

# Letters to a White Liberal

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## I.

If I dare to imagine that these letters may have some significance for both of us, it is because I believe that Christianity is concerned with human crises, since Christians are called to manifest the mercy and truth of God in history.

Christianity is the victory of Christ in the world, that is to say in history. It is the salvation of man in and through history, through temporal decisions made for love of Christ the Redeemer and Lord of History. The mystery of Christ is at work in all human events, and our comprehension of secular events works itself out and expresses itself in that sacred history, the history of salvation, which the Holy Spirit teaches us to read between the lines. We have to admit that this meaning is often provisional and sometimes beyond our grasp. Yet as Christians we are committed to the attempt to see some meaning in temporal events that flow from human choices. To be specific, we are bound to search 'history', that is to say the intelligible actions of men, for some indications of their significance, and *some relevance to our present choice as Christians*.

'History', then, is for us that complex of meanings which we read into the interplay of civilization. And we are also (this is more urgent still) at a turning point in the history of that European and American society which has been shaped and dominated by Christian concepts, even where it has at times been unfaithful to its basically Christian vocation. We live in a culture which seems to have reached the point of extreme hazard at which it may plunge to its own ruin, unless there is some renewal of life, some new direction, some providential re-organization of its forces for survival.

At present, in a worldwide struggle for power which is entirely pragmatic, if not cynically unprincipled, the claims of those who appeal to their Christian antecedents as justification for their struggle to maintain themselves in power are being judged by the events which flow from their supposedly Christian choices.

For example, we belong to a nation which prides itself on being

free, and relates this freedom to its source in Christian theology. Our freedom rests on respect for the rights of the human person, and though our society is not officially Christian, this respect for the person can be traced to the Christian concept that every man is to be regarded as Christ, and treated as Christ.

Briefly, then: we justify our policies, whether national or international, by the implicit postulate that we are supremely concerned with the human person and his rights. We do this because our ancestors regarded every man as Christ, and wished to treat him as Christ, or at least believed this to be the right way to act, even though they did not always follow this belief.

Now if we advance this claim, and base our decisions and choices upon it, we must not be surprised if the claim itself comes under judgment. If we assert that we are the guardians of peace, freedom, and the rights of the person, we may expect other people to question this, demanding, from time to time, some evidence that we mean what we say. Commonly they will look for that evidence in our actions. And if our actions do not fit our words, they will assume that we are either fools, deceiving ourselves, or liars attempting to deceive others.

Our claims to high-minded love of freedom and our supposed defence of Christian and personalist ideals are going to be judged, we believe, not only by other men, but above all by God. At times we are perhaps rashly inclined to find this distinction reassuring. We say to ourselves: God at least knows our sincerity. He does not suspect us as our enemies do. He sees the *reality* of our good intentions.

I am sure He sees whatever reality is there. But are we absolutely certain that He judges our intentions exactly as we do?

Let me cite an example. Our defence policies and the gigantic arms race which they require are all based on the supposition that we seek peace and freedom, not only for ourselves, but for the whole world. We claim to possess the only effective and basically sincere formula for world peace because we alone are truly honest in our claim to respect the human person. For us, the person and his freedom, with his basic rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, comes absolutely first. Therefore the sincerity and truth of all our asserted aims, at home and abroad, in defence and in civil affairs, is going to be judged by the *reality* of our respect for persons and for their rights. The rest of the world knows this very well. We seem not to have realized this as well as they.

Another example: we claim that we are really solicitous for the rights of the Negro, and willing to grant him these rights some time or other.

We even insist that the very nature of our society is such that the Negro, as a person, is precisely what we respect the most. Our laws declare that we are not simply a society which tolerates the presence of the Negro as a second class citizen of whom we would prefer to rid ourselves altogether if we only could. They assert that since the Negro is a person, he is in every way equal to every other person, and must enjoy the same rights as every other person. And our religion adds that what we do to him, we do to Christ, since we are a free society, based on respect for the dignity of the human person as taught to the world by Christianity.

How, then, do we treat this other Christ, this person, who happens to be black?

First, if we look to the south which is plentifully supplied not only with Negroes but also with professed Christian believers, we discover that belief in the Negro as a person is accepted only with serious qualifications, while the notion that he is to be treated as Christ has been completely overlooked. It would not be easy for a Christian to mutilate another man, string him up on a tree and shoot him full of holes if he believed that what he did to that man was done to Christ. On the contrary, he must somehow imagine that he is doing this to the devil—to prevent the devil doing it to him. But in thinking such thoughts, a Christian has abdicated from Christianity and has implicitly rejected that basic respect for the rights of the person on which free society depends. From then on anything such a man may say about ‘Christianity’ or ‘freedom’ has lost all claims to rational significance.

Only with the greatest unwillingness have some very earnest Southern Christians, under duress, accepted the painful need to ride in the same part of public conveyances with Negroes, eat at the same lunch counters, use the same public facilities. And there are still not a few of these Christians who absolutely refuse to worship Christ in the same congregations as Negroes. Even some Catholics have refused to receive the Body of Christ together with Negroes in sacramental communion: and they have been astonished to find themselves excommunicated officially for refusing integrated schools, when in point of fact they had already by their own action manifestly excommunicated themselves, acting purely and simply as schismatics, rending the unity of the Body of Christ.

Nevertheless, the inner conflicts and contradictions of the South are not to be taken as a justification for the smugness with which the North is doing just as poor a job, if not a worse job, of defending the Negro’s rights as a person. The race ‘problem’ is something which the southerner

cannot escape. Almost half the population of the South are Negroes. Though there are greater concentrations of Negroes in northern slums, yet northern Negroes can be treated as if they were not there at all. For years, New Yorkers have been able to drive to Westchester and Connecticut without going through Harlem, or even seeing it, except from a distant freeway. The abuses thus tolerated and ignored are sometimes as bad and worse than anything in the South.

It is clear that our actual decisions and choices, with regard to the Negro, show us that in fact we are not interested in the rights of several million persons, who are members and citizens of our society and are in every way loyal Americans. They pay taxes, fight for the country and do as well as anybody else in meeting their responsibilities. And yet we tolerate shameful injustices which deprive them, by threats and by actual violence, of their right to vote and to participate actively in the affairs of the nation.

Here I can see you will protest. You will point to the Supreme Court decisions that have upheld Negro rights, to education in integrated colleges and schools. It seems to me that our motives are judged by the real fruit of our decisions. What have we done? We have been willing to grant the Negro rights on paper, even in the South. But the laws have been framed in such a way that in every case their execution has depended on the good will of white society, and the white man has never failed, when left to himself, to block or obstruct or simply forget the necessary action without which the rights of the Negro cannot be enjoyed in fact. Hence, when laws have been passed and then contested, and then dragged through all the courts, and then finally upheld, the Negro is still in no position to benefit by them without, in each case, entering into further interminable lawsuits every time he wants to exercise a right that is guaranteed to him by law.

In effect, we are not really giving the Negro a right to live where he likes, eat where he likes, go to school where he likes or work where he likes but only to sue the white man who refuses to let him do these things. If every time I want a coca cola I have to sue the owner of the snack bar, I think I will probably keep going to the same old places in my ghetto. That is what the Negro until recently has done. Such laws are without meaning unless they reflect a willingness on the part of white society to implement them.

You will say: 'You can't legislate morality.' That phrase may be quite true in its own proper context. But here it is a question not of 'morality' but of a social system. If we have got to the point where the

laws are frequently, if not commonly, framed in such a way that they can be easily evaded by the privileged, then the very structure of our society comes into question. If you are responsible for legislation that has only a dubious value, and if as a result the authority of law itself begins to be questioned, then you are partly to blame for the disorders and the confusion resulting from civil disobedience and contempt of law.

I think there is possibly some truth in the accusation that we are making laws simply because they look nice on the books. Having them there, we can enjoy the comfort of pointing to them, reassuring our own consciences, convincing ourselves that we are all that we claim to be, and refuting the vicious allegations of hostile critics who question the sincerity of our devotion to freedom.

But at the same time, when our own personal interests and preferences are concerned, we have no intention of respecting the Negro's rights in the concrete; North or South, integration is always going to be not on our street but 'somewhere else'. That perhaps accounts for the extraordinary zeal with which the North insists upon integration in the South, while treating the Northern Negro as if he were invisible, and flatly refusing to let him take shape in full view, lest he demand the treatment due to a human person and a free citizen of this nation. That is why the Negro now insists on making himself just as obviously visible as he possibly can. That is why he demonstrates. He has come to realize that the white man is not interested in the rights of the Negro but in the white man's own spiritual and material comfort. If then, by making himself visible, the Negro can finally disturb the white man's precious 'peace of soul', then by all means he would be a fool not to do so.

Yet when we are pressed and criticized, and when the Negro's violated rights are brought up before us, we stir ourselves to renewed efforts at legislation, we introduce more bills into Congress, knowing well enough how much chance those bills have of retaining any real significance after they have finally made it (if they make it at all).

The Negro finally gets tired of this treatment and becomes quite rightly convinced that the only way he is ever going to get his rights is by fighting for them himself. But we deplore his demonstrations, we urge him to go slow, we warn him against the consequences of violence (when, at least so far, most of the organized violence has been on our side and not on his). At the same time we secretly desire violence, and even in some cases provoke it, in the hope that the whole Negro movement for freedom can be repressed by force.

I do not claim to be either a prophet or even an historian. I do not profess to understand all the mysteries of political philosophy, and I am not a sociologist. But I question whether our claims to be the only sincere defenders of the human person, of his rights, of his dignity, of his nobility as a creature made in God's image, as a member of the Mystical Christ, can be substantiated by our actions. It seems to me that we have retained little more than a few slogans and concepts that have been emptied of reality. It seems to me that we have little genuine interest in human liberty and in the human person. What we are interested in, on the contrary, is the unlimited freedom of the corporation. When we call ourselves the 'free world' we mean first of all the world in which *business* is free. And the freedom of the person comes only after that, because, in our eyes, the freedom of the person is dependent on money. That is to say, without money, freedom has no meaning. And therefore the most basic freedom of all is the freedom to make money. If you have nothing to buy or sell, freedom is, in your case, irrelevant. In other words, what we are really interested in is not persons, but profits. Our society is organized first and foremost with a view to business, and wherever we run into a choice between the rights of a human person and the advantage of a profit-making organization, the rights of the person will have difficulty getting a hearing. Profit first, people afterward.

You ask me to confirm these allegations? It appears that the one aspect of the Negro demonstrations that is being taken most seriously in the South is that *they hurt business*. As long as there was talk only of 'rights', and of 'freedom' (concepts which imply persons) the Negro movement was taken seriously chiefly by crackpots, idealists, and members of suspicious organizations thought to be under direct control of Moscow like the NAACP. But still, all this talk of Negro rights, especially when accompanied by hymn-singing and religious exhortations, could hardly be taken seriously. It was only when money became involved that the Negro demonstrations finally impressed themselves upon the American mind as being real.

We claim to judge reality by the touchstone of Christian values, such as freedom, thought, the spirit, faith, personalism, etc. In actual fact we judge them by commercial values: sales, money, price, profits. It is not the life of the spirit that is real to us, but the vitality of the market. Spiritual values are to us, in actual fact, meaningless unless they can be reduced to terms of buying and selling. But buying and selling are abstract operations. Money has no ontological reality: it is a pure

convention. Admittedly it is a very practical one. But it is in itself completely unreal, and the ritual that surrounds money transactions, the whole liturgy of marketing and of profit, is basically void of reality and of meaning. Yet we treat it as the final reality, the absolute meaning, in the light of which everything else is to be judged, weighed, evaluated, 'priced'.

Thus we end up by treating persons as objects for sale, and therefore as meaningless unless they have some value on the market. A man is to us nothing more nor less than '*what he is worth*.' He is 'known' to us as a reality when he is known to be solvent by bankers. Otherwise he has not yet begun to exist.

Our trouble is that we are alienated from our own personal reality, our true self. We do not believe in anything but money and the power or the enjoyment which come from the possession of money. We do not believe in ourselves, except in so far as we can estimate our own worth, and verify, by our operations in the world of the market, that our subjective price coincides with what society is willing to pay for us.

And the Negro? He has so far been worth little or nothing.

Until quite recently there was no place for him in our calculations, unless perhaps we were landlords—unless we had *real* estate—in Harlem. That of course was another matter, because the Negro was really quite profitable to us. And yet we did not think of profit as coming to us from the beings of flesh and blood who were crowded into those rooms. On the contrary, it came to us from the only thing that was *real*—our estate. The Negro was so shadowy, so unreal, that he was nothing more than the occasion for a series of very profitable transactions which gave us a good solid reality in our own eyes and in the eyes of our society.

But now, suddenly, we have discovered that there are also some real Negroes. For them to be real, they must have the same kind of reality as ourselves. Reality is estimated in terms of (financial) worth. And so we discover that there are a few Negroes who have money.

Why has this rich Negro suddenly earned the grace of our benevolent attention? Because he is a person, because he has brains, because of the fantastic talents which alone could enable him to be a professional success against such inhuman odds? None of this. It is now to our interest to recognize him, because we can use him against the others. So now, when the Negro claims he wants to take his full part in American society as a *person*, we retort: you already are playing your part as a person: 'Negroes over the years', we now declare, 'have had a rapid

rise in income' (a nice vague statement, but it satisfies the mind of anyone who believes in money). 'Large numbers of Negroes drive high-priced cars'. Another act of faith! But here we come with 'exact figures': 'It is estimated that there are now thirty-five Negro millionaires in the United States'.

What are these statements supposed to mean? Simply that there is no need for the Negro to make such a fuss, to demonstrate, to fight for recognition as a person. He has received that recognition already: 'Thirty-five Negroes are millionaires'. (Thirty-five out of twenty million). 'Large numbers' drive 'high-priced cars'. What more do you want? These are indications that the Negro has all he needs, for he has 'opportunities', he can make money and thus become real.

What opportunities? Even though a Negro millionaire may live in a 'fine residential neighbourhood' he is still living in a ghetto, because when he moves in, the whites move out. The neighbourhood is taken over by Negroes, and even if they are millionaires, their presence means that a neighbourhood is no longer 'fine'. For a white man it is no longer even 'residential'. So that even when he is worth a million, a Negro cannot buy himself, in the land of the free, the respect that is given to a human person.

Doubtless the mercy and truth of God, the victory of Christ, are being manifested in our current history, but I am not able to see how they are manifested *by us*.

## II.

A little time, perhaps only a few more months, and we will realize that we have reached a moment of unparalleled seriousness in American history, indeed in the history of the world. The word 'revolution' is getting around. Accepted at first with tolerance, as a pleasantly graphic figure of speech, it is going to be regarded with more and more disapproval, because it comes too near to the truth. And why? What is a revolution? What does it mean to say that the Negro's struggle for full civil rights amounts to a revolution?

Much as it might distress southerners, the fact that a Negro may now sit down next to a white woman at a snack bar and order a sandwich is still somewhat short of revolution. And if by dint of courageous and effective protest the Negroes who have a vote in deep southern states should actually manage to cast their votes on election day without getting shot, that in itself does not make a revolution, though it may



have something radically new about it. The question is, who will they be voting for? Ross Barnett:

Yet I have often thought there is something true, as well as sinister, in the usual conservative claim to 'realism'. We must admit that the southern politicians are much more fully aware of the revolutionary nature of the situation than are those northern liberals who blithely suppose that somehow the Negroes (both north and south) will gradually and noiselessly 'fit in' to white society exactly as it is, with its affluent economy, the mass media, its political machines, its professional thoughtlessness and its middle class suburban folkways.

We seem to think that when the Negroes of the south really begin to *use* their largely hypothetical right to vote, they will be content with the same candidates who were up last year and the year before. If those candidates themselves were under any such illusion, they would have long since done something that would get them the Negro votes.

In point of fact, the southern politicians realize very well that if the Negroes turn out full force to vote, and thereby establish themselves as a factor to be reckoned with in southern politics, the political machines of the past are going to collapse in a cloud of dust. To put it succinctly: if the southern Negro is really granted the rights which are guaranteed to him, *de jure*, by the American Constitution, and if he fully and freely exercises those rights, it is all up with the old south. There are quite enough Negroes in the south to make any really free election catastrophic for the *status quo*. And Negroes, both south and north, are not going to waste time voting for people who sick police dogs on them and drench them with high pressure firehoses, while occasionally lobbing a bomb on to their front porches for good measure.

So much for the south. But what about the north? Northern Negroes are already able to put some of their own men into office: but this is only the beginning of what is suddenly becoming a very conscious and concerted drive for real political power. This drive is going to be more and more accelerated by the problem of jobs. With five million unemployed acknowledged in 1963, with no indications other than that this figure must grow, and with repeated strikes and protests in which Negroes demand to be hired along with whites, there is going to be violent conflict over the limited number of jobs. With the best will in the world, nobody is going to be able to give jobs to Negroes without taking them away from whites, and there is no indication, at the moment, that the whites intend to retire *en masse* and spend the rest of

their lives watching TV so that the Negroes may carry on the work, and collect the paychecks, of the nation.

This represents, whether we like it or not, a radical threat to our present system—a revolutionary situation. And furthermore it accentuates the already clearly defined racial lines dividing the two sides in the conflict. This means that the Negro is going to continue to be what he has decidedly become: aggressively aware of the power and impact on white society of the mere threat of revolutionary violence.

The Negro finds himself in the presence of a social structure which he has reason to consider inherently unjust (since it has never done him any real justice except in fair words and promises). He also sees that this society has suddenly become extremely vulnerable. The very agitation and confusion which greet his demands are to him indications of guilt and fear, and he has very little respect for exhortations to go slow and be patient. He feels he has been patient for a very long time and that anyone who cannot see this for himself is not being honest about it. He also feels that there is no hope of any action being taken unless he takes action himself, and that the steps taken by the government are mere political manoeuvres leading nowhere. This means that a well-meaning liberal policy of compromises and concessions, striving at the same time to placate the Negro and to calm the seething indignation of the conservative whites, is not going to avert danger. It may, on the contrary aggravate it. Hence the 'realism' again, of the conservatives, who think that the only thing is to stop violence now by the full use of all the repressive agencies—police, national guard, army—which they themselves still fully control. After all, the traditional line of thought of those who use repressive power to defend the *status quo*, is that they are justified in applying force to prevent a chaotic and explosive outbreak of revolutionary disorder, save many lives, protect property (especially their own, of course) and maintain a semblance of national identity which would otherwise be dissolved in blood. Needless to say, this is identical with the argument which revolutionaries themselves advance for repressing all resistance once they themselves have achieved their aim and have seized full power.

Now, here is your situation. You, the well-meaning liberal, are right in the middle of all this confusion. You are, in fact, a political catalyst. On the one hand, with your good will and your ideals, your fine hopes and your generous, but vague, love of mankind in the abstract and of rights enthroned on a juridical olympus, you offer a certain encouragement to the Negro (and you do right, my only complaint being that

you are not yet right enough) so that, abetted by you, he is emboldened to demand concessions. Though he knows you will not support all his demands, he is well aware that you will be forced to support some of them in order to maintain your image of yourself as a liberal. He also suspects, however, that your material comforts, your security and your congenial relations with the establishment are more important to you than your rather volatile idealism, and that when the game gets rough you will see your own interests menaced by his demands. And you will sell him down the river for the five hundredth time in order to protect yourself. For this reason, as well as to support your own self-esteem, you are very anxious to have a position of leadership and control in the Negro's fight for rights, in order to be able to apply the brakes when you feel it is necessary. This is why the Negro emphatically rejects you now. He does not want you in his way. You are more of a nuisance than anything else. And you, offended at this lack of appreciation, want to reassure the Negro—you are really on his side, and to prove it you will help him to get just a little more. You will be satisfied with the headlines. You will once again feel cozy with your liberal image—for a few days. Thus you make it possible for him, according to the fantasies of conservative thought, to 'taste blood'. And conservative thought is not always deluded in its choice of metaphors.

On the other hand, when you come face to face at last with concrete reality, and take note of some unexpected and unlovely aspects of what you have hitherto considered only in the abstract, you yourself are going to be a very frightened mortal. You are going to see that there are more than ideas and ideals involved in this struggle. It is more than a matter of images and headlines. And you are going to realize that what has begun is not going to be stopped, but that it will lead on into a future for which the past, perhaps, offers little or no precedent. But since it is one of the characteristics of liberals that they prefer their future to be vaguely predictable (just as the conservative prefers only a future that reproduces the past in all its details), when you see that the future is entirely out of your hands and that you are totally unprepared for it, you are going to fall back on the past, and you are going to end up in the arms of the conservatives. Indeed, you will be so much in their arms that you will be in their way, and will not improve the shooting.

These are frank and brutal facts. But they are the facts on which you must base your future decisions. You must face it: this upheaval is going to sweep away not only the old style political machines, the

quaint relics of a more sanguine era, but also a great deal of the managerial sophistication of our own time. And your liberalism is likely to go out the window along with a number of other entities that have their existence chiefly on paper and in the head.

What are you going to do? Are you going to say that though changes may be desirable in theory, they cannot possibly be paid for by a social upheaval amounting to revolution. Are you going to decide that the Negro movement is already out of hand, and therefore it must be stopped at any cost, even at the cost of ruthless force? In that case, you are retreating from the unknown future and falling back on a known and familiar alternative: namely the alternative in which you, who are after all on top, remain on top by the use of force, rather than admit a change in which you will not necessarily be on the bottom, but in which your position as top dog will no longer be guaranteed. You will prefer your own security to everything else, and you will be willing to sacrifice the Negro to preserve yourself.

But it is precisely in this that you are contributing to the inexorable development of a revolution, for revolutions are always the result of situations in which the drive of an underprivileged mass of men can no longer be contained by token concessions and in which the establishment is too confused, too inert and too frightened to *participate* with the underprivileged in a new and creative solution of what is realized to be their common problem.

This is the case at present in the United States. Instead of seeing the Negro revolution as a manifestation of a deep disorder that is eating away the inner substance of our society, because it is in ourselves, we look at it only as a threat from outside ourselves—as an unjust and deplorable infringement of our rights by an irresponsible minority, goaded on by Red agitators. But this is a totally fanciful view, which removes the crisis from the context of reality into a dream-world of our own in which we proceed to seek a dream-solution. We forget that the Negro is there *because of us*. His crisis is the result of our acts, and is, in fact our crisis. Our total inability to see this is turning a common political problem into a violent conflict, in which there is no possibility of real dialogue, and in which the insensate shibboleths of racism drown out all hope of rational solutions. When this happens, even those Whites and Negroes who would normally be able to work together to find a common solution, will be driven apart, and the white man will become the black man's enemy by the mere fact that he is white.

As Martin Luther King sees so clearly, if the Negro struggle becomes a violent conflict (and this is what would best please the white racists) it is bound to fail in its most rational and creative purpose—the real vindication of Negro rights and the definitive assertion of the Negro as a person equal in dignity to any other human person.

'I am convinced,' he says, 'that if we succumb to the temptation to use violence in our struggle for freedom, unborn generations will be the recipients of a long and desolate night of bitterness; our chief legacy to them will be a never-ending reign of chaos.'<sup>1</sup>

In one word, there is a serious possibility of an eventual civil war which might wreck the fabric of American society. And although the Negro revolution in America is now unquestionably non-Marxist, and just as unquestionably a completely original and home-grown product of our own, there is no doubt that if it resulted in a revolutionary upheaval of American economic and political life, there might be a danger of Marxist elements 'capturing' the revolution and taking it over in the name of Soviet Communism. Remote as it may seem, this fits an already familiar pattern, and furthermore it has to be considered because it already dominates the minds of the segregationist right wing.

My question to you is this: can you think of a better way of conducting yourself?

Does all profoundly significant social change have to be carried out in violence and with murder, destruction, police repression and counter repression? Is it not possible that the whites might give closer attention to the claims of Negro leaders like Martin Luther King, who assert that they do not want violence, and who give every assurance (backed up by some rather convincing evidence, if you can remember Birmingham) that the Negro is not out to kill anybody, that he is really fighting not only for his own freedom, but also, in some strange way, for the freedom of the whites. (This is a new and quixotic concept to us, since we are fully convinced that we are the freest people that ever existed.) Is it true that all change of our present social framework is necessarily a disaster so great that any price can legitimately be paid to keep it from coming about? Is it not possible that Whites and Negroes might join together in a creative political experiment such as the world has never yet seen, and in which the first condition would be that the Whites consented to let the Negroes run their own revolution non-violently, giving them the necessary support and co-operation, and not being alarmed at some of the sacrifices and difficulties that would necessarily be involved?

<sup>1</sup>*Strength to Love*, Harper Bros., 1963

Is there no alternative but violent repression, in which, reluctantly no doubt, you decide that it is better for the establishment to be maintained by the exercise of the power which is entirely in white hands, and which ought to remain in white hands because they are white (because, of course, Negroes are 'not yet ready' for any kind of power)? This presupposes a simple view of the situation: a belief that when the chips are down it is going to be either whites or blacks, and since whites have proved their capacity to 'run the country' and 'keep order', it is unthinkable even to permit the possibility of that disorder which, you take it for granted, would follow if Negroes took a leading part in our political life.

Conclusion: revolution must be prevented at all costs; but demonstrations are already revolutionary; *ergo*, fire on the demonstrators; *ergo* . . . At the end of this chain of thought I visualize you goose-stepping down Massachussets Avenue in the uniform of an American Totalitarian Party in a mass rally where nothing but the most uproarious approval is manifest, except, by implication, on the part of silent and strangely scented clouds of smoke drifting over from the new 'camps' where the 'Negroes are living in retirement'.

## Placing Indian Religion

BEDE GRIFFITHS, O.S.B.

Professor Zaehner is one of the few Catholics in England to-day who is seriously concerned with the relation of Christianity to other religions. Though his special subject is Zoroastrianism, he has an intimate knowledge of the religious traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, and has worked out a definite theory of their relation to Christianity. This was made clear in an earlier work, *At Sundry Times*, where he tried to show how all these traditions 'converge' on Christ and find their fulfilment in him. In his most recent work<sup>1</sup> he develops this idea further, particularly in the light of Teilhard de Chardin's conception of the

<sup>1</sup>*The Convergent Spirit*, by R. C. Zaehner; Routledge, 18s.