

OF PRIESTHOOD AND PRIMAL REGRESSION

If the normal social defences against anxiety are generated by the perinatal traumata, then that suggests the hypothesis that leaders of religion are elevated as such because their own defences are more primitive and more deeply entrenched than those of the congregation. So if the congregation as a group of people is mirrored back from the persecutory cervix and the failing placenta into a sustained fixated intrauterine foetal regression, in which their life support system is umbilical and the great drama of birth is displaced and acted out in the victimisation, death and resurrection of Easter, so their sustenance and nurture is essentially umbilical and placental. In that case we would see the priest firstly as a fundamentally foetal being, backed so far off from the cervix as to be totally and utterly unconscious of the displacement of birth into the symbols, myths and rituals which he administers. Secondly, that within this intrauterine position, he takes the place of the nurturing and holding environment, placenta and umbilical, rather than that of the foetus, here represented by the corporate being of the congregation in regression. We would postulate that the priest has an experience of intrauterine deprivation, possibly within the first trimester in which the foetus despairs of life itself, being emptied out into the placental support system. Foetal life then presents as a needy, dependent, deprived body, split off from the nurture system, buried deep in the unconscious of the priest, displaced into the congregation and ministered to. In this dynamic the priesthood presents as the compulsive placental carer, seducing and seduced by the foetal dependency of the regressed body corporate.

If that kind of intrauterine collusion system characterises the established congregation, we have to face various other questions. For instance, there is a hierarchy of priesthood: within the Anglican communion we recognise two further levels of ministry in that the bishops are to the priests as the priests are to the people, and in theory at any rate the archbishops are to the bishops what the bishops are to the priests. This may well indicate the different level of armouring and defence required to fit the episcopate for its task, pointing to earlier levels of deprivation, more intense levels of splitting and identification ultimately with the mother figure, the nurturing environment as all good and into which the placental villi probe and seek their nurture in order to provide for the dependent groupings of the disparate congregations. Such positions of defence require very clear splitting between good and bad environment and an intense denial, repression and displacement of the bad environment. This kind of progression of intensity of defence from lower to higher levels of 'spiritual leadership' points us to the examination of the fundamental defences of the religious founders, whether these are seen as the innovative founders of new orders within a particular religion, or even back behind them, the great 'prophetic' founding figures of the world religions themselves. Here we may well be seeing levels of defence and regression which fixate at the blastocystic level in which implantation itself is so traumatic as to reverse the life trace into the sustained spherical, free communion with the ground of being, the ultimate mystic union with the 'Father/Mother' which is the goal of the mystical tradition at the core of every world religion.

In cultures where there are different levels of nurture and malnutrition we may expect different forms of common defence against anxiety. For instance, those who were crop and

animal product dependent in a countryside which was comparatively rich in flora would not normally suffer fundamental foetal malnutrition in the early months of gestation. The desert dwellers on the other hand, living on the borderland of subsistence, the nomadic hunters or wandering herdsmen, barely scraping an existence from a parched pasture, would have a foetal experience of inadequate nutrition and under-resource at a very much deeper level than the first population. It would be expected therefore that this group would have a much more paranoid presentation, seeing always that the environment was persecutory, deprivatory, having resources which they required and yet also the object of talion for with-holding those resources when needed. It would appear that factors of this kind may well underlay the splitting between Jew and Arab and ultimately the psychotic confrontation between Islam, Judaism and Christianity currently coming to a head in the Lebanon.

On a wider scale it would be anticipated that in a world in which resources are in increasingly short supply the dominant world religions will shift across from the Jewish/Christian toward the more paranoid Islamic and ultimately to the blastocystic mystical of the eastern meditative tradition. That this represents a process of psychotic regression and dysfunctional development of the human species with devastating consequences for its future can hardly be over-stressed.

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January, 1984

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Hosted by: Unit for Research into Changing Institutions (URCHIN)

(Charity Registration No: 284542)

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