

IV

CHRISTIAN MATERIALISM

From the mid-thirties onwards, F. Hastings Smyth sought to relate the Christian Incarnation as a process (Transubstantiation in Manhood Into God, Metacosmesis in Discerning the Lord's Body) with the dialectical materialism of Marx, Engels and Lenin. Smyth began with a positive but critical assessment of both Marxist materialism and dialectics. However, the attempt to bring together the Incarnation and dialectical materialism soon required a critique of both traditional Christian theology and orthodox Marxist theory.

In his affirmation of the reality of the material world, Smyth stood squarely in the tradition of early Christian orthodoxy. With Irenaeus, Athanasius, the Councils of Nicea and Chalcedon and Thomas Aquinas, he strongly asserted the reality of the material world of which the human Christ was fully a part. With them he rejected gnosticism, dualism and docetism (including their manifestations in the Christian tradition and contemporary Christianity), asserting that God created and redeemed both the material world and humanity. In putting forward the Incarnation as a process, Smyth asserted the continuing transformative and revolutionary activity of Christ in human history through the church, the sacraments and action for social justice. Smyth judged

developments in the Christian tradition by the benchmark of Metacosmesis.

The Incarnation's affirmation of the material world Smyth related to Marxist materialism, its dynamism to Marxist dialectics. The dialectical materialism with which Smyth initially related Metacosmesis was the official Soviet version: Engels' scientific and metaphysical systematization of the dialectical historical materialism of Marx's later economic and political thought, interpreted through Lenin and Stalin and put forward by Soviet, British and American Communist Party theorists. As a Christian and a Marxist, Smyth was able critically to appropriate dialectical materialism for Christian use.

However, Smyth's critical stance towards Marxist theory (both theologically and philosophically) eventually resulted in a critical reassessment of dialectical materialism. While Smyth remained a Marxist until his death, the relationship between Metacosmesis and Marxist theory underwent much change in his writings. Initially, Smyth emphasized the positive relationship between the materialism of the Incarnation and that of dialectical materialism. However, as he became more critical of the metaphysical character of the latter, relating it with Leninist-Stalinist totalitarian practice in the Soviet Union and international Communist parties, Smyth placed increasing emphasis on dialectics. He eventually rejected any rapprochement with Marxist materi-

alism, although he continued to advocate philosophical realism as a metaphysic required by the materialist character of the Incarnation. In the end he turned away from rapprochement with any unified Marxist metaphysic and tried, still as a Marxist, to develop his own materialist (Incarnational) and dialectical (revolutionary) cells. In this and the following two chapters I shall trace this movement from materialism to dialectics to cell.

However, I shall first briefly outline the development of Smyth's theology of Metacosmesis. Because Metacosmesis integrates Incarnational materialism and dialectical process, one cannot move on to discuss Smyth's materialism and dialectics separately until one grasps Metacosmesis as a whole.

Smyth put forward his basic theology of the Incarnational process (termed Transubstantiation in Manhood Into God, Metacosmesis in Discerning the Lord's Body) as early as 1935 in sermons and meditations. For example, he described the process in a sermon on the Eucharist on Maundy Thursday 1936:

Thus is the Christian life a life of continual sacrifice. We come to God bearing gifts and these gifts are our own lives and those of all our fellow men with whom our lives are bound. Day by day, week by week, year by year, we come to the Altar, making our humble offerings. . . . The whole of life and not a part of it must be placed upon the Altar of the Cross.

This activity is the activity of the Incarnation. We profess the religion of the Incarnation, the Religion of the Eternal Word made flesh. But how many of us realize

that this means, as the great Athanasian Creed says, not so much the coming of the Godhead into flesh as the taking of the manhood [humanity] into God! This lovely phrase sums up all our activity.

Smyth emphasizes the Incarnation as process:

The Incarnation is not something completed once and for all, long long ago. It is, on the contrary, a process begun by Christ, still going on. It is something in which we have our part. Whatever we bring to the Altar of the Eucharist is received into the incarnate life. It is thus salvaged, saved, as it were, from death and oblivion in this world of time, and kept unto eternal life.

Participation in this process of Incarnation requires a perfected offering, namely the "perfection of the world".

Indeed,

There is something gravely lacking in our own gifts which we lay at the foot of the Cross, if at the same time the world at large is left in misery, the prey to greedy exploitation, filled with human contentions and strifes and oppressions and miserable hopelessness, none of which things can ever find a place within the Incarnate Life. The life of Christian sacrifice is not a separated activity. It must aim at including the whole world, or we make a mockery of the Cross.

The offering that has been taken into the divine is returned in communion:

The incarnate life of God's eternal Son, within our own human lives perfected and absorbed within itself, is given back to us! We go forth from the Altars of Holy Communion as bearers of God, Christofers within the world of every day, having our part in carrying the life of the Word made flesh to all mankind.¹

Christians go out into the world to transform it. In this brief description of the Incarnational process one can see all the major developments of Smyth's future theology.

In a retreat on the sacraments given in Susquehanna,

Pa. in November 1935, a few months before the above sermon, Smyth describes the Incarnational process in Thomist terms:

God accepts [the sacramental elements], returning these objects transformed -- transubstantiated is another word -- back into the process of His divine life. Such is the sacramental life of the Church, not separating us from our material lives, but gathering up the whole natural world, transformed, transmuted, transubstantiated into the divine embrace.²

The Eucharist is not an isolated cultic act. Instead, it gathers up and transforms the world. Although Smyth pays less attention to the offertory here, one can still see the shape of the later theology of Metacosmesis.

Smyth's first published discussion of the Incarnational process is a three-part article in the Living Church in April-May 1936, "The Catholic Church and Her Environment". Smyth sets the Incarnational process in the context of the vocation of the church. In Part I, "The Nature of the Church", he begins by rejecting three false views of the church. The church, says Smyth, does not exist to extricate souls out of an evil world, nor to help people adjust to the evil world nor to provide a moral code for daily living. The church was not devised primarily to affect the world but is a society founded and spiritually endowed in order to lead a certain kind of life: "she should show forth in the world a particular kind of social living, while aiming at a goal which is peculiarly her own".³

Smyth argues that the primary vocation of the church is "working out the principle of the Incarnation in individ-

ual and social living". Again, the Incarnation is not the "conversion of Godhead into flesh" but, following the Athanasian creed, "taking manhood" [humanity] into God.⁴ The church exists to continue this process of the incorporation of humanity into the divine. Smyth uses organic terms to explain the process:

The Christian organism, by means of a selective activity within the relatively disordered and unrelated materials of the natural world, appropriates whatever relationships are available for its own use and rejects those which are alien to that use. The materials thus selected are organized into a living social whole agreeable to a revealed divine pattern. Thus, the organism of a supernatural social life, which can be lifted up as an offering to God, is built up out of the materials of the natural world.

Smyth likens this Incarnational process to Transubstantiation in the Eucharist:

. . . as in the Sacrament of the Altar, natural materials are rearranged into new relationships, are transubstantiated through the action of the divine creative principle, and the supernatural grows out of the natural world as does the rose bush from the soil.

Smyth quotes Charles Gore: the New Jerusalem will "turn out to be only this world remade".⁵ The purpose of the church is to create and present a perfected living social organism to God, working with the materials of the social relationships of this world. The Incarnational process enables the church to do its divine work.

In Manhood Into God (1940) Smyth puts forward his first carefully worked out and well-developed theology of the Incarnational process. He begins with the Incarnate

Christ and moves on to the church and the sacraments. Smyth understands Christ's human perfection as the perfect reordering of a disordered world, rather than the supernatural addition of "new and strange elements" to the "content" of Christ's human nature:

Our Lord's individual uniqueness consisted in His perfect ordering of this content, in every feature and detail. For, having secured, in the person of His Mother, the free assent of mankind to his redeeming initiative, He united the natural grace of man to His transcendent, Divine creative power, and he was thus able to begin in His own Person that restoration of a world order for which the unaided natural grace of man alone must forever have remained inadequate. And so by this "taking of manhood [humanity] into God", as the Athanasian Creed phrases it, there was established a centre of perfect order, a focus of reperfected creation, which now began to emerge, to bud, as it were, within the surrounding disorder of a fallen world. (MIG 110-11)⁶

Christ inaugurates the Incarnational process. The process incorporates those who believe in Christ and it spreads into the world.

In his distinctive style, Smyth elaborates on the significance of Christ's taking of humanity into the divine:

In Our Lord's Person, then, time is taken into Eternity. Human perfection which, at its highest within the disordered world, is still perishable, is taken into the Imperishable. Contingent human values are taken into Absolute Divine Values. That which is limited in scope is made potentially universal. That which is finite is taken into Infinity. And so we discover that which was sorrow and agony in the organism of Our Lord's contingent human perfection as it grew within a disordered environment, is received into an eternal joy and gladness. That which was human defeat becomes absolute and therefore universal triumph. The very material content of His body, taken into His human organism from the physical world, is ordered from its contingent natural

perfection into the supernatural Order of His Risen Body, beyond the limitations of our time and space. His death upon the Cross, a culminating element of experience appropriate to, and harmonious within, the perfected ordered structure of His human nature, under the circumstances of His human life, is taken into the Order of the Divine Life. (MIG 194)

Christ's taking of humanity into the divine initiates the Incarnational process among humanity:

Humanity's true potentialities, not only within this world, but beyond and above it, are revealed. And Our Lord Himself begins anew for us the Process of their attainment, as the perfectly ordered natural substance of a manhood [humanity] recreated by Him out of the materials of our world, is taken by the Divine Son into the Absolute Order of the Substance of God's Being. (MIG 194)

Smyth borrows a term from sacramental terminology to describe the Incarnational process:

All this, in the language of Catholic theology, availing itself of the clarity and precision of a terminology borrowed from Greek philosophy, may be called the Transubstantiation of Our Lord's perfected humanity, body, soul and spirit, in such wise that it now assumes that Absolute Perfection which is the attribute of God alone. (MIG 194-95)

Smyth's use of "Transubstantiation" here for the Incarnational process as inaugurated by Christ was an imaginative extension of the traditional but narrow Thomist use of the word, which was limited to the change in the "substance" (ultimate reality) of the Eucharistic elements at their consecration.

In Manhood Into God Smyth traces the Incarnational process through the Resurrection and Ascension to the Eucharist:

To employ again the traditional philosophical terminology, the natural substance [ultimate reality] of the rite of the blessing of the bread and wine, an event which took place in the Upper Room on the final evening of Our Lord's earthly life, was a particular element within the whole substance of Our Lord's human accomplishment, such that, a little later, when it had been conveyed by Him through the Cross into His Divine Nature, it became transubstantiated into the Substance of the Sacrament of the Catholic Altar. . . . It became the Divinely provided means whereby all the creative accomplishments accruing within the natural body of His post-Ascension social humanity might, throughout all future history, be conveyed into His Divine Nature, just as the pre-Ascension content of that humanity had already been so conveyed by Him upon the Cross. It became the Sacramental extension within His social body of His individual Sacrificial Act. (MIG 204)

In the Eucharist, the principal vehicle of the Incarnational process in the post-Ascension church, perfected humanity is taken into the divine.

The offertory (the bread and wine presented for the Eucharist) is a key part of the process. Christians gather together and bring forward to Christ gifts of bread and wine:

These material things, simple as they are, contain within themselves, summed up in the history of their origins and developments, the relationships and the achievements of the natural lives of those who bring them forward. In other words, they stand as objective material representations of the human beings who have prepared them. (MIG 204)

They "sum up, or contain, a newly created portion of the content of Our Lord's growing social humanity". (MIG 204)

They are the continuation of the Incarnation:

They are the objective representations of fresh achievements in the re-creation of our fallen creation upon the level of our material world; they set forth a continuation of the reperfecting process which began in Our

Lord's individual humanity itself. (MIG 204-5)

A perfected offertory requires a perfected social order. In order to participate in the Incarnational process, Christians are required to perfect the economic, political and social relationships contained in the bread and wine being offered, "to prepare, in the world environment, the kind of materials upon which the Divine Life of the Incarnation may most meetly be nourished." (MIG 121)

Smyth rebukes Christians who believe that God will cover the defects of an offertory rooted in an unjust social order:

. . . Catholics have been all too willing to come blindly forward with bread which is mouldy because it is made from wheat reaped in Capitalist and Imperialist war zones, and baked in the damp cellars of an economically oppressed humanity. They have dared to come into the Substance of His Blood, the substance of a wine which, as a material taken previously from the world, has been needlessly or even deliberately allowed to be poured bitter and acrid on their offered Cup. (MIG 231)

Secular Marxists, though not consciously preparing an offertory, make a better one than many Christians: "The Communists and secular humanists go into the Kingdom of God before you." (MIG 123) Indeed, Christians should work with them: "When Communists insist that the perfection of our bread and wine is of immediate importance, sincere Catholics should be ready to agree with them and should find it possible to co-operate with them in many ways." (MIG 229)

In the Eucharist, the perfected bread and wine are not simply taken into the divine but also returned to those

who offer them:

We have come forward with our bread and wine, prepared to give ourselves utterly as these our offerings are placed on the Altar. We intend to keep nothing back, and ask, in our own right, for nothing whatever in return. Our Lord graciously receives our gifts upon these terms, conveying them into His Godhead. But for the fact that we have to return to further action in a world of time and space, Our Lord has also made adequate provision. He responds to this need by giving Himself back to us. Furthermore, since we are now, by means of the Holy Sacrifice, incorporated together into His Risen Life, we thus receive not only Himself, but, in addition our own selves too, given at His hands, back into our own hands for our further keeping. This great Response of Our Lord, this re-giving of Himself to us, and with this giving, this re-entrustment of our perfected transubstantiated selves to our own selves again, is called the Holy Communion. (MIG 210-11)

Those who receive communion go out into the world, true bearers of Christ among humanity, preparing "fresh offerings of new bread and wine . . . new creations of a perfected humanity culled out of our disordered environments, for our next successive Mass." (MIG 211) The Incarnational process is ultimately cyclical, a kind of spiral towards perfection, dialectically moving back and forth between the human and the divine. Other sacraments, particularly Penance, facilitate the process.

Throughout Manhood Into God, Smyth consistently used the term Transubstantiation to describe the Incarnational process. The first motto of the Society of the Catholic Commonwealth, "Transubstantio Mundi Per Incarnationem", (The Transubstantiation of the World through the Incarnation) reflected this usage. However, shortly after the publication

of Manhood Into God, Smyth began to have doubts about the use of this term for the Incarnational process. When he realized that in Thomas' explanation of Transubstantiation the substance of the bread and wine is terminated and replaced by the substance of the Body and Blood of Christ, thus denying the Eucharist as the Incarnational process of taking humanity into the divine, Smyth began to doubt the traditional Thomistic definition. In early 1942 he consulted Norman Pittenger and others at General Theological Seminary. Pittenger agreed with Smyth's critique of the static character of the traditional Thomist term but had little interest in Smyth's attempt to relate Incarnational process and revolution.⁷

By April 1942 Smyth decided clearly that he did not accept the traditional Thomist definition. To Pittenger, he announced his agreement with Article 28 of the Thirty-Nine Articles:

I've come to the conclusion that the strict Thomist definition of Transubstantiation is unacceptable and that (this from me!) the Anglican Article is right when it says that it "overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament". Whether the liturgical view which we are developing ought to be called by the same name is a matter about which I have to reserve judgement. If not, the difficult question arises, what should it be called? Because we simply must avoid every trace of subjectivism and get rid of every trace of idealism in all its manifold forms.⁸

Smyth explained his problems with the Thomist definition more clearly to another correspondent a few months later:

Also, I am no longer satisfied that the carefully defined Thomist doctrine of Transubstantiation can be stretched to bear the weight of the interpretations which I have given it. This latter problem I am finding a most perplexing one. On the one hand, I am convinced that we must preserve and emphasize the truth that something objectively real happens, in the Mass. The ancient terminology [Transubstantiation] does this for us. On the other hand, the Thomist doctrine of the actual termination of the substance of the bread, and its succession by the Substance of the Body, does indeed seem to introduce a disastrous discontinuity into the very heart of the Liturgy, a discontinuity which seems inconsistent with the whole doctrine of the Incarnation and, particularly, with the doctrine of the Two Natures. I am wrestling with this matter, but I think that those who claim that there is something static about the Thomist doctrine may have a good deal of reason on their side. As a matter of fact, I think that the present day emphasis upon process and our growing understanding (pace Aristotle) of its nature⁹ is a genuinely new thing in the history of thought.

Smyth began to search for alternative terms to describe the Incarnational process.

By the end of 1942 Smyth had decided on the term Metacosmesis. He defended his rejection of the traditional term to Jim Wilson of the Order of the Church Militant:

I think that it can scarcely be doubted that the Middle Ages had a very imperfect grasp of the meaning of the Offertory or of the Incarnation, together with its central sacramental actions, as processes involving the social order in redemptive action. Certainly it is difficult to get much aid or comfort from St. Thomas in these vital concerns. My own contention has been that the Body of Christ begins to take form in the level of His Humanity at the Offertory. The process of consecration is then the passage of this contingent Humanity into the level of the Divine Nature. I do not believe that this notion was present to the mind of St. Thomas. I take comfort, however, in the fact that some of the early Greek Fathers seem to hold the door open for such an interpretation. Certainly the "Greater Entrance", the solemn offering of the natural bread and wine which still persists in the Eastern Liturgies, enshrines this principle.

But it has been difficult to find a new term:

But whether the word Transubstantiation can be retained to describe this process in its entirety seems open to doubt. And yet, what other word is there? I think that Dr. [William] Temple's "Transvaluation" carries a wrong meaning to the modern mind; for it opens the door to all sorts of subjective errors. I myself have recently suggested "Metacosmesis", which would be the Greek equivalent for "Transordination".¹⁰

Smyth coined "Metacosmesis" himself though shortly before the publication of Discerning the Lord's Body he discovered that it had been used by Plato and Plutarch.¹¹ Pittenger was critical of the neologism but Smyth argued that all the possible English terms had already acquired inappropriate meanings.¹² Smyth changed the motto of the Society to "Metacosmesis Mundi Per Incarnationem". With the publication of Discerning the Lord's Body in 1946, Metacosmesis clearly replaced Transubstantiation as Smyth's and the S.C.C.'s term for the Incarnational process.

In Discerning the Lord's Body and later writings, Smyth refined his view of Metacosmesis in terms of liturgy, philosophy and politics but the fundamental meaning did not change. In Discerning the Lord's Body, which related Metacosmesis and the Eucharist, Smyth gives a short definition:

Metacosmesis, then, is a kind of transordering, a conveyance of structural order from the level of contingency in time and space to the level of an absolute and eternal order; and then back again to that contingent level where it originated and to which it returns for further creative, ordering growth. (DTLB 47-8)¹³

Again Smyth recounts the extension of the Metacosmic cycle

from Christ's earthly life to the church, where it is made accessible through the Eucharist. Just as the Incarnate Christ took humanity into the divine and returned it to the world transformed to act on the world, so the Risen and Ascended Christ receives in the Eucharist the offertory of bread and wine that Christians prepare through building a just social order in the world and returns it transformed and perfected in the consecrated Body and Blood to strengthen Christians in their continued action and preparation of another offertory. Thus the Metacosmic cycle continues, moving towards a Metacosmic world order which is a "Sacramental order, its economic and political structures functionally incorporated within the social body of the Incarnation." (DTLB 176)

In Sacrifice (1953) Smyth reverted to the term Transubstantiation to describe the Incarnational process. The shift back to the earlier term did not represent a fundamental change in the concept. The term Metacosmesis continued to be widely used within the S.C.C. and Discerning the Lord's Body joined Manhood Into God as a basic text on the Incarnational process. However, for some outside the S.C.C. (and by the fifties much of Smyth's apologetic was directed towards conventional Anglo-Catholics) the neologism Metacosmesis suggested eccentricity and a departure from the Catholic tradition. Smyth reverted to the Thomist term but now becomes openly critical of its Thomist definition, substi-

tuting his own in its place:

The Thomist definition, rigorously applied, denies that movement which is (to common understanding) implied by the prefix "trans-." Thomist Transubstantiation would better be characterized as "Desubstantiation (of "plain" bread and wine) - Substantiation (of ascended Body and Blood)." The Transubstantiation of our present argument, on the other hand, refers to a true movement of our Lord's ensubstantiated natural Body and Blood into the supranatural Body and Blood of the Resurrection and Ascension. It refers to the true movement of the substances of the Incarnate Lord's natural Body and Blood under the forms of the liturgical Offertorial Bread and Wine, emerging within His social Body the Church, into the substances of that same Body and Blood in their ascended state. (Sac. 58-9)¹⁴

Transubstantiation (Metacosmesis) takes place in the context of the Eucharistic sacrifice. The transubstantiated offerings are returned to those who offer the sacrifice. Again, Smyth is trying to root Metacosmesis in the Catholic sacramental tradition. Despite the reversion to the traditional language and themes of Transubstantiation and sacrifice, Smyth continued to put forward the basic Incarnational process theology of Manhood Into God and Discerning the Lord's Body until his death.

I have begun with Metacosmesis in my discussion of Smyth's theology of materialism and dialectics to emphasize that for Smyth materialism and dialectics were an integrated concept and any attempt to discuss the terms separately must respect that integrity. The material world is given meaning and direction by its dialectical interchange with the divine; because the material is part of the dialectical inter-

change, the interchange is impossible without it. Despite any shift away from Marxist philosophical materialism towards non-metaphysical dialectics in his rapprochement with Marxism, Smyth never gave up Incarnational materialism in his Christian dialectics. To give up Incarnational materialism would have been to give up Christianity itself. That materialism was always dynamic and in process in a dialectical relationship with the divine.

Likewise, the dialectical materialism with which Smyth initially tried to relate the Incarnational process was seen by its proponents as an integrated concept (for Engels matter was itself dialectical in its ultimate reality), although descriptive only of the natural world (that is, the only world). Smyth initially respected this integrity and saw it as analogous to the integrity of Metacosmesis. However, it was possible to go only so far in comparing the two concepts before it became necessary to compare their constituent parts. In his Incarnational analysis of dialectical materialism Smyth eventually denied the integrity of dialectical materialism's constituent parts. Like many European Marxists, Smyth grew to believe that dialectical materialism was but one kind of Marxism and an inadequate one at that. Thus, one of the difficulties of tracing Smyth's rapprochement with Marxism is that while his Metacosmic theology was relatively constant, his assessment of Marxism (and, indeed, the form of Marxism he avowed) underwent con-

siderable change. In the end the relationship of Christianity and Marxism in Smyth's theology is very complex.

From my discussion of Metacosmesis, the essential role of the material world in Smyth's theology should already be apparent. In Manhood Into God Smyth is explicit:

It is significant that God initiates His process of reordering the world, on the level of what we call matter. The Process of Incarnation, that is, of re-creation of the world, begins logically, as did the first creation, within the material world. Only later does this Process extend itself into the levels of mind and spirit. Thus, the Catholic Religion, as the Religion of the Incarnation, is, in a sense, rooted in a proper and thoroughgoing materialism; for the method of the Incarnation demonstrates to us that the necessary and prerequisite foundation of all intellectual and spiritual order is, so far as this world is concerned, the development of an organized material body. (MIG 108-9)

Such a view affirms the reality and essential goodness of the material world as created and redeemed by God, over against gnosticism, dualistic pietism and philosophical idealism. The material world must be real and perfected to be taken into the divine. Although pure spirit, God is accessible to humanity only through the material world -- in creation, the Incarnation and the sacraments. Even prayer is rooted in the actions of a human body. The material world is the starting point of any Christian spirituality. In his affirmation of the reality of the material world, Smyth identified himself as a philosophical realist and a Thomist.

In his strong affirmation of the material world as the starting point for Christian spirituality, Smyth found

himself in considerable agreement with dialectical materialists' affirmation of the priority of the material to the ideal. Both Incarnational Christians and dialectical materialists seek a transformed material social order. Incarnational Christians bring it about through participation in the materialist Metacosmic process, dialectical materialists through directly addressing the material circumstances of the oppressed masses. While Smyth faults dialectical materialism's atheism and utopianism, he recognizes a common area of agreement:

. . . Marxists do a great service to Catholics in reminding them that a very great deal not only can, but must still be accomplished within our fallen order, and furthermore, that it is only upon this basis, by beginning to work for the reperfecting of the world on the natural level, that man can hope to be restored to his true end above and beyond it. For man cannot leap the gulf which now separates him from God, caught as he is in a disorder of his own causing, unless a bridge of order be built, re-created out of the materials of that same disordered creation in which he now resides. . . . In the last analysis, [the building of this bridge] must, of course, involve man's redemption, not by himself, but by God. Nevertheless, in much of that preliminary work which must be accomplished in this world, as a foundation for the redemption process, it would seem that there may be discovered an extensive common ground upon which both Catholics and Marxists might meet and work together. (MIG 85-6)

Christians and Marxists share a common task of transforming the material social order.

Nor should disagreement on the final end prohibit Christians and Marxists from working with one another:

. . . if [Communists] now constitute a genuine political and social power which moves toward an immediate, material end desirable from a Christian point of view, Cath-

olics should not refuse to recognize the good which Communists might accomplish, simply because they happen to deny the reality of that which Catholics hold to be man's true final end. It is the fault of Catholics themselves that secular humanists have come to identify the profession of Christianity with social reaction, economic injustice and an indifference to the material welfare of the masses of men. It is the fault of Catholics that humanists would make man alone, rather than God, man's own final end. (MIG 122-23)

The failings of excessively "spiritual" Christianity have themselves contributed to the atheism of dialectical materialism; fear of Marxist atheism should not frighten Christians from working with Marxists where the two groups agree on the material social order they are building.

Smyth characterizes the work of dialectical materialists as a secular perfecting of the bread and wine of the offertory:

. . . Dialectical Materialists claim that a time has arrived such that, if the people of the world but move in the right direction toward a fully Communist economic and political order, a perfecting of bread and wine is a present practicable possibility. And under the stimulus of enthusiasm for this immediate possibility of realization of a glorious and re-created order of human society here and now, Communists seem to have lost almost all feeling that anything beyond this is needed. (MIG 228)

Although Christians must criticize this view as inadequate (insofar as such complete perfection is not possible in this life), there is much in the dialectical materialists' position that Incarnational Christians can support:

. . . [Catholics] should not be too quick, as they unfortunately often are, to find fault with the millions of economically under-privileged people in the world today to whom such a doctrine seems, not only reasonable but a glorious challenge to revolutionary action. When Communists insist that the perfection of our bread and

wine is of immediate importance, sincere Catholics should be ready to agree with them and should find it possible to cooperate with them in many ways. Even while the Communists deny God, and call themselves strict materialists, such men and women can at the same time be accomplishing something which Catholics to their shame, have not only neglected but have often sought actually to prevent. (MIG 229)

Indeed, the dialectical materialists' offering has often been superior to that of Christians:

. . . Catholics, for their part, have given the impression to the economically oppressed and exploited masses and to millions of men and women needlessly suffering because of the present organization of our material world, that practically any bread and any wine will suffice for the Altar of the Mass. "God will take care of these things," Catholics have seemed to say. "Our Lord will cover these defects no matter how we neglect them." And so Catholics have been all too willing to come blindly forward with bread which is mouldy because it is made from wheat reaped in Capitalist and Imperialist war zones, and baked in the damp cellars of an economically oppressed humanity. They have dared to come into the Presence of Our Lord asking Him to receive into the Substance of His Blood, the substance of a wine which, as a material taken previously from the world, has been needlessly or even deliberately allowed to be poured bitter and acrid into their offered Cup. (MIG 231)

Communists witness against this sinful Christian heritage:

Communists therefore do a true service to the Catholic Church when, in their emphatic insistence upon a radical change in the present economic and social organization of the world environment, they bring home the fact that Christians have long been complacently offering unacceptable gifts at their Altars. (MIG 231)

Dialectical materialism has much to teach Christians but in the end it does not go far enough.

Throughout the discussion of Christian and Marxist materialism in Manhood Into God, Smyth is well aware of their differences. Dialectical materialism, in its denial of

God, concerns itself only with the material world. Christian materialism, with its dialectical relationship with the divine, does not end in itself but always points beyond itself to fulfillment in the divine. According to Smyth, this relation with the divine preserves Christian materialism from the inadequacies of dialectical materialism. He argues that, in spite of itself, dialectical materialism recognizes its own inadequacies -- in its acknowledgement of the ever present danger of a return to chaos through counter-revolutionary activity (that is, human sin), of the persistence of innocent suffering in the world and of death.

Smyth argues that Incarnational Christianity takes up and completes dialectical materialism. The dangers of Communism are not those usually ascribed to it:

The danger of Communism, then, is not so much that it is anti-Catholic or even anti-religious. That it so thinks of itself is probably an accident of history for which Catholics themselves are far from guiltless. Neither does the danger of Communism seem to lie in the fact that it is necessarily moving in the wrong direction in its work of reordering the natural world. Certainly, from any genuinely Catholic point of view, the formation of a truly cooperative society does not seem to be a movement in the wrong direction. (MIG 236)

Rather, Communism does not go far enough:

Secular Communism's danger is rather that it is not at present going far enough, while at the same time it insists that it is going as far as it is possible to go, that its own material goal is the ultimate one for man. Catholics may well regard Communists thankfully, as perfecting a new bread and wine; but at the same time they must deprecate the fact that Communists continue to insist that these gifts have to be kept solely on the natural level. It is for Catholics to arouse themselves

to the glaring fact that much perfecting of natural bread and wine needs to be done. Probably, also, it is for them to cooperate with Communists in this task. But in addition, they must humbly and graciously seek to show that Communist bread and wine, while far from being offerings which need to be summarily rejected, are nevertheless not final ends in themselves. They must be brought, for their true and ultimate salvation, further on -- into the body of Our Lord's social humanity, and thence, through the Sacrifice of the Altar, into His Risen Life. (MIG 236-7)

Smyth argues that the truth of the dialectical materialist analysis of political and economic forces in the world and action coming out of that analysis must be taken into Incarnational Christianity for them to have ultimate meaning. Smyth seeks to open Christians to Marxist analysis and Marxists to Incarnational Christianity. Despite the ultimately critical view of dialectical materialism, Smyth's approach in relating Christian and Marxist materialism is irenic and apologetic.

Indeed, because of the large area of agreement between Incarnational Christianity and dialectical materialism on the primacy of the material for human experience and action, Smyth was able to use Marx's critique of religion against non-materialist corruptions of the Christian tradition. Smyth came to see any religious concepts or practices which were detached from the material sacramental order or which sought to start from God without taking account of the material order, as veiled forms of philosophical idealism, insofar as they subordinated the reality of the material to the ideal, and therefore false.

For example, in Manhood Into God Smyth cautiously comments on the individualistic otherworldliness of much of protestant thought:

As far as survival after death and life in the next world go, the Protestant Christian, again logically, thinking of his relationship with God as a private affair, makes the interest of his religion focus principally upon the salvation of his own soul, as if this were isolated or separable from other living souls. He thinks of getting his soul safely out of this world and into heaven, through the saving work of Christ which, in turn, is thought of as chiefly directed to this end for every human individual. From this it then follows that religious attention tends more and more to center on the next world rather than on this, since heaven and hell are everlasting and therefore very important, while this world is fleeting and of but passing interest. Neither the pain nor the pleasure of this life here below has any abiding value and they merit correspondingly slight attention. In this way, the thought of heaven becomes an escape and a release from the obligation of saving and perfecting this world here and now. Why bother about things that are perishing? (MIG 150)

Such a view gives credence to the Marxist critique of Christianity:

And so, logically once more, Protestant theory is in danger of justifying the criticism which Karl Marx, even if with exaggerated and erroneous generalization, made of all religion, labelling it as nothing more than "the sigh of the hard-pressed creature" who in religion is really inventing for himself, and out of his imagination, a "heart for the heartless world, a soul for what are really soulless circumstances." The hope of a perfect heaven paralyzes all constructive effort for the perfection of this earth here and now, and religion, since it tends to keep men quiet when they ought to be definitely rebellious in the midst of miserable conditions, is called "the opium of the people." (MIG 150)

But catholics too have resorted to otherworldliness: "[they] for their part, have so often failed to follow the opposite logic of their own Divine social vocation, and . . . they,

perhaps even more than Protestants, in practice, have made the Marxian criticism seem valid." (MIG 151)

Elsewhere, for example in the Society of the Catholic Commonwealth manual, Smyth is much sharper in his condemnation of non-materialist "extrictionalist" Christianity:

The Society [of the Catholic Commonwealth] therefore also rejects "going to church" as mere comfort, mere refuge from life's storms, mere edification, mere inspiration, all of which things are symptoms of, and stages in, extrictionalism. In short, it rejects all "purely spiritual" and non-Sacramental idealism; for apart from functional Sacramentalism, the only connection of ideals with man's material state rests tenuously and abstractly in what are called the "practical implications" of religion. Implicationism is veiled idealism. The Society rejects idealism as the most subtle and deadly enemy of the Sacramental Religion of the Incarnation.¹⁵

Essential to such spirituality is the "extrication" of individual souls from the evil material world. Extrictionalist religion typically denies the Incarnational redemption and transformation of the material social order, preferring a retreat into a "purely spiritual" personal relationship with God.

Smyth begins Discerning the Lord's Body with a condemnation of extrictionalism, again applying Marx's critique of religion to it. He contrasts the non-Christian view of the world as evil (exemplified by Buddhism, "the most consistent example of an extrication religion") with the Christian view of the world as essentially good despite the presence of human sin. Christian salvation is not the aban-

donment of the world but its transformation and re-perfection:

. . . the Christian Religion is essentially one of redemption of the world, of recall or restoration of a disordered creation. And individual human beings begin to be redeemed or saved as they give themselves here and now to this enterprise of the re-creation of the world of human life as a whole. (DTLB 7)

But the false view that the material order is evil has corrupted much of Christianity:

In so far as men have introduced into Christian thinking that false notion of the essentially evil and hopeless quality of God's creation or of that of any of its various single elements and in so far as they have believed that man's salvation consists primarily in a kind of fishing out of spiritual souls from this clogging material morass, by just so much have they confused the basic understanding of the peculiarly Christian problem. This confusion has perverted much actual popular and even official "Christianity" into an enterprise of extricationist soul-saving. The official Church, intent upon getting souls out of this world into some supposedly ready-made heaven, seems to have an attitude towards this world hardly distinguishable from that of the Buddhist. (DTLB 7-8)

Thus, Christians "can find little rational cause for concern with the attempted improvement of a world which they have been told is at heart hopelessly evil and therefore to be abandoned in the end for a better home in heaven." (DTLB 8)

Smyth believed that Marx's critique of religion applied to such "extricationist" religion but not to genuinely Incarnational Christianity:

Karl Marx understood Christianity in this [extricationist] way. This is the reason why he called religion an opium of the people. He thought religious salvation was a trumped-up, mystical ersatz for all attempt at a rational improvement of the lot of man in this world.

Marx's charge seems justified fundamentally if directed at Buddhism. It was justified practically by the "Christianity" that he knew. It is justified by most "Christianity" today. Our problem is to reassert the genuine Religion of the Incarnation and to apply this to the redemption of our world. When this is done, Marx's successors and followers will finally see that Christianity does not stand in opposition to their humanist aims, but is instead the necessary completion and crown of all that is good in that very social revolution which they themselves now hope to bring about. (DTLB 8n)

Smyth's "extricationalism" is quite similar to John Macmurray's "pseudo-religion" in Creative Society.¹⁶ Both are defective forms of spirituality that deserve Marx's criticism while true Christianity demands the transformation of the material order.

Discerning the Lord's Body assumes and builds upon the basic Incarnational materialism of Manhood Into God. The material world is essential to the Incarnation:

. . . God the Son -- the eternal Logos, as He is also called -- starts His enterprise of the re-creation of His own creation at the level of the matter of this world. His first movement is to take the material seed of a human body upon Himself. He takes this necessary initial material from the body of a young Jewish maiden named Mary. The material body matures in the womb of this young girl and, in due time, is born into the world of human society.

From the point of His birth onward, God continues and expands his re-creative work. He does not cease to take additional matter into Himself and His physical human organism and gradually matures. (MIG 20-1)

The material world continues to be essential to the Incarnational process as it develops in the Church, particularly in the Eucharist.

As I have indicated, Discerning the Lord's Body is largely concerned with the Eucharist as Metacosmesis. Smyth

begins with the Eucharistic offertory. The bread and wine offered at the Eucharist materially contain the social and economic relations that produced them:

Natural bread and wine, therefore, emerge as the end-products of a certain structure or block of socially organized human activity throughout a time recently passed. They stand as concrete, material manifestations of all the human relationships and modes of behavior and activity which have been historically involved in their preparation. They are objects into whose constitution there enter vast and complicated human operations and creative activities which have contributed both to their actual existences and to their presence at a particular required time and place. All of which means that the members of any group of the social body of Our Lord always bring with them, concreted -- as it were materially precipitated -- under the forms of portions of bread and wine, a structure of dynamic human relationships and of experiences, a structure not alone filled in by their own recent lives and deeds, but entraining within itself all other human activities which have been involved in its history. (DTLB 66-67)

Smyth quotes Aristotle ("the faculty of making something resides in the thing made") and Marx:

Karl Marx seems to have intended to say something like this when he wrote: "As values, all commodities (i.e. any artifacts or humanly manufactured articles intended for the channels of trade. F.H.S.) are only definite masses of congealed labor-time." (DTLB 67)

Smyth concludes, "And thus, the emergent values of the multitudinous human relationships and social acts of labor which have produced them, reside in portions of natural bread and wine." (DTLB 67, Smyth's italics.) Smyth quotes St. Augustine to buttress his argument: "There you are upon the table, there you are in the chalice." (DTLB 67n)

One can see in Smyth's offertory theology the rich-

ness of his materialism. It is not simply dead matter that is taken into the divine but living social and economic relationships. Increasingly Smyth came to see these social and economic relationships as part of the substance or ultimate reality of the offered bread and wine.

The second part of the Metacosmic cycle in the Eucharist is the taking of the offered bread and wine into the divine. In the Eucharistic sacrifice, their contingent perfection is completed by the absolute perfection of the divine:

And once again, just as on the historical Cross [Our Lord] conveyed the content of His individual humanity from the contingent level of His human nature to the absolute level of His divine nature, so now He conveys the contingent gifts of His social humanity into the same absolute level. He thus perfects them absolutely. For as Our Lord emerges in the midst of a group of His social humanity, the substances of the offered natural bread and wine, according to the promise and covenant of the Last Supper, terminate at their Consecration in the Substances of His risen and ascended Body and Blood.
(DTLB 71)

The substances of the offered bread and wine (including the social and economic realities that "reside" in them) are taken into the divine and absolutely perfected as the substance (ultimate reality) of the Body and Blood of the Risen and Ascended Christ.

In the third part of the Metacosmic cycle of the Eucharist, the consecrated elements are returned to the offerers. While Smyth is reluctant to say that the "substances" of the natural bread and wine remain in the conse-

crated Body and Blood, their "structures" (the social and economic relations embodied in them) do remain. They are returned absolutely perfected to the offerers to strengthen them in transforming the world and preparing another offertory:

[Our Lord] returns the offered structures embodied in the natural bread and wine, absolutely perfected and clothed upon Himself, to the end that His social humanity, receiving them united to Him in His Body and His Blood, may fare forth again into the fallen world to prepare, upon this absolutely perfected foundation, new offerings, under forms of fresh portions of natural bread and wine, for the Offertory of its next succeeding Memorial. (DTLB 74)

Because it is the material world (including humanity) that is transformed by the divine grace of the Incarnation, matter becomes the basic vehicle of continued divine grace as the process of Incarnation (Metacosmesis) grows in the world. A concept such as a "purely spiritual" sacrament is meaningless; if put into practice (as in "spiritual communion" without bread and wine), it is extricationalist idealism.

In Chapter 10 of Discerning the Lord's Body Smyth develops the "material basis of Metacosmesis" in the Eucharist. While the discussion is repetitive, Smyth makes clear the impossibility of communication between God and humanity outside the material order. Smyth uses an Aristotelian definition of matter:

Matter is here to be defined in its basic Aristotelian sense. It is the principle of individuation within our world. Matter, in the Aristotelian usage, is not confin-

ed to the designation of sensible things. There is matter which is only intelligible. For example, the matter of a species is its genus. (DTLB 150n)

Smyth's concept of matter is, at least initially, rooted in Aristotelian and Thomist realism; it should not be confused with eighteenth century philosophical materialism or later forms of strict empiricism.

Crucial to Smyth's materialism is the unity of the material and the spiritual. In theological terms, they are concomitant. The material offering of the bread and wine, the basic gift that God requires, contains the intellectual and spiritual growth that has (or has not) been achieved in the offering's preparation:

All the spiritual structure which has thus emerged during the preparation of the material gifts moves to Our Lord by necessary concomitance with the substances of the bread and wine. But the spiritual structure cannot be presented in such form as effectively to transgress that wall of partition between the level of our fallen world and the level of the divine life, except it be borne up to the door of Our Lord's Altar under the forms of those material gifts wherein it has come to reside, material gifts which, by Our Lord's institution, are the basic objects demanded from the Divine Community for His Memorial. All other outgoing spiritual movements, whether of heartfelt devotion, of aspiration, of prayer, of resolutions for the future, of Christian moral sanctity, are received by God Incarnate concomitantly with the material gifts of bread and wine. (DTLB 150-1)

Because divine revelation is through Incarnation, a process continuing in the world, the material and the spiritual are in a relation of concomitance; thus, a "purely spiritual" relationship with or approach to God apart from the divinely instituted material vehicle, the Eucharist, is a denial of

the Incarnation and ultimately illusory.

Smyth warns against thinking of the material and spiritual as merely "parallel" processes happening at the same time:

If [this] view be held, the really basic process of the Memorial is a spiritual meeting between God and man, a meeting which parallels the material ritual while the bread and wine lie upon the Altar as passive reminders of the life and death of a great leader and Prophet of long ago. . . . This "spiritualized" view of the function of the natural bread and wine is radically sub-Christian. For it would leap over the historically attested necessity of a material Incarnation. (DTLB 151-2)

The Incarnational concomitance of the material and spiritual requires a more integrated view:

Therefore, we must seek to banish completely the error of thinking in terms of two processes, one a spiritual and one a material, which merely parallel each other, either within Our Lord's individual Incarnation, or within that Memorial which extends the Incarnate life to his social humanity and thus makes it functionally accessible to all other men still held in the flesh of this present world. In Our Lord the spiritual and the material are completely one. He is but One Christ made man for our salvation. For natural man to attempt some kind of short-circuited, "purely spiritual," union with God apart from Our Lord's human Body as the bridge or way of that union, is a mere futile and ignorant presumption. (DTLB 152)

Such a Eucharistic theology is a form of extricationism.

Likewise, by concomitance, both the material and the spiritual are taken into the divine at the Eucharistic consecration:

The absolute perfection of the people's spiritual offering is effected as this offering moves sacrificially into the fullness of Our Lord's risen and ascended life. And this too is a process which moves by concomitance with a simple basic movement deep within the material level of the Memorial. The spiritual movement from the

level of man's natural state into the level of Our Lord's ascended humanity is effected by concomitance with the basic movement whereby the natural substances of the bread and wine of the Offertory are terminated in the Substances of the Body and Blood of the Consecration. The spiritual movement of the life of man from a contingent to an absolute perfection within the Incarnate life of God is here borne along upon the movement of the natural substances of offered bread and wine into the Substances of the Incarnate Body and Blood. Thus in the Consecration as in the Offertory, a basic movement in the material level of the Incarnation is the necessary bearer of the concomitant movement within the spiritual superstructure. And apart from this material basis, the spiritual movement alone cannot of itself be carried through. (DTLB 153)

The material is primary; values, thought and reflection are a "superstructure" (a Marxist term) built upon the material.

In communion at the Eucharist, the material continues to be primary in the concomitant relationship between the spiritual and the material:

But here again, the bearers of this return Gift in the Holy Communion, the Gift of Our Lord in His wholeness united with the absolutely perfected offerings of His social humanity, are the Substances of the Incarnate Body and Blood. The basic movement is still within the material level. Therefore, a mere parallelism between the spiritual and material processes of the Memorial must be excluded from our thought. These "two processes" are but two aspects of one single process. They are inseparably united. And furthermore, instead of the movement in the spiritual level being operationally the primary one, it is quite the other way around. The movement in the material level of the Memorial is the necessary bearer of the spiritual movement. In this sense the movement in the material level has the primary importance. (DTLB 154)

Smyth goes on to liken the relation between the material and the spiritual to that between field (carrier) and overtone waves in radio broadcasting. Without the former, the latter is not possible.

The overwhelming significance of Eucharistic Metacosmesis is that it re-creates and re-perfects the material world:

For in the continuing process of the redemption of the world the substances of material bread and wine and the Substances of the Incarnate Body and Blood of God are the unique and indispensable vectors whereby all other elements in the ordered life-structure of Our Lord's Divine Community are conveyed into the level of His absolute perfection. And they are likewise the vectors whereby His re-creative power is returned to inform the further redeeming growth of that same [sic] His social humanity which presents its Offertory to Him. Such material vectors, as they take form within the natural level of human life, must therefore be made worthy of their high functions. For it is through their appointed material mediums alone that a redeemed humanity in its re-created wholeness is made to partake of the eternal Godhead of its risen and ascended Lord. (DTLB 156-7)

Participation in Metacosmesis takes on urgency for only what is redeemed in this world can be consummated in eternity:

"The content of man's eternity -- so far as his humanity is concerned -- is built up out of the life materials which are available to him for this re-creative work within this world." (DTLB 157-8)

Toward the end of Discerning the Lord's Body, Smyth reiterates his agreement with Marx's critique of religion as applied to much of traditional Christianity, though not to genuine Incarnational Christianity:

In all humility Christians should admit that a great preponderance of the contemporary religious teaching upon which Marx in his day based his damning judgment did largely justify his analysis. The practical judgments of Karl Marx concerning the secular ends served by religion are even now valid in the presence of most present day conventional Church teaching throughout the

world. Therefore, even while we disagree fundamentally with the Marxian judgment upon the basic nature of the Religion of the Incarnation, we can scarcely wonder at it. Neither can we blame Marxists overmuch for an intellectual mistake for which the Christian Church may, in the judgment of history, have to assume a primary responsibility. (DTLB 185)

Christians have much, indeed, to learn from Marx.

Smyth finds himself in agreement with Marx's primary objectives in the material order:

What Marx did seek with all his mind and heart was a truly unified secular order. And in seeking this goal his intention was basically coincident with what ought to be the immediate intention of Christians. For without a prior unity achieved in the secular order there can be no further unified integration of the secular and Incarnational structures of human life. Marx and his successors have set themselves the task of eliminating the present basic material cause of the disunity and conflict in the secular world. They have set about ridding the economic structure of its property-ownership class divisions. (DTLB 186)

According to Marxist theory, with the disappearance of economic classes the political and religious structures based on class division will also disappear.

While Smyth supports the elimination of oppressive forms of religion, the Marxist analysis, as applied to the Incarnation, is ultimately inadequate:

Christians must gird themselves to bear witness to the fact that the Marxian view of the Religion of the Incarnation is a dangerous error. In spite of the corruptions and derelictions of the Church, both in teaching and in practice, the Christian religion rightly understood remains as always the one supreme reality. It is the one Truth which validates and gives rational meaning to every other human experience and endeavor. It shows forth and establishes that one end towards which every other good human effort, whether economic, political, aesthetic or intellectual, is but a rational means of progressive advance. (DTLB 188)

Incarnational Christianity fulfills secular human action:

Therefore, the religious structure of social life, far from being negligible, is instead actually the crowning structure which must embrace in its Incarnational organism -- and thus carry it into an eternal reference -- man's creative accomplishments in every other subsidiary category of his present life in time and space. When this supreme truth is disregarded, when the end of man's salvation is arbitrarily confined to a rational integration of his life exclusively within the level of this world, then an inversion is embraced which disregards man's true end in an eternal consummation of every human value. This materialist inversion exalts the perfection of life in this world from its status as a means to man's true end, into the status of an end in itself.
(DTLB 188-89)

The argument is a slightly sharpened version of that in Manhood Into God: Marxism does not go far enough for it concerns itself only with the material world. The Incarnation is required to complete and fulfill Marxist analysis and action. One notes too that toward the end of the above passage, "materialist" takes on a decidedly negative tone ("materialist inversion"). The negative dimension of Marxist materialism becomes a strong theme in Smyth's later writings.

However, even here, Smyth points out that Christians have something to learn from Marxists. If Marxists err in disregarding religious structures, Christians err in disregarding economic ones:

. . . Christians have tended to regard the economic structure of life, if not as unreal, (as Marxists regard the religious structure) at any rate as having no separate existence and as being already included within the political structure. This mistake alone would account for the medieval failure to achieve a reintegrated

social order within the world of the Incarnation. (DTLB 190)

The oppressive social structure of medieval feudalism could not be integrated into the Incarnational social order and, indeed, contained the seeds of feudalism's own destruction. Ignorant of the economic realities, the medieval church attacked the wrong obstacles to growth into an Incarnational social order:

[The Church] tried to reform individual evil doers, failing to see that her first problem was not one of conversion of individuals, so much as that of a radical economic change. The Church finally gave up the whole problem and began compromisingly to consent to the continuing and relatively independent existence of a secular structure parallel with, and alongside of, her own religious structure. She still maintained that the religious structure of human life was somehow the more important one. But she gradually relinquished the aim of a complete reintegration of the two structures, the one within the other. In other words, in her frustration, she finally relinquished even her own high concept of the complete redemption of human life in this world within the New World of the Incarnation, and gave herself over to the business of extricationist, individual soul-saving. (DTLB 190)

A Marxist critique of such Christianity is quite justified.

Aware of the defects of extricationist Christianity, Incarnational Christians can and should learn from and work with Marxists in perfecting the material social order:

But in this age we can at least avoid the ignorant errors of our forefathers in the Faith. We can take advantage of the secular truths which Marxists now point out. We can see that before the secular order can be redeemed within a single Incarnational structure, it must first have its own inner constitutional contradictions eliminated. The secular structure must itself be made over into a single structural entity before it can be successfully presented as a whole within the Offertory of the Church's bread and wine. And so, within the area of

scientific and revolutionary social action, both Christians and Marxists, at this moment of history, have a common immediate objective. (DTLB 191)

Indeed, despite disagreement on final ends, cooperation is necessary for the perfection of the Offertory:

[Christians and Marxists] disagree as to the ultimate reasons for seeking this objective. Marxists consider it an end in itself. Christians seek it as a means of perfecting and enlarging the content of their Offertory. By the grace of the Holy Spirit, Christians seek thus to reduce the present necessary extent of the social application of the Atonement. But, for the immediate future, the preparatory work of St. John Baptist and the social revolutionary work of Karl Marx, seem in the providence of God to coincide. Until the members of the humanity of the Incarnation realize this latter truth, and devote both their attention and their action to it afresh, they cannot expect the full power of the metacosmic humanity of Our Lord to appear again in their midst. (DTLB 191)

Such a use of Marxism by Christians moves, of course, from materialism to dialectics. As I have noted, because of the nature of dialectical materialism, this is inevitable. But in terms of my discussion of Christian and Marxist materialism, what is important is that both Metacosmesis and dialectical materialism begin with and are rooted in the material world.

In the late forties, Smyth continued to build a Christian apologetic based on rapprochement between Christian and Marxist materialism. In June 1947 Smyth described his approach to Arnold J. Wolf, a rabbi at Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati:

I believe that present day secular materialism (Marxism) can be integrated with religion chiefly through a fresh appreciation of the materially sacrificial tradition in Liturgical theology. It is the 'spiritualization' of

religion, both among Jews and Christians, which has given the Marxians almost a clear field in their insistence upon the importance of Matter. We ought never to have given them a head start.¹⁷

Likewise, Christians need to teach Marxists the difference between extricationalist and Incarnational religion. Smyth described the task in some unpublished notes (1947) on dialectics:

Marxists must be led from blanket denials of all religion to see a distinction between good & bad religion. (The only good religion is Incarnational Catholicism.) This distinction does not necessarily require Marxists to admit immediately that Incarnationalism is true. That admission might come later.¹⁸

Such a strategy required at least a partially positive assessment of Marxist materialism.

Smyth's most positive discussion of the relation between Christian and Marxist materialism is his 1949 Allocation, "Catholic Sacramentalism and Marxian Materialism". As in Manhood Into God, Smyth relates Incarnational Christianity with dialectical materialism. Incarnational Christians are part of the contemporary revolutionary (dialectical) force, seeking "to establish as definitely as possible that religious antithesis which both can and will emerge as the redeeming Incarnational Catholic and Sacramental organism synthetically integrated with the social order of a post-revolutionary future."

Such revolutionary action is unique in human history:

. . . it is a dialectic social overturn which for the

first time in history moves upon a basis of a carefully worked out and rationally understood scientific and philosophical theory of reality and of historical movement. This theory, which stems from the work of Marx and Engels and is amplified and applied by Lenin and other Marxian successors, is called Dialectical Materialism.¹⁹

According to the bourgeois thetical church, dialectical materialism is "absolutely inimical to the so-called 'spiritual' witness of Christianity."²⁰ Smyth rejects this view and defends Marxist materialism. Marxism and "spiritual values" are not incompatible:

Primarily, it is the "materialist" dogma of Marxism which is supposed to be flatly irreconcilable with the so-called "ideals" of Christianity. But in this connection, we must first recall that this materialism does not in any way oppose itself to what we are wont to call spiritual values in human life. It does not oppose itself to valid aesthetic or intellectual values; it does not deny the existence of a rational structure of knowledge built up by the conscious activities of human minds. In short, it by no means denies the objective existence of the spiritual superstructure of reality manifested in the movements of rational human consciousness. Dialectical Materialism is not concerned with any kind of denial of the positive function in reality of what we call the spiritual elements--thinking, consciousness, psychical phenomena of every variety--in the natural level of human life.

Indeed, Marxism respects these values:

On the contrary, it is the special contribution of Dialectical Materialism, in distinction from all other previous materialist philosophies, that it insists on giving their due weight and place in the scheme of reality to psychical or spiritual contributions as these affect the movement of history; contributions made by the activities of rational human mind, as this activity continually and positively alters the social and material environment to which it has access. Marxian Materialism by no means denies the practical role of evolving spiritual values, as we would call them. What it is concerned to oppose and to correct is the basic error of philosophical Idealism. And this is an entirely different matter.²¹

Smyth, quite legitimately, recognizes a dialectical relationship between matter and thought in dialectical materialism. He rejects any "vulgar materialist" interpretation of Marxism.

The enemy is philosophical idealism: "In the controversion of this Idealist error Catholic and Materialist philosophies of reality can fully unite, both by tradition and by basic affirmations; for Catholic philosophy has always denied philosophical Idealism, and has endorsed instead what is called a Realist position."²² To illustrate this point, Smyth places John Wild's definition of philosophical realism in Introduction to Realist Philosophy alongside Lenin's definition of Marxist materialism in Materialism and Empirio-Criticism and finds them strikingly similar. Smyth writes,

The Realist position is set forth [by Wild] as standing on the following "three basic doctrines": "(1) There is a world of real existence which men have not made or constructed; (2) this real existence can be known by the human mind; and (3) such knowledge is the only reliable guide to human conduct, individual and social."

He continues,

. . . Lenin writes that "the recognition of the objective law in nature (i.e. outside and independent of "what men have made and constructed" and of man's observing and thinking. F.H.S.) and the recognition that this law is reflected with approximate fidelity in the mind of man (i.e. 'can be known by the human mind') is materialism."

Smyth concludes, "It is almost startling to see that if we substitute 'Materialism' for 'Realism' in Wild's definition,

or 'Realism' for 'Materialism' in that of Lenin, the two can be used interchangeably!"²³ Indeed, Christians have much to gain from working with dialectical materialists:

Therefore, when Dialectical Materialism is properly understood, we, as antithetical Catholics, must seek our common doctrinal ground with those of the contemporary secular antithesis who call themselves Dialectical Materialists; for it is in integration with them that we must move forward into what we both hope and believe will be a common future historical synthesis.²⁴

The agreement is both in terms of dialectics and materialism.

Smyth outlines the materialist critique of philosophical idealism:

The [Hegelian] Idealists have taught that an immaterial Idea is the primary moving cause and source of all observable reality. The [Dialectical] Materialists insist that movement and change within the natural material (physical) order of reality is primary to every psychical (ideal) process, and that in the world in which we, as human beings, have our existence, consciousness, thought, the psychical superstructure, the ideal world--call it what one will--grows up secondarily out of the primary moving process of the material base. No disembodied consciousness or Idea or Thinking Process is the autonomously primary mover of our real world of time and space. On the contrary, in our world, the basically moving material order gives rise to, is the source of, and causes the movements which we recognize as processes in the spiritual level of conscious thought and purpose. As Engels succinctly writes: "For the Materialists nature is primary and spirit secondary, for the Idealists the reverse is the case."

However the spiritual processes are not simply illusory:

. . . once these spiritual processes arise and are established, they most certainly react back again dialectically upon the material processes (both non-conscious and non-animate) which underlie them. . . . [The spiritual processes] produce their reflex dialectical effects back again upon the basic material processes upon which

they, as it were, ride. Herein lies the distinction between Dialectical Materialism and all other materialist positions.²⁵

Smyth supports this materialist analysis from the natural sciences, arguing that the evolution of human consciousness moves from the physical to the spiritual.

Smyth, however, as a Christian, believes in a God who is pure spirit: "As Catholic Christians we affirm our belief in God who is pure Spirit as the Source and First Cause of all that is." But such a belief "does not entail an idealist interpretation of our natural world as this is here and now given to us." Certainly God as pure spirit creates the natural order ex nihilo but such creation is beyond human experience and understanding. "The only spiritual structures which we know, both by experience as well as in rational concept, which act upon material processes are spiritual structures which have themselves first emerged out of those same material processes upon which they, in turn, then dialectically react."²⁶

In other words, God cannot be known except through the material order or through spiritual structures mediated through the material order. Smyth relates this way of knowing God to the Incarnation:

It is worthy of note that the Creed attributes the creative activity of Deity as concerning our world to the Logos who, from the beginning has been the potentially Incarnate Person of the Trinity. And we, as material beings with rational minds, can know God only as He Himself comes into our material order and thus subjects His own spiritual revelations and movements to the same

material process-hierarchy which governs our own state of being. God, in revealing Himself to men, working among them and redeeming them, first provides Himself with a basis in the material order, a body, without which none of the spiritual superstructure which we recognize as uniquely perfected in the Man Jesus, could have been dialectically integrated with the realities of human history. Thus, even the transcendent values coming from God and mediated within the Incarnation could not, as it were, be directly interjected into history from the level of pure Spirit, but had to be dialectically integrated with history upon that material basis which is the primary mover of our history in time and space. It is in this sense that we Catholics are Materialists; a sense which, I believe, if properly understood, would always have been acceptable to a Marx, an Engels, or a Lenin.²⁷

Smyth is arguing that although God, the ground of all reality, is pure spirit, reality itself (as created by God) is first and foremost material, with spiritual structures and processes within the created world dependent on the material, though capable of shaping it dialectically. Therefore God's self-revelation is not in some "purely spiritual" way but through Incarnation. Thus, Smyth continues,

[there are] no such things as what are called "purely spiritual" approaches to union with God. Every spiritual movement in which we are concerned is necessarily borne along upon its own appropriate and peculiar underlying material process.²⁸

These "material conveyers" are the sacraments, hence the term "sacramental materialism". Smyth goes on to a discussion of the Eucharist basically identical with that in Discerning the Lord's Body.

Smyth argues that the tendency of western bourgeois Christianity to see sacraments as primarily spiritual activities, detached from the material, parallels western bour-

geois society's commitment to one form or another of philosophical idealism. Smyth's two main criticisms of philosophical idealism are that it encourages human pride and opens the way for the divorce of theory and practice. On the first point, Smyth maintains that idealism encourages human beings to forget their material background, their creatureliness, and to elevate themselves to the level of creative deities. The ultimate result is a radical humanism in which human beings, not God, are the centre of all things. (He quotes Henley's "Invictus": "I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul.")²⁹

On the second point, Smyth argues that the detachment of spiritual life from its material substructure results in the breaking of the necessary connection between practice and theory; in idealism the connection is maintained only by constant willing. Practice and theory easily go in opposite directions when the weak human will is faced with the prospect of unjust economic gain:

. . . the bourgeois man can always find an "out" when the competitively inhuman social relations which he establishes contradict his ideals of human "brotherly love"; for the contradiction resides only in the level of "morality," and such a problem can always be postponed--postponed, indeed, for settling in some vague future life! Once again, it is but a step beyond this to entertain the notion that the ideal world can be altogether divorced from material experience. This ideal world becomes the only "true" world, quite apart from the sordid, grim and competitive realities which have become materially inevitable in the developing bourgeois economic structure. Idealism thus has the great advantage of enabling men to think fine thoughts while per-

mitting themselves to be enmeshed in evil material arrangements.³⁰

The connection between practice and theory in idealism is an "ought" while in materialism, insofar as the spiritual is necessarily derived from the material, the connection is a "must". The paradigm is scientific: if an engineer wants to build a bridge, he or she must (not ought to) design it correctly for it to be a bridge, given the material requirements for a bridge.

Smyth goes on to argue that liturgies, because they are materialist, should be "must" liturgies (necessarily conveying the spiritual through the material) rather than "ought" liturgies (subjective and idealistic forms of edification in which the spiritual tries to shape the material). He argues that ancient Catholic liturgies (like the S.C.C. "Anamnesis") were solidly materialist while the liturgical reforms of Thomas Cranmer in the English Reformation were idealistic. He gives numerous examples of the "idealism" of Cranmer's Book of Common Prayer (such as the downgrading of the offertory). Finally, Smyth gives materialist interpretations of prayer and penance.

Smyth concludes the Allocution by returning to the compatibility of Incarnational Christianity (including sacramental materialism) with dialectical materialism. As in Discerning the Lord's Body, he agrees that as far as much of traditional Christianity is concerned, dialectical material-

ists have every reason to dismiss Christianity as "institutionalized idealism expressed in mythological forms." Again, however, Smyth does not regard Incarnational Christianity as falling under that label:

Perhaps our most important function [in the S.C.C.] is to prove in action that our deepest and central religious Act, the Sacrifice of the Anamnesis, fits completely within a materialist analysis of natural reality. For, although in the Sacrifice of the Altar, time and eternity are in dialectic interchange, and although here too Deity and our natural order interpenetrate to give rise continually to new syntheses in moving history, nevertheless, this dialectic between the natural and the supernatural levels of being moves always upon the primary material basis of bread and wine and Body and Blood. In principle, this in no way contravenes the materialist principles of analysis valid for every other movement in our known reality. But that the full structure of human life and accomplishment can, through the door of the Incarnation, move beyond the dialectic of natural history into an eternal consumation, is a witness which we alone are privileged to bear.³¹

The pioneering task of the Society of the Catholic Commonwealth is "to link Sacramental Materialism with practical action, to integrate it with the contemporary world revolution."³²

The 1949 Allocution was Smyth's most irenic attempt to bring together Christian and Marxist materialism. It was his last major effort. Indeed, in spite of this Allocution, one can argue that from the spring of 1948 Smyth and some members of the S.C.C. had already reached a nodal point in their dialogue with dialectical materialism. Smyth began to develop a sharp critique of Marxist materialism as metaphysical and religious, a rival rather than an ally of Christian

materialism. Smyth did not abandon his own Incarnational materialism nor did he give up Marxist dialectical analysis but he began to see the philosophical materialism of dialectical materialism as an enemy rather than a friend. This new position was at least implicit in Smyth's earlier writings; what is different is the change in emphasis.

In the spring of 1948, Smyth published Harold J. Laski's 1947 Webb Memorial Lecture, "The Webbs and Soviet Communism", in three successive issues of the Bulletin. Laski sought to put the Soviet Union in its historical, cultural and religious context to explain "its peculiar Messianic quality, that apocalyptic dogmatism, upon which it is built."³³ In an article entitled "Materialist Dogma as a Creedal Test" in the following issue of the Bulletin, Smyth took up and developed Laski's comments in terms of Dialectical Materialism.

Smyth begins, "Here we believe that Mr. Laski has uncovered in brief compass a problem not brought often enough, and frankly enough, into the open. This is the peculiar 'religious' quality of dogmatic dialectical materialism." The problem is rooted in Russian nationalism but goes beyond it:

A further contributing element in this 'mystical' problem is one not brought out by Mr. Laski, but which confronts us in a progressive crystalization of the Marxian materialist emphasis into a kind of 'fundamentalist' dogma. And, erected upon this basic 'article of faith,' Marxian analyses in these recent years have all too often come to resemble a superstructure of pseudo-

theological exigeses.

American Communists also are "wholeheartedly involved" with "fundamental materialism": "They do erect the dogma of materialism into a kind of Test of Faith, apart from which no dialectic analysis of history, no matter how objective and scientifically true to reality it may be, is to be considered as fully 'orthodox.'"³⁴

Smyth expresses his own frustration with this development:

. . . Westerners who are in complete agreement with the Dialectical Materialists in areas of rational and scientific analysis of the historical process, and who, furthermore, fully share the conviction that the capitalist structure must be superseded by a new socialist synthesis, discover that such rational and scientific agreement is not enough. They discover--most disconcertingly--that above and beyond such agreement, they are required to accept what might be called the 'True Faith' of materialism before they themselves are received as members in full community with the Dialectical Materialists. To many a Westerner, who is steeped in his own rational tradition, and, in the case of Catholics, in the classic realism of their religion, this becomes an experience at once perplexing and frustrating.³⁵

The Marxist materialist "faith" is unnecessary for Incarnational Christians:

For Catholics already possess in the Religion of the Incarnation a structure of reality which can subsume with ease a rational dialectic view of the material process. They therefore see no reason for permitting themselves to be dragooned into some other religious allegiance which, to put it mildly, seems no more adequate than their own, as a condition for a completely comradely integration in the common striving for a socialist order.³⁶

The comments reflect Smyth's increasing disillusionment with both the Soviet Union and the American Communist Party.

Smyth goes on to characterize the difference between dialectical materialism and Christian realism as a profound disagreement about ultimate causation. For the former, ultimate causation lies within matter itself, making "dogmatic" dialectical materialism a form of "philosophical pantheism". For the latter, ultimate causation lies with God. "The conflict, therefore, between rational Catholics and Marxian Dialecticians [lies] in the conflict of religious allegiances to two different, and mutually exclusive, levels of ultimate causation."³⁷

Smyth argues that Christians and Marxists should be able to work together while disagreeing with one another on ultimate metaphysical and religious questions. For a Marxist to demand that a Christian accept the full Marxist materialist metaphysic before cooperation is possible is like a Christian physicist demanding that coworkers believe in the Trinity before any collaboration is possible. The present situation leaves Christians in a strange position: "And so it turns out that we Incarnational Catholics are in the curious position of having to convert Christians to scientific Marxism, while at the same time we have to detach Marxists from the exclusive mystical and religious aspects of their own materialist dogma."³⁸

Smyth grants that the "counter-religion" of Marxist materialism has been (and still is) in some measure a logi-

cal response to extrictionalist Christianity. But Incarnational Christianity is exempt from the Marxist critique; indeed, it is itself Marxist in its use of Marxist dialectical analysis. Marxists should drop the "creedal test" of materialism and work with Incarnational Catholics:

The Religion of the Incarnation--the true Christianity of a this-world redemption--can be reasserted in such wise that it is not only compatible with, but requires, a socially scientific attack upon the contemporary secular order, and the movement of the latter into an equally scientifically planned socialist system of economic production and distribution. In this positive area there ought to be complete integration of effort among Marxian scientists, whether Christian or Materialist--who seek the same dialectical overturn of capitalism; and this rational (and not merely opportunist) integration should be disembarassed from implied religious creedal tests.³⁹

Dialectical materialists must learn to distinguish between perverted extrictionalist and true Incarnational Christianity.

Smyth appeals to dialectical materialists not only to be tolerant of Incarnational Christianity but to move beyond their own limited materialist metaphysic:

We, therefore, would plead with the Materialists that they cease implying to many Christian would-be fellow workers that their Christianity can be tolerated only opportunistically and for the period in which their delusion persists. Instead, let them send such seekers back to a fresh and positive assertion of the Christianity of the Incarnation, of the Word made Flesh. . . . Let those who still adhere to a materialist religion--and no doubt there will persist many of these for some time to come--begin to take a positive, rather than a negative attitude towards a Christianity which is their friend in scientific social analysis, rather than their enemy.

A more tolerant view will enable Christians and Marxists to

work together:

In this way, enormous emotional and religious tensions which now exist between Incarnational Christians and Dialectical Materialists, may be assuaged. Christians of the West who have begun to understand the full this-worldly necessities of their own religion will no longer be faced--even by implication--with the suggestion that eventually they will be led to abandon their deepest and most rationally held traditions. They will not be faced with a dilemma of seeming choice between their Christianity and a genuinely scientific socialist allegiance.

Smyth urges secular Marxists to respect Incarnational Christianity:

Let contemporary Dialectical Materialists cease treating their Christian colleagues as mere step-children in the family of the 'True Faith' of Materialism. Let them, rather, in broad and sincere suspension of judgment in the religious issue at least act as if they were ready to receive Incarnational Christianity in equal standing with dogmatic materialism as an adequate framework from which full scientific cooperation in the historical social movement may proceed.⁴⁰

Smyth concludes that if western Marxists follow this approach, Communist parties will finally lose their sectarian quality, move towards unity and begin to grow.

I have quoted extensively from this essay because it represents an important shift in Smyth's understanding of the relation between Christian and Marxist materialism. In one sense, there is little genuinely new in the essay. The critique of Marxist materialism has already appeared in Manhood Into God and Discerning the Lord's Body. The difference is the movement away from an irenic treatment of Christian and Marxist materialism. Contrast rather than agreement is highlighted. They are now characterized as different faith

systems. Eventually Smyth moves to a Marxist dialectical analysis detached from any Marxist materialist metaphysic. I shall discuss this movement in my next chapter.

There are several explanations for this change. Politically, Smyth's disillusionment with Stalinist totalitarianism, Soviet science and philosophy and the American Communist party, along with his conviction that an irrational dogmatism (of which a rigid form of dialectical materialism was a part) shaped them all, certainly explains much of the shift. After having given Stalin the benefit of the doubt in the late thirties, Smyth was now finally rejecting Stalinism. Smyth began moving towards alternative Marxist visions, such as those of Tito and Mao. At the same time, he was turning increasingly to classical philosophical realism for his theological language; its formulations highlighted the differences between Christian realism and dialectical materialism.

Certain personal factors also contributed to the change. The shift corresponds to the beginning of Smyth's close friendship with Don P. Johnston, jr. Johnston had little sympathy with Marxism and as the friendship developed, Smyth came to share some of Johnston's views. Likewise, the movement of David Hecht, Smyth's close friend and collaborator, to an anti-Communist position pushed Smyth in a similar direction. Johnston and Hecht sought to use Smyth

against S.C.C. members who were deeply committed to their Marxism.

Finally, Smyth's materialist apologetic had not been very successful. It appealed to Christians who already were attracted to Marxism and needed a way of integrating Marxism and Christianity. But it brought few Christians to Marxism and even fewer Marxists to Christianity. Christians were frightened at the seemingly uncritical acceptance of Marxism while Marxists regarded even Incarnational Christianity as irrelevant. While never renouncing the attempt, Smyth moved away from a bold apologetic based on materialism to a more nuanced and critical stance.

This more critical stance can be seen in Smyth's Allocutions, letters and Bulletin articles in the fifties. There his discussions of materialism are either philosophical discussions of the concept of substance required by Metacosmesis or critiques of the metaphysical character of Marxist materialism. Increasingly, Smyth saw substance in terms of "historical structure" rather than "structural relationships" in "space". In 1951, Smyth wrote John Rowe,

My approach has been that the substance of anything which is made (i.e., any artifact) is its history. Indeed, if the artifact in question, a piece of bread or anything else, is intended for any use in its future (i.e., it has a purpose) then this purpose is also already part of the history of its preparation, and is therefore within its substance at any present moment.

This view follows from Smyth's materialist theology of the offertory. The concrete history of the offertory's prepara-

tion is its substance. Drawing on his early theology of science, now informed by Marxism, Smyth argues for a realistic interpretation of Whitehead's primacy of relationships over objects:

Thus while "objects" in reality may be secondary and "relationships" may be primary, this does not entail philosophical Idealism. For the real world, no matter how its fundamental structure may eventually be formulated, is still objectively there and it exists quite apart from any thinking which we may do about it.⁴¹

Smyth defended this view of the historical and dialectical nature of substance against the classical Aristotelian and Thomistic view advocated by John Wild and Henry Veatch.⁴² Smyth's Sacrifice (1953) further develops the position.

However, Smyth's criticism of Marxist materialism also increased. His 1953 Allocution, "The Incarnation and the Hierarchy of Nature", contained one very critical comment about Marxist materialism, likening it to fascism. In the Allocution Smyth puts forward an ascending hierarchy of natures -- mineral, vegetative, sensitive, rational and incarnational -- in which each nature should subsume those below itself. In a discussion of the failure of the rational nature to subsume the sensitive (animal) nature, Smyth rejects any attempt to return to the latter:

Man's first idea of a so-called solution of his problem has been to revert as far as possible to the behaviour patterns of the sensitive level; in other words, human persons have thought it the part of wisdom to find the chief source of conflict between the sensitive and the rational, in the very existence of the rational nature itself. . . . [In this view] the rational nature can be

put at the service of the sensitive. Human being can convert themselves to a great extent into highly intelligent and cunning and ingenious, (but not properly rational) brute beasts. Such a so-called solution is even glorified at times by poets and philosophers and statesmen, by a Nietzsche (who paradoxically calls his really sub-human Blond Beast a "Superman,") by a Mussolini, and a Hitler.⁴³

To this list, Smyth adds Marxist materialism:

And, I have come to believe that, when it is stripped of all its high-sounding avowed practical intentions, the materialist metaphysics of Karl Marx leads to the same end: the placing of the rational nature of man in so far as this is possible, wholly at the service of the sensitive animal nature. Perhaps, in fact, this is a good way of defining "materialism," and this definition can cover not only the philosophically refined, but also the cruder and more vulgar meanings of that word.⁴⁴

Such a strong condemnation of Marxist materialism caused confusion among S.C.C. members and gave credence to the view that Smyth was, indeed, moving away from Marxism.

Smyth tried to clarify the 1953 Allocution comments in a letter to Archie Malloch:

Elmer Smith told me that he felt that I had caused some confusion with John Rowe when I sought an irenic analysis of "Materialism" in a former Allocution [1949], and then "turned round" and damned it (seemingly) in the present one. Perhaps I ought to have taken account of this seeming contradiction. In the earlier Allocution I was seeking to show that as the word "Materialism" had been used by Marx and Lenin (more especially) Lenin, [sic] it was not in a sense rigorously metaphysical, but was an expression meaning pretty much what the classical tradition means by "Realism." But in the present Allocution I was criticising the metaphysics of the materialist standpoint. Stalin continually sets "Dialectical Materialism" over against "Metaphysics," which latter he scorns. He thinks all "Metaphysicians" are "Idealists." Stalin is obviously trying to emphasize Realism, which in his opinion, "Metaphysics" always deserts. But protest as they may, the Materialists do have a metaphysic of their own, and it is this metaphysic (not its vocabulary) which I am criticising in the present Allocu-

tion.⁴⁵

Smyth's explanation is a bit disingenuous; he had, indeed, revised his assessment of Marxist metaphysics and decided that Lenin's materialism was not classical realism.

Smyth did not let up in his attack on Marxist materialist metaphysics. In September 1954 he restated his position in a letter to the Bulletin. By now S.C.C. members were debating whether or not they should still identify themselves as dialectical materialists. Smyth puts forward his view of the problem:

On the one hand, the Marxian metaphysic of Dialectical Materialism finds the source of all motion in the "contradictions inherent in matter". For Marxists, this is the Ultimate Cause, and therefore, metaphysically, Matter is God. Certainly no Christian can do anything but reject out of hand such an heretical absurdity. When we say we are "Marxian in secular analysis", we assuredly do not mean that we are accepting Marxian materialistic metaphysics. We mean only that we think Marx hit upon an illuminating methodology of history when he applied the Hegelian Dialectic to the concept of social classes, brought into being by the social arrangements of production of the material means of living: which social classes are "opposite to" one another and in moving mutual antithetical action in the time process. The Ultimate Cause of this dialectic movement in history is certainly not "matter", but, rather, the Creator, God. In this latter teaching we are anything but Marxists; we are Christians. And note, for this reason, no intelligent Communist would admit for a moment that for his part we can be "Marxian" even "in secular analysis". The Marxists in this connection are as dogmatically exclusive in their own religious reference as are the Roman Catholics in theirs.⁴⁶

Smyth's rejection of Marxist materialist metaphysics has hardened; nor does he any longer expect Marxists to recognize the validity of a Christian realist metaphysic.

One of Smyth's most critical condemnations of Marxist materialist metaphysics is his 1955 Allocution, "The Kingdom of Marx and the Kingdom of God". He begins by looking at Marxism from two perspectives, the ontological and the phenomenological. The ontological "concerns itself with the nature of the being of that ultimate reality in which we are set, and it seeks for the ultimate causes of movement and change which we experience" while the phenomenological "is concerned with the way and manner in which motions and changes in the natural order take place and go forward." The former is "metaphysical" while the latter, insofar as it is based on empirical observation, can be regarded as "scientific analysis". Smyth realizes that most Marxists would eschew such a separation; they would argue that such a division would be to separate practice and theory; and that even ontological assertions are derived exclusively from empirical observation. Smyth rejects this claim, arguing that insofar as Marxists seem to claim to have access to first causes or ultimate reality, they are making metaphysical assertions, not simply observations based on empirical evidence. Therefore Marxism has both ontological and scientific components.⁴⁷

Smyth's thesis in the Allocution is that while Christians can and should accept the phenomenological dimensions of Marxism (in spite of some weaknesses that have appeared in the actual use of the analysis), they should

forthrightly reject the ontological character of Marxism. Smyth argues that Marxists "take a further step [beyond dialectical analysis] in which no Christian can possibly follow." They go on to see the dialectical "tensions" as part of the very essence of matter itself and to assert that there is no reality outside this "self-contained dialectically tensional matter." Smyth goes on:

When we combine these two teachings we come out with the fundamental Marxian dogma: Matter is its own ultimate cause, and holds within itself the sufficient cause of its own movement: Materia est causa sua. Here we have a metaphysic of primary importance. For when men have - or think they have - been able to come into the presence of Ultimate or First Cause of that reality to which they belong and in which they are set, they have come into the Presence of God. Matter, therefore, both metaphysically and psychologically, becomes the Marxists' God! Marx disclosed not a mere phenomenological mode of natural movement, but the ontological secret of the universe.⁴⁸

Smyth argues that it is this ontological character that gives secular Marxism a highly religious flavour. "On this deep ontological and religious level Marxism is the mortal enemy, and not the friend of Christianity and the Kingdom of God." As a result, there are "religious" manifestations within Marxism which parallel Christian phenomena in an upside-down sort of way. Marxists rationally ally themselves to a particular materio-historical movement pattern that will triumph and ride into the synthesis on it. Smyth paraphrases Romans 8:31 to parody the Marxist position: "If Matter be for us, who can be against us?"⁴⁹ The final revo-

lution is a kind of Parousia, with an ensuing Millenium.

Two other results of secular Marxism's ontological character are an adoration of violent revolution as an end in itself and the enshrinement of hatred as a necessary part of the dialectical process. Because the new social order must be won through revolution (since revolution is derived from the metaphysical character of matter), revolution takes on a sacred quality; beyond it lies the "Marxian New Jerusalem". Likewise, class hatred, as rooted in tensions metaphysically present in matter itself, is to be encouraged: the Kingdom of Marx "is a Kingdom not of love but of hate."⁵⁰

Materialist ontology so pervades Marxism that Christianity cannot think in terms of taking over Marxism and "baptizing" it:

The Kingdom of God cannot smoothly, still less glibly and off-hand, take over the Kingdom of Marx by the easy path of a kind of subsequent blessing or Baptism. Marxists are working in a Christian direction only accidentally, and by virtue of a transcendently over-ruling divine Providence. Although the social structure of the Marxian Kingdom may well enshrine certain economics desirable from a Christian standpoint, the ontological basis of this achievement is a kind of demonic enemy of the Kingdom of God. For it is informed by a genuine materialist Theism. The Kingdom of God cannot take over the Kingdom of Marx without revolutionary cultural alteration of the latter's very foundations.⁵¹

Rather, the correct Christian approach is to convert Marxists to Incarnational Catholicism. Smyth concludes the Allocation:

Our work of conversion of communists to the religion of

the Incarnation must first include the assurance that the Kingdom of God does not necessarily (as they now believe) block, but welcomes the attainment of all that is good in what the communists call "scientific" socialism. But communist Christian conversion will then further involve the transformation of Marxian hope, from its blind alley in timebound history, to an eternal consummation; of communist faith, from its certain betrayal in man alone, to the God-Man Jesus Christ, who lived in this world, was murdered by men, yet rose again from human death and for our salvation is alive for evermore. And the passionate strength of communist materialist hate, must be converted through our Lord's Atonement and in sacramental Transubstantiation, into a passion of divine charity. Such I take it is the core of the vocation of our Society in this age.⁵²

While Smyth always worked for the conversion of Marxists to Christianity, Marxist materialism is now clearly a barrier to such conversion rather than a help. Smyth held to the views of the 1955 Allocution until his death despite resistance from within the S.C.C.

By the mid-fifties, then, Smyth's rapprochement with dialectical materialism along materialist lines, which had developed so fully in Manhood Into God, Discerning the Lord's Body and the 1949 Allocution, had cooled considerably and, indeed, turned to hostility. Some common ground certainly remained, insofar as both Smyth and the dialectical materialists continued to reject any form of philosophical idealism (and extricationalist religion) in favour of some form of (in a broad sense) realism. Yet as Smyth came to see Marx's and Lenin's "realism" as tainted with an ontological materialism, even this point of agreement crumbled. While he did not compromise in his Metacosmic Christian materialism,

which, indeed, he continued to develop in works of liturgical theology such as Sacrifice, Smyth gave up on the materialist half of dialectical materialism and turned to dialectics.

Notes

¹SCC papers, G-13-11, FHS sermon.

²SCC papers, G-10-7, FHS mission addresses.

³SCC papers, I-28, reprint of FHS, "The Catholic Church and Her Environment", from the Living Church, April 25, May 9 and May 23, 1936, p. 8.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., 10.

⁶Smyth, Manhood Into God, p. 110-11. (Hereafter cited in text as MIG with page number.)

⁷SCC papers, B-3-75, Norman Pittenger to FHS, Jan. 20, [1942]; B-3-76, FHS to Pittenger, Feb. 9, 1942; B-12-33, FHS to William B. Spofford, Feb. 9, 1942; B-3-73, Pittenger to FHS, Feb. 10, 1942; B-21-80, FHS to Russell McKeon, Feb. 14, 1942.

⁸SCC papers, A-13-109, FHS to [Norman Pittenger], April 10, 1942.

⁹SCC papers, H-2-8, FHS to G.A.C. Shrigley, July 2, 1942.

¹⁰SCC papers, B-5-30, FHS to Jim Wilson, Dec. 22, 1942.

¹¹SCC papers, A-7-72, FHS to [H.H.] Yeames, Sept. 18, 1945. For a contemporary Asian theological use of the term "metacosmesis", see Aloysius Pieris, "Towards an Asian Theology of Liberation", in Fabella, ed., Asia's Struggle for Full Humanity, pp. 75-95.

¹²SCC papers, B-3-68, Norman Pittenger to FHS, May 16, 1944 and FHS to Pittenger, Ascension, 1944.

¹³Smyth, Discerning the Lord's Body, pp. 47-8.

(Hereafter cited in text as DTLB with page number.)

¹⁴Smyth, Sacrifice, p. 58-9. (Hereafter cited in text as Sac. with page number.)

¹⁵[Smyth], The Society of the Catholic Commonwealth, second edition [1945], pp. 7-8.

¹⁶Macmurray, Creative Society, pp. 47-8.

¹⁷SCC papers, D-7-13, FHS to Arnold J. Wolf, June 15, 1947.

¹⁸SCC papers, J-7-318, Dialectics mss.

¹⁹Smyth, "Catholic Sacramentalism and Marxian Materialism", 1949 Allocution, p. 3.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid., 4.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., 5.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid., 6.

²⁷Ibid., 6-7.

²⁸Ibid., 7.

²⁹Ibid., 9.

³⁰Ibid., 10.

³¹Ibid., 20.

³²Ibid., 21.

³³Bulletin of the Society of the Catholic Commonwealth, III, No. 27 (April 25, 1948), [1].

³⁴Ibid., III, No. 28 (May 2, 1948), [1].

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid., [1-2].

³⁷Ibid., [2].

³⁸Ibid., [3].

³⁹Ibid., [3-4].

⁴⁰Ibid., [4].

⁴¹SCC papers, D-5-37, FHS to John Rowe, April 11, 1951.

⁴²SCC papers, C-27-31, FHS to Henry Veatch, June 13, 1951.

⁴³Smyth, "The Incarnation and the Hierarchy of Nature", 1953 Allocution, p. 10.

⁴⁴Ibid., 10-11.

⁴⁵SCC papers, F-41-65, FHS to Archie Malloch, Dec. 12, 1953.

⁴⁶Bulletin and Newsletter of the Society of the Catholic Commonwealth, I, No. 11 (Sept. 1954), 6-7.

⁴⁷Smyth, "The Kingdom of Marx and the Kingdom of God", 1955 Allocution, p. 1.

⁴⁸Ibid., 4-5.

⁴⁹Ibid., 5.

⁵⁰Ibid., 6.

⁵¹Ibid., 6-7.

⁵²Ibid., 9.