

A SOLILOQUY OF THE AUTHOR

WRITTEN FOR THE ENGLISH EDITION

THE REAL OBSTACLE of this book seems to be its table of contents. A table of contents delineates the anatomy of the little creature which the book is expected to be. And so it does in *The Christian Future*. However, not one of my reviewers and (I therefore suppose) next to no reader has paid any attention to the table of contents, or to its restatement on pages 10 and 11. As this has happened to all of my books—I thinking the table of contents to be a severe and disciplined skeleton, and the reviewers denying its very existence as a structure—I must examine myself.

I have been caught in this book between two generations, one of the age of 70 and 75, white-haired men with youthful hearts, the other young veterans, sobered at 25 to a most realistic assessment of the rôle of power and the non-existence of peace. What did they have in common on which I could talk to both? The fact that they were children of their times, that their souls longed for a way out of their division between the old and the new; and, finally, the sacrifices they had made spontaneously, or under the law of war. Hence I divided the book in a preface, "Our Date with Destiny", which acknowledged the fact of my being caught between two generations, and in three parts. One part dealt with "the times", the older men being steeped in the amiable atmosphere of the suburb, our young men being more or less disillusioned by the districts down town, but both being commuters on the highway and soldiers of life's battle. This part I called "The Great Interim". I went on to the longing of their souls for something better: Part Two was labelled accordingly with the Hamlet quotation, "When Time is out of Joint". The fact that this was a quotation, however, made my reviewers consider it as a pun. They neither remembered the fact that Hamlet was in deadly earnest when he exclaimed thus, nor did they admit the possibility that a science of time might have no more precise way of stating the very condition under which

our souls can come to grips with eternity: it is necessary to realize the disjointedness of the times before any permanence can be conceived of. Finally, having in mind the actual sacrifices of these men, I termed the Third Part, "The Body of Our Era". And the whole book, although being a science of time, history and timing, was called, to the great annoyance of the bookstores, *The Christian Future*.

Really, why should such a book belabour the term Christian? It is true that Christianity has claimed to know all about time ever since it started. Christianity is the greatest hoax of history unless it tells us about the temporal. And I have my information about time from this source. But this is only half the truth. Because it remains a fact that neither my old friends nor the young veterans have ever heard that the content of this book is old doctrine. Why, then, give a new medicine to them under a shopworn name? Yes, I was tempted at one time to elope with the book without invoking the Christian name. And now I must go over the whole structure of the book once more to explain why finally it had to be *The Christian Future* and not "The Science of Time".

That there are many times is the perpetual experience of our mind. That there be one final history is a condition for the health and peace of our soul. This eternal conflict is concretely solved each time one man's or many men's personal sacrifices incorporate one solution in the body of our era. On these three facts the three parts are built.

Part One deals with the spirit of our time as the matrix of our mind. As the children and the genii of our time, we will realize time as a wonderful new dawn of original life. This mind, however, we also experience as fickle. If time was just newness, morning, original beginning, we would have to call Part One, "Our Times", or "The New Deal", or "The Era of the Two World Wars", or, with Henry Miller, "The Air-conditioned Nightmare". But in our time it is not difficult to perceive the transient character of all the news. And so I stressed this aspect of the many times in the formula "The Great Interim". No Liberal or Humanist would have called it so.

Part Two treats of the soul's clinging to a faith in one eternity through all times. Men of all times, coming to the end of their wits, their inspiration, their time, their *self-expression* will end by realizing that their times may have an end but that some aspect of all time is not consumed by the fire by which their time is consumed. The true Israel of all times worships the Eternal, while the genius of each time craves self-expression. The insight into the eternal forms Part Two. But again, its title is not such a title as the true Israel of orthodoxy (Catholic, Protestant or Jew) would have given it. "Peace of the Soul", "Return to Religion", "The Glory of God", would be orthodox ways of approach. But it is called "When Time is out of Joint" for the same reason which prevailed in the choice of "The Great Interim". The orthodox worshipper, the true Israel of the Eternal God, is as uninterested in the times as the *Daily Chronicle's* week-day editions are in eternity. I had to speak on eternity to children of time and on our times to men of orthodoxy. For my purpose, "The Peace of God" would have been as impossible a title for Part Two as "The Air-conditioned Nightmare" for Part One. For I always had to choose my terms for one group in such a way that the opposite group could still, with an utmost effort of its good will, admit that I did not misrepresent their spiritual home. So, in the presence of orthodox believers, I had to speak of their eternal home but also describe the temporal condition under which it opens—viz., that the mind, this child of one time, must first have enjoyed its own time thoroughly. For the inhabitants of the world of worship and prayer, I had to stress that the Greek experience of time as original newness is *right*. The only trouble is that it is transient. In the same manner, I had to tell my "Greek" friends that the religionists are right and that the soul, in distinction from the mind, cares for one time only, God's Time, Eternity. But the trouble is that the soul never knows this unless she is lacerated by the manyness of mentalities, by a conflict of more than one time. Unless the soul cries out, "The times are out of joint", any meddling with eternity will do more harm than good. This, then, distinguishes my dilemma from the open road of academic or fundamentalist treatments of time and eternity. In my stead

the Liberals would stand by their first impression of time and take this impression as definite. I treat it as a first impression and in this manner do honour to its incomparable freshness, without admitting that the first impression is the only one. This is resented by the Liberal mind.

When time is out of joint, the glimpses of the eternal, which the religionist treats as lasting, are changed into last impressions. They are accepted as final. But the last impression towards which we are destined is not the first impression which we need. The conflict of at least two times suffices for starting us on God's time.

For both the modern mind and the orthodox soul the temptation is to omit the very condition of their time experience and to feel insulted when they are reminded of the connection of their impression with its opposite. Genius could not create, the orthodox could not worship, unless they felt that they were sure of themselves. A genius must think of his work as the ultimate while it is only new. Eternalists must have the absolute by the tail, although it may be just old.

Hence, my table of contents has been glossed over in an amusing *quid pro quo*, a kind of reversal of fronts. The Liberals have recommended Part Two on Eternity, the orthodox have enjoyed Part One on the world of the mind. For the worshipper of the living God rejoices that the inventions of the mind are not called the ultimate but "interim". And the Liberals sense a kind of relativity by which I coerce the fundamentalists. Hence, I have been classified as "apologetics of orthodoxy" by the Liberals, while the orthodox have shuddered. And these same orthodox quote my "brilliant aphorisms" on the modern mind and yet denounce me as such a modern mind. I am a bigot to the Liberal, a modern intellectual to the orthodox.

Can I help it? Should I wish to help it? The book is written with complete unconcern for Liberalism or Orthodoxy, and I would feel disloyal to my obligation if it were possible to unravel the unity of my book into such strands and elements. Why?

The book is written in obedience to the liturgy of the divine service. And the liturgy is not interested in either Liberals or

orthodox. How else could this be? Is not the Liberal our own Greek heritage and the orthodox our share in Israel? The liturgy presupposes both truths, that of the Greek mind, and that of Israel's soul; the dawn of endless beginnings as reflected by what we call "the time of our life", and the evening of final destiny as revealed by the Eternal Word.

Yes, the liturgy accepts both, the *fin de siècle* art of self-expression, and the *et in saecula saeculorum* of God who is to be all in all. These two experiences of time are not abandoned. They are taken for granted by the liturgy. But they are the two pre-Christian elements on which the liturgy operates.

It is because of the third part of the liturgy and the third part of this book that the Liberal's scorn and the orthodox ire cannot be avoided. What then is this third part? It is called "The Body of our Era".

The Word must not remain paper. It must become flesh. The trans-substantiation reverses the processes of the intellect and the requiems of the soul. A parlour communist and a millionaire mystic are centaurs because they have their bodies, the one in an armchair and the other in shares in a corporation. And man was not meant to be a centaur. The third experience of time is embodiment. Nine-tenths of the Christian World denies this experience. At the noon hour of our lives we know time as neither morning nor evening, neither new nor eternal, but as our decision. And to me, the liturgy says: "Yes, meet yourself as the child of your time first. And meet yourself as soul later. But do not think that you can escape from my judgment into either the flux of time or the haven of eternity. You have to meet yourself finally as your body. Your soul has to change your mind until you may be clothed in your righteous mind and embody some eternal element in your time. This belief in incarnation and the resurrection of the flesh leads to an uproar against you. Because both, the orthodox and the Liberals, have hoped to be Christians without the incarnation. Don't listen to them."

A few months ago, I was in fact offered a European Chair of "Occidental *Geistesgeschichte*", (the history of the stream of

consciousness). These chairs are being established all over Europe nowadays. In this gruesome course the Greek mind's Odyssey from Thales through Plato and Aristotle to Plotinus is being repeated in our era. Mind is meeting mind and, in strange manner, mind begets mind by dialectics. The mind of one time and the mind of another time and the mind of the third time are contrasted and compared and that solves the mind's riddles. Of course, it solves nothing, as it solved nothing in Greece. I had to decline this chair because it embodies in an extreme fashion the Liberal faith in chairs instead of in incarnation.

The orthodox heresy, of course, is to invite soul to meet soul in the reading of the Bible or in prayer and to pretend that their meeting is self-sufficient. Mind to mind, the Greek Dialectics; soul to soul, the eternal Zion: these are the two relapses into pre-Christianity. But my veterans at 25 and youthful idealists at 75 are desirous of becoming members of our era.

The obvious story of the whole man is given in the liturgy. The creatures of time and the souls of eternity do become members of the Body of Our Era, the liturgy proclaims. It is, as bodies, not as minds or as souls, that we occupy our places in God's time with men. And God's time with men, the Eternal within the times, that is our Era.

These bodies interrupt most unpleasantly, obscenely, painfully and unflatteringly the dialectics of *Geistesgeschichte*, the stream of consciousness. And they perturb the lake of eternity. This is the reason why a table of contents in which the sequence goes from Minds (the Great Interim) to Soul (When Time is out of Joint) and thence to Body (the Body of Our Era) is inaudible. It is as though it were not written. "You are inaudible," George Morgan said to me after another fainting spell of a Liberal mind. And my most benevolent critics have insisted that this book was written by a fertile mind, an original mind, even by a professor. This was said by a professor who confessed to me that he only knew the academic manner and did not acknowledge any other.

Do I dream? In the face of such statements, I must cry myself awake to the fact that after I had submitted to the ordeal of

profaning my most intimate convictions, my hand wrote the book—I have no secretary—and, since I am a very poor typist, my hand, my arm, my shoulder, my whole thorax ached. My body wrote the book; my material purse paid out the money for its paper. Now, I well know that books are the last and poorest gateways to embodiment. I renounced the writing of “my” books for fifteen long years because I felt that the times did not ask for more books. So, there is no illusion in my mind about the presumption of writing any book. Only, the concrete relationship to the two generations, the concrete question put to me, and the horrid vacuum between soldiers and thinkers, is the basis for my hope that this is a legitimate task which may be forgiven me. But all embodiments, the better ones of physical martyrdom, or the miserable one of writing a book by which one loses one’s friends and makes new enemies and has to study *Timon of Athens*, have one thing in common: the body is involved. And in my conscience, it is better to write a poor book with one’s hand and body and soul, after having passed through many a mind, than to write an excellent book merely of one mind.

And so my examination ends in great ambiguity. In the one eventuality, this must be a very poor book. For its model is the perfect, the infallible liturgy. In the light of the perfect, the only excuse for the members of our era seems to be that their deficiencies can be forgiven if they are not concealed. My raucous voice must grate on the reader’s ear. It does on mine. I am not an angel, not even an artist or a priest. I have had to articulate difficult things and I am rather surprised that they have a minimum of shape than ashamed of their lack of elegance. But there is the other eventuality. Do I exist, does the book exist? My reviewers believe that all books are written either as an apology for a timeless *cliché* or by a mind as self-expression. They say that no third kind of book can exist; *tertium non datur*. My book cannot be, since my words were only formed in the process of answering a call for help and were neither based on first principles nor echoes from the official eternity. It was just as the second person singular who had to speak that I discovered what there was to be thrown in the fray. Under orders from the liturgy, I neither wrote “The Christian Cross” nor a

“Science of Time” but much more *ad hominem* on *The Christian Future*.

In the academic manner, in the books on the stream of consciousness, creative evolution, about time and eternity and history, such a second person singular does not exist. It was the discovery of my youth that to the second person singular the decisive structure of truth is entrusted. Way back in 1912, the academic world, the University of Leipzig, asked me to suppress the chapter of my book which stated this heresy. How late in the day now to sigh, with my most sensible reviewer, that “Rosenstock-Huessy is the unhappy fruit of an unhappy time who will disappear when this time leaves us”! I represent a type which either does not or should not exist. And in my experience the disbelief of the people in a man’s existence is quite capable of dissolving it, even in his own eyes.

An unpremeditated answer to people in need, they say, is unofficial and unprincipled, a hodgepodge. As a structure, a creature, such a book does not exist and cannot serve. The Liberal and the orthodox say so. The priest and the Levite say so. My poor Table of Contents, do we exist? Do we serve any purpose?