

*The Part of the Story  
You Were Never Told  
About*

*Agape and Eros*

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## INTRODUCTION

I must here refer briefly to something I boldly state (too boldly some might think) at the close of my book *The Part of the Story You Were Never Told--ABOUT WOMEN.* That book is a popular English version of my French dissertation, *Essai sur l'Altérocentrisme contre l'Egocentrisme en tant que Motifs Fondamentaux du Caractère Humain* (Université de Montpellier, France, 1968). My last heading in that popular edition runs: "Love, Most Unlovingly Ushered into the Defendant's Dock." Few readers, I assume, would suspect that this announced any challenge to speak of, directed against Anders Nygren or any other student of fundamental motifs in modern theology or the ultra-modern history of ideas.

What I gently wanted to introduce was a remarkable parallel between the peculiar kind of love characterizing the typical woman on the one hand, and that fabulous new concept of love launched by the New Testament with the new term, *Agape*, on the other hand.

I have already shown in my book, *ABOUT WOMEN*, how a popular tradition has distorted the real facts about the typical woman's peculiar attitude toward love. The conventional trend has been to accuse feminine love of indulging in a sentimental wave of excited feelings. Women are believed to be particularly prone to abandon themselves to a mood of subjective fantasy, defying all sound sense and all sober-minded objective thinking.

2

(The "objective thinkers," you see, are supposed to be men.)

The latter part of that book, *ABOUT WOMEN*, tries to find out whether that reputation, on either side, is fair or not. The data of the research undertaken demonstrate that it is alarmingly unfair, for sometimes it comes close to a case of actual libel. How could any researcher in the field of characterology fail to go against such unfairness? I made it a special point to correct that image of women in the popular mind. I had to demonstrate something striking regarding that fast-spreading myth about woman's "lack of sound realism." It is *not* substantiated by any documented fact produced by differential psychology or by common observation. It is only one in a whole series of misrepresentations regarding peculiar features of the feminine mind.

Besides, there was another capital reason urging me to give a closer study to those various allegations of "female inferiority" made in the past. Every one of those accusations against women of a lack of mental equilibrium seemed to constitute an implicit accusation against something infinitely greater and more far-reaching than the reputation of a wee human being. It inevitably turned into a case of libel against *the greatest thing in the world*. What has here been downrated in a shameful way is not only women's elementary ability to love without making fools of themselves or do anything whatsoever without betraying their "lower rank," intellectually speaking. No, in terms of my inquiry into the nature of a fundamental motif of goodness in God's world as a whole, it seemed to cry out loud: "The entire Spirit of *other-centeredness* (alterocentricity) in this world of ours is bound to reveal itself as definitely *inferior in logical respect!* It is sadly deficient in realistic sense!"

3

And something seemed even worse by far than that negative reputation kept in reserve for alterocentricity. I had dared, from the beginning, to postulate an identity between that alterocentricity (other-centeredness) in the history of human culture and the great *Agape*— nothing less than that. So whatever qualities of basic goodness—in heaven and on earth—were heralded as characteristics of alterocentricity, should also apply to the heavenly love (God's perfect Agape).

On the other hand, if feminine alterocentricity (also called the Spirit of Motherliness) was proved to distinguish itself as a trend of sheer *irrationality*, then Agape must here be assumed to manifest the same features of "distinction."

So don't be surprised if I finished by asking myself this historic question: Did it ever happen in a circle of Christian theologians, in our modern Western world, with its notoriously increasing boldness, that a statement like the following was made, quite seriously? "Agape, the great love of God, according to the Gospel, is a fundamental motif we shall simply have to qualify as *irrational*; that is contrary to common sense reason (ratio)." Did you ever hear any contention of that kind? I assume you did.

4

And now one further question, addressed to you and me: If that historic event ever happened to us, how did we react? Did we accept that sensational dogma of the utter irrationality of Agape as a tremendous revelation coming to us straight from heaven? Or did we reject it with forceful conviction?

In my personal case there ought to have been quite particular reasons why I should *not* have been immediately spellbound by such a philosophy about Agape. For was not this something dubiously similar to just that stereotype idea I had found and fought in the average public opinion in our culture about a "lack of rational grasp" in feminine minds? I am referring to the queer idea that women, as a characterological type—particularly *women in love*—are "definitely less rational," "less objective," "less logical" than men.

Still I was fascinated, like so many other historians, by Nygren's revolutionizing concept of Agape as the great "Irrational One." But at least certain doubts began to bother my mind. They were bound to adopt this critical form: In our cultural milieu is there a general pattern of traditional thought-forms, turning us away from realism, a sort of sentimental romanticism making us terribly confused, even regarding the deepest character of God in heaven? And does an indulgence in that sentimentality drive even our best theologians, sometimes, into a veritable case of slander, more or less unwittingly launched against the most sublime concept of love ever known?

5

I am daring to establish a pattern of comparisons between what happens in the heart of a creature biologically endowed with the glorious assignment of being a mother, and what happens in the heart of One whom the Bible calls the eternal Father. So, in my turn, I am daring to pronounce definite things about Agape, the Incomparable One. But first now, a critical weighing of definite things others have pronounced.

### **IS IT TRUE THAT AGAPE IS IRRATIONAL SINCE IT LOVES THE UNLOVABLE?**

One thing is undeniable. The very term "Agape" might seem to elicit notions of a certain enigma. Learned men down through the ages have observed, with increasing astonishment, the incredible peculiarities of Agape, the New Testament love concept.

And what, precisely, was it that astonished a man like Nygren in his famous work on Agape? It was what he called Agape's *irrational* character.

So, without a doubt, this peculiarly biblical concept of love has met with a destiny quite similar to that of feminine love. Agape too is accused of being unreasonable, contrary to all common human sense. To me that means unrealistic, and unrealistic means contrary to realism. But what is the Bible's idea about realism? The Bible too has a term exactly corresponding to that positive attitude we call realism. It is "the love of the truth." And that is a term of dramatic momentum in New Testament theology. We shall pay closer attention to it later on.

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Now, of course, the ingenious researchers of fundamental motifs in modern theology would hardly come right out and say that Agape is unrealistic (a category of love *not* including the love of the truth). That would sound too negative indeed. It might be interpreted almost as if they were placing Agape deliberately on the side of empty romanticism and sheer human fancy, rather than on the side of stern human realities. So they do their best to look at this "irrationality" of Agape in a way as generous and positive as ever possible. In this they are not unlike some close associates in modern philosophy, namely certain ultra-modern existentialists. For those too have developed a veritable art of acrobacy by which they manage to see something eminently positive and basically good in the totally absurd, rather than in what is rational and objective. Only at the moment when man makes that acrobatic leap right into the absolutely irrational, only then is he supposed to have a fair chance of reaching the sublime pinnacles of "God's reason."

Anyway, the fact we have to face is this: Some serious men of great erudition and tremendous prestige in the world of historical theology today tell us bluntly: God's Agape is unreasonable. It is even a downright anti-reason type of love. In other words, the ideal of Christian love is simply hostile to common-sense reasoning, as this reasoning is found in ordinary human creatures.

7

One argument presented by theologians in favor of that theory is the following: The prototypical Christian concept of love is absolutely "free" from anything you might suggest in terms of *intelligent motivation*. God loves what is inherently unloveable. There is no trace of intelligent reason for the fact that He undertakes to love man, "the absolutely unlovable one."

Is this rumor about the deepest essence of Christ's love true or false? If it is a simple falsehood, then I can hardly think of any case of humanistic slander, directed against the nature of God, that would be a match for it. It is concerning this crucial matter that I want to here present a series of facts which might shed some new light on the topic. There seems to be a constant reappearance of new aspects to the old incredible story about the Maligned God. Here then I must first show you something of how the fundamental motif I have called "Other-Centeredness" is related to the more well-known concept of "Agape."

## THE OTHER-CENTEREDNESS MOTIF IS DULY CHRISTENED, THUS RECEIVING ITS HISTORIC NAME: AGAPE

This is a name with the solemn hush of eternity in it. That does not mean, necessarily, that it has impressed all people in the same solemn way. Some could think of peaks of love quite different from this. Typical humanists definitely do.

8

Of course, there is some agreement among most men on one point: The supreme value in life *is* love. You need not even be a Christian in order to make a value statement of that kind. You will be generally accepted if you make any number of sweeping assertions to the effect that love is supreme. But what *kind* of love is one speaking about? How does this supreme thing manifest itself in human life?

Here, too, there may appear to be some fair agreement among most people. Love is undeniably one of the great *emotions*. So you will hardly run across any somewhat ordinary person who does not admit that some degree of *feeling*, to be sure, is involved in that strange thing called love. And who will contend that they are wrong in their anticipations?

We have not, with this, said that love is *exclusively* a matter of emotions. That would not sound too consistent with the demand for totality in human life. And without totality, how could love be the great thing in life which outdoes all other thing? How could it be a quality of true spiritual value? So love must be something even going beyond the realms of pure emotion. It must be something else, as well. But my point so far is quite modest. Feelings must not be spurned either. Some stern students of the great interior secrets of human life, you see, may think feelings are hardly worthy of being mentioned at all in a company as solemn and serious as that of philosophy and religion. To them emotions appear as something adapted to the level of "low-brows" only; in other words, absolutely beneath the dignity of thinking men, the philosophizing elite of spiritual "high-brows."

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## SUMMING UP SOME HUMAN INTEREST ESSENTIALS OF MY WORK: THE PART OF THE STORY YOU WERE NEVER TOLD—ABOUT WOMEN

Before we go to deeper study of the surprising role Agape was destined to play as a sort of "divine emotion," and the unprecedented drama it was destined to provoke in our peculiar world at large, it would seem desirable to get one thing clearly established, as regards our own tiny world, a most curious microcosmos. I am speaking of the incredible creature who distinguishes himself—or herself—as visibly liable to experience life in terms of emotions.

In my book, *ABOUT WOMEN*, I have already given a fairly unambiguous answer to the question of differential psychology. The emotional ones above all others in our company are: the *typical child* and the *typical women*. Together, as it were, they form a type I have termed the "other-centered." The opposite type is the "self-centered," finding its most extreme representatives in the *adult* and the *male*.

It was the fundamental motif of other-centeredness (altercentricity) which formed the particular object of my investigation. So I there concentrated my attention around the pattern of behavior particularly observed in *children* and *women*.

10

As everybody knows, the child's mind is simply overflowing with emotions. And one thing never fails to verify itself in the lives of genuine children. Their emotions hardly ever tend to be something they are secretive about. Children just are not ashamed of their emotions. On the contrary, they express them with great freedom and frankness. This is, in fact, an integrating part of the "incurably" childlike one, irrespective of age or sex.

Of course, individual men may have emotions too, and even abandon themselves to them quite openly, but we are not speaking about individuals, we are speaking about types. There is no denying that it is preeminently women and children who appear overwhelmed by this dynamic urge *outward*, which is the dramatic result of their openness and the visible outlet of their alterocentric souls.

And what connection have I found then between other-centeredness and *totality*, harmonious wholeness in human life?

A main point in my thesis, as I have propounded it from the beginning, has been that this exuberant openness toward the surrounding world, the world of the "other ones," simply constitutes the medium—the *only* medium—through which totality and inner harmony can realize themselves in personal life. Without this *élan altérocentrique*, this turning outward to the values around you, you just cannot experience the marvel of becoming whole. This is, of course, also bound to apply as a prerequisite for the particular wonder the Bible refers to when it speaks about men being made whole again. (Whole here means safe and sound.)

11

Now you have every right to expect that I myself should give evidence of some elementary "wholeness" and "harmony" in the way I deal with these various aspects composing human life at its best. I, in my turn, must be balanced and all-embracing in my presentation. Accordingly, on the one hand I must wholeheartedly accept the strong feelings as something which might be assumed to find room in the generous heart of Agape. At the same time I must watch myself lest I commit an act of sabotage against the values inherent in *logical reason*, that other side of a whole man's mind. Only a consistent realism of that impartial kind can safeguard the interests of perfect integrity, basing itself on conscientious efforts of objectivity and firm principle—qualities so indispensable for genuine research.

I am speaking about an objectivity and a firmness of principle which never feel in duty bound to sacrifice everything that is most human in our lives, including personal emotion. No, this must be an attachment to principle which announces, simply and joyfully, that now the ring of totality has been harmoniously closed; everything is in its right place.

12

Here we must not fear to go contrary to men's opinions. We should know that the living depths of sensitive human hearts the philosophizing theorist does not usually for one moment expect any intelligently controlled current of stern realism to emerge. But he may be disruptedly one-sided in his judgment. Deep feelings and keen thoughts may find the possibility of a perfect co-existence after all.

## **WHAT HAS LOVE GOT TO DO WITH DUTY AND SOUND REASON?**

This is not a question more frequently asked by *women*, but rather by men.

What so many men in love expect from their mistresses is a soft cloud of ecstasies from which all realism is gracefully absent. So the question above is the rather irritated one popping up in men as soon as women manifest the "whimsical behavior" of raising questions of durability and well-ordered social arrangements and responsible traditions right in the midst of matters of romance. The fellow may be seized by panic at the very word of "responsibility," and at the suggestion that such things as deeds and duties do exist at all. In all ages such apprehensions have caused men to be seized by panic and flee for their lives, rather than have a realistic encounter with any rules and regulations demanding implicit obedience.

Here realism adopts, what appears to many a playboy, its most forbidding form. For now it is no longer a mere question of unconditional faithfulness to the full truth in a non-moral world of "pure" science. No, even personal obligations and religious imperatives insist on entering the scene. Disagreeable voices are suddenly heard, speaking about matters of law—in fact, even *the Law*.

13

Here is evidently one of the things we Western heirs of a pagan environment have more difficulty in swallowing than anything else. Let me warn you that you must count with one thing as fairly inevitable: The romantic-humanistic spirit of our pagan Occidental culture has accomplished a master stroke. Our vainglorious pride in a false erudition has played an incredible trick upon our modern human minds. It has conjured up the disruptive notion in our minds that life itself, as it were, has provided some sharp and unsurpassable border-line between what theoretical research deals with, and—on the other side of the water-tight bulkheads—a realm of reality having to do with man's practical life only. Stern logical reason, one seems to pretend, should be reserved for the world of theoretical science. In man's personal life as a religious being we think we have a right to assume the accommodating philosophy claiming that capricious feelings and all kinds of subjective moods should be permitted to have their sway. "So, at any cost, let us keep the realms strictly apart," says modern man. "No promiscuity please!"

This philosophy of separate realms is in full accordance, as I shall later show, with the tradition of Eros idealism.

14

## **HOW COULD LOVE EVER BE REASONABLE? OR: WHAT DOES OTHER-CENTEREDNESS HAVE TO DO WITH REASONABILITY?**

Let us try to face unflinchingly the full reality of a full world. That simply means: We must resolutely and radically turn our gaze toward the Heart above all hearts, the Center above all centers, the Spirituality above all spiritualities in human existence—nay, in existence as a whole—namely, Agape.

If Agape is not the clue to a way out from our predicament and the fulfillment of our hopes for true enlightenment, then I do not know where to look for it. But if Agape is the great light, then the way to gain true knowledge about it must be the one valid for all responsible research. The researcher must proceed humbly and intelligently, conscientiously laying down one stone at a time.

But in my case then, it seems reasonable that I base my further study on the foundation I have found to be most firm in my previous studies regarding the emotions of the human heart and regarding the emotion above all emotions—that of love.

Quite briefly I must then sum up the findings of my original piece of investigation regarding other-centeredness versus self-centeredness in the daily lives of common human beings like you and me. For statistical evidence, and for any details, the reader would have to go back to the mentioned work on *WOMEN*.

15

Here I shall only make some general statements about the main results of my study. Males are seen to be noticeably more egocentric in their all-around attitudes in life. Females are significantly more alterocentric. I have endeavored to explain, naturally and intelligently, why this had to be expected. I have established without a shadow of ambiguity the following phenomenon of simply biology: The irresistible forces of simple *MOTHERLINESS* exert a transforming influence on all aspects of a woman's love. This transformation then is not limited to her affection for her child. Such a limitation would be simply impracticable. The out-stretched arms of alterocentricity are bound to reach out much farther than that. Her love for her *mate*, as well, is seen to adopt an amazingly alterocentric form. The same applies to her love for any object in that curious world she knows as her own.

The transformation of sexual love I am here speaking about is nothing short of a triumphant victory—in the wider world of fundamental motifs, spiritually considered—over what is typically superficial and ephemeral in any domain of human existence. It means a decisive victory over any "*laissez-aller*" mentality that would turn out to be catastrophic if it were not held in check, on the arena of life, by the controlling forces of true alterocentric love.

Any indulgence in *self* means, in the last analysis, a simple disaster, biologically as well as spiritually. The Christian Agape teachings penetrating the entire Bible, never tire of warning man against the cataclysmic downhill coasting inherent in all Eros trends.

16

### **JUST WHY ARE WOMEN LESS EGOCENTRIC THAN MEN?**

Now why, then, do women, more easily than men, manage to be other-centered, i.e., to place the center of their lives outside themselves? I have sought to present a plausible reason, which we may all accept as logical, for this fact. The commanding reality behind a woman's greater alterocentricity is evident enough. Her biological assignment is to bear children, and to care for them in such a way that they may become fully developed human beings. Those maternal tasks so naturally assigned to her, help her—or in a way they *constrain* her—to be other-centered; that is, to find her main values outside herself—in "the others."

So alterocentricity has graciously enriched a woman's life with an urgent desire to devote herself to the service of others, sometimes actually to sacrifice herself entirely for their benefit. That urge of devotion and sacrifice is, of course, bound to reveal itself as a mighty and most lucky check on all egocentricity, otherwise so natural to human beings in their present degraded state of mind and heart.

Thus, it also happens that where special delicacy and careful insight is needed for the treatment of fellow creatures who are not so lucky, it is often women who are there, right on the spot, ready to help out.

17

Then we also better understand how it comes to pass that over-excitement, and the natural tendency to indulge in such excitement, which certainly is not a lesser temptation in women than in men, here suddenly find an efficient *corrective*. They find it in women, *not* so easily in men. Men have a demonstrably greater tendency to indulge in such excitements. Abandoning oneself to excitements is a phenomenon of passivity. It is a passion. The passive and the passionate are closely related. Even in quite linguistic respect that is evident. "*Pati*" is the Latin verb at the basis of both of them. That means to suffer; that is, to suffer things to be done *to you, by* others; in other words, refraining from activity yourself. The introvert, egocentric type of person has always had that tendency. Activity is a typically alterocentric characteristic, and therefore more a feminine than a masculine trend; the very opposite of what is commonly assumed!

18

But what I here particularly want to point out is the fact that the unfortunate effects of that supersensitivity to which women are more prone than men, mentally as well as physically, finds an efficient corrective in the very fact that they are so significantly more other-centered, and therefore tend to turn so easily outward, finding their natural outlet in activity. Thus they also have more of a natural protection against *irrealism*. That lack of well-balanced realism is always a greater temptation to the introvert than to the extrovert person. In fact, we are all, of course, more or less inclined sometimes toward ideas of illusionism during periods of inactivity and stagnation. And now, what would be the natural influence of exuberant emotions? Under otherwise equal circumstances, women's definitely greater sensitivity ought to make it particularly difficult for them to be realistic. But what happens? Now that natural inclination is significantly held in check by something else—precisely that incredible degree of other-centeredness inherent in the feminine mind.

Is this congenital gift of the "corrective" something important in the household of human minds? Yes, for the woman who is blessed with it, that "pilot," or "homing instinct," is not only important; it is an imperious need, a necessity. It gives her a moral balance she depends on desperately as a good mother. Eros, if he had his way, would destroy women's ability to be good mothers, thus preventing them from having an immense share in the salvation of mankind.

From the general history of ideas, as well as from the lives of human individuals, we know only too well the dangers of introversion, the tendency to lose oneself in oneself. That unfortunate trend is an indwelling element in the classical Eros, Agape's mortal enemy. Eros, you see, is the anti-life trend of shying away from all active endeavor and from every concrete sense of moral duty. Eros has a pronounced negative attitude toward everything that is really sober-minded and affirmative in life, everything that is realistic and truth-loving.

19

## WHAT MAKES MAN'S CONTEMPLATION OF BEAUTY EROTIC INSTEAD OF AGAPEIC?

I have described this particular deficiency in the ego-centric Eros as it manifests itself in the relations between the sexes and also in cultural life as a whole. There is, in Eros, an impulse carried off on a wave of esthetic passion, some sort of inward intoxication experienced in front of beauty, quite secularly speaking.

True, all real beauty has been created by God. That is Christianity's self-evident way of interpreting the esthetic. Yet, another truth also has to be admitted: A one-sidedly egocentric (self-centered) contemplation of that beauty (in terms of a spellbound fixation) leads into zones of serious danger.

The danger consists precisely in the super-individualistic manner in which one may approach the beautiful. For what is it, actually, the beauty-admirer runs a heavy risk of being exposed to at the moment when he abandons himself, without any sound constraint, to a more or less passive\* and self-centered enjoyment of beauty—not for beauty's sake even, but rather for the beauty-enjoyer's sake? The imminent risk is that what is called love may turn out to be just an ephemeral incident in the lover's life. This is the typical male's particular temptation.

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\*Remember again that "passive" is a word of exactly the same origin as "passion."

20

Matters are essentially different in the case of the prototypical female human being. She owes that difference, not to her own special accomplishments in forming her own character, no, she owes it to the fact of her being a woman; that is, a potential mother. So, of course, she has nothing to boast of, in terms of individual merit. But notice at the same time, the fact of her tremendous asset as a woman does not become less admirable for that matter.

There is something we can observe happening again and again in the case of maternal love, or any love flaring up in the heart of a typical woman. The pattern of behavior turns out to be different from what was expected. Love is not an ephemeral incident, a casual episode in that woman's life. No, it gradually becomes woven, as it were, *into* the very web of her life as a whole. It becomes a profound and indissoluble human reality.

It is the secret instinct of a purposeful motherliness that affords a constant protection for her life, a protection from having love disintegrate into the mere flight of a butterfly fluttering capriciously from flower to flower. Potential maternity is the inherent grace in her life that whispers to her, as it were, words of anti-playboy wisdom, words of carefulness and care, words of sound everyday reason.

21

Again I must remind you, there is no ground for boasting here. A woman would be foolish to become personally proud of that buoyant extrovert trend which comes to her rescue right in the midst of her natural super-sensitivity. Alterocentricity, with her, is an inborn endowment. She was created to be a mother. This biological fact is, in itself, capable of holding in check considerable drives of light-minded passion.

It is not through sophisticated training in some super-academic institution of modern learning that women have acquired the wisdom of those anti-Eros attitudes. No, it is by inspiration and grace they have learnt to place the center of their lives outside themselves, thus riveting their values firmly in something greater than themselves.

Here is the great law of life for any person: *He will experience wholeness and harmony, fulfillment and true felicity in the same degree as he is able to find his main values outside himself.* That rule, by the way, holds good, regardless of sex or age. The only condition is that the person be willing to give up himself as the great center. He must submit to the great *élan altérocentrique*, the mysterious spirit of motherliness, or, as we might as well say, the great Spirit of *Fatherliness!* For true alterocentricity corresponds exactly to the heavenly Agape in every respect. We may, of course, distinguish here, saying:

22

Other-centeredness is, on the *biological* plane, a faithful type of what Agape is on the *religious* plane. But what is Bios? Life is simply Jesus Christ. This applies to true life, wherever you turn. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. There is no life outside of Him.

What criterion is there then, testifying with certainty that the Spirit of Agape is operative in a human being? The practical proof is to be found in the active outreach for the other ones; so the very opposite of sentimental introversion, passive rumination of mystic self-absorption. The *élan altérocentrique* means a dynamic launching out for new shores of exciting reality. And it is not merely the person's literal arms that stretch themselves out. It is his (or her!) deepest being, the reasoning mind as well as the longing heart. It is man as an integrating whole who manifests, in deed and docility, his firm determination to orient his life in the direction of the "other ones." Above all, his orientation will be toward the great OTHER ONE. That is God. Here is the Center above all centers. When Christ becomes the governing reality outside man, irresistibly, he is pulled toward that greatest of all outside realities. At the same time, the miracle above all miracles takes place. Disrupted man is made whole. How? By the very fact of turning outward; that is, by obtaining a new Center for his life. The great MAGNET of the uplifted cross (John 12:32) is what makes the ensuing movement, not only a movement outward, but also a movement upward.

23

This general pattern of behavior manifested in the alterocentric unfolding of love, just could not be limited to the potentials inherent in one single sex. It could not possibly be limited to the potentials inherent in a certain age either. Alterocentricity is bound to be a universal force.

I am convinced that this is also the only force endowed with sufficient dynamic outburst to pull the arche-typical humanist away from the blind alley in which his onesidedness has too often left him. I am referring again to that onesided contemplation of "pure beauty," in the typical Eros sense, disengaged and disrupted. I do not hesitate to call that a "blind alley." It is the deadend street in which a human person tends to get stuck. For this infatuated contemplation of "pure" beauty is in reality nothing but a blind stare at utter vanity, a nonentity that is ten times worse than nothing, accurately speaking, because it boasts of being something.

Here again is a manifestation of the *fata morgana* of spiritualism in its most insidious form. It is the mirage of an empty Oriental nirvana dream, appearing today in an Occidental disguise. It is a non-stop seance of "transcendental meditation," establishing its present center in the Western World, after having filled Eastern hearts with nothingness for millennia.

24

I shall soon demonstrate, on a firm ground of conscientious research backing, what essential features TM has in common with Eros. But, so far, we must first have a firmer ground to stand on regarding the relationship between other-centeredness, as a biological core quality, and the New Testament Agape.

### **DOES A WOMAN LOVE IN A WAY MEN DO NOT KNOW?**

What, precisely, does Agape have in common with the spirit of motherliness? Of course, today, in our human world, maternal love can only provide a weak and most imperfect picture of Agape, the resplendent source of heavenly light, emanating from the glorious Love of the Eternal One. But the essential effect is always the same. In both cases there is a practical trend of thorough transformation taking place. Right into a woman's love for her mate there is bound to enter a considerable element of her peculiar love for her child. The alterocentric pull—or rather *pushing* and *lifting*, since the trend is *outwards* and *upwards*—will always assert itself as a standard phenomenon in a woman's affection for those to whom she devotes her life. The other-centered urge is unmistakable: With quite a particular ardor of self-forgetfulness, her yearning heart reaches out for the persons *who need her most*, or for whom she has already got into the process of *sacrificing herself*.

25

These outward-pressing qualities are of the greatest significance: for they guarantee the excellence of love in two respects. They assure that her love will be *deep*. They also assure that it will be *lasting*. Could you think of any more decisive qualities in love than those two—*depth* and *durability*? Notice, however, that usually those two qualities are the ones women are constantly accused of *not* having, for they are known to be dominated by a fluctuating sanguine temperament. The sanguine is, as a type, just superficial, lacking in both depth and endurance. Of course, some women may also tend to possess a rather melancholic temperament. That is looked down upon by men still more, if possible. They find it weak and "sissy-like." Let us admit one thing: naturally women seem, *a priori*, doomed to lack qualities considered indispensable for strength of character.

But, my point is precisely this: whatever the deficiency in women, as a type, may be, the other-centered in their motherliness instinct will unfailingly be there, right on the spot, coming to their rescue, securing a wonderful balance, an indispensable correction. They just turn outward, and safety is suddenly secured.

How does women's natural urge outwards manifest itself? It must express itself in some kind of outward action. And what is the effect of action? What does that outward expression of the inward contents invariably imply? If you *unfold* your inward feelings, or anything that is *in you*, then that inward thing, in its turn, will only become more and more intense, more and more strong and lasting all the time. That is the unfailing law governing any inward state of mind at the moment when it is given a

practical unfolding in the surrounding world. The feeling or thought, or whatever it may be, there in the deep interior will immediately grow only deeper and more durable through its own exercise.

26

Now, in the case of women's love, we have to do with an outward act of strong devotion to the urgent needs of the other ones. That very act of self-sacrifice through which the love in their hearts expresses itself, or projects itself outwards, causes the inward sentiment to become profound and lasting. Every single act of love, by which that love is allowed to find its *object*, will prove to be a stabilizing and perpetuating factor. To "objectify" one's love, in accordance with such an alterocentric pattern, is then certainly not an unworthy or despicable maneuver. Just drop all your fears and all your idealistic hesitations on that score. If you fancy that you are coming closer to the divine Agape in the same degree as you manage to abstract your love, making it "independent of any reality outside itself," you are sadly mistaken. That is the tragic, age-old mistake of spiritualism, the great illusion of the Platonic Eros.

By the way, this has been the perilous tradition in both Western and Eastern philosophy. Philosophers, by and large, have had the unfortunate tendency to entertain a sort of "instinctive" depreciation of women. Why? Precisely because those "less philosophical creatures" were constantly observed to tend toward a materialization, in this external world of practical deeds, of values the philosopher only knows as something potential and theoretical, deep down in the hidden corners of his speculative mind. No greater sin, he thinks, could ever happen to realistic nature. For, according to the philosophizing theorist, all interior realities had better stay where they are, namely in that frozen state of theoretical possibilities—"in *potentia*," not "*in actu*," as the Aristotelian disciple would have put it.

27

But remember, external inactivity kills the life of the internal as well. Nothing but death, external and internal, can be the result of self-centeredness.

What do those theorists imagine that they are going to achieve by reducing even their love life to a mere abstraction? Do they realize what is bound to happen if they succeed in disengaging even their love from all practical purposes and all external manifestations? Love will die out. It will suffer the death of simple suffocation.

Of course it will never happen that modern alchemists of that lugubrious race will manage to keep Agape locked up in such a way; that is, cut off from all connections with an outside world. If it *could* happen, what a tragedy! What a meaningless world we would have! But the truth about Agape is the direct opposite of such metaphysical speculations. For in one thing exclusively can human beings find their rescue. They must base their love on virtues and values they can reach out for—*outside themselves*. They must build realistically on qualities having a sure existence in the object. Values based on mere sentimentality, a beautiful mirage in the subject's fancy-ridden mind, and artificially worked up by fits of ecstasy, are bound to be of short duration and turn into disillusionments of the most bitter kind.

28

As soon as his passion has burnt itself out, the egocentric lover is left barren and destitute in his lonely ego chamber, behind the cross bars of his own narrow heart. His

vision has proved to be an empty spook, the feverish dream of an oasis in the desert. But that oasis is without substance in reality.

## CAN A WOMAN LOVE A MAN WHOM SHE DOES NOT ADMIRE, OR DOES NOT DEEM WORTHY OF ANY TRUE LOVE?

How different from this unrealistic trend is not the response of the motherly heart! The typical woman surprises us by doing the very opposite of what an old myth accuses her of doing. As Signora Gina Lombroso says, she loves the man whom she is able to respect:

A woman cannot love a man whom she does not esteem and admire (sic!). True, she may very well fall in love with a contemptible man. But that is simply because she sees in him a poor victim of unjust calumny or some kind of unfortunate circumstances. To save him from such injustice and misfortune, that is just the mission she feels called upon to perform. As soon as she becomes really convinced that he is worthy of contempt, she will cease to love him. To a man the very opposite may easily happen. Many men love women—even to the extreme of suicide and murder—women they despise or believe completely unworthy.

29

That was an outstandingly intelligent woman's testimony. I go into captivating details in the argument here developed in my book, *ABOUT WOMEN*. I believe Signore Lombroso has thrown important light upon something strange and enigmatic here. For women do constitute an enigma to most men's traditional thinking. They turn out to be a standing problem to the usual calculus an average man will traditionally tend to make in his love life. In his boundless desire for total "freedom" that man will make plans he thinks entirely acceptable. But what attitude does his little mistress take to those plans? She suddenly astonishes him by responding in ways cutting radically across all his planning and all his "reasonable" expectations. She surprises him—and frustrates him—by suddenly manifesting a "whim" he had never thought possible. She boldly declares that she is *on the side of realism*, to put it in the terms of the historian of ideas. She insists on having an intelligent foundation for her love. That is the sensational turn matters are taking in an unsuspecting lover's love drama. The woman whom he had come to think of as the model of perfect irrationality, suddenly comes up with a claim for what she calls "*rational* principles in matters of love." How could you blame him if he is somewhat non-plussed at the unexpected "new caprice" of this incredible female. She peremptorily declares that she is on the side of stern realism. In matters of love he himself is rather the born "idealist." Ironically I might say: He loves for love's sake, without any "petty regard" for things "beyond the realms of the love experience itself." In other words, however much that typical male would otherwise insist on producing logical reasons for anything he does or thinks, here in the precious "kingdom of pure love," he would almost consider it as a kind of "sacrilege" to apply the tenets of just simple everyday logic.

30

This is evidently quite different with the prototypical woman. She just does not have the ability—this she openly admits—to go on loving without any intelligent reason behind her love. She just cannot love at all without assuming some reasonable motivation for that love. Evidently she does not manage the ingenious feat of loving "spontaneously," as the phrase goes among Agape researchers.\*

It is, no doubt, this "inability" ("lack of genius") that makes it practically unfeasible for her to love—really *love*—a man whom she just cannot contrive to mobilize any respect for. Before she can abandon herself to feelings of deep love for the man of her choice, she would at least have to find some means of rationalization. In other words, she would have to convince herself, in some way or other, that, after all, he does have qualities in his factual being which make him *worthy* of being loved. She has to appreciate him by virtue of his own inherent qualities, some kind of *objective value*.

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\*Please keep in mind, as we proceed, Nygren's claim about Agape as the absolutely "unmotivated" and "spontaneous" type of love.

31

## WHAT MAKES MEN AND WOMEN SO TYPOLOGICALLY DIFFERENT IN MATTERS OF LOVE?

Now you may, of course, ask: Is this just a new form of sentimentality on the part of women? Is it, more deeply considered, a blank refusal to accept sound human sense?

Hardly. It is rather men who here significantly come out as the irrational ones. That furiously ecstatic masculine lover—he and not at all his "beloved"—is virtually the one who here pushes all logic aside and bluntly refuses to accept the basic tenets of plain reasonability, face to face with a thing as practical as that of the man-woman relationship. Openly and categorically he rejects the claim that reason has any business to interfere in matters of love. Love and reason, to him, are absolutely incommensurable realms in life. They must be kept carefully apart. This is his saying. And he *means* what he says.

But what is it, then, that causes the typical woman to say and mean something entirely different? It cannot be an insignificant matter to find out about this. Frankly speaking, what can be the true spirit of the secret voice whispering so impressively into a woman's ear: "Now, my dear lady, you must be consistent and reasonable right in the midst of your heart's cascades of feelings."? Who is the one that dares to take up a fight against so heavy odds, forcefully and incessantly suggesting a philosophy of life as "rustic" in its realism as that?

32

Well, who should it be, if not just that future mother in her? We must remember one fact in order to understand this: choosing a lover means choosing a companion of life. And choosing that companion means choosing the man who is going to be her children's father. Is it a serious business to choose a father for your child? Please do some elementary reasoning. If the child is that "other one" constituting the center in the future mother's existence, would it be a farfetched idea that some reasonable planning will have a definite priority in her mind?

We understand, don't we, that the CHILD is bound to constitute an important motive, and a reasonable motive, in the girl's choices. But of course this does not necessarily mean that all girls, at all times, choose reasonably. They do not always realize, in practice, the ideal of placing their love where the true value is. The historical facts too often testify that they choose men who are not at all likely to become the best fathers.

This is evident and undeniable. Even the *typical* woman, is not, *eo ipso*, necessarily the perfectly reasonable one in practical reality. But one thing can still safely be said about her: In an astonishing degree she has the honest *willingness* to realize that ideal of true reasonability in her choice and in her general pattern of behavior. She does not stubbornly go contrary to the voice whispering into her ear so insistingly,

33

"Remember now, little girl, you cannot separate this serious event of your love choice from your life as a whole. For don't forget—that life of yours is the life of a mother."

Those are words of plain reasonability. And it is essential to state that women have in them a profound respect for every element of the reasonable—even when they do not manage the wisdom to direct their lives accordingly.

### **MAN—THE SENTIMENTAL SEX—THE STUBBORNLY UNREASONABLE SEX**

And now, what about you and me, professional students of life and reality. Should not we, in our study, be reasonable as far as our much-lauded intelligence goes? Or do you think we should just go on speaking so irresponsibly and so unintelligently about the sentimental foolishness of *women*, the "typical irrationality" of the fair sex?

Too long, indeed, have men now kept talking and talking about the "weak sex," and I assume we hardly ever thought of the *brain* as an exception to that case of feminine weakness. A tradition of slander, through thousands of years, is responsible for that kind of talk. More careful investigation has revealed that weakness, in body as well as mind, is more likely to excel in quite another sex.

Don't let us speak so loud any longer about sentimentality as properly a feminine quality. Men are not only those who distinguish themselves as being more sentimental, but—worst of all—they insist on being that way.

34

I am thinking of the typical man whom the outstanding criminologist and most experienced psychologist, Gina Lombroso, describes so vividly: The fascinating beauty whom he chooses as the "mistress" of his life, may—for all he cares—just as often be a person of sheer emptiness. And, in that case, he even knows she is. He knows it with the certainty that belongs, as it were, to "another part" of his being; that is, the precious "discursive reason" he otherwise boasts of so emphatically, but obviously has now—temporarily—put aside, saving it for "other occasions." In short, he does realize, with his cold intellect, that this girl of his momentary choice, soberly considered, is not worthy of any decent man's lasting love. And still he insists on choosing precisely her, willfully and without a moment's hesitation.

There is even conclusive evidence in scientific research, today more than ever, that Gina Lombroso was right in her observations in these respects. It is *men* who, to a far greater extent than women, choose the patterns of behavior dominated by a passion which is "*consciously* blind."

I could hardly think of a more shaky foundation for a relationship that is supposed to last throughout life.

35

### THE "VULGAR" EROS AND THE "HEAVENLY" EROS—A REMARKABLE DISTINCTION

What kind of love is it man has here permitted to enter upon the scene? Its totality-disturbing features are sufficient to show that this love has everything essential in common with the great Eros of pagan tradition in our world. Is it the "vulgar Eros" of the poor unphilosophical plebeian, or is it the "heavenly Eros" of the spiritualist elite?

Here we must acquaint ourselves with certain concepts of pagan idealism; that is, in our Western World, Platonic spiritualism. Plato, the great Master Disrupter, as I shall soon describe him in more detail, and, I think, reasonably so, could not deny the deepest nature of his philosophy. He could not help tearing even Eros to pieces. He distinguishes between a "vulgar" Eros and a "celestial" one. Whereas he is fondly attached to the latter, he mostly looks down upon the former. He adores the heavenly Eros and despises the vulgar, and all the time for the wrong reasons. The "reasons" he has for despising the vulgar Eros are just as narrow-minded as those he has for admiring the celestial.

Well, what does Plato mean by the "vulgar Eros" then? You have probably already guessed it. It is love in its "bodily aspects." The frank modern word for it is sex.

36

### IS SEX AS SUCH AN EROS PHENOMENON?

Most of my students, when we start a course of *fundamental motifs in the Western World*, immediately seem to assume, as a matter of course, that sex must be relegated to the realms of evident Eros. "Such a thing" certainly could not ever have any qualifications for being included in the fundamental motif of Agape, they think.

That is a basic misunderstanding, and a symptomatic one. It shows how platonic we all tend to be in our fundamental outlook. Had we been thoroughly influenced by the Bible as a main source of our cultural heritage—and the Bible means both Testaments, harmoniously joined together—then we would never have wandered about, weighed down miserably, by misconceptions and rash conclusions of that sadly pagan kind.

Be reasonable now, and remember what Agape stands for. It represents the total essence of God's character, and accordingly His entire plan and counsel. Consequently everything—note it down: *everything*—that is basically good, basically in accordance with God's plan for the world, is simply bound to find its place *in Agape!*

That, by the way, as we shall abundantly see later, also applies to *justice*, including absolutely every aspect involved in it, just to mention one matter which has been subjected to terrible doubt in the on-going Agape debate.

Now then, what about sex? Was that according to God's original plan? Of course it was. "Man and woman created He them." To create a "spirituality" more

spiritual than the Spirit of God, that has always been the machination of the pagan Eros. And the result is evident in spiritualism, the philosophical type as well as the vulgar type.

37

Plato, like all the other spiritualists who have followed after him, did not want to have anything to do with *creation* as an essential part of God's plan. Of course not. To Plato, matter, including all kinds of bodies, constitutes the great deplorable evil. So anything having to do with such bodies (including sex) must be looked upon as a most despicable and damnable thing. That is the fairly consistent pattern of thought in all spiritualism. I say *fairly* consistent. You shall soon see why. I do not want to exaggerate in the way I use my terms.

Spiritualism goes on manifesting some kind of consistency in its deep contempt for everything that is bodily, until the crucial moment when something fatal—and apparently inevitable—happens: Spiritualism develops into pantheism. Then suddenly the hitherto "unlawful" and "inadmissible" bodily things become lawful and admissible, even to the extreme of licentiousness. This is the remarkable trick of the "heavenly" Eros, shamelessly pushing forward his scabby head, this time as the "vulgar" one.

Thus you will easily understand what I mean when I say that pagan idealism tends to despite what is original and good in human sex, and condone what is derivative and evil in it. Again you can see that there is a poor amount of true logical consistency in spiritualism, the Eros philosophy par excellence.

38

Perhaps now we are all better prepared to grasp the predicament of the self-centered lover as a candidate for marriage, and the reason for it. There is in his mind a willful determination not to curb his unreasonable passion, whatever the ethos of his environment, or the good sense of his own mind tries to bring home to his heart. He had rather abandon himself, thoughtlessly and playboy-like to the unbridled pleasures of his super-excited ego. This is Eros taking possession of the person who was from the beginning made for freedom, not for slavery.

Some critics of stern Christian standards in the field of sex ethics ask with wonder how a Christian teacher can speak about the "beastly passion." Does not this remind too much of the original platonic spiritualist's unrealistic and rather pharisaic attitude toward natural bodies and natural sex?

No, not necessarily, by no means! If a person created on the high level of a human being places himself on the lower level of a beast, just a radically self-centered male, not considering for one moment what the female's good interest may happen to be, you do realize that "beastliness" in this case must adopt a bastard-like character, entirely different from that of a real beast behaving like a beast. A tom-cat behaving like a tom-cat may not be considered objectionable from the viewpoint of human sex ethics. But the case of a man behaving like a tom-cat would, of course, have to be relegated into quite a different category, ethically speaking. We are here speaking about the definitely vulgar Eros playboy's reactions in terms of sex ethics.

39

#### **AGAPE AND EROS—DIFFERENT VIEWS ABOUT ESTHETICS AS WELL**

And what about his *esthetic* reactions? If he has any at all, they limit themselves to the esthetics of pure humanism. Or how else would you account for that special type of high tension engendered in the typically masculine being's palpitating heart at the

casual contemplation of a rather superficial kind of beauty? This is not only a pretty, shallow type, but often also a most boisterous one. I mean boisterous in a vulgar sense; and vulgarity in a definitely derogatory sense.

What is it, frankly speaking, this ecstatically indulgent lover really loves? Is it the alleged "object" of his love? By no means. To him the *other one*, as a person, hardly exists. What *he* loves, is not the other one, but first and foremost, his own amorous mood. Even his relation to beauty is a matter of pure vanity. For how was that ecstasy born in his heart? It was through a most subjective contemplation of the beautiful. And what *kind* of beauty, if you please? It is what the french language calls "*une beauté à fleur de peau.*" That would correspond fairly well to the English proverb: "Beauty is only skin deep." Accordingly, something rather superficial and corruptible.

40

A person's beauty, if it has totality, is something far different. It is deep and durable. In order to know this, one does not need to be exceptionally religious, or in some elevated mood. Even a plain secular humanist would hardly be tempted to chant the praises of a beauty so vulgar that it has to cry out about its excellencies at every market place. "The emptier a barrel is, the more noise does it make," says a Norwegian proverb (Tomme tönner ramler mest).

Do not misunderstand me. I am not saying one single disparaging word about the natural beauty in a woman's body. It certainly is not Eros who has had anything to do with creating that. The Creator's name is Jesus Christ, and He is Agape. It is not Eros who has made sex a pleasant experience, any more than he has made strawberries taste delicious. It is God, and God only, who has prepared all things that are good—really good. It is He who has invented feminine beauty. Accordingly, there could be nothing whatsoever wrong with that beauty; that is—and here is the important point—as part and parcel of the woman possessing that beauty. And when I am speaking about a "woman," I am again speaking about a totality, including an endless number of realities, such as her God-dependence as a creature, her rights and responsibilities as a person endowed with freedom of will, etc., etc.

41

In fact, there need not be anything wrong at all about that woman as the gorgeously beautiful one, in terms of a real object, reasonably seen. On the other hand, there may be something terribly wrong with the eyes that see. For an eye that stares its eyeballs out at torn-off (that is, bleedingly lacerated) particles of an original totality, or at sheer emptiness, that eye is bound to become torn and empty itself. That is where the tragedy comes in.

The objectives facts, inherent in the loved one, as a person, mean next to nothing in such a lover's evaluation. Hence, such qualities as true respect and admiration for the girl he "loves," are realities unknown to him. His love is not the sum total of a reasonable evaluation of her as a human being.

In one way this may sound downright incredible. For otherwise in life's practical business, that same man may have a wonderfully keen sense of evaluating things objectively. Look at him sitting at his office desk for instance. Or observe him as he makes his minute experiments in a laboratory, or as he prepares an inventory of his pieces of merchandise in a storage hall. There he is sober-minded enough. But then,

suddenly, when he comes to matters of love, the greatest thing in the world, his sober-mindedness and his objectivity have vanished into thin air.

Why do people cut up their lives in this way? Do we humans have, at the back of our minds, some kind of automatic disruption mania, driving us to such dichotomies in our lives? Is there some kind of distribution machine saying arbitrarily: "In this field here sober reason is still supposed to prevail; in that one over there, however, sentimentality and light-minded romanticism are entitled to have their sway." What an incredible philosophy. And how can we find out about its secret "rationale?"

42

Evidently, in the obscure cabinets of romantic half-light there is no room for any sound esteem and admiration for the *other one*. In the Dionysian temple of ecstatic super-tension, no true rationality or serious concern for persons or things outside of oneself have any chance of survival.

The Eros playboy's leaning is naturally toward the spectacular and the romantic, to the dreamlike and illusory values. Our "values" are too often something we find exclusively *in ourselves*. We call them values, but what are they? They are the emptiness we tear out of our own breasts. And what valuable content could you ever expect from such a mega-zero? What durability could you expect from something whose main property consists in being *nothing*? We men may stand ever spellbound in front of that nothingness. But as soon as the fury of our passion (called love) is spent, the spell is broken. Our emptiness has realized its potentials to the full. And what has, by that time, really happened to the "lover's" "love?" It has blown away with the chilling gust of the first morning breeze of sterner realities.

43

But the main project of our study has never been Eros. It has never been self-centeredness. The positive angles are so much more encouraging and also more promising. So, in the first place, what we must get better acquainted with is not the Eros "values" with all their spectacular display of sham glories. What we need to concentrate on is Agape. It is Agape, as unobtrusive other-centeredness, spurning all outward display. Right in a world of vainglorious splendor we must get sight of new aspects to those "more tedious" qualities we have found to survive at least in the potential mother. I have called it *true respect* and *realistic esteem* for the other one. It so happens—and this is a most significant historic fact, although it is almost never mentioned—that the word "Agape" in the Greek language of classical times had a sense corresponding fairly well to those "tedious ones." It was not Love, the "many-splendored thing." No, its splendor did not go one single step farther than to the modest concept of "respect" or "esteem." So you see how inconspicuous and (considered from an Eros angle) downright *tedious* Agape is, even in its literal linguistic extraction.

For a realistic understanding of Agape's nature, it may be more to the point than most men might tend to believe to listen once more to the anxious cry of that human female, confronted with her "this-worldly" love: "I do not dare to skip realism in my choice of a love partner. I must choose, as an object for my great, great love experience in life, a person whom I can truly respect and realistically esteem. As a prospective mother I have moral obligations which I cannot betray. That is what forbids me to be unrealistic in the way I choose my loved one."

Now, is the God of the Bible heard to say something similar to this? Or would what *He* says, through the witness of His eternal Agape, be the diametrically opposite?

### **AGAPE'S BASIC CHARACTERISTIC: INTENSIVE PERSONALISM**

If I were to express with one single word what I have found to be the fundamental quality characterizing Agape as opposed to Eros, I would say *personalism*. But for practical purposes I would then immediately have to add: I cannot get along with that one word at all in my present milieu. For here it is imperative to indicate precisely what I mean by "personalism." And that takes many words. What does it imply, essentially, to be a person?

I have a synonym or two for the concept of personalism. This may help to emphasize the peculiar aspects of the terms which I consider most neglected—and most fatal to neglect.

1. To be made a person is exactly the same as to be created on the tremendously high level peculiar to those creatures who have been granted the exceptional endowment of a *free will* (such as angels and men).

2. Second point to be held fast: The Bible describes that category of privileged beings as having been created *in God's image*. This indicates that it is God, the Creator, who must be considered as *the Person par excellence*. Some theologians have had the erroneous viewpoint that it is a case of naive "anthropomorphism" that fools us into speaking about God as a Person. We think of God in human terms, as being one who has an "arm," a "mouth," an "eye," etc., and even a personal mind, "just like men." But in reality, the sophisticated scholar says, that is childish nonsense.

Fortunately Brunner puts them straight about this matter. He says it is they who suffer from a case of *theomorphism* (or *theo-pathism*). *God* is the only original Person. When we human beings consider ourselves as the persons *par excellence*, then we are very much mistaken. We figure ourselves in the form of God, the only truly personal One. When we say that we are persons, that may be right, but only parabolically so.

I am confident that we may go even farther than Brunner here. We may say that we are persons, and most realistically so. But this is a fact for which we must be just thankful. It is—again—nothing to be proud of; that would be nonsensical. It is in Him we have all our pride. But then it is a reasonable and legitimate pride.

What I mainly wanted to arrive at here, however, is this realistic equation:

$$\text{PERSONALISM} = \text{WILL FREEDOM} = \text{GOD'S IMAGE}$$

Now, what I further want to point out firmly and decisively is this: Personalism constitutes the essence and the *sine qua non* of the peculiar religion which bases itself on Agape.

Here some will say: "That sound like a truism, something self-evident and therefore rather dull. Have you got nothing more important to say about Christianity and about Agape? Where do you find a philosophy or a religion in this world which would care to put up a serious fight with you on the basis of a statement as tedious and non-controversial as that? Do they not all admit tacitly that being a person is a tolerably

good thing? Where would you expect to come across one single humanistic movement which would assume personalism to be something negative?"

Is this right? Is humanism, whether Christian or pagan, consistently in favor of personalism?

For several years I have had the serious task of conveying basic truths regarding fundamental motifs in the Western history of ideas to my students of philosophy and religion. Unfailingly I have then always had to spend considerable time trying to bring home, to their hearts and to their heads, a momentous fact which spiritualistically-oriented teachers have always tended to cover up: Whereas the God of the Bible has never, in one single passage of His Word to man, intimated anything which might suggest that He gives prestige to *impersonalism* of any degree or any kind, it happens again and again that the wise ones of this world make it a capital point in their implicit teaching that there is some tremendous virtue in being a *non-person*. You would never believe it, but this weird gospel of "salvation and eternal bliss" through downright *impersonalism* has invariably asserted itself as a capital feature of every religious and philosophical movement through which the Eros motif has managed to propagate its ways and its views.

47

The wisdom-seeker who is bent on arriving at the full truth about Agape cannot today have any legitimate hope of reaching this goal without also having a look into the lugubrious abyss of that negative gospel which for so many thousands of years has spread its darkness over the continents of both Eastern and Western lands. The great sermon that is being preached openly and without shame to millions of attentively listening souls has one aim exclusively: It is to convince the world that the peak of all spirituality is simple impassivity Salvation must be found in perfect indifference and non-intervention.

If there is any concept of God at all in this barren humanism, then it is the ideal of a God who has the "tactfulness" *not* to intervene in any way or at any time in the individual creature's life.

The distance between that "god" of all spiritualist philosophy and the Living God of the Bible is simply endless in all respects. You must get to know their respective attitudes toward both intelligent thought and living emotion.

Until we have given thorough study to these basic differences between the opposing motifs, we cannot flatter ourselves that we have a tenable outlook on life and on the world. It is our failure to practice that kind of thoroughness which has left us with a concept of Agape that is nonsensical and fatal to our Christian creed and the very source of our disarray today, our polarization crisis.

48

The facts modern motif researchers have added to our knowledge about Agape are praiseworthy and indispensable achievements. But those which they have failed to reveal are equally indispensable. How can one account in a plausible way for that failure? I think the explanation is partly to be sought in one fact about Agape which is more easily overlooked than anything else. I do not know whether I shall call it unobtrusiveness, modesty, humility, or by some other name.

## A REMARKABLE MODESTY APPARENT IN THE VERY TERM

This point is so salient for our inquiry into the nature of God that we are forced to dwell upon it at considerable length.

A. P. Salom (in an article of "*Ministry*," September, 1961, p. 20) marvels—and with considerable reason—at the historical fact that Agape did establish itself as the consecrated term for Christian love. I want to take my point of departure from some of his reflections. But let me then first cite Moulton and Milligan: *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, 1930. The question dealt with is the following: To what extent may Agape be considered as a new word, a word of Christian manufacture, so to speak:

49

Though it would be going too far to say this important word was born within the bosom of revealed religion, it is remarkable that there are only three supposed instances of its use in "profane" Greek, two of which are now read otherwise and the third is doubtful.

First then, why was it deemed necessary to introduce a special word at all? Here we do accept the linguist's reason, the historian's reason. Anyone would understand the hesitation of the Gospel writers to choose the word "Eros" as their favorite term for the purpose of expressing the peculiar qualities of Christian love. Greek literature, as well as colloquial speech through centuries, has done their utmost to give that word a rather pornographic connotation. It was natural, nay imperative, to look for a term less currently associated with the idea of sensual passion and *self-love* rather than *love*.

A similar problem was also faced by the translators who created and improved the Vulgate version, the great edition of the Word of God throughout the Middle Ages. This is evidenced by the fact that whenever they saw their way free to avoid the word "amor," they did so.

At the same time I think it should be admitted that the word "caritas" (a sort of "Latin Agape") does have its deficiencies as well. For certainly "charity" does not quite convince us as being "love," does it? Probably no modern human mind (for instance, an Anglo-Saxon preacher) would manage to substitute the word "charity" for the word "love" without suffering some considerable loss in human warmth and emotional richness.

50

In fact, to any word there is bound to correspond some definite internal substance. And who among us would be really satisfied, at the bottom of his heart, if he had to infer that the feelings his dear ones had for him were simple feelings of beneficence, that well-known dropping of "alms" into the bag of the poor by the wayside. We do not precisely think of Agape as a synonym to "Bakshish" of Middle-Eastern regions, so just some kind of charity which circles of affluence dole out to beggars and derelicts, do we?

It is human to want something "more," in terms of love, than "just sheer compassion" sometimes, isn't it? What we all seem to be longing for is to be loved "for our own sake," loved for the irresistible charms of our personality, or why not for the real lovable ness there is—or should be—*in us!*

Now whether that insistent desire to be loved in a "realistic" way—for such "substantial" reasons—is always so entirely laudable or as realistic as it may appear, this is indeed another question, and, I would say, a very dubious one. For, in fact, who would dare to deny that there is, in man's specific case today, the danger of downright self-centeredness (so precisely self-love) lurking at the bottom of such desire; I mean the desire to impose oneself, as it were, upon other people's feelings of love or admiration.

One significant thing, I believe, should be admitted in favor of the Latin "caritas." (Which I choose to look at first, owing to its more familiar character, its greater proximity to our own words in our English and Romance language versions of the New Testament.) It does have a lot of active, sober-minded puritanism in it. (And here I use "puritanism" in a favorable sense, expressing the opposite of indulgence.)

51

Some romanticists may here perhaps wrinkle up their noses, saying, "It has too much of that soberminded puritanism in it. Why does Christianity have to be so sober-minded, so tedious, so absolutely lacking in rapturous excitement and ravishing delights?"

I shall not yet try to work out my most pointed answer to that question. Let us now rather concentrate our attention around other points regarding the peculiar concept of Agape as the supreme revelation to us in New Testament times of the nature of God and the nature of man. Let us draw out special aspects of that Agape, and preferably such that have hitherto received a rather stepmotherly treatment in modern research.

One thing will be readily understood by anyone who has any true idea of Christian chastity versus Greek extravagance at the historical time particularly concerned. The word "*Eros*," coming so naturally to Plato—and to all human philosophy in the Western World—whenever the endeavor was made to establish concepts of a *summum bonum* (the highest good) as anthropo-centric (man-centered) philosophers are bound to conceive of such things, this would never do as an adequate tool for the gospel writers. There is no consensus possible between outlooks on life so wide apart and mutually exclusive.

But what then about "Philia," the most common word for love in classical Greek? What could you ever desire that would sound more spiritual than "Philia?"

52

This question would appear the more reasonable in my case, as I have repeatedly dared to speak with the boldness of Biblical anthropomorphism about the "emotional God," the "humanly warm and tenderhearted God."

Now let us note one semantic fact emphatically asserted about the corresponding verb "philein": It means precisely to consider another person with feelings of the *warmest* imaginable human affection. So one might seriously inquire: Why then, was not "philein" regarded as fully worthy of expressing the highest concept of Christian Love, and of presenting it as the supreme New Testament revelation of God?

Well, it would be very wrong indeed, to pretend that love in the gospel literature is *not* expressed by that word for it occurs some fifty times in the New Testament.

For instance, when the most friendly affection of Jesus for a man like Lazarus is to be described, we know that "philein" is the word chosen (John 11:36). And the same

word is used to express His attitude toward John—the "disciple whom Jesus loved." Here it is the apostle John himself who finds that word adequate to express the wonderful emotion of warmth and tenderness binding him and the Saviour together (John 21:7).

53

Nevertheless, we also know the historical fact: With the triumphant surging up of the Christian religion as a world movement, a *new* word was destined to establish itself as the term *par excellence*, a term denoting the most active, outward-reaching, alterocentric type of love our world had ever known; at the same time the most elevated type of love any human formulation for divine things could ever manage to hold fast. The noun "agape" is used approximately 120 times in the Greek Testament, and the verb "agapao" is used more than 130 times.

But how does this extraordinary concept distinguish itself then? What light can it throw over the nature of God? How does it delineate the nature of Christian spirituality as opposed to pagan spiritualism? Does it have any secrets to disclose regarding the peculiar traits of pagan theology? I am, of course, particularly interested in the "theology of Eros." So many important questions still need to be answered about Agape and Eros. And they are not all so easy to tackle. So we must proceed with circumspection and care, as well as with thoroughness, if we are to arrive at safe and meaningful answers to them.

### DID CHRISTIANITY CHOOSE THE POORER WORD INSTEAD OF THE RICHER ONE?

Salom illustrates the distinction between "agapan" and "philein" by quoting a striking remark from Anthony's famous speech about Caesar, as reported by Dio Cassius:

"You *loved* him ("philein" is the verb used) as a *father* and *cherished* him ("agapan") as a benefactor."

54

From an emotional point of view (and in the former case the emotion should lack nothing in human depth and tenderness) you might reasonably assume that the strongest word available would be the one used to describe a son's warm feelings of affection for his father. But in this case of secular literature, what do we see? Strange enough, the verb "agapan," to us the really famous one today, is reserved for the "smaller" or "more prosaic" task of describing just a protégé's respect for his benefactor. In other words, "agapan" here does *not* impress us at all as being the richer one, the "heart-felt" one.

If this case is characteristic, what shall we then say? Has the gospel intentionally chosen, as its favorite, the "poorer" term, the more "*down-to-earth*" term, to render God's attribute *par excellence*, since it is said that He *is* Agape?

One thing is indisputable: in the case referred to above—and the same may be shown to apply in other passages of profane Greek—the verb "*phileo*," *not* "agapao," is

used to describe the richest wave of human emotion. Should not then that same word for love be the appropriate one to reveal God to us poor children of an Occidental world culture, a Greek culture? In fact, is not Christ the One who supremely reveals God to us? And does He not do it in no place better than in the New Testament records about His matchless love? And how did that love there manifest itself? Was it not precisely as a swelling wave of infinite tenderness? Is not Christ's love diametrically opposed to all that is frigidly stern and rationalistic? Is it not cordially responsive to the modest values of the childlike heart, things consistently despised by sagacious philosophers and by mighty politicians alike?

55

So should there not be reasons enough to go ahead just crowning, unanimously, that divine Christian love with the most sympathetic of all Greek names: *Philia*?

To this most understandable human question an answer must be given, of course. And it must not only be an answer held in delicate terms (that is *tactful* terms; for, according to Paul's song of praise to the honor of Christian love in First Corinthians 13, love is also this: *it is full of tact*); but it must also be a *clear* answer, a relentlessly truthful one. That answer must here evidently contain some absolutely reliable, additional pieces of information straight to the point.

And frankly, if what I call the theology of Christian realism, is not the elect one to provide us with that indispensable addition to our common knowledge about Agape, then I just do not see who could ever manage it for us.

56

There are some serious dangers always lying in wait for the student of theology, particularly when such delicate topics as "different levels of love" are being analyzed and categorized. On the one hand, sheer scholarly sophistication may get the upper hand. Result: the love which happens to be the object of observation in the laboratory is *atomized*. On the other hand, trends or romantic humanism may be prevailing. Hence, sentimentality rather than sound human sentiment may succeed to the throne. Then we find ourselves in the realm where the danger is more fatal for the study of Agape than anything else. We have entered the weird kingdom of magic, in which the divine spirituality, proclaimed by the Biblical Agape, has radically been replaced by something having more to do with the peculiar philosophy of Eros than anything else I have ever come across. Our capricious research vessel is about to lose its sound bearings completely, sailing right into the rock-strewn straits of pagan spiritualism rather than Christian spirituality.

For a long time I used to imagine that the diametrical opposite of spirituality was the blatantly *unspiritual*. I have now had to admit that it is something very different, namely the *spiritualistic*. I can no longer make any serious effort toward unravelling the mystery of Demigod Eros as a living spirit in our world without laying bare a tremendously significant historical fact: The philosophy of Eros is the philosophy of *spiritualism*, nothing but that! The *non-spiritual* has never been the worst enemy to the truly *spiritual*. No, not even the openly *anti-spiritual*. The mortal enemy to the Spirit is the *pseudo-spiritual*. Eros never militantly denied the existence of the spirit. On the contrary, he always defended the spirit as "the only existing thing." That is where he constantly had his severest clash with true realism. For realism is the philosophy of totality. It is total enough—and humble enough!—to include matter, downright humus

(earth), as part and parcel of all human reality. And man's reality is embraced one hundred percent by God's reality. The God of Agape is the HUMBLE God. He is the DOWN-TO-EARTH God. This is the first thing modern Agape research failed to realize; and, therefore, also to point out in indisputable terms. It was too engrossed in simple MARCIONIST philosophy to manage its first hurdle. So it was doomed also to make its ethics a realistic totality. For ethics cannot exist without ethical acts, the down-to-earth substance that was traditionally despised by all spiritualist philosophies.

57

### THE FORMIDABLE REALISM TRIUMPHING IN AGAPE

Of course Christian realism would not be realistic at all if it did not include the *ethical* reality the Bible maintains from cover to cover; that is a consistent discipline of the human will, the God-given principles of right action in practical everyday life. To genuine Judaism, and to genuine Christianity alike, love is inseparable from a wholehearted obedience to God's commandments, the well-ordered willingness of the alterocentric person to *do* something—to do the *right* thing, the thing about which one knows that it will give pleasure to the *others*, to the great *Other One*. This was Christ's constant concern. Through His example in that respect He revealed the first law of Agape to us. He never fell a victim to the miserable onesidedness of "*human* ethics." He never got so busy caring for the *other ones* that he lost sight of the *Other One*.

58

This is the wonderful realism of Agapeic totality: A remarkable thing happens to the Christian "agapan": It becomes so versatile and all-encompassing a verb that it may, with perfect naturalness (and with the best of reasons), be placed even in the *imperative*: "Love God!" "Love thy neighbor!" "Love thy enemy!" This would never happen logically to a verb expressing exclusively, or even mainly, a "feeling," in the common subjective sense of that word. But "agapan" is first and foremost a dynamic deed, not a subjective feeling.

Here I have experience enough with serious students to foresee some degree of battle already. The logician and the realist—just the persons to whom I am now making my most pointed appeal, and whom I would hate to exclude from my eager discussion—may have some definite objections to make at this juncture. They will immediately exclaim: "Is it not somewhat exaggerated, after all, to speak so much about objectivity, reasonability, and sober-mindedness even in connection with the Christian Agape? For instance, how can you love a person who, in himself, is not loveable at all? How can you love him "objectively" and "reasonably"; that is, with an unshakable basis in logical reality?"

You certainly sound, my dear friend, as if you have read Nygren. For exactly that question was the one he felt so seriously confronted with. And of course the same question was the one Kierkegaard and the whole long procession of philosopher-theologians after him felt bound to face unflinchingly.

59

### THE PROBLEM OF THE RELIGIOUS MAN IN AN ANTI-RELIGIOUS ERA

Here we may choose one of two alternatives:

1. On the one hand, we may have such implicit confidence in what prestigious experts in modern science state about the "recently discovered facts" of physical nature, that, intellectually, we abandon all faith in what we think the Word of God states.

2. On the other hand, we may have such implicit confidence in what that Word says that we cannot immediately accept what the modern scientists say contrary to the Bible.

Is there a third alternative? More and more people think there is. The solution they suggest is that the Bible is right and wrong at the same time. What an ingenious solution!

In this latter case man's capitulation in front of the dictum of modern science is still unconditional and complete. Kierkegaard, for instance, actually capitulates one hundred percent. According to him, the type of reason which human logic and human science know is in flaring contradiction with what the Scriptures tell us. But that is not because the one is right and the other wrong. No, they are both right, each one within its own system of truth. Do you see the remarkable thing which has here been suggested by the philosopher-theologian as his only solution to the supposed problem of an intellectual contradiction between Biblical revelation and the naturalist's alleged discoveries? We are at a loss to know what to call this.

60

Is it a modern apparition of what ancient tragedy writers used to call a "*deus ex machina?*" Doubt-haunted man, at his wit's end, simply assumes that there does exist, side by side, two entirely different—and mutually exclusive—categories of truth:

1. First, there is the truth of every-day human commonsense intelligence, embracing everything that is strictly rational. Thanks to the well-ordered system of this kind of truth, man can orient himself *materially* in his present world, finding all kinds of intelligent relationships in nature, scientifically considered.

2. Second, there is a type of truth that entirely "transcends" the rational, or the scientifically verifiable. This "super-spiritual" category of truth is, allegedly, the one God operates with in His favorite world, or should we say: the only world He is assumed to acknowledge as "His own." That truth may be—or rather: it *must* be—in the most glaring opposition to the truth which has its validity in the material world. So, from this worldly point of view, truths in the world of religion are simply bound to abandon themselves to the utterly *absurd*. But here, allegedly, one has to do with an absolutely "divine sort of absurdity," an absurdity of the highest prestige, spiritually speaking.<sup>61</sup>

The fixed idea then has established itself: The type of reason which human logic and human science know must be completely given up as soon as you enter the realms of the Kingdom of God. The Christian's faith must assert itself, not in conformity with all traditional reasonableness, but rather in vertical defiance of it. *Credo quia absurdum*. I believe because it is absurd; so certainly not because it is logical and sensible. According to this outlook on life and on the world, then, you may as well give up every hope of grasping the most elementary knowledge about God and His Agape, unless you are willing to abandon all your usual categories of human reasoning.

61

## THE DUALISM OF THE "TWO WORLDS" MADE BY THE SAME GOD, OR SHOULD IT BE BY TWO DIFFERENT GODS?

Do you see the sharp duality that is here created? On the one hand there is "temporal truth," on the other there is "spiritual truth." And you should not expect to find that those two are in harmony with each other. On the contrary, according to this pessimistic view on human intelligence commonly considered, the two are incommensurable, or even mutually hostile.

Is this philosophy realistic? Is it Biblical?

I can hardly believe that it is with any unmixed joy intelligent theologians and thinkers find themselves placed in front of such a radical downgrading of the natural reason they have so far, as eager truth-seekers, appreciated so much. But once they have yielded they must evidently find their reward in some kind of mystic vision initiating them into certain delights provided by the gospel of absurdity that old-fashioned Biblical philosophy knows nothing about. I have in my booklet, *The Mystifying Dynamics of Pagan Philosophies Infiltrating the Endtime Church*, tried to describe in touchingly human terms how a man like Tillich experienced that initially tragic confrontation between the "two worlds." And no less pathetic is Kierkegaard's experience, as I have come to evaluate it.

62

But here I must, so far, content myself with asking one simple formal question: What are the visible facts about that painful tension, or downright disruption, experienced at the encounter between the "two worlds?" Is this something that is bound to happen to all people who are particularly religious and particularly intelligent at the same time? Is that doctrine about God's kingdom as the glorious summit of all absurdity, something before which we must incline ourselves unconditionally if we want to remain on God's side in the battle between good and evil, truth and falsehood? Is that cleavage of the world of reality which has here imposed itself upon the minds of modern men some kind of holy dualism, having its origin in Christianity? Or is it an offspring of the blackest paganism, just as dualistic creeds by and large?

63

I may as well confess my own view on the matter, my own firm conviction, based, as I hope, on thorough observation and conscientious research: That dualism is nothing new in the drama of our European history of ideas. It forms an integrating part of the arch-false duality which, in spite of Christianity's intensive fight against it, has insinuated itself into the highest places of Christendom. Nothing could have a heavier share in the responsibility for the fact that our culture is soaked with pagan thought-forms. The spiritualistic unrealism it has spread over Occidental lands has caused a confusion which hardly a single one among us has managed to escape from without hurt. For our deepest cultural heritage in the Western world is just that nightmare spook of which we feel the deadly weight in our inmost lives.

So, please do not imagine that any splitting asunder of the world God has put together is an insignificant thing, or that this disruption is Agapeic or Christian in any respect. It is arch-pagan and Eros-minded in the highest degree. In our culture it traces its origin back as far as Plato, and after Plato it has formed part and parcel of all the devices which spiritualist philosophies have adopted in our milieu. It has led us into the mortal sin of denying the supreme gift granted to us all by a gracious God: freedom of

the will and our simple common sense, making us responsible for the way we use that freedom.

If this is the historical fact, then how could we stoop down to accepting the non-sense cult, insinuating its subtle dogma about something "infinitely more spiritual" in unreason than in reason?

### WHAT IS THE ESSENCE OF NYGREN'S THESIS ABOUT AGAPE AS THE GREAT UNREASONABLE ONE?

We shall now face Nygren's motif research fairly and squarely. In it we must humbly accept what is great and truthful. But we must also courageously reject any elements for which he does not have realistic arguments.

64

First it would be good to know whether his main idea in this realm is very much the same as Kierkegaard's.

Nygren blames reasoning theologians for having tried to solve the riddle of Agape by applying the usual means which their rationalization batteries have always disposed of. Their question and his question is the same: Why did God, in His boundless love, choose to concentrate His affection precisely upon the sinner? For a long time this has been a question students of the New Testament have obviously felt that they could not help facing. What does God find in that sinner that causes Him to regard the sinner as "so much worthier of His love" than the "righteous" person. Would it perhaps be the sinner's "greater sincerity," a stronger awareness of his own unworthiness, a humble recognition of how totally he depends on a saving Omnipotence?

The religious thinker, says Nygren, is so entirely wrapped up in the sophistries of the old theme: Love must have an intelligent reason. It must have some logical connection with some kind of "value," or "worthiness" inherent in the very object that is being loved.

No, says the famous author of "*Agape and Eros*." It is vain to try to find such intelligent reasons for God's dealings. According to Nygren, there is one basic fact about Agape which such human reasoners do not grasp: The phenomenon of love we here have to do with is something absolutely *spontaneous*, something perfectly *unmotivated*.

65

If God's love for you and me were to base itself on any kind of lovable ness in us then how could He have any possibility whatsoever of falling in love with *us* at any time? No-no, the fundamental fact about Agape is an entirely different one: it is the love that loves man in spite of his unlovable ness, even in spite of his bottomless depravity.

Is this the full truth? Is it a partial truth? Or is it false altogether?

One thing has to be admitted to begin with: That radical formulation of Nygren's seems to have some definite advantages for the sake of argument. I would most willingly admit that its hyperbolical form helps me wonderfully to find a spectacular way of pointing out the vast difference existing between the God of the Bible and the other well-known gods of the Western World, such as Zeus, Jupiter, Wotan, etc.

Or let us just as well compare Him to Plato's god. I am particularly concerned with Plato's god of *Love*; that is, the incredible sorcerer, Eros.

Nygren has taken careful note of what Plato states about a specifically intelligent attitude toward love: One loves what one does not have (i. e., what one painfully lacks, and feel a passionate need of possessing). "For who would ever desire what he has already?" says Plato.

66

That is very characteristic of what I have called the motif of *Autarkeia*, or *Self-Sufficiency*. The real god of Plato's world—that is, the god of the Idea—has all he wants. He is the perfectly self-sufficient one, the one hundred percent *autarkes*, the only one who has attained the great goal of all pagan idealism. This is the plausible reason, I should think, why that "god" does not ever care to entertain any true relations with human persons. Why should he? He is self-contained. He could not derive any satisfaction from anything outside himself. No wonder that Plato can say, even: God has no friends. He just does not need them. So why should he have them?

To the idealist philosopher then, love, humanly speaking (or divinely speaking for that matter), is in a way a negligible thing, to express it mildly. In fact, in his secret heart, he is rather bound to look upon it as definitely negative. To Plato *all* love is passion. So it is what characterizes the inferior ones, those who are in need, those who suffer terrible lack. Love is the passion of possession, the passion of greed.

This is the basic ideology of spiritualism in all epochs and in all lands. Love is, to this cold intellectualistic philosophy, nothing less than a dangerous sidetrack. It is the thought-perverter above all thought-perverters, the passion above all passions. It is what makes seeing people blind and reasonable people unreasonable.

This is what every man should know about the classical West. And do not believe that things are so different in super-philosophical circles of the classical East. Budd'ha developed a spiritualistic idealism of an astonishingly corresponding type. But let us now keep to the cradle of Western culture, Greece, so far. The great Eros whom Plato speaks about in the *Symposion* (the *Banquet*) is a category of "love" human beings today can easily understand and appreciate (See Plato's *Symposion*, section 200). It has to do with a hectic hunt for values.

67a

No, I should not say a hunt for *values*. For that might suggest that I accept Nygren's argument. And I certainly do not. I rather ought to formulate it as follows: What the typical Eros man keeps hunting for, is what he, as the pagan he really is, *assumes* to be a value. It is not a true value in any respect.

The dangerous thing about Nygren's formulation is this: He makes it appear as if that sham value of the Eros hunt has something in it that is really valuable, something a logically reasoning human mind can accept as true value. It has not!

In other words, Nygren virtually declares that Eros takes its stand in favor of what is reasonable. It does not!

Eros is said to love the truly loveable. It never did.

## IS IT AT ALL POSSIBLE FOR THE TRULY INTELLIGENT TO VALUE THE VALUELESS AND TO LOVE THE UNLOVEABLE?

67b

While Agape, according to Nygren, loves what there is no true or logical foundation for loving (for instance, man, who is alleged to be, in himself, absolutely

unloveable), Eros is said to have the opposite attitude, the rational one: Eros loves the loveable. It must have a reasonable foundation for its love. It can only love what is found to be, in itself, worthy of love. This is what Nygren calls a *motivated* love. Agape has no such rational motivation for its love, he claims. It loves "spontaneously." It loves the absolutely unloveable. Thus, according to Nygren, an absolutely valueless human being becomes the most natural candidate for, or recipient of, Christ's love. For he is not only the helpless one, but the absolutely worthless one. Of course then, to Nygren as to Marcion of old, the only God who could ever fall in love with such a wretch must be the irrational God who takes stock in absolute worthlessness. What you and I needed, evidently, was a God who has thrown all value scales of sound common logic overboard, a God of what I would have to call the anti-intellect kind. A God who defies all commonsense reason. Such a God is Jesus Christ.

This sounds novel and exciting, doesn't it? But is it also true?

According to Nygren, we are here confronted with exactly the great characteristic making the God of the Bible—or rather the God of the New Testament—a God so totally different from the smart reason-oriented deity of Platonic philosophy. (Nygren seems convinced then that Eros *is* smart and reason-oriented.) According to this view, Agape is not the type of love that searches far and wide for the inherent values. No, Agape is the love that *creates* the values. Out of what? Out of nothing. Or would it not be more correct to say: Out of worse than nothing, out of evil. I just wonder. For if man is the absolutely unloveable one, there is nothing but evil left in him, then the creation here happening must be a creation of good out of evil, mustn't it?

68

According to Nygren, further, Agape does not desire the inherently loveable. It is not *amor concupiscendi*, as Augustin might have expressed it. And the reason alleged for its being without any desire of the trivial, commonplace kind is that our Christian God has done away with all cheap this-worldly logic. That is why He is envisioned as turning "spontaneously" just toward those who have nothing loveable about them, those who suffer lack of all worth and all worthiness. And then suddenly the incredible thing happens. The totally *unwarranted* thing happens: Agape, the creative force, causes the entirely unloveable one to become loveable.

### IS AGAPE A SORT OF MAGIC?

If you did not here, from the beginning, have the consciousness of being in the midst of a study in Biblical soteriology, rather than in the imaginative mood of some story from *Thousand and One Night*, you might feel something like a spell of magic. At a given moment the great magician fills the chamber with the hush of his presence and presses the right button of a secret board. The master sorcerer has pronounced his *abra cadabra* which causes wondrous feats of metamorphosis to happen. They happen instantaneously—and unmotivatedly! If we had not been told by Plato himself that it is Eros who is the great sorcerer, we might have been tempted to think, after such a lecture, that it is Agape.

69

On one point I may here seem to fight a losing battle against Nygren's formulas: Agape, he says, is the *value-creating* love. How could I ever deny that? In one way he is, of course, perfectly right in this. Agape does create, miraculously. And we all know

fairly exactly what creation means. Properly speaking—that is, Biblically speaking—it means to produce something out of nothing. It was Agape that called the worlds into existence.

But if Nygren insists that this creative force is unmotivated and spontaneous, then I am afraid he goes one step too far. For what would that imply, in the sense in which he uses the terms? A certain *arbitrariness* is here suddenly felt moving in upon the scene. And that is a rather dubious concept to let loose in connection with a portrayal of God's nature. A God who suddenly transforms what is inherently evil—even the tiniest little bit of it—into an inherent good, has turned out to be arbitrary in the most dangerous and negative sense of the term. In fact, if He did such a thing, He would thereby automatically Himself have been transformed from the perfect Creator whom the Bible describes, into the abominable monster of professional sorcery known by the world of magic. I might as well say *black* magic. For—from the Bible's viewpoint—there is only one kind of magic—the black one.

70

It is only in the devil's own philosophy, the philosophy of pagan spiritualism, that the totally wicked and depraved is changed, by the mere waving of a magic wand, into an ocean of goodness and perfect integrity. God could never do that. For he is simply incapable of bypassing with total disrespect the inalienable laws of basic goodness and justice, constituting the expression of His very nature. If we attribute to Him the ability to do such a thing, then we are propagating the most dangerous falsehood of a spurious gospel.

One thing, you see, is to create a world of perfectly good things out of the "material" we\* call absolute nothingness. Quite another thing would be to turn black into white, ethically speaking.

One most crucial fact should here be kept in mind: God, the great Governor of the universe, just because of His essence as the perfect One (that also implies the perfectly just One), has a terrible trouble with some things which are already there. For example, created persons who have turned evil because they used their personalism (their freedom of will) in a wrong way. His own spotless justice, which is part of His realism, simply forces Agape to go into no end of sacrifice in order to cope with that problem justly and realistically. He cannot say to the moral evil which has thus come into real existence like the magician

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\*By the way, is not this "*ex nihilo*" creation, philosophizing theologians speak about, rather a misnomer? *Nihil* means nothing. But is it intelligent to speak about the tremendous forces, the unlimited resources of the Almighty One as "nothing?" does: "Vanish!" Or: "Be changed into your very opposite! Hocus Pocus!"

71

Oh no. This is not the way God can deal with what already exists in a world of personal ethics. It is magic that deals with evil in that arbitrary way.

To blot out sin, the indisputable anti-value existing in our world, by means of that cheap system would be in the highest degree unrealistic and unjust. And this is dangerous teaching in theology, I assure you. For it would be tantamount to saying that salvation from sin may happen without any *confession* of sin—with the least trace of

any obligation on the sinner's part to receive what the New Testament calls Metanoia, true *repentance* of sin. That kind of "salvation" is vain. Man must actively accept the offer of salvation. And that fundamental attitude of acceptance can be practically realized in one way only: Metanoia (in Greek), Poenitentia (in Latin), Penitence (in English). Man must simply permit God to reduce him to "nothing *in himself*."

Notice what a reduction to nothing here really means: Man must surrender his big, proud self. Only then can the wonder of re-creation and redemption take place. We should be realistic enough in our thinking to know how much better a good round zero (0) is, after all, than the minus infinite ( - 00 ) which Eros insists on presenting as his passport to heaven.

72

### **DOES AGAPE EXPLODE ALL KNOWN BARRIERS OF LAW AND JUSTICE?**

To begin with, it may of course sound rather novel and exhilarating to hear about a type of Agape so filled to the brim with grace that it explodes all previously established norms of intelligent motivation in reference to law and justice. But in the end that leads to a false doctrine of salvation, a heresy among the most dangerous in the history of Christianity. One result is the doctrine of universal salvation. All evil creatures, even those persisting willfully in their wickedness, will finally end up in heaven. They cannot miss it. For Agape is the grace that simply forces itself upon the wicked one, irresistibly conquering him right in the midst of his unrelenting wickedness. According to that kind of theology, it is bound to happen that even the devil himself is going to be saved in the last round. A more sentimentally unrealistic teaching could hardly be imagined, nor a more fatally tranquilizing heresy devised.

Such teaching is also a direct attack against Agape as the love of perfection without a flaw. A love of that cuddly-muddy kind would not by any means be flawless. It would run a black streak through the greatest gift ever granted to man; that is, his freedom of choice. And since freedom of choice is identical with personalism, such imposition (a forced salvation) would simply mean the annihilation of everything that is most profoundly personal in the reality of man.

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If God could make evil hearts good just by pressing the automatic button of magic, then He would render a terrible disservice to the men He was supposed to serve. For then He would, with that same action, take away from them the great privilege of being real persons, and that is exactly the same as taking away everything He gave them when He created them *in His image*. Would it be love that prompted such an act, just reducing man to the level of animals or minerals, or what have you?

Of course not. It is precisely God's Agape that permits human beings to make their own choice, even at the most crucial crossroads—or just there. Man has been granted freedom to accept the eternal life offered him by God, or to turn down the offer, thus choosing eternal death on his own conditions, rather than eternal life on God's conditions. Man is not forced to accept the conditions. That would be tyranny, salvation terror. God's kingdom is not a terror regime.

The Christian who does not give room for the free will in his theology, gets an incurable breach in his logical Christianity. He reduces Agape to a monster, to the most inconsistent thing in the world.

Stern logical reason is not an ingredient about which you must fear that it might take something valuable out of Agape. Even with that element still there, it remains an unshakable truth that the great divine love is the only source of almighty creative force. It also remains unshakably true that man, in himself, is powerless and totally abandoned to utter despair without the transforming wonder wrought by that force of creation.

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But this fact, on the other hand, does not either explain away another fact of equal importance: The perfect Agape can never produce anything positive by attempting to force the human will. For that stubborn human will *is* sin. And God, as long as He remains the *One He IS*, can never wink at the reality of sin. To condone sin, even just once, would be the total capitulation of justice. And if justice capitulates, then the perfection of God capitulates. How could God's Agape under such circumstances manage to turn, "in love," toward sin? Impossible!

How could God, in any sense of the term, *love* anything that is sinful? A realistic God just could not commit the absurd and inconsistent act of accepting as loveable what is notoriously un-loveable. That rule is bond to apply to God's consistent attitude toward any creature on man's level as a person; that is, a personally responsible being.

### **WHERE EVEN ALMIGHTY CHRISTIAN LOVE COMES SHORT**

Agape simply does not manage (if we may put it in those human terms) to fall in love with anything that is essentially evil. No-no! Agape is straight. To make it appear crooked is wicked insinuation; so it cannot be inspired by God. Let us beware of introducing theories making it appear as though Agape delighted in walking on crooked paths. Agape would never be capable of breaking the harmony inherent in the least commandment of the holy law which forms a downright transcript of God's own inmost nature. To assume such inconsistency on the part of the Lawgiver would be presumption. It would be blasphemy.

75

God hates sin with the same consistent ardor with which He loves the sinner. There is no necessary contradiction here. It is intelligent and consistent enough, as we shall see later in more detail. So what God loves in the sinner could not possibly be the elements in him that are sinful or depraved. What God loves in him, in accordance with my uncompromising postulate about God as the perfect One, is bound to be something different. We shall soon search out in detail and with logical accuracy what this actually is. What we must, so far, intelligently assume is that there must be, after all, in that historic reality we call a human person, something valuable. There must be something an intelligent God in heaven finds definitely valuable still.

This may seem to many a rather bold assumption. They will immediately refer to the well-known fact of Biblical anthropology which claims that man today is utterly depraved. His very nature is an abyss of wickedness. So is not then the simple truth rather that such a "loveable value," in man, as the one I have the boldness to suggest, must be non-existent? I think *not*.

76

In my opinion the real dare-devil suggestion about man is on the part of those who claim that there is nothing whatsoever in him that could be worthy of intelligent admiration and intelligent love. For if you dare to say this about man, you have at the

same time said something terribly bad, in fact something blasphemously bad, *about God*. It is God's reputation as a decent evaluator, an intelligent weigher of true values, that has been hauled down into the mud. And realistically the tragic effect of that act of slander is not reduced one bit by the otherwise mitigating circumstance that the slanderers may not themselves realize at all what they are actually having a part in.

However this may be, one thing asserts itself as an urgent necessity: God's reputation must be washed clean. Agape's name must be vindicated, for heaven's sake. We cannot live in company with a blackened Agape. We just cannot bear it. To us Agape means life or death. Living through the ages of eternity together with an Agape which is less than one hundred percent perfect in all respects would change heaven into hell. And we would have the old, sad story over again. Don't you know what the ongoing battle was all about, from the very beginning? It was this crucial question: *How is God, the One who gave the law that has now been broken? Is He, Himself, a perfect God? Is His own code of Ethics perfect?*

Do you see how indispensable it is that we go all the way down to the bare facts of the case, the rock-bottom reality about the nature of Jesus Christ, in terms of His Agape, to see what is fiction and what is fact in this matter of dispute.

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So I am once more formulating as clearly as possible the decisive question to which (I frankly admit it) I have not, so far, given any answer:

**WHAT COULD THERE STILL BE IN MAN, AS HE NOW STANDS, THAT A  
REASONABLE AND PERFECTLY STRAIGHT-LINED GOD FINDS  
DEFINITELY LOVEABLE; THAT IS, TRULY WORTHY OF BEING LOVED?**

So far, there is one thing we should carefully note. But for that purpose I must first admit something in favor of Nygren's thesis. There is nothing in what I have hitherto stated which, in any way, reduces one wonderful truth in Nygren's argument. It is this: Agape is characterized by a typical down-going line, the line of utter humility and meekness, in sharp contrast to the line of hectic climbing so characteristic of the proud Eros of pagan thinking and pagan doing.

In fact, this is one of the salient points in my own argument in favor of the bold claim that Agape is absolutely sober-minded and reasonable. And when I here say sober-minded and reasonable, then I understand this in the only way any common-sense human child is bound to conceive of sober-mindedness and reasonability. Agape too, you see, manifests this humble preference for a *modest, down-to-earth simplicity* which accepts with perfect candor and sincerity the rational faculties God has granted to his human creatures.

78

It is the proud elite of intellectualistic Eros climbers in the Western World who have always tended to look down upon the common sense intellect falling to the lot of quite ordinary people. So how could you expect *them* to honor this down-to-earthiness as a God-given endowment. The only kind of intellect that was granted high prestige among members of that sophisticated elite was rather some weird subtleties machinated by speculative philosophy. In this field of spiritualist vanity the most absurd

things have been propounded with a lustre of academic glory that is incredible with sensible men.

So, before we cut right into the topical question of "how God could be intelligent and still love man," we shall now first try to get an idea about what Agape's rationality is like. It certainly is not rationalism. For that, again, is disrupted and lopsided. It thinks ratio is all that exists—or all that *ought* to exist. On the other hand, Agape's form for rationality does not fall into the opposite ditch either. Agape never suggests that sound reason is something that can be—and *should* be—"transcended," going right into the Elysian Fields of some kind of super-human super-rationality. No-no!

Here again it is comforting and reassuring to know that Agape is to be found in the field of a *well-balanced, happy medium*. Some will again wrinkle up their noses, calling it mediocrity. Never mind. Agape knows what is *safe*—and *sound*. Let people call it whatever names they like. Let us see for ourselves how Agape has all the time stood out as the kind of love which steps all the way *down to earth*, completely, and in all essential respects.

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### **THE LOWLINESS OF AGAPE (ITS DOWN-TO-EARTHNESS)—HUMILITAS**

Here we come back to what all research has agreed on: Agape is characterized, not by an *ascending* movement, but rather by a *descending* movement. There is nothing in man that could enable him to climb up to God. Only the proud philosophy of Eros spiritualism could ever mobilize the incredible amount of self-conceit it must take in order to imagine that man, in his mannishness, possesses a spark of divinity, automatically pushing him all the way up to the highest pinnacles of the "mount of the Congregation," the throne of God (Isaiah 14:12-14).

The Bible has an anthropology entirely different from this pagan pride and self-sufficiency. Christianity informs us that, on the contrary, it is God who has to come down to man. Why? The reason is simple. There just does not exist any way leading upward from man to God. There only exists a way leading downward from God to man. And this way is called Agape. True Christian love is revealed, not as a way of taking, but as a way of giving; not as a way of human pride, but as a way of divine humility.

It may sound bold in the midst of a Greek-inspired culture to speak about the *humble God*. Throughout our lives we have imbibed the arch-pagan thought-forms of platonic idealism with all its vain-glorious insistence on climbing, climbing—in one's own power—to the stars. What glory could there be to us—children of a Hellenist world—in meekness? But it is God Himself who uses this description about Himself:

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"Learn of me. I am meek and lowly in heart." Matthew 11:29.

The only One who had any chance of conveying to our hearts what is really divine was Jesus Christ. He had to reveal to us in his factual life on earth day by day what an extreme form love was bound to take in order to be of any reasonable help to you and me whatsoever.

We may safely say that, to the pagan West, this revelation came as a bolt from the blue. One may think of many reasons why it was rejected. But maybe one reason is to be found in the fact that it was so utterly simple. Simplicity of thought and action is certainly not the strong point of this race. In order to accept the unexpected Agape

message, a hitherto unknown measure of candor and sincerity was demanded. This we did not have.

True, it also demanded an actual transvaluation of all values. But that does not for one single moment mean that value had to be given up in favor of valuelessness, or that reason had to be given up in favor of un-reason. On the contrary.

But in what sense, then, was there a dramatic clash of worldwide dimensions at the moment when paganism and Christianity had their historic encounter?

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You know where they were destined to meet in a more spectacular way than ever before. And you also know where they meet still today with a force of drama which has no parallel in human history. It is in our super-civilized Western World, the battle field of the endtime.

What Christianity has really meant after all to our world is hardly realized until we finally get to see Agape and Eros arrayed side by side as the two gigantic rivals they really are.

Still it may be that we fail to see the drama that is bound to happen and the all-out battle that is bound to be fought wherever those two irreconcilable enemies come to grips with each other in a life-and-death struggle. Sooner or later, every human being possessing a living human heart is obliged to come down into the valley of decision in a *saeculum finale* like this.

### **WHERE THE RESEARCHER IS PRETTY KEEN, BUT FAILS TO FOLLOW UP**

What we so easily forget is the fact that Plato's Eros spirit represents nothing less than a way to salvation. In other words, it is a religion; hence, a formidable rival to Christ's Agape. At the same time that same Eros is *non-religion*, or even *anti-religion*. Pagan spiritualism, ancient and modern (i. e., the openly impersonal, as well as the presumptively "personal" type of spiritualistic philosophy) is nothing but man's constant endeavor to climb up to God to save himself. So if Agape is the immutable doctrine of man's salvation along the humble road of theocentricity (God-centeredness, which coincides with other-centeredness), then Eros is just as certainly the immutable doctrine of man's salvation along the proud road of anthropocentricity (man-centeredness, coinciding with self-centeredness).

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Nygren has obviously grasped something essential in this crucial Either-Or relationship between Agape and Eros. There is the intransigence of inexorable rivalry in it. Wherever Eros is seen to progress, Agape is bound to regress, and vice versa. You cannot stack one farthing on the one without openly betraying the other. This also seems to be Nygren's clear understanding. The more incredible does it appear that he manages to adopt a certain academic *neutrality* in his judgment of the two rivals. For nothing in the world would he want to appear partial in his moral evaluation, taking sides with one or the other. It looks as if he fears that all his scholarliness would suddenly come to a sad end, at the moment when he would dare to say a word which might be interpreted in terms of such partiality. So he avoids like the pest committing himself to any value judgment, this way or that way.

## NOT TAKING SIDES MEANS CHOOSING EROS

But frankly, what is bound to be the actual result of the researcher's anxious effort to avoid taking any personal moral standpoint in so typical a moral matter as the fight between Agape and Eros? As far as I can see, that will be tantamount to taking one definite standpoint, after all. For *not* committing oneself is also a commitment. In the world of living ethics, this has always been so. Choosing the line of impersonal research about Eros versus Agape inevitably amounts to choosing Eros after all.

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How can I dare to say such a thing? My argument is simple. Everybody should know one indisputable historical fact. There need be no doubt whatever regarding which definite side Eros happens to be on all the time. He is wholeheartedly on the side of *impersonalism*, as we shall soon demonstrate. That means wholeheartedly on the side of *heartlessness*, if you can bear the controversial character of my formulation. I know I cannot, without a guilty conscience, remain silent about anything I know Eros to have committed with great hurt to my fellow men. And among the worst things he has fooled us into, I have to count a certain cult of *impersonalism* which is bound to be deleterious to the very efforts made by Agape to save us.

As we shall soon see in much further detail, Eros has always been, and at the bottom of his heart will always remain, as long as his dominion endures, the most notorious representative of the pure-idea-ism (pure-soul-ism), a fatal philosophy paying homage to one thing only, in the last resort—namely the frigidly *impersonal*. That applies equally well to Plato's basic teaching in the West and to Budd'ha's basic teachings in the East. Pagan spiritualism never managed to conceal its true nature in the long run.

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In short, then, whenever you make an option in favor of an impersonal, non-engaged attitude in matters of ethical judgment, you are, *eo ipso*, placing yourself—in practice, if not in theory—on the side of the great Eros movement of this world. You are staking on the black horse of Eros gamble.

This is what Nygren obviously has not realized. It is a dire fact which hardly any branch of humanist science seems sufficiently alert to realize. By this I mean: Scientific research, as a modern institution of intellectualistic onesidedness, has something most striking in common with platonic idealism, also in this respect: Instinctively, as it were, it casts its lot with the barrenly impersonal; that is, with the humanly neutral; or, I might as well say: with the *in*humanly neutral. For neutrality, you see, in heart affairs such as those of ethics and religion, is invariably *in*humanity of the most cruel type.

Agape would not have any reasonable case to defend at all as a Christian fundamental motif if she did not commit herself openly and valiantly to the cause of the personal God, Jesus Christ, the restlessly active and engaged One, who already in Old Testament times let His tireless warning ring through valleys and wildernesses, wherever His wavering children set their feet: "I am Yahweh, the Eternal and Only God. I am a jealous God. Not for one moment can I bear the presence of any other God beside Me. Not under any circumstances can I accept a neutral position. The question for my people is a question of white or black, life or death, salvation or perdition. My dear little ones, what merchandise is it you are dealing in, is it blessed truths or damned lies?"

The serious fact of the case is again this: Eros, in his most sincere moments (or we ought perhaps rather to say: in his most audacious moments, and he has a lot of those) presents himself as a religion, a veritable message about the "right way to salvation," the "only practicable way." It is the Nirvana way, the way of *transcendental meditation*, if you want a formulation of specific contemporary relevancy. But all the time, in reality, the leading trend has been one and the same in all salvation programs sponsored by Spiritualists Anonymous. I have called it the "ostrich philosophy" sometimes: "Reduce your senses to a minimum. Be an expert in un-awareness. Say that nothing matters. Tuck your head deep into the sandpile. Then you have made it. Your enemy can no more be seen. So he does not exist. All is well in eternity. Amen."

### **THE RATIONALITY/IRRATIONALITY BATTLE BEGINS IN FULL EARNEST**

What we must now finally subject to a decisive scrutiny is that main thesis, according to which Agape is the totally irrational type of love, irrational in all essential respects.

I do not flatter myself that I have even started to say anything of importance yet that would have any hope of beating down the formidable battery of Nygren's argument in favor of that contention. But it is coming. Be patient, please.

According to Nygren, this utter irrationality of Agape is an irrefutable fact. And because it is, man has ample occasion to be surprised when he faces the real facts. Or should one perhaps rather say: Man becomes downright shocked when he is all of a sudden confronted with the incredible theology of Agape.

Nygren refers to the brother of the prodigal son as an example of such surprise. That man was shocked indeed. You remember the way he reacted on returning from the fields and discovering that the father was preparing a great feast to welcome his homecoming, spendthrift son, almost as if that boy had accomplished a mission of glory abroad. In reality, utter poverty had driven him home after a riotous life among prostitutes and scoundrels. We know the reaction of the elder son. He found his father's gracious condescension not only tasteless, but downright scandalous.

And equally scandalized were the workers in the vineyard who had to take the infuriating experience of watching their boss paying out to a group of workers who had been working only for a little while just before sundown, the same amount of money he had paid to *them*, "the faithful veterans," for a whole day's busy labor!

It will fall to our lot to pay particular attention to this latter case of "unfair treatment." But now first to my original question: What does this general trend of "utter ir-rationality" in dealing with people really signify? Or some may call it Agape's "notorious lack of stringent fairness." Personally I would formulate the question simply as follows: How could the "strange" treatment Jesus Himself, the Lord of Agape, clearly seems to subscribe to as the only appropriate one, find a reasonable explanation? Nygren does not for a moment suggest that one should look for any reasonability in it at all.

With so many others, he has given up every possibility of making it appear reasonable. The rational eventuality has been given up altogether. Rationality is feared as the great bugbear.

I can very well understand, in one way, this attitude among modern humanist scholars. Somebody else may be to blame more than they are. I am thinking of onesided rationalists in former eras as well as today. In their veritable worship of human intellect, those extremists have seemed to believe that there are no limits to the summits man's own wisdom can reach. And then one day the reaction was evidently bound to come. The pendulum naturally had to swing out in the opposite direction. The sound senses with which a generous God has seen fit to equip His dearest creatures, begin to be looked upon as something in itself bad and hostile to the cause of goodness and reality.

And now, to what *kind* of reality do they think ordinary common sense is hostile? A particularly "divine" kind. That must be a choice kind that God has reserved for His Kingdom. That is a kingdom in which  $2+2$  does not make 4 any longer. Notice: I am not here speaking about Zen Boudd'hism. For in that spiritual community—I do not know how many ages ago—it was decided that nonsense should make sense. No, here we find ourselves right in the midst of the precincts of serious Christian theology.

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Of course, any reasonable Christian theologian is bound to admit that it would take something far beyond our limited human wit to grasp even a fraction of the things God has managed to carry through in order to place you and me where he wanted us to be. In order to save us, nothing less than a wonder was required, namely a divine new act of creation, in addition to the old one. By "the old one" I mean that first "extraction *ex nihilo*" which was our original creation. Both those creative acts (creation and redemption) evidently constitute something miles and miles beyond our best efforts of comprehension. Of course they do.

But then comes this decisive question: Does all that mean, necessarily, that God's thought forms and God's categories of reason, wage a regular war all the time on the logic and reason we find valid in the physical world and in the simple minds of common sense creatures surrounding us on all hands? No. As a Christian realist you just could not assume an alternative as absurd as that, could you?

So to the facts of history, carefully and intelligently:

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### **WHICH IS THE MORE IRRATIONAL, AGAPE OR EROS?**

This is bound to be a crucial inquiry. To me it would not be different from asking: How is Christian realism going to defend itself against the formidable myth about Eros as the "more rational" type of love. Is there realism or non-realism in the world of Christianity?, that is the question.

Here we must have a clear decision: Is it true, or is it *not*, that Eros proves itself to be the rational type of love, Agape the irrational type? Nygren seems to accept that thesis rather uncritically.

There is something here that astonishes me. For just that man, with all his scholarliness in the field of fundamental motifs, ought to be better qualified than most of us to realize that the rationality of Eros is nothing but a pseudo-rationality. Frankly

speaking, how could there be true sobriety and reasonableness in Dionysian intoxication or in super-excited Erotic subjectivism? How could you expect an environment of vain pure-spirit-ism to be a likely place in which to look for sound, sober-minded reasoning? An outstanding historian of ideas ought to know that spiritualism constitutes the favorite philosophy of the Eros movement and has done so from times immemorial. On the other hand, it was always Christian realism, and no other philosophy on the whole earth, that consistently opted for a well-balanced pattern of thought and action. Let us go to the most well-documented facts of the history of ideas, as Nygren himself has helped us wonderfully to grasp them.

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I would like to begin with this question: When did Eros ever make the tiniest bit of a decent effort toward what I call a final landing maneuver; I mean coming finally down to the realistic pattern of caring about the *substance* of one's love, the factual qualities constituting the essence of the loved one, so something providing a reasonable foundation for any sentiments of true love?

Please let us remember what has been admitted about Eros even by that "deity's" most knowledgeable spokesman, Plato. Eros is equated with concupiscence—that is, passionate desire, simple covetousness. So how should Eros manage to be rational, reasonable, and well-balanced? How could a character of that kind be expected to attach himself to real values? The thing coveted, in terms of concupiscence, is precisely not the real value. It is pure sham; so a sentimental illusion without any basis in stern reality.

On the contrary, then, it is Agape that, logically, ought to be presented as the true representatives of a rational reaction in human hearts and human minds.

True, Agape is always God's Agape. But does the God of the Bible really ever distinguish Himself as an unreasonable God? *Even when God loves sinful man, does that love logically have to be presented as an irrational type of love?* Are we justified in this generation to hang out God's love as something contrary to all sound reason?

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This is the pointed question I must insist on asking. My own answer would be a categorical: No. There is no logical basis whatsoever to characterize a representative of genuine love as irrational, as far as I can see.

However great our suspicions about God's reasonableness may be, let us rather examine the matter thoroughly and calmly. It might turn out, after all, that God's love for man is not as unreasonable as it has sometimes been made to appear. Of course, we must produce valid reasons for thinking that God, in this affair, might deserve a better deal than our most learned men in Christian theology today seem inclined to give Him. I mean, as far as His rational faculties are concerned.

To be sure, God has His own reasons for the way He behaves. And they are not either necessarily reasons that no ordinary man can accept as rational.

### **WHAT CREATION MEANS—DO YOU HAVE AN INKLING?**

What then are God's reasons for loving man, the apparently quite non-loveable one? Are they objective and fundamentally valid reasons, quite logically speaking? Let us go right to the substance of the matter: The great and undeniably decisive fact about man is that he has been *created by God*, even in God's image. This, as the Bible looks

upon it, is a historic reality that can never be disputed. So it is a value that can never be devalued. When God created man, it was with a tremendous plan in view. Now, plans may of course fail. They may be subject to radical change or total abrogation. But the outstanding fact is: God never radically changed His plans for man.

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Man's fall into sin is also a fact of course, granted! That dark event is a fact just as irrefutable as that of creation. But God has gone to endless depths in sacrifice in order to keep unmolested His plans of a glorious future for man. This too is a reality so tremendous and so signal that it is incredible how it could be lost sight of. No demonic perversion of the objective facts could prevail to explain away this simple reality. Even if there are as many devils in Erosville as there happens to be tiles on the roofs, there is still no possibility here of having such as reality changed into irreality, or of reducing reason to unreason. As a direct result of God's original and irreducible plan for man, every human being entering upon the scene of this earth, indisputably retains, in the life that God has given him, the potential of being a literal saint. His own blunt negation is the only thing that can destroy this potential reality, simply blowing it out of his hands again.

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In the light of these simple facts, I can find only one "reason" which might account for the strange event in modern theology that common-sense realism has been deemed incompatible with Agape. This must be due to an incredible degree of unreasonableness *in the theologians*. And what was it they failed to reason intelligently about? It was *CREATION*. Man's basic negative attitude toward biblical biology—that is, toward simple creationism—unfailingly tended to be his most fatal step toward unrealistic conceptions about God—and accordingly about Agape, which amounts to the same time thing. As an evolutionist he could not, of course, in any possible way realize that God is a person. For personalism is just as unknown to evolutionism as it is to spiritualism, the other great system of human "faith" today. Both philosophies are bound to lean toward one single belief: the belief in total automatism. The basic Christian fact of personalism then automatically ceases to be the great thing in the nature of man, man as a superior creature. It was the Genesis creation record, you see, that stated: God created man in His own image. That means: He created him as a person, a creature endowed with freedom of will. Modern science today rather believes in determinism; so no realistic personal freedom in either God or man.

Modernism has failed to accept the axiomatic fact that GOD CREATED. In this failure there always was a heavy risk implied. The harmonious image of a concrete Agape ran the risk of being vitiated and entirely disfigured. And the learned elite certainly are not the only guilty ones. We, all of us, constantly tended to forget the tremendous historical fact that man was created by God, in His image. *Therefore*, and obviously for no other "more important" reason, we have also constantly failed to see why He could love us and still remain perfectly intelligent. After all, he had some realistic foundation to base His love on.

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The fact that man is God's own creature is reason enough for Him to love that man. In fact, it is not only an intelligent reason. It is an absolutely inevitable reason. As long as creation is a fact—and I do not see who could manage to change it into a non-

fact; for even God cannot reverse history, or make done things undone—*you* are the Creator's creature. You yourself could not, even with the most obstinate efforts of your will power, move one single inch from the unshakable fact that He is your Maker, the Generator of your life, the constant Upholder of your existence.

This rock-bottom realism is bound to remain rock-bottom realistic, whether you consider it from a divine or a human view-point, or any matter-of-fact angle you might want to apply.

### **CAN THE MOTHER OF A CHILD CEASE TO BE HIS MOTHER, BECAUSE HE CEASES TO BE A GOOD CHILD?**

Take, for analogy, the example of an earthly mother who has born a child into the world. That child may, by-and-by, behave ever so badly. But does it for that reason cease to be her child? No, not for one moment. The mother's destiny remains forever intimately connected with the child's destiny. That applies not only in a purely legal respect; it also applies to the deepest realities of the heart. Only if the heart of that mother could be torn out completely and annihilated, would there be a radically altered situation. For then there would be no human totality left in that woman; and, accordingly, no more reason to speak about rationality either. But as long as that woman is the mother she used to be, it is only sheer unreason and irrationalism that would try to tell her that she is no longer inseparably attached to the destiny of her child.

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Once a mother, always a mother; once a father, always a father. Once a Father (Creator), always a Father.

Do you see the compelling reasons why we are entitled to speak about God's love for us as a reasonable thing? Marcion did not feel any such reasonable compulsion. For He did not believe that Jesus Christ had created Him! But Nygren and you and I ought to be in a radically different position. For we believe in creation. (Or do we not, after all?) We are not spiritualists, taking exception from the Biblical view of bodies as something created by the Lord. (Or is that, after all, just what we are: platonic spiritualists?)

Let us be Christian realists rather. Jesus Christ, by simply creating us as real men and women, body and soul, has caused His very life, His entire honor, to be knit together with ours. We have the power to dishonor Him, blaspheme Him, and tell Him, straight to His face, that we do not recognize Him as our legitimate Father, or not even as our Creator in the most barely technical sense. But all that wicked talk of our mouths is absolutely impotent to abrogate the historical fact that He is and remains forever our Maker, our only Source of Existence.

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### **EROS "REALISM," THE MOST MISERABLE ONE OUR WORLD HAS EVER SEEN**

And now over to the opposite fundamental motif: Eros. Let us have a look at the "reason" and the "realism" which that demi-god can boast of. It should be sufficiently well-known by now what the poor human victim of Eros love makes the object of *his* love experience. We have spoken already both about the Playboy and the Spiritualist Philosopher, and we certainly have not yet exhausted what we have to say about either

one of them. I could hardly think of anything more illusive than that "object" of love. Here it would really hit the mark to say that the "foundation" men find for their "higher lives" in those hunting grounds is vanity. It is worse than nothing. Remember, we have now arrived in the ghost kingdom in which the sense of reality, and whatever there might be left of intelligent motives, goes into total bankruptcy. Just let us go on chasing after shadows and fog banks of that kind for a while, and we may be sure that the last remains of our sound reasoning will dwindle into naught.

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### **EXISTENTIALIST LIBERALISM WILL LAND IN THE CHAMBER OF THE NECROMANCER**

What will be the destiny of a "Christian" theology, or philosophy, which makes it appear as if God's eternal counsel and His eternal principles are essentially, and of necessity, at all-out war with the whole "secular" reason and logic, which the same God once laid down as a base for "this world?" What is it we are actually exposing ourselves to when we conjure up a bottomless gulf and an eternal enmity between two sets of values, two sets of truths, the spiritual on one side and the temporal on the other, both actually created by the identical God, and both pronounced "very good" by Him (Genesis 1:31)? Something more fatal than we realize must be gradually happening when we declare "very bad" what He has declared "very good." We are gradually coming under the spell of a mysticism which is spiritualism pure and simple. In its least philosophical form today such conjuration takes place in all kinds of environments under the more unambiguous name of "spiritism." To the spiritualist the spirit world is the only world. The material world, which a natural scientist frankly faces, is downrated as something inferior and unworthy, nay something downright evil. How well Plato hit the characteristic of his Eros god when he called him a *sorcerer*. He might as well have said a *necromancer*, a conjurer of spirits, not the spirits of dead men but of living devils.

The spiritualist feels the need of something forming a "happy contrast" to that "inferior world" governed by rigid laws of natural science and practical common sense. So he conjures up a world of the "pure spirit," a world made "free" from all the "shackels" of "narrow-minded legalism," as he would term it. To him the noblest token ever known of that world's "crushing superiority" is the alleged marvel that it gets along so splendidly without any bodily elements to prop it up. Now, what is this, if not an anti-reason philosophy of arch-pagan dualism? It has no right of citizenship in Biblical Christianity. When and where did God teach that a human soul has no need of a human body, or that "faith" as a pure abstraction can exist at all without its own "body," its tangible counterpart in terms of practical actions?

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The Scriptures never revealed their Agape message in any ghostly lustre of that kind. The terms used by the Bible are always realistic. They testify that spirit and matter are just two sides of one and the same reality. There is not one loop-hole for a spiritualistic outlook on the world, either in the Old or the New Testament writings. Precisely in its extension to the human plane, Agape is manifested as strikingly dominated by a principle of plain reasonableness; that is, something man can perfectly well understand here and now. He can accept it wholeheartedly as valid, unwaveringly true and dependable.

## **THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD WITH ALL THINE HEART**

The first commandment is an illustration, as good as you could ever desire to have it, of the reasonability inherent in Agape. Tell me, does the Bible sermonize, solemnly enjoining upon us: now we must take care and see to it that we love God "spontaneously," or "unmotivatedly?" Are we sternly warned lest we abandon ourselves to the evil course of loving Him intelligently, for sensible reasons, humanly speaking? On the contrary. The gospel itself plainly stresses the reason, and it is one which any child can understand: "because He loved us first." It is a highly rational motivation that is here suggested.

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And then the second commandment:

## **THOU SHALT LOVE THY NEIGHBOR AS THYSELF**

What is the motive referred to for my duty to love my fellow man? Again the reason is entirely rational and easy to grasp for common people. It is because He, the great Model Lover and the Model Reasoner, has so dearly loved both my neighbor and myself in the first place. What He expects me to do is barely to follow up where He has preceded, showing me the right way. I am supposed to act in simple accordance with a factual precedence of momentous force and inspiration. The preceding act is something He can refer to as an accomplished fact of a most concrete event in past history.

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That example, set by Christ Himself in the past, may very well have elements in it which I do not fully understand, particularly not at this early stage of my pilgrimage—granted! Due to my limited scope of intelligent vision, it may also be something whose future aim I do not yet fully survey. What I do manage to see clearly is just certain links in the great chain of perfect coherence. But even with those scattered glimpses I have all the evidence I need in order to be confident that the chain, in its entirety, must be according to God's consistent logic all the way through. And as fragments of knowledge are added, one to the other, in my daily experience, the general trend is unmistakable. There is less and less and less temptation to think in terms of a "necessary discrepancy" between the logic revealed in my own world of temporal existence on the one hand, and some kind of super-logic the Eternal One could be supposed to have "reserved for Himself" and for His special unsearchable kingdom, on the other hand.

## **LOVE THY ENEMIES**

And finally, what about the command that has been decried as the logical problem above all logical problems in the enigmatic world of Agape: Love thy enemy!

It is a fact well known to all, of course, that Mr. Jones, over there in the next block to mine, is a scoundrel of the first order, an almost incredible concentration of sheer wickedness. It is also an indubitable fact that he has focused his wicked tricks just on me, as it were. So how can I still love him? And why should I? Would it be reasonable at all to return love for his hate? Could Mr. Jones, with any basis in the strictly rational, demand such a return? Could even God Himself demand it? And if He does, is He then quite fair in His demands? Is He in harmony with the stringently rational?

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Yes, even this case is clear. It is logically understandable considered against the background of Agape's own inherent facts. In accordance with those facts, you see, it is not decisive at all that Mr. Jones today presents himself, to anybody who has senses to observe with, as "*the scoundrel incarnate*," a veritable hard-core villain, without any visible attenuating circumstances in his villainy. Why is that not decisive? Let me give you the reason: It is only apparently that this makes that man an inappropriate candidate for my active love at the present moment. By the way, what do I know about right timing? What if precisely this "unlikely" moment of mine should turn out to be the moment when he is most desperately in need of Agape, an Agape coming from Christ, through *me*—who knows?

One thing, at least, is absolutely certain. I need not move one inch away from the most rigid Christian realism, when I now discern, in this miserable sinful creature, nothing less than a *potential saint*. I can see this realistic possibility in Mr. Jones—nay, I *must* see it in him—simply by virtue of the tremendous fact that *Christ has died for him*, like He died for all other bad sinners, including myself.

In short, that man who today insists on being my sworn enemy, is a definite candidate for a radical change. And that change realistically includes the very core of a man's behavior even. For there is any amount of stern realism where the Bible speaks about the literal ways and the literal "works" which divine love and divine providence have already "ordained that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:10. Agape is the power making it possible for the regenerated Christian to walk in perfect obedience before the Lord; that is, a moment-to-moment perfection in a moment-to-moment walk, with Him!

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In this respect, love and grace become *synonyms*. *Agape* and *Charis* are exactly the same power. It is a world-power which realistically changes men, changes their lives totally.

By the way, that synonymity is clearly indicated even in a linguistic way, a way of historical linguistics: The Greek word "charis" for grace and the Latin word "caritas" for love have a striking outward resemblance, haven't they? And this is not by mere chance. The two's etymological oneness is just an external sign of their interior oneness as well. I have indeed been struck by that interesting relationship between the Greek word for grace (*Charis*) and the Vulgate version's term for Agape (*Caritas*).

## **REALISM AS THE FIRM FOUNDATION EVEN FOR THE WONDER OF GRACE OPERATIVE IN HUMAN LIVES: THE SALVATION FROM SIN**

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Of course the freedom of man's will is not for one moment unrealistically skipped (suspended) in that co-operation between God and man, taking place as soon as man has accepted to be saved. Man actually retains his strange autonomy right in the midst of his surrender. In fact, he strengthens his own will power, his self-government, at the moment of self-surrender. That is not so strange or self-contradictory as it may sound. For God has never wanted to curb man's will. He has always wanted to *strengthen* his will. In order that man should be liberated from his slavery under sin, it is indispensable that he should all the time *voluntarily yield*, "granting God permission" to realize His divine wonder in the human

heart, the human life. The creative miracle is entirely dependent upon this *cooperation*. Only on this condition will the sinner be enabled to be obedient to the commandments of God. The power of God's grace (in its dynamic aspect) and man's voluntary acceptance of that power—those two realities must go together. At the moment when they do not coincide any longer, man automatically falls back into his natural condition of disobedience and enmity against God, with the whole misery of impotence accompanying that tragic state of man's life.

Realistically seen, there is no room for any "problem" here, either theoretically or practically. Agape is the real power that creates and maintains all things in the universe of God. And please do not commit the inconsistency of splitting up the universe here into a "spiritual part" and a "physical part." All men have free access to that power (spiritual and physical at the same time).

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Our strained relationship to God will turn normal when we let Agape do her work of power transfer in our lives. Nothing could be more real and problem-free than this. We have seen that even our most strained relationships with any other person around us does not raise any problem of "this-worldly logic." However negative that person may happen to be at any given moment, he will always be, to you, a realistic object for reasonable respect and love (Agape), on your part. You are perfectly consistent when you consider him, wholeheartedly, as a positive person of eternal value. Why? For the simple reason that Christ has sacrificed everything, even His very life, for this creature of His. He gave it all for him some two thousand years ago on Calvary Hill, nay from everlasting. And notice: Everlastingness is not here a non-time, a non-history abstraction. By no means. Because of that historic act, Jesus Christ, in the first place, is bound to be the great realistic object of *your* most reasonable respect and love (Agape). Everything Christ performs is respectable and loveable; so absolutely worthy of intelligent admiration. In other words, the logical order has been well taken care of by Him. Have no fears, either intellectually or otherwise.

There is even one further reflection making it extra clear that I should not hesitate to love actively any fellow-man I come across, and particularly the least attractive one: *My* Agape—which, of course, is nothing but a mere reflection of *Christ's* Agape—might very well become the explosive power, used as an instrument in God's hand to transform the life of that very fellow creature, exactly the same way my life was transformed. Small wonder, under such circumstances, that it becomes a sacred obligation of one man to love another man.

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But the piety which is to transform lives must always be practical, realistic, and of vigorous reason. The Bible would be the most inconsistent of all books if it taught the absurdity doctrines of modern theology on this point. Tell me, have you ever come across any passage in the Scriptures that could duly be interpreted to this effect: "Here you must do violence to your human reason, for this is the domain of the *spirit*; this is the domain of *un-reason*!"

There is a plausible argument presented by plain Biblicalism against that incredible *un-reason doctrine* which keeps undermining our simple confidence in all sound sense. The Bible's tacit assumption is: there is no secret battle, no subtle incongruity between the nature of the present world as observed by truly sharpsighted human science on the

one hand, and the higher inscrutable wisdom of the Eternal One on the other hand; that is, the spiritual truths spiritually revealed in the Bible. There is perfect harmony. The reason for that is also simple: The same God is the author of both. So they must agree. If it is the same Creator who has called into existence the world of the spirit and this temporal world, then it would be foolish to imagine that He keeps operating with *two manners of truth* (two systems of logic), as it were; one having validity for the world of the spirit only, the other for the world of natural science only. What true science in one field of God's creation reveals cannot be at enmity with what true science in the other field reveals. Again, the old truth asserts itself. It is a firm faith in the Biblical fact of CREATION that decides the issue.

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An outlook on life and on the world, based on the staunchest faith in the plain word of the Bible is not a philosophy of interior disruption or of timid vacillation, intellectually speaking. Oh no, it has plausible arguments in store for any emergency. So it is apt to defy every point of the classical unreasonability dogma forming the poor basis of liberal theology.

### **WHEN DID SELF-LOVE MANAGE TO BECOME THE SAME THING AS LOVE?**

I must here mention a phenomenon which I notice popping up in otherwise quite conservative Christian literature. A given word may for ages have had a negative sense. And then suddenly it begins to mean something definitely positive. Is that a good sign?

There seems to be, in this age of skepticism and confusion, the strange idea that what is straight can, all by itself, suddenly turn crooked, and that the reason for this crookedness is already inherent in the original thing's deepest nature.

The Bible seems to have a different idea. The Psalmist says that God has made all things straight. It is man, the creature, who takes many a crooked turn.

In our particular case, we may ask: Is God Himself unable to keep Agape and Eros apart? Expressed differently: Is love bound to intermingle with self-love? Can it even *turn into* self-love, and vice versa? This question is not an entirely irrelevant one at the present time.

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For some of our theologians have evidently drunk so deeply from the cisterns of wisdom of contemporary humanist psychology that they keep echoing a strange phrase, torn loose from all sensible contexts:

"In order to love others, man must first learn to love himself." And Christian heralds of this idea even produce Bible texts in support of their statement. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor *as thyself*."

Accordingly, it is entirely legitimate and good to love oneself. Yes, but the legitimacy and the goodness of this proposition depend entirely on one condition: You must have your context straight. You must have that context clear in your own mind, and you must make it thoroughly clear to those other ones whom you are exposing to a deadly danger if you simply say: "It is legitimate and good to love oneself," without providing any desperately needed modification to go along with your sweeping statement. What your interlocutor gathers from your word of wisdom *may* be a useful truth that enhances his life. It *may* also be a fatal falsehood that destroys his life.

The common trend of our humanistic environment is to leave those phrases dangling in the air like that, without any modifying addition whatsoever. Nothing could be more catastrophic to the clear distinction between Agape and Eros. Man's most urgent need, however, is to know exactly *in what sense*, or *under what circumstances*, it is perfectly legitimate and perfectly beneficial to "love oneself."

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Most propounders of that fascinating idea seem to assume—probably because their humanist-inspired authority in the field of religious psychology has foolishly suggested it to them—that there is something, somewhere, in the deepest recesses of yourself that is still good, some basic fund on which you can draw for a gradual development toward the better. This "intuition" is the most satanic delusion that has ever haunted mankind. The Bible is radically opposed to humanist philosophy on that particular point. Did you ever hear some person state about a fellow man: After all, he is good at bottom." That is probably a most well-meaning phrase on his part. But, on the devil's part, it is the most insidious lie ever invented. Up to a certain point, Nygren is perfectly right: Man, in himself, is absolutely valueless, or even a thousand times worse. He is through and through depraved, a real precipice of depravity, as Luther said. So, on that score there certainly is no intelligent reason for you and me to *love ourselves*, or to have such a profound *respect for ourselves*, as the humanist phrase goes.

No-no! Every time we are tempted to think along those lines, we must shake ourselves awake, realizing that there is something here which we have tragically failed to point out in the core of our thought and expression. To omit it is to forget it, and to suffer others to remain ignorant about it, maybe to the loss of their souls.

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For nothing in the world must we make the terrible mistake of loving ourselves, what we have in ourselves *apart from our God*. It is in Him exclusively we have our values, every single one of them. The only intelligent reason according to which we are entitled to "love ourselves," or "respect ourselves," is the historic fact that the *Lord has created us*. That is a tremendous merit. But notice: it is not our merit; it is entirely Christ's.

The conclusion—if you are intelligent enough to draw it—is a sobering one: Any Christian is—in himself—exactly as bad as the non-Christian. And the non-Christian is exactly as good as the Christian. By virtue of what fact? By virtue of the fact that he was *created by Christ* exactly the same way the Christian was. It is the Spirit of God who is in the process of creating good things in both of them all the time.

By foolish men, this too is misunderstood as "inherent merit" on man's part. That is another case of self-deception, sheer illusion. A cruel type of disillusion is bound to happen to that human being on the day Jesus has predicted, when the Holy Ghost is to be gradually withdrawn from the last (lost) generation. Then it will be discovered—by humanists and by any person who still possesses an ever so little bit of simple sense observation—what man really is, *in himself*. All "natural" goodness is gone, including motherliness, fatherliness, and brotherliness:

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*"The brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death." Mark 13:12.*

It will then finally have to be admitted what that "basic human goodness" of previous ages really consisted in. It was, all the time, nothing but the miracle of God, a process of active creation on the part of His Holy Spirit, going out to the entire world with healing under His wings.

Do you see how prone we are to draw the false conclusions, conclusions of the humanist kind? Why? Because we are humanists; for no other reason. We have left out of our account the simple fact of a creating God. There seems to be some understandable reason, then, behind the fact that we are reminded in God's Holy Word, not just once or twice, but an endless number of times, that He is the Creator; we are the created ones.

### **IS AGAPE AN OGRE — OR A PERSONAL MOTIF OF DIVINE ORIGIN?**

Our failure to have that constant awareness of creation is particularly fatal to our conception of God and His Agape, in view of one fact: It causes us to think, in our foolishness, that some "other" merits than God's creation makes us valuable; that is, merits of self-creation. Or, a still worse alternative, if possible, is the Nygrenian theory that the God of Agape is a lover of *non*-values, nay of *anti*-values. Do you realize how easily we may run the risk of turning God into an ogre? Whatever we do, don't let us permit ourselves to glide into the blasphemous concept that God is some sort of omnivorous monster, greedy enough to swallow down good and evil in one large gob, just gulping it all down, line, hook, and sinker. What an unworthy notion of Agape!

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### **NYGREN'S GREAT IDEA ABOUT AGAPE, THE SPONTANEOUS ONE. WHAT COULD IT MEAN? AND IS IT SAFE IN THE POPULAR FORM IN WHICH IT HAS BEEN INTERPRETED?**

I want to start this part of my investigation with a word about the notorious heretic Marcion, a most fascinating figure emerging on the scene of Christendom in the second century A.D.

In fact, one question used to worry me quite a lot for a long time. How could such a staunch Christian historian as Nygren manage to sympathize with Marcion as much as he did? As if that man should be a likely candidate for grasping the deepest essence of the divine Agape! Marcion was a philosophizing theologian who had a supreme contempt of bodies and all concretely created forms. His aversion against matter is even much greater than Plato's.

Could it be that Nygren's mind, too, was somewhat biased by that classical Greek idealism which constitutes the latent cultural heritage of most of us? I am afraid so. In fact, why should modern theologians of our day be expected to come out less prone than others to succumb, in part, to the trends of philosophical spiritualism?

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Remember: what we here have to do with is humanism at its highest, and on its most learned level. We know what particular philosophical ailment Marcion suffered

from. That was the dualism of the pagan idealist, causing him to make a subtle dichotomy between spirit and matter. So my curious question is the following: Is it a similar "neo-platonism" that now causes Nygren, in his turn, to compare the religion of the Old Testament to that of the New? You should note down what that Protestant theologian states as his conclusion drawn from that comparison:

*Christianity, in spite of its historical connection with Judaism, and in spite of any bonds and affinities between them, is a fundamentally different thing from Judaism (Agape and Eros, 1969, p. 68, Italics mine.)*

As I feel bound to look upon it, this is a statement of an almost Marcionistic radicalness. Marcion saw the two Testaments in contrasts of black and white. To him the Old was tinted in black. The New was tinted in white.

Is this "fundamental difference" between the Old Testament and the New a fact or a simple fiction? My assumption from the gospel itself is that the two form a basic totality we can rely on as harmonious one hundred percent. The New Testament view regarding that same matter is as consistent as anyone could wish it to be. No New Testament author seems to doubt for one single moment that the two Covenants form one coherent line. And evidently it is about the Old Testament that Peter states that "all Scripture is inspired by God." It is this divinely inspired totality Marcion permits himself to tear asunder.

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Some will fail completely to see that Marcion was a disrupter of totalities. Above all, they fail to realize that the essence of this disruption was spiritualistic in the sense of platonic idealism. That, however, is manifest. Marcion persists in down-grading the reality of any concrete world of the senses. He stubbornly refuses to accept any literal things, literally created, by a literal God—a God who is also *good*. Not that Marcion is a match for modern evolutionist biology in absurd denial of that kind. He never denies that a Creator was needed in order to have the miserable material things of this world come into existence. Oh no, Marcion has implicit faith in the record of Genesis about the creative acts of Yahweh. What he refuses to believe is only the claim according to which this Yahweh should be identical with Jesus Christ, the great God of heaven, and of the true Agape. That stern God of the Old Testament who demands implicit obedience, cannot be the God of Agape. Marcion fights a bitter battle against that reality.

Nevertheless, reality itself is invincible. Throughout the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, a one hundred percent realistic Creator-God is placed in front of us with the ringing call to give Him implicit obedience. And the New Testament is not one bit less insisting in its categorical claim of obedience than the Old Testament.

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The serious question we have to ask here is this: What is meant by this "fundamental difference" which Nygren assumes to exist between the two Testaments? Does he lean toward the Marcionist tradition? Or does he believe, candidly like Paul, that all Scripture is given by inspiration (2 Tim. 3:16), and that the "Lord" who, in minute details, helped Moses to write and legislate and to lead God's chosen people through

the wilderness, was the same Jesus Christ who revealed Himself to Paul on the road to Damascus?

"Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." I Cor. 10:4.

What, now, does the modern theologian hold as he weighs the historic facts surrounding the fundamental motifs of Agape versus Eros? Does he, too, arrive at the conclusion that the Old Testament, even in its basic structure, must, somehow, and to no little extent, have been vitiated—or at least obscured—by some tinge of "Demiurge" inferiority? "Demiurgus" is the name Plato gives to that inferior creator-god in his fantastic book *Timaios*\*. And Marcion tried to introduce very much the same concept into Christian theology.

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\*I have tried to come to grips with this incredible piece of literature in my book, *Man, the Indivisible*, in a chapter entitled, "The Genius of Platonism."

Before we can compare Marcion and Nygren in this important respect, we must honestly find out, first, what Marcion deemed to be inferior about the Old Testament. Second, with the same honesty, we must find out what Nygren deems inferior there.

#### A STRANGE TYPE OF AGAPE: THE BODILESS ONE

Marcion has always been a controversial figure in the history of Christendom. Some have admired him and some have condemned him. Here we should, in a certain respect, imitate Nygren. For he has certainly made great efforts to avoid onesidedness. In this he has followed the example of the great Marcion researcher Adolf von Harnack, to whom we are all indebted for most of the concrete historical knowledge we possess about that captivating figure of ancient theology.

Of course, even the one who has the greatest admiration for the wonderful description Marcion gives of GRACE as the essence of Christian love is bound to have a hard time defending that man's theology as a whole, particularly when he sees the way in which Marcion manipulates and changes the texts of the gospel. Zahn (in his *Kanonsgeschichte* I, pp. 652 ff.) has been seriously troubled by the awkward problem of how to face, morally, the worst of those manipulations. For Marcion's procedure here is often so artificial ("künstlich") or so petty ("Kleinlich") that Zahn arrives at one inevitable conclusion: Either there must have been something wrong with that man's conscience ("Gewissen") or with his sound sense ("Verstand"). Which of those alternative viewpoints is the correct one, he finds most difficult to decide.

And now Nygren's attitude. We do understand the main reason why he has a particular admiration for Marcion. The great theme of the Agape gospel is: *gratia gratis* data, the free grace of God. And that seems to be the very burden of Marcion's melodious song of praise. Obviously, Nygren felt this to be a rare phenomenon. He does not fail to point out that he had to go all the way down to Luther's age to find something he could compare to Marcion's insistence on grace as the absolute summit of gospel truth. And this is the story of Agape, nothing more, nothing less.

Of course nobody could intelligently deny one fact: Grace is the unique source of salvation in Christianity. So how could there ever be too strong an emphasis on that element? The danger of falling into the ditch of extremism only presents itself at the moment when "grace" and "law" are considered as mutually exclusive opposites. In other words, there sure is a possibility of onesidedness, even right in the emphasis on grace. That is the fatal extreme called antinomianism. How on earth could the antinomian heresy become any true announcement of Agape's victory over Eros? There is not any possibility that antinomianism (the anti-law spirit) could have anything positive about it in any degree or of any kind.

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Is Nygren himself an anti-nomianist? To claim this would probably evoke a loud cry of protests. Nygren makes a conscious effort to consider the law, and the entire "Nomas motif" from an angel as positive as he can. But he may have placed himself in the zone of a serious danger due to a certain schematic narrowness in the way he formulates his two fundamental motifs in marked opposition to each other.

I do not, by this, for a moment suggest that there is something wrong with the clear marking of the Agape/ Eros contrast. But my own research in this same field of the history of ideas has often shown me one special danger incurred when negative poles and positive poles, in the realms of human ideas, are compared to each other. The thing one has to make sure of, one hundred percent, is whether the values compared are really opposites. Has it first been certified that law and grace, for instance, are absolute opposites? Grace, of course, may assert itself as a rather unambiguous quality in its current Biblical sense. But what about "law?" "Law" in the Bible may be a positive concept or a negative one. So it is not a matter of course that "Law" and "Grace" do, of necessity, exclude each other mutually. Evidently there may be ways of emphasizing grace that represent a serious pitfall. I do not say it is an easy task to make perfectly sure, even with the best of criterions, whether a concept is negative or positive. In my own research, I have chosen a device for the weighing of values which, I think, provides considerable vouchsafe guarantee for not falling into error. The bipolarity scheme I have employed in order to shed some possible new light on that same most momentous battle between Christianity and paganism, is contained in what I have already pointed out as Alterocentricity versus Egocentricity. The decisive criterion I thus found for good versus evil was this one:

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Is a given concept or a given trend in human life and human history other-centered (alterocentric) or is it self-centered (egocentric)?

A never-failing corollary to that question is: Does the given trend prove to be *holistic* in its practical effects, or rather *disruptive*? (Is its result *integration* or *disintegration*?).

It is my experience that contrasts expressed in these terms present a decisive advantage: They permit a series of comparisons pinpointing concrete details in everyday life. Hence, the picture obtained tends to become more many-sided, and more graphically distinct.

So let us now apply this criterion to the case of Marcion. How does the core of Marcionist philosophy turn out when submitted to my proposed "ego-altero" test?

For a better understanding of the experiment, let me first repeat more explicitly what those terms of alterocentricity and egocentricity stand for: Alterocentricity is, generally speaking, the attitude in a person's life that causes him to find his center (his main values) *outside* himself; that is, in the other ones, or, above all, in the Other One (God). And this is not a mere question of technical evaluation of human types in the sense of differential psychology. No. You remember, of course, that we are finding ourselves in the midst of an existential discussion about Agape versus Eros. Face to face with such basic issues in human life, matters are bound to take on a character of the deepest religious kind. So, for every one of us, it becomes a matter of significance on the highest ethical level. It becomes a question of good and evil, right and wrong, salvation or perdition.

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Other-centeredness, in the case of the Christian religion, becomes synonymous with Christ-centeredness. For Christ is here the Value above all values to which man must turn. A more general term would be God-centeredness (Theo-centricity). That is, of course, the opposite of Man-centeredness (Anthropo-centricity). God-centeredness is Christian faith. Man-centeredness is pagan humanism.

It follows immediately from the nature of those terms that, while Other-centeredness spells outward-directedness (extroversion), Self-centeredness spells inward-directedness (introversion).

Considered from the point of view of philosophy rather than from that of general human typology (characterology), all trends of *intro*-spection as a method of grasping the reality of man's world will lead him away from Christ as the great Center. That is why Platonic idealism reveals itself as anti-Christian. It has a pronounced predilection for just *looking inward*. The soul of man is the one great object of knowledge. As Plato puts it: Only the soul can see the soul.

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Hence also the mania for reducing all good things to "pure spirit." It is part of the irrealism of all spiritualistic movements to grant an enormous prestige to everything that is *bodiless*.

So, let us not be so overly astonished at Marcion. Let us not look upon him as some unique monster. He is, on the contrary, the most natural phenomenon you could ever expect to come across in our pagan culture. It is in perfect accordance with the core values of this culture that the super-spiritual, the absolutely bodiless, acquires top prestige; whereas, anything that is concrete and bodily is looked down upon by the elite of superspirituality in this world.

No wonder, then, that the New Testament gets problems to tackle which did not seem to worry the Old Testament writers one bit. The New Testament writers are busy pointing out heresies which the Old Testament writers knew little or nothing about. Why? Simply because the environment to whom the Old Testament writers addressed

themselves had not yet managed to sink far enough down into pagan unreason to need any admonitions of a similar kind. I am referring to the disruptive view that bodies are unreal; or far worse than that: they are imagined as the source of all evil. By the era of the New Testament writings, the glorious concept of a total bodilessness has had time to crawl up on the rostrum, and it does not stop until it has reached the pinnacles of the highest respectability. Plato's philosophy has penetrated the milieu of Biblical lands.

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Of course, that enthusiasm about bodilessness is a typical sign of Eros temporarily conquering Agape's territory. This trend of paganism, according to the Bible's clear statement, is nothing less than the very spirit of the anti-Christ. The apostle John gives the trumpet no uncertain sound when he refers to this specimen of human philosophy. Let us render his verdict *in extenso*. And, as you read it, please keep, at the back of your mind, a little space open for what you already know about the basic principle of Marcion's thought forms. Remember, particularly, what the body (the "flesh"; that is, Biblically speaking, the most deeply human in all men) meant to Marcion. To him, the human body, that created monster, produced by the evil Old Testament creator-god, was the bottom of all abomination. And worst of all was that creator-god himself. But the important thing for us to know is what John, the inspired writer, has to say about that kind of anti-body philosophy, having already insinuated itself into the hearts of contemporary philosopher-theologians:

Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come *in the flesh*, is not of God: and this is the spirit of the *anti-Christ*, whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now is in the world. I John 4:3; see also II John 7.

The Bible here turns strongly and decisively against the wanton stubbornness and pride of the "pure-spirit" philosopher. That titan is seen as rising up against the very God of creation, declaring that material bodies are evil. True good and true reality are alleged to be found in one thing only: the pure spirit. Even Christ is nothing but a ghost. What men grasp with their literal senses is declared to be deception, delusion.

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Now then, what is the result of this teaching? It is the most dangerous heresy in Christendom. What the spiritualist refuses to accept is the simple fact of the *incarnation*. *Dis-carnation* is the great thing. Sophisticated human wisdom has taken the place of God's own realism. This was the typical paganism infiltrating itself at such an early date into Christendom. And still today the same kind of weird Eros yearning for a discarnate type of saviour is in vogue. Christ is represented as a ghostlike apparition, some kind of "inner reality" without any exterior substance.

From the very beginning, the Hellenist idealism insisted on one thing: spiritualizing away the concrete reality of God's Agape, His tremendous plan for the world. In due course, such spiritualistic deceivers became bold enough to turn even Jesus Christ into a mere ghost, a bodiless monster. That was the type of "higher Christianity" Marcion had excelled in during the years of his theological speculations.

You may imagine how much there tended to remain, in those speculative theologizings, of true respect for the concrete Word of God, the original Scriptures. The

eraser and the correction pencil are the most important tools of editorial activities in that workshop.

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For a comparison with phenomena taking place in our days, I may mention something almost incredible from the spiritualist workshops of the endtime. You certainly know how new versions of the Bible have been mushrooming in recent years, some even catering for those who want the Bible truths expressed in slang language. But the most fantastic among those editions of the Bible in English is certainly an American one that has now appeared. Its editors will not hesitate to claim that it is the most spiritual version that ever came into existence. It has been realized only thanks to the generous aid contributed by the *spirit world*. So it is one of those strongly "improved" editions. Now, could you guess how this version distinguishes itself from the traditional ones in terms of contents? That is largely the same way Marcion's "emendations" were bound to distinguish themselves from the Greek original of the gospels he felt an urgent need of "improving." Wherever a passage of the gospel suggests the "profane" idea that even Christ Himself lends significance to the "deeds performed *in the body*," great efforts are spent by the partisans, the "pure spirits," to efface every "materialistic misconception" they found dispersed all over the Bible and decided to extirpate bit by bit.

#### **THE SUBTLE DUALISM OF "FAITH WITHOUT WORKS" AN HISTORIC SOURCE OF PAGAN CONFUSION**

In fact, what was Marcion's most obvious aim in all his revolutionizing activity as a theologian? It was to make Christian life itself bodiless. That is most efficiently done by eliminating law and justice from its basic motifs. The fundamental error of all spiritualism is precisely this. It consists in systematically despising the plain realism of God's concrete Word; that is, taking away the substance, the tangible foundation, the body of reality, which is the immutable code of divine ethics.

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And, as soon as we say "ethics," we know very well that this does not have to do with mere philosophical speculation, something of little consequence spiritually and practically. Oh no, we are here right in the heart of all spirituality of all practice.

Well then, how does Marcion's standard of ethical behavior come out in practical life?

Beautifully, in the highest degree, would be the enthused answer of some historians. Marcion led an exemplary life in moral respect.

I am afraid that certain rigid specialists in ethical ideologies may have some hesitation in accepting that claim. At least philosophically speaking, Marcion was a notorious annihilator of bodies; in other words, he was a "body-killer" of the first order. And "body-killing" certainly has never been an activity counted among the most ethical types of human occupation. Literal physical murder has always been a pattern of behavior Christian ethics had the greatest difficulty in accepting. Dear Friend, if you believe that Biblical realism is decisive for salvation, please be warned against "body-killers" of the most dangerous kind. Taking away the reality called a human body is a crime which may be particularly fatal to serious God-given ethics, precisely when that body-killing remains there at a stage of *metaphysical speculation!*

In this field, I would think it perfectly pertinent to remind of one particular "body" we have seen murderously manipulated away by many famous "pure-spirit" experts of religious philosophy. I am referring to my previous study of Calvin's and Luther's faith-works ideology and the dangerous way in which it was expressed by them, and interpreted by others. More particularly, I am concerned with the one-sided way in which this duality of "faith versus works" was understood by later Protestant denominations. In this case as well, you see, a certain "body" was looked down upon as valueless, or rather downright evil. I am referring to the *good works* constituting, in reality, nothing less than the very "*body*" of *faith*. There is an outward expression, you see, which man's faith just *cannot do without*, exactly as the soul cannot exist separated from its bodily counterpart. In the entire Bible, so not in the Epistle of James exclusively, the attitude of taking that side of the faith-works totality seriously is called the spirit of *law-abidingness*. It is called by Paul, "good works," and consistently praised by him as an inestimable value. Hence, it should, of course, never be confused with another concept of his: "the deeds of law," something he just as consistently condemns as being rotten through and through. The "works of the law," with Paul, always means a *foreign* body; that is, a *dead* and *corrupt* body which threatens to contaminate and destroy the true and living body. This latter abomination, "the deed of the law," is *human pride* and the pagan spirit of *self-salvation*; so the most perilous thing Paul has ever described. It has nothing whatsoever to do with the outward counterpart of inward faith: the *good works*, meaning simply an implicit obedience to the commandments of Jesus Christ.

What the spiritualism of a world-be protestantism tries to get rid of now, however, is precisely that very body of all true faith: the good works of the believing Christian. What it insists on *spiritualizing* away as something deemed "unworthy" and "evil," what deluded man fights unwittingly is the concrete substance called good works. Nevertheless, in reality, that practical willingness to obey God implicitly is man's literal and most realistic act of *going down*: so imitating Jesus Christ, the down-going One par excellence, the realistic One par excellence.

In order to resemble his Creator, the creature must *do* something. He must realistically obey. Accepting grace is the most significant and the most indispensable act of obedience you could ever think of. It means nothing more and nothing less than a literal deed of submission to the Creator, the Logos, the Word, as Supreme Authority. It means an elementary *willingness to obey* without grumbling. The Christian must have Metanoia. It could not be expressed more simply than that by the Bible: *Metanoia*.

Now, did Marcion have that willingness? Did he have the spirit of bending down before God and His authoritative command in the humble way of Metanoia: that is, submission and implicit obedience? In the case of any human creature, this act of repentance is the only practicable way to remove the devil's obstructions to the glory of salvation. It is the active attitude on man's part that constitutes an absolute prerequisite to being made whole again after having been torn asunder by sin. Did Marcion choose that good creaturely way of Metanoia?

Our answer depends on what conception we have of Metanoia. Is it a spiritualistic and totally disrupted phenomenon?

Metanoia actually means a change of mind. That means a sincere repentance of the state of mind you formerly used to have. Can that be equated with some kind of "pure" repentance, in the abstracting sense of philosophical spiritualism? Does the Bible suggest the platonic idealist's "change of mind," with an exclusive stress on the element "MIND," implying no change in deed ("in deed" means, of course, in practical action)? If this is so, then we have to do with a concept of Metanoia which only ghost-seers and ghost-raisers (necromancers) can appreciate. That would be a strange type of Metanoia. It would have all the "aristocratic" characteristics of *bodilessness*.

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In no other field could the spiritualistic onesidedness be more absurd or more fatal. For do we realize what it is that here remains suspended in mid-air, spiritualist style? It is man's *ethics*, nothing less. In no other field did spiritualism ever manage to create a ghost world as spooky as that. Eros here performs his insidious trick of intellectualistic mental abstraction with a murderous rage that has otherwise never been machinated. Before man ever noticed what was going on, the whole ethical reality of his life has been cut to pieces and carried away.

Without totality in man's concept of man, no ethics is possible. Just do not nourish yourself with vain illusions. In anthropological dualism, no ethics has ever managed to survive.

When I say this right at this moment, I am fully aware of the risk I am running. For, applied to the present case, it would be tantamount to raising doubts regarding Marcion's ethical norms. Well, I take any risk involved, and this in spite of the fact that, among certain researchers, Marcion enjoys a remarkable reputation. What he is famous for is his tireless battle against legalism on the one hand (i.e. law thralldom) and riotous living on the other hand.

Let us take that "law thralldom" first. We all agree with Paul, of course, in his epistle to the Galatians. Legalism is the worst pest any church can be contaminated with. But please tell me: Where in the Scriptures do you read that legalism is identical with law-abidingness?

And now to the rather delicate facts of our context:

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*Marcion* is the character whom I have boldly chosen, or whom Nygren has boldly chosen, in order to shed a particular light on the phenomenon of an *anti*-legalist (and *anti*-debauch) motif called Agape. So frankly to the inevitable matter: Is that man a fit image of the true Agape, as this great spirit manifests itself in the Early Christian Church? Is he a relevant model for the Reformation with its triumphant message of *gratia gratis data*?

When you hear Marcion, a man haughtily raising his head in the air and pouring his contumely over the Lawgiver whose law he arrogantly tramples down with his heretical feet, do you imagine you have had a vision of the ideal fighter against Jewish legalism?

What I am here bent on applying to the case of Marcion, as a possible "Agape revealer," is precisely my mentioned ego-altero test, as my special criterion. Let us be reasonable on all sides: It goes without saying that legalism could not be expected to

be on the side of genuine other-centeredness. The mentioned Galatian law-righteousness is rather an arche-typical self-centered manifestation. What the whole system here aims at is self-salvation. The narrow-minded ego-orientation is exactly what all the time causes legalism to excel in the kingdom of the bluntly *unrealistic*. For self-salvation is, of course, bound to be *sham* salvation. And sham salvation means nothing short of total perdition. In fact, it is the most tragic form perdition could ever adopt. For here man flatters himself that he has salvation.

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In contrast to this, look at the spirit of the law-abiding heart. In what direction does it turn? Not inward toward self, but outward toward a real Savior. How different from the kind of "obedience" contained in legalism! Legalism is sheer vanity. And vain here means two things: It means absolutely *empty* (ghost-like, specter-like); and at the same time *vain-glorious* (that is: proud) accordingly, foolishly egocentric. The only true specimen of obedience is invariably that of the lowly heart. This is Christ's characteristic. Therefore, it is also the great characteristic of Agape:

*"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Matthew 11:29, 30.*

### THE HUMBLE GOD AND THE PROUD TITAN

The humble God! This is the great mystery, the un-heard-of thing in the history of religions. It was the unique thing happening when Christianity came upon the scene. But it is not a paradox. It is not an absurdity. We had better save those terms for other phenomena. It is realism of the most down-to-earth type we encounter in the Person of Jesus Christ. *Humilis* means bending down to *humus*, the very soil. It is the incomparable story about the *geo-centric* God who "so loved the world" that He gave Himself as a ransom. He saw nothing unworthy about coming down to *earth* in human flesh.

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Now, did Marcion put much stock in this "humility business"? Was he himself humble? That must be a capital question for our argument under the auspices of the "ego-altero" test.

Let us be fair to the man. The great Marcion expert, Adolf von Harnack, in his standard work, *Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott*, finds many things to praise in that great heretic's human character. He describes him as straight-forward and often admirably sincere; in fact, even manifestly modest!

For instance, the idea never seems to have entered Marcion's mind that he might procure a much-needed authority for his work, and for himself, by simply pretending that he had had a revelation. His "fidelity toward history" is remarkable. He never claimed to be a prophet or an apostle.

Now, if those abstentions (from what I would call gross villainy), all by themselves, spell modesty and humility, then they must, of course, be recorded in Agape's favor. I do not bluntly deny it. For refraining from evil (*any* evil you might care

to mention) must, of course, be noted on the positive side of the balance. In other words, it might look as if Nygren has obtained an indisputable scoring here.

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However, when this has been said, something else should not be left un-said. There are some other traits, as well, that have been extremely well documented by modern research. They make me question seriously the reality of that "faithfulness to history," and that "intellectual integrity" for which Harnack gives Marcion credit. There is one tendency among others (to mention them one by one, and not necessarily in the order of their respective importance) that must definitely have tempted Marcion to wander away from the beaten road of strict truthfulness. That is his notorious weakness for *novelty*. A certain insatiable craving for *sensations* is not one of the great traits of notorious realists.

But, let us not go to extremes in pessimism. New things are not, in themselves, an evil. And yet, there is good reason to be on the alert, and most seriously so, if a gospel interpreter seems to feel the urgent need, all the time, to point out how extremely "strange" his "new" God really is—"strangeness" in this case meaning nothing but goodness—as compared to some other God (the "old" and rather "wicked" one). This is the moment when "newness" becomes quite a dubious affair. For, as everybody knows, "old" things have an inevitable tendency to appear rather "tedious." That, at least, is the reaction of the excitement-craving egocentric who takes a sentimental pleasure in novel experiences.

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We ought to know this tendency well enough from the encounter we may all have had with certain sensation imps in our own breasts. The egocentric element in us demands a never-ceasing current of new stimulants in the form of exciting new events. What has gone on for some time, however good it may be, tends to appear boring to us. Those "old" trotters have nothing against them, except that they look so exasperatingly "domesticated" and, therefore, unbearably dull. That is the age-old fact of the Eros world of which you and I are undeniable citizens. So there is something so blessedly "re-newing" attached to the entirely unexpected happening popping up in our midst. It grants, to the sentimental soul, a certain relief from all daily routine, all uniformity and boredom. It is something to "quicken the bones," otherwise aching with spleen and dullness. That "routine" and "intolerable regularity" of every-day life I am speaking about, may very well assert itself as extremely boring also in the case of *unchanging standards for ethical behavior*. To some people, traditional ethics may be the greatest hardship they can endure, a virtual time of trouble, to people indulging in the stimulating experience (the "drug" if you like) of innovation all the time.

Let me express it sternly and realistically: There just cannot develop any balanced attitude toward any values in life with such people, particularly not a sober attitude toward Agape and her most astonishing ingredient: the Grace of God.

Nygren raises Marcion to the rank of an outstanding representative of Agape. And on what basis? Simply on the basis of that man's "magnificent" relationship to Grace. But what was Marcion's relationship to Grace, then?

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It was as unbalanced as you may expect to find it with arche-typical irrealists. And what, exactly, is the traditional attitude of the non-realist to that greatest thing in Agape, viz. Grace? It is one of two alternatives:

Extreme number 1: He thinks a given task imposed upon him to be *more difficult* than it really is, and simply gives it up. He rejects it as a task un-reasonably demanded of him.

Extreme number 2: He assumes it to be much *easier* than it really is. So he does accept it, but too lightly.

According to these two opposite attitudes some people find their tasks excessively *un-pleasant*, while others find them altogether *pleasant*. Both attitudes are wrong and entirely unfit to tackle the case of Grace. Marcion belonged to the former group. He found the demands of the literal, tangible, law-enforcing God of the Bible too taxing and hence, unreasonable. In contrast to that "un-pleasant" God, he invented a "pleasant" One: the God of Grace (cheap Grace).

### **ANTINOMIANISM IS THE NAME OF THAT EXTREMITY**

But here, too, we must strive to be entirely fair to that controversial man; for we should not be unappreciative of the fact that Marcion did not belong to those "grace-enjoyers" who take any grace as a pretext for *lasciviousness*—or even as a pretext for *mercilessness* toward others. Cf. Matthew 18:23 ff. In sharp contrast to Carpocrates, for instance, Marcion was famous—and rightly so—for his stern *asceticism*. He was a true ascetic, in theory and in practice. He sternly and consistently condemned all traditional indulgence in fleshly lusts. Now, how do we explain this "duplicity?"

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### **EROS MAY ADOPT VERY DIFFERENT ATTITUDES TOWARD SEX**

Marcion did condemn any form of indulgence in an immoral life style, traditionally considered, and the various excesses associated with that. But right in the very condemnation of excesses, there may be another excess worse than any traditional one, and an indulgence worse than any traditional one. Why worse? For the simple reason that it is no longer realized and shunned as excess and indulgence. The way Marcion wages his war against the "lusts of the flesh" was a definitely excessive one. He was wildly *im-moderate* in his furious rage to acquire *moderation*. Look at the way he describes marriage. He calls it a *negotium impudicitiae*. That means simply an open business established for the purpose of furthering the cause of impurity and shamelessness. He forbids the members of his church every kind of sexual intercourse. He characterizes that way of procreation as an endless shame, the most abominable scheme the Creator could ever have invented. It must be fought relentlessly. The flesh must be kept down. It must be killed. And to Marcion, "flesh" does not mean merely "man—under the sign of sin," in the well-known spiritual sense of the Bible; no, it refers to anything that is simply bodily. For all such things are, to him, the result of creation, so the ill-smelling product of that "wicked Yahweh" who has had the tactlessness, nay the shamelessness, of calling into existence a material world. It is precisely that true Creator of matter whom Marcion despises with all his heart. And there is one way to show one's contempt for such a monster.

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So, what is his underlying motive all the time for depreciating the flesh, and not only the "flesh" in its negative sense, Biblically speaking, but everything bodily, as the pagan spiritualist will tend to look upon it? Marcion's one great aim is to heap shame upon the *Creator-God* of the Genesis account, who has had the enormous "baseness" of producing the flesh with all its "carnal enormities."

So, we know exactly Marcion's main purpose, then, for being so extremely "moral," teaching men to abstain from all sexuality. It was simply to demonstrate his own deep contempt and defiance of that "sordid world-framer" of old. He seems to be hurling right into Yahweh's face a defiant protest like this: "You abominable brute. I do know that you have created me like this. You think I am going to accept your turpitude and be just as base as you are. You are mistaken. Thanks to the help of that New God of mine, Jesus Christ, the Bodiless One, I am going to annihilate your vile plans for my life by simply refusing to give you any cooperation whatsoever. And I shall see to it that my dear parishioners do the same."

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As a matter of historical fact, his followers did obey his orders to the letter. But did that make the Marcionist church a paragon of virtue? Did they become so infinitely virtuous for the reason that they did their best to annoy Yahweh, provoke His anger and defy His orders, thus proclaiming brazenly to the entire world: "We are no longer in that God's service; we definitely belong to *another Lord*. We shall brazenly defy the Old Testament God who invented sex, in favor of the New Testament sexless God."

The witness could not be stronger: To Marcion and his church, Yahweh is the bottom of all bottomlessness. To me, this shows one thing only, namely a bottomlessness in Marcion's own philosophy, which demonstrates several aspects of the abysmal depths in the Eros spirit itself. Our usual trend has, unfortunately, been just to think of the sham religion of pagan spiritualism as something merely passive or neutral, a Nirvana spook of glaring emptiness. But here some entirely different phenomena suddenly enter the arena. Spiritualism may amaze us by, all of a sudden, revealing itself as the tireless demon waging a most determined and inhumanly cruel war against the bold adherents to Christian realism. So there is a militant variety of the Eros spirit which constitutes the bottom level of all blasphemy.

According to Epiphanius (*Haer.*, 42,3), the Marcionites also had a very rigid fasting system that made no exception for the *Sabbath*. This, too, was, allegedly, in order to "defy the Lawgiver." In fact, food or drink, or any other created thing you could touch with your body, or perceive with your senses, was to be ignored as far as humanly feasible. And all was done "ad destruenda et contemnenda et abominanda opera creatoris." What an ideal: to destroy and cover with supreme contempt the work of the Creator!

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But here again we must then openly admit something in Marcion's defence; he certainly does not show anything in all this reminding of that "butterfly lightness" we have previously assumed as an inseparable epithet of the typical Eros worshiper. In Marcion's genuinely ascetic life style, there definitely was not any room for any volatile fluttering from flower to flower in the particularly well-known Eros garden of *carnal indulgences*. By no means.

But at the same time another fact must be kept in mind. Different people seek their sensations, their extravagances, in widely different fields. They satisfy their passion for novelty and ecstasy through a variety of ways. And why should not Marcion's favorite type of indulgence be one peculiar to *him*? His type was just that of saying his say right in the face of time-honored canonical authority. In this special pattern of eccentric behavior he found his special satisfaction.

The Eros (or anti-Agape) spirit has its own archetypical pattern of conduct. The very essence of its indulgence consists in denying God obedience, obstinately challenging the clearly expressed will of man's Generator and Re-generator. Therefore, Marcion's attitude toward things spiritual could still properly be described as an act of "lasciviousness," without offending the true spirit of the matter. For if we take the term "lascivious" in it's widest sense, Marcion is not only lascivious; He is *blasphemously* lascivious!

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His pagan dualism, too, is of a unique character. It has the titanic vehemence of the renegade. Therefore, it is not only pagan, it is worse. Marcion does not content himself with being an ordinary dualist, considering matter as just evil. His religiously impassioned dualism actually turns into a cruel accusation against God Himself.

### **WHAT, THEN, ABOUT MARCION'S ADMIRATION FOR JESUS CHRIST?**

It may easily be objected: "Does not Marcion put something evidently good and great in the place of that 'inferior Old Testament God' whom he tries to abolish? does he not set up Jesus as the great ideal? And is not that, after all, fundamentally different from pagan humanism, by and large? When did paganism of any type. capitalize on the Person of Jesus as man's only hope of salvation? Is it not great that Marcion has no difficulty with Jesus of Nazareth?"

The fact is rather that Marcion has *no end* of difficulty with Jesus of Nazareth. How could he fail to have difficulty with Him, the humble God, calling Himself the Son of *Man*. Marcion actually makes an endless variety of acrobatic maneuvers to explain away the simplest statements of Jesus, Himself. They are to be interpreted "allegorically," he says. The literal, historical Jesus is, to Marcion, an occasion for scandal, an opprobrium even greater than that of the Old Testament Yahweh.

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And what about the resurrection of man as a totality? Of course Marcion could have no tolerance of anything as realistic as that. In his view, the "*souls*" only are redeemed. The flesh is a thing so base that it can hardly be imagined how even the "World-Framer" of the Genesis account could stoop sufficiently far down to create such a mess. Matter is, in itself, evil.

Here, at least, Marcion is fairly consistent. Yet generally I have to agree with Burkitt that Marcion's view are a "jumble of inconsistencies." (F.C. Burkitt: *Church and Gnosis*). They are even inconsistent on a most serious point, namely in their attitude toward this historical Jesus. That is disastrous to one who professes to base his religion upon the same Jesus. Small wonder that his theology becomes the object of formidable attacks from such polemical experts as Irenaeus. Marcion's inconsistencies were taken well care of by critics, both contemporary and subsequent ones. But now this critical question from the field of modern Agape research:

## **DOES MARCION'S INCONSISTENCY BECOME NYGREN'S INCONSISTENCY?**

A tentative formulation of this question might as well be: Does the "Strange God" of Marcion become the "Strange God" of Nygren as well?

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To attempt an answer to this question, we shall look more closely at the Marcionistic God from various angles.

Marcion appears to me as an innovator who conjures up clouds as black as possible in "the old world" in order that the "new" may impress us as all the more sunny and ideal. That kind of shade experimentation may be artistic, and therefore perfectly permissible in artistic creation, but not quite fair in cosmogony and in meaningful history.

How does Marcion produce the psychological effect which is supposed to realize the final conviction in us that the "New God" is a super-agapeic One? For the purpose of providing a profitable background, he thinks it important to stress the idea that our Creator has left us to ourselves and to our body-infested misery without any hesitation. And now, what about that "*other* God," Jesus Christ, the "foreign One?" Oh, He takes us up and gives us the fatherly love we so desperately missed. Marcion is downright infatuated in his boundless admiration for that "New God."

Jesus Christ, according to Marcion, demonstrates his magnanimity just in this: He takes pity on the children who neither were, nor had ever been, His own; that is, bastards like you and me. For this piece of theatrical demonstration, then, it is important for the dramatist to have the darkest possible background: That miserable humanity to which we belong, according to Marcion, constitutes the wretched off-spring of the Old Testament

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"Under-God," or whatever name He should be given. The point Marcion makes is that the real God of the New Testament, Jesus Christ, was meritorious in a way nobody had ever been thinking of before: He had had the exceptional magnanimity of feeling sorry for the misshapen progeny of His worst enemy, that Old Testament Creator, who was, in reality, an ogre rather than a God. We human beings fail to realize that we are the off-spring of *another*. We just could not expect to be taken care of by Jesus Christ, the real One. So what has happened is the wonder above all wonders. This is the fantastic generosity of the Super-God. So you see what, to Marcion, is the summit of the heavenly Agape: It is having pity on the children of "another," on nasty bastards, whose creation you have had nothing to do with. This is the anti-rational wonder Marcion stares at dumbfounded and with open mouth, *infatuated* indeed.

If what he here says were true, we might have to just nod our heads and admit: That God there does go beyond all limits of the normal and the reasonable. Hegel and Kierkegaard—and all the rest of them—must be right after all. Absurdity is bound to triumph in the end.

And now, what about Nygren? Does he really think that we should all accept that non-sense philosophy as legal tender? Should we accept it with all it implies? If so, what will happen—to us?

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One conclusion we would then certainly arrive at is this: "Jesus Christ has not created man. Even Adam, before his fall, was a miserable wretch. So when Jesus nourished emotions of Agape for him, that was not based on any natural urge or any intelligent fellowship feeling. No, it was contrary to nature and to all commonsense intelligence. A divine pity stooping down to the bottomlessness of taking pity on such a bastard creature as Adam must be the great evidence that God's Agape is something absolutely un-natural. It is unintelligent in the everyday sense of the term. It is spontaneous in Nygren's sense of spontaneity. The less Jesus Christ has had to do with the historic creation of those body-infested beings called men, the easier it will be to realize that there can be no foundation whatsoever for the 'myth' that he had any reasonable cause why he should stoop down to the act of loving them."

Is this the way to prove that Agape is utterly unreasonable?

In reality, this Marcionist method of "proving" things only reveals a desperate lack of valid arguments.

## AGAPE—THE ABSOLUTELY UNCHANGEABLE

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The great fact about the Bible's God is that He remains identical with Himself from one Testament to the other; in fact, from everlasting to everlasting. This means mainly one thing: His Agape remains immutable, indestructible. The great law of that Agape remains forever the transcript of His eternal character. So, everybody can rely on Him at all times one hundred percent. At no time of His historical past did any magical metamorphosis take place in His divine essence.

But then, if still tremendous things do happen in the life and history of that God, how can this be interpreted? The matter is simple enough: Whenever God, the only Self-Existent One, is suddenly seen to dive all the way down to wretches like you and me, the dark world of the lost ones, He performs one obvious task: He simply turns back to those whom He openly admits to be His own creatures. The fact of creation is never denied or reduced. How could there be any denial or any reduction of that? If we do exist—and we assume we do—and if we still fail to realize that this existence has its source in Him, and in Him only, then there is just one alternative left in our thinking: We must be gods every one of us. That is self-deification. And there is no presumption more foolish than that. In the last analysis, it is exactly what all spiritualists come to presume about themselves.

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Let us rather stay in the world of firm realities, for better or for worse. We are creatures. We are God's creatures. The Lord never made the slightest attempt to deny this fact of our royal origin. He never gave up His title of ownership. Not at any moment does He profess Himself to be the "Strange One." He is and remains the natural Father who cannot but intervene in favor of His literal children; for they are, after all, the destiny-shaking reality of His historical creative act. To Him we are never just the children of "another." It is true enough that Satan, the great enemy, has caused degeneration to happen to us. So he certainly could claim to be our "father" in a *figurative* sense. Some would say in a "spiritual" sense. I would say in a wantonly *spiritualistic* sense. For that fatherhood is an empty or entirely ghostlike one, a pseudo-fatherhood. It is a fatherhood without any trace of fatherliness. Even Christ admits that some men have the devil as their father, as far as all evil patrimony in their lives is

concerned. So the evil one does have a certain right to the title of "father," as far as his relationship to such people goes. But there is one title he could never, never claim. He could not say, with any bit of verity in his statement, that He is man's Originator, man's Creator, the Source of our very being. Only a Marcion, or some similarly bewildered soul, would say a thing like that about man and the devil. To accept Marcionism is to accept the idea of a God who, at the dawn of the New Testament, emerges in the form of a pure-spirit apparition, capable of dispensing totally with all realism, all commonsense rationality, all uncompromising justice, as the ground of His being.

### THE FABLE ABOUT A SEPARATION OF LAW AND GOSPEL

It has been said that "Marcion's principal work consists in having separated the Law from the Gospel:

*Separatio legis et evangelii proprium opus est Marcionis*, Op. cit. p. 332.

Nygren quotes this description of Marcion's merit with manifest approval and admiration. Then he adds his own remark:

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*In this respect he displays far keener insight than any of his contemporaries.*  
*(Ibid.)*

This evaluation is, of course, one basing itself on an individual viewpoint. Considered from another scholar's viewpoint, Marcion might have to be valued very differently. As far as I can see, a considerable number of Marcion's contemporaries had a far keener insight in several respects than he had. For instance, in terms of an inexorably realistic philosophy and theology, it does not testify to any particular keenness of insight in any thinker or theologian to disengage from God's total Agape such core qualities as a *fundamental justice* and an *elementary reason*. How does Nygren imagine that Agape could exist at all without those *conditiones sine qua non*?

### A PARABLE BY JESUS THROWN INTO THE FIRE OF THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSION

Here we must resume—and this time in real earnest—the topic of *justice*. For that is, and remains, one of the most crucial points in the entire debate about reason versus unreason. Can we here accept Marcion—and Nygren? Is justice one of those foreign bodies, which at all costs must be sifted off from the regular core elements of the great Agape, in order that she be preserved pure and genuine! Undoubtedly, we cannot here avoid facing the captivating debate given in Nygren's book regarding the workers in the vineyard. To that end I must insist on quoting it in its entirety from the Bible:

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For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market place. And said unto them: Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the 11th hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. So when even was come, the Lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the laborers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it they murmured against the goodman of the house, saying: These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny. Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil because I am good? So the last shall be the first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.  
Matthew 20:1-16.

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The great question that is raised in this connection is the following: Was the Lord of the vineyard strictly just in his treatment of the different groups. The householder himself in the parable says yes. Nygren, however, says no. That then is also the reason why he so strongly challenges another theologian, the German Jülicher. In his book, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu* (1910), Jülicher had permitted himself to characterize as unfair, not the owner of the vineyard, but rather precisely those boldly protesting early servants demanding a higher pay. Jülicher's simple question was: How could they blame the manager of the vineyard for paying to the late-comers equally high wages as to them? And the same author answers: This was just "miserable jealousy."

To Jülicher's judgment here Nygren objects very strongly, saying: This was *not* just miserable jealousy, for the early-comers had "purer and loftier motives." In fact, he says, the "champions of justice" in Judaism had some logically valid reasons for reacting against the teaching of such a parable. Nygren actually goes so far as to state that:

*it is futile to try to eliminate from this parable that which is offensive in it from a juridical point of view. The offence only ceases when the principle of justice itself is eliminated as applicable to the religious relationship. (Sic!!)*

In other words, the early laborers in the vineyard are the ones who faithfully stay on the side of justice and reason. The owner of the business is on the side of non-justice and unreason.

Is this true? The answer to that question must be decisive to our topic. Let us now pose the problems in all their acuteness.

What we must, above all, find a trustworthy answer to is this capital issue:

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### **IS JUSTICE TO BE SEPARATED FROM THE TOTALITY OF THE GENUINE AGAPE MOTIF?**

Here I am afraid that our traditional Agape theology is on dangerous ground, and the danger lies in the disruptive essence of the "spontaneity" thesis. Here, once more, there must be a fatal failure to appreciate at its proper value the fantastically many-sided thing called *creation*.

What was the true reason why the laborers first engaged reacted so negatively to the husbandman's dealings? I think Jülicher is perfectly right when he says, short and sweet, "miserable jealousy!" That would perfectly suffice to account for the sour response on the part of those ungrateful workers. And nobody should try to tell people of average intelligence that there is anything so wonderfully evocative of "justice" or "reasonability" in that. Frankly, did the generosity of the manager of the vineyard toward the late-comers, in any objectively verifiable way, reduce the wages of the early-comers? Not one bit. Only their own subjective attitude would make it appear that way. And this was a subjectivity of a notoriously malignant type, wasn't it?

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But how, you may now be wondering, does "creation" get into this matter? Well, creation enters into it precisely the way Nygren himself has very realistically suggested. God's Agape, in the very act of loving, *creates* the value. Let us apply that basic doctrinal principle to the case at hand. What was the net value of the work performed by those late servants, or any servants within the realms of mankind, in the vineyard of the great Husbandman? Christ's own evaluation of the work of sinful creatures certainly has come out in terms clear enough. We need not remain in the dark about that matter if we read Luke 17:10.

*"So likewise ye, when ye shall have done those things which are commanded of you, say, We are unprofitable servants. We have done that which was our duty to do."*

So this must be admitted—about the quality, as well as the quantity—of the work performed by the late-coming workers of the parable: It was nothing to boast of. It certainly did not entitle them to the high pay they actually received. In itself, it did not. So they had very good reason to be astonished, and heartily thankful.

But what then about the value of the work of the workers who had "borne the burden and the heat of the day," as they themselves like to express it? Did *their* exploits entitle *them* to a higher pay than what *they* received? Did their work entitle them even to what they actually received?

Let us look at this calmly and realistically. Let us look at it in the penetrating light of the heavenly Agape. That is not only a heavenly light, but just, therefore, also a down-to-earth light; in fact, the only light that enlightens our contingent world of blunt everyday reality.

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The only thing strong enough to supply value to the work of men, performed in the workshop of God, is Agape, the great value-creating agent! This is what we should all know with certainty. Without that divine supplement, human activity is worth absolutely nothing. And that rule applies to all men without exception.

But what possibility does there exist then, you may very well object, of making any realistic distinction at all between man and man? What difference can any evaluator establish, with any degree of reasonable criteria, between specific groups of human workers? Is there no difference of any realistic kind?

To be sure, there is a difference. And it is a marked one, a decisive one. Again we have to be reminded of a capital point: Man is a free agent. He is not an automaton. He may not be able to create, all by himself, any true value. But he does have the ability to *prevent* that value from being created in him. This is his one expertise, that of interfering *negatively* with creation. So there is a difference, a most conspicuous one, when the final outcome is observed, from person to person, or from group to group.

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And notice one thing: that realistic difference is just the one we can readily observe in the two groups of workers in the vineyard. One of them turns out to be what the Bible calls a regenerated group, the other an un-regenerated group. The members of the former find their values outside themselves; that is, they find them in accepting, unreservedly, the simple fact of the Husbandman's generosity and grace, without any sophisticated analysis of comparative merits inherent in two rivaling categories. The latter, however—the grumblers—insist on finding the criteria of value in themselves; that is, in the work they themselves have produced. This self-centered attitude of theirs forces them into the subjective mood of demanding so and so large a reward, based on a "just" comparison between their own merits and those of their neighbors. In short, the two attitudes are fundamentally divergent.

This also explains how Agape can manage to save one person (a salvation constituting the most remarkable fact of miraculous creation, or re-creation, ever observed) while another person is not saved. It is a vertical impossibility for any Saviour to save him.

It stands to reason—plain commonsense human reason—that everyone will not be saved then, even though God is without any partiality or injustice, or any deficiency whatsoever in His love. Of course, the one great boon that comes to man, according to the evident sense of the whole story, is his salvation into the kingdom, and would it make any sense whatsoever for a Christian, who has enjoyed the privilege of serving

the Lord from his childhood on, to bear a grudge against another person who has accepted salvation only at the eleventh hour of his old age?

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## DOES GOD LOVE SINNERS RATHER THAN RIGHTEOUS MEN?

A particularly obstinate myth about Agape's arbitrariness and unreasonability has been manufactured in the ingenious workshop of modern theology. And the manufacturer is again that illustrious "spontaneity" and "unmotivatedness" theory we should now be fairly familiar with. So, whatever we do, let us not accuse Jesus of being the originator of such a myth. We have had theologians more than enough who imagined that it had its basis in certain sayings from our Lord at the time when He went around doing good and exposing evil in Palestine. Let us quote Him verbatim:

*"I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Matthew 9:13*

According to the celebrated motif researcher, God is here seen "cutting across all lines of traditional justice and sound human reason." Evidently something quite important has not here been duly noticed: When Christ makes the above statement, He is answering the *Pharisees* who accused Him of keeping company with sinners all the time; that is, with the manifestly sinful ones: publicans and prostitutes. According to their concepts, he should rather prefer the company of such as them, the allegedly righteous ones! That was their reasoning.

In this context, then, *what*, exactly does Jesus mean when He speaks to them about the "righteous," and about the "whole" ones who "need not a physician?" What do his terms mean when He says that His loving care is for "they that are sick?" Matthew 19:12. Please *think* before you answer that question.

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The human creature who still has a bit of self-criticism left in him ought to understand the Lord of Agape quite well here, even though the Pharisees did not. They were hopelessly blind, you know, to the simplest facts in their lives. Do we who read the gospel today suffer from the same lack of basic intelligence and sound self-appraisal? Do we not understand the simplest bit of ironical speech? It stands to reason that those "whole" ones, to whom Christ was speaking, were anything but whole in the profoundest depths of their actual condition. Those "righteous" ones were anything but righteous in the proper sense of the word. Or do you really think that Christ, in full earnest, intended to point out that the vast majority of men, those who did not avail themselves of His cure for their souls, were truly well, truly righteous? Please remember what was very soon to happen to those Scribes and Pharisees so boundlessly proud of their own excellency. To any intelligent observer, they would shortly reveal themselves as notoriously sick and notoriously unrighteous. That special unrighteousness of theirs was a mortal disease in their deepest hearts. They were virtually dying for lack of spiritual wholeness.

So what can it be that prevents allegedly sharp-witted listeners from perceiving the shaking irony contained in Christ's words: "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners."?

As if those to whom He came were not all sinners! Of course we all are.

Note this: There is only one difference between men and men. That is the difference between repentance and impenitence. Those who harden their hearts reach a desperate stage in the end. At that stage, they are absolutely insensitive to their own sinfulness. For such people Christ cannot do anything.

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Irony is a form of speech often intended simply to shake a person awake. He must be called back, before it is too late, to a sad reality he is about to let dwindle catastrophically away from the conscious regions of his human mind. Would it be so strange if the Bible senses the need of using that form of speech sometimes? How tragic then, if the readers are so blind that they do not at all catch the ironical meaning of the terms employed. Are theologians, among all men, those seeming least prone to grasp this simple explanation of the "enigma?" Some of them certainly insist on conjuring up nothing less than a whole revolution, assumed to have taken place in the very essence of God's normal thinking—away from all decent rules of common sense. And why do they go to the wild extravagance of introducing such a mess of far-fetched absurdities? They do it simply in order to have the literal words harmonize with their normally underlying ideas.

The main reason why we must wage a relentless war against this non-reasonability cult is evident: It is cruelly unfair to God. It is a terrible denigration of His character. His maligned name must be washed clean again; and common sense has a significant part to play in that act of vindication!

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God is the entirely fair, the entirely reasonable One. That is the ringing message all men must get to hear. He is the loving Father who keeps doing all He possibly can do, both for His repentant and for His impenitent children. This was also the great rule applied when He turned to the workers who worked in His vineyard throughout the whole day. It was the basic principle applied to the workers of the eleventh hour as well. Let us look again at the two categories.

#### **THE RATIONALE BEHIND THE DIFFERENT TREATMENTS GIVEN TO TWO DIFFERENT GROUPS OF WORKERS**

Those jealous, self-seeking first-comers were not worthy of any extra pay. So they did not get it. But there was one reason still more important, from an Agape viewpoint, why they should not get any additional remuneration? If they had got it, what would the result have been? It would have caused them direct harm. It would have rendered them still more jealous and self-seeking. It would have perpetuated in their hearts the erroneous idea that, in spite of their jealousy and self-centeredness, they were perfectly just.

The true Agape, however, could never yield to that subjective idea of self-righteousness, man's proud insistence on an ever increasing salary, regardless of his personal attitude toward the work, toward right and wrong.

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And now, what about the late-comers, the eleventh hour workers? They were not given any promise or contract, apart from the plain statement that they would receive their due reward. Evidently they did not demand anything more than that. Why? They

were obviously conscious of their own lateness, their manifest insufficiency. Therefore, they were humble and thankful for an opportunity to work in a good vineyard. They recognized that they were given a worthy task in spite of their own unworthiness. Do we realize what such recognition or self-criticism actually means for the outcome? I mean, for the factual quality of the work performed? Workers having this spirit will inevitably tend to do a better job than those who start out bargaining about their "rights." Can that be denied?

And now, please think of the *manager* for a brief moment. Think of him as a person, a man surrounded by personal problems, a man like you and me. Does it mean something to him personally whether he gets employees like those late-comers into his workshop. Such workers do not waste the manager's time and nerve power quarreling with him about their rights "according to the contract," do they? Probably they don't, while others certainly do.

So tell me then, was the work of those eleventh-hour workers worth something real to their employer? Obviously yes! Maybe even more—quite materially speaking—than that of the long-term employees.

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It means something, I can assure you, to the quality of the work in a plain, practical way, that the spirit of Agape is found in the worker's heart. To the Master, this is essential. You and I may be ever so unworthy of the call to work for Him at the time when He calls us. But his attitude toward us is that of the creative Agape. The incredible reward of a cooperation with Him produces in us the value we originally lacked. That is: if we permit Him to change us, like nobody else can. By the time we are through, and are due to receive our "pay check," we will be transformed men. This is God's creation, which changes everything. In the outcome of that creative act, there is no lack of realistic value, no absence, of justice, no want of reason. Who would dare to challenge God's creation in the name of either justice or reasonability? That would itself be both terribly unjust and terribly unreasonable.

The residual value and worthiness God, Himself, is able to discern, even today, in creatures who have gone wantonly astray, is something He must be fully entitled to find valuable, of course. To Him, the Creator and legitimate Father, that is value enough to make them worthwhile candidates for a thorough recreation; that is, redemption. He who has realistically sacrificed His life for you and me has every realistic right to look upon us in the perspective of that tremendous work already accomplished on Calvary's Hill in our behalf.

Well, you insist, but the realization of that new creation in the life of Mr. So-and-So may not yet be an accomplished fact in the same complete sense; so what just reason or intelligent right does God actually have, at this early stage, to love him?

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This objection is not valid in the case of God as the great Lover. For, in His very capacity as the eternal One, the only Self-Existent One (that is, the Non-Created One), He is not limited by the time borders that limit you and me, the creaturely ones. Even the dead "live unto Him," as Christ Himself expresses it about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, still in their graves. To God's mind, we are eternally present in our final form; that is, in the way we shall come out in the end, whether it is as those who have chosen to obey or those who have refused, in the willfulness of their rebellion. If

we, at the decisive moment, accept His salvation, He sees us as saved ones. This is the undeniable merit and the inalienable reality of His new creation act, His re-creative Agape. Should not Christ have the full right of perfect reasonability to love the produce of His own creative wonder, and that even any number of years before it visibly, historically takes place? His plan of concrete creation was a reality in His mind from everlasting, wasn't it? What we all fail to fathom is the tremendous realism of that divine creation as an ideal *plan*, and as an *historical act*.

Some theologians and philosophers seem to think that Christ's Agape is so devoid of all reason and realism that He would have died willingly, even if there had been no prospect of one single man accepting His sacrifice or deriving any practical and reasonable benefit from it. That kind of idealism is not a part of true Christian philosophy. On the contrary, it might turn into a downright calumny against God. For it would be a meaningless statement about Him. And there is no room for any meaninglessness in God, blessed be His name.

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More orthodox teachers may, it is true, have had radical ways of expressing the tremendous individualism inherent in God's logic. For instance this: Even if there had been just one single person lost to sin, and Christ saw it possible to save him, He would have died for that person. That, you see, is a radicalism which does *not* get involved in the unreasonable. It is *not* meaningless. It does *not* go into absurdity. It simply shows the value God places on each single individual. Such a truth enhances the meaningfulness of human life. Notice the difference between those two cases: There is an infinite distance between *one* individual and *no* individual. One is the minimum number, according to common sense logic. And Christ is a common sense logician. To die for anything *less* than one would fail absolutely to make good sense. So God would never do it.

The confusing thing is that modern theology makes such an ado about a certain "deeper sense," even right in the midst of utter nonsense. And so does modern philosophy. Since Kant, this world seems to have lost its senses completely. Reason, as something based on objective facts, independent of subjective moods, is looked upon as an utter impossibility. It is often assumed that there is no absolute norm for the reasonable. What would appear reasonable to one being, for instance man, just cannot be accepted as reasonable to another, for instance God. And this discrepancy is believed to apply regardless of how enlightened that man may be in his perception of objective truths. In fact, the more realistic a grasp he has of the objective facts of everyday life, the more man is assumed to be "out of tune" with God. Of course, what is really proclaimed by those epistemological pessimists is simply that there are no objective facts accessible to man in this world.

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## **GOD HIMSELF IS THE STANDARD OF PERFECT FAIRNESS AND PERFECT TRUTH**

Nygren thinks that the spontaneous quality of God's Agape necessarily means that His love is directly "opposed to all rational computation and calculation." (Op. cit., p. 90).

No, not at all. Agape is only opposed to some men's computations and calculations. But they are furiously irrational. Christ is our ideal, our perfect model, also in matters of rationality and good common sense. He has called into existence persons endowed with sufficient reason to understand, in order to meet this rationality ideal of Jesus Christ. How, otherwise, could they reasonably have been made responsible for their acts?

We have mentioned the difficulty theologians find in fitting into a reasonable pattern the "exorbitant" requirement made by the old God of stern rule: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." (Mark 12:30). This is "Old Testament Judaism," they proclaim. What they fail to realize is the fact that Christ, in the New Testament, is exactly as "exorbitant" in His demands. And one thing in particular is overlooked:

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At what point of man's life does God demand this total love? It is only after He has made Himself indubitably known to man as the infinitely loving and loveable One, who He really is. That knowledge gives man a fair opportunity to be "possessed by God," if I may use Nygren's terminology.

By the way, I am not entirely happy with that term either. To be "possessed" may remind some readers of something not quite positive. The one by whom people are more often "possessed" is rather the devil German: "vom Teufel besessen").

Such negative connotations will tend to prevail at a time when the idea of "conjunction" and "exorcism" is so strongly in the forefront. That implies a downright forcing of the human will. But this is exactly what God never permits Himself to do. Freedom of the will is essential, as we have seen, for any meaningfulness to exist at all in Christian soteriology. God never forces a person to do His will in terms of accepting His salvation offer. He never annuls the gift of will freedom which He has once granted to man. For that would mean refusing to regard that man as a person any longer. And, of course, the only way we can be saved is as persons, either this or not at all.

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The conclusion of my argument is bound to be: We must admit that God is entirely fair, entirely just even in demanding of man that total love. For He always consistently remains in harmony with what I call the fundamental motif of other-centeredness. That will have to be, in His case as well, the decisive criterion. God's basic trend is that of turning outward—like the natural mother does, to use the best illustration we could ever find in an imperfect world. This simply means—on any plane of living personalism—the fact of seeking, and finding, the center of one's life *outside* oneself, rather than *in* oneself; that is, looking to the objective world, the world around one, the world of the "objects," as the place where one comes across one's dearest values.

Now, in the case of man, it is in perfect order to ask this searching question: Is it true at all that God does demand an unconditional and total love of him *without first having given him a fair chance to turn his gaze outward in that required alterocentric way*? No. God permits man to have a good long look at the wonderful Center of his being. The first thing God does is to reveal Himself, thus making it possible for man to accept Him reasonably, as the one true Value outside himself. Thus Jesus Christ, the revealed *Other One* above all *other ones*, causes the *one*, the helpless little one, man,

to find his Center, and to be irresistibly (but not forcedly, in the Machiavellian, political sense) attracted by the inherent beauty and infinite worthiness of that Center.

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### IS SPONTANEITY, IN ITS RADICAL SENSE, A DANGEROUSLY EGOCENTRIC PHENOMENON?

Now the sensational thing happens, I am afraid, that the quality of SPONTANEITY, as philosophers and theologians tend to conceive of it, turns into the diametrical opposite of that other-centeredness of God and of all goodness. Already a linguistic analysis would suggest this danger quite clearly: "Sua sponte" is, in Latin, the expression corresponding to the English adverb "spontaneously." But in the original that means: "of one's own (interior) urge" (in German: "aus eigenem Trieb"). So, rather a sort of ego-centric "self-possessedness" is here meant. You might as well, in certain cases, say: the fact of being obsessed with oneself. That is, not at all being primarily possessed by extrinsic forces, such as God, in the present case.

Now, according to the Bible, is God essentially the self-centered One? Does He demand of the others a quality of other-centeredness which He fails to reveal in Himself? No. The Bible starts out with the story of a literal creation. And what is that creation? It is exactly the great historic act of *turning outward*. It is a phenomenon philosophizing theologians have never been able to integrate in *their* concept of the divine. Why? Because their concept always used to be a concept of precisely self-centeredness: How could God, the absolutely self-contained One, have the desire of objects; that is, of factual things outside Himself? To them this was quite incredible. The notion that the great self-dependent One could even stoop down to *making* Himself dependent on the other ones, this was bound to leave them dumbfounded. Nevertheless, the Bible was undeniably there. The fact of Agape was also there. So human thinkers simply had to face this fact of boundless other-centeredness in some kind of way. Marcion looked, and turned his eyes away with disgust. He stubbornly denied that the good Lord had ever committed the "base act" of calling into existence the world of objects. "Another one" must have done that. The "bad God" of the Old Testament had committed this abominable crime of a concrete alterocentric outreach; that is, in the "unworthy" sense of bodily realism.

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Some existentialist theologians of today would not go to the same lengths of overt spiritualism as Marcion. They would rather admit that *some* strange alterocentric movement on the part of the true God has actually taken place. The Saviour of the world must have launched out on *some* kind of "alien" rescue maneuver. Still they seem to have some reservation. Exception must be made, they seem to say, for *one* ingredient of that God's totality. What "ingredient" is that? And how can they concede that there is any need of making any exception at all? I have some suspicion that they are not all that sorry about that concession. In fact, they may not count that ingredient they admit as part of His real being at all. In reality, it would seem incredible for them to commit themselves to any faith in creation proper. Above all, there is one part they seem prepared to swear has not had any share in that famous (Marcion would say *infamous*) "expedition" of God to realms outside Himself.

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What "ingredient" am I referring to? In my opinion, it is an integral part of the essence of God, namely *His soberly reasoning mind*. *Reason*, as old-fashioned Christians used to think of it, is not fit for the *kingdom of God*, as spiritualistic skeptics think of it. Sound common-sense reasoning has had to be replaced by un-reason somewhere along the road of divine pilgrimage. Objective evaluation has had to be replaced by subjective mood, sound sense by absurdity, in order to have the deed done. Agape, in other words, is not susceptible to principle-governed motives of love, based on the reality of the loved object itself, but only to the arbitrary impulses of the subjective lover.

This is the very opposite of what I have found to be true in my research on Alterocentricity as a basic motif corresponding, in all essentials, to Agape. (See [The Part of the Story You Were Never Told ABOUT WOMEN.](#))

According to Nygren's plain words, Agape is a love that *makes mockery of all attempts at rational motivation*.

To this I must sternly object that Agape generally distinguishes herself as being no mocker at all. And what she would be least capable of mocking is precisely reason. For sound reason obviously means—among divine Persons, as well as creaturely ones—the very grasp of reality. It is the proper organ, as it were, for the *love of the truth*. And that truth is *one*. It is not a plurality of entities at bitter war with each other. If we land in the absurdity cult of ultra-modern existentialism, we shall render a fatal disservice to all sound quest for the truth in Christian theology.

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### **AGAPE SEEN AS THE "NEW LAW" WRITTEN ON THE TABLES OF THE HEART—IS IT BASICALLY DIFFERENT FROM THE "OLD LAW" OF THE SINAI TABLES? OR IS IT AMAZINGLY SIMILAR EVEN REGARDING RATIONAL CHARACTER?**

What is this "law written in the heart?" Is it something entirely new, abolishing what had formerly been literally—and hence intelligently, rationally—expressed in so many words?

Or let me put it in other terms so that you may understand exactly what I am driving at in connection with modern theology's traditional interpretation of Agape: Is that new law, written in the hearts of human beings, something "blessed" with the "sacredness of the irrational"? In other words, must we do our utmost to "transcend" the profane realms of our common-sense intellect in order to grasp its "utopic reality"? Is that sacred "*internal*" writing of the law (whatever this specification stands for), something that is bound to take us by surprise once more? And does it surprise us so shockingly because it has what Nygren presents to us as the great surprise of Agape, something that "makes mockery of all attempts at rational motivation"? Those are his very words about Agape as a general surprise shocker.

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What I want to know with as great accuracy as possible, is whether the concept of the law written on the "fleshly tables of the human heart" is bound to be considered in terms of that same "sacred absurdity" we hear so much about today in existentialist circles of philosophy and theology. To have the law in one's heart—does that mean the

necessity of saying definitely good-bye to all reasonability and to abandon oneself unreservedly and relentlessly to the mercy of certain moods in man that cannot under any circumstances be governed by plain this-worldly reason? I refuse to believe this until I have clear evidence to that effect.

So far I may as well give you an illustration which might indicate that the opposite is true.

First, I must confess that I believe wholeheartedly in Agape as that tremendous renewal, a "law written in the heart." But what has not yet been proved is the theory that the "new" has nothing to do with the "old." A capital question here would be: What was the "old law" like? Did the Decalogue distinguish itself as having nothing whatsoever to do with the Spirit of Agape? We do read, at least, that the ten commandments were written "with God's own finger." This is a solemn declaration made about those "ten words" of God, and, apart from them, no other passage in all Holy Writ.

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Still there is no getting away from the fact that Jesus Christ speaks about a "new commandment." Does this mean that the "old ones," those He gave under so impressive circumstances at Mount Sinai, are henceforth outdated and declared non-valid? In order to pass an objective judgment regarding the true relationship between the "two laws," we must, of course, particularly have some definite knowledge about the peculiar Agape nature of the "new commandment," the one "in the heart." Is that "ideal" law a fact which automatically downrates the "rational" and allegedly "less cordial" law system of the Old Testament, committed to verbal formulation during the exodus events of Jewish history? In other words, is the Sinai law some kind of downright Eros phenomenon of narrow-minded legalism and self-salvation, so a spirit for which there is no place any longer at the moment when Agape has triumphantly won the battle? Is the new law bound to fight the old one indiscriminately and relentlessly?

#### **DID YOU EVER TRY TO MEASURE THE RATIONALITY OF THE "LAW IN THE HEART"?**

In his matchless little book on the sanctuary service, *Ransom and Reunion*, W.D. Frazee has given an illuminating and most intelligent illustration of what it really means to have the law written in one's heart. I am referring particularly to chapter 9 in the book: "When it is Easy to do Right."

The inner motive making it so "easy"—and I would say: intelligent—to follow the written commandment is, of course, precisely Agape. No other power on earth, either in the Old Covenant Era or in the New, could manage that master stroke.

And now, find out for yourself whether it is a power stripped of all sound human reason. You should, in the following, make it a point to check exactly *where* reason and un-reason have their respective places in this little incident:

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In accordance with Frazee's scheme, I accept the role here of meeting a mother who happens to be visibly embarrassed at the moment by the fact that her little child keeps whimpering or crying all the time. Then I pluck up my "courage" saying to her (I am making myself somewhat worse, it may appear, than average human beings would like to have the reputation of being. I apologize for the hyperbole):

"Say, madame, why don't you kill that embarrassing child of yours?"

What will that mother answer me? Shall we, for the experiment's sake, make her just as inhuman, with regard to both heart and head, as I have just proved to be in my question? Good. Suppose her answer would go approximately like this:

"Sir, I am afraid I do not quite get your idea. Do you really suggest that I should take the boy's life here and now? I just do not see how you could make a suggestion like that under the present conditions. Don't you realize, sir, that there does exist, in this land, a written law directed against such killing? You should go to the office where the law codes are kept and you will get to know about all the awful punishment they threaten against those who kill babies. Now, if I yielded to the thing you are speaking about, what would happen? The police would be there right on the spot, and I would be taken to prison. I might have to spend the rest of my life in jail. Do you understand that there are hard-core laws in the land that keep me from doing what you so temptingly suggest? I think I have some good reasons, after all, why I treat the little fellow the way I do. You must be careful these days about the way you treat kids. Of course, there are moments when I wonder if I shall manage to control myself. But when I think of that life-long imprisonment, I just don't dare to give in to my feelings. You understand me, sir?"

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Now what do you think about that answer? Does it sound intelligent to you? Of course not. Why not? You know something essential about mothers and their feelings toward their children. They have a certain law of love written in their hearts. So they are infinitely more intelligent than all that, aren't they? A mother would not spoil the reputation of her heart with an answer of that kind. If my question should be ever so foolish in the direction I have intimated, that mother would never respond to my wicked suggestion with a corresponding foolishness. She is simply too reasonable for such nonsense.

Let us continue to roam about in the kingdom of incredible imagination. We assume the presence of the same mother, the same boy. Even my own question to her remains the same. Only her answer this time varies slightly, according to the setting of the theme. We imagine her as a lady having some theoretical knowledge of the world of theology. Otherwise her response is very much the same:

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"You don't seem to be in your right mind, sir. Do you really propose that I should commit murder against this child of mine because he keeps crying all the time? You seem to be ignorant about the law written with God's own finger on tables of stone at Mount Sinai of old. You should also know that those very commandments remain written on tables in the heavenly sanctuary. One of them says: Thou shalt not kill! Now, if I did kill, what would happen to me? Do you quite realize what the result would be to me if I yielded to the temptation in this case? I would risk burning in the lake of fire. Of course, I do not want that. If you are intelligent, sir, you can't blame me, can you? I have some valid reason for not putting that boy to death. Do you get me? The temptation to transgress is certainly there, but as soon as I start thinking of the flames in that lake, I become sensible and behave myself."

Did you ever hear such madness from the mouth of a mother? Hardly. But what is it that makes us think this reaction just as splittingly mad as the challenge to which

she reacted? It simply is the absolutely intelligent assumption that a normal mother does have a certain law written in a certain place. Where? In her heart. She loves her child. She loves him with a kind of love having more in common with Agape than anything else we human beings on this earth happen to know: maternal love.

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And what then about the relationship between true reason and true love? Is it a strained one? Do you arrive at the conclusion that there is bound to be a bitter strife between the two? No, at least not intelligently so. There must be something wrong with your own mind if you think that a mother's love for her child will tend to make her less intelligent because intelligence is "supposed to have a standing conflict with genuine heartfelt love." Parents who are under the influence of the spirit of Agape, will in this very fact have an excellent guide for their sound behavior in life's most precarious situations. And that Spirit of Agape is none but the Holy Spirit.

Here some may say to me: "You are not so naive as to think that it is the Holy Spirit influencing and directing all those parents, most of them completely wordly in their ways and views, are you?" I am. In other words, I do not happen to be among the many who believe that Christians have a "monopoly" of the Holy Spirit and His gentle influence on human hearts. On the contrary, I am convinced that every person having a generous feeling of any kind in his heart, is thus influenced and guided, a wisdom-creating influence and guidance, directly from God. Not a single one among us would, in ourselves today, produce one single good feeling or practical deed of love. It is the Spirit's doing in every case. So the "law written in the heart" is a phenomenon you may observe every day in all kinds of environments. This is the only thing making our world tolerable and habitable at this late hour. It is Agape that keeps us all from turning mad, and committing the most awful crimes. Agape makes life tolerably easy for every one of us. Frazee writes:

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*You see, if parents love their children, it is not hard to keep from killing them. When husbands love their wives, it is not hard to keep from committing adultery, either in outward act or in inward thought. And children who love their parents don't find it hard to obey them. The Scriptures tell us, "Love is the fulfilling of the law." (Romans 13:10) How strange that anyone concluded that, if he had enough love, he didn't need to keep the commandments." (John 14:15, RSV).*

Frazee has certainly hit the mark. Just think more deeply of this phrase: "*If only I had enough love, I would not need to obey the law.*" Could any formulation be more unintelligent than that? Only illusion-haunted theologians could make statements as illogical as that. The main intention seems to be: Love should be kept so completely enclosed in the depths of the heart that no bit of it would "go to waste." According to such a philosophy, the person must feel elevated above every necessity of letting that love express itself in the form of concrete acts of love. Only spiritualist philosophers could invent anything as foolish as that.

"*Spirit of love without acts of love.*" What a strange specimen of the species. That is a love remaining at the stage of pure abstraction, needing no realization

whatsoever in terms of a practical unfolding in real life. Pagan spiritualism has again, for a while, conquered Christian realism. Eros has defeated Agape. But that defeat is only apparent or temporary. In the end, Agape is going to conquer triumphantly.

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Of course, there is a love—so-called—which is nothing but intoxication, an empty surge of feelings, a flood of vain phrases. The real name given by inspiration to this category of "love" is *infatuation*. It reminds me of what one shepherd of the flock writes warningly to a mother who keeps spoiling her child: "What you feel for your child, dear sister, is not love at all. You are just infatuated."

That means: fooled by vanity, indulgence in human *pride* and utter *emptiness* (those two always meet in the concept of being "*vain*"). The result is nothing but self-centeredness, so self-love rather than love for the others. "He that loveth his child chasteneth him." Proverbs 13:24. Here again the inexorable realism of Agape comes to the forefront. Of course this is a side of the Agape motif which most people had rather avoid. And the same holds good for the inclination we must always except from the lofty heights of super-academic theology, which is particularly high on vanity. I say "high on vanity," just as people today say "high on heroine," "high on LSD," etc.

#### **AGAPE—THE ANTI-ROMANTIC AND PRO-DYNAMIC**

In my opinion, Nygren has failed to do justice to the totality of Agape. And the details of this failure can be pinpointed, one by one. It is precisely what we all tend to overlook in this culture. Our dualistic trends cause us to have feelings of downright contempt for what the Bible keeps in high esteem.

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We have been speaking about the full Judeo-Christian respect for plain common sense. The Bible has deemed this indispensable for man in his this-wordly condition. And lest I be misunderstood, I should add to this that I expect man's this-wordly condition to be a condition God has planned for man now and forever. God made him to inhabit the earth, and there is nothing in the Bible to indicate that He has changed His plan in that respect. It is the spiritualistic distortions, peculiar to our present culture, that have foisted upon our minds the false impression that God has planned for man to leave forever this space-time world which He originally gave to Adam and Eve. God never intended to usher us all into a new category of existence that is "more spiritual," a weird eternity of timelessness and spacelessness. This is a philosophy entirely foreign to Holy Writ. It has its roots in platonic idealism, not in Christian realism. I deal with that topic in more detail in my work: *The Mystery of the 7th Day (Does it Interfere Crucially with the Basic Structure of all Reasonable Ethics?)*

#### **DOES AGAPE HAVE AN OUTWARD BODY? OR IS IT A MONSTER OF BODILESS INTERIORITY?**

I must say frankly that some of our spiritual leaders have been awfully anxious to expedite our departure into a world in which there will be "no more trouble" with the bodily substance of common sense ethics any longer. I mean precisely that idealistic world of timelessness and spacelessness.

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What we need is to come down to earth again; that is, to embrace the totality of Agape. The Judeo-Christian type of love is bound to include the "love of the truth" (the Biblical term meaning exactly the same as the modern term "realism"). What is obviously meant is simply a positive attitude toward *all truth*. This is decisive for our lives. Why? Because it decides our vital attitude toward the basic standard of all ethical behavior. Man is personally responsible because he has been given freedom of will and elemental intellect. He must make his option in front of that basic standard of right and wrong. He must do it here and now.

Without that rigid sense of the categorical imperative imposed by practical duties in everyday life, there would be no wholeness in Agape. And without that wholeness in Agape there would be no sense of meaningfulness in anything theologians do in order to form a reasonable image of the God of the Bible, to know what He really stands for.

I do understand the temptation theologians have succumbed to. They want an Agape that is pure interiority, an absolutely bodiless one, presenting no rigid form, no distinctive contours. It is so pleasant sometimes to have to do with the formless (the amorphous). At any given moment then, this can be given, by you yourself, any form you please. The "freedom" to do that is yours as long as the pure abstractions of your wishful thinking bear sway in your life. But that illusion of freedom will turn into disillusion as soon as that hidden inwardness "comes out." Simple reality takes definite shape, and unless a person has gradually familiarized himself with the concrete appearance of that reality behind a definite shape, he will have the unexpected experience of one practical problem befalling him after the other. So he will go on having the temptation to prefer a certain state of *formlessness* all the time.

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But would it do for Agape to remain at that stage of "pure Being," as idealist philosophers imagine it? Of course not. We are here standing in the immediate presence of nothing less than the Biblical giant of a total Agape; the unwavering courage to be absolutely *consistent* in one's attitude toward all realities: that includes the crucial question: What is meaningful and what is not? Above all, Agape is concerned with the boundless depth of immeasurable meaningfulness filling the whole of Christian religion. In order to be meaningful a thing must have *consistency*. And then the question will be: Which of the following two reactions is the really consistent one, and which is the really inconsistent one?

1. Would it be a more consistent realism to think of Agape as an interior reality remaining forever at that stage of a *pure interiority*?
2. Or, would it be a more consistent realism to think of Agape as an interior reality taking on *exterior form in dynamic action*?

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The intelligent answer is bound to be: The consistent behavior for all life is that it *unfolds*. It must manifest its essence in tangible physical form. The logical monistic outlook on life in the Bible invariably implies that the inward and the outward constitute nothing but two aspects of one and the same reality. This is the evident fact about man as a soul-body unity. The soul realizes its essence exclusively in a body. But those two sides of the human reality are totally interpenetrating, as the realistic anthropologist would express it. That means: there is no part of the inward soul which is not

thoroughly permeated by the outward body. On the other hand, there is no part of the body that is not thoroughly penetrated by the mental or spiritual element. It lies in the nature of all other-centeredness that the "inward" ceaselessly realizes itself in one way only; that is, by unfolding, expressing itself in something "outward."

### AGAPE—THE TOTAL ONE

And now, what about Agape? Is Agape something "inward" or something "outward?" According to that same biblical philosophy, Agape must be something "inward" and something "outward" at the same time. A love that fails to unfold, even for one single moment is no love at all. Love finds its entire life, its entire reality, in the unfolding. It knows no other style of life. It has no other possibility of existence. Its first and last movement is the trend outwards. What else would you expect if Agape is a synonym for Other-Centeredness? Agape would die the simple death of suffocation at the moment when it were compelled to remain at the stage of a pure theory; that is, in a condition of deep-freeze.

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Could you imagine anything less susceptible of being deep-freezed than just love? What makes Agape alive is precisely its versatility, its all-sidedness. Agape happens to be the total phenomenon above all total phenomena in this world. That is obviously William Barkley's opinion also. He writes:

The great reason why Christian thought fastened on Agape, is that Agape demands the exercise of the whole man." (*More New Testament Words*, p. 14)

What we must not suppress then, in an act of foul sabotage, is that Agape means a constant unfolding. It *is* active obedience. It *is* the dynamic realization of an ethical norm in personal behavior.

Of course, it has to be admitted that Christian love is an interior feeling *as well*. It is the sweetest sentiment ever thrilling a convert's heart. We must not cover up that fact, either. But if Agape were *only* this, it would be miserably deficient and incomplete. For then it would be confined to comparatively brief moments in a person's life, and to a comparatively narrow circle of favored friends in his environment. But now we have the blessed assurance: Christian love is something more than that, something infinitely more: *It is a principle at the same time*.

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### IS IT TOO CRUEL A STROKE FOR A ROMANTIC SOUL TO BE TOLD BLUNTLY THAT AGAPE IS JUST A PRINCIPLE?

Let us speak our mind freely. Let us express ourselves plainly and fearlessly in the sacred name of Christian realism. We should do this even at the risk of shocking some incurable romanticists: Love is *mainly* a principle!

Does that mean a mere theoretical abstraction? Is it what the so-called nominalists, a fairly realistic group within the precincts of medieval philosophy, used to

call *flatus vocis*; that is, something as empty as a mere breath of the voice? No, not at all. Agape is not emptiness in terms of some mere abstraction. But how could that be avoided in the present case, you might inquire? Do not all principles have something in common with Plato's pure Idea? To some thinkers, yes, that would appear inevitable, because the principle to them means nothing but a generally valid rule, regardless of particular circumstances—so, after all, a certain type of "barren abstraction."

Our question seems to take on a most serious tone. If Agape is mainly a principle, then is not she, as well, something purely verbal (*flatus vocis*) without any concrete substance in the tough world of contingent realities?

God forbid! Who would dare to claim that Christ's Agape is hardly more real than Plato's pure Idea? That would amount to making Agape just as pagan as Eros. Such claims could never be validated in the case of Agape.

But how can we make these things to rhyme then? If Agape is first and foremost a principle, does not that reduce love to something purely general and purely theoretical, something just as barren and heartless as the common lot of platonic abstractions?

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Well, let us see. One thing we do know about principles is this—and it is not a fact we always find too pleasant: They are implacable. Their validity is absolutely inexorable. So let the question be formulated boldly and unequivocally: Is Agape inexorable? Is it more or less inhuman?

The answer to that question would depend largely on the answer to another question: Is an absolutely irrevocable principle—*eo ipso*—necessarily inhuman? I would have to admit that the principles maintained by some philosophical and religious movements definitely are. For instance, I would state without any hesitation that the philosophy of pagan idealism maintains principles which are downright inhuman in the sense of utter heartlessness. Of course then, the duty would incumb on me to give valid evidence of that statement. And this would have to be done first of all. Afterwards I would have to prove—if I can (I so far accept the legitimacy of your doubts)—that the principles Christianity (that is, the philosophy of Agape) deals in, are basically different in this very respect: They are *not* inhuman. The general validities inherent in Agape, in terms of law and righteousness, are human in the sense of *humane*, that is filled to the brim with such delicate heart qualities as mercy and compassion right in the midst of the sternest justice.

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But, for the purpose of grasping that wonderful many-sidedness of Agape, we must now first take the time necessary to enter into the main tenets of the Eros philosophy *par excellence*, a philosophy I have dared to characterize as the most inhuman—or inhumane—ever known in the history of our world. It is not I who have posted the label of "Eros" on that philosophy. It is a tradition as old as the philosophy itself. And modern motif research has adopted the term as part of its nomenclature.

## **DOES A CERTAIN LONGING FOR NIRVANA EXIST IN NORMAL HUMANS? AND IS THERE ANY TRACE OF THE SPIRIT OF AGAPE IN IT?**

It must be permissible to assume that people in our Western World, so thoroughly haunted by Eastern Meditation philosophies, as has been the case of recent

date, do have some familiarity with the concept of Nirvana. Anyway, it is nothing more and nothing less than the incredible urge in personal beings that makes them desire, for some reason or other, to become non-persons; that is, to lose their individual identity. Man seems to think that personality is, at best, a superfluous quality. He would have every advantage in letting it go down the drain. In its place he would like some kind of impersonal collectivism of universal consciousness to take hold of his life. It is, above all, a certain type of meditation exercises that are supposed to help man become totally absorbed by the universal consciousness of the "World Soul," or whatever this absolutely impersonal deity is called. Sometimes it is entirely in a setting of Hinduism, called Brahman. My topical question at this time, however, is the following: Is that strange urge to have one's personal being swallowed up by an ocean of impersonalism an Agape phenomenon or an Eros phenomenon?

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Let us first take our point of departure in something comfortingly human. I am thinking of every normal human person's desire to find sympathy and personal warmth at the bosom of some compassionate fellow being. That is the normal reaction with all normal men toward their suffering and sorrow in a yet comparatively normal, or at least fairly human world.

We all know the Negro Spiritual: "I often feel like a motherless child a long ways from home." That is how poor human creatures express their sadness and suffering along the merciless path of their pilgrimage through this valley of shadows. Sometimes they find real comfort only in the God whom the Bible speaks about as the pitying Savior. He is so blessedly personal and therefore hearty in his mercy. He knows the individual's destiny. He is perfectly acquainted with man's various hardships, and shares every single one of them.

The diametrically opposite of this is what I feel expressed so vividly in another Negro Spiritual: "Old Man River." Did it ever occur to you that this is the desperate individual's touching description of what we all encounter sooner or later, in this frenetically merciless culture of ours, in the form of a philosophy of complete impassivity: "Old Man River!"

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*Old Man River.* To the courage-forsaken black person, Mississippi here, the way I feel about it, becomes a mighty symbol of that massive insensitiveness emanating from all things around him. Maybe you, today, do not at all see any monster in that gigantic river. And I do not blame you. I do not accuse *you* of insensitivity on that score; for in actual reality, a normal river, however large, does not harbor in its ceaselessly running masses of water any conscious malice or unsympathetic qualities of any kind. In fact, so far, the Mississippi is a thousand times better than the human slave-drivers; for the latter seem to have no real humanity left in them. They are the ones who have turned actively inhuman.

But notice: active inhumanity is not here the problem. Worse than positive hate and active ill-will is that solid impassibility (impassivity) which seems to penetrate nature itself today, thus constituting a violent onslaught, not so much against man's body and his physical life, but against his mind and heart, his very vision of meaningfulness. Active wickedness would be something you could cope with, to some extent. Or at least you imagine you could, either by reciprocating wickedness or by rendering good for evil.

But with total indifference there is hardly anything you can do. Now, "Old Man River" is just that totally indifferent fellow creature, a hopelessly impersonal element in the suffering Negro's existence. "He just keeps rollin' along."

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Again the great question is that of meaning or no meaning. Emptiness and despair, henceforth, seems to be the only visible reality in the life of the abandoned human child. How could anyone cope with that? Man seems doomed to the fate of just standing there. Where shall he turn for help? As far as human conditions go, he can only waver desperately between the devil and the deep sea. He is "tired of livin' and scared of dyin'," and meanwhile the Old Man River "just keeps rollin' along."

Never ever have I come across a more tragically gripping expression for that monster of comfortless impersonalism which is Eros stripped of all his usual beautiful garbs.

In order to appreciate more fully the character of the Christian Agape, it will be good to get to know something in further detail about the abysmal depths of the Platonic Eros with its icy message of systematic unconcern as the great philosophical ideal; that is, what pagan Western thought calls "idealism."

### **THE PART OF THE STORY YOU WERE NEVER TOLD ABOUT THE FAVORITE PHILOSOPHY OF THE PAGAN WEST, WHICH IS THE SWORN ENEMY OF AGAPE**

What is the truth about that "heavenly Eros" which was destined to become the philosophy and the religion of our Western World after Christianity had first tried to gain a foot-hold there, but had been stubbornly rejected? I am here speaking about the spectacular Victor, the great Throne Usurper of Western Lands. I become the essential "spiritual heritage" of our culture, the vain message of self-salvation, which, today more than ever, we see spreading like a prairie fire across super-civilized lands.

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The demon (Greek: *daimon*) who keeps spreading that fire (the flame of spiritualism) has one goal in mind: to make it impossible for Agape to have any impact worth mentioning on the hearts of Western men.

Since the thing happening at a furious pace in our world today is of such an epoch-making nature, and foreboding still greater drama in the near future, you will permit me to go back in history for a while to give you an overview of the whole matter from the dawn of western history. That means: I must draw a sketch of Plato's doctrine of the Idea, as I see it.

Well, you may object with a sigh of reluctance, I feel I can get along just as well without any deeper penetration into theories as deadly boring as Platonic philosophy. I am fed up with that stuff from certain classes in ancient history.

I sympathize with you. Evidently, what you have already been exposed to in this field of the spirit, has not impressed you as particularly entertaining. To you, it is just another specimen of the "tedious stuff" school books on philosophy abound in. But stop a little. The main reason why you have found it so tedious may be this common one: Essential elements have been left out of the story. I would like to include them. Philosophy teachers, you see, have their own way of cutting the record short, exactly at the spot where it might begin to be thrilling and just teeming with human interest angles.

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I am not speaking about a positive thriller, but a negative one. Toward such a thing in your life you must adopt an adequate attitude. Suppose a close relative of yours is fighting his last battle in a hospital's intensive care department. And then you say: "This is a funny case. But it leaves me unimpressed and mainly bored." Would than be an adequate reaction? No. In order to say that, you would have to be either an insensitive brute or a totally misinformed ignoramus.

Would it be equally inadequate to say about Plato's philosophy that it is just "funny?" I admit that it may *appear* as a weird game of the imagination, something incredible, but otherwise harmless. What Plato seems to tell us is approximately the following: You must not attach yourselves to those five beautiful pansies you have in your garden. They will soon be withered and gone. So *they* cannot constitute reality. The true reality is only one thing: the idea behind those pansies, a pure abstraction, "pansy-hood," if you can accept that term. What is real is not that beautiful flower, but rather beauty *as such*, beauty *in itself*. That will never die. It will exist forever. So attach yourself to the idea of beauty exclusively. Then you will never be disappointed.

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You may be surprised at a man who can fall in love with a world as barren as that of a purely abstracting mind. What a drear specimen of love! But do you feel there is any direct *harm* in this "funny game" of the pure intellect? "Dull" and "boring" may be the worst adjectives you would be inclined to use about a loner who gives himself up to ideas of that kind. You would not see anything so sensationaly *wicked*, or any "threat of life," in Platonic idealism. How could ideas of that purely theoretical kind constitute a real threat, except indeed to the happiness of the man himself, in case he should turn entirely crazy as a result of his mono-mania?

Above all, it would never enter your mind to bear any actual grudge against the fellow, as long as he—or your teacher of ancient philosophy—would have the gracious considerateness to leave *you* alone, that is, not insisting on imposing his weird ideas upon you, at least not beyond the realms of some class assignment, as imposition you feel you would have to bear patiently for a little while. But nothing beyond that!

### **IS PLATONIC IDEALISM A MATTER TO WORRY ABOUT?**

It is a common phrase on the part of generous observers, to state something like this: Why are you so militant in your attitude against idealism of the type you describe as pagan? Why not let the odd fellows of that philosophical fraternity enjoy their oddity as long as they can manage to find any pleasure in it? In other words, nothing to worry about at all! Forget the whole thing!

No, this is just what could never happen. The Western World has never been able to "forget the whole thing." After Plato, believe me, our world just could not be the same again. That was a vertical impossibility. To make as if philosophical spiritualism does not exist, after its existence has become an indelible historical fact, is simply to close one's eyes, willfully, to one of the direst realities of our present world.

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The peculiar brand of spiritualism taking its beginning in Greece, the cradle of our culture, has been a ball of fire causing a conflagration that no man can ever stop. We must get away from the dangerous idea that Plato was just a cute fancy-monger whose

fancies were bound to die with him. Plato is not dead. He is more alive in our world today than he used to be in antiquity. To ignore his aliveness would be the most fatal falsehood happening to Occidental history. And it is the very falsehood of a glorious Eros usurping the throne of a smitten Agape.

But is it not an undeniable fact, you say, that platonism is equated with the concept of *idealism*?

Yes indeed, that is a linguistic nicety. But if you imagine that this stands for idealism in the modern popular sense of the term, then you are again dangerously deluded. You naturally think: Plato is praised as the great idealist. So, in him, we have a man of unsurpassed *ideals*.

This is a common pitfall. Plato's philosophy should never have received the name of "idealism." That term leads us completely astray. It ought to have been called idea-ism. For it is the doctrine of the Idea, barely that, not the faintest notion of true ideals. And what *kind* of "idea" is it that here enters upon the scene? It is the "pure" idea. Beware of that "purity." It is pure nonsense. It means spirit without one bit of matter to go along with it and endow it with sensible reality. It is "pure soul" without one bit of tangible visible body to realize itself in. A more spooky thing than that was never machinated by men.

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Ghosts and apparitions have started invading the land of sturdy realism. A theory more destructive to the sense of reality and to the cause of meaningfulness in human life was never forged by the father of lies.

From now on, it is a quite bodiless soul that is imagined as going on to live in the human being after the body has been visibly destroyed and disintegrated. This is platonic fancy-monger business, not Judeo-Christian sense of human totality.

### CAN WE SYMPATHIZE WITH PLATO?

Well, you may still say a little apologetically in Plato's favor—is not this viewpoint of the great father of Occidental spiritualism, after all, a heroic effort to provide some tiny bit of comfort in a pretty comfortless situation? Is it not a certain token of well-intentioned idealism, even idealism in the most humane sense of the term? We must try to understand Plato. Would not that be fair? Then we might still be able to sympathize with him.

I do sympathize with Plato. I always have done so, and quite wholeheartedly, I may sincerely say. I also *understand* him, to a large extent. That is precisely what permits me to nourish no end of sympathy with his tragic case.

Here is the interior process taking place in Plato's life, as I have come to look upon it. That man had, of course, watched, like you and me, the sad thing happening to human bodies everywhere around him. He had observed how those bodies turn weaker and weaker as the years pass by. At last they become hopelessly sick and die. Consequently they are simply thrown into some dark hole in the black earth. There they rot and are eaten up by worms. Could this be a worthy fate for the highly-lauded king, called man?

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Hopefully not, I seem to hear Plato saying. God forbid!

But where then, should that poor philosophizing creature turn for some degree of comfort in a situation like that? Plato was worse off than you and I. He had no knowledge of the Christian hope we may cling to. I mean the future fact called resurrection—even the "resurrection of the *body*," if we may quote literally the confession of faith formulated by the Christian Church of old. So where would you expect the poor man to find a way out of his hopelessness? Would he find it in what visibly happened to the body? Oh no, that "part" of man certainly had to be given up as entirely hopeless, as far as the possibility of a survival was concerned. For what happened to that human body, as anyone could clearly perceive? It was doomed to destruction.

But what now about the "soul" of man? To Plato, the concept of "soul" did not mean the totality of a human being, as it does in the consistent anthropology of the Bible. To him, it meant something ethereal and entirely bodiless. So he had just one thing to cling to in order to salvage some morsel of human meaningfulness. And as a good humanist he must, of course, still do his best to insist on man being meaningful.

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So, by and by, the great idea flares up in his mind: What is there is the possibility of that "soul" of man being able to tear herself away from the body in the last moment—just like the rats are said to do at the moment when they anticipate their sad lot in a sinking ship. They just leave the doomed vessel. In this theory of "separability," which the realistic monist would rather call a theory of disruption, Plato was able to find the last hope of his rescue. His soul could leave the "sinking ship."

The "separable" soul then is the great solution. Why should not this precious "part" of the human reality be able to wiggle its way out of the dead body and establish for itself an existence entirely apart from all bodies?

Good, you say, again mainly approvingly—is not that, after all, the only thing any person can cling to? And is it no idealism in the best sense the term could ever adopt? So Plato did have a meaningful vision of some kind of survival right in the midst of the darkness of death!

### **THE SPIRITUALIST PLATO, AND HIS CONCEPT OF SURVIVAL**

You said "meaningful" didn't you? And then you said "survival."

What beautiful concepts in the world of true philosophy and true religion! There could hardly be anything to criticize as far as the meaningfulness of those words is concerned. But then we must immediately come to the bare facts. Please permit me to tell you something important about the special brand of "survival" Plato makes allowance for in his fantastic philosophy of the Idea. Afterwards

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We may deliberate calmly in order to see if you would feel equally tempted to use adjectives like "hopeful" and "meaningful" in connection with platonic survival.

Here again, you see, there is something your philosophy teachers have, most likely, failed to inform you about. That is a failure which has been going on for ages in our culture. And its results have been fateful to the spirituality of our world. Why have professors of ancient philosophy been so silent about a matter of such momentum?

I am not accusing them of willful deception. I am rather inclined to think that they just did not know better themselves. In fact, we all seem to be sailing in the same godforsaken ghost ship in this particular respect. We are children of the Western World. And, as such, we just never grasped the full implication of Platonic "survival." It is the very spirit of spiritualism itself which has here evidently been working wonders (that is, wonders of a rather demonic brand) in concealing certain facts from our spiritual eyes. Teachers of antiquity are, themselves, obviously kept in the dark about what Platonic dualism, or Platonic idealism, really stands for, what it deepest down implies.

What is it that "survives" in that "immortal" soul which Plato adheres to in his "hopeful" philosophy?

I had rather start by enumerating a few things you should *not*, by any means, expect to survive, according to Plato's scheme of "survival." Those negatives, you see, are so much easier to lay hold on. Maybe this simple series of "NIET"s, mentioned one by one, will take the worst of your illusions away. And this should happen the sooner the better.

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I may, in fact, limit myself, for the time being, to three qualities within the realms of the identity every one of us would insist on conserving intact, but which definitely are not candidates for actual survival in traditional platonism. I would be very much astonished if you would be willing to sacrifice those. If you had to despair of getting those three across the gulf separating you from the "other world," you would hardly put much stock in the concept of "survival." I should like to hear what you sincerely think about each one of them:

#### **THE NITTY-GRITTY OF "SURVIVAL" IN A PHILOSOPHER'S THINKING**

1. What about *memory*? I mean the simple recollection of things previously known? Will that blessed "immortal soul" of yours, which is supposed to survive the death of the body, have any definite remembrance, in the other world, of what happened to you in this one? Will there be a survival of individual memories, if the current theory of philosophical idealism holds good?

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No, not a whit of it. Just do not flatter yourself that anything of that kind could happen to you. Even Plato is not for one moment able to give you any promise to that effect. So, if you happened to think that your bodiless surviving soul, as consistent Platonic idealism conceives of it, should also include the childlike hope that you might *recognize old friends of yours* in that new "heaven" you are bound for, then just cut that stuff out of your imagination. In our present world, yes. Here friends, when they meet again to have some familiar chat about this and that, do enjoy the pleasure of sharing memories they have in common, joyous ones or sad ones. But just drop all hopes of that category at the gateway to the world of the Ideas. Memories do not belong to the eternity of Platonic idealism!

Why not? Oh, that matter is very simple. Just reason intelligently for a moment: When, today, you happen to remember something, does that something exist in a vacuum, as a pure abstraction? Is it a timeless and spaceless thing? No. You will always find that the thing you do remember, happened at a definite time and in a definite place. It also happened in a definite way, under specific circumstances. But

here there is one thing you still have to learn: in Plato's "heaven," such specificity has no prestige. In fact, it is not supposed to exist any longer. So be advised, my good friend; you should know that here you have got into entirely different categories of "existence." I rather ought to say categories of "essence." You have landed in the no-man's-land of eternity and infinitude. Specific memories could have no chance of surviving there. All your memories, so far, you see, have been so "this-worldly" in their nature that they just are not fit for survival. They would be absolutely homeless in that new world of the pure spirit.

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You do not seem to realize fully what kind of world you are bound for. Plato's reality is a reality entirely beyond time and space. You must get to know what his concept of eternity is like. To him, eternity means *timelessness*. To Biblical philosophy (the wisdom of the Judeo-Christian God) it means something entirely different: *time without end* (so: time, time, time,— no end of time! According to God's plan for man, the two of them, Jesus Christ and man, are to spend their millennia, one after the other, endlessly, in a most definite place, the New Earth; *endlessly*, day after day.)

But we are speaking about Plato's "heaven" and Plato's "eternity." You may have had certain illusions regarding the "history" and the "geography" of that strange "land," which spiritualistic thought has in store for you. It certainly is a weird "time" and a weird "place" you there have in front of you. It is good to get one's theories straightened out. You must now get to know something you hardly imagined about a Platonic Kingdom, whose "history" is drowned in timelessness, and whose "geography" has only one consistent name: spacelessness.

So if you happen to be a novice in platonism, and you have hitherto imagined that you are still going to have a nice time around the fireplace, or something like that (for instance, a friendly chat in a snug corner) after you have reached the fancy harbor which Eros has intended you to land in, well then, my dear reader, you happen to be the victim of a sad mistake. You are in for a terrible disappointment. May I assure you: in that "harbor" you will find no group of old friends coming together to chat about "the old days." Even the *term* "days" has been blotted out. Things are not all that human, I assure you, in the realms of Platonic romanticism. There are no "mansions" prepared for you in the realistic sense in which the Bible speaks about mansions. You should know with more surety which heaven you are heading for.

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2. And now to my second point: What about the *will*, the ability to wish for something, heartily and intensively, and then to make up one's mind, dynamically, to have that wish come true? Will any such possibility be among the realities in the world of Platonic Idea?

Far from it. The will, you see, belongs to the "this-worldly" attributes of human beings. Some religious creeds of our world today, it is true, still do, apparently, ascribe to the will a certain importance. Without it there could be neither freedom nor progress, nor any of the most meaningful thrills in life. But how could you imagine the survival of any such thing in Plato's world of the heavenly Eros? Just be sensible now. You ought to know already something elementary and self-evident about a person's will.

Whenever you "will" (that is, put into practice that faculty of your being), it is always *something* you "will." And there is, of course, also another thing your will has in common with your memory. This "something" that you grasp with your power of volition, must find its proper home in time and space. The willed thing, no less than the remembered thing, *must* meet certain conditions in order to be a reality at all: Its realization must be in time and space, or not at all. So the will, too, would be a vertical impossibility if it were deported to the barren realms of pure abstractions. You just cannot apply your will to a *non-object*. That would be a contradiction in terms. It would be willfulness, at its highest level of absurdity.

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3. Now, finally, the human phenomenon called *feelings*. You are not entirely indifferent about that part of your life, are you? You do have some "bias" causing you to think it would be nice to get *that* thrilling part of your humanity along with you on the unique trip you have been booked for into the promised land.

Well, again Plato's thumb goes down, mercilessly. No feelings please! If there is one thing for which no visa can be issued by the immigration authorities of that blessed Wonderland of the pure Idea, then that must be the feelings. For they are invariably rubricized as passions. And the passions always have some dubious intercourse with the *body*, that miserable scape goat for all evil in the world. According to Plato, salvation is a definitely unbodily business. The genuine spiritualist (idealist) is scared to death almost, when he hears about a world in which passions (emotions) are possible.

Well, you may say, I find it quite reasonable that all evil passions should be banned and refused entry into the great land of future bliss. So I do not object to Plato one bit on *that* score. Take, for instance, envy and maybe worst of all: direct hate. Would not any philosopher or religionist be perfectly right in banning emotions of that kind? Would it not be his simple duty to ostracize them? Would not a Christian also like to exclude jealousy, for instance, from the realm of possible things in an ideal future world?

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Entirely correct. But, now, wait a minute. What about some other feelings? One of them is called *love*. Let me pass on to you a serious piece of information: Love, as a living sentiment in personal human hearts, is a taboo in the land of Platonic "salvation." The gates of Erosville (a sort of counterfeit, I would say, to the Bible's New Jerusalem) just are not open to any genuine feelings of the human heart. To Plato, all emotions, without one single exception, are representatives, not of the *heavenly* Eros, but, at best, of the *vulgar* Eros. So they are not eligible for the heavenly pilgrimage.

By the way, knowing the basic rules for admission to those sublime halls of the pure intellect, how could anyone expect that a thing as this-worldly and downright "vulgar" as human emotions, of any kind, could be admitted and considered dignified enough for the fabulous empire of a world-soul nothingness, that silent harbor of a joyless and sorrowless Nirvana, which spiritualist thinkers have manufactured for *their* eternal bliss?

You should again be reminded that this Nirvana is timeless and spaceless, in fact, even *objectless*. By the way, I think that is a pretty well-suited "house" for just "*nothing*" to dwell in—and expand in. There should not be much there to prevent that

blessed *nothing* from feeling at home and safe against any interference on the part of *something*.

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What do I mean when I say that Nirvana is objectless? I mean it is as different from Agape as anything could possibly be. The person who loves, you know, in a meaningful sense of the term, could never be objectless, could he? For when you love, it certainly is *something* or *somebody* you love; isn't that indispensable? And this something or somebody *whom* you love, does happen to exist at a definite time and in a definite locality, isn't that beyond doubt? He does not have the "shameless boldness," as Plato would be likely to consider the matter, to have his life and his entire being in those most concrete categories. And what about you, the lover, the one who has the "daring specificity" to love such and such a one, at such and such a time, in such and such a way; *you* seem to feel absolutely free to exist in exactly the same literal way as your beloved one. Of course, such literalness and concreteness would be an unheard-of indecency in Plato's company. How could you expect that such qualities, pertaining so self-evidently to all individual persons on our realistic plane of existence, would also manage to pass on as legal tender into the nameless and emotionless land of pure-spirit-ism?

In other words, you may be right enough, I might say, in admiring the "one half" of Plato that seems so eager to get rid of the evil passions. But those passions do not reside in the *body exclusively*. They are in *man* as a totality; that is, a time-space creature. Plato is right enough to the extent that he desires to rid himself of jealousy and hate. But there is a tragic absurdity which consists in the extreme of "throwing the child out together with the bath water."

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So it is against this obscure background you must henceforth visualize the glorious light called Agape, the "Morning Star" of your human night, the "dayspring from on high," "the sunrise of your hearts." Those are Biblical expressions for the matchless event of divine love building its bridgehead for our rescue right in the midst of enemy territory. For this earth of ours today is definitely still in the possession of a pagan Eros, although it is also true that Eros is a conquered foe.

Those three cases of personal human phenomena (memory, will, and feelings), so totally unfit for translation into Plato's heaven, are just a random sample of the general gloom you should now possess some accurate notion about. It is a gloom constituting an inherent trait of that "celestial" Eros, which for millennia has had the audacity to establish itself as a "viable rival" for the Christian Agape in a world-wide drama of inexorable battle between basically diverging outlooks on life.

It could hardly be "intelligent reason" that is demanded in order to opt for such an alternative of "survival." On the contrary, it seems incredible that people with a grain of common-sense reasoning left in them can choose a way of self-salvation offering "promises" of a bliss as poor as that. The most important thing, however, that you should here catch a firm hold of is this historic fact: The one of whom you have here got a tragic glimpse is none but Eros. It is Eros, the lonely climber in the night.

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The air he has got to breathe must be dangerously ratified up there in the icy ether among the twinkling stars.

## WHAT SURVIVES, THEN, IN THE EROS PARADISE?

Now I do realize what the reaction of some of my readers might be to what I have just said: "Can this dreary picture you have been painting of spiritualism's promised land of survival be an entirely fair one? The ideology of philosophical idealism, the great religion of Eros, cannot be all that empty, can it? There must be something you have pushed under the rug, some positive thing you have failed to mention. What you have here enumerated is just what man does *not* manage to haul along with him into the Nirvana heaven of the pure Eros motif. Now the time must finally have come to tell us something about what one does manage to get into "the place." What is it that really survives in this Platonic category of eternal life? The theology of the Eros motif must have *something* to offer after all. What is it that really survives?"

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What really survives? That is swiftly told, my dear friend. Only one thing survives. One single thing is deemed worthy of survival: *pure intellect*. I shall try to bring home to your mind and your heart what that practically means. May we go to the world of mathematics for an instance. I am speaking about *pure* mathematics. That is why I must be extremely careful lest I choose a concrete example which might lead your thoughts astray into the variegated world of *applied* mathematics. If I tell you that the concept of "2 plus 2 equals 4" belongs to the "things you get along with you" into the dreamland of that Platonic New Canaan, then please don't be so light-minded as to think: 2 potatoes plus 2 potatoes equals 4 potatoes, or 1 dandelion plus 1 dandelion equals 2 dandelions. Sorry, my good student. Your thinking, however fresh and correct it may be for simple everyday purposes, here proves useless, or worse. It has been contaminated by totally irrelevant issues. Your mathematics has been mixed up with material elements, in fact, things as profane as prosaic potatoes and vulgar dandelions. You must be considered a naive child in the sophisticated kingdom of the pure Idea. You had better grow up. A mature idealistic thinker would not let his childlike feelings, entangled in the specificities of a tangible world, get the better of him. You seem to imagine that you can introduce bread and butter, cabbages and guinea pigs, right into the lofty world of pure mathematics. That is a sacrilege. To Plato, who is your great model of Western thought forms, that would be a sure sign of unforgivable materialism. Whatever you do, you are not supposed to contaminate the world of pure abstractions with things as vulgar and as irrelevant as that.

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After this general orientation about do's and don'ts in the ideal world, I would like to ask you one straight question: Do you feel inclined to buy the eternity Plato offers you? I have an inkling that you would have some hesitation to choose Eros, after all, now that you have, to some degree, been kept duly posted on what his self-salvation really implies. It is nothing but a pseudo-salvation, custom-made for super-adult intellectualists in our Occidental super-culture. It would be a good thing if we all got a little more aware of the terrible onesidedness—and hence the disruptive character—of this culture. The "pure intellect" survival constituting the only immortality this idealism can boast of, is *not* intellect at all. It is intellectualism. Intellect is a God-given and irreproachable thing. There never was anything wrong about being intellectual. Intellectualism, contrarywise, is a fundamentally evil thing. It is onesidedness. It is a

phantom, a ghost. Intellectualism is what happens in a culture when the intellect is no more satisfied with occupying its legitimate place. It is intellect turning into a tyrant, elbowing his way forward at all costs, knocking all other things down, and not stopping until he has filled *all* places with *his* huge, self-conceited ego. The vain fool who permits intellect to do this to his life is an intellectualist. He has ceased to be a human being. This is exactly what has happened to our present Western culture. Tragic Occident: How could Agape be expected to find a last little corner in which she might still place her slender little figure in such a crowded and incongenial environment? How could she manage to breathe and survive in so rarified a spiritual atmosphere? Barren intellectualism has always been a typical Eros phenomenon, a usurper, an imposter.

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### **IS THE MAIN STREAM RELIGIOUSNESS OF THE EAST ANY DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF THE WEST?**

And then let us take a rapid mind trip to the Far East. Not so very far in time from Plato's era in the West, there appeared a man in the East teaching a spiritualism of an astonishingly similar type, and even laying the foundation for a religion which was destined to become the strongest, numerically speaking, in the whole world. I am referring to Buddha and Buddhism. By the way, would you expect man-made philosophies to differ so significantly from each other? When man gives himself up to manufacturing religions, there is just one alternative available. That is to reproduce, over and over again, the religion of Eros.

Of course, it may be admitted that Buddha was an idealist, impressive enough in his own way. He has actually become famous for a certain idealism in the most popular sense of the term. Here is a man, many would say, who harbored true ideals of heartfelt humanity in his sublime soul.

I do not doubt for a moment that Buddha's heart may have been filled with genuine pity at the sight of India's famishing millions. What could he do for these crowds of suffering people? What hope could he give them? To him this became a searching question. Reaching to them a helping hand was his honest aspiration. I do not doubt it. But what did he actually do for those desperate millions of starving creatures?

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He did give them something. And it is a gift reaching through the centuries, all the way down to you and me in this Modern Western World of ours. He gave us all a philosophy constituting nothing but a confirmation of what our own sage Plato has machinated for us in his special type of pagan idealism, custom-made to meet the peculiar needs of our god-forsaken West. The two have worked admirably together to give Eros a decisive victory, in our world at large, over Agape; that is, an impressive one, *numerically speaking* once more. Spiritualistic idealism has only unessential variations from land to land, from hemisphere to hemisphere, from epoch to epoch. Eros remains identical with himself, always and everywhere.

Was it true optimism and the courage of realistic salvation Buddha offered to the multitudes of suffering and dying men in his immediate environment? Let us see:

What does Buddhism say about suffering? It is the one great evil in the lives of conscious beings. Notice one thing here, distinguishing Eros theology from Agape theology. It is an all-important distinction. And it also does have something to do with

illogical versus logical thinking: According to Eros, sin is not mentioned at all as the basic evil. No, suffering is the evil *par excellence*. To the higher logic of Biblical philosophy the perspective is entirely different. Suffering is nothing but the *automatic consequence* of sin. So sin, not suffering, is the root of all evils. That is Christian philosophy.

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With this we have already laid bare the first erroneous conclusions all along the line. We have pinpointed the first serious deviation from rational thought, not only in Buddhist philosophy, but in all Eros thinking. This is an irrationality that could not be avoided for one simple reason. Why? It is due to one capital fact, one fatal deficiency: There is no trace of the concept of *Metanoia* in Eros. I am speaking of the decisive and most precious concept in Biblical theology, called man's realistic awareness of the sinfulness of sin, and hence the *repentance* of sin. According to Holy Writ, this *Metanoia* is the primary condition, in the world of human lostness, for the great divine rescue maneuver: the salvation of our lives through Jesus Christ.

What, now, is the inevitable result of this wrong point of departure in Buddhist philosophy, and in the tradition of Eros-thought as a whole? I mean the idea that suffering is *the* great evil. The result is an immediate and perpetual fleeing away from suffering, the imagined big bugbear of human existence. And now how is that flight to be realized? How does man efficiently escape from suffering? He is supposed to manage this on one condition only: He must abolish the *will*.

Do you see the traditional Eros assault against what constitutes, at the same time, nothing less than *God's image in man*, and the basis of all personalism: the *freedom of the will*, God's most precious gift to creatures on the human level.

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## **INDIFFERENCE AND IMPERSONALISM RAISED TO THE LEVEL OF TOP IDEALS**

If the fundamental concept of a free will has been cast aside, then all meaningfulness and all hope in human life has equally been cast aside. The way Buddha expresses his all-out war against the will, the governing power in man's life, is approximately as follows: Man must unconditionally give up one bad habit in his everyday existence: He must cease to *will* this and that. He desires too much. He should give it all up. He is pestered by so many wishes. He wants to be happy, he wants to be pious; he wants to be a non-sufferer, short and sweet. These wishes can never be fulfilled. They are themselves the great hindrance to his happiness, his piety, his coveted state of non-suffering.

The proposed solution then is the thoroughly negative one: Man should abandon his very desire to overcome any evil, his will to achieve any improvement in the prevailing misfortunes of his miserable present. Only at the moment when you just do not care one bit any longer whatever misery befalls you, only then will it cease to have any power over you and to do you harm.

So what that great Eros prophet of the East actually says to his millions of suffering brethren in the world is this: Adopt an attitude of total resignation. Your wishes and longings for a better life cannot be satisfied anyway. True peace can come to you on one condition only. It will be yours only on the day when you have completely

succeeded in crushing the very urge for happiness and life in you. Resignation is the only clue.

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In other words, perfect *indifference* is set up as the great ideal, the only way to salvation. Is this negative thing true salvation? Does it lead to real peace? Is this the peace of life? No, it is the peace of death.

This is, however, the constant solution always envisioned by the philosophy of Eros. It may teach some type of self-denial. But is that the self-denial taught by Christianity? No, Christ's pattern of self-denial always has a positive goal. The aim of Agape is never a *status quo*. It is a positive progress. The thing you abstain from is something bad which will naturally prevent you from progressing. It will hamper or entirely cut off your triumphant march toward the land of bliss and eternal goodness.

It was never Agape's insidious plan to bar the person's courageous onward march toward that land. On the contrary. It is Agape's constant purpose to meet her followers *in* that land, and stay there forever with them. It is the God of Agape, Jesus Christ, who has, from the beginning, placed into every living creature an urge of self-preservation, a desire for life, abundant life, a sound desire for self-realization. Those original urges are positive forces of constructive character. So they are entirely favorable to the achievement of the highest felicity.

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How different from this is Buddha's insisting on a negative approach, a principle of utter resignation, a principle of non-life rather than life, of minimal consciousness rather than a maximal one! Man is supposed to resign himself to a world of total indifference and unconcern, a world in which passivity has all the prestige, and dynamic action non whatsoever.

With Agape, sound alterocentric activity is a sign of wholeness and harmony. With Eros, however, the ideal is rather one encouraging a minimum of vital urge outward. The life style favored is that of timid introspection. What is this? It is simply the trend of curving oneself into oneself.

No wonder that the most egocentric type of meditation ever invented by human creatures is hailed by Eastern "salvation experts" as the one great way of raising one's standard of everyday life to the level of sublime philosophy. Where Agape recommends *prayer*, Eros recommends "*transcendental meditation*." What a typical distinction between the two. In pagan spiritualism, meditation always took the place that only prayer can fill in genuine Christian spirituality. And what is the basic difference between meditation and prayer? Eastern meditation is a systematic effort to turn inward, finding one's deepest values exclusively *in oneself*. Prayer is the basic expression of an alterocentric style of life. It turns immediately outward. Man here finds his great value, his salvation from sin and final perdition, not in himself, but outside himself, in the Great Other One.

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Here some may feel that I should abstain from heaping words of depreciation, or even condemnation, over the efforts made by prophets from the East visiting Western lands today in an effort to rescue us, physically as well as mentally and spiritually, by

helping us to obtain a much needed relaxation from the tenseness which a hectic civilized existence has driven us into. Well, you might be right, if those exercises of "relaxation" limited themselves to an avowed this-worldly activity only. But this missionary effort has taken on dimensions of not only a philosophical, but even a profoundly religious nature. If ever Eros was waging an insidious war against Agape in our world, this is certainly now the case. And I have already told you what I think neutrality and tolerance mean in matters as serious as those of the great battle between evil and good, as it finds its culmination in an all-out struggle between certain fundamental motifs, in our days more than at any other time.

If you should have been under the deceptive impression that the old spurious gospel of passivism and self-sufficiency preached by the pagan religions of the Extreme East is something we have no relevant reason or human right to argue against, because they "do not have anything to do with us Occidentals," then you should just open your eyes and see for yourself how the teachings and basic life patterns of men like Maharishi Mahesh Yogi are now sweeping like a prairie fire across the continents of our Western World. I would have to be looked upon as a poor Agape researcher, if I had failed to make a fairly thorough investigation into the historical, philosophical, and religious aspects of the Transcendental Meditation movement now happening to our world.

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### THE SYSTEMATIC ANNIHILATION OF HOLINESS

But, so far, we must limit our study to some general traits of a typical Eros nature in the Eastern religions. Neither in theory, nor in practice does Agape have anything in common with what is here taught to the world. What does the Bible say about suffering? Is this the primary evil, a thing to be avoided at all costs? Not at all. Peter, for instance, tells us that we ought to rejoice in the same degree as we are seen worthy to suffer. So there must be some definite possibility then of finding meaningfulness right in the midst of suffering. Even suffering should be able to find its goal *outside itself*. So the way we suffer must be the determining factor. How should it be done? Whenever we suffer, it should be *for the sake of the other ones, the Other One*. Suffering together with Christ—this is what raises suffering to a higher level, an ideal level. There is no virtue in suffering as such. The *flagellants* and the *stylites* experts of the Middle Ages were wrong in arriving at that conclusion, of suffering as a good thing *in itself*. Nor will it avail anything to suffer just as an automatic consequence of one's own evil deeds.

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On the other hand, suffering as such is not necessarily an evil. In the philosophy of Eros, there has been the ditch-like extreme of regarding suffering as *the* evil of all evils, something you must flee away from, hate it like the pest. What if the Lord of Agape had adopted an attitude like that toward suffering? If so, things would not have looked too promising to you and me, would they? For then He certainly would not have come down to us. He would not have taken upon Himself the extreme amount of suffering it was bound to cost to redeem us.

Notice this: In order for the redemption of man by Jesus Christ to be a realistic thing, there was no possibility whatsoever, according to Agape's relentless philosophy, to lower, in any way, the level of consciousness in either Christ or man. The application

of a "syringe," in order to have some reduction of the pain involved is here absolutely excluded. Accepting the fact of the pain, and accepting it fully, together with the factual knowledge about its true origin (sin) this is nothing but a self-evident and integrating part of Christian realism, or Agapeic realism, which is one and the same concept.

So what *is* that flight from all suffering, as we find it in the Eastern religions of old and in their heritage left among modern men in the form of Transcendental Meditation? It is one and the same age-old Eros phenomenon: pagan man's systematic escapes from all reality.

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### **WHAT UNDERSTANDABLE "REASONS" CAN THE SPIRITUALIST HAVE FOR ELUDING PERSONALISM?**

Here I must mention a certain problem often arising in my students' minds as I go through the history of the great fight between good and evil with them, the history of the fight between Christian realism and pagan irrealism. Frankly, they say to me, you cannot assume that the Eros-intoxicated thinker you are describing is devoid of all logical thinking. Would not that be too fantastic indeed? There must, after all, be some kind of logical reason to account for the way he thinks and the way he acts.

That may very well be, but I, for one, would not boast that I have managed to find that logic. Evidently I have not got to the bottom of this difficult matter yet. On the other hand, in a way, I tend to agree with you very much. I believe that thinkers do have their reasons. That also applies to the one choosing the way of a systematically reduced consciousness, emotional unconcern, and downright impersonalism rather than an intensified consciousness, an ever increasing sensitivity, and glowing personalism. I do believe that he has his "reasons." Excuse me for putting that word between quotation marks. All I want to say is this: Those reasons need not be of the kind we commonly describe as logical or truly reasonable, as we understand logic and reasonability. But if they are not logical reasons, they may still be *psycho*-logical reasons. In other words, although they may not distinguish themselves as being intelligent, they may still have the quality of being intelligible.

Of course, the spiritualistic thinker may be just as much offended when I say this; maybe even more. For when I here speak about a *psycho*-logical reason for going into the dubious realms of a personless Nirvana, I might just as well use another adjective. I might say *psycho-pathic*.

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And still I do not think he should be entitled to consider me as a writer expressing special hostility to him. He is not the *only* psychopath among us. In fact, it is a psychopathy we all seem to have in common. The typical Nirvana worshiper may not be all that different from you and me. There is something here that seems to hit all of us pretty hard. For we are all fallen creatures. We all do *wrong*. At the bottom of our hearts, we all have a more or less clear recognition that this is what we do. We yield to evil, obeying the Eros voice of our being, whispering hoarsely into our ears: Do your own thing, man; deviate as much as you can from the pattern set by God for human beings!

At that moment, however, we also realize, more or less, that we are naturally liable to suffer *punishment*. There is *guilt* in our lives. And that guilt is something

disturbingly personal. So long as we remain persons—and so long as God remains personal—there is bound to be trouble in the offing. Justice will catch up with us sooner or later.

At such moments I am afraid the fact—however great in itself—that we have been made as persons, endowed with freedom of will, does not perhaps impress us as such a wonderful boon after all. To tell the truth, we are then tempted to think that we might as well do without it. In fact, it appears almost as a heavy burden, a definite disadvantage.

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Of course, there is no actual intelligence in that kind of an impression (I hardly dare to call it reasoning). For how could the great value suddenly turn into a non-value, or anti-value. Will-freedom means nothing less than having been deemed worthy of posing as *persons*. That historic fact could never turn into an actual handicap, a downright curse in our lives, unless indeed there happens to be something terribly perverse in the way we have used our great privilege. Otherwise nothing in the whole world could be a greater asset than the unique gift of God, bestowed upon us at the moment when He made us persons.

But now we must then also accept the inevitable corollary, the serious thing always going *along with* will-freedom. Together with his personalism, every man must also accept the fact of *personal responsibility*. This is, however, what men, weighed down heavily by a guilty conscience, just cannot take. Responsibility is something that ought to be avoided almost at any price.

Of course, another alternative was present in your life and mine all the time: We might have shown ourselves really worthy of that responsibility, assuming its full weight in terms of an impeccable behavior. But you know what we are like. We tend to hate giving up our own way, the way of continued indulgence in sin. And to some extent we are, even in a condition of impenitence, pretty well aware of our record of sinful acts during a life-time.

So that haunting idea of inevitable punishment is there, at the back of our minds, all the time.

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How, then, is this awkward matter to be put straight? The "awkward matter" here referred to by sinful man is still just one thing: the *punishment*. And what is his idea of "putting it straight?"

If you do not know it perfectly well already, I shall give you first-hand information about the usual way we tend to manage it. In current practice, it all seems to be a matter of finding the "trick." What "trick"? I am speaking about the *magic* that is supposed to work wonders. It is to simply *cut out* the punishment, that's all! But in order to have the punishment "cut out," something else has to be cut out first. You will understand that, if you have an elementary bit of intelligence left in you: Personality itself, nothing less, will also have to go as a self-evident prerequisite.

Obviously man realizes, vaguely at least, what it is that causes him to be on the level of existence where he is held absolutely responsible. That is inseparably connected with the fact that he remains a *person*. So, logically enough, in order to be relieved from responsibility, he must be relieved from personalism. Only persons can

justly be punished by a personal God. This, then, is evidently why the thoroughly absurd idea arises in the hearts of men that personality is a negative thing. Personality, on the contrary, is a most positive thing, a most meaningful thing. That applies to the inexorable philosophy I have called Christian realism. Do you see once more the infinite distance there must be between that realism and pagan spiritualism with its lightminded passing into the illusory relief of systematic unconcern, and its fatal flight into the system of living death, a way of escape we call *impersonalism*; that is the systematic attempt to reduce both man and God to non-persons.

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You will easily grasp the reason why the Christian Agape could not, under any circumstances, accommodate herself to the easy escape into the pagan habit of jacking oneself down to a much lower level of consciousness, even to the extreme of Nirvana un-consciousness (falsely called universal consciousness, or the consciousness of the "world soul.") The reason is to be found in the part played, in Agape's unchangeable philosophy, by the concept of *sanctification*. Sanctification is consistently shown, by the Bible, to be the diametrical opposite of impersonalization. Sanctification means an ever increasing intensification of the intelligent creature's consciousness, his awareness of his own insufficiency and imperfection. At the same time, it means intensive awareness of God's absolute sufficiency and wonderful perfection. It is through an ever increasing nearness to God, and by beholding Him as He is, in terms of the true Agape vision, that man himself is changed in that process called sanctification. You can see, can't you, how catastrophic a *lowering* of the level of personal consciousness, according to the traditional Eros pattern, is bound to become. You can also see the valid reason I have for saying that Eros' nature is to hate one thing more than all others: holiness!

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## THE ROLE OF METANOIA IN THE REALITY OF AGAPE OR FREE GRACE AS A SOURCE OF SALVATION

It is evident that our theologians have had a painful perception of the *problem* aspect in two apparently contradictory demands:

1. Keep God's commandments perfectly.
2. Depend on Christ's grace exclusively.

Is there a real contradiction here? Let us have a look at a similar "antithesis": It is expressed in the text of Revelation 12:17, where the seer of Patmos distinguishes the characteristics of the remnant Church; the typical traits of the *loipoi*, the remaining ones: those with whom the dragon was particularly worth:

"Which (1) keep the commandments of God and (2) have the testimony of Jesus." Is there any link that is total enough, or versatile enough, to unite these "opposite" terms; I mean (1) the stern necessity of keeping God's commandments and (2) the mild gratuity of a gift received from Jesus Christ, whose testimony is full of this one thing throughout the gospel: *gratia gratis data*.

We have spoken about God revealing himself in human history in an unheard-of way; that is, the phenomenon of Agape as downright humility, unreserved submission, a total abandonment of self.

Personally, I have been inspired by Reformation theology to suggest a "reconciliation" of the "opposing parts" causing our theologians so much trouble. That announcement may cause you to prick up your ears to watch the trend of my thinking more carefully. For what is this? Is it, perhaps, a new case of Hegelian dialectics, letting *thesis* and *antithesis* merge magically into a harmonious *Synthesis*?

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Well, the special topic I am still most crucially concerned about is that of *Metanoia*. Would it be wrong to say that Metanoia is the form Christian humility adopts in the case of man? Let us turn to two of our greatest reformers, Luther and Calvin. What was the role of this great *Penitentia* (repentance or penitence) according to them?

To the uncompromising mind of Martin Luther, the case of a Christian converts was bound to remain on a level that most men would call the *paradoxical*. Man was from the day of his justification through Jesus Christ, until the day of his death: *simul justus et peccator*, at the same time *just* and a *sinner*. And it should be duly noted that Luther, unlike Augustine, does not try to modify this, or make it "more logically understandable," by adding: *ex quadam parte justus, ex quadam parte peccator*; that is, *partly* just and *partly* a sinner. No, to Luther man is all the time *totaliter justus, totaliter peccator*; that is, totally just and at the same time *totally* a sinner.

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Is there any way at all then to reconcile those apparent opposites? I believe Luther and Calvin did see a certain way of reconciliation. I was astonished to discover something the historians fail to tell you here as well. Both Luther and Calvin did find a solution that satisfied them. For they both have an addition to that "*simul justus, simul peccator*." It was another "*simul*," and a decisive one. The Christian is: *simul justus, simul peccator, simul penitens*. So penitencia (metanoia) is the *conditio sine qua non*, as far as man's attitude is concerned. But how then can this fact of a *constanter justus* (in spite of the fact of a *constanter peccator*) be an unfailing reality in man's life? That state of a constantly valid justification of the human sinner can only happen on one condition: The additional ingredient, the reconciliating attitude of repentance in man (metanoia) is bound to be an equally constant state of the human heart. It means having a contrite heart all the time, bowing down to the ground in a state of absolute brokenness and humiliation *all the time*. It means going around in a constant attitude of *prayer*. For prayer is the indispensable expression of Metanoia.

It is by demanding of man this strange constancy, that God reveals to him what He Himself is like. He is the Agape that goes *all the way down, all the time*.

Unfortunately, the English word penitence (or penance, German: Busse) has acquired a certain connotation of "punishment" or "self-punishment," so something rather negative. But how could man's reflection of God's Agape be something negative? How could a *change of mind* (Metanoia), which constitutes a unifying principle, be negative? Only pagan perversion can present the matter in such distorting light.

Repentance is the one condition made, as far as man's part in the process is concerned. But that means a spirit of subjection, and subjection is all the cooperation that is needed on the part of man. This is the human side of the covenant. It is a modest but indispensable side.

I say Metanoia is the *only* condition, the *only* thing demanded of man. But what an endless variety of elements that Metanoia encompasses! An analysis may be a rather imperfect mode of approach. But let us still consider some of the ingredients contained in Metanoia:

First, repentance means a total abandonment to Christ's mercy, and to Christ's doing. Second, it means a resolute enterprise of active submission, which is nothing but implicit obedience to God's will, expressed in His law. Of course it is not a vain-glorious "nomos" type of obedience. That would be pride, and not at all humility. *Humilitas* is here exactly what the word says. It is the positive and actively engaged bowing down toward "*humus*," the earth. It could never be the servile, passive, or reluctant type of bowing down. It must be the wholehearted bending of knees and head and heart, so of man as a totality. It is a submission that enjoys to submit. It deliberately *plans* to place the other person higher than oneself. And it is love that inspires this positive preference, this deliberate plan.

The early Church was intensely aware of the simple fact that it is the goodness (the kindness: "to chreston") of God that "leadeth to repentance" (Romans 2:4). Our hope as Christians is that the One who loves us will *give* us repentance (2 Tim. 2:25).

Metanoia has this in common with Agape. It is a source of rejoicing and sadness at the same time. It is a smile through tears. To be "sorrowed to repentance" is to be "made sorry after a godly manner." (2 Cor. 7:9) But that "godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of" (verse 10), so rather a gladness-producing kind.

Metanoia is simply bound to have an undercurrent of joy even right in the middle of its intensest sadness, of hope right in the midst of its intensest fear (which is nothing but the fear of God; for it constantly bears a sense of fulfillment; it is totally penetrated by meaningfulness. Whether we envisage it as a mournful jubilation or a jubilant mourning, makes little difference. The Metanoia change of orientation in a human mind is a real one and a thorough one. It is not a matter of capricious mood. It is bound to be something durable. Christ's perfect redemption can become a saving reality for each individual sinner only on condition that this individual person consents to make Metanoia the constant attitude of his conscious life. In this and in all other respects, repentance coincides with faith. Both faith and penitence (*pistis* and *metanoia*) are simply the fitting forms Agape is bound to take in the case of man, the fallen one, in front of Jesus Christ. But remember: he is supposed to be in front of Christ from now on and forevermore. So everyone in the universe will forever and ever see man in the peculiar light of Metanoia.

Of course, it is nothing but sheer realism that causes Agape to present herself in this context in our exceptional world. But that is a realism which will remain real for this world through all eternity. How do I dare to make a statement as bold as that about Metanoia (the total bending down) as the only reasonable form Agape can adopt in the case of human beings?

## WHEN WILL METANOIA COME TO AN END?

Let us keep one fact in mind: There are certain epoch-making realities that have come into being in the course of the history of the ages—epoch-making even seen from the vast viewpoint of the universal scope. There are tremendous changes taking place, but on the other hand, maybe more things remain unchanged in that great history of the universe than thinking men tend to realize.

What right and reason do I have for counting Metanoia among those tremendous epoch-making things that have come to stay? What "permanent changes" do we know to have happened in this exceptional world of a fallen mankind?

Let us start with what happened here to the Creator Himself. That is something momentous indeed, an event most unshakably riveted right in the rock-bottom realism of Christian history. It is basic to our elementary creed that the Rock Himself, Jesus Christ, is to remain forever and ever what He made Himself to be for the sake of the human race. Even His quality as the Lamb of God will be perfectly maintained through the ages of eternity. The incarnation mystery was never supposed to be a transient, ephemeral episode. Our Saviour remains wholly and fully the Son of Man through ages everlasting.

Therefore, and for no other reason, Metanoia, the great arche-typical attitude characterizing the inmost heart of every saved human creature, is equally destined to stay the same, receiving from heaven the glorious stamp of an eternal reality.

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Can we establish this as a firm fact of our endless future? Let us proceed with due care and caution: First, what have we firmly and safely put down as essential and indispensable on the part of the human person who is to receive salvation? His fundamental attitude must be that of Metanoia: wholehearted repentance. But if Metanoia literally means "Change of Mind," then the next intelligent question must be: Is that change to become a transient and ephemeral one? Or is it to become a lasting and permanent one?

Of course, the answer is bound to be: Man has changed forever and ever. This must be the truth about man and his existence in a new and genuinely ideal world. I intentionally say: "ideal" world. And then maybe some inquisitive "idealist" of the classical kind will inquire: Ought not Metanoia to be done away with as particularly one of the "not so ideal" things, the things of this world?

The answer to that question should not be so difficult to find. The opposite to Metanoia, in my vocabulary, as readers of my other works will recall, is *Autarkeia*; that is the fundamental attitude of pagan *Self-Sufficiency*, the great glory of Eros from times immemorial. About this attitude we know one thing for sure: it will *not* survive to enter the kingdom. Of course not. Through the eternal ages of our future life, no creature will ever be the *autarkes* anymore. There is to be an absolutely permanent riddance of that quality from the world made new. Men shall no more, in the haughty pride of their "own inherent" forces, depend on themselves for continued life and perfect happiness. They shall depend on God.

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But when, thus, the fundamental motif of this present world, Autarkeia, is finally destroyed, must the same thing happen to its diametrical opposite, Metanoia, as well?

This is no negligible question. For there may seem to be some ambiguity about it among both theologians and laymen. Would it be theologically and realistically proper to make the blunt statement that man's true position through eternity in the kingdom of God is one that can adequately be expressed in terms of Metanoia still? Or is it rather a fact, as so many seem to think, that Metanoia has, after all, something like a "negative slant" about it? Repentance, they will insist, does mean sorrow, does it not?

Yes, to be sure, it means sorrow over sin. And we do hope, don't we, that by the time we are here referring to, sin will be an evil which man has left behind for evermore. Certainly, but is the matter definitively settled with this argument? Personally, I have become convinced that Metanoia is a concept man will have to keep in his vocabulary even during his glorious future without end, face to face with his Creator and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

And here are my reasons: Metanoia means a change of mind. There is no running away from that semantic fact. In man's life, the corresponding realistic fact is a radical change of the deepest heart. And that change in man is PERMANENT. Who would dare to deny that? Its permanence is just as certain as the fact that the historic change brought about by Jesus Christ in a broken world is a permanent one.

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Well, you still say hesitatingly, but "repentance" implies *sorrow*. Is there not always something bad about sorrow, something fundamentally negative? No. A creature's genuine sorrow, in the present, over "badness" and "negativity" in the past, however bad and negative that may have been, is in itself an attitude entirely good and blameless. In fact, this is precisely the attitude in man that warrants the *non-repetition*, in the present, of the blamable acts of the past. In the case of a forgiven sinner like man, Metanoia is simply the form his subjection *to*—and dependence *on*—God is bound to adopt.

But why should there remain an element of "sorrow" in something that is, in itself, joyful and good?

To this we might answer with a more specific question: Do we imagine that we shall ever completely forget that we—you and I—were the ones who actually crucified Jesus Christ, our best Friend, our Lord and Saviour?

Now please do not reason here in the spirit of the oblivion experts, or should I say, the oblivion worshipers, Plato and Buddha.

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We have betrayed Christ like Peter did. We have crucified him like the Roman soldiers did. How could you think that our plain knowledge of this historical fact, that we have done those things, is ever to vanish from our realistic minds? On the other hand, if that knowledge remains in us, as a firm historic recollection, how then could we ever manage still to stay unaffected by it? How could we here avoid some state of mind bearing a definite affinity to the concept of "sorrow"? Could the saved ones contemplate the realistically human form of their beloved Saviour, week after week, millennium after millennium, including the print of the nails in His hands and the sore in His side, without any feeling having the slightest resemblance to what sturdy everyday language calls SORROW?

That would be impossible—and undesirable! For it is precisely the awareness of something profoundly sorrowful, in the past, that here lends its peculiar profoundness also to man's gladness in the present, and his hope for the future, his joy triumphant forever in Jesus Christ.

It is Eros who machinates to take away from man both his joy and his sorrow. Agape has a bosom wide enough and generous enough, total enough, to carry them both. Nothing, in fact, could be more forceful than Agape to convince us that repentance, from the beginning of our lives, and forevermore, is bound to be something entirely laudable, something thoroughly good. So we can only repeat the apostle's strangely qualifying statement about that repentance: It is a "repentance not to be repented of." In other words, we need not be so anxious to throw it away at "a moment when we need it no more." Be assured, there will never be a time when redeemed creatures will repent of having adopted that repenting attitude. That is what the text plainly says. And what else would you expect? Metanoia is the attitude of coming back to God, of re-submitting to Him, of resting again, and forever in the arms of His mercy. There is no virtue of denying the realities of one's past history.

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I have here described Metanoia as the Christian child's smile through tears. But mark you: those tears have no trace of the negativity inherent in either sentimentality or despair. If they had, then, to be sure, they would be really bad. But how could tears be bad if they are of the peculiar kind that turn into pearls, real gems of creaturely experience? In human lives there are precious jewels of such translucent material that God's reality is able to appear through them in a vision, only a thousand times more glorious than ever before. The usual and original human eyesight evidently does not permit the greatest marvels of our God to transpire immediately. That is a simple fact of creaturely limitation.

By the way, must it not be logically assumed that it would hardly serve any useful purpose for any creature to close his eyes to such a fact as sorrow, as long as sorrow forms part and parcel of his plainest reality? To refuse to see is downright irrealism. It is anti-realism of a guilty kind. The redeemed and the entire universe will have to see a lot of things that are not precisely joyful during the thousand years when the books are being opened for sentence to be passed on the lives of fellow creatures who may have been near and dear to the hearts of the on-lookers.

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Nothing but sheer realism causes Agape to present herself in the form of heart-rending sorrow sometimes. I have tried to show how absolutely different Agape's peculiar religion, Christianity, is from the man-made pseudo-religion of Eros, dominating the world today, both numerically and virtually; that is, Platonic spiritualism in the West and Buddhist nirvana-faith in the East. And we could not fail to realize that the greatest difference lay in their respective attitudes toward just suffering and sorrow.

Christ would step into the path of endless pain once more—if the terrible thing were to happen again. Of course, that "if" sentence of mine is just another case of hypothetical subjunctive, but it is still logical enough in its own proper setting. We should know one precious fact: It is the eternal presence of Metanoia, in the world of

tomorrow, that will constitute the warranty, as far as creatures are concerned, that there will be no more repetition of the lugubrious past, no more need for Christ to have another experience of hell agony.

So don't let us regret Metanoia. The fact of the case is that the realism of God just does not have any possibility of entirely obliterating from our intelligent human minds the sad drama into which our closest relatives, perhaps, and our dearest friends, in this land of an alluring Eros, and at the same time the fact of personal responsibility, have permitted themselves to be involved. There is a day when the books shall be opened and the tragic result of every wicked choice has to be faced by the entire universe. That is the day of God's final vindication. Everybody must get to know for sure that God is the One who judges with perfect righteousness. And everybody must realize that His righteousness is an integrating part of His holy Agape. That is the very reason why His redeemed ones are solemnly requested to be His "co-judges" during the final judgment scene (I Corinthians 6:2). It is to be made definitely clear to the minds and hearts of all living creatures endowed with normal wit and personal responsibility, precisely *what* the great rebellion against God was all about.

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If you think of the dire disclosures of evil deeds produced by the minute inquiries of that particular judicial court as something "thrilling," I may at once say that this is a kind of "thriller" the saved ones do not at all enjoy. For the spirit *they* have come to develop in their hearts has nothing in common with the sensation-craving spirit developed in the hearts of theater-goers in this world, by and large. It is a satanic quality to enjoy the sight of another creature's death and disaster. There is nothing destined to survive eternally in that spirit. It is a spirit that revels in scenes of catastrophe. On this earth of ours, there seems to be a strange satisfaction in knowing that the cruel waves engulfing the lives of others will "never reach me." Man today enjoys being purely an on-looker. He enjoys the thrill of disasters he can watch at a distance, from the safe heights of his royal theater seat in the gallery. But let us remember one thing. There are no "pure on-lookers" in the theater of heaven.

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It is not "for pleasure's sake" that those scenes of the past are reproduced "on the screen" in the heavenly courts. The holy ones on the walls of the New Jerusalem just are not people of that "balcony hero" type. For the human actors observed on the stage of God's flashing film strips of a drama-filled past down below happen to be their own loved ones. And you just do not enjoy the sight of your father or son having made the fateful choice that leads him inevitably downstream, ever closer to the roaring cataract, the abyss of eternal annihilation.

No, indeed, even that late hour is still bound to be a time of deepest sorrow. On the other hand, certainly no element of morbid bitterness will be permitted to live on in that sorrow of the deeply sensitive ones. The endless solicitude of a tender Father is ample guarantee that no single sting of downright negativity will be permitted to embitter the lives of His children at any moment of their passage through the pearly gates. Hence, the firm assurance of Revelation 7:17: "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

But this is not tantamount to saying that Metanoia, which has never had anything negative in it, is destined to die out in the depths of human hearts. On the contrary,

Metanoia is the core of our realism. It is the fearless and undying realism inherent in the minds of changed men, the realism that unshakingly knows the sweet presence of God right in the midst of all the trials that creatures of this unique kind have to pass through. It just could not occur that this true realism would ever see a day when it was declared unfit for further existence. Whatever ages of endless time redeemed men are destined to lay behind them, whatever new shores of blessed adventure and boundless glory they reach, there will be no day for the enraptured traveller when he shall finally say: "Metanoia is dead in my heart. I do not recall that I have ever done one single thing that could sadden the heart of my Lord and Master."

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No, as long as Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, dwells among men, men are bound to have a constant awareness of certain past historic events, events that can never be denied: There will always be, at the back of human minds, the remembrance of Bethlehem, and the remembrance of Calvary! Remember: After the destruction of evil, nothing but sheer historic realism causes Agape, in the case of man, to be received into his heart in the form of Metanoia. Therefore, Metanoia is a realism which will remain real for all worlds and for all eternity. Metanoia gives infinite courage. It means God-dependence. And only the God-dependent child can reasonably be courageous—at the same time humble—bending down.

If our theologians would speak about the "nomos aspect" of Agape in this way, I doubt that the traditional antinomians could reasonably accuse them of entertaining the idea that people can make themselves worthy of salvation. For Metanoia is not only the spirit of obedience, and so of active penance, but at the same time a personal and incessantly active consciousness of the sinfulness of one's sins. So there is no room left for any vain-glorious pride, or self-righteousness, or sense of "deserving" anything whatsoever. The very thankfulness Metanoia inspires will manifest itself precisely in man's urging willingness to *do the will of God*.

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The great question troubling Luther's intelligent mind was certainly this: How can man be "totaliter justus" in spite of the fact that he is also "totaliter peccator." The only answer presenting itself to him (and also to Calvin) was the one we have here dwelt upon at great length: "This happens when man is *penitent* (repentant)." And we have seen the meaning of that penitence, penance, repentance. It is nothing but the attitude of totally bending down; that is, of implicit humble obedience. Obedience to what and to whom? You need no repetition of this basic practical matter. You know what makes Metanoia substantial and real, what gives it a true *body*.

There is so much altercation among theologians over certain "problems" relative to sanctification; for instance, this question popping up again and again: the obligation to become perfect in this life. It might be wholesome, then, for our theology to keep in mind one pertinent point: *The highest summit of perfection any man can evidently reach on this earth is just the perfection of Penitentia, Metanoia*, with all that this implies. But this repentance, or penitence, or penance, is the attitude that never loses sight of *Dei sola gratia*. So it immediately becomes a constant safeguard against man's greatest peril, in discussions on sanctification: self-aggrandizement and self-delusion.

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Exactly to the same degree that man is granted the precious realism to despair of his own forces, his chance exists in hoping for, and submitting unconditionally to God, the eternally Faithful One, as Luther calls Him (*Opera*, Weimar edition, 1883, p. 428).

Metanoia is that despair and that hope meeting together, an infinite despair and an infinite hope. But if man's unworthiness is bound to remain the same all his life, the profound awareness of that unworthiness must be equally lifelong.

### A GRIPPING EPILOGUE CONCLUDING THE LAST CHAPTER OF THE LAST GOSPEL: PETER, THE EROS-INFATUATED ONE, BECOMES PETER, THE AGAPE-INSPIRED ONE

The 21st chapter of John culminates with a most remarkable and a most heart-touching incident. You might call it an Agape-Eros drama of the intimate ones. The chords it touches, however, are not those of shallow romanticism. It is rather those of profound realism. The historical setting is not uncertain: Not only the crucifixion, but also the resurrection of the Lord is an accomplished fact. The scene is the shore of the Sea of Tiberias. The persons facing each other are Jesus Christ, the Agape Realist, and Simon Peter, the *would-be* realist. The last dialogue between those two men is remarkable. The disciples have just dined with their risen Lord on the fish they have caught. The mood is rather one of few words and tense expectations. Then suddenly Jesus says to Peter: "Simon, son of Jonas, *lovest thou me more than these?*"

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(John 21:15). Peter answer: "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I *love thee.*"

Bible students have often found it striking here that the question and the answer have different words for the idea of *love* in the original text. Christ's searching question has the verb *agapao*, whereas Peter's eschewing answer has the other Biblical verb, *phileo*.

Is this difference a casual happening? Or is it providential in terms of a deeper significance coming out in the sense of the dialogue? We have, from the beginning, called attention to the historical fact that *Philia* is *not* the epoch-making new term for love in the New Testament times. *Agape* is. Peter's answer then might seem somewhat "out of date." It does not have the verb corresponding to that famous noun, *Agape*. Not a single one of the three consecutive times he is prodded on to give his answer, does the inspired record render his response in terms of *Agape*. It is rather Christ who appears to condescend, as it were, the third time when He asks His question to Peter's term of *phileo*. You might almost imagine Him saying, with a suspicion of resignation in His voice: "Peter, two times now have I asked you if you have the love for me which has priority with God. Do you love me *more* than these? Is your love something going infinitely beyond a mortal human being's natural affection for members of his earthly family? You must know, Peter, that this is not enough. *Philia* is not the kind of love that will carry you through to salvation. Not that it doesn't have its legitimate place in human life. But at the same time, it represents a certain danger. It so easily falls down to the level of *Eros*, love in terms of sheer infatuation, of romantic sentimentality. What you cannot do without in any way is the radical love that builds a character for heaven. That is also the only love making it absolutely certain, in a time of crisis, that you will realistically *feed my lambs!* Frankly, Peter, you fling out your traditional *phileo*, but are you quite sure that you love me even with that kind of

earthbound human love? With an instability of feelings like yours, Peter, how long will that last? When will it be engulfed by the mediocrity, or even the cuddly-muddy sentimentalism of downright Eros?"

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At this point the plain record goes on: "Peter was grieved . . ." That seems indicative of a change for the better. That man has definitely begun to realize that he is desperately in need of a new kind of love. What he must catch hold of is the precious gift only One Person can bestow upon him. He needs something stern and steady; otherwise his slender vessel will go down. He must lay hold on a realism strong enough to overcome the direst deficiencies of his own volatile sanguine temperament. That frivolous dance on the capricious wave crests of purely human emotions is a humanism that will never save him.

To me, it is reminiscent of the love pattern of a modern pagan like Goethe ("the arch-pagan of German literature"). What did love mean in his life? What source of reliable happiness did he find in it?

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Freudvoll und leidvoll, gedankenvoll sein,  
Langen und bangen in schwenberder Pein, Himmelhoch jauchzend, zum  
Tode betrübt,  
Glücklich allein ist die Seele, die liebt.

A free prose translation of this might be:

Full of joy and full of sorrow, full of heavy thoughts as well,  
Painfully wavering between longings and fears.  
Rejoicing in heaven-bound ecstasies, then suddenly saddened unto death,  
Happy alone is the soul that loves.

What a sad mistake: That human indulgence in emotional extremes has nothing to do with true love, nor with true happiness. What man needs is the love that saves. And how in the world could Eros, the absolutely bottomless value, be a structure firm enough for salvation?

What Peter needed was a total transformation of his sentimental life. Only Christ's Agape could provide that, and it did. Jesus points out to him, in most significant terms, exactly what had been the matter with his life so far, and what a tremendous alteration would take place at the moment of a total surrender:

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou *girdedst thyself and walkedst whither thou wouldest*, but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." John 21:18.

What does this signify in terms of stern Agapeic realism? Let us try to paraphrase it as it might be expressed, addressing itself to you and me; that is, people in an epoch of lightminded hippies:

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"Now it is high time, Peter, that you be thoroughly transformed by the still, strong virtues of my grace. Up until now, you have largely insisted on "*doing your own thing.*" You have been self-willed, self-dependent, self-seeking, self-planning. But now this self-centeredness must finally come to an end. If you let me take over at the helm, you shall henceforth be going where you would never go all by yourself, that is for sure. But it is the safest place in the whole world. It is a step-to-step walk in the midst of the most gracious rainbow bridge of the heavenly Agape, across the bottomless gulf of Eros perdition."

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