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CHRISTIANITY AND CRISIS: Correspondence (*published in next issue*)

Dear Editor--

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Since in our house we are going through the dying of a parent whose faith in "God's unconditional love" is the faith Sheila D. Collins-- C&C 17 Apr 78--says her father had, I read her article in tender and appreciative mood. I say a loud and deep "Yes!" to Sheila's humaneness, and do not differ from her in "socio-theological" analysis of the multi-layered and largely unconscious injustice of the world in general and our American uncivilized culture in particular.

This letter, then, could be no more than a yes-saying to my sister. But it will be more useful, I believe, if I speak against her from the stance of her father's faith--certainly not against her existence or convictions, but against the way she grounds her faith in that very Enlightenment which she scores for having flattened the world into mere "equality," a depersonalizing doctrine that rubbed off her father's face and ripped off his gifts and broke his heart. (Ironic that this is now the code word for justice in the liberationists' lexicons!)

Against the indignities of the -isms, the ideologies, and the holocausts, where can we best locate human dignity so as both to ground us in reality and to position our feet to resist the onslaughts of these demons? In a higher order? In a sociopolitical paradigm such as "equality"? In the latest "theology of \_\_\_\_\_"? In (Pascal) "the god of the philosophers"? In (Wiemann) "the person-making process"? In oneself? In some other human being? In the biblical God? In magic or the occult? In meditation, or some psycho-technique? In (Sheila) "the dignity of our common humanness"? Well, you could do a lot worse for a trust-locus than Sheila's. Besides, she writes beautifully...thus: "Deep in the self of each person is an image of human dignity, which is always the last thing to be given up. It was this dignity that Jesus was able to call upon in each of his acts of healing....the simple faith that to be human is to be entitled to something better....Jesus names and calls forth this deeper conviction of dignity."

Sadly, this theological Flatland, neglecting the biblical doctrine of creation and introjecting the biblical God to become the god of dignity within, has not the power to confront the cultural Flatland of economic suffering, which she calls "the real dimension of sin." By this return to Feuerbach, we shall not, I fear, manage better than did those other Flatlanders from Feuerbach, viz. Marx and Freud. Sheila has fallen into the humanistic trap described in 1937 by Cadbury as THE PERIL OF MODERNIZING JESUS, as well as into the Feuerbach-Marx-Freud deity-as-projection: "As Christians perhaps our task is to take back from God the power we gave over to Deity to confer human dignity...." But through this shabby, effete theology shines a spirit fresh and bright and on the side of angels and humanity.

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CLASS, FAMILY, FORGIVENESS: A Socio-Theological Memoir

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