

## NEGATIVE UTOPIA AND RELIGION

### I. POLITICAL EVANGELISM

At the time of Plato's *Republic*, the citizens lived in a unity of religion and politics. Hegel refers to this life, prior to the rending of the conscience into the exterior modern State and interior religion, as beautiful, free, and happy.

Perhaps the nostalgia for the beautiful, free, and happy unity presides today over the confused attempts to "change life," where politics and religion exist side by side and intermingle. But this unity was not possible except in the ideal of the Republic; the current confusion takes place rather in the name of a utopian non-city.

The attitude of Christians today is, in effect, one of the most surprising manifestations of negative utopia.<sup>1</sup> As in the leftist movement, we should distinguish between the politicized militants, progressive and often aggressive Christians, and a general state of mind which concerns the whole of Churches up to their highest

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<sup>1</sup> As opposed to Plato's *positive* utopia which proposes a very well-defined model of the Republic—which serves as a criterion for all judgements made on historical cities but which has nothing of the mythological or the ideological about it—one could call *negative* an anarchical utopia or the future non-city, which consists of nothing but the denial (negation) of all recognized value to the current historical reality and proposes an ideology of disorganizing action, organization being considered as fatal for man. Man is thus defined as being essentially free within his spontaneous "creativity".

dignitaries. One is all the more astonished since all this seems to preserve the dominion of spiritual authority *par excellence* over the protest of that authority. There are at the same time strong doctrinal reasons for a Messianic religion to discard all political utopias as terrestrial. Without doubt it is not at all the same for a negative utopia, which is by nature receptive to contradictions.

Theologians cannot but be in agreement on at least one point: Creation can only be inferior to the Creator, reality here below is imperfect. In other words: only God's justice is justice. This is the least that one could say, and Pascal does not hesitate to go even further: the justice of men is injustice. This need for the absolute is comprehensible on the part of a religion, and the general conclusion from this is that it is impossible to deduct a political attitude from it, since religion denies that politics is a means or end of health, the only thing essential for man. Politicians know this, and J.-J. Rousseau was not deceived by it: "The Christian religion," he said, "far from attaching the hearts of the citizens to the state, detaches them from it as from all things on earth."

Unlike the ancient citizen for whom piety was tied to membership in the Republic, the Christian does not see himself as beginning with political and social laws, but within a subjective faith. As a modern citizen, he does not believe less in the universal Church, nor in a fatherland, a social class, or a family, which he will serve loyally if they oppose no insuperable obstacles to his well-being. It is not a matter of opposition to this or that state but of an infinite distance from politics itself. As far as he is Christian, man does not conduct any political battle. The kingdom of Caesar is, in the absolute, a negation of justice; one can live and act in it as a citizen, but not as a believer. The Christian unhesitatingly refuses to carry out any orders contrary to his Christian conscience, to the love of God and his neighbor, but this refusal is purely negative. The rest derives from secular life, from reasonable judgement, not from faith.

It seems amazing that we appear to rediscover today the absolute character of divine justice, not as opposed to the political state and to the fundamental injustice of the creature, but to a certain historical state which could only be the bourgeois liberal state, for the excellent reason that it usually permits protest. Certainly, criticism does not spare the socialist states, but since the

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bourgeois state has no excuse, the socialist state is given credit for generous intentions, unfortunately held back by circumstances or wicked people. At any rate, all states are guilty not only in regard to absolute divine justice but also with regard to a Christian society, of which one has thought up until now that it was not of this world, but which one wanted to establish as soon as possible in this world, by a "joyous eschatological daring," as one theologian calls it.

This flame of evangelical purity could only cheer the hearts of those afflicted by seeing this world devoted to materialism, if this new Sermon on the Mount did not confuse the "here below" and the beyond to the advantage of a future life just as terrestrial as the present. Will the future be Christian if it is Socialist? This is what certain Christians affirm. Some claim to have become socialists as a deepening of their faith, through understanding that socialism is the earthly name for Christianity; others, that they have been convinced by the scientific accuracy of the socialist precepts, and knowing that what is true scientifically cannot be contrary to what is true religiously. There are those who seem to unite a solid theological tradition with simple good sense. We must believe them when they aver that their socialist conviction has nothing to do with their faith. They have made their choice under the influence of reasons which are completely terrestrial. God wills that there should be reasons. Let us admit then that scientific reasoning has led them to Marxism. This cold persuasion is still far away from the burning climate of the theology of the revolution and of the leftist cultural revolution which it recommends without hesitation. This fusion should therefore not astonish us. One could doubt that the theory of the plus-value could excite the Christian as such, on the other hand one understands that one who feels burning faith and love for his neighbor could be tempted by the fraternal community which socialism promises. Eschatology inhabits socialist sentiment like it does the Christian faith, but it is lying down. Christianity becomes the future of the earth.

The following reflection of a progressive Christian, addressed to atheistic Marxists, has been taken as involuntary humor: "That which brings us together is more important than that which separates us." It is not, in effect, at all a big thing, one could say, it is only God. But God, we are agreed, does not divide people.

There is a misunderstanding, say the leftists; there is a tacit understanding, say the Christians. Is not an atheist leftist who lives authentically his "leftist" faith more Christian than the sociologically "believing" bourgeois, who, being bourgeois, cannot live his faith, alienated as he is by bourgeois society? God is certainly there, misunderstood or implied.

Messianism, which is not absent from Marxism, becomes essential to the left. Without doubt Marx had thoughtlessly considered religion as a form of insanity and a reversion, but we shall see that with a bit of theological good will, it is possible to strike a compromise. First, certain theologians are skilled in making the implications of Marxism understood, God hidden in the socialist society to come. Then, is it not beneficial to recognize the materialistic truth within Christianity itself? There is a misunderstanding carefully maintained by bourgeois philosophy. What is then this spiritualism of bourgeois society, if not the excuse for a sordid materialism? True spiritualism is not idealistic but realistic, which is another name for materialism. There is a simple misunderstanding. Christian realism or dialectical materialism live the same human reality, which is also divine. The true spiritualism of true Christians, the true materialism of true Marxists live in the same sense.

Let us understand, these "sophistic" arguments are interesting only to men of order, concerned with coherence, that is, men of the Church and the party. But the Christian "fools of God" and the leftist "fools of the revolution" have no need for these religious and political ideologies. Christ the Superstar is enough, and His power is of another substance! We have nothing to do with God the Father, a cumbersome myth and an unbearable authority, or with the Holy Spirit, a pretentious reasoner. There exists only the Son, man-God, God here below in flesh and blood, an historical subject, a rebel, Christ or liberated humanity, freed from divisions into believer and non-believer, if however the difference has any sense any more. "I believe in God" is a verbal affirmation without foundation and without coherence.<sup>2</sup> "I work

<sup>2</sup> One of the religious paradoxes of our age is the difficulty of distinguishing a believer from an atheist. To the question "Do you believe in the resurrection of Christ?" it is possible that the neo-Christian would answer "No," and that the "atheist" answer "In a sense, yes." In the sense in which the "believer" answered "No." Their meeting point is, one could say, "transcendent" of

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for the revolution” is a Christian act which authenticates faith.

The Church, merged with the State, betrays the spiritual; the progressive religion of Christ merged with the cultural revolution, is on the contrary the sublimation of the spiritual. The pursued Crusader is perfect: the modern Christians, avid for a better future, needed to believe in the world, in the Promised Land. Atheistic leftists, nostalgic for the eternal, needed to believe in more than the earth: a Messianism of glowing tomorrows reconciles and merges them.<sup>3</sup>

Progressive Christians are thirsting for a totalitarian vision and immediate action; “atheistic” leftists are as religious, even mystical. Utopia fascinates both insofar as it has neither shape nor organization, insofar as it is the negative of this world. Religion confirms itself politically, as they say, whereas politics is steeped in indeterministic religiosity. Manicheism rules, opposing to the purity of the bad and corrupt world, not this life below, world of evil for all and all time, but the historical, bourgeois, technocratic, consumer, bureaucratic world. For no present time would know how to satisfy these soldiers of the absolute: Stalin, Castro, Allende, all of them lacking the absolute. There remains the permanent scandal, the metaphysical scandal of imperfect existence. Waiting for Godot.

## II. RENEWAL AND SAVAGE FAITH

The Church gladly considers these extremists as a useful but painful ferment. It listens to this still confused noise with apprehension. Having long been numbed in a conservative winter, it is awakening to the boldness of this century, but not without some hesitation. One accuses it of weakness or recklessness, of cowardice or temerity. The Church is floundering, mixing sudden action with frightened reticence. Is it to give itself courage, like the child who sings in the dark, that it proclaims in a very loud

faith and of unbelief and there is at the base the place of terrestrial and political order which constitutes their common “faith”.

<sup>3</sup> When R. Garaudy sees in Christianity and Marxism two hopes which should merge, each able to save the other from alienation, one evokes the two Greats of the Utopian world, parallel to the two Super-Greats of the historical world.

voice that it is in the process of undergoing a renewal? The troublemakers are a sign of life, the disorder is a spontaneity which seeks and which perhaps finds again the first steps toward community without hierarchy, dogma, ritual. "In those times," in the catacombs, there was nothing but nudity, poverty, prayer. Certainly, they go too far. They are too zealous, like the Zealots of the time of Jesus, but that is the price of a renaissance.

So be it. The renewal recovers however some very different innovations which it would be prudent to distinguish.

1) The theological renewal can designate a renewal of the content of dogmatic theology—the mysteries that are the Trinity, the Resurrection, etc.—in the framework of a thought that is specifically religious, but conceptualized according to modern philosophical doctrines, which are considered more suitable than St. Thomas to carry the divine word into the hearts and minds of contemporaries. What is new here is the philosophy, even if its name is theology.

2) The case is completely different when traditional theology confronts modern history and reinterprets it according to a theoretico/practical ideology of the historical world. One observes then a sliding of dogmatic theology toward a theology of history and of theology of history toward a "theology of revolution." One will note the paradox of expressions which give the genitive complement of the noun to "theology," while the term already bears its content: it is the Logos or word of God. Most often this Freudian and Marxist concept constitutes the interpretive structure of this argument.

The renewal is then very different. It makes of theology a theoretico/practical doctrine which invites historical and political change.

3) One still designates as renewal the adaptation of the traditional Church to modern mores, whether through its own initiative or under the pressure of groups which question its authority, that forces it to concessions. Paradoxically, the principle is often the return to primitive ecclesiastical forms. The renewal is here a "renaissance," a return to origins.

4) Finally, the Church as a hierarchical body would have a new attitude regarding politics and, particularly insofar as it is a spiritual force, regarding power. The Church wants to break

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with compromises and agreements. The terrain is slippery. It does not seem to be a question of affirmation of the purely spiritual but of temporal involvement for a just cause. But the political appreciation of the justice of a cause poses some problems which are not precisely religious.

The first sense of the renewal does not interest us in itself.<sup>4</sup> However, the passage from dogmatic theology to the social theology of history of revolution, etc., is full of instruction. It illustrates the ambiguity of the notion common to all of "demythologization."

Let us take the case of the devil. It is a myth in which no one believes at first sight. So then, one will say, "does he not exist?" Do men believe in him because their world is not sufficiently rationalistic? It is not so simple. We all know that the supreme ability of the devil consists in making one believe that he doesn't exist. Demythologized, fine, non-existent, certainly not. That depends on what you mean by existing. What counts, says the theologian, is not his existence, but his significance. What does one understand for devil or devilry? And here the interpretation is open. You can recognize in Satan that there is no evil more fundamental than the will of man, a seduction anterior to his desire, unless it is desire itself. You can see in it the delirious passion for supremacy, the *ὕβρις* of the Greeks, or the regress towards the infrahuman. "Satan" is a name like the "Opération Primevère" or the Clément Marot Plan. It is not impossible for the seduction to be that of money, the desire to be that of profit, the regression towards the infrahuman, the bourgeois capitalist world which ends up at Buchenwald, etc.

This is not to condemn the principle of demythologization, but to state that once begun it must be continued. After Satan why not Christ? The dogmas then cease to have value of truth in the here and now. The event of the Resurrection becomes the "Operation Resurrection," the "Ascension Plan." If you are a coal-dealer, you can believe that it is a matter of a return to life after a sojourn in the morgue or of an elevation in the air,

<sup>4</sup> It is however on this unique level that the balance sheet is positive both for theology and for philosophy. The emergence of theological studies on Hegel, for example—or even on Heidegger—is beneficial to the highest degree and has given, even if only to the history of philosophy, some remarkable works. But this is not our problem nor even that of the Church as such.

but the theologian cannot do this. He asks, "But still, what does that mean?" All of that means passing it through the sieve of philosophical criticism, interpreting it with full reflection.

Let us return to dogmatic theology and to the theology of history. Dogmatic renewal can consist, as Bultmann would have it, in demythologizing, by returning to history that which is human and therefore historic—and Christ lives in the world—or on the other hand in removing all historical character from that which is "miraculous" or an insertion of the divine into the world. And here two opposite attitudes are possible: either one only sees a symbol and this "only" indicates that demythologizing is to reduce to the advantage of any science whatsoever (psychoanalysis, linguistics, etc.); or the symbol becomes the manner of considering the fundamental event of the divine word, which remains essential and in this sense dogmatic truth. For example, Luther announcing "*Deus justificans hominum peccatum*," proposes a dogmatic content of religion, a guide for interpretation, a way of extracting truth from a symbol. In speaking of the *Kerygma* Bultmann means to distinguish from simple informative message a religious call which demands an answer and a voluntary decision on the part of each person: the specificity of faith is less in the content than in the attitude.

But this is not the case in historicist and revolutionary theologies. They are condemned to slide towards what seems to us the opposite of a demythologization, that is to say a creation of religious myths; for example, a religious myth of the class struggle.

An interpretation of the sacred content of Christianity which is at the same time historicizing and symbolic is not new. It goes back at least to Hegel who saw in religion all the content of philosophy, but not so well thought out. Now the philosophy of Hegel is a philosophy of history which presents itself as a philosophical consciousness of history and as brought by it. It is no longer here a matter of exegesis having a religious meaning but rather of interpretation which only has meaning in the whole philosophical system.

The situation is different with theology whose principle is to justify a theoretico/practical interpretation and revolutionary policy. This "history" must not illude us. It is purely mythical and serves as a springboard to an ahistorical ideology. The



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contesting exegesis becomes an egalitarian and libertarian interpretation of the Gospel.

The interpretation of the dogmatic content by contemporary philosophy—whatever it may be—could constitute a more satisfying comprehension of the religious nucleus provided that they respect its specific character, that is to exist only for faith. What is more, they must not aspire to anything but expressing a message, as St. Thomas did in his time, with the difference that we are in another time. On the contrary, when the progressive theologians or the theological progressivists use the analyses of Freud or Marx or their leftist surrogates they seem simply to dress as Christian figures concepts which already have a defined sense in their respective domains. This is why this figuration constitutes a mythologization.

But, one will say, if the Marxist or Freudian analysis—or more often a Marxist-Freudian mixture—is true, it cannot contradict faith. Did not St. Augustine recognize that true philosophy agrees with faith? But the question is another: this progressive theology proclaims that the human is the criterion of the divine which closely takes up the outlines of man's political, lyrical, etc. experience. If a contradiction appears between this experience and the divine letter it is because one has probably misunderstood the message (or one has probably disguised it to make it the opium of the masses). The conflict is not at all that of Galileo, that of the demands of science against those of the dogmas of the Church, because it is not a question of science—to which the Church adapts itself perfectly, having understood that its line of resistance is absurd—but rather of human *values* lived on a secular level and for human interests. For a long time religion has glorified itself in confronting the instincts of the human animal; one would now like it to accord them some respect. To oppose oneself to the blossoming of human values—i.e., legitimate desires—is to alienate the individual which is the inverse of religious liberation. Religion is freedom and it is man who feels the desire for liberation which therefore is the criterion for the religious person. In the case of conflict with traditional standards of religion it is the religious dogma which must be put in question instead of summoning mores before the tribunal of faith. It criticizes its own incomprehension of the human.

To render Christianity “credible”—to apply without reserve a marketing term to a religion—is to submit to it the demands of life as conceived by man involved in the struggle experienced by the oppressed, or at least as that struggle is interpreted by their intellectual representatives. For the purpose of helping the delivery of the man of tomorrow, the activity of the neo-theologians seems completely consecrated to demonstrating the anthropomorphic nature of religion. This sudden change means perhaps that the ways of the Lord are decidedly tortuous, at any rate, when they pass through the spirit of neo-Christians.

It would be amusing to demonstrate the disorganization of the sacred in describing the ephemeral cults which, under the name of Christianity, flourish all over the world and especially in the United States, but after all the “Jesus freaks” and other folkloristic groups are not eternal. We will not devote ourselves any longer to celebrating the rediscovered millenarianism of certain Christian hippies who are replacing political criticism with more or less Franciscan religiosity, though we see in God a good guy, a nice friend who is not at all angry that one adores him with all one’s body rather than with one’s heart or, *a fortiori*, with one’s mind. In the end we all consider those who express their taste for the holy without organization or institution as a marginal phenomenon, a sign of disenchantment without doubt, but whose manifestation teaches nothing about its base.

It is a serious matter that the Catholic Church is in a sense “off its hinges.” In a certain measure Protestantism has been protected from extreme contestation, on the one hand because of its long tradition of personal reflection and the absence of a hierarchical church and too precise dogmas, on the other hand thanks to the doctrine of salvation by faith and of terrestrial independence of actions, which permit an acceptance of the autonomy of politics, an elastic manner of being in the world and not being in it. Catholicism, on the contrary, consists in a powerful universal church, organized hierarchically up to a supreme leader representing God, and in a corpus of dogma which is coherent or at least tending to be so. The day when authority is questioned—hierarchically and intellectually—under the exterior blows of politics, organized religion crumbles, and it constitutes the unfurling of the profane in the holy body.

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The priest becomes again a simple intellectual—but not a sage—and as an intellectual he has neither object nor technique to keep him from falling over the edge of the abyss. There is no more limit to his delirium of interpretation in the name of a faith without dogma: the absolute is possible, it is there, the unreal becomes real, the earthly mystical.

By reading certain contemporary theologians one would think that the fathers of the new church were Feuerbach, Nietzsche, Marx and Freud. Certainly the death of God is at the heart of the Christian religion, but up to the present faith consisted in believing that He was resurrected. But no, it is His death and that alone which interests them because it seems that one sees in it the key to human creativity. And it is rather that which is the resurrection: God is the creativity of man.

Following in the footsteps of this bold thesis one could take the lead of the crusade of religious disalienation in the very name of true religion. Religion, the opiate of the masses, is true; religion as neurosis is also true; the religion of slaves is absolutely true. Nietzsche is right: this God is anti-human. But all this criticism must lead us to the God who disintoxicates the masses from their religious opium, who heals man of his neuroses, who makes a triumphant rebel of the suffering slave: the God of disalienation purified by Marx, Freud and Nietzsche.

According to Marx, religious alienation is not an error of the ingenuous and the primitive but the reflection of the false world—the heart of a world without a heart. One must change the world if one wants to change the thought of the world. The neo-Christian approves, adding: “That’s what Jesus has always said!” Bourgeois religion, the historic Church and its reassuring representation, all this is alienation itself; we are all drug-pushers. It is no longer a question of converting the Gentiles—often very decent and very articulate—but the pseudo-Christians of the ruling class. Preaching, on the other hand, would be of no great use; it is the bourgeois alibi *par excellence*. True conversion begins in the political plan with the demolition of alienating structures. At that point Christianity no longer gathers together the Christian, the Jew, and the Gentile, but becomes the dividing point between the exploiter and the exploited, the moment of truth. The bourgeoisie of the world, under the usurped name of Christianity, has abused the masses, putting

them to sleep in the dream of family, fatherland, and property, all the false idols which paralyze healthy rebellion. The misunderstanding must be dispelled. The division does not cease at the portal of the church; rather it is there that it acquires its true meaning. Christian theology does nothing more than become aware of the fact, it is the theology of the revolutionary praxis.

The non-Christians therefore prove their eternal adversaries right. They take alienation upon themselves better to overcome it. They speak in full awareness and are determined to go further in disalienation, both of themselves and of others.

Faith has nothing to do with any dogmatic content, which is always decaying in historic development; nor is it characterized by personal attitudes without guarantee or objectivity; faith is that which is lived and is active in the revolutionary struggle. It is action itself, lyrically expressed, the theoretic practice which is born from the class experience. The religious attitude, for itself sentiment and intimacy, is in itself political. Once again priests address themselves to Christians, inviting them to fight politically in the name of Christian truth. Is this then the renewal of the Church Militant? After being chained for a long time to the established order on which it depends, is it now going to take as the criterion for truth the destruction of the established order, injustice because it is established?

Machiavelli thought that one should make much of religion although he was persuaded that Christianity constituted a great obstacle to politics of the modern world. But it was important to keep in mind the weight of the sociological and historical realities. Today, inversely, the churches appear to be discovering that one must make much of politics, not only as the place where the truths of faith are applied but also as something which is internal to faith. This is not so much a belated revival of the Jesuitical design as a kind of sanctifying of politics. Dom Besret (prior of the abbey of Bocquen) summarized the tendency of this new Christian spirit very well: "Religion," he writes, "must adapt itself to the critical, lyric, and political experience of our times." This adaptation, this Jesuitical scheme to make the transcendental truth better understood in the profane world and using the means of this world, is no longer only a concession to human weakness but the elevation of the human political exper-

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ience to the sacred level. The act of faith receives from without the grace that one expected before from the God within. History is sovereign. It is through politics that one becomes authentically Christian, faith is no longer measured by the act of involvement of love and hope, but by the objective struggle that gives its content to hope. The task of theology is to sanctify political involvement.

Thus did the Christians set themselves to love the world passionately, perhaps to be perfect in it. Christians have discovered happiness and for now. The immanence of God in the revolution has always haunted revolutionaries, even the atheists, for all are naturally in love with the absolute. But it becomes today the ferment of faith and of action, which are inextricably bound. The political doctrine is Messianism, the great evening is prophecy. The transcendental God—the All Other—is scarcely suitable to the struggle of the oppressed. He impeded history and undermined all historic creativity. God becomes the suffering slave, the man-God made divine by his historic acts. God lives in protest. He is protest itself sanctified. God does not free, he is the liberation of man by man, of all men by certain men entrusted with the divine mission. It has been said that Che Guevara resembled the traditional Jesus with long hair and a beard, but the deep resemblance is inverse for today's consciousness: it is Jesus who reflects Che Guevara. Let us remember that a few decades ago in a more confined atmosphere suspicious of the admirers of Che, his compatriot Eva Duarte, wife of a *Caudillo*, was reflecting already with her splendor the Christian virgin, beloved heart of the *descamisados*. Some people ardently desire her canonization. To what lengths will revolutionary religion go, to what fetishism? If God is the human liberation of man, one might fear that the Cross could pale next to the storming of the Bastille, unless one were persuaded that Christ was killed on the barricades or in the Bolivian Resistance.

The theology of faith has always been inseparable from the theology of hope and love. The hope is today that of a terrestrial world, love tends to be selective, subordinate to political action and ready to accept hate, consecrated by evil, without doubt, but whose ready sword is carried against those who are considered to incarnate it, the exploiters. As the theology of a history that

is inevitably in conflict, as the theology of a sociological and political process, religion becomes a kind of "aura" around the historical struggle for humanization.

What is left of the *Credo* which constituted the sense of the Catholic religion a little while ago: its doctrine, its rites, its system of morals, its hierarchical institution? In what sense has its content evolved? In what sense is it capable of evolving? Following the tendencies described here above, it seems that one can answer that the dissolving of the content, under all aspects, is almost total except in two points which will then be the only core of religion: a message of universal love, a command to poverty. What is new is that all the rest—the dogmatic and hierarchical structure—tends to subordinate itself to these sentiments, that is, to disappear. The figure of Christ tends to blend into that of St. Francis of Assisi. A St. Francis who, instead of leaving all, even down to his very clothes, to marry poverty, would have used a motorcycle helmet and an iron bar to launch a protest against wealth.

If love and poverty are the only aspects which remain, the dogmatic and spiritual authority of churches is dying. These sentiments—made ardent through action—constitute all the experienced substance of religion because there is no longer any imaginable spiritual substance which might be truly religious, no more mental and institutional structure which might make of the Church a universality of thought and will. Why, in the disintegration of the Church, does the religious element of love and poverty stand fast, when all dogma collapses? Without doubt the ideal of universal love is easily comprehended and it is all the more easy to understand as it becomes independent of dogmatic content. But poverty? Why in a world of relative abundance does it become a figure of virtue and take on a religious character? The answer would, without doubt, be complex. It comes at the same time as disenchantment with the senseless world of the consumer society and as indignation in the face of inequality. Poverty becomes the holy place, the place of scandal and of revolutionary action. The voluntary choice of poverty—evangelical teaching—and the struggle which results from having really experienced poverty—political event and actions—end up confused. The sentimental content of religion merging with the fact of social reality consecrates the crumbling of religion's

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dogmatic content and of its hierarchical ecclesiastic organization.

Let us go on rapidly to speak of the religious system of the Church: customs and rites, hierarchy and spiritual authority, doctrine.

1) Just as it would be absurd to want to preserve the medieval rites when Christ sings in the music hall and African rhythms beat out the Mass, so it is impossible to oppose oneself to the evolution of mores, for example, in the erotic domain. The Church is no longer mistress of mores. We are inevitably moving toward a "liberation" of mores, and it is the faithful who are pulling the Church and not vice versa. The Church wanted to keep itself beyond time. It is being towed by time.

2) The Church is undergoing a crisis of authority which is shaking all its hierarchies. Is the case not fatal when it is a question of an authority which is essentially spiritual? Without doubt it will be said that the history of the Church is less that of spiritual authority than of theological and political authority. That is true, but the prestige of the interpreter and of the theologian-philosopher, the reassuring affection of the (Holy) Father, the temporal power of the high functionaries of the Church would not explain the literally "mysterious" influence of religious leaders. It is through them that theophany passes, it is in them—their words, clothing, deeds—that the holy inhabits the world. Now, challenged in their role of father, of head or leader, of wise man or interpreter, the religious men of today seem to challenge themselves, to deny the holiness of their dress and of their deeds and the infallibility of their words. There is no need to be an integrist—the foolishness of integrism will not save anything—to observe the disintegration of the Church, which does not at all mean that of religion. Secularization is currently an irreversible phenomenon, integrism and the pretended renewal are equally incapable of coping with indifference. We are moving toward the religion of savage faith where hierarchy, rites and morality are no longer of any use.

3) Savage faith is first of all the death of dogma. The Church as guardian of dogma has often been however quite prompt in judging orthodoxy and heresy. It has gone even so far as recognizing in one man infallibility in matter of faith right in the middle of the 19th century. The crumbling of the theologico-political powers, the self-criticism of the hierarchy under the

pressure of the “clerical” base—which is so less and less in the religious sense but which risks becoming so again in the political sense—all that is the sign of the disintegration of dogma, and of the appearance of the pervading religiosity of love and poverty. “What God are we talking about?” asks the theologian, or to use the jargon of the period—highly significant in the circumstance—“what is happening with this God of whom we are speaking?” for then all answers are possible. It doesn’t matter which! One no longer knows what separates the sacred from the profane, dogma no longer defines anything, the kingdom of God must become the kingdom of Caesar; religion must become politics. Without dogma religion becomes essentially subjective and all is permitted. And certainly the striking part is not that faith is subjective, it is also nature itself and no one can do anything against this faith, neither to create it nor to destroy it. The amazing part is that being subjective and “savage” it is not “personal” because it moves itself in the domain of the sentimental and political “collective,” because to believe has become especially to believe “with” rather than to believe something. God is so incarnated that it is no longer a question that He emerged from his flesh but only that He be born—or reborn—in future humanity. The Church wanted to be a ship out of time; by sailing into the wind of history, ill-able to navigate, it risks sinking, and no one will imagine that there is a powerful vessel there except those who will know how to recognize the debris—the integrists or sects of renewal.