

by other means. For example, one may or may not like the clutches, grips and handshakes which these days go under the name of the Kiss of Peace, but this kind of mandatory spontaneity is a version of the American feely-feelies and the group-grope. People are well and truly touched, made whole or maddened by the laying on of hands.⁸

The phrase "laying on of hands" may introduce one further curious feature of clerical zealotry. It exhibits a strong tincture of neo-clericalism. It often emanates from traditionally clericalist churches and revives the clerical attitude in plausible disguise. It exalts the *laos*, the People of God, but despises the congregation. The zealous political cleric often has as little real respect for the People of God as the zealous political academic has for the People. The People of God and the People always need to be liberated from sin or from false consciousness by the energy and foresight of the elect.

THE FORM OF THAT LIBERATION remains a problem. Some political clerics make the traditional appeal to personal responsibility; others rail against structural constraints. The former believe in the potency of goodwill, the latter in the malignancy of social arrangements, more especially those of Capitalist society. When goodwill patently fails there ensues a period of breast-beating and self-flagellation for which there is no absolution. Those who are confronted by the deep resistance of structures hunt for scapegoats and can find them in

⁸ This particular rite either arouses enthusiasm or intense resentment, more usually the latter. Clergymen promote it while their congregations smoulder.

⁹ There is a remarkable absence of non-Utopian analyses of the Christian political responsibility, in spite of the fact that many politicians are clearly groping about for it. The theme cannot be pursued here but it is eminently worth pursuing.

individual Christians, or in the Church as an institution, or in Christian doctrine. (Thus one very distinguished theologian, Gregory Baum, asked me what theological adjustments I had made since the politico-religious murders in Northern Ireland.) These febrile shifts, breast-beatings and searches for scapegoats arise because political realism in the Augustinian tradition has been forgotten. Naïve optimism turns compulsively through every circle of unhappiness, accusation and frustration.

There remains, at any rate, the basic contradiction. Part of the radical thrust is spiritual psychology and encounter ideology tuned to Christian instruments. It sometimes overflows in a political vocabulary, but contains little enough by way of serious political analysis. It may also overflow in courageous political witness, but there is still no serious assessment of what kind of society eventually is to be achieved by political action or what costs are to be met and values to be sacrificed *en route*.

SO, BASICALLY, THE POLITICAL CLERGYMEN are not really *en marche*. They are assembling the nicest possible ensemble of attitudes; and they are also softening up the frame of discourse. Political sermons disseminate a vocabulary and an accepted frame of discussion even though they are foreign to the complexities, paradoxes, ambiguities and unintended consequences native to political analysis and action.⁹

Yet their contribution to political attitudes and attitudinising should not be underestimated. Hard utopians know how to use soft utopians when "the time" comes. Niceness is not without penalties nor naïveté without costs.

Metaphysics

A room. With books. With a half-dead rubber plant.
A typewriter, a telephone, two chairs.
Other evidence.
I stand in this room and I turn,
unseen by anyone I turn, clockwise, slowly,
—or quickly if you prefer—
completely around.
A definitive act, unarguably comprehensive.
I have faced the world, call it
a confrontation, call it an exposure,
call it a lie.

Bruce Berling

David Owen

Britain & Europe

At 6's & 7's, Between Nine & Twelve

BRITAIN is completing the sixth year of her membership of the European Community. The transitional phase of membership laid down in the Treaty of Accession came to an end on 31 December 1977, and our tenure of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers in the first half of that year meshed us into the working machinery of the Community in a valuable and enduring manner. The years since Accession have steadily strengthened the ties of interdependence between the British economy and the rest of Europe. (In 1970 25% of our total trade turnover came from the other eight Member States, while in 1977 the figure was 38%.) Membership of the Community is now a fact of life for all sections of British society—industrialists, trade unionists, businessmen, financiers, farmers—and they are learning that it offers new opportunities and a new arena for action. The British stake is *firmly* set in the Community. The British Government's view of the Community is not the perspective of an outsider looking in, but a view from inside the Community looking forward.

For us now the Community is a basic and permanent factor of both domestic and foreign policy. But that does not mean that we regard the Community as a static organisation. The Community is developing and must develop further; it is our right and our duty to put forward views of our own on the course of its development and to offer them as a contribution to a debate that must concern every thinking citizen in Europe.

The British reluctance to adopt a specific concept of what we expect the Community to be is sometimes criticised or misunderstood. It is at root a question of national character. We find it difficult

to commit ourselves to a formula, however impressive it may sound at first hearing and however comforting it may be to repeat. We want to be certain we understand its practical working and its implications. Grand designs do not appeal; we judge concepts from the well of our own experience. This does not prevent us from taking part fully in open discussions of ways of achieving greater European unity. We recognise the value of some sort of structure dividing responsibilities and functions between Member States and central organs. The British Government does not see the Community developing as a federation. I, and others, have used the word "confederation" and this is clearly nearer to being the appropriate label. But even this label has the danger of encouraging preconceptions, and giving the impression that we know and can predict the future. The European Community is an unprecedented venture by a unique grouping of nations; it is likely to evolve in ways entirely without precedent and forge a unique pattern. Its development will be the product of a whole series of pressures, successes, failures and above all conscious decisions on the part of Member States.

NO AMOUNT OF sincere commitment or evocation of the general principle of European union or the use of *communautaire* language can, or should, gloss over our failures to deal with the current areas that really matter. Success in these areas will do more for the real strengthening of the Community than any number of abstract inspirations. Human affairs are, of course, influenced by the manner as well as the substance of discussion—but the greatest influence comes from deeds. Honest open debate will do far more to stimulate the Community's healthy development and involve the peoples of our countries than will indifference masked by apparent consensus. There is no

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