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CONTEMPORARY SYMPTOMS OF THE FALLENNESS OF MAN

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THIS paper by the Professor of Systematic Theology in New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary was prepared for the World Congress on Evangelism (Berlin, 1966) and was presented there in digest form. We are glad to publish the complete text.

AN essay concerned with the "fallenness" of man, will evoke a wry smile from some and outright derision from others. After all who but Americans could invent a term like "fallenness" for their religious jargon, and who today takes seriously the idea of man's radical sinfulness? Even if men do things which can be called sinful, the mood of our time questions whether one ought to thunder ponderous theological invectives against them.

Among theologians it is customary to begin discussing man's sinfulness at the point of the biblical words for sin, or the fall, or original sin. It is a question whether these starting points will reach the understanding of many men today, so far removed is the public mind from the talk of clergymen and theologians. Religious talk and the concepts of twentieth century man seem to be of diverse worlds.

Instead, let us turn to modern man's recourses for an index of his sinfulness. Examination of that to which men turn in the critical areas of their lives may prove a useful indicator of the human spiritual condition. For the present purpose let us look at human recourses in the intellectual, emotional, political, economic, and religious realms.¹

¹ My purpose in this paper is not to slight the technical, theological approach, but to begin with certain conduct of contemporary man that, to my mind as a Christian, points to his sinfulness. Therefore, certain historical questions, even on the activities cited, are not discussed. It ought to be clear also that no theology, including an evangelical one, can exclude contemporary man's conduct from the scrutiny of the Word of God. A further qualification is important. No one can write on these matters except out of experience. My life has been in the West—in Canada, in the United States, in Britain, and in western Europe. I beg the reader's indulgence to be allowed to write from this background. I do not intend thereby either to slight or to praise other parts of the world. I hope that what I say will be sufficiently stimulating to encourage reflection on man's sinfulness wherever he is found.

I do not intend to say that man's interests in his intellectual, emotional, political, economic, and religious life are distinctly sinful, but within these realms many modern people seek a life independent of God. Independence of the Creator is the essence of sin. Within these realms men can share the divine life and labour; but they do not, and what is worse, many will not. Contemporary modes of life do not take God into account. Though not sinful in themselves, these realms become vehicles through which men can express their indifference to spiritual values, their mistrust and abuse of other men, their squandering of their own resources and those of their environment, and their defiance of God—in short, their sinfulness.

I. INTELLECTUAL RECOURSE

In a series of Advent talks four years ago in Britain, the American Episcopal Bishop Stephen F. Bayne said that the prime characteristic of our age is a massive demonstration of unbelief.² It takes the form of a most impressive demonstration of what man can accomplish without any traditional belief in God at all. He added that we are mistaken to suppose that this unbelief is due simply to the challenge of Marxism. Rather, it is a mood of the times of which Marxism is a prominent, militant instance. There is in man that which responds to the secular, the bizarre, the selfishly pleasurable. The spirit of the age is a self-consciousness of the arts of power and industrial skill, but without faith.

It has been popular especially among religious people to blame science for this mood, and the unbelief of scientists in particular. This error is compounded doubly by the tragic and often comic spectacle of religious people zealously hunting skeletons of unbelief in every scientific laboratory closet. In fact, pronouncements of unbelief by reputable men of science have been surprisingly few in the post-war era. It is possible to amass an impressive list of authorities in many scientific fields who have in various ways expressed religious faith. But this does not mean that most men of science are believers.

More important is the blasé attitude of unbelief that characterizes student reaction to religion. (The basis of the reaction may be justified though the reaction itself may be irrational.) "Scientism" is a happy title for a sceptical outlook on ethical and religious values which conveys the impression that unbelief is solidly grounded in the assured results of experimental science. Such attitudes have important philosophical and scientific-claim

² *The Listener*, Nov. 29, 1962, p. 914.

bases, though there are many both within and outside religion who believe the claims to be wholly or in part specious.

In the United States during the past half-century a powerful wave of naturalism has engulfed higher education and has seeped down into lower levels. Rejecting the name "materialism" because of its anachronistic billiard-ball conception of the atom, intellectuals use the term naturalism³ to express the claim that life in this world is of one kind only, namely, natural. Everything, whether biological, aesthetic, or ethical, can be accounted for in the terms of nature and its processes. Religion too must point to some factor of the process which is scientifically identifiable and manipulable. This procedure yields the handy conclusion that naturalists need not deny God, which denial would be as doctrinaire as to affirm his otherworldly existence. Naturalism reduces whatever the term God denotes to nature. God is reduced to the measure of man's comprehension and to the limit of his command.

Psychology, notably behaviourism, is the most publicly prominent discipline which has been naturalistically conditioned. Derived from the parallel research of Pavlov in Russia and William James, John Dewey, J. B. Watson, and B. F. Skinner in the United States, behaviourism interprets all human conduct in terms of the stimulus response (SR). Satisfaction of need and conditioning are alleged to give a total account of human behaviour and therefore of the essential nature of human life.

In recent years the theory has come under vigorous attack, the most famous being that of Arthur Koestler.⁴ In a monumental work he examines the behaviourist premise in the light of recent scientific data on the creative actions of animals and the activity and intelligence of human beings. He concludes that fifty years of behaviourism (famous for its study of the white rat in an experimental box) have produced nothing but a ratomorphic view of man.

In the twentieth century man has been animalized and robotized. Nowhere is it more evident than in the advocacy of freedom in sexual mores, including pre-marital sexual intercourse by "responsible" young people. The euphemisms which envelop this advocacy of change in the public's attitude to sex mores are remarkable for their imprecision and quasi-moral flavour. The appeal is to "adult attitudes", "mutual responsibility", "regard for the other's feelings", etc.

³ *Naturalism and the Human Spirit*, ed. Y. Krikorian (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944).

⁴ Arthur Koestler, *The Act of Creation* (London: Hutchinson, 1964).

But are such situations, especially among youth, really as rational as alleged? Under the impact of naturalistic philosophy and behaviouristic psychology the relativization and jettisoning of ethics means that the present appeal to "liberalize" the public's attitude toward sex mores is in reality an appeal to codify what is regarded as *fait accompli*.

During this past year in America some ranking educators, including a prominent woman college president, publicly endorsed a study entitled "Sex and the College Student" which was produced by 260 psychiatrists.⁵ The report urged that sexual activity be regarded as a private matter not of administrative concern, that information about contraception should be provided college students, and that a girl who becomes pregnant and her partner should be able to secure early diagnosis of her condition so as to be in a position to consider alternative plans, apparently including abortion.

Information on contraception, venereal disease, and abortion seems to be a current prime objective. Information is important, nevertheless present programmes seem to condone promiscuity. Is our primary concern how to live with our sinning rather than how to direct human drives in morally sanctioned ways—ways that answer to the purposes of their Creator? I am opposed to the legislation of religion and morality. But do not present trends encourage development of a planned economy of immorality?

The new code, speciously advocated on the grounds of "freedom" and natural pleasure, projects forms of human behaviour and modes of human relations which many believe attack elements necessary to the integrity of personal life and the best interests of communal life.

Similar attitudes are widespread in Europe as well. In a widely noted radio address, the British professor of psychiatry, G. M. Carstairs,⁶ advocates revision of attitudes to sex in view of the radically changed situation in Britain, especially among youth. He notes a significant alteration in the public's attitude even in the previous three years. In the published form of the address phrases like "new attitude to contraception" and "experienced newly weds" occur. While the dangers to emotional life and the social life of the community and venereal disease are points of concern to the author, the key feature of the address is that sex mores in all strata of society have in fact changed considerably and that we may as well accept the revised ways as a new code. This is the reality

⁵ *New York Times*, Paris, Dec. 13, 1965.

⁶ *The Listener*, Nov. 25, 1965, p. 835.

of the situation, and he adds, "Young people's sexual behaviour can certainly no longer be restrained by appeals to religious tenets in which their parents no longer believe."

The collapse of certain aspects of sex-prudism may be welcomed but the facts of which Professor Carstairs speaks may require an interpretation other than that which he places upon them. One correspondent pointed out that Professor Carstairs' essay bristles with the kinds of value judgments he condemns. Slanted expressions like "religious admonitions", "exalted standards", and "Victorian hypocrisy", occur together with the innuendo that clergymen entertain unreal notions of their influence on society in view of the recent religious boom, while the actual sociological facts are against them. But if not the advocacy, then the acceptance of pre-marital sex experience as "part of the business of growing up", "as a sensible preliminary" to marriage, through which they can "fulfil their potentialities" in "deep personal relationships", having "thought about the matter", comprises value-judgments and built-in attitudes calculated to manipulate the listener's response while distorting opposing viewpoints.⁷

In Britain also the animalization of human behaviour has either been based on, or has adopted as its foundation, a powerful surge of popular naturalism. Recently the creation of the British Humanist Association under the apostleship of men like Julian Huxley, A. J. Ayer and A. G. N. Flew has crystallized efforts to make the humanist movement more militant and evangelistic. Concerted efforts have been made to articulate humanist principles by radio broadcasts, pamphlets, and discussion groups. Members of the group have felt (rightly or wrongly) that their cause has been significantly buttressed by the theological perspectives of Paul Tillich, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Bishop John Robinson.

Such efforts have an admittedly pronounced anti-religious and anti-supernatural stance often combined with a debunking attitude toward "Victorian morality" and normative ethics, or any ethics built on a theistic premise. In recounting his conversion to logical positivism Professor A. J. Ayer⁸ makes the point that even earlier he was already a "tremendous proselytizer" in his efforts to debunk religion and the authority of the Bible, which he combined with a sceptical attitude to traditional claims for the foundations of morals. It cannot be said that some pronouncements by clergy and theologians, either then or now, encourage thinking youth to accept

⁷ *The Listener*, Dec. 2, 1965, p. 908.

⁸ *The Listener*, Nov. 4, 1965, p. 699.

the supernatural basis of true religion or the divine sanction of moral standards.

Is it unfair to suggest that just as Christians and churches must bear responsibility for the diffused results of their acts or inaction, so philosophical humanists and naturalists must bear the responsibility for personal and societal distress which their moral ideas generate? Or does the relative character of their premises absolve them from this responsibility? Not even the most militant of them has been willing to say that.

Similar trends are already well established in western Europe. The Roman Catholic psychotherapist Ignace Lepp has written on the atheistic, nihilistic, and anti-moralistic movements in France. His analysis includes the influence of Nietzsche, Jean Rostand, André Malraux, Albert Camus, and Jean-Paul Sartre. Of the latter he says, "To scoff at all the recognized values, to respect neither country, religion, nor even social revolution—this is a mission worthy of a true existentialist". Then, on the results of this philosophy, Lepp concludes:

He is perhaps proud that a substantial number of young people recognize him as a master; yet he must be pained to see some of the results of his cogitations. Snobbery has certainly been more influential in creating the existentialist vogue than Sartre's philosophy. But the link between this philosophy and the vogue is no mere accident. Both bear witness to the failure of the ambitions of the nineteenth-century atheists: to make man the supreme being for man, to build a superior civilization and a humanism that would be dependent upon no absolute.⁹

The value judgments of humanism (that they are there in the form of hidden absolutes is incontrovertible) promise freedom in release from traditional moral restraints. But this rosy picture of idyllic life according to nature and of conventions developed on a high intellectual plane is a myth—often a corroding and damning myth.

One needs to have looked into a few burdened faces in a pastoral way and to have sensed the remorse and the pain of soul that burns in the eyes to know that the popularly conceived humanist code for a heaven-on-earth is false. The true child of the modern mood of normless mores and a Godless world is spiritless man, convinced that nothing reigns supreme, and incapable of suicide because even that recourse is meaningless. The true mood of life is despair and the truth of reality is nothingness. No one should suppose that these ideas represent the opinions of a sophisticated minority. They articulate the despairing mood of the times. The

⁹ *Atheism In Our Time* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), pp. 149, 158.

mood characterizes not only personal existentialist outlooks but also an historical or cosmic despair. In contrast to the rosy platitudes of the proselytizing humanists, Bertrand Russell in some eloquent line has given utterance to what is the truth of the atheistic perspective:

That man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins—all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built.¹⁰

These words are known not simply as "I told you so" quotations by clergymen in religious tracts. Multitudes of intelligent, prosperous people in our time live by them, as I have come to know in my work first as a pastor and then as a theological professor. They comprise a sort of creed-in-reverse of the times.

That morality can represent many things no one can deny. It can represent a sense of caste—social or intellectual. It can answer to utilitarian demands. It can be connected with our sense of the pragmatic, of the practical, of what works. But essentially morality concerns obligation to right action. P. T. Forsyth, the British theologian of a recent generation, said "The truth we see depends on the men we are".

The final sanction of conduct is that it represents a righteousness unto the Lord, the Creator and Sustainer of life. To deny this, in my judgment, is to express most clearly the radical fallenness of man.

II. EMOTIONAL RECOURSE

To some, what men do in their emotional lives constitutes the most obvious marks of human sinfulness; to others it constitutes landmarks of man's right to freedom and his chief end, which is pleasure.

One of the incongruous aspects of modern hedonism is the tension between its egoism and its altruism. John Dewey saw the world primarily in biological terms. Organisms seek satisfaction

¹⁰ From "A Free Man's Worship", cited in *Selected Papers of Bertrand Russell* (New York: The Modern Library, n. d.), p. 3.

from their environment until new needs arise and the cycle is repeated. Dewey himself is reputed to have been a benign person. In his theory he sought to transpose the highly subjective need-satisfaction activity of human organisms into altruistic behaviour. This can be done only in terms inconsistent with the theory's premise. The same inconsistency occurs in the naturalistic ethics of R. B. Perry.

How does one and why should one pass from concern with one's own need to concern about the needs of others? A. L. Hilliard¹¹ has applied the principles of the hedonist ethic much more consistently when he remarks that since the activity of organisms is directed to the satisfaction of need or pleasure, altruism marks the death of an organism.

The general public has been much less prone to make subtle and inconsistent distinctions. This view of man has in our time triggered a powerful impulse of egocentric, hedonistic behaviour marked by significant sensual overtones and social irresponsibility. So great are the dimensions of this trend that of recent years Bertrand Russell, no friend of the Christian faith, has remarked that what the world needs is a strong dose of Christian love.

When I visited England for the first time, I was immediately impressed by the privacy of the English home. With its small walled garden the Englishman's home is his private kingdom. In the United States most new suburban subdivisions have an openness about them because often there are no fences let alone walls between properties. At least in architectural planning communal life or "togetherness" is suggested. In fact neither plan may suggest the truth of the matter.

The real walls between people are not of brick and mortar, and they may be as much there when the breeze can blow from garden to garden unimpeded by masonry. The real divisions are in the lives of people, not the divisions of the petty, quarrelsome kind, but deep-seated isolation which is due sometimes to bitter loneliness and sometimes to selfish living.

Egocentric behaviour dominates modern, especially urban life; but media of public communication have disseminated this spirit to all parts of society. The philosophy is "get while the getting's good", "play now pay later", and "let's have fun". The tragedy is that people lose while they're getting, they pay while they're playing, and the more they get, the less they enjoy it.

A vast restlessness has engulfed well-to-do Western man, which

¹¹ A. L. Hilliard, *The Forms of Value* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), p. 156.

says more about his travel-craze than that he is simply interested in new people and lands. One wag has commented that Baptist preachers especially have of recent years rewritten the biblical text to read, "Go ye into all the world and photograph every creature".

The abject sadness of tourists with whom I have spoken is appalling. How many, especially older people, pay thousands of dollars for trips they neither need nor enjoy simply to be with other people for a few weeks?

Frustration seems to intensify where affluence and pleasure-seeking are in the ascendancy. With this frustration there sometimes is combined a desire to break through the often self-created barrier of isolation by philanthropic interests, but these deeds are done "at a distance", requiring no personal involvement of the donor.

The symptoms and diseases of frustration are many. They include drug addiction, alcoholism, mental breakdown, obsession with sex, criminal activity, and cruelty. The recent book *The Group* charts the course of similar behaviour. The final outlet of frustration is suicide. There have been noteworthy instances in recent years of people taking this outlet, including several world-renowned beautiful women. Recent sociological and law-enforcement agency studies indicate that all the foregoing symptoms show marked and continuing escalation in recent years.

Absorption with sex has assumed public epidemic proportions. Pornographic literature has become a subject of widespread concern. Other equally pernicious material is offered on an ostensibly acceptable social level, such as in *Playboy Magazine*, in Bunny Clubs, and in other private "art appreciation" groups. The republication and extensive distribution (even at food store check-out counters in the U.S.) of *Fanny Hill* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* are instances of the dissemination of material which portrays sex as idyllic pleasure with no reference to the personal and medical consequences of sin. The book *Sex and the Modern Girl* is seen by some as a manual of instruction on the exploitation of sex both for personal gratification and for business advantage.

The movie industry has established its own censorship, as have certain sponsors of TV programmes and the TV outlet themselves. But this censorship does not touch the small independent producers nor the many approved films which are dubious and unfit for family viewing.

In a pointedly titled article published in *Reader's Digest* (one of many such articles in current literature), O. K. Armstrong asks, "Must Our Movies Be Obscene?"¹² What used to be fare shown

¹² *Reader's Digest*, Nov., 1965.

furtively only in slum theatres is now standard diet in many "respectable" movie houses. A routine survey of lurid theatre marquees, he said, yielded such scenes as almost nude embraces, strip-poker parties, torrid love, and sadism; lesbianism and homosexuality were openly suggested. Such films are now booked at regular prices at neighbourhood theatres where they attract the teenage audience most of whom have money to spend.

The bitter harvest of such influences is now being reaped. Statistics show a startling rise of crime among youth. Youth with little or no moral foundation comprise large segments of society. Fearful predictions are being made that law and order are breaking down, especially in large metropolitan areas. Let him who is sceptical feel at first hand the ruthless force of unbridled lust and violence before he heaps scorn on the predictions.

During the past year England was shocked at the disclosure of bestiality connected with a multiple murder case. Newspaper headlines read, " 'You should have seen his eyes', said Myra" (one of the accused speaking of a victim). And, "Brady kept hitting him until the lad stopped screaming", said by a young witness. During October last year, the news wires carried the story of a helpless paralytic waiting outside a Florida shop who was accosted by some youths and severely beaten. As the victim died in the arms of his wife he was heard to murmur, "They kicked, and kicked, and kicked". Such stories can be multiplied endlessly. They attest a harvest of hate, indifference to suffering, and outright sadistic cruelty which depends on a view of human life under-girded by no spiritual values, the physical, mental, and emotional resources of which can be triggered to abysmal depths of evil action.

Vital to the foregoing tendencies is the loss of the sense of sin, which must be put down to more than secular influences. It is ironic that in our time clergymen have aided in undermining the sense of sin in the name of religious psychology.

Chiefly through Freudian theory, a reverse meaning has been assigned to the function of conscience. It is said that anxiety is due to evil wishes the individual represses rather than commits, not from acts he has committed but wishes he had not. Freedom therefore has been interpreted as liberation from repressing a super-sensitive conscience. I am acquainted with clergymen who counsel clients to do things they have not dared to do because these things have appeared to be immoral. This advice is based on a naturalistic understanding of personality and value.

Recently O. Hobart Mowrer, a former president of the American Psychological Association, has called for a more traditional

doctrine of sin, guilt, and forgiveness, urging clergymen to "return to a sounder, less fantastic position". He writes,

At the very time that psychologists are becoming distrustful of the sickness approach to personality disturbance and are beginning to look with more benign interest and respect toward certain moral and religious precepts, religionists themselves are being caught up in and bedazzled by the same preposterous system of thought as that from which we psychologists are just recovering.¹³

Professor Mowrer claims that the patient who condemns himself, even to the point of thinking that he has committed the unpardonable sin, is likely to get well. It is the patient who blames others who does not get well.

The Christian Gospel has always proclaimed that a deep sense of one's sinfulness is the first step to peace with God, with one's self, and with one's neighbour.

III. POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RECOURSE

A significant concern of recent times is the emergence of the "organization man" in modern industrialized society. To be "part of the team" often means to be a cog in the works. The humanitarian concerns that pressed for the social securing of basic human needs seem to have carried with such procurement the radical impersonalization of life.

Pressure to conform is enormous in all societies. Increasingly sophisticated methods are being devised to keep complete "tab" on any man at any time. Various electronic devices are now so efficient and so widely used that some believe personal privacy has disappeared in civilized society. The traditionally despised eavesdropper and snooper has been baptized into a highly competent—indeed to some, necessary—technician. Serious discussions have been undertaken at the government level in Britain, Canada, the United States, and elsewhere on how to cope with this growing menace to freedom.

The increasing use of propaganda techniques is universally apparent. This term is simply a euphemism for "brain-washing" and "thought-control". Few aspects of modern life receive the skilled attention of more professional and highly paid executives than do the search for what the public is thinking and the attempt to direct or redirect that consensus. At a consumer conference last year, Louis J. Lefkowitz, Attorney-General of New York State, said:

"Truth in lending" or "truth in packaging", "truth in advertising" or just plain "truth in the market place" is shockingly absent in the dealings of a broad fringe element of business with the consumer.¹⁴

¹³ O. Hobart Mowrer, *The Crisis in Psychiatry and Religion* (New York: Van Nostrand, 1961), pp. 52-53.

¹⁴ *New York Times*, Paris, Dec. 13, 1965.

Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* need not wait long for fulfillment.¹⁵

One irony of the foregoing techniques is the brainwashing of the brainwashers. Any pattern of advertising or of political thought-control or of sociological or religious ideas tends to influence other as yet non-participating outlets until the outlets of propaganda become themselves victims of their own creation. So intolerant can attitudes become (they can be created with remarkable speed) that criticism of them is often tantamount to political, economic, or sociological suicide.

For example, during the Kennedy-Nixon political campaign, a powerful climate of opinion was created which made it virtually impossible to ask penetrating questions on the religious and political involvements of a Roman Catholic president for the candidate and for the country. This climate was as irrational an ethos as that which had rejected the idea *a priori*. A similar wave of opinion is now dominant in America and Canada so that it is highly unpopular, especially in religious circles, to criticize Roman Catholicism in the light of the Vatican Council.

When Governor Nelson Rockefeller attempted to oppose the candidacy of Barry Goldwater at the Republican National Convention in San Francisco in 1964 by means of radio and television, the public was treated to the hysterical reaction of a crowd previously conditioned by an amazingly resourceful technique. At the present time a different propaganda machine is attempting to efface this image and to create one of the party more politically acceptable to the voter.

Another problem is discrimination. Racism seems to be a problem as old as recorded history. In modern Western history racism derives specifically from the European white-supremacy colonial policies. Racial discrimination is on the increase and is now compounded by prejudice in reverse where whites are discriminated against in the emerging non-white countries. With this is combined a new militant chauvinism.

I have often sat in the French Market of old New Orleans drinking coffee and pondering the fact that human beings were actually sold there in recent history. In some parts of the world they are still being sold or are being held in equivalent economic and social bondage. I lived in the Deep South of the United States for five years and frequently visited the rural areas, where I had oppor-

¹⁵Similar books are: George Orwell, *1984*; and C. S. Lewis, *That Hideous Strength*.

tunity of intimate contact with the people. It is heartening that despite generations-old ingrained attitudes, rapid strides are being made to overcome the worst elements of the social and political isolation and mistreatment of the American Negro. On a national scale probably more advance is being made in America at the present time than in any other predominantly white country. But the progress is agonizingly slow in comparison with the enormity of the problem. World-wide racial tensions probably will become far worse before they become better.

A year ago a centenary occurred which few cared to remember. It was the final end of the transatlantic slave trade. From the sixteenth century until 1865 it is estimated that about 15,000,000 African slaves were carried to North and South America in about 50,000 voyages. While the pattern of slave ownership in America is well known, it is not well known that the largest single slaveholder in South America during this period was the wealthy Jesuit order.

The shippers of slaves were predominantly the British (and Americans after 1783) and Portuguese, who shipped about equal numbers, followed by the Dutch, French, and Spanish; but there were significant Danish, German and other shippers also.¹⁶ The record of the slave-era is excruciatingly painful to read. It was justified sociologically, thought to be economically necessary, and approved by the leading religious bodies. The voices of dissent were easily suppressed or dared not to speak at all. The current harvest of racial hatred can be understood only in the light of the past record.

The problems generated by racism and nationalism continue in widespread ways. Housing for "coloured people" in Britain, in America, and on the Continent is a constant irritant. Ghetto-like conditions keep local feeling at high pitch and near-riot circumstances prevail almost constantly in many urban centres. I read with much appreciation the Reith Lectures in 1965 by the prominent Ghanaian, Robert Gardiner, in which he analysed contemporary race problems.¹⁷ I was disappointed however that while he criticized the colonial powers and contemporary racist attitudes, he scored the current anti-white tendencies by certain emergent nations, the attitudes to the outcasts in India, and the attitudes of many Arabs to Negroes only lightly. Is this casual treatment due to political

¹⁶ Hugh Thomas "Slave Trade", *The Observer*, Oct. 17, 1965.

¹⁷ "A World of Peoples", *The Listener*, Nov. 11, 18, 25. Dec. 2, 9, 16, 1965.

reasons, just as white supremacist attitudes are often expressed for political reasons?

Many contemporary nationalist attitudes in fact reflect racism. The treatment of Italian, Yugoslav, and Greek labourers in the industrial countries of central Europe is in my judgment sometimes neither enlightened nor Christian. I have often travelled on the trains of central Europe and have noticed the painfully prejudiced attitudes taken toward foreign labour, whose services in burgeoning industry are welcomed, but who are carefully kept disenfranchised, and who enjoy little of the rights of other citizens. The extent of chauvinistic attitudes in certain countries of Western Europe against most foreigners is quite astonishing.

An economic malaise of the modern world is the wasteful exploitation, sometimes involuntary, of natural resources. Water and air pollution alone have become problems of immense proportions. Sometimes the destruction of landscape and the undermining of public health that follow exploitive measures in industry and agriculture change the balance of nature, with the evil consequences fully felt only by the succeeding generations.

The senseless destruction of wildlife during the past century has threatened the extinction of scores of animal and bird species. It is reliably reported that since 1900 over 100 species of wild creatures have become extinct.

Spike Milligan, the well-known British entertainer, in a biting article, attempts to awaken the public conscience and to stimulate action to save wild animals. The mass extermination of vast stores of animal life (witness the buffalo in Northern America and the oryx in Arabia and Yemen which have been near extermination) are due to man, the wasteful predator who loves to kill senselessly. Mr. Milligan cites the incident when 800,000 pounds sterling was paid (350,000 by public subscription, and 450,000 by the British government) to "save" a Leonardo da Vinci cartoon from being sold abroad, though up until then it had been kept in a cellar. Then he adds:

With that sort of money the future of *living* masterpieces, that not even Leonardo could create, might be secured: the orang-utan, the panda, the Javan rhino, the cheetah, the whooping crane, the Tasmanian tiger. The fight for wild life is no crank struggle: it is as much a battle to save man's morality as it is to save the world of animals he is constantly destroying.¹⁸

New questions are being raised on the moral as well as the medical and economic implications of factory farming. In Britain

¹⁸ *The Observer*, Dec. 12, 1965.

the Brambell Committee reported somewhat negatively on factory farming last year. It recommended a ban on mutilations (de-beaking chickens) and on iron-deficient diets to produce anaemic white-fleshed calves. It proposed minimum standards for cages and pens housing fowl and animals. Important in the report is that suffering not only physically but also socially can be caused to animals when basic instincts are frustrated commercially. Thus the exploiting tendencies of man in relation to the creatures that furnish his livelihood and food are brought under moral scrutiny and judgment. The Committee concluded that there should be legislation to make infliction of unavoidable stress an offence. It seems that man who brings frustration on himself aims also to pass on his malaise by mechanizing the lives of the creatures that sustain and feed him.

When writing on the political challenge of an over-populated world, Sir Geoffrey Vickers drew two lessons from a familiar story. The story is that a man who fell from the top of the Empire State Building was heard to say to himself as he whistled past the second floor, "Well, I'm all right so far". The story points, first, to the absurd speed with which we come to accept as normal almost any outrageous condition once we have actually, though briefly, lived with it. Second, it points to the absurd slowness with which we come to accept any impending change which has not yet happened.¹⁹ We are at the end of free fall.

The use of war to settle international disputes is exercising many minds in all political camps, because the holocaust which nuclear devastation would unleash cannot be imagined. Failures of judgment are among the most feared causes of war, especially as recent history shows how rapidly new factors make issues peripheral which were once thought to be decisive.

Edward Crankshaw, the journalist on Russian affairs, pointed out early this year that the role of Russia as peacemaker between Pakistan and India is a curious twist of history, while America, the peace-lover, is engaged in an ideological war. Who remembers the Japanese-Russian war now that China has emerged as the third world colossus? Who remembers that once Tashkent and a short rail line to Merv were thought by Whitehall and Delhi to be a threat to India? How many bastions felt to be strategic by nineteenth-century generals have slipped out of reach and importance by forces neither they nor their political leaders could foresee? Then Crankshaw adds, "The more things change the odder they become".

¹⁹ *The Listener*, Oct. 28, 1965.

The political disillusionments of the past generation comprise a sort of quiet revolution. No one has articulated the failure of a political ideal recently more dramatically than has Milovan Djilas. In his most recent book *Montenegro*, an historical novel, Djilas describes the collapse of the Serbian ideal during World War I, but implies the collapse of all political ideals. Throughout the book is the plaintive cry of the heroic heart which is incapable of giving up an ideal though it is hollow, yet which is incapable of not dying for the ideal. Despite its naturalistic assumptions this heart cannot escape the force of moral good. Djilas puts these words into the lips of Miloš who tomorrow morning is to be hanged as a patriot at the hands of the Austrians.

The footsteps continued to drip. In books there is always a dripping of water before an execution. And the beating of drums. They'll beat for me, too, to announce my death, to measure out the time, the time of our emergence onto the stage of Europe and the world, the time of my hanging.

But I have not many sins. I use the word "sin" as if I were religious. But the expression isn't important. We atheists, for that matter, haven't yet invented a substitute for it. The idea is important. It is important what I think—if I can still think. I don't really believe in sin, yet I remember mine as if I were a believer, and a devout believer at that.

My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? Christ on the Cross in his last moments. Ha, I may become a Christian yet.²⁰

The human sense of sin is the first glimmering ray of heavenly light, the first caress of God's Spirit.

IV. RELIGIOUS RECOURSE

Some have named our age "The Post-Christian Era", so impotent has seemed the impact of the Christian message through the Church. It is more likely that the Fallenness of Man is exhibited with astonishing clarity in institutionalized religion, including the Christian religion.

Interest in religion, especially in the United States and Canada, has been booming since the war. But this boom only obscures world-wide scepticism that the Church has any vitality to affect world affairs.

There is good reason to wonder whether the Church can expect the respect of men. The Church has increasingly intruded into areas of public affairs and social action, while staging a dramatic retreat on the need of godliness in its own life, the need of morality, and the need of a concerted effort to get the Gospel to the common man, especially at the central urban level. It is easy to pontificate as the

²⁰ *Montenegro* (London: Methuen & Co., 1964), p. 245.

growing tendency of the religious establishments seems to be, especially when newspapermen telephone church offices to know what the "Baptist" or "Episcopal" or "Catholic" view is on any particular question; but it is hard to see how human problems will be solved by words.

Tragically the most common recourse of man is religion. By its very nature religion may obscure the truth of God's revelation, or it may become an escape hatch to release native pressures to conform which simply shield the fact that little or no personal faith in God is held. There is such a thing as the unbelief of believers or religious atheism.

Many Christian bodies in their public acts and pronouncements have withdrawn from the issues of sin and redemption. The spiritual life of the Church has been petrified into social strata which parallel divisions in society. To me, withdrawal from the world into religious orders tends to make a mockery of the Christian commission, but I must say that prominent Protestant bodies in the Western world have staged tactics of withdrawal. One department of evangelism of a prominent religious denomination in the United States proclaims piously that the denomination's programme is not to reach the most but to be the best. This kind of stress on "quality" is to opt for exclusivist, esoteric Christianity and in reality constitutes a confession of failure.

A favourite Marxist motto is "Religion is the opiate of the people". This statement is true. Between the non-Christian religions and the various forms of institutionalized Christianity (especially where religious establishments prevail), uncounted millions of people live in religious paralysis and economic depression, which are abetted and imposed by religions. In my youth I was part of a prevailing Eastern Orthodox religion and personally can attest to the stultifying effects of lifeless religious form, especially when allied with politics.

In recent months a furious debate has broken out in Canada over the best-selling 1965 Lenten paperback, *The Comfortable Pew*,²¹ commissioned by the Department of Religious Education of the Anglican Church of Canada. Pierre Berton is a popular journalist, radio and TV personality in Canada, and self-confessed agnostic. The Commission decided to invite his services for an "outsider's" view of the Church. Mr. Berton had in his youth been an Anglican. Later in disgust he gave up religion, though he now belongs to the United Church of Canada.

²¹ Toronto: McLelland & Stewart Ltd., 1965.

Clergymen, theologians, and informed theological readers will hold in reserve their agreement with Mr. Berton's theological ideas which are expressed in the currently popular demythologizing language of Bonhoeffer, Bultmann, Bishop John Robinson, and Paul Tillich. That certain perspectives of these men are hospitable to Mr. Berton's convictions is apparent, but one can withhold agreement with these perspectives while still appreciating a major thrust of his book.

While there has been a violent reaction to Mr. Berton's book, religious people would do well to read carefully what he says. Chiefly he indicts religious establishment, esoteric language, deadness, isolation from the world and the common people, prudishness, and social exclusiveness.

He points to the irrationalities of war where religious leaders of the conflicting sides claim God for their respective causes. He is sharply critical of the colour bar which prevents non-whites from worshipping in most white churches and of the social barriers which keep out lower class people from most churches which are predominantly middle class. The alliance of the Church with business interests (often shown by the failure of the Church to judge its members), the ecclesiastical caste system, and the shallow concern with the outcasts of society all constitute indictments of mid-twentieth century "comfortable pew" religion.

How many central city churches have been closed down or moved out by their congregations simply because the congregation has lost touch with the community the church was built to serve? *This pattern is characteristic of churches of all theological persuasions.* The Church stands more as the symbol of affluence than of service to humanity. To play little religious games in church with those of one's own kind may well be a prime index of man's fallenness.

A peculiar type of withdrawal from the lists of combat is indirect evangelism by radio, newspapers, tracts, or the support of missionaries. All these may be legitimate efforts to spread the gospel, but there is in some quarters a grotesque impersonalization of Christian work. To be sure, modern means should be employed for preaching the gospel, *provided such means are not deputies for the non-involvement of Christians and churches.* Dropping tracts over jungle areas by airplane or balloon or subsidizing Christian work is no excuse for one's own inaction. I know of many prominent evangelical churches which contribute handsomely to various missionary causes but which make little effort to reach the people

around them. This is a sinful distortion of the Christian calling and task.

About five years ago in New Orleans I represented the Christian side on behalf of the New Orleans Council of Churches in a dialogue with a notable Jewish leader. He spoke on the attitudes of Christians to Jews, and I was invited to reply. In the interesting exchange that ensued, the question of the evangelization of Jews by Christians was raised. I shall never forget one of his comments, which went something like this, "If you Christians are so anxious to win us Jews to your faith, why do you give us tracts; why don't you take us out for an hour on the golf-course?" The point was well made: many Christians would like to win Jews, but those same Christians really don't wish to have anything to do with Jews. One cannot really blame the non-Christians, who so often suspect the motives of Christians.

A further mark of man's sinfulness in religion is discrimination and outright persecution. Many religious bodies, including the Roman Catholic Church, the various Eastern Orthodox churches, some segments of the Episcopal communion, and others, still maintain the post-Constantinian mediaeval view of the co-extensive church and state. In order to preserve political stability, as well as religious uniformity, multitudes of people were cruelly exterminated because they held ideas contrary to the establishment.

The vision of many mediaeval martyrs has approached realization only in recent generations. They envisioned the separation of church and state and the achievement of composite societies where differences of religious views are not merely tolerated but where religious establishment with all its attendant evils is banished.

In the name of all that is holy, how can the *Christian* church have anything to do with enforcing religious beliefs? The alliance of religion and political power has perpetrated some of the worst evils in history. These practices were true of the Catholic church in the middle ages and later of the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, and Reformed Churches.

The play *The Deputy* has occasioned an outcry, but little by way of rebuttal of what playwright Hochhuth criticized in the alliance of the Papacy with the Nazi regime of Hitler and the Fascist regime of Mussolini. The recent book by the historian Guenther Lewy, *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany*,²² makes depressing reading. In this unique and thoroughly documented book the overriding impression I had is that the topmost Church leaders were concerned with the image of the church and

²² New York: McGraw Hill, 1964.

the maintenance of advantage in the future rather than with the ministry of Christ.

The recent Vatican Council has adopted a Declaration on Religious Liberty which all men will welcome. It reads in part:

This Vatican Council declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom. This freedom means that all men are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such ways that no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits.

Does it need pointing out that tens of thousands of Christians were martyred during the middle ages for such beliefs by the same church, and is it not remarkable that it has taken until the mid-twentieth century for this statement finally to be made? No one who has not been actively persecuted for religion's sake can know the beastly horror that persecution is.

Ignorance, intolerance, and religious persecution form an astonishing troika. In a recent book entitled *Opium of the People* by an English Anglican theological student, Michael Bordeaux, we have the personal reminiscences of one who spent a year inside the Soviet Union. A key feature of the book is that the author went to Russia because he was enamoured of the Orthodox ritual, but he came away sadly disappointed with the Orthodox, while praising the evangelical groups like the Baptists. He remarks that forty years of persecution have taught the Orthodox little.

No fair evaluation of recent history can escape the conclusion that religious establishments, through their own corruption, indifference to the higher values of the spiritual life, political alliances with evil, dictatorial regimes, have sown the wind and have reaped the whirlwind. This harvest is the judgment of God, and it will ever be thus.

In religion, history attests the fact that the fall is the greater because the claim is higher. The Church can never be at peace with society but must always have its own life and the life of the world under the judgment of God's Word. World-wide revival is possible in our time. Let men seek the God who redeemed them, who as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is worthy of all praise now and ever.

New Orleans, Louisiana.