RELIGION IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

BY JAMES RESTON, JR.

PAINTING BY
SALVADOR DALI

Billy Graham, the Dalai Lama, Robert H. Schuller, Alison Cheek, Madalyn Murray O'Hair, Daniel Berrigan, William Sloan Coffin, Jr., Desmond Tutu, Truman G. Madsen, and Robert F. Drinan on the Gods of the Future

Editor's note: *In planning this holiday issue, Omni asked James Reston, Jr., to report on what will happen to religion in the future. Reston, whose remarkable book* Our Father Who Art in Hell, *on the jungle disintegration of the Reverend Jim Jones, has received wide literary acclaim, searched out and interviewed prominent religious figures throughout the world. From this research emerged Reston's following analysis of "the new religion," as well as the accompanying interviews with William Sloan Coffin, Jr., Daniel Berrigan, Billy Graham, Madalyn Murray O'Hair, Desmond Tutu, the Dalai Lama, Robert Drinan, Alison Cheek, Truman Madsen, and Robert Schuller.*

In the waning days of the summer of 1981 religion seemed to dominate almost every aspect of world news. In Iran the chief of police and the chief prosecutor were assassinated, leaving only the charisma of the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini to hold the Iranian theocracy together. In Egypt President Anwar el Sadat raged at the militant Islamic faction, while at the same time deposing the Christian Coptic Pope. In Poland the new Roman Catholic primate, Jozef Glemp, made overtures to the rebellious Polish workers' union. And in the United States the Jewish lobby vowed to fight the sale of sophisticated aircraft to Saudi Arabia, while Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin journeyed to America and met with Jerry Falwell, the founder and leader of the Moral Majority.

Was it simply coincidental that all these religiously influenced events were clustered together at one time? Had religion come to intrude more significantly into contemporary life, or was it simply reasserting its former power and influence? Will the trend intensify in the twenty-first century? Will the collective religious voice of man grow louder or softer? How will the churches themselves change in form and ritual, and how adaptable are the churches to the new technology and the new family of the future?

Together with these questions and with interviews of prominent religious figures, I tried to weave a tapestry of future religion. The dimensions emerge as follows:

There will be a far broader ministry, responsive to life-styles other than the nuclear family, with rituals more sensitive to divorced people and modern sexual mores and the special spiritual needs of women. There will be church divorces for all and church marriages for homosexuals who want them.

The new religion will shift away from the community church to the television church, with spiritual persuasion based less on doctrine than on the television performance of electronic preachers. But the effective television ministry will also depend on follow-up missionary work by the established church organization. The business skills of a church will determine its growth. The church of the future will have a more local look, with local and national customs affecting priestly vestments, local insights determining the manner of prayer. The authority of Rome, Canterbury, Geneva, and Istanbul will diminish.

Future religion will ally itself far more with the poor and the oppressed, looking with greater shame on its past associations with the rich and the elite and the colonizers. It will look back with pride at its pivotal role in the liberation of Nicaragua and South Africa. The future church will retain its central imagery of God the Father, but it will place God the Mother on a throne of equal power and mutual submission.

But the most startling theme to emerge from these interviews perhaps is this: The sturdiest thread throughout this tapestry is the rising anxiety about nuclear holocaust. And this anxiety will create an ecumenical movement that will force the world's political leaders to address the ethics of nuclear armament. At the core of this nuclear-arms debate within the Christian community will be the question of whether to fight on against the rising probability of nuclear conflict or to resign oneself to the fact that Armageddon and the fiery return of Jesus Christ will finally be at hand.

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Let us go now to hear the words of our modern prophets . . .

WILLIAM SLOAN COFFIN, JR.

Senior minister at Riverside Church, in New York City, and former chaplain at Yale University, Dr. Coffin is one of America's most outspoken religious activists and one of the few clergymen chosen to visit the U.S. hostages in Iran.

He is a great, jolly bear of a man, who sparkles with zest for this life and excitement about the future. He presides over a church that has always been in the vanguard, always deeply engaged in social struggle. For him there are two images of the future church, between which there should always be "creative tension": the light on the hill versus the arch of salvation. The church on the hill, like Riverside Church itself, whose Gothic tower looks one way to the palisaded shore of the Hudson River and the other across the steaming, turbulent rooftops of Harlem, can be seen as representing great purity and enlightenment, its danger being that it can be so pure that it reaches no one and becomes a monument to irrelevance. But the arch of salvation also has its own problems. With all welcome, no dues to pay, there can only be darkness. Coffin's preference is clear. The twenty-first century needs the light on the hill. The church is at its best and most useful as a "faithful remnant," a "prophetic minority."

"Does that not foretell a church only of elected, purified monks?" I ask.

"That would be okay," he replies, "provided their influence radiates, provided biblical insights illuminate public life, as well as personal, private life, and the recognition that salvation is for everyone, including us few monks."

Coffin is preparing a long attack on the Moral Majority, whose influence he deplores and whose very title he finds ludicrous. There has never been a moral majority, he declares. Morality never captivates the masses. The majority usually stone the prophets among us.

Predictably he does not argue against having spiritual men engaged in society's issues. He has always been as engaged as any, and he has contempt for "the gospel of private salvation." "Just me and Thee, O Lord," he says with a shake of his head. Yet if politicians would only move to the "creative edge" of their profession, ministers would not have to become involved, for they could attend only to the soul and "let justice roll down as mighty waters."

"Jerry Falwell and his crowd cannot live with uncertainty," Coffin says, beginning to hit his stride. "The faith is what makes it possible to live with uncertainty, including intellectual uncertainty. So you can face a future that is open, not clarified. That is always scary, particularly in times like ours, when the currents of history are churning into rapids. Fundamentalists would rather have a God that is cruel than have a world that is out of control. They invariably subordinate God's love to God's power.

"We have always had conservative religion, conservative economics, intense nationalism. What's new [with the Moral Majority] is that they're all merged together. These people believe in God, Adam Smith, and George Patton, but not necessarily in that order. But if God is a God of history, then God is ahead of us or within us, as much as He is above us. The history of Christianity is characterized by an exodus that proclaims a New Testament, which in turn announces new wine, new song, a new Jerusalem, a new heaven, a new earth, and we'll all become new beings. So it is a very future-oriented religion."

With the threat of extinction hovering over mankind, Coffin sees a hopeful process at work, forcing men to accept the original prophetic view of the planet as one. The survival of the human race, he insists, has always meant the survival of the entire human race and its environment.

"There is a process at work in the world that affirms and protects more and more of life. God must have been pleased when our moral awareness reached sufficient sensitivity for us to abolish slavery. God will be pleased now with the long-overdue recognition of women's rights, the rights of the handicapped, of the poor, the rights of the unborn, even the rights of whales. Nature is included in the process: It is not just a toolbox. So it is not a question of creating human unity, but one of affirming it. It used to be that this part of the globe could not protect itself against the other parts. The whole is the target of future war now. The whole world lives on the target. So we are forced to affirm the ancient religious belief that we all belong to one another."

DANIEL BERRIGAN

A Jesuit priest, Berrigan, along with his brother Philip, has become identified with civil disobedience and dramatic protest against the U.S. military machine. Convicted at Catonsville, Maryland, of destroying draft records during the Vietnam War and again at King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, in 1981, for protesting against nuclear armaments, Father Berrigan awaits an answer to his appeal of his latest conviction.

In the early darkness a man stirs in nightmare: Indistinctly in the mist he sees the image of a man—perhaps it is he!—walking upon some unknown path. Underfoot, a rug rolls out before him at a steady pace. He plods on. Then he dares to look behind and sees, to his terror, that the rug is rolling up. He begins to jog—an action he has always taken before to try to forget. But glancing backward again, he notices that the rolling rug is gaining upon him, and so he begins to run, faster and faster. But the rug ahead of him continues to unfold only at a walking pace! *It will not unfold fast enough. He tries. He strains. But there is no escape. He is tripped up and flattened into the swirl.*

This is Daniel Berrigan's image of the current nightmare that besets America. The United States has lost its past. It is speeding up the present, but there is nowhere to speed to. America, rolled into the process of time, ceases to be the master of time and becomes its victim. Berrigan's image is for the mass of Americans who have acceded to the "insane" nonfuture of nuclear armament. Each nuclear weapon, be it ordered, manufactured, or acceded to, further jeopardizes the human race. With each weapon, the ante is raised.

"What Reagan pushes ahead of him psychologically and spiritually is what Dr. Robert J. Lifton calls 'psychic numbing,' induced by the weaponry itself. As the weaponry touches individuals, they are really touched with madness, with a death of feeling and of compassion. We become a nation touched with moral leprosy. That's Hiroshima before the fact."

Reagan's image is not accepted by everyone. There are many, like Daniel Berrigan and his friends, who refuse to consort with the Beast. To accept the arms race is

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to partake of an anti-Eucharist, a feast of cannibals. I ask him about the MX missile. "What should be the appropriate Christian response?"

"Any Christian worth his or her salt refuses to enter into a discussion of the insane. It's like joining the cast of *Marat/Sade*. All that frenzy, nonsense, babel is suicidal. One must close that debate, open the New Testament, and take the real news, the good news."

I put his own question to him, posed in his latest book, *Ten Commandments for the Long Haul*. "What if the good news remains only in the past and the bad news awaits us in the future?"

"We are sleepwalking," he says. "The disease hits our people in several ways. Temporally, it wipes out the past and makes a future less likely. The two things go together. If you don't know the past, you are really writing off the future."

As dangerous as Father Berrigan feels the world has become, as close as the earth may be to the situation where "these silk-suited characters with their manicured hands on their children can reach over the child's shoulder and press a button to kill children thousands of miles away," the priest does not see Armageddon quite like, say, Billy Graham. For starters, Berrigan believes Christ has already come; he has seen this in his own work and the work of his friends. More important, the evil signs in the world may not be the indication of the "end time" at all, but mere "seismic shiftings," "shadowy reminders" of the possible.

"If we lie around weeping about the state of the world and waiting on Christ, that's magic. It is not enough, not human. We were called upon to do more in the world than weep about the state of affairs. With that stance, there is no impulse to resist the Armageddon."

In short, Armageddon is overrated.

"It is just one image out of many in the Bible that deal with the end of time. It is a waste of human energy to concentrate on one biblical image to the exclusion of many, many others. So many beautiful images! The bridal image, the image of the great feast, the Eucharist, which is eternity itself. We tend toward the image of the bloody battle and all that stuff, because we are so bloody and violent ourselves. There's something in us about that image, as much as about God. We deeply want things to end that way."

BILLY GRAHAM

A spiritual adviser to presidents and a minister whose crusades are attended by millions and whose television programs are viewed by tens of millions, the Reverend Billy Graham is the world's best-known evangelist.

"*Evangelist*," Billy Graham instructs me from his home in Montreat, North Carolina, "derives from the ancient Greek word for announcer." In the Greek city-states the announcer traveled about, proclaiming the news. As applied to the writers of the four gospels, the word *evangelist* means the announcer of the good news of salvation and the personification of the Holy Spirit. Graham sees his mission as essentially that of an announcer, the clarifier of the Word of God in areas generally not accustomed to hearing the Word.

The success and power of the Graham sermon are attributed in an authorized biography to "its almost artless simplicity," "its breadth of elementary exposition about Jesus from His birth to the Cross and Resurrection and coming judgment." But Graham thinks of himself more in the tradition of the roving preachers, such as George Whitefield, leader of America's Great Awakening, and John Wesley, whose methods Graham has studied carefully.

In the modern world the evangelist has the freedom to address controversial problems, Graham believes, where the traditional church experiences difficulty.

"The Bible mentions a total of 22 signs signaling the onset of Armageddon, and Billy Graham discerns them all converging now for the first time in history."

"[The traditional church] is on the horns of a dilemma," he says, his voice fading in and out across the telephone from his mountain retreat. "It would like to adapt, but it's held back by the teachings of the Scriptures. There's only so much flexibility. They have to say, for example, that homosexuality, as taught in the Bible, is a sin. But it's only one of maybe a hundred or two hundred sins—I've never counted them—and no greater a sin than a lie or jealousy or greed or prejudice or lust. In this generation, it's been pulled out. It's been so publicized that almost everywhere you go, if you're a clergyman, you're asked about it."

On two aspects of twenty-first-century religion, Graham is already a special witness: the power of television and the shape of Armageddon. He speaks pointedly to me about both.

The revolution that television has fomented goes far beyond the "parachurch" preachers of the Sunday morning airwaves, Graham thinks. It has now reached the most conservative elements of the traditional church. Even the Southern Baptists, once so scornful of television because of its use as an entertainment medium, are now purchasing prime time. The advent of cable television and the deregulation of the airwaves will make more than 100 channels available before the year 2000; available equally, Graham notes, to religion and smut. The tube, consequently, will make the forces of Christ and those of Satan both stronger at the same time.

Inevitably the emphasis on the "performance" of the television minister will grow, and competition for ratings will follow. While Graham denies that he is part of the electronic ministry, he is comfortable with entertainment parlance. By appearing on television every Sunday, one builds a narrow and limited audience, he believes, and he is careful not to be overexposed.

"If I come on periodically in prime-time television, the audience is much greater," he says. "Our Nielsen rating will go up to thirteen or sixteen percent."

He is resolved not to compete with the village church, however, for he thinks that if television were to replace local parishes, the whole concept of the church would be lost. Television should be viewed solely as an adjunct of the church "to stir up religious feelings," especially in those who don't normally attend church services. But the real problem of the future will arise when a television preacher announces the gospel one way and the parish preacher announces it another.

In the proliferation of cults and in the words of self-proclaimed prophets—400 people in Los Angeles now claim to be God, he says—Graham sees the mark of the Devil. How then is a television viewer to know the sincere from the insincere religious performer?

"The Bible teaches that we are to learn to discern the Spirit," he tells me. "When we are walking with the Lord, He gives us the power, as Christians, to discern between good and evil. The believer should not be fooled. The person who is not a believer and who does not know the Lord can easily be fooled and easily be misled."

"You don't think the believer can be misled?" I ask.

"He can be misled for a while, but he'll soon wake up if he's a true believer. My wife was sitting beside the head of the counterfeiting division of Scotland Yard some time ago at a dinner, and she said, 'I suppose you spend a great deal of time studying counterfeit bills and coins.' He replied, 'No, I never look at them. I study the real thing constantly.' If you know the real thing, you'll be able to detect a counterfeit."

Of all the participants in this inquiry, Graham was the most certain about how the impending Armageddon will unfold. The time of reckoning is "relatively near," he observes. The Bible mentions some 22 signs signaling the end time, and Graham discerns them all converging now for the first time in history. The signs are international (wars and the rumors of war), cultural (movies like *The Exorcist*), satanic (devil

worship in this country and elsewhere), natural (starvation in many parts of Africa, Asia, and Latin America), and mysterious (UFOs). When Armageddon is upon us, the world will pass through "terrifying events," which will involve much killing, but not enough to annihilate mankind. Or Armageddon may involve interplanetary warfare, but not sufficient to destroy the solar system. Christ will intervene at the last minute "to save mankind from itself."

"Does that not make it simply a matter of degree?" I ask. "To qualify as Armageddon, doesn't the cataclysm have to be great, with much killing, but not so much that knowledge and mankind would be wholly eliminated?"

"I can only speculate, like anyone else," he says. "My own judgment would be that [Armageddon] will involve a great many armies and peoples from north, east, south, and west, gathered in the Middle East to war against one another. They will have the power to destroy a substantial portion of the human race, but God is not going to permit it."

But Graham sees beyond these terrifying events. His is a glorious vision: a world of true justice and permanent peace, without soldiers and police, where the lion lies down with the lamb, where there will be no weeping and no suffering. In short, the world created for Adam and Eve.

Why then should the believer not rejoice at the prospect of the cataclysm, or at least accept its inevitability?

"We're to live pure lives as though Christ were not coming for ten thousand years, and yet we're to watch for Him and have this hope in our hearts. If man does reach Armageddon, God has a plan for the human race. This gives great incentive to all kinds of good works. To attempt to bring about as much of a heaven on Earth as we possibly can, as Christians. We're to be the salt of the earth, and we're to be the light of the world."

MADALYN MURRAY O'HAIR

America's most famous atheist, Madalyn Murray O'Hair is best known for her successful lawsuit to remove Bible reading and prayer recitation from the public schools.

Were Madalyn Murray O'Hair's philosophy to be adopted by our society gradually, this examination of future religion would be quaint indeed. The influence of theology would diminish so significantly that religion would become only a mild curiosity.

Atheism is still accepted by only a small minority of Americans. Billy Graham contends that more people attend religious services in America every Sunday than attend all the sporting events held in this country combined in an entire year.

Madalyn Murray O'Hair might respond: But which do Americans care about more, their religion or their sports? If people were only honest with themselves, if they would recognize their religious mouthings as insincere and destructive, she says, they would see that America and the world are now already in a post-Christian era. O'Hair thinks religion is more a stimulant than an opiate. Like sports, it is only one of a number of means Americans employ to kill their boredom.

O'Hair proposes to puncture the hypocrisy and sanctimony of the churches and to remind Americans that church and state were separated in our Constitution for very good reasons. Her refrain is constant: More killing and wickedness have been perpetrated in the name of God and religion than for any other cause. Unabashedly elitist, she cites her upper-middle-class roots and pitches her message to the intellectual elite while ascribing the rising influence of fundamental Christianity and the Moral Majority to the lowest social classes. She scoffs at a country that could now peg Billy Graham as a liberal.

It is hard to talk to this abrasive Texas lawyer and social psychologist without debating with her. Her contentiousness comes across naturally. She is more comfortable in criticizing the nonsense of contemporary religion than in expounding on the future of atheism. Still, I press the point with her. I ask about the perfect atheistic world of the future.

"There are five insane ideas that should be outlawed," she declares. "First, violence between individuals and nations; second, slavery; third, racism; fourth, sexism; and fifth, God—a god that gives punishments or rewards in the afterlife, so that you remove yourself from everyday life or abdicate the use of human reason."

"Might these be called the five atheist commandments?" I ask.

"Oh, no," she objects. "Atheism has no commandments. Well, only one commandment: Thou shalt use thy mind, use reason in everything that thou doest, and never stop the process of learning."

"But religion exists as much as anything to address the *meaning* of life," I parry.

"The meaning of life is simply to live," she replies, "not to prepare to enter a heaven or elude a hell, but to actualize your potential and to ameliorate the human condition. All other forms of life help their own pack. The human community alone fights within its own species for the elimination of that species."

What is the perfect atheistic world of the future? O'Hair sees it as a world without hypocrisy, with the greatest possible individual freedom, free universal education, sensitivity to the health of the race and the preservation of the environment, equal justice as a reality, with an emphasis on the uniqueness of the individual. In short, a worldwide Jeffersonian democracy.

It sounds good, I think, but will the atheists in the Soviet Union and China espouse it?

DESMOND TUTU

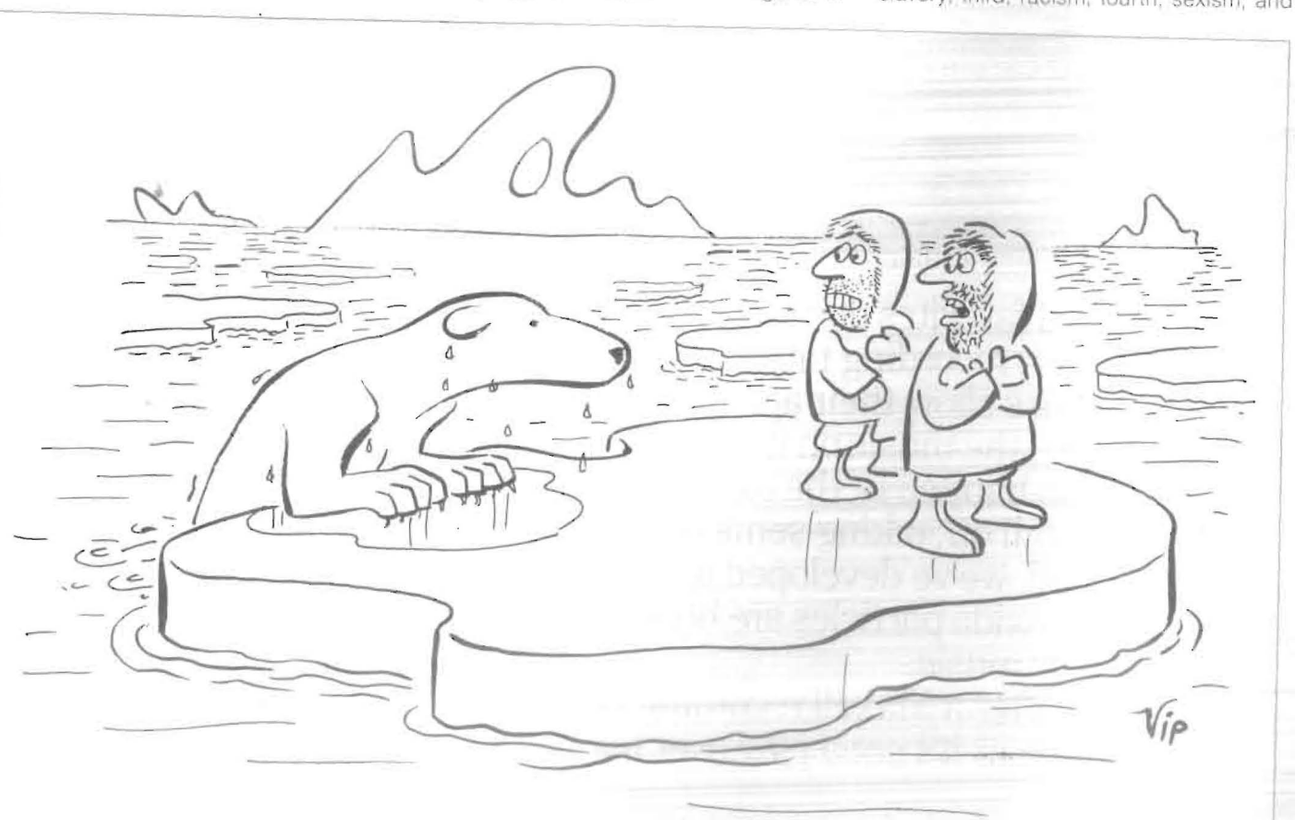
Black Anglican bishop and head of the South African Council of Churches, Desmond Tutu is an eloquent figure in African Christianity.

Because Bishop Tutu is often kept under house arrest for statements and actions that advocate the liberation of his people, I thought it best that we speak first about Christianity in black Africa as a whole.

Clearly, the bishop is excited by what is happening in the African churches. With the liberation of most African nations, one might have thought that the Christian churches would suffer, associated as they had been with the colonial masters. Instead, church growth since liberation has been dramatic. Soon, Bishop Tutu asserts, Africa may be the most Christian continent in the world. The rapid growth of Christianity there is due to the essential spirituality of the black African, he suggests.

"An unspiritual, irreligious African is almost a contradiction in terms," he says.

Bishop Tutu applauds the great energy obvious in the Africanization of Christianity now taking place. Black theologians are busily at work in adapting Christian thought to local circumstances and argue intently that God was present in Africa long before Western missionaries arrived. In 1975 a new Anglican liturgy was devised, containing many new prayers drawn from African insights and harmonious with the African's exuberance. African vestments are replacing Western ones. Incense and candlelight fill the churches, lending a luminous quality to worship. Dancing, clapping, and "sing-



"One thing's for sure. He's got the home ice advantage."

ing lustily" accent the new services.

"I was thrilled to attend Roman Catholic services in places like Cameroon and Ghana, seeing how they use the things of the soil, preaching that the Incarnation [the doctrine that God took on human form] sanctified the whole of our life. We don't need to be circumcised, as it were, into Western Christianity first. We come to God as who we are, where we are, with our gifts and our insights, in order to enrich the total church of God in the world."

Step by step we inch closer to the issue at hand. How will the black churches deal with anger? When the cataclysm comes, will the churches be in the middle of the fray? Or will they, like Gandhi, be proponents of nonviolence?

"In South Africa race is never very far from our consciousness. Virtually anything we do, say, or think is affected by the obsession with race. The main hope for a new, more just, more open society lies with the churches. They demonstrate as their chief consideration that there is no Jew or Greek, no male or female, no slave or master, no rich or poor, but all one in Christ," he says, quoting St. Paul.

"This idea can be quite explosive. The church must concern itself with the marginalized ones: the oppressed, the downtrodden. It must be the voice of the voiceless, be the prophetic church, declaring itself against injustice. The very credibility of the gospel of Jesus Christ is always at risk when the church aligns itself with the rich and the powerful.

"It is very difficult to see how other leadership [outside the church] can operate reasonably freely. I would say, our society is hopeless without the church."

"What about anger?"

"I'm not sure we're handling that adequately. Some try to compartmentalize life, by saying that anger, which is obviously a highly volatile and political thing, does not quite belong in the realm of the religious. That's one way. The other is to stress that biblical tradition takes all of life seriously. There is nowhere where the writ of God does not run. We have a gospel that speaks about grace for sinners, but that also challenges the social and economic system, not merely providing palliatives, preaching that things will be okay upstairs, giving them a kind of 'prophet of the post-mortem pie.' God is a God of grace and truth, but also one of justice."

The issue of nonviolence, as it is perceived in the American experience, is a luxury for the South African black, the bishop asserts. "Quite a few of us on the inside feel the peaceful, nonviolent options have not *yet* been exhausted. Massive resistance may still turn the trick. But the authorities will act against any resistance. We are running out of peaceful options."

Although Bishop Tutu is anxious to be off to his next appointment, I ask him one more question. Spiritual leaders in the West perceive nuclear holocaust as the central moral challenge of the future, but surely the black in South Africa, facing a white remnant in possession of nuclear weapons, must view this problem in a special way.

"It is not being melodramatic to say that we could have a scorched-earth policy if the whites thought they had had it. They could do a Samson on us. Since they would be destroyed, they could very well say, 'Well, let's all be destroyed together, or take away as many of them as possible.' "

"But nuclear weapons can be packaged small," I insist, "so that they wouldn't have to take away whole cities, but only neighborhoods, such as Soweto."

"They could do that," he admits. "But I suspect it would be such an act of desperation, such an extreme situation, they would fear the reaction of the world. That would spell curtains for them. If the West didn't do anything about it, I'm just as certain as I can be that the Socialist world wouldn't just look on. However you look at it, the use of nuclear weapons, no matter where or how limited, would trigger World War III."

"Though in the past the church associated itself with the upper class, it is now identifying with the poor. The poor and the powerless are the people of the future."

THE DALAI LAMA XIV

The pontiff of Tibetan Tantric Buddhism and the spiritual and temporal leader of the Tibetan people, His Holiness was forced into exile by the Chinese Communists in 1959. He now lives in northern India and awaits the day when he can return to Tibet.

To have an audience with the Dalai Lama is to be in the presence of considerable, gentle power. William Sloan Coffin remarked that he could never quite tell with Buddhist priests whether their simplicity was on this, or the other, side of complexity. With His Holiness, there can be no question. Yet as he held my hand at length after our conversation and smiled and joked, he might have been a jovial, disingenuous village priest, not the spiritual and temporal leader of 100,000 refugees, the symbolic leader in exile of faraway Tibet.

He was in the United States for his second major visit, and we met in a stately mansion down a remote, deer-traveled dirt road in New York's Catskill Mountains. He rested there after bestowing the Kalachakra Initiation upon the faithful in Madison, Wisconsin—a ceremony that lasted three days and that can be conferred only by a scholar lama after 20 years' study—and before he gave a series of lectures at Harvard Divinity School on "Emptiness and Great Compassion."

To speak of the future with this personage is to speak of the present and the past: The currents of history are like the currents at the bottom of the sea, where the moiling of sand is insignificant and constantly changing. Everything changes, perhaps even the institution of the Dalai Lama. Perhaps this fourteenth incarnation is the last. It does not matter. If the institution is useful, it will be retained. If not, it will be discarded.

"Despite external program, basic human suffering remains eternal," he says in his staccato bursts of broken English. "Old age, disease—these will always be with us. In order to face suffering, mental development is necessary and helpful. To utilize material progress in the *proper* way, to maintain *human* value above *material* progress, one must think inwardly and have a clear awareness of the human itself."

In the present day the Dalai Lama and his fellow Tibetans in exile are often considered an esoteric curiosity. But a Dalai Lama reestablished in his Potala in Lhasa, Tibet, would provide the world of the twenty-first century one more powerful moral voice. No longer could that Buddhist pontiff, even in the remoteness of Tibet, represent the purity and safety of isolation.

What are the chances for his return? In the last two years discussions between the Dalai Lama and the Chinese leaders have begun. An invitation to return has been extended, but His Holiness is in no hurry. What happens to him personally "is not important."

"We must reach a certain stage where the majority of the Tibetan people are happy. That is the main condition [for return]," he says. "Then we will see. In the future a new attitude may come. The Buddhist faith cannot be replaced. But I believe there is common ground between Marxism and particularly the higher form of Buddhist practice."

"What is your dream?" I ask. At first he seems not to understand and, when he finally does, not to be much interested in the question.

"More harmony. A more friendly attitude. Less suspicion. Not living with a hostile attitude toward one another. If we develop the proper attitude that all human beings are the same, crises can be handled coolly, with more patience, more understanding. Not using weapons. With that, we may have a better world. That is what I believe. And you see that is the only alternative."

If religion is kept simple, without complicated theology, he believes, people will not argue over unimportant differences.

"How can universal religion become a more powerful force?" I try.

"It is complicated, difficult," he answers.

"What do you see as the greatest moral challenge of the future?"

He turns to his interpreter, Professor Jef-

frey Hopkins, of the University of Virginia, for a translation. They talk back and forth in Tibetan for what seems like an eternity. Finally His Holiness turns back to me.

"The question is not very clear," he says.

ROBERT F. DRINAN

A Jesuit priest, Father Robert Drinan was elected to Congress from Massachusetts in 1970, then withdrew from elective politics in 1980 after receiving a papal decree forbidding further elective political activity. Drinan, who is president of Americans for Democratic Action, teaches law at Georgetown University, in Washington, D.C.

Father Drinan's departure from elective politics on orders from Pope John Paul II posed dilemmas for himself, for the Roman Catholic Church, and for the United States. He accepted the Vatican decree with "pain and regret," not "pretending to understand" why the Holy See had chosen to silence the one priestly voice in Congress while it permitted priests to continue in top administrative posts in other nations.

Obedient to church authority, Drinan stands in sharp contrast to the Reverend Alison Cheek, an Episcopalian. Together they draw an issue for the future: Can ecclesiastical authority keep pace with a turbulent and ever-changing world? Will its laws and practices remain relevant to moral problems in the future? When the established church ceases to speak to the modern world, must the priest accept his superiors' orders? Or should he reject them dramatically?

I had heard speculation that two reasons lay behind Pope John Paul's decision: that the pontiff had become increasingly disturbed about the political involvement of priests in Latin American revolutions, particularly in Nicaragua, and wished to send a symbolic warning to all priests by silencing Drinan, and that, by representing a liberal constituency that favored abortion, Drinan, as a Catholic priest/politician, had become a liability.

In his disheveled office at the Georgetown Law Center, Drinan addresses both problems. With Latin America having a population of more than 350 million and representing half of those in the world who adhere to the Roman Catholic faith, Drinan sees a significant moral shift. Whereas in the past the church had associated itself with the upper class, now it is identifying with the poor. The poor and the powerless, he says, are the people of the future.

"There will be more situations like Nicaragua, where the church will promote political liberty and economic freedom. The Catholic Church does not stand aside.... For the first time Christianity presents itself as a religion that favors the poor.... Inevitably you're going to have political revolutions.

"If Rome knew more about it, it would say Nicaragua is a very interesting experiment," Drinan continues. "Many Catholics believe that Nicaragua could be a model of what could happen in all Latin America if there is no relief.... That's okay, if the Nicaraguan model is followed. Nobody wants a Communist state or heavy Cuban influence. There is no one model for the future. But all over the continent, priests are telling people, 'Cry out for justice!' "

Drinan sees abortion more as a question for now than for the future. He cites the statistic that there are 40 million abortions worldwide in a year. In the Third World 80 million infants are born annually, but 25 million will die before the age of five. Still, Drinan is opposed to abortion on moral grounds and thinks the U.S. government should not be involved in the question.

Drinan, like Father Daniel Berrigan, believes that nuclear holocaust will be the chief moral problem of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries. At the Vatican II ecumenical council, in 1965, 2,200 Catholic prelates proclaimed that nuclear weapons should never be used for any purpose, offensive or defensive. As far as Drinan is concerned, the council waffled on the issues of manufacture and possession for deterrence. Again his horrifying statistics: 50,000 nuclear devices extant now, 30,000 in this country, and 3 more manufactured every day. At Vatican III, Drinan asserts, the church should declare their very possession immoral.

"The world is sick and getting sicker. "Sodom and Gomorrah were mini-San Franciscos. There is a tendency toward radical individualism," says Madsen.

"The possibilities [of nuclear warfare] seemingly grow more possible every day. The proclivities of mankind to do evil are always present. We have to prevent that from happening." But how? "Through the collective religious voice of mankind. It will require a huge moral force that we can't even estimate."

But when Ronald Reagan's defense budget comes in the next session to the House floor, there will be no bony finger to punctuate the air, filled with hot talk about the vulnerability of our 30,000 atomic devices. To make his arguments effectively, Drinan must hope for a certifiable political appointment, presumably in another administration.

ALISON CHEEK

Episcopal priesthood was conferred on Alison Cheek and ten other women on July 29, 1974, in Philadelphia, in an "irregular" ordination, conducted by three retired bishops over the objections of the Presiding Bishop. For two and a half years the ordination was generally considered "illegal" and led to ecclesiastical trials of ministers who allowed the 11 to perform priestly functions. In 1977 the Episcopal House of Bishops finally approved the ordination of women and recognized the ordinations of the original 11. Cheek is now the director of the Well Woman Project, in Philadelphia.

Cheek saw her ordination in 1974 as a metaphor. It was as if she were standing upon a great cliff, perhaps in her native Australia, looking out to the sea, watching a wave in the far distance form, swell as it drew inevitably nearer, crest frighteningly, powerfully, and then crash upon the beach. The year 1974 was the time for the Episcopal Church to face up to women's equality, the time for the church's slowly receding patriarchy to yield.

Yet Cheek approached her ordination as a sad event of the spirit. It was the end, she feared, a spiritual death, for she fully expected to be deposed afterward, not simply branded as a bogus priest, but removed as an Episcopal deacon as well.

Not only in her investiture as a deacon of the church, but also in the Philadelphia ordination itself, she had sworn to obey any "godly admonition" of her bishop. "I knew jolly well I was not going to obey godly admonitions [on women's issues], and I thought of Martin Luther: If you must sin, sin boldly. So I took that vow, sinning boldly."

Looking back now on her original disobedience, Cheek hesitates to say that the success of her action validated a technique for updating canon law. "For most of us there was no technique involved. We were doing what we had to do. It was powerful because we weren't playing politics."

Cheek is part of the Episcopalian clergy, with the church's blessing. Yet she feels autonomous, almost longing for the old public image of disobedience, rather than the new subtle discrimination of the church.

Cheek focuses on the "whole woman" of the future. To that new woman, a rich spiritual life is central. Its shape begins with discarding the outmoded practices of a patriarchal Christianity. "Humility is woman's sin," she quotes.

The "problem text" in the Scriptures about woman's submission to man must mean in the future mutual submission. The spiritual difficulty for women will be "to claim the whole of themselves and not feel guilty about it." By so doing, women "grow to full maturity in Christ."

Much in the traditional church is not suited to the condition of today's women, but that will change. The wife in the nuclear family represents only one life-style. What about the single woman, the divorced woman, the gay woman, the adolescent? The new whole church must have a place for them all. And, she says with passion,

this split between the spirit and the body—so solid in the traditional church's attitude toward women—must go. "Women want to be able to come to church as whole people, and not have to leave a part of them behind. In the church, women should be able to talk about *anything*."

Even the central image of God the Father will change radically. God the Father will give up power to "God the Mother." The early, feminine interpretations of Christianity, lost after the first century, will reenter: the Old Testament image of God as a mother dangling Her child on Her knee, and the words of Jesus, wishing He could gather the Jews of Jerusalem to Him "as a hen doth her brood."

Yet women ironically will not want to give up "father language" or "father symbolism" lightly. In fact, Cheek says, with a touch of wryness, the father image may even strengthen, because many modern women find a scarcity of reliable earthly fathers in the temporal world today, and thus they long even more for the heavenly Father.

DR. TRUMAN G. MADSEN

The Richard L. Evans Professor of Religious Studies at Brigham Young University, in Provo, Utah, Dr. Madsen is a noted Mormon scholar and a theologian of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The vision of the future Dr. Madsen propounds is both hopeful and apocalyptic. His enthusiasm stems from the certainty of the Mormon view and the joy of sainthood; his gloom comes from his surety that discord can only grow worse.

Mormonism is the fastest-growing religious persuasion in the United States. By the year 2000, it expects to attain 20 million members, a figure exceeding worldwide Jewry. Soon a tower will rise outside Salt Lake City that will beam a television signal around the world. It will enable a peasant outside Calcutta to get on a bicycle and generate the energy to tune in a concert from the Mormon Tabernacle. But this would only aid, not replace, the missionary zeal of the church. Mormons rely on the one-on-one approach. At Brigham Young University missionaries are trained by the battalion. Thirty thousand of them are out in the field, all over the world. The hope is that each will log in a new convert every month.

Madsen thinks the challenge of the future is not so much to adapt to modern reality as to restore traditional verity: the family as the core of love, the body as a temple, God as the Father.

The world is sick and getting sicker. "Sodom and Gomorrah was a mini-San Francisco. . . . There is a tendency toward radical individualism."

The irony of 1981 is that this, the most politically conservative of America's major religious sects, has done more to affect the central moral concern for the future than any other. On May 5, 1981, the eighty-two-year-old President of the Mormon Church, the living oracle, as he is called, Spencer W. Kimball, made a major pronouncement on the seemingly temporal matter of MX missiles. Whenever this prophet speaks, he reveals God's will for the Mormon faithful.

"Our fathers came to this western area to establish a base from which to carry the gospel of peace to the peoples of the world," the statement read. "It is ironic, and a denial of the very essence of that gospel, that in this same general area should be constructed a mammoth weapons system potentially capable of destroying much of civilization. . . . We plead with our national leaders to marshal the genius of the nation to find viable alternatives." From the point of this statement, the Reagan Administration began to reconsider whether the proposed MX system was feasible. A region closest to anything resembling a theocracy in America had profoundly challenged the nuclear-arms race.

"Why is the MX a moral problem for the Mormon Church?" I ask. After all, the Mormon stance wherever the church exists has been to support civil and military authority.

"People were meant to live in a garden, with the sounds of water, the whisper of wind, the fragrance of grass. Later Schuller will say the Santa Ana Freeway adds a touch of realism to the mix."

Conscientious objection, even in this broad sense, is something new to Mormons.

"[The destruction of innocent life] is part of it, but it is more the impact on the community itself. So complex a system would involve a revision of the very nature of life in the two states [Utah and Nevada]. It would bring in massive industrial components, severely affect our meager water resources, build heavy-duty roads throughout our region, introduce great numbers of people indifferent to our community life. We would pay a price, a moral price, for a missile system that may or may not demonstrate itself as a proper mode [of national defense]."

Perhaps the Mormons would succeed in stopping the MX, at least its deployment in their gardens and parking lots, but this was only a fleeting moment in a wider, grimmer process.

"Discord is not going to decrease," Madsen declares. "Time will come when you have to take up the sword against your neighbor or flee to a few havens in the world where there are solid communities designed to promote peace."

Zion is the name he applies to this safe refuge, to which the wounded would return. This is only one of a number of identifications with Israel. Mormon Utah is America's Israel. The river that flows from Utah Lake (their Sea of Galilee) through the desert to the Great Salt Lake (their Dead Sea) is the Jordan River. In a century and a half, Madsen says, "Mormonism has recapitulated a minihistory of the Jews, with its genesis, exodus, struggles, persecution, and even occasional destruction."

So in these latter days the Mormon must seek to live a saintly life in the midst of turmoil and with the expectation of war.

"No one should rejoice in war, but it is part of the prophetic future. We must be sturdy and peaceloving even in the midst of war, but that is the test. If we welcome it in a bloodthirsty spirit, we are not Christians and not Mormons. It is a matter of faith and of attitude."

ROBERT H. SCHULLER

Pastor of the Crystal Cathedral, in Garden Grove, California, and creator of the television program *Hour of Power*, which is seen by 3 million viewers in the United States and Australia, Dr. Robert Schuller claims that he is the most widely known churchman in America.

"I had this big dream of a dynamic ministry with a beautiful church," Dr. Schuller writes. "I dreamed of a staff of eight ministers, of a thousand lay people doing the teaching, the counseling, the work. But my dream was stalled. All the 'Possibility Thinking' I could muster left me trapped in a corner. For two years God tested me, to make sure He could trust me, before He began to give me the success He was planning. That was easy for God to do, to keep me humble. His biggest task was to keep me believing bigger and better and more beautifully than I had ever thought before. There are, I had to learn, no mammoth tasks, only small minds."

One fruit of Schuller's big dream is the magnificent Crystal Cathedral. Designed by architect Philip Johnson, set amid glass office buildings and aesthetic shopping malls just off the Santa Ana Freeway, in Orange County, it is an extraordinarily impressive symbol of the future, an architectural concept Schuller calls "biorealism."

"The human being was meant to live in a garden," Schuller tells me, "where the sounds of water, the whisper of the wind, the fragrance of the growing grass, the touch of the sun on the skin are all a part of us." Later he will say that the sound of the Santa Ana Freeway adds a touch of realism to the mixture.

The other fruit of his big dream is the *Hour of Power*, deemed by many the perfect marriage of religion and Hollywood.

An autographed photograph of John Wayne decorates the backdrop of Schuller's desk, near one of Billy Graham and the snapshot of Schuller with the Pope.

Sitting in his office, atop his Tower of Hope, across from the Crystal Cathedral "campus," gazing out on the freeways and

office buildings and the hot plain where Schuller says 500,000 *hurting* people hunger for spiritual upliftment, I feel as if I am with the hotel magnate who started out with a simple root-beer stand. Schuller began his California ministry preaching in a drive-in movie theater. The marquee once announced the Sunday feature: "Someday Is Today, Featuring Robert Schuller with a Supporting Cast of Thousands."

As a communicator to small minds, as a packager of salvation, Schuller is unparalleled. "Losers can be winners." "Bloom where you are." "God has no wastebaskets." "Attitude has no latitude." "No gain without pain."

It is as if he is saying, "I'm okay. You can be, too, and make a tidy fortune as well, if you will only dare to begin." Schuller confers upon this message the imposing title of his "theology of self-esteem." And it sells.

"In the latter part of the twentieth century we are experiencing nothing less than a theological reformation as deep and abiding as the event in the sixteenth century," he says enthusiastically, alluding to the Protestant Reformation.

Religion at present, particularly evangelical Protestantism, he believes, rests upon embarrassing the sinner by fostering shame and fear as the lash of redemption. He means to accent the positive.

"Self-esteem is the central verity, the north star, the central mark of the emotionally healthy person. That is why I talk against failure so much. Failure is an ego blowout in heavy traffic in the public eye."

Health, not sin, is the standard to gauge the upright life. As for divorce, for example, he says, "We would ask the question, What is the healthy decision? There is no doubt that many marriages are a terrible mistake." He agrees with William Sloan Coffin that the church should be involved in the dissolution, as well as in the making, of marriage. He has even conducted a church divorce.

"All right, this marriage is terminated," he recalls telling the couple. "There is no way you can go through this process without wounds. I will not excommunicate you from the church, provided you come back to me after the judge has ruled, and we'll have a time of healing and prayer." Still, Schuller contends, the phrase *Till death do us part* should remain in the marriage vows as the goal of the couple.

High over Orange County, Schuller knows he's effective. He is excited about "what I have going here." After 30 years of preaching, he says, "I have my act together.

"If there's one thing I hear over and over in the United States and Australia, it is, 'Dr. Schuller, you saved my life.' It's always the same words. We're trying to give hurting people a look, a word, a touch, a healing touch that makes them think, 'Maybe I'm lovable after all.' So that's why I use my little phrase, 'God loves you. So do I.' "

"It must be hard to be humble," I say.

"Oh, no," he replies. "It's the easiest thing in the world."