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Christ And Human Experience: God is with Us

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Encounter, Manila; Catholic Trade School, 1965, pp. 201-213.) can also be looked into as a help in reassessing her image.

These are but a few of the considerations that must be kept in mind and it is not unlikely that they will lead to the conclusion that certain adjustments *must* be made in longstanding traditions and institutions. Fr. Adolfs' book, in presenting its own conclusions with clarity and with boldness, was bound to meet with opposition. True, Fr. Adolfs' ideas and his proposals demand further discussion. But it is perhaps his clarity and boldness that are needed for our time.

R. F. HABITO, S.J.

CHRIST AND HUMAN EXPERIENCE

GOD IS WITH US. by Ladislaus Boros, S.J. New York: Herder & Herder, 1967. 199 pp.

What is striking about this book is its overall conception: to move from human experience as lived today and formulated in personal and existential categories to an analysis of the man Jesus. In this confrontation there gradually appears the fundamental inadequacy of our human concepts to describe the reality of the man Jesus as portrayed in the New Testament sources. The very failure of this attempt to comprehend Jesus thus becomes an "existential way to God" (pp. vii-ix).

The book is directed by the author to those who, "for whatever reason, live apart from God,"—not as formal proof of God's existence, but rather as a 'way', an invitation, which is not so much an intellectual construction as an existential exercise to be carried out personally. This exercise consists of a phenomenological analysis of a specific characteristic of human experience, which is then compared to the Scriptural image of Jesus. Through ten successive chapters, each treating of a different individual quality of human life, the conclusion is constant: there is in Jesus of Nazareth something that goes beyond, that is inaccessible to, human thought. The convergence of these individual studies creates a conclusiveness and certainty that exceed the results of individual arguments. Yet the value of the book will be missed if it is read in the context of the usual apologetics manual; as the author takes pains to point out, "the true progress of thought takes place not within the book itself, but in the reader," who is asked to "look beyond the implications of each individual essay ... to arrive at an existential synthesis, a per-

sonally achieved union of the different aspects that make up the whole" (p. ix).

The book begins with the most important element of human life, *love*. Against the background of a brief phenomenological analysis of human love, the author highlights the unique demand of Christ: that all should draw their life and existence from Him, that they should take His very being into themselves, that He would be the very food of their souls. This clearly goes beyond the demands and ideal of any human being who loves deeply, honorably and maturely. Rather, in the 'loving kindness' of Jesus, "there emerges a supernatural love which is 'wholly other', and beyond human understanding" (p. 16).

This theme of love is developed at greater length in the following chapter devoted to *humility*. Here the author portrays in detail the opposite of humility's selflessness, namely man's self-seeking, with its consequent evils eating at the very heart of his own self-identity—mediocrity, superficiality, profanation, restlessness and inward exhaustion (pp. 18-21). True humility is pictured in terms of creative power, enhancing human existence with a gentle greatness.¹ Yet in contrast to Jesus' humility, the author points out that in human existence there is an inward limit to humility. "Man would only be able to give himself completely if the ultimated basis of his own being lay in himself, if his being existed of itself and was not derivative. But we are derivative; we are forced on towards being" (p. 25).

A chapter on *speech* takes up Pascal's argument that from the very simplicity and coolness of Jesus' speech about God, the glory of the saints, the pains of hell, a kind of proof for the divinity of Jesus can be fashioned. The chapter unfortunately does not make use of contemporary philosophy of language to elucidate man's existence from another contemporary aspect, but concentrates on an analysis of the mystics, and their incapacity to describe their mystical experiences.²

¹ The author's treatment of humility is traditional enough. For a new, rather startling expression of self-creativity, see R. Joyce, "A Christian Will to Meaning in Everyday Life," *Cross Current*, 17 (Winter 1967), 25-38.

² The author assumes that the spiritual experiences of the mystics "are among the noblest and loftiest that the human spirit has ever achieved" (pp. 35-36). While personally agreeing with the author, I must point out that this is not a universally held evaluation. See, for example, G. Santayana, *Reason in Religion* (Collier, 1962) p. 189: "an innocent observer might imagine that mysticism was an ultimate attitude... But exactly the opposite is the case. Mysti-

The quality of human mercy fares much better, however, in the following essay's three step phenomenological sketch: first, as the ability love possesses to be inwardly moved by the suffering of another; then as the readiness to engage in a unity of being with the person suffering; and finally, as the will to persevere actively and loyally in this unity (pp. 51-56).³ A fourth characteristic of human mercy is the *absoluteness* of its demands: of its very nature, mercy will go to the limits of what is possible. This sets up the concrete problem in applying this analysis of mercy to Jesus' life. For the author finds that "the astonishing and staggering thing in the gospels is not so much that Jesus worked miracles, but that the number of these miracles was so small as to be insignificant. If a human being had had such miraculous powers at his disposal, it would have been impossible for him not to make use of them everywhere and on every occasion" (p. 63). The only explanation, according to the author, is that of faith in Jesus' divinity—an answer that may be found less than adequate for those 'living apart from God.'

The essay on *estrangement* which follows also makes good use of contemporary existentialist themes: man as a stranger to himself in his voluntary activity, (his inward division and disruption), in his knowledge (anguish sustained from such limited knowledge) and relative to time (the discontinuity of his existence). In a word, man is absent from himself—he cannot be said to 'be' himself (pp. 67-71).

Three following chapters trace man's existence from the point of view of its extension in time: *repentance*, constituting man's relation to his past; *faith*, defining his existence in the present; and *hope*, defining his existential status relative to the future. The essay on repentance is one of the best in the book, taking as its theme the fact that only through repentance is the human personality brought to perfection. Three stages are outlined: *regret*, that power which

cism is the most primitive of feelings and only visits formed minds in moments of intellectual arrest and dissolution."

³ Much of the author's analysis of mercy can be compared to M. Mayeroff's "On Caring," *International Philos. Quart.*, 5 (Sept. 1965), 462-74. In anticipation of the critical remark concluding this review, Mayeroff can be cited as an example of a perfectly naturalistic, phenomenological humanist. Taking issue with Eric Fromm's position that man's short span of life does not allow full development to his potentialities, and thus points to something beyond, Mayeroff writes: "I believe, by contrast, that insofar as one's carings are comprehensive, the process of life itself is found to be enough, and there is no further claim for the realization of all of one's potentialities, let alone the full realization of all human potentialities." *Ibid.*, p. 474.

man has to look at himself from the outside and be dissatisfied with himself, thus proving he is greater than the reality produced by his past; secondly, *shame*, making man conscious that his existence is essentially one of association with others, especially persons to whom he is bound by love ("I cannot give myself to those I love in this present state of what I have become"); and lastly, *repentance*, a true liberation from the guilt of the past brought about by the redeeming words: "I love you in spite of everything" (pp. 85-91). Here, perhaps more than in any other quality, the difference in Jesus' life is clear: there is simply no indication that Jesus ever knew the feeling of personal repentance.

Moving from Tillich's idea of *faith* as the 'state of being ultimately concerned,' the author develops the thesis that an essential factor of all human existence is a kind of 'basic faith' which is "the fundamental breaking open of the present moment," without which man is enclosed within himself, becoming small by regarding the present as final conclusion, and by losing himself in what he possesses and already knows (p. 11). In contrast Jesus proclaimed himself the way, the truth and the life, constantly and compellingly demanding faith of others, but never of himself (p. 119).

The chapter on *hope* disappointed this reviewer, but this weakness was more than made up for by the following essay on *temptation*; man can create his own being only by overcoming temptation. In his effort at a 'metaphysic of temptation' the author first distinguishes *trials* from *temptation*, and then analyzes the latter according to its three fundamental kinds: *desire for riches* (to wish to bring the whole of reality, above all, God and His grace, under our control); *vainglory* (impatience with God, forcing His hand); and *overweening pride* (exaltation of one's own being over the pettiness of 'ordinary people') (pp. 143-49). The fact that Jesus did not attain perfection through temptation is shown by a close examination of the temptations of Christ in the desert (Mt. 4/1-11).

The foregoing description of the book points to its strength as well as its weakness. Its strength is obviously in the author's masterful command of a phenomenological approach to human experience, not only drawing on contemporary sources such as Guardini, von Balthasar, A. Brunner, Rahner, Metz, Marcel and Scheler, but integrating this contemporary stance with some of the best in the Christian tradition: Ignatius of Antioch, Irenaeus, Augustine, Anselm, Thomas Aquinas and Pascal. In short, this work is a fine piece of Christian philosophizing.

As an approach to those who are 'living apart from God,' however, certain reservations seem to be called for. Bluntly put, the author has the cards stacked from the beginning. Using the phenomenological descriptive method for human experience, and

canvassing the New Testament for incidents that illustrate a particular hypothesis, do not afford an adequate basis for conclusions beginning: "There is no other possible explanation for the fact..." "the only logical conclusion is that he was God" (p. 83 *et passim*). In all justice it must be admitted that there are other possible logical conclusions, at least that of admitting the question goes beyond logic. The author does not take seriously enough the contemporary secularist position, or the new humanism that finds its absolute in man alone.⁴ The assertion, for example, that in Jesus man finds the fulfillment of his being (p. 134) can occasion real scandal for our contemporaries who are most saturated with the very phenomenological approach the author is employing. The other-than-human and utter finality of such a conception of *man's* fulfillment, seems to run counter to their whole *elan*.⁵ Nevertheless, once it is understood that the author has more tricks up his sleeve than phenomenological analysis, no one should complain that he walks out *his* door with a winning hand. He has given us a fine book in the process.

JOSEPH L. ROCHE, S.J.

CHRISTIANITY IN JAPAN: 1549-1650

THE CHRISTIAN CENTURY IN JAPAN, 1549-1650, by C. R. Boxer. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967. xv, 535 pp.

The reprinting of this book suggests the continuing demand for a valuable contribution to the study of a century of Japanese history (1549-1650) referred to as the "Christian Century." Although corrections on the original were made by the author, they did not necessitate changes in pagination of the 1951 edition. As reprinted, this volume retains a map of Japan indicating the places where Christians existed or were persecuted within the period covered, fourteen appendices of documents which were first translated into English by the author, as well as fifteen illustrations depicting historical

⁴ The real force of the secularist position is stressed by Langdon Gilkey in his review of S. Ogden's *The Reality of God*, in *Interpretation; Journal of Bible and Theology*, 21 (Oct. 1967), 447-89, esp. 450. *Blackfriars*, 46 (June 1965), 226-33.

⁵ For a calm, reasoned presentation of the new 'naturalistic' humanism, see H. Meynell, "The Humanist: A Dialogue", *New Blackfriars*, 46 (Jan., 1965), 226-33.