THE FAMILY AND POVERTY

by William Downing

There is today a perplexing problem related to poverty. This problem is the lack of a stable family tradition among the poor. Desertion and cohabitation are facts of life all too real. Why does this situation exist? Is there a hope for improvement?

Let us first examine the historical roots of the problem. For many of our poor the problem can be traced back to the days of slavery when abuses of human dignity were rampant. The family structure of the slaves was systematically destroyed by the plantation owners. Some of this was done with the intent of making control easier. Much of this destruction of the family resulted as a by-product of other abuses in the slaveholding system of which most of us are aware. Reconstruction found the slaves lacking a tradition of stable family units.

The next great force that has contributed to destroying stable families as well as discouraging family stability has resulted from our efforts to aid the poor. The welfare system we have in operation today tends to subsidize the breakup of the family. There is something wrong with a welfare system that encourages a man to leave his family in order that they may be better off in terms of welfare checks. We need to take a long, hard look at our welfare system and change it so that it serves the purpose for which it was originally designed. A negative income tax could provide a better economic solution. This tax should be based on family income. Even a simple change such as making the welfare payments the same for families with fathers living at home and families without fathers. This might encourage family stability which is certainly an improvement.

Another force which tends to disrupt the family is our economic system. This disruption is felt regardless of income class. However, the American middle-class can adapt and maintain a stable family. The worst effects fall upon our poor. Lower income families soon discover that it is easier for the woman to obtain employment than it is for the male. It is little wonder that the husband and father of a poverty stricken family feels that he is useless. He has no skills, little education and a long conditioning to defeat. This is happening within the context of a society which views the male as the primary breadwinner of a family. Among the poor, the roles are reversed. The woman is the breadwinner for many of these families. This is one situation which is intolerable to the self-respect of the male. He believes that he should be a contributor—if not the major contributor—to his family income. Given the American belief as to the role of the male, and the situation he finds himself in, he must leave his family in hope of retaining a little bit of self-respect. When he leaves, he realizes that he is removing a non-contributing burden, in the economic sense, on his family.

The situation appears to be somewhat hopeless for this generation. All of us will have to realize that these conditions can never be improved within a few years. The real hope likes in the generation entering school and attending elementary school. With a massive effort on the part of education, government, churches, and individuals the next generation of men can become valuable wage earners who will have a chance to build a stable family on their achievements. The next generation of women can spend more time with their children and encourage their children to greater accomplishments.

The problem of poverty may not be solved, but the situation can be improved if we can improve the stability of the family structure, as well as create hope for a better life in the next generation. Any variety of hope is better than a spirit of despair. Let us not forget that these people are American citizens and that it is our moral obligation to render any and all assistance to them in order to create a society in which every individual is a useful and productive member.

REAL DEMOCRACY IN AFRICA!

by James G. Ward

In south central Africa there lies what once was a prosperous, sleepy colony of Britain with a chiefly rural population. The people were friendly and just in their dealings; no different from the people of our Midwest, western Australia, or even England. This area has not changed much in the last decade except that it is no longer sleepy and no longer a colony of Britain, at least from the point of view of the people of this area. This former colony, Rhodesia, has achieved a turbulent, largely unrecognized independence. New African nations are usually welcomed by all the great powers to the family of nations. Loud praises are usually heard for the nation and its leaders. This same occurrence in the nation of Rhodesia has been met with hostility and threat of armed intervention. As with the other nations of the continent, the majority of Rhodesia's population is native African. Unlike most of the rest of Africa, the government is immigrant African-white.

Britain and many members of the Commonwealth thought that Rhodesia was not ready for independence, but the nationalist fervor was too strong. The white dominated government, on November 11, declared a unilaterial independence. This was done by Rhodesia's Prime Minister, Ian Smith. The neighboring nations have met this decree with threats of violence. Neither the United States or Britain recognize the independence of Rhodesia. The African nations surely do not want another white government on the continent, Britain is trying to keep relations within the Commonwealth on an even keel, and the United States is following it s usual policy in such matters, burying its head in the sand and making believe that the situation does not exist.

The central point of the situation is the growth of nationalism in Rhodesia coupled with the supposed immorality of a white minority ruling a black majority. In Rhodesia's Parliament the 225,000 whites control 50 seats while the 4,000,000 blacks control only 15 seats. Under the "one-man-one vote" theory this certainly looks like cause for alarm. How can Rhodesians like Ian Smith, Clifford Dupont, and Desmond Lardner-Burke who supposedly stand for democracy tolerate a situation like this?

One of the basic tenets of democracy is equality. But, equality in no way means equality in ignorance. In a democracy, the right of suffrage probably has primacy over all other rights of citizenship. Suffrage should not be denied because of race, creed, or socio-economic position. On the other hand, suffrage should be denied because of a lack of literacy in education. As an absolute minimum one must be literate in order to arrive at an intelligent decision on matters of government. Anything less is not democracy, but mob rule based on ignorance. Suffrage is not based on percentage of racial registration or on property, but on the ability of its citizens to contribute intelligently to the decision-making process. If a democracy is not this, how can it be a preferred form of government?

We must face certain rather obvious facts in Rhodesia. The whites, who control the government, are literate and generally well-educated; a vast majority of the native Africans are not literate. The native Africans who are literate are accounted for in the system with their proportionate representation, 15 seats in Parliament. Does Rhodesia need responsible democracy or mob rule? An upstate newspaper referred to Ian Smith as the "most hated white in Africa." I would certainly not disagree with this, but I would also add that he may be one of the few people in Africa who can still see the concept of democracy in the way in which it is most meaningful to those governed by it. Whether it is Rhodesia, Britain, or the United States, democracy must have certain minimum standards, literacy among them, or the government reverts to a state of chaotic mob rule.

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The Golden Eye

Friday, Dec. 10

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"THE SECULAR CITY:
A CELEBRATION OF ITS LIBERTIES AND AN INVITATION TO ITS DISCIPLINE"
by Harvey Cox
Reviewed
by David W. Heal

It is characteristic of many members of my generation, introduced to paper-backs through the glories of Westerns and the mysteries of detective stories, to think that what is to be found between soft covers is primarily entertaining, and if not entertaining, capable of producing slumber at the end of a day given over to "real" reading of pages respectably bound between board or calf leather. This is a prejudice which is hard to overcome in spite of, or perhaps because of, the the example of the younger generation which devours soft-covered books on the most abstruse subjects with an appetite which has only been exceeded by the paper shredders of the shadowy people who inhabit the worlds of diplomacy, espionage, counter-espionage, and detective agencies. In consequence one approaches the paper-covered three-hundred pages of The Secular City with nothing like the respect of the problems of the city-urban decay, racial ghettoes, political corruption, and traffic chaos, but a deeply considered appraisal of what the coming of tech-nopolis in fact means to man, and what it means to the Church; not an institution but a people. The book cannot be lightly read, although its general tone of hope and optimism is a great encouragement to the diffident reader. The general tenor of the book might be suspected from the full title. Liberty is a word that plucks a responsive chord in the emotions of most of us. Discipline reminds us of restrictions and limitations which may appear to be the antithesis of freedom and liberty, but which is the stay and foundation of that liberty. The Secular City is, therefore, a call not only to rejoice but a call to responsibility.

The premise of the thesis presented in The Secular City is that the rise of urban civilization - technopolis, to distinguish it from pre-industrial town life - and the decay of traditional religion are related phenomena rather than two unrelated movements that happen to be occurring concomitantly. The Secular City is the city from which the gods have fled. With this in mind, the title of the opening chapter, The Biblical Sources of Secularization, appears paradoxical. How is it that the Bible, the written record of the appearance of two of the traditional religions, can contain the seeds of a growth which causes those religions to decay, for secularism, for most of us, stands for something other than religion? Sacred and Secular is a duo that we easily recognize. So it is necessary to define terms.

Secularism is "man's coming of age" (Bonhoeffer). It is the realization by man that the world is his problem, his responsibility. It is a turning away from an other world view to a view focused on this world where the trials and tribulations, as well as the joys and victories, cannot be ascribed to the furies or to a blind Kismet but to man. The Bible speaks to this issue in three ways. First, in the secularization of creation. The Jewish account of this act of God was unique in that it drew a clear distinction between the Creator and the creation. There was no river god, or wind god, or spirits living in the trees. There remained God, rivers, winds, and trees. This attitude to creation is a necessary attitude for the development of natural science. It does not in itself assure the growth of the scientific method and the sciences, but it is a condition for any society that develops natural science. It is not coincidence, then, that natural science, which underpins technopolis, should appear in the Judao-Christian world. Secondly, the Bible speaks to the secularization of politics. The Jewish nation was born in an act of rebellion: a rebellion against a deified government in Egypt. The Bible then cannot speak against change; it cannot deify a ruling class. Again, the political creeds emphasizing individual liberty before governments grew up in a society that had been influenced by the Biblical tradi-tion. (Unfortunately that does not mean that it was the Church which actually led the advance). Thirdly, the Bible in the Sinai covenant leads the way to the secularization of values. The injunction that the Children of Israel should not worship anything made by man is interpreted as applying not only to physical realities but metaphysical as well. The relativisation of values that ensues from this covenant demands responsibility on the part of man: the responsibility at least to recognize that although the view may be relative the thing viewed exists.

The shape of technopolis is determined by the mobility and this annonymity of its inhabitants. Both of these characteristics Cox views as being liberating features, and sees the first as being distinctly within the Judao-Christian tradi-tion. Mobility is the weapon of the underdog, in the sense that if you can't beat them, you don't have to join them, you can move. This message might well be received by a nation of immigrants. The early church was a mobile church, so much so that its people were called the people of the way. The Children of Israel spent the first forty years of their existence as a nation in permanent movement. Both religions suffered mutilation almost beyond the limits of recognition when their adherents attempted to fix Yahweh to the Temple rock in Jerusalem, and Christ to christendom. Annonymity on the other hand, might not be directly biblical, but it

does demand of the individual responsibility. It does demand that he come of age. It does require that he leave the crutches of the tribe and of the small town. The decisions that are made by technopolitan man, whether they be day to day decisions such as which movie to see, or more important decisions such as the choice of a wife or of a vocation are his decisions and he is responsible for them. In this way technopolitan man is required to grow into the nature ordained for him by man. That nature is to share in the act of creation, to share in the formulation of order out of chaos. Man was created in the image of God, that is as a creator as well as a created being, and not as a plaything for the gods. In technopolis man has an increased ability to fulfill his function. He also runs the risk of creating greater chaos. This would appear to be the real issue of the day.

It is evident that this thesis is something different to the message so often proclaimed from the pulpit that the city is part of hell, and that heaven is to be found in the small town of rural America. It is also different in its welcome of change, in its desacratising of institutions and values, but very welcome to those who have felt the contrdiction between institutionalized christianity with its defense of the status quo, and the social taboos, on the one hand, and the revolutionary thirst presented and crucified by the religious institutions of his time, and rejected by the defenders of the status quo. Our faith is a revolutionary faith that does not lend support to our prejudices and social niceties. It is a faith that tells us to banish the gods and to take our place in creation as creators. That we should throw in our lot with God should not be surprising, because we were created in his image, and his aims are our aims, his victory is our victory, his happiness is our happiness. There is nothing demeaning to man here; he is called to be a god, and the secular, technopolitan society can be viewed as an aid in this achievement.

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*          Arthur Collins              Thomas Littlefield            *
*                                                                    *
*  *1(in Mr. Staley's absence, David Tuggle will serve as surrogate) *
*                                                                    *
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November 30, 1965

To The Editors of SKANDALON:

A couple of weeks ago, you requested that I write an article from a conscientious objector's point of view on the November 27 March on Washington for Peace in Vietnam. What can a C. O. say about the March other than "Hurrah! 40,000 people want to stop the killing in Vietnam!"?

The primary issues to be raised in an article about the March are political ones. Most of those who marched did so out of a patriotic motivation. The Veterans who have seen other wars stood opposed to the Vietnamese War on primarily political and patriotic grounds, not pacifist. The majority of the marchers were there because they do not want the U. S. to become involved in a full-scale land war in Asia. They believe that untried approaches to a negotiated settlement should be attempted before further escalating the conflict. As a pacifist, I welcome the support of such people; but, although I share their views, my own motivation comes from a deeper moral conviction that the war itself, as all wars, is immoral.

Peace,

Gary Delain