

SandalPrints

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PARADISE IS WHAT YOU MAKE OF IT

While driving on Interstate 10 the other day, I noticed a Greyhound bus with its destination, "Paradise," boldly shown across the front.

How wonderful it sounded. I remember thinking: "Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could settle back on a bus destined for Paradise?" Then I wondered, "What would this place be like, and would it be paradise for everyone?"

I thought to myself that no matter where we are, we create our own heaven or hell. Each of us defines our own paradise.

Some spend a lifetime in search of happiness and may even convince themselves that there is no paradise on earth except of our own making.

We drive ourselves and determine what it will be like when we get there. It seldom occurs to us that paradise is within us and of our own making.

There is no Greyhound bus to Paradise, and even if there were, it's more than likely that when we got there, we'd be disappointed and want to go elsewhere.

Nothing is ever enough until we are enough. We cannot take busses, trains or airplanes to paradise because we take ourselves with us, and if we're not good traveling companions, no matter how wonderful, exotic or exciting the place may be, it will only reflect what we believe.

When the glamour of the newness fades, we'll

still be faced with who and what we are.

There's really no place to go, is there? Where we are is what there is.

Sally Olins is rabbi at Temple Isaiah in Palm Springs, CA

Dance as though no one
is watching you,
Love as though you have
never been hurt before,
Sing as though no one
can hear you,
Live as though
Heaven is on Earth.

SOMETIMES A WASTE OF TIME ISN'T

By Richard Brakefield, J.D., S.F.O.

"I don't understand how an intelligent person like yourself can believe the drivel that religion teaches." That was how the conversation started. My friend, who claims to be an atheist, seems to foster a visceral dislike for religion and considers it one of the greatest evils invented by mankind. Well, this time he was particularly agitated and determined to drive home his point that religion is merely a silly and childish refuge for the weak minded.

"Specifically, what drivel are you concerned about?", I asked. "It all sounds like drivel to me but the Christian claim that mankind is created in the likeness of God is blatantly silly. Does God have a nose and two ears? Does He have to brush His teeth? You have

to admit that such a claim is just wacky.”, he replied with an air of vehement certainty. My response was less than enthusiastic for I’d heard this sort of argument before and knew that the basic understanding of reality that I have is so alien to that which my friend espouses that this kind of discussion was doomed to frustration in any event. I saw instantly that this was likely to be a waste of my time and breath.

Oh, I explained to him that when we say that we believe that we are made in God’s image, we are speaking of the spirit of a person, about the immortal human soul and God’s call to us to participate in the divine plan for forging the kingdom as it was originally intended to be. My friend, however, has a propensity for describing religion in terms that make it sound like a fairy tale to be told to small children and then ridiculing it as such. If I attempt to explain what an instructed adult Christian believes, he will insist naggingly that I’m merely trying to complicate the issue in order to obfuscate the obvious silliness of our beliefs. If the conversation begins to look like I’m making any sense, he immediately turns away from the subject with some expression of exasperation like... “Oh well, people will believe what they want to believe.” Thus terminating a discussion that never gets much beyond that point.

It is quite interesting that, although he admits that most people believe in some version of a divine entity, his minority opinion, in his mind, is superior and far more learned than that of any believer despite the fact that he has the burden of convincing nearly everyone that he is right and all the others are entirely wrong. As a Christian, I don’t have that burden. I may think that Christianity is correct and the others are wrong in some or many respects; I need not discount the belief of a Jew, Muslim, Hindu or other creed in its entirety. Some are more correct than others but all recognize a controlling and creative divine force and a moral law. The bottom line is that my atheist friend cannot engage in a serious discussion of religion because he does not understand the need for religion and decries the reality of a moral law. How can one begin to talk about the fact that Christians see the world as having been created by God but made imperfect by the pride of mankind and the fact that the Creator calls us all to participate in the making right of this fractured

reality in which we live when the listener does not recognize the fact that a moral law exists and that there is a power behind it? How can one talk to such a person about forgiveness and salvation when he doesn’t recognize that there is anything to be forgiven or anything to be saved from? Until a person comes to the realization that there is a moral law and that we are in a bad state of affairs and must work at putting things right for our own good, there is little sense that Christianity can make to that person.

That’s just where my conversion with this friend ended. But before we parted he fired one last grouching at religion. “Religion has caused so much damage throughout history, perpetrated such evil and perpetuated such injustice that no reasonable person can defend it. And all its evil has been done in the name of God but is in reality done out of greed for money and power.” I parried by asking him, “Are you then admitting that there is an actual good and evil in reality? Is there truly some sort of moral principal applicable to mankind that you believe religion has violated?” His look changed from self assured intellectual superiority to a surprised and somewhat confused understanding of where his reasoning was taking us. I quickly added, “That’s a good point you’ve made, my friend. Let’s pick up from there the next time we discuss religion. I think you’re on to something.” He answered with a nod and a suggestion of a knowing grin. I thought... maybe this discussion, wasn’t a waste of my time, after all.

“I have much more to tell you, but now it would be too much for you to bear. When, however, the Spirit comes, who reveals the truth about God, he will lead you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own authority, but he will speak of what he hears and will tell you of things to come. He will give me glory, because he will take what I say and tell it to you. All that my Father has is mine; that is why I said that the Spirit will take what I give him and tell it to you”.

John 16: 12-15

PRAYER WILL PROVIDE YOU NECESSARY WISDOM

There are always some people who say that with the world in such a mess, why do you spend so much of your effort in talking about the importance of spirituality and prayer.

You promote "being" above "doing," imageless prayer above discursive thinking. How can you be indifferent to the plight of millions who are in horrible straits?

The answer that I would give is simple yet illusive. It is in silent prayer that we get the courage to honestly look with new eyes at the many issues that face our world.

Meditation can lead to a profound conversion like that of the Good Samaritan in the Christian scriptures who picked up the poor traveller who was injured on the road.

Prayer opens the heart to compassion for every human being who suffers. In prayer, we gain the enlightenment and wisdom to see problems at their roots without the spin that comes from varying ideologies and the media.

Prayer can liberate us from discouragement and sadness that often come when undertaking great tasks for a better world. Prayer can even give us joy in the midst of seeming failure and patience to endure even when real success might not come in our life time.

Having said all of this, the right brain cannot deny the benefits of the left brain. Silence needs words, darkness needs light, negation needs affirmation, unknowing needs knowing, intuition needs reason, mysticism needs theology, the feminine needs the masculine and yin needs yang.

When we can get beyond egotistical motivation and seek the good for its own sake, all aspects of the human personality can be brought to bear on the problems that face us with ever increasing engagement. We look to the influence of a Mother Teresa of Calcutta. It was her prayer life, even without consolation, that informed her to care for the poorest of the poor and eventually reach out to the world.

Let me conclude with the observation that it is more important to change hearts than to change systems. This happens in a mysterious way through the love that manifests itself as the result of prayer.

Brother Carl Sternberg, OSC is a member of the Mid-Valley Interfaith Council and director of Spiritual Life Ministries in Southern California.

Website Watching

Have you stumbled upon a great website recently that you'd like to share with the readers of SandalPrints? If so, please email it to: Anthony@FranciscanCanticle.com and we'll put it into the next issue under Website Watching. This issue's website of interest is another project of Franciscan Canticle, please visit the new site:

www.AngelsandSaintsEtc.com

Franciscan Saints, Blesseds and Holy Ones July

1. Bl. Junipero Serra, I Ord.
4. St. Elizabeth of Portugal, III Ord.
8. Bl. Gregory Grassi & Comp. I&III Ord.
9. St. Nicholas Pick & Comp. I Ord.
10. St. Veronica Giuliani, II Ord.
12. St. John Jones & John Wall, I Ord.
13. Bl Angeline of Marsciano, III Ord. Reg.
14. St. Francis Solano, I Ord.
15. St. Bonaventure, I Ord.
17. Francis Garces & Comp. I Ord.
21. St. Lawrence of Brandisi, I Ord.
23. Bl. Cuenguenda, II Ord.
24. Bl. Louise of Savoy, II Ord.
25. Bl. Antonio Lucci, I Ord.
27. Bl. Mary Magdalene of Martinengo, II Ord
28. Bl. Mary Teresa Kowalska, III Ord.

It is not always possible to choose when and how we will witness to our faith.

St. Nicholas Pick and Companions (Franciscans) martyred for their faith in Christ and the Church in 1572 AD in the Netherlands.

"The hour is now at hand,' Father Nicholas Pick said, 'to receive from the hand of the Lord the long desired reward of the struggle, the crown of eternal happiness.' He encouraged his companions not to fear death nor to lose through cowardice the crown prepared for them and soon to be placed on their brows. Finally he prayed that they would joyfully follow the path on which they saw him leading the way. With these and similar words he joyfully mounted the ladder without ceasing to exhort his companions until strangulation deprived him of the use of his voice.

WOULD HE GIVE HIS LIFE AGAIN?
(just a question)

If Jesus were here
Would he give his life again?

In a world without balance
As nations break apart and fall
Can the Light of Christ bring healing?
Will our leaders hear the call?

If Jesus were here
Would he give his life again?

Still hunger takes our children
Whether food, abuse or love
Is the cost worth the effort?
Or Christian just a name to wear?

If Jesus were here
Would he give his life again?

Yet the Church marches forward
Soldiers fighting for the kingdom
People asking from the sidelines
Is it God or is it man?

If Jesus were here
Would he give his life again?

So we claim to be his body
The truth, the light and only way
Will the world recognize him?
As again we nail him to the tree!

If Jesus were here
Would he give his life again?

The man with faith
and the woman of love
the child filled with hope, know

YES! He would give his life again!

Fr. Edd Anthony

Let us pray for the intentions of those who
asked us to pray for them.

T

Once a certain provincial judge heard of Abbot Moses
and went off to Scete to see him. Someone told the
elder that the visitor was coming and he rose up to fly

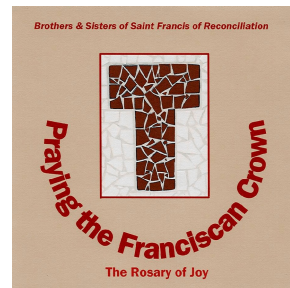
into the marshes. But on the way he ran into the judge
with his companions. The judge asked him, saying; Tell
us, elder, where is the cell of Abbot Moses? The elder
replied; What do you want with him? The man is a
fool and a heretic! The judge went on and came to the
church of Scete and said to the clerics; I heard about
this Abbot Moses and came out here to meet him. And
an old man heading for Egypt ran into us, and we asked
him where was the cell of Abbot Moses, and he said to
us; What do you want with him? The man is a fool and
a heretic! But the clerics, hearing this, were saddened
and said; What kind of old man was this, who said
such things about the holy man? They said: He was a
very old elder, with a long black robe. Then the clerics
said: Why, that was Abbot Moses himself. And because
he did not want to be seen by you, therefore he said
those things about himself. Greatly edified, the judge
returned home.

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