

"Cloudy bright" is a term used in photography. It fits christology well: we know enough about "the real Jesus" to send us straight to heaven/hell (so, "bright"), yet devotion and historical criticism in tandem will never be able to bring his figure into sharp focus (in "taking") and high resolution (in "development"). I find this double fact consonant with the biblical revelation of the God who self-discloses in such wise as to encourage and guide us without depriving us of the disciplines--spiritual, intellectual, moral, ethical, relational--we need for our development, maturation, peace, joy, and power of self-giving.

As to the "cloudy" side of christological revelation, here are a few things I have to say: (1) Necessarily, and as a strength, there are as many christologies as there are Christians; (2) Thank God, the Christian canonists did not flatten the NT christologies into one: the NT presents us with christologies, not a christology; (3) Historical criticism has had the paradoxical effect of increasing both our knowledge of the historical Jesus and our ignorance about him, giving us a grounded intellectual confidence while at the same time taking from us many of yesterday's "assured results"; (4) Sociology of knowledge has now made clearer a truth enunciated 27 centuries ago in Ionian philosophy and repeatedly (e.g., by Voltaire) in the intervening centuries: The God-idea (in both the visional and the intellectual senses of "idea") is forever being shaped within us ("us" both distributively and collectively). So "Jesus" is in quotes in the title of this thinksheet; in Schweitzer's words, we discover "who he is" as we "walk with him." And that is-ness inevitably reflects our are-ness. (A rough illustration: On our walk last night [28Dec81], I remarked to Loree, "From the moon tonight we see only a sliver of sunlight; all the rest is earthlight.")

As to (4), above, one's sex is very apt to be a factor in one's christology. One would expect a christology written by a woman who is both wife and mother to be a relational christology, since the estrogens nudge into the creation and nurture of relationships (as testosterone nudges into adventure and exploration). Sure enough, look at these words of a female theologian (Rosemary Radford Ruether, TO CHANGE THE WORLD: CHRISTOLOGY AND CULTURAL CRITICISM [Crossroad/81], 5): The Bible has "revelatory paradigms by which to construe a redeeming vision of an alternative humanity and world....Jesus discloses the transformatory and liberating patterns of relation to each other and, through them, to God,...in ways that continue to speak to our situation." Note: Not only is the human-human relation given priority; the divine-human relation is limited in modus "through them," the human-human relations. Because this viewpoint is so current (I call it "the religion of interpersonalism," and describe it as Streng's 5th "way of being religious" as [my thinksheet #545] "hyperfeminine fixation on the interpersonal"), it's as apt to be noticed as a fish is apt to notice water. Ruether doesn't notice it, though she does notice how much of Kung is in Kung's "Jesus" and how much of Schillebeeckx is in S.'s "Jesus"--a lapse which would be more forgivable in a less sophisticated person; but she's noted for brilliance, not a self-distancing humility or spiritual wisdom.

By yanking and pulling on the NT materials, RRR manages to make "Jesus" relevant to (shades of Cadbury's THE PERIL OF MODERNIZING JESUS!) the following problems (3), "the most pressing and inescapable for our times:"

1: "political commitment in the light of poverty and oppression." RRR is stridently sloganistic, uncritical of her "liberationist" language. E.g., 20: "It is the rich who have deprived the poor of all hope." She rejects the Jewish achievement of a positive valence for suffering, and therefore impoverishes the Christian doctrine of the atonement.

2: "anti-Judaism and religious intolerance," vs. "the religious integrity of the Jewish people." She unjustifiably poohpoohs the pagan root of anti-Judaism (religious) and antisemitism (racial). Tribal particularism need not (but usu. does!) lead to stinkin' ethnocentricity, and global universalism need not (but usu. does!) lead to stinkin' imperialism. Tragic confrontation, not (as RRR) one-sided distortion.

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6. Unfailable GOALS-statement (68): "the human scale of habitats and communities; an ability of people to participate in the decisions that govern their lives; work in which everyone is able to integrate intelligence and creativity with manual labour; a certain just sharing of the profits and benefits of production; a balance of leisure and work, rural and urban environments."

3: "justice for the female half of the human race."

4: "human survival in the face of chronic environmental abuse."

I feel moved to some comments mainly cutting across her problem-categories:

1. Hyperpoliticization was more common, in the USA, in the '60s than it is now. RRR's book thus leaves me with a deja-vu feeling even though she sees herself as radically oriented toward the future. I thought of her when I read THE CHRISTIAN CENTURY's "End-of-the-Year Reflections" (James M. Will, 30Dec81): "So much of what passes for religion in the United States is thinly disguised politics of the left or the right, or pseudo-self-help that at times rivals *People* magazine for superficiality." Not much to choose between psychotheologians and sociotheologians: both tempt me to move to them economics' label "dismal science." RRR's sex (female) and religion (Roman Catholic) help explain her break-out mentality, and I badmouth neither; but breaking out ("liberationism" I call it when it's a theologian's primary mindset) is only one human activity--whereas in RRR it seems to be, at this world-time, the only decent activity--which produces a rhetorical theology, polemics, parading as theology itself (the part pretending to be the whole). Her myopic attention to *eris*, the struggle to break out and away from the past, is enough to explain her grotesque distortions of theologoumena.

2. If you didn't know it was a Christian writing on "anti-Judaism" vis-a-vis Jesus and Church, you might guess it to be an anti-Christian Jewish propagandist. The reductionism is so radical that nothing is left of traditional christology on its divine side: Jesus is in no sense God, not even God is god! How Christians interpreted the Hebrew Scriptures was all a big mistake. Jesus is only "this-worldly, social and political," his vision "not eschatological"; and anyway, there's no eschaton for history, though there is for the individual (viz., death). The Jewish contribution to Christianity is romanized, the Greek denigrated. (I often call Christians "honorary Jews," but I refuse to consider myself a dishonorable Gentile!)...What makes all this so exasperating is that RRR is an excellent displayer of historical-critical facts/theories/paradigms; she lays all this out cool, in a calm voice; and all at once begins to screech!

3. RRR's feminism is of the radical-androgenous sort: nurture, not nature or both. Jung's anima/animus is nothing but male romanticism introjected into the psyche and metaphysicized as "eternal cosmic archetypes" (66; 151-9 of her *New Woman / New Earth* is her full critique of Jung)! Here as everywhere, she is half-globe provincial: no wisdom from the East, e.g. yin/yang in Sun Moon's brilliant treatment of the cosmic rootage of sexuality. It feels good to me for me to be, on this rare occasion, pro-Jung!

4. Even more brow-furrowing is my feeling that RRR is tetch with claustrophobic paranoia. It's as though she were screaming "I will NOT let you dominate me...the Third World...the Jews...the environment!" This stream of invectives defines "you" as white male Christians [me! maybe I'm paranoid? no, she really is after me!]. This demonology is flattering to us WMCs, but it won't wash. "Domination" is her demonic holophrase, but it seldom is accurate where she applies it. (Bobby Sands died starved to death screaming that Meg Thatcher was "dominating" him, whereas the truth was that British soldiers were trying to keep the peace in Ulster at the invitation of his own (Catholic) folk, not at the invitation of the Protestants.)

5. Serious charge: Her dry-screeching academicism reveals that she is woefully uninformed about economics and administration (common failings of academic theologians) as well as about effective rhetoric (motivation/sanctions). Into the voids of her ignorance she hurls handfuls of "-tion" words: "domination," "exploitation," "oppression," "deprivation"--none of which will bear hard analysis of the weights she gives them. Hypocritical: In justice's name, verbal injustice. Internal contradictions don't bother her: hers is preaching, not theol.construction.