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Humanocentrism

HUMANOCENTRISM: AGAIN, FROM THE HOWARD BURCKLE BOOK, "GOD, SUFFERING, AND BELIEF:"

[The next quotes should be taken in the context that I mean them, even if Burckle did not mean them this way. I believe that God The Father, the I AM, is who should be referred to in the following passages. It is the Holy Spirit, with His unique mission, who is active today:]

'Humanocentric theism.....within these positions we do not look for God to do anything. This is what makes it possible for human beings to be functionally ultimate.....it envisions the world without God <again, as I said above and I want to be clear on, this refers to God The Father>.....the God of humanocentric theism does no more in the world of humankind than if He did not exist at all. Humanocentric theism is a world in which (1) by God's 'purpose and plan' human beings enjoy 'an exalted status,' with full recognition of their freedom; (2) God creates human beings as 'co-determining' centers of power within Himself and in doing so gives the 'most authentic expression of His sovereignty;' (3) the highest human good is conceived as a process which stresses human activity and choice; (4) God gives human beings such independence of Himself that they are functionally ultimate relative to their own history; and (5) God's omnipotence is redefined to 'fit the requirements of the freedom of God and man,' this being understood in terms of God's benevolence in granting this freedom.'

In humanocentric theism, God is active in human history. God offers cosmic support for every constructive venture.'

'If God can persuade us to forego our destructive tendencies and apply our energies to beneficent ends, God will have created an incomparably rich new reality. If God does finally fully win our love, He will have carried through on of the greatest of all possible projects <and defeated Satan at his own game> and proved Himself as powerful as reason and goodness allow.'

Offering but never fully giving Himself, God leads us constantly toward better conditions. It is difficult to imagine a cosmology better able to elicit a vigorous, free human activity that this one founded in a God who is Himself loving and just and who calls on all free creatures to be loving and just, too.'

Human beings, in their 'creative potential,' are in the 'image of God' and thus are clues to what God is.'

'In this, she [Mary Daly] fits very well into William R. Jones's category of humanocentric

theism, and she also confirms my conviction that God can accomplish His aims for the human race only through human beings <consistent with Jesus becoming human>. Human courage is the fulcrum of divine creativity in human history.'

I believe that human beings have an innate and virtually inextinguishable sense of rightness about this--about what is fair and humane--and thus about what God essentially is. Also, we need to elevate radically our own understanding of what it means to say that God is that being than which no greater can be conceived. We know that God cannot be willingly involved in anything which degrades or destroys and can only work for the preservation and enhancement of every manner and form of positive value.'

'I have tried to show that (1) the loneliness and mortality of human beings in this vast universe do not necessarily imply that God is either hostile or nonexistent, and (2) that the diabolical cruelty which some human beings inflict on others because of religious, racial, or sexual bigotry does not necessarily that God is either indifferent or malevolent. I have tried to break the logical hold of absurdity and show that one can believe in a God who is benevolent, wise, just, and adequately powerful--without falling into irrationality.'

'Consider the alternatives which face the person deciding between belief and unbelief. To believe in God is to see oneself within the safety of a universe which is governed by a compassionate, all-powerful Creator, while to decline to believe is to see oneself carried along blindly by galactic tides which care nothing for human beings. Obviously, the former is vastly easier to accept. In a God-tended world, one has a well-defined place, a purpose, and a protector; one is a person of worth; and one can rely on God to guarantee a triumphant outcome. The God-less world, by contrast, offers only laceration, despair, and loneliness.'

'The decision about whether to believe in God, if made thoughtfully and unreservedly, requires as much fortitude as any decision one is capable of. If one is wrong and there is no God, after all, the direction of one's entire life has been fundamentally mistaken. One has erred on the most important issue of all, the question of what human life is about and the spiritual qualities by which life is best organized and conducted. If there is no God, the believer has, 'like the donkey, fed on the roses of illusion.'

'Moreover, believers bear a special hardship. They suffer not only the evils of existence which all humans suffer but the anxiety of knowing that these very evils also count against their religious beliefs. Every evil is both a pain to be borne and an item of prima facie evidence that humankind's deepest beliefs are illusory <therefore, the great need for 'A Matter Of Will!>. There is no way to avoid this double jeopardy, for believers

can neither ignore the evils before their eyes nor deny the belief that all things are providentially ordered. As believers, they are committed to the proposition that God is at work keeping peace and maintaining the bonds of mutual concern which are deeper and more lasting than the obvious forces of dissension. For the Christian, at least, this is not a mere hope, but an affirmation of present truth. In Christ, God has overcome meaninglessness, removed guilt, conquered death.

The problem, of course, is that much of the evidence available in everyday life is either neutral or seemingly contradictory to this. Millions of human beings exist without meaningful goals, live without forgiveness for their transgressions, and die without expectation of survival.'

Those who have experienced the incredulous and patronizing gaze of friends who do not share their belief that God is at hand moderating the pains and disharmonies of the world know how naive their beliefs seem to many others whose judgments they respect. The point here is simply that believers carry burdens which are not often noticed: their hopes are as heavy as Sisyphus' <a character from Albert Camus' The Plague> despair and require as much courage to sustain.'

'Ethically, too, belief poses problems. Believers are faced not only by whatever ethical standard fits the situation they face, but also by the Holy One from which the standard derives. God not only gives the law, but commands us to obey it; God lays a claim upon each individual to act; to do this deed, here, now. The God of religion is active goodness. His nature is to be constantly sponsoring what is good. God establishes the possibilities and conditions for enhancing what already exists, and, also, for introducing fresh goods; moreover, God interacts with those creatures who are capable of rational choice, striving to persuade them to join in the venture. To believing persons, the world is a portentous cosmic drama. In some ways it is tragic, in some ways, joyous; but always full of potential meaning.'

'Believers live not only under self-imposed standards and social conventions which they can alter or ignore with relative impunity, but under independent, universal standards which make a claim upon them irrespective of human preference.'

'All who have seriously wrestled with belief and unbelief and tried conscientiously to make their own commitment know that the leap of belief must be constantly repeated. In one respect, 'leap' is a poor metaphor since it implies that the leaper's feet soon touch solid ground, which is not so. Perhaps 'flight' would be a better image. A bird flying or a fish swimming, at once buoyed by a fluid and propelled by its own efforts, suggests the continuity and repeated movement of belief. We 'let go' of our frightened dependence

on proximate certainties and break out of the cramped system in which we have found security. We detach ourselves and begin moving in new ways. Whatever the analogy, genuine belief in God involved 'dreadful,' constant, lifelong exertion <without the presence of the Holy Spirit, or the joy of Christ, supposedly>. To begin to believe is to begin to be a self, to dare to act as an eternal spirit.

In addition, the life of belief is subject to the usual problems which all persons face. Believers are not exempt from the ordinary human difficulties and sorrows. They must still work for their bread and endure the slow shipwreck of their psychological selves. They too worry about their children, grieve for those who suffer, regret their personal perfidies, and sorrow over the despoliation of the planet.

They too become ill and die.'

'Every moment of our existence is filled with profound danger. Our vital supplies of air, water, and food could be cut off or lethally contaminated at any moment; we are never entirely safe from fire, storm, and disease, from thieves and murderers, from mayhem on the freeway, or from nuclear obliteration. These real possibilities threatened all of us, and they strike some of us irrespective of whether we believe in God. God's rain falls on the just and the unjust. Although believers hold that God will eventually turn all evil to good and that they will taste this good, they do not assume that in the meantime they will suffer less than those who do not believe in God.'

'Shall we then conclude that belief is categorically more courageous than disbelief? The argument seems to lead there, and I am bound to say so.'

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