

Article

Part II. 50 Nobel Laureates Who Believe in GOD: Nobel Writers

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ABSTRACT

This article covers well-documented quotations from the following eleven (11) Nobel writers: Thomas S. Eliot, Joseph R. Kipling, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Francois Mauriac, Hermann Hesse, Sir Winston Churchill, Jean-Paul Sartre, Sigrid Undset, Sir Rabindranath Tagore, Rudolf Eucken, and Isaac B. Singer.

Key Words: GOD, Nobel laureates, Nobel Writers, belief, science, religion.

(28) T.S. ELIOT – NOBEL LAUREATE IN LITERATURE

Nobel Prize: Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888–1965) won the 1948 Nobel Prize in Literature “for his outstanding pioneer contribution to present-day poetry.” His prestige is still apparent, most prominently in his selection by *Time* magazine as “the poet of the XXth century.”

Nationality: American; later British citizen

Education: M.A. in philosophy, Harvard University, 1910

Occupation: Poet, philosopher, playwright, literary critic; assistant in philosophy at Harvard (1909–10); editor, *The Criterion* (1922-1939); editor and director, Faber & Faber Ltd. (1925-1965)

1. “What is worst of all is to advocate Christianity, not because it is true, but because it might be beneficial.” (Eliot 1988, *The Idea of a Christian Society*). “To justify Christianity because it provides a foundation of morality, instead of showing the necessity of Christian morality from the truth of Christianity, is a very dangerous inversion.” (Eliot 1988, *The Idea of a Christian Society*).

2. “I do not believe that the culture of Europe could survive the complete disappearance of the Christian Faith. And I am convinced of that, not merely because I am a Christian myself, but as a student of social biology. If Christianity goes, the whole of our culture goes.” (Eliot 1967, 200).

3. “The greatest proof of Christianity for others is not how far a man can logically analyze his reasons for believing, but how far in practice he will stake his life on his belief.” (Eliot, as cited in Draper 1992, No. 599).

4. In *The Rock* (1934) Eliot challenges the so-called “advances” of our high-tech information age:

“The endless cycle of idea and action,
Endless invention, endless experiment,
Brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness;
Knowledge of speech, but not of silence;
Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word.
All our knowledge brings us nearer to our ignorance,
All our ignorance brings us nearer to death,
But nearness to death no nearer to God.

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Where is the Life we have lost in living?
Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?
The cycles of Heaven in twenty centuries
Bring us farther from God and nearer to the Dust."

(Eliot 1934).

5. Eliot also wrote:

"Lord, shall we not bring these gifts to Your service?
Shall we not bring to Your service all our powers
For life, for dignity, grace and order,
And intellectual pleasures of the senses?
The Lord who created must wish us to create
And employ our creation again in His service
Which is already His service in creating."

(Eliot, as cited in *Poetry and Belief in the Work of T.S. Eliot* by K. Smidt, 1961, p. 55; see also Michael Caputo, *God - Seen through the Eyes of the Greatest Minds*, 2000, 116).

6. In *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939) T. S. Eliot stated: "We must treat Christianity with a great deal more intellectual respect than is our wont; we must treat it as being for the individual a matter primarily of thought and not of feeling. The consequences of such an attitude are too serious to be acceptable to everybody: for when the Christian faith is not only felt, but thought, it has practical results which may be inconvenient." (Eliot 1988, Ch. I, p. 6).

7. "The division between those who accept, and those who deny, Christian revelation I take to be the most profound division between human beings." (Eliot, as cited in Yancey 1999, 88). "Our times are corrupt, the whole of modern literature is corrupted by secularism." (Eliot, as cited in Ozick 1989, 151).

8. "Why should men love the Church? Why should they love her laws? She tells them of Life and Death, and of all they would forget. She is tender where they would be hard, and hard where they like to be soft." (Eliot 1934, *The Rock*).

9. This is the sad picture of the XXth century:

"Here were decent godless people:
Their only monument the asphalt road
And a thousand lost golf balls."

(Eliot 1934, *The Rock*).

10. "A society has ceased to be Christian when religious practices have been abandoned, when behaviour ceases to be regulated by reference to Christian principle, and when in effect prosperity in this world for the individual or for the group has become the sole conscious aim." (Eliot 1988, Ch. I, pp. 9-10).

11. In *Christianity and Culture* (1948) T.S. Eliot stated: "The tendency of unlimited industrialism is to create bodies of men and women – of all classes – detached from tradition, alienated from religion,

and susceptible to mass suggestion: in other words, a mob. And a mob will be no less a mob if it is well fed, well clothed, well housed, and well disciplined.” (Eliot 1988).

12. “Christ is the still point of the turning world.” (Eliot, as cited in Castle 2002, 219).

(29) RUDYARD KIPLING – NOBEL LAUREATE IN LITERATURE

Nobel Prize: Joseph R. Kipling (1865–1936) received the 1907 Nobel Prize in Literature “in consideration of the power of observation, originality of imagination, virility of ideas and remarkable talent for narration which characterize the creations of this world-famous author.” He is England’s greatest short-story writer.

Nationality: British

Education: Educated at the United Services College, Westward Ho, Bideford, North Devon, England

Occupation: Poet, novelist, and editor

1. Kipling wrote:

“*Non nobis Domine!* –
Not unto us, O Lord!
The Praise or Glory be
Of any deed or word;
For in Thy Judgment lies
To crown or bring to nought
All knowledge or device
That Man has reached or wrought.
O Power by Whom we live –
Creator, Judge, and Friend,
Upholdingly forgive
Nor fail us at the end:
But grant us well to see
In all our piteous ways –
Non nobis Domine! –
Not unto us the Praise!”

(From ‘*Non nobis Domine!*’, 1934; see Kipling, as cited in T.S. Eliot 1963, 257).

2. Kipling also wrote:

“Father in Heaven who lovest all,
Oh, help Thy children when they call;
That they may build from age to age
An undefiled heritage.
Teach us to look in all our ends
On Thee for judge, and not our friends;
That we, with Thee, may walk uncowed
By fear or favour of the crowd.
Teach us the Strength that cannot seek,
By deed or thought, to hurt the weak;
That, under Thee, we may possess
Man’s strength to comfort man’s distress.”

(Kipling, as cited in T.S. Eliot 1963, 272; see also Kipling 1989, 575).

3. In his article *"The Religion of Rudyard Kipling"*, Jabez T. Sunderland wrote: "I believe that Kipling has a religious message for our time. Some of his poems have been born out of his deepest soul, and go straight to the consciences and religious needs of many men. God speaks to the world through many voices. I believe one is that of Kipling." (Sunderland 1899, 607-608).

4. Kipling further wrote:

"God of our fathers, known of old,
Lord of our far-flung battle-line,
Beneath whose awful Hand we hold
Dominion over palm and pine –
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget – lest we forget!"

(From "Recessional", 1897; see Kipling, as cited in Sunderland 1899, 606-609).

5. This is Kipling's revelation of himself:

"I was made all things to all men,
But now my course is done –
And now is my reward –
Ah, Christ, when I stand at Thy Throne
With those I have drawn to the Lord,
Restore me my self again!"

(From "At His Execution", *Limits and Renewals*, 1932; see Kipling, as cited in Wilson 1978, 340).

6. This is Kipling's notion of Heaven:

"And only the Master shall praise us,
And only the Master shall blame;
And no one shall work for money,
And no one shall work for fame;
But each for the joy of the working,
And each, in his separate star,
Shall draw the Thing as he sees It,
For the God of Things as They Are!"

(From the poem "When Earth's Last Picture Is Painted", 1892; see Kipling, as cited in Sunderland 1899, 612).

(30) ALEXANDER SOLZHENITSYN – NOBEL LAUREATE IN LITERATURE

Nobel Prize: Alexander Solzhenitsyn (born 1918) won the 1970 Nobel Prize in Literature "for the ethical force with which he has pursued the indispensable traditions of Russian literature." In 1983 he received the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion.

Nationality: Russian; later American citizen

Education: He studied mathematics and physics at Rostov University (USSR), graduating in 1941.

Occupation: Physics teacher, writer, and historian

1. "How easy it is for me to live with Thee Lord! How easy to believe in Thee! When my thoughts pull back in puzzlement or go soft, when the brightest people see no further than this evening and know not what to do tomorrow, Thou sendest down to me clear confidence that Thou art, and will make sure that not all the ways of the good are closed." (Solzhenitsyn, as cited in Burg and Feifer 1972, 189).

2. In his acceptance speech for the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion (Buckingham Palace, London, May 10, 1983), Alexander Solzhenitsyn said: "More than half a century ago, while I was still a child, I recall hearing a number of older people offer the following explanation for the great disasters that had befallen Russia: 'Men have forgotten God; that's why all this has happened.' Since then I have spent well-nigh fifty years working on the history of our Revolution; in the process I have read hundreds of books, collected hundreds of personal testimonies, and have already contributed eight volumes of my own toward the effort of clearing away the rubble left by that upheaval. But if I were asked today to formulate as concisely as possible the main cause of the ruinous Revolution that swallowed up some sixty million of our people, I could not put it more accurately than to repeat: 'Men have forgotten God; that's why all this has happened.' " (Solzhenitsyn 1984, Issue 36; see also Solzhenitsyn 1983, 874).

3. In his Templeton address (May 10, 1983), Solzhenitsyn stated: "It was Dostoevsky, once again, who drew from the French Revolution and its seething hatred of the Church the lesson that 'revolution must necessarily begin with atheism.' That is absolutely true. But the world had never before known a godlessness as organized, militarized, and tenaciously malevolent as that practiced by Marxism. Within the philosophical system of Marx and Lenin, and at the heart of their psychology, hatred of God is the principal driving force, more fundamental than all their political and economic pretensions. Militant atheism is not merely incidental or marginal to Communist policy; it is not a side effect, but the central pivot." (Solzhenitsyn 1984, Issue 36).

4. "What is more, the events of the Russian Revolution can only be understood now, at the end of the century, against the background of what has since occurred in the rest of the world. What emerges here is a process of universal significance. And if I were called upon to identify briefly the principal trait of the *entire* twentieth century, here too, I would be unable to find anything more precise and pithy than to repeat once again: 'Men have forgotten God.' The failings of human consciousness, deprived of its divine dimension, have been a determining factor in all the major crimes of this century." (Solzhenitsyn 1984, Issue 36).

5. "The 1920s in the USSR witnessed an uninterrupted procession of victims and martyrs amongst the Orthodox clergy. Scores of archbishops and bishops perished. Tens of thousands of priests, monks, and nuns, pressured by the Chekists to renounce the Word of God, were tortured, shot in cellars, sent to camps, exiled to the desolate tundra of the far North, or turned out into the streets in their old age without food or shelter. All these Christian martyrs went unswervingly to their deaths for the faith; instances of apostasy were few and far between. For tens of millions of laymen access to the Church was blocked, and they were forbidden to bring up their children in the Faith: religious parents were wrenched from their children and thrown into prison, while the children were turned from the faith by threats and lies." (Solzhenitsyn 1984, Issue 36).

6. "It is true that millions of our countrymen have been corrupted and spiritually devastated by an officially imposed atheism, yet there remain many millions of believers: it is only external pressures that keep them from speaking out, but, as is always the case in times of persecution and suffering, the awareness of God in my country has attained great acuteness and profundity. It is here that we

see the dawn of hope: for no matter how formidably Communism bristles with tanks and rockets, no matter what successes it attains in seizing the planet, it is doomed never to vanquish Christianity.” (Solzhenitsyn 1984, Issue 36).

7. “Imperceptibly, through decades of gradual erosion, the meaning of life in the West has ceased to be seen as anything more lofty than the ‘pursuit of happiness’, a goal that has even been solemnly guaranteed by constitutions. The concepts of good and evil have been ridiculed for several centuries; banished from common use, they have been replaced by political or class considerations of short lived value. The West is ineluctably slipping toward the abyss. Western societies are losing more and more of their religious essence as they thoughtlessly yield up their younger generation to atheism. If a blasphemous film about Jesus is shown throughout the United States, reputedly one of the most religious countries in the world, or a major newspaper publishes a shameless caricature of the Virgin Mary, what further evidence of godlessness does one need?” (Solzhenitsyn 1984, Issue 36).

8. “To the ill-considered hopes of the last two centuries, which have reduced us to insignificance and brought us to the brink of nuclear and non-nuclear death, we can propose only a determined quest for the warm hand of God, which we have so rashly and self-confidently spurned. Only in this way can our eyes be opened to the errors of this unfortunate twentieth century and our hands – be directed to setting them right. There is nothing else to cling to in the landslide: the combined vision of all the thinkers of the Enlightenment amounts to nothing. Our five continents are caught in a whirlwind. But it is during trials such as these that the highest gifts of the human spirit are manifested. If we perish and lose this world, the fault will be ours alone.” (Solzhenitsyn 1984, Issue 36).

9. Solzhenitsyn’s attitude towards contemporary Western media was expressed in his Harvard Commencement Address (1978): “Hastiness and superficiality are the psychic disease of the twentieth century, and more than anywhere else this disease is reflected in the press.” He also referred to “TV stupor” and “intolerable music” (Solzhenitsyn 1978). Solzhenitsyn claimed that media consumers were having “their divine souls stuffed with gossip, nonsense, and vain talk.” (Solzhenitsyn 1978). “Such as it is, however, the press has become the greatest power within the Western countries, more powerful than the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. One would then like to ask: by what law has it been elected and to whom is it responsible?” (Solzhenitsyn 1978).

10. In his article “Alexander Solzhenitsyn: The high school physics-teacher-turned-novelist whose writings shook an empire” (*Christian History Magazine*, 2000), Prof. Edward E. Ericson, Jr. wrote: “As a boy, Alexander Solzhenitsyn planned to find fame through commemorating the glories of the Bolshevik Revolution. But as an artillery captain, he privately criticized Stalin and got packed off to eight years in the prison camps. There, the loyal Leninist encountered luminous religious believers and moved from the Marx of his schoolteachers to the Jesus of his Russian Orthodox forefathers: ‘God of the Universe!’ he wrote, ‘I believe again! Though I renounced You, You were with me!’ ” (Ericson 2000, 32). In his autobiography Solzhenitsyn wrote that while he was in one of the Gulag’s prison camps, a Jewish doctor Boris Kornfeld (who was a Christian) won him to Jesus Christ.

11. “Our life consists not in the pursuit of material success but in the quest for worthy spiritual growth. Our entire earthly existence is but a transitional stage in the movement toward something higher, and we must not stumble and fall, nor must we linger fruitlessly on one rung of the ladder. Material laws alone do not explain our life or give it direction. The laws of physics and physiology will never reveal the indisputable manner in which the Creator constantly, day in and day out, participates in the life of each of us, unfailingly granting us the energy of existence; when this assistance leaves us, we die. And in the life of our entire planet, the Divine Spirit surely moves with no less force: this we must grasp in our dark and terrible hour.” (Solzhenitsyn 1984, Issue 36).

(31) FRANCOIS MAURIAC – NOBEL LAUREATE IN LITERATURE

Nobel Prize: Francois Mauriac (1885–1970) was awarded the 1952 Nobel Prize in Literature “for the deep spiritual insight and the artistic intensity with which he has in his novels penetrated the drama of human life.”

Nationality: French

Education: Licence es Lettres (M.A. in Literature), University of Bordeaux, France, 1905

Occupation: Novelist, playwright, poet, and journalist

1. Francois Mauriac wrote in his book *Anguish and Joy of the Christian Life* (1931): “Today, in the evening of my life, I know the final answer. It is Jesus Christ alone who quiets the radical anguish that is in us – an anguish which is so consubstantial with the human condition that it is cruelly manifest from childhood to the grave. The torment of loneliness, the vacillating shadows of those we love as they leave us in the horrible mysteries of death, the secret and permanent thirst we have for the limitless gratification of our ego. Our hearts remain full of unseen idols until we are stretched on the wood of the Cross with Christ, until we cease trying to nourish ourselves and our desires, and give ourselves completely to the poor, to the needy, to the suffering members of Christ’s body throughout the world.” (Mauriac 1964, Notre Dame).

2. “God does not give Himself totally except to the person who has annihilated all things, *everything*, whatever is in himself and in the world that stands in the way of divine love.” (Mauriac 1964, 43, Notre Dame).

3. “The God of the Christians does not wish simply to be loved. He wishes to be the sole object of our love. He will not allow us to turn aside a single sigh from Him; all other love is to Him nothing but a form of idolatry unless it is expressed in His name. It is this demand that seems utterly unreasonable. For it is impossible to love a creature without deifying it; yet we are also obliged to love everyone and everything. The creature thus becomes a necessity usurping the place of God: the heaven of His presence, the hell of His absence.” (Mauriac 1964, 26; Section 1 ‘Anguish’, Dimension Books).

4. “Impurity separates us from God. The spiritual life obeys laws as verifiable as those of the physical world. Purity is the condition for a higher love – for a possession superior to all possessions: that of God. Yes, this is what is at stake, and nothing less.” (Mauriac 1963, 51-52).

5. In his book *Life of Jesus* (1936), Mauriac claimed: “If there is one part of the Christian message that people have rejected with incomparable obstinacy, it is faith in the equal worth of all souls and races before the Father who is in Heaven.” (Mauriac 1978).

6. “The majority of Christians never get beyond the letter of the catechism. They have had no knowledge of God. It is a word which, for them, has never had any real content. They deny, yet do not deny. Christ has never been in their lives.” (Mauriac 1970).

7. “We are therefore wrong to think of the mystics as exceptional Christians. On the contrary, they are the only real Christians. They wear themselves out in the pursuit of God, as sensualists do in the pursuit of the flesh. They unceasingly desire to possess Him; to be possessed by Him, to love Him. Here love is understood to mean embracing God with the whole heart, of giving oneself to Him completely and searching to be possessed wholly by Him in return.” (Mauriac 1964, 26-27, Dimension Books).

8. In *Holy Thursday: An Intimate Remembrance* (1931) Mauriac described the ethical aspects of the Christian faith: “One must first hate one’s sin, a prerequisite which, in certain cases, is very difficult

to achieve. Next, we must resolve never to sin again – and this is not only a matter of words but an inner determination of which God is the only judge. Last, the fear of punishment does not suffice if it is not inspired by love of God. No one can be forgiven without a beginning of love.” (Mauriac 1999, Ch. 5).

(32) HERMANN HESSE – NOBEL LAUREATE IN LITERATURE

Nobel Prize: Hermann Hesse (1877–1962) was granted the 1946 Nobel Prize in Literature “for his inspired writings, which while growing in boldness and penetration, exemplify the classical humanitarian ideals and high qualities of style.”

Nationality: German; later Swiss citizen

Education: Educated at the Grammar School in Cannstadt and the Maulbronn Theological Seminary, Germany

Occupation: Novelist and poet

1. Hesse expressed his attitude towards God in a conversation with his friend Miguel Serrano: “You should let yourself be carried away, like the clouds in the sky. You shouldn’t resist. God exists in your destiny just as much as he does in these mountains and in that lake. It is very difficult to understand this, because man is moving further and further away from Nature, and also from himself.” (Hesse, as cited in Miguel Serrano, *C.G. Jung and Hermann Hesse: A Record of Two Friendships*, 1966, 10).

2. “The fact that people think they have their life on loan from God and do not want to use it egotistically, but, on the contrary, they want to live it as service and sacrifice to God, this experience and legacy, the greatest one, from my childhood has had an extremely powerful influence on my life.” (Hesse 1972, 59).

3. “When you are close to Nature you can listen to the voice of God.” (Hesse, as cited in Serrano 1966, 10).

4. “Christianity, one not preached but lived, was the strongest of the powers that shaped and moulded me.” (Hesse, as cited in Gellner 1997, Vol. 1).

5. “If one does not take the verses of the New Testament as being commandments, but as expressions of an extraordinary awareness of the secrets of our soul, then the wisest word ever spoken is: ‘Love thy neighbour as thyself.’ ” (Hesse, as cited in Gellner 1997, Vol. 1).

6. “For different people, there are different ways to God, to the center of the world. Yet the actual experience itself is always the same.” (Hesse, as cited in Gellner 1997, Vol. 1).

7. “The road to piety may be a different one for everyone. For me, it led through many blunders and great suffering, through a great deal of self-torment, through tremendous foolishness, jungles full of foolishness. I was a liberal spirit and knew that sanctimonious piety was an illness of the soul. I was an ascetic and drove nails into my flesh. I didn’t know that being religious meant health and cheerfulness.” (Hesse, as cited in Gellner 1997, Vol. 1).

(33) WINSTON CHURCHILL – NOBEL LAUREATE IN LITERATURE

Nobel Prize: Sir Winston Churchill (1874–1965) received the 1953 Nobel Prize in Literature “for his mastery of historical and biographical description as well as for brilliant oratory in defending exalted human values.”

Nationality: British

Education: Churchill was educated at Harrow School and the Royal Military College in Sandhurst, England, 1895

Occupation: Writer, historian, and Prime Minister (UK)

1. In his speech “The 20th century – Its Promise and Its Realization” at the MIT Mid-Century Convocation, Boston (March 31, 1949) Sir Winston Churchill said: “Here I speak not only to those who enjoy the blessings and consolation of revealed religion but also to those who face the mysteries of human destiny alone. The flame of Christian ethics is still our highest guide. To guard and cherish it is our first interest, both spiritually and materially. The fulfilment of Spiritual duty in our daily life is vital to our survival. Only by bringing it into perfect application can we hope to solve for ourselves the problems of this world and not of this world alone. United we stand secure. Let us then move forward together in discharge of our mission and our duty, fearing God and nothing else.” (Churchill 1974, Volume VII, p. 7807ff).

2. “We must indeed be vigilant, we must indeed be firm in upholding the principles we believe to be just, but let us resolve with patience and with courage to work for the day when all the men in all the lands can be brought to cast aside the dark aspirations which some have inherited and others have created. Then at last together we shall be able to strive in freedom for the enjoyment of the blessings which it has pleased God to offer to the human race.” (Churchill 1974, Vol. VIII, p. 8607).

3. “Above all, we have our faith that the universe is ruled by a Supreme Being and in fulfilment of a sublime moral purpose, according to which all our actions are judged.” (Churchill 1974, Vol. VII, p. 7650).

4. “There is another element which should never be banished from our system of education. Here we have freedom of thought as well as freedom of conscience. Here we have been the pioneers of religious toleration. But side by side with all this has been the fact that religion has been a rock in the life and character of the British people upon which they have built their hopes and cast their cares. This fundamental element must never be taken from our schools.” (Churchill 1974, Vol. VII, p. 6762).

5. In his Harvard Address (September 6, 1943) Churchill stated: “If we are together nothing is impossible. If we are divided all will fail. Let us rise to the full level of our duty and of our opportunity, and let us thank God for the spiritual rewards He has granted for all forms of valiant and faithful service.” (Churchill 1974, Vol. VII, p. 6827).

6. “The flame of Christian ethics is still our best guide. Its animation and accomplishment is a practical necessity, both spiritually and materially. This is the most vital question of the future. The accomplishment of Christian ethics in our daily life is the final and greatest word which has ever been said. Only on this basis can we reconcile the rights of the individual with the demands of society in a manner which alone can bring happiness and peace to humanity.” (Churchill 1974, Vol. VII, p. 7645).

(34) JEAN-PAUL SARTRE – NOBEL LAUREATE IN LITERATURE

Nobel Prize: Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980) won the 1964 Nobel Prize in Literature “for his work which, rich in ideas and filled with the spirit of freedom and the quest for truth, has exerted a far-reaching influence on our age.” Sartre declined the prize.

Nationality: French

Education: Doctorate in Philosophy, Ecole Normale Supérieure, France, 1929

Occupation: Professor at Lycee du Havre, Lycee de Laon, Lycee Pasteur de Neuilly-sur-Seine, and Lycee Condorcet; Editor, *Les Temps Modernes*, Paris, (1944-1980)

SARTRE – THE MILITANT ATHEIST

1. In his lecture *Existentialism Is a Humanism* (1946) Sartre described his atheistic existentialism thus: “Dostoevsky said, ‘If God didn’t exist, everything would be possible!’ That is the very starting point of existentialism. Indeed, everything is permissible if God does not exist, and as a result man is forlorn, because neither within him nor without does he find anything to cling to. He can’t start making excuses for himself. In other words, there is no determinism, man is free, man is freedom. On the other hand, if God does not exist, we find no values or commands to turn to which legitimize our conduct. So, in the bright realm of values, we have no excuse behind us, nor justification before us. We are alone, with no excuses.” (Sartre 1957, 22-23; see also Sartre 1988, 78).

2. “First of all, man exists, turns up, appears on the scene, and, only afterwards, defines himself. If man, as the existentialist conceives him, is indefinable, it is because at first he is nothing. Only afterward will he be something, and he himself will have made what he will be. Thus, there is no human nature, since there is no God to conceive it.” (Sartre 1957, 15-16; see also Sartre 1988, 75).

SARTRE’S CONVERSION

3. Nevertheless, Sartre underwent a very surprising change of mind towards the end of his life; in fact, he came very close to theistic commitment. The magazine *National Review* (June 11, 1982) reported it thus: “Throughout his mature career, the philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre was a militant atheist. Politically, although he quarreled with Marxist materialism, his rhetoric was often indistinguishable from the most heavy-handed Stalinist boiler-plate. However, during the philosopher’s last months there were some surprising developments. In 1980, nearing his death, by then blind, decrepit, but still in full possession of his faculties, Sartre came very close to belief in God, perhaps even more than very close. The story can be told briefly, and perhaps reverently. An ex-Maoist, Pierre Victor, shared much of Sartre’s time toward the end. In the early spring of 1980 the two had a dialogue in the pages of the ultra-gauche *Nouvel Observateur*. It is sufficient to quote a single sentence from what Sartre said then to measure the degree of his acceptance of the grace of God and the creatureliness of man:

‘I do not feel that I am the product of chance, a speck of dust in the universe, but someone who was expected, prepared, prefigured. In short, a being whom only a Creator could put here; and this idea of a creating hand refers to God.’

Students of existentialism, the atheistic branch, will note that in this one sentence Sartre disavowed his entire system, his *engagements*, his whole life.

... The epilogue is much less edifying. His mistress, Simone de Beauvoir, behaved like a bereaved widow during the funeral. Then she published *La ceremonie des adieux* in which she turned vicious, attacking Sartre. He resisted Victor’s seduction, she recounts, then he yielded. ‘How should one explain this senile act of a turncoat?’, she asks stupidly. And she adds: ‘All my friends, all the Sartreans, and the editorial team of *Les Temps Modernes* supported me in my consternation.’ Mme.

de Beauvoir's consternation v. Sartre's conversion. The balance is infinitely heavier on the side of the blind, yet seeing, old man." (*National Review*, NY, 11 June 1982, p. 677, article by Thomas Molnar – Professor of French and World Literature at Brooklyn College; see also McDowell and Stewart 1990, 477).

4. In the late 1970s, Sartre's close friend and personal secretary Pierre Victor (an Egyptian Jew and former Maoist student leader) became a deeply religious Orthodox Jew. Pierre Victor's real name is Benny Levy. The publisher of the book *Hope Now: The 1980 Interviews* (University of Chicago Press, 1996) wrote: "In March of 1980, just a month before Sartre's death, *Le Nouvel Observateur* published a series of interviews, the last ever given, between the blind and debilitated philosopher and his young assistant, Benny Levy. They seemed to portray a Sartre who had abandoned his leftist convictions and rejected his most intimate friends, including Simone de Beauvoir. This man had cast aside his own fundamental beliefs in the primacy of individual consciousness, the inevitability of violence, and Marxism, embracing instead a messianic Judaism. (...)

Shortly before his death, Sartre confirmed the authenticity of the interviews and their puzzling content. Over the past fifteen years, it has become the task of Sartre scholars to unravel and understand them. Presented in this fresh, meticulous translation, the interviews are framed by two provocative essays by Benny Levy himself, accompanied by a comprehensive introduction from noted Sartre authority Ronald Aronson. This absorbing volume at last contextualizes and elucidates the final thoughts of a brilliant and influential mind." (See *Hope Now: The 1980 Interviews*, Jean-Paul Sartre and Benny Levy (ed.); translated by Adrian Van den Hoven, with an introduction by Ronald Aronson, University of Chicago Press, 1996).

5. The editors of *Wired* magazine (May 1996) wrote: "Everything you know about Jean-Paul Sartre is wrong. *Hope Now: The 1980 Interviews*, a book full of conversations between Sartre and his assistant Benny Levy, conducted shortly before his death, reveals a philosopher who had abandoned leftism and his friends for messianic Judaism." (*Wired*, 1996, Issue 4.05, The Conde Nast Publications Inc., San Francisco).

6. Concerning his former atheistic-existential philosophy, in one of the 1980 interviews with Benny Levy, Sartre made some shocking acknowledgements: "*Benny Levy*: You said to me once, 'I've talked about despair, but that's bunk. I talked about it because other people were talking about it, because it was fashionable. Everyone was reading Kierkegaard then.' *Sartre*: That's right. Personally, I have never despaired, nor for one moment have I thought of despair as something that could possibly be a characteristic of mine. Yet I had to consider that despair must exist for other people, since they were talking about it. But it was a passing moment. I see that in many philosophers: Early in their work they talk from hearsay about some idea, they give it importance. Then, little by little, they stop talking about it, because they realize that for them its content doesn't exist – they've merely picked it up from other people. *Levy*: Is that true of anguish, too? *Sartre*: I have never known anguish. That was a key philosophical notion from 1930 to 1940. It was one of the notions we made use of all the time, but to me it meant nothing." (See *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 10-16th March 1980, No. 800, p. 56; and *Hope Now: The 1980 Interviews*, University of Chicago Press, 1996, 55).

See also the articles:

- "The Last Words of Jean-Paul Sartre," trans. Rachel Phillips Belash, *Dissent* magazine, Fall, 1980: 418-19.
- "From Maoism to the Talmud (With Sartre Along the Way): An Interview with Benny Levy," by Prof. Dr. Stuart Z. Charme, in *Commentary* magazine, December 1984, pp. 48-53.
- "Special Tribute to Sartre. Benny Levy: Today's Hope - Conversations with Sartre", in *Telos* magazine, No. 44, Summer, 1980.

- The 1980 interviews were originally published in *Le Nouvel Observateur* on March 10th, 17th, and 24th, 1980, (No. 800-802); and were republished by Benny Levy with his own introduction and a concluding note under the title, *L'Espoir maintenant: Les entretiens de 1980*. Jean-Paul Sartre et Benny Levy. (Paris: Editions Verdier, Lagrasse, 1991).

(35) SIGRID UNSET – NOBEL LAUREATE IN LITERATURE

Nobel Prize: Sigrid Undset (1882–1949) was granted the 1928 Nobel Prize in Literature “principally for her powerful descriptions of Scandinavian life during the Middle Ages.” Undset donated the prize money to charity.

Nationality: Danish; later Norwegian citizen

Education: Schooling at Kalundborg (Denmark) and Christiania (now Oslo)

Occupation: Novelist and essayist

1. In her famous article “Catholic Propaganda” (February 28, 1927), Sigrid Undset wrote: “There is no room in the Catholic Church for different concepts about the being of God or about the divine-human nature of Jesus Christ or about the motherhood of the Virgin Mary; because Christ himself is the way to God’s kingdom and because his death on the Cross is the secret which opens God’s kingdom to the descendants of Adam, his blood truly cleanses the sinner from all his sin, his body is truly the food which is the life of believers.” (Undset 1993, in *Sigrid Undset: On Saints and Sinners*. Proceedings of the Wethersfield Institute. Deal W. Hudson – Editor. Volume 6, pp. 232-272. Ignatius Press).

2. In the same article Sigrid Undset wrote about Jesus Christ: “ ‘He came to his own, and his own did not receive him. But as many as received him, to them he gave power to be the children of God.’ This is the Catholic faith, that an act of the will on the part of man is unconditionally necessary before he can be saved. By his will, man turned from God; with his will he turns back to him. God pours out his saving grace for us because of love alone and not because in the least measure we have deserved or earned it; the Catholic Church teaches nothing else.” (Undset 1993).

3. In her article “Finding Faith” Undset said: “When people stubbornly hold on to the hope that it is impossible to find any absolute truth, it is because they fancy that life would lose its excitement, would have no freedom, if there really existed one truth – one alone in which all other truths are contained. In this world we can only attain one kind of freedom, that which our Lord spoke of when he said: ‘The truth shall make you free.’ ” (Undset 1999, Vol. 13).

4. “Fear and hope drive the soul forward; they teach it to watch and pray and thus gain a growing knowledge of God – and as a consequence more and more to lose its egoistic concern for itself and to become unselfish, with adoring love for God: this is the fruit which the soul may bring forth at last.” (Undset 1993).

5. “Floating in the infinite personality of God, the human personality rests, an infinitesimal speck in infinity just as the earth is a speck in the part of the universe which our knowledge can comprehend. The earth, men, atoms, become almost equally small when measured against infinity – and each person is as complex as a planet or an atom.” (Undset 1993).

6. “Christianity explains – in unity with other religions – that the invisible infinity is God. He has created all things visible and invisible out of himself and all rests in him. By a special act he has created man in his image – in Catholic theology that means, as white light is broken up by a prism, God’s uncompounded being is broken into human properties.” (Undset 1993).

7. "For Catholics, grace is a medicine which sinners may ever inhale and bathe in, that they might grow up rightly – become saints, be perfect as their heavenly Father is perfect. Only when we are as good as God are we good enough." (Undset 1993). "However, there are probably only a few converts who are prepared to explain their own conversion, why their resistance to one who calls himself the Way, the Truth, and the Life, a resistance dictated by fear and mistrust, has been overcome. It does not happen without the cooperation of the mystical and supernatural power that theologians call grace." (Undset 1999, Vol. 13).

8. "As is well known, no one can be received into the Church without basic instructions – it is not enough to have 'everyone who wants to be saved, raise your hands', as I have had the experience of hearing at a revival meeting. The Church does not receive capitulations who only join, after having been momentarily stirred either by intoxicating feelings or emotional worship services; she demands that the convert should know what she teaches and understand what she says. The convert has months, years if he will, to think things over before he takes the step." (Undset 1993). "We believe in complete seriousness that the peace of Christ cannot be advanced in the world unless we confess with Peter, literally and without interpretations: 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!', and therefore, accept all His words as the word of God." (Undset 1993).

9. "There is a kind of modern, confused deism, more or less Christian sounding, colored by a kind of Jesus worship that is not worship of God but of a hero. It is prepared all too willingly to enter into company with whatever kind of altruistically colored materialism, without understanding that the Christian and materialistic ideals are incommensurate, even when outwardly they look exactly alike." (Undset 1993).

10. "By degrees my knowledge of history convinced me that the only thoroughly sane people, of our civilization at least, seemed to be those queer men and women the Catholic Church calls Saints. They seemed to know the true explanation of man's undying hunger for happiness – his tragically insufficient love of peace, justice, and goodwill to his fellow men, his everlasting fall from grace. Now it occurred to me that there might possibly be some truth in the original Christianity. But if you desire to know the truth about anything, you always run the risk of finding it. And in a way we do not want to find the Truth – we prefer to seek and keep our illusions. But I had ventured too near the abode of truth in my researches about 'God's friends,' as the Saints are called in the Old Norse texts of Catholic times. So I had to submit. And on the first of November, 1924, I was received into the Catholic Church." (Undset, as cited in Grenier 1999).

(36) RABINDRANATH TAGORE – NOBEL LAUREATE IN LITERATURE

Nobel Prize: Sir Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) received the 1913 Nobel Prize in Literature "because of his profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse, by which, with consummate skill, he has made his poetic thought, expressed in his own English words, a part of the literature of the West."

Nationality: Indian

Education: Privately educated in England and India (Bengali Academy)

Occupation: Poet, novelist, playwright, song composer and painter; founder of the Visva-Bharati University at Santiniketan, West Bengal (1924)

1. "In one salutation to Thee, my God, let all my senses spread out and touch this world at Thy feet. Like a rain-cloud of July hung low with its burden of unshed showers let all my mind bend down at Thy door in one salutation to Thee. Let all my songs gather together their diverse strains into a single current and flow to a sea of silence in one salutation to Thee. Like a flock of homesick cranes flying

night and day back to their mountain nests let all my life take its voyage to its eternal home in one salutation to Thee.” (Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali (Song Offerings)*, New York and London: The Macmillan Company, 1913).

2. Tagore wrote:

“This is my prayer to Thee, my Lord – strike, strike at the root of penury in my heart.
Give me the strength lightly to bear my joys and sorrows.
Give me the strength to make my love fruitful in service.
Give me the strength never to disown the poor or bend my knees before insolent might.
Give me the strength to raise my mind high above daily trifles.
And give me the strength to surrender my strength to Thy will with love.”

(Tagore 1913, *Gitanjali*).

3. “Day after day, O Lord of my life, shall I stand before Thee face to face. With folded hands, O Lord of all worlds, shall I stand before Thee face to face. Under Thy great sky in solitude and silence, with humble heart shall I stand before Thee face to face. In this laborious world of Thine, tumultuous with toil and with struggle, among hurrying crowds shall I stand before Thee face to face. And when my work shall be done in this world, O King of kings, alone and speechless shall I stand before Thee face to face.” (Tagore 1913).

4. “Our love of God is accurately careful of its responsibilities. It is austere in its probity and it must have intellect for its ally. Since what it deals with is immense in value, it has to be cautious about the purity of its coins. Therefore, when our soul cries for the gift of immortality, its first prayer is, ‘Lead me from the unreal to truth.’ ” (Tagore, as cited in Chakravarty 1961, 281).

5. “Accept me, dear God, accept me for this while. Let those orphaned days that passed without You be forgotten. Do not turn away Your face from my heart’s dark secrets, but burn them till they are alight with Your fire.” (From Tagore’s prayer “Accept Me”, as cited in Vetter 1997, 1). “The self-expression of God is in the endless variety of creation; and our attitude toward the Infinite Being must also in its expression have a variety of individuality ceaseless and unending. Those sects which jealously build their boundaries with too rigid creeds excluding all spontaneous movement of the living spirit may hoard their theology but they kill religion.” (Tagore, as cited in Chakravarty 1961, 286).

6. “The rain has held back for days and days, my God, in my arid heart. The horizon is fiercely naked – not the thinnest cover of a soft cloud, not the vaguest hint of a distant cool shower. Send Thy angry storm, dark with death, if it is Thy wish, and with lashes of lightning startle the sky from end to end. But call back, my Lord, call back this pervading silent heat, still and keen and cruel, burning the heart with dire despair. Let the cloud of grace bend low from above like the tearful look of the mother on the day of the father’s wrath.” (Tagore 1913). “Time is endless in Thy hands, my Lord. There is none to count Thy minutes. Days and nights pass and ages bloom and fade like flowers. Thou knowest how to wait.” (Tagore 1913).

(37) RUDOLF EUCKEN – NOBEL LAUREATE IN LITERATURE

Nobel Prize: Rudolf Eucken (1846-1926) was awarded the 1908 Nobel Prize in Literature “in recognition of his Idealistic philosophy of life, his penetrating power of thought, and

his earnest search for truth". Eucken was an Idealist philosopher, interpreter of Aristotle, author of works in ethics and religion, and founder of Ethical activism.

Nationality: German

Education: He studied philosophy at Goettingen University and Berlin University

Occupation: Professor of Philosophy at the University of Basel, Switzerland (1871-1874) and the University of Jena, Germany (1874-1920)

1. "Christianity is a religion of redemption, not a religion of law; that is to say, it makes the critical turning-point, the winning of the new world, depend not on man's resolve or exertions, but on divine grace meeting him and lifting him upwards, grace that does not merely second his own effort, but implants within him fresh springs of action and makes his relationship to God the source of a new life, a new creature. For man as we find him has wandered too far from goodness and become too weak in spiritual capacity to be capable of bringing about his own conversion; all his hope of salvation depends on God and from Him must he receive everything. Thus deep humility and joyous gratitude become, as it were, pillars of the new life; but they are genuine only when they are the result of a great upheaval and an inward transformation." (Eucken 1914, 7).

2. "Christianity still remains to countless souls an anchorage in the storms of life and a comfort in its trials; it is still a prolific source of self-sacrificing love and loyal devotion to duty; it still finds many who are ready to live and die in its service." (Eucken 1914, 1).

3. "The union of the Divine and human nature is the fundamental truth of religion, and its deepest mystery consists in the fact that the Divine enters into the compass of the Human without impairing its Divinity. With this new phase, life is completely renewed and elevated. Man becomes immediately conscious of the infinite and eternal, of that within him which transcends the world. For the first time the love of God becomes the ruling motive of his life, and brings him into an inner relation with the whole scope of reality." (Eucken, as cited in Trine 1936, ch. 5).

4. "The world's history fulfils itself in great deeds; this indeed is what transmutes it from a mere process into a genuine history. And inasmuch as these deeds are interconnected, and unite in mutual interplay to form a complete whole, reality becomes transformed into an ethical drama. This drama, moreover, extends its action right into the soul of the individual, which has its own private struggles to undergo, its own experiences of renewal; thus alone does each soul acquire a distinctive history of its own. It was Christianity that first made this history possible. Otherwise it could never have degraded all outward events into mere secondary trifles in comparison with care for the soul, even as Jesus Himself said: 'What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?' " (Eucken 1914, 9).

(38) ISAAC SINGER – NOBEL LAUREATE IN LITERATURE

Nobel Prize: Isaac Bashevis Singer (1904–1991) won the 1978 Nobel Prize in Literature "for his impassioned narrative art which, with roots in a Polish-Jewish cultural tradition, brings universal human conditions to life."

Nationality: Polish; later American citizen

Education: Traditional Jewish education at the Warsaw Rabbinical Seminary

Occupation: Novelist, essayist, and journalist

1. In his Nobel Lecture (8 December 1978, *Les Prix Nobel 1978*) Singer said: "I can never accept the idea that the Universe is a physical or chemical accident, a result of blind evolution. Even though I learned to recognize the lies, the cliches and the idolatries of the human mind, I still cling to some

truths which I think all of us might accept some day. There must be a way for man to attain all possible pleasures, all the powers and knowledge that nature can grant him, and still serve God - a God who speaks in deeds, not in words, and whose vocabulary is the Cosmos." (Singer 1979).

2. "I'm a sceptic. I'm a sceptic about making a better world. When it comes to this business where you tell me that this-or-that regime, one sociological order or another, will bring happiness to people, I know that it will never work, call it by any name you want. People will remain people, and they have remained people under communism and all other kinds of 'isms.' But I'm not a sceptic when it comes to belief in God. I do believe. I always did. That there is a plan, a consciousness behind creation, that it's not an accident." (Singer, as cited in *The Brothers Singer* by Clive Sinclair, London, Allison and Busby, 1983, p. 30).

3. In his last interview (1987) Singer stated: "God is behind everything. Even when we do things against him, he's also there. No matter what. Like a father who sees his children doing a lot of silly things, bad things. He's angry with them, he's punishing them. At the same time, they're his children." (Singer, as cited in Green 1998).

4. "Man prays for mercy, but is unwilling to extend it to others. Why should man then expect mercy from God? It's unfair to expect something that you are not willing to give. It is inconsistent." (Singer, as cited in Rosen 1987).

5. "The serious writer of our time must be deeply concerned about the problems of his generation. He cannot but see that the power of religion, especially belief in revelation, is weaker today than it was in any other epoch in human history. More and more children grow up without faith in God, without belief in reward and punishment, in the immortality of the soul and even in the validity of ethics. The genuine writer cannot ignore the fact that the family is losing its spiritual foundation. All the dismal prophecies of Oswald Spengler have become realities since the Second World War. No technological achievements can mitigate the disappointment of modern man, his loneliness, his feeling of inferiority, and his fear of war, revolution and terror. Not only has our generation lost faith in Providence but also in man himself, in his institutions and often in those who are nearest to him." (Singer 1979).

6. "The material world is a combination of seeing and blindness. The blindness we call Satan. If we would become all seeing, we would not have free choice anymore. Because, if we would see God, if we would see His greatness, there would be no temptation or sin. And since God wanted us to have free will this means that Satan, in other words the principle of evil, must exist. Because what does free choice mean? It means the freedom to choose between good and evil. If there is no evil, there is no freedom." (Singer, as cited in Farrell 1976, 157).

7. "Life is God's novel. Let him write it." (Singer, as cited in Moraes 1975).