

On Being a Witness

Jean Brun: Witness of the Human Condition

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On Being a Witness

Often in the Scriptures, amid people groping, sometimes in utter desolation in the heart of the night, stands the humble yet straight silhouette of the watchman. His gaze is invariably turned towards the daylight, which he expects to break soon. The firmness of his heart, the clarity of his word and the certainty of his message are the sure witnesses of his unique faithfulness to the promise of God. As he raises his voice he awakens the sleepers, he instructs, he strengthens hearts; like a harvest he gathers the long and fervent prayers, including also his own personal humiliations, with the unique personal determination to proclaim in times of turmoil and uncertainty, in the midst of errant decisions and policy, when the hearts of ordinary men fill with fear, the certainty and the invincible peace offered by the One to whom no one can be compared.

Humble and faithful, the watchmen, the holy cohort of witnesses during long centuries, have raised their voices, have “cried out” to the ears of their contemporaries, and even for future generations, so that they “comfort them, comfort His people”. The Sovereign Lord of the universe and of His people, has blessed their message, both for themselves and for those who had the privilege to heed them, albeit with anxious thoughts, and heart in pain. The watchman shared their evident joy and led others to the One who declares: *I am the way, the truth, the life.*

In the present troubled times and for our anxiety stricken minds, they still pursue their sanctified mission. Now more than ever it is the hour for witnessing. In our days, unlike those of the past, it is not mere ideas and works which are shaken and placed under judgment; it is man in his person who is questioned and judged in what he is. Everything around him reveals now, sharply, dramatically, that he cannot, he must not, remain *what he is*. In the heart of all difficulties, in the name of Christ, creator of the New Man, with courage and passion, the watchman-witness intervenes and urges; *you must change*. He pleads to be listened to; and be judged by the redemptive values of which he is the carrier

and the voice.

His certainty is not generated from staggering human certainties but from the gospel of Jesus Christ. In order to make, or remake, man whole, the witness, like the gospel he is witnessing to, requires that this certainty may become personal, a certainty to be exposed in total freedom—in a freedom reaching the innermost depth of the soul, and thus becoming a “spiritual” certainty.

Personal. Freedom. Spirit. Those are precisely the necessities rejected in modern times. What matters today is not the personal, but the collective, the wild mobilization for and the grafting into the ranks of the vile mob. Our times demand not freedom but the totalitarian grip of an arbitrary and inhuman power. What is appreciated is not the spirit, but material values. So, the witness never has been so much contradicted, opposed and vilified as he is nowadays. Assailed in his sensible heart, how is he going to judge the prevailing situation, what can he foresee; what must he proclaim?

Certainty. For the face of the witness shines with it.

Personal. Man is not meant to live and act by procuration, for each one of us loves, suffers and lives in his private state; he may truly believe only by personal convictions. That is the reason that all true witnesses have been also genuine humanists, in the sense that they have fought to defend man, and defend him first and foremost against himself. For man foolishly glories in himself. He needs therefore to be entrusted to the care of the message of the witness. Place for instance this “modern” man, into the hands of a John Calvin and nothing will remain of his shabby glories and arrogant sufficiency. In the school of the great Reformer he will learn that admirable prayer of confession: *We confess that we are poor sinners, unable by ourselves to do good.* Therefore it is here, on this point, that the true evaluation of man can take place; here he is offered forgiveness and the face of the new creation is restored in him. Sinner, yet reconciled; miserable, yet already taking part into eternal glory; lost, yet found; doomed to perdition, yet the blessed recipient of eternal redemption. In times when technique and science have depersonalized the human person, the witness calls him to his original status. Not a single human is meant to be reduced to a cog for the functioning of an impersonal machine; the collective will not hide and deform his face, or maintain him as nameless number in a faceless crowd.

Free. Finally, the witness calls him to a total freedom. Free to believe, in such a way that not a single social, ideological, political, scientific, cultural, even less an ecclesiastical, constraint can colonize him. Free in the *elan* of his ardent faith, his bright hope, his active love. Free, at last in the loving, protecting, and guiding hands of his Divine Liberator.

Despite all appearances, man, our contemporary realizes, can no longer live, act and think without a radical operation taking place. He is aware, at times even in terror, at the prospect that each new step taken may carry the threat of the destruction of his works.

Surprisingly clear-sighted at times, he is waiting hour by hour for that unavoidable, great implosion that may take place, which man has himself prepared with a almost hysterical precipitation! Each deed, added to another deed, contains the awfully anticipated internal collapse.

Therefore the witness calls him to look towards the *elsewhere*, to that which lies beyond man, time, andspace, to chose the solid ground (the *pou stô*) for his frail and precarious existence. The solution of his problems will not be given him by his culture, his science or his politics. But by *religion*, as it is understood in its full, rich, exhaustive biblical sense. At times the witnesses's voice will sound harsh and his mood too gloomy to be pleasant in the sight of those obsessed with pleasure. However, with serene and joyful certainty the witness is convinced; his mission is what matters for man, for the present, the future, society, for the human condition.

Where could modern man, *men*, meet such a witness? Only in the ones who are “deceived”—to use Jeremiah's words—graciously, and powerfully, by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Such a witness will repeat relentlessly that there is no salvation on earth and under heaven, except in the gracious revelation given to man from the “elsewhere”. That *elsewhere* is not confined between the narrow boundaries of the present world, therefore men attempt in vain to pierce the boundaries of their present world in the foolish expectation that they will finally attain a *beyond*.

Jean Brun

Jean Brun was, to the last breath of his existence, witness to truth in its fullest extent and therefore was also a witness of the human condition, upon which it sheds the only light.¹

1 My last letter did not reach him in time. I had been happy to learn that he would visit South Africa for a lecture. Eric, our son, teaching French in the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, had organized a “tour” for him. Alas, death occurred a few weeks before. Quietly, he passed away, leaving behind him the “nocturne” in order to accede to the “diurne” for which he had hoped ardently, in faithful perseverance.

Born in 1919, in Agen, south of France, in an protestant family, he remained an evangelical Christian to the end, despite his many legitimate frustrations from the Reformed Church of which he and I were members. He taught philosophy in several French Universities, spent six years In London, at the Institute of the United Kingdom, in the Sorbonne and the prestigious Lycee Lakanal in Paris; finally he was appointed Professor of Philosophy in the Academy of Dijon. He was honorary Professor of the University of Mayence, in Germany, “Correspondent” of “L'Institut” in Paris, and Member of the “Academie des Sciences, Arts et Belles Lettres” of Dijon.

His books have been translated into several european languages; Greek, Swedish, German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and Japanese. Not into English! In his last letter, I received a few weeks before he passed away, he was gently complaining that Anglo-Saxons have not deigned to publish him! Two attempts from my part to introduce him in the USA, proved unsuccessful. *La Nudite Humaine* sent to a “Reformed Publishing House”, was flatly sent back, with the remark they can not publish it! I suppose that the French “reader” chosen, probably from a “Reformed College”, and assigned for evaluating the book, did not have the ability to appreciate, not only the highly original French style of Brun, but the heart of the message expressed. An essay on “The Death of Socrates and of Jesus”, sent to an “academic” review, was also refused; I was told that it does not meet academic requirements. Again, I believe it must have been the message which was at stake, not the English linguistics of Brun. I had the

That human condition, he specified, with cautious warning, lies between “the nocturne and the diurne”. Doubtless the French original “substantive” is more telling than simple English adjectives can render.

Rarely have the modern French intelligentsia—and beyond France many others—heard such a powerful message delivered by a “lay” evangelist as did the Christian Professor of Philosophy of the Academy of Dijon, southeast of France, during the past 40 years. He taught and guided students, readers, those who have had the privilege to meet or read him, towards the revealed truth. With a sanctified and burning fire in his bones, an ardent speech, undaunted in the face of modern, or meta-modern, real betrayals of that truth, Brun remained an exceptionally brilliant and eloquent witness. In possession of a highly original, critical and amazing knowledge of the “fundamental ground motif” of non-Christian thinking, he projected his scrutinizing light, despite the frequent complaints of mediocre critics that considered him merciless to all those who, to borrow the title of a famous French book of the twenties by Julien Benda, have been guilty of the “betrayal of the clerks”.

agonizing responsibility to tell to my friend that he was refused. I have not yet forgiven myself for that ungracious task.

I had wondered, already several years ago, if indeed there was, even before the French coined the term, and implemented the principle on the other side of the ocean, a “cultural exception” on this side of the ocean! My experience having been increased in this respect, my first intimations are now corroborated! The reason—naturally this requires more consideration than I can here offer—is to be found between what in general can be called the Anglo-Saxon analytical mind, and the more “synoptic” way of thinking or reasoning of the French, and Latins in general. The Babylonian builders had never realized to what extent were we going to pay the price of their “Hybris”! Not just “confusion of tongues”, but maybe a whole ethnic mindset(?) Unless, another hypothesis also could be advanced, at my own risk (and perils the French would add)—that in general Anglo-Saxons, be they liberal or conservative, have taken literally the biblical injunction: “it is better to give than to receive!” Therefore they will always “give”, usually reluctant to receive. This may also explain Brun's fate with them! (And that of many others, too).

Our first epistolary contact started in the early seventies. With a handful of orthodox Reformed and Lutheran theologians we had formed a movement to resist the alarming tornado of secularization, Christian Atheists and Christian Marxists, invading Churches and colonizing them. (There had even been some “Christian prostitutes” at those glorious times of “May 1968”, though in Roman Catholic churches of the capital. Were these “respectables”, as the French call them euphemistically, considered to be a new category of deaconesses, assigned to a specific service? “Impossible is not French”, the French will say again!).

For Brun the “Catastrophe of Secularization”, and its specific hermeneutics needed an uncompromising response. He was among the first, along with Jacques Ellul and other prominent Protestant Professors, to adhere to our movement, after reading our Manifesto in the prestigious daily, *Le Monde*. He did more than send a signature, he became active in our movement, bringing his exceptional contributions in the public meetings we organized. I had invited him for interviews on my French Broadcast program and read several of his most noteworthy papers as relevant topics. We kept a rather regular correspondence, after my coming to this continent.

My debt to him, after his corrosive *Le Retour de Dionysos* (The Return of Dionysios) is great. His impact has been equally great on my thinking and ministry as that of several “Reformed” thinkers. Even if he does not match their criteria and nor follows the same methodology. The paradox of such a “synthesis”, I believe a legitimate one, can be best expressed by Pascal's dictum: One does not show forth his grandeur (for my case naturally it is not grandeur, common sense!) in clinging to one extreme, but touching both at the same time, and filling the between.

With often a caustic and irresistible wit, which was characteristic of his origins from the “midi” (South of France), he ridiculed those who, clad with their psycho-intellectual nullity, parade themselves miserably, closing their eyes to the crying evidence of their nakedness. One might well use here the familiar reversal of Anderson's tale, and speak of “clothes” carrying, and covering, no emperor! He has been one of the most lucid critics of modernity. Few philosophers have exhibited such a clear-sightedness in their analysis of the human condition—a clear-sightedness much needed among Christian witnesses of today. Jean Brun put his ardent faith into the service of the truth, helping others to use the same sharp sight and enabling them to make the correct diagnosis of the tragic plight of perennial man. The existential struggle for him does not take place as with Jacob with the angel; on the contrary the modern struggle is to grapple with the vastness of “knowledge” and the “power” with which it promises to endow those who can grasp it. Man believes he is becoming god, whereas his destiny is to become, or remain man. Relentlessly Brun brought his audience back to the original act of sin, to the Fall, to that state of fact with various aspects, prolongations, ramifications, actualizations in modern society. He was determined to unmask the disguises of his contemporaries in order to offer the indispensable and unparalleled answer to anxiety-ridden questions, because man, in his passionate, often hysterical search for meaning, has forsaken the belief that his quest has a(ny) link with the transcendent.

His books, starting with his first doctoral dissertation under Jean Wahl, *Les Conquetes de l'homme et la Separation Ontologique*, a second, complementary thesis under Georges Canguilhem, *La Main et l'Esprit*, the more familiar, *Le Retour de Dionysos*, *La Nudite humaine*, *A La Recherche du Paradis perdu*, *Philosophie et Christianisme*, *Le Reve et la Machine*, many more, hundreds of articles and monographs, his posthumous *Verite et Christianisme*, qualify him as a witness of truth of a superior quality. Other writings, published by the prestigious Presses Universitaires de France, on classical Greek thinkers are a mine of erudition and a “must” as reference tools for those who, involved in Christian thinking, need a sure guide, both as an expert and critic, to the epistemological forefathers of modern western man. Each of his writings tells the pathetic story of man's shipwreck, devoid of a compass, pleading too with him to abandon his *hubris*, and come back to the transcendent refuge where at last and definitively “truth will set him free”.

In the usual sense of the word, Jean Brun was not a “Reformed Philosopher”; rather, he was a Christian with a philosophical message; the impact of that message has been tremendous upon all those who read him respectfully and gratefully, and catch something of his illuminating inspiration. Powerfully, brilliantly, unswervingly, convincingly—while addressing himself to those who like the “Old Man and the Sea” return to shore from their futile fishing and wander meaninglessly, often desperately—he has urged them to attend to the Word, because it has the unique constructive, and reconstructive, power for their shattered “absurd” existence, so that they may become ontologically whole. The plight of man—of whom he was one of the keenest observers, with a sure diagnosis no longer common among modern “physicians of man”, even among “theologians”—did not keep him in the ivory tower of abstract philosophizing but engaged in radical therapeutics. He had the rare ability to oppose fundamental contraries, and in that way

make his plea telling, relevant. His preaching, or speech, had a healing power, but functioning like a “sanctified scalpel”.

The multiple rescues (*sauvetage*) will never bring the longed for Redemption (*Salut*); the shaky shelters (*abris*) do not avail as does the Eternal Refuge; the temporary truces (*armistice*), will never afford the peace which surpasses all understanding; the most efficiently gained liberations cannot achieve what only salvation (*Redemption*) can offer; the unending attempts to unveil (*devoilement*) will never shine as does revelation from above, proclaimed Brun. Man's tragedy does not reside in his “situations” but in his “condition”.

“God”, wrote Marx, in an youthful poem, “I will ascend to heaven, will chase you from your throne, and will set man on it, instead of you”. To Nietzsche, and his somber “certified report”, “nothing is true, all is permitted”. Jean Brun, with the strained energy of his passionate Christian soul, opposed to these the revealed truth. To the modern pancosmic guru, Claude Levi-Strauss, with his doctrinaire structuralist nihilism (“nothing has a meaning except by man, who has no meaning”) Brun indicates what meaning is and where it is to be found. The desolate eyewitness of the tragic “situation of man”—which is the outcome of catastrophes plaguing him since he lost his spiritual-religious “north”—Brun reminds us that there is a yet more tragic catastrophe than the ones falling on the horizontal line of “history”, that “unredeemable condition” of another dimension, unless “truth sets him free”, because all the barns of the world will never satisfy his hunger unless he partakes from the bread come from above; all the water sources of the planet earth will never quench his thirst if he does not drink from the fountain from which springs the living water; all the blinking lights on the sky will not guide him unfailingly if he is not led by the ever shining Star of Bethlehem; which will not fail to lead the inquirer to the “place” where he discovers God, and discovering Him, he rejoices greatly.

Those opposites just mentioned bring precisely forth to light the miserable character of man's situation. He must discover where his “evil” does lie, of which he is victim but also guilty. Therefore Brun pleads with man to give up his outrageous pretensions (*remeasure*); he, this man, (who could be a Christian!) is in the stage of the “nocturne”, far, very far indeed, from the “diurne”, that light which he must expect in hope, with patience, persevering, as the object of his eschatological faith. He, and all of us, are treading only towards it, advancing, not yet possessing with its blazing purity and purifying power. Otherwise, while engaged in obsessive quests for the lost paradise, with *eros*, (in the original Greek sense) *epheisis*, *orexis* (desire), *pothos* (ardent wishing), man can only wander in the desert, which, like the Sahara is ever growing, year in, year out, with an alarming speed, yet never flourishing!

It is not easy to introduce Jean Brun, even to French readers. He belongs to those geniuses whom you have to let speak for themselves in order not to betray their message. In what follows the main task of this paper will be that: to let you listen to him with your...eyes!

Les Separations Ontologiques

Brun's Christian thinking was shaped, receiving its decisive form and content, in *Les conquêtes de l'homme et la separation ontologique*. He begins by reflecting on the “frames” (*cadres*) of our dispossession, namely time and space. Time and space locate each individual in a radical separation. Socrates had made philosophy to descend from heaven to earth and gave it its proper and final object: i.e. man. Socrates's philosophy places man either upon the horizontal plain that has no horizon on its boundaries, or on the metaphysical level which he dimly discerns but only as the hollow shape of transcendence, surpassing him. Socratic man is always confronted with the barrier of his own self. He may ascend higher and higher in order only to attain his self—no more. Starting at this point, Brun pursues his accurate diagnosis and formulates his message in the most convincing tonality. Each individual in his despairing concreteness, and confronting conditions of being and existence, relentlessly interrogates himself; an interrogation which has become the radical concern of his existence, to know who he is and what he is not. Brun's first thesis was a critical reflection upon what man does and what he is. There he defines the ontological situation through the idea of separation, existing in the heart of all. Such a separation is not of a secondary character, but essential.

There is separation between himself and the world, upon which he reflects, separation from the universe in which he walks as a stranger (*depayse*). A separation also exists between beings, which is immanent, present, in all dialogues and by means of which he tries to stretch a bridge in order to join two irreducible “I”s (*Je, selves*). Nevertheless they are together and alone, because unique; they remain unique, despite the dialogue. There is a constitutive separation of space expressed by the division between the “here” and the “there” (*ici* and *ailleurs*). Another immanent separation is the experience of time, expressed by words such as “now”, “no more”, “not yet”, “in the past”, “tomorrow”. Finally a constitutive separation of the consciousness which the self has of himself. I am only me, I am this, not something else.

This separation, writes Brun, is not an accident, a property impressed upon ourselves after the event, but, on the contrary, it is the ontological condition with its unhealing torments. We are separated from ourselves, we are separated in ourselves. Therein lies an infinite distance between man and himself!

There is also the separation between man and the other. The “other” (*L'Autre*) is another than me. Again a radical separation has taken place in which each one feels that other is another me than him! In that word “that” resides the whole distance of the world, a distance which man attempts to abolish in conquering space by his machines, and by becoming the pilot of time in order to make himself the engineer of ontology. The story of sciences and techniques witnesses something other than man's efficient rationalization and the claim to give up myths, to free himself from error by building a scientifically rigorous universe of his own. In fact, behind the triumph of the *homo faber* lies hidden the desire of man to liberate himself by knocking down the wall of his prison, and that of

space.

The Genesis

Where does ontological separation originate? From what are we originally separated that consubstantially affects us—a lack which is evident—in the echo of the pain caused by our being and by the distress of existing?

There has been an ontological earthquake, tells Brun, at the root of human condition (In *La Main et L'Esprit*). A mysterious schism has occurred at the starting point of all the existential catastrophes. Secret, this “event” does not pertain to “history” as commonly understood in the Hegelian sense; rather we are referred to the Transhistorical to which belong our beginnings; (theologians will speak here of Eternity). Following this earthquake humanity has become heir of an immemorial beginning and agent constantly carrying it forward, prolonging it repeatedly.

In philosophical terminology Brun gives the exact Biblical account of the Original Sin. Lest we forget, Jean Brun does not speak as a theologian, repeating slavishly the often “wooden language” of the latter. He speaks as philosopher; what he tells with his language is the exact equivalent, I would even insist more brilliant than most of the routine theological clichés. In his own words he tells how the original transgression is the cause of the human adventure of which we have become both the witnesses and the partners. There occurred the separation with God, and unavoidably it resulted in the misery of man. Brun is familiar with the Genesis story and is a highly trustworthy interpreter of it, though he will use his peculiar philosophical terminology. So for instance with the word nakedness he has kept its thoroughly biblical meaning; *nakedness* is the ontological condition of man—nakedness of which Adam and Eve became aware as soon as they realized their guilt. They realized they are not covered; after their disobedience they became conscious of the absence of “clothes”. Those who now make intellectual and cultural “clothes” conceal the fundamental nakedness of man. They undertake to hide the guilt and even make it disappear. Such is the use of all fineries by means of which man attempts to forget his essential nakedness. Nonetheless, man will remain naked. In the state of ontological privation which maintains him in uneasiness, suffering from himself, experiencing the frustration that not a single “having” can compensate for it, and even less fill it. Nakedness is what defines man both biologically and existentially. The dizziness caused by the to be engenders a distress, a torment, that of the unhappy soul, caused by the breaking off with the primary unity, the breach of the unity between the human and God, a severing which has become an unending and ever flowing source of miseries, also the point where (his) will tries to overcome it, although it is destined to fail with an unmistakable regularity. Tantalus is its symbol, Prometheus its hero, Sisyphus its mythological figure.

For man does not remain passive in the face of his insecurity and limitations of his condition. Yet Satan's “You shall become like gods”, which motivated his rejection of God, generated the human ambition to become God. In order to transform his distress into

victory, man offers to himself all the means available: deeds, science, technique, art, politics; he ascribes to them an end, an aim, which is not just in order to become like god, or a god, but to become God. Does he succeed?

Reading Jean Brun in a theological perspective we can say that the original sin has two intimately associated aspects: separation with God, the desire to become his equal or even better, to substitute himself and become king of creation by usurping God's place, and thus to heal himself from himself!

Culture is precisely the desire to deliver himself from his limitations. The desire to push further away the boundaries of his self, the desire of self-creation, to save himself by his own self. To the original "The Word was in the beginning" he now substitutes "Action was in the beginning". That was the credo and dogma of Second Faust of Goethe. It is by an ontological necessity that the human being is conquering under the pressure of this desire, aiming at a self-deification by knowledge and power. But, writes Brun, his works are devouring him. Culture has become a vast field in continual extension to allow escapes, and provide illusions for man who ends by becoming the *demiurgos* of his own void.

Note also that the "existential" anxieties of man are not simple anxieties, which would be almost normal to expect from fallen humans. They are also manipulative anxieties. Those opposites bring to light the real and deep miserable character of man's situation. Thus he transforms them into a tool by which he tries to fashion, or refashion, man the raw-material, and then operate to effect upon himself all the transformations of which he deems himself to be worthy. The most elaborate forms of this tool naturally are the social ones, the state. For the real question which matters: *Who Am I*, he substitutes *What Am I*; that is the sure premises of all reductionisms, of all simplifications, which attempt and often succeed to kill in man the *imago dei*. Brun relentlessly pursues this reification of man everywhere; he is well equipped to do this with his vast knowledge of civilization, both western and eastern. He uses this knowledge in the service of the prophetic warning against the seduction of the Serpent, whispering into man's ears "pick up the fruit by your own action, you will experience how your ontological status will be infinitely improved".

Yet, what has been the balance sheet of our century, with all its "Great Steersmen", turning its back to God? As soon as "he dethrones Him, or even stupidly, and vehemently declares His death, then the death of man follows unavoidably. And Man dies terribly."

Christienisme et Philosophie

In *Christianisme et Philosophie* Jean Brun traces the development of the humanistic thought starting with the Greeks to the moderns, such as post-modern "philosophers" or artists, or poets and the whole array of linguistic deconstructionists. We will mention a few figures only, among the most familiar and significant of them.

THE GREEKS

Brun's familiarity with the Greek myths, though not of an “encyclopedic” type, enables us to perceive their relevance for the modern mind.² He has read in them the timeless expression of diverse facets of the desperate immanence in their thinking and believing of the transcendence! With brio he has explained how the attempts of modern man are just extensions of the Greek myths, to which, he, the modern man is not opposed, as at first sight he might seem to be; rather they are prolongations of those myths. Therefore he will oppose to these myths the Revelation as an satisfying answer to all human needs. Man needs to consider this transcendent redemption. No doubt, Brun would agree with me that in the Greek myth we have all the archives of modern technical laboratories. For Western civilization worked towards technicizing myths and making them operational. We are now reliving them, either with euphoria or in terror after having conveyed to them the powers of the machine of which they were the forefathers.

DESCARTES

To have access to truth where man may establish himself as the agent of his own salvation, discovering in himself what he needs for self-therapy, implies a self-initiated knowledge, by means of which man proceeds to attain the necessary “unveilings”. Instead of placing his faith upon God, he has transferred his faith to himself. Descartes was the first thinker to operate this modern *metabasis is allo genos*, if the expression can be used in this context. For as the author of the *cogito ergo sum*, and the arrogant promoter of “owner and master of nature” man is not “lost”; he is only strayed (*egare*). He does not need “redemption from above”, but simply a method to help in his inquiries. He can, and eventually will, find his way using a compass of his own devising.

Cartesian humanism assigned such a task to itself. The non-communicable initiation into the other in Greek thought disappears for the benefit of a method of the departing point which is located in reason. Reason exists in everyone, totally. Truth does not emerge from a sacred sanctuary, where it was hidden to the eyes of the uninitiated, and dwell among men. What was needed was correctly to conduct reason. Therefore man must seek truth in science(s). This search for truth starts, and ends, with man in himself, by “inspecting his own mind”. The Cartesian *mystos* (initiate) has undertaken the task to study within himself. This is the approach by which Descartes starts the *First Meditation*. He first undertakes his auto-epuration, by doubting, following which he will discover that which is indubitable. Descartes inquires for truth in an ascending movement, but never exiting from himself—to such an extent that he closes his eyes, and ears, turning away all his senses, going so far as to think that the world is perhaps mere illusion and deception. Where there is an internal illumination, there seeds of truth will be found. Therefore,

2 There is naturally a modern obsession with “myths”. Take for instance the impact on some “Christian literati” fans and acolytes in a few “Christian and Reformed colleges”, of a Madeline L'Engle, a disguised “priestess” of the New Age movement, according to competent authors who have discerned in her writings such parasitical elements, and seen the spectrum of the Trojan Horse invading the Ecclesia. Brun would vehemently oppose that type of para-, or pseudo-poetical gibberish.

from now on truth is what man understands it to be, thanks to the natural light he sees in himself. As with Aristotle or the Greeks, truth is that which reaches the thought that thinks. All is true which we know clearly to be true. The *cogito's* first clear and distinct idea was discovered by a return of mind to, and upon, itself. From now on it is possible to undertake the construction of science and technique, thanks to which we shall become “masters and owners of nature”. In Descartes no philosophy of the “tragic” can be found, nor contemplation—*theoria*—such as in Plotinus, only a philosophy of action. However, whatever the difference between them, both lead to the self-divination of man. It is enough to judge correctly in order to act correctly, pretends Descartes. “Pelagianism”, said theologians who criticized him rightly. In Descartes salvation is through knowledge, enforced by the philosophy of salvation, while in Plotinus action was the mere shadow of contemplation. From now on man must take care of the growing of the tree of knowledge. Yet, reminds Brun, man is owner of truth, but not its creator. If he is able to establish any truth the reason is that truth must come, be delivered, or revealed, to him, from above him.

The God of Descartes is pure intelligence, not the God of love. Descartes intellectualized God, opening the door to rationalist philosophies. His is not the philosophy of the tragic! There is no place for the passion and suffering of Christ. The passions of men are mere conflicts of ideas; they belong only to the psychological realm, to the domain of simple bio-psychology. Though Descartes recognizes the power of God; he draws man so close to him that he eventually identifies man with God.

The Enlightenment a century later managed to deprive Cartesianism of its latent, hidden, theology, making of man the full possessor and master of truth, suppressing all the distinctions between understanding and knowledge, offering him the possibility to be enthroned as creator of history, and consequently master of the world.

Hegel

The next “metaphysical and historical situation” to be remembered (leaving aside Malebranche in France and Kant in Germany, important though they are), is Hegel's the “historical because metaphysical”. The mission he assigned to himself was to end everything which could separate comprehension from knowledge, knowing from thinking, phenomenon from the thing-in-itself, man from God. By elaborating a synthesis of a philosophy of history with a theology of the living God, Hegel makes eternity to walk in history so that the historical givens become the instant focalizations of the giver who, thanks to them, constitutes himself; then truth dynamized appears as the becoming of one's self.

Despite Hegel's claim to be a Lutheran and deciding to remain such, his thinking appears as an endeavor towards the dynamization of truth as the parousia of the absolute, or the historical process of becoming (cf. modern process theologies). In Hegel, time confounds itself with the ever resurgent truth; Hegelian time is nothing else than the parousia of God who becomes such in time and through time. Thus, true Truth—forgive me the

redundancy—is the becoming of oneself.

Though for Hegel before one writes history one needs to define the notion of it; nevertheless the significance of the Hegelian turning point in the history of the destiny of truth is the impulsion given to the idea that truth is not made, but is making itself, that it is in process of being, not an inert reality to be described, a subject developing itself. The true figure in which truth exists must be the scientific system of the same truth. Therefore, there cannot be on a knowledge, and distinct from it a path to love which would be the love of knowledge; there is no other effective reality than the organic system of truth, unveiling itself in and through everything. For Hegel, truth is everything. But the total everything is only the essence of self-accomplishment by means of self-development.

Hegel is a *theognoste*, in the same line as Meister Eckhart, for whom “the essence of God is my life”. The being of God must become my being, neither more nor less. Therefore if I am transformed into God in such a manner that produces as his own being, one with him, and like him, by the living God, it is also true that there can be no more distinction, (between Him and me). The *Deus Absconditus* of Eckhart unveils himself in and by man. He will go as far as to say: “Let God be God, I am the cause”. Hegel mobilized these ideas and put them into the march of history. The self-deification of man has become possible by dialectically recuperating the *kenosis*, that movement by which God emptied himself in order to identify himself with man and identify man with God. Man is self-deified by God who is self-humanized. God becomes conscious of himself to the extent that human consciousness operates dialectically. Theophany has become one with history. Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Spirit* is the autobiography of truth which confounds itself with theogony in which God thinks through the deeds of man. Truth manifests itself, is born, dies, in order to revive in a new manner, like the Phoenix from its ashes, in a series of *Aufhebungen*, where the positivity of the negative and the negativity of the positive are such that eventually nothing is born and nothing perishes.

On the one hand Hegel seems to develop a theory of creation, in the line of the sacred history, attempting to reconcile faith and knowledge, taking over the theology of kenosis, to phenomenologize the Passion of Christ, and dialecticize the “I am the way, the truth and life”, so man becomes the cooperator of God in situating himself in its light, and welcoming the manifestation of the absolute. On the other, it is easy to find in Hegel lines of strength which lead to the anthropologization of Jesus, socialization of God, divinisation of the social, crowned by the meaning of history both as a creative and promethean task. Man is no longer the simple cooperator of God but his successor and his substitute. The historical revelation has become a revealing, or revelatory, history, in which the passion of Christ is endlessly repeating itself. Truth is the becoming of one's self, of which he is the artisan and not the servant.

Hence, hellenism, gnosticism, illuminism, Joachinism, scientism, may join together in a philosophy and in politics of action pretending, more or less explicitly, to have broken the seals of the Book of Revelation, able not only to read its words, but also to write its text,

in order to realize its coming in time, that which, until their times, was considered to be only “close”. Thus may be explained the fanaticisms of The Apocalyptics, the Taborites, Thomas Muntzer, and all modern theologies of liberation who have joined the fanatics of the scientific history in their tyrannical missionary will and who pretend to instaure upon this earth the kingdom of the Saviour.

In these Hegelian transmutations of reality, history is fording over eternity and making it obsolete. In analyzing the human condition, Brun insists that the historical is not merely a fact of the past, but an ever reoccurring grievous act, with the disastrous illusion that original fall may become self-redemptive. Brun acquiesces to Nietzsche: the sickness of man is not foreign to him, he himself is his sickness.

In history, in the meaning Hegelian man conveys to it, man believes he is on his way to the final *parousia*, divorced and devoid of eternity, (positivist position, Darwinian utopia). Brun sees, and reads history as the ever recurring attempt of man aiming to liberate himself from his historicity; for history reminds him of his creatural condition, not that of the creator he strives to become. Therefore, explains Brun, man invents all kinds of eschatologies in order to finally come to the end of history. Man, with his Hegelian conception of history, acts to infuse historical chronicles with his own errings, yet curiously, and foolishly, declares them to be self-redemptive!

NIETZSCHE

Protagoras had declared that man is the measure of all things. The nineteenth century adopted the same pretension but transforming “man” into “humanity” or “society”. Our culminating twentieth century works toward evacuating the notion of man, trying to prove that man as such does not exist, that he is a mere chapter of nature, of which he is part in the same way as animals, plants, stones. Since there is then neither essence nor existence of man, one can no more speak of measure.

This is the idea in the heart of Nietzsche's thinking. With him truth is shipwreck, like a drunken boat, tossed by the resounding tohu-bohu starting over continents. Nietzsche denounces all the beyonds, sings the innocence of becoming, breaks the tables of values and aspires to situate himself beyond good and evil. With him it is no more truth that is on the move as in Hegel; rather it is the marching on, the move as such, which becomes truth, a move and a marching in its purest state, refusing the idea of a beginning, of aim, of meaning; even the idea of a Way. Before Nietzsche man had taken off the veil of truth, in the belief that he would contemplate himself in it; with Nietzsche he affirms that there is nothing behind that veil and that the only error is to believe that there is any truth. That which before was called truth were the mere pleats of the veil, moving under the breath or the wind of the becoming. Now man is urged to offer himself to chance, learn to drink from every cup at his reach, and so make of his life a tool of knowledge.

The great desire celebrated by Zarathustra was called among Greeks, *epheisis*, *orexis*, *pothos*. Yet the Greeks aspired to unveil the hidden truth with which they wished to

become one. In Nietzsche the desire makes him the object, the argonaut of the beyonds, of all the earths, the explorer of the elsewhere, of all the elsewheres. There is no need to unveil the truth, instaurate and dynamize it, but rather to be freed from it by disintegrating the subject. In Nietzsche there is no subject which dwells or advances; there is only a marching which focusing at one point makes the subject to surge as an accident of a moment. Nietzsche's active nihilism answers man's great desire and blows up man in the desire itself.

That Nietzsche is the last philosopher after whom there would not be a philosophical reflection was the general opinion at his time. Brun sees that Nietzsche represents the concluding point of the great desire haunting the undergrounds of history. That great desire touched in the course of centuries the surface of time, pretending to reach the truth to establish it, to dynamize it, yet finally disintegrating it.

Nietzsche was the great sick man, not in a medical sense, but because he incarnated the passion of man, delivered to the frozen breath of living lonely. In a passion which he sang more than he analyzed it this grand "tortured" one asked, Where is my dwelling place? Not receiving an answer which would come from himself he desperately strove to dissolve the responsible subject of the question to exorcize the idea that there can be a dwelling place.

The thunderous (*fracassant*) philosopher became himself the crashed (*fracasse*) philosopher. He had foreseen that he would disappear in an enigmatic storm in which he would be both the lightning and the thunderstruck tree. His collapse was not of a somatic order; rather it expresses the neantization of man who wants to lean upon himself in order to go beyond himself, and, after having denounced the idea of truth, discovered himself to be all alone, solitary, in the central chamber of the labyrinth facing a monster, which was none other than himself, and with whom he got lost forever in the darkness of his final delirium.

Brun sees a further prolongation of those ground motifs in the theory of the relativity of Einstein. It would be interesting and necessary to devote another paper to this prolongation also of the annihilation of truth, because in his turn and manner, Einstein has denounced the "fiction" of a system of solid reference. Hence all the modern relativizations in their absolutized forms. Christian thinkers are urged seriously to undertake the critique of this newest dogma of atheistic humanism for apologetic purposes.

Language

Language has become another of the great manipulations of man by which he conditions his own reification. He imagines to be able to generate with his language and to shed an allegedly diurnal light upon his condition. Yet, reminds Brun, we are still in the nocturne, heading towards the diurne, which eventually we will attain, but will never pass beyond.

Brun would agree if at this point we added that to pretend or imagine going beyond the diurnal light here and now would be the equivalent of an act of de-creation, of the murder of reality, its assassination by means of linguistic feats, cultural concepts, technical tools. We have to be reminded at this point very specially that Brun has in mind the recent so-called deconstructionist “catastrophe” of Sieurs Derrida, Foucault, *et alia.*, those “mascots” of some American modern pundits.

From Aristotle to the present, language has often been used to state logically coherent truths, from which all ambiguity, all equivocation, even poetry, were to be eliminated. Language invokes no more the beyond to which we aspire; it serves only to establish catalogues, fix lists of subjects and categories of predicates. Such a language will deny that there can be any serious interrogation of man; for man does not want to hear of such an interrogation of himself. To the great interrogation he has substituted simple questions to which his “language” pretends to bring satisfactory answers. Language has lost its religious nature. It has been secularized. To such a language Brun opposes the revealed, and revealing Word, underlying once more the deeply nocturne nature of language, always in expectation (*en attente*) for the Word. Language is necessarily nocturne in the sense that it is the support of the quest for meaning, both present in significations which imply it, and distant also from it, for these significations will never exhaust it totally. The language through which Brun expresses himself is a totally nocturne one, often metaphorical, a philosophical poetry like the myths he so masterfully has reinterpreted.

Lest the reader misunderstand, and be shocked, suspecting at this point any kind of crypto-heresy in Brun, I will hasten to explain carefully. Like many continental thinkers, especially French and Latins, Brun remains “stranger” to the Anglo-Saxon “logical analysis” philosophy, which he estimates, I believe quite rightly, judging from its impact on some orthodox theology, has resulted to a rigidified language, lacking something of the legitimate, beautiful, and necessary vibrations. Naturally these “ethnic” comparisons need a much more careful consideration than I am ready here to offer. One needs only to listen to an orthodox, even reformed Anglo-Saxon sermon and to a French one with something which is of an unparalleled esthetical brand.

For Brun, poetry and metaphors, reasonably borrowed from Greek myths, provided they do not become substitutes for the Christian message, serve to illustrate the truth, when the Christian is pointing at the hybris common to both Greeks and moderns. There is no need, we hope, to remind at this point how the written Word uses language not the type of the “scholastic theologian's manual” but with metaphors, poetry, liturgies and supralogical but not irrational flavor, to make the divine truth accessible to human beings, endowed with ethico-esthetical instincts! For not all divine truth is contained in our theological grammatical lingo! This truth does not tolerate a dry and soulless nomenclature of mere propositions, such as some of the dogmatic manuals on my shelves are expounding. Calvin taught us that God himself speaks with us in a language of “accommodation”. God is stammering, stuttering, writes the great reformer. The Incarnate Word used parables to make us grasp the redemptive word. Is it too much then to expect that the Christian uses

poetry in order to witness to that same truth?³

Language is the harmonic of that which we cannot say, but which rises in us from the beginning of time to its end. Each one of our words passes and passes over again from the underground layer of a great river which is carrying our existences, leading them to the kingdom which has no closed walls and no locked doors. Dominating the human figure of language the Verb incarnate carried in himself the history of the world which does not belong to the world. There is the message which history will not write. That message speaks even beyond history.

That word is promise. In time, and transcending it, Christ paves and traces the way towards the kingdom, where, after labors, struggles, and agonies necessary for our time, eternity which is indefinable remains, so to speak, open. There the stammering language will at last cease, for the infinite felicity which is not produced by history will at last be given to us as a grace. For the time being, in Christ when the "existent" is in trouble with himself, his language will be raised as a call, as an imploration, as a prayer. Nurtured by the presence which transforms into essential truth the absolute and final meaning, language can only stammer, because of the infinite felicity which history is unable to produce; but there at last the Word is given to us. In Him man reaches eternity; marching towards it, on his way, but already illuminated despite the despair, transforming the distress into victory. That word is not a hermetically closed system, but a bursting, overflowing, irrigating vivifying and transforming *elan*, sweeping away all the falsely-true meanings. We stand at the shores of this river, inviting those in the desert of meaninglessness, to partake from its blessedness.

Situations

Since the very beginnings man has asked, or required from voyage, a key enabling him to open the threefold lock of space, of time, of the body. He hopes to receive that key in the elsewhere, in all the elsewhere. Although he feels uneasy under his skin, nonetheless he still sticks to it like the tunic of Nessus. This is the reason today for the quests for drugs, for unbridled licenses, purposeless wanderings, dictatorial postulations which are conceived in order to remake man's being. He oscillates from rottenness to nihilism to intellectual terrorism, all imposed upon him in scientific manner. Brun demystifies the solutions which are proposed by man. Man is overfed, he tells, saturated by solutions which choke him to death. Brun ridicules the soteriological adventures undertaken by man, in the name or by means of technique and politics, which only serve to perpetuate the permanent crisis of man through their shabby triumphalisms. Man is not the owner of meaning, though he is not for that dispossessed of meaning. He belongs to truth which possesses him and which is beyond him. Therefore unveilings will not offer him the *revelation* of which he can become the happy recipient.

3 When some time ago, following Brun's *L'Homme et le Langage*, and Arnaud-Aaron Upinsky's *La Tete Coupee ou la Parole*, I wrote a paper in *Communique*, one of the official Bulletins of the Reformed Ecumenical Council, with a "logical analysis" of the professor in a Christian college explained that with a colleague they did not understand what was at stake!

Dostoevsky imagined that Christ had come again on earth. The Great Inquisitor of Seville, having watched him raise a girl from death, imprisons Him and demands: “Why did you come again to disturb us? I was among the mob of those who seek to correct your work... Tomorrow I will make you burn”.

The modern Great Inquisitor has taken the face of the scientist and of the politician; he resembles those who impose salvation by prodigious works of machines, who distribute systems of certainties, of contacts, of escapes, of all kinds of devices. Knowledge, the machine, the privileged form of modern culture, but also art, politics, labor, the city, are all products of the desire to be like God. Even if they may be of some utility, Brun denounces the failure of technique which provides the means but does not propose any end, and science which gives no indication to man where the final harbor is. Man has sought to decipher in history his philosophy which would allow him to unveil the secret of the legend of centuries and to “make”—fabricate—the philosopher's stone, able to metamorphize pitiless time into a liberating guide, to capture the fleeing of years in order to transform into progress and strengthen the dream of Prometheus asking from technique to make him the master of the nature. He works towards lighting new suns, in order to light paths of his becoming. But he runs the risk of resembling Phaeton who, trying to lead the solar chariot, was almost burning the earth and setting fire to the skies. Auschwitz and the Gulag were born from the rational deliriums of Clio (muse of epic poetry and history). Science and history are nothing but immense palaces where are hidden the modern labyrinths—those of our life; there we look for an exit which could liberate us from all the monsters. This is what philosophers of all “Philosophy of History” conclude from their history, the noises and roarings which are thought of as joyous shouts of victory.

Technique certainly makes life easier, improves conditions of living, but culture in all its forms leaves unsolved the problem of man which man is to himself, without an answer to the interrogation which existence, heavily loaded with anxiety, continues to address its limits. Machines are not only useful instruments of work but also the fruit of the most irrational phantasy. From the mythological Icarus to scientific Galileo, man has projected on them his dreams to master time and space. Today cybernetics and robotics regard machines as the infallible vehicles of progress: infallible and neutral—though these new divinities are able to open the gates of hell. Jean Brun's vigorous critique de-stultifies us and sounds a serious warning.

The history of sciences and of techniques must be read in a radically different way from what the positivist tradition we inherited has taught us. It urges us to believe that the history of science is nothing else than a succession of perfectly logical discoveries aiming at purely utilitarian application. In reality, it is animated by a desire from which we must remove the masks if we want to understand why science and technique, presented as instruments of liberation, end by becoming weapons of death. In this respect the Greek myths are of precious help; for, contrary to what is believed, myths have not been dissipated by the light of reason, but are the most powerful motors of it. Greeks had dreamed of technique without dreaming on them. Western civilization has technicized

those myths, making them operational. Reason and action were mere masks carried by the desire of man aiming to explode the dikes of his being.

A technique which considers itself to be an end invades our daily life. But it triumphs even more deeply in the unsuspected hideouts, especially in philosophical speculation, pushed to paroxysm by dialectics of unveilings, of dangerous overtakings, reducing human existence to a simple game, made by a veil which covers nothing. Master and slave of his desire, which pretends to become the key of its own lock, man is nonetheless in a perpetual waiting for that which his myths will never offer him.

Dionysis is the god, the service-worship of whom consisted in frenetic dances bringing individuals to a state of wild exaltation, ecstatic delirium, elevating them outside themselves, the celebration culminating finally in the beatific dizziness of drunkenness, and to virtual destruction. This does not happen only in the great deeds of mankind but also in all and every activity and undertaking—drugs, narcotics—offering the satisfaction of a provisional “*divertissement*”, diversion, in the pascalian meaning of the term. The society of consumption, the society of enjoying, the society of furnishing dreams, is death-dealing for the inferiority of man, for it creates idols such as the state, nation, race, money, and production. The one who renders worship to them, denying himself will end by totally losing his self. For all affirmations are negations. Man has been caught in the passion of losing himself. Our civilization is a Dionysian one, generator of artificial paradises which make it dream of, and hope for, happiness, yet it produces the dilution of man in his own self. Culture has thus become a vast field of escapes, illusions, and man himself the *demiurgos* of his void. Thus goes the world, the “promises of which are carried away ineluctably by the irreversible time, and the glory of which fades away for ever.”

Everywhere today are manifest the phenomena of rejection and sociologists know well that the rate of dissatisfaction rises with the increase of material resources: violence, eroticism, trance, children of despair, spread their power universally; dark despots of nihilism choke life under their “knowledge of facts”. Nonetheless, man launches unceasing messages of assistance to his present world, which is unable, because it is not equipped nor meant for that purpose, to offer help to the man wandering on the shores. Though, even there, while wandering on the shores he can meet and read the signature sent from outside his universe, yet, despite all the tragic consequences, the present irritated world is organizing powerful counteroffensives in order to reduce to silence that which interpolates him from another place; for so great is the conviction that there are no frontiers, and that this world is the sole infinite universe to exist.

Modern man wishes to rectify Christianity in adapting it or accusing it—charging it with his vehement denunciation; he has flattened Christianity so that he may exploit it as an archetype or as a scarecrow. He wishes to become like gods but achieves his own demonization; more tragically he is the artisan of his victimization, in holocausts offered on the altars of science, technique, history, and the state. Guided by the north toward which the professional pilots of his existence are pointing, he builds shelters which will

never become the refuge. Therefore, Nietzsche can utter his cry of agony: “I am homeless and homesick”!

By corroding all these relativisms at the touch stone of the absolute, Christian faith allows man to have access to the foundations of the critical spirit and encounter his neighbor in the heart of truth which never originates from this present earth. While searching for man in the manner of old Diogenes man first must secure the proper lantern to carry on the greatly needed task. Since the Tower of Babel men attempt to reconquer heaven, searching for power and a certainty. Myths and ideologies of all times and of all genres feed this desire deeply anchored in his heart. The materialist approaches of the end of the present century constitute the new steps—echelons—of these unending constructions which terminate in a dead end.

Witness and Betrayal

Witness and anti-witness; one may also call this part of the “ontological separation”! The human condition is oscillating between these too.

In *Temoignage et Trahison*, (*Witness and Betrayal*, the worshipers of Judas), Brun undertakes another thorough and sharp Christian denunciation of modern dialectics, as it is implemented in the political arena and in almost all academic and even theological and ecclesiastical operations. The indictment of the manipulation of truth is extremely severe and very relevant for our times.⁴

To the extent to which martyr means witness, writes Brun, until recently the witness was considered to be the one who would value the fact that there are truths worthy of dying for or living for; he would offer his death as an holocaust—not by mere gratuitous and spectacular act of bravado—in particular tragical circumstances, compelling him morally to stand up and refuse to become a submissive slave. The witness would sacrifice his life, i.e. time to eternity. Thus he would convey a message signifying that it is inconceivable that time can annihilate eternity. He was not dying because of what his torturers inflicted on him, but instead, on behalf of them, hoping to allow them to understand that in the final analysis man was not the unconditioned master of existence nor of the death of man. By such a witness, rendered in the course of time, something was standing above time, in fullness and in superabundance, unknown, unfamiliar, unusual, to all the goods of mass consumption.

Nowadays, in and through the instrumentality of time, men face truths which they can understand, but of which they are not the witnesses, only the mere artisans and the agents. Such truths, artificially maintained, dwell among men, as links in chains of slavery, as

4 Ernesto Castelli, a Roman Catholic Italian thinker, for several years gathered around a colloquy in Rome most of the better known European Christian philosophers and theologians, Protestant or Roman. The Papers read at those “Colloques de Rome” have been published in French, by Les Editions Aubier, Montaigne of Paris. The following excerpts are from *Temoignages* with Brun' contribution as “Temoignage et Trahison”.

soon as it has been declared that there are socio-political truths to which it is necessary to submit people, on pain of becoming accomplices of a disastrous error. Yet truth is not some kind of a general truth, be it scientific or collectivistic, offered to men before which they may bow. The witness of truth is not witnessing to such avatars of truth. He is the witness of the irreplaceable One. Crowds, or mobs, remain strangers to it. Hence the witness will remain totally stranger to politics. The *witness of truth* is cautious of becoming a witness of truths. Politics, such as it is generally practiced in our days, has no common link with eternity; and no sooner the politician introduces eternal truth into his politics, he also betrays it.

Who is “the” Judas? He is the anti-witness (*Martus*). The one who betrayed Truth to the crowd and delivered it to death. He approached Jesus with the salute of a kiss, a kiss of betrayal, followed by those who are the essential components of all crowds: priests, chief-priests, worshipers of all the truths which are good to “say”; scribes, those who are fierce—fully strong in the presence of the weak—and the miserable weak in the presence of the strong; elders, who probably believe that it is proper to shout as much as their gullets tolerate; the mass of the armed mob, always ready to find in the heat of the herd an occasion to undertake crimes collectively, which, if they were contemplated individually, no one would have the audacity to commit.

Judas betrays. It is important to remember that he was not an ordinary citizen, a professional delator, a mere police informer. He was one of the twelve, someone who had little in common with the above mentioned, certainly nothing that would allow him to cause the disappearance of Christ. Judas was an apostle; he became traitor only after. Why this conversion in reverse? Peter denied because of fear. His motive was not noble, nevertheless it can be explained psychologically. But why Judas? Why did he become the contrary of what he was until that hour? What was the deep nature of his temptation, or resentment, which caught him entirely and profoundly? We are unable to produce the slightest hypothesis. We read in the Gospels that Satan entered into Judas. What happened afterwards, his remorse, the giving back of the thirty pieces of silver, the price of his crime, his hanging himself - in the final analysis all this was by reason of his madness preceding him in his betrayal and pushing to his suicide. Nothing will help us to clarify it.

Whatever his case, one thing is certain, that today Judas has opened a school of thought, of attitudes, of a given behavior. His distant disciples are of a considerably improved brand. Though unaware, or unconscious, they are not short of argument to tell, or share with us, the reason of their “evolution”. They firmly believe that their “becoming” ensures the synthesis of all contradictions; having first been an apostle, then a traitor, Judas was simply true to himself, therefore they declare that truth is the child, or product, of times. Therefore he can be considered as a witness, for the simple reason that he became a *traitor*. If he were to live today he would not need to commit suicide. Dialectic would have absolved him, make him understand that good conscience is bad conscience and bad conscience is truly the best one possible! More: dialectic would provide the chance to introduce him as the one having the courage to act, when the other apostles would step

back; what he did was absolutely necessary for the development of history.

So in the sight of “moderns”, Judas becomes the principal actor of the passion. Without Judas there would have no condemnation of Jesus, no agony of the Calvary, no resurrection. Without Judas, Christ would have continued living an exemplary life and eventually disappear as a wise and peaceful man, surrounded by beloved disciples. Therefore, in order for Christ to become Christ, it was necessary that men kill the Son of God, so that humanity may attain his full measure. Judas was the essential instrument, the central figure, of the drama of Calvary; as such it is correct and right to consider his treason as a redemptive witness. In this philosophy of history the guilt of Judas becomes the famous *felix culpa* (cf. Augustine) which earned us such a salvation! Therefore Judas is recoverable as an integral part of apostleship. Modern dialectics takes a further step; was not Judas the true apostle? Did he not have the clear-sightedness and the courage to understand that he ought to dynamize truth by killing it, so that it may not pretend to be eternal? The only unfortunate aspect of his deed was his suicide, due to his remorse; that was the sign of his alienated conscience; he had not—yet—grasped that, according to Hegel, “the crimes of the Spirit are the ones which are the most quickly healed, leaving no scars”.

Many are those who nowadays would enter into competition offering the (in)famous kiss of Judas. That kiss makes possible the creative *elan*, without which time is not possible. From now on Judas does not exist in a derogatory sense, there are only those who have (are) alienated consciences due to the concept of eternal truth; they have not understood that Judas was the first great dialectician of history, capable of destroying all the fossils of time. Nonetheless, his deed was a mere artisanal job. Today turncoats, individuals or collectives, bring a spectacular efficiency to everything which occurs in the great laboratory of history: from faithfulness to treason in international alliances; from faithfulness to treason on the level of treaties; in personal or collective engagements, the big and mediocre Judases strive hard using the leaven of inversions, of turnings over, of betrayals, etc. They seek the genuineness of truth which notwithstanding they unceasingly deny, thus imagining that they go beyond themselves, in order to achieve their rebirth.

This explains why contemporary Judases are being born again in regularly recurring purer forms; their successive betrayals and witnesses seem to be so paramount that they accumulate more contradictions in their around- or about-turns. Witness is sclerosed. The modern witness-traitor must destroy it. It is appropriate even that Judas expresses some gratitude to Satan, since he permitted to accomplish such a decisive act, without which the course of history would have been definitely stilted. Thanks be therefore to Satan, for satanism is angelism par excellence, and angelism true satanism!

Judas, a dialectically witness-traitor, assassinator-savior, has received a literary figure of a smaller dimension in “Monsieur Perrichon” (in Eugene Labiche's *Le voyage de monsieur perrichon*), who nevertheless experiences several successive incarnations, animated by a powerful spring of dialectic. He expresses sheer contempt toward the one who saved his life; while he is full of admiration for the one who pretends to have saved him though the

farce of a mountain-accident. The gratitude of Monsieur Perrichon goes to this latter. He offers him his daughter in marriage, while his real savior remains the object of ungratefulness.

Our present world is full of Perrichon-Judas. All of them are more developed and sophisticated than old Judas. They have become followers of their prototype. They are surprised to learn that those to whom they owe gratitude have not yet been wiped off the maps of the world! On the other hand, their game is to introduce the biggest Trojan horse into communities, nations, religion, professions. Perrichon-Judas introduces himself to the sight of everyone as an overzealous witness who dared that which none other would ever had the audacity to undertake. “It is me who alone, introduced the Trojan horse into the city. I ask you to give me your gratitude....” These traitors have originated suicidal behaviors which are seen as indispensable to the rebirth of the Phoenix of history, so that the legendary bird may be born again even more beautiful than before. Therefore, diplomats, politicians, business men, ministers of the Church, university people, publishers, journalists, compete in zeal with each other, in order to be the first one to reach the gates of what is historically relevant and thus become the most famous witnesses of beautiful betrayals of the past; those betrayals without which there could never be a tomorrow. The meaning of history will unmistakably offer the needed absolution—if it were still necessary—to those who witness and make detours to new directions.

Another question comes on their lips: why there must ever be any witness and for what purpose? Why talk of treason and betrayal? Do not such concepts imply a reference to a seriousness of mind which is repressive and alienating? For, they urge us to believe, all bipolar values are expressions of social oppressions; they have chained humans for centuries, telling what to do and not do. Let us then obstinately refuse to make distinctions between beautiful and ugly, normal and pathological, good and evil, true and false, healthy and morbid, the permitted and the forbidden; with Nietzsche we must “learn to drink from all cups” offered to us. So that beyond any idea of betrayal we will become witnesses of the whole, of the totality of Babylonian truths, devoid of *truth*; witnesses of the whole and yet witnessing to nothing. Therefore there is no more need for Judas to hang himself. There is not a Christ to betray; repentance is a retrograde and sterile attitude, a remnant of alienating ethical conceptions. The essential task of Judas remains to triumphally betray himself in order to unceasingly question himself, but never become the prisoner of any essence. This is the way in which the witness-esthete is reasoning, who witnesses to nothing but to himself, who betrays nothing except everybody.

These apostles-heralds of the “everything is allowed to be enjoyed without hindrance and with free expression” soon transform themselves into Herods, with the task of making sure that no one refuses the kiss of Judas or the Trojan horse. The massacre of the innocents is always deemed necessary in order to ensure this gestation of the tomorrow, in favor of which the witness is definitely freed of all possibilities of betrayal; given that the meaning of an act remains always a suspended sentence, and that the sequel of time will confer to it a decisive meaning. That is why Judas and its modern counterparts

become so easily Manichean after having been apostles of the reconciliation of the contraries; with the difference that their Manicheism is dialectical; consequently their dialectics permit not being Manichean!

Our dialectician begins indeed by making us to know how the manicheisms which distinguish between the Clean and the Dirty, equip those who confess it, with a good conscience of the oppressor; “Clean is indeed gentle, nice, it is from above. Dirty is ugly and elsewhere, below, wicked. Clean is—yes indeed—that which is genuine, dirty is below end ugly, wicked, dirty, is the useless. Clean is right” According to such “authors” (Brun mentions the German Christian Enzensberger: *Essai de quelque envergure sur la crasse*; translated from the German, Paris, 1971) at the end they conclude: Clean is dirty, furious, sick; dirty is powerful; that which is clean never more disappears; and he fixes an appointment with the ironical tone of a Herod who is absolutely sure of the (his) Meaning of History.

Since Clean is Dirty and Dirty is Clean, Herod may now massacre the Innocents because they are guilty, because freedom is servility, because peace is war, because tolerance is oppression. That is why Judas-Herod and “all those witnesses of our times” cautiously distinguish between just wars from unjust wars, the good violence from bad violence, good sadism—that of the Divine Marquis, of Georges Bataille, Bunuel, and authors and film makers, considered as Message-carriers—from bad sadism alienating character, capitalist, and/or, fascist. One may even find in the intellectual circles where these witnesses proliferate, an effort to recover cannibalism; a good cannibalism, the one you may meet in Pasolini or in Arrabal, with no relation with the sordid cannibalism of the torturers of unfortunate prisoners of concentration camps. Cannibalism and zoophilia may be considered to be counter-witnessing of a decisive historical significance, if one follows and remains attached to the following:

Since *corps* (in French body) and *Porcs* (in French pork) are in an anagrammatic relation, follow the school of Pasolini in his *Porcherie* (a film of the Italian) in order to put into motion a machine producing meaning and destroying false meanings. Usually one loves the body, and eats pork; let us then liberate ourselves from this sclerosis of an alienated culture and operate a disalienating crossing; lets us eat the corps (body) and love the pores (porks). So we will attain the Promised Land of the violation of taboos and will hear the elevated witness of one of Pasolini's figures: “I killed my father, I ate human flesh, and I shiver with joy”.

Clean was dirty and dirty was clean. We had not seen it. Some scatosophy (scata, human dejection and sophia) has received the calling to teach it to us, as Christ was Judas and Judas was the true Christ, according to the good Judases, who denounce the bad Judases. Nevertheless, Judas-Perrichon agrees to ask a question: Are there any bad Judases now who wouldn't be recoverable? (understood in a dialectical manner, not in the sense of the Gospel). Now, they are all, who were able to speak in the name of some cleanness and refused to play the game of Herod. But is it the case with the others—those who do not hesitate to play the game of Herod? Take for instance the case of Hitler; is he not—

surreptitiously to be redeemable—by those who denounce him but simultaneously and at the same token owe him so much. Because without Hitler and the Second World War the development of modern technique would never have occurred; no sulfamides, antibiotics, plastic material, reaction-engine rockets would have been invented. Without Hitler and the Second World War the society of consumption would had never been come to existence, with all the plethora of vital articles, new machines, new products which in normal times would not have imposed themselves on business and industry. All such results would have never been attained without the preliminary ruins heaped by Hitler. Certainly it has to be admitted that millions died but they would have died anyway, say the dialectician, and for nothing! Thanks to this *felix culpa* they did not die in vain. This new massacre of the Innocents, may therefore be considered beneficial, as the motor of history; were it not for the Second World War ail these Innocents would have continued living, guilty of the charge to have obstructed good results of which nowadays all the nations of the world are benefiting. Herod must fear nothing; contrary to what it is so often affirmed, there is no Tribunal of History, only a tribunal of history from where all the Judases of the world distribute kisses in order to be able to triumph.

The apostles of the tomorrows are fixing the stage upon which they witness primarily and principally to themselves, clad with the luxurious garments of the protagonist, establishing theatrocraies, cultivating changes of decors, of machineries of all sorts and more especially the veritates ex machine which seem to be indispensable to the pursuing of their plot.

Definitely liberated of remorse the modern Judases are willingly engaged in the service of Pontius Pilate and of Herod, in order to become champions of successive sincerities. Truth being the child of time, it is unthinkable that, their kisses go to the truth they loved, but which must be reasonably sacrificed on the altar of history in order that another truth may arise. Judas is sacrificing the truth of today, that of tomorrow, and even the idea of Truth following the truths. For, as Saint-Exupery was telling in his *Citadelle*, “It is always possible to throw down the temple and to rebuild with its stones another temple. And this other one is no more true nor it is false, no more just nor more unjust”. This Truth Judas threw down as food to the mob in order to be put to death. Concerning Pontius Pilates, they come to request this mob to offer them truths. So the modern philodoxes [lovers of ambition and glory; ARK] use all the resources of public polls in order to know what truth is, the “current” truth. Adulated, flattered, manipulated by all the resources of psychological action of publicity and propaganda, this “opinion” is not supposed to err, and from which, normally, a detour must be done; it is the thing upon which everything else has to be remodeled by the experts of doing and of undoing opinions.

The Judas of the Scriptures was not this “perfect” Judas, for it is written: “When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and resumed the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders...” (Matthew 27: 3).

The contemporary Judas does not hang himself; he is busy hanging others; his rates are

higher comparing to the one received by the prototype. Naturally there are many who witness in a gratuitous, free and benevolent manner, but they do it at the precise condition that no one may ignore them; that is why, true stars of the humanitarian scene and news adhere to clubs of petitions, assured that their name will appear on the first pages of the media, becoming “cover-story”. All of them are ready and willing to save humanity; humanity in general and vague sense; their neighbor next to them, the individual, is not interesting if he suffers, because this individual is the victim of social structures; so they are busy to change structures. If they were assisting him it would result in contributing to the perpetuation of the status quo of social structures. No one does despise the human condition than he who professes to be the head of the mob.

A good number of “witnesses” are adventurers who use history to prepare their biography. So well, that finally history has become the domain of evil; the evil which men have to suffer, sinking under misery and injustice; the evil that guineas-pigs are destined for: radical therapeutics; the evil perpetrated by those for whom the aim justifies nothing but for whom action delivers them from death. As Paul Valery said: “to do, to act, comforts us from our ignorance”. The history of this anti-creation in the whole course of which man attempts to kill God and yet apes him, in believing that becoming is the witness par excellence and that Man is the extasis of man. In imitating Pascal one may say: “History is such that it placards everywhere the lost God, in man and out of man, in a corrupted nature”. If man witnesses to it, he does so only as a witnesses of that which he will not become the master and will never be able to accomplish himself. He may witness that history is not the *extasis* of existence, that science is not the *extasis*⁵ of thought, that technique is not the *extasis* of action. He may witness that the way which runs from me to you does not takes its departing point in us, that truth of which man is the carrier and not the creator, has nothing in common with those who are the architects and the owners of the Towers of Babel. He may witness. But to what extent can he? To claim to be a true witness is not to presumptuously to witness to one's self. If it happens that we are witness it may also be despite of our knowing; for merely having said a phrase, or accomplished a deed, which containing in them a promise which we would not by ourselves be able to keep. Our witness is not rooted in something which is in our possession, but in what we lack. So, not words only become witness, but also our cry and our silences.

Quo Vadis Ecclesia? The Church Too!

How did all this happen? asks Brun. From the beginning of Christianity theologians have accustomed us to all kinds of intellectual, and even sexual, deliriums. The history of heresies will confirm it. Moderns—he means theologians—are competing to see who will excel in following the band-wagon of the most recent trends of philosophies, and so strive to catch the attention of the media. Curious for the latest ideological gadget, offered, thanks to a sensational scoop, in abundance on the market, they like to qualify is as “Being open to the present world”.

5 I.e. standing outside of or transcending. Ed.

However it happens to them, to the “modern” theologians, exactly what happened to the philosophers of the Eighteenth century. The latter were in favor of a so-called enlightened despotism. They assumed that kings and other despots were helping to spread, and institutionalize, their philosophico-political theories. In reality the kings and despots who were taking advantage of the naive philosophers to implement their own politics. Modern theologians behave exactly in the same way; contemporary dictators (Brun has in mind the species of Castros, Maos, Nassers, and the hoards of political ogres, from the A.N.C. to the Tupamaros) are the “good” and enlightened monarchs and “political movements”! With an amazing irrationalism, if not overt complacency and complicity, they believe that they are inspiring them as they applaud their most suicidal behaviors; they will angelize the most ruthless tyrannies, provided they accord with the direction of the Meaning of History. Political involvement, writes Brun, has become the modern theological “cache-sex”. The origin of all secularizations, exploitations, recuperations, insertions, absorptions and demolitions of Christianity, stem from a certain notion according to which God incarnates in the Time of Man, in history. We now may draw the conclusion that the history of the City of Man is none else than the Manifestation of God. The Verticality of Transcendence has been flattened in history in order to substitute for God-become-man during history, Man, who in the course of his history is becoming god. Thus goes each Theology of Liberation, of Revolution, of violence!

So much for the sacrosanct churchly *left!*

But what about the right wing—no exception to other types—more breathless “Betrayals”? Brun has been active in France, and generally in Europe, directing his arrows against those known as “Christian Marxists” and even “Christian atheists”. In this sense he achieved a tremendous task. He did not care much, at that time, for the lesser, I would add, insipid, category of those who draped in their less elegant fineries, but with an equal, and higher bid of self-confidence—albeit of inferior intelligence—are not less to be blamed for their “conservative” betrayals. No doubt some of his arrows also could be destined for this side of modern churchianity, for the witness ignores any kind of “discrimination” between two equal evils.

The writing of books of lamentations over the shortcomings and errings of Evangelical Christianity has no end. We are weary of them, despite their fortune to have become the best-sellers on the market of biblioscopia. Are all the diagnostics without exception accurate, and the therapeutics proposed infallible? Judging from the quantity of volumes produced, our evaluation will be less than one of reservation. The saddened observer of the phenomena taking place on the “evangelical” field is embarrassed in the presence of so much theological tediousness, from one side, (take for instance the unbelievable feat of gibberish multiplying the Trinity by Three, and reaching to Nine Persons!; on the other the psitasistic repetition of worn out cliches, old as Noah, where the creativity seems to have been wiped out forever, and gone with the torrents of cataclysmic waters. To make a word play in (modern) Greek, I would compare the genuine and refreshing *zoopoiesis* (from *zoe* and *poiesis*, creation) to the biomechanics (average industry) of those who have firmly, and with amazing authority, established their monopoly as the “witnesses”. The

Gospel in three minutes, four Spiritual Laws, Five lessons, and treatment as quick as in a fast food, is simply another version of Betrayal. Conservative, Orthodox, even Reformed, Christianity is not innocent from such a guilt. For not all gasbags shouting “Orthodox, Orthodox”, are honoring orthodoxy with their varieties of orthofixism, orthostasis, orthosclerosis. For the live, evergreen tree of truth, they have substituted a collection of artificially-chemically scented dried flowers. Unless, the huge tree, outwardly still seeming magnificent, with still large leaves and many birds under its shadow, is decaying from the inside by devouring termites, and is ready to crash and be shattered. Such disasters are not at all unpredictable.⁶

Instead of the sharp, double-edged sword of the Word, a new brand of evangelicalism is using a knife lacking its handle, and missing its cutting edge! (have you seen such a knife in your life?). In the tumultuous wild, if not vociferous celebrations of New Pentecosts, the Spirit is not the Guest you are looking for. In vain you may knock at the door, and eagerly, even anxiously, ask: “Spirit, are you there?”. Be prepared to receive no answer.

The churchly-ghettos of conservatism are unable to utter the witness. The gold of truth by an illicit alchemy has been transmuted into vulgar plastic. Theologians are supposed to do theology. However, to paraphrase a familiar dictum, “what do they know of theology those who only theology know”?

A particular area where the witness to truth, has been humiliated, to borrow an expression of J. Ellul, is a familiar one to me; the communication of the Gospel through the mass-media. In one of the most relevant, dynamic, almost totalitarian hegemonies in modern society, shaping new mores and undoing old, solid ethics, radio and television, you will find no serious, respectable, competent and convincing reflection among Evangelicals. If ever someone deals with the subject, it is after having borrowed “alien” talks, with no specific Christian content.⁷

6 The desperate lack of serious thinking on contemporary problems, and consequently formulating a trustful message, can be seen—it is just an instance given here—in the multiplication of Bible dictionaries, encyclopedias, manuals, handful of purposes, Bibles in all formats and uses. for the busy minister, for the lazy lady in the kitchen, the inspirational Bible, the Bible for days of troubles, Bibles for the young couple, the Bible for the courting youngsters, the Bible for the business man, the Bible for the inside pocket and the Bible specially designed to be placed near your sofa (I am unable to buy and send one hundred French Bibles for my spiritually starving African listeners). One classification of the Bible follows another Bible verse listing, a Bible electronic concordance competing with the old Strong's. There certainly is logical analysis and philological classification and naturally gnoseological inflation, but where is the harmonic of the Word and the punch of an inspired witness? Instead of reflection we meet the plethora of conditioned reflexes of worn out theological formulas.

7 Two instances suffice to illustrate how even Orthodox and Reformed Christians are not ready—I mean intellectually equipped—to think upon one of the most widely debated modern cultural, social and technical issues, the communication of the Gospel by mass-media.

For some years I had been in charge of an unpretentious bulletin officially published by the Reformed Ecumenical Council. Almost all contributions, with rare exceptions, were prepared by myself, to my own distress. I am a mere amateur. An ecclesiastical body such as the REC has not been able to gather together some “thinkers” and establish a think-tank. That assembly is busy with classical missionary issues, which naturally have their importance, yet have not the same relevancy of the other one. For having myself been involved in the broadcast ministry, both radio and TV, I have been

Are we unnecessarily harsh towards “The Church”? But wasn't it Aristotle who said: “I love Plato, but even more truth”?

Defenders and witnesses of the truth are called to take a courageous stand against all deliberate attacks, from the outside, and every subtle compromise from the inside of churches which officially still subscribe to conservative and orthodox Confessions of faith yet, as children of their times, in fact relativize the absolute of the revealed truth. Indeed the “betrayal of clerks” does not occur only in the academia. It also takes place in the Ekklesia. Hence the urgency for the discernment of spirits, which is indeed a gift of the Spirit. Contrary to those who shamelessly declare: “My denomination, right or wrong”, those who truly love the Church of Jesus Christ, with pain in their heart, yet unswerving determination of their will, will challenge the arrogance of church nomenclature and the arbitrariness of officialdom. For, as in the past, some old demons are haunting today the Church of Jesus Christ: those of the two channels of revelation, one serving as a mere facade. the other for opportunely jumping into the bandwagon of modernity. “Big Brothers” are not the sad privilege of atheist Gulags. Intellectual terrorism can spread its jaws over the pulpit and the narthex, even in Orthodox and Reformed and Evangelical and conservative and protestant denominations. Truth is subtly wiped out by the corrosive, much celebrated, modern heresy of love-helping, as R.J. Rushdoony, might have put it. How sad to see those who officially subscribe to the doctrine, creed and church-order, behave practically contrary to the Forms of Unity. At the end, the clerisy and bureaucracy may win, merely according to appearances.

I am comforted, though, by remembering an instance from the history of the Reformation, which can apply also to the modern witness. I mention that wonderful pastoral letter of John Calvin, sent to Gaspard de Coligny, Amiral de France, imprisoned in a Spanish dungeon, as the chief of French Huguenots. “Monseigneur”, wrote the great Reformer, “even though what you did has not been effective, remember that it will count in the eyes of God and his angels”.

Each and every witness who fights such a battle deserves to receive the same assurance. As I turn again to Jean Brun and to his reminder of transcendence, allow me another illustration from the pages of French history.

On May 12, 1610, the royal carriage driving through the narrow streets of Paris, was heading towards the Louvre. Henry IV, king of France and Navare, was accompanied by three of his High officers. Suddenly, Ravailac, a fanatic Jesuit monk, grasped the handle of the door, and with his poisoned knife hit the king in the heart. While two of the officers immediately launched to the pursuit of the regicide, La Force, a Huguenot

appalled at the unpreparedness, incompetence, not to say more, of those appointed by ecclesiastical bodies to supervise the ministry of the broadcaster. Leaving aside the sad practice of nepotism in such hermetically constituted clubs, denominational agencies and their boards, one is afflicted to notice how much of the concern is around who is to administer whom, and naturally what are the newest marketing discoveries to bring in more money to make the business go. Rare are the people I have known with a genuine interest in the matter of communication as such and an authentic Christian witness.

believer, turning to the bleeding and dying monarch of France, pleaded. "My lord, remember God".

Remember God. That has been Jean Brun's witness and the message to us.

The Transcendence

Few philosophers have in recent times with such clear-sightedness analyzed the human condition in the so-called existential struggle; a struggle, we saw, which is not that of Jacob fighting with the angel; on the contrary it is the one where he is confronted with power and learning, believing that through them he may become god, instead becoming what he is meant to be, i.e. Man.

Brun's philosophy is a demystification of progress and of culture, a deabsolutizing of history; for not a single labor of man will heal him of himself, change anything in his original condition. The solution of the problem which is man himself, does not reside in himself. Man surpasses man said Blaise Pascal, in his paradoxical language. Indeed, provided there is *transcendence*, immanent to him.

Through the desolate silences, masked by blabbering, behind the lassitude weariness covered by omnivorous actions, at the heart of bitter frustrations, veiled by ephemeral successes, despite the shaky shelters, the word draws paths which will lead man beyond the desert shores where he endlessly and purposelessly wanders. Therefore we are right in our assessment that Brun's is far from being a pessimistic description of the human condition; he stubbornly hints at the message, towards the unique hope.

Brun brings us regularly back to the original Fall in order to come close to the cross. His untiring pen, dipped into the sanctified ink of passion, is engaged in an *agonizesthai*, in the original Greek meaning of the word, so that he may remain the witness of the truth revealed on that redeeming cross. He has nurtured many of his readers, and through his ardent thinking has led many of them to faith. He has spoken to the humble as much to the more learned, even to the illustrious. He has spoken in his books, from the university chair, in international conferences, with his warm and corrosive denunciation of the latest illusions of our times of which the society of the dying twentieth century has been the victim.

As witness of truth he has also been effective in the presence of the "neighbor". He consistently refused to flatter public opinion, those who angelise (another of his favorite expressions) the "consensus", dythyrambically celebrate the ready to wear products of the media and its ephemerides. No wonder he has not had the audience he deserved in the media. The public poll opinion manufacturers would not tolerate his genius to express himself. He belonged to the great race of writer-prophets who cry in the desert,... "Joannes-Jean clamens in deserto"!

Does he favor a mood of despair; is he dipped in a neo-nihilism called in French “*La sinistrose*”?; be it of a libertarian or totalitarian nature? Jean Brun, the lucid witness of the only hope, points to the light, for he is confident: “Post Tenebras Lux”. There is a revelation he claims; it may have been veiled, yet is ever shining. The modern plight of society, with all its variants, economic, ecological, underdevelopment, are pretended to be solved by science and technique which claim also to divinize man, giving him the illusion that he is on his way to that great desire of self-divinisation. Modern man clings to his obstinate dream of rescues and desperate fight for freedom. Yet his need is *salvation*. He needs the diamond offered by Christ, not the plastic gadget of his technical products. Truth revealed is not an impersonal and abstract notion. It bears a name, has been seen on a face, has taken flesh upon himself like our flesh. Christ, with his death, has gone so far as to save the rebellious companion next to his own cross. It is his revelation which will shine upon the mysteries of evil, not our “unveilings”. It is its powerful rays that reveal the deep root of the evil, not external to man but part of his existence. He warns not to listen to naive pedagogues, be he a Socrates or a Kant. Evil, for the Christian witness, is not an evil, but guilt, rebellion, to which man clings despite fatal consequences. Yet forgiveness has also been offered. Revelation which reveals the gracious face of *the Redeemer* offers the light to shine also upon the face of the neighbor. My neighbor is not an individual cog of a machine, a simple anonymous citizen, a consumer to be exploited, but a person, irreplaceable, unique, image of God, His creature, my brother.

Christians, argues Brun, have been guilty of arrogant triumphalism. They have come to imagine that they possess the Truth, instead believing that he possesses them. It surpasseth us, it is in its light that we walk, it attracts us. It is both a constant presence and an ever to be attained distance. It leads us away from the swamps on the *route*, even if the end is not nigh. Therefore he urges us to walk upon that *route* and not idly sit at the edge of it, and amuse ourselves as if we were insincere, nor arrogantly fold back upon ourselves and imagine we already know sufficiently. There the hand of God is stretched upon the route; we have to take hold of it. Because, “from the cemeteries of our lost illusions, a light may rise which is that of the indestructible *hope*”, declares Brun.

Jean Brun was not a secluded philosopher, an ermetic thinker in his study, pursuing sheer erudition. He was not a “systematician”, a system-producer. Instead, he choose the challenge of being the witness-messenger of truth for the sake of defending and illustrating a rare ability and an outstanding quality among modern puny thinkers.

“To the heritage which he made personal”, writes Marguerite Baude, professor of Philosophy at the University of Aix-en-Provence, “carrying on a philosophical tradition heavily led with the pathetic of human existence, Jean Brun impressed it with the mark of the intellectual personality and of the believer with its incisive, original and sharply drawn traits”.

He was not a Calvinist, or Calvinian, as I am. He relies, sometimes heavily to my taste, upon Kierkegaard. I understand the reason for that. The Dane had been the first to raise a solid barrage to the devastating, total and ruthless trends of secularization launched by the

German Hegel. Because of my grateful friendship for him I understand, and (humbly add), excuse his kierkeegardian sympathies. Yet he invited us constantly to wait for the Other side, that which is not yet at hand. In hope only, not in utopias, even when they may have been baptized Christian. Witness-evangelist to neopagans he directed attention to the eschatological liberation, offered from what he terms the Elsewhere. He used the language of *kairos* not that of *chronos*.

Brun was a genuine Christian humanist, compared to so many anemic, dullifying, devirilized, herds of modern Christians.

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