

COMMON CAUSE: A COMMON FAITH SENSE ----- ELLIOTT #1760

As a from-the-start reader of Jn. Gardner's COMMON CAUSE magazine, I am a partisan of pro-human politics--for almost all the same reasons as that, as a reader of the Bible, I am a partisan of pro-biblical-God religion, which I hold to be the world's best news for humanity....This thinksheet is about a third partisanship of mine, viz., my will to coalition with any and all human beings who yearn and strive for a pan-human way of making sense--a transpolitical, transreligious, transcultural means/language of communication ("an Esperanto of the spirit," as I put it in the intro to Mel Yosso's TRANSCULTURE).Here are a few notes toward the common human cause of "a common sense."

1. As COMMON CAUSE is a magazine's title, A COMMON FAITH is a 1930 Jn. Dewey book-title. It, and "A Humanist Manifesto" I, were sacred scripture to roughly the same sector of society to which DAS KAPITAL and "The Communist Manifesto" were secular scripture--the sector which at the time most attracted me (a few years before my conversion to Jesus). At that time, the arts of the West were congruent with this spirit; e.g., also in 1930 appeared George Bernard Shaw's THE ADVENTURES OF THE BLACK GIRL IN HER SEARCH FOR GOD, a hilarious announcement of the unmourned death of the world's religions....½c ago I sucked in all the above literature, and was still heart-hungry. The "common faith," which on the religious side was a thin least-common-denominator abstraction, was on the political-economic-social side a passionate new religion whose transnational expression (Trotskyism) sparked national expressions (Fascism, Stalinism, and Nazism). A chiasm: the religious aspect was a philosophy far more than a religion, and the political aspect was a religion of the four (above) denominations!
2. The past ½c has, contra the above literature, brought the world no nearer to "a common faith." Rather, the shrinking globe is more aware of its ineradicable pluralisms (the Zeitgeist being not transreligious but rather panreligious *laissez faire*); and the old faiths of root and reach, instead of dying, have recrudesced into neofundamentalisms (e.g., Ayatollism and Falwellism): in 1983, Muncie IND is more religious in traditional ways than it was in 1924 when Robt. & Helen Lynd arrived (series: 1929 MIDDLETOWN, 1937 MIDDLETOWN IN TRANSITION, U.Minn./83/Theo. Caplow et al ALL FAITHFUL PEOPLE: CHANGE & CONTINUITY IN MIDDLETOWN'S RELIGION).
3. Conclusion? We should surrender, as a Late Enlightenment myth, the illusive hope of "a common faith"; and we should set our souls and our minimax societies toward achieving the gift of "a common sense." Note the two invitations to modesty in this Post-Modernist goal: (1) instead of overwhelming the world with one global religion of "reason" and "humanism," we hope to find a common way of sense-making among the world's life-commitments ("faith-communities"); and (2) instead of jejunely assuming that "we can achieve whatever we set our minds to," we humbly reflect on the fact that only the spirit of the grateful gift-recipient can deliver us from the Prometheanism of "we can," the proud spirit that throughout history has led not to the unity of freedom but to the unanimity of tyranny and on to anarchy--which, instead of being either a common faith or a common sense, is only a common anguish. "A common sense," while more commonsensical than the past and present human condition, requires the uncommon sense of saints, of John rather than Tom ("Tom knew everything, but John knew other things"). (In my Christian commitment, "grace" is the word here: all human good is gift-assignment, Gabe/Aufgabe, from God, whose self-gift is, supremely, Jesus.)
4. TRANSCULTURE, INC., is a hopeful process toward a common sense.