Eighth Annual

GTU FACULTY LECTURE

Robert McAfee Brown

Pacific School of Religion
Professor of Theology and Ethics

"1984 -- Orwell and Barmen"

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 28

8:00 p.m.

PSR Chapel

There will be a Memorial Service for
Gordon Weber,
Chair of the GTU Board of Trustees, 1977-1983.

A reception will follow in D'Autremont Hall.

GTU Lecture, March 28, 1984

1984 - ORWELL AND BARMEN

by

Robert McAfee Brown
Professor of Theology and Ethics
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Introduction: from Snoopy to Niemoeller

1. "1984" as a symbol
   Orwell's 1984:
   War is Peace
   Freedom is Slavery
   Ignorance is Strength

   The fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of the Synod of Barmen of the German Confessing Church, May 29-31, 1934

2. Brief historical background

3. The Declaration itself
   Affirmations
   Negations
   Some examples from Articles 1,2,3

4. A personal interpolation:
   the problem of in-house Christian talk in a pluralistic culture
   a proposal

5. The demand for a status confessionis (a confessional situation)
   Germany in the 1930's as creating a status confessionis and Barmen as a result
   South Africa in the 1980's as creating a status confessionis and the declaration of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches as a result - Ottawa, August 1982

6. Is there a status confessionis in the United States today?
   is there an evil in our time of the same magnitude as the evil in Barmen's time?
   nuclear weapons and a status confessionis

7. Resources from Barmen for dealing with an "Orwellian drift" in our own society
   three examples from recent experience
   the descriptive power of Orwell's slogans

Conclusion: contemporary response to "the one Word of God whom we have to hear, trust and obey, in life and in death" (Article 1, The Barmen Declaration).

President Blecker, Dean Ernst, Professor LEbacqz, Martha Weber, ladies and gentlemen:

The January 1, 1984 Sunday comic section of the San Francisco Chronicle - one of my chief sources of theological insight - carried the usual Peanuts cartoon, obviously created for those trying to cope with New Year's Eve hangovers, with the following exchange between Charlie Brown and Snoopy:

Charlie Brown: You look terrible. Drank too much root beer last light, eh?

Snoopy: Not really.

Charlie Brown: And then you ate too many pizzas...Is that right?

Snoopy: Not really.

Charlie Brown: And then you stayed up all night dancing.

Snoopy: No, that wasn't it. That wasn't it at all. (reclining now on the roof of his dog house) It wasn't the root beer, the pizza or the dancing...It's thinking about all the George Orwell jokes we're going to have to listen to in 1984...

And although this is not going to be a talk replete with George Orwell jokes, I realized, in a moment of psychic deflation as I read that strip, that in terms of the topic on which I had decided for this occasion, I had been beaten to the punch by a talking dog. So much for aspirations to theological originality.

There is another recent event, however, of greater significance than a comis strip,that gives timeliness to the "Barmen" side of my topic, and that is the recent death of Pastor Martin Niemoeller at age 92, founder of the Pastors' Emergency League, one of the first acts of protest against Hitler, one of those in attendance at the Synod of Barmen, one of the signatories of the Barmen Declaration, and, in sum, one of the few out-

sopken critics of the Hitler regime. Niemoeller paid for his acts of conscience by spending seven years in the concentration camp at Dachau. After the war he was the chief architect of the Stuttgart Declaration, a confession of the complicity of the German church and the German people in the atrocities committed under Hitler. He was later active in the German Peace movement, voicing convictions that made him as persona non grata in post-war Germany as he had been in pre-war Germany. And on this occasion I want to pay tribute to this great Lutheran leader, whom those of us (who are not so fortunate as to be Lutherans) also acknowledge as one whose life and memory we revere, and from whom we shall continue to draw strength and courage.

The year 1984, into which we are well embarked, is more than just a year. For many years it has been a symbol. When George Orwell published a novel about totalitarianism in 1948, he chose a title by simply reversing the last two digits of 1948 to read 1984. His book, as most of you know, describes a hideous universe of totalitarian thought control, torturers, and informers, along with the essential government propaganda industries of Newspeak and Doublespeak which exist to make syntactical and logical sense out of three slogams that dominate the book and the world it describes: WAR IS PEACE, FREEDOM IS SLAVERY, IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH. We will return to them.

Many people believe that the book 1984 describes life in the Soviet Union, and Big Brother does bear a resemblance to Uncle Joe Stalin. Other see in it a description of the German Third Reich, defeated by the Allied armies even as the book was germinating in the author's mind. A few others, myself included, view it apprehensively as an exaggerated version of tendencies that, in more subtle fashion, are further

advanced in our own society than we want to believe.

It has already become fashionable to deride this latter view. A recent ad by the Mobil Corporation - one of my most trusted indicators of what is being thought by people who don't live on Holy Hill - tells us that we are probably "sick of reading stories with '1984' in the headline - stories about how near we are to George Orwell's vision..." Mobil conveniently disposes of the threats Orwell describes by continuing, "We'd like to stand '1984' on its head for a moment and examine not the oppressiveness of Big Brother, but the usefulness of Little Computer." The usefulness is illustrated by telling us that in Norway you can buy gasoline even after the gas stations have closed, thanks to the wizardry of computer technology. (New York Times, March, 20, 1984, p. 27) It is my contention that what Mobil calls "the oppressiveness of Big Brother" cannot be disposed of quite so easily.

But if the year 1984 is a symbol in the Orwellian sense, for some of us it is a symbol in another sense as well, for it is the fiftieth anniversary of the Barmen Declaration of the German Confessing Church, issued in 1934, well into Hitler's second year of power, a declaration that represents one of the very few corporate challenges to Hitler and what was being done in Germany by the Nazi party.

I find the juxtaposition of Orwell's book title and the anniversary of Barmen an important juxtaposition, for it is also my contention that if we are to stand against those evidences of the Orwellian world that we already see in our midst, the resources for doing so will be found in the stance and conviction and courage of the creators of the Barmen Declaration. The worlds of Orwell and Barmen are incompatible. If you really want the world of Orwell's 1984, you'll take all the Barmen types into

custody. If you affirm Barmen, you will use it to challenge the Orwellian universe. And if you are simply concerned about the possibility today of drifting into a 1984 world without quite realizing what is happening, Barmen provides a way to stem the tide. To me, this fact is especially timely, for one important lesson we can learn is that Barmen, for all the conviction and courage that lay behind it, really came too late to allow other than the witness of martyrdom. The tell-tale signs in Germany were not taken seriously enough soon enough by anybody but the Barmen signatories - and they were too few. So today, the fact that we are not yet in the crudities of Orwell's world but are beginning to experience some of its subtleties, is an important reason to learn from both Barmen and Orwell, and begin to speak and act while there is still time.

Let me give a brief historical background, for those of you for whom Barmen is not exactly a household word. By 1934, Nazi Germany already resembled Orwell's 1984. Totalitarian thought control, informers, torturers, experts in Newspeak and Doublespeak, were all being nurtured. Confronted by Hitler's increasingly total control, most of Germany wilted and capitulated; the business communities, the universities, the cultural groups, the churches, almost without exception bought into the Nazi glorification of the Aryan race, the anti-Semitism, the doctrine of "blood and soil," and the belief that anyone who disagreed was dangerous. There were a few exceptions, notable individuals who were either imprisoned or liquidated or able to escape - Franz Jaegerstetter, Martin Niemoeller, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Bishop Lichtenberger. But they were the exceptions. As far as the church was concerned, so total was the capitulation of the "German Christians, a group who affirmed Adolf Hitler as a new "Messiah," and

took a very anti-Semitic stance, that another group in the Lutheran and Reformed churches created a counterpart that they calld the Bekentnis Kirche, the "Confessing Church." (It is a sad commentary on church history that it took a Hitler to get the Lutherans and Calvinists together.) And it was the Confessing Church that created the Barmen Declaration. To a significant degree the work of the Swiss theologian Karl Barth, (who was then teaching in Germany but was soon expelled as an anti-Nazi for refusing to start his classes with the words "Heil Hitler!") the Declaration was ratified by members of the Confessing Church, meeting for a synod in the city of Barmen in 1934. It is one of the few communal acts of defiance in that tragic period of German history.

The Declaration itself

A first reading of the Declaration leaves one a bit let down. It hardly seems political at all, let alone "dangerous." It comes through as a vigorous declaration of what we might call Biblical neo-orthodox Christian (even Barthian) faith, strongly Christological, and centered in concern for the church.

But such an assessment is only a beginning. For at the time of its creation, Barmen demonstrated that if you were going to be strongly theological you were also going to be strongly political, a lesson we seem to need to relearn in every generation. There was no way to separate theology and politics. Suppose you believed, like the seventh angel in the book of Revelation, that "the Kingdom of the world has become the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." (Rev. 11:15) If you believed that, as the delegates at Barmen did, and someone came along and challenged it, saying, "The kingdom of the world is really the kingdom

of Adolf Hitler, and he shall reign for ever and ever," that would be not only a political but also a theological challenge, and if you were going to stick by your original affirmation about Jesus Christ, you would have to deny any affirmation that went contrary to it. And in the Germany of 1934, that was politics with avengeance, just like the early church, which, when its members affirmed "Christ is Lord" were thereby also saying "Caesar is not Lord.

We can see just how Barmen took this combined theological/political stance by looking at the two sides of its first proposition, the affirmation and then the consequent negation. The affirmation:

> Jesus Christ, as he is attested for us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God which we have to hear and which we have to trust and obey in life and in death.

There is one Word of God, not two or three, and that Word, the dabar, the logos, has been manifested in Jesus Christ.

Now that's good solid Christian doctrine, something Bible-believing Christians in America can affirm just as wholeheartedly as German Evangelical Christians, and almost anybody else in the Christian family for that matter. (Jews would have problems and I want to come to them in a minute.) Notice that the affirmation contains some demands in the verbs describing the necessity of human response, verbs like hear, trust, obey. One would be hard put to find stronger verbs in any Christian confession. It is one thing to hear. But it is not enough just to hear; one has to move from hearing to acts of trust. Trust is what faith is all about. To trust is to say, "We will remain faithful even when the evidence goes the other way, even when it might seem advantageous not to trust." It's what within a Jewish framework Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego said and did when Nebuchadnezzar (an earlier edition of Hitler) threatened

to burn them in a fiery furnace unless they worshipped a golden calf (Nebuchadnezzar's version of the swastika). And what they told Nebuchadnezzar was this: "God can save us from the fiery furnace, O king, but if not, even if he doesn't, we won't take orders from you or worship your gods." (Daniel 3:18, slightly paraphrased). When we've begun to enact that kind of trust, we are already describing what it means to obey. To obey is to follow through on trust, to be open to taking the consequences, and that is what the signers of the Barmen Declaration were signalling they would do, in full awareness of the consequences, for the text goes on very realistically to point out that the hearing, trusting and obeying don't just apply when things are going well, but "in life and in death." The signers knew they were putting their lives on the line by affirming the text, and they felt it worth the risk.

All very well, a reader might respond, but what's it got to do with Hitler? To make sure the readers in 1934 didn't have to ask that question, the writers of Barmen not only said, "Here's what we affirm," but went on to say, "Because this is what we affirm, here is what we deny." The negation following the affirmation I read a moment ago reads as follows:

> We reject the false doctrine, as though the Church could and would have to acknowledge as a source of its proclamation, apart from and beside the one Word of God [i.e. Jesus Christ], still other events and powers, figures and truths as God's revelation.

It is obvious that the word "Hitler" does not occur in the statement, but it should be equally obvious that the claims of Hitler inspired every word. Nobody, but nobody, living in Germany in 1934 could fail to get the point. For precisely what Hitler was trying to claim from the churches (and succeeded in getting from the so-called "German Christians"),

was an acknowledgement that the truth was found "apart from and beside the one Word of God," Jesus Christ, and that it was in "other events and powers, figures and truths," that "God's revelation" for modern Germans was located. "Events" were clearly the coming of Hitler and the Nazis into power; "powers" represented the total military and political control of the divinely ordained state; "~~powers~~ figures" were Hitler and his functionaries; and "truths" were such articles of Nazi faith as blood and soil, racial purity and anti-Semitism. The waterfront was well covered.

So in the first paragraph, the Barmen signers were saying "Yes" to Jesus Christ, and because of that affirmation, in the second paragraph they were saying "no" to Adolf Hitler. They realized, as most of their compatriots failed to realize, that it was impossible to say "yes" both times. An unequivocal either/or was demanded.

A symbol of the spirit of this first proposition is the title that Martin Niemoeller gave to a book of sermons during the period, Christus Ist Mein Führer, Christ is my Führer, my Leader. We may be sure that his use of the word Führer was not inadvertent. For in Germany there was a new Führer, and his name was Adolf Hitler. To be saying, as Niemoeller was saying, and Barmen was saying, that Christ is my Führer, was also to be saying, loud and clear, that Hitler is not my Führer. And that was anathema. That meant Dachau, as Niemoeller soon discovered.

The other five Barmen propositions simply spell out the implications of the initial one. Let me mention only the next two.

The second proposition asserts that since Christ is the assurance of the forgiveness of our sins and also God's claim upon the whole of life, we receive a joyful deliverance (today we would probably say "liberation") from the godless fetters of this world for a free grateful ser-

vice to God's creatures." What does such an affirmation call upon us to deny? "We reject the false doctrine," the document continues, "as though there were other areas of our life in which we would not belong to Jesus Christ but to other lords, " which meant, of course, Hitler and the absolutistic claims of the Nazi party.

The third proposition insists that the church conform its message and its life solely to Christ, which means rejecting "the false doctrine as though the Church were permitted to abandon ~~to~~ the form of its message and order...~~the~~ to changes in prevailing ideological conviction," i.e. to the beliefs of the Nazi party.

And so on, six times over. No ambiguity. No compromise.

x x x x

Now here I want to interpolate a comment of my own before going on. The talk so far has been very much in-house Christian talk. It worked very well for those at Barmen, who were all extremely in-house Christians. And it can work well today for those who stand inside the Christian story and identify with it. But it doesn't take account of all the people who are here tonight, or are part of our society. The religious pluralism that we represent in the United States is much more self-conscious than was true in Germany. And we have to take account of that fact in whatever use we make of the themes of Barmen.

This came home to me at an informal and sub rosa conference I attended in San Francisco in the late 1960s, in relation to Vietnam. Our denominations, as were perceived them, were either ponderously slow or thunderingly wrong in their official attitudes toward the Vietnam war. Perhaps we needed to learn from the German situation and create a kind of Confessing Church here, and issue a document akin to Barmen, indicating that, in our situation also, a "yes" to Jesus Christ ~~the~~ make it necessary to say a "no" to our country's policy. And we decided against ~~it~~ doing so, largely

on the basis of the fact that we were already involved in war protest with members of the Jewish community, and there was no way we were going to initiate an action that would separat us from them.

Since those years I have become more and more involved with the Jewish community and the Jewish faith, and I realize that another shortcoming of the Confessing Church was that it did not see with sufficient clarity what was happening to Jews in Germany. Jews and Christians disagree about the interpretation we give to the life and death of a particular Jew, but we do not disagree about the dangers of idolatry, about the erosion of human rights at home and abaoad, about the wrongness of torture, about the fundamental rights of the poor in a society increasingly geared to the privileges of the rich. So while we Christians may, and indeed should, in our own denominational life, rally under the banner of Christ as the one through whom for us God is present in combating idolatry, let us at the same time, find the words and the symbols with which to share these concerns far beyond Christian boundaries, and broaden the base of our involvement. The God whom Christians affirm as the God and Parent of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the same God whom Jews affirm as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and (let me add) of Sarah, Leah and Rachel. Indeed, what Christians are saying when they affirm that "Jesus Christ is Lord" and nobody else, is simply a kind of Christian way of saying what Jews are saying when they acknowledge the binding character of the divine commandment, "You shall have no other gods before me."

The Consequences of the Barmen Declaration

Theologians who frequently resort to foreign phrases to make a point (a sin to which you can anticipate I am going to succumb) sometimes talk about a status confessionis, which means "a confessional situation,"

in which the church, if it is to be faithful to its message and to itself, must distinguish clearly between truth and error. Since life on the whole is pretty ambiguous, and the lines between truth and error are often fuzzy, and Christian can legitimately disagree on lots of questions and be found on both sides of many social issues, times of self-conscious status confessionis are infrequent, and should be. It was clear that Germany in 1934, however, represented a status confessionis, and the signers of Barmen were affirming that Hitler represented a reality about which the church could not say, "Christians, on the basis of their own individual consciences, can decide either for or against Hitler." It was a time of status confessionis in which the church had to say, unequivocally, "No Christian can support Hitler, and all Christians must oppose him." And while that was bad news to Christians who wanted to straddle the fence, and worse news to Christians who wanted to support Hitler, it was surely the worst news of all to Hitler, who now had to lower the boom more and more insistently against this stubborn crowd of church folk who refused to fall into line and were upsetting his plans. And on one level it was also bad news to the signers, for it made them the inevitable targets of Hitler's wrath.

But the lines were clearly drawn. The signers of Barmen were saying: "The discussion about supporting Hitler or not supporting Hitler is now closed. We have rendered our verdict. There is no longer a basis for negotiation. Either/or, not both/and."

Within more recent Christian history, there has been another situation of status confessionis, and a brief look at it can further clarify the matter. In this case the issue has not been Hitler but apartheid, the forced separation of the races, and the matter was brought to the fore by the

churches of South Africa who are members of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. Until 1982, members of the various Reformed churches in South Africa had managed to occupy all sides of the issue. Many affirmed that apartheid was consistent with the Christian gospel; other affirmed that it was not; some were saying that the matter wasn't clear; and the rest were saying that it didn't really matter because it wasn't the church's business anyhow. The issue finally became clear enough so that when the General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches met at Ottawa in August 1982, the Alliance formally declared that "apartheid is a heresy," meaning that it was no longer possible to affirm the Christian faith as proclaimed by the Reformed Christian family and affirm apartheid at the same time - a clear either/or had been reached. Either Christ or apartheid, but not both.

Is there a status confessionis today?

Now probably a lot of support could be mustered for the notion that in extremely perilous times - the world of Orwell's 1984, the Germany of the 1930s and the South Africa of the 1980s - when issues of right and wrong emerge with stunning clarity, there is a place for unequivocal stances of the sort that the Barmen Declaration exhibited.

But a lot less support would probably be mustered for the notion that we are even remotely close to such a time of extremity in the United States of America today. Christians legitimately and honorably see the world and U.S. domestic and foreign policies in different ways, and the notion that we could take any of these policies and either baptize them or anathematize them, would strike most folks as theological imperialism of the worst sort. I might privately believe that one cannot be a Christian and vote for Ronald Reagan, but I would have no right to propose that such a position become an article of faith for the church,

which all must believe on pain of either excommunication or damnation. I would be entitled to summon all the arguments I could, to persuade people to see things my way, but I would be unjustified in seeking to un-church them for disagreeing with me. (I hope you realize how hard it is for me to make that generous concession.)

This is the reasonable, the American, way of doing things, after all, and we just don't have moral issues that are clear-cut enough to justify or demand a status confessionis in relation to them.

Or do we? After a lot of internal struggle, I have come to believe that there is at least one such reality today so overwhelmingly evil in its consequences, that, just as the Confessing Church had to say a "no" to Hitler in its time, we today have to say a "no" to a similar peril in our own time, and that if we continue to delay in doing so we will be running the same risk that was fatally run in Germany, waiting until it is too late to stem the peril. I refer to the issue of nuclear weapons, the presence of which seems to me increasingly to force a contemporary status confessionis upon us. Such a matter would be the appropriate subject for an entire lecture. Let me, however, simply offer it for your consideration as a counterpart in our day to the magnitude of evil that the Confessing Church faced in its day - a situation where the reality of the evil was so manifest that the time for equivocation, for careful weighing of pros and cons,was a moral luxury that could no longer be afforded. I sometimes fear that just as Germans today look back on the early 1930s and say, "How could we have been so blind as not to have seen the peril of Hitler?", people of a later generation (if indeed there is one) will look back on us and say, "How could they have been so blind as not to have seen the peril of nuclear weapons?"

The Roman Catholic bishops have given us immense help in facing this issue. Their recent pastor/letter develops a logic which they do not carry to its full conclusion, but which they come pretty close to affirming in its entirety. They argue, as I understand their position, that there is no situation in which the use of nuclear weapons is morally permissible or consonant with the will of God. There must be an unequivocal denial of the possibility that Christians or anyone else could engage in the actual use of such weapons. A second step in the argument suggests that if it is wrong to use nuclear weapons, it must also be wrong to posess them, since posession powerfully tempts toward use, whether by deliberate decision, technological accident, or human error, and that if one power posesses nuclear weapons all other powers will likewise need to posess them, thus compounding rather than diminishing the likelihood of use. If these things are so, a third step would be to argue that if it is wrong to use them, and wrong to posess them, it is also wrong to manufacture them, since manufacture inevitably means possession and posession almost inevitably means use.

That, I say, is the logic of the bishops' statement, even though they themselves to not press the argument quite that far, arguing that for the moment, posession may be provisionally justified if it is used as a basis for sincere negotiations to reduce and finally eliminate all nuclear weapons. If such steps are not forthcoming, they insist, the argument in even the ~~near~~ near future might have to be pushed to its logical conclusion - which would mean that a status confessionis had been reached - neither use, posession nor manufacture is compatible with Christian faith.

The World Council of Churches, at its assembly last summer in Vancouver, pushed the argument even further, and while statemsnts of an assembly of the World Council are not binding on the member churches,

they must be examined and taken very seriously, as member churches work out their own position. Listen to just a few sentences from the resolution on peace of the World Council of Churches:

> We believe that the time has come when the churches must unequivocally declare that the production and deployment as well as the use of nuclear weapons are a crime against humanity and that such activities must be condemned on ethical and theological grounds.
> Nuclear deterrence, as the strategic doctrine which has justified nuclear weapons in the name of security and war prevention, must now be categorically rejected as contrary to our faith in Jesus Christ who is our life and peace. Nuclear deterrence is morally unacceptable because it relies on the credibility of the intention to use nuclear weapons; we believe that any intention to use weapons of mass destruction is an utterly inhuman violation of the mind and spirit of Christ which should be in us.
> We believe that Christians should give witness to their unwillingness to participate in any conflict involving weapons of mass destruction or indiscriminate effect.

This seems to me the issue within the Christian community on which there is the greatest likelihood that a status confessionis might emerge. We are not there yet, and a lot of Christians never will be, but I see a developing ecomenical concensus moving toward the declaration: either Jesus Christ or nuclear weapons, but not both.

That's a risky stance. But the Confessing Church's position in 1934 was also a risky stance. Risk is part of the authentic Christian vocabulary and life style.

Barmen and an "Orwellian drift"

But we have not yet disposed of Barmen's challenge to us. For there are other things happeining in our life today about which Barmen calls upon us to respond, even though they may not yet approach a status confessionis. And here I want to come full circle and return to George Orwell's 1984, which depicts the end product of a world in which none of us would care to dwell, but toward which, it seems to me, we are drifting,

perhaps not even aware of the fact. I want to signal some present tendencies that, if not checked soon, will land us finally in a world that will exemplify those three great Orwellian truths: WAR IS PEACE, FREEDOM IS SLAVERY, IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH.

Take the Orwellian doctrine that WAR IS PEACE. Our nation recently engaged in a military invasion of another country, Grenada. But we were emphatically told by our president that this was not a military invasion but a "rescue mission." The point was ~~emphatically~~ insisted upon in a presidential news conference, where reporters were chastized for describing it as a military invasion, as though it had bean an act of war. No, it was a "rescue mission" of medical students, an act of peace and charity, even though as we subsequently discovered (once the governmentally-imposed censorship was lifted) the medical students had in fact been in no danger.

We are told that we are not engaging in war in Central America, that we are lending an advisory presence only to interdict arms on their way to guerillas in El Salvador, and that whatever fighting is going on is being done by the people in the countries themselves. And then we learn that it is our CIA that not only trained Nicaraguan contras to mine harbors, in violation of international law, but that we ourselves assisted in doing it, and that we were also responsible for the blowing up of oil refineries that destroyed 3½ million gallons of oil. These are acts of war against another nation, that we try to hide under specious and less-and-less convincing governmental rhetoric. Missiles of first-strike nuclear capability are called "Peacekeepers. That is pure Orwellian Double-speak. It is our government telling us that WAR IS PEACE.

Take the second Orwellian doctrine that FREEDOM IS SLAVERY. If

we are able to speak too much, debate too much, question too much, those very expressions of freedom will lead to our enslavement by making it possible for some enemy to overwhelm us by exploiting our vulnerabilities. A piece of White House-initiated legislation promulgated last fall mandates that all public officials who have had access to classified material and who want to comment on public affairs, either now or in the future, must obtain governmental clearancd for their remarks ahead of time. The provision applies not only while they are in office, but for the rest of their lives. "The prupose of this legislation," commented Floyd Abrams in the New York Times Magazine (September 6, 1983),"is to prevent unauthorized disclosure of classified information, but its effects are likely to go far beyond that. It will give those in power a new and powerful weapon to delay or even suppress criticism by those most knowledgeable to voice it." I can think of nothing more threatening to the healthy discussion and critique that is supposed to characterize a democracy than such a law; those most calculated to give us wisdom and perspective bedause of their experience, are precisely those forbidden by law from doing so. (Just a couple of weeks ago the further enforcement of this legislation was put on hold, due to an accumulation of outside pressures, but it nevertheless illustrates the mindset of those in power in our nation, and the recent retreat on enforcement is by no means a retreat from the basic principle.)

Take the third Orwellian doctrine that IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH, that a government must not let its people know too much, or we will be in danger of losing our dominance in the world. A few examples:

One of the most disturbing actions of recent years was the unprecedented refusal of the administration to let the press cover the

invasion of Grenada, to which I briefly referred a moment ago. There was total news management and government censorship for four days. Only after a free press was finally admitted to Grenada did we learn that many of the statements issued by the White House during those four days were factually incorrect. There was no way for the public to engage in assessment or critique or support from an informed standpoint. News favorable to the administration's position was shared, news unfavorable was either not reported or falsely reported. We had in those four days a preview of 1984 Orwell style, and I am still amazed at the relative lack of public outcry. If it worked for four days that time, why not four weeks next time, if we engage, say, in a "rescue mission" in Nicaragua?

Another example: last spring the State Department denied a visa to the widow of Salvador Allende, the democratically-elected president of Chile, who was murdered in the 1973 military coup of General Pinochet - a coup ~~that was~~ supported and backed by our own government. The sole purpose of her trip to the United States was to address students at Stanford University and the University of Santa Clara. The State Deparatment clearly felt that university students were not mature enough to be exposed to the thought of a 70-year old woman whose deceased husband had been a socialist; their minds might be corrupted, their allegiances diminished, by exposure to her point of view. As a result, our national ethos would be threatened. Could there be a better example of the Orwellian thesis that IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH?

A third example is the consistent degree to which our administration will not let us know what is truly going on, clear across the globe, as far its own actions are concerned. The administration has apparently decided that it is all right for us to intervene unilaterally in the

affairs of other nations by means of the threat of military force (as our presence in Honduras makes clear), by direct shipments of arms and military equipment to those we favor (as El Salvador makes clear), by that great euphemism of our time, "covert aid" (as support of the guerillas in Nicaragua makes clear), by financial and espionage assistance (as our part in the coup to overturn Allende in Chile makes clear) and by public verbal support of repressive regimes (as the enconiums of Vice-President Bush and Secretary of State Shultz about the magnificent "democratic achievements" of the Marcos regime makes clear).

I have several difficulties with such actions: (1) we take no account of world opinion: when our invasion of Grenada was "strongly deplored" by the United Nations, by a vote against us of 108-9, the President replied blithly that that had not upset his breakfast one bit. (2) We support fascists, military dictators, violent deniers of human rights, and help ruthless regimes remain in power, who, without our aid, clearly could not survive. And (3) we cloak this posture with a specious moralism. Mr. Reagan, for example, on last night's television was insisting that we support the government in El Salvador with more millions because the guerillas are trying to "shoot their way into power," and that we must oppose such activity. It seems somehow to escape his attention, and that of the public, that the admistration is simultaneously supporting the guerillas in Nicaragua with massive assistance, and that the simplest definition of their objective is to "shoot their way into power." I submit that we cannot have it both ways.

The unspoken assumption in all of this is that we do not want, nor will we tolerate, any "peoples' revolutions" to succeed, since they either tarnish our image or threaten our economic interests. And to

avert that we support and bless regimes and countries that are devastatingly accurate imitations of the Orwellian world.

As I was drawing these particular examples together in preparation for this talk, I had to stop and this point and reflect: "Isn't this all rather paranoid? Aren't these parallels overdrawn and slightly hysterical?" And as I faced the possibility that maybe they were, and toyed with the blue pencil, events continued to unfold that persuaded me that the tone, rather than being more muted, had better in fact become louder. So let me share the recent events that italicize rather than negate what I have said this evening.

In a recent speech at Georgetown University, the President complained about the way Congress was meddling in his attempts to carry out foreign policy, by challenging his decisions and even withholding funds from activities he thought were essential. He said that while there ought to be debate before decisions are made, once the administration was embarked on a policy, everyone should close ranks behind him. No more criticism, in other words. Mr. McFarlane, from the State Deparament, later said that if members of Congress disagreed they could send private letters to the White House or State Department, but should not voice the criticism publically.

However, within a few days of this speech, it came out that our government was directly involved in the mining of harbors in Nicaragua, that the president had personally given his endorsement to this project, and that it had been carried out without proper notification to the Congressional committees who are entitled to be informed. So the action not only contravened the constitutional procedures for reaching such decisions, but was directly in violant of international law. It is illegal to do what we did. And when Nicaragua quite properly took its grievance to the

World Court, where there could be a judicial hearing under international auspices, our government announced that ~~we were~~ in time not going to recognize the court's jurisdiction on any matter for the next two years that was related to Central America.

Can one really believe it? Suppose Nicaragua had mined New York Harbor and that ships doing international business had been hit? Our national outrage would not have been containable. And yet it is actions of this sort that the President, in his Georgetown speech, was asking us to accept without criticism. Do not raise questions, he said, about what we are doing. Simply trust us. We should not have to be held accountable. What this posture represents, I must insist, is the beginning of what can grow into a totalitarian mentality that says, "We are above the law, we do not need to tell people what we do, and those who challenge us, even in the Congress, are making us weak and destroying our ability to stand tall. So give us a blank check."

WAR IS PEACE. SLAVERY IS FREEDOM. IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH.

And in the face of all that we come back, very briefly in conclusion, to Barmen. It is in the name of affirmations, we recall, that Barmen issued negations. We desperately need to be doing that once again ourselves, lest we drift into a kind of world that Barmen tried too late to stop. It is the claim of Barmen, you will remember, that there is only "one Word of God which we have to hear and which we have to trust and obey in life and in death." For Christians, that one Word of God is Jesus Christ. For Jews it is the God of Sinai, the God of the prophets, the God of the Hebrew Scriptures, and Jews and Christians can affirm that we are calling upon ~~the name of~~ the same God. And in the name of that God we must protest today, in the same fashion as Barmen

protested yesterday, when a government even begins to say, "Hear, trust and obey us. We'll tell you what to think. We'll decide what information you should have. If we withhold information it is for your own good. If our public arguments don't make sense, be assured that there are reasons behind them that we can't really share with you." When it even begins to say such things, as it clearly has, then that is the time for challenge, because when a government does that it is beginning to play God over our lives, and the taste of such identification is a very heady thing. It is becoming identified with what Barmen calls "other events and powers, figures and truth," that are trying to elicit unquestioning and docile loyalty.

And when that happens, as it is beginning to happen again in our time, our response to any such government must be "no " because we have already said "yes" to "the one Word of God whom we have to hear, trust and obey in life and in death."

Note: This lecture was later given as the Christian Century Lecture in Seattle, Washington, and in a slightly abbreviated form published in that journal. It was the germ for what later became a book entitled Saying Yes and Saying No: On Rendering to God and Caesar, Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1986, and portions of it are found in Chapter One.

Graduate Theological Union

GTU ANNUAL FACULTY LECTURE

The Office of the Dean, Eldon Ernst, Acting Dean, is pleased to invite you to a dinner honoring Robert McAfee Brown preceding the GTU Annual Faculty Lecture; Wednesday, March 28, 1984 at 6:00 p.m. in the O'Neill Room of the University of California Faculty Club.

Please return the enclosed card to the Office of the Dean by March 20, 1984.

2465 LeConte Avenue, Berkeley, California 94709 (415) 841-9811

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Graduate Theological Union

Inter-Office Memorandum

To: June

From: Peter

Date: March 27, 1984

Subject: GTU ANNUAL LECTURE

All billing/invoices relating to the Annual Lecture will be routed through the Office of the Dean and charged to his departmental budget. The Acting Dean and Cinda have assumed the management and organization of the event.

Thanks.

cc: Cinda

SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE

Gordon M. Weber, 1919-1983
Chairman, Graduate Theological Union
Board of Trustees 1977-1983

Introduction to the Evening

Michael Blecker
President, Graduate Theological Union

Opening Prayer

Robert McAfee Brown
Professor of Theology and Ethics
Pacific School of Religion

*Psalm 46**

Hope Raymond-Schimke
M.Div. 1983, Pacific School of Religion

New Testament Reading (John 11:1-3, 17-27)

Mary Ann Donovan, S.C.
Associate Professor of Historical Theology
Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley

Benediction

Rabbi Joseph Asher
Congregation Emanu-El (San Francisco)
Member, GTU Board of Trustees

Introduction of the GTU Annual Lecturer

Karen Lebacqz
Professor of Christian Ethics
Pacific School of Religion

"1984--ORWELL AND BARMEN"

Robert McAfee Brown

**see reverse*

PSALM 46

God is our shelter, our strength,
ever ready to help in time of trouble,
so we shall not be afraid when the earth gives way,
when mountains tumble into the depths of the sea,
and its waters roar and seethe,
the mountains tottering as it heaves.

Yahweh Sabaoth is on our side,
our citadel, the God of Jacob!

There is a river whose streams refresh the
city of God,
and it sanctifies the dwelling of the Most High.
God is inside the city, it can never fall,
at crack of dawn God comes to its aid;
to the roaring of nations and tottering of kingdoms,
when God shouts, the world disintegrates.

Yahweh Sabaoth is on our side,
our citadel, the God of Jacob!

Come, think of Yahweh's marvels,
the astounding things God has done in the world;
all over the world God puts an end to wars,
breaking the bow, snapping the spear,
giving shields to the flames.
"Pause a while and know that I am God,
exalted among the nations, exalted over the earth!"

Yahweh Sabaoth is on our side,
our citadel, the God of Jacob!