

XOYOS

Bulletin of the London Anarchist Christians - Koinonia
 October issue started September 13 page one

meetings c/o:-

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last meeting September 12th
 next meeting October 18th - tackling other parts
 of Nick Walter's pamphlet.

Meetings are held - at above address - on (usually) the second Saturday in
 the month at 8.00 P.M. preceded by a short service in the adjoining church.

Besides Tony Fleming's article and Anne's reply there is at last the
 MayDay Manifesto Racialism report; the delay was that Ambuj Makharjee
 who publishes it had not got enough copies - he had promised me an 100,
 (now there are more than 100 people on the mailing list and I am not sure
 I can remember who has already had one copy) Further copies are avail-
 able from Ambuj at a shilling each. Also another insert from Anne Vogel.

Meeting of the 12th September: - present Barbara Dempsey, Valerie
 Bickers; Ian Lewis, Laurens Otter; Frs. Gresham Kirkby & Aurelio
 Orensany. Apologies: Anne Vogel, Jean Sergeant, Fr Andrew King.

Gresham was due to speak on "God - neither Master nor Corpse" a summation of ourlier commentaries on Nicholas Walter's section - in "About Anarchism" - on God and Church. It had been agreed that this talk amended in the light of discussion should be produced as a christian anarchist pamphlet. The talk follows - it is meant to be substantially as Gresham read it incorporating points, but there may be passages I am unable to read clearly as Gresham's writing is minute. So this page, with this top blotted out and subsequent pages will be available separately to anyone who wishes for extra copies.

God - Neither Master nor Corpse.
 an anarchist christian commentary on the "God and Church"
 section of Nicholas Walter's "About Anarchism"
 (Anarchy 100) pp. 13

While as Christian Anarchists we welcome Nicholas Walter's informative and eirenic pamphlet 'About Anarchism' we are not surprised to find a serious misconception of authentic Christianity in the section God and Church. Since Christianity itself is in a state of confusion we impute no blame to the author. Nevertheless we find it necessary to challenge his basic assumptions, and this we propose to do passage by passage. Anarchists have traditionally been anti-clerical, and also atheist.

In the Judaeo-Christian tradition the true image of God is man - and the man Jesus Christ bears the very stamp of his nature. But there has been a recurring tendency from which Christians are not exempt to reverse this by creating God in the image of man, in the image of ourselves, in terms of individualist, then capitalist man, even of clerical man. Instead of God being the 'Father from whom every family in heaven and earth is named'; he becomes a celestial and super papa or Pope. Since secular anarchists like all others have been thus indoctrinated and misled, it is not surprising - nay

it is laudable - that they have been anti-clerical & also atheist.

The early anarchists were opposed to the Church as much as to the State, & most of them have been

opposed to religion itself.

The true function of the Church is to be the sign or sacrament of the coming age. Where the church has become

an end in itself it has become like the state - whether

in alliance or conflict with the secular state is of

little difference. The later theory of an 'Invisible

Church' i.e. of a non sacramental and spiritual elite -

has appeared to many secularist anarchists as less

dangerous; but in this respect they may well be short-

sighted & seriously misled. A purely spiritual religion

in the long run would be a greater menace than corrupted

Rome ever was.

The slogan 'neither God nor

Master has often

been used to sum up the

anarchist message.

The terms Master and Lord are in Christian usage applied to

God and Christ, but such terms and all concepts of

authority and power have been revolutionized in their

meaning. Christ is the servant of all, the representative

man, through whom man attains to sonship and shares the

Divine nature. The Christian man, the alter christus,

thus is his own master, attaining a new dignity and in

that for all anarchists Freedom is more than freedoms from

it should be apparent that that dignity is an essential

part of freedom.

Many people still take the

first step towards anarch-

ism by abandoning their

faith and becoming rational-

ist or humanists. In so far as a faith is irrational or anti-humanist it must

of necessity be abandoned before an authentically Christian

faith can be found. In this sense rationalism and

humanism belong among the many roads to Christ, the 'light that lighteth every man..'

The rejection of divine authority encourages the rejection of human authority.

This is by no means self-evident. Beliefs in divine authority properly understood precludes the acceptance or at least is a powerful force for the rejection of human authority. The rejection of human authority is more than a mere rejection of the balance of power. There would appear to be in Man to be an innate need for the acceptance of some kind of authority. The only genuine & worthwhile authority is that which belongs to Man's nature - Christ spoke with authority, and not as the Scribes (and Pharisees). This was not coercive authority & we would suggest that this is the authority of God in Man.

Nearly all anarchists today are probably atheist or at least agnostic.

We would surmise - remembering that it is very nearly exactly an hundred years since the breach between Marx and Bakunin - that the number of people generally who call themselves atheists or at least agnostics has increased considerably. We would be more than gratified if there were a commensurate increase in the anarchist movement. Equally though the number of believing Christians has very probably dwindled, there has been considerable growth in the number of anarchists who are christians & christians who are anarchists; and we suspect that it is not of negligible significance that these are now found not so much on the edges of orthodox christendom as in its heart, acceptance of some kind of authority. The only genuine & worthwhile authority is that which belongs to Man's nature - Christ spoke with authority, and not as the Scribes and Pharisees). This was not coercive authority & we would suggest that this is the authority of God in Man.

But there have been religious anarchists, though they are usually outside the mainstream of the anarchist movement. Obvious examples are the heretical sects which anti-

icipated some anarchist ideas
ideas before the nineteenth
century, & groups of
religious pacifists
in Europe and North America
during the 19th and 20th
centuries, especially
Tolstoi and his foll-
owers at the beginning of
the 20th Century & the
Catholic Worker movement
in the USA since the 30s

We are not sure what the author means ~~the~~ by the mainstream
of the anarchist movement. 'The Pursuit of the Millenium'
suggests that social revolution - at least from the early
Middle Ages onwards owes its importance to the confluence
of secular revolutionary ideas & religious millenaral hopes
which at points of time - when men have been disoriented
& so questioned the system - have led to upsurges. The
influences on for instance William Godwin were just such.

The origins of present day anarchism are as confused and
perplexing as those of Christianity, and neither is the
worse for that fact. That both are weak, confused and
divided occasions no surprise. But the past has shown
similar movements flourish after weakness before. 'Except
the seed fall in the earth and die, how shall the harvet
follow'?

The general anarchist
hatred of religion has
declined as the power of
the church has declined,
& most anarchists would
now think of religion as a
personal matter. They
would oppose the discourag-
ement of religion by force,
but they would also oppose
the revival of religion

anyone believe and do what he wants, so long as it affects only himself; but they would not let the church have any more power.

Christianity like anarchism was founded to meddle in the affairs of men, to reshape those affairs, so that tolerance of either belief, as long as the belief affects only the believer is no tolerance at all.

Hatred of one's opponents, real or imaginary, is a dissipation of one's energy. The decline of the temporal power of the church is a requisite for the growth of its inner & spiritual power. Christianity cannot allow itself to be thought of as a purely personal matter. It was founded (as Newman observed) for the express purpose of meddling with the affairs of the world, and in this respect its rights are no greater and no less than those of anarchism itself.

We hold - in so far as they are similar - for it to be politic for the twin to combine. We would suppose (without being told) that secular anarchists would not discourage Christianity by force, or they would scarcely be anarchist. We would hope they would defend Christianity by all anarchist means from those who would discourage it by force, even as we as christian anarchists would defend secularists against forceful suppression.

We hope, indeed, that secularist anarchists would let anyone believe and do what they want - as long as it affects only themselves. (Even Elizabeth I in her religious policies refused to pry into men's souls provided they conformed.)

We hope we understand what is meant by 'not letting the church' 'have any more power'. The apostolid church had no power - save that which came from above, but it proved very effective. We trust that secularist anarchists would respect such power that is manifested in weakness. Not for nothing do we remember the cross.

history of religion is a model for the history of government. Once it was thought impossible to have a society without God; now God is dead. It is still thought impossible to have a society without the state; now we must destroy the state.

The history of Government and of the state is in fact that of the attempt to build a society without God, the history of the Jews is the one exception, which although it failed in the end or outlived its usefulness, managed to conceive & develop the socialist and libertarian tradition. The Roman Empire was the outstanding example of lack of God - a society built in the pride of life & "the lust of the flesh." Noone took their gods seriously and Emperor worship was just a convenience, and an useful device.

In the history of Western Christianity, God has been absent and dead for a thousand years or more. E.G. in the corpse on the crucifix on the altar, on in the Protestant stress on the fact that Christ died for the ungodly. This is a false emphasis, which anarchists have imbibed with their mother's milk. God was in fact a corpse for three days.

The question believers and non-believers alike have to answer is what happened to that corpse on the third day, on Easter Day. Why was the body not produced to settle the matter once and for all? The only rational explanation is the truth of the apostolic teaching on the Resurrection.

It is not surprising that that dead God outlived the empire which crucified him; and therein in that fact is a power that remains and it is still actively conceived to bring down all state power and authority.

CRITIQUE OF CHRISTIANITY continued

Tony Fleming

I read the criticisms of Laurens and Anne with a good deal of interest: they provoked some detailed thinking out of my position in more depth. I would now like to attempt to extend my case and 'answer' their points.

Although their criticisms were separate I have, to avoid repetition, integrated my reply. I have, rather arbitrarily, divided it into 'Philosophy' and 'Anthropology'.

Philosophy

The basic problem is an attempt to identify the nature of God. It is fair to say that many (most?) mystics have seen God in negative terms, but Christian theology has traditionally been more positive, if that is the right word for it - rationalist might be better.

God is defined as Love. LO defines 'love' as including justice, or the yearning for it, and freedom. But how true is this? Love involves the acceptance of injustice without resentment: to yearn for justice and be frustrated in one's yearning inevitably produces resentment: logically, therefore, Love cannot involve the yearning for justice for oneself. It may involve it for other people. But even here 'love' is supposed to be for both oppressor and oppressed. Are these in fact even compatible? We may doubt, too, whether love involves freedom: the mother does not allow the child to develop freely, but protects it from potentially harmful behaviour and conditions it to conformity, calling this as being a loving parent - though the love of a parent is probably more a case of loving a receptacle into which the parent's hopes can be injected.

Is it possible to 'overemphasize' the omnipotence of God? Either He is omnipotent or He is not. If He is omnipotent, then He is ultimately responsible for the universe as it is. But logically, in fact, He cannot be omnipotent, because if He was He could do the impossible, such as creating square circles. God is only capable of creating the logically possible.

At this stage I can introduce a point I did not make before. God is non-material and the universe is material. How could one create matter? It would seem, surely, to be logically impossible for

ap pure positive to create pure negative, and vice versa.

This leaves us to explain away the need for an unmoved first mover, an uncreated creator etc etc, it would seem, but this is not so since, if such an entity is needed it is more logical to see it as material than spiritual. We may in any case call in question this line of argument. If the universe has a beginning and an end, then it exists preceded and followed by no time: it logically therefore does not exist. The argument can equally be applied spatially: if the universe exists surrounded by nothing, it exists nowhere, and therefore does not exist. But how can a series of moments, of units make up a self explaining whole? The answer is, of course, that time is not a series of moments, but a continuous flow: in the same way, spatially, we seem to come to ^{have} the point where we must recognise matter is infinitely divisible.

If, however, we maintain the existence of God, he could have created free will which, of its nature, could not then be interfered with. This would mean that man could choose to reject God, and this rejection which we define as sin, can explain the occurrence of what we call evil on a human level. Man is, however, only the end product of evolution. And the animals behave in the same way. Intra-special co-operation may be vital, but only as a survival technique in the 'framework' of NATURAL SELECTION. (Inter-special: we are not claiming this applies to man, at this point, in his intra-special relations. It does however call for an explanation in terms of the Creator.

AV argued that the idea Love necessarily produces a cooperative universe is the equivalent of saying God could create square circles. This seems more the logic of a Love being able to create hate. It is the equivalent of saying that Love can create an amoral universe. The creation of an amoral universe must be the work of an amoral Creator. Nevertheless, she clearly has an extended argument to back up this point: it was unfotunate she could not go into it.

Stimulated by L), I pondered on gnosticism a bit more, and saw the logic of his point. Protons and electrons coexist in atoms: positive electricity attracts negative etc etc. Opposites can therefore coexist to the extent of forming vital building blocks

for the universe. We could also recall the fact neutrons break down into protons and electrons. Thus we could think in terms of two rival Creators producing a coherent universe.

But we can go on from this point about neutrons to the further point that neutrons and protons may be considered different aspects of the same particles. Logic would imply that in a sense we can talk of protons and electrons in the same way. We come towards the idea of the union of opposites, which characterise both Zen and medieval alchemy. Pursuing this line further, we can assert that many mystics have seen God as beyond good and evil. This was indeed one variety of gnosticism: we see an alternative idea in the two-faced Janus, a god both good and evil which is still at the level of the union of opposites rather than beyond it.

(If free will exists, it is the ability to choose between identity and conformity. Jesus called the apostles to obey his teachings: it might not have been conformity to the larger society, but it was conformity in terms of a cultural sub-group. The anarchist chooses identity.)

Jesus

The cross cannot conceivably be defined as non-violent resistance. According to the Christian myth, Jesus went like a lamb to the slaughter: total nonresistance. "Do not resist one who is evil" (Mtt v, 39) can hardly be taken to mean anything but a call to nonresistance. Whether in fact it was an authentic saying is at least debatable: it may well be an example of the ethics of the early Church being put into the mouth of Jesus. We can at least be sure that it is part of the Christ-myth, and in terms of this myth it is such a call.

The cleansing of the Temple is, of course, an old problem: a Christian Committee of 100 pamphlet affirming the concept of the 'peaceful Christ' has seen it in terms of violence only towards animals. From a human point of view, it was the result of a very unloving anger: but then Jesus was not exactly friendly towards his opponents.

Jesus was as distorted by his culture as his contemporaries, even if with different consequences (which proves nothing: no two people are distorted in exactly the same way). Thus his teachings were radical, but within rabbinism, expressed in rabbinical nuances: more blatant was his expression of the racism of his contemporaries - the incident with the Syrophenician woman cannot be explained any other way. Even if Matthew probably ~~probably~~ represents a Nazarene mutation of the original text, we can see Mark as authentic - and, if less violent, he nevertheless gives the same message. More, the woman is rewarded by a miracle for admitting the racial superiority of the Jews. (Mk vii, 25-30). The universalism was largely due to the Pauline desire for spiritual imperialism, but also an attempt to make Christianity and Christ acceptable in the eyes of the Roman

Anthropology

I'll come back first to mysticism. We seem to have different types of mystic experience, from that of the 'cosmic light' to the experience of oneness with nature. (My 'mystical' experience, natural and with acid, have been confined to the latter). In capitalist ideology most of all man is regarded as being somehow distinct from his environment - but all ideologies accept a separation between man and nature, or rather almost all. Man is not distinct from the environment however: he is interdependent with it. We cannot exist without the environment: equally the environment cannot exist without us, because if we did not exist the environment would be a different one. So that to say the mystical experience is simply a flight back to the womb, and an escape from freedom, is oversimplifying it. This is a component part of the mystical experience, and almost certainly, especially for 'otherworldly mysticism', the main stimulus. As Jung has pointed out, early Christianity was itself aggressively anti-naturalist: this is certainly the basis for the non-naturalist mystical experience. The mystic represses his drive to oneness with nature, wishes to escape from the sinful (i.e. real) world, and therefore compensates by a flight to the womb experience projected on to a mythical God, itself a reified memory of the experience of the omnipotent mother in earliest childhood and 'masculinised' by the later experience of the father as the dominant figure. There is a vague shadow of the oneness with nature that should have been, but nothing more.

I said that morality is the internalized values of the culture. This is obviously another oversimplification which needs expanding. Morality, I also said, is the product of the need of the ruling class to prevent the oppressed from 'indulging' in behaviour which, positively or negatively, fails to reinforce their position, or at least even vaguely undermines it. It is conditioned into us from the beginning of our post-natal existence. You counter this by the argument that there are primitive societies without class structures that nevertheless have moral codes. We can of course overstate this - thus, though the class distinction in Kung Bushman culture is very undeveloped, in theory at least the Head of the Band owns the vledos himself: true, it is shared equally, and he does not take a larger portion for himself, but this is because the cultural ethic, but this is because the cultural ethic inhibits a power-structure economic differentiation developing. But beyond these it is possible to see any 'morality' in the primary collective as in fact, as AV says, intuitive. In saying this, we should surely conclude that this is then not 'morality', but man being human. But this in any case is partly a Utopian picture. The fact of the matter is that egalitarian collectivism only functioned successfully until men had more than enough to eat: with the occurrence of surplus we have the beginnings of the evolution of classes. So we may wonder if in fact these early groups had a morality designed to enforce equal sharing, and thus prevent some living well at the cost of others starving. At this point we can recall the Pilaga who, in spite of having a subsistence economy, are strongly 'capitalistic', with cultural mores aimed at preventing the less fortunate from begging off the more ~~fortunate~~ fortunate. Thus even here man does not

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instinctively behave cooperatively. We may hypothesise that cultures that of the Pilaga are the result of a cultural group developing a surplus economy which for some reason ~~fails them~~ fails them and they return to subsistence: the ethics developed with the evolution of class, however, do not automatically collapse but rather persist, economically and survival-wise maladaptive though they may be. This would lead us to suspect that man started off as a small and continually threatened species, by coping with a group approach, individuality being undeveloped because not to the advantage of the species. Nevertheless it was there, and activated in the situation of cultures less threatened and with a surplus of food. Genetically, we would possibly expect man by nature to become more egotistic: in fact, this does not really seem to have happened very radically. Lorenz may be right in seeing man as not changing genetically fast enough to keep up with cultural change: this is a welcome sign, since it means that our egotism is itself an internalised cultural value to a very large extent, even if not wholly.

The evolution of culture may be predicted to lead to a balance between self-assertion and collectivism. The history of man is not purely the cultural superstructure adapting to changes in means of production. It is each of us coping, and the species coping, with changes in our environment, changes more and more the result of our efforts, in terms of our humanity. Since the middle ages, when cooperativism and class structure had a kind of equilibrium, we have seen the increasing development of individualism, followed by the developing present of bureaucratic capitalism, itself a ~~rk~~ ruling class attempt to create a co-operative society which must fail because it ultimately denies the exploited any identity. We see the development of the workers' power movement, and other -power movements, demanding a class's right to control its own life. And this to me seems like the start of a march into egalitarian ~~capitalism~~ collectivism that would also be libertarian - achieving the equilibrium that we can define as being a full human being.

AV also mentions primary man as being monotheistic and talks of a belief in a Great Spirit presiding over the universe. I am not sure whether she is thinking of mana in Melanesia and other primitive

cultures, but as Mircea Eliade has pointed out the evidence shows this is not the pre-animist religion, and in any case Melanesia in fact has Creator-Beings as well as mana. I would have doubted whether in fact omonotheism was the primary religion: this can be debated. If indeed the primary collective had a group religion, then it would have been monotheism, simply as a reflection of the unity of the group. Animism would seem to represent a compensation for the loss of oneness-with-nature - a kind of consecration of an environment previously experienced as part of oneself. It is not altogether irrelevant that a comparative study by M. Mead has shown that, where children in our society are animistic, children in at least one animistic society are realistic, when we see animism as involving things being caused by spirits and realism as events being caused by earlier events. This split surely in fact hides what is, or should be, a continuum, involving realistic thinking in the context of respect for one's environment. It has been suggested man's alienation from nature was caused by his killing of other species: it seems more likely that it was the result of cultivation, which is the manipulation of the environment as opposed to merely using what is there, the experience of alienation being reinforced, and perhaps brought above the level of consciousness, by the collapse of the primary collective and the experience of separation and alienation from one's fellow men. I would wonder if in fact the origins of religion lie in this experience of alienation and the fear that stems from the sense of helpless fragility and precariousness. Thus we see the development of Judaism from a placatory religion to an ethical religion, and this seems to be the common evolution of all religions.

Does this in fact refer to a false type of religion? In this thesis God is the ground of our being, and finding God means, not conforming to the will of an external Being, either intellectually or as an action of the total person, but becoming at one with oneself. This would lead us to expect that, if the personality were deconditioned, we would find this integration. But God in me and God in you is the same person: hence the identification with trees etc: etc. Oneness with nature becomes oneness with the divinity that is throughout nature: surely in fact the latter is a compensation for the former. Actual identification with a tree rather than the divinity in it must surely be classed as a failure of ego-differentiation: I am part of the universe, as is the tree $\frac{7}{8}$ - that does not make me part of the tree, or identical with the tree rather, but simply means we share the characteristic of belonging to the same whole. It would seem to be a compensation for the loss of harmony with nature.

We have to admit that we are born with certain genetic potentialities, which are selectively reinforced or inhibited by our upbringing. A coercive society conditions our responses to situations by reinforcing some and inhibiting others. In a 'free society' the child would interact with its environment, creating its own responses in terms of existing personality (genetic potentialities + learning from experience). This hardly leaves any room for integration with the divine spark: in fact total deconditioning is impossible.

Anarchism is surely about allowing the personality to evolve freely, where conformism distorts the evolution of the personality into the framework of cultural values. The idea of becoming one with the Ground of Being is impossible. We could add that the hypothesis of God in these terms is totally superfluous in any case.

Conclusion

Religion is the spiritualising of the urge to harmony with the Other, to be achieved through becoming one with a reified, projected archetypal ^{father-}figure (either as a vehicle for His will or as total unity).

Anarchism is about liberating oneself from all distortions and mystifications and interacting with the environment in mutual spontaneity.

Tony Fleming.

REPLY by Laurens Otter

1. Philosophy Just as Christianity both fulfilled and overcame the Judaic Law so Love both fulfils and overcomes (destroys) justice. When Christ said Love thy neighbour as oneself this was no empty comment and to suggest that justice is only for others would so make it, for it would suggest that man is an island and that one can accept injustice without condemning others to it. Love must make one both oppose the injustice and yet love the perpetrator, - the difference perhaps between the philosophy of non-Resistance and non-violent resistance.

God cannot do anything contrary to the nature of God - LOVE - therefore in this case God is not omnipotent, for he cannot do evil or wish evil, he cannot break his word or call back his gift of free will. Indeed Tony points out that God cannot make square circles, and that in this case he cannot be omnipotent, and by the same token he cannot make evil godlike without transforming that evil into good and so destroying its evil.

Tony moves from material and non-material to pure-positive and pure negative to prove his next point, but does not prove that non-material is anti-material in the sense that negative is anti-positive. Now if evil is the turning away from the good, and if good includes freedom of choice, then it is palpably impossible to conceive of a good universe without the possibility of evil. An automaton or a computer may be only able to do what it is told and therefore incapable of doing anything that the possessor regards as evil, but it can in no sense be considered morally good. So, therefore, God could not create an universe with the possibility of good without also the possibility of evil.

I did not rest my case on the gnostics - whom as I said I consider the greatest enemies Christianity has ever seen, they did certainly (or at least some did certainly) believe in twin creators of good and evil, and the Sufic conception of Allah still so does making Allah to contain the evil concept of the earlier Manes-Zoroaster traditions.

Again I : . . . between what Jesus ~~said~~ did in calling men to obey the law of love and what an anarchist-revolutionary does when he calls men to dedicate themselves for work for a free society.

2. Jesus, or, rather, the Cross and NVR. Going like a lamb to the slaughter may be non-resistance but it may be non-violent resistance. If one goes to the slaughter in a way that will demonstrate the iniquity of the slaughterer, if one could avoid the slaughter merely by keeping mum, then one's act of sacrifice is part of a wider struggle. Non-violent resistance uses the same techniques as Non-Resistance in the same spirit but goes out to encounter. I don't think the rest of this is worth refuting.

3. Anthropology

or rather mysticism. It was Tony that brought in the return to the womb and I who denied it. On his comment on acid may I refer him to IKON IV. On the point of the Lorenz (and I detect Ardrie) comments see the refutation in the collection of essays edited by Ashley Montagu. I think that Tony will find that if he looks at ~~the~~ most animist religions that there is an "All-Father" whose name it is blasphemous to mention except in circumlocutions. (I have always suspected this rather than the ordinary hospitable interpretation is the meaning of St. Paul's reference to the "Unknown God's" altars.) But anyway since it is normal early Christian belief that all previous philosophies and religions had insights about God, but that the Judaic insight was the closest to the real thing, the fact that early man was mistaken does not really matter, there is a valid development in these matters and one sees this in the Old Testament.

SHORT COMMENT by Anne Vogel

I found it difficult to answer Tony, because although his facts seem all right, and his arguments are logical, we seem to be talking about different kinds of universe. This will take space and time to explore and I am preparing something for a later issue.

In the meantime it would help if Tony could let me know how he would or does bring up a child himself, his remarks about it do not seem to refer to any human child I have known; and I would like other people to join in this discussion, I am sure they must have many useful ideas to contribute, as well as factual information.

I agree with Laurens that the degeneration of Xy must have been gradual and started well before Constantine; as Tony observes, the anti-nature tendency started very early, I would like to have any information about this - I have no access to early Christian sources.

Tony said various things worth discussing - I have chosen the ones that seem most important.

Human Nature

1 Bringing up Children

Tony says: "the mother does not allow the child to develop freely, but protects it from harmful behaviour and conditions it to conformity."

All young mammals need protection, and young humans need to be taught how to fit in with their environment. We are not born with instincts which would enable us to survive without training. We have been trained to conform to a coercive society, and this has damaged us. In a better kind of society the damage would have been less. But I think it possible that parents who have themselves achieved wholeness could bring up children undamaged even in a bad society.

2 Morals and Instinct

Tony uses an argument that goes round in a circle: all morality is the result of conditioning, so if people behave well without conditioning this is not morality, it is just being human. The idea that morality is anti-human is ingrained in our minds because we live in an anti-human society. Conformity to our society is not what I would call morality. Tony's views coincide with those of Freud - people suffer frustration and diminishment as a result of social conditioning: Freud thought this was a necessary evil, that without repression civilisation would be impossible. Tony thinks we would be better off with no conditioning at all. I disagree with both. I believe a civilised society is possible without class stratification, and in such a society instincts would not be repressed. A lot of Christians agree with Freud on this point, but not all. Herbert McCabe in "Love, Law and Language", passed by the Catholic Church, defined morality as doing what one deeply wants to do, not always what one wants to do at any given moment, nor what one is brain-washed into thinking that one wants, but what would satisfy our long term needs as individuals and a species. How do we know what we want in this sense?

3 The Human Brain

The human cerebral cortex has a function that corresponds to that of instinct in animals. When working properly it includes and transforms the instinctual energy rising from the lower centres. There must be contradictions, conflicts between the raw instincts and the cortex, the crux of the matter is in how the conflicts are resolved: in a healthy person the resolution should lead to a synthesis. There are contradictions because during evolution the new and specifically human brain was superimposed on top of the old brain inherited from our prehuman ancestors. The old brain was not altered to make it more efficient, a new one was simply added to it. A very interesting explanation of this evolutionary development and its physiological results is given in "Man's Presumptuous Brain" by Simeons, a doctor who believes that nearly all diseases, including some infectious ones, are psychosomatic, and most of these are caused by repressed fear or guilt, and are cured if the underlying fear is removed. This may be the explanation of Christ's curious habit of telling sick people that their sins were forgiven; Christians today generally would not approve of this unsolicited free pardon, the sinner is supposed to confess his sins and ask for forgiveness.

Incidentally, Simeons says that the human cerebral cortex evolved out of the olfactory lobes, the organs of smell, in fish and reptiles. This fits in with the experience of intuition as a kind of smelling - one 'smells a rat', the French use the verb 'flairer', to sniff out what is going on, we say "there is something in the wind". Mystical experience of God is described in terms of touching and tasting, and this is what happens when one smells a material object from a distance, a molecule of it floating in the air has touched a sensory nerve in the nose.

4 Morals and Aesthetics

A hundred years ago Ruskin was invited to lecture on architecture to some Bradford business men, they wanted him to help them to choose a ~~suitable~~^{good} design for an Exchange - Ruskin told them it would be impossible because business is immoral. He told them: "Taste is not only a part and index of morality; - it is the ONLY morality. The first, and last, and closest trial question to any living ~~thing~~ creature is, 'What do you like? Tell me what you like and I'll tell you what you are . . . all delight in fine art, and all love of it, resolve themselves into simple love of that which deserves

III

love . . . and it is not an indifferent or optional thing whether we love this or that; but it is just the vital function of all our being. What we like determines what we are, and is the sign of what we are; and to teach taste is inevitably to form character."

Werner Peltz said in one of his books ^{the architecture of} that ~~our~~ suburbs reflect the moral decay of our society. Avarice, greed and envy are ugly.

JESUS

Tony accuses him of racialism in his dealing with the Syrophenician woman. This is not in keeping with his character described elsewhere. I think he was testing her: would she react to the form of his words, or would she respond to the wholeness in him which is of God? In the latter case she could transmit his healing power to her daughter.

But the content of his words was a statement of fact: he was planting the seed of a new society, which would grow to include the ~~whole~~ whole human race; it had to take root first in the culture in which he was reared.

Tony says: "If free will exists, it is the ability to choose between identity and conformity. Jesus called the apostles to obey his teachings: it might not have been conformity to the larger society, but it was conformity in terms of a cultural subgroup. The anarchist chooses identity." Elsewhere he says: "The evolution of culture may be predicted to lead to a balance between self assertion and collectivism." Freud again - the ego holding the balance between the Super-ego and the Id - a liberalised version of Orwell's 1984. Jesus made it clear that the Kingdom of Heaven was not this sort of society - see Matthew xxiii verse 8. The widespread misunderstanding of what Jesus was trying to do is bound up with our stereotyped conception of an individual as a kind of discrete lump bounded by his skin - "God in me and God in you is the same person", so a person who is one with God is simply a carbon copy of everyone else. We have become so conditioned by our machinelike society that we cannot think of ourselves except as component parts of a machine. Jesus said 'I am the vine, ye are the branches' - a cell in a plant or an animal ^{is an} ~~is an~~ individual and ~~is~~ ^{also} one with the whole - there is no conflict of interests unless the cells become diseased. Then they become destructive. The atomised individuals of our society are cancer cells in the body of Humanity.

Space and Matter
Tony's argument that the universe cannot logically exist

Tony says: "The cross cannot conceivably be defined as nonviolent

resistance. I think he is right if by 'defining' something he means summarising its essential character, but neither does his alternative definition 'total nonresistance'. It was totally nonresistant but this was incidental. The real point was elsewhere. It certainly has something to do with what Tony was saying about animism, identity with trees - I suppose he was thinking of identity with the totem (animal, tree or what not) that crops up all over in primitive religions, and later reappeared modified in the rites of 'mystery' cults which proliferated in the Graeco Roman world at the time of Christ. In these the member of the cult became one with or filled with the god. On the cross the totem was a human being, who was also God: it could be defined as the Totem of Man. We do not have to find our identity any longer in a tribal group or any subdivision of the human race, because in Christ we are made one ~~species~~ - the totem group is replaced by the ~~entire~~ species. But it was much more than an enlargement of the symbol, there was a qualitative leap (in Marxist jargon) because it was both the symbol and the end result of the transformation of a human being from the uncomfortable semi-animal stage of conflict between instinct and the Law into a true human being. In Jungian terms Jesus personified the goal of therapy - Individuation, and, as Jung explained, the process of reaching it involves pain and sacrifice. The sacrifice of the small, limited ego consciousness to the Self, which he defined as the subjective experience of God. (see Collected Works, Vol. 11, under Sacrifice.)

THE NATURE OF THE UNIVERSE

Tony's remarks about God, Logic and so on ought, if our group is really something more than a pleasant occupation for a Saturday evening, to stimulate among its members some uncomfortable thoughts. The more uncomfortable the better, as Colin Wilson observed in Beyond the Outsider human beings never exert themselves fully unless they are constantly goaded by pain and discomfort. Almost any intelligent person could knock holes in our present theory of reality, but few take us seriously enough to bother. The greatest obstacle to the world revolution at the present time is the utter absence of a hypothesis about the nature of reality which is true to our knowledge and experience, and which gives us a solid framework in which to act. Without

one we are floundering in a strange country in a fog without a map. The fog is the barrage of lies and mystification generated by the ruling class. Our society is founded on lies, we are fed them with our mothers' milk. Not just the obvious ones exposed in radical journals, they go much deeper than that, right down to the foundation of our experience of reality. Our mental model of the universe is not, as we suppose, a pure product of scientific method, it is the product of conditioning for a thousand years in authoritarian social structures, and of the interaction between Christianity and society, science and Christianity, and science and society.

Spirit and Matter

Tony says "God is non-material and the universe is material. How could one create the other... (for) it is impossible for a pure positive to create a pure negative." Laurens pointed out that Christians do not believe that spirit and matter are antagonistic, but I think there is still a lot to be explained. Teilhard de Chardin wrote a tremendous apology for Christian doctrine based on scientific evidence in "The Phenomenon of Man", but he failed to bridge the gap between spirit and matter. In our current model of reality there is no room for God, and there is no room for free will. Surely Tony is right when he points out that God appears to have created an amoral universe - the universe which most of us believe in is ruder than a vast machine combined with factory farm. The fact that Christians believe there is also another kind of reality, a ghostly annex tacked on to the material cosmos known to science, does not improve matters, in fact it makes them rather worse. If God can only interfere in the cosmic process by performing miracles, and clearly he cannot perform them too often or the machinery would get all out of gear, why did he construct such a horrible thing in the first place?

Space and Time

Tony's argument that the universe cannot logically exist if it is finite is not important; since Einstein's most cosmologies are based on a finite universe and they postulate space and time as properties of matter. If Tony does not accept Einstein's theory of Relativity, and I wouldn't blame him as it is hard to swallow, he would still have to devise some alternative hypothesis to explain the facts that are explained by it.

The Problem of Evil

My 'extended argument' about this is simply the

negative fact that I tried to imagine a world in which we had free will but nothing nasty could ever happen, and I failed. If anyone else can I would like to hear about it and will willingly rethink my position.

Square Circles

Since reading Russell's ABC of Relativity I see that

I underestimated God in this respect. He could easily create square circles and has probably already done so in some dimension beyond the range of normal human minds.

DOGMA & EXPERIENCE

I believe the origin of science and religion, both in individuals

and historically, is our need to understand our environment, to be

able to deduce fairly simple laws relating our disparate and chaotic

impressions of events; and, I think Tony is right in the case of religion

to see ourselves as a part of the total pattern, to reestablish

the harmony with nature which was disrupted when we began to choose

what course of action to take instead of relying on instinctual reactions.

The raw material of both is experience. In the case of

religion it is mystical experience. Dogma is a translation of

it into 'positive' terms, i.e. symbols relating to everyday

experience through our 'normal' sense organs. The dogma,

when it is formulated, naturally conforms to current knowledge and

theories of the material world. But the experience itself is very

simple and always the same for people of any religion or none:

1 IT is the source of our life and of everything that exists.

2 IT is pure creative love.

3 There is never any experience of evil - the evil experienced in

trying to meditate comes from the individual ego, sometimes in the

form of 'devils', which does not want to give up its mastery and

know-how and trust itself to IT.

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POSTSCRIPT

I suggest that non-violent resistance differs from non-resistance only in the sense that it is accepted deliberately - that one goes out to meet the evil rather than let it come to you - with the intention of converting the perpetrator of the evil.

That moreover non-violent resistance is non-violent in the degree to which it approximates to non-resistance.

I cannot give Tony's allegation of racialism the serious consideration that Anne gives it, the wording of the Gospel passage makes it plain that the words were a test, and also maintain the truth of the fact that Christ came first to the Jews and only through them to us gentiles - the whole point of the chosen people, the militant minority, the revolutionary elite.

But perhaps my judgement of the subject is coloured by the effect at an early age of hearing "The Man Born to be King".

I think Anne allows Tony too much in distinguishing material and spiritual, not only are they not antitheses, I would suggest that they are not even separable totally.

C H R I S T I A N M U T U A L A I D

Our social structure makes it difficult to love one's neighbour as oneself; I suggest we try to build a new sort of structure, within the present one, which could bridge the gap between the small, self contained and often selfish small family or individual, and the large, impersonal governmental institutions that cater for people in need.

My children used to bring home friends from school; some of them had nowhere else to go after school and in the holidays because their mothers were out at work all day and some were short of money so that their children did not get proper meals. I sometimes fed the more emaciated ones, but could not do much in that line for similar reasons. It was nice having lots of children around, but they made an appalling mess, especially when they brought their younger brothers and sisters and other friends. Some picked unripe fruit in the garden and occasionally made off with toys and kitchen equipment, they were especially fond of sharp knives. I told the original friends not to come any more unless they were invited, and their visits became infrequent. Instead my children played with them outside, and I had some bad times searching for them among decrepit ruins or half finished houses on building sites. I heard rumours of adventures on the railway embankment. I thought of asking for advice from some welfare department, but was deterred by the thought that machinery might be set in motion that could deprive the unfortunate parents of their children. In any case, it seems to me that love must be a matter of personal care and friendship, not a governmental operation.

In our local mental hospital there are patients who ought not to be there, in fact would not have had to go there in the first place if they had had friendly homes to live in; they have to stay on indefinitely often getting worse instead of better, because they are not well enough to live on their own. I know that some Christians in our neighbourhood would like to take them in, but either haven't got room or do not want to risk taking in someone who may be emotionally disturbed and does not belong to the family.

Similar difficulties beset unmarried mothers, they really need a family when their children are young. It is difficult for them to find anywhere to live with a baby, and also to find someone to look after it when they are out at work.

St. John Chrysostom (d. AD 407), bishop of Constantinople wrote:

"Consider the time of the Apostles. I say not the chief men, but believers themselves generally. All, it is written, were of one heart, neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own. There were no such words as 'mine' and 'thine'. This is friendship . . . It is only impossible (today) because we have not the will, for possible it is. If it were not possible neither would Christ have commanded it nor have discoursed so much upon love." (Homilies. 1 Thessal. Hom. 2)

It is sometimes said that the sharing of possessions by the first Christians was confined to Jerusalem and lasted only a short time. This is not born out by what Tertullian wrote around AD 200 in his 'Apology':

"We are brethren in our family property, which with you mostly dissolves brotherhood. We, therefore, who are united in mind and soul, doubt not about having our possessions in common. With us all things are shared promiscuously, except the wives. In that alone do we part fellowship, in which others (Greek and Roman pagans) exercise it."

This suggests that sharing of possessions was still common practice towards the end of the second century after Christ, but had ceased by the end of the fourth century when St. John Chrysostom was writing. In the interim, Christianity had become the official religion of the Roman Empire, and there had been an influx of converts, some for reasons other than religious conviction. The church became respectable, and many Christians were trying to live 'normal' lives within a pagan social structure based on slavery and private acquisition of wealth. It is not surprising that the sharing communities ceased to exist, or were replaced by monasteries. We have inherited a pattern of life accommodated to a social structure that is basically non-Christian, therefore it is not surprising that we generally find it impossible to obey Christ's commands on love while trying to conform to the society around us.

Recently I met a lady living in New Southgate, just over the railway line from us, who during nine years has collected a large circle of families and old people whom she visits and helps. She collects clothes, food and money from other people for them, a room in her flat is permanently filled with such things. Her list became longer and longer. She rang up various welfare services for help but was told they already had more than they could cope with. Eventually her heart gave out and she had to go into hospital. When she came out she asked some local Christians to take on some of the old people she had been visiting; some members of our Lenten study group offered to help. We had been thinking ~~of~~ of starting a cafe because young people in New Southgate have nowhere to go in the evening, in the High Road houses are condemned and will be demolished in a year or two, we had been offered an empty shop for the cafe. But in discussing the plan several difficulties had appeared; I think the biggest one was that the cafe would need someone working full time to organise it.

After listening to the lady with the long list of people needing help I had an idea. She had said that, when collecting things, she found that the most generous givers were people who were poor themselves. I remembered the hymn: "Help us to help each other, Lord, Each other's cross to bear, Let each his brethren aid afford And feel his brother's care." How much nicer it would be for all concerned if we could all help one another: according to our needs and capacities. Most people do not want charity, most people do want friendship. The giver of charity, however kind and tactful, is always felt to be superior, and the receiver of charity feels inferior. We need a community in which everyone gives what they can and receives what they need; not on an exchange basis but out of love. But such a community requires a new structure in which it can operate. The first thing needed is a place where people can meet, outside their homes, on an equal footing; preferably with two or three rooms and facilities for making tea and coffee. It could be started in a small way with only one or two rooms, and expand as more people join in. A condemned house or a church hall would do, and it could open two or three afternoons and evenings a week according to the number of people in the group starting it. I think there should be a group of people responsible, who meet regularly

for prayer and discussion. They could keep records of those needing or able to give help, of people needing to be visited in their homes, and arrange a rota so that some responsible person is always there when the place is open. But this work will be shared more and more by new people coming in, and the fact that people meet one another in a friendly atmosphere and can make their own arrangements for mutual aid will cut out a good deal of the organising work associated with 'normal' do-gooding activities. Such a centre would attract young people who want to meet others and do something useful, but do not want to be bossed around by official leaders. One thing they could do for a start in an old house would be to decorate it and help brighten up an otherwise melancholy neighbourhood.

A mutual aid centre would not in itself solve the problem of people whose primary need is for a good home or for help in the home from others sharing it with them, but it could begin to solve them by bringing together people with different but complementary needs: e.g. an overburdened mother of young children and people living alone who would be glad of company and would help her with the children and domestic chores. The problems of exhausted parents and lonely unmarried or old people are unknown in Africa and India where people live in large families that include grandparents, aunts, uncles, and unmarried brothers and sisters. Such problems only arise in small family units like ours.

Organisation of Mutual Aid would be much simpler and less burdensome for individuals than the present way of doing things. The done good to would be able to do good themselves, everyone can give something and feel responsible for the atmosphere and general amenities of the centre. It should not be just a place where people come for giving or receiving the kind of help given by charity organisations, but it should be seen as a social club where people can cooperate in entertaining one another and in educational activities for themselves and their children.

The diagrams overleaf show the difference in structure between the present isolated do-gooder or centralised welfare service and the mutual aid centre. But one important advantage in the new system could only be seen in a moving picture which shows development in time. The centralised system cannot grow beyond the capacity of the central individual (or welfare office) and, in the case of an individual, the whole thing collapses when he or she does. The mutual aid system is self-perpetuating, and there is no limit to its growth in time and space, when it gets too large for one premises people can start new ones.

People in Friern Barnet or New Southgate who would be interested in forming a mutual aid group can get in touch with:

Mrs. Anne Vogel,
14 The Crescent,
N. 11

Telephone: 01 368 3343

CHRISTIAN MUTUAL AID

New System of Mutual Aid

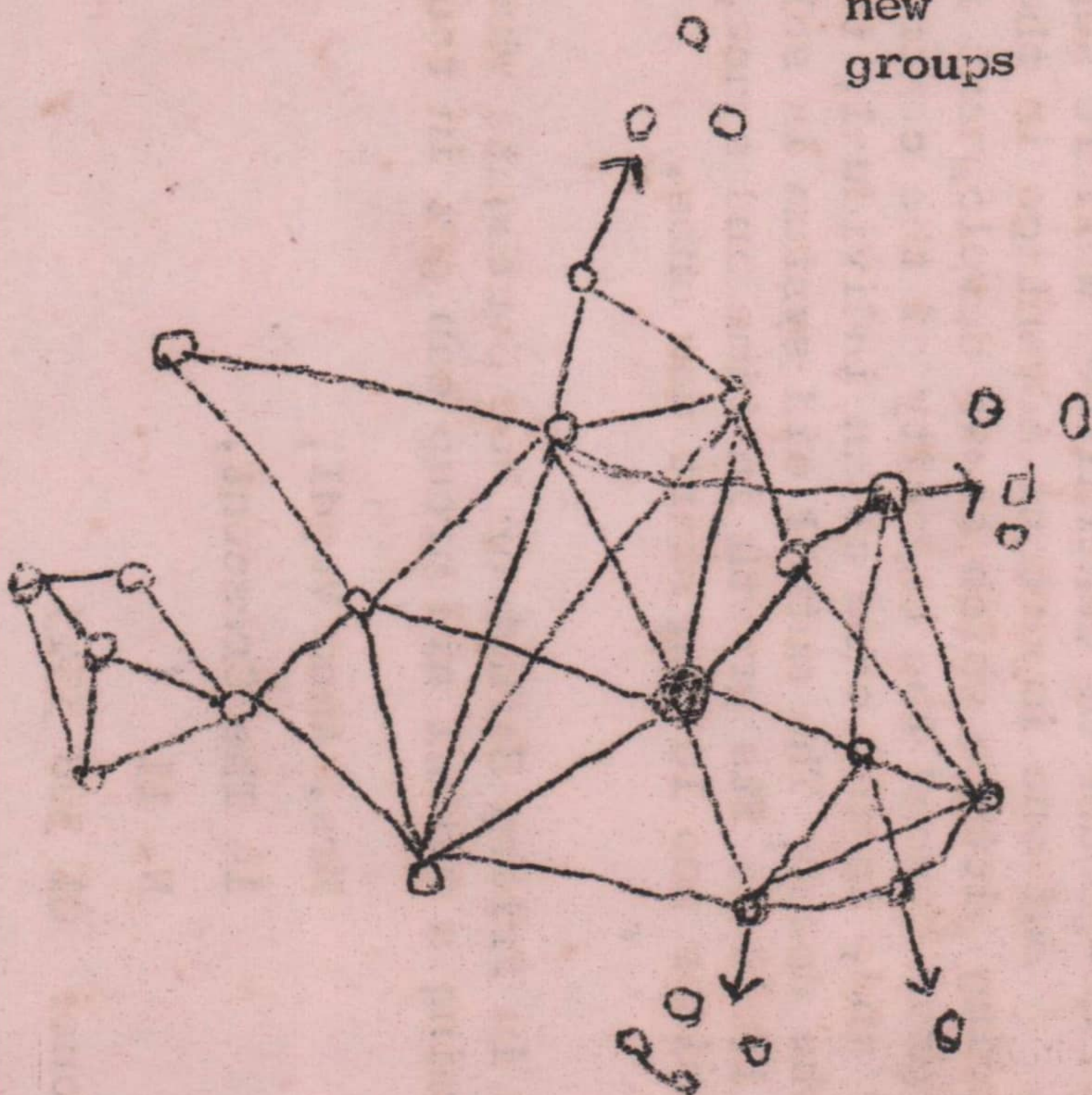
KEY

Members of Mutual Aid Group ○

Personal Contacts —

Growing points →

potential
new
groups



CHRISTIAN MUTUAL AID

Present System of
Do-gooding

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Do-gooding person or
Welfare Office ●

Personal Contacts —

People done good to ○

