

to forgive, heal, and strengthen, is prepared to embrace the forlorn and sinful within the same blessing it pours upon the chosen children of grace.

In the characteristically sober language of the Code of Canon Law, the Church shows solicitude that her priests be trained for the frontiers to which St. Paul's charter beckons: "In seminaries there should be lectures on the theology of pastoral duties, practical seminars on catechising both youth and adults, conferences on hearing confessions, visiting the sick and assisting the dying" (Canon 1365, ¶3). Here the law of the Church reminds the priest that wherever his work may take him, he is always to be the dispenser of the riches of Christ. To hungry, thirsty, dying souls he must always be prepared to give Christ to eat, to drink—to love. For blind, tired and indifferent souls he has to be ready to break the bread of Christ's truth for them to taste the savor of faith and begin to hunger for the Bread of the Divine Master Himself.

What are the dimensions of the priesthood? They soar beyond the limits of the world into the infinite space which so fascinates us today. They soar beyond the problems which cover earth to find a conclusion in God. The dimensions of the priesthood are the dimensions of Christ: infinite.

—Paul Philibert, O.P.

SOMETHING FOR NOTHING

*So on we worked, and waited for the light,
And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;
And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,
Went home and put a bullet through his head.*

(From *Richard Cory*, a poem by Edwin Arlington Robinson)

IN A RECENT ISSUE of a prominent national weekly magazine an article appeared dealing with the troubled emotional state of modern man. Aptly entitled "The Anatomy of *Angst*," it proceeded to analyze the guilt/anxiety feelings prevalent today. More an historical conspectus of the problem than a true analysis, the article concluded with a few remarks

on how to order this psycho-phenomenal chaos. Psychic energizers, analytic therapy and shorter, more directive psychiatric treatments were mentioned as obvious cures. Religion, though not mentioned, could also be considered a cure, should it prove beneficial to the patient . . . at least that species of humanistic religion so widespread among our generation. As for a God-centered religion (of course, He is there in the other, too . . . someplace), the article does not really take a stand on this, God being outside its orbit. But God does have a rôle to play in our anxieties and guilt feelings! According to the author of the article in question God is one of the *causes* of our emotional chaos, merely because He has "grown silent." God, it seems, has become a bored "Otherness" beyond the world Who refuses to play our games, Who refuses to "speak" again to man.

Anxiety as a fact cannot be denied. It is one of the great sicknesses of our era. We are surrounded by anxious people. The busy executive fears the booming competitor; the rising young employee sees his fellow workers as "the enemy"; the teenager is uncertain of his future in a jungle society; the world eyes the "bomb" and wonders if there will be only rubble on the morrow; mental diseases are on the increase; nervous breakdowns are unsurprisingly common. The future looms ominous, bleak and full of dark, monstrous shadows of various mushroom shapes. This is the *Age of Anxiety*; but to say that God is its cause on account of his silence is a rather easy way of getting around the problem man himself has created.

God is no more silent today than He has ever been in ages past. His word is constantly being uttered to the world. Today, however, the loudness of man's self-importance deafens him to the Divine word. In our humanistic society man has made himself the all-important being, the kingpin of thought, study and, in some cases, even prayer. God, if He is acknowledged at all, is usually roaming off in the distance, unconcerned, uninterested in His creation. Like a child called away from his toy top to more important affairs, God will let the world and its universe spin itself out. It is no wonder that God seems silent. Man has shut God up in a closet and is trying to make over His house somewhat unsuccessfully!

But how does this cause anxiety? With God safely out of the way, man is able to romp freely about his world, enjoying it, developing it, using it. But it is not so. When man disowns his God, he is left to himself. All he has, his beginning and his end, his source of joy and comfort, his love and its consummation, his entire life are only himself. All other things in the universe have only an order to himself and must be explained through his being, through human existence and happiness. Man has be-

come the ultimate, the supreme. In short, man has made himself his own god. But a human god is no god. He is a god full of contradictions.

In the beginning of the humanistic movement man was little understood; there was a mystery about him. And because he was mysterious and unfathomable, he could be a god. But today the study of man has progressed. We know practically his whole physiological structure. We can understand his emotional states. We have statistics on every phase of his day-to-day living. Man has become less mysterious and more and more a laboratory specimen like the white mouse and the guinea pig. Peeled of his mystery, man is left in a somewhat embarrassed position. His frailties and shortcomings slowly pimple to the surface. His complete changeability sprouts up in him. He becomes scarred with his own impotence. His divine lustre dims to a dull, tarry glow. He becomes just another creature, lacking the agility, strength, sensory perception and beauty of many of his fellow animals. He is a clayfooted god, crumbling from within.

Yet, modern man looks at himself still and refuses to seek a more powerful being outside himself to serve. He decides that this creature, himself, is still his god; but a god doomed to nothingness. The end of god is "the black pall of nothing, nothing, nothing—nothing at all," to borrow a phrase from the poet Archibald MacLeish. Man has become a sickened creature, filled only with himself. His image causes nausea. The prospect of a future of nothingness creates in him a profound anxiety. He fears the future and the unknown, because these are his lot . . . and these are nothing. His soul becomes troubled and his life full of anxious perplexities. He is alone with himself and this is too much to bear. He is guilty of making himself his god. The knowledge of his crime escapes him, but its consequences overpower him. He fears nothingness, for that is himself. He has committed the crime of self-deification, and his guilt makes him ashamed. Man is doomed to man. He has damned himself to his own nothingness. There is no escape. There can be no exit.

No exit! That is, there is no way out humanly speaking. God does not speak on man's terms. Man's little ego must leap over the wall of his inherent nothingness and race out onto the field of the supernatural for an answer to his problem. There God is waiting for him. There God will accept his surrender and speak to him through Grace. For God's voice is found in His law, the New Law which Christ has given to the world: the Law of His Grace. Man stands in need of such a law to be freed from his anxieties and guilt.

Man is free. He can choose either himself or God. We have seen the

results of the former choice. What of the latter? Will hurling himself into the arms of the Omnipotent implant in man's soul quiet and weed out anxiety and guilt? Is the God-trusting man a man at peace?

First of all, it must be acknowledged that man of himself is capable of some good things. He can know all truth proportioned to his mind. He can perform singular acts of natural virtue. He can even withstand the onslaughts of sin for a time. But all his capabilities on the natural level are in direct contact with his nothingness. As a result man's grasping of truth is most difficult. It is scrambled with error once he has it, the unscrambling of which takes much time, more than that of the lifetimes of many men. Natural virtue in man is elusive. Now he has it, now he hasn't. It cannot be held onto for very long and to be totally virtuous is impossible. Man cannot do every good he wants, because the evil that is in him is too strong for him to overcome alone. Thus man sins. He sins frequently when relying solely on his natural powers. He has no choice in the matter, for his fallen nature is inclined that way.

The article cited above corroborates this fact. "Pragmatism . . . not only—legitimately—questions every truth, but it also questions whether the concept of truth itself has any meaning. When mixed with logical positivism, it leads to the notion that philosophy, the search for truth beyond mere language or mathematical symbols, is impossible. Few things could produce more anxiety in people who either believe in, or want to believe in, a moral order." This is an observation well made. For the humanist, things are true only if they work, only if they aid man in his pursuit of happiness. There is no ultimate truth of things beyond man. But man on the natural level is feeble, changeable and tending towards nothing. So, truth is feeble, changeable and tending towards the nothing from which it came. Truth, which must be stable and eternal, becomes contradictory and impossible. A moral order based upon it is subjective and circumstantial. There can be no certain and permanent measure or rule of human actions. Morals are founded on truths which in turn are founded on nothing. For all practical purposes man becomes amoral, judging all his activity by momentary circumstances. To steal or murder is right today; tomorrow it is wrong. The merely natural order in which man finds himself becomes chaotic and absurd. Ultimately, when man abstracts himself from God completely, himself is all he has left. That is a very imperfect thing. He can see his potentiality, but can also see the impossibility of its actualization. So man despairs of himself and reckons nothingness his lot.

Man, however, is not called to lead merely a natural life. He has a

higher calling. He has been raised above his natural existence, given the opportunity to live a higher life, a life which shares in the very life of God Himself. Man's vocation is in the elevated order of the supernatural; in that order he must act. His soul must be filled with the breath of God. He must rely on the aid of supernatural Grace.

Just as man in the natural order can know the truth and follow the good proportioned to his nature, so in the supernatural order endowed with Grace man can know the truths and follow the goods of his supernatural: the truths and goods of God. Reinforced by Grace, man's natural capabilities are made perfect. Like the morning fog vanishing before the dawning sun, the frailties and impossibilities of his mind and will lift, as the sun of supernatural Grace shines down upon them. The nothingness in man is filled with the Divine 'somethingness' of Grace. Man can now persevere in good. He can accomplish the totality of God's commandments. He can rise from sin and remain in the realm of benediction. He no longer need fear the shame and disgust of a degraded life of sin, but can walk freely in the comfort of joy and peace, made possible through supernatural virtue. Man no longer despairs, but hopes. His lot is no longer himself alone, but the infinite totality of God.

But isn't man still anxious? The Christian in the state of Grace fears the future and the unknown. He is troubled with his own nothingness. His lot seems even worse, for now he must worry about the loss of his new-found aid. How long can he keep the grace that has been given to him?

The reason for the Christian's (the Christian aware of his call to Grace) anxiety is still himself—to a lesser degree to be sure than his anxious humanistic counterpart. He still relies too much on his own capabilities. His hope is mixed with fear. His trust in God has something of a question-mark about it. He has leapt over the wall of his nothingness, only to find that he has left his shoes behind. His feet are getting cold. Instead of warming them in the field of Grace, he wants to sneak back and slip into his old loafers. He has not yet cut himself off completely from his old self-sufficiency and put his total needs in the hands of God. His surrender has been conditional, and he is looking for the effects of an unconditional surrender. So he is still troubled, anxious and fears his doubtful guilt. He knows that Grace is enough, but wonders if he cannot also help in its work. God is there, but so are his capabilities. How are they reconciled?

They are not reconciled, if reconciliation mean's God's cooperation

with us. A summit conference between God and self is not held in order to decide which method of procedure is best to follow. According to such a notion man is trying to retain his self-identity and self-sufficiency while acknowledging the fact that God is a good "helper" and not much more. Acting this way, man merely augments his anxieties. Concern about his part in his actions blacks out the rôle of God's Grace and ultimately man finds himself stuck with himself once more, thrown back again on his own imperfect powers.

The reconciliation we are looking for is the reconciliation of a total, unconditional surrender. Man must give himself over completely to God. He must rely solely on the help of Divine Grace, knowing that he can accomplish nothing without it. He has to forget the rôle he plays in his life and see that all is ultimately from God. God directs man's life totally, and it is only when man rejects this divine direction that he falters and begins the long groping trek down the dark, void corridor of nothingness. Total dependence on God through His Grace is the only solution to man's anxieties and guilt feelings. For then, and only then, man can be free from fear of the future and the unknown. All is in the guiding hands of God; He knows the future and the unknown. Man has to trust in Him, take hold of His omnipotent hand and be led to peace and joy.

Grace is the only exit man has from his guilt and anxiety. It teaches total and unconditional surrender to God, a surrender in which man attains the perfect freedom he was created for. Without Grace man is nothing. Total dependence on God frees him from all concern, anxiety and questioning of the future and the unknown. Grace fills up the void in man. It is the day to inner peace. It is something for nothing.

—George Bernardine Dyer, O.P.

PREACHING—ITS HIDDEN NATURE

An eighteenth century English rhyme says:

Ah, let me enter, once again, the pew
 Where the child nodded as the sermon grew;
 Scene of soft slumbers!
 . . . a power was there
 Which conquered e'en the sage, the brave, the fair . . .¹