

# ΣΚΑΝΔΑΛΟΝ

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SKANDALON

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## GOD, MAN, AND PRAYER: A STUDY IN CHRISTIAN HUMANISM

by James G. Ward

At a recent Christian service of worship I was struck by the number of times, in prayer, reference was made to God. In prayer of petition, the gathered fellowship asked many things of God: love, repentance, courage, strength, foresight. In prayers of thanksgiving, the congregation thanked their God for most everything that had happened to them. In prayers of intercession, they asked God for love, health, and general well-being for others. These are all acceptable and traditional according to the conventions of the Church. The sincerity and well-meaningness of the congregation and the relevance of the prayers to the contemporary situation cannot be questioned.

The general subject of prayer often bothers individual Christians. (One might ask if there is any other kind of Christian.) To some Christians, prayer means little in the ultimate analysis. At times, they seem to be absolutely correct. But, on the other hand, I think that prayer has its validity. Much has been written and said on the beneficial nature of prayer, and it would be both unnecessarily iconoclastic and utterly fruitless to deny any value to prayer for the Christian.

Prayer is an integral part of Christian worship, on both the individual and the corporate level. If prayer lacks meaning and relevance for the individual involved, it means one of three things: 1) the person praying is not sincere and is going through nothing but a ritual act, 2) the entire concept of Prayer is invalid, or 3) the methodology of prayer is radically amiss. The first I have assumed not to be true already, and the second I have just dismissed. This leaves us with methodology.

The thing that distresses me about our praying as Christians is that we are always addressing God. I certainly do not want to imply that we should have other deities to which we pray, but it does seem peculiar, especially in prayers of petition and intercession, that we ask everything of God. I often wonder if this isn't an unknowing and subtle way of Christian "buck passing." The proverbial buck is said to have stopped on the desk of President Truman, but where does the Christian buck stop? For the most part, the Christian does not seem to be concerned about this. He asks God for strength and courage to do a task or for love and justice for a Negro rotting in jail and then our Christian feels that he has done his part. He has passed the buck to God.

Biblical theology seems to indicate, at least to me, that the Christian is here to carry out the work of God, this work that we have passed on to God through prayer. The God-man Jesus served as our example for this. It is not God that should show love to the world, but man. It is not God who as *deus ex machina* gives man strength and courage, but it is man who gives this to man. This, of course, is not to say God is not involved, but it says that possibly our emphasis has been grossly misplaced. Where does this leave us in terms of prayer?

I think it can only point in one direction. Why should we not ask our fellow human beings, Christian and non-Christian brethren alike, for love and justice? Why not ask ourselves? Christianity has traditionally and vitally stressed the concept of community, so wouldn't we be better off to ask ourselves and our brethren for strength and courage in a difficult task, rather than a metaphysical God? Maybe prayer would mean more then. Maybe we are using an archaic, but once meaningful, concept as a crutch to lean on when we should be walking by ourselves, nay running. Maybe we are using God as a mask to hide behind so that we don't have to do anything. Let us forget about God for awhile and ask these things of ourselves. For the time being let's say, "O man our help in ages past, our hope for years to come."

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## T H E   A R T S

### Zhivago

A great movie is Dr. Zhivago, now playing at the Hellman Theater here in Albany. Not only is the filming beautiful, but the message is timeless: the fight of a sensitive, life-loving spirit to survive even under the stifling conformity of a socio-political order. Dr. Zhivago, a poet-doctor, loves life in its fullest, and his need for expression of this sensitivity cannot be killed by the extremely suppressive

and trying conditions of the Bolshevik Revolution. Through his work as an army doctor, through conditions in Moscow after his return for the war front, through his flight into Siberia, and through his life with his beloved Lara, through endlessly running from the men of the State, Zhivago's love of life continues and become immortal in his poetry. As a study in the personality of a man who is a man in the fullest sense, this film is superb.

Findlay Cockrell

Mr. Findlay Cockrell, a recent addition to the music faculty of the University, treated an audience that only half filled Page Hall, to an excellent piano performance on October 4. Running through selections from Bach, Beethoven, Imbrie, and Chopin, it was evident that Cockrell is a pianist of excellent caliber--a musician that has the rare ability to make his audience want to dance, or laugh, or cry, depending on the mood of the music. The complexity of the Bach partita was matched in spirit only by the liveliness and variety of the Beethoven bagatelles. Next the audience was treated to a sonata of Imbrie, a contemporary composer. Cockrell finished his performance with selections from Chopin that stirred the hearts and minds of the audience. Findlay Cockrell certainly showed his audience that the credentials that he brings with him to the University are, at the least, an understatement of his vibrancy at the keyboard.

Golden Eye

The architecture of the new campus was the topic of a presentation and discussion at the Golden Eye last Friday evening with Edward Cowley of the Art Department. As usual, we heard the students who perennially complain about the so-called sterile and impersonal architecture of the new campus. We, however, must fully agree with Mr. Cowley that the campus is a masterpiece of art. It reflects a sense of discipline and order, as well as a feeling of soaring upwards to an apex of greatness. Is this not the proper atmosphere for a University? Do not education and learning require discipline and order of thought as well as an upward flight of the intellect? It would be interesting to know how those who are so highly critical of our campus would design a university reflecting the atmosphere of learning.

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THE TRUE TEST OF FAITH

by Walter J. Clark

The true test of faith is not a mystical claim

To experiencing the oneness of an unpronounceable name.

The true test of faith is

A helping hand to the weary one by carrying his load.

Total acceptance of the stranger you see on life's road.

Bearing the anxiety of another.

Leading a blind man.

Teaching Braille in one's spare time.

Working late into the night

Aiding a friend or giving another a new insight.

Defying a superior to bring comfort to a "broken reed,"

By being with him or her in an hour of loneliness and need.

Bearing the condemnation of dirty-minded neighbors to comfort a dying one and forgetting the text

Which would limit your role because of differences in sex.

Staying up all night with an alcoholic friend.

Waiting for an anguished brother in the rain.

A kind word and a little time given to those men have driven insane.

A prayer that if anyone must wander and roam than "let it be me,



variety of rhetoric is not anything new but the same old problem of power and race which has faced our beloved country since 1619. " The fundamental premise here is that the same situation, between Black and White, has existed since the inception of slavery in our nation in 1619. This would seem to put the burden of the lack of improvement in the Negro status in the United States since that date on the shoulders of the White segment of society. However, I would ask, is the plight of the Negro in contemporary America the same as it was in colonial America? It would appear that possibly the most blatant difference in the situations of both times is that in 1619 the average Negro was ignorant that any other way of life existed for him in this country. In recent years, the Negro has become aware, for the first time, that there is a better life in this country--somewhere. Now, armed with that awareness, the Negro is seeking out that new position, hoping to make as much progress in as short a time as conceivably possible.

To the Negro, the goals of "power"--a position of responsibility in the American society--seem within reach, if only he can make an organized effort to achieve them. The organization of individuals into groups with a greater possibility of being heard and of gaining demands is merely an example of good political sense. Beyond this obvious political explanation, however, is noted a second and, to our study of the "Black Power" concept, extremely more consequential justification for the utilization of group power tactics. "We must not apologize for the existence of this form of group power, for we have been oppressed as a group, not as individuals." How true this statement appears! How many times has the statement been heard, "I judge all men, White and Negro alike, on an individual basis," only to have the same person only moments later issue prejudicial generalities against either group? The next obvious question appears, if we are prejudicial against the group as a whole, how can we treat the individual as an equal? Group demands for group acceptance then become the next logical step in the drive for recognition.

Should these group demands continue beyond the point of equality to the point of supplanting one evil with a second evil? One key point to remember in this aspect is "if power is sought merely as an end in itself, it tends to turn upon those who seek it." The Negro race, it is true, needs this group power to aid in their task of obtaining an equality which appears to be approaching their grasp. The use of "Black Power" in this respect is with a definite, beneficial purpose in mind, and is in the final judgment, well within the bounds of ethical action. However, when the use of Black organizational power begins to have as its end the rebellion and violence, the raw, physical power which was evident in the United States this past summer, the movement crosses the line, and becomes unethical, and in the long run, dangerous to the progress of the Negro strivings. The supplanting of one evil with another, of one unjust power for another, can do nothing but allow the Negro to savor the taste of revenge.

"The future of America will belong to neither white or black unless all Americans work together at the task of rebuilding our cities." If this be the goal of "Black Power," then, how does anyone dare oppose the efforts of those groups which advocate it? But, if the goal of "Black Power" be violence, rebellion, and discord, then how can anyone condone or support it? In which direction shall the "Black Power" turn--to peaceful progress, or violent rebellion?

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Apology — Unavoidable difficulties necessitate our publishing a few days late this issue. With added staff and more foresight this will be remedied in the future!