

THE **DIGGER** **AND** **CHRISTIAN ANARCHIST**

NOV. '86

FOR A CHRISTIAN COMMONWEALTH

#13

I've been thinking about Christian joy a lot for this article and I always wind up with cliches. We all know them so perhaps the best way to explain the joy of being a Christian is to define our terms. Firstly the Christian is happy and full of joy because s/he has accepted a program laid down by the creator of the universe and epitomized by the life and teachings of Jesus. Why some people accept the plan easily while others reject it is hard to fathom. History shows us however that many people have denied the plan and ridiculed the plan throughout their lives only to accept it at the end. I for one feel that an intelligent, questioning, caring atheist may be closer to acceptance than a dogmatic, hateful, person who claims to be a Christian.

Beyond the acceptance of the plan which Jesus embodied, two of the main points of the plan are 'forgiveness of sins', and the gift of 'eternal life'. Why should forgiveness of sin make us joyful? What is sin? Today we think of sin in the narrowest of terms, but sin is much more than merely doing that which we innately feel is wrong.

Sin is pain, sin is error, sin is restriction, sin is loneliness, sin is everything that is not of God in our lives. Sin is the NORMAL state of our being. Even though we strive to do good, the best of us continues to live in error. Sin is error and error is lack of truth and Jesus said "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." Jesus insists that God's plan is the program of liberation. The Christian is joyful because s/he is accepting the plan and knows that the fog has lifted, the restrictions no longer apply. The Christian accepts all challenges, tackles all things.



What is Eternal life? For that matter what is life? Is it seventy years of striving? Is it a short space of little joys and woes crowned with failing limbs, pain, senility, and the grave? No, that is life without the plan. When the body goes, you go. But as sin is forgiven and sin is limitation, life must be eternal and the death of the body merely the sloughing off of a husk. Does a caterpillar die when it spins a cocoon (so like a shroud) Does a snake die when it sheds its skin? No, the snake lives on with a new skin and the caterpillar becomes a butterfly. So having accepted the plan we look forward not to death but merely change. Death is surely a painful and sad thing to have to endure, but it is not a tragedy, just a phase, even a learning experience, as is life and birth. It's all the same thing and it's all just a part of an eternal life according to the plan, a life of joy and fullness. Death is the one most overpowering, evil, mind numbingly terrifying fact that people have to face. Consciously or unconsciously it moulds our lives on earth. Some people will not accept that, some people don't have to. That's joy.

See, this kingdom of God is now found within us. The grace of the Holy Spirit shines forth and warms us, and, overflowing with many varied scents into the air around us, regales with heavenly delight, our senses, as it fills our hearts with joy inexpressible.

St. Seraphim of Sarov

IF I HAD A HAMMER Then and Now

About 180 A.D. while Marcus Aurelius was still emperor, persecution of the Christians broke out stronger than ever. At many places, particularly in Gaul, the Christians had become so numerous and so zealous that they publicly insulted the Roman gods, laughed at the pagan priests and made themselves generally objectionable. For example, an influential young man named Symphorian, who lived in the city of Autun, disturbed a solemn procession in honour of the goddess Cybelle, shouting his contempt for all 'idolatry and superstition.' Summoned before a judge, and asked why he refused the respect due the mother of the gods, Symphorian replied: "I adore the true God, but as for this idol of your demons, if I have an opportunity I will break it with a hammer before your eyes!" The judge had him flogged and thrown in prison, and questioned again after a few days, when he was offered full pardon if he would consent to the formal sacrifices required by the law of the land. Symphorian refused, with the most insulting language, so that the judge had to read the death sentence.

In the early hours of Sept. 1980, eight Christian activists entered the General Electric weapons assembly plant in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania. In a matter of minutes they hammered the casings of two Mark 12 A warheads and poured a bottle of blood on the weapons and on nearby classified blueprints. They then sat down and began praying and singing till security officials and police came to arrest them.

CATHOLIC WORKERS VISIT

On Friday October the tenth Chuck Angus, Brit Griffin and Julie Egan of the Toronto Catholic Worker visited with us and presented their work and philosophy at the Peterborough Public Library. It was a real treat to meet, hear, and talk with them. They told us all about their house of hospitality in Toronto. At present fourteen people are living in that house - under those circumstances you really need to have a community feeling. Included in that number are three small babies. The community is a success despite the fact that (naturally) all forms of grant, or loans are not sought. The house and its extended family run on personal charity, and varied amounts kicked in by the folks who live there.

Apparently the storefront on Queen street will be closed as it is felt that it really is not desperately needed and the funds will be more useful at the house. The turnout was less than it should have been, as we had some problems with the media advertising the evening. Still we had some twenty odd (very odd) folks show up and for a group that size a good donation was raised as my cap was passed around. A special treat for me was meeting the McCaffreys who drove down especially from their farm at Wilno about 150 miles away and though they had to return right after the presentation, it was a real pleasure to meet and talk for a while.

Myself and everybody involved from Projects For Change thank all those who came out and were so

generous, and we thank Chuck, Brit, and Julie for fighting the traffic on a busy long weekend to get here. The whole thing makes me think that the radical Christian community here in Peterborough ought to be in closer contact and see if we can't get more of a community spirit going here. What about it? Comments?

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Le GUINS ANARCHIST

My novel The Dispossessed is about a small worldful of people who call themselves Odonians. The name is taken from the founder of their society, Odo, who lived several generations before the time of the novel, and who therefore doesn't get into the action - except implicitly, in that the action started with her.

Odonianism is anarchism. Not the bomb in the pocket stuff, which is terrorism, whatever name it tries to dignify itself with; not the social-Darwinist economic 'libertarianism' of the far right; but anarchism as prefigured in early Taoist thought, and expounded by Shelley and Kropotkin, Goldman and Goodman. Anarchism's principal target is the authoritarian state (capitalist or socialist); its principal moral-practical theme is cooperation (solidarity, mutual aid). It is the most idealistic, and to me the most interesting, of all political theories.

BAD NEWS BEARER

The Christian, and particularly the Christian anarchist is often accused of being too harsh, too critical, of despairing of the world. This is because s/he consistently speaks out on the evils of the world, the faulty systems which plague people rather than help them to become better people. They are in good company. In the sixth century B.C. the prophet Jeremiah was similarly charged. This was at a time when the Babylonian empire was attacking a weakened Israel and which culminated in the defeat of Israel and the deportation by the thousands into Babylona.

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Jeremiah pointed out the low moral level to which Israel had (again) sunk and warned of many disasters to come, all directly or indirectly because of the people turning away from God. Jeremiah became known as a wet blanket, a gloomy Gus. Folks laughed at him and said "What's the sad news from the Lord today Jeremiah?" Jeremiah attacked those who insisted that things weren't all that bad, that things were getting better, that good times were just around the corner.

The priests as it turned out were among the chief of these "Glad hnders". So while the people insisted on wearing "rose coloured glasses", our old Jeremiah continued. He didn't like the role he was playing either. He didn't want to be a downer but he was doing the Lord's work and he told it like it was. History shows that Jeremiah was right and the scoffers were wrong. It's one thing to be a happy Christian anarchist, but we are not excused from denouncing evil.

I do not think there is anyone who takes quite such a fierce pleasure in things being themselves as I do. The startling wetness of water excites and intoxicates me; the fireiness of fire, the steeliness of steel, the unutterable muddiness of mud.

G. K. Chesterton

"Christ, by means of His disciples, would have caught all the world in His net of faith, but the greater fishes broke the net and escaped out of it, and all the rest have slipped through the holes made by the greater fishes, so that the net has remained quite empty. The greater fishes who broke the net are the rulers, emperors, popes, kings, who have not renounced power and instead of true Christianity have put on what is simply a mask of it.

Tsech Helchitsky
15th century

A FEW CHURCH PRACTICES WHICH WERE DISCONTINUED AFTER THE THIRD CENTURY WHICH WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE RE-INTRODUCED.

The early Christian church was a church without temples or buildings. That was when the church was truly the body of membership and not a pile of brick. When services were not held out of doors they were held in someones home. We would like to see fewer people going into a church building on Sundays, and more services held in peoples homes..

The agape or love feast usually followed the eucharist and was a time for fellowship and enjoyment of a festive nature. There is something especially lovely about people eating together, (especially today when people grab something on the run and don't commune at meal times).

There is a lot of fasting going on today for health reasons, but in the early church fasting was a major activity having two aspects. the moral as well as the physical. "This is the fast that I have chosen, saith the Lord, not that a man should humble his soul, but that he loose every band of iniquity, untie the fastenings of harsh agreements, restore to liberty them that are bruised, tear in pieces every unjust engagement, feed the hungry with thy bread, clothe the naked, bring the homeless into thy house." (the Epistle of Barnabas, c. 130 A.D.). "On the day on which you fast you will taste nothing but bread and water; and having reckoned up the price of the dishes of that day which you intended to have eaten, you will give it to a widow or an orphan, or to some person in want." (Hermas) In the second century fasting was expected on Wednesday and Friday in each week i.e. on those days food was not taken before 3 in the afternoon (starting the

night before). The choice of these two days was determined in opposition to the Jewish custom of fasting on Mondays and Thursdays, and the Christians gave them the title 'station days', which was derived from the word *statio* meaning a picket or guard, i.e. that Christians were by fasting, standing on watch for the return of the Lord.

There were many practices of the early church which were abandoned for various reasons throughout the centuries, as we find more that appeal to us, we will publicise them and recommend them.

"Hello, you little fat father!" the devil said to the priest. "What made you lie so to those poor misled people? What tortures of hell did you depict? Don't you know they are already suffering the tortures of hell in their earthly lives? Don't you know that you and the authorities of the State are my representatives on earth? It is you that make them suffer the pains of hell with which you threaten them. Don't you know this? Well, then, come with me!" The devil grabbed the priest by the collar, lifted him high in the air, and carried him to a factory, to an iron foundry. He saw the workmen there running and hurrying to and fro, and toiling in the scorching heat. Very soon the thick, heavy air and the heat are too much for the priest. With tears in his eyes he pleads with the devil: 'Let me go! Let me leave this hell!'

"Oh my dear friend, I must show you many more places' The devil gets hold of him again and drags him off to a farm. There he

sees workmen threshing the grain. the dust and heat are insufferable. The overseer carries a knout and unmercifully beats anyone who falls to the ground overcome by hard toil or hunger.

Next the priest is taken to the huts where these same workers live with their families - dirty, cold, smoky, ill smelling holes. The devil grins. He points out the poverty and hardships which are at home here.

"Well isn't this enough? he asks? And it seems as if even he, the devil pities the people. The pious servant of God can hardly bear it. With uplifted hands he begs: "Let me go away from here. Yes! Yes! this is hell on earth!"

"Well then you see. And still promise them another hell. You torture them to death mentally when they are already all but dead physically! Come I will show you one more hell - one more, the very worst."

He took him to a prison and showed him a dungeon, with its foul air and the many human forms, robbed of all health and energy, lying on the floor, covered with vermin.

"Take off your silken clothes', said the devil to the priest, put on your ankles heavy chains such as these unfortunates wear; lie down on the cold and filthy floor - and then talk to them about a hell that still awaits them! "No, No!" answered the priest, "I cannot think of anything more dreadful than this. I entreat you let me go away from here!"

"Yes, this is hell. There can be no worse hell than this. Did you not know it? Did you not know that

these men and women whom you are frightening with the picture of a hell hereafter - did you not know that they are in hell right here, before they die?"

Dostoevsky

The Projects For Change Food Bank is really taking off. Bins for receiving donations are now installed at Harvest House, 682 George st. N., Kelcey's Farefax Nutrition Centre, 414 George st. N., and The Incredible Bulk in Peterborough Square. Please be generous, and incidently support these merchants who are giving of there space.

The best things in life are free. If people did what they enjoy most what would they do? play games, hike, work together, make love, get together with other people - all of which cost little or nothing. To mix poetry and humour into our lives is neither costly or exhausting.

The drug of affluence robs us of many of lifes deeper pleasures. Jesus said that to enter the good life we must become as little children. Think of the joys and pleasures of childhood. Unless we move beyond the frills and artificial pleasures and live simply as children we will never experience the joy of the new age. Joy is innocent, uncomplicated, and simple. Simplicity and pleasure are old friends.

Dear Digger:

The only thing I can't agree with in your front page stuff in #12, is that "Jesus is the Christ, the only hope of salvation and the only way to know God." I believe Jesus was a real fella who came to understand some deep stuff and had the guts to live what he believed. I don't see how he could be the only hope of salvation or the only way to know God. Christians are a minority in a world populated with Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims etc. Their spiritual paths, heroes, and heroines are just as holy as the Christians. Making Jesus the only hope of salvation turns his good example into a superstition, a graven image almost, a bad dynamic warned against when the ten commandments hit Moses.

I somewhat reject Heaven and Hell too. Hell is literally on earth and has been for some time. What Heaven is is up for grabs. Anything is possible, it could be a Heaven of oneness with the Earth Mother, body and soul merging into the soil, into the ecological neatness of the planet. Hell could very well be a coffin, body and soul kept from Big Mommas earthy embrace.

Many folks seem to put God and Jesus into a blender (though some times they are separate entities), in a position of power over (a feminist concept) their believers instead of power with, a more liberating perspective. I believe the perspective on Jesus should be more like the Muslim, that he is one of a long line of respected prophets - like we hold Gandhi, King, Mott, Dorothy Dat, Emma Goldman etc. in our memories. They give us the boost we need for the funky job of monkey wrenching and creating new societies in the shell of the old, blah, blah, blah....

Thornton Kimes, Kindred Community
Des Moines IA, US of A

Dear Thornton:

Glad to get the letter. I do believe that Jesus is Christ, the only way to salvation, but that is my belief, others obviously have theirs. Actually though Christians are a minority in the world that in no way diminishes their truths, just as being a majority does not enhance someone else's. As to Heaven and Hell, whatever Heaven is I'm sure it will be beautiful and I hope after a lifetime here I will be ready for it. For thought on the theory of Hell being on earth, refer back in this issue. It's a theory I sympathize with but actually I think if Heaven is the ultimate good trip, then Hell need be nothing more than an absence of Heaven (or anything else), a big zero, death, the grave in fact. So Hell would take its meaning as an antithesis of Heaven.

Some people tell me they have no use for reading about what Gandhi, Day, Goldman and others did in their time, that it is sterile history and leads only to hero worship. I however find great inspiration in their work. Where would we be today without them? Where will our grandchildren be (supposing the world lasts that long) without us to keep the faith. Good to hear from ya. Kenny



"First they came for the Communists, but I was not a Communist so I did nothing.

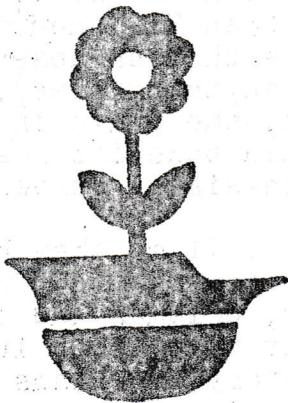
Then they came for the Social Democrats, but I was not a Social Democrat, so I did nothing.

Then they came for the trade Unionists, but I was not a trade Unionist so I did nothing.

Then they came for the Catholics and the Jews but I was neither and I did nothing.

At last they came for me and there was no one left.

Rev. Martin Niemoller
Nazi Prison Survivor



"My socialism was from the beginning a revolt against the intellectual degradation of the factory hands and the damned ugliness of all that capitalist-industrialism produced, and it was not primarily a revolt against the cruelty and injustice of the possessing classes or against the misery of the poor. it was not so much the working class that concerned me as the working man - not so much what he got from working as what he did by working."

Eric Gill (1882 - 1940)

FOODBANK UPDATE

Due to the kindness of Paul Strano, manager of Brookside IGA, You may now make foodbank donations there. The IGA is across from the Burnham Manor at Lansdowne (hwy 28?) and the old Keene rd.

One day as Jesus was walking by the sea of Galilee He saw Simon and his brother Andrew fishing with nets. They were commercial fishermen. "How the fishing?" asked Jesus. "Not very good sir." replied the brothers. "Well if you come with me, I'll make you fishers of men." said Jesus. (Mark 1, 16-17) This is given by Malcolm Muggeridge as an example of Jesus' dry sense of humor.

Paul the apostle had been charged by the Jews with heresy. As he was a Roman citizen he appealed to be tried in Rome in front of the emperor. In the meantime, he spent two years under arrest in Caesarea (he wanted the state to pay for the trip to Rome and to be his bodyguard). One day King Herod and his wife Bernice came to visit the Roman governor Festus and Paul was brought before them to state his case. He spoke so eloquently that king Agrippa said "In brief, you want me to become a Christian!" Paul replied, "Brief or not I wish to God that you all could be just like me ... except for these chains of course!"

Don't forget to write. It's Digger/CA, 642 George st. N., Peterborough, Ont., Canada

