

## SCANDAL OF NONPAREIL-UNIQUE PARTICULARITY

1 Unapologetic Christianity is now spreading faster than any other religion (Islam being second; Buddhism, third). Apologetic Christianity is mired in apologies, some of it so abject as to sound like "Forgive me for still being alive." Michael Horowitz, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute and, though a Jew, tireless advocate for persecuted Christians, is appalled that liberal-mainline Christians are the chief obstacle to his witness. When he asks them to say something positive about Christian influence in history & today, they persist in bemoaning all the harm Christianity has done! He quotes Joan Brown Campbell, general secretary of the National Council of Churches, as saying (as quoted in the NEW YORK TIMES), "If you look at the Nazi regime, you see in it the philosophy of Christian superiority." (3.1.99 CHRISTIANITY TODAY, 54) She's dreadfully afraid of being accused of what this Thinksheet's title proclaims.

2 In attacking the Holocaust Museum's 14-minute film for its blatant antichristianism, Horowitz can count on no help from liberal Christian leaders even though the facts favoring the attack are compelling. The film is "a screed promoting the idea that Martin Luther, a few popes, and Christian doctrine were the prime if not singular causes of Auschwitz"--a "libel of Christianity" parallel with the now-repudiated antisemitic screed of "deicide." "I look forward to a serious effort to insist on a film that understand's Nazism's direct links to such anti-Christian movements as German romanticism and the Enlightenment-based, Darwinian notion that put race at the center of all." He cites Jewish scholar Marc Saperstein, who calls for "historical accuracy and fundamental fairness" to see that Nazism was "a regime that was fundamentally anti-Christian": making Christians guilty of the Holocaust is as bad as making Jews responsible for the Crucifixion.

3 In contrast to degenerate Christian liberalism that is intolerant of historic Christian particularism, especially evangelicalism, Jews like Horowitz can & do make common cause with evangelicals in protesting the present persecution of Christians in many countries. Say those liberal Christians, evangelicals "bring it [persecution] on themselves"; "we wouldn't want [them] as neighbors"; they are "clannish" types who refuse to "fit in" with "host" cultures--the very charges, says Horowitz, which rationalized indifference when Jews were suffering persecution!

4 Liberal insensitivity to the current fate of evangelical Christians in many countries ironically contrasts with liberal supersensitivity to nonChristians & non-Christian religions. The Christian language is suppressed when Jews, secularists, or devotees of nonbiblical religions are present. Geo.Marsden & Jas.T.Burtchael have been detailing the tragic betrayal of the vision of the Protestant founders of virtually all early-American schools of higher education (as well as, I may add, the American [Protestant] public schools). Robt.Wood is quoted in yesterday's CHRISTIAN CENTURY (p235) on this: "The 'effort to build up a great unified American civilization--indeed, to usher in the Christian century whence this journal takes its name--produced a huge unintended irony. The old-line universities where Protestant liberalism was once the established faith became so all-inclusive that they not only lost their Christian identity, they eventually excluded Protestant liberalism.'"

5 The second & last words of this Thinksheet's title are these: "anti-egalitarian" & "particularity." "Equality" raised to the sacred power dislikes difference & hates what here I've called "nonpareil-unique particularity," i.e., the claim of noncategorical (incomparable & exclusive) onliness such as the biblical monotheism of Jews & Christians & the "Jesus only" of Christians. So pervasive in our culture is the postmodern egalitarian spirit that its hating can be felt even in some Christian leaders & (especially radical feminist) literature.

6 Reason, faith, & love direct us to inquire of what good may be in what we are feeling as threat & evil, but also what evil may be in what we are feeling as promise & good. As I'm a "Jesus only" **radical particularist** (i.e., a believer in the canonically communicated Christian revelation), I am in danger of blind belief without benefit of critical consciousness. In M\*A\*S\*H\*, that hilarious & healing spoof on the military, Major Burns says "Unless we follow our leaders blindly, we can't possibly remain free." (Of the classical/natural virtues, only prudence appears in that statement: courage, temperance, & justice are off-stage.)

But melancholic-hymnist Wm. Cowper (in "God moves in a mysterious way") reminds us of the peril opposite to blind belief: "Blind unbelief is sure to err, / and scan his work in vain; / God is his own interpreter, / and he will make it plain." So don't overuse your critical consciousness: "Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, / but trust him for his grace; / behind a frowning providence / he hides a smiling face." (In that outrageously & uproariously politically correct THE NEW CENTURY HYMNAL, "blind unbelief" cannot occur because "blind" is an insult & hurt to the optically otherwise abled--so Cowper's phrase becomes "our unbelief" [the personal pronoun additionally distorting C.'s meaning].)

7 The God who calls us to worship him with our "all" does not have "a smiling face" when we (to use the words of the Pope's most recent encyclical) swamp FIDES (faith, trust, belief) with RATIO (reason, critical consciousness)--as in liberal Protestantism such as my UCCC--or the reverse--as in the two Catholicisms, East & West. Liberal Protestantism, having surrendered "Jesus only" (i.e., radical) particularity, can't grow. Orthodoxy (Catholicism East) can't grow because it's still mired in ethnicity. Christianity's three growing arms are unashamedly radical-particularist, lightly bearing the burden of the gospel scandal:

- (1) PENTECOSTALISM (the radical particularism of SPIRIT).
- (2) EVANGELICALISM (the radical particularism of BOOK, Bible).
- (3) CATHOLICISM WEST, Romanism (the radical particularism of CHURCH).

Please look, now, at this Thinksheet's second line, the title of the upcoming Craigville Colloquy; then address that question to each of the three above particularisms. Each of the three can be viewed as a mode of providing the assurance of "Jesus as Savior now." All three are evangelistic in bringing the outsider in, into the reality & sense of **belonging**.... While all religious communities have this three-fold character, the Jewish religion is the Christian base; & the movements, denominations, & institutions of the two religions have parallels corresponding to the three: (1) Shekhinah (Heb., "indwelling") is God's presence, the Holy Spirit sometimes experienced (in Hasidism & Pentecostalism) ecstatically; (2) Torah is the sacred text & the teaching (as doctrine & praxis) thereof--in Jewish & Christian high torah, the text elevated to inerrancy (higher than infallibility), the sacred book having sucked up into itself the sacrality of holy temple & holy land; (3) Halal is the community which, seen in its special earthly-heavenly relationship with God, is "keneset" (the Heb. word most closely approx. the Christian word "church"; the State of Israel uses the word for its parliament; in my three "arms," the correspondence is with the Roman Magisterium, the authoritative teaching office of Catholicism West).... Why dwell on the Jewish parallel? Because it's the model, ever fruitful to consider, for Christianity. The NT's major metaphors for this are **adoption** (a family metaphor, in NT a complex idea: Gal. 4.5, Ro. 8.15, 23; 9.4, Eph. 1.5) & **grafting** (an agricultural metaphor, also complex: Ro. 11 [vv. 23-24, Jews grafted back in]). An underexploited (& dangerous!) intracanonical analogy: First Adam, then Eve was taken out of him: First Israel, then the Church was taken out of him (him, Jacob-Israel). Man/woman, & Israel/Church, are fruitful mysteries to be lived, not divorced.

8 Me? I'm a "Jesus only" radical particularist with (what sounds like a contradiction but is only a qualification) an active critical consciousness that forbids "blind" commitment to any of the three arms. E.g., I understand, somewhat appreciate, but am repelled by the ex-Protestant who, in the liturgy of submitting to Rome, said (p5 FIRST THINGS 3.99) "I believe everything that the Catholic Church believes, teaches, and proclaims to be revealed by God." I don't like making Major Burns happy.