

Alfred D'Aliberti: A Vignette

by Richard Rose

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TAT Foundation founder, Richard Rose, spent a lifetime in spiritual and philosophical research. In "Alfred D'Aliberti: A Vignette," he shares his memories of one of the men who meant the most to him along that path, a man of real stature who might otherwise go unremembered.

To the average layman there is nothing more boring than the meetings with or dialogues with, a spiritual person. A type has been cast that all spiritual people are supposed to fit into. The type or stereotype is that of a hypocrite, a person that is mentally sick perhaps, and a nuisance who goes about trying to convert you by shouting positive statements which in turn seemed to be needed more by the exhorter to shore up that which constitutes his faith.

Perhaps I have associated with a different breed of spiritual people. I have met a few men in my life who stood out, and yet the outstanding quality which they possessed was largely their own casual truthfulness. I could have said humility, but somehow I associate that word with hypocrisy. Many of the ministers and philosophers whom I met who described themselves as being humble were described by others as being tumid or hypocritical.

Alfred D'Aliberti was a minister. I never called him, "reverend," because I thought the term itself was hypocritical unless it has been earned. Alfred understood when I called him Mr. D'Aliberti that I was trying to be an honest rebel, and he knew that I was very fond of him and his family. If there has been a man who ever truly earned the spiritual title of "reverend," it was the man who never got it from me. But we knew each other, and like any really close friends, knew that we could depend on the other when the chips were down.

I met Alfred after talking to a friend of his in San Antonio, a Reverend Green, formerly of Steubenville, Ohio. I cannot remember Green's first name. Reverend Green had been interested in ESP, and had done some research with Sheldon Scott and Alfred. Green suggested that I look up Scott and D'Aliberti, when I returned to Wheeling.

Alfred and his wife were seekers in the true sense of the word. They did not make compromises for the sake of pollyanna or church-politics. To them, the truth was the truth. As soon as I talked to them a short while, I knew that I had enlarged my family. We decided to invite a few tolerant people to form a small group which would be able to get together once a week and discuss philosophy, religion or any interesting esoteric direction.

I have always said that a man must work spiritually on three levels. He must do something on the physical level, on the mental level, and these two levels make for or create the

spiritual work. Alfred and his wife gave of their time, money and energy to help people. The esoteric research work which we did in our group constituted his mental contribution. And in true philosophic consistency, he had no spiritual dogma except helping and encouraging his fellow-man to look for the truth of things. God was the search, not some pompous announcement by some cleric who had not made the trip.

He also taught in the local high school, and did this because he could not survive on the receipts from his church. It was never his policy to pressure his congregation for anything. I know that all of this sounds superlative, and I will stop short because my words will not change Alfred's fact-status, which will live in the hearts of those who knew him.

I would like to leave with you some of his sayings. I got them from the little tracts that he dittoed off to pass out at each Sunday meeting. Alfred considered himself to be a liberal, but he did not endorse anything that detracted from the substance or energy of people. "Let's get this clear: your Minister is quite liberal in his Theology and in his conduct. He has never condemned drinking, smoking or friendly games of cards, bingo or what have you. But he does not hesitate to tell you that intemperate smoking may enslave you and do irreparable damage to your body, that intemperate use of alcohol can, and often does make some people incurably alcoholic, and friendly games are no longer friendly when they turn into downright gambling. In the Protestant Church, gambling is a sin."

"There are certain people who bark at the darkness, curse it vehemently, threaten to destroy it, but they are too indolent to light a candle. It is within their reach to turn the lights on, but they are afraid. They will even raise their children in the darkness they curse, and contribute to its blackness with money, submission and vote, but to hear them talk, they have the mouths of lions and the hearts of chickens."

This one is dated September 7th, 1958.

"With this copy we hope to have the time to fill this page with thought-provoking statements on religious beliefs, religious history and religious facts. We believe that religion is the most important force for good in the world, but its effectiveness can be greatly impaired by errors, delusions, credulity, superstitions, etc.... Religion is a tragic and criminal, evil when it is used to keep people in subjection through fear of "sin," the "wrath of God" and the eternal (?) flames of hell. Religion is being used today by unscrupulous men who are gradually infiltrating into every phase of society with the most sinister results. Of course there are many excellent highly educated men and women in such organizations, and occasionally they muster enough courage to complain. One thing they know: they are guilty of a lack of intellectual and moral integrity for their apathy and indifference and personal identification with organized fraud.

"If religion were at least skin deep, some of it would, in one way or another get into the blood stream and be carried to the heart. Religion is more like a costume. It only covers the skin....

"Conventional Christianity is not the moral philosophy of Jesus, but a distortion of his person and his teachings. It should be called Churchianity. Many Church members are not Christians but Churchians..."

July 27th, 1958.

"If God is within me so that I am a manifestation of God, how can I worship Him? I will be worshiping myself! That's it! Until I learn to worship myself humbly, sincerely and earnestly, I can never hope to worship God. Please think.

"God is the source-spring of all blessings. If you knew that such a source-spring is right in your very heart, would you worry? Wake up then to the presence of God within you.

"To 99.44% of members of all religions, God is something to be placated. God is an invisible overlord, demanding and exacting obedience and tribute. People pay tribute to this cruel, harsh, powerfully wicked chieftain in many ways: In India, some people who are faithful go to such extremes as traveling a hundred miles or more by rolling! In Mexico, on Good Friday, the faithful, clad only in short shorts and a crucifix around their necks, jump into clusters of cacti, often piercing their throats or eyeballs! The Protestant faithful hold rattlesnakes, often with fatal results! I have often wondered, if I were God, what would I want people NOT to do?"

July 20th, 1958.

"The following is an important Bible statement. 'Neglect not the gift that is within thee.' In a Church-religion, "sin" is the breaking of a church law. In a personal religion, "sin" is the breaking of a law which is related to self-development. The harboring of thoughts that degrade in any way is 'sinful.' Negatively speaking, the neglect of moral development is equally sinful. Hence the admonition: 'Neglect not the gift that is within thee.' What gift? The gift of life. The gift of intelligence. The gift of love. The gift of conscience. What do you say of a person with a beautiful voice who neglects it? The gift of music, or of painting, or of speaking--There are so many gifts given to people which are neglected!..."

Alfred had a very full crusade against childishness in religion,--and by childishness I mean the childish insistence by theologians to force the public to accept absurd beliefs.

On February the 16th, 1958 he wrote: "About 400 years ago a Protestant scholar computed the age of the world to be at his time, 3963 years old. Pope Urban VIII condemned such ignorance in no uncertain terms. Being a very smart man, and with the direct help from the Holy Ghost, he declared that the whole world was created in the year 5199 B.C. With penalty for unbelievers. (Alfred is here referring to the ex cathedra infallibility of the Pope.) 200 years later, after the penalty was worn out, theologian Lightfoot startled the world by placing the creation on Oct. 23, 4004 B.C.!"

On February the 9th, 1958, he puts the following arithmetic to work: "There are 1440 minutes in a day. This means that if a person who dies goes straight to heaven and wants to see Jesus for one minute only, he will have to sit in a waiting room with 1440 other souls for 24 hours until his turn comes. This is of course on the basis of 1440 people dying each day, and not counting the million of people who died before the time of Christ.

The whole thing is preposterous ... Jesus sitting' at the right hand of God on a golden throne ... are only figures of speech, and not material realities.

On October 21st, 1956 he wrote on sin. "In your minister's dictionary there is no such a word as SIN. A Christian does not believe in sin... there are only right and wrong."

I have skipped through quite a sheaf of weekly messages, none of which were as illuminating as his conversations in informal groups. He had a quiet way of pointing at things which people took for granted, customs or beliefs that did not deserve the attention given them. I remember once he was talking about the crucifix, and the devotional fetish that it had become.

"Why don't we worship the electric chair?" he commented. "Crucifixion was a very brutal execution in which we see Christ at his worst. Are we to remember him morbidly, worshiping and kissing the instrument used to kill him?"

I remember when he said this that it had not occurred to me previously, and probably had not occurred to thousands of other Christians, that the sanctification of the cross was the equivalent of universal Christian masochism or morbid fetishism. I can see that it is good to remember the brutal execution of a hero, so that by remembering we will never allow it to happen again. But when the remembering takes on the love of the process (of execution) then we are worshiping the sadistic procedure, not the hero.

Alfred believed that Jesus was basically a man, and that our first appraisals of Him should be practical, and not bloated with wishful thinking about celestial things that Jesus might be. He believed that Jesus was a good man, a saint, and an historical social revolutionary. He used to point out that Mary was evidently married, because Jesus had brothers. Jesus pointed at the divinity of every man, or the divine potential, and he may have been

misinterpreted. His message was that we were all men, but we could be like Jesus, and discover that we had been a part of (children of) God, all the time.

Alfred did not accept Hell as it is accepted by many Christians. To him, either the Christian concept of Hell was wrong, or the Christian concept of a benevolent God was wrong. And he knew that he must try to point out these things to people, but he also knew that he had to do it gently, he did not want to fracture the faith of those that needed faith to sustain them, but he wanted to be honest and reassuring to those who were beginning to break the chains of blind belief.

He did a lot of work along esoteric lines, knowing that any path to Truth was worth the while, if it were sincere. It was through the effort of Alfred and John Copitka that I was able to find a genuine materializing medium, and witness a genuine materialization. We experimented with paranormal phenomena, and we spent several years at this type of research, meeting sometimes every Friday.

But his was a mind that did not plunge blindly into anything. He was able to pick out the frauds, and did not hesitate to notify our group when fraud was detected. He was sitting with a small group once, experimenting with table-tilting. One of the sitters had encouraged the sitting and had a habit of helping the table a bit. So Alfred reached beneath the table and caught and held the man's hand causing all phenomena to cease.

I often wondered how he managed to do all that he did. When I first met him he was very close to sixty years of age. Yet he was in the process of building his house. The D'Aliberti children, a son and daughter, had married and were living out of the immediate area. Alfred felt that the time had come to try to make things more comfortable for his wife. Their house had been in bad shape for years, so he decided to rebuild it.

He taught school besides his ministerial duties while all this was going on, and our "psychic" group met, as I mentioned, sometimes every Friday. And he spent a lot of time in hospitals, visiting the sick.

I am inclined to think that his schedule ultimately killed him. He was a short, husky man with tremendous energy and determination. He was also one of the kindest men that I have known. When he visited my house or the Copitkas, I noticed that he always picked the children up and kissed them, and talked to them with genuine concern for their positions and dispositions.

One day he had a heart attack while sitting in a chair. His passing was quick and unexpected, since all of us thought that his vitality would keep him going for a long, long time. My first reaction was a desire to put up a monument to him. It seemed that forgetfulness would settle over the town too quickly, and I knew that the town owed this man a lot. But his service dealt with intangibles for the most, and intangible services and acts of friendship cannot be seen unless they are written in history or granite.

Then it dawned on me, that perhaps I was doing something, or trying to do something that Alfred would not approve of. His life was a great success, because he lived to the fullest a life of service. This fact, and his knowledge of that fact, was him. And this Self would be forever immortal without my help, and without the reminders in paper or granite. However, I will retain, to the end of my days, the belief and fear that the members of his congregation never knew the real size of the man who was their minister.