

#### THE PROMISE OF CREATIVITY

Creativity is the “realization” of life, of our uniqueness. In creative action we become aware of the strange interplay between power and impotence, freedom and necessity, commandment and grace, as of the reality of our human condition. Here we are compelled to acknowledge our limitations—neither too late nor too early, if we are really creative—and to understand them as challenge and promise. *This* we can do. *That* we cannot do yet, although we would love to. But “all things are possible to him who believes.”

Until beauty has seduced us into taking up many labours we cannot hope to complete in our time and strength, we shall not know the meaning of the hope which is not a utopian or religious delusion. We must have been tempted to cope with many tasks beyond our power, before we can realize that there is a faith distinct from credulity. We must have been lured into desiring to give more than we can possibly give, before we can understand the meaning of love which is more than a mutual indulgence.

In every creative wrestling with men or things we arrive at the point where the very intensity of our desire for more seems to mock us and makes us despair. This is the moment of “forgiveness,” of longing for “another chance,” the moment when the promise of life and the kingdom may become more than a doctrinal formulation: a frightening, bracing, clear-cut hope. Creativity brings joy and frustration, it insists on pushing me to the point where my desire to go further is as great as my inability to “realize” it. Here I meet myself and despair and here alone I cannot help hoping

against despair that what is impossible may be possible after all. The words of Jesus seduce me to go to that extremity, because there is no other way of finding out whether I hope. (Religion, christian or non-christian, presents man with the “promise” before he has arrived at the place where it has become meaningful to him. In this way the promise becomes dogma, love becomes charity and men begin to believe in creeds.)

Creative work is definite: the nurturing of this child, the moulding of this stone, the tackling of a unique task. Yet, although the glory of all creativity is its concreteness, it is equally true that whatever we tackle creatively leaves us ultimately unsatisfied and restive. In dealing with men or things, we are never justified by what we have done—however lovely it may be—but by what we have not yet achieved but have been trained for in our work. In short: we have never done. We can only hope that what we have done will be fruit and bear seed.

On the other hand, I cannot help hoping that the seed-bearing fruit will be the consummation of a unique existence: my life, that my life will be fruit. Here again the words of Jesus prick and tickle. They tempt me to live as if there were always life. They urge me to admit that I cannot think of life except as *my* life and to live *my* life as if it would always be mine. And my life is this most definite, singular, circumscribed something I am in the process of becoming in my creative responses and activities.



# WJL ACCEPTS CORNELL POST

## *Dear Everybody:*

First, my thanks to the Staff of the Community for inviting me to communicate with all of you in this way. Bob Bryant, James Wagener and Bill Smith have led the Community through a fruitful year in the various programs at the Laos House and in the Provocational Dialogues in various cities. However, finances have been in short-supply and I hope you readers will get in behind the significant and continuing contribution of the Community with your own regular contributions. By so doing you will release the full force of their creative efforts in behalf of all our churches and of the world. Pioneering possibility and flexibility remain the prime features of this significant Christian Community.

My leave of absence since January first has been passing strange. Through April I was almost constantly involved in some phase of trying to help the Community sell part of its property. Efforts were largely unsuccessful although we thought week by week that the sale would be consummated. In addition, I filled many speaking and preaching engagements, honoraria from which kept my family afloat in this "no salary" stage of our social insecurity. Finally, The Hogg Foundation for Mental Health came through with a grant to help underwrite the research phase of my proposed history and evaluation of the Community. The grant began on May first, and the services of Millard Research Associates of Austin and New York were employed by the Hogg Foundation to assist me in preparing and processing a questionnaire to be sent to all former members of the College House. The research phase should be completed by August 15th, but the historical narrative will have to wait for a year or two.

I was called to Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, in the middle of May and was asked to consider becoming the Associate Director of Cornell United Religious Work (CURW), with special assignment in the area of Service, i. e. responsible life in the world (mission). Since this was the area I had planned to explore in the proposed "Institute of Cultural Affairs," especially with experimental "bodying forth" of the secular meaning of the Gospel, this offer from Cornell seemed to be made to order. Therefore, I accepted and will begin work there on September first. My resignation with the Christian Faith-and-Life Community will be effective on August 31, 1964, exactly thirteen years since returning from Scotland to initiate the Community program.

John Lee Smith, former staff member of Christian Faith-and-Life Community, is Associate Director for Studies of CURW, and Paul Jaquith, formerly with the National Council of Churches, is the Director. We three are appointed by the President of the University, and there are thirteen Chaplains of all major faiths and denominations jointly appointed by their respective churches and by the Board of CURW. Offices and program facilities are all housed in Anabel Taylor Hall, a memorial gift from Myron C. Taylor, former Ambassador to the Vatican, himself an Episcopal layman.

Mary and I are pulling up stakes in Austin after twenty-five years residence, four years before and eighteen since WWII. Our children are all grown, married or about to be, except for Susan who will spend her fifth and final year as a boarding student at St. Stephens Episcopal School near Austin. She plans to do her undergraduate work at Cornell. As of this writing George is planning to

be wed to Suzanne Sloan of Corpus Christi on August 28th, then go back to Europe where he will write and Suzanne will paint, living more than likely on love and pale moonlight for a few years. Pat's husband, Charles Sackrey, will receive his doctorate in Economics in January and their family will be ensconced in a University or College professor's atmosphere 'ere long. Buzzy and Harley (Clark) and their two daughters will remain in Austin where Harley is practicing law, so we'll have more than one reason for visiting Austin when we can manage it.

Last December I wrote to "Everybody" expressing deep gratitude to all Board, Staff and Student members of the Community, past and present, and to the host of friends of the Community whose prayerful and financial support through the years had made the Community a continuing reality. Thanks again to all of you. Let's keep in touch. And let us all give the needed encouragement and support to the ongoing work of the Faith-and-Life Community in Austin and its primary mission in the Great Southwest as a "Community of learning in Theology and Culture."

Adios and Peace  
W. Jack Lewis

P. S. Our mailing address after September 1, 1964 will be  
Cornell United Religious  
Work  
Anabel Taylor Hall  
Cornell University  
Ithaca, New York



## *"Dear Jack:"*

In "Dear Everybody" is W. Jack Lewis's announcement of his acceptance of a new position at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. As he states, the new role there will offer Jack unusual opportunity to pursue his keen interest in the mission of the contemporary church to those persons and areas which are not generally the recipients of her concern.

We on the Collegium of the Community share Jack's enthusiasm for his new place of service and wish for him the very finest experience possible in the years ahead. Of course, we in Austin and his many friends throughout Texas and the Southwest will miss his presence and trust that his visits here may be frequent and his counsel relative to the future of the Faith-and-Life Community will be shared with us. The very nature of Jack's work at Cornell matched with his intimate knowledge and insight borne out of his relationship as a founder and guiding spirit of the Austin Community will be invaluable to the continuing staff of the Laos House.

The Christian Faith-and-Life Community as it has emerged during the last decade and more has been the historical embodiment of Jack's lively dream for a new mode of campus ministry and lay training. Following his founding of the College House program of the Community in 1952,

he was for several years the sole teacher, fund-raiser and director. Later, as staff was added, program was augmented, and the Laos House was opened as a training center for laymen, Jack continued in his key role of coordinating the efforts and interpreting the project to the constituency and the general public. He has made countless speeches, given lectures in this country and Europe, and represented the enterprise in the larger currents of the lay movement in this country and abroad.

No words, of course, are adequate to "thank" Jack for his efforts in regard to the Community. More appropriate would be words of thanks for his life, for this is more nearly synonymous with the dimension of his concern for this enterprise. His willingness to invest his time, his thought, his life energy in the Community's life has been instrumental in enabling it to remain in being. For these and all other gifts and graces which he and Mary have brought to the Community over the last thirteen years the staff, board, and participants are very grateful. He will be missed. But we wish him Godspeed in his new and exciting venture.

## houston dialogue held



The May Provocational Dialogue in the Houston, Texas area marked the end of the program year in that city with a banquet held at Trinity Episcopal Church. Approximately 100 persons attended.

Robert Bryant, chairman of the Collegium or teaching staff, introduced the alums of the Faith-and-Life Community according to the year of their first participation in the program. Visitors and guests were also presented to the group.

*The Typists*, a drama by the English playwright, Murray Schisgal, was presented by the Ben Bard Players of Austin. The production was directed by Brenda Bard Askeland and the two roles were played by Marie Fletcher and Gene Leggett of Austin.

Scenes from the Houston meeting are shown on this page.





# 13TH ANNUAL MEETING AT LAOS

The thirteenth annual meeting of the Board of Directors of the Community was held May 15-16, in Austin. Russell Roberson, retiring chairman, conducted the two-day meeting which reviewed the work of the past year and looked to the 1964-65 Laos House plans.

Board officers for the coming year were elected. The following will serve in the capacities indicated: Horace S. Wallace, Jr., chairman; William B. Hilgers, vice-chairman; Ann Appenzellar, secretary; and Cecil H. Hale, treasurer.

The meeting itself was divided into four segments: Personnel, Task, Supporting Structures, and Summation and Directives. A staff member gave a formulating statement in each of these areas providing a background for specific reports, which were followed by a time for group reflection and dialogue.

Topics considered during the meeting included the mutual and distinct roles of a volunteer board and a professional staff, the content and direction of the three new advanced courses offered in the Laos House this past year (The Cultural Dimensions of Human Existence, Man in Family, and a directed reading course of Werner Pelz's *God is No More*), the launching of the Provocational Dialogue project in five Texas cities, and the evolution of the Share Plan for the financial undergirding of the Community's task.

Mandates for next year arising out of the meeting include the extension of the mobile seminars to other areas and possible experimentation with another form, a self-study of the committee structure of the Board, revised formats for the Provocational Dialogues, a seasonal emphasis on the Share Plan, and the possibility of creating area strategy groups for the dispersed constituency of the Community.

On Friday evening Board members gathered with constituents and friends from the Austin and San Antonio areas for the Feast of Endings at University Methodist Church. Highlight of this event was the presentation by the Ben Bard Players of the Murray Schisgal play, *The Typists*, previously presented in Houston.



Russell P. Roberson, retiring Board Chairman, is shown above left. Horace Wallace, incoming Chairman, is pictured at far right above chatting with Ed Shaw, Austin Board member.



New Board members who attended the Austin meeting are shown above, l. to r., Reverend Charles Cox, Austin, Mrs. John Douglas, Austin, Don Snyder, Oklahoma City, and Hugh Greene, Austin.

## RETIRING BOARD MEMBERS

May 31st brought to a close the current term of service for the following members of the Board of Directors:

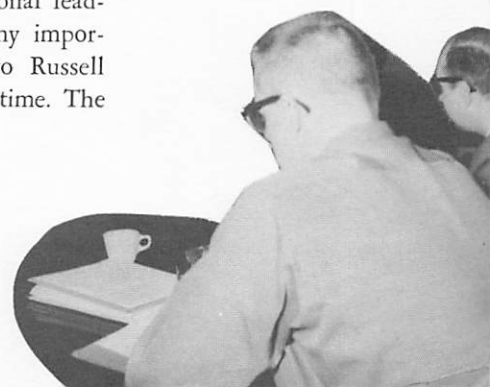
RUSSELL P. ROBERSON; Austin, Texas  
J. WILLIAM MORGAN; Austin, Texas  
MRS. JACK F. RITTER, JR.; Austin, Texas  
JOHN E. DOUGLAS; Austin, Texas  
MRS. HARLAN M. BURNS; Austin, Texas  
MISS JANE GREER; Austin, Texas  
MRS. WILLIAM J. MURRAY, JR.; Austin, Texas  
A. S. BLACK; Houston, Texas  
JOHN GRIFFIN; Port Lavaca, Texas  
MRS. JOSEPH M. ROWE; Dallas, Texas  
STEVE WARE; Corpus Christi, Texas

## NEW BOARD MEMBERS ELECTED

The following persons, comprising the Class of 1967, were elected to the Community's Board of Directors at the annual Board Meeting.

	Residence	Church Affiliation	Occupation
John Bean	Houston	Episcopal	Business
Charles Cox	Austin	Disciples	Clergy
Mrs. John Douglas	Austin	Methodist	Journalist
Ted Eubanks	Houston	Episcopal	Business
F. Dan Gealy, Jr.	Midland	Methodist	Geologist
Hugh Greene	Austin	Disciples	TV Production
William Holmes	Dallas	Methodist	Clergy
Floyd McGown	San Antonio	Presbyterian	Attorney
Don Snyder	Oklahoma City	United Church of Christ	Business
Tommy Thornhill	Houston	Baptist	Business
Joe Vaughan	Dallas	Methodist	Business
Mrs. Steve Ware	Corpus Christi	Presbyterian	Homemaker

The By-laws provide for regular rotation of Board membership, and while it is not difficult to understand the wisdom of this policy there is always a sense of deep loss when experienced and capable Board members end their terms of service. This is true concerning those listed above. They have given generously of time and concern in directing the policies for the program of the Community. Special recognition is rightfully given to Russell Roberson who has served as Chairman of the Board for the past two years. Russell has spent himself freely and has given exceptional leadership in leading the Board in facing many important issues. Due gratitude is expressed to Russell and all those who leave the Board at this time. The Community will find other ways to utilize their abilities in the future.



***"But the serpent said . . . 'You will be like God.'"***

## Genesis 3:1-15

I side with the serpent. Don't you? So perceptive, so ingratiating, so persuasive: God, the nature of things, presents himself as an imposition, and we have the power to resist. Why accept the role of the eternal neophyte—he who is forever every minute a new creature—when we have within our grasp the ability to understand it all? Why should each new phenomenon come to us—as a cataclysm—a nuisance of incomprehensible sights and sounds—why should each experience have the aura and the pain of the transcendent—when within our grasp is that which will make it clear as crystal and as common as mud? Why should we with our sense and our minds be content to rest amid an ambiguous universe . . . when we can—with as little effort as it takes to bite an apple—classify, analyze, synthesize, fix it all forever with a name? Would we not then be truly like God? In control . . . the master of all we can name . . . in control of self and soul and all? This is the promise of the tree of which God said, "You may not eat any of it, nor touch it, lest you die." Lest we die? And the subtle serpent hissed his subtle smile and said, "You would not die at all; for God knows that every day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like gods who know good from evil." I certainly side with that serpent.

With the episode in the garden Man became a pragmatist. And this was the death God had promised him. The practical man knows when he is naked and covers his nakedness. The practical man knows what to do when he is called to account. Accuse the woman, who in turn accuses the serpent. We know when something is impossible (impractical) and we cover it with all the studied nonchalance of a cat. We have learned to sense the first symptoms of congenital am-

*This witness was presented by Hugh Greene at the annual Board meeting of the Community. Mr. Greene, a new member of the Board, is in instructional television production at The University of Texas, and teaches related subjects at The University of Texas. He is a layman in the Disciples of Christ denomination. His picture appears elsewhere in this issue.*

biguity and to cure it with a word—almost any word will do. It is easier—less ambiguous—to buy a box of candy than to love . . . to give money than to become committed—to accept the word of a Norman Vincent Peale, a Billy Graham, or a Tillich than to appreciate the experience of the word.

We have become obsessed with symbols and cannot abide the raw experience they represent. But the symbolizing has become a burden; our fingers are worn from thumbing dictionaries and encyclopedias, and our tongues from uttering words too small to contain the weight they bear; it wearies us.

Pragmatic, we abhor the unpredictable, the ever-changing stimuli the world bombards us with . . . we go to the conglomerate rock of our fossilized over-simplifications, and the rock cries out "No hiding place!" We are in control . . . without seeing. . . . We are of the world but not in it; we are the hollow men—dead.

In our lives we all know the serpent . . . and the Christ . . . and our allegiance falls first to the one, then the other. Each propels us into change. The serpent speaks to our inchoate longings for order and comprehension, and when we have heard him and eaten of the apple, the Christ speaks to our weariness, our disillusionment, and our death. The serpent calls us to "wise up," be practical, realistic . . . to think before we act, to predict the results of our action. The Christ calls us to be fools of God, visionaries, natural men upon whom the ambiguities of life fall as rain and to whom the world comes before a word, men who are forever experiencing the unique and then—and only then—finding themselves doing a new thing. And it is only when we find through the serpent in us that order and certainty are a kind of death that the Christ can lead us through ambiguity to spontaneity and eternal life.

## letter to laymen

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NEAR ALEXANDERPLATZ, the new downtown area of East Berlin, stands the hulking ruin of the old Protestant Cathedral of Berlin. Today, 18 years after the war, it remains a pile of shattered wreckage and pocked stone.

Alongside the cathedral stretches Marx-Engels Platz, the scene of the massive May Day demonstrations, and across the square rises the steel framework of the new Council of State building of the German Democratic Republic. In a crypt beneath the cathedral floor lie the remains of illustrious clergy and nobility from the era of the Kaisers. Occasionally a small group of people gathers for a worship service in a temporary chapel in the crypt.

All around them, in East Germany and in the whole of eastern Europe, a new world is being constructed in which God and religion have no place at all. The question of what the Church should do in a "post-religious era" is not a matter of seminary bull sessions for the Christians of East Germany; it is a hard fact of life with which they must grapple every day.

The Protestant Church in East Germany, viewed in its historical and institutional forms, is fulfilling precisely the prediction made by a German intellectual named Karl Marx 100 years ago. It is dying out. Sunday congregations have shrunk. Fewer and fewer people bother with baptism. Religious instruction in the schools is no longer permitted.

But when one emerges from the cold crypt of the broken cathedral and looks for signs of church life in other places, the picture is very different. In no other country in the world is there such a variety of new forms of Christian existence. A kind of "post-religious Church" is emerging in the German Democratic Republic today—a vigorous, young and astonishingly virile kind of Christianity in a land where the post-Constantinian era has already arrived.

## The Church in Missionary Action

After a year in Germany—living in West Berlin but traveling to East Berlin almost daily where I worked for the Church there—I am convinced not only that the Church in East Germany will survive but that it is engaged in advanced research for the whole of Protestantism as we now move into a world that, as Bonhoeffer said, has "already become a world without religion."

The Church in East Germany today provides a living example of what someone has called "the shapes of the Church in missionary action." Leaving behind the cocoon of Christendom, it is emerging into the new age of secular, technological society with a verve and *joie de vivre* that never ceases to astonish crepe-hangers from the "Christian West." It is producing a generation of young laymen who know what it is to make a conscious choice to serve Jesus Christ in a country where it is no longer the "thing to do." Styles of worship and congregational life are being developed that befit a period when the ancient privileges of throne and altar lie buried in the crypt along with their departed custodians.

Equally important is the group of young theologians that is being produced. Beginning with the heritage of Bonhoeffer and Barth, they seek to discern the presence of God in a society that allows him no special place, and they believe that, precisely because their fellow citizens are so far from God, they themselves may be closer than ever. The theological contribution these theologians can make to the ecumenical conversation is an invaluable one, and we will hear more from them in the future. They combine the traditional precision and *Gründlichkeit* of German theology with a refreshing this-worldliness lacking in most theological cerebration today.

What are the main questions they are facing?

(1) Radical secularization. The main challenge confronting the Church in East Germany today is not communism but the galloping secularization and rationalization of what was once a very traditional society. In this respect

# The Church in East Germany

by harvey cox

## FOREWORD

So much is happening before our very eyes these days which seems to have immediate repercussions for our lives—the presidential campaigns and November election, the racial and economic revolution this country is going through, the Viet Nam crisis—that one is tempted to become restrictive in what he looks at for the sake of his own equilibrium. But we dare not.

One of the pictures which easily gets pushed to the back of the mental file is that of the church in East Germany. What is its message to us western Christians who remain in our provincialism to our own loss? Harvey Cox, after spending a year in Berlin, sensitively assesses the East German situation in the lead article of this issue. Mr. Cox teaches at Andover Newton Theological Seminary. The article is reprinted through the kind permission of Christianity and Crisis.

The second offering in this issue is a personal response to a week-end seminar which first appeared in the Holladay Community Church (United Church of Christ), Salt Lake City, Utah, news sheet.



the situation is not unlike that in Western Europe and the USA. It is simply more visible. Politicians in Communist countries do not feel called upon to invoke the deity in their speeches, and there are no prayers at the opening of the Party Congress or the meetings of the Central Committee. The public facade has been removed and secularization is seen for what it is, the social process that inevitably accompanies the development of industrial society.

Few East German theologians bother to bewail the march of secularization. The only ones who do are those who still hanker for the eventual return to the 19th century amalgam of monarchy and Lutheranism. For most, however, secularization is not something to regret but rather to understand, and to understand theologically. Many view it quite favorably as the occasion that calls the Church to an exodus out of the stifling Egypt of Christendom toward a land that God has promised but has not yet revealed.

Drawing on the theology of Friedrich Gogarten and the sociology of Dietrich van Oppen of West Germany and Hans Hoekendyck of Holland, they believe that secularization has its roots in the Bible itself. The Old Testament God abolishes sacred realms and de-demonizes nature. Jesus Christ defeats the cosmic powers and turns the world over to man to shape and care for responsibly. Secularization is seen as man's coming of age, taking into his own hands the reins of responsibility, being made free from cultural coercions so that he can stand between God and his fellow man without mythological barriers getting in the way.

The need for a theology of secularization is pressing today. How is Jesus Christ present for his Church in a world where the inherited theologies of natural law and the orders of creation are being swept away? But a theology of secularization can be written only in a secularized society, and, in this respect, the East German Christians may be in a better position than their Western brothers to formulate a theological response to the dechristianized world.

### **"All Men Are Basically Godless"**

(2) Atheism. Again this is not a matter of theorizing. It is the question of how one lives with and communicates with people who are atheists.

In this setting blanket generalizations about atheism are impossible. In East Germany there are political atheists and scientific atheists and practical atheists. These are human beings with whom one works and lives, with whom Christians teach in the same school and do research in the same lab. Daily life with atheists makes necessary a theological understanding that goes further than the old Eisenhowerian formula that everyone should believe as firmly as possible in whatever god he chooses.

No, common life with atheists demands of Christians an open confession that all men are basically godless, Christians included, and that it is precisely those "without God" whom God has reconciled in Jesus Christ. The fact that the Gospel has nothing to say to any of us unless we are in some sense without God places Christians and atheists together in a solidarity that makes wholesale indictments sound false and hypocritical.

Then there is the question of the relationship between the methodological atheism, or at least the agnosticism, that informs modern science and Christian faith. In East Germany, as in many places in the West, the necessity for bracketing the presupposition of God refers not only to natural science but to all *Wissenschaft* (technical learning), including of course whatever kind of social science is possible. Just as most natural scientists have already disposed of the need for presupposing a deity in their attempt to understand the natural order, so social scientists in the East believe one can come to terms with human personality and social structure without including a divinity factor.

This opens the way for conversations with Marxist social scientists, and there are some Christians who believe there is no necessary contradiction between Christian faith and most elements of the Marxist method of social analysis. "Whether I accept the principles of Marxist social analysis or not," said one young East German to me, "has nothing

more to do with the Gospel than whether I accept the particle or the wave theory of light." When I suggested that his theology might be leaning precariously toward a kind of Christological atheism, he countered with the opinion that this was probably better and even more biblical than the non-Christological theism that seems to be the temptation of Westerners.

In any case there is much more work to be done by all theologians on the real meaning of atheism. When one recalls the ancient rabbinic saying that the next best thing to belief in Yahweh is at least not to believe in idols, then atheism might in fact be much closer to biblical faith than the vague cultural theism of nominal Christians in the West.

As in other areas the issue between Christians and atheists in East Germany seems cleaner and more forthright. Nominal theists are disappearing. They are disappearing in the West, too, but not quite as quickly. The day will come, however, when the fog of cultural piety will lift from the West and reveal us all for what we are, people who really do not believe in God at all. Then the painful process through which East German Christians are now passing may come to our aid, reminding us in a new way that it is precisely the godless ones for whom the Gospel of Jesus Christ makes any sense.

### **Responsible Action in Communist Society**

(3) Communism: not as a theoretical ideology but as the basic program by which the social, political and economic life is organized. Here the question is how does a Christian do his share to help his society to become what the World Council of Churches (WCC) has called a "responsible society"? What does this mean for Christians who wish to participate in political life? Are the only real Christians in East Germany those who are digging tunnels under the Wall (sometimes with shovels furnished by American television companies)? How can Christians who seek to play a role in political life avoid opportunism and me-tooism?

This syndrome of problems comes to focus in the question put by a young Methodist layman who reads everything he can get his hands on about political ethics, especially from the WCC's Departments on the Laity, and Church and Society. "Everything I read," he said, "urges me to get in there and work in the political arena, to grapple with ambiguities, to get my hands dirty. Now let me ask just one question, does that mean *me*, here, or is that just for Christians who live in Western liberal democracies?"

I do not believe Western Christians have ever faced this question seriously. We have not usually been willing to allow Christians in the East to cope with political responsibility within their structures as we urge politicians to do on this side. While we revel in the ambiguities of power and the need for provisional solutions and half-loaves that are better than none, we frequently demand of Christians in the East a purity and consistency that would be dismissed with a smile in the West as well-intended utopianism.

Thus we indict a Hromadka for not "speaking out" on Hungary, as if this were the final test of his personal authenticity, and we condemn other Eastern churchmen because they do not issue resolutions on things we know they must be against. We seem to want everyone to be a Western liberal regardless of the actual political situation in which he is living. We often deny to others the same right to situational response or prudential judgments that we so carefully defend for ourselves.

But despite the lack of a real ecumenical consensus to support and encourage their work, many East German Christians are active in the power structures of their society—in factory councils, collective farm committees, city councils and even in the national People's Assembly. There can be no doubt that some of these people are opportunists. But there can also be no doubt that many of them are dedicated Christians who want to share in shaping their society.

It is useless and even wicked to suggest to these people that their main task is to oppose communism or to weaken the regime. Further it is cruel and untrue to imply, as we

often do, that they are at best misled, at worst disloyal, followers of Jesus Christ. Much more to the point would be our effort to help these believers to work out the ethical and theological guidelines they need to live and make decisions in a society where parliamentary democracy and an independent judiciary are not part of the governmental furniture. In short, our ideas on the ethics of political decision-making are considerably more provincial and socially determined than we often think. Conversations with those Christians who are trying to make faithful political decisions in the Eastern bloc might help deliver us from some of our situationally induced shortsightedness.

### To Create a Mystery

In their confrontation with communism the Protestants of East Germany have a special responsibility. They live in the only Communist country where the vast majority of Christians are Protestants. Although a French theologian may have overstated his case when he once said that "only in East Germany do the Communists have the opportunity to hear the real Gospel," it is certainly true that the confrontation here will be a very different one from that which takes place in countries with an Orthodox or Roman Catholic tradition. There are of course many Christians in East Germany who simply refuse to take part in this conversation. But those who do have frequently noticed a remarkable readiness on the part of Marxists to go to the brink of revisionism in their efforts to understand what Christian theologians are saying.

One party member recently told me, after an extended conversation about some of the Protestant theologians he had been assiduously reading, that he agreed with Marx that the Church would die out, but he rather thought it would probably last for another 2,000 years or so. Here the border between quantitative orthodoxy and qualitative revisionism is reduced to almost nil.

But the important thing to notice is that East German Communists, ordinarily among the most stalwart defenders of doctrinal purity, have not been driven to these theoretical adjustments by theological arguments. They have been forced to rethink their theories by the fact that Christians in East Germany have simply not fitted into the predictions of scientific socialism. They have not functioned merely as ideological defenders of reaction and counter-revolution as they were supposed to. They have not all fled to the West. They have not died out.

In a sense those Christians in East Germany who are not content merely to pray in the crypt validate a striking statement of the late Cardinal Suhard of Paris. This spiritual father of the French Worker-Priest Movement once said that it is not the task of Christians to advocate a program or ideology. Rather their task is to create a mystery, a mystery that cannot be explained by any human system of thinking and can finally only be understood as the grace of God.

The conversation between Christians and Marxists in East Germany and in other countries of the Eastern bloc is in its first stages. At the universities of Leipzig and East Berlin, young Marxist philosophers are writing doctoral dissertations on Helmut Thielicke and Gogarten. A Marxist philosopher in Prague recently published a critique of dialectical theology. The same man gave an address at the European conference of the World Student Christian Federation last summer at Graz, Austria (where he told the students he felt like one small lion in a huge cage full of Daniels).

When an East German bishop recently announced a public lecture on Christianity and Marxism, 400 people crowded in to hear him; and when we held a conference for theological students on the same topic at the East Berlin Evangelical Academy in Weisensee last winter, it was oversubscribed.

Many East German Christians know that Marxism is not a passing phase and that most of them will be living with it indefinitely. They also realize that to refuse any proffered conversation is to refuse to believe that a Communist can modify his ideas or perhaps even be converted. And to disbelieve in conversion is to disbelieve in God.

### Hope for This World

But what does the East German confrontation with a godless society mean for us?

As this conversation unfolds, it becomes increasingly clear to many that while the weakest link in Marxism is its naive doctrine of man, the thin spot in contemporary Christian thought is its lack of a viable eschatology, an understanding of God's intention for the world. The Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch, who once taught at Columbia University, has made the assertion that the "principle of hope" that was the genius of early Christianity, a principle by which all reality was understood, is no longer to be found in Christianity; it has been taken over in our time by the Communists. It is the Communists today who look with confidence to the future, while Christians think wistfully of their lost provinces and departed privileges. Anyone who has talked with Marxists knows that there is an important element of truth in what Bloch says. What, then, should our response be?

It has become evident to me that Christians must regain a hope for the world. Somewhere between existentialist theology and *Heilsgeschichte* we have lost sight of the fact that it is *this world* that God is redeeming, and this world cannot mean either my own decision-making center, somehow lifted miraculously out of the cultural milieu in which I am enmeshed, or a Beulah-land world that is in some curious way totally "beyond history." Without relapsing into easily realized eschatologies, social gospelism or schematic philosophies of history, Christians must once again insist that our hope is not for the Church or for individual souls, but for the world. And this hope must be given specific content.

The first thing East German Christians have had to do in recent years is to relinquish false hopes. They have had to learn not to live year after year in the enervating expectation that deliverance was coming from the West. They have had to learn that it is on Jesus Christ and not young Lochinvar on whom their hopes should be centered. And Jesus Christ "comes on clouds from heaven." Whatever that may mean it is clear that he does not come riding a tank through the Brandenburg Gate.

I think we in the West have cheated and misled our fellow Christians in East Germany by our constant suggestions that rescue is on the way. We do it every time an American politician, including John F. Kennedy, makes a speech at the Wall. It is time to be honest with ourselves and with them. If the East Germans were not "liberated" on June 17, 1953, when they fought tanks with paving blocks, or on August 13, 1961, when a wall was erected through the middle of what is still ostensibly a "four-power" city, is it fair to continue to suggest to them that if they just hold out a little bit longer, all will be well? I do not think it is.

It is a terrible thing to die in the waiting room, and I believe we should tell our fellow Christians in the German Democratic Republic that, despite all our reservations about the questionable legality of their regime and the human tragedy of their separation, they should serve God with a whole heart where they are. As a young layman told me recently, "I cannot look my East German neighbor squarely in the eye, whether he is a Communist or something else, if I am constantly glancing over my shoulder toward the West."

He was right. I have not said much here about the political situation as such or about the Ulbricht regime with which, needless to say, I have very little sympathy. But I do believe that God is doing something in East Germany today for his whole Church, something from which we will all be able to profit in a world racing toward an era in which deities and divinities no longer will be accorded even summary deference.

When a recent well-meaning Christian from the West assured a young East German pastor with a pat on the shoulder that "we are remembering you constantly in our prayers," the pastor thanked him and said, "But when you pray, pray that we will be given the capacity to see what God is doing here in our German Democratic Republic, and the willingness to let him do it in his way instead of ours."

## *A Different Cup of Tea...*

What impels thirty persons, individually and by couples, of wide range in age, vocation, economic and educational background, to travel considerable distance to spend a week-end with strangers? It might be understandable if their common cup of tea were the races, skiing, or a bridge tournament. But these came to explore together the meaning of life, and of faith, and of one's own existence. Furthermore, most came ready to let the commitments and beliefs of others threaten their own most cherished certainties—to hold up every past "I believe" to possible exposure as one's own private golden calf. Many a "practical" person comfortable in habitual patterns of thought and action will answer simply that it is lunacy, or at best a foolishness tolerable so long as it doesn't disturb them.

Yet hundreds of otherwise sane, intelligent and responsible people are drawn to such gatherings through lay movements here and in Europe where they had their beginnings. Patterns for them vary widely. Some are within the traditional organizations of the denominations; some interdenominational; others have no direct relation to the church as an institution. One group, which has experimented for eleven years in the relation of church and theology to the world and culture, is the Austin (Texas) Faith-and-Life Community. Two weeks ago I attended one of its laymen's week-end seminars, conducted in Norman, Oklahoma, by two of the Community's ordained staff members.

The setting was a young church housed in a large country home with garage transformed into sanctuary. Here we began and ended the days with worship, and in between met each other as persons over and through dialogue based on questions directed by the leaders and presented by common reading, discussions based on movies and contemporary art, and by lectures (a misleading term for the intense outpouring which drew us into dynamic encounter with the ideas, the speaker and one another).

The seminar's aim was "understanding the meaning of the Christian Gospel for our lives in the twentieth century." The emphasis was not toward an individualistic appropriation of some Gospel truth, but rather toward its possibilities as source and means of responsible involvement with others in the world. There was no explicit definition of that Gospel handed out, or mutually agreed upon. The content for dialogue came from Biblical, theological and cultural sources, as well as from our own life experiences. In some ways it was like a pilgrimage with destination unknown

but with the certainty that the essential "staff," for those who wished to join the company, was an unqualified mutual trust and faithfulness. And one of the gifts of the week-end for me was the evidence that it happens that people can differ, and speak the truth, in love—and this despite the widest differences of beliefs.

We each brought baggage of faith—ideas and commitments accumulated out of various heritages of faith or non-faith and out of infinite varieties of life experience. Some carried it lightly, ready to cast it overboard. Others clung tightly. But few left with exactly what they brought. For a great many, the experience brought freedom from guilt and uneasiness over not being able to accept particular traditionally-presented images of God,—and their air of exhilaration at parting was contagious. For others the baggage was reshuffled, with only partial riddance. Certainly for me, idols were smashed, and I left with mixed feelings one of them reluctance to leave behind the scattered pieces of the cherished, lovely things. (One can understand, finally, the Hebrews' refusal to speak the name "God," for the word is magnet for all kinds of private and corporate idols.) But the experience of real freedom came later, as the meanings of all that happened at Norman were confirmed by, and woven into the fabric of the daily life of family and church and groceries and news broadcasts and chauffeuring, and thinking and reading and prayer—and especially of trying to express and share some of this with others.

One surprise was this: some of the smashed idols were returned whole, transformed into means instead of ends. Their "Godness" gone. "Goodness" reaffirmed. And if foundations were knocked out, rebuilding begins. The words that point to cornerstones, for me, are "Grace" and "Jesus Christ": At the heart of life is the reality of a gracious "One" who affirms us, loves and forgives us, and who meets us at the center of busy active life as well as in prayer and worship, and whom we can meet and give ourselves to because he gives Himself to us in Jesus Christ. With the stripping down there has been granted a new freedom to be, become, relate, receive and give. This includes a granting to all others the freedom to rearrange their own luggage, and to name it, as they are called to do. Yet I would invite others to consider this: "For freedom Christ has set us free."

Lucy Powell

## **letter to laymen**

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## THE THEOLOGY OF TRUE SECULARITY

by William O. Fennell

There is a place in theological writing for venturing risk beyond that which ordinarily belongs to all statements of faith. Theological journals exist in part to encourage such ventures wherein the theologian seeks to set forth, not the final results of years of precise scholarship and considered reflection, but something much more tentative and imprecise. He seeks to give some indication of the direction in which his theological thought seems driven to move, inviting his colleagues to a dialogue of critical comment. Such, at least, is the nature and purpose of this article on the theological foundations of true secularity.

The writer has become persuaded that a great deal of traditional and modern Christian thought is in error in its understanding of the created

world as a "religious" or "sacred" order, and that this error has been compounded by the attitude adopted toward that secular realm which we call the culture of man. It is the first thesis of this article that, in creating the world, God called into being, not a religious but a secular sphere, so-called because he willed for it a certain autonomy to be creaturely as a good in itself. It is our second thesis that, in creating man, God called into being a creature, gifted with autonomous freedom and mandated to use that freedom to build a human, secular world within the world of God's creation. Our third thesis, though first in theological priority, is that, in Jesus Christ, God has rescued the world from man's "religiousness," restored it to its original "secularity," and in him has given back to man the freedom which he lost when he sought to make his culture a religious and therefore idolatrous thing.

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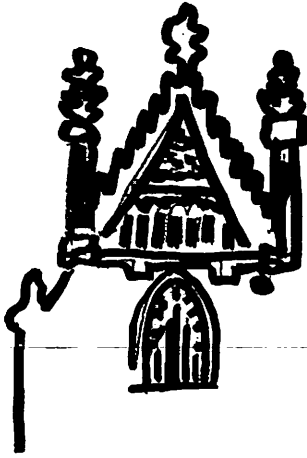
### ABOUT THIS ISSUE . . .

The two articles which comprise this issue of *Letter to Laymen* speak to questions often raised by our constituency. The first, *The Theology of True Secularity* by William O. Fennell, attempts to make the distinction between "secularity" with its sources in a Christian self-understanding and "secularism" which may have its well-spring in any number of life-understandings alien to the Christian. It deals with the question oft-heard at the Laos House: "Is not all this talk about the secular man just a baptized brand of humanism?" The answer is "Yes" and "No." Both aspects of the answer are important. The key to the distinction is in the difference between the ultimate answer and the penultimate answer.

The second article, *The Moral Duty to Obey—or Disobey—Law*, concerns itself with the timely question of civil obedience and disobedience. Although this issue is formulated for us today in sentences which include words like Mississippi and New York, it has ramifications for always and everywhere. Mr. Shinn denies the possibilities of being blindly obedient or irresponsibly disobedient to the laws of the land. This subtler and more comprehensive point of view than is usually proposed is near the top of the list of a free society's requirements.

We offer these articles as insightful contributions on two key issues.

If these theses are in any wise true, it must be affirmed that, contrary to much that passes for true preaching of the gospel of our God today, the church should be calling men, not to a "religious" understanding of and attitude toward nature and human culture, but to a better, truer "secularity."



The doctrine of the world we find ourselves constrained to call into question with our first thesis is that which thinks to find the world's true being and meaning in its transparency to God. Such a religious, sacramentalist view of nature seems to do justice neither to the nature of God, nor to the nature of the world, as these are made known in the historical self-manifestation of God to which the Scriptures bear witness. It does not do justice to God who is self-revealed as one whose gracious will it is to create and to redeem, not for his own but for the being and the good of another than himself. God's love is "agape" love which "seeketh not its own." The world was not called into being through any need or desire on the part of God for "Lebensraum." In creation God did not seek a larger room to be God in. God is complete and perfect in himself and therefore can be wholly *for* the world in his creating, restoring, and fulfilling love. God as self-revealed in Jesus Christ is not God-for-himself in and through the world. He is God for the other than himself—the world. It is therefore nature's and man's true end to glorify God, in response to God's self-glorification through self-giving love, by being in joy and gratitude that which he willed them to be—the creature.

Of course it is true that the world has no independent existence apart from God. The world could not for a moment be apart from his creating, sustaining, and renewing activity. The world derives its being as creaturely both originally and continuously from God, its Creator. Its freedom to be world is a freedom rooted

and grounded in God—and only in God. But God does give it freedom to be world. He sets it free from himself to be itself. God did not create the world that it might have or find its being and its purpose in pointing beyond itself to him who is its Creator, as though to be God alone were good, and to be creature were itself a mark of fallenness. God alone *is* absolute, final, ultimate good. But the creature created by him is relative, finite goodness given by God freedom to rejoice in being itself. When the Old Testament witnesses speak of nature as manifesting the glory of God, and find in it fellow-creatures which in their very being utter praise to him, it is not because nature is thought by these witnesses to be the medium of a general revelation, the locus for the self-manifestation of God. It is rather that, having come to know God the Creator in his historical self-manifestation, the prophets and the psalmists see the realm of nature as the work of his gracious will and purpose, the effect of his sovereign power, and thus find in it that which in its very being utters praise of him. It is a pagan not a Christian attitude toward nature that seeks and finds in it man's God or gods. And it is an attitude which in principle would make every scientific, aesthetic, and even moral approach to nature a profanation. Only the Christian understanding of God as Creator, and of the creature which God has made free from himself to be itself, provides a true foundation for the secular approach to nature that inheres the cultural enterprise of modern man.

It is difficult to see how in the last analysis on any "sacramentalist" view of nature, nature could be treated *naturally* by man. The attitude towards the "sacred cow" would seem to be the appropriate attitude for religious man to adopt towards nature generally. If once nature is viewed in principle "religiously," i.e., as the arena wherein the Lord God is generally made manifest, or as the sphere wherein many gods are thought to dwell, the only consistently appropriate attitude towards nature is the religious one that finds in it a sacrament which is profaned by any secular approach or use. But God has not intended every bush to be a burning bush, nor is his incarnation in a human form a particular, perfect instance of what his relationship to nature generally is intended to be. God's manifestations to Israel, through prophetic witness to his presence and deeds, are from the beginning to their end in Jesus Christ radically unique. If this were not so we would profane nature whenever we approached it in a secular fashion, whenever we sought to know

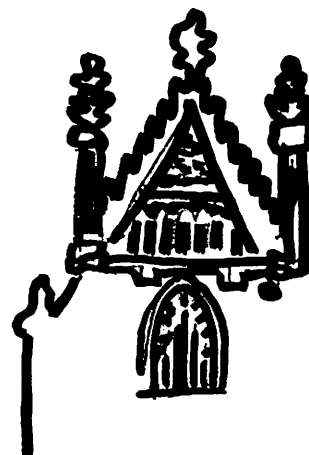
it and use it naturally, i.e., in accordance with its own nature, rather than sacramentally as the locus for the manifestation of God.

God, in creating the world, has brought into being another than himself that in the grace of his being for it, it might be itself. Nature exists in separation from God in a power to be separate which constantly derives from his original and sustaining creative will. God constantly gives to nature its power of independent being. In the unceasing fidelity of his love, God constantly frees nature from himself to be itself. Therefore when man approaches nature scientifically, to predict and control it and press it into the service of human, creaturely ends, he does not thereby engage in the profanation of an essentially religious sphere. It is hard to know how one could ever tend with horticultural care, in order to make it blossom after its own fashion, a bush which is in principle, and therefore ever potentially, a burning bush—a bush intended by the will of its Creator to be the sacramental locus for the appearance of God.

There are other methods of approach to nature than the scientific one. Nature yields differing kinds of knowledge of itself to man in accordance with the differing methods of approach to it. There are also aesthetic and moral relations to, and knowledge of nature. There is even a transcendent relation that men have called "religious" wherein nature discloses, to those who have the eyes to see, its own mysterious, wondrous, and awesome depths. But it is its own depths that it thus discloses and not the being of God. To the writer's mind this is what the word "heaven" in the creed may be taken symbolically to mean. "I believe in God, the Creator of *heaven* and earth." Heaven as well as earth is a creaturely reality according to the confession of the creed. Can it, then, not be understood to signify that experience of transcendent mystery which men of genius have known and borne witness to? This experience of transcendent mystery is still within the order of man's secular knowledge of the world. It is nature known in terms of its own depth. It is a dimension of the creaturely being that is known and spoken of here.

Of course we must go on to say that the nature which we thus know naturally is not simply that created world upon which God "originally" looked and beheld to be very good. Nature in general, as well as man in particular, is fallen creation. All of creation is subject to the vanity of evil, destruction, and death. But in Jesus Christ the whole of nature participates in God's

work of reconciling and renewing grace. For God in Jesus Christ has loved the world in spite of its fallenness. In him God has reconciled the fallen world unto himself and rescued it from its bondage to decay and death. Thus it is that in the Biblical witness to the world's eschatological fulfillment there is, at the end even as at the beginning, a garden. But it is a garden which, according to the picture in the book of The Revelation to John, is freed from unproductivity, decay, and death, and which, according to the vision of first Isaiah, is a habitat of animals that have lost their urge to kill. We cannot attempt here any extensive interpretation of this mythology, but simply state that these myths do bear witness to nature's participation as nature in the New Being of Jesus Christ, in his reconciling work and resurrection life.

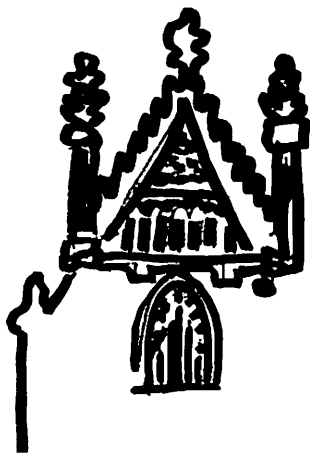


We turn now from this brief discussion of the Christian attitude toward nature to the question of the Christian attitude toward culture and the creative enterprise of man. Here too it would seem to the writer to be wrong to adopt a "religious attitude" toward culture and find in it what is called a religious purpose and meaning. For the "religious" attitude toward culture is precisely what is meant by *secularism*. It is our thesis that **the Christian faith calls man from an idolatrous secularism to a believing secularity.** Secularism results from the inevitable tendency on the part of fallen man to make some aspect of his creaturely existence in the world an absolute which serves him in the place of God. Or man himself assumes the status of the absolute and becomes the object of a devotion, hope, and service "religious" in quality and extent. For the church to stand opposed to all such forms of secularism is of course demanded by its faith in the Lord God who is the Creator and Redeemer of man. But the Christian protest against secularism



and its idolatry, in the name of the worship and service of the one true God, should lead in the direction not of a religious attitude toward culture but in the direction of a true secularity.

The true secularity which is founded on faith resides precisely in the dethronement of man-made gods through acknowledgement of the one true God revealed in Jesus Christ. In the creation story God set man down in the garden of the world and mandated him to the creative enterprise of taking possession of the earth and subduing it to human purposes. It is of the God self-revealed as Creator and Redeemer that Paul Riceour somewhere speaks: "Our God is a God-Act, a God-Gift, who makes man a creator in his turn in the measure in which he receives and is willing to receive the gift of being free." Even as we said about the realm of nature in general, so now we say about man in particular, God gives and sustains, in his creating grace, freedom to man to be man in the world. Man in himself is not autonomous man, as though his freedom to be man the creator derived from himself. He is theonomous man in that he has his freedom only through and in God. But the freedom which thus originates in and is sustained by God is to be used autonomously. It is given for a human work, and that human work we call culture. Culture no more than nature is to be viewed "sacramentally" as though culture's meaning and purpose were to be found in its transparency to God. All that Christian man does he does in joy and gratitude to God, in an attitude of trust and love and hope toward him. This faith and hope and gratitude is the actualized "image of God" in man, which includes the neighbor in its love. But it is in and from this actualized image of God that there derives man's freedom for the truly human work of culture in the world.



Of course, again, the man of whom we speak is not simply the man whom God created and

called very good. For man refused his God-given vocation to be free, not by his desiring to be creative in the world, but by refusing to acknowledge in gratitude and answering love God from whom originally and continuously he derived his right and power to be. In pride and unbelief he sought a self-grounded autonomy of freedom, and lost in deep, dark ways his power to be genuinely free. In his sin he lost the knowledge of his Origin and became the victim of false gods. Now his freedom for creativity took the form of a quest for his lost Origin and culture generally became man's attempt at self-redemption. This is the source of the secularism we spoke of awhile ago. Culture becomes the pantheon of religious man's idols. But God acts *against* the religiousness of fallen man and *for* his freedom to be humanly creative within the world. In Jesus Christ God restored to man the lost knowledge of his Origin, dethroned the idols man had worshipped in place of the unknown God, and renewed in man the call to creativity in loving, grateful correspondence with his God.<sup>1</sup> "If the Son shall make you free, you are free indeed." Jesus Christ liberates man for the use of autonomous freedom in the world. Through him the realm of culture becomes a thoroughly de-divinized sphere. It is made the *secular* order by virtue of the fact that he robs it of its *religious* quality and power. Jesus Christ alone is the man of faith's Absolute. All else, including man's freedom and all that he creates, is relativized in relation to Him. This is the theological ground for, and true meaning of, secularity.

"Because faith frees us from the world, it frees us for the world. Because it does not live on the world, it makes it possible for us to live for the world. Because it puts an end to the misuse of the world, it opens the way to the right use of the world. Because it breaks the domination of the world, it gives domination over it and responsibility for it. And because it drives out the liking and the misliking of the world, it creates room for pure joy in the world."<sup>2</sup>

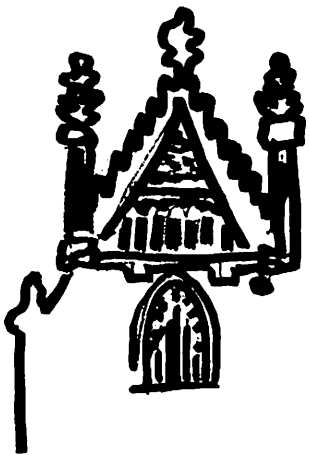
In the restored calling of man to creative freedom by the forgiving and renewing grace of God in Jesus Christ there is also the promise of God's judging and accepting mercy of all that man creates. In faith, man is made free through the forgiveness of sin and the renewal

<sup>1</sup> Cf. A. Dumas: "Aussi Barth peut-il écrire cette phrase énigmatique: 'Jesus Christ, est "l'image du Dieu invisible" (Col., 1:15) et par suite le type de l'homme cultivé, puisque orienté vers Dieu et formé par lui.'" Chapter entitled "Théologie et Humanisme" in *Homage et Reconnaissance: Cahiers Théologiques de l'Actualité Protestante*, Neuchâtel, Delachaux & Niestlé, 1946.

<sup>2</sup> Gerhard Eberling, *The Nature of Faith*: Philadelphia, Muhlenberg, 1961, p. 161.

of his being for a creative life within the world. But in fact, man remains the sinner who is justified by grace. Therefore it cannot but be that all his works in time this side the eschaton will be marred by sin. Even the man of faith remains threatened by idolatry to absolutize himself or some finite achievement in the world. And his so-called "religious" principles, values, or norms are no real challenge to or escape from this idolatry. Indeed, they partake of it. The only cure for this ill is to call man from the idolatrous worship of all false gods or absolutes to the one true Absolute who is Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Christian is one who believes that not only he as man, but also his human work is justified by faith. It is not that his work any more than he will escape a final judgment. For even if, as man of faith, he is freed *from* the quest after his lost humanity through his cultural endeavors, and freed *for* the full expression of his humanity in the joy of a self that has found itself in the Christ, nevertheless he knows that his work still bears upon it the marks not only of a good finitude but also of a baneful sin. But as man of faith he also believes on the basis of the scriptural witness to revelation that in the time of the Kingdom's consummation the nations of the world will bring their glory, the fruits of their cultural and civilizing labors, and offer them to the King both for his judgment and his accepting grace (Rev. 21:24-26). Until that time of fulfillment no man can know with any sense of finality what of his work will win the final approval of God. Yet this he can believe—that whatever is done in the joy, gratitude, love, and freedom which are gifted to man in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit cannot fail to find some acceptance.



In conclusion we raise for a very brief discussion the question of the significance of our

subject for understanding the relation between the church and the world. By "church" we mean the community of the faithful who assemble together to receive the Word of God in preaching and sacrament, to respond in prayer and praise, and to enjoy that fellowship together which is the communion of the saints. By "world" we mean all that lies outside the immediate context of this community and its corporate activity.

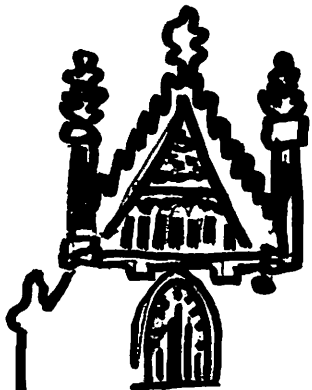
In Jesus Christ the radical separation between church and world has not simply been transcended, but broken down. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, for God so loved the world. Contrary to much Christian thought on the matter, faith in Jesus Christ does not, or ought not to foster in man a *crise de conscience*, a conflict of divided loyalty between churchly existence on the one hand and worldly existence on the other. If in Jesus Christ the world has been reconciled to God, then there are no longer two realms, a godly and an ungodly, standing in irreconcilable enmity toward one another. There is now only one realm, the created, creaturely, fallen yet reconciled and renewed realm over which Jesus Christ reigns as Savior and Lord. In recent times it has been Dietrich Bonhoeffer who through his posthumous writings has caused many of us to rethink our theological understanding of the relation between Christ and culture, between the church and the world.

"Sharing in Christ we stand in both the reality of God and the reality of the world. The reality of Christ comprises the reality of the world within itself. The world has no reality of its own independently of the revelation of God in Christ. One is denying the revelation of God in Jesus Christ if one tries to be 'Christian' without seeing and recognizing the world in Christ. There are therefore not two spheres, but only one sphere of the realization of Christ, in which the reality of God and the reality of the world are united. Thus the theme of the two spheres which has repeatedly become the dominant theme in the history of the Church, is foreign to the New Testament. The New Testament is concerned solely with the manner in which the reality of Christ assumes reality in the present world, which it has already encompassed, seized and possessed. There are not two spheres, standing side by side, competing with each other and attacking each other's frontiers. If that were so, the frontier dispute would always be the decisive problem of history. But the whole reality of the world is already drawn into Christ and bound together in Him, and the movement of history consists solely in divergence and convergence in relation to this centre."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*: London, S. C. M., 1955, p. 64.

Of course it must be confessed that although there are no longer two realms, a godly and a godless, standing in unreconciled enmity one to the other there does still remain a distinction between "godly" and "godless" men, i.e., between those who believe in God revealed in Jesus Christ and those who do not so believe. This distinction gave rise to, and continues to give rise to and preserve that community of faith and love for God and man in Jesus Christ which is the church. And this community finds or makes for itself a space in the world for the hearing and the responding to the Word of its life. But since Jesus Christ is the one in whom *the world* is reconciled to God the community seeks no separate existence for itself as a religious community in radical separation from the world. Rather, like its Lord, and in him, it exists for the sake of the world. It seeks in speech and action and attitude to interpret to the world the foundation in God of its true rather than false worldliness. The church manifests corporately, and in the lives of its individual members, not that love for the world which is enmity to God because it springs from the false and sinful autonomy of unbelief, but that love for the world which springs from God's love for the world as manifest in the Christ.

Thus in Jesus Christ the distinction between churchly existence and worldly existence is relativized. Ultimately—eschatologically—the distinction disappears. And penultimately, though the distinction does indeed remain as a significant distinction, the Christian community must nevertheless always give evidence that it lives in the light of the End in which it believes and for which it hopes. This the Church does, within the context of our present discussion, by manifesting to the world that, in faith, it is possible to engage freely in the secular enterprise of man's cultural existence, not as a human quest for self-redemption but in thankful and joyous celebration of a redemption freely given as God's own self-gift.



## THE MORAL DUTY

Now that a civil rights law has been enacted, we are beginning to see some changes in attitude toward law. Groups that have been seeking to establish human rights through civil disobedience are now pressing for those same rights through enforcement of law. At the same time some segregationists, disliking the new law, think they are scoring a clever point by justifying defiance with warmed-over quotations about civil disobedience from church leaders. This is a time for reassessing the moral meaning of obedience and disobedience of law.

Let us start with the obvious. Law and order are precious achievements. Frequently they are not appreciated until a community moves to the edge of terror or chaos. Although all legal systems are imperfect, due process of law is certainly better than the uncontrolled play of power. Hence the individual who resents legal restraints has no moral right to capricious defiance of law. A long Christian tradition has enjoined obedience to law, even under a wicked or pagan government.

But equally obvious is the fact that laws may be unjust and tyrannical. The Nazis, to take a clear example, promulgated vicious laws that destroyed persons and social values. Today we honor courageous men who defied the Nazi government not for their own advantage but for justice.

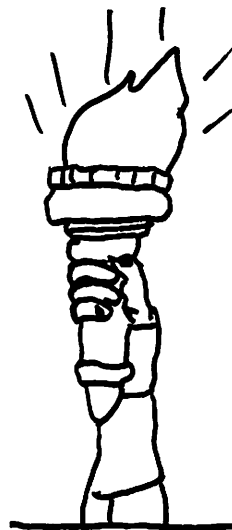
The tradition of honorable disobedience of law runs deep in our society. Socrates went to his death saying, "Men of Athens, I honor and love you. But I shall obey God rather than you." Peter and his friends in Jerusalem, when commanded to stop preaching, answered, "We must obey God rather than men."

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# *or disobey* TO OBEY LAW

by roger l. shinn



These episodes, thrilling as they are, raise difficult problems, because every malcontent can claim that God is on his side. Any system of social morality must require individuals, at least some of the time, to subject their own judgments to those of legal authority.

An ethic, therefore, must avoid either an absolutizing of law as the final good or an elevation of the individual that breeds contempt for law. No perfect set of criteria exists that will determine when disobedience is justifiable. However, we can suggest three examples in which there may be a right or even a duty to disobey law.

(1) Our processes of constitutional government provide methods for the testing of laws in courts. Sometimes the only way to put the law to legal trial is to disobey it. To challenge a law openly and honestly may be a sign of respect for the fundamental legal processes. Many constitutional freedoms have been made secure because men risked disobedience of law in order to get a judicial judgment on the law itself.

(2) Disobedience of law may be a moral right and obligation when political methods of changing the law are not available. Normally the person who dislikes a law has a responsibility to try to change it rather than disobey it. But if a tyranny or a corrupt bureaucracy makes orderly change impossible, other forms of protest become necessary. Thus our forefathers issued the cry, "No taxation without representation." More recently Negroes, denied political representation, have disobeyed laws they had no hand in making. Sometimes the only way for a person or group to maintain moral integrity and impress those in power is to disobey the power bloc openly and accept the consequences of the act.

In both these types of disobedience the act is open and above board. There is no plotting to harm other people, no violence, no trickery or cheating. The effort is not to evade a legal claim but to challenge the law in the public arena. Government sees and invokes the penalty. Government also has to decide whether the law should be changed.

(3) A more rare situation may call for still more radical disobedience. The case of a morally intolerable wrong may drive people of integrity to conspiracies of disobedience. Thus in American history the evil of Negro slavery led men of conscience to help slaves to escape via the 'underground railroad.' Thus also the Nazi persecution of Jews led the best and bravest of men to disobey laws in order to save lives. Here the effort was not to make an open witness that might persuade the society to change; it was a simple, direct act to save persons from vicious laws.

Any of these justifications for disobedience may be misused as rationalizations for ethical irresponsibility. People are always eager for theories that will justify their own prejudices and privileges. But Christian responsibility requires us to take the risk. We must reject any automatic assumption either that bad laws are always to be obeyed or that the individual is free to defy law at his own choosing.

Responsibility, of course, does not end with the decision to obey or disobey. The making and sustaining of laws is also a work of conscience. When laws are just, the valid reasons for disobedience are removed. And in an open society those who disagree with laws have the opportunity to work for their modification. A healthy society learns to cultivate respect both for law and for the rights of men to change law.



## NOTES

### BOARD ACTS ON COMMUNITY PROPERTY

During the month of August the old College House property on the 2500 block of Rio Grande Street was leased and an option to buy arrangement was entered into. All phases of the Community program in Austin such as seminars and colloquys will continue to be held in the Laos House at 700 West 19th as was the case this past year.

The staff together with a committee delegated from the Board of Directors will this year make a study of future needs for program facilities and make recommendations to the Board prior to the 1965-1966 program year.

### BEGINNING SEMINAR SEPTEMBER 25-27

The first IA seminar of the year open to the general public will be held at the Laos House September 25-27. This course is prerequisite to all other seminars offered by the Community. A five dollar registration (applicable on the \$20.20 total) assures one a place in the seminar. Registrations should be sent to 1906 Rio Grande, Austin, Texas.

### HIGH SCHOOL SEMINAR TO BE YEAR'S FIRST

The 1964-65 program year will open September 18-20, with a beginning seminar for high school youth. Two such seminars and an advanced week-end have been held at Laos House in past years. Requests for this program to be offered again warranted scheduling it this fall.

This IA seminar is open to any young person who will be a junior or senior in high school this fall. There are no other prerequisites. The cost is \$20.20 per person.

Yes . . . you did get a copy of **Letter to Laymen** just recently. The staff is attempting to catch up on our bi-monthly schedule during the summer months when the program load is lighter, so you may receive copies closer together than every two months until the schedule is met.

### ADVANCED SEMINAR OCTOBER 9-11

In the July 1st issue of **The Christian Century** Lloyd J. Averill in reviewing Werner and Lotte Pelz's book, **God is No More**, wrote that it is the kind of book that he feared could no longer be written and the only book he had read recently that he wanted immediately to read a second time. "As an attempt to overcome the frightful inertia of our familiarity with the words of Jesus and to expose their radical and transforming claims with fresh urgency," he says, "the book must be accounted a stunning success. It is one of those rare volumes which deserves to be called seminal . . ."

On October 9-11 the advanced reading course on this book will again be offered at the Laos House. The book may be purchased through the Community office at 1906 Rio Grande or at your bookstore.

### LEWIS FAMILY HONORED

A reception honoring Jack and Mary Lewis was held at the Laos House Sunday afternoon, August 23. Over sixty Austin friends and associates attended the event given by the Board and staff of the Community.

Horace "Sonny" Wallace, Chairman of the Board of Directors, presented a wall clock with a drawing of the Laos House engraved on the face to the Lewis family as a token of appreciation from the Board for their thirteen years of service to the Community. Robert Bryant, collegium chairman, presented in behalf of the staff a guest book which was used to record the names of those present at that occasion and would become a part of their new home in New York. It symbolized, Mr. Bryant said, the graciousness, the warm cordiality and human concern which has been so typical of Jack and Mary during their years in Austin.

Among the guests were persons who had been instrumental in all the phases of the Community development from the time of its inception to the present.

## letter to laymen

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# letter to laymen

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November/December 1964

## AUTONOMY IN AN ABSURD SOCIETY

Initially we must open our eyes to the reality of the Absurd World—I want to draw this figure with broad lines so that you will see that it is only the very unusual person who can sense any measure of choice in this world at all. I hope its effect will be to make us tolerant of the many individuals who are not free.

Let us now look at some facts about the world with which the human infant is confronted as it enters the world and as it develops. These facts are so simple and so compelling that they are likely to be dismissed as just obvious, universal and, therefore, not relevant to the variety inherent in human behavior, or just Absurd.

William James described the first conscious experiences of the newborn infant as a “big, blooming, buzzing confusion.” The difficulty with this often-quoted speculation is that it puts the burden of this experience on the nature of the infant. It is as though the world is not in fact big, blooming, and buzzing with confusion. Some worlds, I would argue are bigger, blooming-er, and buzzing-er than others and some are less. Nevertheless, this in fact is what the infant is confronted with. If he is to survive, he must learn his way among the confusions. He must in short find *meaning*.

The growing human must find meaning in a world which is dramatically devoid of choice in important areas. Consider the following:

1. We do not choose our parents, their character, their tendencies to punish and reward, or their mode of punishment and reward.

2. We do not choose the laws of the physical world into which we are born.

3. We do not choose ourselves. Our genes and chromosomes which determine our sex, our height, our skin color and our potentialities are given and must be accepted pretty much as they are.

The above three non-choices are literally forced upon us. We must do something with these givens. Who are we if we

did not choose our first social world, our physical world or our very own physical, neurological and cortical equipment? In a world where a useful unit of measurement is the megaton each person in his way must ask, “What am I compared to the precision and dependability of thermonuclear process?” We are beset with a problem of identity. As if the identity problem were not great enough at this point, let me remind you that these non-choices are only the biological and physical facts with which the organism must cope. Consider the following additional constraints imposed upon us:

4. We do not choose our country, our culture and its history.

5. We do not choose the fact that we grow old, get more rigid, get more wrinkled, get more Right politically. (These are the three R's of aging: wrinkling, rigidity and Conservatism.) And what's more, we do not choose the meanings and evaluations other persons place on our wrinkles and rigidity.

In addition there are more subtle Absurdities in our existence:

6. Even though some of us can and do learn about our country and our culture, we find that there is typically a great gap between our values and our dispositions and what we can effect in the way of changes in our country's goals and decisions. We must reconcile ourselves to the fact that the CIA should not, in the opinion of those in power, be inspected too closely or attacked too vigorously. Most of us, I'm sure you will agree, are alienated from our country's greatest decisions and policies.

Now. What is the poor person to do with this objectively overpowering world he is given? He can be pessimistic. He can be so pessimistic that he can make the ultimately absurd choice—he can take his own life. But he does not. Biologically. (I will return to this; there are ways to take a life other than the biological.)

For example, in the death-camps people were dehumanized

Occasionally an article appears which serves to tie up the many loose ends which people have been aware of for a long time—not in any final sense, but in a working consensus for the present moment. This article by Dr. Banta is such a piece. His understanding of freedom in a world characterized by non-choices is lucidly put. This article is printed through the kind permission of The University of Denver Magazine and the author.



in every possible way. The death-camp epitomized the Absurd. Not even one's name was permitted to remain as a reminder of one's dignity as a human. Yet suicide was not the choice. Viktor Frankl, a psychiatrist who was himself exposed to the death-camps and survived, sometimes asks his patients who are suffering from endless privations and great despair, "Why do you not commit suicide?" Their answers all revolve around *meanings* life has for them: family, work, play—some *relatedness* to the world through meaning.

I will define freedom at this juncture as *one's ability to choose among possible meanings, and understand the sources of one's meanings, in relation to himself, his bio-physical world, and his social world.*

I started out on the cheery note that I believe that there is evidence for belief in basic goodness in the nature of man. Next I described a set of conditions which paint a rather dark picture for the context in which man enters the world and makes his way through it. The two ideas should not be *confused*. They should be *fused*.

Eric Fromm's concept of the sane society suggests to us that the social structure may have a considerable bearing on our personality structure. Lack of psychological freedom may have as much to do with the structure of the economy as with the structure of the psyche. That is to say, we are confronted with many hard-to-change facts of the world. Freedom's expression must be understood in these contexts.

What I am suggesting is that many processes which we see as threats to freedom are mistaken. This usually happens in two ways. First, we may react to a phenomenon whose label suggests psychological threat, and in all good conscience fight it and object to it in all its forms. Many times our label or our concept is technically underdeveloped; the concept "conformity" is a particularly good example. Second, we may not have a label for an important concept, or more usually for a process which is quite complicated and has not been seen as a unitary phenomenon—the idea of deep-relationship-and-autonomy or social-organization-and-personal-freedom are examples of such processes.

\* \* \*

*The free individual is not dead or asleep.* Death is sometimes a technical word. In this context a poetic conception is clearer than the technical one. The technical one revolves around the idea of the cessation of certain organic functions. Since death is regarded as a generally unattractive alternative to life, we are likely to overlook certain kinds of death the poets, playwrights and novelists have tried to point out to us. I refer to this particularly nasty kind of situation as ambulatory death. Ambulatory death describes the individual as having lost his ability to sense and his ability to experience; we might say that ambulatory death involves senselessness and lack of experience. Such a person is in trouble because the world does not communicate with him, and he does not communicate his deep feelings and thoughts to the world.

The word "Buddha" may be translated as "awakened." Aldous Huxley suggests that, "Those who know about things, or only think that they know, live in a state of self-conditioned and culturally conditioned somnambulism. Those who understand given reality as it presents itself, moment by moment, are wide awake." The person whose world is completely regular and predictable has arrived at a state of ambulatory death. A person is a process. If the person is at a steady state, he is not fully functioning precisely because the world which is his frame of reference for experiencing is not a steady one, unless he makes it so by ceasing to ex-

perience the incredible number of nuances and contours of our external and internal worlds.

*The free individual is anxious.* Closely related to the previous point is the idea that if a person is free—that is, not dead, dying or asleep—he will sense the world around him. Some of the things he senses will not be pleasant. Who guarantees that the real world is continuously pleasant? This has been called the Age of Anxiety. And no wonder. The world is, in fact, anxiety-provoking. An age where individuals are alienated from persons influencing world events which have great implications for the very continuation of life as we know it should, it seems to me, result in persons feeling anxious. We sometimes get things backwards. Let us keep in mind that it is entirely reasonable to be anxious when the world is anxiety-provoking. To put the argument in a mental health context, one becomes inclined to diagnose as "sick" those who do not reflect the difficulties of a world so full of non-choices. The secure, even-tempered, controlled, unemotional person probably does not have access to his entirely justifiable feelings of anxiety.

*The free individual conforms.* More people are certain they are free people because they can tell you about the things to which they do not conform. They can tell you whose ideas they do not endorse. They can tell you how wrong the radical Right or the radical Left are. But there is always a potential contradiction when we view freedom as deviation from some standard. First, we are behaving *in relation to* the standard. That is, we are making up our minds on the basis of all we know about the standard; we are as over-determined when we multiply each influence effort by minus one (deviation) as we are if we multiply each influence effort by plus one (conformity).

Second, usually deviation *from* a standard implies allegiance to another standard. What group of deviated look more alike and behave and feel more alike than a group of Beatniks? May I say that I endorse many of the things the Beatnik stands for. But, thankfully, I need not join them in their community. Such an association implies more constraint on my personal freedom than I care to be exposed to.

The adolescent rebellion is another case in point. In his self-conscious efforts to deny the authority of parents and develop his own culture which he assures us will "not be like my parents' culture," he is not free to adopt even the few good or reasonable aspects of parental behavior and beliefs.

We must train our guns on the appropriate enemy. Granting that the free individual must be free to conform where such apparent conformity is based on rational choices, where does irrational or crass conformity come in? The most telling setting is in the group problem-solving situation. Virtuous collective problem-solving behavior is very simple in theory. It simply involves each person's reporting his views as he sees them. The rules are 1) rationally respect others as sources of information, and 2) report so that others can rationally depend upon your report. As D. T. Campbell points out, "It is failure in this latter respect that instigates our moral indignation at the conformant chameleon character, who parasitically depends upon the competence of others but adds no valid information . . . to the social pool."

Thus the free person has a sense of security about adding an opinion to the collective efforts which may deviate greatly from the beliefs or orientation of the majority. The implications are great for this admonition. It is more than an individual matter. It is a matter of social design. Not only must the person be alive and sensitive to possibilities outside the accepted modes of thought, but the social setting must be such that he will not expect punishment for an unusual idea. His responsibility lies in not creating a punitive environment for others who do not accept his unusual ideas.

This is a great part of the secret of the construction and design of a free society. This leads us to our next point.

*The free person has very few deep relationships.* A truly deep meaningful relationship is a rare thing. If it were superabundant it might be less desirable; I don't know. The great problem is one of realistically differentiating between those relationships that *appear* to be deep and meaningful, those that for some reason one *wishes* were deep and meaningful, and those which are *authentically* deep and meaningful. The reason that this is a great problem is that all persons believe that they should have such relationships, and, in the service of this belief, our culture provides means by which we can mechanically create the illusion of a good relationship. Dale Carnegie's courses exist not only in response to this demand, but also because the courses are effective in creating illusions. Having taken such a course of instruction, one finds that it in fact works. When you learn another person's name, remember it, and smile at him when you use it, he begins to remember your name, smile, and respond to you. It reminds even the most insensitive of us of a good relationship. There are many common elements here which tend to confuse the open, spontaneous, responsible, emergent social relationship with this person-as-object-to-be-manipulated substitute.

Popular conceptions of the love and marriage relationship in our culture do not aid the development of deep relationships for the free person. Rather, the conception of romantic love and "until death do us part" themes may be the very bases for salability of mechanically enacted relationship techniques. That is, if we are all supposed to have long-term romantic love experiences and they don't happen when we want them to, or when affection comes from the wrong person (one we are not for the moment interested in,) then it is in our way of doing things to seek some technical remedy for a problem. A love relationship is not a trait of the loving individual. Being in love is not due to a trait of the individual loved. The deep relationship emerges out of the developing sense of mutual trust, the experience of mutual openness, the feeling of not being afraid to say anything that comes to mind to this particular individual, who also feels this security. The best word I can think of to describe this mutual relatedness is "connection." *What I am* gets along very well with *What you are*. Consider these illustrations: Saying "I love you" in response to the request, "Tell me you love me," is not the same thing as having said "I love you" in the first place. The former is compliance, the latter "connection." Similarly, saying it because I expect that it will be requested is not the same as simply finding myself saying it.

What is a good relationship then? A good relationship may be one in which an I-love-you-emitter meets up with an I-love-to-hear-you-say-I-love-you receiver. *Ad almost infinitum* for all other behavior dispositions the two persons wish to share. Very improbable, you say? Indeed, that is why a relationship of this kind is rare. That is why there are ecologically based selections—high within social class

marriage rates; high incidence of friendship cliques related to social class; great similarity in dominant values in friendship selection.

Another misconception about a good friendship is that it is one which meets needs for both persons involved. I am not against having needs met. That is not intrinsically bad. Some effects of this orientation are bad, however. If the relationship is founded entirely on the meeting of mutual needs, it is always threatened by the fact that another person can meet these same needs. Each party to such a relationship is simply an object which operates as a mechanical need-satisfier for the other. The obvious case in point is sexual need gratification. It can be met by any number of persons, by any number of purely mechanical techniques, and with no more than enthusiastic complementary demands by the partner.

To push this point still further, there is a growing case for the position that too much togetherness can work in an extremely negative fashion. Harlow's primates, when reared in the "together" condition, find great security with one another. This security is so great that there is no need for the infants to explore the rest of the environment. In fact, by contrast to the complete world of security provided by their bodily contact, the rest of the world is frightening—more frightening by comparison than it could be in absolute or objective terms. Who wants to learn about the world by playing rough and tumble with peers, or with curious looking objects when a body surface can feel so good, so comforting? The latest result is that these monkeys who have provided one another with great security and great togetherness are suffering what seems to be irreversible inadequacies in sexual behavior and social interaction in general.

This kind of experimental evidence along with clinical evidence based upon family therapy, points to the fact that complementary need satisfaction is a definite steady state; it is so static and so satisfying that it inhibits further change, further growth. Togetherness can be carried to the point where it is despicable because it retards autonomy and competence.

Ask again. What is a good relationship, then? It is not matching of values, although this is nice; it is not the meeting of complementary needs, although this too is nice. A good relationship provides for feelings of openness, mutual trust and autonomy. The good, deep relationship, like the good society, provides for individual autonomy. The persons must be free to develop in directions that are productive. They must be free to explore possible meanings the world may have for them. They must feel secure about trying to create a painting, or to write a bad poem, or to cry when feeling great despair, or to turn to the friend with childish awe and in infantile dependence when appropriate. Let me emphasize that these things should not be used as tests of the relationship. To test it is to make it inaccessible.

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#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR . . .

Dr. Thomas J. Banta is University assistant professor of psychology at the University of Denver. A university faculty member since 1963, Dr. Banta formerly taught at the University of Wisconsin and worked at Veteran's Administration hospitals in Tomah, Wisconsin, and Oklahoma City. He received his bachelor's degree from Ohio State University and his master's and doctoral degrees from Columbia University.



## NOTES

### ETHICS SEMINAR APRIL 23-25

A week-end seminar on the topic "Man as Neighbor: the Relation of Moral-Being" will be held at the Laos House on the week-end of April 23-25. One of the three core courses in the Community curriculum, this course is being offered for the second time this year. It is open to all persons who have attended the beginning Core Course I.

The ethics seminar attempts to look at those relationships with other persons which all of us give to and receive from—the ethical dimension of those life-ties which hold and sustain us at the same time they release us.

Total cost for the week-end is \$20.20 which covers registration fee, study materials, food and lodging. Registrations should be mailed to 1906 Rio Grande, Austin, Texas 78705.

### DAY OF DIALOGUE PLANNED

Clergymen of all denominations have been invited to attend a one day seminar at the Laos House in Austin on April 20. The session, lasting from 10:00 A.M. until 10:00 P.M., will center on a conversation with Alan Watt's book, *Beyond Theology*. In a witty and insightful way, Watts uses Eastern thought and modern science to show that our normal sense of the person as a lonely island of consciousness is a dramatic illusion based on theological imagery. We in the West, the author proposes, have been taken in by our own theological metaphors so that we believe that our images are the way things *really* are—rather than very rich and meaningful but nonetheless limited "pictures."

An appreciation and clarification of the author's thesis, a critique of the position, and an exploration of the work's relevance for the minister's task will make up the day's program.

### AREA SCHOOLS CONTINUE

The Area Schools of Theology and Culture are continuing in Corpus Christi, San Antonio, Dallas, Midland, Houston, and Austin in Texas, and Norman and Tulsa in Oklahoma. A second series of courses is being offered in Austin, Houston, and San Antonio.

Area Representatives who will be available to inform and interpret the Laos House program and plans to the constituency in each area have been appointed. They, together with the faculty, will attempt to integrate interested persons into the Area Schools, the Dialogues, the week-end seminars, and all other phases of the Community program.

These representatives, appointed to date, are as follows: Houston, Ted Eubanks; Austin, Hugh Green and Mrs. John Douglas; Corpus Christi, John Yochem; San Antonio, Mrs.

William Walker; Dallas, Joe Vaughan; Midland, Dan Gealy; Oklahoma, Don Snyder.

### SPRING BOARD MEETING MAY 21-22

The spring meeting of the Board of Directors of the Community will meet in Austin May 21-22. At this meeting new officers for the ensuing year will be elected. All outgoing and incoming members are invited as well as their wives or husbands.

### BEGINNING SEMINAR MAY 7-9

In response to a number of requests for a late spring seminar, Core Course I will be offered at the Laos House on the week-end of May 7-9. This is the basic seminar which is prerequisite to the other week-end offerings. It is open to any interested person. Alumni who have friends or relatives who have not attended are urged to encourage them to attend on this date. Registrations may be mailed or called in (GR 7-4471) to 1906 Rio Grande, Austin.

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## Letter to laymen

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The Absurd World I described was one filled with overwhelming non-choices. The person who surrenders hope in this state of affairs can only feel constant despair. Such depression and such withdrawal is an avenue taken by some. In its extreme form this is a pathological condition called schizophrenia. Others of us hold out for hope. In an anxiety-provoking world and in a world where everyone has a right to feelings of insecurity, we are given opportunities to avoid the anxiety and the insecurity. The alternative is to be free. It is not always the most attractive alternative. To stand alone, to be accounted for in terms of one's individual decisions—arrived at independently—is frightening. How much nicer to feel the security of the Middle Age's feudal society—to know that my job is related to a morality I believe in; to know that my world is stable and unchanging; to know that people do not move around from job to job; to know that all my moral choices can be relegated to a perfectly authorized set of beliefs; to know that all my social interactions will provide support for these things adds further security.

In an Absurd World, people are a piece of an environment which tends not to support autonomous behavior. I hope that it will be clear by now that I feel it is more important to understand the conditions under which people give up or, more emphatically, turn and run from their freedom, than it is to enumerate non-free behaviors and simply moralize against them. Let me suggest briefly some of the serious threats to freedom which grow out of this absurd condition.

*Identification with the aggressor.* Recognizing that the world is threatening, and that some of the most threatening things in this world are powerful authority figures, some persons rely on this psychological syllogism: He is threatening. But he does not *appear* to be *threatened*. Therefore, if I look and act like him, I will eventually *be* him and, therefore, I will not be threatened either. Such is the logic of much unfortunate followership. Some people would point out in their analyses that we must be on guard for pathological leadership. Today's social psychologist would warn that we must be even more aware of the conditions of pathological followership. To put the point even more emphatically, the pathologically motivated leader is never a problem—only his pathological constituency.

*Chronic know-nothing-ism.* In Hyman and Sheatsley's careful analysis of "Some Reasons Why Information Campaigns Fail," five current events of great importance to our nation were studied in terms of the respondents' awareness of these foreign affairs matters. Only 12 per cent of this large representative sample reported awareness of all five. And one person out of seven reported no awareness of any of the five items. These were no small matters, understand. They related to the Acheson-Lillenthal report on atomic energy and to the Paris meeting of the Big Four foreign ministers then in progress, for example. This was 1946. Such know-nothing withdrawal behavior continues today. This defense against an Absurd World renders the world incapable of harm. These persons say, "If I see it, I will be frightened." To be sensitive to the nation's interests and actions exposes one to great anxiety. The psychologist is aware, however, that anxiety is one of our most profound motivators. It can be a productive feeling for the free person. But it cannot motivate if it cannot stimulate. Such chronic know-nothing ambulatory death is an effective defense for individuals, but collectively it can and has been disastrous.

*Boredom.* Viktor Frankl has argued persuasively that man's great problem today is not anxiety, it is boredom. He points out that "In actual fact, boredom is now causing us—and certainly us psychiatrists, too—more problems than is distress. . . . Let us think only of the Sunday neurosis—the kind of depression which afflicts people who become

aware of the lack of content in their lives when the rush of the busy week is over and the void within them becomes manifest." Thus it is suggested that man may withdraw from the Absurd and find within himself a void. In running away from the void (which he does not relish either), he runs to some form of distraction, some contact with shallow, non-productive activities and relationships. The superficial security of romantic love, or the security of money and power, has meaning only in terms of providing relief from boredom. These means—money, power, romantic love—become ends. They become the blankets and thumbs of security for the adult Linus.

*Crass conformity without responsibility.* When the free individual makes a choice it may resemble in great detail the choices made by others around him. This may be called conformity. As was pointed out earlier, the free individual does conform. But at this point it is simply a descriptive word. If we are to understand conformity in its evaluative sense, we must examine the conditions and process by which the individual elected an alternative resembling that of others. If the choice is justified on the basis of the fact that others have also made it, it is then a bastard choice. Its parent is not identifiable; furthermore, the choice-maker is not identifiable. He has no identity. Riesman's other-directed character is habitually justifying his choice behavior in this way. But the free individual must feel the individual responsibility for his choice among the alternatives. When the free individual conforms, *he* has done so. No one else has made this choice for him. We must come to realize that conformity can exist only in a social context. Conformity is an accident of the social context. All choice must ultimately burden the individual.

*Defensive optimism.* An expedient and efficient way to deal with the world is to develop a convenient habit of thought. Always see things better than they are. It is, after all, just a way of coping.

The modern dramatists are not very comforting. Genet, Ionesco, Albee, Pinter and Becket all tell us about things we would not like to hear. A common reaction to their efforts is "I don't care to hear or read such hopeless and senseless material. The world can't be that bad." In contrast to the dark anger and passionate audience appeals and accusations about the audience's morality in Genet's *The Blacks*, we have the ever-dependable, all-good, all-nice Hollywood production. In the Hollywood effort, even the Bible has good endings. It is clear that the Bible is not read widely or deeply in Hollywood. The interesting thing about audience reactions to Genet, in contrast to the Hollywood ending, is that as much as one is made uncomfortable by the Absurd theater, one continues to grapple with the problems the play raises long after the play is over. I take this to mean that the persons witnessing this kind of theater resonate with the problems encountered there. To say that the play was bad because the ending was not delightful is not to criticize at all. It simply describes. To say simply that "the world is better than that" is to deny that the world contains any misfortunes. It is certainly true that the probability that you will see an unhappy ending in a randomly selected piece of entertainment in the world today is very, very low. In reality this probability, I have tried to argue, is much higher. It is interesting then that when one runs across unhappy scenes in plays, novels or life, today's optimist denies that it represents reality. Such denial optimism, when it occurs, is dangerous because it renders us insensitive to realistic and absurd tragedies for humans.

\* \* \*

My hope is that we in the behavioral and social sciences can structure a psychology and a social philosophy appropriate

to the real Absurd World. By this I mean that I hope we will not continue to depict man solely as an element in a casual matrix; I hope we will interpret our findings with due respect to man's potentialities. If man feels tendencies to conform, it is because there *are* real pressures to conform. They are pressures he did not ask for, did not choose. In this sense they are Absurd. Systematic data on religious and political choice are among the most dramatic documents on the influence of family attitudes on children's choice we have yet found. In 1952, Campbell, Gurin and Miller report that respondents whose families voted Democratic also voted Democratic by an overwhelming majority—79 per cent. Ninety-one per cent of the persons whose families voted Republican also voted Republican. Where families cast a split vote, the effect was to split the vote of the offspring—41 per cent voted Republican, 54 per cent voted Democratic. Such are the data. People who did not choose their parents chose to vote as their parents did. Either we can rest there in our social science efforts, or we can seek to understand the constructive ways in which these persons attached meanings to their choices. We can undertake studies of the majority which conformed thoughtlessly and automatically and those who felt the strain toward self-determination, toward responsibility for their individual, overtly conforming choices. Furthermore, we can learn from the minority which did not vote as their families voted—which of them found their own personal way of choosing, and which of them were overdetermined to rebel against parental voting preferences. These latter were no less free than those who showed overt agreement with parental choices.

In Riesman, Glazer and Denney's provocative study, *The Lonely Crowd*, the concepts of inner-directed, tradition-directed and other-directed were developed. These concepts got so much popular attention that the impression left by the book was that it was an invective against our predominantly other-directed culture. People read to be sure that such complaint did not describe them. No one wants to think of himself as other-directed or as an automaton conformist. Such an image of their efforts as being primarily a moral admonition to change this national character did not free its subsequent readers to finish the book. The concluding portion of the book is titled, "Part III: AUTONOMY." Few of us got that far. Let me urge you to re-read it. It embodies a spirit of positive attitudes toward the development of persons fit for a free society. To borrow just one quote: "Modern industrial society has driven great numbers of people into *anomie* [or alienation], and produced a wan conformity in others, but the very developments which have done this have also opened up hitherto undreamed-of possibilities for autonomy. As we come to understand our society better, and the alternatives it holds available to us, I think we shall be able to create many more alternatives, hence still more room for autonomy."

\* \* \*

I would like to conclude this paper with just four paragraphs about where I think the social and behavioral sciences can lead us and are leading us.

First, I think that we are witnessing a greater emphasis on the interesting aspects of man—his ability to be productive, responsible, authentic, open, sensitive and free of overdetermination of his choices. Growth theory, self-actualization, spontaneity theory, all imply a basic need within man to change in these directions. They imply that the more one learns about man, the more we will find that it is these tendencies that lie under the surface.

Second, there will be, and should be, more effort placed on understanding the process of raising free children. Parents may well be the worst thing to happen to some people. For

parents to find virtue in the motivation to raise children as persons who will be free is asking a great deal. At times such a child-rearing experience is trying and exasperating. I am sure that the direction such investigation will take us will be away from child-rearing techniques. When given the job of doing something to the child as an object to be manipulated or trained, the parent is placed in such a self-conscious role that the child cannot help but receive the message of lack of spontaneity, lack of authenticity. A parent told to take an interest in the child's activities asks the child all about what he is doing. The child's reaction to this surprising question-and-answer period is typically "Why are you asking me all these questions all of a sudden? When you talk to adults you make statements about what *you* are interested in. Why am I so different?" Sometimes when attention is paid to one's own life, in terms of self-understanding and trust in others, there is an impressive positive effect on others. I suspect that admonitions about techniques of child rearing will decrease and attention to the self-actualization of parents will increase. The children will very likely grow beautifully in such a fertile environment.

Third, I think we will see an increased interest in the development of social and organizational structures which permit free social interaction within a context of necessary restraint. As we become sophisticated sociologically, we see the importance of status differences in organizations, the necessity for clearly defined roles and rules to guide behavior. Recognizing the nature and necessity of rational organized bureaucracy, we can now concentrate on developing settings within such organizations where persons can feel a deep sense of trust in the fact that, although organizational constraints exist, they can be made to work in the direction of safety from exploitation and can furthermore provide a context for spontaneous and productive effort. I think such interests will tie in intimately with the study of autonomous but deep and meaningful social relationships. I don't think our deep relationships need be developed in the formal contexts of the work situation, but meaningful relationships developed outside this context will undoubtedly have an important effect on relationships developed on another level in the work situation.

Fourth, and last, I believe we will see the social and behavioral scientists feeling the press of responsibility to apply some of these conditions to the educational process. Just as in child rearing we have passed through the phases of rigid scheduling and naive permissiveness, so has education gone through the phases of the rigid drill of classical languages and naive progressive education. Perhaps we will see the security of teaching as humans to humans. Education has the primary responsibility to teach content, but this can certainly be done in the context of non-authoritarian, open, personal interaction with students. The student must get the message that knowledge is developed by humans, not given by impersonal textbooks. But as with the Ying and the Yang of Zen philosophy, the two aspects, teacher and student, make up the whole. The teacher has something to say. It should be heard. But the student must learn that the teacher is vulnerable, but still is competent and has dignity. This he cannot learn under controlled status-conscious conditions. The student must learn somewhere that all knowledge is human knowledge.

In summary I would like to say that the core of the problem of freedom is the development of basic trust. All genuine and worthwhile social interaction is predicted on this principle. The Absurd World is a Positively Absurd World. If humans are basically good—in the sense that they are open, sensitive, becoming themselves—and find their own personal meanings and relatedness to the world, genuine and productive social interaction will follow, as will the free society. This I believe to be the case.



**In 1952**

*the Christian Faith-and-Life Community,  
an ecumenical center of learning  
in theology and culture  
came into being  
in Austin, Texas*

## ITS CONCERNS

the questing man *seeking* the depth dimension of his many endeavors,  
the man of conscience *trying* to be responsible in today's complexity,  
the churchman *looking* for a place and possibility to talk frankly about the Christian faith,  
the college student *wanting* an educational perspective out of the academic potpourri.

## ITS FORM

to provide a place and brief occasions for persons to "stand between" competing institutions, ideologies, age groupings, causes and self-understandings to let the winds of alternate perspectives dispel some of the fog.

## ITS FOCUS

the *whole man*—rather than intellectual man or religious man or psychological man or political man.

## ITS METHODOLOGY

to bring to formulation those images of personal integration and social possibility already latent in the person and to give language-symbols for "remembering" these.

## ITS HERITAGE

the whole tradition of the Christian Church focused through the lay movement and bound to participation in the world wisdom of the arts and sciences. An attempt is made to converse theologically with culture and culturally with theology.

## ITS OBLIGATIONS

to examine man's possibilities in today's world without being bound by a denomination, a foundation, a school of thought or vested interest.

SCIENTIFIC MAN CULTURAL MAN ETHICAL MAN RELIGIOUS MAN SCIENTIFIC MAN

# letter to laymen

JOURNAL OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH-AND-LIFE COMMUNITY IN AUSTIN, TEXAS



# THE NEW MOMENT

The new moment is the rise of man. Everywhere men are saying they will no longer see themselves as victims. They are rising to take over their world. And the take-over is not just an economic or political upheaval. It is a revolution of self-imagery. It is a replacing of the picture of man as a machine with the picture of him as a human self in process. A new horizon of imagination and understanding beckons him.

This move is focused in many issues:

## URBANIZATION AND THE RISE OF THE CITY

*There is the possibility* of our burgeoning cities becoming expressions of men's social and cultural concerns rather than ugly settings for anonymity.

## AUTOMATION AND TECHNOLOGY

*There is the possibility* of the machine, the technique, and the organization serving the human spirit rather than burdening it.

## THE KNOWLEDGE REVOLUTION

*There is the possibility* of man the

"knower" ascending over any static (and necessarily temporary) body of knowledge. Knowledge of the knowing process is a new learning.

## INJUSTICE

*There is the possibility* that the order aborning, indistinct in today's violence of birth, will assure at least the opportunity of richer human potential to everyone.

## WORK-LEISURE

*There is the possibility* of seeing man's play not as unproductive escape from his vocation as worker, but an act of celebration of his vocation as man.

## AUTHORITARIANISMS

*There is the possibility* that a rejection of all superschemes, all oversimplified answers—religious, political, economic—may open the way to creativity in the roles of citizen, student, parent, and worker.

The revolution in *consciousness* may pale all predecessors known as revolutions.

# THE NEW MAN

The modes of sensitive, eyes-open, responsible participation in this world of the 60's are the focal points of the Laos House curriculum.

The event of the new man occurs when and where man's being and doing coincide, when what he is concurs with what he does. The new man loves himself, what he is doing, and those people about him.

The concern with the image of this man may be termed theological anthropology.

A part of the meaning of the symbol of the Incarnation is that in the event of this man all there is to know about God is shown.

We do not see *through* the Incarnation to God, we see real man *there*. To see essential man related to all reality is

all there is to know of God. To be this man *is* to love God.

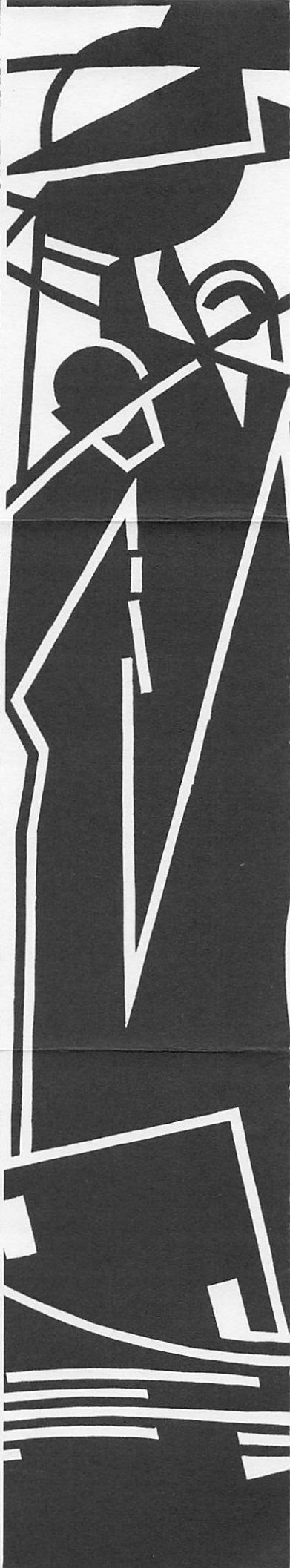
The chief temptations of the new moment are, first, for man to reduce what he sees, knows, feels, intends to manageable proportions. He is tempted to trim the messages his society sends him to fit his abilities. *He denies comprehensiveness.*

The second temptation is for man to give himself—but with reserve—to the life-enterprise. He stands back from it, evaluates it, waits for new data, finds the flaw. *He lacks the commitment of all the life he has.*

Comprehensiveness without commitment is cynicism. Commitment without comprehensiveness is fanaticism.

The curriculum of the Laos House and the program embodying it attempt to call persons today to the life in their midst.

MAN SCIENTIFIC MAN CULTURAL MAN ETHICAL MAN RELIGIOUS MAN CULTURAL MAN ETHICAL MAN RE





## CURRICULUM

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>MAN</b></p> <p>Every man awakens to awareness of his own selfhood already in the midst of life. It is from within that he must reflect, image, understand, decide. This section of the curriculum explores the mystery of being alive: the dynamic process of human life, the origin and power of religious symbols and languages, man's power, pain, freedom, finitude, time, space. Our life-shaping, life-giving responses to the questioning in life emerge out of deep, often unexamined, values and images. The way is cleared for discovery of and commitment to the self.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>MAN-IN-WORLD</b></p> <p>Being man involves everyone in a human community with language, signs, symbols, values, a body of knowledge, traditions, arts. We are formed and conditioned by the culture. To be a self of dignity is to raise the question of how man participates in shaping the world that shapes him. This section of the curriculum examines both the contemporary cultural forms and the process which continually transforms these. The way is cleared for a movement from a sense of fate toward a lively participation in what is and what shall be.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>MAN-AS-NEIGHBOR</b></p> <p>The primary events of human life always involve an-other. It is with other men—the neighbor—that everyman lives, both giving to and receiving from. The caring for and enriching of this relation in all dimensions is man's deepest concern and most urgent demand. Here the question of ethics and morality is properly addressed. This section of the curriculum focuses on an analysis of the relation which both holds and sustains while it releases. The way is cleared to explore the meaning of care for the world and the self as the lively tensions between social law and unique individuality, freedom and obedience, moral codes and moral acts, concern and nonchalance, passion and discipline are held.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>CORE COURSE I</b> Man: The Structure of Self-Being</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>CORE COURSE II</b> Man-in-World: The Process of Cultural-Being</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>CORE COURSE III</b> Man-as-Neighbor: The Relation of Moral-Being</p>
ADVANCED COURSES	ADVANCED COURSES	ADVANCED COURSES
READING COURSES	READING COURSES	READING COURSES

## PROGRAM PROSPECTUS

### THE LAOS HOUSE WEEK-END SEMINAR

The seminar is the basic educational unit of the Laos House. It embodies a unified teaching pattern of lectures, study, small group seminars, conversation, art forms, and movies. Lasting from Friday evening until Sunday afternoon, or an equivalent period of time, the Laos Seminar involves eighteen to twenty-five persons in an intensive quest to discover their ownmost questions in the light of today's world and to formulate for themselves the avenues of greatest possibility. Every part of the experience—from the food to the study materials—is planned to facilitate this quest.

Twelve to fifteen week-end seminars are held at the Laos House in Austin from fall through spring each year. The participants—both churchmen and non-churchmen, college students and non-college people—come primarily from the Southwest, but occasionally from other parts of the nation. No pre-requisites or advanced preparation are required for attendance. Seminars, meals, and lodging are provided in the Laos House. Core courses of the curriculum together with advanced and reading courses are offered over a year's time. The beginning course (Core Course I) is pre-requisite to the other offerings.

### THE YOUTH SEMINAR

Once or twice each year an opportunity is offered for interested senior high school youth to come together for a week-end seminar in Austin. A core course of the curriculum is offered. Problems peculiar to young persons in this age group—or intensified during this period of life—are looked at and possible ways of participating in this age of pressures and uncertainties beyond rebellion and blind conformity are explored.

### THE CLERGY COLLOQUY

The Ministers' Colloquy is a series of two two-day seminars for parish and campus clergy of all denominations attempting to wrestle with the edge-questions of today's theological dialogue and the implications of this lively conversation for the practical role and identity of the professional clergy of our day. The faculty of the Community is augmented in this enterprise by a faculty of outstanding guest lecturers. The two day sessions are offered on successive months. This is an effort to provide the man in the parish a brief, intense post-seminary study experience held in the practical context of his everyday task.

### THE DAYS OF DIALOGUE

The Day of Dialogue offers a small group of clergymen a day-long conversation at the Laos House focused on a question raised by a seminal book in theology or culture and the light it may shed on the shape of the gospel in today's secular world. The Day of Dialogue is open both to ministers who have participated in a Clergy Colloquy and those who have not.

### THE MOBILE SEMINAR

From time to time, as the demand arises, the week-end seminars are offered in some other cities than Austin, underwritten by interested sponsoring groups. Insofar as possible, conditions similar to the Laos House are duplicated for the seminars in these cities. In the past, mobile seminars have been offered in Oklahoma and California. Two faculty members conduct the mobile seminars.

### THE AREA SCHOOLS OF THEOLOGY AND CULTURE

Informal adult education courses are offered by faculty members in various cities of Texas and Oklahoma. The five-session courses are offered in weekly, bi-weekly, and monthly patterns. Groups of fifteen to twenty-five persons of all ages and backgrounds consider together such questions as the relationship of religious language to secular life, the Christian message and today's short story, selfhood in the organizational world, emerging understandings of family life, the city and human values. Advanced registration for these courses is required.

The Laos House faculty is composed of three theologically-trained teachers representing the Episcopal, American Baptist, and Methodist traditions. Left to right above they are William H. Smith, Robert R. Bryant, and James W. Wagener.



## WHAT IS A SEMINAR LIKE?

What impels thirty persons, individually and by couples, of wide range in age, vocation, economic and educational background, to travel considerable distance to spend a week-end with strangers? It might be understandable if their common cup of tea were the races, skiing, or a bridge tournament. But these came to explore together the meaning of life, and of faith, and of one's own existence. Furthermore, most came ready to let the commitments and beliefs of others threaten their own most cherished certainties—to hold up every past "I believe" to possible exposure as one's own private golden calf.

... One group, which has experimented for eleven years in the relation of church and theology to the world and culture, is the Austin (Texas) Faith-and-Life Community. Two weeks ago I attended one of its laymen's week-end seminars ...

... we began and ended the days with worship, and in between met each other as persons over and through dialogue based on questions directed by the leaders and presented by common reading, discussions based on movies and contemporary art, and by lectures (a misleading term for the intense outpouring which drew us into dynamic encounter with the ideas, the speaker and one another.)

The seminar's aim was "understanding the meaning of the Christian gospel for our lives in the twentieth century." The emphasis was not toward an individualistic appropriation of some gospel truth, but rather toward its possibilities as source and means of responsible involvement with others in the world. There was no explicit definition of that gospel handed out, or mutually agreed upon. The content for dialogue came from Biblical, theological and cultural sources, as well as from our own life experiences. In some ways it was like a pilgrimage with destination unknown ...

—A SEMINAR PARTICIPANT

The Christian Faith-and-Life Community is an independent ecumenical center chartered under the laws of the state of Texas. The Community is supported by voluntary gifts from interested individuals. All gifts are exempt for tax purposes.

For information about the Community or any of its programs, please write Christian Faith-and-Life Community, 1906 Rio Grande, Austin, Texas 78705.

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## letter to layman

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