

Serial marriage is one spouse after another but never more than one at a time. I've extended to "serial alienation," becoming disenchanted with one infatuation after another. Perhaps a synonym for it is "growing up."

1. As I was emerging from my Marxist period and going to seminary (summer '37), A MOVEMENT FOR WORLD CHRISTIANITY held, at CRDS May 25-28, a conference on "Christianity and the Economic Order." I just reread the report, noting my underlinings and notes after almost a half century. What occasioned the rereading was my reading of the journal SOCIAL TEXT: THEORY/CULTURE/IDEOLOGY, winter/spring '86, 248pp, entirely produced on the wordprocessor of the managing editor, David Wildman, a young man I love as I love and feel close to his whole family, so I was strongly inclined to agree with this issue (at least) (\$7.50, SOCIAL TEXT, Box 450, 70 Greenwich Av., NY, NY, 10011). The former publication is neocapitalist; the latter, neomarxist--their hearts are in approximately the same place, their minds somewhat farther apart. Let have a look at both.

2. The subtitle of CEO is "What are the world-wide economic implications today of our central Christian faith and experience?" Newspaper baron Frank Gannett presents his company's efforts at profit-sharing: labor reps on the board of managers (an idea now widely practiced in Western Europe, still only very slowly catching on in our country); increment checks (not bonuses!) to the workers, parallel with dividends to the stockholders; excess profits to go not into the pockets of stockholders but into a charitable foundation. To sum up: (1) "We must have a sound, honest monetary system" leveling booms and busts; (2) "An honest banking system" with security for depositors rated more important than profits and serving in the creation of "an honest, fair mechanism for the exchange of goods and services"; (3) "We must increase purchasing power....too large a share of the wealth produced goes to capital and not enough to the worker and consumer"; (4) "A real partnership between capital and labor," with capital sufficiently motivated but not excessively rewarded," stocks' value being based not (as now, 1937) on earnings but "on actual investment....If the management of our corporations had been as eager to increase the earnings of labor as it has been to increase the earnings on the common stock, today we would not have this feeling against capital on the part of labor." In reports, total disclosure, including "the return that labor gets for its services." "Give capital a fixed and fair return, varying of course with the risks involved"; after that, "the profits of a corporation should go to--the workers, the consumers, a limited bonus to management. The worker would get his share of the profits through a wage dividend," the aim being "the elimination of class prejudice and class feeling." Job security: "It is not right, not fair, to dismiss a worker from service merely to increase profits. To keep him employed should be a first consideration. Adequate pension funds...unemployment insurance...continuity of employment....All of these suggested changes can be brought about by private corporations without legislative means. Public opinion favors them in principle," and adopting them would bring our economic system "more in line with Christian principles and would by example and influence lead the world to everlasting peace." Mind you, Gannett wasn't just dreaming; he was trying to institute these reforms in his own corporation and was, to a degree few now remember, successful. Why not more successful? Original sin, you might say: greed, bureaucratic warfare, ass-covering, the blaming game, the alibi of competitive necessity--a spread of human filth not too different from that under any economic system anywhere....

3....which leads me to mention the myopic illusion: Close-up flaws look

over

worse than far-away flaws. That year (1937), Stalin was beginning his Great Purge, and those Americans (including me) with socialist dreams were beginning to see some far-away flaws to put alongside the close-by flaws we'd seen through our Great Depression. (Here I was repeating my father, whose prosocialism began to decline with the excesses of the Revolution of 1917. Having gone through the disillusionment himself, he could help me out of mine with the Voice of Experience. What I best remember was his addressing my theories and halfbaked anticapitalist arguments with "In comparison with what" that is in practice or that's ever been practiced?)

4. Some at the CEO conference said Gannett was starry-eyed: only a tiny portion of Am. capitalism would innovate, at he was, toward a more humane economy; and anyway, wasn't his plan ineluctably paternalistic, and isn't the profit motive (as F. Ernest Johnson maintained in his paper) in direct contradiction to the law of love? However, the conference agreed that, given the fact of Am. capitalism's durability, Christians should within it "unite to promote the infusion of the spirit of cooperation to the largest possible degree." Some thought that self-interest, being a law of nature, would endure even though "the spirit of community which Christianity represents" is perhaps "in conflict with the law of nature which drives the individual to look to his own survival and always has done so." While "capitalism must ultimately give way to a collective system of some kind for human good," at present capitalism, adjunctive to democracy, is "the system most productive of human welfare." Seminar work, facing recalcitrant capitalists as an objection to meliorism, "recognized that moderate governmental action would be requisite" (as Johnson urged): "public unemployment insurance and minimum wage laws....governmental assistance for housing to be developed by the localities....efficient public administration....merit basis" for public hiring. "Unqualified condemnation" of communism in the Far East was questioned. "The church should give sympathetic consideration to the co-operative movement," and an integrated co-operative in Tenn. was praised. "The monopolization of raw materials by any country and the erection of barriers to trade stand in the way of the larger good, and cannot be regarded with unconcern by those who take seriously Christ's message of good-will to men." The church, in obedience to Christ's love for all, must "press insistently" for economic structures open to "the largest human good and the elevation of the human spirit."....Johnson's paper reads exactly like Vance Packard's THE WASTE MAKERS (McKay/60, 23 years later!): an unrestricted profit economy defeats itself by production's outrunning consumption. (I add: In an overrestricted economy such as the USSR, consumption-desire outruns production.) Johnson's last sentence: "As Christianity increases, capitalism must decrease."

5. SOCIAL TEXT has a brilliant "Introduction" (by Wildman), comprehending the contents of the issue, which has as its subtitles "Writing After Colonialism" and "Ethics and Radical Practice." (The issue demands another thinksheet, later.) At one point (vii) "History" is capitalized when it doesn't begin a sentence: does this mean the author is, as apparently are the priests in the Sandinista government with this capitalization in Sandinista officialese, comfortable with this marxist holophrase for God? (In my #1910, on the three models of Western thinking--providentialist, moralist, empiricist--marxist "History" is in the 2nd category: the 1st, viz, God, and the 3rd are assumed under the 2nd, viz, the belief that there is in the nature of things a protostructural dynamic making socialism finally inevitable, "History" being the name given to this dynamic. As a devotee of the Biblical God, I am an enemy of "History.")