

"LOVE" AS GOD IN HOLISTIC HUMANISM:

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"I/We can manage on my/our own" has been the core of humanism ever since Adam and Eve ate an apricot that internalized good/evil (i.e., ever since by sinning they/we got a conscience).^{*} Currently, there's big money to be made by management consultants to institutions (on processes) and individuals (on emotions and on health). Big money, too, to functionaries who work combinations: IBM gave a minister I recommended \$12,300 for 4 days work combining processes and emotions, and "Dr. Ross" last night (8Oct83, Loree and I present with \$60 tickets given by somebody who couldn't make it: she doesn't refund even any of your \$650 for a 5-day workshop if you can't make it) grossed ca.\$60,000 for less than 3 hours work combining emotions and health. (Am I doing something wrong? I just finished leading a retreat, 12 hours with clergy retreatants, \$400.) But I'm not complaining: since acc. to the doctrine of grace I'm never punished enough, I'm always overpaid.)....^{*} This was not a bad idea, but it was evil. At the level of morals it was even a good idea; but at the interpersonal level it was disastrous, leading straight to antitheistic humanism: "I/We can get along without God as Companion and Guide."

Observe that imperial syncretism is at work everywhere and always when a person/movement has a salvific self-image. Familiar instance: The titles of Jesus (who is seen by Christians as inhabiting and appropriating ancient Jewish and Hellenistic savior-titles; and, from the Third World, "guru" as expounded in a Harv. PhD thesis I read this summer in the author's presence, a Tamil of South India). In the Boston Mus. of Fine Arts yesterday I was tickled and awed to see an ancient Shinto deity sitting as Buddha: when Buddhism arrived in Japan, he'd gotten rebaptized into the new religion as Baal had gotten rebaptized in Hebraism--in both instances, with proper purification ceremonies of the inner life. This theomachic deconstructionist-reconstructionist God-making has, as its shadow, demon-making. If the god demands obedience (as does the biblical God), the demon is a rebel (Lucifer, Satan) and the vice is rebellion and the sin is "pride" (understood as resistance to the divine will and rejection of the divine nature + assumption of the divine powers). If the virtue is loyal love, then the vice is philandering (Hosea) and weak knees (Letter to the Hebrews) and jealousy (Letter of Barnabas, which--the last book to be rejected to form the NT--explains all the evil in cosmos and world as stemming from this vice). Reverse: If the vice is effete hedonism from living a faulty paradigm that has failed to support intimacy and whose devotees, in consequence, are loved-starved, the virtue is more of the same but purified and at a higher level--viz., elative Love as salvific. When preached by medics,^{*} this deity is Hygeia Redivivus, the goddess of all thereapeutae (therapeutic cults) returned (the celebrants of often being priestesses--e.g., Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddy and Eliz. K-R--rather than priests); and the priests, e.g., Leo B, tending to effeminacy).

This imperial syncretism is, among other things, connections management. In love religion such as Leo's and Betty's, love is the omnivore in both senses: it eats anything and it eats up everything ("Panacea," all-diseases-healing, being another ancient Greek healing-goddess). There's a radical difference--the difference that explains why I'm writing this thinksheet--between the pastoral use of love (as the operation of grace unto the glory of the biblical God) and the devotional addressing of Love (as life-affirming, death-defying Eros, a pagan alternative to the biblical God of Holiness-Truth-Righteousness-Justice-Love). Two instances of the pastoral use, in which the derivative-metaphorical process is conscious: (1) Jim Wall's 5Oct83 editorial (XN CENTURY), "Pastoral Imagination Links Love to Action"; and (2) my paragraph in this week's KIRK-RIDGE READINGS AND INTENTIONS: "Not where I own, but where I love, I live. Not where I know, but where I love, I live. Not where I control, but where I love, I live. For love is the name of every road that leads to life: all other roads lead to death. And 'love never fails.' Love never fails to demand that we love." (Because I'm a biblical theist, "demand" here means not coercion

* I did a thinksheet on one I heard recently, viz., Bernard Siegel of Yale U. School of Medicine.

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but an interpersonal invitation from God as Lover + a structural fact of life from God the Creator, viz., human life without love is not *human* life. Bucky Fuller, as a connections genius, is right in rejoicing that we are set loose on spaceship earth without an operations manual; he is right scientifically, but he is wrong in the realm of the humanum: the manual is in our genes, our social womb, and our Bible.)

To evade biblical-theocentric "love," Eros religionists avoid biblical language. Biblically, "shalom" means the total fulfilment of both God's will and man's (i. e., humans') yearning; but Betty, instead, reaches from West to East for the Sanskrit rough equivalent, viz., "Shanti." So her newsletter is "Shanti Nilaya (Skr., "Home of Peace"--the name of her flaky-Calif. community) Newsletter." Her promo on the community (p.2, S.N.N., June/83): "non-sectarian org. dealing with the promotion of psychological, physical and spiritual healing of children and adults through the practice of unconditional love." In her long lecture, "unconditional love" was used as a salvific holophrase for God. I have no objection up to the point at which she coopts the biblical God into her project (and so commits what I am calling "imperial syncretism"). Further, I have no objection to her committing imperial syncretism: how could I, seeing that the biblical tradition does? What I insist on is that what she's doing be seen for what it is rather than (as she wants) a faithful versioning of Christianity, her mother-faith. Clearly, she is (1) a magnificent, useful woman who should be upheld in her work, and (2) a heretic, who should be theologically (and in no other way[]) condemned by those responsible for the *depositum fidei* (the historical core of our Christian Faith). My major motivations in attending the lecture were (1) to see whether/how she's developed since ON DEATH AND DYING, and (2) to ascertain whether she's switched from the biblical God to Eros or was only using Eros as a secular-acceptable way of speaking of the biblical God. I came away sadly convinced that she has become an Eros-worshipper, a convert out of Christianity (as my former student and friend Al Bloom, prof. of Jap. rel. at the U. of Hawaii, is an honest and honorable convert out of Christianity into Buddhism).

Another sad conclusion of mine is that Betty has not broken out of the medical-occupational paradigm. She preaches love, but she practices psycho-violence in the interest of "healing." A Christian Scientist accepts his cancer and ensuing death, and she seduces him into becoming his cancer's enemy--and chortles that she has freed him! God (biblically) is in the business of saint-making, and medicine is in the business of death-defying, and she's clearly captive to the medical project (which she cleverly promotes with religious and mystical language). How can I fault her for this when so many theologically-trained clerics are dupes to the same seduction?

I'm appalled at Betty's naivete about human nature. She speaks of the negativities (viz., the negative emotions, to which she reduces the negativities) as captivable by the will to love. No dealing with (1) eccentricity from theocentrism ("sin" in Gn.3, and parallels from other cultures) or (1) the mystery of evil. Contrast Wm. Golding (Nobelist in Literature, 1983), whose great theme is the Fall (97 NW 17Oct83): "Man suffers from an appalling ignorance of his own nature"---as revealed by Milton, Buyyan, Melville, Hardy, Conrad. "Man makes evil as bees make honey." In addition to sin and tragedy, our life is sorrow-permeated. Here is the biblical answer: Where shall I flee from my sorrow? Into the sorrows of God (supremely, the crucifixion of our Lord). None of this in Betty. Thrice she quoted Jesus in her lecture, never with attribution (no reference to Jesus in her lecture); rather, she played into her audience's (1) spiritual amnesia about the West, and (2) openness to therapeutic Eros-Hygeia-Panacea: a thoroughly pagan performance, parasitic on her Christian heritage.

As a goddess-savior, Betty make no personal references to influences upon her. She may justify this as clean, stripped-down discourse; but its effect was to push the audience into imagining that she's come up with all this by herself, "without our aid." Personally, I know that Dan Williams' brother-in-law, Ulalia's brother (Granger Westberg, chaplain at Billings Hospital, prof. in the U. of Chic. Div. Sch.) got her started--cf. Dan's great THE SPIRIT AND THE FORMS OF LOVE.