

Cosmos Shows Love-Life And Love-Death Themes

THE THEOLOGY OF SPACE (Fourth in a Series)

By BISHOP FULTON J. SHEEN

Let us begin with a riddle: What is common between Freud, the Eucharist, the Crucifixion and the Cosmos? The answer very quickly is contained in the title: Love and Death.

This combination is often expressed in these Greek words: "Eros-Thanatos. Through history these words have not always been used in their proper sense; for example, the French poet Beaudelaire pictured love seated on a skull to indicate that a day must come when the lover's arms are outstretched, and when the last cake is crumbled at life's great feast.

Freud on Love and Death

Freud treated this tension of Life-Death or Love-Death from a psychoanalytic point of view. His theory was that along with the love instinct in man, there is also the death instinct. Hence, his followers for the Electra and Oedipus complex, in which girl loves father and would like to kill her mother, and boy loves mother and would like to kill his father. To Freud, Eros was practically sex, not love, but along with it was the death instinct of the propensity or drive to self-destruction, aggression and death. In other words, love and hate, or better love and death walk hand in hand in the subconscious man.

While Freud's theory went to extremes, it cannot be ignored that he was expressing an idea which all philosophers and literature have vocalized. Did not St. Thomas Aquinas, the wisest of Christian philosophers, say that in man there were two great passions: concupiscence or love which made him pull things and persons to himself and the irascible drive, or the opposite passion, which made him drive things away from himself? And what is this Eros-Thanatos, but attraction and repulsion in the physical universe, metabolism and katabolism in biology, creation and chaos in Genesis, production and consumption in economics, capitalism and the proletariat in the pages of Marx.

Love and death are the emotional counterparts of the profound, constructive and destructive drives in nature and in man. From a purely psychological point of view, Dr. Karl Menninger speaks of these two in some sick: "The skillful physician not only holds off the relatives, but he tries to keep the patient from doing those things which Eros demands rather than recovery." An example of the death instinct is the urge to destroy life by suicide. But long before that, aggressiveness is manifested in the child against anyone who would deprive it of life satisfaction.

Eucharist - Eros: Union with the Beloved

Leaving the psychoanalytic theory for Sacramental Theology, we find the Eros, or the Union with the Beloved, in Communion, and also the Thanatos or the Union with His Death. This union strange to many, because our theologians and our prayer books have emphasized only the one side of union with the Christ-Life, but rarely or ever have they dwelt on the union with the Christ-Death. We find the Eucharist described as the Sacrament of Life in the Gospel of St. John: "The bread that I shall give is My Flesh for the life of the world." (John 6/51)

All life depends on communion. The rain, sun, and chemicals practically say to the plant: "Unless you eat me, you shall not have life in you." Plants practically say to animals: "Unless you commune with us, you will have no life on this earth." All lower creation says to man: "Unless you make us the bread of your body, you shall have no life in you." Christ makes exactly the same claim, except that here spirit must have communion with Spirit: "If you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood you will not have life in you." (John 6/53) The law of transformation holds sway: the lower is transformed into the higher, plants into animals, animals into man, man into Christ, so that the Christian can cry out: "I live, no, not I-but-Christ-lives in me."

Eucharist - Thanatos: Union with Death

The Thanatos aspect of the Eucharist expresses an incorporation to the death-Christ. This second aspect St. Paul stresses: "Until the Lord comes, every time you eat this Bread or drink this Cup, you are proclaiming His death." (1 Cor. 11/26) Thanatos is inseparable from Eros; mortification is the condition of life: "You too must consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but strive for God in Christ Jesus." (Rom. 6/11)

Thus, the Eucharist is not only Eros, or the union with the Beloved, but also Thanatos, or the union with His Death. This second aspect of Communion we rarely hear of, and yet it is just as important as the Life side. Shall we go to the Communion rail, eat the Bread of Life and the "Wine that permeates virgins" and offer no wheat to be crushed, no grapes to be ground? If we only receive and give nothing back, we become parasites.

Our contemporary contempt of self-denial, our preference to be violent to others instead of being violent to ourselves, our love for carrying banners of protest instead of beating of our guilty hearts — all these make us forgetful of the Thanatos side of the Eucharist. And this is Christ dying with Christ to live with Him. "I have been crucified with Christ, and I live now, not with my own life but with the Life of Christ who lives in me." (Gal. 2/20) "You cannot belong to Christ unless you crucify all self-indulgent passions and desires." (Gal. 5/24) "Through Christ the world is crucified to me and I to the world." (Gal. 6/14)

The death is the condition of life is affirmed by nature. Before the plant can live in the animal it must be born up from its roots and pass, in a sense, through the jaws of death; before

the animal can enter into the life of man it must pass through fire and water which constitute its Gethsemane and its Calvary. Each thing must die to itself, it must be immolated if it is to have its life perfected. Nothing is "born to a higher life" unless it is born "from above".

The Crucifixion is Continuing

In The Death of Christ, we find Eros-Thanatos entwined, for as Laurence Housman put it, "Love made Life, Life made pain, pain made Death". To Our Lord the test of love was sacrifice: "There is no greater love than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friends" (John 15/13). The night before He died, John wrote of Him: "He had always loved His own who were in the world, and now He was to show the full extent of His love" (John 13/17).

Does not anyone who loves put himself at the mercy of that beloved person? A mother who loves her babe is at the mercy of the night-calls for attention; so is the love of the physician for his sick, the pastor for his people. The lover puts his peace and his happiness on the auction block; it can be sold for thirty pieces, or blistered by a kiss.

But who are the "strong", the "powerful" in the world today? Those who love the least? What can the bishop, the pastors and the priests and religious in the Church do with those who would flaunt the truth of the Church, teach false doctrine, throw mud on the Bride (which is the Church), demand her liturgy, and go first to the press and last to the altar? What can true love do in the face of these except—absolve, be quiet, take the slap. Thus they imitate Christ Who, because He loved most, was "powerless"; that is why Omnipotent Love can be crucified.

Those who love least get their way; those who love most get stoned. Hate today is in the saddle of one of the four horses of the Apocalypse, and love is trampled beneath its thundering hoofs.

What is all this but a reflection of Christ Whose love extended those hands which blessed to be transfixed to a beam by the fellows of his own profession? Christ, the Forger of the hot planets, the Maker of the cold moon, and the earth, so "tangled in a skein of blood and tears, is Weakness Itself." Eros is Thanatos, or as Ignatius of the second century said: "My Love (Eros) is crucified."

The whole cosmos turned against Love on that gibbet; the roses by giving their thorns; the bowels of the earth by surrendering their steel; the forest by delecting itself to make a wooden cross, the sun by refusing to shine; the planet earth opening its breast to a cross; the distant stars by being hid in darkness at high noon. That close relationship between Love and Sacrifice continued beyond Golgotha, when Stephen, "full of the Spirit" was stoned. The glorified Christ in heaven was seen "standing" (not "sitting at the right hand of the Father") as if His Love shared the agony of Stephen's death. Thus, within a few years, the heavens opened as the bigot Saul, later Paul, begins persecuting the Church. Love questions: "Saul! Saul, why do you persecute Me?"

How could Paul be persecuting Christ in Heaven? Well, if someone steps on your foot, does not the head complain? Paul was striking the Church, the Body of Christ, so the Head protested: "Why do you persecute Me?" — Oh! how often today does it happen that not only those who are outside the Church, but those inside it, make the Lord again shout through space: "Why Me? Why Me?"

Light-Darkness in the Cosmos

Inasmuch as we are writing on the Theology of Space, we now have to see Eros-Thanatos applied to the cosmos. Naturally, we here leave all analogies of emotion behind, such as love-hate; love-death; and enter into an astronomical universe. But we find the same tension. What is Eros-Thanatos in man, in the Eucharist, in the Crucifixion, but Light-Darkness in the Cosmos?

Whence came the darkness in the cosmos at the beginning of creation? We have already hinted at an anti-Light, anti-God, anti-creation intelligence which brought chaos to the cosmos as sin brought thistles to earth, complexes to man. God did not separate the darkness from the light, but the light from the darkness (Gen. 1/4). Darkness seems to have been there as anti-light. As Gerhardt von Rad noted in his commentary on this text: "Every night when the created world of forms flows together into formlessness, chaos regains a certain power over what has been created. Many of our evening hymns know how to express impressively the creaturely feeling of dread toward the night."

Genesis does not divide the day as we do, into morning and evening, but into evening (vespers) and morning. Darkness, whatever be its origin, is given no rest. God is the relentless Hound of Heaven in pursuit of stygian blackness.

After the Revelation in the Old Testament which dissipated darkness of mind, there came the Incarnation. "And that Life was the light of men, a light that shines in the dark, a light that darkness could not overpower." (John 1/5) The light which is at the essence of the atom is like the feeble John the Baptist in the cosmos announcing Him Who said: "I am the Light of the World."

Light is like a mighty warrior battling against darkness. Christ founded the Church to diffuse light to all nations. As Paul Claudel wrote: "From the outset — from the very hour of Satan's secession, the very moment when he took advantage of the Almighty's weakness in allowing him to exist and managed to become a negative force — there was the light to oppose darkness and the good to oppose evil."

It is light which reveals the colors of a painting; light shining on our souls (and it is not sun-

(Continued on Page 11)

LETTERS to the editor



Praise for Merton

While the death of Thomas Merton represents a loss to only some men, the life of this great man should be a lesson to all men.

Thomas Merton started out with an indulgent and pleasure-filled life; he did not find in it the satisfaction that he craved. In his mid-twenties, he undertook the ascetic life of a Trappist. The great happiness and peace of soul he found in the monastery are clearly evident in his Seeds of Contemplation.

The lesson to be learned is not that all men should enter the contemplative life. The lesson is that happiness and peace will not be found without at least a minimum response to the renunciations which Christ demands of His followers. Renunciations which are "frequently against the grain, but creative in their final effect." (U.S. Bishops' Pastoral Letter, Human Life in Our Day) Which of us can deny the creativity which blossomed from the soul of Thomas Merton after he embraced his Trappist asceticism?

The lesson is an old lesson but seemingly one which many have forgotten in their rapid rush for renewal. Thomas Merton has set for us an excellent example of Christian renunciation.

—Arnold B. Morrison, Grand Ave., Rochester

their own living. What people? The run of the mill — not the intellectuals. The latter have other sources of reading geared to their understanding.

I believe that the Courier goes far afield of its objective — a mistake many secular publications have made much to their sorrow. It is trying to enter too many avenues. Your reader desperately wants to learn about God, and when he has sifted out all extraneous matter, together with a liberal sprinkling of advertisements, he finds little of it.

—Miss H. Irene Trefel, Rochester

Need Liturgy Help?

I have followed with interest the comments and letters to the Editor on the state of liturgical celebration in our diocese. Most heartening to me is the interest in the liturgy so noticeably coming from the laity; their dissatisfaction with the present situation, most of our parish churches and their great desire for a better, more meaningful participation and understanding.

Our laity have been hungry for better liturgical fare for a LONG time. Someone has failed them — either because of smugness over the status quo, or because those who should be explaining and leading are untrained or unprepared to do so, or because they are blithely unaware or unconvinced of this need of the people.

Many young clerics are eager, energetic, willing and zealous to do more but are not given the green light by a hesitant pastor who fears they may go too far. This is understandable. Some who are allowed to implement diocesan directives for participation have gone overboard for various reasons: over-enthusiasm, inexperience, lack of adequate training. Many who are non-musicians are the worst offenders — and the situation then becomes worse instead of better.

Circulation Idea

Why isn't our Courier sold in our churches, at least at Sunday Masses?

It cannot be found on news stands or in places where other newspapers are sold, but especially I think it should be available to visitors and folks who are short-stayers in town. These folks in some cases do not want a subscription and perhaps wouldn't know how to go about getting one if they did.

Perhaps a copy or two could be kept in church vestibules and marked "to be read while here."

A paper that has heart for Peter is one which has heart for Christ.

—George Bedford, 581 Flower City Pl.

Objective Criticism

Last week Mr. Farren, associate editor, asked for comment about the Courier. There are times when silence can be interpreted as consent, but this is not one of those times either. This is a time when silence is the muteness of resignation — of a despair born of futility, that is haunting a certain segment of the People of God.

I refer to the step-children of the Church, who have steadfastly clung to Her teachings, accepting the bitter with the better in the belief that they should not expect their religion to be a thrilling experience to themselves, but a way to worship their God.

In these days of confusion and bewilderment of the faithful, the Catholic press is in a unique position to make a great contribution to Catholic teaching — but does not always do so.

Its objective? — I presume it is to guide people in their thinking and to give them the opportunity to acquaint themselves with the best and authoritative Catholic thought, to stimulate a religious activity in

Word for Sunday

Only the 'Sensitized' Know God

By Father Albert Shamon

Forty days after the birth of a firstborn son, a Jewish mother did two things. First she presented her child to God; then bought him back for five shekels. This prescription reminded God's people of His mercy to their firstborn in Egypt and of their need for redemption. Secondly, she made two offerings: a lamb (or, if poor, a dove) in thanksgiving and a dove for her purification. Mary made the offering of the poor — two turtles.

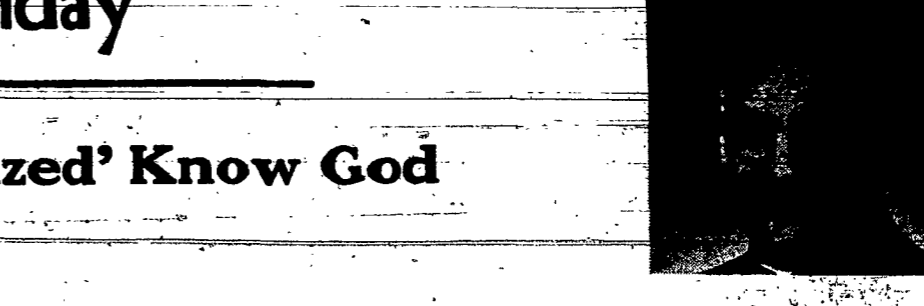
Of all the people who met the Holy Family on this occasion, only Simeon and Anna recognized them. Why only these two?

In 1830 rubber-fover swept America. Millions were invested in rubber products; millions bought them. Then calamity struck: in the summer heat rubber goods became like glue; in the winter cold they became bone-hard. Millions of dollars were lost. Everyone proceeded to forget about rubber. Everyone — except Charles Goodyear.

The mysterious "gun-elastic" caught Goodyear's fancy. Five years he experimented with it, spent every last cent on research. Then one winter in 1839 he discovered how to weather-proof rubber. He was in the habit of carrying a fistful of rubber-gum wherever he went. One day at a grocery store, while playing catch with a wad of the gum, he accidentally dropped it on the sizzling hot, polished stove. The heat did the trick. What rubber-gum needed to be made impervious to cold or heat was to be heated, vulcanized.



"I THOUGHT HIS REASON FOR WEARING THE PEACE MEDAL WOULD BE A LITTLE MORE THEOLOGICAL THAN SIMPLY 'IT'S MY BAG!'"



COURIER-JOURNAL
PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY OF SACRAMENTS

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Adult Sche

Eight once-weekly, recent religious topics in Adult Theology. Program to begin on Monday, Wednesday night, Feb. 19 in four diocesan centers: Fairport, Seneca, Auburn.

Information may be obtained through the Office of Formation, St. Patrick's (716/924-3100 or the Program, P. O. Box 3131/788-1991).

No credits are given for the classes. No examinations are demanded. Certain require outside reading.

Confraternity of Christ teachers taking certain receive advanced CCD.

Fees include: one two courses — \$12. Fees from the same course (they need not courses) — \$12; two courses — \$12; two courses — \$12; two courses — \$12.

Following are the places of the courses:

MONDAYS-FEB. 1

St. Agnes High School
7:30-8:30 — "The G...
Temporary Social I...
Sebastian Falcone, C...
Bernard's Seminary-F...

7:30-8:20 — "Basi...
Christian Morality,"...
Rosen, OFM, Cap., Co...
Theology Program, G...

8:40-9:30 — "Seci...
Christianity," Msgr...
Shannon, Chairm...
partment, Nazareth...

In all fairness let me say that this group of so-called liturgists are good, well-intentioned, generous people who are often aware of existing problems. Therefore, I do not think the situation is hopeless. There are several people who are available for such assistance.

I, for one would be most happy to aid any parish that really wants to improve its program. This is a large, vital area for Parish Education Programs.

In case anyone would like further information on implementing the parish liturgy I can be reached at 580-1000.

—Sister M. Florian, Motherhouse, Sisters of St. Joseph
(Sister Florian, long distinguished as a composer and director of church music, has been a generous contributor to diocesan liturgical life.)

9 Church Downton Joint Ef

Two Catholic churches "downtown" Protestants have joined in Rochester Downtown Ministry, it was announced.

Participating in the group are representatives of St. Mary's Church and Church, Franklin S. Episcopal, Presby and United Church of Nations.

Purpose of the ministry is to provide a means by which the ministry may, serious relationship of the to the decisions which within this community.

Father P. David I vicar for the diocesan Urban Ministry, took plans for formation group. Although he associated with it, establishment.

Announcement also the appointment of Father J. as director of try. A graduate of and Union Theological comes to Rochester the Urban Training

cajo.

"The ministry will of laymen," he said through important ing-human-factors. The beginning p a heavy emphasis o discover the needs, dreams of the peo downtown."

Six churches — St. Joseph's, Brick Presby Presbyterian, St. Li and Salem United C were reported as financial support of. Three others — Church Cathedral, P and St. Luke's Luthi soaked with the six ganizing and workin istry.

Representatives of churches and mem istry's board of dir Mary's — Msgr. Jan Father Charles A. Barry, Harold S. Hael — Very Rev. John Father Robert Cougl

Women of D Invited to Te

"Come, let us read the invitation an En offer Feb. 19 to an ish and Christian w B'rth Kodesh.

The Temple Sister women of the dioces interfaith dessert lu Rabbi P. S. Goldbe ten-Guests also will tour of the Temple, wood Ave.

Catholic women m vations, by Feb. Everett E. Murphy, Road, Rochester 554 288-4682 or 654-8822.

Museum Sho Bird Painting

Bird paintings and by J. Fenwick Lansdowne, will be shown Museum and Science Oct. February.

The original paint Mr. Lansdowne's ne of the Eastern Fore