

which represents a corruption which all men are said to inherit, but from which Mary has been exempted in the Christian tradition. In this context each Marian dogma can be said to be a 'counter-myth', that is, the counterpart of myths in Genesis. In Genesis 4, 1 Eve conceives Cain, which is an event of tragic significance because of the conflict and murder which he later originated. But the immaculate conception, on the other hand, presents the conception of a child as an event which is free from corruption and tragic significance. After the eating of the apple, sex is a matter of shame (Gen. 3, 7), but when Mary had her child she was preserved, not so much from sex, as from the shame of sexuality. In the Old Testament childbirth is painful and bringing a child into a world of suffering is itself tragic and dreadful (Gen. 3, 16). For Mary, having a baby was without pain and was a matter for joy. In Genesis, death is annihilation and total corruption (3, 19). But Mary's death is not the end, she does not return to dust. What Mary represents is life in the new dispensation brought about by the resurrection of her son. Marian dogma represents life in the Church under grace. In dogma, Mary has become a cypher for the Church and for each member of the Church. But not in a static sense; she stands for the life of the Christian who has been freed from all forms of corruption by the grace of God. In mythic terms Mary has become the archetypal Christian. We too can now be free from original sin (contrast Paul's pre-Christian and Christian life in Romans 7, 7-25 and 8, 1-39). We too are liberated from the shame of sexuality. Bringing children into the world is no longer a matter for regret. Death is no longer the final corruption.

God, America and the Remnant

by John Illo

The American assault on the human spirit and upon the salvational work of God began at home as a degeneration of the American character. The European capitalist ethic had always threatened a perversion of the spirit, because it exalted individualism and because it measured religious justification by ownership or wealth or power. And so the American character from its infancy bore the potential of moral disaster: the individualism could become egotism, the productive energy could become technicism and a commodity ethic, the optimism and pride of achievement could become racism and imperialism. Thoreau saw the danger in the 1840s, De Tocqueville even earlier. The American contribution to the decay was a separation of the capitalist ethic from a religious base, a vulgarization of

cultural criteria, and an immensely extended dominion over nature. The American people, having perfected a new morality of power, egotism, technicism, and the commodity ethic, became with each generation less culpable and less capable of moral choice, like inebriates or addicts who cannot be judged as the men they once were.

American individualism reduces the judicability and therefore the salvability of men because it isolates them not only from their human neighbours but from the divine community of law, love, and responsibility. The moral shrinking can be seen in some of the manifestations of individualism. One is sentimentalism within a dominant savagery. Human ferocity, unlike the natural kind in animals, is often tinged by an apparent and trivial tenderness. How repugnant it is to the American spirit to sacrifice a monkey or a mouse in a satellite! How appropriate it is to our American temper to post at intersections signs advising all visiting motorists that, unlike them, 'We love our kids'! How admirable it is in the American soul to rush tons of industrial equipment to save one little child or dog fallen in a well! How consistent it is with the sentimentalist ethic to fill the global atmosphere with fall-out for 'kids', and to approve the atomic bombing of cities and the Lazy Dog or napalm bombing of villages, to cry out for a Rusty Calley more heartfully than for the children he murdered.

Another side of American individualism is an energetic neuroticism. The American spirit, afflicted by a subdued but irrepressible awareness of the antagonism between its culture and the human way of life, expresses and solaces itself in a nervous, perverse over-consumption. A complacent arrogance is sustained by the abuse of goods and faculties, an abuse essential to national economic health. The sickly public preoccupation with violence and sexuality, half-reproached, half-cherished, is only a very obvious index of an economically significant neurosis. Sane habits of eating and travelling would debilitate the economy: who would buy Metrecal and 400-horsepower cars? To rationalize travel, advertising, gadgetry, to reduce entertainment and the consumption of vulgar luxuries would initiate a general depression in a psychological and an economic sense. Like Rappaccini's daughter, the American spirit and economy are now so thoroughly nourished on poisons that an antidote would bring death.

If a moralist were to hypothesize a peculiarly appropriate American social malady he might suppose the widespread consumption of a wildly expensive commodity, nutritionally useless or pernicious, that distorted the consumer's perception of reality and removed him from viable communion with his neighbours, while it decayed his capacity to discontinue or diminish the product's use and in fact continually required him to increase its consumption. Of course the moralist would have imagined heroin addiction, exactly the Ameri-

can kind of consumption. And where America focuses its critical antagonism to the human spirit, the addiction will become almost a way of life, or death-in-life—and so it does: in Vietnam, where one in six American troops have used the drug. How futile and foolish for the American Presidency to establish a special White House office to examine and minister to the disease: as foolish as an investigation of the causes of anti-Semitism directed by the Third Reich, or an American Presidential commission on the causes of social violence.

The egotist neuroticism nourishes and is nourished by the commodity ethic, which is so profound and pervasive that we have come to measure human lives as commodities, as once only political scientists did. The political significance of the Government's releases on Vietnam, especially during the Johnson Administration, is that they were calculated by the White House and Pentagon as a way of gaining popular support. An astute politician, knowing well the American mind, Lyndon Johnson assumed that the public would be convinced of the success and rightness of a war policy if favourable quantitative results could be adduced. And for many years the assumption worked. The bomb tonnages and the illusory but regular body counts were very much like industrial averages or the periodic sales figures on Ford vs. Chevrolet. They made the war a familiar, almost a comfortable, thing to a people accustomed to commodity thinking. The technique failed finally not because of moral nausea, but boredom.

Richard Nixon's highly popular policy of diminishing the number of American corpses while annihilating Indochinese from a distance implied no change but rather another dimension of the American spirit—racism. Of what concern the aerial annihilation of Indochina to the man whose bumper-sticker proclaims, 'God is not dead. I talked with Him this morning.'? Very little. The strongest support for Nixon, indeed for Governor Wallace, has been in Bible Belts and the pious American heartland. To the American housewife, bloated or chic, to her who elected and re-elected Richard Nixon, of what concern the murder of a thousand or a million brown or yellow children? Of immeasurably more concern are the new car of her spiritual longing, or the week-end's TV programming. Her principal responsibility to country, to self, to mankind, to God, is being a competent consumer. Her choice of Richard Nixon, in spite of demonstrated corruption, deception and malice, was not because of apathy, as many commentators have supposed. It was genuine democratic choice: people without scruples prefer an unscrupulous President.

Such a people, responding to the continual slaughter of innocents as Americans have responded, are either malevolent or spiritually anaesthetized and atrophied. But if we see an absence of scruples, it is difficult to see active or positive malevolence in the face and

heart of Americans. Unaware of their place in the economy of salvation and of their responsibility to the family of man, how can Americans be culpable or divinely judicable? In a self-induced moral lethargy and an invincible spiritual ignorance, the American majority, though not their political rulers, are like Dante's trimmers, 'without blame and without praise'. The trimmers' punishment of stinging insects and an endless circular foot-race seems appropriate to Americans, bedevilled as they are by the continual restless quivering between complacency and disquiet, between surfeit and frustration, between stimulants and tranquillizers.

The American spirit is thus a curiously blanched and vaporous thing, hardly worth the attention of a God of justice, a moral neuter composed of cancelling elements, an amalgam of arrogance, uncertainty, anxiety and self-righteousness, confident in its technological sophistication, but morally and politically naïve or stupid enough to believe whatever a Nixon tells it, to be led wherever a Nixon wishes to lead it. Disguising its interest as altruism, it calls on its vast technology to preserve its broad though not universal opulence, at whatever cost to other humans: we are in Vietnam to preserve 'our system', said Lyndon Johnson in a rare moment of honesty. And our system is a dearly loved loyalty even to those whom it exploits, President Nixon's 'new majority', even to many in the most deeply submerged part of the nation, who participate in it only as tools or materials, like the slaves in the Platonic state.

Yet the American middle majority, while thoroughly selfish, is thoroughly servile, more absolutely submissive to the state than Europeans or than man in Hobbes' ideal totalitarianism. Hobbes' iron contract between sovereign and people might be annulled if the sovereign could no longer secure the lives of his subjects. But in America a Secretary of Defence can conditionally predict 100,000,000 American deaths in a nuclear exchange without evoking the faintest sounds of rebellion—indeed, the prophecy elicits an even firmer popular commitment to the state. The American ego thus has no ethic or end but to preserve and expand the national power and wealth, vested in the state. And so, consistently with its ethic, it can assume a right to impose its will on the rest of mankind.

The Americanization of mankind has several means. One is war, by which men in other nations become subservient to the American state and its satellites, or become dead. The disavowal of America's attempt to be 'the world's policeman' is made by hawks and doves alike. What is significant about the disavowal is not only that it transforms the criminal into the policeman, but that it conceals an intention limited only by resources: America, most Americans believe, *should* be the world's policeman or governor, if it were feasible, because American values are the most essentially human. Americans can assume that Vietnamese, about whom they know nothing and care to know nothing, would be better humans if they

resembled Americans, and not only Vietnamese but Cubans, Russians, Chinese. But because these will not or cannot be assimilated, they should be contained and controlled, if not annihilated.

Another means of Americanizing the world is a cultural infection. The export of American language, manners, artifacts to the Old World has been regarded as deplorable or amusing, but it is undeniable. Lewis Mumford has characterized American and European man today as 'post-historic', detached from his vast heritage of feeling and hand-crafts and organic affinity with nature. But the American condition is more thoroughly post-historic than the European. Each European nation has its own homogeneous tradition, but America, a heterogeneity of most European as well as of African and even of Asian and Amerind traditions and cultures, is without a single strong heritage to counter the general pull of technology and scientism toward the post-historic condition. In its diversity of heritage, America is without heritage, free to be post-historic. And so it can devise and export the hollow but impressive products of the new condition back to the old homogeneous cultures, which often admire though they cannot originate them. Eric Seifert's Miami Beach hotels grow with popular approval in London.

Another kind of global Americanization is the export of physical pollutants, a complement to the transmission of the American spirit. The silent spring becomes the silent planet. The United States has supplied by far the greatest part of atmospheric radiation and fall-out since it opened the Atomic Age in 1945. Every human now has traces of America in his bones and his brain. When scientists discovered lead and mercury from American gasoline and industry in both polar regions, they discovered the totality of America's physical presence in the human family: pollutants whose effect is irreversible brain damage, transmitted from American producers and consumers to 'the living air' and ultimately to 'the mind of man'.

Other nations pollute, but America consumes half the world's resources—and wastefully, neurotically, and, for some, profitably. If the noble American rivers alone had become open sewers and the Great Lakes a cesspool, the disaster would be tragically justified, a deserved national punishment. But if the United States is guilty of polluting itself, how great is the crime of polluting a world! The American suburbanite who buys two TV sets or two automobiles is reducing his humanity, but the American who casts his sophisticated excrements into the atmosphere, over Kansas or Indochina, is debilitating millions who have not yet been induced or enabled to over-use automobiles and TV, and who might have died more human. America has such control of the goods of the world that she can Americanize every human and every landscape, even without bombers or warheads. The Indochinese War is not an American aberration, but an ultimate expression of American deathliness and

perversion, as Auschwitz was of Nazi racism and inhumanity.

America's pollutants, whether economic or military, are especially potent in transforming man, in effecting a decline in his ability to be a man. The radiation from American nuclear explosions, like the lead from American gasoline and the mercury from American factories, produces a decay of the human brain and of the human capacity for thought and moral decision. The hundreds of thousands of predictable mutants from American nuclear explosions and from defoliation in Indochina are a minuscule portent of the hundreds of millions that would result from the nuclear war that America offers as its ultimate instrument of national policy. When is a mutant not a man, and not salvable as a man? Grimly significant today are the old theological controversies about the humanity of foetal monsters and the culpability of the insane or feeble-minded. The spiritually unseduced among mankind can hardly resist the physiological degeneration visited on them from an atmosphere that once was the dwelling place of the Almighty, and that now has been exhaled by a new kind of deity.

The concurrence of war, physiological decay, and spiritual disintegration is America's continuing contribution to mankind. Perhaps God desires America as the means for a moral catastrophe and the reconstruction of the world, using America as one of his 'masks', and the American Government, criminal as it is, is really effecting God's will, like the Empire during the Apostolic Age, or like Pharaoh in Paul's interpretation, a 'vessel of disgrace'. Yet if there are no other humans in this universe, a premise that American space technology is beginning to demonstrate, the destruction and denaturing of the uniquely salvable part of creation, man on earth, seems rather a violation than a fulfilment of divine purpose.

The author of Genesis proposed a similar defeat for God, and recorded the solution: one human family, in a vessel secured from universal destruction, preserved as the seed for human restoration. The first pious remnant, the family of Noah, in the broadest earthly disaster, was followed by others: Lot and his family, the Jews of the exile, the whole nation of the Jews in a world of polytheism and idolatry, the lonely prophets, the Baptist in the wilderness, the Messiah and his apostolate, whose promised reward was the hatred and persecution of the world, the followers of the Lamb in Revelation. In fact the concept of the remnant is a unifying principle in the Scriptural plan of salvation: a few men, or one man, recurrently saving mankind not only for itself but for God.

America has its remnant within the American condition. If that remnant is a radically alienated youth culture and black culture, it seems also to be post-historic or anti-historic, like the established anticulture that it combats, and so it has been characterized by some academicians. It is true that any revolutionary or prophetic group resembles its hostile parent society—in language, and by the manners

and assumptions that make even antagonistic communication possible: Isaiah was a Jew, Thoreau a Yankee, Marx a European intellectual. In the young part of the American remnant, violence and commodity-orientation are evident, but as tactics or aberrations, in the established society, as essential virtues. Yet the remnant includes more than youths and blacks, and it is not post-historic. It includes all who reject not only the policies but the premises of the American state, who cannot endorse either political party. Many of this remnant are white and are over 30—and over 60; are scholars or academics or professionals, and are closer to a recognizable human heritage than the government agents who prosecute them and the conservative suburbanites who despise them.

The remnant, a wide spectrum and not as a whole uncultured, is not post-historic but supra-historic. Though it knows history, it sees beyond history to justice. Like prophets and reformers, it is not bemused by the manipulations of power and the modes of exploitation that learned but less perceptive men call history, tradition, civilization, custom, and on which they establish laws and loyalties and political ethics as though they were absolutes. The American remnant sees through not only the evils of the American system but through the chronic perversions of the parent European societies: it is genuinely supra-historic. And so it includes the most grievously exploited part of the Euro-American civilizations, those blacks like Malcolm X and Eldridge Cleaver who can read the hypocrisies of American legalism and white European ethics and religion, a significant part of black America though not a majority. It includes young whites not yet absorbed into the hypocrisies. It includes those Christians and Jews who hear in their moral past the voices of prophets and evangelists, beyond nation, beyond culture, beyond history. It is remnant of 1776, which, like 1789 in France, was a spirit more philosophical than historical. The most striking component of the remnant now is the American Catholic left, a small part of American Catholicism, most of which has Americanized itself with a vengeance, even electing a Conservative Senator in New York. The genuine Catholic heritage of moralism and dissent is as old as the gospels. It is older than any heritage but that of the Jews, among whom moral intensity and anti-institutional integrity are still a vital legend, in spite of the new suburbanized Jew who votes for Nixon and affluence.

To a scripturalist, the presence in America of a remnant, composite and even confused as it is, seems an assurance that God will not be killed by American power, because it repeats a pattern that has saved man and God beginning with the deluge. Without an appeal to Scripture, the success of the American remnant is more doubtful. True, it has increased and spread its peripheries, so that the underground editorial of 1967 is the *New York Times* editorial of 1972. And in only a decade it has helped convert millions of Americans

from complacency or vehement statist loyalty at least to uncertainty and distrust.

But it is difficult to believe in a greening of America or to concur with the President of Dartmouth telling his own student-remnant, 'You have won. . . . The majority is now with you.' Such sentimental fictions lead us to forget that the education of the American majority, and of some university presidents, has cost immeasurable pain and hundreds of thousands of innocent lives, that the Pentagon and the Congress and the Presidency still represent the corporate power of America, the mind and heart of the American evil, that the disquietude in the American spirit may be from frustration or boredom rather than from guilt or scruples, or from scruples remarkably obtuse. The facts of American aggression and atrocity in Asia have been rubbed into the face of the American people every week for eight years, and yet what have been the popular responses to Kent State, Mayday, and the Calley Trial? Indignant defence of the Government, or of the right, even the religious obligation of genocide: 'The Battle Hymn of Lt. Calley' cites St Paul and concludes with the Lieutenant's ultimate vindication before the Great Commander. The least perverse popular response has been an 'avoidance syndrome', as psychologists Edward Opton and Nevitt Sanford call it: Vietnam is not there.

To a moral theologian it might appear that avoidance syndrome is vincible ignorance and culpable acquiescence in the sins of the state. But it can be argued that vincible ignorance may become invincible by habituation to evil, and that the American majority does not share the guilt of its leaders: the Pentagon Papers support this thesis. Yet, though not culpable, the majority is perhaps outside the possibility of salvation—that is the spiritual price of the avoidance syndrome, of converting vincible to invincible ignorance, of closing the conscience to the evils of the state.

The American remnant may have a function entirely theological and ethical: to expose to the majority the sins that it would ignore or disavow, a prophetic function and an unforgivable one, and so remnants are cursed and prophets are killed. And the American remnant demonstrates that even in America some men may see the reality of evil and remain unseduced by nationalism, by the idolatry of power, by an egotism at once cowardly and savage. These are valid modes of the remnant's function, and, to apocalyptic vision, the most important.

But the remnant may also have a genuine political function, which is not only to convict the majority of its culpability and to perish unseduced, but to win. Much of it will perish, like the Vietnamese who have died resisting the American state. But the Vietnamese have won, and not merely in having remained unseduced and defiant, but in having overcome American technology by the physical power that derives from the unseduced human spirit. As

they defeated the imperialist French, they have defeated imperialist America, against an unimaginably massive and concentrated expenditure of the sophisticated American luxury goods called military hardware. They have defeated America not only militarily but politically. Vietnam survives, wholesome though in pain, and North Vietnam and the NLF have won the concessions that the American state would never yield them. But America, with its trillion-dollar economy and no incursion of its sacred soil, is shaken and fragmented, threatened by a dictatorship of the military and Executive, closer to 1984 by its very unawareness of the closeness.

The middle-aged generals and the bright young advisers in the Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon administrations thought that the mechanical force required to defeat the Vietnamese could be calculated, as though spirit were a quantity or a thing. How characteristically American to write confident memos of Rolling Thunder and ratchet tactics—and how ignorant of the human spirit! The true reason for the American defeat in Indo-China is the despiritualization of Americans—especially of organization men like the Harvard intellectuals in government service, who are, as Mumford might say, only disguised as human beings. One could not expect those to understand spiritual resources.

If the Vietnamese are the vanguard of the human alliance against the American state and its popular majority, the American remnant are their less heroic associates, sharing with them one political purpose, one moral commitment, one theological end: to save mankind from America. Mankind will not be lost or denatured and God will not be dead while a communion of men resist the modern American state and ethos.

And perhaps the communion, continually increasing and vivifying a deathly society, may restore America to what it briefly promised to be—something godly in no sense that Richard Nixon or Billy Graham might understand, but as a political and social organism securing justice, freedom, and peace, and conserving life and humanity—‘the only true America’ that Thoreau imagined and that Jefferson may have conceived. That is the positive work of the American remnant.

Humanism and Ideology

Brian Wicker

I would like to regard this review of Professor James R. Flynn's book, *Humanism and Ideology*,¹ as a kind of appendix to Denys Turner's recent articles on 'Morality is Marxism'.² This is because of Flynn's

¹*Humanism and Ideology*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London and Boston, 1973, 192 pp., £2.75.

²'Morality is Marxism', *New Blackfriars*, February and March, 1973.