



by james wagener

letter to laymen

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about this issue . . .

This past summer Community faculty member James Wagener and his family went to Europe and the British Isles to visit some of the lay centers there and to be American tourists. The trip was a long-cherished dream of the Wagens and the culmination of several years of planning and saving.

In response to many who have asked for some report of the trip, the bulk of this issue of Letter to Laymen carries Mr. Wagener's reflections. A report on the lay centers the Wagens visited is given on page 6.

Leaves from a European Notebook contains direct quotes from the diary of the trip. These are fragmented jottings made hurriedly at the end of the day. The elaboration on some of the subjects raised directly or indirectly by the trip demanded a leisure not available while traveling. Therefore, there is a real discrepancy in the styles of the notes and the reflections which follow.

The article makes no pretense at any kind of comprehensive understanding of the places and people visited. Seven weeks hardly gives one license to pontificate! It is rather a listing of reactions—usually sympathetic, sometimes naive, occasionally pertinent—of an American visitor abroad.

It should be remembered that the remarks are random. Some of them are sweepingly general and some are trivial. It is hoped that they will stimulate the reader's own reflection.



London. July 12, 1965
 Into Westminster Abbey out of the rain to attend Evensong. The amazingly well-proportioned interior belies the building's exterior. Handful of worshipers. Good choir, paid I am sure. Old Testament lesson from I Samuel. New Testament from Acts 15. The gray building is tranquil—but dank, dismal, relic-like. It is saddening, in a way, that this great architectural expression should be but one step from a museum, an artifact of a once-lively faith that expressed itself in the British culture. The flowering is over even if the stem remains.

To American eyes the secularization of life in Great Britain and on the continent seems in a later stage than in the United States. The American religious establishment has, in fact, woven itself more noticeably into the fabric of American life than the official state churches of Europe ever have. Everyday life there as I saw it was far freer from the vestiges of religiosity than in southwestern United States. This is, depending upon your point of view, either to be deplored or welcomed.

From my perspective, it is welcomed. It represents for this moment in history a willingness to let the world be the world. It is no longer possible—or desirable—to put cross and crown on the same level. They are not in the same frame of reference. They are not of the same order of listing. To juxtapose the two is like listing flour as of the same status with bread.

The church as a sociological phenomenon has had its day in Europe expressing itself in Westminster Abbeys and Notre Dames. And a great day it was! It has had its day in the United States expressing itself as a pious style of life. But faith is *not* manifesting itself today primarily in the form of Westminster Abbeys or in “religious” or “moralistic” virtues. It is presenting itself as the leaven in the secular lump of society which is unidentifiable in itself. Faith has to do with a dimension of *all* of life rather than with designated activities, places, concerns—*parts* of life. If we let nostalgia blind us to this turn of events, we cannot be true to what is.

This situation leaves many questions unanswered. The pious style of life could be *identified*. At least so far as externals go, you knew who had it and who did not. Westminster Abbey has substance: it can be seen and felt, it stays in the same place. Its beauty and uniqueness can be viewed by everyone who cares to look. The lump of yeast, however, hidden in the bread is *hidden* and has no distinct life once it leavens the other ingredients. Must not the self-understanding of the “cruciform” secular man (the new Christian) be arcane or hidden, as Bonhoeffer said? Or to put it another way, “Christian” as a religious label from the sociological point of view no longer has any meaning. “Christian” from the point of view of faith has only to do with a man’s self-imagery and world-imagery. It is a name for the shape of his perspective, *not* his religion or his style of life. It transcends both his religion and his style of life. So far as his participation in the symbols of his religion point him to—re-present to him—his self-imagery and world-imagery his religion participates in his faith and is good. So far as his style of life gives shape to the acting out of his destiny, making his perspective of self and world concrete and histor-

ical, to that extent it participates in his faith and is good.

But neither religion nor virtue is the prime mode of faith-ing in our time. The prime mode of faith expression is rather political in the broadest sense of that term. It has to do with the polis—the life and order of the world community. The “cruciform” secular man is bent today on making common cause *against* all those things, structures, movements, mind-sets, and powers which de-personalize and de-humanize life in the world community. He is bent on making common cause with all men *for* the forging of a new human civilization which overleaps the old walls and boundaries of race, nation, position—and religion.

Perhaps it is good that Westminster Abbey should become a museum and that the “good man” of American Main Street religiosity should find his place in the pages of yesterday along with his Puritan ancestors.

London. July 14
 Smooth-skinned youths in tight peg-legged slacks, built-up shoes, long wavy hair almost to the shoulders. Innocent-faced, dangling, serious-looking. The ruddy-cheeked look of childhood gives way to a pallor in English youth. Girl-companions with skirts high above the knees, hair straight and long, little or no make-up.

It is dangerous to generalize about any age group from random impressions and conversations, but the conviction is strong that youth every place is on the make. The object of their quest is different in different places, but the hunger is there and the external trappings of the crusade can be seen. In London the search seemed to be for a distinctive style in dress and appearance. By American standards (or French or German, for that matter) British clothes are uninspiring. To be sure, English tailoring still holds a high place in the realm of men’s clothing, but the appeal is largely for the middle-aged and reflects a proper conservatism. The “from-nowhere” look of tight pants, high-heeled boots, the binding short coat bizarrely trimmed, topped by a full head of hair is a long way from being staid. It is as unique as the electrically-amplified music and primitive dances which have been copied in the United States and other countries. The youthful “gentleman” has been radically re-designed and in a time of “me-tooism” this is not to be sneered at. There is a new kind of Lord Fauntleroy on the streets.

In Germany the youth crusade seemed to be for an ideology rather than a style. In that country World War II is a specter over the whole spiritual landscape. I was told in Berlin that the present generation of youth is trying to understand their fathers’ actions in the Nazi episode. “How,” they ask their elders, “could this have happened?” The answer is “You would not understand, you did not have to live through those days.” And the responding question, “How can I understand if you will not tell me?” This shroud of quiet around the Nazi days on the part of older men has created a break in history for their sons which has resulted in a smouldering and sometimes surly demand for roots, for ideology, for a less-fractured history. They are angry with the old ideological symbols: Kant, Wagner, Bach. But the new ones are not forthcoming. The ideological

healing has been slight even though the economic recovery of the country has been phenomenal.

There are, of course, many short-hand ways of "explaining" these phenomena—the old quest for identity, disenchantment with an adult world of nuclear war and Victorian ideology, the effort to fence off a youth sub-culture that is invulnerable to the adult phonies, and others. Beneath all these, and perhaps in conjunction with them, is the groping for a new way of ordering things, a fresh way to hang things together so that a less restricted life for all may be lived. It is, I am persuaded, more than rebellion although that is an element in it. The youth crusades of our century unlike the children's crusade of the 13th century do not seek to free the Holy Land but to forge a style and create new patterns of order.

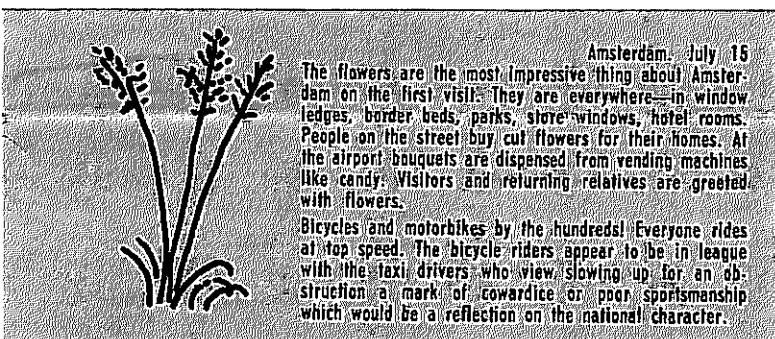
is it to say that in a technological world we can go back to the mystique of the medieval craftsman. It is to say that because of our own insensitivity and the glut of things, we do not have what we have in any satisfying way. An aesthetic of materialism is needed.

In connection with this I was impressed by the fact that in several countries there seemed to be a real vocational reconciliation within persons. Many people who performed services of one kind or another for us were, from all the clues you could read, at one with what they were doing. And many of them were doing things that in the United States would be considered low in status, jobs one puts up with until something better comes along. This is only an impression and there is no way to cite chapter and verse or give statistical evidence, but an example may illustrate.

At the Maria-Theresa Hotel in Innsbruck, Austria, we were served by a bevy of waiters. Various members of the group were obviously in different stages of their apprenticeship with one master in charge. These men—all of them so far as I could tell—had about them a concern for what they were doing, a skill that gave them pleasure, a presence to the here and now and these particular people, and flourish that came of basic pride rather than ostentation that one seldom finds even in good hotels in the United States. To be sure, the profession of the European waiter has a long and noble history. But even considering this, I marveled at the fact that there was about these men no apparent sense of separation from their task. What these people did was, of course, a million miles from "slinging hash" and "bussing dishes" (these very phrases mirror the demeaning of the tasks). They literally *mediated* the meal to their guests.

Many explanations can be given for this. Europe does not have the vocational mobility that is present in the United States. The spiritual restlessness of Americans that many times infects our work is either not present in our European counterparts or does not engage their work if it is.

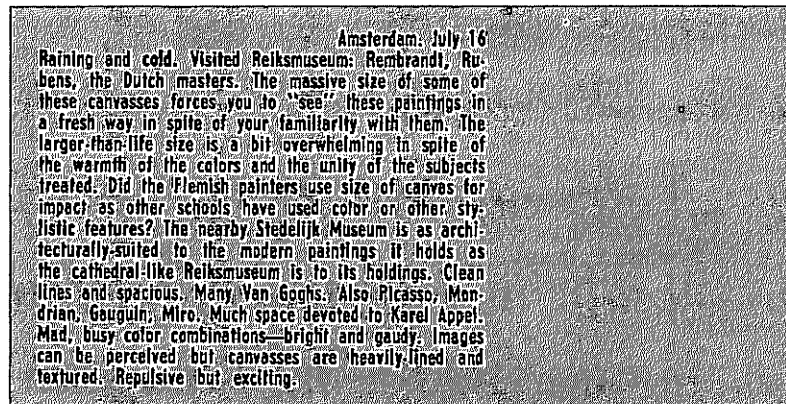
But beyond the truth of these is still the question for me of why so many lawyers, physicians, and bookkeepers in America are struggling in mid-life to find themselves vocationally, why engineers are going to seminary, and clergymen are becoming government employees. There is, as has been shouted over and over again, no realistic view of work for our time of technology when people must become less and less work-centered.



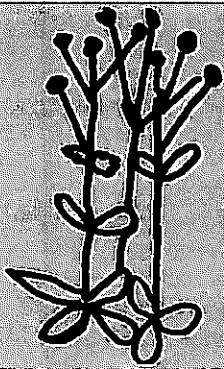
Amsterdam, July 15
The flowers are the most impressive thing about Amsterdam on the first visit. They are everywhere—in window ledges, border beds, parks, store windows, hotel rooms. People on the street buy cut flowers for their homes. At the airport bouquets are dispensed from vending machines like candy. Visitors and returning relatives are greeted with flowers.
Bicycles and motorbikes by the hundreds! Everyone rides at top speed. The bicycle riders appear to be in league with the taxi drivers who view slowing up for an obstruction a mark of cowardice or poor sportsmanship which would be a reflection on the national character.

The natural beauty gets through in Europe. The lush airline advertisements in American periodicals pushing European travel do not lie in their visual presentations. The grandeur of the Swiss and Italian Alps, the storybook quality of the Bavarian villages, the majesty of Rome, the glitter of Paris need no drum beaten for them.

Beyond the obvious, however, the concerns of the people themselves in some of the countries for the pleasure of the visual was refreshing. The absence of advertising and billboards on the German autobahn lets the countryside rest in peace. The Dutch penchant for cleanliness gives a patina to the objects and ornaments of everyday life that makes the people-and-their-things cohere. I don't think this is a romantic notion. To be possessed by our possessions in the crassest form is easily recognized as the idolatry it is. To be single-mindedly acquisitive of luxuries, gadgets, things or "culture" vulgarizes human life. But there are many ways to hold possessions beyond these extremes. One way is strictly functional: to keep them at-hand, in the closet as it were, until a need arises and we remember the thing to meet the need and out it comes. It is used and restored to its resting place. But there are subtle and important differences in the way the possessor relates to the possessed object. I once watched an old half-blind tailor go carefully over a coat I had brought him to alter to see if it was worth the task. His fingers read every seam in the garment and as they moved they seemed to impart something to the cloth and thread that had not been there before, or I had not seen before. His care and concern animated the object. His relationship to the coat can only be termed aesthetic. This is not to say one should go into a trance every time he plugs in the Mixmaster or makes use of modern plumbing. Nor



Amsterdam, July 16
Raining and cold. Visited Reiksmuseum: Rembrandt, Rubens, the Dutch masters. The massive size of some of these canvasses forces you to "see" these paintings in a fresh way in spite of your familiarity with them. The larger-than-life size is a bit overwhelming in spite of the warmth of the colors and the unity of the subjects treated. Did the Flemish painters use size of canvas for impact as other schools have used color or other stylistic features? The nearby Stedelijk Museum is as architecturally suited to the modern paintings it holds as the cathedral-like Reiksmuseum is to its holdings. Clean lines and spacious. Many Van Goghs. Also Picasso, Mondrian, Gauguin, Miro. Much space devoted to Karel Appel. Mad, busy color combinations—bright and gaudy. Images can be perceived but canvasses are heavily lined and textured. Repulsive but exciting.



Berlin, July 19
The bombed-out hulk of the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church dominates the Kurfürstendamm, the main street of West Berlin. After World War II a portion of the old church was left standing in its gutted state with its steeple clock operating. It is now flanked on either side by a new, modernistic bell tower and sanctuary. It is a reminder of the past which is not to be forgotten but one which few seem really able to deal with. There seems to be real disagreement about whether the old portion of the church should be left up at all because it reminded everyone of an ignominious period in Germany's history. Berlin is divided not only into East and West but also into past and present and both cleavages are great.

How does a nation deal with its immediate past? If economic recovery is a mark of healing West Berlin radiates health. Helped to its feet by American funds to provide a showplace to contrast with the Communist-controlled eastern zone of the city, West Berlin does not lack for goods or marks to purchase them with. The well-dressed people who promenade on the wide sidewalks of the "Ku'damm" have about them the air of people who are outdoing themselves. I was told that the overdressing might be explained by the fact that nobody wants to be reminded of the terrible period of deprivation and want prior to and shortly after the end of the war. Therefore it is tacitly considered bad taste to appear in less than your best.

Political ferment there, especially among college students and youth, is rich. The question of reunification holds high priority in this. Beyond this there is the concern with a unified Europe also. But there is no clear direction for this. DeGaulle is often mentioned as a towering figure but the direction he represents leads back to an old nationalism and this is not a live option. A united states of Europe in some form seems desirable to many but the notion does not have clear enough shape yet to get implemented. We saw cars with EU (Europe Unie) bumper stickers on them in the Netherlands, France, Germany, Italy, and Switzerland. At that time the forthcoming German elections did not seem to be taken with a great deal of seriousness by many because they considered both Brandt and Erhardt to be cut from the same cloth.

The wall between East and West Berlin and all it signifies is, to understate it, lived with but not accepted. Everywhere there are enigmas. The S-Bahn or elevated train is operated throughout both the East and West sectors of the city by the East Berlin government. Ticket takers and other personnel come over into the Western sector and operate the trains with all profits going to the East. The West Berliners avoid the S-Bahn as a kind of patriotic gesture.

While we were there the process of laying land mines in the no-man's-land adjacent to the wall was being carried out by the East Berlin government. At that time, in spite of a mammoth force estimated at greater than 40,000 East German police and soldiers guarding the wall, fifteen to twenty persons a week were managing to slip over into the Western Zone. Upon reaching age sixty-five East Berlin citizens are free to leave but few do it because their friends are in East Berlin and they would be left without a pension or other means of support since they can carry nothing across with them.

It is a misconception sometimes held by Americans to think that most East Berliners desire to leave. Even if their political sympathies lie elsewhere, the fact that their roots, their business or work, and their property is in East Berlin is reason enough for many to stay.

There is a quality of unreality that pervades West Berlin that is not hard to feel even on a short visit. The root of it is signified by the wall. The ominous and immovable presence of this artificial division does not go away. There is real doubt that it will any time soon. A genuine acceptance of this probability might allow for a more normal and routine life. There is a feeling that the people in West Berlin are trying too hard in everything they do, as if there is something to be proved or disproved in the frantic quest for fun in their night life, the hyperfastidiousness of their dress, and all the other manifestations of running away that affluence can provide. It is one thing to pretend a problem is not there, it is quite another to take it into oneself even if it has no solution. Many West Berliners appear to have chosen the former option.

The cultural and entertainment life of West Berlin, like everything else, bears the scars of war. The historic Friederick-Wilhelm University is located in East Berlin and the Free University was established for West Germany after World War II. Both the fine Dahlem Museum and the architecturally imaginative Berlin Zoo have slightly apologetic statements in their brochures recalling greater days when their exhibits were more extensive.

Two interesting forms have evolved there. One is the recovery of the serious radio play. In spite of successful television, some very good writers have turned to the radio play as the liveliest vehicle for their talents. Like books, which allow the imagination to create its own mental pictures, the radio play requires a different dimension of participation on the listener's part than the television drama does. This more active involvement, rightly enhanced, is capable of striking a very high level of dramatic encounter. Even more encouraging than the fact that these plays are being aired is their popularity and enthusiastic reception.

The second form—which is by no means limited to Germany—has been called the "epistemological movie." In a way it is aiming at something of the same thing as the radio play. In this genre the viewer's sense of perception is played with. For example, an actor begins to tie his tie, a few frames are cut from the film, and the next thing you see the knot is being slipped up tight against the collar. You supply the missing frames. This now-you-see-it, now-you-don't process lets the audience bring a higher degree of imagination and participation to bear than conventional editing allows.

The prevailing cinematic mode is comedy married to all sorts of visually exciting effects. *Help*, one of the Beatles' movies, is an English example of this type of motion picture.

The significance of the emergence of this drift is not easy to assess. It does seem, however, that although comedy, especially satire, has the capacity to probe our ways and spotlight the ludicrousness of

our poses and surface seriousness it usually can succeed only in giving us transcendence on our situations. Comedy that has as its aim something more than escape can give the near-sighted man another point of view which allows him to laugh at himself. We all need this in controlled doses. In a time of fanaticism people need to laugh at themselves. But for great numbers of us middle class people about the only thing we are fanatical about is combating fanaticism. We have transcendence—even on our transcendence. “Don’t sweat it” is not a corrective to unrealistic zeal, it is a suburban slogan. There are notable exceptions to this picture among all ages and classes, but playing it cool is a trend. Comedy and visual excitement in the movies may tickle our funny bone and pop our pretenses, blast our eyes open so that we have a fresh vision at least for a second, but it seldom points us any where. The theatre of the absurd is always covertly at least saying something is *not* absurd. Comedy says in one voice or another “we are all fools.” But the viewers do not know what the opposite of a fool (I don’t even know a good word for it) looks like today. In an era when this is clear, comedy can laugh at the fool in all of us and indirectly underline the possibility of being the non-fool.

The sensitive playwrights and movie-makers have the mandate to clarify the next steps in perception and feeling. Maybe there is nobody around with keen enough nose to smell the trail yet or maybe the way the trail goes demands more courage and ingenuity than anybody on the present scene has. But if literature degenerates into drawing room drama, albeit a very keen and sparkly comedy of manners, we lose a great deal of the force that could help make life humane and urbane.

In all the larger European cities and London the same major movies were being projected. *My Fair Lady* was everywhere (we saw it with German lines dubbed in) as was *The Knack*. The motion picture has become internationalized as a cultural form as science and technology have as an intellectual one.



On the Road July 29.

It has been surprising to me how much of one's attention can be eaten up with concern for places to stay and food to eat (we made few advance reservations to allow for a more flexible schedule). The feeling of being displaced persons is a new one for us. It comes strongest when we go to those places and do those things which do not exactly square with what is expected of tourists. We spent several days in Weilheim, Germany, a small village which supposedly has nothing to attract the foreign tourist. Buying bread and cheese in the markets when we did not know the language or sitting in the park watching the people gave us a little taste of the cultural shock persons who are transplanted to another country and find themselves a shockingly-small minority must feel. The children are the first to bridge the gap. The teen-age daughter of the innkeeper in whose home we stayed managed through her broken English and our broken German to invite LuAnn and Laurie to tea the second afternoon we were there. Once the ice was broken, our children and the children of the family in Stuttgart we visited played together like old school chums, each chattering delightedly in his own language and neither understanding what the other was saying.

Florence. August 5

Florence is Michelangelo. To walk around the space displaced by the David and see the depth of it is a high experience. But to me the balance and perfection achieved in the David is not the jolt the Four Unfinished Captives (located in the Accademia with the David) are. The un-

finished state of these giants gives the impression of tortured figures writhing out of captivity in the stone into full and free form before your eyes. I have never seen sculpture with this much movement in it before.

Rome. August 11

Saw Constantine Arch commemorating Constantine's declaration granting religious toleration to the Christians. Another arch needs to be constructed today marking the end of this era of Christendom—a more subtle end than the former period, but just as sure. The twentieth century has seen the return of pluralism with the rise of technology and the city—and the end of a sixteen century epoch.

Past cultures are typified by phrases which probably do serious injustice to the diversity of life in them. The statesmanship and military prowess of the Romans, the free thinking and sometimes anarchic independence of the French, the Teuton intellect coupled with a romantic nationalism are examples. No doubt there were Romans who objected to being soldiers, there are Frenchmen who are other-directed and not individualists. Surely there are muddle-headed Germans and those who couldn't care less for blood and soil. But the French still seem to hold the Revolution as the touchstone for their impulses. And the overshadowing event in the modern German consciousness is World War II. The American spirit has been molded by the Civil War and the Depression of the 30's.

Beyond all these half-true national stereotypes and their shaping events is there a European character? Can this generalization be made, and if it can is there an equivalent American character? How do they compare?

The life dynamic of Western man seems to involve two basic elements: contemplation and action. These are embodied in the thinker and the doer, the intellectual and the man of affairs. Neither of the types exists in a pure state without some element of the other also present. In the past the intellectual role has been pasted on the European. The activist role has predominated in the American.

If all this seems rather bookish and off the ground, consider the situation in everyday life. Most of us have noticed how when you are wrestling with a problem in your mind and all the possibilities have been run down mentally and none seems appropriate or complete and you get weary of the whole matter and turn and *do* something which may have no connection with the issues you are mulling, not only are you refreshed by the change but oftentimes the issues upon your reconsideration of them are transformed. This rather trite observation is nothing new. The truth of it has been used as a reason for persons whose work is sedentary breaking it up with periods of exercise and vice versa for the sake of keeping a creative edge on what one is doing. The illustration also shows, however, how complete the separation between thinking and doing is in our conceptual scheme of things.

A new synthesis of thought and action is being enunciated in Europe, and to a certain extent, in the United States. It can be oversimplified in some such fashion as this. That aspect of existential thought which holds that the only life one has is at the point of the irrational leap into the surd has been extended

about as far as it will go. It has been pushed in two directions.

From one standpoint, it has been extended to include not just the individual but also society and civilization. The latter day interpreters of Freud and such literary figures as Genet and William Burroughs have with variations expounded the theme of what-the-hellism. In this world things are not solved, even provisionally, they can only be experienced. Society becomes the villain and the only possibility of living is to step up one's personal life while cutting off involvement with society. Whatever intensifies experience—drugs, crime, sexual experimentation—is to be integrated into the cool personal world of social detachment. This direction has no future.

In the other direction, and a more hopeful one, the leap as life position has been extended through the scientific understanding of reality as process (after Einstein and Whitehead). This point of view affirms the fact that life is the leap of commitment but the *probability* of the outcome of the leap is taken very seriously. The question is not "what the hell?" but "what's next?" What is emerging and how is it to be shaped? What new factors should be entered into the equation? And the factors are fully known only in the action of adding them.

The new "intellectual-activist" knows that truth is known only in historical action and that action without reflection-while-acting is a delusion. One cannot know what "should be" in any final way without being inside the shaping process which itself constantly redefines what should be. Analysis of the past for the sake of "understanding" why a person acts as he does or history is where it is is futile unless it in some way illuminates the next step of action. The "intellectual-activist" has his eye focused on the future. He knows that ideas cannot be separated from history, that rationality is action oriented to the next emerging step, that action is the commitment of what one sees to concretion. It is a socially optimistic point of view based on a conviction that the world is a big organism. This allows for a historical meaning that is more than the internalized meaning for the isolated self.

The scientific revolution, perhaps the only truly *international* revolution, may become the touchstone for a new international character giving to people living their lives in the twentieth century the key

for their consciousness which the French Revolution, World War II, the Civil War, and the great Depression of the 30's provided for the consciousness of the Frenchman, the German, and the American.

The leading impression which came to me out of the whole experience of being in Europe this summer is the notion that, in spite of all the forces which are splintering and fragmenting life today, there are urges toward some new brand of unity. Whatever form this unification of life takes, it will include rich diversity and built-in change and development. It will not supplant nationalism but will incorporate it. It will dramatize and conserve the common humanity of life on this planet and the handling of power in such a way that change does not become cancerous and conservation does not stagnate. The unity will serve human life rather than having human life serve it.

In spite of the problems present in Europe, there is a real climate of hope and optimism. From what I could learn there has been discernible movement from a feeling of despair and impotence to a regained confidence in the present and the future. It is not a naive or utopian confidence rising out of any kind of mechanistic picture of progress or static goals, but rather the deep confidence that where a wide enough perspective is gained on any issue, the issue can be *provisionally* dealt with. Tomorrow will present new and thorny issues that evolve out of today's decisiveness, but they too can be handled provisionally. And so the process goes.

The unity can be sensed politically in the flickering desire for a united states of Europe. It can be sensed intellectually in the effort to bring thinking and doing together through some joining of existentialism and scientific prediction. The unity of thinking and feeling in the arts is more impoverished. The unity of thinking and style can be perceived especially in the folkways of youth.

The great gift of technology is binging the blessing of affluence to Europe as it will, barring the catastrophe of a global war, to all the nations of the world. Affluence is neither good nor bad in itself. For too long those of us with a Puritan heritage have thought of it as a mixed blessing fraught with more dangers than possibilities. We must learn to think otherwise. Affluence simply presents a different set of demands than poverty does. These demands can be and, hopefully, will be met.

The Lay Centers

Three lay centers were chosen for visits because of the nature of their work and concerns and their locations. A brief visit was paid to the Gossner Mission in West Berlin and more extensive conversations were held with the faculties and representatives at the Evangelical Academy at Tutzing near Munich and at the Roman Catholic center, Pro Civitate Christiana, in Assisi, Italy.

The Gossner Mission

The Gossner Mission has its headquarters in a large brownish building on Handjerystrasse in West Berlin. A good portion of the main street floor houses a book store operated

by the mission with a great number of inexpensive paperbacks as well as hardbound books for sale.

My host, Dr. Christian Berg, a rotund, baldish pastor, informed me that the Gossner Mission was founded 150 years ago by a de-frocked Roman Catholic priest-turned Lutheran pastor. Throughout its history the institution has been concerned with mission in an ever-broadening sense of that word. Long before "relevance" became such a popular word in church circles the Gossner ministers and laymen were attempting to get the Christian gospel and the everyday concerns of people closer together. The biggest concern at home today, I was informed, was with the needs and life of the church in East Berlin.

"Christian witness is highly relevant in East Berlin!" Dr. Berg said bombastically. Westerners, and especially Americans, who are not always the best informed people, have a tendency either to pity churchmen who find themselves

in a partially or totally totalitarian situation, or to write the church off as dead. If the church could not exist in a totalitarian setting much of early Christianity would have been an impossibility. A semi-hostile environment often produces a flexibility in forms and a creativity in expression that a more-friendly setting might never elicit from the people who call themselves Christian.

The concern of the Gossner mission extends far beyond East Germany however. The Reverend Mr. C. B. Aind, vice-president of the Gossner Evangelical Lutheran Church in Rampur, India, was a guest of Dr. Berg at the time of my visit. Gossner missionaries are in India as well as a number of other distant countries. Mr. Aind asked a rhetorical question: "India is rich in religions. Why send Christian missionaries to that country? Because the people are poor in spirit." Before we could pursue the meaning of this statement, Dr. Berg swept us on with the aphorism that the East teaches materialism, the West practices it.

He made a memorable comparison. "The German Church is at the evening of its life. At 6:00 P.M. it is still very light in Berlin but you already know the end of the day is coming. The American Church is in the afternoon. Let us hope the young churches of India and Asia are in the morning."

In analyzing the different moments for the church and its strategy for dealing with these, Dr. Berg contended that the temptation for the German Church was for it to become a ward of the state. The residue of guilt in the German consciousness was, he said, continually prompting the government to offer the church this piece of property or that building for its use. This sometimes tempted congregations to be irresponsible in their use of a privileged position.

The American temptation as he had observed it on trips to the United States was for the church to become the Sunday bleaser of weekday life. It either subtly or openly became a substitute for individual responsibility in spiritual and moral matters. The gospel simply is not allowed to inform the way of life.

What of Christendom's future? My informant's response to this question was that the Christian religion would without doubt decrease numerically. But this purge would purify what was left. "The Christian's task, simply and plainly, is to pronounce the healing word for sick men. The increase or decrease of congregations is not in our hands and we should not worry about it."

The Tutzing Academy

The Evangelical Academy in the village of Tutzing is housed in a spacious Bavarian castle overlooking beautiful grounds and a picturesque lake. The Academy hosts a great many people, both churchmen and non-churchmen, from all walks of life and from all over Germany for many week-end and short-term seminars and conferences. Thirty-three events were listed on the calendar from April through November. The program is richly varied and the conferences cover a broad spectrum of topics. The seven permanent staff members are all professionally trained in theology or a discipline such as political science, sociology, or economics. Together they plan and administer the conferences. Most of the occasions are planned around outstanding lecturers who have not only insights but also convictions about their subject.

One of my hosts, Herr Christian Klipstein, a sociologist, told me that one of their major concerns in planning was to bring leaders of the highest caliber possible as guest lecturers to the conferences. As a result of this concern the Tutzing Academy has gained a notable reputation in Germany for intellectual and social pioneering. Whenever a meeting on education, for example, is held at the Academy wide newspaper, radio, and television coverage is given to the event because these media are persuaded that something pertinent on the subject will be said in the course of the conference.

A typical conference begins on Friday evening. The heart of the occasion is the lecture in the discussion room. This room is a very modern circular building designed something like a small indoor amphitheater. At the lowest level is a lectern with a circle of upholstered seats radiating out from it. There are three circular levels of chairs above the lectern level designed so that 70 to 110 persons may be seated com-

fortably in such a way that every face may be seen and no one is very far from the speaker. The rich blue carpeting and the murals give the room warmth and visual interest.

Following the lecture a formal discussion is conducted in this room. The speaker is questioned and the problems he has raised are sharpened. The next phase of the discussion is carried on in a large upstairs room with a bar at either end. Here, over drinks, smaller groups gather with the assigned faculty members to push further on the matters under consideration. Following this all who wish are invited to worship in the chapel. The worship, however, is optional and the individual makes the choice whether he will participate or not. The park-like grounds provide the setting for walks which allow the participants to cool off after the heated discussions.

Some of the conference subjects will illustrate the concerns: "South Europe: how to get to know strange countries," "Church Questions of the Present Time," "The End of the Religious Age?—The Voice of Dietrich Bonhoeffer," "Individualism as a New Religion, The Lone Man and the Community" (for pupils of the gymnasium), "Practical Issues for Young Parents," seminar for 'peace corps' people, a week-end for Sunday painters, a seminar for invited officers of the German army, "The Education of the Human Race" (for professors, lecturers, and those preparing to teach), information meeting on Red China, examples of famous female life (for women), and a week-end for police officers.

According to Herr Klipstein the genius of Tutzing is that there people get to speak and listen across the fences that separate them as group members.

Pro Civitate Christiana

The Pro Civitate Christiana is a Roman Catholic lay association located in Assissi which carries out its apostolate throughout Italy. Its target is the Italian intellectual who must be addressed through different forms than the church has traditionally concerned itself with. The association's statement of purpose has as its major premise the belief that Jesus Christ provides the unique basis of true civilization. It is especially concerned for "those environments farthest removed from the faith."

About 90 to 100 persons compose the Association. A large majority of them are laymen of both sexes. These persons, called Volunteers, agree to abstain from matrimony, they do not exercise any profession, they hold degrees from a university faculty and live on the premises of the Association in the discipline of an apostolic militia. There are also friends of the Association who are called Radials who live in their own cities and carry out their apostolate individually or collectively.

The specific activities of the Association are varied. It sponsors congresses for university professors, journalists, writers, motion picture actors, artists, and musicians at which cultural issues and their bearing on the life of faith are discussed. Works of art by some of the more gifted painters and sculptors are commissioned by the Association. The Association organizes competitions and art exhibitions. Interested artists or writers are invited to work in residence at the Assissi center of the Association called the Christian Citadel, a combination of buildings and gardens which house the offices, libraries and galleries of Pro Civitate Christiana. These buildings surround a little church in which the liturgies are celebrated daily.

An important aspect of Civitate's witness is what they term hospitality or cordiality. Any person of whatever faith or background who is struggling with the life issues of our time or who is looking for a quiet place to think through his own life is welcomed within the Citadel. This is the modern equivalent of the hospitality offered pilgrims by the ancient abbeys.

It was made very clear to me during the days we were at the Citadel that this movement is dominated by the laity and not the clergy. In the polity of the organization and in actual practice the directors are the lay volunteers who guide the activities of the Association "with the assistance of the priests."

In addition to their work in Assissi the Volunteers hold meetings in industrial plants in some of the cities of Italy in which both management and employees sit down to talk

over their points of view and commonly participate in a course on the catechism. A Congress for youth attending universities is held each year on a theme relevant to that group.

One of the more interesting endeavors at the Citadel is the establishment of a complex of galleries-library-archives called the Christian observatory. In a beautiful modern building there is an art gallery with a permanent collection of "Christian art" and various other exhibits of paintings, sculpture, and lithographs. The gallery also contains an iconographical documentation composed of thousands of photographs of "Christian works of art" from the early centuries to the present day. The library of 35,000 volumes contains

a detailed indexing system which attempts to give notes and comments on every reference to Jesus Christ from ancient manuscripts to the most recent publications. A collection of recordings and music and a library of films round out the archives.

The Association also has a publishing venture. *Rocca* is a fortnightly review published in Assisi which comments on Italian life today and relates new experiments in the apostolate. Editions of books on various subjects related to history, dogma, and the life of the church which members feel are especially relevant are published and distributed by the Association.



STAFF NOTES

Youth Seminar Re-Set

The beginning high school seminar originally scheduled for January was re-scheduled for the week-end of February 18-20 at the Laos House. This occasion is intended for youth in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades of high school. The curriculum is composed of the basic materials of Core Course I and a modern short story. The conversation topics bear directly on teen life today. Other features include some examples of teen music, a folk singer Friday evening, and a dance Saturday evening.

Spring Dates To Remember

Core Course I Beginning Seminar	February 25-27
Day of Dialogue for Clergy	March 8-9
Advanced Youth Seminar	March 25-27
Core Course I Beginning Seminar	April 15-17
Advanced Seminar	May 13-15
Spring Board Meeting	May 20-21

Film Festivals Scheduled

A new program form will be tried experimentally this spring. Three full-length films have been chosen for viewing, each of which points up an issue of importance to life today. Each movie will be discussed in a seminar. Consideration will also be given to the relationship of the movies to each other. A context for each picture will be set by the leader and an article relating art to faith will be studied. Usually the Festival will extend from Friday evening through Saturday evening.

Festivals have been arranged for Oklahoma City on March 11 and 12 and for Midland on March 18 and 19.

Area Schools Begin

Area Schools of Theology and Culture either have begun or will begin shortly in Dallas, Fort Worth, San Antonio, and Corpus Christi. Dates for Dallas and Fort Worth are February 21, March 21, April 18, and May 16.

Dates for San Antonio and Corpus Christi are March 1, March 29, April 26, and May 24.

letter to laymen

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letter to laymen

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

THE CRISIS IN EDUCATION

by hannah arendt

I

THE LOSS OF AUTHORITY

THE CHILD IN THE FAMILY IN THE WORLD

A crisis in education would at any time give rise to serious concern even if it did not reflect, as in the present instance it does, a more general crisis and instability in modern society. For education belongs among the most elementary and necessary activities of human society, which never remains as it is but continuously renews itself through birth, through the arrival of new human beings. These newcomers, moreover, are not finished but in a state of becoming. Thus the child, the subject of education, has for the educator a double aspect: he is new in a world that is strange to him and he is in process of becoming, he is a new human being and he is a becoming human being. This double aspect is by no means self-evident and it does not apply to the animal forms of life; it corresponds to a double relationship, the relationship to the world on the one hand and to life on the other. The child shares the state of becoming with all living things; in respect to life and its development the child is a human being in process of becoming just as a kitten is a cat in process of becoming. But the child is new only to a world that was there before him, that will continue after his death, and in which he is to spend his life. If the child were not a newcomer in this human world but simply a not yet finished living creature, education would be just a function of life and would

APRIL, 1966

It is as though
parents daily said:
"In this world even we are
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We are innocent, we wash our
hands of you."

need to consist in nothing save that concern for the sustenance of life and that training and practice in living that all animals assume in respect to their young.

Human parents, however, have not only summoned their children into life through conception and birth, they have simultaneously introduced them into a world. In education they assume responsibility for both, for the life and development of the child and for the continuance of the world. These two responsibilities do not, by any means, coincide, they may indeed come into conflict with each other. The responsibility for the development of the child is in a certain sense a responsibility against the world: the child requires special protection and care so that nothing destructive may happen to him from the world. But the world, too, needs protection to keep it from being overrun and destroyed by the onslaught of the new that bursts upon it with each new generation.

Because the child must be protected against the world, his traditional place is in the family which daily welcomes him back from the outside world into the security of private life within four walls. These four walls, within which people's private family life is lived, constitute a shield against the world and specifically against the public aspect of the world. They enclose a secure place, without which no living thing can thrive. This holds good not only for the life of childhood but for human life in general. Wherever the latter is consistently exposed to the world without the protection of privacy and security its vital quality is destroyed. In the public world, common to all, persons count and so does work, that

is, the work of our hands that each of us contributes to our common world; but life qua life does not matter there. The world cannot be regardful of it, and it has to be hidden and protected from the world.

Everything that lives, not vegetative life alone, emerges from darkness and, however strong its natural tendency to thrust itself into the light, it nevertheless needs the security of darkness to grow at all. This may indeed be the reason why children of famous parents so often turn out badly. Fame penetrates the four walls, invades their private space, bringing with it, especially in present-day conditions, the merciless glare of the public realm, floods everything in the private lives of those concerned, so that the children no longer have a place of security where they can grow. **But exactly the same destruction of the real living space occurs wherever the attempt is made to turn the children themselves into a kind of world.** Among the children there then arises public life of a sort and, quite apart from the fact that it is not a real one and that the whole attempt is a sort of fraud, the damaging fact remains that children—that is, human beings in process of becoming but not yet complete—are thereby forced to expose themselves to the light of a public existence.

That modern education, insofar as it attempts to establish a world of children, destroys the necessary conditions for vital development and growth seems obvious. But that such harm to the developing child should be the result of modern education strikes one as strange indeed, for this education maintained that its exclusive aim was to serve the child and rebelled against the methods of the past because these had not sufficiently taken into account the child's inner nature and his needs. "The Century of the Child," as you will recall, was going to emancipate the child and free him from the standards derived from the adult world. Then how could it happen that the most elementary conditions of life necessary for the growth and development of the child were overlooked or simply not recognized? How could it happen that the child was exposed to what more than anything else characterized the adult world, its public aspect, after the decision had just been reached that the mistake in all past education had been to see the child as nothing but an undersized grownup?

THE BONDAGE OF EMANCIPATION

The reason for this strange state of affairs has nothing directly to do with education; it is rather to be found in the judgments and prejudices about the nature of private and public life and their relation to each other which have been characteristic of modern society since the beginning of modern times and which educators, when they finally began, relatively late, to modernize education, accepted as self-evident assumptions without being aware of the consequences they must necessarily have for the life of the child. It is the peculiarity of modern society, and by no means a matter of course, that it regards life, that is, the earthly life of the individual as well as the family, as the highest good; and for this reason, in contrast to all previous centuries, emancipated this life and all the activities that have to do

with its preservation and enrichment from the concealment of privacy and exposed them to the light of the public world. This is the real meaning of the emancipation of workers and women, not as persons, to be sure, but insofar as they fulfill a necessary function in the life process of society.

The last to be affected by this process of emancipation were the children, and the very thing that had meant a true liberation for the workers and the women—because they were not only workers and women but persons as well, who therefore had a claim on the public world, that is a right to see and be seen in it, to speak and be heard—was an abandonment and betrayal in the case of the children, who are still at the stage where the simple fact of life and growth outweighs the factor of personality. The more completely modern society discards the distinction between what is private and what is public, between what can only thrive in concealment and what needs to be shown to all in the full light of the public world, the more, that is, **they introduce between the private and the public a social sphere in which the private is made public and vice versa, the harder they make it for their children, who by nature require the security of concealment in order to mature undisturbed.**

However serious these infringements of the conditions for vital growth may be, it is certain that they were entirely unintentional; the central aim of all modern educational efforts has been the welfare of the child, a fact that is, of course, no less true even if the efforts made have not always succeeded in promoting the child's welfare in the way that was hoped. The situation is entirely different in the sphere of educational tasks no longer directed toward the child but toward the young person, the newcomer and stranger, who has been born into an already existing world which he does not know. These tasks are primarily, but not exclusively, the responsibility of the schools; they have to do with teaching and learning; failure in this field is the most urgent problem in America today. What lies at the bottom of it?

Normally the child is first introduced to the world in school. Now school is by no means the world and must not pretend to be; it is, rather, **the institution that we interpose between the private domain of home and the world in order to make the transition from the family to the world possible at all.** Attendance there is not required by the family but by the state, that is by the public world, and so in relation to the child school in a sense represents the world, although it is not yet actually the world. At this stage of education adults, to be sure, once more assume a responsibility for the child, but by now it is not so much responsibility for the welfare of a growing thing as for what we generally call the free development of characteristic qualities and talents. This, from the general and essential point of view, is the uniqueness that distinguishes every human being from every other, the quality by virtue of which he is not only a stranger in the world but something that has never been here before.

Insofar as the child is not yet acquainted with the world he must be gradually introduced to it;

whole) to consider the past qua past as a model, ancestors, in every instance, as guiding examples for their descendants, to believe that all greatness lies in what has been, and therefore that the most fitting human age is old age, the man grown old, who, because he is already almost an ancestor, may serve as a model for the living. All this stands in contradiction not only to our world and to the modern age from the Renaissance on, but, for example, to the Greek attitude toward life as well. When Goethe said that growing old is "the gradual withdrawal from the world of appearances," his was a comment made in the spirit of the Greeks, for whom being and appearing coincide. The Roman attitude would have been that precisely in growing old and slowly disappearing from the community of mortals man reaches his most characteristic form of being, even though, in respect to the world of appearances, he is in the process of disappearing; in any case he then approaches for the first time the existence in which he can begin to be an authority for others.

With the undisturbed background of such a tradition, in which education has a political function (and this was a unique case), it is in fact comparatively easy to do the right thing in matters of education without even pausing to consider what one is really doing, so completely is the specific ethos of the educational principle in accord with the basic ethical and moral convictions of society at large. Today, however, we are no longer in that position; and it makes little sense to act as though we still were and had only, as it were, accidentally strayed from the right path and were free at any moment to find our way back to it. This means that **wherever the crisis has occurred in the modern world, one cannot simply go on nor yet simply turn back.** Such a reversal will never bring us anywhere except to the same situation out of which the crisis has just arisen. The return would simply be a repeat performance—although perhaps different in form, since there are no limits to the possibilities of nonsense and capricious notions that can be decked out as the last word in science. On the other hand, simple, unreflective perseverance, whether it be pressing forward in the crisis or adhering to the routine that blandly believes the crisis will not engulf its particular sphere of life, can only, because it surrenders to the course of time, lead to ruin; it can only, to be more precise, increase that estrangement from the world by which we are already threatened on all sides. Consideration of the principles of education must take into account this process of estrangement from the world; it can even admit that we are here presumably confronted by an automatic process, provided only that it does not forget that it lies within the power of human thought and action to interrupt and arrest such a process.

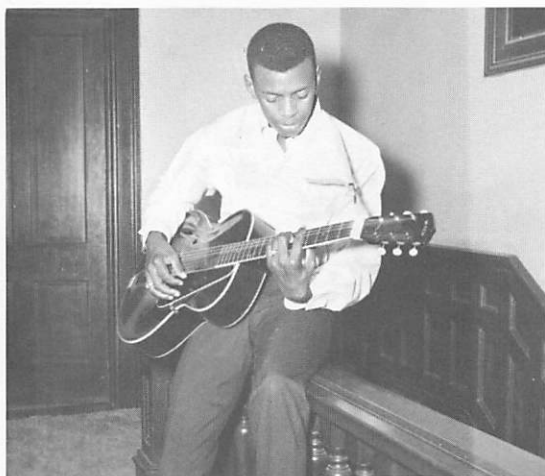
TODAY'S DILEMMA: SEPARATING THE MEN FROM THE BOYS

The problem of education in the modern world lies in the fact that by its very nature it **cannot forego either authority or tradition, and yet must proceed in a world that is neither structured by authority nor held together by tradition.** That means, however, that not just teachers and educators, but all of us,



insofar as we live in one world together with our children and with young people, must take a radically different attitude toward them than we do toward one another. We must decisively divorce the realm of education from the others, most of all from the realm of public, political life, in order to derive from it alone a concept of authority and an attitude toward the past which are appropriate to it but have no general validity and must not claim a general validity in the world of grownups. In practice the first consequence of this would be **a clear line drawn between children and adults;** no attempt would be made to educate adults or to treat children as though they were adults. Where this line falls in each instance cannot be determined by a general rule; it changes often, in respect to age, from country to country, from one civilization to another, and also from individual to individual. Moreover, in our civilization we must be aware that professional training in universities or technical schools, though it always has something to do with education, is nevertheless in itself a kind of specialization. It no longer aims to introduce the young person to the world as a whole, but rather to a particular, limited segment of it. **One cannot educate without at the same time teaching;** an education without learning is empty and therefore degenerates with great ease into moral-emotional rhetoric. **But one can quite easily teach without educating,** and one can go on learning to the end of one's days without for that reason becoming educated. All these are particulars, however, that must really be left to the experts and the pedagogues.

What concerns us all and cannot therefore be turned over to the special science of pedagogy is the relation between grownups and children in general or, putting it in even more general and exact terms, our attitude toward the fact of nativity: the fact that we have all come into the world by being born and that this world is constantly renewed through birth. **Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it from that ruin, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and young, would be inevitable.** And education, too, is where we decide **whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and leave them to their own devices, nor to strike from their hands their chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world.**



ESTRANGEMENT FROM THE WORLD

This attitude has, of course, nothing to do with that revolutionary desire for a new order in the world—**Novus Ordo Seclorum**—which once animated America; it is rather a symptom of that modern estrangement from the world which can be seen everywhere but which presents itself in especially radical and desparate form under the conditions of a mass society. It is true that modern educational experiments, not in America alone, have struck very revolutionary poses, and this has, to a certain degree, increased the difficulty of clearly recognizing the situation, and caused a certain degree of confusion in the discussion of the problem; but in contradiction to all such behavior stands the unquestionable fact that so long as America was really animated by that spirit she never dreamed of initiating the new order with education but, on the contrary, remained conservative in educational matters.

To avoid misunderstanding: it seems to me that conservatism, in the sense of conservation, is of the essence of the educational process, whose task is always to cherish and protect something—the child against the world, the world against the child, the new against the old, the old against the new. Even the comprehensive responsibility for the world that is thereby assumed implies, of course, a conservative attitude. But this, it seems to me, holds good only for the realm of education, or rather for the relations between grownups and children, and not for the realm of politics, where we act among and with adults and equals. In politics this conservative attitude—which accepts the world as it is, striving only to preserve the status quo—can only lead to destruction, because the world, in gross and in detail, is irrevocably delivered up to the ruin of time unless human beings are determined to intervene, to alter, to create what is new. Hamlet's words, "The time is out of joint. O cursed spite that ever I was born to set it right," are more or less true for every new generation, although since the beginning of our century they have perhaps acquired a more persuasive validity than before.

Basically we are always educating for a world that is or is becoming out of joint, for this is the basic human situation, in which the world is created by mortal hands to serve mortals for a limited time as home. Because the world is made by mortals it

wears out; and because it continuously changes its inhabitants it runs the risk of becoming as mortal as they. To preserve the world against the mortality of its creators and inhabitants it must be constantly set right anew. The problem is simply to educate in such a way that a setting right remains actually possible, even though it can, of course, never be assured. Our hope always hangs on the new which every generation brings; but precisely because we can base our hope only on this, we destroy everything if we so try to control the new that we, the old, can dictate how it will look. Exactly for the sake of what is new and revolutionary in every child, education must be conservative; it must preserve this newness and introduce it as a new thing into an old world, which, however revolutionary its actions may be, is always, from the standpoint of the next generation, superannuated and close to destruction.

II

THE LOSS OF TRADITION

Now the real difficulty in modern education lies in the fact that despite all the fashionable talk about a new conservatism, even that minimum of conservation and the conserving attitude without which education is simply not possible is in our time extraordinarily hard to provide. There are very good reasons for this. The crisis of authority in education is most closely connected with the crisis of tradition, that is with the crisis in our attitude toward the realm of the past. This aspect of the modern crisis is especially hard for the educator to bear, because it is his task to mediate between the old and the new and he must therefore possess a clearly defined regard for the past. Through long centuries, i. e., throughout the combined period of Roman-Christian civilization, there was no need for him to become aware of this special quality in himself because a clearly defined regard for the past was an essential part of the Roman frame of mind, and this was not altered or ended by Christianity, but simply shifted onto different foundations.

ROMAN AND GREEK ATTITUDES

It was of the essence of the Roman attitude (although this was by no means true of every civilization or even of the western tradition taken as a



insofar as he is new, care must be taken that this new thing comes to fruition in relation to the world as it is. In any case, however, the educators here stand in relation to the young as representatives of a world for which they must assume responsibility although they themselves did not make it, and even though they may, secretly or openly, wish it were other than it is. This responsibility is not arbitrarily imposed upon educators; it is implicit in the fact that the young are introduced by adults into a continuously changing world. Anyone who refuses to assume joint responsibility for the world should not have children and must not be allowed to take part in educating them.

RESPONSIBILITY GIVES AUTHORITY

In education this responsibility for the world takes the form of authority. The authority of the educator and the qualifications of the teacher are not the same thing. Although a measure of qualification is indispensable for authority, the highest possible qualification can never by itself beget authority. **The teacher's qualification consists in knowing the world and being able to instruct others about it, but his authority rests on his assumption of responsibility for that world.** Vis-a-vis the child it is as though he were a representative of the parents, pointing out the details and saying to the child: This is our world.

Now we all know how things stand today in respect to authority. Whatever one's attitude toward this problem may be, it is obvious that in public and political life authority either plays no role at all—for the violence and terror exercised by the totalitarian countries has, of course, nothing to do with authority—or at most plays a highly contested role. This, however, simply means, in essence, that **people do not wish to require of anyone or to entrust to anyone the assumption of responsibility for everything else**, for wherever true authority existed it was joined with responsibility for the course of things in the world. If we remove authority from political and public life, it may mean that from now on an equal responsibility for the course of the world is to be required of everyone. But it may also mean that the claims of the world and the requirements of order in it are being consciously or unconsciously repudiated, all responsibility for the world is being rejected—the responsibility for giving orders no less than for obeying them. There is no doubt that in the modern loss of authority both intentions play a part and have often been simultaneously and inextricably at work together.

In education, on the contrary, there can be no such ambiguity in regard to the present-day loss of authority. Children cannot throw off educational authority, for that would mean they were playing the role of the oppressed—although even this absurdity of treating children as an oppressed minority in need of liberation has actually been tried out in modern educational practice. **Authority has been discarded by the adults**, and this can mean only one thing: that the adults refuse to assume responsibility for the world into which they have brought the children.

And yet there is of course a connection between the loss of authority in public and political life and in the private pre-political realms of the family and the school. The more radical the distrust of authority becomes in the public sphere, the greater the probability naturally becomes that the private sphere will not remain inviolate. There is this additional fact, and it is very likely the decisive one, that from time out of mind we have been accustomed in our tradition of political thought to regard the authority of parents over children, of teacher over pupils, as the model by which to understand political authority. It is just this model, which can be found as early as Plato and Aristotle, that makes the concept of authority in politics so extraordinarily ambiguous. It is based, first of all, on an absolute superiority such as can never exist among adults and which, from the point of view of human dignity, must never exist. In the second place, following the model of the nursery, it is based on a purely temporary superiority and therefore becomes self-contradictory if it is applied to relations that are not temporary by nature—like the relations of the rulers and the ruled. Thus it lies in the nature of the matter—that is, both in the nature of the present crisis in authority and in the nature of our traditional political thought—that the loss of authority which began in the political sphere should end in the private one; and it is naturally no accident that the place where political authority was first undermined, that is, in America, should be the place where the modern crisis in education makes itself most strongly felt.

The general loss of authority could, in fact, hardly find more radical expression than by its intrusion into the pre-political sphere, where authority seemed dictated by nature itself and independent of all historical changes and political conditions. On the other hand, modern man could find no clearer expression for his dissatisfaction with the world, for his disgust with things as they are, than by his refusal to assume, in respect to his children, responsibility for all this.

It is as though parents daily said: "In this world even we are not very secure at home; how to move about in it, what to know, what skills to master, are mysteries to us, too. You must try to make out as best you can; in any case, you are not entitled to call us to account. We are innocent, we wash our hands of you."





ADVANCED YOUTH SEMINAR HELD

When you play so many games at one time—being a student, a friend, a teen-ager, a draftee, a citizen, a son or daughter, a little sister, a big brother—where does your integrity lie?

What does destruction as a style say about our feeling for life? What's wrong with "our" school initials on "your" water tank or bridge?

What does your picture of yourself as "ugly," "smart," "popular," or "misunderstood" do to your way of life?

These and other questions like them were considered by the twenty-five high school youth who gathered at the Laos House for the Advanced Youth Seminar March 25-27. The participants had all attended previous seminars in the Community's program. Corpus Christi, Dallas, Houston, College Station, Austin, Richardson, and Gonzales were among the hometowns of members of the group.

The curriculum studied was Core Course III, "Man as Neighbor: The Relation of Moral-Being." The lectures and seminars centered on the questions: How can I trust the fact that I am trusted? How can I love the love of my neighbor? How can I shape the shape of the world?

Folk music, the poetry of Wallace Stevens, and a presentation by Norris Domingue, a pantomimist and independent movie producer, supplemented the curriculum.

The picture above shows the participants. Other pictures throughout this issue were made at the Youth Seminar.

ADVANCED SEMINAR MAY 13-15

The final week-end seminar of this program year will be held at Laos House May 13-15. Subject matter for the course will be selections from Kierkegaard's *The Sickness Unto Death*—an "exposition for edification and awakening," as Kierkegaard called it. This author has been widely acclaimed as the fountainhead of the modern theological awakening, and this work is one of the most illuminating for our present dilemma.

The seminar is open to any person who has attended a beginning seminar in the past. The cost is \$20.20. Registrations should be mailed to 1906 Rio Grande, Austin, Texas 78705.

THIRD PRINTING OF DAILY OFFICE

The Daily Office, the book of worship developed several years ago by the faculty of the Community, has entered its third printing.

The Office contains the order of service, the rationale of the service, an abbreviated form, a selection of Psalms from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, a selection of prayers, variables, and a lectionary of the Old and New Testament lessons.

Copies are available for \$1.25 each plus postage. They may be ordered in quantity or singly. Back orders will be filled as soon as the books come from the press.

BOARD TO MEET

The annual Spring meeting of the Board of Directors of the Community will be held at Laos House May 20-21. At this meeting officers for the ensuing year will be elected, the work of the past year will be reviewed, and a projection for the fall will be made.

In addition to the statistical analysis an attempt will be made this year to present the emphases and direction of Community in a seminar setting.

FILM SEMINAR SCHEDULE OPEN

This spring two experimental film seminars were held in Oklahoma City and Midland, Texas, as attempts to view some modern movies through a theological perspective. Films considered were *Hud*, *The Edge of the City*, and *All the Way Home*.

Response to these ventures has been such that plans for scheduling more of these seminars next year in various cities are under way. If you, your group, or other sponsoring organization is interested in holding such a seminar in your city in the Fall, 1966, or Spring, 1967, please contact the Community and further information will be given.

letter to laymen

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When man becomes aware of himself he finds that like a fish in water he is immersed in a complex of relationships with a cosmos of personal and impersonal "others." Man's being is a co-being. He discovers his own identity in a process of reflection, that is, a process of address and response, within a network of relationships. For man, being-in-the-world is the basic ontological characteristic of his existence. As Rollo May suggests, world is the structure of meaningful relationships in which man exists and in the design of which he participates.

There is much about being-in-the-world that is "fixed" but in the case of man there is much that is "free." When the style of man's participation in his world is understood as fixed, then we examine it under the rubric of nature. When the style of that participation is understood as free, we analyze it under the rubric of history. Nature and history are not two different worlds as is sometimes thought. They are finally two inseparable modes of participation in the one world of man. An important implication of this is that the reality of being-in-the-world is lost if either of these modes is distorted or confused.

It is to this lost reality of being-in-the-world that Thomas Merton addresses himself in the article, "Is the World a Problem?" He speaks for many of us when he confesses that there is a great deal of confusion about being-in-the-world. On behalf of us all he suggests that this is the state of affairs of "man in the modern world." The heart of that confusion consists in this: on the one hand there is that understanding of being-in-the-world as fixed, not a matter of choice; and, historically, these modes of participation have gotten mixed up. In other words man's relation to history and nature is inauthentic. Modern man is estranged from his world. He lives in an unreal world. As a problem the world confronts man with the question of finding himself in genuine relationship with his world—both history and nature.

At the present time the Church is outgrowing a style of participation in the historical world which conceived of history not as free but as fixed. Merton designates this particular historical style as the "Carolingian worldview." This perspective on being-in-history was the unofficial but generally accepted view of the age of Christendom. It was essentially an heteronomous age and the Carolingian worldview was the authoritative ideology of the age. In its unilluminated form this view pictured man as utterly estranged by his sin from any participation in the self-determination of his own destiny. Even in its enlightened form this view pictured man's reflection upon his world as thinking God's thoughts after Him or as reflection upon "the fulfillment of a predetermined intellect-

continued on page 2

Letter to laymen

JOURNAL OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH AND LIFE COMMUNITY IN AUSTIN TEXAS

IS THE WORLD A PROBLEM?

ambiguities in the secular

by thomas merton

Is the world a problem? I type the question. I am tempted to type it over again, with asterisks between the letters, the way H*y*m*a*n K*a*p*l*a*n used to type his name in the *New Yorker* twenty years ago. And as far as I am concerned that would dispose of the question. But COMMONWEAL is doubtless too concerned about the question to accept this: a blank page with "Is the world a problem?" running down the middle, full of asterisks. So I have to be serious too, and develop it. It is, you see, a *topic*. And a topical topic.

Maybe I can spell this topic out coherently, admitting that there are still cogent reasons why the question should be asked and answered. Perhaps, too, I am personally involved in the absurdity of the question. Due to a book I wrote thirty years ago, I have myself become a sort of stereotype of the world-denying contemplative—the man who spurned New York, spat on Chicago, and tromped on Louisville, heading for the woods with Thoreau in one pocket, John of the Cross in another, and holding the Bible open at the Apocalypse. This stereotype is probably my own fault, and it is something I have to try to demolish on occasion. This is one of the occasions.

Now that we are all concerned about the Church and the World, the Secular City, and the values of secular society, it was to be expected that someone would turn quizzically to me and ask: "What about you, Father Merton? What do *you* think?"—and then duck as if I were St. Jerome with a rock in my fist.

First of all, the whole question of *the world*, the *secular world*, has become extremely ambiguous. It becomes ever more ambiguous when it is set up over against another entity, the world of the sacred. The old duality of time-eternity, matter-spirit, natural-supernatural and so on (which makes sense in a very limited and definite context) is suddenly transposed into a totally different context in which it creates nothing but confusion. This confusion is certainly a problem. Whether or not "the world" is a problem, a *confused idea of what the world might possibly be* is quite definitely a problem. So what I want to talk about is this confusion, and what I myself think about it at the moment.

I want to make clear that I speak not as the author of the *Seven Storey Mountain*, which seemingly a lot of people have read, but as the author of more recent essays and poems which apparently very few people have read. This is not the official voice of Trappist silence, the monk with his hood up and his back to the camera, brooding over the waters of an artificial lake. This is not the petulant and uncanonizable

Thomas Merton (Father Louis, O.C.S.O.) is the author of several books, most recently, *Seasons of Celebration* (Farrar, Straus).

This article is reprinted from the June 3, 1966 issue of *Commonweal*, a weekly journal of opinion edited by Catholic laymen, through the kind permission of the editors. We offer it to our readers as a sensitive contribution on the question of secularity from a Roman Catholic point of view.

ual plan." In this worldview men "cannot be left to their own freedom." Historical participation in the world was, paradoxically, not free but fixed.

Merton does not really tackle the problematic character of modern man's participation in the natural world. But he certainly points to the problem when he describes that aspect of "world-confusion" wherein the "given appears to have been chosen." The Church, hopefully, is also beginning to outgrow that style of participation in the natural world which understands nature not as fixed but as free. This is certainly an important characteristic of that scientific, technological, cybernetic, modern worldview which has been the most serious threat to the authority of the Carolingian worldview. The fact that man can technically control nature creates the unreal view that man's relationship to the impersonal "givens" of nature is free. In this worldview there is little of the humiliation experienced by the Psalmist or Pascal or even Kant in their contemplation of man's insignificance in relation to the immense fixity of the natural world. The assumption that in relationship to man's being-in-nature nothing is fixed, all is endlessly mutable, is false and unreal.

Merton's suggestion seems to be that man's quest for himself in genuine relationship with his world rests on the view that "the world can once again become an object of choice." Such an assumption will correct that Carolingian worldview which assumed the opposite, that history is not free but fixed. It will also avoid the misleading alternative which assumed that the technical control and manipulation of nature was the predicate of the real world. The task of renewal is the task of freeing man from the illusion that history is fixed and for active participation in the shaping of his own destiny. It is also the task of freeing man from the illusion that nature is free and for passive participation in that which shapes his destiny. It is this which constitutes genuine participation in the world.

Because of man's long-standing inclination to accept things that can be changed and his equally strong inclination to attempt to change that which cannot be changed, the petition of the truly modern man for authentic participation in the real world might be: God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

— Charles Cox

Mr. Cox is Director of the Bible Chair at the University of Texas. He is a Disciples clergyman and a member of the Executive Board of the Community.



modern Jerome who never got over the fact that he could give up beer. (I drink beer whenever I can lay hands on any. I love beer, and, by that very fact, the world.) This is simply the voice of a self-questioning human person who, like all his brothers, struggles to cope with turbulent, mysterious, demanding, exciting, frustrating, confused existence in which almost nothing is really predictable, in which most definitions, explanations and justifications become incredible even before they are uttered, in which people suffer together and are sometimes utterly beautiful, at other times impossibly pathetic. In which there is much that is frightening, in which almost everything public is patently phoney, and in which there is at the same time an immense ground of personal authenticity that is *right there* and so obvious that no one can talk about it and most cannot even believe that it is there.

I am, in other words, a man in the modern world. In fact, I am the world just as you are! Where am I going to look for the world first of all if not in myself?

Escape?

As long as I assume that the world is something I discover by turning on the radio or looking out the window I am deceived from the start. As long as I imagine that the world is something to be "escaped" in a monastery—that wearing a special costume and following a quaint observance takes me "out of this world," I am dedicating my life to an illusion. Of course, I hasten to qualify this. I said a moment ago that in a certain historic context of thought and of life, this kind of thought and action once made perfect sense. But the moment you change the context, then the whole thing has to be completely transposed. Otherwise you are left like the orchestra in the Marx Brothers' "Night at the Opera" where Harpo had inserted "Take me out to the Ball Game" in the middle of the operatic score.

The confusion lies in this: on one hand there is a primitive Christian conception of the world as an object of choice. On the other there is the obvious fact that the world is also something about which there is and can be no choice. And, historically, these notions have sometimes got mixed up, so that what is simply "given" appears to have been chosen, and what is there to be chosen, decided for or against, is simply evaded as if no decision were licit or even possible.

That I should have been born in 1915, that I should be the contemporary of Auschwitz, Hiroshima, Vietnam and the Watts riots, are things about which I was not first consulted. Yet they are also events in which, whether I like it or not, I am deeply and personally involved. The "world" is not just a physical space traversed by jet planes and full of people running in all directions. It is a complex of responsibilities and options made out of the loves, the hates, the fears, the joys, the hopes, the greed, the cruelty, the kindness, the faith, the trust, the suspicion of all. In the last analysis, if there is a stupid war in Vietnam because nobody trusts anybody, this is in part because I myself am defensive, suspicious, untrusting, and intent on making other people conform themselves to my particular brand of deathwish.

Put in these terms, the world both is and is not a problem. The world is a "problem" in so far as everybody in it is a problem to himself. The world is a problem in so far as we all add up to a big collective question. Starting then from this concept of a world which is essentially problematic because it is full of problematic and self-doubting freedoms, there have been various suggestions made as to what to do about it.

At present the Church is outgrowing what one might call the Carolingian suggestion. This is a worldview which was rooted in the official acceptance of the Church into the world of imperial Rome, the world of Constantine and of Augustine, of Charlemagne in the west and of Byzantium in the east. In crude, simple strokes, this worldview can be sketched as follows: We are living in the last age of salvation history. A world radically evil and doomed to hell has been ransomed from the devil by the Cross of Christ and is now simply marking time until the message of salvation can be preached to everyone. Then will come the judgment. Meanwhile, men

being evil and prone to sin at every moment, must be prevented by authority from following their base instincts and getting lost.

They cannot be left to their own freedom or even to God's loving grace. They have to have their freedom taken away from them because it is their greatest peril. They have to be told at every step what to do, and it is better if what they are told to do is displeasing to their corrupt natures, for this will keep them out of further subtle forms of mischief. Meanwhile the Empire has become, provisionally at least, holy. As figure of the eschatological kingdom, worldly power consecrated to Christ becomes Christ's reign on earth. In spite of its human limitations the authority of the Christian prince is a guarantee against complete chaos and disorder and must be submitted to—to resist established authority is equivalent to resisting Christ. War on behalf of the Christian prince and his power becomes a holy war for Christ against the devil. War becomes a sacred duty.

The dark strokes in the picture have their historical explanation in the crisis of the Barbarian invasions. But there are also brighter strokes, and we find in the thought of Aquinas, Scotus, Bonaventure, Dante, a basically world-affirming and optimistic view of man, of his world and his work, in the perspective of the Christian redemption. The created world itself is an epiphany of divine wisdom and love, and, redeemed in and by Christ, will return to God with all its beauty restored by the transforming power of grace, which reaches down to material creation through man and his work. However, this view too is static rather than dynamic, hierarchic, layer upon layer, rather than on-going and self-creating, the fulfillment of a predetermined intellectual plan rather than the creative project of a free and self-building love.

The Task of Renewal

One of the essential tasks of *aggiornamento* is that of renewing the whole perspective of theology in such a way that our ideas of God, man and the world are no longer dominated by the Carolingian-medieval imagery of the sacred and hierarchical cosmos, in which everything is decided beforehand and in which the only choice is to accept gladly what is imposed as part of an immobile and established social structure.

In "turning to the world" the contemporary Church is, first of all, admitting that *the world can once again become an object of choice*. Not only can it be chosen, but in fact it must be chosen. How? If I had no choice about the age in which I was to live, I nevertheless have a choice about the attitude I take and about the way and the extent of my participation in its living on-going events. To *choose* the world is not then merely a pious admission that the world is acceptable because it comes from the hand of God. It is first of all an acceptance of a task and a vocation in the world, in history and in time. To choose the world is to choose to do the work I am capable of doing, in collaboration with my brother, to make the world better, more free, more just, more livable, more human. And it has now become transparently obvious that mere automatic "rejection of the world" and "contempt for the world" is in fact not a choice but the evasion of choice.

On the other hand the stereotype of world-rejection is now being firmly replaced by a collection of equally empty stereotypes of world affirmation in which I, for one, have very little confidence. They often seem to be gestures, charades, mummery designed to make those participating in them feel secure, to make them feel precisely that they are "like participating" and really doing something. So precisely at the moment when it becomes vitally important for the destiny of man that man should learn to *choose for himself* a peaceful, equitable, sane and humane world the whole question of choice itself becomes a stark and dreadful one. We talk about choosing, yet everything seems more grimly determined than ever before. We are caught in an enormous web of consequences, a net of erroneous and even pathological effects of other men's decisions. After Hitler, how can Ger-

many be anything but a danger to world peace? To choose the world therefore is to choose the anguish of being hampered and frustrated in a situation fraught with frightful difficulties. We can joyously affirm the world and its secular values all we like, but the complexity of events responds too often with a cold negation of our hopes.

In the old days when everyone compulsively rejected the world it was really not hard at all to secretly make quite a few healthy and positive affirmations of a worldly existence in the best sense of the word, in praise of God and for the good of all men. Nowadays when we talk so much of freedom, commitment, "engagement" and so on, it becomes imperative to ask whether the choices we are making have any meaning whatever. Do they change anything? Do they get us anywhere? Do we really choose to alter the direction of our lives or do we simply comfort ourselves with the choice of making another choice? Can we really decide effectively for a better world?

The Marxist View

The "suggestion" that has now most obviously replaced that of the Carolingians is that of Karl Marx. In this view, history is not finished, it has just reached the point where it may, if we are smart, begin. There is no predetermined divine plan (although frankly the messianism in Marx is basically Biblical and eschatological). After a long precarious evolution matter has reached the point, in man, where it can become fully aware of itself, take itself in hand, control its own destiny. And now at last that great seething mass of material forces, the world, will enter upon its true destiny by being raised to a human level. The instruments by which this can be accomplished—technology, cybernetics—are now in our power. But are we in our own power? No, we are still determined by the illusions of thought patterns, super-structures, devised to justify antiquated and destructive economic patterns. Hence if man is to *choose* to make himself, if he is to become free at last, his duty can be narrowed down to one simple option, one basic commitment: The struggle against the (imperialist) world.

With a shock we find ourselves in a familiar pattern: a predetermined struggle against evil in which personal freedom is viewed with intolerance and suspicion. The world must be changed because it is unacceptable as it is. But the change must be guided by authority and political power. The forces of good are all incarnate in this authority. The forces of evil are on the contrary incarnate in the power of the enemy system. Man cannot be left to himself. He must submit entirely to the control of the collectivity for which he exists. "Man" is not the person but the collective animal. Though he may eventually become free, now is not the time of freedom but of obedience, authority, power, control. Man does not choose to make himself except in the sense that he submits to a choice dictated by the authority of science and the messianic collective—the party which represents the chosen eschatological class. Though there are in theory all kinds of possible choices, in reality the only basic choice is that of rejecting and destroying the evil "world"—namely capitalist imperialism and, in the present juncture, the United States. Hence the ambiguities of Communist dogma at the moment: the choice of peace is of course nothing else than the choice of war against the United States. In other words, we have turned a page of "Aida" and we are now playing "Take me out to the Ball game," but it is the same crazy Marx Brothers' Opera. Freedom, humanism, peace, plenty and joy are all enthusiastically invoked, but prove on closer examination to be their opposites. There is only one choice, to submit to the decision handed down from on high by an authoritarian power which defines good and evil in political terms.

This, as I see it, is the present state of the question. The Church has finally realized officially that the classic worldview, which began to develop serious flaws five hundred years ago is no longer viable at all. There is something of a stampede for security in a new worldview.

In this endeavor the dialogue with Marxism is going to be of crucial importance not only for Christians but for Marx-

ists. For if it is a true dialogue it will possibly involve some softening and adjustment of doctrinaire positions and an opening to new perspectives and possibilities of collaboration. Obviously, however, the dialogue with official and established Marxism—the Soviets or Red China—is not to be considered yet as a meaningful possibility. But the conversations that have begun with the type of revisionist Marxism represented by the French thinker Roger Garaudy may certainly have some effects. But what effects? Good or bad? It is all too easy for enthusiastic Catholics, having tasted a little of the new wine, to convince themselves that “turning to the world” and “choosing the world” means simply turning to Marx and choosing some variation, Maoist, Soviet, Castroist, of the Communist political line. There is no question that since the Council a few Catholic thinkers and publicists in Europe and South America are tending in this direction. Their tendency is understandable, but I do not find it altogether hopeful.

The majority of Catholic thinkers today are however working in the direction of a modern worldview in which the demands of the new humanism of Marx, Freud, Teilhard, Bonhoeffer and others are fully respected and often heartily endorsed. For them, the tendency is no longer to regard God as enthroned “out there” at the summit of the cosmos, but as the “absolute future” who will manifest himself in and through man, by the transformation of man and the world by science oriented to Christ. Though this certainly is not a view which conservative theologians find comforting, it represents a serious attempt to re-express Christian truths in terms more familiar to modern man. It demands that we take a more dynamic view of man and of society. It requires openness, freedom, the willingness to face risks. It also postulates respect for the human person in the human community. But at the same time it seems to me that it may have serious deficiencies in so far as it may ignore the really deep problems of collective technological and cybernetic society.

To assume, for instance, that just because scientific and technological humanism can theoretically be seen as “perfectly biblical” (“nothing is more biblical than technology,” says Père Daniélou) does not alter the profound dehumanization that can in fact take place in technological society (as Daniélou also clearly sees). The fact that man can now theoretically control and direct his own destiny does nothing to mitigate the awful determinism which in practice makes a mockery of the most “realistic” plans and turns all man’s projects diametrically against their professed humanistic aims. The demonic gap between expressed aims and concrete achievements in the conduct of the Vietnam war should be an object lesson in the impotence of technology to come to grips with the human needs and realities of our time.

The Danger

When “the world” is hypostatized (and it inevitably is) it becomes another of those dangerous and destructive fictions with which we are trying vainly to grapple. And for anyone who has seriously entered into the medieval Christian, or the Hindu, or the Buddhist conceptions of “*contemptus mundi*,” “*Mara*” and the “*emptiness of the world*,” it will be evident that this means not the rejection of a reality, but the unmasking of an illusion.

The world as pure object is something that is not there. It is not a reality outside us for which we exist. It is not a firm and absolute objective structure which has to be accepted on its own inexorable terms. The world has in fact no terms of its own. It dictates no terms to man. We and our world interpenetrate. If anything, the world exists for us, and we exist for ourselves. It is only in assuming full responsibility for our world, for our lives and for ourselves that we can be said to live really for God. The whole human reality which of course transcends us as individuals and as a collectivity, nevertheless interpenetrates the world of nature (which is obviously “real”) and the world of history (also “real” in so far as it is made up of the total effect of all our decisions and actions). But this reality though “external”

and “objective” is not something entirely independent of us, which dominates us inexorably from without through the medium of certain fixed laws which science alone can discover and use. It is an extension and a projection of ourselves and of our lives, and if we attend to it respectfully, while attending also to our own freedom and our own integrity, we can learn to obey its ways and coordinate our lives with its mysterious movements.

The way to find the real “world” is not merely to measure and observe what is outside us, but to discover our own inner ground. For that is where the world is, first of all: in my deepest self. But there I find the world to be quite different from the “obligatory answers.” This “ground,” this “world” where I am mysteriously present at once to my own self and to the freedoms of all other men, is not a visible objective and determined structure with fixed laws and demands. *It is a living and self-creating mystery of which I am myself a part, to which I am myself my own unique door.*

When I find the world in my own ground, it is impossible for me to be alienated by it. It is precisely the obligatory answers which insist on showing me the world as totally other than myself and my brother, which alienate me from myself and from my brother. Hence I see no reason for our compulsion to manufacture ever newer and more shiny sets of obligatory answers.

The questions and the answers surely have their purpose. We are rational and dialectical beings. But even the best answers are themselves not final. They point to something further which cannot be embodied in a verbal formula. They point to life itself in its inalienable and personal ground. They point to that realm of values which, in the eyes of scientific and positivistic thought, has no meaning. But how can we come to grips with the world except in so far as it is a *value*? That is to say in so far as it *exists for us*?

There remains a profound wisdom in the traditional Christian approach to the world as to an object of choice. But we have to admit that the habitual and mechanical compulsions of a certain limited type of Christian though have falsified the true value-perspective in which the world can be discovered and chosen as it is. To treat the world merely as an agglomeration of material goods and objects outside ourselves, and to reject these goods and objects in order to seek others which are “interior” and “spiritual” is in fact to miss the whole point of the challenging confrontation of the world and Christ.

Do we really choose between the world and Christ as between two conflicting realities absolutely opposed? Or do we choose Christ *by choosing the world as it really is in Him, that is to say created and redeemed by Him, and encountered in the ground of our own personal freedom and of our love?* Do we really renounce ourselves and the world in order to find Christ, or do we renounce our alienated and false selves in order to choose our own deepest truth in choosing both the world and Christ at the same time? If the deepest ground of my being is love, then in that very love itself and nowhere else will I find myself, *and* the world, *and* my brother *and* Christ. It is not a question of either/or but of all-in-one. It is not a matter of exclusivism and “purity” but of wholeness, wholeheartedness, unity and Meister Eckhart’s *Gleichheit* (equality) which finds the same ground of love in everything.

The world cannot be a problem to anyone who sees that ultimately Christ, the world, his brother and his own inmost ground are made one and the same in grace and redemptive love. If all the current talk about the world helps people to discover this, then it is fine. But if it produces nothing but a whole new divisive gamut of obligatory positions and “contemporary answers” we might as well forget it. The world itself is no problem, but we are a problem to ourselves because we are alienated from ourselves, and this alienation is due precisely to an inveterate habit of division by which we break reality into pieces and then wonder why, after we have manipulated the pieces until they fall apart, we find ourselves out of touch with life, with reality, with the world and most of all with ourselves.



we recommend . . .

a thousand clowns

A Thousand Clowns is the unfortunate title of a very fortunate movie. The title is a poor choice because, unless clarified by a subtitle, it calls up for some of us mental pictures of a tired Cecil B. DeMille treatment of life under the big top with a mad elephant and heart of gold funny men in color and Cinemascope. *A Thousand Clowns* is anything but that, thank God!

It is a fresh and sensitive visual and verbal treatment of a free spirit's effort to cope with our gray world of attaché cases, canned unfunny humor, deadening routine, standard operating procedures, and owing one's soul to the company store.

The story line is simple enough but the aesthetic impact is total and organic in a way which outstrips the story itself and calls the theatre-goer into brief but charged moments of transcending his own bondage and knowing it as bondage. Murray Burns (Jason Robards) has scrapped his job as chief writer for the embarrassingly obnoxious *Chuckles* the Chipmunk television show for children. Living on his unemployment insurance, Murray occupies an apartment cluttered with worthless but dear junk such as busted radios, a TV set without a screen, a wooden eagle, a bugle, a lawn chair, binoculars, and assorted clocks all telling a different time. These are *his* artifacts—they are not imposed by conventional taste, a paid decorator, or some principle such as form following function. He spends his days making excursions to the Statue of Liberty, enjoying hot pastrami sandwiches, flying kites, and holding persuasive conversations with the recorded voice of the weather lady on the telephone.

Murray's precocious twelve-year-old nephew (Barry Gordon) lives with him, having been left there by his mother seven years before when she went out for cigarettes and never returned. (Her philosophy of life is said by Murray to be somewhere left of Whooppee!) The nephew never had an official name and he is allowed by Murray to take different names temporarily to try them on for size until the boy becomes thirteen when he must choose his permanent name. During most of the movie his name is Nick.

The Child Welfare Bureau sends two stuffy investigators (William Daniels and Barbara Harris) to visit Murray to determine whether he is fit to serve as Nick's guardian. The unorthodox interview is a hilarious puncturing of the pretenses of social work as it is attempted by this unhappy duet. Sandra (Barbara Harris), charmed by Murray's aliveness and sensitivity urges him to take a job or Nick will be taken from him.

Murray's siege of Madison Avenue in search of a job is an impressionistic *tour de force*. He buys a suit and a hat, apes the stride of the mechanical men he sees along the avenue, walks out on a prospective employer who "just" wants him to be his funny self on a panel show, and temporarily talks himself out of a job. The lunch hour rush sees the modern buildings disgorge their workers to become the *corps de ballet* hurrying to cafeterias and food dispensing machines accompanied by the Halleluiahs Chorus. The irony is a foot thick during this stretch of the film. Murray practices apologizing to Sandra because he cannot carry off the job, but she is not taken in by his efforts to keep his magic cosmos a "wonderful world for twelve-year-olds."

Nick, approaching his thirteenth birthday, decides to take Murray's name as his own and takes out a public library card to make it official. Murray is visibly stunned by this. The impact is heightened by the visit of Murray's successful brother, Arnold (Martin Balsam) who levels with him as Murray plays march music in the abandoned Chinese restaurant on the floor below his apartment (significantly named the "Original Lum Far's Oriental Paradise"). Murray accuses Arnold of having sold out to the Establishment. Arnold counters that he is the best possible Arnold he knows how to be and says, in effect, that one has to take this world seriously. He charges Murray with having taken an iron-clad and doctrinaire position which is, in its own way, as closed as that of the rigid organization man. (One is tempted to give him a text at this point from Bonhoeffer: the free man is not free to overleap the world.)

Murray is caught between his desire to live a separatist life according to his own sense of dignity and beauty and fun, on the one hand, and his love for Nick on the other. Can a man remain just a commentator—albeit a keenly witty one—on life's absurdities? Is not transcendence momentary rather than a style of life? These and similar questions can be unwound out of the situation at this point.

Does Murray sell out? Does he join the Madison Avenue chorus hoofing out his days in lockstep? The movie is too rich a presentation to allow an ABC answer. One can only hope as he watches Murray stride off to work that occasionally he stops long enough to shout to the nameless occupants of the apartment buildings along the way: "Rich People. I want to see all of you in the street for volleyball in five minutes!"

This movie commends itself from many angles aside from its meaning-structure. The absurdly comic and the serious are so bound together that one does not see the funny part and *then* the serious; they are one. The characterizations are rounded so that one sees people rather than formulas. Even the prosaic social worker whose conversation sounds like it has been written down ahead of time, while admitting that he is no match for Murray's glittering verbal creations, can at the same time tell Murray exactly what he is: a man who will not listen and one whom he hopes will be saved from his own dream. And, wonder of wonders, this movie treats sex frankly but does not make it the prime mover of all action in the universe as so many Hollywood efforts are wont to do. The cinematography is wonderfully inventive (the slow motion scenes on the bicycle are mesmerizing!) but the photography serves the story and not vice versa. Although the script is something of a Robards vehicle (his plastic features in some scenes are funnier than his lines) it is as much a director's piece as an actor's. Fred Coe, the director, is a talent to remember—his previous Broadway work is impressive: *Two for the Seesaw*, *The Miracle Worker* (the screen version also), and *All the Way Home* (Drama Critics' Award and the Pulitzer Prize).

This "Madison Avenue Zorba" should take its place with *Zorba the Greek* and *The Pawnbroker* as among the finest creations of a maturing art.

— James Wagener

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The Christian Norm

By Myron B. Bloy, Jr.

Technology, both through the cornucopia of specific innovations and through the increasingly pervasive weight of what Hegel would call its "objective spirit," is successfully challenging the values and life-style of every traditional culture. What is the character of this vast cultural change? What is the function of Christian faith in relation to it?

Whatever ostensible religious sanctions for sexual behavior have been adduced in this country, it is clear that the so-called "prudential ethic" has been the real power behind them. This ethic has enforced extramarital chastity by garishly describing the triple threat of infection, detection, and conception (a phrase coined by Joseph Fletcher of the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge). That is, so the threat goes, you had better not indulge in extramarital sexual adventures because you are very likely to catch one of the dreaded venereal diseases, or you might be caught in the act and have to endure public shame and parental reprisal, or you might find yourself a parent perforce. The argument used to work well, but no more. The new wonder-drugs which medical technology has produced cure venereal disease fairly swiftly and simply; the automobile, with the motel, offers nearly fool-proof privacy; and new, easily obtainable drugs have reduced the risk of unwanted pregnancy to a minimum. Technology has dealt a body-blow to the prudential ethic and will eventually make it powerless.

The development of what Donald Michael calls "cybernation"—the meshing of automation and cybernetic devices into a single productive process—is also destined to have a massive impact on our traditional value system. Automation (the substitution of mechanical processes for human muscle and dexterity) and cybernetics (the substitution of electronic circuits for many mental skills), taken separately, abolish many traditional jobs, but linked together their functional capacity is geometrically increased. For example, cybernation has already eliminated almost all but custodial and top management jobs in the oil refining industry; the baking industry is developing

in the same direction. Because automatic machinery can be controlled with computers which have digested not only production skills but also economic and inventory information, the middle-management as well as the blue-collar function is replaced by machines. Although the view of one economist that 2 per cent of the traditional labor force will eventually be able to perform all the necessary production tasks of the nation seems exaggerated, vast social and economic dislocations are bound to result from this development. But what about the spiritual problem? In a society nurtured by the Protestant ethic, which has yoked man's identity firmly to his work, what happens to the man who is permanently excluded from the productive enterprise? The public dole may sustain him, but what of his self-esteem as a man?

As a last example, consider the erosion of the value-forming power of the family under the impact of technology. Many familial functions of the past have gradually been taken over by such institutions as schools, hospitals, and the Little League. More recently, the rapidly increasing mobility of youth has further removed children from close family control, and where knowledge of the wide world was once selectively filtered through parental values to the children, now the whole raw world is televised into the family living room. Consider the plight of the classical music aficionado who finds his child captivated by the "Go-Go" music shows or that of the pacifist parents trying to counter the effects of "U.N.C.L.E." in their children. What does this lessening potency of the family mean for the health of the culture?

But before considering the significance of the breakdown of the traditional culture under the weight of rapidly proliferating technological innovations, we should remember that such innovations must also be seen as symptomatic of a world-view which is far weightier and, in the end, more profoundly significant than any of these specific symptoms. That is, these "outward and visible signs" have an "inward and spiritual" world-view which is challenging the traditional culture at a deeper level. One of the best current renderings of the conflict between this technological spirit and the traditional orientation to life is in the following scene from *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold*, in which the Communist agent,

* "Cybernation: The Silent Conquest," a Report to the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, 1962.

Fiedler, is interrogating the captured English agent, Leamas. What—Fiedler wants passionately to know—is the philosophy that motivates English agents in their fight against communism?

"What do you mean, a philosophy?" Leamas replied. "We're not Marxists, we're nothing. Just people."

"Are you Christians then?"

"Not many, I shouldn't think. I don't know many."

"What makes them do it, then?" Fiedler persisted: "They must have a philosophy."

"Why must they? Perhaps they don't know, don't even care. Not everyone has a philosophy," Leamas answered, a little helplessly.

"Then tell me what is your philosophy?"

"Oh for Christ's sake," Leamas snapped, and they walked on in silence for a while. . . .

The Marxist in this scene represents the traditional, ideologically-centered culture: in Marxism he has a vision of the Ultimate Truth of history which determines the loyalties, the values, and the style of his life; Fiedler cannot conceive of living at all except around some passionately held "philosophy of life." Leamas, on the other hand, is a true representative of the technological spirit: his loyalty is simply to the job at hand, to good workmanship; he is non-reflective, his satisfactions being in the immediate experience and not in the vision of some grand design which is presumed to lie behind the façade of history. When these two archetypal figures meet, they are a source of deep puzzlement and frustration to each other; it is as if they spoke different languages.

In the novel the traditionalists, whether Eastern Communists or Western idealists, all go down to defeat before the non-ideological, technological "pro's." The novel is a paradigm of the massive cultural shift that is occurring everywhere in the world. For example, the thaw in the cold war is not, as we might like to think, the result of a mutual upsurge of goodwill, but, rather, of the growing obsolescence of "capitalism" and "communism" before the onslaught of a common, functionalist concern to raise the Gross National Product by whatever means computers and sophisticated mathematical techniques indicate. The destruction of traditional ideologies by

the technological spirit is reflected in more homely ways too. Political party leaders may argue that loyal party membership is the essence of American democracy; company brass and/or union leaders may vie for the worker's allegiance; parents may struggle to inculcate family traditions in their children; community leaders may use every promotional gimmick they can think of to get their neighbors out to the local bandstand for the Memorial Day speeches; the D.A.R. may still imagine that it can call us to some historically determined social distinction; and a Paul Tillich may advance the apologetic gambit that everyone has some "ultimate concern" which necessarily implicates him in at least a covert religion. But all these appeals to some form of ideological loyalty are less and less effective. Experience, metaphysically undifferentiated, is trusted to yield up whatever perspectives are necessary for any given decision. Men everywhere increasingly identify themselves with William James' pragmatist:

"He turns away from abstraction and insufficiency, from verbal solutions, from bad *a priori* reasons, from fixed principles, closed systems, and pretended absolutes and origins. He turns toward concreteness and adequacy, toward facts, toward action, and toward power. That means the empiricist temper regnant and the rationalist temper sincerely given up. It means the open air and possibilities of nature, as against dogma, artificiality, and the pretense of finality in truth."

Technology, works and spirit, is clearly bringing about the swift collapse of the traditional culture, and those of us with a vested interest in that culture are bound to be dismayed. But perhaps we traditionalists have been so mesmerized by the destructive aspects of this massive historical event, perhaps our cultural shock has been so great, that we have not yet been able to see that in the larger view the event can portend a great step forward in man's growth towards his maturity. Father Walter Ong has provided the classical text for this perspective: "Seen in larger historical, and prehistorical, perspectives, the age of technology is part of the great and mysterious evolution of the universe devised by God. It can be considered as an epoch in what we may call the 'hominization' of the world, that is, the taking over of our planet by mankind."

Each one of the changes I have described does, in fact, enlarge man's freedom over heretofore implacably contingent factors of his existence. The prudential sex ethic, based on

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Readers of Letter to Laymen will recall James Wagener's review of "A Thousand Clowns" in the July issue. This very humorous movie spoke to the sensitive viewer about a problem of contemporary life that is no joke—how to be human in a massive society where behavior is more and more tightly organized and rigidly prescribed. Another kind of approach to this problem was made recently when thirty-one scholars, many from outside the United States, joined with the staff of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions in Santa Barbara, California, for a five day discussion of technology and society. Several of the papers presented at the conference have been published by the Center in a pamphlet titled **Technology and Human Values**. From this pamphlet we have selected the article by Myron B. Bloy, Jr. who is a chaplain at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

The question of human values is the religious concern of our day, but this is certainly not a concern that

belongs exclusively to a segment of society identified with religion. Americans are so enmeshed in the technological process, so enamored by the new affluency it has given and its utopian promises, that most of the time we are unaware of what is happening to cultural and personal values. Nor, do we raise the question of how we can participate purposefully in shaping the goals that direct the course of life. Yet, there is a tender uncertainty about it all which questions us. This is the ground of our deepest concern.

Leaders from many fields are searching the question of human values. Spokesmen for the church are being sought out to participate in this dialogue, but they are not being asked to come in just to restate well-worn and comfortable solutions. Myron Bloy was in the Santa Barbara conference as a spokesman for religion, but he also spoke to all those concerned with the function of religion in the age of technology. He points to the possibility for Christian-

ity to have a lively role in shaping cultural values, but he is aware of the tendency toward having a vested interest in traditional culture. His vision is the bringing of "faith and culture into a lean, dynamic, functional relationship instead of perpetuating the fuzzy, honorific, often escapist relationship that now exists." What we are seeking, he says, is a Christian norm flexible enough to exploit the rich promise of freedom and coherent enough not to dissolve under the anti-normative pressures of our time. This is a challenging task for "such norms are hard to come by."

Other articles in **Technology and Human Values** are: "A New Salvation, A New Supernatural" by Gerald Sykes; "Fighting Existential Nausea" by Dennis Gabor; "Our Ageless Unconscious" by Martin Grotjahn; "Forbidden Games" by Theodore Roszak; "Some Musings" by Bertrand DeJouvenel. Copies of the pamphlet may be secured by writing to: The Fund for the Republic, Box 4068, Santa Barbara, California 93103.

nothing but fear, made moral morons of us all; now we can make decisions about sexual behavior on the basis of a positive understanding of sexuality. Similarly, by breaking the stranglehold that productive necessity has always had on man's self-identity, cybernation is giving us the opportunity to evolve richer, more satisfying models of self-identity for ourselves. And the family, which has traditionally exacted an often tyrannous value—conformity in exchange for the security it provides the child—is now in a position to become a supportive setting for the young in which they have the freedom to explore value systems other than their parents'. Finally, there is no gainsaying the sense of exhilaration and release in James' description of man freed from the ideological straitjackets of the traditional culture. Daniel Bell put this whole growth towards freedom in sociological perspective when he said, in his *The End of Ideology*:

"If it is granted that mass society is compartmentalized, superficial in personal relations, anonymous, transitory, specialized, utilitarian, competitive, acquisitive, mobile, and status-hungry, the obverse side of the coin must be shown, too—the right of privacy, to free choice of friends and occupation, status on the basis of achievement rather than exclusive and monopolistic social controls of a single dominant group. For if, as Sir Henry Maine once put it, the movement of modern society has been from status to contract, then it has been, in that light, a movement from a fixed place in the world to possible freedom."

Whatever dangers our rapid growth into a technological culture entail, and they are hard to underestimate, we must stop simply wailing through the shambles of the past and learn to use our expanded freedom as the occasion for new growth towards our adulthood. This is clearly a highly bruited moment in history, for the only alternative to using our freedom for fresh maturation is to allow it to dissolve into mere anarchy—an end that many traditionalists actually seem to desire as they passively wring their hands over the present simply because it confounds so much of the past. Freedom is not simply our release from captivity, but, more fully, the occasion, the elbow-room, to lay hold of our destiny as men.

We are not only freed from the prudential ethic, the slavery to production, the tight little family, or the metaphysical jails of the past for no other reason than to revel in the new roominess of life (although reveling is clearly in order too); we are freed for the task of growing up. And in order to grow up, men must make the risky commitment to some norm of what the mature life is and therefore to those political and social forces which tend to establish the possibility of that life. In short, without the commitment to some judgment-empowering perspective, freedom never fulfills its true function in the economy of existence, but is likely, rather, to deteriorate into anarchy. Thus, our goal must be to develop dynamic cultural norms which are coherent enough to give society and individuals a sense of historical orientation and direction while remaining flexible enough to interpret new dimensions of freedom as new opportunities for growth.

The Christian faith has an opportunity to be crucially useful at this historical juncture, but the Church will first have to rid itself of those rigid metaphysical and moralistic commitments which function as mere inhibitions of the new freedom. John Wren-Lewis, English physicist and theologian, describes how such metaphysical structures function: "A culture which restricts human creativity to the cultivation of the natural world within the limits of a set pattern, on the ground that this pattern reflects the will of higher powers beyond, is just as much motivated by the desire to avoid responsibility for the state of the world as is the frightened neurotic who lives by compulsive private rituals. In fact, the moral stability of societies governed by 'belief' (in the ordinary sense of that term) is not a safeguard of man's humanity, as modern defenders of the traditional human outlook usually claim; it is stability purchased at the price of inhibiting the expression of man's humanity."

Wren-Lewis goes on to argue that freedom from the metaphysical rigidities of religion is one of the marks of technological culture. But we know that the Church is still an escapist rather than the bold innovators of society. Furthermore, culture, to the authoritarian personalities who cannot stand the ambiguities and risk of free, creative living. Although we venerate as models of manhood the freedom-enlarging persons of our tradition, the prophets and saints, we know that the most ardent supporters of the Church are generally the escapist rather than the bold innovators of society. Furthermore, I have no doubt that if Church leaders continue their tendency to label indiscriminately this emerging culture as anti-human and to man the apologetic barricades against it, thus implicitly strengthening the role of the Church as an unhealthy nest for cultural dropouts, the Christian faith will have no

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share in determining the character of the new culture. To be useful, the Christian perspective must be dynamic rather than depressive, flexible rather than rigid. It must, in short, help men to use their new freedom to cope creatively with a world of constant change rather than to deny the existence of both their freedom and this real world.

On the other hand, one wonders how useful such a vague norm, as "the expression of man's humanity" (which is often heard from liberal religious quarters) can be to contemporary man. Surely any society needs norms that are coherent and concrete enough to provide a solid perspective from which to understand and make judgments on its life, but such norms are hard to come by in our time. Daniel Bell argues that our culture is increasingly characterized by an "eclipse of distance," that our penchant for "immediacy, impact, simultaneity, and sensation" tends to break up "all fixed points of reference"; and Marshall McLuhan has described, in his *Understanding Media*, the subtle pressure of the electronic age to inhibit "private points of view." This is simply to say that if the Christian norm is to be useful it must also have enough body and definition to withstand the anti-normative tendencies of our time. In short, our vision of the life God has given us the freedom to grow into must be both flexible enough to exploit the rich promise of that freedom and coherent enough so that it will not dissolve under the pressures of our time, thus allowing our freedom to revert to chaos.

Whether Christianity can be culturally useful in this "hominized world" where man's power and freedom are so enlarged depends on how imaginatively Christians cope with the squeeze play between coherence and flexibility in understanding their own norm. I believe that the vanBuren/Hamilton/Altizer understanding of Jesus as the "contagious" model of our adulthood, given extension and depth by the deChardin/Ong understanding of grace (defined by the life of Jesus) as the evolutionary power of history, would be both honest to the Church's experience and an extremely useful perspective for our society. Jesus as the model of human adulthood and the eschatological clue to the meaning and direction of history is a coherent focus for our imagination while being dialectically open to every new experience and situation. But the cultural usefulness of the Christian norm will develop only insofar as Christians determine never to let it become separated from the actual, concrete life of our society. This means that we must eschew any theological baggage that cannot be rendered in terms of specific, immanent issues of our society, and, conversely, that we must always struggle to find the inner meaning, from our normative perspective, of every crucial social issue. This cross-ruffing effort could help us gradually to bring our faith and culture into a lean, dynamic, functional

relationship instead of perpetuating the fuzzy, honorific, often escapist relationship that exists now.

This is the prophetic stance which Christians must achieve in order to help our technological culture—this challenging "hominization of the world"—to become the occasion for new growth into our God-given adulthood rather than for the death of civilization.

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