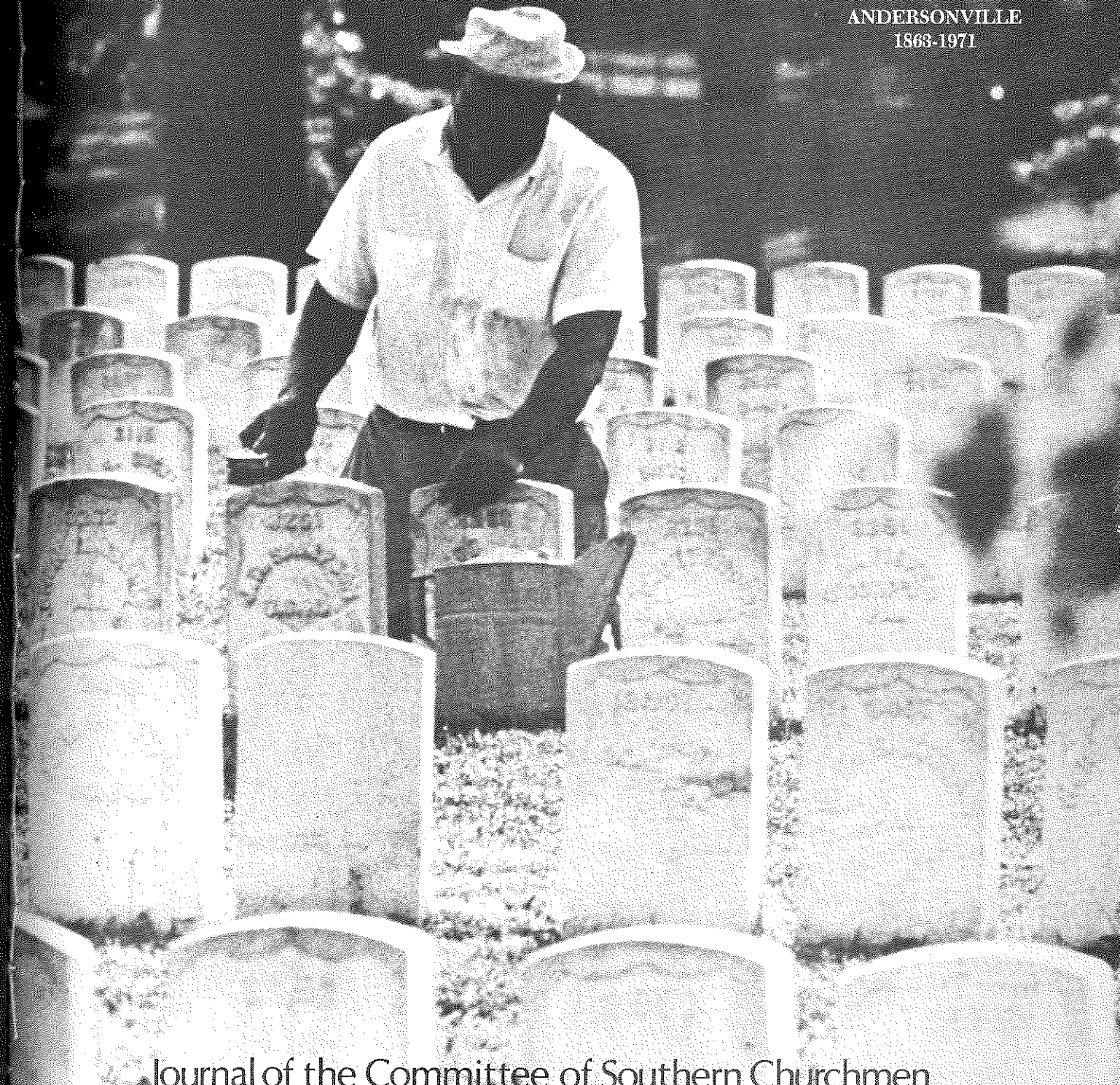


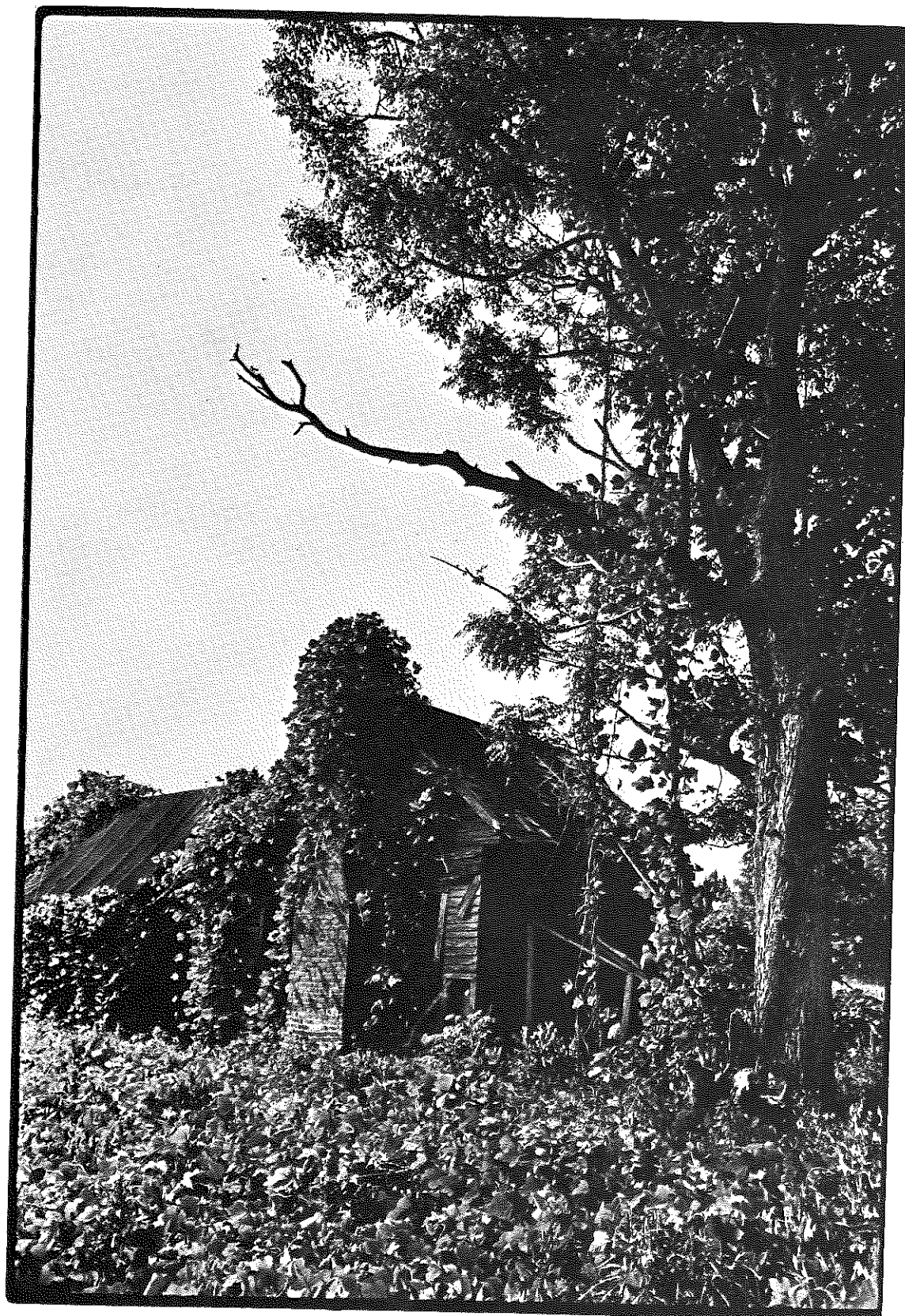
BE RECONCILED

KATALLAGETE

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ANDERSONVILLE
1863-1971





KATALLAGETE BE RECONCILED

Journal of the Committee Of Southern Churchmen

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FREE WHO?

Ann Beard

But the act of teaching is usually casual. That is, you can pick up God knows what from God knows who.

Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones)

I am the only kind of slave I could stand to be—a bad one. Every day that come and hour that pass that I got sense to make half a step do for a whole; every day that I can pretend sickness 'stead of health; to be stupid 'stead of smart; lazy 'stead of quick—I aims to do it. And the more pain it give Marster and the more it cost him—the more Hannibal can be a man.

Hannibal in *The Drinking Gourd*
by Lorraine Hansberry

A Regime that talks most of some value is a regime that consciously or unconsciously denies that value and prevents it from existing.

Jacques Ellul

To be Black in America is to live forever on the edge of death at the hands of white people. To come to

realize that most of the brothers and sisters who are in this country's jails are there because they did something RIGHT! and not wrong is to come to realize how close and for REAL! Death is for Black people.

Liberals are eager to point out and make examples of those Blacks who "made it" into the great American system of big business and suburbia and Playtex girdles in spite of the fact that they "just happened to be Negro." And they are even fonder of those they saved from their negritude, their final act of Love Impossible being to send them North to school to have the "best" education and exposure to a culture which would save them from those niggardly "dis 'n dems" and collard greens and fatback and Royal Crown Hair Grease.

Could any liberal believe that our own fathers and mothers and aunts and cousins and friends wanted what was best for us? But that our fathers and uncles and friends had no equations or guidelines for Blackness for this had been burned from their consciousness in the Mississippi Delta and Southside Chicago and Berea's Middletown and five-and-dime-stores and welfare lines. That when the call went out to send their young, gifted and Black North, they could hope only for the best and send us away in spite of all their fears, and in spite of all

that Aunt Bessie had learned while sweating in Miss Ann's kitchen.

The plan (or "program" as they are so fond of calling their schemes) goes by many names: cultural enrichment programs, high risk, exchange programs. Whites seldom knock at the doors of Black families unless they want rent or insurance money, or they come to arrest Black people for some crime supposedly committed. They would send a white man to the doors of Black families to "look over" the family situation, to see if they were getting the very "best" of Black youth. You see, to qualify for their programs, a student had to be long on the road towards success and achievement as defined by white people in their white world. A student had to be national honor society material (preferably valedictorian of his or her class), a talented dancer or pianist or artist or speaker or student leader. In other words, a student had to be "it" or super nigger before he could possibly be considered for such programs.

Then the letters from the national office would start pouring into Black homes, and letters from the white families in the great North with whom the Black students would be living. And our mothers would sit at the dining room table late into the night trying to make some sense of it all, and to explain it to her Black children. There would be an excitement of sorts all around the house and in the neighborhood as our mothers mended old clothes and made a blouse out of scraps which could be worn with two or three skirts; or the little old lady who had taught Sunday School for all of her life would stop by to tell you how proud she was and to slip a dollar into the student's hand; and from somewhere out there in our community would come a new pair of shoes and a silk slip and a scarf. Classmates would stop by to say their goodbyes; and we wondered then if we would ever see them again or what would become of their nice-but-not-super-nigger-type lives.

All of these things would be lovingly packed into old trunks and taken down to the Greyhound Express. And finally, the long ride into the night.

For some of us, it was almost too much: living with white families for two years; being the "only one" in the school; fear of failure and disappointment to those who loved us back home; countless speeches to the local Chamber of Commerce and Kiwanis about how much better it was "up here" than in the South and "No Suh, ain't nevuh seen snow and I can't tap dance, neither;" smiling when there was every reason to cry; being in fact the only one taking the REAL high risk. But most of all knowing that they were saying that something was wrong! with the way you had been brought up and your mother's values and your father's job and the food auntie cooked and Bobby Blue Bland and Sonny Terry and mama shouting in church and the brothers and sisters lettin' down on Saturday night, and singin' the blues unless your white family happened to be super-educated and thought the blues quaint and nice!) and going home

for vacation and wanting to kiss and hold everyone close but feeling a kind of stranger and fearing that you would lapse back into "negro mannerisms" and have to start from the beginning and—like our foreparents—having our Black consciousness burned from our beings.

We learned our lessons well, those of us who survived. We made their kindness worthwhile by graduating with honors. We learned to carry on very pleasant conversations after Silent Meeting (saying nothing and everything), and to recognize melodic lines from "La Boheme" to attend church and sit for *exactly* one hour and never feel a thing, even though the preacher tried to be hip and run down a joke or two and the choir sang a glorious! rendition of some obscure Bach cantata. Yes, we proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that Black folks can become cultured, refined, and polished.

But the lesson we learned with blood and with our very lives was not supposed to be a part of the curriculum (or was it?). To have scheduled this class (Liberal Racism 203b, 2:30 MWF) would have stated openly and exactly who and what they are. If Cynthia and Carol and Denise and Ada could unearth their now-rotten lips, they would scream along with all of us:

*Intergration is a drag, or
"Prepare to meet
(sisters and brothers) the brash and terrible weather;
the pains;
the bruising."*

Gwendolyn Brooks

What does all of this have to do with her? You must know of whom I speak, for you read newspapers ("Progress!") and already mass media commentators and newsmen press their black suits and purchase new bow ties to receive their "coveted" Best-Story-of-the-Year awards. They have told you all there is to know. They have told you nothing.

Angela Davis and I (along with others in both our families) participated in such programs; we were victims of love-a-nigger-a-year projects, betcha-I-can-be-more-liberal-than-you mentalities, and unbelievable blindness. We were not strangers to each other. Our paths crossed from Federation Day Nursery to city-wide concerts to summers at Camp Blossom Hill with the Girl Scouts to piano lessons and recitals to the band and National Honor Society at Parker High School to the friends we shared and finally to New York to one such high school program. Our paths have not crossed much since those days in New York, except in the way that all Black peoples' paths must cross. I would see her sometimes at the public library in Birmingham during vacations. She went on to Germany, and I ended up in college where I learned even

more about white liberals.

She sits alone in a jail cell now. We are told that when first arrested (kidnapped) in New York City that she was placed in a ward for the mentally disturbed where library, recreation and other privileges were absolutely denied. She ate alone, showered and exercised alone, and her cell was searched three times a day by a guard stationed around the clock. She found roaches in her food, and awoke in terror at night to find rats racing across her body. The intimidations and harassment do not end with her; they are extended cordially to her family. Visiting privileges are taken away for any reason a guard can get by with. Her pregnant sister, Fania, was shoved and pushed by a matron while she tried to put on her boots to leave the jail. Her mother and father in Birmingham are forever victims of hate at the hands of the local police.

A woman who received the BEST in education at one of New York City's BEST private high schools, and who attended the BEST of eastern universities and who studied at one of Germany's BEST universities and who attended one of the West Coast's BEST institutions and graduated from all of them with highest honors now sits alone in a jail spitting roaches out of her coffee. Now we know it all: a nigger is a nigger is a nigger! This is the American Way.

We live in a country where false issues are the word of the day; this is what keeps Americans patriotic and ready to murder the first "Gook" who raises his head.

It is also the American Way that Black people are not immune to sickness and false issues, and that some of us actually believe that Angela Davis is guilty of some crime. To know it all is to know that Angela is not the criminal, but educational institutions, barbie doll, political parties, Julie and David, Wall Street, directors of human rights commissions, Sears, TWA, Eastland, Nixon, Reagan, Woolworths.

For fear that the point is missed, let me state: the subject of this article is not Angela Yvonne Davis. The subject is all those white liberals who squeeze their eyes and ball their fists tightly against their reddening cheeks and mouth between clinched teeth, "There is progress! Things have changed. Prog. . ." The subject is all those who will integration to be a cruel and vicious device to control the niggers who SOMEHOW! fled the plantation. The subject is all those Great American Institutions (especially the church) which have to this day failed to deal in any positive manner with the racial crisis. Their we-will-hire-anyone-who-is-qualified racism and academic-excellence smoke screen have effectively kept the niggers and undesirables in their places. The subject is all those Christian churches and Christian colleges which have out-caesared Caesar. The subject is White House Prayer Breakfasts. The subject is the For Real! criminals. The subject is slavery and the American way of TV, super highways, Captain Kangaroo, the little doughboy, commissions, reports, studies, and Mrs. Olson's mountain grown coffee.

And the subject is young, Black Jonathan Jackson walking armed into that now famous San Rafael courtroom and announcing to all the world, "Excuse me, gentlemen, I'm taking over now."

FOUR WHO REMEMBER

Kierkegaard, the Blumhardts, Ellul, and Muggeridge

Vernard Eller

I.

The most obvious characteristic that our Front Four have in common is that they remember that we are insane. However, closer examination will show that this is not their most basic commonality; that lies in the "different diet" that feeds this remembrance. And to do that food analysis is the work before us.

The team is nicely international and ecumenical, including a Dane, the double German, a Frenchman, and a Britisher. Their birthdates neatly span a century, from the elder Blumhardt in 1805 to Malcolm Muggeridge in 1903, or from Kierkegaard in 1813 to Jacques Ellul in 1912. As we shall discover, they have gone to a common source for their diet although not particularly to one another. Ellul, apparently, has learned much from both

Kierkegaard and the Blumhardts and Muggeridge has done at least some reading in Kierkegaard; but this seems to be as far as their interdependence extends.

Before going further, we should perhaps attempt a thumbnail identification of each.

SØREN KIERKEGAARD (1818-55) needs no introduction. He wrote voluminously and has been written about to such volume beyond all measure that it has become next to impossible for the man any longer to make his own witness in his own way. The label most often used to identify him, namely "the father of existentialism," is as misleading as anything that could be said about him. His works are widely available, most of them in paperback.

J. C. BLUMHARDT (1805-80) and his son CHRISTOPH (1842-1919), as regards notoriety, stand a pole away from Kierkegaard. Although well known in their native Germany to the present day, only a handful of people in this country even will recognize the name. In their careers they essentially were pastors who came into such tension with the organized church that they withdrew to become directors of a spiritual retreat center which they established at Bad Boll in the south German principality of Wurtemberg.

Their accomplishment was to develop a theology of the kingdom of God (if "theology" it should be called) which then had a determinative effect on the development of such thinkers as Brunner, Barth, Thurneysen, Cullmann, Bonhoeffer, and others. Their thought has contributed much to the social gospel, Christianity's turn to the world, the theology of hope, and the whole eschatological awareness which now is in ferment among us.

Their writings consist entirely of sermons, meditations, letters, and table talk. Although most of this material still is in circulation in Germany, the unhappy fact is that so little is available to English-speaking readers (and English-reading speakers). As far as I know, my article about them in *The Christian Century* (October 8, 1969) is the only attention they have been given in a periodical. Beyond that, three brief and miscellaneous books (*Action in Waiting*, comprising an essay about Christoph Blumhardt by Karl Barth and one of Blumhardt's sermons; *Christoph Blumhardt and His Message*; and *Evening Prayers for Every Day of the Year*—all from the Plough Publishing House, Rifton, N.Y.) represent virtually all of the Blumhardt material yet translated.

JACQUES ELLUL (1912-) still needs to be introduced to many people but hardly to readers of *Katallagete*. The double issue of a year ago (now available in book form) does the job very adequately. There seems to be no problem in getting his important works published in this country, and a secondary literature dealing with the man and his thought is beginning to appear. All the signs indicate that Ellul is coming on and that he may come on big.

MALCOLM MUGGERIDGE (1903-) has a name but only recently one that has attracted any Christian

notice—because only recently has he become a Christian. As the blurb on his book jacket has it, he is "the dean of British columnists, has written for the *Manchester Guardian*, the *Evening Standard*, and the *Daily Telegraph*. He was the editor of *Punch* for several years and writes regularly for *Esquire* magazine. Mr. Muggeridge has also become a recognized television personality both in England and the United States."

The total body of his writings is, of course, monstrous; but his Christian writings are scant (which constitutes a real recommendation for reading them). A 1969 volume, *Jesus Rediscovered*, collects the significant periodical pieces. "The Great Jesus Brouhaha," a feature in *The Critic* magazine (July-August 1970), constitutes a most illuminating sequel to the book. And an article in the December 1970 *Esquire*, "The Decade of the Great Liberal Death Wish," may not strictly qualify as a Christian writing but gets to the heart of Muggeridge nonetheless.

II.

And what is it that justifies our making these four into a set?

Well, it certainly is not that they hold a common theology. One of them would not rate as a theologian by anyone's standards, and the others all have resisted the label.

If a theologian is one who through logical, philosophic analysis seeks to understand the Christian gospel as a coherent thought-system, then Jacques Ellul says, "I refuse to construct a *system* of thought, or to offer up some Christian or prefabricated socio-political solutions. I want only to provide Christians with the means of thinking [things] out *for themselves*." And the other three say, "Amen!"

If a theologian—systematician or not—is one whose relationship to the gospel is predominantly a matter of intellectual understanding, then Christoph Blumhardt says, "I don't want to be a speaker before you. I want to be a man of experience. I want to stand before you as a witness." And the other three say, "Amen!"

If the task of a theologian is to recast the gospel into terms more amenable to modern thought, then Kierkegaard says, "This poet suddenly transformed himself, threw away the guitar, and brought out a book which is called *The New Testament of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*." And the other three detheologize with him.

We are not meaning to suggest that these men are irrationalists, mystics of mind-blowing bent, or anything of the sort. They all display exceptionally good heads and the ability to use them; but they are convinced that man does not live by head alone and that the gospel offers much more (and demands much more) than the thinking through of a catch of concepts. With each of these men, theology is only of secondary interest at best; and it is nothing akin to a theological system that forms their common ground.

III.

If our four are those who remember that we are insane and who make so bold as to remind us of the fact, then it would appear that they are *social critics*.

This is not the whole of what needs to be said, but it will do for a starter. In the first place, we need to stretch the term "social critic" as wide as it will go. These men do not focus their criticism upon any particular field—whether politics, education, culture, fashion, the arts, or whatever. They feel free to criticize anything in sight—and a good deal that has not yet come into sight. The world is their target—the world and they that dwell therein (specifically, that world of which they that dwell therein—and not God himself—are the creators).

The criticism is less pointed and explicit in the Blumhardts than in the others; but even with them it is there, perhaps on a more fundamental level than with some of the others. But none of these men has any faith in the world, hope for the world, or love of the world. (However, the ambiguity of the word "world" will force us, in due course, greatly to qualify that statement, because all four of our subjects do have complete faith in the Governor of the world, hope for what he will make of it, and love for the therein dwellers for whose sake it is being made.)

The four differ considerably in the manner and mode of their criticism. Kierkegaard and Muggeridge are virtuosos in the ways of cut and slash. But no, that phrase does not say it, for these two are of an entirely different breed than those adulated contemporaries whose art consists solely in blind rage, wild denunciation, and the laughter of derision. But Kierkegaard and Muggeridge, being those who remember and who, through memory, have gained insight and perspective, are instead practitioners of pointed wit and genuine laughter. Rather than cut and slash, they slip the steel deftly between the ribs and right to the heart of every absurdity they attack.

And so Muggeridge quotes Kierkegaard—"The human race has in the course of generations become ever more insignificant"—and then says, "[This] is the kind of sentence I love; startling, apparently nonsensical, in direct opposition to all contemporary dogmas such as progress, evolution, etc., yet to a discerning mind glowing with an inner truth of its own."

He would have been even more pleased, I believe, with Kierkegaard's sentence to the effect that "in the course of time and the constant advance of nonsense" to be a Christian has become identical with to be a human.

As befits a sociologist and professor of law, Jacques Ellul exhibits a dignity that restrains him from jabbing away with quite the flair of a Kierkegaard or Muggeridge. His assaults tend to be somewhat more analytical and closely reasoned—although often accompanied with a wry observation that carries a sting all its own. But then read his *A Critique of the New Commonplaces* and

find an Ellul who is at least close to joining his leagues.

The Blumhardts are of a different stamp in this regard. They do not practice an intellectual finesse and subtlety that goes in for satire and the bon mot. Instead, their social criticism gains its thrust from blunt statement and colorful, earthy language. This is not without humor, but it is of a much simpler and more primitive sort. The following is typical of the Blumhardt approach: "Who ever can think it should think once of how shriveled we are in a political sense. This great round of earth with its peoples, what an unconfined playground it could be for genuine humanity and how small we have made it by dividing ourselves up as tigers and lambs, as foxes and geese—with, naturally, the foxes gobbling down the geese."

IV.

Very good. So we have a sampling of social critics of sharp and effective style. But social critics (even good ones) come a dime a dozen. Why these four and no more?

Well, most social criticism represents little more than internecine struggles between different factions of the world. A representative of one political ideology takes out after the followers of other ideologies. The spokesman of one social philosophy takes out after anyone who holds a different philosophy. The proponent of Consciousness III takes out after people of Consciousnesses I and II. The person who is gung ho for one theology takes out after those who prefer other theologies.

All of this criticism, though it has a place and validity, is intramural, operating out of one milieu and within one framework. It is all "the wisdom of this world," or as Paul also puts it, "a wisdom belonging to this passing age." Thus it represents the paranoids analyzing the schizophrenics, the alcoholics calling the homosexuals sick. It starts from the assumption that only some of us are crazy and that if the insane would just be willing to undergo therapy at the hands of the sane (of whom, obviously, the critic himself is one), all hurts could be healed. The most telltale characteristic of this brand of criticism is that there is always one sector of society that never gets criticized, namely the faction to which the critic himself belongs.

Because such criticism has no transcendent base, can introduce nothing from outside, it can neither imagine nor recognize, let alone create or move toward, *the truly new*. The best that can be done is to let a slightly different variety of lunatic play doctor for a while. In the same passage from which we just quoted (1 Corinthians 1:8–2:16), Paul tells us that, in order to get man back to sanity, God must "overthrow the existing order"—and that, plainly, can be done only by a force or entity from outside the existing order. In that regard it should be obvious that Consciousness III, for example, is just as much a part of the existing order as are Consciousnesses

I and II. Simply to shift the center of gravity within the existing order is not the same thing as overthrowing it.

If it be true that our four do indeed remember that we are insane (that we *all* are insane, that the existing order, as such, is the kingdom of those who have eaten poison grain), it is because they have been nourished on grain from another kingdom and not merely from a different field within this kingdom. That this is so is supported by the fact that none of our four can be identified as belonging to a particular movement, school, or party. They are not typical conservatives, liberals, radicals, or anything else. At points they may show affinity with almost any category; at other points they differ from any and all categories. Likewise, none of them has a bloc of friends who are exempt from criticism. You can't get close enough to any one of them to escape his thrusts, because his assault is aimed as much at his own insanity as at anyone else's.

In consequence of their transcendent base, their center (or granary) which is not of this world, the greatest strength of these men in their social criticism is their immunity to the insanity of acculturation. Each in his own way, in his own time, has been exceptional at smelling out fads and exposing them for what they are (and it should be said that conservatives are as susceptible to their fads of the past as liberals are to their fads of the present and radicals are to theirs of the future). But our four are those least likely to be swept up in the spirit of the times, least likely to swallow (or to sell) a party line, least likely to chase around trying to get to where the action is (or to get ahead of the game and create the action for tomorrow). These men haven't had to come out with bright, new programs every five years when they discover that, in the meantime, man has come of a different age and the fashion has changed.

V.

The good grain on which Kierkegaard, the Blumhardts, Ellul, and Muggeridge have fed is, of course, the Christian gospel. And where they find that gospel is not in any particular creed or doctrinal position. It is not in church tradition as such (all four of the men, to greater or lesser extents, have been mavericks in relation to their respective churches). Their understanding of the gospel is derived directly from the pages of the New Testament. All of them display a strong biblical orientation; and all of them take their Bibles straight—reading it pretty much for what it says. They aren't much for demythologizing, hermeneuticizing, and working the Bible around to make it say what modern man wants to hear.

This biblical radicalism gets to the heart of what makes these men tick and is much more fundamental than the similarity of the social critiques they derive therefrom. And it is *the nature* of their approach to the Bible that most clearly differentiates them from modern theology in general and perhaps disqualifies them altogether from being "theologians."

What these men discover in the Bible, from the Bible, and through the Bible is *an order of reality that is "not of this world."* What they do not find is simply a different method of conceptualizing the human phenomena with which mankind already is familiar (which is about as much as most contemporary theologians undertake to do). Rather, in their Bibles our subjects find the proclamation of "things beyond our seeing, things beyond our hearing, things beyond our imagining, all prepared by God for those who love him." The gospel points them to that which is truly new and not merely to a new arrangement of the old.

And if it be that insanity is the situation that results when one loses contact with reality, then we men of the world are most literally insane. We have lost contact with that order of reality in which the world was created, by which it is sustained, and for which it is destined—and so have jumped to the crazy conclusion that the madhouse in which we presently live is indeed reality itself. Consequently we expend our energies in decorating the walls to suit our delirious fancies and are full of sound and fury—signifying very, very little.

Yet, although the focus of our four is upon that which is "not of this world," this is not the same thing as saying that their orientation is "other-worldly." That step does not necessarily follow; and it is the refusal to take this step that distinguishes them from that conservative tradition which is willing to locate the new order of reality either in the private heart of the individual or in the sky by-and-by but at no place between those two. However, our four have read their Bibles more closely and so have discovered the reality which truly is *in* the world even while not being *of* it. This reality is nothing other than God himself; and it is God *at work* rather than at repose in his eternal essence. But all we know of God or have encountered of him, all of God that the Bible is concerned about or that our four are interested in, is God *pro nobis*, God active in this world, Immanuel (God with us).

That there is an order of reality greater and more fundamental than the this-worldly order which presently obtains, and that the site of this greater reality is here and not elsewhere, suggests very strongly that the explanation of its hiddenness must lie in its "not yet" component. It is a reality in process of actualization but not yet fully realized. The Blumhardts are perhaps the first thinkers of modern times to organize their understanding of the gospel around this theme, to identify this new order of reality as being the oncoming kingdom of God, and to see that it is this reality that governs the course of history and constitutes the judgment that a humanity oriented only toward the existing order indeed must be insane. Ellul strongly has followed their lead. Kierkegaard saw the same truth, but did not find the terminology with which to give it powerful expression and so left it more implicit than explicit. Muggeridge is not enough of a theologian to enable us to peg him on this point.

But because, in the gospel, our four have found not merely a new means of conceptualization but have felt themselves enlisted for and possessed by a totally new order of reality, they inevitably write about it (and live in it) *with passion*. Kierkegaard, of course, probably thought and wrote more about the passions and their relationship to faith than any other person in history. But more to the point, all four of our men *write passionately*. They are not scholars and academicians in the customary sense (although some of them have the qualifications and have proved themselves capable in such a role), and when treating the gospel, they put no value upon the sort of scientific detachment that scholarship exalts. These men are personally involved, very much concerned. They feel deeply the things about which they write. Their passions have been enlisted in the service of their message; they have become "evangelical," and their desire is to arouse similar passions within their readers.

However, the important thing is not that passionateness happens to be an idiosyncrasy of these writers, a matter of personality trait. Neither are we saying simply that passion in regard to Christianity is a good thing and we wish more theologians would see fit to inject a little of it into their work, let themselves go, as it were. Clearly, in the cases of the men we are studying, their passionateness was not theirs by choice, not something they decided to add. Their passion has been *evoked* by the reality they encountered in the gospel and is to be attributed entirely to it. They could do no other; and with the many who produce passionless theology it may be that they know the gospel only as a means of conceptualizing the old order rather than as a new order of reality that has grabbed them.

But when our men do theology, the very reading of it makes plain that it is theology done by a *human being*. The author does not attempt to hide himself and present his work as though it came from some sort of disembodied, dispassioned, disengaged oracle. Rather, in his work we meet the man himself, a real, live human being wrestling with the faith, striving mightily to give expression to that which he feels impelled to share because he has found it all-important in his own life. Only conversation that recognizes the human actuality of both the speaker and his hearer can do justice to the faith that claims to be the essential truth about living men and the truly living God to whom they belong.

VI.

Given the nature of the gospel these men have encountered and their passionate response to it, perhaps the most crucial aspect of their work is its naiveté. (The printer has it right; I wrote "naiveté" and meant "naiveté.")

But when Kierkegaard writes, "I have, quite literally, lived with God as one lives with one's father"—that is naive.

When the elder Blumhardt believes that one of his parishioners is possessed by evil spirits and that, through prayer, the power of Jesus exorcised these demons—that is naive.

When Ellul says: "The act of private prayer is the act through which history is structured in Christ. . . . Prayer holds together the shattered fragments of the creation. It makes history possible"—that is naive.

And when Muggeridge makes like the Apostle Paul and insists that the living Jesus met him upon a road in Palestine and changed his life—that is, to say the least, naive.

If naiveté is to believe passionately in something that everybody who is anybody just knows that modern men do not accept, then our four are naive—or else it is indeed the truth that *we* are insane.

Kierkegaard understood what I am talking about: "Every man has a basic primitive disposition (for primitiveness is the possibility of 'spirit'). God knows this best, for it is he who created it. All earthly, temporal, worldly cleverness tends to destroy its own primitiveness. Christianity aims at following it."

But we dare not pass over this naiveté too lightly; it stands right at the heart of each of these men's thought and not at all on the periphery. It follows in each case that many of the man's most ardent devotees perversely are misreading him; he may be their man, but they've done him wrong. For instance, they have no right to Kierkegaard's name and ideas who blithely ignore his naiveté and make him out to be a wingding philosopher, the father of existentialism, and all like that. Those who lap up Ellul's *The Technological Society* because it currently is the "in" thing to castigate modern technology and the depersonalizing forces of society, but who ask to be excused from his *The Meaning of the City* with its embarrassing naiveté—these people have not really understood what Ellul was saying in the book they did read, let alone the one they did not. And that the readers of *Esquire* magazine should be the audience that is open to and capable of understanding Malcolm Muggeridge is as preposterous as if John Allegro (he of *The Mushroom and the Cross*) were to become a columnist for Billy James Hargis' *Christian Crusade Weekly*.

However, there is still more that needs to be said about the naiveté of our quartet. It is true naiveté—a stumbling-block to Jews, folly to Greeks, and outrageous nonsense to everyone who has come of age—and we have no intention of backing off on that point. Nevertheless, it displays a character that marks it off from the naiveté that one encounters elsewhere. Theirs is what we might call *second-order naiveté*.

The practitioners of first-order naiveté, the garden-run variety, are that way because they can't help it, they don't know any better. It hasn't gotten through to them that modern men can't believe such stuff any more, and so they just go on believing like the medieval peasants they are. They come by their naiveté honestly.

Not so with our four. Each and every one of them knows enough to know better. They have to be naive by conscious, deliberate choice. Their education has included the best that worldly wisdom has to offer; they could have operated (and often wrongly are treated as though they had) as the super-sophisticated darlings of a sophisticated society. They know all about the world and don't care (a contemptible attitude!)

The economy is particularly prominent in the cases of Kierkegaard and Muggeridge. Kierkegaard circulated on the top crust of Danish society, and his pseudonymous works show that he could keep up with (if not beat hollow) the best of them. Muggeridge, before becoming a Christian, had pursued a career and earned considerable repute in literary circles and in that worldliest of worlds, the world of entertainment and the mass media. Ellul's sophistication is of a slightly different order in that it has been demonstrated in the worlds of academia, politica, and ecclesiastica rather than in the more glossy worlds attended by Kierkegaard and Muggeridge. With the Blumhardts the situation was quite different, although they would have become popular as preachers and mass evangelists had they not deliberately rejected the role.

Even so, in each case the man deliberately and with all malice aforethought declared his world and all other sophisticated worlds to be sham and delusion and chose instead to go all the way with the naiveté, the "things low and contemptible, mere mouthings, by which God has chosen to overthrow the existing order." This is second-order naiveté. Because it cannot be dismissed as stupidity and natural brutishness, it ought to be even more infuriating to onlookers than is the first-order kind. By rights, many more people should be mad at our four than are. That the world takes their back-of-the-hand rejection and keeps coming back for more is of no credit to the world. It shows only that the world's first interest is in being entertained and that it really hasn't listened to them at all—another indication that we are indeed insane.

VII.

When anyone sets out, as our four do, to mount a radical critique against any and all orders of the world, any and all parties within the world, any and all programs for the world, the expected response would be for him to be indicted as negative and defeatist, a malcontent and misanthropist, a nasty child who will not dance when we pipe or mourn when we weep and wail.

The response has not failed to come as expected, the best illustration of it being the magazine piece, "The Great Jesus Brouhaha," in which, in face to face encounter, a devoted ethical humanist took Malcolm Muggeridge to task on just this point—and that in very insulting, personally defamatory terms.

Kierkegaard had run into the same sort of static: "What the old bishop said about me—that I talked as if

everybody else was on the road to hell—is simply not true. No, if anyone wants to be able to say that I talk about going to hell, then I talk like this—'If the rest are all going to hell, then I am going along.' This is the way I speak if anyone is able to say in any sense that I talk about going to hell. But I do not believe it. On the contrary, I believe that we will all be saved—and I, too—something which arouses my deepest wonder."

As Kierkegaard did a good job of answering his detractor, so did Muggeridge in answering Senator Skeffington. But more convincing than their rebuttals is a reading of the actual works of the four men themselves. One can understand how a reader who so little credits the proclamation of a reality not of this world that he cannot even hear such words would come to the conclusion that these writings express morbidity. But for those who have ears to hear gospel, our four write nothing but gospel (*good news*).

Even their writing styles betray a certain fun-loving, free-swinging lightheartedness (although Ellul's perhaps a little less than the others and although undeniably there is, in Kierkegaard, a strong strain of melancholia that runs alongside his exuberance). However, it is significant that Kierkegaard's most critical book, *Attack Upon Christendom*, is also the most witty—and his is not that contemporary demonism of humorless "black humor" either. The Muggeridge-Skeffington brouhaha is even more to the point. Of course, no reviewer can speak of Muggeridge without calling him "an old curmudgeon," and he is a past master with the studied insult and other such knives. Rather obviously, Skeffington's intent was to serve him back in kind. But it did not come off that way. In comparison with Skeffington's malice and despication, it becomes apparent that, even at his harshest, Muggeridge's words communicate a certain levity, tolerance, and relaxedness and can even carry something akin to goodwill. His is a lover's quarrel with the world.

Out of what I believe was the first piece of Ellul's I ever read, the sentences that had the greatest impact upon me were these. Speaking of "the passion to play," he said:

This alone must be the basis for anyone's participation in a group. However serious an enterprise, however important the stakes and the values to be realized, these must not induce us to participate (in political life, for instance). All that in fact is part of the very technical structures that must be opposed! But if, on the contrary, participation is prompted by the passion to play, then it is free; it gives life to the group and at the same time permits the individual to express himself.

That paragraph was written before the current Celebration/Feast-of-Fools jag got itself launched. But if Ellul now were to write a paragraph on play, from the post-fad rather than the pre-fad perspective, I know where it would appear—in his *A Critique of the New Commonplaces*.

What we observed earlier regarding the passions in general would apply now to Ellul's "the passion to play."

He would have no interest in celebrating the existing order which is this world—celebrations occasioned not by the encounter of any new thing worth celebrating, but only because celebration seems like a nice activity that we ought to have more of. No, for Ellul, the only play deserving the name is that passion involuntarily *evoked* when one is grabbed (and tickled) by the new order of reality which is the oncoming kingdom of God. Then, and not until then, does a person have anything to inspire or justify true Christian play. In this world, only the naive have anything to laugh about; all else is the cackling of insanity.

And not Ellul alone, but all of our four, know that Jesus Christ's is a playful gospel. However, remembering that we are insane also entails remembering that

"world gone" means "kingdom come"—for it was Jesus himself who counseled, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world!"

This, I suppose, could be called "the theology of hope"—except that it speaks of experience rather than theology and eventuates in a passion for play rather than a theoretical concept of "hope." Better, with Christoph Blumhardt, it should be called "Joy in the Lord," the title and topic of his focal sermon that constitutes the second half of the little book, *Action in Waiting*. But whatever it is called, this is what Kierkegaard, the Blumhardts, Ellul, and Muggeridge are up to—even when they are performing as most caustic critics of the world.

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RESISTANCE, CONTEMPLATION, LIBERATION

James W. Douglass

On the back cover of his album *John Wesley Harding*, Bob Dylan has written a comment on man's willingness to pursue the truth. It offers a good introduction to the way of truth which is the first and last concern of this essay: the way of liberation. According to Dylan's oblique parable, three kings decided that a man named "Frank" was the key for understanding the new Dylan record (rather than "Faith" or "Froth," referring to two of the approaches of listeners anxious to pigeonhole the meaning of Dylan's music). The three kings crawled into Frank's room to see if he could help them. Frank acknowledged to the first king that he was indeed the key for understanding the record.

"Well then," said the king in a bit of excitement, "could you please open it up for us?" Frank, who all this time had been reclining with his eyes closed, suddenly opened them both up as wide as a tiger. "And just how far would you like to go in?" he asked and the three kings all looked at each other. "Not too far but just far enough so's we can say that we've been there," said the first king.

The parable is Dylan's way of commenting on the Magi, the followers of the star, who come seeking the latest revelation of truth from the artist they want to deify and identify with, without having recognized the seriousness and personal demand of truth in their own lives. It recalls Gandhi's statement, to those ready to canonize his every word yet unwilling to recognize the word in themselves, that he didn't want any followers, just people seriously pursuing their own truth, which would in the end bring all men together.

The point here is the same, as applied to the anxiety of all relevant Americans to identify ourselves with the oppressed—and in particular their media-inflated leaders—in their struggle for liberation. Our instincts tell us, as they should, that our liberation is somehow linked with the struggle of the oppressed, and we crawl into the presence of liberation leaders (captured dead or alive on video tape, lecture tours, and the archives of *Ramparts*) seeking their truth. But the existential response, when reality breaks in, is the same chilling question of truth:

Just how far would we like to go in? Just how far would we like to go into the reality of liberation, given a recognition that real liberation can be written only with the blood of men's lives—the lives of Malcolm, Martin, Che, the thousands killed resisting oppression from Latin America to Indochina, the thousands more in jail—the always unfinished litany of the suffering and dying witnesses? Just how far would we like to go into the world of mass victims and silently responsible executioners (with obscurely familiar faces)? How far into the suffering humanity caged in slums and tunneled under jungles which demands release from that world and whose needs, when seen and felt, move men either to impotent shame or the decision to resist inhumanity? Just how far would we like to go with our lives into the suffering truth which commits men to liberation through resistance?

Not too far but just far enough so's we can say that we've been there.

The truth of the cross and the empty tomb, the truth of crucifixion-resurrection, is not a speculative or tentative truth. Not too far but just far enough so's we can say that we've been there—is nowhere for liberation. We go in or we stay out. Jesus didn't try out the cross to see if his faith would work. The only feasible experiment with the truth of liberation is Gandhi's experiment in truth, the kind of inquiry into the power and demands of truth which Gandhi undertook each day of his life, with as much care as any lab technician ever took in treating explosive chemicals. Gandhi's seriousness with truth was a simple reflection of his uncompromising willingness to act on the truth with his whole life once he discovered its way. The truth of liberation taken seriously is a way of life and of suffering resistance to the powers, a way of freedom with an admission price—my whole life in the service of truth. The martyred apostles of liberation, observing the homage we pay them, ask with their eyes wide as tigers, "And just how far would you like to go in?"

Americans whose faith in social change passed through the commitments and assassinations of the 60's are afraid that they have already gone too far in, and many have retreated. They have already seen and experienced too much of the world's truth, and a succession of dead leaders, and widening slums and wars, have ended an earlier vision. Jack Newfield, a writer who began by chronicling the birth and growth of the New Left which he participated in, concludes a later memoir of Robert Kennedy in a way characteristic of the change in attitude, with a generation's sense of extinguished vision:

Now I realized what makes our generation unique, what defines us apart from those who came before the hopeful winter of 1961, and those who came after the murderous spring of 1968. We are the first generation

that learned from experience, in our innocent twenties, that things were not really getting better, that we shall not overcome. We felt, by the time we reached thirty, that we had already glimpsed the most compassionate leaders our nation could produce, and they had all been assassinated. And from this time forward, things would get worse: our best political leaders were part of memory now, not hope.

The stone was at the bottom of the hill and we were alone.

This resting place of Camus' rock of Sisyphus, which rolled back hopelessly on a generation in 1968, had already been seen in 1965 by Dylan in his great song, "Like a Rolling Stone":

You've gone to the finest school's, all right Miss Lonely,
But you know you only used to get juiced in it.
Nobody's ever taught you
How to live out on the street
And now you're going to have to get used to it . . .

How does it feel? How does it feel?
To be on your own. With no direction home.
Like a complete unknown. Like a rolling stone.

Although Dylan was singing about more than the New Left, Miss Lonely out on the street with no direction home embodied the stripping of illusions which the believers in non-violence and a democratic society were forced to suffer relentlessly for the rest of the decade from the hopes of Montgomery and Port Huron to the despair of Memphis and Chicago. After Memphis, Los Angeles, Chicago, Cambodia, Laos . . . just how far can we go now into a theology of liberation?

But left alone at the bottom of the hill, or out on the street as Miss Lonely, stripped of the hope to liberate a dying society through direct action, we are freer now to think through the nature of liberation itself, and to enter into a dimension of liberation which both includes and goes deeper than the struggle for civil rights, the end of the war, and participatory democracy. Alone at the bottom of the hill, we can begin to understand our own evasions of truth. For in our politically saturated time an overt commitment to resist the powers of oppression may serve in its own way as an avoidance of the ultimate demands of truth. We may discover that simply to have resisted the powers was not to have gone very far into liberation after all—or to have gone only half the way to truth, a truth which is undivided, so that half the way to truth is nowhere in reality. Just far enough so's we can say that we've been there, "Yes, we resisted, now we're somewhere else," nowhere in either case. Liberation is much more than resistance, and to have gone no deeper than resistance is to have missed the truth of liberation and of resistance itself.

The deeper half of liberation is contemplation, and contemplation begins alone at the bottom of the hill, or

out on the street as Miss Lonely. To contemplate is to look intently at reality, and to begin to see it as it is. Contemplation begins with a sharp perception of our rock-bottom poverty and powerlessness—not so much in the sense of leaders assassinated and campaigns destroyed, the preliminaries to a deeper onslaught, as in the sense of an individual self exposed finally without props and pretensions as—what? As nothing, as emptiness, as a vacant stretch ahead with no direction home. When society has replied to the advocates of change by blasting concrete hopes held so deeply that they served as the political and social props of a generation's existence, men are left inhabiting blank spaces. But the very blankness and silence which is left contains a new beginning and a deeper possibility, for contemplation as a bedrock base for liberation can begin to be known for the first time when each of us is left alone to face himself.

Resistance and contemplation combine to seek the liberation of man from a twofold poverty: the poverty of the world which subjects living children to rats and starvation, and the root poverty of man's own self which is alone and impotent to overcome the world.

The full truth of liberation is like the *Tao*, or the Way, which stands transcendent behind the *yin-yang* dualistic manifestation of its Reality. In Taoist mysticism, yin and yang are integrally complementary aspects of a single Reality, as seen in the polarities of active-passive, bright-dark, firm-yielding, etc. The union of the yin-yang differences constitutes the necessary wholeness through which the Tao is known. The meaning of yin-yang, like its symbol , cannot be grasped unless it is perceived in its entirety. Yin and yang are meaningless in themselves; they are necessary to each other.

If resistance is the yang of the Way of Liberation, then contemplation is its yin. The two are one, indivisible reality, and it is through them as one that the Way of Liberation is known. If we wish to pass into the living truth of Jesus and Gandhi, we must affirm, as they did, the Way of Liberation as neither the yang of resistance nor the yin of contemplation but rather as the one, indivisible Way, standing behind and transcendent to the yin-yang of resistance and contemplation.

The significance of contemplation in its specific—and in today's world, indispensable—relation to resistance, can be drawn from some of the final words of a great Western monk who died on his journey to the East, Thomas Merton. A few hours before his death on December 10, 1968, at a monastery in Bangkok, Merton gave a talk on "Marxist Theory and Monastic Theoria". The background for the talk was the work of Herbert Marcuse: "And I would add quite bluntly and brutally that I regard him as a kind of monastic thinker, so that if you

want to be completely irresponsible you could say that this is a conference on the monastic implications of Marcuse at the present time." In the talk, Merton gives two concrete illustrations which speak simply and profoundly, first, of the existential situation we have already glimpsed through a political impasse, and secondly, of the contemplative response to that situation.

After dwelling on Marcuse's theory that all highly organized technological societies end up by being equally totalitarian in one way or another, Merton brings the significance of this home by telling the conference of monks the story of a Tibetan Lama:

This friend of Merton's had to leave Tibet or be killed when the Chinese Communists took over all the Tibetan monasteries. The Lama was caught out in the mountains, living in a peasant's house and wondering what to do next. He sent a message to a nearby abbot friend of his saying: "What do we do?" The abbot sent back a strange message which Merton found extremely significant. The abbot said: "From now on, brother, everybody stands on his own feet."

Merton comments on this message:

To my mind that is an extremely important monastic statement. If you forget everything else that has been said, I would suggest that you remember this for the future: "From now on, everybody stands on his own feet." This, I think, is what Buddhism is about, it is what Christianity is about, what monasticism is about, if you understand it in terms of grace. That is to say (it is not a Pelagian statement by any means), that we can no longer rely on being supported by structures which may be destroyed at any moment by a political power, or political force. You cannot rely on structures. The time for relying on structures has disappeared. They are good, and they should help us, and we should do the best we can with them. But they may be taken away, and if everything is taken away, what do you do next?

The Zen people have a saying which has nothing directly to do with this, but it is analogous in a certain sense: "Where do you go from the top of a thirty-foot pole?" Well, in a certain way, the answer has something in common: "Where do you go from the top of a thirty-foot pole?" Which is where we all now sit, and I think it is useful in this conference to take account of the fact that that is where we are.

From now on, brother, everybody stands on his own feet. The time for relying on structures has disappeared. How does it feel to be on your own? With no direction home. The stone is at the bottom of the hill and we are alone. If everything is taken away, what do you do next? Where do you go from the top of a thirty-foot pole? For that is where we all are now, brothers and sisters.

Merton's second illustration, and a moving one for him to conclude a talk and his life on, is a depiction of one of the traditional representations of the Buddha. The Buddha is seated in the lotus posture, in one hand he holds a begging bowl, and with the other he is pointing to the earth. The gesture of pointing to the earth has been made in response to an accusation by Mara, the tempter

who represents all illusion. Mara had come to Buddha who had attained enlightenment, and said: "You have no business sitting on that little square of earth where you are sitting because it belongs to me." The Buddha pointed to the earth, and called it to witness that it did not belong to Mara, because he had just attained enlightenment on it.

Merton comments:

This is a very excellent statement, I think, about the relation of the monk to the world. The monk belongs to the world, but the world belongs to him insofar as he has dedicated himself totally to liberation from it, in order to liberate it. You can't just immerse yourself in the world, and get carried away with it. That is no salvation. If you want to pull a drowning man out of the water, you have to have some support yourself. Supposing somebody is drowning, and you are standing on a rock, you can do it. Or supposing you can support yourself by swimming, you can do it. There is nothing to be gained by simply jumping in the water and drowning with him.

There is no sensitive conscience which can confront the global organization of power today, and its very nature, without seeing that the people are indeed drowning. They are drowning everywhere, and they are going down fast. If the horsemen of the Apocalypse continue to gallop faster, there will soon be no stopping their sweep across an entire world, beating into dust and bones every illusion which mankind has managed to sustain to this point in history. The words of another Dylan song catch the mood of that impending scene:

All along the watchtower
Princes kept the view
While all the women came and went
Barefoot servants too.
Outside in the cold distance
A wildcat did growl.
Two riders were approaching.
The wind began to howl.

The people are drowning, or more exactly, they are being drowned by a system which submerges humanity beneath enormous power apparently controlled by a few but perhaps by no one. For the sake of everyone's humanity, a response is necessary. But to respond to the people and to resist the power of that system without a rock to stand on is simply to jump in the water and drown with the people. Merton suggests that the contemplative has a rock to stand on—he has dedicated himself totally to liberation from the world in order to liberate it—but from where most of us stand, the rock of contemplative liberation, the square of earth on which the Buddha sits, remains indistinct both in itself and in relation to the needs of the people.

Archimedes once said that he could move the world if he could be given a place outside the world to stand. And Merton himself has said elsewhere where we might begin to look to find this place outside the world, this rock on which to stand. It is a rock of faith which is discovered through realizing what is known in the Gospel as *metanoia*, and what is known in Zen as *satori*. He refers

to the Buddhist rejection of a naive and activist doctrine of revolution by force, and points out further in his *Mystics and Zen Masters* how a particular Buddhist writer questions rather astutely

the Western acceptance of a "will to transform others" in terms of one's own prophetic insight accepted as a norm of pure justice. Is there not an "optical illusion" in an eschatological spirit which, however much it may appeal to *agape*, seeks only to transform persons and social structures *from the outside*? Here we arrive at a basic principle, one might almost say an ontology of nonviolence, which requires further investigation (emphasis in original).

Hints such as this, found in the concluding words of one of Thomas Merton's last books, lead one to the examination of roots: the roots of the Gospel, of Zen, of Reality.

In the Gospel a key term, pivotal to the entire statement of Jesus, is *metanoia*. *Metanoia* is the unavoidable imperative which we all seek to avoid at the center of Jesus' Gospel and at the very heart of existence itself. A Greek word meaning literally "change of mind," *metanoia* is in the Gospel the term for man's profoundly necessary conversion to God. It is the absolute demand made on every man that he turn away from his self and that he turn toward the holy God, who can finally become present only through the wrenching emptiness of man's self-renunciation. The way Jesus put it was, "The time has come, and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the Good News." (Mark 1:15) And more explicitly: "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it, but anyone who loses his life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it" (Mark 8:34-35).

Metanoia is the demand for that innermost turning of my existence toward the living truth which, if carried through, would result in my becoming a new man, someone whom I do not know now and whom I am profoundly fearful to know. I will do anything I can to avoid recognizing the imperative of *metanoia* because my self is terrified by the prospect it opens up of a future in which the self has been renounced. For what, after all, can there be left for me—without me? Nothing, yet it is precisely there, in nothingness, that *metanoia* claims to expose the rock on which to stand, the Buddha's square of earth. For it is just there, at the point where one has renounced everything, that Jesus presumes to lay on man the full burden of existence. It is then, after self-renunciation, that a man is prepared to join Jesus in resisting the powers—to "take up his cross and follow me," to take the walk to the electric chair, to trial, imprisonment, death, to whatever these may mean in the living reality of one's own resistance.

The rock which appears in the *metanoia* of Jesus is the second half of his statement: "Repent, and believe the Good News." The nothingness of self-renunciation is for the sake of faith. The second stage and fulfillment of *metanoia*'s total inner transformation is faith. If Jesus is to be taken seriously, faith is the rock to stand upon: "Have faith in God. I tell you solemnly, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Get up and throw yourself into the sea,' with no hesitation in his heart but believing that what he says will happen, it will be done for him" (Mark 11:22-3). At this point it seems that at least one observation can be made about a rock: If it exists, few people have stood upon it. Or another possibility: If many have stood upon it, few have realized what Archimedes hypothesized, that they might then have been in a position to move the world.

The Zen equivalent of *metanoia* is *satori*. *Satori*, or "awakening," is the acquiring of an absolutely new point of view toward life and the world, an intuitive looking into the nature or suchness of things, as opposed to a verbal or analytic understanding of them. D. T. Suzuki, the greatest expositor of Zen to the West, has said: "Whatever can be named leads to dualism, and Buddhism is not dualistic. To take hold of this non-duality of truth is the aim of Zen." In *satori*, the mind's surrender of a separate ego, and of all dualisms, results in a flashing perception of the profound unity of existence. *Satori* is the outcome of a crucial inward struggle for liberation from an autonomous self and from all the frustrated cravings of a self-defined world. Merton called *satori* "the explosive rediscovery of the hidden and lost reality within us," "the recovery of paradise." Suzuki said its discovery came through the realization of Emptiness, "seeing into the nonexistence of a thingish ego-substance" and being poor in spirit: "Emptiness, poverty, death or dissolution—they are all realized when one goes through the experiences of 'breaking through' . . ." To be absolutely naked of all things, and even of the experience of *satori* itself, is the goal of Zen training.

By liberating man from a restrictive ego, Zen allows him to open his eyes and see. What he sees is a void which is infinite. What he sees is the suchness of things. What he sees is indescribably one. And that may in fact have been what Jesus saw in a pure perception of being, although both Merton and Suzuki agree that Jesus added a dimension of faith to the contemplation of reality which characterizes Zen. The perception of Zen is an instantaneous, living insight into being, so that we look at things as they are and so that we live now, on the ground where we are standing. Jesus' supreme expression of both Zen and the rock of faith which he added to it occurs in the Sermon on the Mount:

Look at the birds in the sky. They do not sow or reap or gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. . . . And why worry about clothing? Think of the flowers growing in the fields; they never have to work or spin; yet I assure you that not even Solomon in all his

regalia was robed like one of these. . . . So do not worry; do not say, "What are we to eat? What are we to drink? How are we to be clothed?" It is the pagans who set their hearts on all these things. Your heavenly Father knows you need them all. Set your hearts on his kingdom first, and on his righteousness, and all these other things will be given you as well (Matthew 6:26, 28-29, 31-33).

Suzuki cites this passage as "the spirit of Zen" because of Jesus' "ordinary mindedness" toward the birds and the flowers and his counsel of no thought for food, drink, or the morrow. But it is equally the spirit of the Father and his kingdom. Life is to be seen, experienced in itself, and the kingdom is to be built. The union of Zen and a living, working faith in the Father's kingdom is testimony both that the kingdom is not ideological and that life itself is not indifferent toward a loving justice as the culmination of history. Life and the kingdom are one in Jesus' prayer, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Satori and *metanoia* compose an imperative dimension of existence itself, and as such are the demand behind the demands which reduce a man to nothingness: How does it feel to be on your own, with no direction home, a complete unknown? Because that's the way reality is, Miss Lonely, and the way reality seeks to come home to your still unbelieving, un-self-denying self. Reality comes home in desolation. The self is alone and exposed but it holds on desperately in the face of judgment: How does it feel? How does it feel? Perhaps the self begins, ever so slightly, to turn. The poet Dylan follows the shock and judgment of reality in "Like a Rolling Stone" with a more gentle invitation in "Queen Jane Approximately":

Now when all the clowns that you have commissioned
Have died in battle or in vain
And you're sick of all this repetition
Won't you come see me, Queen Jane?
Won't you come see me, Queen Jane?

As the self finally shows signs of loosening its grip, reality's judgment becomes an invitation to faith and the kingdom. Won't you come see me, Queen Jane?

But to begin to envision the way of the kingdom, the summit of liberation, it is helpful to reconsider the relation of resistance and contemplation.

As we saw, the solitary reality which bears down everywhere on human existence began to be experienced as a crushing reality by Americans when their faith in social change was extinguished by the murderous events and climate of the late 60's. Corporate America's hammer blows to a newly radical faith in social change was the point where we began out of necessity to seek a more solid base for liberation, "a rock outside the world to stand upon." Thus it was the destruction of a naive and

illusory faith, the shock of a reality resistant to my collective self and its idea of change, which led to the search for a more deeply liberating change, the change of mind and heart which is metanoia, and the change to a totally new point of view which is satori. Liberation, the common factor in resistance and contemplation, is thus, on a still simpler level of understanding, the reality of change—the change profoundly necessary to a world and a self which mirror each other in their frustrated yearnings for freedom.

The concept of change found in the *I Ching*, or *Book of Changes*, is that of the Tao. The Tao, or "Way," is the active power in the universe as a whole and in each of its parts, the way on which we must all walk. The Tao is the way, it is the walker, it is the walking itself on that way. "The Tao stands all by itself, all alone, and yet walks about everywhere." The Tao is everywhere and nowhere, and it cannot be defined or measured. What is infinite cannot be measured by the finite.

The Tao is the constant in change. Change is the movement of life which we experience, the stream in which we find ourselves and in which we feel we are losing ourselves—unless we can perceive something constant or secure in the movement of change. The Tao is the great principle, the constant way discoverable in change. This Taoist constancy of change can be understood through the dynamic polar tension which runs through reality and which is expressed in *The Book of Changes* by a succession of paired concepts: creative and receptive, active and acted upon, firm and yielding, all of these combining finally in the co-ordinate concepts of yin and yang. Yin and yang are the forces of change which make up existence, are mutually dependent, and give expression to the Way. They are dynamic forces.

In short, what is necessary for a man to bring about change in his own time is that he re-discover in himself the yin-yang dynamism of change, which knowledge, if disciplined and directed, will permit him to plant a revolutionary seed of his own in the flow of change. The yin-yang dynamism is recognizable today as resistance and contemplation.

Yang without yin is no liberation, no change: To resist without seeking to shed the skin of the individual self is not to resist at all. It is simply to confront the power of the world with a smaller, antagonistic version of itself. To resist with the self is to surrender to its embodiment in the world.

Yin without yang is no liberation, no change: To contemplate without seeking to shed the collective self of totalitarian institutions is not to contemplate at all. It is simply to build the fall-out shelter of an esthetic spirituality and to seek refuge in ruins. To contemplate being without resisting the destruction of the living is to contemplate the self.

Now yin, now yang, is the way: To resist as the new man, and to contemplate being under the banner of resistance, is to stand solidly on that rock outside the world, the rock of faith, and to move the mountain of

injustice. Contemplation-resistance ushers in the kingdom.

Before he was tortured and executed for resistance before he confronted the power of the Sanhedrin, before he knocked over the tables of the money-changers in the temple, before he flayed publicly the righteousness of the Pharisees, before he called men to pick up their own crosses and come along—before all this, Jesus went into the desert for a long time. The Gospels say he was led there by the Spirit. What he saw in the desert we do not know, but it is said that the tempter came to him with three ways to seize power. From the story of Jesus' encounter with Satan, after a 40-day fast in the wilderness, we learn that contemplation is a solitary struggle with the temptation of power, and a renunciation of it for the sake of resistance, and liberation into the kingdom.

Jesus' first temptation to seize power was that of economic power: "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to turn into loaves."

James S. Stewart, a perceptive commentator on the Gospels, has said of this first temptation:

... surely it was not his own hunger alone that was in Jesus' thoughts in these desert days. There was the hunger of the great multitudes of the world's poor... it was a question of the regular method to be adopted for his whole public career... First the earthly paradise, then the heavenly paradise—was that not the right order?

The Gospel narratives tell us that Jesus did in fact respond later to the hunger of the multitude following him. But he did so only occasionally, in response to a particular need, not as a primary statement of the Gospel. Jesus' method in igniting men's faith followed instead the sense of his response to Satan: "Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." Every word from the mouth of God—that man might listen to that word in himself and fill his life with it—was the primary factor for Jesus, not the satisfaction of man's physical hunger, as it would have been had he consulted an economic planner for the kingdom. There is no question that Jesus' position here is scandalous to the modern consciousness. There are few of us who are not on this point thoroughgoing Marxists. We believe in the priority of physical food over the truth. And our understanding of the methodology of social change is derived from that priority: In order to change conditions of intolerable injustice, let us direct our primary efforts toward changing the economic substructure. But Jesus rejected such a Marxist understanding of change: Man does not live on bread alone. Therefore Jesus' response to the hunger of the masses is not that of turning stones into bread. He emphasizes a different kind of bread and of change, at the same time as he

shares personally the most basic needs of the people, intensely so at the end of a 40-day fast.

The basis of the economic temptation, then as now, is our own power under the guise of a politically realistic humanism: We must somehow turn stones into bread (capitalism and class conflict into shared resources) or the people will perish. The point of Jesus' response to Satan is that man, the people, will live irrespective of your and my efforts to transform stones. The people's need for liberation goes deeper than our particular techniques for saving them, and in fact the bread in every sense will come through that deeper kind of liberation, not by some political or technological savior's giving it to them. Man does not live on bread alone. Liberation is deeper and more radical than that, and the contemplative struggle in the desert reveals that its way is not open to him who aspires to his own power through the people's need for bread.

Jesus' second temptation (according to the order of Matthew's account) was that of spiritual power:

The devil then took him to the holy city and made him stand on the parapet of the Temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said "throw yourself down; for scripture says: 'He will put you in his angels' charge, and they will support you on their hands in case you hurt your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "Scripture also says: You must not put the Lord your God to the test." (Matthew 4:5-7)

A man utterly alone in the desert, eating nothing, seeking the reality of truth and his life's mission, must begin to experience his powerlessness, begin to drop toward zero. But the drop to zero is infinite, and somewhere in the despair of the self's fall a vision intervenes: On the parapet of the Temple—this is the right setting, here the invitation to a spiritual commitment of sonship. Yes, throw yourself down, but not alone in a wasteland but as an effective demonstration of mission, as a spiritually relevant act whereby men may see God's power, see it bear one up out of the depths. Drop toward zero, but do so somewhere in the arena of power so that the drop itself and the infinity which is bound to meet you before zero might serve as effective power.

Some have suggested that Jesus envisioned in the temptation a comforting scenario of the death penalty he feared on the horizon: not by crucifixion but by being thrown down from a tower in the temple wall into the Kedron Valley, followed by stoning if necessary to bring death, the prescribed penalty for blasphemy. The hope of divine intervention would then have been the same temptation that Jesus suffered through in Gethsemane in his prayer to the Father and again at Golgotha in the form of the spectators' taunts that he demonstrate God's power by coming down from the cross. But neither an avoidance of the end nor a substitution of spiritual relevance for complete emptiness was possible. The drop into zero had to be accomplished in resistance on the cross just as it was in contemplation in the desert, in stark emptiness, for infinity to be realized. Jesus' rejection of

the second temptation signifies that in the desert, on the dark side of the mountain, there is no spiritual power—only the Spirit itself leading one into a more and more desolate wasteland, the power of the powerless.

The third temptation: from a mountain, a vision of all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. Naked political power. But the temptation went much deeper than sheer power—it was power with a redeeming purpose, power for the liberation of Jesus' people.

We often forget the facts of the case: (1) The Jewish people were an occupied nation, under the garrison of imperial Rome. (2) Jesus lived intensely in the context of his people's burning passion for freedom from Rome. At least one of the chosen twelve, Simon the Zealot, and perhaps as many as half of them, were Zealot revolutionaries, who expected Jesus to lead them in an armed revolution and were bitterly disappointed when he did not. (3) Jesus was crucified under the public charge made by the Romans that he was in fact seeking national liberation—"This is Jesus, the King of the Jews"—and after Pilate had at the crowd's urging released a Zealot leader, Barabbas, rather than Jesus.

Given a sense of the revolutionary milieu and of Jesus' own passion for justice, it is not difficult to feel the reality of this temptation that he take up the sword against the imperial forces and attempt to seize all power for the people. But the prevailing argument in Jesus' mind against Satan's offer is, in Luke's text, the very argument made by Satan himself: "I will give you all this power and the glory of these kingdoms, for it has been committed to me and I give it to anyone I choose. Worship me, then, and it shall all be yours" (Luke 4:6-7). The power of these kingdoms, the power of the sword, belongs to Satan. To seize the sword and Caesar's power, for whatever end, is simply to worship Satan, and Jesus' reply is that God alone must be worshipped and served. For the sword of the world's kingdoms usurps the power of God, who alone has legitimate power over life and death. There is no kingdom and no state as defined by the sword which is not indicted by Satan's claim—all have been committed to him—and which is not humbled by Jesus' counter-claim, that God alone deserves to be served.

The conclusion to this final drama in the desert, with Jesus' sweeping rejection of Caesar's power, is the most radical possible concerning the nature of God and the question of liberation. It becomes explicit in the verses in Luke following Jesus' return from the desert, when he goes into the synagogue in Nazareth on the sabbath and stands up to read Isaiah's text:

The spirit of the Lord has been given to me
for he has anointed me.
He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor,
to proclaim liberty to captives
and to the blind new sight,
to set the downtrodden free,
to proclaim the Lord's year of favor.
(Is. 61:1-2; Luke 4:18-19)

Jesus' comment on this proclamation of sweeping liberation to the poor, prisoners, the blind, and the oppressed, is a simple one: "This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen."

What are we to conclude from, first of all, Jesus' rejection in the desert of all the world's kingdoms and their power, past and future—and soon after his return from the desert, his identification of the Gospel with a proclamation of absolute freedom for all the world's oppressed peoples? The conclusion is that the God whom Jesus addresses so intimately as "Abba," and the inauguration of whose reign on earth is the core of Jesus' message, is a God of Liberation—and of such radical liberation that he wages a permanent revolution down through history against every kingdom and state in existence—a revolution to liberate *all* the oppressed, free *all* the prisoners, give back land to *all* the people—a revolution to set everyone free, to level all corporate and bureaucratic power, to break open the prisons, to smash every war

machine known to man, and to do so without swearing allegiance to a single regime or ideology in history, for God the Liberator is alone to be worshipped, God the Condemned and Executed and Always Resurrected—the enemy of every state—is alone to be served.

But a Liberator God-Man whose suffering resistance puts the flame of truth to injustice only after man has first sought Him in silence in the heat of the desert and fought with his Spirit in the freezing wind of the mountain's dark side. In the desert, on the sheer face of the mountain, man becomes God by renouncing power and becoming nothing. Now yin, now yang, and for a few hours man is transfigured on the cross and resists with the power of God: The world changes.

The Liberator becomes man, and man the Liberator when man has fallen freely to zero, for zero equals infinity, and the Spirit is free at last to become a fire roaring out of the one Reality—not man or God but the One, in whom all are one, a single flame, burning suffering division into Being. The litany of the living-dying-dying-living.

Resistance and contemplation, sunlight and darkness, one Way, one God-Man Liberator, a single roaring flame, a question of Being: Just how far would we like to go in?

AL ULMER lives at the highest point of the old Love place in Northeastern Tennessee but gets mail at Vilas, North Carolina.

SUNDAY VISITORS /

SOMEBODY OUGHT TO SHOOT THE POOR THING /

RUTH'S MY BIRD DOG'S NAME /

SPRING IS WHEN NEW LIFE COMES /

Al Ulmer

Claude and Cindy live in the valley below our mountain top. During the years we have lived in this area of Appalachia they have been regular Sunday visitors. Claude is a slim, angular man in his early sixties who still works a saw mill with his youngest son during the week. Weekends he drinks. Tales about him and his drinking are part of almost every local story teller's repertoire. There's the time he eased over the gap road with its steep drop offs and sharp curves and no side rails going so slow it is reputed it took him all day to go three miles, and earning him respect of sorts for having trained his old truck so well. No doubt Cindy would have long ago left him if she too didn't enjoy a bit of refresh-

ment from time to time. Cindy is the exact replica of Jack Spratt's wife's picture in a book of children's stories I had as a youngster. Together she and Claude can sip the platter clean.

But I would not want to be misunderstood. Claude and Cindy are good people. Better neighbors we couldn't ask for. He sells me lumber at wholesale prices and she gives us butter and milk when they have extra. And Claude and Cindy are good people even when they have been drinking. That is quite exceptional for our area. A majority of people have been convinced from an early age that to take a drink is to sin and therefore many of them feel like since they are going to hell anyway for

sniffing the bottle cap they might as well drink it all and raise some before they go. Social drinking is not a problem on Beaver Dam road. Perhaps one of the reasons Claude and Cindy remain good people even when they are not good walkers is because their souls have been lost for some time. Both have been publicly expelled from the local church twice after having been given the due process by a board of their peers, peers in drinking that is, private undiscovered tippling being no sin, of course. Not having the weight of new sins on their souls, and the old sins having evaporated quite a bit, Claude and Cindy are pleasant Sunday companions.

Claude is most fond of home brew. He has told me his story involving home brew many times over the past few years. It is not a happy story and he always cries when he tells it. His oldest son was home on leave after finishing basic training for WWII. Claude had had to sign for him before the boy could be enlisted. The two had often hunted together and they took this opportunity to go out for grouse. Claude had a couple of gallons of home brew hidden in a spring not far from where our house stands now and the two stopped for a refresher. They went no farther that day, nor the next. Claude says they stayed drunk til the following evening when they walked back to the house completely forgetting they had come up the mountain in a truck the day before. The boy was killed the following month.

"I really got to know that boy those two days," Claude says after he finishes the story, talking very slowly as is his custom. "Yep, ya know Al, that's the first time I ever knew that boy, at all". And then he cries, sometimes for a long time.

Last Sunday they pulled up in their pick-up truck just as a friend of mine and I had finished a game of basketball, and were cooling ourselves off with a home brew.

"Want a home brew, Claude?" I asked, knowing it was up to my wife to offer one to Cindy, as that is the custom around here.

"Wouldn't care for one at all," said Claude, which meant if I didn't hurry and get him one he'd take mine if I set it down. We settled down on the porch with our brew and sipped silently for quite some time listening to a family of Indigo Buntings and watching the light play across the new plowed fields.

After a while Claude said, "You know my youngest daughter is married to a boy that farms right smart, farms for a millionaire, he does."

"A millionaire?" my wife asked.

"Yep, farms for a fella up in Ohio, must own close to thousand acres or more", said Claude.

"Lawd, Claude," said Cindy (who says Lawd Claude a lot and is not a poet even) "that man's got more than a thousand acres. Must have two or three thousand for sure. Me and Claude went up to see 'em, my daughter and her family, two, or was it three years ago, Claude, and we like to got lost in that house a his'n. Could put

eight or ten houses big as this one it in. He just lives there with his wife. Both must be around seventy or better. Alma, she works for the missus just sort of her personal maid or servant, and Jimmy, that's Alma's husband he works around the place, mows and keeps up. They stay plenty busy. But they make good money. Lawd Claude, don't they make good money?"

"Sure do, Cindy," said Claude taking a long drink. "Yep, they sure do make good money. Man pays them real good."

"Why it's a sight the money them young'uns make working for that millionaire farmer, more'n me and Claude could make in five years. They sure do make good money working up there, all right," (Conversation with Cindy and Claude after several home brews can get to the point where it doesn't take a lot of listening ability to get the gist of what the talk's about)

"And treat 'em right too," continued Cindy, "Treat 'em just real good. Why Mrs. Engles said to Alma that the onlyest time she ever beat one of her young'uns was when the youngster sassed one of the servants. Mrs. Engles said she wasn't going to have none of her kids being disrespectful to her hired help, no sir. That's one thing about the Engles, they treat their help real good. Give Jimmy a \$500 bonus for getting all the hay in on time. He had to work 24 hours straight two days in a row to do it and nights for most a week, but he got it done, and Mr. Engles done him right by it."

"Jimmy and Alma, they stay in a house a their own near the 'big house', that's what they call it, and it's as nice as you could ask for, bigger than our house, ain't it Claude?"

"Sure is Cindy," said Claude, "Just as nice a house you could ask for."

"Mr. Engles, he's got houses in England, the Caribbean, California and I don't know where else," said Cindy. "But Alma and them don't have to go with 'em when they go except when they go to Hot Springs, Virginia. Mr. Engles owns Hot Springs Alma says and she goes along to help Mrs. Engles with her wardrobe and take care of her clothes and runs errands and all. Jimmy drives the car cause the butler don't drive. The butler been with the Engles for over forty years, that's how good the Engles treat their servants, and he's from the West Indies. Black, Lawd Claude, ain't he black?"

"Lawd yes, Cindy," Claude said, "He's black, black as any man I ever seen".

"He's black as ever anything you ever seen," said Cindy, "and not a bit a nigger in him. No sirree, not a bit nigger in him at all."

The home brew got gone about dusk and Claude and Cindy eased down the mountain. "One good thing about Claude," my wife said sounding very local, "When he's been a drinking he moves real slow, even in his truck."

For the next five minutes or so we watched the pick-up turn around down by the barn and then creep slowly down the road./

I can't decide which pattern I . . .

Look! There goes a deer.

Oh! Somebody's shot it.

And it dragged its beauty

Down the road bleeding fear.

It sure can run on three alright.

Poor thing can't make that barbed wire fence.

Somebody ought to shoot the poor thing.

Somebody did

With a beautiful gun, stock hand rubbed,

Barrel highly tempered, bore hand tooled,

Sight precise enough for dropping bombs.

Hey! It made it through.

She sure can run on three alright.

She made the woods,

Didn't know it was

A free fire zone

And suddenly the deer looms large,

Fills the eye and overflows into

A small cross around its neck.

Squeeze, Brother, squeeze the beauty out of it.

Well, I guess they got her.

It's best. She'd only suffered.

They squeezed her on the little cross

So she wouldn't suffer.

I think I'll take the Huckleberry pattern.

The complete set?

Please, but sup bowls instead of saucers./

Ruth's my bird dog's name.

I call her that because

She thinks I'm Naomi.

On windy days her ears

Turn inside out to catch

The rustle in the rear.

My other dog is called

Ester, though I can't say why,

She doesn't think I'm Mordecai.

At times Ester's lip slips,

Snagging a tooth, making

It seem she has a bark

Stuck in between two teeth.

Vashti would have snickered./

Snow sleeps deep on the mountains. Here and there the morning sun rouses it and snow stretches and slips away, leaving its brown bed behind. The cold spell has passed. Sparkles hidden all night in the hoar frost on the hickories dance now. The air is filled with a million whirling silver pins. Thales was right. All things are made of water. Everything is snow.

You've got a fine baby girl, seven pounds, five ounces. You can see your wife when we wheel her by. Nursery's there. Nurse efficiency. An old nurse, snow hair, snow dress, snow feet, drifts by. A girl, huh? Well, she won't have to go to war, at least. A son wouldn't have had to go either. Perhaps she didn't hear.

Beautiful, the little girl. Call her Laurel for the flower, pale pink like little girls, call her Kali Mara for the Greek good morning and the Hebrew Mary; think of pale pink Laurel wrapped in morning snow; feel your heart stretch in the morning sun. The cold spell has passed.

Don't think to buy gasoline. Sorry to bother you, Mrs. Saller, would you have any gas I might borrow? Come in son, warm yourself. Elizabeth! We got a siphon hose around somewheres? No, Mam, don't think so. I'll go look. A baby girl, huh? Know you're excited as can be. Had eight myself. Five of them right here in this house. Had an awful good woman help me with the having. She was a colored woman . . . not full colored though. Lord, sure knew what to do about babies. Anders was her name. Is she dead now? No, she's living over to Hattie's Hill (but my baby-having days are dead). Laurel flowers, not full-colored though, on the morning snow.

Gas whooshes through the hose, tastes terrible, but it gets me to the store. They're all there, the men who sit and stare, almost never nod, not to strangers. I've been here four years now. I'll always be a stranger. Only last year I stopped being a new people. It is cold at times for strangers, city people with red beards and different ways of seeing things.

That fella what lives on the mountain don't have much to say does he? Guess we don't talk his talk, college and all. What's he do up there on the mountain all the time? Dunno, grows him a little cabbage and berries and a

lotta garden. Gotta bunch a books. Him and his wife built that house themselves ya know. You seen it? Yeah. Done a pretty good job. Used log and stone, fire place and all. Put it way up there on the top, got to carry water quarter a mile or better straight up. Can't see where he didn't put it next the spring. Says he did it for the view. Can't drink no view's what I told him.

But you can. You can drink hoar frost shivering in the sun, you can sip wood smoke, taste new plowed ground and fresh cut hay. And you can sleep walking in the woods. You can love in the sunshine summer and find Laurel blossomed in the morning snow.

I need three dollar's worth. Okay to pump it myself. Sure, rather you do it than me. My wife had a baby girl this morning, really pretty. Heard Ferris say she did. They pretty ain't they? Friend a mine said that once and I said, Betty, have you ever seen a baby wasn't pretty? She said, No Roxanna, can't say if I ever have. You know what's really pretty? Little nigger babies. Yessir, little nigger babies is really pretty, got all that curly black hair.

That word hurts. I've heard it said farther south. The store floor is dark and oily. The narrow boards are very worn around the counter. Sweet and sour flow together in my head. Yes, they are. They sure are.

Men shake my hand, many of them the same ones who stare but never nod. Thanks for the cigar, I'll smoke it for the baby. Mighty happy for you'uns. You don't look too awful much older. Tell the madam hello for us. A small man, hunched from birth, smiles. All his sour got put outside and his sweet within. Twisted Laurel flower.

The day begins to cool, the snow stops stretching, mush turns back to ice. The sun splits into a million whirling silver stars. Everything is snow. Winter returns. But the fire warms. The wine warms. Scheherazade spins her thousand and one stories, spins them soft as new born snow. It is still the mid of winter, but for a Laurel blossomed morning we had a thaw, on mountains, and in men.

Spring is when new life comes.

FRYE GAILLARD is a journalist on the staff of Race Relations Information Center. He is a native of Mobile.

MOBILE

Frye Gaillard

WRITER'S NOTE: Much has been written lately about the emergence of a new and more humane South. I don't entirely disagree with that assessment, but I also think it is important to remember that there are areas as old as they ever were. Much of the story which follows was written in the summer of 1969. When I went back in the spring of 1971 to update it for publication, I found the task surprisingly easy. Very little has changed. The thrust of what I am saying here, in fact, would have been true in 1964, or 1954, or if my grandfather had written it in 1900.

Mobile, Alabama. To get there by land, you grind southward through the dreary, rustic monotony of Dixie's heartland, along the tiny twisting roads choked with pickup trucks and souped-up '57 Chevy's; past the tangled, sun-burned cotton fields, the acres of not so plush meadows dotted with grade B cattle, the rickety unpainted shacks with the feeble lines of smoke rising from ancient chimneys, and the sad-eyed Blacks sitting on their porches—numb but still vulnerable to the capricious hostility of the region. You keep pushing south past all of this, and through the occasional misnamed towns like Demopolis, Fairhope and Liberty, eerie in their sameness, combining the ugliness of urban sprawl with the loneliness of rural isolation. After a time, as your tires hum and bounce along the patchy, black-topped pavement, human habitation becomes quite sparse; the countryside flattens, vegetation thickens and the highway snakes its way for miles through dense, shadowy swampland. Then without warning, you top a hill and there below you Mobile Bay spreads out, its muddy waters glinting fraudulently blue in the sun.

To your right is the city with its three skyscrapers pointing proudly upward . . . It seems a refreshing change.

You make your way down the hill—cautiously due to the unsettling driving habits of many of the natives—and after dipping through a claustrophobic tunnel beneath the Mobile River, you find yourself on an inner city street, which, as far as the eye can see, is overhung by giant, mossy live oaks rustling softly in the gulf breeze. If it were not for the hodge-podge architectural assortment ranging from colonial to condemned, any given Mobile thoroughfare would seem much like a shady lane winding its way to the Big House where suspicious darkies pitter-patter about indulging the whims of their masters. Which, as it turns out, is not too far from the case.

The best time to go to Mobile, the time when the city is most like itself, is spring—a season which seems to evolve imperceptibly from the previous summer. There is, of course, something which passes for winter in between; but it doesn't last long, and after a few chilly nights the annual Mardi Gras carnival provides a kind of

giddy, unnatural prelude to a genuinely stunning burst of floral color. New leaves will soon appear on the live oaks; magnolias will blossom in all their stereotyped splendor, and multi-shaded azaleas will bloom by the millions attracting sightseers by the thousands; all of which fits in perfectly with the prevailing style of life.

America's Junior Miss Pageant, perhaps the high-point in the city's year-long celebration of its virtues, occurs each May. Some 250,000 residents brace themselves for the out of town hordes, and the civic-minded Junior Chamber of Commerce maps out an Azalea Trail for tourists actually interested in touring. Citizens bask in the ooohs and ahhs of their dazzled guests, while throughout the city, cash registers ring up the happy totals.

But there is a problem. Mobile's fair complexion is marred, and not everyone celebrates when the visitors come to town.

To be raised in the deep South is to learn that regardless of your own particular standing there are three distinct—and very distinctive—social strata. The lowest, of course, is composed of those individuals, who by the accident of birth, or perhaps by the hand of God, are cursed with the gift of black pigmentation. They are known (except to those who buck the system) as niggers.

One notch up are the everyday people who are not black, but who are not rich either. They lack the social graces which emerge when one has the leisure time to polish one's twittery laugh or perfect one's smile before a mirror. This middle group is known as "decent, hard-working citizens" or "white trash," depending upon one's social perspective.

On the top of the Southern heap are the aristocrats, of which there are two types: those who made it into the select circle because their ancestors made it and carved out a niche for their progeny; and the newer arrivals who bought their way in. But regardless of how you got in, once you are in, you are known as a Southerner.

The system is really very neat and orderly; or at least it always has been, for the South began perfecting itself during the 1790's when the genius of Eli Whitney encountered the availability of free black labor and the lavishness of European tastes in habadashery. Although Dixie was at its most stratified prior to the Civil War, there are still areas which have defied time, abolitionists, technology, civil rights workers and assorted other assaults to linger as antebellum fossils—as exquisite caricatures, perhaps, of the nation as a whole.

Mobile, Alabama is such a place.

I was born there 24 years ago, and I was a member of category three because King Cotton had been very

good to my great-great granddaddy. Next door to my house was the shiny, white, Civil War vintage mansion which my family had inhabited since 1836. The place always had its own special charm—standing serenely as a great columned monument to a way of life which is not entirely lacking in appeal.

There is, in fact, only one major problem with the Old South milieu, and it remains beneath the surface until someone circulates the idea that perhaps the inhabitants of the bottom rung of society are capable of rising higher. Southern life makes perfect sense if you can believe that Blacks are really objects, dumb and unfeeling, quite content with relegation to the white man's daily drudgery. Until this belief is shattered, there is no need for a Southerner (who may be a basically decent person) to feel guilty about a system that condemns black faces to inferiority. God, after all, took care of that when he started the world several thousand years ago.

All this being so, one becomes educated very early to the fact that black humanity is a contradiction in terms. For me, as best I can remember, the education started when I was about five. My parents, aunts, uncles, cousins and I sat at the dinner table listening to my 90-year-old grandfather tell about the time the Yankee soldiers had sacked his home when he was eight, and how his mother had pleaded with them not to do it, but how they had done it anyway because they were evil. During a lull in the narrative, I inquired with all good intentions as to why it was that Robert, our black yard man, was eating in the kitchen instead of with us at the prototypical, mahogany, leafed table which was cluttered with succulent delicacies prepared by the black maid.

Shh, child, I was told; you mustn't say that. You will hurt Robert's feelings.

The lessons continued as the years passed, and I learned them well. Negroes, I could tell you, habitually cut each other to ribbons with knives, screwed incessantly, and loved to cut lawns for five dollars a day. Furthermore, this was the natural order of things, and there would be no problem except for Yankee agitators and the NAACP (Nigger Apes and Associated Crack-Pots, one of my wittier relatives used to call them—amid hip-slapping laughter, which was nonetheless tinged with bitterness). Being white and therefore superior, I chuckled over Amos 'n' Andy, rooted for Ingemar Johanson, and hated Martin Luther King. I scoffed at ghetto squalor (why can't the niggers take better care of themselves?) and gratefully retreated to the confines of a private high school to escape desegregation.

Then I became 18, and emigrated from Mobile to Vanderbilt University. It took approximately a month for my prejudice—so carefully nurtured for so many years—to crumble under the weight of a somewhat more intellectually honest atmosphere. I had always had a few carefully suppressed doubts, and once the reinforcement was gone, I found it impossible to tell the black student

who lived down the hall and made straight A's in calculus that he was inherently inferior.

So the collegiate years ticked away, while my awareness of events at home grew dimmer. But I knew Mobile remained untouched by the hordes of light-skinned invaders—the civil rights workers—who swooped down from the Northland during the early 1960's to save the South from its sins and atone for the region's racial transgressions. I also knew that local activists of the black variety did not flourish in the Mobile climate, which was cooled by the patience of moderate Black leaders (the same ones, who, in more recent years, have closed ranks into a phalanx of would-be tokens). Through all the ferment of the "We Shall Overcome" era—the police dogs, church-bombings, fire hoses, sit-ins and miscommunication—Mobile remained a pool of superficial serenity, stagnating quietly in the solitude of southern Alabama.

I, meanwhile, pondered the tides of history, cloistered in the surrealistic security of beer-sloshing fraternity parties, ivy walls and eight o'clock classes. In time, armed with a diploma and a reconstructed set of ideas, I returned home and plunged once more into the world of the WASP. I found that it hadn't changed much, although it seemed quite different.

It is my first assignment for the newspaper in Mobile. The crowd is angry and its rhetoric ugly. There was a fight between a black kid and a white kid. The school suspended them both; the white kid says the black kid started it, and the local whites believe him. A PTA meeting has been called and several thousand students and parents have turned out—all but five of them white. "Niggers are getting better treatment than we are," one kid is saying. He doesn't present any evidence, but the crowd bellows its angry approval of his comments. Denunciations of the black race are frequent and bitter.

I am frightened; not so much for myself as for my city. I have recently graduated from college and things like this just didn't happen in college. I am astounded that they happen anywhere in the fall of 1968.

The rhetoric continues. It is like a Klan rally. I marvel at the stoic courage of the five black parents. They watch quietly, realizing the futility of speaking out. After the meeting, I interviewed them outside. No, they do not believe their kids are getting preferential treatment, and yes, preferential treatment for anybody is wrong. A crowd gathers: who is this white kid talking to the niggers?

The Blacks become edgy. I break off the interview and stroll through the crowd, forcing nonchalance. At the edge, two greasy-haired, gap-toothed good ole boys ease toward me. One of them has a gun under his coat.

Who the hell am I, they ask. A newspaper reporter, I answer. What did I think of their little meeting, they continue. Anger and frustration well up inside me: "You bigoted sons-of-bitches, I hated your damned meeting. I have never seen such a conglomeration of demented, race-baiting, red-necks in my whole life," I think to myself. "I thought you presented your grievances very forcefully," I say aloud. They are satisfied, and I wander around getting more quotes. It is very depressing.

As an adventure, the incident pales beside the experiences of my contemporaries who were weathering bullets, cracked heads and Mississippi jail cells while I was chatting with campus liberals. But it was, nonetheless, a classic case of cultural shock—or more precisely a jarring beginning to a cultural shock which never ended, for Mobile has a very shocking culture:

"Our policy on race relations is to let sleeping dogs lie," the editor of the local newspaper told me after I was hired. "Why should landlords provide their tenants with decent houses—the tenants can't pay," demanded a city commissioner. "Don't quote me on this, but Robert Kennedy was killed by the grace of God," confided a local politician. "Our school is 80 per cent nigger—they can't learn much, but they sure can sing," a local principal explained. "I think the nigra should be proud and grateful for the progress he has made in the last 100 years," opined a local physician.

And so it goes.

The mayor, very popular and very Baptist, launches crusades against the evils of pornography but refuses to attack the causes of illegitimacy. Civic leaders, questing for the Good Deed, are horrified by litter, but indifferent to hunger; terrified by militancy, but unconcerned about despondency.

Increasing numbers of blacks are pledging themselves to use "any means necessary" to better their condition. An ethos of violence pervades ghetto neighborhoods, and the cataclysm may be drawing closer. Hundreds of fire bombs in the last couple of years demonstrate the growing irrelevance of sermons on law and order.

Yet the white community remains startlingly placid. Having never really confronted any effective black power, its membership retains a uniquely angelic faith in the permanence of white supremacy. And because the faith is so strong, there is an almost complete unwillingness to compromise or to make the slightest concession. What do the niggers want anyway? The federal government has given them everything they ever asked for.

Much of the credit for Mobile's current predicament belongs to the city's super-establishment—a regal collection of several dozen families (including my own) which

rears the debutantes, hoards the money and calls the shots. The motives of the ruling caste are neither malevolent nor humane, its goals neither destructive nor far-sighted. The local aristocracy is, in short, an assortment of basically decent, but essentially reactionary people, bound together by a love of being important—and, I suppose, by a strong belief that they are doing the right things, the things that their tradition dictates.

But whatever their motivations, they are trying, in effect, to sustain a schizophrenic metropolis, so stark and depressing in its contradictions that one wonders how in the world it has lasted this long.

There are, on the one hand, the Azalea Trails, Camelia Balls, Junior Miss Pageants, debutantes and all of that; none of them so bad, all things being equal; but all things are not equal and there are also the southern-style ghettos—the little hunks of Selma and Marks, Miss.—sprinkled arbitrarily about the landscape, obscured for decades by the pandemonium of pageantry and the pervasiveness of bigotry.

Yet somehow the city *has* lasted, and indeed the Mobile of physical beauty and the Mobile of human misery managed to coexist in an atmosphere of sullen peace until the spring of 1969: the year the niggers got uppity—and were promptly slapped down by the local patricians with help from the local police.

When word got out that blacks planned to stage demonstrations during the 1969 installment of America's Junior Miss Pageant, the aristocrats—and the crackers who aspire to be aristocrats—reacted with the fury of medieval zealots who have just learned of a plot to pillage the temple and make off with the holy shrines: "We are faced with a small, self-seeking, lawless minority interested in disruption for the sake of disruption," one local leader explained to the approving populace, "and we will not tolerate it." Which they didn't.

Some things are taboo in Mobile, and one of those things is for Blacks to attack the sacred monuments to the city's ego—especially when the attack might make national television. Who cares if a third of the area's housing is substandard, or if thousands of Black children graduate from all-black high schools reading at less than an eighth grade level, or if Mobile babies die three times as often as babies across the nation? The Junior Miss Pageant must go on, and the world must believe that all is bliss on the local scene.

And so the repression began. When approximately 100 Blacks, plus a sprinkling of priests and nuns, assembled in the public park across the street from the pageant auditorium, police moved in and arrested them. Anyone Black or not middle class who happened to be in the vicinity was jailed. Anyone going to the pageant whose hose to walk through the park was allowed to do so. Demonstrators were ordered to leave the area and were then arrested for allegedly blocking nearby sidewalks as they tried to obey. A Black attorney who came merely to observe was jailed for sitting on a park bench. And

when a television newsman reported that police were using "questionable tactics," he was asked to resign by his pressured boss.

I was on hand as a reporter, secure in the knowledge that there was nothing I could do anyway. And so I watched; or tried to. But I was a known nigger-lover (a term still widely used in Mobile) and the local constabulary had not yet perceived, as I was beginning to realize, that I was the very epitome of an innocuous human being. (For I was a liberal in the classic sense, and as such I could recognize inequities and speak out against them or even challenge the conservative assumptions of my newspaper with the articles I wrote. But I was unwilling to make any real sacrifices to change things, and that is the definition of a liberal.) But as I said, the Mobile Police Department catches on slowly, and a special investigator took it upon himself to remain at my side and peer at my note pad periodically. He need not have bothered, for my boss fully shared his fears and had no intention of allowing heresy to appear on the pages of his publication at such a crucial time in the city's history.

Thus, the dismal drama repeated itself night after night until the Pageant ended. Blacks tried a few marches—all of which ended in police paddy wagons within three blocks of their starting points. Demonstrators offered little or no resistance to the police, and there were no beatings or cracked heads. It was very genteel oppression.

Finally, the city regained its normal placidity, and the white community began its public gloat over the victory of law 'n' order. I wandered into the black community to offer my condolences and point out a trifle sadly that there would be other days when the odds might not be so formidable. I discovered to my utter surprise that the sponsor of the protests, the local SCLC affiliate, was claiming victory. I was a little puzzled as to its line of reasoning since the only visible result of the whole fiasco was several hundred blacks in jail. "We made the white folks take notice," one black leader said proudly. I reflected that Moby Dick probably took notice of Queequeg's harpoon too, but I didn't say anything.

I resumed my wanderings through the black community and sank deeper into my white liberal compassion, realizing all the while that it was tainted by the condescension of non-participation. But Mobile makes it easy to feel righteous, so I began to reflect on the summer of 1966 when I had been a cub reporter and had squatted in the stink of the city dump, interviewing Blacks who managed to remain alive by eating Mobile's garbage. They came everyday by the hundreds and devoured with bitter gratitude the rotten melons and tomatoes, the coffee grinds, and the decaying table scraps which the rest of the city had found inedible.

It was at the dump that day in 1966 that I met Sam. He was old then and probably dead now, and I saw him sitting on a cement block, calmly sipping a bottle of

rubbing alcohol. As I approached in my coat and tie against a background of kids and flies fighting for watermelon rind, he stared at me with a look of passive disbelief and a tired, ambiguous expression settled on his leathery face, as if hostility or fear or shame would be too much of an effort. After an unsuccessful attempt at pleasantries (What, after all, do you say in that situation: "How are you today?" or "Nice day isn't it?") I gave up and remarked that maybe rubbing alcohol would not be too good for his health. He sat there for a few moments, exuding alcoholic fumes along with the kind of silent wisdom which is peculiar to the ancients. Finally he blinked up at me with a look resembling disgust, but still too stoical for that and said, "Kid, what good does health do me?" The question was no easier to answer three years later, but that was what I was thinking about after the 1969 Junior Miss Pageant, when an angry voice disrupted my catharsis of compassion:

"Hello, cracker. What's your white ass doing in my neighborhood?"

I looked around good-naturedly, and seeing no other white asses, I concluded the salutation was addressed to me. "Just looking," I said. "What's your name?" Sullen stares greeted my inquiry, but I was persistent and friendly, and eventually a conversation of sorts occurred.

His name, it turned out, was Willie Washington. And he was a hard man. He could handle a cue stick, pop a shine rag, or swipe a hubcap with the best of them. Nestled in the profanity of his discourse was the idea that the world is a hustle, and you've gotta get the other guy before he gets you. His dark eyes burned with anger and mistrust.

He was eight.

Mobile cranks out the Willie Washingtons by the truckload. But the white community was indignant over demonstrations during the Junior Miss Pageant. My newspaper endorsed the indignance, and I quit. But nothing changed at all.

The problems faced by Mobile are no different in kind from those faced by other American cities. Centuries of neglect have produced a tangled web of hopelessness, self-hatred and despair. Slum housing, poverty, job discrimination, and exclusion of blacks from the political process are the tangible manifestations of the segregationist legacy.

But Mobile has its own distinguishing characteristics. For one thing, the blacks there are more reachable. Separatism has gained little favor with the masses; and the official symbol of the city's most militant organization is a white hand clasping a black one. Many Blacks are angry to be sure, and it is possible for a white man to feel very uncomfortable in the ghetto. But one senses

at the same time, perhaps because of the completeness of the repression, that if the lid were removed, there would be a brief instant—a tentative pause before the explosion—during which amends could be made. All it would take, one imagines, is an inkling of honesty backed up by some concrete support for the cause of equality.

Unfortunately, such support is almost completely lacking, and that is Mobile's second distinguishing characteristic. White citizens have turned their backs on the possibility of peaceful progress—a possibility which may be a thing of the past throughout most of the United States.

White Mobilians voted overwhelmingly for George Wallace in November of 1968, and again in 1970, and there are few public figures who dare openly to challenge him or his philosophy. As a result, the absence of progress is staggering. Whites in the city are still uncomfortable with tokenism. They are only beginning to integrate such semi-relevant governing bodies as the water and sewer board, the county personnel board, or the local planning commission. School desegregation is still actively resisted in official quarters, and until about a year ago, court suits were pending against several restaurants which refused to serve Negroes.

Yet it is more than the completeness of Mobile's oppression that is galling to young blacks—it is the ease with which it has been accomplished, almost as if the white race perpetuates its dominance without even trying, as if Mister Charlie has simply lounged on his antebellum veranda, rapping the knuckles of occasional errant Blacks without so much as smudging his own ruffled sleeves. Cross-burnings, Klan rallies, and even strong anti-Negro rhetoric are by and large too boorish for the cultured Mobile taste. Why be crude, after all, when one can accomplish the same result by pruning one's azaleas and drowning one's consciousness in the champagne of Mardi Gras carnivals? It is much easier to be a debutante's knight than a Klansman, and most local aristocrats "just don't like to think about all this race stuff." They know, however, that they better think about it when the black folks get uppity, because segregation in Mobile is a sacred trust bequeathed to the aristocracy by the crackers who are abundant and who are quite prepared to use cruder tactics if the Brahmins become too soft. And since crude tactics often mean unfavorable publicity, the current white leaders—the friends of the Chamber of Commerce—are most willing to be stern as in the case of the Junior Miss Pageant. Not much brutality, of course. Just enough sternness to let our nigras know who is boss.

The traditional black leadership in Mobile has known very well who is boss and has basically accepted the fact. Newer leaders are more rebellious, but the city's black community has been so deeply divided that mounting any kind of an effective crusade has been virtually impossible. Moderate leaders are very moderate indeed. So moderate, in fact, that they spend an inordinate

amount of their time criticizing what they see as the violent tendencies of the more militant leaders. The influence of the moderates is shrinking, but it is still large enough to be divisive.

The militants, meanwhile, are not very militant by the standards of the rest of the nation. They are distinguished basically by their willingness to use direct action, usually non-violent, to compensate for the sluggishness of Mobile's legal channels—which are unbelievably sluggish. Throughout most of the 1960's, for example, the city had only one black lawyer to represent the interests of the entire Negro population, and none of his white colleagues had the slightest sympathy for civil rights. Thus, local law enforcement officials were usually free to disregard such annoyances as the first amendment, and at the first sign of trouble (for instance, black pickets at a department store in 1968) they would simply round up the trouble-makers and cart them off to jail, charging high school students with vagrancy if that was necessary and ignoring the state laws which explicitly forbade such charges.

The number of black lawyers has tripled, i.e. to three, in the past couple of years, but they still remain acutely overburdened.

In addition, the federal courts—in many places a repository of some semblance of decency—are staffed in Mobile by one of the most conservative and anti-civil rights judges anywhere in the federal judiciary. "I've never seen anything like him," said one civil rights lawyer. "Ever since 1963, Judge [Daniel] Thomas has approved desegregation plans for the Mobile schools that he must have known would be ineffective. And as a result, after eight years of legal maneuvering, the city still has a number of all black schools, and its desegregation plan was just over-ruled by the U.S. Supreme Court."

In the face of these kinds of obstacles—which, taken together, really compose a monolithic white power structure with very few exploitable weaknesses—it is not surprising that blacks have been unable to carry out their frequent threats to "turn Mobile upside down until black folks get some justice." And even if they succeed in effectively disrupting the city—through a massive and spontaneous riot perhaps—there is a real question as to whether concessions to blacks would result. Mobile's white masses are also quite volatile, and the city's white leaders, who are sympathetic anyway, have not failed to notice . . .

Old Shell Road two-lanes its way past the Mobile Police Jurisdiction sign and winds randomly through the rural elegance of western Mobile County. White-faced cattle munch away at their plush green surroundings,

gazing stupidly at the occasional automobiles which penetrate south Alabama's humidity. Mississippi is only a few miles distant, and the Ross Barnett culture has splashed across the border. Change seems anything but inevitable.

Tucked away in the heart of the greater Mobile wilderness is Tanner Williams, a tiny hamlet that boasts a new brick schoolhouse, a generous sprinkling of Baptist churches and several stop lights. According to the conventional wisdom of the natives, God is in his heaven, the Negro is in his place, and all is right with the world.

Alas, it has become 1968, and the implications of Brown vs. Topeka have filtered their way to Tanner Williams. The all white faculty of the town's all white school is about to be diluted. Two Blacks have been assigned to teach there.

The populace, in the face of such a cataclysm, is beside itself. Communism, the leaders agree, that's what it is, which of course means that Southern Hospitality can be set aside temporarily until the menace is taken care of.

As the Black invaders report for work the first day bricks and bottles are hurled in their direction in a most un-genteel manner. Angry citizens carry placards demanding that someone "Get rid of the niggers." And an aging housewife sobs bitterly to a television newsman: "We just don't want these niggers here." Hysteria reigns for several days and then subsides. But not before it spreads eastward to the more civilized regions in the county.

There had been uneasy grumbings the previous summer as a broadly-based organization called STAND (Stand Together And Never Divide) drew upwards of ten thousand Mobilians at rallies protesting the impending system-wide step-up in school desegregation. And even though a federal judge subsequently softened his ruling in apparent response to the pressure, the natives were restless as public education began its 1968 term.

Following the Tanner Williams episode there was a bitter outburst at Vigor High School which gave rise to widespread rumors that Blacks were receiving "preferential treatment" throughout the school system. The rumors were false, and there was no evidence to support them, but thousands of citizens believed every word. Ugly, although relatively minor, incidents became commonplace all over the county.

The incidents became worse, however, in the fall of 1969 when a second court order again stepped up the level of desegregation. Bitter parents from the lower and middle class held angry marches protesting the "death of freedom of choice"; many refused to enroll their children in the proper schools; and school board meetings were often besieged by howling and barely restrained masses of intensely Caucasian humanity.

School officials were conciliatory in dealing with the white protestors. When one segregationist, for example, made a speech at a school board meeting defending the principle of white teachers calling their Black stu-

dents "nigger" as a noun of direct address, the president of the school board looked at the segregationist very earnestly and said, "Mr. Westbrook, we feel like you are against our conscience, and we hope you will continue to prod us."

But when Blacks and their handful of white allies presented grievances—however peacefully—they were met either with harsh repressiveness or cold rebuffs. One example of the latter occurred when Dr. Melton McLaurin, a white historian at the University of South Alabama, presented the school board with an analysis of one Alabama history text in use in 1969. An excerpt from McLaurin's findings:

"The book's discussion of slavery . . . is presented in the form of a story about the life of a white child who is the son of a plantation owner . . . (The text is used to instruct blacks as well.) The child, of course, is reared by a loyal Mammy, p. 115. Most masters are said to have treated their slaves 'kindly'. The plantation wife is 'the best friend the Negroes have and they know it.' Slaves in the fields look up when they see the young master, tip their hats and say 'Good morning, Master John.' Master John likes the 'friendly way they speak and smile; they show bright rows of white teeth.' One of the slaves is named Gig because 'he dances so well when the Negroes play their banjos' . . . After working all day in the fields, the slaves still see fit to serenade the master's family. Whippings, runaways, and discipline problems of any kind are conspicuously avoided . . . So is any discussion of the slave's family life . . . The text continues to portray the Negro as a loyal, trusting and lazy child-man of the post-war era: 'Many of the Negroes in the South remained loyal to whites . . . They knew who their friends were' . . ."

The school board listened patiently to McLaurin's report and proceeded to pass the historian's criticisms without comment to the state textbook committee. The state superintendent of education said he didn't see anything wrong with the book, and it was still in use a year later—despite the fact that the protest against it had spread from Mobile to Birmingham. One Mobile school board member delivered a parting blast at McLaurin for bringing the whole thing up, and the matter was laid to rest.

The result of all of this is that blacks are becoming more and more hostile because they feel, quite correctly, that no one is listening. White parents, on the other hand, generally do not doubt that school officials are listening, for their protests always meet with sympathetic nods of the head and "oh yes, we see your point, and we wish we could help you." But the point is the officials never do help, because regardless of the prevailing euphemism, what the whites really want is segregation, and segregation is illegal. The president of the school board may denounce the federal court system and the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, and the mayor and city commissioners may lead marches for freedom of

choice or neighborhood schools. But when the painfully extracted court orders are handed down, each one requiring a little more desegregation than the last, the officials always comply. And as a consequence, white rage and frustration are also growing: Whites have been encouraged in their fears, but never satisfied in their concerns, and the city is becoming very polarized.

In the past few months, the polarization has become more tangible. Clashes between black and white students have become so severe that two integrated high schools have been forced to shut down and then reopen gradually, a grade at a time over a period of weeks. There is no indication at this writing that the tensions are easing, and there is no sign of the kind of enlightened leadership that might be able to seek out genuine solutions.

At a recent PTA meeting at one of the crisis-stricken schools, the principal made a routine speech during which he remarked in conclusion that yes, they had had some problems at Murphy High School, but that, happily, things were now under control and the difficulties should soon subside. Meeting adjourned. The Blacks in the audience began to protest that it might be more productive, while everyone was together, to talk things out—even at the risk of some bruised feelings. "The meeting is adjourned!" the principal reiterated sharply. "Everyone please file out." All of the whites promptly complied, leaving a bewildered group of Black parents with no one to talk to but themselves.

It was Mobile in microcosm.

A PERSONAL EPILOGUE

Mobile could be a paradise for a detached liberal journalist — a kind of unreal Enchanted Forest where themes of Good and Evil coexist with a gothic nakedness quite appropriate for scorn, humor, condescension or vicarious anguish—almost any emotion, in short, that the journalist cares to apply. But detachment is the key, and if you are raised in privilege in the South it is virtually unattainable. If you stay, they say, you can never get away. But once you go you can never come back.

True. But only partly. For you can never really go either.

What I have tried to say in this article is that a historical logjam of monumental proportions exists in Mobile, and it will either remain jammed or it will be blown to bits, and either way the suffering will be incalculable.

That is a very sad thing to write about one's own city, and particularly so to me, for the people on whom I place the primary blame—the city's white leaders, who, through a combination of cowardice and bigotry have failed to speak out, have said nothing at all or have said the wrong things, as the fears of whites and the bitterness of blacks escalated into a confrontation which may consume them all—these privileged people are my relatives and my friends and the friends of my family. I know them as decent people, and I like them.

They have tried, I realize, to live good lives—to make their children proud, to build a city of grace and charm, a city less tainted by the impersonality of the modern world, a city aware of its heritage and its links with the past; and in many of these endeavors they have succeeded. I don't think they have ever realized that it could all be snatched away by their failure to understand that Black people—I repeat, Black *people*—also inhabited their fair metropolis, and that despite their pigmentary deviations, they were entitled to the same respect and consideration that the city fathers routinely accorded people of their own race and class.

It is hard to blame the leaders for their failings, of course, for their time-tested faith not only in the permanence but the rectitude of white supremacy was something rarely challenged except by hostile forces which threatened their manhood and put them on the defensive. But it is also hard to be too philosophical, too mellow, or too charitable in assessing the situation, for it has also produced a number of ruined lives. Consider, for instance, the case of Gerald Goodman:

Ask Gerald what grade he's in, and he'll tell you: the fifth. Ask him to count to five, and on good days he can do it. But write it down for him: "Gerald Goodman is in the fifth grade." Then ask him to read it. He'll look at the page, and he'll look back at you. You encourage him—"Go on, Gerald, you can do it." Intently he studies the page. He looks back at you and grins uncertainly. He notices that you are friendly, and he wants to please. He stares grimly at the page, but it's no use.

With a contrived giggle, he tosses the paper into the air and bats at it. His eyes dart in your direction to see if your mind has been diverted from the original request. . .

School is a painful experience for Gerald. Each day he goes (because his parents have high hopes for him—they might not have had much education, but by God they are going to see their boy has a decent chance), and

each day his sense of failure is reinforced.

Gerald is retarded, quite possibly because of the protein deficiency that has characterized his diet for years. His parents, black and very poor, lack both the money and nutritional expertise to feed him properly.

Somehow Gerald has made it into the fifth grade. He can't read, and he needs the special help the schools offer to retarded children. But his teachers have passed him routinely from one grade to the next. The main thing he has learned from school is that he is a failure compared to other youngsters. A devastating lesson for any child and especially for Gerald.

I liked Gerald, but I didn't particularly enjoy meeting him. Depressed by our conversation two years ago, I started back toward my office. Outside I ran into the minister of the segregated church I used to attend.

"Hello," he said, "I have been reading your articles in the paper." I mumbled an appropriately inane response, my mind still swirling with visions of a child completely ruined by a cruel and indifferent system.

"There is another subject I wish you'd take up," the pastor continued. "You know a lot of drivers these days are just doggone careless. I have had two friends in wrecks lately, and it's just a shame."

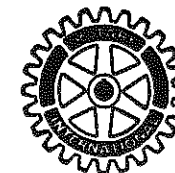
I agreed that safe driving is a good thing, and continued on my way saddened by the Reverend's priorities. I passed a newspaper stand and picked up the latest edition. After thumbing past an editorial lamenting the fact that the United States has given up its sovereignty almost completely to the United Nations, I came to an interview with the 83-year-old Archbishop who presided over Roman Catholicism in the Mobile Diocese.

His Excellency was disturbed by the "breakdown of law and order" which he saw as a dire threat to the region. But he also expressed confidence that with God's help, Mobile and the surrounding area will pull through.

That could be, I decided. But according to traditional Christian teaching, God is just.

INTERACT CLUB of LINDENHURST NEW YORK

P.O. BOX 7
LINDENHURST, L.I., N.Y. 11757



May 17, 1971

The Appalachian Regional Commission
1666 Connecticut Avenue
Washington D.C. 20235

Dear Mr. Branscome:

We are writing to you once again, to ask you to verify the existence of the Marrowbone Folk School in Pikeville, Kentucky. When we wrote to you previously you advised us to contact Mrs. Edith Easterling, which we did. We received a letter back that was so full of spelling and grammatical errors, we began to doubt the validity of it. It was suggested that the letter was typed by someone from the school itself, just learning a trade. Even if this was true, why would such a letter be sent out uncorrected?

If this school does exist and all is valid, we would like your opinion on how much it actually accomplishes. We apologize for our suspicions, but you must understand that we have to check out everything before we can ask our club to donate money to it. We will be awaiting your reply.

Sincerely yours,

Gary Messerole
Gary Meserole

President

the COMMITTEE OF SOUTHERN CHURCHMEN

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