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Donald Evans:
New Perspectives for a Theology of Peace

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Converging paths towards world peace involve reconciling social and cultural differences, the natural environment, the sinful aspects of consciousness, and the feminine dimension of human life and experience.

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CHRISTIANITY has not yet become a genuinely humane and incarnational religion. The embodiment of God which Jesus initiated has not been fulfilled in the humanity of Christians. Christian theology has encouraged us to separate far too much of that humanity from the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. One of the results of this constriction has been that our overall record as peace-makers has been dismal for nearly two thousand years. There have been some notable exceptions, but in general we have promoted war more than we have promoted peace.

Today, when the extinction of all life on this planet is a real possibility, there is a special urgency for Christians to re-examine the beliefs which have shaped our thought and action, beliefs which usually have not effectively inhibited our tendencies to foster institutionalized conflict. Radical revisions may be required.

Some theologians will immediately retort that Christianity has not been tried and found wanting, but has not been tried. That is, the only revision that is needed is not in Christian beliefs, but in Christians. There is some truth in this, but not the whole truth. For as we look back over Christian history it is now clear that some of the most saintly Christians legitimized violence and oppression against "outsiders;" whether these were heretics or witches or people of other religions or other cultures. They were corrupted as much by what they believed as by their own personal flaws.

The Christian community has much blood on its hands, much need for repentance. And repentance includes a re-examination of its beliefs. Fortunately, however, there is much *within* Christian theology on which we can draw as we review it in relation to peace. Part of what is required is a re-emphasis on elements in our tradition which have been ignored or distorted, though we must also explore new implications of that tradition in relation to an evolving understanding of our humanity.

Within Christian theology three basic beliefs need to be reaffirmed. First, being human involves being part of the human community on this planet, sharing in a common origin as the image of God, a common entanglement in evil, and a common destiny at the End of history. Nothing human is fundamentally alien to any one of us. Second, God became human in Jesus so that we also might come to embody God, both individually and communally. We can learn to embody God in ways similar to Jesus, but also in new ways which, though compatible with his incarnation, are not included in it. Third, what it means to be fully human is only gradually being lived and understood by human beings as we learn how to incarnate God with our whole selves. Human existence is historical, and human nature is changing. Only at the End will our humanity be fully transformed and fully disclosed as the revelation of God.

Christians have been most destructive when these beliefs have been suppressed or perverted. Often we have lost our sense of common humanity, treating non-Christians at best as "strangers" and at worst as enemies. Often we have insisted on belief in Jesus as the only incarnation of God, excluding from salvation anyone who rejects that belief, and even from humane treatment by us. Often we have presumed to know already what human nature is and can be, refusing to learn from other religions or cultures any elements of what it means to be human, any ways to incarnate God.

What Christians need is a theology which sees the whole human community as learning in various ways how to be lived by God in all the dimensions of our humanity, in spite of our common entanglement in evil. In this learning process Christians are guided and empowered by the indwelling Christ, who reaffirms our connection with all of humankind. As Christians we can be open to broaden and deepen our understanding of what it means to be human, so that eventually the whole self can be surrendered into the divine life.

FOUR PERSPECTIVES ON HUMAN NATURE

Many dimensions of our humanity need to be included in our understanding and in our lives, but four are specially important in relation to world peace. One dimension may be called the "global-humanistic." Human beings need to nurture their sense of connection with humankind as an intimately-interdependent global community. Another dimension may be called the "inner- ecological." Human beings need to re-discover their inner resonance with everything in the world of nature, especially their sense of being rooted in planet earth. A third dimension is often called the "dark side." Human beings need to uncover the repressed and unowned destructiveness which otherwise we project on to others, who thereby become at best strangers and at worst enemies, regardless of their reality. And a fourth dimension may be called the "oppressed feminine." Human beings need to recognize as a major source of institutional violence the radical distortions in human nature produced by millennia of male domination.

The four perspectives on human nature which I am advocating are not the only ones relevant to

peace-making. Moreover, they do not by themselves answer crucially urgent questions concerning what military and political strategies will best promote peace, or concerning the moral dilemmas which all proposed strategies seem to create. But long-range issues concerning basic perspectives are also important, and should not be neglected even when we realize that the possibility of nuclear folly means that possibly there is no "long-range" for humankind. If we are to learn how to live through the twenty-first century with --our knowledge of how to build the bomb, we obviously need to have some perspectives which reduce our reliance on institutionalized conflict. So I am proposing four such perspectives for serious consideration. In each case Christians are challenged to revise our belief-structures, but in ways which broaden and deepen our understanding of their incarnational essence. Of course, changes in belief do not by themselves cause the personal transformation which genuine peace-making requires, but unrevised beliefs can prevent such transformation.

INCLUSIVE HUMANISM

A *global-humanistic* perspective is initially difficult for many Christians, for various reasons. One obstacle is the liberal individualism which Protestantism has spawned in Western culture generally. How can I have any sense of being inherently and intimately involved, for good and ill, with all of humankind if I am essentially an atomic individual? Since a liberal's connections with others depend entirely on his free choice to enter into social contracts, the best an altruistic liberal can do is to "opt for humanity," creating a connection rather than experiencing it, assuming responsibility rather than acknowledging it. And since each liberal consciousness is allegedly sealed off from any direct influence by other private consciousnesses, it seems that we can only affect each other through material media. In contrast with this, a global sense of connection with humankind includes an awareness that we influence each other not only in our institutional power-structures and in the public events which the media reports, but also on a psychic and spiritual plane. Long before modern communications arose to intensify our human togetherness, we lived in a global village, influencing each other around the planet towards hope or despair, trust or terror, compassion or rage, peacefulness or violence.

Obviously social-contract liberalism is incompatible with traditional Roman Catholic and Orthodox teachings concerning human community, and private-consciousness liberalism is incompatible with much in the spirituality of pre-Enlightenment Christendom. But criticisms of liberalism based on appeals to earlier Christian doctrines are not adequate if Christian theology is to nurture a sense of world-wide human community. The hurdle for many Christians is still their restriction of community to *Christian* community, so that non-Christians are, at best, "strangers whom Christ loves." Instead of having a sense that nothing human is alien to me and that we human beings are all in this thing together, many Christians are still influenced by the exclusivism of most traditional theology. If there is no salvation outside the Church, or outside correct beliefs concerning Jesus, non-Christians are aliens. If one's primary sense of identity is Christian rather than human, then even if Christian beliefs are held by post-liberals in a relativistic true-for-us way (which implies that non-Christians may have true-for-them beliefs), there is still no sense of participating in a common humanity. This humanity has not yet completely evolved, but it already transcends many of the differences which divide us, and it includes much that unites us.

Fortunately there are new global rituals, initiated by Christians or welcome by Christians, which are challenging Christian exclusivism and nurturing a sense of our common humanity. Pope

John Paul initiated a "meeting together to pray" in Assisi, drawing together representatives of diverse religious traditions who are united by a common concern for peace. This was not a "meeting to pray together" he explained, for no common prayer was proposed or used; but each person can be "present" while others pray. Such a procedure, while theoretically still compatible with Christian exclusivism, implies some legitimacy in non-Christian prayer, so he was criticized by ultra-conservatives.

The new challenge for Christians is to broaden our sense of spiritual community, becoming fully ecumenical not only concerning whom we pray *for* but also concerning whom we pray *with*. If humankind can begin to pray together we can begin to live together, finding new and creative ways to reduce the evils which plague our planet, especially the threat of nuclear holocaust. But how can we pray together with integrity, when we differ so much in beliefs? These differences should not be ignored in a desperate intellectual search for a least-common denominator unity in doctrine or a prayer-wording which everyone can tolerate.

The best way to being to pray and meditate together is in *silence*. Words are not enough. In silence we can sense that we are not separate from anyone, and so we can dare to hope for peace. For silence to "work," participants must bring to it some degree of trust, love, and letting-go: a trust in the good-will of the others which moves them to join in such an expression of human caring; a love which brings a sense of heart-felt connection with the others as human beings; and a letting-go for a short time of our desperate clinging to the convictions which separate and divide us, letting these recede to the background of consciousness. After the silence, we return to deal with the same differences, but in a different spiritual climate.

On the third Tuesday of September each year the United Nations Assembly invites all humankind to join in a minute of silence for peace. The International Day of Peace observance is organized in Canada by "A Peal for Peace;" which calls for a peal of bells after the silence to celebrate our common hope. Such a global ritual is open in principle to every human being on earth, of every faith and of no faith. People whose perspective is strictly secular can use the silence to ponder the question, "What can I be or do for peace?" Religious people can pray according to their respective traditions, but silently. And some people are silent within, emptying the mind of all words or images.

A world-wide minute of silence for peace expresses a new level of awareness which is emerging in the consciousness of humankind. Not so long ago, only a few saints and mystics were personally aware of being deeply connected with all other human beings for good and ill. Recently, however, there have been many symbolic public events which have both evoked and expressed such an awareness of human solidarity, though the awareness is as yet mostly rudimentary. In July, 1985, Live-Aid focused the caring of millions of people on world hunger. In May, 1986, five million people joined Hands Across America, spurred by secular celebrities and Billy Graham. Though this event was not planetary in focus or scope, it was similar in its invitation to set aside differences to join in a symbolic public event expressing a common concern. In June, 1986, rock stars joined with Amnesty International to raise consciousness concerning the plight of political prisoners around the world. In September, 1986, the United Nations "minute of silence" was the most widely-observed peace event in Canadian history, and the world-wide "Millions of Minutes of Peace" project made it the most widely-observed peace event in world history.

We are witnessing a dramatic shift in human consciousness. It arises partly from new contact between people around the world through TV and radio, partly from a new awareness of our economic and political interdependence, and partly from a new sense of shared vulnerability to nuclear holocaust and ecological disaster. But there is also a spiritual dimension to this movement towards human community, a heart-felt sense of connection and kinship, an experience of our common humanity.

The global rituals which nurture and express this change in human self-understanding are not a substitute for concrete policies to reduce the likelihood of war. To see them as a substitute is to succumb to a disembodied spirituality, a romantic sentimentalism. But if the overall spiritual climate within which policies are considered and implemented is mostly negative, it is unrealistic to expect much progress toward peace. Clever strategizing and righteous protesting are necessary, but by themselves they are usually futile.

Christians should welcome the new global rituals not only because they help to improve the spiritual climate around the world and thereby facilitate practical peace-making but also because they are first steps towards a global humanism, towards the embodiment of God in all humankind. As Father Zosima says in *The Brothers Karamozov*, "Every one of us is answerable for everyone else... if we knew this, we would at once have heaven on earth Until that day we must keep the hope alive."

INTEGRAL NATURALISM

We also need an "*inner-ecological*" perspective to extend our self-understanding beyond humankind to include the whole of nature. Our interdependence with nature has become evident to some scientists, in spite of the basic scientific perspective which detaches us from nature as its observers and manipulators. And a new ecologically oriented science is helping to remedy our ravages of nature by inventing new technology. But this is inadequate as an inhibitor of further ravages and as a basis for understanding what it means to be a human animal-vegetable-mineral.

What is required is an *inner* ecological perspective, that is, an awareness of nature within oneself, an experiential understanding of embodiment. In response to this requirement Christianity is ambivalent. On the one hand, as the religion of incarnation, of Word becoming flesh, it has the strongest possible basis for exploring every dimension of embodiment so that the whole self may be lived by God rather than only the intellectual self or the spiritual self or the communal self. On the other hand, however, Christianity has inherited from its Jewish origins an abhorrence of anything that seems to resemble nature-worship, and this has deterred Christians from exploring "primitive" religious paths and thereby learning how it feels to resonate with nature inside oneself: celebrating inner connections with earth and moon and sun and stars, experiencing within oneself the vibrating energies of a bear, a lotus or a crystal, regressing back through one's evolutionary history to one's elemental origins, integrating sexual passion into the whole of life.

Christians must realize that a grateful and reverent acknowledgment of our embodiment within nature is not nature-worship. Rather, it is a rediscovery of a dimension of our humanity which can then be surrendered into the divine life. It is true that without such surrender we are involved in idolatrous worship of the non-ultimate, but this danger arises for every aspect of

human life, not solely our embodiment within nature. All our technologies and ideologies and theologies become idolatrous in so far as they are not surrendered into the divine life. Fear of idolatry has been too closely identified by Christians with fear of nature as such. Nature has been the alien "other" and even the enemy. The alternative to this is not a sentimental view of nature as friend, which still implies that nature is an "other." The alternative is a sense that nature is part of us and we are part of nature, that we are not separate. It is true that we are not identical with nature, but every dimension of our humanity is pervasively influenced by our embodiment within nature, which both enriches and limits our existence. To fear nature is to fear a substantial part of what makes us human.

Recently the United Church of Canada formally and publicly apologized to native Canadians for being destructive towards their religion. This act of communal repentance was important, but the next step is to learn from native traditions -- and from traditions of feminine spirituality which have survived centuries of Christian persecution -- how to re-experience our non-separation from nature. Fortunately not all of their oral tradition has been lost, and fortunately -- dare I say this to post-Enlightenment Christians? -- many of their shamanic teachers from past centuries are still directly accessible in spirit as guides and healers.

What has all this to do with peace? A great deal. First, it is obvious that people with a strong inner-ecological conscience have a concern for planet earth which reinforces their concern for humankind: a double concern which issues in action. In addition, an inner-ecological perspective helps us to understand better what peace actually is. Peace is not only the absence of institutionalized violence, though it includes this. Peace is, more fundamentally, a discernible spiritual "climate" or "mood" or "vibration" which pervades not only humankind but also nature. Its opposite is a pervasive disharmony and disconnection. Planet earth, with all its human and non-human inhabitants, is like an organism. Its current disharmony and disconnection is a sickness which is experienced as such by people who have an inner-ecological awareness. The earth needs healing if there is to be peace. This healing comes through environmentalist activism but it also comes from rituals of healing for the earth such as those observed by native Canadians. Such rituals should not be dismissed as mere superstitious magic. They express a reality which most Christians are not able to discern. We Christians typically pray to God for nature as if we were not part of nature. In such prayer we are rebelling against the very embodiment into which God creates and calls us.

A ritual of healing for the earth need not be an idolatrous substitute for prayer to God. It can be the embodied mode for such intercession. Together with native people we can humbly acknowledge and celebrate our finitude. We offer up to God both ourselves in nature and nature in us. A friend of mine once had a vision in which a shaman appeared, wearing a strange and frightening mask, challenging him not to flee. Then the shaman removed the mask, revealing the face of Christ, who said, "Before you can truly know me as Christ you must know me as shaman." This is a message, I believe, for all disembodied Christians, whether our flight from nature is expressed in doctrinal intellectualism or born-again spiritualism or moralistic activism.

MORAL HOLISM

Repression of our nature-self is similar to repression of our "*dark side*," which is the third dimension to be emphasized in relation to peace. Primitive paranoia is the simplest manifestation of the dark side: I repress my own murderous rage, pretending to myself that I am

all niceness and virtue; I project this urge to kill on to other persons or other nations; then I fear them because it seems clear to me that they want to kill me. Individual paranoia easily becomes mass paranoia, cultivated by the state to justify its own power by pointing to Them as a threat to Us. This has been a commonplace in the twentieth century, practiced not only by totalitarian regimes of left and right but also by democratic governments. It has been specially pervasive and powerful during war-time, when we are taught to see only the dehumanized face of the enemy so that our atrocities can seem to be justified.

One of the great benefits of deep psychotherapy is the somber realization that nothing human is alien to me, including the most destructive impulses of humankind, and that I tend to project on to others whatever I refuse to own within myself, regardless of the extent to which they are actually behaving destructively. This realization does not mean that I become naive about real evil out there. On the contrary, I can then discern it more accurately. The atrocities of Hitler and Stalin have made it clear that some individuals and some institutionalized structures of power can be almost entirely evil. This is a realistic insight, not a paranoid projection. Where openness to our dark side is crucial is in acknowledging *our* own evil, both potential and actual. Even if the Soviet Union today is as evil in its policies as Ronald Reagan has claimed, this does not imply that many policies of the United States are not comparably evil. Repression of one's own dark side enables people to suppose that almost all of human evil is out there -- whether in Moscow or in Washington -- and this provides a basic rationale for strategies of mass murder and for ideologies of self-congratulation. We want to feel good about ourselves as a nation, so we project our dark side on to others, thereby also justifying violence in order to protect ourselves; and all this can go on quite independently of any of the realities of the political-military situation. Even if there is a beam rather than a mote in the eye of the other person, the unacknowledged beam (or even the mote) in my own eye will distort my discernment of the other.

What I have been saying about the dark side will probably seem fairly familiar, for the depth psychologies of Freud and Jung have influenced many Christians in North America to some extent. So my proposals here may be initially less disconcerting than those concerning global rituals for humankind or healing rituals for the planet. In some ways the notion of a dark side is compatible with traditional Christian teaching concerning sin as a universal tendency to deceive ourselves concerning our true motives. As Reinhold Niebuhr noted, sin is neither a sheer ignorance nor a fully-conscious decision but rather a wilful ignoring of our own turning away from God. In contrast with some New Age spiritualities which minimize the reality and the self-deceptiveness of sin, thereby enabling such paths to evade much of their own dark side, main-line Christianity is in principle open to this dimension. Talk about the dark side can be seen as a further filling in of the Christian concept of sin.

There are, nevertheless, two very serious obstacles to an adequate Christian theology of the dark side. First, Christians still tend to ignore the unconscious nature of the dark side, and the need to undergo a gradual process of uncovering it and dealing with it. This process may be a modern depth-psychotherapy or it may be closer to the spiritual paths of saints in many religious traditions, but in either case it becomes clear that neither correct beliefs nor conscientious service nor ecstatic spiritual experiences suffice. Indeed, any of these may be used as diversions from facing one's own hidden terror or hatred or anguish. For example, one of the most persuasive preachers on trust in divine providence went into therapy and found that

he was unusually paranoid, and that his fervent preaching had been mainly an attempt to conceal this from himself! Since he was inwardly a stranger and an enemy to himself, his world seemed full of strangers and enemies. At best, the idea of God as Friend gave him something to hold on to -- better than nothing, but not an authentic faith.

A second obstacle to Christian exploration of the dark side is the fact that Christians still tend to ignore human nature. We tend to demonize it, or at least to reject it in a heavily judgmental way. Typically we try to eliminate rather than to befriend any destructive tendencies which we uncover within ourselves. By "befriending" I mean accepting the tendencies as human, as distortions of something which can eventually be integrated into the whole self and thereby transformed. Such a befriending only makes sense if a destructive tendency is essentially a distortion of a human tendency which is basically good, a distortion which involves a disintegration. If, for example, murderous rage arises from frustrated longings for love, then rage which is acknowledged and harmlessly expressed can become a creative force, a positive energy which empowers a person's commitment to love. In such a context Christians can experience divine forgiveness as the transcendent enabling presence at work in the process of befriending and integration and transformation by which the dark side of our humanity is owned and its vital energies are transmuted into love in the heart. Instead of trying to eradicate evil within ourselves, meanwhile hoping God will not punish us for failing to do so, Christians can let God help us to transform evil within ourselves. Then, and only then, can God help us to transform evil outside ourselves. ("Let there be peace on earth and let it *begin* with me.")

In contrast with a view of a sin as a derivative distortion of a good human tendency, some fall/redemption theologies see sin as an autonomous evil tendency, not derivative but independent in its energy. The only way to deal with sin is therefore to eradicate it. Such a perspective can lead to a total rejection of the dark side. And this total rejection often leads to total repression, for unconscious passions tend to remain repressed if they have been rejected in advance. To some fall/redemption Christians, who lack a sense of the priority of original blessing over original sin, it seems better not to open Pandora's box at all than to have to deal with all the dreadful demons which lie inside. (That is, incidentally, a trivialization of the rare cases where there really are demons to be exorcised!) Meanwhile the repressed passions, intensified in their disintegrating power as if in a pressure-cooker, leak out wherever they can in unacknowledged ways. Thus some traditional Christians become very dangerous people. Having rejected so much of themselves, they reject much of humankind, and they spread their contagious hate and fear unconsciously wherever they go, though outwardly their image is sweetness and light.

The problem of the repressed dark side is not confined to Christians, though it is arguable that some elements in Christian theology have helped to create the problem. All human beings repress their dark side to some extent. And there will not be peace but war on earth until most human beings have taken responsibility for their dark side. This is the first century in which such a change could realistically seem to be even a remote possibility. Millions of North Americans are at least beginning the arduous process which is required, and there are also hopeful signs elsewhere.

LIBERATING FEMINISM

We have reason to hope wherever a newly-acknowledged cause of conflict begins to be dealt

with, even if the new insight makes us realize how far we are from peace on earth. This is especially obvious in the case of the fourth and final perspective which I propose. During the last few decades the partly successful feminist challenge to the systematic oppression of women by men has made it possible, for the first time in human history, to envisage an eventual reconciliation between the sexes based on a genuine equality of power. At the same time it has become obvious to some of us that the most fundamental cause of institutionalized violence in the world is the unresolved conflict between the sexes and the distortions of humanity which this conflict has produced. So we have a new hope: there could be peace on earth if there were peace between men and women. And the new hope is sobering: there will not be peace on earth until this happens.

The dimension of human nature which Christians and others need to acknowledge is the "*oppressed feminine*." The most obvious example of this is the institutionalized injustice which has denied women equal rights and opportunities alongside men. The structures of power in society have been in the hands of men. The prevailing ideologies, whether religious or secular, have legitimized the subordination of women and the constriction of their lives. As the pervasive injustice of the patriarchy becomes evident to many women, the suppressed rage and distrust and pain passed down by women through millennia of male domination begins to be acknowledged and expressed. Sometimes, understandably, this legacy is what is most prominent in feminists.

For some feminists, however, there has also been a discovery and recovery of distinctively feminine ways of thinking, feeling, loving, choosing, being spiritual, and doing rituals. In the past, men have always subordinated these feminine ways and usually suppressed them whenever men have been in charge of society. Yet it is clear that the distinctively feminine ways of being human are, at their best, less likely to encourage institutionalized violence than any prevailing male mode of behavior, whether this be the macho warrior, the schizoid technocrat planning strategies, the gang of boys fascinated by powerful toys, the alien dominator of nature, or the god-at-the-top.

All these war-prone tendencies in men are linked with their negative attitudes towards women and towards the feminine dimension within themselves. Dorothy Dinnerstein (*The Mermaid and the Minotaur*) has shown, I think, that the tendencies originate in male infancy as alternative strategies for coping with the fear of being overwhelmed and controlled by the dominant woman, Mother. And Dinnerstein's neo-Freudian perspective can be complemented by Jungian insights concerning the repressed feminine component within each male psyche. As a man explores his dark side in these ways and begins to encounter women with less fear, a more peaceable male begins to emerge, with a deeper inner confidence and less need to dominate.

A more radical change in men's self-understanding is needed, however, if men are to be able to meet women without implicitly constricting the sexual-emotional-spiritual energies of women. In my own experience it is not through Freud or Jung that a man begins to discover the distinctively male energies which can eventually complement the energies of women in a genuine and reconciling way. Rather it is initially through a shamanic process, an experience of one's inner links with nature. There are both masculine and feminine energies in the cosmos, and a man can gradually learn to live in steady openness to both of these, -thereby beginning to learn how to encounter women in a sexual-emotional-spiritual way which neither threatens them nor feels threatening to him. But this is only a beginning, for if a deeply-reconciling

encounter is to take place the man must surrender his whole self, including his shamanic self, into the divine life. And an analogous but different transformation has to occur in women -- a change which I do not presume to define.

The basic challenge to Christian theology in all this is not only a recognition of the institutional rights of women but also, even more fundamentally, an openness to a genuinely embodied spirituality which seeks an embodied reconciliation between the sexes. St. Francis and St. Clare did not reconcile the sexes, making sexual intercourse authentically a sacrament by working through the ancient enmity between Adam and Eve. No one has done this as yet. The task is just beginning, at the end of this century. We do not as yet understand what it means to be human, and especially what it means to be male and female. This will gradually become clear as the rights of women are secured and as a movement towards reconciliation is thereby made possible.

We need to make rapid progress in understanding what it means to be human, expanding our human self-understanding to include all of humanity, all of nature, our dark side and the suppressed feminine. If we do not, this planet may not continue to be inhabited through the twenty-first century. If we do, we will not only be reducing the risk of nuclear catastrophe, we will also be facilitating the embodiment of God in humankind.

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