position of all utopian systems. Nor is Marx particularly original in contending that this quasi-heavenly existence is constructed over firm material foundations. If this is what provides scientific mooring to the Marxist conception of Communist society, then it is not alone among utopian systems in possessing such qualifications. Almost all utopias consider excessive physical work as a sign of man's lack of power and, therefore, a defect of technical ability rather than a divine curse. Most utopian systems introduce science as a remedy for the ills of society, automatize most functions and turn society into a technological paradise as egalitarian as that of Marx.

True, Marx considered his socialism to be scientific because it revealed the mechanism of class struggle and the relationship between systems of production and economic crises. So completely, however, did Marx believe that he had solved the "riddle of history" that his claim to scientific analysis vanishes by the supreme claim that science renders superfluous everything else—religion, law and State—and that it brings man's untarnished happiness on the scene. In fact, Marx uses the concept of science in the same way as earlier utopians used the concept of purity and sinlessness; he and Engels are unable to repress their enthusiasm when speaking of the unlimited perspectives which science opens up, whether in the domain of pure research (for example, chemistry will find the formula of life) or of technology. The utopian element in these predictions is not so much the anticipated accomplishments of science as the unconditional belief that the human situation will become "scientific" and, therefore, one without problems. In the language of Marxism, "science" means not only the activity produced in laboratories; science is also man's reconquest of his essential unity with nature. When man conquers nature, he acquires the decisive victory over himself; he possesses himself. And through industry this possession is an active one, so that the new divinity never ceases to create.

T. Molnar

2 - SECULARIZED RELIGION: PANTHEISM

NO MATTER HOW the utopian defines sin and sinlessness or alienation and integration, the essential element in his definition is the definitive and collective evolving from the first to the second. In urging the distinction between perfection so achieved and everyday efforts to pursue values and virtues, Aurel Kolnai (in *La Table Ronde*) rightly perceives that an exaggerated thirst for values and a similarly exaggerated contempt for reality do not characterize the utopian. Rather, the utopian mentality is fascinated by that reality which consists of values, including the value of their complete realization. In other words, the utopian is convinced that, once we acknowledge the desirability of an ideal state of affairs, we must immediately proceed to bring it about; any hesitation or reckoning with obstacles is an unforgivable scandal in his eyes. Once opportunity for perfection is given, it must be seized immediately and resolutely; therefore, the non-perfect deserve the most severe punishment and must be pointedly set aside from the elect.

That anonymous medieval religious agitator, the "Revolutionary," once declared that the Emperor will issue an annual decree for the purpose of unmasking sin. Unquestionably, one aspect of medieval "perfectionism" did develop as a repudiation of the alleged loose living of clergy and hierarchy. Emperors and kings had indiscriminately placed their favorites in bishoprics and other ecclesiastical posts, with the result that feudal-age *mores* penetrated the higher ecclesiastical ranks. From the time of the foundation of Cluny, however, and especially after the reforms of Gregory VII, there had been a vigorous movement toward renovation within the Church—a fact which the leaders of heretical sects consistently failed to appreciate. A second fact that must not escape notice is that sectarian fanatics had gone beyond simple advocacy of reforms and had attacked both institutions and the social framework, as such, on the grounds that they originated in the material and corrupt side of creation. In consequence, they sought to oppose to them pure morality and pure spirit which sustain themselves by their mere spiritual superiority.

Separation of Sinners and Sinless

It was natural for religious fanatics to turn to the laity and to set their "purity" in opposition to the depravity of churchmen. The propaganda of these sects consisted, as Georges de Lagarde notes, in a spectacular display of the ascetical lives of their leaders, the so-called perfect ones who believed that they had been called to fulfill the moral law before the eyes of the faithful.[1] Invariably, these sects drew inspiration and belief from some form of Manicheism and had already determined who were evil and who were good. Such a determination meant, in turn, that these sects must set about to abolish institutions, particularly all religious institutions. The so-called Lombard sects, with which the Waldensians

[1] *La Naissance de l'esprit laique,* Ed. Nauwelaerts, Louvain, 1956, I, p. 85.

merged at the beginning of the thirteenth century, rejected not only the Catholic hierarchy, but all forms of the priesthood as well. They elevated those laymen whose mode of life was judged dignified and entrusted them with the sacraments. The real priest, they declared, is the morally perfect man.

Msgr. Knox remarks of the Puritans—whether those in Geneva, Edinburgh, or America—that they meted out punishment to sinners on the understanding that these enemies of God, "being unsaved, had lost the common rights of humanity."[2]

This absolute separation of the sinner from the sinless, together with the urgency attached to the process, is to be expected from the utopian. "If only everybody would bear witness," wrote Tolstoy,[3] "to the truth that he knows, or at least not defend as truth the untruth in which he lives, then in this very year [1893] there would take place changes toward the setting up of truth on earth." Urgency is now coupled with exclusivity: perfection, toward which all human efforts are directed, is man's only worthy objective. The great, true goal of history, as Michael Bakunin sees it, the only justifiable goal is our humanization and deliverance—the genuine liberty and prosperity of all men in society.[4]

Self-divinization of the Pure

It would be a mistake to imagine that perfection, or sinlessness, thus conceived is a slow and painful rise in the direction of such a norm as that expressed by Christ—"Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect"—a noble aspiration and recognized as impossible of earthly accomplishment. On the other hand, utopian perfectionism believes in what is actually a conscious and concentrated form of *self-divinization.*

Louis Salleron has pointed out that, while one term in the

[2] *Enthusiasm,* Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1950, p. 133.
[3] As quoted by Paul Elzbacher in *Anarchism,* Libertarian Book Club, New York, 1960.
[4] *Dieu et l'Etat,* Geneva, 1882, p. 65.

utopian's religious imagination remains fixed—God—the process of becoming perfect consists of continuing progress by man toward the same level.[5] In fact, mankind and nature ascend the path of progress together until the cosmos will be indistinguishable from God.

As noted in the Introduction, Fr. Herbert McCabe, O.P., has pointed out correctly that, even for the Christian, our common world is not yet identifiable with the coming sacred world. Virtue still requires effort because it is not yet man's ordinary condition. Yet, the utopian believes that it is enough simply to demand that the world become virtuous, since our original moral purity has never really been sullied (as the doctrine of original sin teaches) so much as only obscured and rendered more difficult by unfavorable circumstances. For the utopian, then, it is intolerable that moral perfection, which lies just beneath the surface, so to speak, has not yet been uncovered and allowed to shine as an ineffably splendid piece of gold retrieved from the mud.

Since the utopian has no reason to believe that it is man's own fallen nature which is the real obstacle to human goodness and perfection, he assumes that perfection is easy. Nor is it surprising that he attaches his hopes for mankind's regeneration to sufficiently impressive and spectacular events or to techniques which strike the imagination and affect the external aspects of our existence.

The impact of modern science, for example, leads the utopian to believe that the path to perfection has become considerably shorter and the objective more clearly visible. With an almost disarmingly naïve faith, he assumes that communications techniques and ease in travel forge a new mankind, a global melting pot to which each man brings his own unique contribution and receives the imprint of the communal consciousness. More than a hundred years ago, the early stirrings of democratic liberalism prompted the same illusion: on the threshold of the 1848 revolution, Georges

[5] *Les Catholiques et le capitalisme,* La Palatine, Paris, 1959, p. 15.

Sand, friend and patroness of the French utopian socialists, greeted the dawn of a "unanimous mankind" whose artisans and members would be "nobler than the sages of Greece." Today, science and technology have taken the place of ideologies, and the new enthusiasts greet an age when cooperation will be prompted by a mixture of good will and material necessity. The Jesuit priest Teilhard de Chardin imagined that, following the model of cooperating teams of scientists, all men would gradually become one in aspiration and method and rise together toward the last phase, the emerging "super-mankind." Such prominent Protestant theologians as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Paul Tillich and Bishop John Robinson, similarly impressed with the stupendous achievements of modern technology, conclude that mankind has come of age and must now shed its "traditional religiosity," perhaps even the very term, *God.* These theologians hold that adult man has no need of what biologist Julian Huxley has called "the umbrella of faith" under which God, like a *paterfamilias,* assumed ultimate responsibility; rather, adult man nears perfection precisely by loosening his ties with the concepts and images of traditional belief and by developing an autonomous "morality of love" conceived as the "ground of his being."

Perfection through Science

Throughout the pages of Bishop Robinson's little best-seller, *Honest to God,* is his unconcealed admiration for modern science, not, however, as a cure-all, as it was regarded in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but as an aid to purify us of our moral imperfections and to force us to face the impossibility of a "God above and/or outside." In light of the technological revolution in general, Bishop Robinson seems better able to suggest that we reexamine all our previous judgments and attitudes about good and evil and that we pronounce no final judgment until we have

measured our acts against the only valid standard: the amount of love in our action. However, the good bishop fails to explain how this amount is to be measured. And why should he? Presumably we are all "adult men," able to judge our own actions according to our own lights. If he continues to mention "love" as a standard of religiosity, it is probably because this term, taken out of its theological wrappings, can be easily secularized, that is, identified with social actions on which all may agree, regardless of religious or irreligious commitments.

Perfectionism in our time is not essentially different from that of other ages. Invariably, some new invention, discovery or event—the expectation of the millennium, socio-political revolution, or new technological advances—offers the utopian his pretext for announcing the need of a new and final set of moral values worthier of a purified, sinless, mature, autonomous, perfected mankind than any previous set of moral imperatives. As Pope Pius XII viewed it, modern technology seems to communicate to man, kneeling at its altar, a feeling of self-sufficiency and satisfaction in his insatiable desire for knowledge and power. Through its many uses, the absolute trust it prompts and the possibilities it promises, modern technology spreads before contemporary man such a vast vision that its beholders may easily confuse technology with the infinite.

The real issue, then, is not one of opposition between exaltation of and contempt for technology. The issue is whether the laws of morality are likely to undergo and, in fact, ought to undergo fundamental changes because of technological progress or some startling development. For example, why should a strikingly new means of communication require us to adopt a different attitude toward our fellow human beings? The currently standard answer to this question is that a more perfect system of communications leads to a multiplicity of contacts; these contacts lead, in turn, to a better knowledge of others; this better knowledge, in turn, leads to mutually friendlier attitudes. With the same likelihood it could be

argued that a mere quantitative increase of contacts yields opportunities for antipathy as well as for sympathy, for injury as well as for charity; in other words, the perfecting of communications media may have merely intensified feelings for better as well as for worse, without even considering the question of qualitative improvement.

Another argument advanced is that technological advances in communications assures more knowledge and better information. Again, however, knowledge and information do not necessarily prompt good action: while it is true, for example, that the modern stock market developed because information was more quickly received about the conditions in distant points of the globe, this meant only that speculators could sometimes take advantage of even a few minutes' advance information. In the same way, the Rothschilds of London increased their fortune and prestige because news of Wellington's victory at Waterloo had reached them before it reached their competitors. It is also undeniable that the very rapidity of today's communication leads to misunderstanding and confusion, since those in charge of the communication centers of operation (news agencies, journalists, government spokesmen) often launch false information or are tempted to exploit their position at the sources of information.

Instant Utopia

If the utopian seizes upon fashionable ideologies, scientific inventions and technical improvements to shorten the way toward the desired perfect state, it is because he holds all intermediary situations in contempt. He does not proceed, like the usual reformer, in piecemeal fashion because he lacks the patience to adjust concrete realities to new requirements. He is intent on abolishing every part of an existing situation because only in this way can he prevent the radically new from being contaminated by the necessarily old. The utopian is, therefore, the great demolisher of institutions in

which he sees congealed forms of vested and pernicious interests which stifle the fresh sources of spontaneity. He particularly attacks those institutions which seem to block man's higher aspirations, because he believes that the dynamism of these aspirations suffices to create the atmosphere in which morality and goodness may become as natural as breathing.

Charles Maurras warned against the folly of those purely moral philosophies which try to bypass institutional mediation and to bring about at once the desired result of ethically perfect creatures.[6] The objective of purely moral philosophies is, he warned, to eliminate the web of relationships by which the individual is aided in his understanding of and positive attitude toward the fundamental problems of his being. Granted, he continued, these philosophies may correctly assume that the foundations of the moral problem are rooted in the individual conscience; granted, too, that they strive, in consequence, to secure a more intimate tie with the source of our being, unassailable by the hazards and vicissitudes of ordinary existence; at the same time, these purely moral philosophies so strongly insist on the sufficiency and exclusiveness of the individual's relationship to God that they put an unbearable strain on it.

God Exalted and Dismissed

In his attempt to eliminate everything "artificial" and to remain honest to the point of moral nakedness, the religious utopian relies entirely on God. This is, of course, an adequate support. In our human weakness, however, we need around us the example and inspiration of our fellow men on every human level. Not so the religious utopian: "the enthusiast . . . expects more evident results from the grace of God than we others. . . . He has before his eyes

[6] Cf. Henri Massis, *De l'Homme à Dieu,* Nouvelles Editions Latines, Paris, 1959, p. 101.

a picture of the early Church, visibly penetrated with supernatural influences; and nothing less will serve him for a model."[7]

In our own time, too, the religious utopian desires to strip the relationship between God and man of its religious dimension. Today, like in times past, he stresses faith at the expense of reason and opposes austerity to the aesthetic dimension. The pretext today is that modern man "has come of age": technological inventions are modifying the structure of his thinking and behavior; science answers most of his questions which were hitherto shrouded in a God-protected mystery. To save both God and the believer from future embarrassment, the religious utopian would like to limit their relationship to a purely moral one because—who knows?—science may tomorrow be able to answer *all* our questions, thus further restricting God's "religious" domain. It may be a significant coincidence, for example, that the Soviet astronaut Titov declared he had found no God in space at about the same time as Bishop Robinson published the view that modern man dismissed the concept of "God above" as childish. Several critics of Robinson pointed out that most people—and certainly theologians, churchmen, and the intelligent laity—never had thought that "God is above" in a spatial sense. But that, of course, is not the issue. Robinson and his fellow theologians have posited such an ineffable, irrational, and abstract concept of God that the religious believer, if he wants to follow them, must feel compelled to give up religion altogether and suffer even his belief in God to be shaken considerably.

German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer put the thesis in its boldest form. Modern man, he argues, has been increasingly capable of solving all those problems (technical, political, economic, and the like) in which he once asked God's help. Accordingly, God "is being more and more edged out of life, losing more and more

[7] Knox, *op. cit.,* p. 2.

ground."[8] What will happen, asks Bonhoeffer, when even the so-called ultimate questions—death, guilt—will have been answered without recourse to divine explanation? We must prepare for that day, Bonhoeffer urges, by recasting God in his new role and, indeed, with his authorization, for in this twentieth century God is decidedly calling us to a form of Christianity which is independent of religion's premises. As Bultmann would have it, Christianity must be de-mythologized and the entire conception of a supernatural order which invades and permeates this order must be abandoned.

Dissolution of Christianity

What role, then, will remain for God and the entire Christian religion? The question implies that religion does not constitute a total and permanently valid approach to man's problems and is only partially and conditionally relevant to human existence. It implies also that this relevance is shrinking. "To be a Christian," Bonhoeffer continues, "does not mean to be religious in a particular way, to cultivate some particular form of asceticism, but to be a man. It is not some religious act which makes a Christian what he is, but participation in the suffering of God, in the life of the world."[9]

If we now add to Bonhoeffer's statement one by Paul Tillich, we may conclude that the doctrine of this new school is apt to create the greatest confusion. "There is no religion," writes Tillich, "as a special spiritual sphere. Everything is secular and every secular thing is potentially religious. The relation to the unconditional permeates every moment of the daily life and makes it holy. The

[8] As quoted by Bishop John Robinson in his *Honest to God,* SCM Press, London, 1963, p. 24.

[9] *Ibid.,* p. 83. And, in this connection, Teilhard de Chardin remarked that if he lost faith, successively, in Christ, in a personal God and in the Spirit, he could still continue to believe in the world.

'holy' is not one value beside others [but it appears] in all values [and] being."[10]

It is no wonder that the average Christian loses his bearing when he is told by Bonhoeffer and Tillich that Christianity is both everything and nothing, that it is not religion, but life—everyday life; yet it is participation in the suffering of God. The very people who most profess to be worried about the de-christianization of modern man are those who push him farther away from religion. And there is no little irony in Bishop Robinson's warning that "If Christianity is to survive, let alone to recapture secular man, there is no time to lose in detaching it from [its traditional] scheme of thought, from this particular theology or *logos* about *theos*, and thinking hard about what we should put in its place."[11]

In 1960, prior to Bishop Robinson's *Honest to God,* another Protestant theologian Prof. Hans Hoekendijk said in a speech at Strasbourg:

> We will not be able really to get alongside man in our modern world unless we begin to "dereligionize" Christianity. Christianity is a secular movement, and this is basic for an understanding of it. We have no business to make it a religion again. That would mean a correction of what Christ has done. And we have no business to make a Christian into a *homo religiosus* again, a religious man, a normal human being plus something. The Christian is simply a man who is in the process of being restored to normal manhood.[12]

These theologians are convinced that the most urgent task is to abolish religion or, rather, to dissolve it in "everyday life." If we re-read the above statements by Robinson, Tillich, Bonhoeffer and

[10] *The Protestant Era,* University of Chicago Press, 1948, p. 175.

[11] Robinson, *op. cit.,* p. 43.

[12] Quoted in Edwards-Robinson, *The "Honest to God" Debate,* SCM Press, London, 1963, pp. 272 ff.

Bultmann, we must conclude that the following are synonymous with religion: childish concept of God; non-scientific answers and solutions; mythology; the supernatural order; traditional theology; an abnormal concept of man. Such ideas should be removed from religion as religion is conceived by such as Robinson, Bonhoeffer, Tillich and Bultmann because these ideas represent that "plus" which, in Prof. Hoekendijk's derisive remark, is unnecessarily added to the definition of the religious man and of the Christian. By similar logic one might say that a healthy individual is one who lacks arms and legs, or that a thinking man is one without a brain. Notes omitted from the definition of the normal human being are not a plus"; they are inseparable from man's essence and, conversely, man is incomplete—that is, no-man—without them. Prof. Hoekendijk's statement would have been acceptable perhaps by the ultra-materialists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—and certainly by the Marxists—but man's religious dimension has been confirmed by ethnology, depth-psychology, art, and any number of other disciplines, each in its own way.

When such theologians as Bonhoeffer and Tillich eliminate the traditional and traditionally rich concept of religion, it is done, they say or imply, for the greater glory of God. Not only man, but also God must be purified to satisfy the utopian. They regard religion as a complexus of ceremonies, precepts for singular living, sacraments and institutions which sully man and God alike: religion detracts from man's purity of intentions and renders God more remote by emphasizing attention to intervening distractions. However, utopian efforts to simplify matters succeed not in bringing God and man closer together so much as in alienating man from God. In his weakness, man needs crutches—crutches by which he walks toward his God. Thus we pay the heavy price of sacrificing religion in order to obtain a supposedly clearer view of God and a more solid, reliable link to him. Yet the God who emerges from these efforts—or, rather, what remains of God after religion has

been swept away as an embarrassing remnant of a primitive age —is a strangely impoverished one. When Luther struck out at saints, sacraments, Church and clergy, there remained in his beliefs an unforgiving God, frightening in his might and inexorable to the sinner. When Paul Tillich writes of theology, one wonders why he needs three bulky volumes (*Systematic Theology*, 1953) to deal with the extremely rare instances of man's encounter with God. Tillich's "God above the god of theism" is a remote and abstract figure which frustrates our religious imagination and disappears when, in this puppet show, the theologian draws back the string at the end of which his God was dangling. We should be aware, Tillich writes, "of the paradoxical nature of every prayer, of speaking to somebody to whom you cannot speak because he is not 'somebody,' of asking somebody of whom you cannot ask anything because he gives or gives not before you ask, of saying 'thou' to someone who is nearer to the I than the I is to itself." And he concludes: "Each of these paradoxes drives the religious consciousness towards a God above the god of theism."[13] One might add that there seems to be no reason to stop here: as with the bottle's label on which the bottle label is reproduced, and so *ad infinitum,* so we might look for another God above the one who is himself above the god of theism, and so on.

Return to Gnosticism

Tillich's position is not original; it is a modern formulation of the Gnostic idea of the *deus absconditus*, the transcendent God hidden from all creatures, knowable only by a few elect through supernatural revelation. The Gnostics taught that the created world is imperfect and evil; God, consequently, cannot be held responsible for it; he cannot have created it. The "real" God is

[13] *The Courage to Be,* Yale University Press (paperback), New Haven, Conn., 1959, pp. 180–181.

one above creation, ineffable, and accessible to the specially illumined possessors of knowledge. Cerinthus, the Christian Gnostic, taught that "the world was made, not by the first god, but by a power which was far removed and separated from the source of being and did not even know of the God who is exalted above all things."[14]

The position of Tillich and those of similar leanings resembles that of the heretic Marcion of Sinope who taught the opposition of the idea of the unknown god to that of the cosmos. Man's salvation, Marcion held, consists in his liberation by the superior god from the power of an inferior and oppressive creator.

Clearly, God is not hurt by this proposed isolation, but its effects on man are devastating. For all practical purposes, a God man cannot reach is a God who does not exist, and the practical result is agnosticism or atheism.

> For Tillich, belief in God has been evacuated of all its traditional content. It consists now in moral seriousness and nothing more. Even if we were to concede Tillich a verbal triumph over the atheist, the substance of atheism has been conceded. Just as Bultmann's view of the New Testament points towards scepticism, so does Tillich's analysis of the doctrine of God. It seems that Dr. Robinson is not alone as a theological atheist. . . . We should expect to find continual attempts to use religious language to make an atheistic vacuum, and sooner or later someone was bound to try to preserve the religious language and the atheistic content together by suggesting, although not of course explicitly, that the latter simply *is* the meaning of the former.[15]

[14] Quoted by Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (second edition), Beacon Press, Boston, 1963, p. 136.

[15] Alasdair MacIntyre, "God and the Theologians," *Encounter*, Sept., 1963.

The "God is dead" theology claims to salvage whatever remains of God in this secularized, scientific and anxiety-filled age. This trend is especially popular in the United States[16] since it consists of a series of attempts by individual theologians to adjust the remnants of God-belief to modern industrial society. But there is very little that is original in these well advertised attempts; American theologians follow either Tillich or some scientific, evolutionary theorist like William James or Alfred North Whitehead, and they find God in the "ultimate concern" (that is, in subjective sentiment and enthusiasm) or in the ever-more-perfect domination of man over nature (that is, in science and technology). At the end of both approaches there is the replacement of God by man, the latter's self-divinization.

All this is as old as the Garden of Eden and the Tower of Babel, and it does not mean that "God is dead"; it means only that age-old temptations are presented in modern terminology. The "God-is-dead" theologians are not theologians, but the last and desperate disciples of earlier humanists. Having lost faith in God, they have succumbed to the dreadful alternative of deifying man. Their "concern" for the modern world is not so much based on charity as on their own *libido dominandi*.

Replacement of God with Personal Enthusiasm

The pseudo-exaltation of God stripped of religion is an enterprise launched not merely to "de-mythologize" religion and to "de-religionize" Christianity, but to *dissolve the concept of God*. The entrepreneurs of this dissolution, as MacIntyre warns, are anxious to remain religiously respectable: their proclaimed motive is so to re-define the concept of God that it is unassailable. Nor will the immediately resulting bewilderment, despair, and scandal deter them in their objective to establish an invisible church whose

[16] *Time* magazine devoted its cover story to this subject, April 8, 1966.

faithful are tranquil before the vague and illusive God known only to the heart. But this is not God; this is nothing but an outgrowth of personal enthusiasm, and his existence has endurance commensurate only with the endurance of whipped-up enthusiasm.

The very term, "God," Tillich advises, is sullied by anthropomorphic associations,[17] and it should be abandoned in favor of "ground of our being." The faithful are given precious little help in being told that the "ground of being" is love, since love has always been fundamental and central Christian teaching. But matters become still more difficult when love is identified with God, because then a basic shift in doctrine has taken place. The teaching is no longer that "God is love," wherein God has many other attributes besides love; rather, the current teaching is that "love is God," and this is the exaltation to divine status of a personal feeling which is subject to change and whim, which may expand or shrink, which may even turn into hatred. This "love" may mean one thing to one person and something else to another, as witness the comment by an agnostic English Free Church minister on Bishop Robinson's *Honest to God*:

> This is one of the most happy things—a sense of identification with absolutely everybody. I can understand the "trad" [*sic*] Christians because I was one, the gnostics and atheists because in a real sense I am one, and the perfervid evangelical because I have in common with him a quite unavoidable sense of being "in God," "in Christ," or however you choose to describe it.[18]

[17] In the July 3, 1964 issue of *Commonweal,* I pointed out what I regarded as a surprising eagerness on the part of these theologians to drop the name of God. Michael Novak, a Catholic writer of the "new wave" in matters religious, answered my letter to the editor: "It does not surprise me that some theologians blush when they say 'God,' in view of the uses to which that Holy Name is put by demagogues and cynics." But shall we also abandon *virtue* or *honesty* because these words too have been put to immoral or cynical uses?

[18] Quoted in Edwards-Robinson, *op. cit.,* p. 79.

This quotation illustrates the typical utopian contempt for language and rationality. The greatest thrill may be obtained by "identification with absolutely everybody"; instead of precise knowledge, it is enough to have a "sense" of this or that, "however one chooses to describe it." The inevitable satisfaction displayed by utopians in the use of fuzzy language, blurred notions, irrationality and inordinate stress on sentiments is characteristically present in the above quotation, along with the predictable impulse to identify oneself with a nebulous substance. To paraphrase Msgr. Knox, once the interlocking relationship of reason and revelation is loosened, so that one no longer controls the other, anything is possible in the domain of theology and its adjuncts; in the case of the enthusiast, the speculative intellect is dethroned and only those impressions are valid which are authorized by the individual's "light."

The upshot of all this is usually pantheism, for pantheism authorizes the individual to identify himself with everybody and everything elevated to the status of the highest existence. Despite the impression conveyed by Bishop Robinson's language, this form of reasoning may be detected: when Robinson writes that "assertions about God are, in the last analysis, assertions about love—about the ultimate ground and meaning of personal relationships," he means to say that "all personal relationships are expressions of love," that "love is God," and, therefore, "personal relationships express God."

Pantheism

God's dissolution in pantheism is a most fascinating mental exercise, although, as C.S. Lewis remarks, "so far from being the final religious refinement, pantheism is, in fact, the permanent natural bent of the human mind."[19] The reason is obvious: once

[19] *Miracles,* The Macmillan Publishing Company, New York, 1947, p. 85. This is illustrated by Cicero's statement (in *De Natura Deorum*) that the

the equilibrium of reason and faith is upset, man loses his gravitational center, so to speak, and believes that everything is part of a self-contained and self-sufficient universe. Whatever exists, he says, is part of the universe; therefore, God, too, is a part. It is a contradiction, continues Lewis, to say that something exists which, not a part of the totality, has created it and now moves it from an impossible "outside." The pantheist, therefore, is led to state either that everything is God or that nothing is God, but in neither case is he able to give any precise meaning to his concept. For, if it is maintained that "every object in this room is a table," then there is no longer a distinction between an actual table and a chair, a bed, or a desk lamp; everything in the room must be a "table" because it was arbitrarily so decided; yet nothing would be a table and nothing could be used as one by the rules implicit in the statement. Similarly, if everything is God, then everything exists in its own right; there can be no subordination, no political community; if, on the contrary, nothing is divine, then the universe is a chance encounter of atoms, an ephemeral phenomenon, and all man-made structures are artificial, illusory and without justification.

In consequence, the pantheist is apt to think of the world as being better or as being worse than it actually is; it is either a world of saints and of perfection or it is merely illusion and vanity from which one should try to escape.

The first type of belief was exemplified by many medieval heresies. One example is the thirteenth-century Amaurians who professed that all things are One because whatever is, is God.[20] Drawing a legitimate conclusion from this pantheistic belief, one

cosmos is all there is, there is nothing beside it, and nothing which is not part of it. This all-embracing whole is God.

[20] Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium,* Harper & Bros., New York, 1961, p. 159. "All that is known for certain of Amaury's doctrine is that it was a mythical pantheism which owed much to Neo-Platonic tradition" (*ibid.,* p. 157).

leading Amaurian held that "he could neither be consumed by fire nor tormented by torture, for insofar as he was, he was God." In this he echoed the first heretic Simon Magus, a contemporary of the Apostles, who said of himself that he was "the Power of God that is called the great." The Amaurians held also that Christ's Incarnation had been superseded because it was now being repeated in each one of them. And similar expressions are basic to the creed of the Brethren of the Free Spirit who believed that "God is all that is," that "every created thing is divine," and that from all eternity man was "God in God." Accordingly, these Brethren taught that man was not begotten and that "he is wholly immortal."

In the practical order, these two visions—the optimistic and the pessimistic—show identical contempt for reality. While it is not practical in everyday living to deny the existence of the object-world, it is quite tempting to deny legitimacy to human accomplishments, to civilization. Pantheists regard civilization as an arbitrary construct, arbitrary because men choose the values by which they live. "Why these values rather than those?" asks the pantheist, and he concludes that values are mere illusions: either values do not exist or else any autonomous act, as the existentialists say, is a value. This creates, of course, a confusion between good or evil when, as in Sartre's system, a criminal and a pervert, a Hitler and a Stalin are placed on the same ethical level as ordinary good people or even saints.

Buddhism

The pantheistic doctrine *par excellence* is Buddhism, the perfect illustration of the belief that the world is illusion. It should be observed that, in times of crisis, Buddhism and its variants at once begin to exert their attraction in western Christian thought and outlook. Germs of a destructive vision find it easier to penetrate a

body of thought when it is in a weakened condition. The fundamental belief of Buddhism is that all is matter, including the individual. The Venerable Nyanatiloka Mahathera (*Présence de Bouddhisme,* 1959) wrote that there are no individuals, only perpetually changing combinations of bodily conditions, sensations and states of consciousness. To speak of "I" or "self" is merely a conventional way of referring to a changing assemblage of sensations. The self, or ego, is an illusion, and contemporary Buddhists consider the non-substantiality of the ego as the tenet which contains the essence of the entire doctrine.

If the "self" is nothing but illusion, a segment of the permanent flux of atoms which gains consciousness of itself only by suffering (it suffers because it knows it is pure illusion), then it is advisable to terminate this flux and its exasperating repetition. Individuals must annihilate in themselves the *kamma,* the vitalizing *élan,* the ardor which drives life on and on. The sages have completed this annihilation and their continuing activity is meant only to enable others to choose the same Noble Path. Ignorance of the Noble Path is at the source of desire, and desire makes us live—in fact, desire makes us live even several existences in the hope of finally possessing wealth, beauty and all by which the world tempts us. Yet, how can the self possess anything whatsoever when the self does not even exist? All possessions, therefore, are illusory, and the endless string of desires is, in reality, an endless pain, the very sickness of existence.

The devastatingly negative character of such belief is obvious: it allows for no God, not even for meaningful human life, and it rejects action at its very source for the reason that action would lead to an illusory possession, to unnecessary extension of an equally illusory self. Needless to say, Buddhism refuses to consider such a self as a social being, since all that the self can reasonably do is to enter more and more into itself and learn the techniques of asceticism by which it may decrease its suffering in

the next incarnation. The ultimate hope of the self is to extinguish in itself all desire and put an end to the inexorable series of consecutive existences.

Dissolution of the Self

In the Buddhistic brand of pantheism, the dissolution of God leads directly to the dissolution of the self and all the attributes which make the individual a multi-faceted human being; it leads to a thorough nihilism. Msgr. Knox remarks that the "oriental anti-thesis between spirit as entirely good and matter as entirely evil . . . brings with it grave dangers, speculative and moral, leading away from Christianity to pantheism."[21] But in Buddhism there is not even room for this antithesis: one of the terms, spirit, is missing. Manicheism recognizes the reality of good and evil and recommends escape from one and adherence to the other. Even Brahmanism acknowledges that the self seeks union with Totality; in other words, it recognizes movement and, therefore, action. Only Buddhism denies the self and urges the annihilation by which it can be dissolved in the "nibbana" (nirvana). After decisive encounters with this world's suffering, Gautama, founder of Buddhism, felt an incurable repugance for suffering. His very first discourse, at Varanasi, dealt with pain, the result of successive rebirths, and how to escape it.

The root of suffering, according to Buddhism, is the impossibility of possession by a phantomatic self. However, as thoroughgoing materialism, Buddhism does not deny the here-and-now existence of such and such an object. The object is illusory in this sense, that, granted its existence today, it will not exist thousands of years hence. The same may be said about societies, movements and empires. Mircea Eliade makes this clear when he writes[22] that,

[21] *Op. cit.,* p. 93.
[22] *Images and Symbols,* Sheed and Ward, New York, 1961, p. 68.

in Indian idealism and the Vedanta, the historic world, its societies and civilizations, so painfully reared by the efforts of countless generations, are all unreal because they last but for an instant in comparison with the cosmic rhythms. The Vedantic, the Buddhist, the riski, the yogi and the sadhu conclude from the lessons of infinite time and from the Eternal Return that they must renounce the world and seek the Absolute Reality, for only knowledge of the Absolute can help free them from illusion to pierce the veil of Maya.

Atheistic Existentialism

Parenthetically it may be noted here that the contemporary expression of Buddhist teaching in the western world is atheistic existentialism. Despite its somewhat different language, atheistic existentialism expresses the same basic convictions and preoccupations. The world is matter and psychic relationships; life is absurd; the self is morbidly engulfed in itself and, when it emerges, it is absorbed (Sartre) in the traps of illusion, in bad faith, or in impersonalness (Heidegger); selves are enemies of one another and are intent upon greedy conquest; whatever is created is built on the quicksand of time and renders human effort futile in retrospect (Camus). Further analogies—and, in fact, influences—can be found in Hegel, Schopenhauer and Fontane.

The teachings of these men, apart from frequent points of similarity, are commonly pessimistic. "Escapism" seems to be the current favorite word for pessimism. Regardless of the nomenclature, the fact remains that, as noted before, pantheism of the materialistic variety soon develops an incurable repugnance for suffering; now, since suffering is but another term for reality as it presents itself to us, repugnance is directed to reality itself.

Not every expression of pessimism need be as thorough as Buddhism. For example, pessimism of the Calvinistic variety

teaches that man's rational lights were so completely obscured by original sin that, unable to comprehend divine justice, man can conceive only meanness, iniquity and corruption. From this premise of perversity, Calvin concluded that any society of men must be governed with mailed fists. Accordingly, he excoriated Luther for holding that no law would be needed in a society of true Christians.

The reason for devoting so much space in this chapter to Buddhism and other pessimistic doctrines is simply to cast greater light on pantheism, the dissolution of the concept of God. When religious utopians insist on clearing "religion" out of the way in order better to approach God, pantheism inevitably follows.

The next logical concern, the matter of the next chapter, is the elaboration of secular religion and man's self-divinization when God has been dissolved in pantheism and man alone is master of his destiny.

3 - MAN-GOD

IN MÉMOIRE SUR LA SCIENCE DE L'HOMME, Saint-Simon assumed that in every age a new set of beliefs gives mankind the strength to live, work and accept his society. Crisis inevitably precedes and attends the birth of these beliefs, so that with each crisis mankind becomes more perfected as its concept of religion becomes purer, more precise, more scientific. What men of his own time most needed, according to Saint-Simon, was a synthesis of all positive—that is, scientific—knowledge. Science, he held, is a collective enterprise, so that the religion of the future must, negatively stated, cease to be individual aspirations for eternal life without regard for the social framework and, positively stated, must become collective will to protect itself against external perils.[1] This implies religious unity, and when such a unity breaks down, as in the Roman Empire and in sixteenth-century Europe, a crisis in leadership occurs. When, as a result of new basic dogmas, religious unity is restored, a new sacerdotal caste assures "the monoploy of spirit-

[1] Ernest Renan maintains that the universal task of all living beings is to make God perfect, that is, to bring it about that the cycle of things will be closed and unity imposed. Reason is the agent to bring this about and, after reason has organized mankind, it will set about to organize God. Cf. *L'Avenir de la science,* Vol. III, Calmann-Lévy, Paris, 1890, p. 757.

ual activity." In Saint-Simon's view, then, the religious institution of a historical period is, at the same time, its principal political institution.

The New Religion: Faith in Mankind

In Saint-Simon's judgment, the future religion will be a mere auxiliary of the most important task: the industrialization of the West. Nor was Saint-Simon the first to propose that religion be removed from the sphere of the divine and integrated into a system of disciplines directed toward socio-political goals. His most illustrious predecessor in this line of thinking was Machiavelli who held that a religion is good only when it serves the State by encouraging civic virtues. The Roman religion, practiced at the height of Rome's greatness, was Machiavelli's model for every State to emulate.

For our present purposes, it is important to note that an inherent logic is at work in the development of the utopian idea, for, when God and religion are dissociated, two phenomena take place: the notion of God dissolves into pantheism; the concept of religion is secularized. We shall shortly see what fate is reserved for the notion of God. As far as secularized religion is concerned, both Saint-Simon and Machiavelli seem at least honest in their positions. Saint-Simon, Machiavelli and Renan express their faith in mankind exclusively; they are not really concerned with religion and are quick to introduce such substitute terms as science, industry, statecraft and social cohesion. Religion, in their terminology, is merely a phase in man's gradual understanding of himself and his environment, and this places them in basic agreement with Julian Huxley:

> The god hypothesis is no longer of any pragmatic value for the interpretation or comprehension of nature. . . . It will soon be as impossible for an intelligent, educated man or woman to believe in a god as it is now to believe that the earth is flat. . . . Gods will doubtless survive, sometimes under the protection of vested interests, or in the shelter of lazy minds, or as puppets used by politicians, or as refuges for unhappy and ignorant souls.[2]

As Huxley views it, then, religiousness is to be equated with cynicism, stupidity, dishonesty and ignorance. The same Huxley, as quoted by Bishop John Robinson, wrote that "gods are peripheral phenomena produced by evolution," leaving us to conclude, therefore, that cynicism, stupidity, dishonesty and ignorance—all shelters for religious belief—are also only peripheral phenomena, manifestations of an inferior phase in evolution, all of which, except for a few fossilized specimens, will vanish when higher phases have evolved. In these higher phases, men and women will reject the "god hypothesis" because they will be "intelligent and educated."

The Last Phase: Socialization

This is, of course, an extraordinarily simplistic, unrealistic and crude picture to which the spiritual utopian cannot subscribe. Taking his own detours, however, the spiritual utopian must arrive at the same conclusion, that is, at a secularized religion. Now a secularized religion, as earlier indicated, undergoes crises and basic alterations in each great historical period. Accordingly, we may not speak of one secular religion, but of secular religions in an ever-ascending line. For each historical (bio-psychological, etc.) period is supposedly more perfect than the preceding one, and, therefore, each religion which is attached to a given historical period becomes also more perfect than the preceding religion.

[2] *Religion without Revelation,* Harper & Bros., New York, 1927, p. 62.

Perfection here means, as evolutionary pantheism teaches, "socialization" and "humanization": to the secular utopian, socialization is the cooperation of all men in all great common tasks along the lines laid down by science; to the spiritual utopian, socialization is that increase in moral substance among men which will enable them to be like brothers in a kind of "divine milieu." However, since there is no adequate image by which to visualize the coming fraternity in the "divine milieu," the spiritual utopian must concretize his image by urging social, economic and cultural achievements. Thus Teilhard de Chardin looked forward to the Geophysical Congress of 1955, at which scientists of all nations would convene and exchange ideas, to provide a model for his noosphere. Teams of scientists who, in Teilhard's own experience, united for common paleontological research provided a working model of the noosphere.

Such images and models, characterized by certain religious features, may be adopted by the secular utopian also, because they are so vague that practically any interpretation will be considered acceptable. Among the available interpretations, the socially more concrete secular model is likely to prevail. My own feeling is that so many atheists, gnostics, anarchists and secular utopians welcome the statements of Teilhard de Chardin because the evolutionary outcome he proposes (and couches in religious imagery) is a million years away. There is no danger that Teilhard's "Super-Christ" will emerge very soon; and, in the meantime, the secular utopian enthusiastically underwrites Teilhard's statement that the eventual establishment of the noosphere will signal the emergence of "super-mankind."

The spiritual utopian is singularly restricted in his proposals. If he wants to appear at least quasi-religious in his language, the best he can do is to add religious flavor to fashionable secular terminology. The Sabellian heretics in the fourth century explained God as an expanding monad. Marcellus, Bishop of Ancyra, spoke

of the "dilation of the divine" and of the *logos* externalizing itself through an active energy, though always remaining God. The Arians believed that Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost were subsequent emanations of God the Father, that Jesus Christ is a man whose soul is the *logos*, which meant that Christ was a perfect man in direct communion with God and that, as a unique man, Christ would facilitate our own communion. All of this was nothing more than post-Platonic philosophy lightly dipped in holy water.

The religious utopian today speaks the sentimental language of *socialization* and asserts his belief in the dawn of a new *scientific* era. He seeks the invalid baptism of evolutionism when, with Teilhard de Chardin, he speaks of the "ascension of the living" toward the "ultra-human" or of a "finally awakened human intelligence" at the "threshold of a greater consciousness." In all this, man, not God, is exalted; in currently fashionable philosophical vocabulary, man's ordinary qualities are blown up to cosmic proportions, and the swollen result is then called divine. This procedure is not haphazard: the notion of God must first be made sufficiently meaningless before man will undertake to put himself in God's place.

Teilhard de Chardin performed this work of secularization, of rendering the idea of God meaningless, by ingeniously combining contemporary admiration for science, socialism and irrationality with their respective vocabularies. The result, condemned by every line of the Old and New Testament, is the very content of the original sin. But this age believes in what the French existentialists call *dépassement*, that is, the necessity of leaving behind traditional forms. It is not difficult for the religious utopian to forget that he is, himself, a permanent type in the struggle of belief and disbelief. His public forgets even more easily that man cannot step out of the human condition and that no "universal mind" is now being manufactured simply because science has permitted the building of nuclear bombs, space ships and electronic computers.

Teilhard's God: Spiritualization of Matter through Evolution

What Teilhard did was to identify God with the universe—standard pantheistic procedure—not a static, but an expanding, universe, not a space-and-time universe, but a mental-moral continuum of his own devising. As Bishop Marcellus tried to come to terms with Plotinus, calling this supposed expansion "dilation," so Teilhard sought to come to terms with Darwin and Marx, calling this expansion "phyletic effort" and "totalization." Teilhard is certainly explicit in teaching evolutionism or collectivism; in addition, his forced and empty neologisms, his unwarranted comparisons and *non sequiturs*, all couched in that vague language so beloved of all utopians, has appeal for the untutored, for those who are so easily impressed by emotional appeal, allusions and poetic style and who confuse these qualities with substantial speculation and rational analysis.

The God of Teilhard's system is tied to the evolution of matter, for God could not create life and, later, man unless the material preconditions were ready. Similarly, in this view, God cannot save mankind until its moral condition has reached the dizzying heights of what Teilhard calls noosphere, that improved world of men, morally and intellectually united, who await further "centration" in Omega Point, the end of evolution when "superhumanity" meets "Super-Christ." It is, then no exaggeration to say that, for Teilhard, God *is not*; more accurately, God only *becomes*, he grows, so to speak, along with his own creation; he is a non-rational God, partly aloof from man's difficulties, partly powerless. Sooner or later the heretic and enthusiast will identify this with a more understandable term, such as nature, evolution or history. In the name of an *evolving* God, or a *pan-Theos*, or a God which is the unfolding of Absolute Spirit in history, every personal experience is exalted

as an increase in goodness and consciousness and every hallucination becomes interpretation of the divine will. Once the rational standard is eliminated, the idea of a personal God is discarded, too. Corresponding to the concept of God identified with nature, evolution or history is the concept of collective salvation or collective perdition.

Teilhard's thinking decidedly takes its direction from confidence in the collectivization of mankind. He speaks of "phyletic effort," of "totalization," and in *The Future of Man* (as seen by a paleontologist) he who is not yet completely socialized is regarded as a lower form of evolution. The fundamental choice, says Teilhard, belongs not to the individual, but to the "human mass." In the quasi-Marxian terminology of *The Divine Mileu*, man's alienation and frustration are cries that find no echo. The reader will easily note also the atheistic, existentialistic spirit of Sartre and Camus in such a description.

In numerous places throughout Teilhard's works,[2a] the Second Coming is predicated on the coalescence of individual men in one Whole, the coalescence of individual consciences in one "cosmic conscience." Thus we are caught up in a "super-evolution" tending toward a super-organism in which individual thought becomes unanimous thought at the phase of socialization. Only at this point in the evolution of a "super-humanity" may the "Super-Christ" finally emerge.

Teilhard de Chardin, the enthusiast, saw everywhere signs of incipient collectivization which made him confident of the future. He calculated that in a "few hundred thousand years" we shall have taken enormous steps toward an "enlarged consciousness," which he visualized as a kind of globally organized and permanent, scientific research project. Like every "enthusiastic" doctrine, whether it be the Albigensian heresy, Anabaptism or the modern variants, "Christified evolutionism" exalts the individual's "unique experiences" without benefit of rational norms.

[2a] In *Notes for Progress,* as an example.

The New God: Mankind

The contemporary variant of secular religion retains the name of God, but permits mankind, as a collectivity, to identify itself with God. Mankind, as such, seldom appears as an object of worship, however, at least in the crude form of such religion; worship is more often addressed to a society, a race, a nation, or to some hypothetical State to appear at evolution's end. The only difference among secular religions is the form of worship: a given nation, race or regime may demand, as shown in Nazism and Communism, an elaborate ritual, specific slogans and gestures; mankind as such, particularly an evolving mankind, offers no precise object that may be displayed for worship. Robespierre tried to organize elaborate ceremonies in honor of the Supreme Being, a kind of super-mankind, but the rituals collapsed into obscenity and ridicule. Thus, a vague reformist attitude dictates good deeds and respect for other people as precepts to be observed in secular religion.[3] Unwittingly, perhaps, John D. Godsey hit upon the only coherent attitude which the modern religious utopian may assume concerning Christian teachings: "The continuance of a religious interpretation of the Gospel in a non-religious world may be at once a misunderstanding of the Gospel itself and a default of the Church's responsibility *vis-à-vis* the world."[4]

If speaking of religion is admittedly out of place and an almost indecent and reprehensible enterprise, what is left? In the debate occasioned by Bishop Robinson's *Honest to God*, T. E. Utley answered this question:

[3] The Freemason's creed is perhaps the end of the line in religious feelings. As summed up by Serge Hutin in *Les Francs-Maçons* (Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1960, p. 180), this doctrine is an eclecticism at the mercy of all new ideologies; its practice accepts a soulless ritualism; its internal discipline consists of vague recommendations for improving oneself.

[4] *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* as quoted by Robinson, *Honest to God*, SCM Press, London, 1963, p. 124.

> Where, one must ask, will the ravages of liberal theology end? The Devil and Hell went long ago; the position of the Blessed Virgin has been seriously undermined; God, who until last week was invulnerable, is now distinctly on the defensive. What will ultimately be left except the belief in the need for bishops, if only to give evidence in trials about obscenity and to talk to pop singers on television?[5]

This may seem like caricature and cruel sarcasm; actually it expresses the only logical position open to the religious utopians. Nor are the latters' attacks against religion limited to Christianity: the Gnostics caricatured Judaism, for example, by converting the names denoting Jahweh into demonic entities and by reviling the Mosaic Law as a network of institutions and precepts intended to enslave men to the Demiurgos and other archons. On the one hand, the utopian objective is to show a frightening distance between God and man, bridgeable only by those few Elect who possess the divine knowledge; for ordinary people, God is no longer available because utopian designations have completely obscured any meaningful discourse about him. On the other hand, the individual and mankind are held to be increasingly exalted as they stand on the threshold of a brilliant cosmic career, developing new mental and moral faculties in the processes of mutation. Is it any wonder, then, that Bonhoeffer, as summed up by Robinson, should state: "The eternal Thou is met only *in, with and under* the finite thous, whether in the encounter with other persons or in the response to the natural order."[6] In other words, God, for man, is man himself, exactly as the atheist Feuerbach—Marx's mentor in this matter—had written.

Robinson, Tillich and their fellows protest against this interpretation as one belonging properly to naturalism. But what is

[5] *Sunday Telegraph*, London, March 24, 1963.

[6] *Op cit.* Italics by Robinson.

their own interpretation? They contend that one must go beyond the naturalist critique of supernaturalism, yet they welcome this naturalistic critique as valid. In Tillich's own words, "Our period has decided for a secular world . . . a great and much-needed decision [since] it gave consecration and holiness to our daily life and work."[7] The only reason they give for warning against naturalism is that there is some "necessity for the name 'God' " because "our being has depths which naturalism, whether evolutionary, mechanistic, dialectical or humanistic, cannot or will not recognize."[8] Paul Tillich enumerates these "depths": "the feeling for the inexhaustible mystery of life, the grip of an ultimate meaning of existence, and the invincible power of an unconditional devotion."[9]

The Social Gospel

These reasons are hardly sufficient for preserving the name "God," particularly since Tillich himself rejects this name and prefers—because he is fond of speaking of depth—"ground of our being." In reality, however, interpersonal relationships are substituted for relationship with God, because, one may assume, "love of God" has lost all meaning where God is emptied of all significance. One cannot love an abstraction, particularly when that abstraction is discoverable only at the peak of evolution. One can, however, love his fellow men, as witness Bishop Robinson's statement that "assertions about God are, in the last analysis, assertions about love—about the ultimate ground and meaning of personal relationships."[10] This is, of course, the purest pantheism because, as Herbert McCabe, O.P., explains in *Blackfriars* (July-August 1963), if all statements about God can be converted into

[7] *The Shaking of the Foundations,* Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948, p. 181.
[8] Robinson, *op. cit.,* p. 54.
[9] *The Shaking of the Foundations;* see note 7 *supra.*
[10] *Op. cit.,* p. 105.

statements about interpersonal relationships, then such relationships are God—or else the sentence is a tautology. And, indeed, Robinson himself confirms this analysis: whether one has known God, says Robinson, is tested by one question only: How deeply have you loved? He concludes: "encounter with the Son of Man is spelt out in terms of an entirely 'secular' concern for food, water supplies, housing, hospitals and prisons."[11] An astonishing anticlimax in view of the fact that we have been told that the name "God" still stands for a "feeling for the inexhaustible mystery of life." Robinson tries to save the situation by putting the word "secular" between quotation marks, indicating thereby, one assumes, that concern for food and the like is not a purely secular preoccupation; at the same time and insofar as these concerns are associated today with the activities of social workers and agencies of the welfare state, one would like to know what Bishop Robinson and his fellows regard as the difference between social work, governmental functions, and religious devotion. There is no difference, judging from the Bishop's statement. Is one to conclude that the relationship with the "finite thou"—social work—is the only meaningful way of encountering the "eternal Thou?"

That very conclusion seems inescapable in light of the purely social nature and moral relativism contained in the foregoing statements. The character of social work today does not posit the question of right and wrong; its sole concern is alleviation of what it regards as the ill effects of urban living, slum conditions, delinquency and similar social conditions. This thinking may be right as far as it goes, but it does appear to be neutral in the religious sense. In fact, Bishop Robinson goes no farther than the average social worker when he declares:

> Nothing can of itself always be labelled as "wrong." One cannot, for instance, start from the position "sex relations

[11] *Ibid.,* p. 61.

before marriage" or "divorce" are wrong or sinful in themselves. They may be in ninety-nine cases or even a hundred out of a hundred, but they are not intrinsically so, for the only intrinsic evil is lack of love.[12]

How, indeed, could anything be "right" or "wrong" in the context of evolutionary pantheism when these labels are supposed to cover different items throughout the advance of moral, psychological and social evolution? Perhaps their true nature—unless "true nature" is inappropriately static in an evolutionary context—will be revealed at Teilhard de Chardin's Omega Point. For that matter, perhaps even the elements of Tillich's "ultimate concern" will cease to be ultimate as science (considered as broadly as the evolutionary pantheists speak about it) provides answers for them. This, at least, is the assumption to be noted in a text by Bonhoeffer:

Our whole nineteen-hundred-year-old Christian preaching and theology rests upon the "religious premise" of man. . . . But if one day it becomes apparent that this *a priori* "premise" simply does not exist, but was an historical and temporary form of self-expression, that is, if we reach a stage of being radically without religion—and I think this is the case already, else how is it, for instance, that this war, unlike any of those before it, is not calling forth any "religious" reaction?—what does that mean for Christianity? It means that the whole linchpin is removed from the whole structure of our Christianity to date.[13]

[12] *Op. cit.*, p. 118.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 122. What Bonhoeffer regarded as the complete lack of religious reaction to the atrocities of World War II was sufficient reason for him to judge the almost two thousand years of Christian teaching as wrong. Bonhoeffer was executed in a Nazi prison in 1944 and, therefore, was in no position to have witnessed the strong religious reactions. Too, why should a failure of religious people to react, as Bonhoeffer felt they should, invalidate the body of Christian truth? Finally, if Bonhoeffer felt that Christianity and other moral teachings had failed so miserably, why did he feel that man was "mature" and able to define his own religion?

The logic of the evolutionary pantheist's attitude, as it appears from these analyses, leads to a secular religion, that is, to the worship of mankind. In their tremendous impatience with traditional religions (the worship of God) which do not deliver the expected goods—namely, the transformation of humanity into a community of saints—the evolutionary pantheists are ready to jettison the religious luggage and to look for something else, the only one alternative: a secular religion—the worship of man—in which the tensions and contradictions of the *homo religiosus* are, if not solved, at least ignored. And there is, of course, no way back from a secular religion because it has its own logic and its own program.

The religious man believes that freedom leaves us in a permanently precarious situation because of the everlasting tension between what he wants and what he can achieve. He trusts God in the same way as the child puts his trust in his parents, and not because he expects God to work a miraculous cure; he knows his parents' love for him, a love which will guide him through his difficulties.[14] But man also knows that his own wrong decisions may wreck the intentions of divine providence. The same holds for society and mankind as a whole: Dominican Father Calmel holds that the goal of civilization and religion is not to promote a brilliant and prestigious mankind which is free, from the present century onward,

[14] Claude Lévy-Strauss, a prominent French anthropologist, recently declared that there is no meaning in the world or in life, and that whatever meaning the individual assigns is meaningful only for him. The famous biologist, Jean Rostand, declared on the same occasion that our brain is perhaps a mad mechanism, making us mad, too, and rendering all science, philosophy and faith illusory. What remains, says Rostand, is only our anguish in the face of this meaninglessness, although we cannot even account for this anguish.

In the statements of both scientists, interviewed in *La France Catholique* Oct. 23, 1964, are to be found not only the roots and form of contemporary atheism, but also elements of Buddhist, Gnostic, etc., style characteristic of all atheistic thought.

of the miseries and defects inherited from Adam, but to allow a permanently imperfect humanity to remain faithful to God in the spiritual and temporal order.[15]

Secularized man, on the contrary, seems to have adopted religion in the hope that it will bring about mankind's autonomy. In the opinion of secularized man—Julian Huxley, Freud, Bonhoeffer—religion has been given its necessary and fair trial period (which corresponds to mankind's childhood) but now, as it also seemed in the fourth and thirteenth centuries, this trial period is over. Religion has ceased to pay dividends on man's investment, and, at any rate, he has come of age: science explains rationally what, in the past, were considered miracles and mysteries; psychology dispels the darkness which man once confused with the soul; technology benevolently compels man to create the universal society by making him recognize the needs of his fellow men. The things expected of religion have come to men without religion and the religious world view—in fact, in opposition to them. Hence, nothing may stand in the way of an emancipated humanity to reach the "ultra-human," to realize its limitless potentials, to become its own goal, to worship its own achievements, to worship itself.

The True Motive of Secularism: Disappointment with God

None of this is surprising to the secular utopian. He expected for a long time that the "revolution of science," the discoveries of psychology and the affluent society would bring about the emancipation of man from what Freud called "illusions" and from what Marx called the "opium of the people." Although the secular utopian regarded these developments with great satisfaction, and

[15] Cf. "Première approche du teilhardisme: la distinction des trois ordres," in *Itinéraires,* March, 1962, p. 162.

by no means with astonishment, they did come as a tremendous shock to the religious utopian who was hoping all along that God would somehow appear, take over personal leadership of the modern world and explain how, from all eternity, he devised the laws of science. But things simply did not happen as he had envisioned, and science seemed to do quite well without proclaiming its fealty to God. Shock followed shock, and God was not found in the depths of the psyche, in the altitudes of space travel or in the mechanism of the modern welfare State. Disappointed and scandalized at this point, the religious utopian is ready now to switch his allegiance to secularism. He now transfers to society and mankind the passion he once felt for God. Bishop Robinson speaks for them all when he declares in his own summary of the debate which developed around his *Honest to God*:

> Accepting the fact that modern man has opted for a secular world, Bonhoeffer refuses to deplore this. On the contrary, he agrees that the period of religion is over. Man is growing up out of it: he is "coming of age." By that he does not mean that he is getting better, but that, for good or for ill, he is putting the "religious" world view behind him as childish and pre-scientific. Till now man has felt the need for a God, as a child feels the need for his father. He must be "there" to explain the universe, to protect him in his loneliness, to fill the gaps in his science, to provide the sanction for his morality.[16]

The God of Utopians: the Socially Integrated Man

The assumption that the period of religion is over appears, significantly and almost verbatim, in the writings of Friedrich

[16] Edwards-Robinson, *The "Honest to God" Debate,* SCM Press, London, 1963, pp. 270–271.

Engels. Marxism's founders were really convinced that Christianity was the most advanced accomplishment, the very synthesis of the religious spirit, and that no other religion could surpass it or take its place. After 1874, Engels expressed the opinion that the European working class was simply finished with God. This means to the Marxist that the idea of God in its entirety may now be translated into a secular language and projected into the world. In this sense, Christianity is the reverse side of the coin of what Marxists and secular utopians generally consider to be the *true* nature of man, the nature he would have had if religious belief had not usurped it and made it into a distorted reflection of reality. Marx himself thought that Christian theology contained valuable information about the men who conceived it: for example, the Holy Family is a model for the average Christian family, and religion is the consciousness of man who has not yet found himself.

Consequently, it must be re-emphasized that the God of secular utopians is man himself. Needless to say, there are deep reasons for this exaltation of man. In the religious conception, as earlier noted, there always remains a tension between what man desires and what he can achieve. This tension is, of course, heightened in the case of collective desires and achievements, for then the element of the unknown, inherent in the individual, is multiplied by the number of the participants. Basically, this is the price of freedom, itself the result of the distance separating man from God. In the concrete worldly contact, this freedom appears as chance, as an element of incalculability in human actions. This very incalculability, this margin of uncertainty which is inevitable in all human enterprises, is offensive to utopians in their planning of the perfect society. This margin is recognized as flowing directly from the distance between man and God expressed in the human conscience—a tabernacle of God and a private laboratory of invisible and inscrutable decisions. If this distance could be suppressed and God

"brought down" from Heaven[17] and made to coincide with man, the rule of chance could be eliminated from human affairs.

Leo Strauss suggests, for example, that "Machiavelli's lowering of the standards is meant to lead to a higher probability of actualization of that scheme which is constructed in accordance with the lowered standards. Thus, the dependence on chance is reduced: chance will be conquered."[18] Saint-Simon foresaw the same development as the next and last phase in the history of religions: a socialized religion. Auguste Comte also grappled with the problem: if God exists, he thought, mankind cannot establish a fully rational and secular society, because the selfish concern for personal salvation and the absolute interest in a Divine Absolute demanding this interest prevent each from giving himself entirely to the common task.

Only a *man-god,* therefore, would be a guarantee that the common task could be carried out as conceived, since not only an extra amount of energy would be liberated by not being spent "outside" the human enterprise, but the loyalty of man would also be naturally channeled into the construction of a purely this-worldly society. The resulting network would be the highest achievement in the universe and credited to man as sole creator.

Leo Strauss mentions that Savonarola already denounced the "wise of the world" who opined that "speaking philosophically and disregarding the supernatural, the world is eternal, God is the final and not the efficient cause of this world, and there is only one soul in all men; they say that faith is nothing but opinion."[19] This rejected belief is an early affirmation, somewhat timidly expressed, of the doctrine of the collective soul and its divine character. The terms are still theological, but a few centuries later Hegel drew the

[17] In *Brothers Karamazov,* Dostoyevsky observes that socialism is the contemporary incarnation of atheism, that it is the rearing of the Tower of Babel not to reach Heaven from earth, but to lower Heaven to earth.

[18] *What Is Political Philosophy?* Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, 1959, p. 41.

[19] *Thoughts on Machiavelli,* Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, 1958, p. 175.

logical consequences: if mankind is on its way to becoming divine, then, first of all, the traditional dualism of God and man must be rejected; the second step is the description of mankind's self-elevation from finite to infinite life presented as world history. World history must then be conceived as God's progressive self-realization.

Feuerbach shifted the emphasis only slightly, yet it proved decisive. While Hegel still spoke of God as a world spirit which seeks plenitude in the material that mankind provides, Feuerbach looked at the problem from a strictly human point of view: God, he said, is the result of man's thought, its projection. But projection means alienation since the ideal thus projected makes man realize his own limitations. The task for Feuerbach, as it must be for the Marxists, was to re-absorb this ideal and to assure man that he possessed the projected qualities. "Religion is the disunity of man from himself; he sets God before him as the antithesis of himself. God is not what man is—man is not what God is. God is the infinite, man the finite being; God is perfect, man imperfect; God eternal, man temporal; God almighty, man weak; God holy, man sinful."[20] But if God were really so different from man, this perfection would not trouble the latter: "God is nothing other than the prototype and ideal of man: as God is, so man should be and desires to be, or at least hopes to become some time."[21] The turning point of history, says Feuerbach, will be the moment when man will realize that his only God is man himself, *Homo hominum Deus.*

Proudhon's convictions were substantially the same as Feuerbach's. He, too, regarded history as one prolonged error of imperfect societies which attributed to an imaginary being their own qualities and vices. But now, Proudhon continues in his *Correspondance* (V, 299), society is on the way to becoming perfect;

[20] *The Essence of Christianity,* K. Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., London, 1893.

[21] Feuerbach as quoted by Robert Tucker, *Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx,* Cambridge University Press, 1961, p. 89.

it is time to substitute mankind in flesh and blood, in thought and action, as an organism and a system for the supernatural Christ of the Gnostics and the God of Rousseau and Spinoza. The cult of the Supreme Being should now yield to the culture of mankind which Proudhon saw as the comprehension of the universe.

These conclusions seemed to be in the air. Saint-Simon, Auguste Comte and Proudhon in France advocated them, as did the Russian characters found in the novels of Turgenev and Dostoyevsky and English writers of the leanings of Godwin. Engels wrote in an early article: "Hitherto the question has always stood: What is God?—and German philosophy has resolved it as follows: God is man. . . . Man must now arrange the world in a truly human way, according to the demands of his nature."[22] Several decades later, in his introduction to *Literature and Revolution,* Trotsky echoed Engels when he held that the revolution must start from the central idea that collective man must become sole master and that the limits of human power are determined by man's knowledge of natural forces and by his capacity to use them.[23] Mankind is definitively enthroned in the place of God, and from this point on, as Marx said, all will depend on the development and organization of the productive forces. This represents the shift in governmental and social functions which Saint-Simon had predicted when he said that, because *government of people* is a thing of the past, the task of the new era is to organize the *administration of things.* The utopian element in this position, as Michel Collinet remarks, is the abandonment of the Aristotelian contention that man is a *political* animal in favor of the tenet that man is an organic animal.[24] Indeed, the utopian believes that organization is the last word in everything pertaining to man.

[22] As quoted by Tucker, *ibid.,* p. 73.

[23] Cf. the Introduction to Trotsky's *Literature and Revolution,* Russell and Russell, New York.

[24] "Saint-Simon et l'évolution historique," *Le Contrat Social,* Sept., 1960, p. 294.