

BE RECONCILED

PERIODICALS ROOM

KATALLAGETE



Westside United Methodist Church

Parsonage Phone
684-2402

104 N. Morris Street — Geneva, Alabama 36340

Church Phone
684-9653

April 3, 1973

James Y. Holloway
Box 936, College Station
Berea, KY 40403

Dear Mr. Holloway:

The enclosed sermon was delivered in the Westside United Methodist Church at the 11:00 A.M. worship service. It was well accepted and seemed to meet a real need in the church's life. The thought occurred to me that your magazine might be interested in it.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Sheppard

Thomas J. Sheppard, Pastor

TJS/lp

Enclosure:



THE TORN PICTURE

1 John 4

For sometime our church has been subscribing to the Parish poster service. Each Sunday, two posters are placed in the sanctuary. Usually people do not comment about their presence. But two weeks ago the late Dr. Martin Luther King's picture and one of his favorite and meaningful quotes "We shall live as brothers, or perish like fools" was placed there. They were dated October 8, 1972. This brought forth mild reaction at first and later, destruction. On the following Thursday morning I found both posters torn into four pieces lying on a table in the back of the sanctuary.

After gathering the pieces together I started out of the Sanctuary. My path out was by the altar and almost

before I realized it I found myself kneeling and weeping like a child. Perhaps it was the memory of the fateful day when he died or the pathos of our present day that carried me to this altar. Whatever reason, here I was. It was in that moment that a message began to burn from within even as it did in Jeremiah the prophet. You see what has happened has gone far beyond the torn paper even to the destruction of great Christian principles. The symbolism is so evident.

There are two imperative tenets of a faith for the Christian—Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of man. Both of these are realized in Jesus Christ. Dr. King implied in this quote that one is foolish if he does not



KATALLAGETE BE RECONCILED

Journal of the Committee Of Southern Churchmen

EDITOR

JAMES Y. HOLLOWAY

Box 936, College Station
Berea, Kentucky 40403
(606) 986-8218

PUBLISHER

WILL D. CAMPBELL

for the Committee
of Southern Churchmen

EDITORIAL BOARD

ANN BEARD

JAMES G. BRANSCOME

AL CLAYTON

DUNCAN GRAY, JR.

FRED W. HALL

JOSEPH M. HENDRICKS

JOHN LEWIS

WALKER PERCY

KELLY MILLER SMITH

ELLA VANDER HORST

The Committee of
Southern Churchmen, Inc.

GIDEON FRYER

President

WILL D. CAMPBELL

Director

Post Office Box 2215
Nashville, Tennessee 37214
Telephone (615) 758-7862

SUMMER 1973

Vol. 4, No. 4

Can These Be A
Crusade for Christ?

2

Will D. Campbell
James Y. Holloway

Time and Unburdening and
the Recollection of the
Lamb: The Easter Service
In Faulkner's
The Sound and the Fury

8

Thomas Merton

Franz Overbeck and the Theologian
as Antichrist

17

Robert B. Luehrs

Merton

22

Julius Lester

The Blumhardts

28

Vernard Eller

Front Cover by Al Clayton: "Babylonian Captivity of the Church, circa 1973."

Published by the Committee of Southern Churchmen, Inc. Individuals receiving KATALLAGETE forward a contribution of \$2.00 to \$5.00 for four issues to cover the cost of printing and mailing. Correspondence relating to subscriptions and mailing should be sent to the Committee of Southern Churchmen, Post Office Box 2215, Nashville, Tennessee 37214. Editorial correspondence should be sent to James Y. Holloway, Box 936, College Station, Berea, Kentucky 40403.

Third class mailing privileges granted to The Committee of Southern Churchmen at Nashville, Tennessee © 1973, The Committee of Southern Churchmen, Inc.

CAN THERE BE A CRUSADE FOR CHRIST?

Will D. Campbell
James Y. Holloway

No doubt the title is overworked.

We have heard it in other times and places. Yet the crusades go on. And in His name. Not just the circus barker, sawdust-trail, tent-pitching successors to Marjoe, or the hundred thousand Explo 72'ers in Dallas, shouting slogans, pointing upward with the index finger, declaring their independence and alienation from the adult culture, then adulating a few, select elders who admonish them to go on back home, join the local Steeples, and repeat what has been repeated for centuries. And not just the Robertses, the Grahams, or even just the Key 73'ers, who make a crusade sound and be, so smooth, so sophisticated and respectable that one dare not put it in the same category as any other crusade.

Not just those. But all of us. The others have been analyzed, dissected, and diagnosed—so often declared by the rest of us to have nothing whatsoever to do with Gospel—that there is no point in covering that ground again. Except those “crusades” go on, too: mainline, structured, organized Christianity carry them on. So, once again, we have something to say about them. And also about ourselves, who so often have stood aside as the ministerial alliances organized and bled their people for enough of their coin to rent Braves Stadium, or Neyland Stadium, or Cobo Hall. Stood aside, and scoffed that Jesus was not a crusader and that what was happening there was something less than, other than, Christian.

It is one thing to scoff, to be embarrassed by the taste or style of the Bible-thumping, Biblical-quarterbacking fundamentalist. But it is quite another to examine our own crusades, also in His name, and so false witness, containing no “good news” and reflecting even more of the “civilization as we know it” (as the President of these United States likes to put it).

We wish to speak of both.

And any discussion of any type of crusade reopens the question of true and false witness. The question is a very specific one: does “crusade” give true, or false witness about the good news in Jesus? The word “crusade” does, after all, come from “the Cross” of Jesus.

False witness is a temptation ever-present to the Christian. But do we even grant *that*? Are we not instead at ease in Zion in word and deed—that is, in Nashville, Rome, Canterbury, Geneva, New York City and wherever brick and mortar reach into the skies throughout “christendom”? At ease we are. We no longer see the contradiction, nay the *lie*, in the witness to Jesus in crusades—be they against Muslims or Albigenses blessed by popes and saints; against the natives (the “Indians”) of our “new” world by Catholic and Protestant conquistadores; against blacks and Asians by political missionaries; against an anxious middle class and totalitarian youth culture by the media evangelists. Where in the Gospel

account of Jesus do we find crusade on the agenda? It is just not there. Yet it *is*, today, as it was yesterday, the main item on the agenda of our civilization's witness about Jesus. So that must be the heart of the matter about true and false witness: the difference between the Jesus of the Gospels, and the Christ of the institutional church allied with “civilization as we know it.”

Gospel as we know it today is not just influenced by, not just tainted or weakened by “civilization as we know it,” but defined and interpreted by “civilization as we know it.” Consider the Quaker President of the United States and the self-confessed *Christian* social science administrators and bureaucrats, Graham and the myriad other mass evangelists, political preachers and theologians, Key 73, Christian “social action” against racism, poverty, Vietnam, pollution; and, (alas) consider even the “ecumenical” movement. Each is an instance of the transformation, and therefore perversion, of the earliest confessions about Jesus into the ideologies of their particular crusade—all of which are an inextricable part of the history of western civilization since the “fall” of the Roman Empire.

What we are saying here is that crusades are crusades: their means *are* their end; their *means* are what crusades—all crusades—are all about. Politics and culture are the “Christ” for all crusades: it makes no difference whether Church or Caesar passes out the little crosses to the troops at the launch-site. To be sure, the words and rites of the first gatherings about Jesus become the explanations and ideologies used by Church and Caesar to justify and reconcile *ourselves*, *our* politics and “civilization as we know it.” So Christ is *our* crusader, for *our* causes. So we crucify God. There can be no “decisions” for Christ in crusades. There can only be *enlistments* by individuals, institutions, structures and movements into ideological causes, into the political maneuverings which are a fundamental part of the suffering, slavery and death in our, and every, civilization.

Having considered those, consider Paul. And Jesus. Why no urgent correspondence from Paul about a Jesus-directed duty to subvert an Empire as the base for world-wide crusades for Christ? And where was there ever anything about Jesus to provoke the imperative to crusade? He turned down the proposition Satan made. And it was a proposition both Jesus and Satan agreed was Satan's to make. The proposition was to bring all peoples to their knees, politically. He also turned away offers of guerrilla warfare. The cross-ties he carried up the hill were not used as clubs or hooks, weapon or subtle inducement, forcing a “decision” for Him.

When did Jesus pray for civilization and political order? He didn't. But when we are enjoined by crusaders to “pray for me” (your “leader”), and to “pray for civilization as we know it,” our witness in His name is

as if He lived and prayed *only* about that deadly idol, “civilization as we know it.” And that is precisely the point of false witness: Jesus for us Christians today is not the Jew scorned and rejected by culture, politics, religion. He is not for us the One Unknown, the One judged criminal by “civilization as we know it.”

Kierkegaard had it right: Jesus today is a Christ exalted not by God, but by civilization. He is Crusader in our causes because we believe that it is *we* who have authenticated Him, that our civilization's programs, and not *God's* deed, resurrects Him from death at the hands of society. Today His vicars are carried around on golden chairs, wear hats laced with gold and diamonds, fanned by ostrich plumes, and the pious flock along with “the world” for a glimpse at a tourist's attraction.

Ah, but worse than that: the Jesus of today is like an executive administering the lives and the destinies of hundreds, thousands, millions—behind a mahogany desk, consoles of computers and a dozen administrative assistants, thus to be prayed for at wrestling matches, football games and youth revivals. He is Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor, because His interest is not the children, the aged, the prostitutes, addicts, criminals, draft dodgers, but “civilization as we know it.”

Ah, and worse still: He is the one featured on the television segments of White House “prayer” breakfasts. He is like unto the minister fretful about getting more people into his building to participate in his employers' programs of charity. He is like unto the technically competent and theologically trained political mediator of the ecumenical agencies. He is the scholar, arrogant but trembling before his peers as he presents his latest “paper.” He starts a ministry to this or that “new group” (defined by society) and telephones the news networks, wire services and the Johnny Carson Show. He is the one known to all as *the* crusader, yet who knows in his heart that his words are picked up by “the world” only so long as they concern political leaders and their skullduggeries, sanction saturation bombing of the innocents, or advocate castration of rapists “convicted” by “civilization as we know it.”

Add it all up and what do you get? A Jesus who is the victor of the Law over the Good News. An image of “civilization as we know it.”

Or maybe it is all just a “failure of communication.” But the people in the New Testament also knew about the problem of “communication.” They knew it on several levels. Sometimes they became stumbling blocks and offenses when they confessed “Jesus is Lord.” And sometimes—especially when they *did* communicate—they were stoned, thrown into jail or, when they were lucky, out of town. Jesus also knew about the problem of communication; it is a central part of the Gospel story. Toward the end, when things began to come into focus about Him in his civilization, popularity sagged, attendance fell off sharply, friends looked the other

way, denied or betrayed him, and he was tried and executed by the legal and religious authorities of "civilization as *they* knew it."

That is the basic problem of communication. But there is another level. And that is the use of language, symbols, images, rites and testimonies to let "the world" know that Jesus is Lord, that the news about Him is good for everyone. The New Testament writers made their confession of this in a variety of ways, rejecting a teaching of doctrines, philosophies, theologies. But even in the New Testament, confessions about Jesus were not simple or self-evident. Jesus himself used parables, hyperbole, interpreted Scriptures, healed, performed miracles and finally walked up the Hill under a Cross to confess who God *is*. Paul used a variety of ways also: sermons, letters, hymns, judgments on brothers and leaders of the congregation who segregated themselves from other brothers simply because they were not circumcised or ate pork meat. The problem of communication on this level is tough and subtle. We labor today under handicaps that Paul could not have known. The reason is that most of the language, symbols, images, rites and testimonies about Jesus in the Gospels have been appropriated by and are the property of the institutional church and "civilization as we know it." And these two, become so nearly one and the same, have controlled its use for over a thousand years. Under their control, the language and images became "theology" and "worship," or Faith and Order. They are not burned out or bankrupt, as some believe. They are full of power—not the power of God, but the kind of power that comes from the age-old alliance of the institutional church with "civilization as we know it." So the language and images do not carry the same power they did in the times of Paul and Silas, for the simple reason that theology and worship have become the language of the ideology of western civilization. Thus when the Christian today tries to use what he thinks is New Testament language, he is in reality using the language of Western civilization. Without meaning to, without even awareness, when he uses what he intends as New Testament language, he risks false witness, risks *being* a lie about who God *is* in Jesus. The Christian today finds himself in catacombs covered over for thousands of years not only by "civilization as we know it," but by the institutional church.

With the churches' acquiescence—if not at its direct behest—the language and testimonies of the New Testament about Jesus have become the rationalizations of the political and social enterprises of Western civilization since the fourth century. What were originally confessions about Jesus in the earliest fellowships have long since served as justifications for all kinds of crusades launched by a civilization determined to bring all people everywhere into political and cultural subjection. That is why Christians who insist upon being identified by political allegiances—liberal, radical, conservative—are

crusaders, no less than the White House court prophet, the double-minded preacher who explains that he is a "New Testament evangelist, not an Old Testament prophet." Consider the New Testament language used and the "good news" that emanates from the language. The Gospel's record of the woman at the well, the sheep and goats, man and the Sabbath, freedom to criminals, sight to the blind, and love, even unto death, becomes for him castration of rapists "convicted" by "civilization as we know it." The Gospels' account of why the Samaritan was good becomes a toleration of the slaughter of the innocents by his congregations. Or, in the case of others of us, the Gospel's record of the woman at the well, the sheep and goats, man and the Sabbath, freedom to criminals, sight to the blind and love, even unto death, become New Deal, T. V. A., A. D. A., Cold War, The New Frontier, national security, containment-into-crusade against communism—all on the same line as Korea, Vietnam, the Dominican Republic, Chicago 1968, Orangeburg, Kent State, Jackson State, Watergate and Cambodia.

Both range of examples demonstrate how the language of the New Testament has been appropriated by "civilization of we know it." Crusades all. None having to do with the agenda of the Gospel.

Now if the agenda of the Gospel is not crusade, then what is it? If Machiavelli was right when he intimated that Christianity had long since become the language and testimonies of the ideologies of the crusades of Western civilization, any attempt to answer that question is likely to be filled with ambiguity, if not outright deceit. Yet a reply must be attempted, though it risks blasphemy, or misunderstanding.

The answer might well begin with the unequivocal *minus-sign* Jesus *is* when placed alongside that deadly equation of the Gospel with the crusades of "civilization as we know it." Begin with this: crusades are just what the good news *is not*. The good news *is* just what crusades are not. Negative beginnings to determine the agenda of the Gospel are necessary, we repeat, because the Biblical language and crusades are warp and woof of Western civilization. An answer, in other words, must begin with a judgment on what the Gospel is *not*. And the good news is *not* an enlistment on behalf of Christ to conquer anyone, or anything. It is *not* "Onward Christian Soldiers! Marching As To War!" It is *not* a call to *do* something. It is a call to *be*—in Christ, to *be* Jesus'. And Jesus is God's. The agenda of the Gospel, then, begins with Jesus *in our place*. We in His: It is Cross, not crusade. It is Jesus, up the Hill called The Skull, in our place, freeing us forevermore of the burden of "winning" anyone to Him, to us, or to our cause.

The good news *is*. The good news does not call for anything to be "done"—by religions, doctrines, programs, politics, movements, education, institutions, philosophies, or causes. What could be "good" about that news? That would *have* to be bad news. On the contrary:

these doings are the very gods which have lured us, in Jesus' name, away from Him and where He *is*: namely, *with us*. Nowhere are we told that He is with our movements, education, economics, politics, technology, culture, or institutions. Oh, yes! God is "Sovereign" over everything in "creation"; moreover, he is "Lord of history." But we are not told that God is with the abstractions we have named "creation" and "history": He is *with us* as with Jesus.

Immanuel! God with us in Jesus. That is the agenda of the Gospel. Movements, education, politics, culture and the rest may be ever so legitimate and preserving. But they are not redeeming. And when, and if, they presume to save us—from anything—they lie about Jesus if they use His name, and lose their legitimacy for everyone, Christian and non-Christian, because in so doing they become as gods.

The ideology of Watergate is supplied by the language of the Bible. That is why Watergate is the essence, not an accident, of politics and economics as crusade. Watergate sought to save us, not destroy us. There is "Watergate" in all institutions and causes today—political, religious, educational, economic, social. It is so because they all presume to save us, to be as God. And it is our civilization which has forced it upon them. The testimonies of the Biblical faith, the language of God's judgment, have been integrated into them. But not to indict them. Rather to sanctify them.

The good news can never be the advancement of cultural values or political arrangements. It is about *us*, *where we are*, in bedrooms and bars, jails and supper tables, gatherings of faith hoping to confess Jesus is Lord. The Gospel is the trust that makes neighbor, brother. It is the trust that makes each one free with and for the other as Jesus is with and for us: *the gift of God*. Crusades dehumanize, abstract, use and institutionalize us. They do *things*. They carry on programs, make golden calves, build temples, turn the Cross into art forms of gold and paint. Crusades are the things *we do*, the *gods* of those of us who do them.

Paul may not have had the same problem of communication because his language, images, confessions were driven by the power of Jesus. They had not yet become the property of that fatal equation of church-as-institution with "civilization as we know it." Jesus, on the other hand, did have a problem like ours. The language, images and confessions about Patriarchs and Prophets had in his day become the property of the religion, politics and culture of Palestine. He had to resist that language, or else convert it by demonstrating its immediacy, its specificity, over against the moralisms and institutions which claimed it for their own. Thus in Luke 4:16-30 he summoned the tradition of Israel: the Gospel is release to captives, sight to the blind, good news to the poor, *literally*: "*fulfilled in your hearing*." That is to say, the Gospel is not interpretation. It is

truth between people. It is not theology and teachings, religious good works or political advancements. It is *Event*: the gift of faith and trust that men and women, girls and men, boys and women, *be with* the other as Jesus is with us, as God is with Jesus, with no questions asked as to whether the "other" is Kluxer or liberal, Black or White, deserving or undeserving poor, prisoner for incest or prisoner for burning draft records.

John the Baptist also faced the manner in which Palestine had converted the language of the prophets to its own culture. So he demonstrated the words of the same prophet Jesus had summoned with the same kind of immediacy Jesus had confessed. *Repentance!* Sharing clothes, and food *where we are*. Repentance does not steal, commit violence or lie to *those near*, those we hold in our power. Repentance is not changing political parties to make a more effective onslaught against the bastions of the other's politics and culture.

Those confessions and lives about the agenda of the Gospel are the great *minus-sign* before the equation of the Gospel with "civilization as we know it." Thus the Gospel does not concern what most of us want to hear about good news, namely, something advancing our causes. Rather it concerns *us*, where we *are*, *now*, and has nothing to do with our programs or movements whose aims are the advancement of our culture and politics. Yet we eagerly, scholarly and enthusiastically dismiss the Gospel as being sentimental, pious, unrealistic, irrelevant, and so powerless to oppose as Jesus did the starvation and slaughter of the innocents. Or the guilty. How often we oppose war and poverty for political reasons only, justifying war and poverty on political grounds when it suits our causes! We reject the good news and make Jesus a golden calf of our culture, no less an idol of our own making than the one described in Exodus 32.

The Gospel is grace. It is gift. Not to our politics but to *us*, where we are, the starkness of what goes on between a woman and a man (or woman and woman, or man and man), daughter and father, prostitute and preacher, pusher and lawman, jailer and criminal, student and teacher. And it is just that *gift of freedom* of which "the world" complains—it turns things upside down. Just that confession of faith is the good news that Jesus gives to *us*, about God *with us*—in parables, hyperboles, Calvary, Resurrection. If the Gospel is good news, it is with us—and those nearest to us, or it is not with us at all. It is not to our programs; but to us and our neighbors, free to *be* the ones near *us*, and we, near to *them*. It cannot be transformed without blasphemy—without making it into a crusade—into "teachings" about God which become the moralisms that sanctify relationships between persons and persons, persons and institutions, according to whatever values and laws "civilization as we know it" finds useful.

Jesus tells us the Gospel of God in stories about why

the Samaritan is good, why sheep are separated from goats, why the trust of children is a metaphor of the Kingdom of God, why there is none good, *except God!* and God's goodness is lived in his love *for us* in Jesus at the place called The Skull: and that *is* Good News! *Gospel*: The truth about human affairs that turns "the world" upside down, re-defines "the world," brings on the crucifixion by "civilization as we know it" of the only One who lived the news as good.

If Jesus is the authority for this good news, the Gospel cannot be generalized into institutions, programs, movements, doctrines, teachings, religious, or crusades of culture. There is an example in the most immediate of "institutions:" marriage. It is an example for both the Gospel and "civilization as we know it." Marriage of Caesar entitles a couple to one, and only one, thing—the right to sue one another. Marriage of Caesar today is the institution become sickness-unto-death, a piece of paper for one or the other to wave in a court of law, a law to circumvent, though still *use* the other as object. When the two-who-are-together in marriage is not the two-in-"one flesh," a gift from God, it is not Jesus' good news, but a piece of paper, a copulation. It is a creation of "civilization as we know it." It is law, divorce and custody trials. It is the mirror of our civilization. Jesus replied quite specifically to those who sought to trip him up on his views on marriage as an institution, "a-piece-of-paper", a copulation. What about marriage in "heaven?" they asked. "Marriage" is not, as his questioners believed, a legal arrangement reduced to a court document. There is no such "marriage" in heaven. And the good news is that there is no such "marriage" with us, now, defined by the law and values of a specific culture. Two-made-one-flesh is with us *now*. It is the gift of trust which frees us to be with the other as Jesus is with us. Two are not made one-flesh by law, nor by technique, whether it is the sexual technique of Masters and Johnson or the psychological technique of encounter sessions. Two-in-one flesh is the *gift* of trust, the freedom to be with the other as Jesus is with us. That is, with no questions asked, no institutions or politics between the "fleshs," legalizing or defining.

So the good news is God's gift, not civilizations' doings. It is this: if I am love to you as Jesus is love to me—even unto the place called The Skull—there is *no* hate, suspicion, resentment, hunger, murder, violence, alienation. And the news is good, for even when hate, resentment, suspicion abound, Jesus is still love *to us*. That is the gift which makes neighbor, brother, not the completion of a course on morality, or the implementation of laws against murder and discrimination. The good news is the Kingdom of God where *we* are, *now*. Jesus likened it to the trust, that is, the joy, freedom, spontaneity, excitement of the little children.

Of course it turns the world upside down!—no rules, movements, programs or crusades just the gift of resur-

rection against the deaths of "civilization as we know it." Just the *minus-sign* of Jesus, outside that grotesque equation of the Gospel with "civilization as we know it," those massive conquests and deaths seeking to liberate humanity from the evils of hunger, war, violence, ignorance, poverty, alienation, and hatred by crusades—crusades which in turn breed hunger, war, violence, ignorance, poverty, alienation, and hatred. And the necessity of more crusades.

The minus-sign of the good news is in truth the *plus-sign*, the sign of Jesus, the way to death which leads to life eternal. The Cross.

We believe that the New Testament is straightforward when it confesses Jesus is Lord. That confession does not take us out of "the world" and on to crusades, but leads us into "the world" defined not by "civilization as we know it," but *re-defined* by the confession about the Gospel of God. So the Christian is in "the world" not as crusading technicians for "civilization as we know it," but as servant of God, witness to Jesus.

To repeat. We speak not only about and to the crusading of Graham, Hargis, Roberts, Humbard and the others in their commerce of media evangelism (and technique guarantees that their individual, stylistic differences are meaningless). We speak also about and to ourselves, we who have spawned all those crusades of false witness to our Lord by our identification of Jesus with our social, political and cultural ambitions and conquests.

Is Christ a Crusader? The question itself is the question of false witness. The good news is Jesus struggling up the Hill, cross-ties strapped to his back and, before the eyes of those who loved yet betrayed him, undergoing the agony of death by the spikes driven into his body by the religion and politics of "civilization as we know it." The good news describes Jesus' resurrection as God's doing, then and now—not as our programs, politics, accomplishments.

God have mercy on us.

Christ have mercy on us.

God have mercy on us for the suffering and death our false witness has wrought against the millions of "the least of these" Jesus died on and rose again for, the ones—"the world"—we are empowered to *be with*, as Christ is *with us*. Jesus is Lord is not a crusade conquering our brothers to "civilization as we know it." It is confession God gives us the power to *be*.

We have written this introduction to this issue of *Katallagete* because we believe the pages which follow suggest contrary readings to the false witness about Jesus as crusader which has made up so much of the life of the church and "civilization as we know it."

If they do, they will recall us all to . . . *consider well* . . . what it means to confess: "Jesus is Lord. Hallalujah!"

Ad maiorem Dei gloriam.

TIME AND UNBURDENING AND THE RECOLLECTION OF THE LAMB: THE EASTER SERVICE IN FAULKNER'S *THE SOUND AND THE FURY*

Thomas Merton

An Introductory Note:

Thomas Merton resigned his post as Master of Novices at the monastery of Gethsemani in mid-August of 1965, and entered upon a more solitary life, living in a small, cinder-block hermitage in a wooded area overlooking the old abbey in Nelson County, Kentucky. Each Sunday afternoon, however, he could be seen hiking down through the woods and jumping over the creek in blue jeans with an empty water jug hung from his shoulder. He was returning to continue his conferences, or informal talks, to the novices and young monks. Later he opened them up to the entire community, where the attendance grew as he began to explore more literary themes, such as the poetry of Rilke and the German poets after World War II in the winter of 1965, and on into the spring of 1966. Later that year he spoke on the poetry of Edmund Muir, Thich Nhat Hanh (who visited Gethsemani), and the anti-poets.

In January of 1967, Father Merton commenced his lectures on "The Classical Values in William Faulkner," which continued for several months. These included an excellent commentary on "The Bear"—a pattern of development in hunting and in the spiritual life. An article entitled, "Baptism in the Forest: Wisdom and Initiation in William Faulkner" which grew out of these studies, was written by Merton as an introductory essay to George Panichas' *Mansions of the Spirit* (Hawthorne, 1967). Then came readings from *The Wild Palms*, with its buried baptismal imagery—the theme of the *Deluge*. And finally in March of 1967, he concluded this series of talks with *The Sound and the Fury*. To each, Merton brought a wealth of wisdom and insight, often punctuated with a dash of humor. As in any subject treated in these Sunday afternoon talks, the fire of Merton's enthusiasm made Faulkner come alive to his audience.

Merton wrote a long review-article for the April-May 1967 issue of *The Critic* on Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays, edited by Robert Penn Warren. He concluded his essay with these eulogistic lines which bear quoting: "There was a day when Faulkner seemed dwarfed by people like Hemingway or even Steinbeck and Caldwell. Now we can understand that he was of far greater stature: a genius comparable to Melville, Hawthorne, Dickens or Dostoevski . . ."

Father Merton had been in close contact with the folk at Katallagete during this time, and had agreed to contribute an article on Faulkner for a project he and they had been working on for some time. Unfortunately, his plan never materialized. What we have here, with a minimum of editing, is a transcription of a tape-recording made by the Trappist monks of Merton's commentary on the deeply moving Easter service in *The Sound and the Fury*. The message for us today is so obvious that it requires no further comment. The words of Thomas Merton (and William Faulkner) speak eloquently for themselves in the "the unburdening and the recollection of the Lamb."

—Brother Patrick Hart

Abbey of Gethsemani, Kentucky

The Sound and the Fury is one of William Faulkner's greatest stories.

It has one of his greatest saints. Faulkner had many saints. And it is absolutely wrong to say that he had a "negative view of women." Faulkner had a very positive view of women: two of his most "saintly" saints are women. The Christian saint in *The Sound and The Fury*, a mystic, you might say, is, of course, Dilsey. She's a fantastic, wonderful person, and what I want to lead up

to in these talks is the climax of *The Sound and The Fury*: the Easter service at the black church, which Dilsey attended that particular Sunday morning. This service is one of the most beautiful things Faulkner ever wrote. The Easter experience of Dilsey occurs in the midst of all "the sound and the fury" of the story. The event is much more impressive when you see it in the middle of all that "sound and fury" which takes place in the household where Dilsey works—and that is just how Faulkner develops the theme in this story.

□ □ □

Now to get all this clearly in focus, let me fill you in on some of the background. We will want to look especially at some of the great ways Faulkner handles his theme. (By the way: this is an extremely difficult book to read; so it is a book that could easily be read around monasteries. Any segment of it could utterly "disedify," but it is so obscure you probably won't be aware that you're being "disedified!") In any case: one of the things Faulkner does in all of his books—and does so very effectively, indeed, is to deal with the question of *time*. He has a really amazing way of handling *time*. By that I mean, not just the way he might begin at the end of a story and work backward, or with the tricks he plays with the sequence of events in a story. Rather: in *The Sound and The Fury*, he divides the book into five parts, and each part represents the experience of time by a particular person in the household of the family, Compson.

One of the things that marks the differences between and establishes the character and identity of each person in the Compson household is their totally different experience of *time*. The great thing about Dilsey is her completely Christian experience of time. Basically, it seems to me that Faulkner's own treatment of time is itself Biblical. Of course, in his stories, there are many experiences of modern, abstract time—the time of the villains, the bad ones, who follow linear, clocked, calendar time. But that and other kinds of time are seen and understood against the biblical view of time, and the more sympathetic, deeper characters have just this understanding of time.

Thomas Merton, until his death in 1968, was a member of the Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance in the Abbey of Gethsemani, Kentucky. In addition to his autobiography, *Seven Storey Mountain*, his more than thirty books of theology, poetry, devotion, and literary and social criticism include *The New Man*, *Seeds of Contemplation*, *The Waters of Siloe*, *Seeds of Destruction*, *Raids on the Unspeakable*, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, *Mystics and Zen Masters*, *Contemplation in a World of Action*.

Copyright 1973 by the Trustees of the Merton Legacy Trust.

From *The Sound and The Fury*, by William Faulkner. Copyright 1929 and renewed 1957 by William Faulkner. Copyright 1946 by Random House, Inc. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

Now we know that the biblical sense of time is not linear. For us, today, this is hard to comprehend, since we live on a time-line. Our experience of time is wholly linear, and therefore wholly artificial. In fact, we, today, have no *real* experience of time, for our experience of it is wholly abstract. For example: I don't even have to look at the clock to tell you that, right now, it is 4:12 (well, 4:15, I'm three minutes off!) In fifteen minutes, our gathering here must stop; Vespers will be exactly at 4:34 (or whenever it is!). Then, we know that supper will be exactly at 5:15. And we know this is 1967. Our time is like the railway line, and we know that there are stations we are going to pass, eventually, and that we will, sure enough, pass them, along this linear time-line. But the biblical conception of time is not this way at all. The Bible measures time not by a line into which things fit, a line into which to put in slots of 1965, 1966, 4:30 p.m., 5:15 p.m., etc. Rather, the biblical conception of time is a matter of ripening, fullness. It is more like that little dog of our recent experience: she knew what was going on inside her belly, and it was quite different from the time that was going on inside the head of Brother, who had consulted his time-line calendar, and thought he knew when, on that line, the puppies were due to come. She had her puppies when she had her puppies. When the time came for her to have her puppies, she *had* her puppies. But her time had to do with fullness, ripening, not time-lines. And so the Bible is not concerned with what's going on in anybody's head about time on a line, any more than the little dog gave a hoot about what was going on in Brother's head. The Bible is concerned with time's *fullness*, the time for an event to happen, the time for an emotion *to be felt*, the time for a harvest, or for the celebration of a harvest.

In Faulkner one finds a type of people who have just this biblical sense of time, time which goes with the fullness of things. Dilsey is one of these people, and Faulkner sees these characters as having a special capacity for pity which those with other conceptions of time simply don't have. These folks are more compassionate, more loving, more understanding of others because they are more in touch with the natural rhythm, the movement and growth of life. So, the more these characters in *The Sound and the Fury* get away from this biblical notion of time, the more their evil becomes apparent. The villain in the story is Jason Compson, a miser, who lives entirely by clock time, by telegrams, telephones, timetables—things like that. He is a sly, crafty man who has no sympathy for anyone, hates everyone, makes life miserable for everyone. I am not saying (and certainly Faulkner is not saying, either) that if you look at your watch you are an evil person (You! fellow! Right there! Looking at your watch! You'll just have to wait for that drink of water or Coke!) But it is to say that one can live by clock time and become a slave to it, and so not care for people. It is to say that clock time cannot measure what is real, significant, full of meaning: clock

time cannot permit us to live in expectation, anticipation, fullness.

Time, and each of the characters' sense of time, is a key factor in *The Sound and the Fury*.

□ □ □

So, let's identify the characters in the story by the *time* which dominates them. First, there is Benjy Compson, a 33-year old idiot. The story begins, in fact, on his thirty-third birthday. Benjy's sense of time is completely whacky. He has no sense of *any* kind of time: everything is present to him at once. Even his wailing Faulkner describes as seeming "to begin before the sound itself had started, seemed to cease before the sound itself had stopped." Even his vocal sounds—not words, though full of meaning for Dilsey—were timeless. The past is present, always immediate to him. That is why Benjy's section is so difficult to read. Everything in time is coming and going, and only after you get through, say, a hundred pages or so, do you realize that all of the events which Benjy is experiencing are not happening on the same day! On the contrary, some of them happened thirty years ago!

There is this beautiful girl, Caddy Compson (possibly she is Faulkner's favorite girl character). She is always in the background of the book, but never quite gets in, and you see her only through the eyes of the others—and of the time they live by, and on, and in. But she's there, throughout the Benjy section, from when she's five years old to when she's fourteen, maybe older. Then, later on, she's married and out of the picture, and when we get Benjy in focus, she's gone.

Another thing about Benjy is that he cannot talk. He has no way of communicating anything, with anyone, directly. He just sounds off, like a factory siren or something like that. What bothers Benjy the most is that Caddy's gone away. There are a few things Benjy likes: Flowers. Firelight. Caddy (but she's gone). The pasture next to the house: It *used* to be a pasture, but they sold it and made a golf course out of it so Benjy's brother, Quentin, could go to Harvard. Benjy likes to watch the fellows play golf, but he disturbs the players by bellowing at them as they play on his pasture.

Now, for me, this Benjy section is a beautiful part of Faulkner's story. It is a wonderful vision of life through the eyes of Benjy, the idiot. In fact, the thing that is most beautiful is Benjy's immediate reaction to everything. He doesn't think about anything or anybody, he just reacts to simple things, like color and people and golf players, as a child might react. But, he's not a child. Benjy has no personal identity. He's just a sort of nature. Some ridiculous critics have said, as you might well guess, that "it is not possible to 'identify' with Benjy." But the fact is, he is *just* the sort of person you *do* identify with—or, at least, I do! Because, all Benjy's got is a nature, so, you simply absorb his reactions as if they were your own. There is no "personality" in the way. It is just this natural

mechanism of Benjy's which reacts to simple things, to warmth, color, light, love, etc., etc. And when something beautiful is taken from him—for example, when he's looking at the fire in the stove, as if in a trance, they shut the door of the stove, and he starts bellowing because the fire went away . . .

In sum, Benjy has no sense of time, whatsoever.

Then there is Quentin, who goes to Harvard. Quentin is all fouled up about time. It's a very difficult section to discuss, but we can't go into it now, for it's a very tricky, modern section. Sartre, for example, read the book and picked up Quentin's section and said, "A-hah! Look at all this about *time*!" Quentin breaks his watch—this is the first thing he does, in his section of the story: it's time to get up, out of bed and go to class. But instead of that, he gets out of bed, breaks his watch, puts it in the drawer, shuts the drawer, and goes back to bed. Of course, that sort of thing could happen at any college—you don't have to go to Harvard for that! But the point of Quentin's section is that he has no capacity to get away *from time*. He's haunted by it, even though that day, in his section, is his birthday (a different day than Benjy's, of course). Quentin cuts all his classes and rumbles around Cambridge, Massachusetts. He hears each striking of the clock, so he's constantly aware of time. In fact, he's *hyper-aware* of time, in a way that is very, very bad. He's doomed because of it, because he's so dominated by it.

And there is the mother of the Compson family. She's always upstairs, a hypochondriac. She has a notion of time, measured by her headaches, her need for her hotwater bottle, all the things she's always asking for and worrying about. Faulkner's portrayal of her is an admirable one—with her funny, yet depressing, pathetic personality. She, too, has a destructive idea of time, turned forever in on herself.

It is Jason Compson who's on *business* time, a miser. Actually, his idea of time seems the most normal, the most real to us, and yet it's the most destructive time of all. It's Jason, actually, who seems to set the action for *The Sound and the Fury*. Caddy Compson, his sister, after a wild, teen-age life, gives birth to a child, a girl, and Caddy—somehow or other, Faulkner never makes it quite clear—goes away, ending up in Europe. But Caddy leaves her daughter (named *Quentin*!) in the care of Jason. But Jason takes the money that Caddy sends for the support of her daughter, and, of course, in the process treats the daughter very badly, tormenting her, abusing her. The girl is aware what is going on. Finally, on Holy Saturday night (before the climactic Easter service), Caddy's daughter steals the money which Jason had kept hidden in a box on the floor of a closet in his room, slips down a rain pipe (or pear tree), and gets away. So on Easter Sunday morning, there is a great explosion of wrath by Jason when he discovers that the girl has made off with the money he had been stealing from her. And this, of course, upsets the whole household: the mother frets; Jason thinks he knows where to

find the girl, but he never does. He rushes madly over the countryside in his car, trying to get the sheriff, to get a telegram off, to use the telephone—all sorts of things—but he never catches up with her. And the Compson household is in an uproar on that Easter morning.

In the middle of all this Dilsey (along with Benjy) and the other Blacks, make their way to their church for this beautiful Easter service. Here, Dilsey has a great illumination about Christian truth: the beginning, the end, and everything. It's a wonderful thing. Really beautiful.

□ □ □

Now, we're ready, I think, to look at a few passages in *The Sound and the Fury* more closely. First, let's get introduced to an obvious passage about *time*. There has been a lot of by-play between Dilsey and Luster (her son, who takes care of Benjy). And, of course, there is all that commotion going on, everywhere, in the household, as each of the Compsons wake up: the hypochondriac mother is yelling for her hot water bottle; Jason knows that Caddy's daughter has escaped with the money, etc., etc., and Dilsey is trying to make bread by getting the stove ready . . .

Dilsey put some more wood in the stove and returned to the bread board. Presently she began to sing again.

The room grew warmer. Soon Dilsey's skin had taken on a rich, lustrous quality as compared with that as of a faint dusting of wood ashes which both it and Luster's had worn, as she moved about the kitchen, gathering about her the raw materials of food, coordinating the meal. On the wall above a cupboard, invisible save at night, by lamp light and even then evincing an enigmatic profundity because it had but one hand, a cabinet clock ticked, then with a preliminary sound as if it had cleared its throat, struck five times.

"Eight oclock," Dilsey said. She ceased and tilted her head upward, listening. But there was no sound save the clock and the fire.

This is a typical example of Faulkner's direction. Here is this household beset by *time*: the clock strikes five, and Dilsey says, "eight o'clock! . . ." She knows it's three hours slow. The thing about Dilsey is that, as Faulkner sets this question about time in the story, she is on Benjy's time, and Quentin's time, and Jason's time—completely on everyone else's time. She is able to understand all these different times, in each of these different characters, and she correlates them into one, natural and Christian experience of time, time which transcends them all. That is one of the keys—maybe the most important key—of Faulkner's story.

Another key is that an estimate can be made of the characters by how they treat Benjy. Each one treats him consistent with the *time* they are on: the great characters

understand and love Benjy; the others don't. Dilsey loves Benjy; Caddy loves Benjy; some love him more, some less; some don't love him at all; some think he's an idiot and try to get him away from the house, for good, because he's always bellowing. But Dilsey understands. She understands why he starts bellowing and she knows what to do to calm him down.

It seems to me that when a story is built on leads and thrusts such as these, it becomes a totally different experience when you read it—different, that is, from reading what we might call a "straight" story. You can see what Faulkner is doing with us: the story releases in us—it's really like a *meditation*!—it releases in us a certain capacity for deep feeling and emotion. Emotions and feelings we do not get from reading a straight, surface story—stories which are just any novel, among many. But when stories do what Faulkner is doing here, they are deep *meditations* on life. What one invariably receives in reading Faulkner is something qualitative. There is a deep quality to be found in just one, tiny, beautiful passage.

Just to read one gives you some indication of who Dilsey is: Here, of course, the theme is *identity*. For the Compsons (or, the mother) it becomes necessary to give Benjy a new name, because it becomes obvious he is an idiot. So he's named "Benjy," changed from Maury (from his mother's family), early in his childhood, when he was three or fours years old. "Benjy" is a "Biblical" name:

His name's Benjy now, Caddy said.

How come it is, Dilsey said. He aint wore out the name he was born with yet, is he.

Benjamin came out of the bible, Caddy said. It's a better name for him than Maury was.

How come it is, Dilsey said.

Mother says it is, Caddy said.

Huh, Dilsey said. Name aint going to help him. Hurt him, neither. Folks dont have no luck, changing names. My name been Dilsey since fore I could remember and it be Dilsey when they's long forgot me.

How will they know it's Dilsey, when it's long forgot, Dilsey, Caddy said.

It'll be in the Book, honey, Dilsey said. Writ out.

Can you read it, Caddy said.

Wont have to, Dilsey said. They'll read it for me. All I got to do is say Ise here.

I believe that this is one of the best statements about what identity means for a Christian: it is a perfect statement of what identity is in *Christ*: identity as *response*. But a response to a name you already have! You are given a name: *the name to which you will respond, when it is called out!* In this passage, there is *identity*. And *vocation!* (So, we all ought to be careful about changing our names: when we get up there, they may read it to us out of a book!)

II

Now, I believe we are ready for the move to the church, for the Easter service, for this preaching of the Word about Easter. Here we have this holy Faulkner character, Dilsey, going to the church. The theme is resurrection.

Resurrection is also one of the themes in Faulkner's early stories. In some of them, he treats the resurrection theme as a member of his own generation, the World War I generation. It is about men coming back from that War, men whose lives have been completely dislocated by the War and are unable to readjust to normal life. In his novel, *Sartoris*, he really moves with this theme: in this story, Faulkner depicts the various attempts and various means of that generation trying to get back into normal life. But nothing works. The character gets a fast car, and speeds all over the country, but cannot settle down. Then, he falls in love, and this holds him a while, but not completely. Then something happens: his father is killed in the automobile accident, and the character is completely dislocated by it, and takes off into the hills with some country folk and lives there, in a sort of daze, but this doesn't settle him, either. Then follows a sort of Christmas-scene, where he is in a cabin with some Negroes, finding himself caught up on Christmas day, experiencing Christmas with them. But, he himself has no place to go. *But he has to go somewhere!* These moves are treated as ritual situations, situations which *could* have brought about his resurrection from the state of collapse the War had left him in. But they all fail. Again, the question of time in this *Sartoris* story is critical: there are moments (which Faulkner handles beautifully) in which the man lives a natural, ordinary life, where all the beauty and sense of time moves in a slow, organic quality of life. But then the character is off again, dashing about, madly. *Sartoris* is a beautiful book. "Does he ever get settled?" No. He commits suicide. But, in fact, he doesn't commit suicide. He disappears from home and ends up in Chicago. Some crook there has a new kind of airplane and needs a test pilot for it! The character is drunk, and says, "Sure, I'll test it for you!" As soon as he gets the plane off the ground, the wings fall off! And he cracks up. That is *Sartoris*.

□ □ □

But, this Easter service, with Dilsey: that is an absolutely beautiful thing. Really beautiful! It is the resurrection theme. Let's remember now the different tempo, the different levels of the time and action of the people in *The Sound and The Fury*. Jason Compson, the godless, avaricious man, the liar, the cheat, who cons everybody, who's interested only in himself—Jason is rushing down the road in his car after his niece, seeking to get the money she had taken from his room, but which he conned her out of, but he never finds her.

Faulkner's thrust here in the Easter scene is beautiful:

this small, beat-up Negro church, with all these black people together. A beautiful picture of them being *called* from their poor, beat-up cabins—the *ecclesia*: called together, to this church, their church, for Easter service. All of them are black, except Benjy, the idiot: he must go to their black, church. Understand what Faulkner is saying: these are *the elect*, these are the ones who are *chosen* in this mad, crazy world of nutty people. These are *God's own*: Benjy; and Dilsey, who loves him and calms him and takes care of him; and all the other black people, going to that Easter service.

Let's start out where Benjy is wailing over something. What he's wailing over now is that his niece (Caddy's daughter) is gone. When something like that happens, he just moans, and wails . . . Here's a bit of that moaning and wailing:

Then Ben wailed again, hopeless and prolonged. It was nothing. Just sound. It might have been all time and injustice and sorrow become vocal for an instant by a conjunction of planets.

"Listen at him," Luster said, "He been gwine on dat way ev'y since you sont us outen de house. I dont know whut got in to him dis mawnin."

"Bring him here," Dilsey said.

"Come on, Benjy," Luster said. He went back down the steps and took Ben's arm. He came obediently, wailing, that slow hoarse sound that ships make, that seems to begin before the sound itself has started, seems to cease before the sound itself has stopped.

"Run and git his cap," Dilsey said. "Dont make no noise Miss Cahline kin hear. Hurry, now. We already late."

"She gwine hear him anyhow, ef you dont stop him." Luster said.

"He stop when we git off de place," Dilsey said. "He smellin hit. Dat's whut hit is."

"Smell whut, mammy?" Luster said.

This is a kind of cosmic woe, coming out in Benjy. This is what the Fathers of the Church call the *planctus creaturatum*, the moaning of the creatures, the lamentation of the fallen world. But Benjy is not fallen: you see, this is the lamentation of innocent creation, innocent dislocation—creation just wailing it's *un-understood* sadness:

"You go git dat cap," Dilsey said. Luster went on. They stood in the cellar door, Ben one step below her. The sky was broken now into scudding patches that dragged their swift shadows up out of the shabby garden, over the broken fence and across the yard. Dilsey stroked Ben's head, slowly and steadily, smoothing the bang upon his brow. He wailed quietly, unhurriedly. "Hush," Dilsey said, "Hush, now. We be gone in a minute. Hush, now." He wailed quietly and steadily.

Dilsey knows that just as soon as they get Benjy away from that Compson household, Benjy will stop his howling: it is the doom over the house that makes him wail the way he does.

So now they start off, down to the church. And there is this lovely procession, and as they go down, the other black families, one by one, join them. This is a real *procession* to Church: a ceremonial procession:

They reached the gate. Dilsey opened it. Luster was coming down the drive behind them, carrying the umbrella. A woman was with him. "Here dey come," Dilsey said. They passed out the gate. "Now, den," she said. Ben ceased. Luster and his mother overtook them. Frony wore a dress of bright blue silk and a flowered hat. She was a thin woman, with a flat, pleasant face.

"You got six weeks' work right dar on yo back," Dilsey said. "Whut you gwine do ef hit rain?"

"Git wet, I reckon," Frony said. "I aint never stopped no rain yit."

"Mammy always talkin bout hit gwine rain," Luster said.

"Ef I dont worry bout y'all, I dont know who is," Dilsey said. "Come on, we already late."

"Rev'un Shegog gwine preach today," Frony said.

"Is?" Dilsey said. "Who him?"

"He fum Saint Looey," Frony said. "Dat big preacher."

"Huh," Dilsey said, "Whut dey needs is a man kin put de fear of God into dese here triflin young niggers."

"Rev'un Shegog gwine preach today," Frony said. "So dey tells."

See! This is a kind of incantation. We are being led into a different world! These people who are *getting themselves ready*, getting themselves into a certain mood, to hear the Word of God. There is a kind of incantation about the visiting preacher, Reverend Shegog.

They went on along the street. Along its quiet length white people in bright clumps moved churchward, under the windy bells, walking now and then in the random and tentative sun. The wind was gusty, out of the south-east, chill and raw after the warm days.

"I wish you wouldn't keep on bringin him to church, mammy," Frony said. "Folks talkin."

"Whut folks?" Dilsey said.

"I hears em," Frony said.

"And I knows whut kind of folks," Dilsey said, "Trash white folks. Dat's who it is. Thinks he aint good enough fer white church, but nigger church aint good enough fer him."

"Dey talks, jes de same," Frony said.

"Den you send um to me," Dilsey said. "Tell um de good Lawd dont keer whether he smart er not. Dont no-body but white trash keer dat."

A street turned off at right angles, descending, and became a dirt road. On either hand the land dropped more sharply; a broad flat dotted with small cabins whose weathered roofs were on a level with the crown of the road. They were set in small grassless plots littered with broken things, bricks, planks, crockery, things of a once utilitarian value. What growth there was consisted of rank weeds and the trees were mulberries and locusts and sycamores—trees that partook also of the foul desecation which surrounded the houses; trees whose very burgeoning seemed to be the sad and stubborn remnant of September, as if even spring had passed them by, leaving them to feed upon the rich and unmistakable smell of negroes in which they grew.

From the doors negroes spoke to them as they passed, to Dilsey usually:

"Sis' Gibson! How you dis mawnin?"

"I'm well. Is you well?"

"I'm right well, I thank you."

They emerged from the cabins and struggled up the shading levee to the road—men in staid, hard brown or black, with gold watch chains and now and then a stick; young men in cheap violent blues or stripes and swaggering hats; women a little stiffly sibilant, and children in garments bought second hand of white people, who looked at Ben with the covertness of nocturnal animals:

"I bet you wont go up en tech him."

"How come I wont?"

"I bet you wont. I bet you skeered to."

"He wont hurt folks. He des a loony."

"How come a loony wont hurt folks?"

"Dat un wont. I teched him."

"I bet you wont now."

"Case Miss Dilsey lookin."

"You wont no ways."

"He dont hurt folks. He des a loony."

And steadily the older people speaking to Dilsey, though, unless they were quite old, Dilsey permitted Frony to respond.

See! This is again a ceremonial. Wherever Dilsey is, she's the queen of it, all dressed up! And Frony (her daughter) goes along, answering questions about her, addressed to her, or speaking for her: "How are you?" Or whatever:

"Mammy aint feelin well dis mawnin."

"Dat's too bad. But Rev'un Shegog'll cure dat. He'll give her de comfort en de unburdenin."

Now, all this may sound very quaint to us, but it is part of the story Faulkner is telling here, part of what *The Sound and the Fury* is all about. Here are these black people, who are *burdened*, really burdened. And they are going to church with their sadness and burden and grief. The Lord is going to *unburden* them: they are going to the church to be *unburdened* of a *real* burden, not an imaginary one:

The road rose again, to a scene like a painted back drop. Notched into a cut of red clay crowned with oaks the road appeared to stop short off, like a cut ribbon. Beside it a weathered church lifted its crazy steeple like a painted church, and the whole scene was as flat and without perspective as a painted cardboard set upon the ultimate edge of the flat earth, against the windy sunlight of space and April and a midmorning filled with bells. Toward the church they thronged with slow sabbath deliberation. The women and children went on in, the men stopped outside and talked in quiet groups until the bell ceased ringing. Then they too entered.

See! They are inside: *gathered* there. The people come in. The preachers come in:

The second man was huge, of a light coffee colour, imposing in a frock coat and white tie. His head was magisterial and profound, his neck rolled above his collar in rich folds. But he was familiar to them, and so the heads were still reverted when he had passed, and it was not until the choir ceased singing that they realised that the visiting clergyman had already entered, and when they saw the man who had preceded their minister enter the pulpit still ahead of him an indescribable sound went up, a sigh, a sound of astonishment and disappointment.

The visitor was undersized, in a shabby alpaca coat. He had a wizened black face like a small, aged monkey. And all the while that the choir sang again and while the six children rose and sang in thin, frightened, tuneless whispers, they watched the insignificant looking man sitting dwarfed and countrified by the minister's imposing bulk, with something like consternation. They were still looking at him with consternation and unbelief when the minister rose and introduced him in rich, rolling tones whose very unction served to increase the visitor's insignificance.

"En dey brung dat all de way fum Saint Looey," Frony whispered.

"I've knowed de Lawd to use cuiser tools dan dat," Dilsey said. "Hush, now," she said to Ben, "Dey fixin to sing again in a minute."

When the visitor rose to speak he sounded like a white man. His voice was level and cold. It sounded too big to have come from him and they listened at first through curiosity, as they would have to a monkey talking. They began to watch him as they would a man on a tight rope. They even forgot his insignificant appearance in the virtuosity with which he ran and poised and swooped upon the cold inflectionless wire of his voice, so that at last, when with a sort of swooping glide he came to rest again beside the reading desk with one arm resting upon it at shoulder height and his monkey body as reft of all motion as a mummy or an emptied vessel, the congregation sighed as if it waked from a collective dream and moved a little in its seats. Behind the pulpit the choir fanned steadily. Dilsey whispered, "Hush, now. Dey fixin to sing in a minute."

They get this *thunderclap*! Who can ever forget it when he reads it? All of a sudden, this preacher changes. Completely:

Then a voice said, "Brethren."

The preacher had not moved. His arm lay yet across the desk, and he still held that pose while the voice died in sonorous echoes between the walls. It was as different as day and dark from his former tone, with a sad, timorous quality like an alto horn, sinking into their hearts and speaking there again when it had ceased in fading and cumulate echoes.

"Brethren and sisteren," it said again. The preacher removed his arm and he began to walk back and forth before the desk, his hands clasped behind him, a meagre figure, hunched over upon itself like that of one long immured in striving with the implacable earth, "I got the recollection and the blood of the Lamb!" He tramped steadily back and forth beneath the twisted paper and the Christmas bell, hunched, his hands clasped behind him. He was like a worn small rock whelmed by the successive waves of his voice. With his body he seemed to feed the voice that, succubus like, had fleshed its teeth in him. And the congregation seemed to watch with its own eyes while the voice consumed him, until he was nothing and they were nothing and there was not even a voice but instead their hearts were speaking to one another in chanting measures beyond the need for words, so that when he came to rest against the reading desk, his monkey face lifted and his whole attitude that of a serene, tortured crucifix that transcended its shabbiness and insignificance and made it of no moment, a long moaning expulsion of breath rose from them, and a woman's single soprano: "Yes, Jesus!"

As the scudding day passed overhead the dingy windows glowed and faded in ghostly retrograde. A car passed along the road outside, labouring in the sand, died away Dilsey sat bolt upright, her hand on Ben's knee. Two tears slid down her fallen cheeks, in and out of the myriad coruscations of immolation and abnegation and time.

"Brethren," the minister said in a harsh whisper, without moving.

"Yes, Jesus!" The woman's voice said, hushed yet.

"Breddren en sistuhn!" His voice rang again, with the horns. He removed his arm and stood erect and raised his hands. "I got de ricklickshun en de blood of de Lamb!" They did not mark just when his intonation, his pronunciation, became negroid, they just sat swaying a little in their seats as the voice took them into itself.

Now what follows is a sacred poem. I can't read it right, but I'll do the best I can. A fantastic, sacred poem!

"When de long, cold—Oh, I tells you, breddren, when de long, cold—I sees de light en I sees de word, po sin-ner! Dey passed away in Egypt, de swingin chariots; de

generations passed away. Wus a rich man: whar he now, O breddren? Was a po man: whar he now, O sistuhn? Oh I tells you, ef you aint got de milk en de dew of de old salvation when de long, cold years rolls away!"

"Yes, Jesus!"

"I tells you, breddren, en I tells you, sistuhn, dey'll come a time. Po sinner saying Let me lay down wid de Lawd, lemme lay down my load. Den whut Jesus gwine say, O breddren? O sistuhn? Is you got de ricklickshun en de Blood of de Lamb? Case I aint gwine load down heaven!"

He fumbled in his coat and took out a handkerchief and mopped his face. A low concerted sound rose from the congregation: "Mmmmmmmmmmmmm!" The woman's voice said, "Yes, Jesus! Jesus!"

"Breddren! Look at dem little chillen settin dar. Jesus wus like dat once. He mammy suffered de glory en de pangs. Sometime maybe she helt him at de nightfall, whilst de angels singin him to sleep; maybe she look out de do' en see de Roman po-lice passin." He tramped back and forth, mopping his face. "Listen, breddren! I sees de day. Ma'y settin in de do' wid Jesus on her lap, de little Jesus. Like dem chillen dar, de little Jesus. I hears de angels singin de peaceful songs en de glory; I sees de closin eyes; sees Mary jump up, sees de sojer face: We gwine to kill! We gwine to kill! We gwine to kill yo little Jesus! I hears de weepin en de lamentation of de po mammy widout de salvation en de word of God!"

"Mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm! Jesus! Little Jesus!" and another voice, rising:

"I sees, O Jesus! Oh I sees!" and still another, without words, like bubbles rising in water.

"I sees hit, breddren! I sees hit! Sees de blastin, blindin sight! I sees Calvary, wid de sacred trees, sees de thief en de murderer en de least of dese; I hears de boasting en de braggin: Ef you be Jesus, lif up yo tree en walk! I hears de wailin of women en de evenin lamentations; I hears de weepin en de cryin en de turnt-away face of God: dey done kilt Jesus; dey done kilt my Son!"

"Mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm. Jesus! I sees, O Jesus!"

"O blind sinner! Breddren, I tells you; sistuhn, I says to you, when de Lawd did turn His mighty face, say, Aint gwine overload heaven! I can see de widowed God shet His do'; I sees de whelmin flood roll between; I sees de darkness en de death everlastin upon de generations. Den, lo! Breddren! Yes, breddren! Whut I see? Whut I see, O sinner? I sees de resurrection en de light; sees de meek Jesus sayin Dey kilt Me dat ye shall live again; I died dat dem whut sees en believes shall never die. Bred-dren, O breddren! I sees de doom crack en hears de golden horns shoutin down de glory, en de arisen dead whut got de blood en de ricklickshun of de Lamb!"

Now, what is this? This is a man announcing the Story. The sacred history of salvation in the simplest possible, straight terms. They are not just the terms of the preacher, but they are the terms of the people in his hearing. *They are ready for it!* The way he presented it at the beginning of his sermon, he was *not* telling them *anything*: he was preaching to them as a white man. But now he is simply saying not only what they know, but *what is present among them!* Now: he is *re-creating* in them their realization of the great truth: *Jesus lives!* And these people realize this. They *know* that they know *this*. So what happens?

In the midst of the voices and the hands Ben sat, rapt in his sweet blue gaze. Dilsey sat bolt upright beside, crying rigidly and quietly in the annealment and the blood of the remembered Lamb.

As they walked through the bright noon, up the sandy road with the dispersing congregation talking easily again group to group, she continued to weep, unmindful of the talk.

"He sho a preacher, mon! He didn't look like much at first, but hush!"

"He seed de power en de glory."

"Yes, suh. He seed hit. Face to face he seed hit."

Dilsey made no sound, her face did not quiver as the tears took their sunken and devious courses, walking with her head up, making no effort to dry them away even.

"Why'n't you quit dat, mammy?" Frony said. "Wid all dese people lookin. We be passin white folks soon."

"I've seed de first en de last," Dilsey said. "Never you mind me."

"First en last whut?" Frony said.

"Never you mind," Dilsey said. "I seed de beginnin, en now I sees de endin."

This is an impressive statement because this is what the story builds up to. It is really the climax of the whole book. This Christian statement . . . about *time!* The Word of God breaks into *time*, into the community of *the chosen*, into those who belong to God. It reveals the beginning and the ending: *at once!* It reveals the *meaningless* of time and the *full meaning* of time. Dilsey sees all this because she is a person filled with love. All her functions in the Compson family, their household, is to hold together those who are separated by conflict, *by time*. Dilsey has a love that reaches out and embraces all of them. So, *she's* the one who is burdened, And *she* sees at this Easter service the beginning and the ending. And this is just what worship is. This is what contemplation is.

Let's put it this way: worship and contemplation is to hear the Word of God and to see it *all*, in *one* thing.

Now, just what is the beginning and the ending? As Frony says, "the beginning and the ending of *what?*" That is an order! I think this scene is a prelude to the terrible theology of another Faulkner story, one that follows this one, *Light in August*: a terrifying book, but also a great book about the crucifixion. It is a very strange story (and I know we don't have the chance to go into it here). But the center of it is Joe Christmas, a bootlegger and murderer who is . . . lynched, I guess . . . but he is, nevertheless, a sort of Christ-figure, and how he gets that way is a very strange tale.

But in this picture we have of Dilsey, the answer is very simple. There are no complications, no funny theology. There is simply the *Word of God*. Remember that what goes through all this preaching, this sermon, is the refrain coming up from the chorus: "Yes, Jesus!" Yes, *Jesus!* That is what is important. That is the secret of the whole thing. Hearing the Word of God, opening one's self to it with a complete: "Yes, *Jesus!*" Not a "Yes!" off the top of the head. Not a "Yes!" as individuals. But a kind of a—well, try to think to yourself what it means: This kind of "Yes, *Jesus!*"

What is this response, this "Yes, *Jesus?*" Of course, Faulkner dosen't tell us. He leaves us in the dark about Reverend Shegog. That is, it is not altogether clear whether Reverend Shegog did what he did on purpose—whether he had some trick up his sleeve. Why did he start out preaching as a white man and then all of a sudden shift to preaching as a black? I don't know. But *it doesn't matter*. That is not the point.

The point is what Dilsey said, from the start that Easter morning: she is going to church for the unburdening, and while Reverend Shegog is a funny little man, the Lord has used "cuiser" things than that! The Lord is going to speak to her! *This* is the whole story. It isn't what kind of person you are, or what you do. But it is a matter of your *expectation*. What you expect is what you get is pretty much what the answer is in *The Sound and the Fury*. Each of the characters gets what they're looking for: Benjy isn't looking for anything, so he doesn't get anything; Jason expects trouble, and he gets trouble; Quentin is all tied up in his trouble with time, and that is what happens to him; Dilsey is looking for the recollection and the blood of the Lamb and the unburdening, and that is what she gets.

III

And that is why this seems to me to be a very great book. One of the things that is so marvelous about it is that the Easter service is a statement of the Gospel in a wholly American idiom: Dilsey's expectation, Reverend Shegog's sermon, Dilsey's unburdening. It is a fine example of an authentic way to preach the Word of God, here.

There is, after all, something very fundamental about the Word of God in America. There is something very fundamental about the "theology" in the sermon of

Reverend Shegog. There are some very special slants that are not at all our "conventional" Christian theology of expiation and redemption. Rather, there are some different twists in what the Reverend Shegog says: for example, what happens when Christ *dies*, in the Reverend Shegog's sermon? God the Father is spoken of as "de widowed God," who "shet His do'": the One most disconsolate and sad at the crucifixion is God in heaven. *He's* all broken up about it: "Look at *what they did!*"

But that's not the way the Gospels are usually presented: conventional theology has God in heaven, waiting for Christ to die! "You've got to pay the price," God is represented as saying: "I'm waiting to get this bill paid off!"

But that's not what Reverend Shegog says. He says something else: something familiar, of course, to mystics and to others who have a deep sense of other aspects of the redemption given by Christ. It is what you find in the Gospel, and the parables. Nowhere in the Four Gospels do you find anything about God, sitting up in heaven, and waiting for this blood-debt to be paid off. This idea of God waiting to get "paid off" is later theology—a lot of it is German, bringing in their tribal, feudal idea of responsibility incurred, that must be "paid off".

□ □ □

What is critical, after all, is the theology of this church service on Easter, where Dilsey is unburdened by the message of Reverend Shegog, and its contrast with the gathering at the white, Presbyterian church in *Light in August*, where a truly gruesome Sunday service takes place, attended by those who the very next day are determined "to get" Joe Christmas.

So all in all, the Easter service in *The Sound and the Fury* seems to me to be an authentic example of the way in which the Word of God is preached: the point is the fulfillment of one's life and the fulfillment of one's identity in response to the Word of God preached in a community.

That is the unburdening and the recollection of the Lamb.

THE SOUND AND THE FURY

FRANZ OVERBECK AND THE THEOLOGIAN AS ANTICHRIST

Robert B. Luehrs

In an essay he wrote in 1920, Karl Barth asked the question why theologians refused to take notice of the nineteenth century church historian Franz Overbeck and why, in particular, they declined to respond to his view that theology is anti-Christian to the core, a crude betrayal of everything Christianity means. The question still holds. It has been precisely a hundred years since Overbeck first denied theology the right to speak for Christianity in his short treatise *Concerning the Christianity of Our Modern Theology* [*Über die Christlichkeit unserer heutigen Theologie, Streit und Friedenschrift* (Leipzig: E. W. Fritsch, 1873)], an incisive yet dispassionate attack upon not only theology but modern culture as well. Despite Overbeck's reputation in his own time for intellectual integrity, careful scholarship and critical acumen, he was able to count a mere thirty references to the book in German and English journals during the subsequent forty-two years of his life; most of his would-be readers, he observed correctly, did not comprehend what he was trying to say or even take it seriously. Since his death in 1905 his ideas have not fared much better. The last full-length study of Overbeck in German appeared in 1931, and one has never been published in English.

□ □ □

Yet, such neglect on the part of the theologians at least is understandable. They have found it impossible to deal with one of their number who so unrelentingly denied

Dr. Luehrs is Director of the Honors Program, and Associate Professor of History, Fort Hays Kansas State College, Hays, Kansas.

the discipline any positive value; who insisted that church history ought to be treated no differently than the history of any profane institution, devoid of holiness or any special truth; who found no special message of universal import in history and certainly no trace of a deity; and who, in fact, possessed no religion at all, beyond a dedication to individualistic humanism carefully tempered by skepticism. Overbeck did not hate Christianity; he felt no relationship of any sort to it, either positive or negative. He conceived his task to be the chronicling of the dissolution of that faith at the hands of the forces of modernity, and his particular interest lay in studying the destruction visited upon Christianity by those who claimed to be religious. He never was able to explain satisfactorily to others or to himself why he entered into religious studies in the first place. Once he did, however, all vestiges of religious belief rapidly evaporated. It is no wonder theologians have avoided coming to terms with him. It is much easier to dismiss him summarily as a purely corrosive influence or attempt to twist his arguments into being the foundation for yet another theological school.

When historians or philosophers have dealt with Overbeck, they customarily place him in relation to his close friend, Friedrich Nietzsche, assuming one man must have played the role of mentor to the other. To be certain, there were many similarities between the two. Both belonged to the second generation of the nineteenth century, although Nietzsche was seven years younger than Overbeck. Both were Saxon by extraction and cosmopolitan by preference. Overbeck's cosmopolitan outlook was encouraged by an international family

background: his grandfather had migrated from Frankfurt-am-Main to London during the Napoleonic era; his father was a successful merchant in Russia; his mother was a transplanted French Catholic. Until he was thirteen, Overbeck's native tongue was French, a language Nietzsche later mused he should have used for his own works; it was more civilized than German.

Both Overbeck and Nietzsche had studied at Leipzig and arrived in Basel, Switzerland, at about the same time to teach at the university there, Nietzsche in 1869 as a professor of classical philology and Overbeck a year later as a professor of church history. They lived in the same rooming house, customarily ate dinner together in Overbeck's quarters, and rapidly discovered they shared the same aristocratic disdain for their times. Both were sensitive social critics and psychologists, who were profoundly disturbed by the signs of cultural decay which abounded: rampant militarism, virulent nationalism, anti-semitism, mass mediocrity, mindless optimism, the supposition of Darwinian progress, the suffocating paternalism of the super-states—in short, the hollowness of cultural philistinism. They felt themselves out of step with the modern world, which appeared to them insane, bent on bringing down upon mankind the catastrophe of nihilism. The two men remained close friends even after Overbeck's marriage in 1876. After Nietzsche resigned his professorship three years later because of ill health and a desire to pursue his philosophical interest unimpeded by academic responsibilities, Overbeck oversaw his financial affairs in Basel. When Nietzsche went insane shortly after New Year's Day in 1889, it was Overbeck who travelled to Italy to bring him back for psychiatric treatment.

For all of their closeness, however, there is no evidence that one thinker considered the other as a disciple. Rather, their minds operated independently, and the interaction that existed was one of mutual reinforcement of extant ideas, a natural reciprocity in which neither man was distinctly the leader. Moreover, their intellectual development proceeded in totally different directions. Overbeck was too scholarly and cautious to indulge in Nietzsche's extreme, agitated reflections about morality. Nietzsche's currently notorious proclamation of the death of God was not a ringing cry of atheism but the announcement of a sociological fact: man had destroyed his own belief in God and would eventually discover that by doing so he had also destroyed all standards, all values, all certainties, and all truths. It was foolish, Nietzsche argued, to expect the Christian value system to survive the demise of the Christian God; thus his own philosophic experimentation was directed toward proposing an alternative standard for judging behavior, a "revaluation of all values" through which man liberated from religious restrictions could create out of themselves higher beings. Overbeck most appreciated that portion of Nietzsche's thought which applied the scapel to the ills of society to reveal their cause and nature; he had no real sympathy for the mysticism of *Thus*

Spake Zarathustra or the vision of the Superman. These appeared to him to be products of desperation, not of clear thought. For his part, Nietzsche seemed fascinated by being in communion with a man who shared his agnosticism and his feeling that man must rely on his own resources alone but who did so calmly, without agony and without rancor toward Christianity.

□ □ □

Overbeck's book, *Concerning the Christianity of Our Modern Theology*, one of the few things he ever published, was a product of Nietzsche's encouragement for him to put into writing the views he never allowed to creep into his classroom lectures. It was also intended as a companion piece to Nietzsche's *David Strauss, the Confessor and the Writer*, the first book in his series "Thoughts out of Season." Although Nietzsche's essay concerned the victory of the German Empire over the German mind, while Overbeck's remained largely centered on the character of modern theology, each was an attack on certain manifestations of cultural philistinism, which David Strauss embodied. In 1835 when he was "but 27, Strauss had shocked European intellectual circles . . ." and delighted young radicals by publishing a life of Jesus which argued no biography of Jesus is possible due to the contradictions and improbabilities evident in the four gospels, a mass of superstition and fable more poetry than history. This sort of daring honesty Nietzsche and Overbeck applauded. But by 1873 Strauss was comfortably berthed in the establishment and had just published a popular book which dismissed Christianity as intellectually unsound and endorsed, in its place, materialism, Darwinism, nationalism, and a smug, middle-class morality. Nietzsche saw Strauss as the embodiment of the spiritual vacuity of the newly-created Germany; Overbeck saw Strauss in a more limited sense, as an example of how little theologians understand Christianity. As Overbeck put it:

There is in fact even among the most hostile theological standpoints today a tacit agreement that Christianity consists only of a given sum of historical or mythological facts and dogmas which one needs only to accept or half or totally reject in order to know how one stands with regard to Christianity. However, this religion has no definite outlook on life or only one or no consequence. [*Über die Christlichkeit unserer heutigen Theologie, Streit und Friedenschrift*, second edition (Leipzig: C.G. Naumann, 1903), p. 111]

Not everything is Christian which chooses to adopt the label, and Overbeck was careful to distinguish between original Christianity and that religion which existed in his own time, a degenerate hybrid loaded down with almost two thousand years of doctrine and accommodation with the world. In its original form Christianity was not intended as an historical force, for historical institutions all are subject to change. They are born, grow, blossom, and at last decay, providing

soil for the genesis of other institutions. Christianity, on the other hand, was meant to be eternal and unchanging, with exclusive influence over the lives of its adherents. Likewise, Christianity renounced the world without reservation. "Christianity among men was not seriously based on anything other than the unholiness of the world" [*Christlichkeit*, p. 71].

Or, even more clearly:

... world-denial is the innermost soul of Christianity; the world no longer has any value to it as a possible and worthy place for religion. With that is connected the extraordinary poverty of church history in great and pure traits. History experiences nothing of the greatest and the purest in this area. In fact one enervates Christianity if one imputes to it anywhere a reservation in favor of world culture. ... [*Christlichkeit*, p. 91]

Why should such a reservation be made? The early Christians firmly believed both history and the world were scheduled for an early demise and that the Kingdom of God was imminent; the basic expression of this outlook on life was eschatology. To the extent that modern Christianity pushed the Second Coming to the periphery of the religion, it announced itself the very antithesis of what the first generation of Christians believed as the absolute center of their faith. It was only natural when the apocalyptic destiny of the world was not fulfilled as anticipated that Christianity should find itself compelled, unwillingly, to strike compromises with the world and so leave its self-contained existence beyond history and enter into the historical realm. In later works Overbeck discussed some of the painful steps in this process. Like Nietzsche, he argued that Paul was the co-founder of Christianity and the man who by opening the doors of the church to the pagans started the religion on the road to betrayal of its first principles.

□ □ □

Nevertheless, the original impulse of the Christians to rise above the sinfulness of the world remained alive in asceticism and the concept of monasticism. The preservation of the ascetic element within Christianity and its valuation above a religion which was cheapening itself vulgarly were the reasons why the failure of Christ to return did not shatter the faith. Asceticism was the continuation of the eschatological belief in a form which defied the facts by ideals. The great summary of this Christian attitude, Overbeck felt, could be found in Matthew 19:12, a firm statement of the absolutely unbending character of Christian asceticism. Early Christianity did not devote itself completely to the impotent and decaying Graeco-Roman civilization; what it seemed to abandon to this culture on the one hand by drawing near, it won back again through the restraint of monasticism.

... the ascetic view and conduct of life is, in fact, a metamorphosis of the early Christian belief in the return of Christ in so far as it rests upon the perpetual expectation of this return, continues to

view the world as ripe for destruction, and induces the believing to withdraw from the world in order to be prepared for the reappearance of Christ, hourly anticipated. The expectation of the return of Christ had become untenable in its original form, which enlivened the prospect of the destruction of the present form of the world with all sorts of Judaic hopes; it changed into the death-thought which according to Irenaeus should always accompany the Christian, into the *memento mori* whereby the greeting of the Carthusians summarizes more deeply the basic wisdom of Christianity than the modern formula that "nothing disturbing should force itself between men and their fountainhead." [*Christlichkeit*, pp. 86-87]

Monasticism was not only an expression of ideological purity, a preservation of something of the original faith. The cloister actually saved Christianity from degenerating into being nothing more than an agency of the state and drew into the church the talented men the Roman government might have employed for its own purposes. Between the fourth century and the Reformation monasticism was the source of every great movement and every profound creation generated by the church. Overbeck considered the Reformation the death knell for religious creativity; Luther's destruction of the ascetic ideal and his reliance on the state as a guardian for ecclesiastical purity were fatal mistakes for Christianity. When Protestant divines seriously declared asceticism to be irrelevant to Christianity and an eccentricity of a particular historical period, they put themselves in the absurdly untenable position of declaring that for some fifteen hundred years the religion had been dominated and disfigured by an alien power and only with Luther was its true personality at last revealed. Strauss was no better; he dismissed asceticism with two or three disparaging remarks and proved himself totally unaware that Christianity was not embodied in a stock of doctrines and pronouncements but in a philosophy of life.

Because of this complete misunderstanding of the nature of original Christianity, theology cannot help but be an enemy of the faith.

Nowadays people hear it often said that Christianity has an "inclination toward learning." In order to be able to judge this point we must next determine in what sense Christianity is being spoken of. Christianity in the form in which it has come to modern man is not only a religion; it is chiefly a culture. The Graeco-Roman Antiquity became Christian in the hour of its death and, dying, won the strength to make us its heirs. Thus at the same time from the same hands and as a united creation modern man has received with the Christian religion also the culture of Antiquity. It could be said that Christianity is the embalmed form in which Antiquity has come into our own time. If this is what Christianity is understood to be then the assertion it has an inclination toward learning is nonsense, for so defined it already has learning in it. However, if it is defined as that which it originally and above all exclusively was, a religion, then nothing can be more erroneous than the cited phrase. On the contrary, so defined, Christianity, as does every religion, has the most unequivocal aversion for knowledge.

As does every religion, for the antagonism between faith and reason is eternal and irreconcilable. [*Christlichkeit*, p. 22]

A theologian who offhandedly insists that religion has nothing to fear from reason must be referring to a religion that is firmly implanted in this world. A genuine, transcendental faith, as Christianity was at first, does not even recognize the existence of reason or knowledge; through absolute belief all contradictions vanish. Faith and reason cannot coexist peacefully. A strong faith relies on itself and holds reason at bay. When a faith becomes feeble and calls on reason for aid, it renders itself superfluous. Reason cannot be reconciled to being hand-maiden of faith, as theology would have it, and must always remain an alien force within religion, destructive in its impact. Given an opening, reason will flood into religion and reduce everything to matters of logic and criticism. Belief is thus dissolved unconditionally.

□ □ □

The destruction need not be the result of a frontal attack. It could just as easily be the product of a desire to "explain" Christianity—for example, the rather ludicrous attempts by theologians to explicate why divine miracles somehow took place two thousand years ago in a remote corner of the Roman Empire, but never again. The concept of miracles can be used by faith to bring people into the church, but the same concept when approached rationally can only alienate potential converts. Christianity is not a collection of independent doctrines which can be accepted or rejected selectively as occasion demands. It is of one fabric, not open to amendment. If the account of the creation in Genesis is to be replaced by Darwin, it is only a matter of time until the entire Bible must be discarded. The authority of canon rests on the equal reputation of all of its parts as the literal word of God. If history or natural science is employed to cast the least shadow of doubt on the authenticity of any portion of Scripture, then no portion can be immune from the most extreme revisions. In sum, reason can only point out the discrepancies in religion that are irrelevant for faith but impossible for logic; it can decompose a religion but not create one. So long as religion can regenerate itself and evolve as a life force rather than a dogma, it is vital. However, once this power disappears, nothing can restore it.

So when early Christianity began to evolve theology to combat the metaphysics of Gnosticism, to establish standards of faith and to protest certain concepts against the onslaught of pagan reason, it introduced a poison into its system. Derived out of religious instincts, theology was supposed to protect Christianity against its own weaknesses in a hostile environment; instead theology became a corrupting influence, part of the secularization of Christianity and of the process by which Christianity became a historical movement. Overbeck disliked theology's illegitimacy. It had no principles

of knowledge of its own since there was no Christian knowledge and was only a parasite at the table of scholarship.

Overbeck saw no real difference between the two major theological schools of his day, the apologetic and the liberal.

If we have to reproach the apologetic theology with possessing only the shell of the cause they represent, not the kernel, so it would appear by the well known free attitude which the theology customarily called liberal adopts today toward Christian myths and dogma that the judgment could be raised against this theology that it has thrown out the shell with the kernel. [*Christlichkeit*, pp. 72-73]

The apologetic school appealed mainly to those already believers and employed worthless historical and scientific arguments which original Christianity would scarcely have recognized as valid. Early Christians were not bothered by contradictions in the Bible; the efforts by apologists to reconcile these contradictions only produce more unbelievers. Furthermore, even worse than this lack of insight, was the hypocrisy of the apologists, who grandiosely professed a belief they daily denied in action. Modern apologists were too attached to the world to be serious about the Second Coming, too pleased with the blessings of secular culture to hold the ascetic ideal. They were patriots and successful businessmen, not Christians; dogmatism and orthodoxy served their purposes far better than did genuine piety.

The only legitimate form of apology, Overbeck felt, was the life of the believer. To the extent an individual actually embodied the virtues of Christianity, he might profess his faith to others.

□ □ □

Liberal theology was certainly no better. If the apologists thought they could defend traditional Christianity by history and sciences, the liberals thought they could reconstruct Christianity after these same disciplines had dissolved it. There was a certain honesty about the liberals since they made no pretense about defending the faith of the early Christians, but they had turned Christianity into a nebulous thing without center, always changing to fit the times, "the religion with which people can make what they wish" [*Christlichkeit*, p. 80]. When the liberals sought the essence of Christianity in the religion of Jesus or the life of Christ they turned Jesus into a historical figure rather than being above time and missed the point that Christianity is belief in Christ, not his life or religion. Liberal theologians thus made Christ into a friend of culture and in trying to reconstruct Christianity actually created new religions. Their adventures into remaking the faith were all failures, and their public pronouncements, despite all the advantages betowed by mass media, have only served to make theology unpopular and religion weaker.

The public is interested in practical knowledge, but theology offers none. Theology did not even have a cultural value; its confusion of faith and reason was barbaric. Theology, whether apologetic or liberal, had no real purpose or direction, and the Christianity it was supposed to be protecting was its greatest victim. A generation later, when he issued a second edition of his book, Overbeck felt all the more certain that his judgment of 1873 was correct. In the Afterword to the new edition he noted: "Theology has *always* been modern and for that reason has always been the natural betrayer of Christianity" [*Christlichkeit*, p. 217]. It could not be otherwise, since theology refines and accommodates Christianity to the world and thereby forces the church to deny its very soul.

□ □ □

Karl Barth felt he had discovered in Overbeck a man who was pointing the way to a new type of theology, one with more insight and caution, but surely Barth was

in error. Although Barth mentioned the fact that Overbeck remained a theologian, as evidence that there must be something positive which could come out of it, most likely Overbeck found his profession a handy situation for studying church history in a scholarly fashion. He was no reformer. His aversion to theology, the "satan of religion," grew stronger as he aged, and, at best, he proposed theology ought to be aware of its distance from the spirit of Christianity, be cognizant of its own irreligious character, and surrender the right to speak in behalf of religion.

As for Christianity, Overbeck considered it finished. Although he readily admitted that the replacements for the old faith proposed by men like Strauss were infinitely inferior, he was convinced that his own time was loosening the last strands that bound it to Christianity, with the assistance of theology. Knowledge was vanquishing belief. And Overbeck was content to record the last hours of this fading monument to a god he did not recognize, with neither satisfaction nor regret, with moderation and objectivity. □

MERTON

Julius Lester

"I want to be a monk," I said to mother. I don't remember how old I was. Seventeen, maybe. I can't even remember where I could have heard of monks or monasteries in Nashville, Tennessee in the mid-nineteen fifties, but somehow I had, and the idea of spending my life in a cloister, praying, singing Gregorian chants, and studying appealed to my nature much more than the prospect of working for a living, an enterprise for which I was morally unfit and totally devoid of talent.

Mother was preparing supper, as she usually was when I wanted to discuss something serious and she did not stop or turn around as she said, "Monks don't do anything."

"Mother!" I exclaimed in protest. "That's all you talk about. 'Do!' That's not everything, you know."

"What else is there?" she demanded.

And being only seventeen, I didn't know what to say and could only conclude that she was right; monks didn't do anything and in that world into which I was growing, one was raised and educated to do something with his life. (America is a nation of doing—digging minerals from the earth, clearing forests, building cities, highways, cars, airplanes, inventing miracle drugs, transplanting organs from one body to another. America is what results when the Puritan work ethic goes psychotic.)

I was seventeen and everyone wanted to know what I was going "to do" with my life. Not much, it appeared more and more as I meandered through college, for the

early promise I had shown disappeared one day when I asked, of no one in particular, "Who am I?"

The answer came back so quickly that I was almost knocked from my feet: "A nigger!" The society had been trying to get me to believe that for seventeen years and I'd always found such a definition incomprehensible. What was a nigger? Was it seasonal, like black-eyed peas? Maybe it was the successor to the Edsel, or something between the woofer and the tweeter on my hi-fi. Whatever it was, I'd wait until the price went down before getting one.

Rejecting that answer to my question, a long and deep silence descended, swathing me so tightly that sometimes I had to struggle to breathe. Who am I, I demanded to know and the mere question was a challenge to God, because I'd learned in church every Sunday that I was a child of God, created in His own image and Jesus had died so that I might be redeemed from sin. To ask "Who am I" was to reject that Christian dogma and confront God directly: "If You know who I am, then speak. If you are indeed my Creator and in You and only in You will I find meaning, reveal Yourself. Do it in a burning bush, or a pillar of fiery clouds, or a red MG, if there're no bushes around."

But God, I learned, is not a dog, who comes when requested. Despite the theologians, I think God is choosy about what prayers He answers and what petitions He will grant. When you pray, God has St. Peter tap your phone; He looks through your dossier and sees what your soul has been doing behind the veil of your *persona* and if He thinks you've paid your dues, if He thinks you have walked in the path of righteousness, maybe He'll listen to what you have to say.

So it appeared to me as I stumbled through the desert of myself, searching for the am-of-my-I, searching for the

Julius Lester's most recent books include *Black Folktales*, *The Knee-High Man and Other Tales*, *Long Journey Home*, *Search for the New Land*, *To Be A Slave*, and *Two Love Stories*. He has edited a three volume edition of the writings of W. E. B. Dubois and, with Pete Seeger, *Folksinger's Guide to the 12-string (Leadbelly) Guitar*.

I-of-my-am. St. John of the Cross calls it *la noche oscura*—the dark of night of the soul—wherein one is made to know his miniscule finiteness in every fibre and corpuscle of his being. Mine lasted for almost three years until God allowed me to see Him as I rode on a train from Los Angeles, California to San Francisco. I had seen the ocean many times, but this once I saw it and the mountains that rose from the rocky beach at the edge of the sea and knew that this was the "I am that I am" and so was I. "My Me is God," said St. Catherine of Genoa, and Meister Eckhart, frustrated and angry at the inadequacy of language, was driven to cry, "I am God! . . ." and that morning of June 10, 1959, I knew that I was, too. Having taken the risk of revealing Himself, God once again disappeared, reluctant to trust His being in the hands of a mortal, having been mistreated and misused so often throughout history. He retreated to see what I would do with my knowledge of who I was.

I became a seagull, flashing white as I soared, dipping over the curling ocean. I became the sky, sparkling in glitters of blue over the world. I became All and each step I took was the most graceful pirouette ever done by a mere mortal.

□ □ □

But the ecstasy which follows release from *la noche oscura* does not last long, particularly when one is a senior in college and whether or not he knows who he is, he must find something "to do" with his life (as if it were a ball which must be bounced or hit, as if a life were a tract of beautiful land, which cannot be allowed to shine beneath the sun, but must be turned into a Disneyland.) It must have been around this time that I came upon Thomas Merton. I can't recall, because looking back it appears that as long as I have been, there was Thomas Merton. I don't even remember whether I read *The Seven Storey Mountain* first or something else. But it is of little consequence. I came to Merton and the idea of becoming a monk was planted in me once again. After all, if one has been blessed by seeing the face of God, it is his duty thereafter to devote his life to God. There is no more pure and direct way of doing so than in a life of contemplation.

Merton's collection of essays, *Disputed Questions*, was a startling revelation to me about monastic life. The first essay was about Pasternak and *Dr. Zhivago*, a *cause celebre* in the West in 1960 as Solzhenitsyn is now. I was surprised that a man who had been cloistered for twenty years or so knew so much about the dynamics of the 'outside' world. This was no sanctimonious priest mouthing pieties, but a man more involved than most who lived in the world, more astute in his observations and insights than the more recognized social commentators. (After all, how can anyone really take Max Lerner seriously?) There was a purity in Merton's vision and literary style which a young twenty-one year old like me would find appealing, because the young listen only to those who have pure ideals. (And the danger with

the young is that the purity is more important than the content of the ideals. Jesus freaks and Weathermen are the same people, masquerading as dissimilar ones.) The pure idealism of Merton was not expressed in simplistic dictums, which would only have resulted in his becoming the focus for a cult. No. He challenged one with a clear statement of an ideal that could only be reached through agonizing spiritual work. He told us what our duty was, but gave us no formulas by which to fulfill it.

. . . our job is to love others without stopping to inquire whether or not they are worthy. That is not our business and, in fact, it is nobody's business. What we are asked to do is to love; and this love itself will render both ourselves and our neighbors worthy if anything can.

"The Power and Meaning of Love"

How much I wanted to rush off to the Abbey of Gethsemani, don my cowl and sit in Merton's class for novitiates. And I would have had I not been required to join the Catholic Church, which always struck me as being akin to enlisting in the Army. I could not accept any authority over my life.

Though it would be some while before I was sure, my way was in and of the world. I was not only prey to the appetites of the flesh, I was loathe to give them up. Even on those days when I thought that I could be a Catholic, I knew that I could never be a celibate. And not even Merton was able to convince me otherwise. The Lord had bestowed upon me an almost infinite capacity to lust and to deny it would be to deny myself. I could not understand salvation through denial. Salvation came through fulfillment of self.

So I entered the world, the arena of "doing," where there was no place for a contemplative in search of a form for his life. I would have to make my own form and I was happy to read an essay of Merton's confirming the desirability of the contemplative life in a secular environment.

. . . true contemplation is inseparable from life and from the dynamism of life—which includes work, creation, production, fruitfulness and above all, *love*. Contemplation is not to be thought of as a separate department of life, cut off from all man's other interests and superseding them. It is the very fullness of a fully integrated life. It is the crown of life and all life's activities. . . .

. . . what we need are "contemplatives" outside the cloister and outside the rigidly fixed patterns of religious life—contemplatives in the world of art, letters, education, and even politics. This means a solid integration of one's work, thought, religion, and family life and recreations in one vital harmonious unity with Christ at its center.

"Poetry and Contemplation"

There was, perhaps, no more contradictory time to become a contemplative than 1960. The sit-in movement had begun and the social revolution of the '60's had begun. I held myself apart from the ferment around me, suspicious of its ability to make significant change. I listened to the platitudes of Martin Luther King, Jr. and was not convinced that he knew what Merton knew. Non-violence was a tool for the *contemplative*, not the

KATALLAGETE

political organizer and Dr. King seemed to be a product of libraries and Bayard Rustin as opposed to any kind of inner struggle to attain Being. He commanded us to love our enemies, but that is not possible when a people do not love themselves. Black people could not be soldiers of *satyagraha*; they could only be passive resisters. (In his last public appearance King said that he had been to the mountaintop and seen the promised land and though it was an inspired use of Biblical imagery, it confirmed the feeling I'd always had about Dr. King: He saw himself as Moses come to lead the children to the promised land. And I tried to imagine Gandhi saying he had been to the mountaintop, and I couldn't. Gandhi would have looked puzzled and said, "No, but let me tell you about Hell," because it is in hell fire that the soul is tempered and refined and made ready to do God's work.) I did not sit-in or freedom-ride, because, even though Dr. King talked about redemption through suffering, I could not feel love vibrating from him, only quasi-religious rhetoric uttered in the dulcet tones of a sophisticated Baptist minister. Dr. King was wrapped in the aura of the spiritual, but his essence was political. The right use of non-violence demands a spiritual leader. Merton made a distinction between "the non-violence of the weak" and "the non-violence of the strong," and he defined the former as using "the language of power." Non-violence of the strong was "not for power but truth . . . It does not say 'We shall overcome' so much as 'This is the day of the Lord, and whatever may happen to us, He shall overcome.'"

Of course, in the early sixties, none of the above was clear in my mind. I just knew that the civil rights movement did not resonate with the bell-like tones of the soul's purity and I stayed away, living as best I could a life of study and contemplation in New York while working at various odd jobs until I decided that even to work at something which did not bring me closer to God was blasphemy. My last job was with the welfare department, and when I quit in April of 1963, I put my physical well-being in God's hands: "Listen. If You want me to be about Your work, You pay the rent." And perhaps God liked my audaciousness, because He hasn't missed a month in ten years (though He does cut it rather close sometimes).

□ □ □

By now I was married and in a few years would be a father, which truly brings one into the world. Sometimes I think it is easier to live with God than it is another human being, particularly one who does not understand the contemplative life. Marriage is a perverse institution anyway, particularly when most of us think that just because we love someone we can live with them. The two are not necessarily related, but it took me eight years to finally realize that.

I, the monk without a monastery, married a Marxist-Leninist without a Russia, someone who could see the class struggle in a bowl of Rice Krispies. Our values were

so different and she was so much better at expressing hers than I was mine. I felt no need to convince her of the truths I had learned, but for her there was only one truth—Marxism-Leninism. And because I conceded that possibly she might be right, I slowly found myself viewing the world with political eyes, seeing "the oppressed" where before I'd just seen people, seeing the "ruling class" where I'd just seen *rich* people. It was a slow, subtle transformation and without realizing it, I forgot Merton and became a part of my times.

I joined SNCC and believed that the revolution had come. I travelled to college campuses and spoke on the necessity for revolution and wrote articles and books in an attempt to articulate an ideology for revolution. I believed that a revolution was necessary, but I also knew that ultimately the revolution had to be spiritual. However, I was convinced that it was possible to inject the radical political movement with a spiritual essence, and it was to that end that I wrote

. . . the revolutionary knows that to change the institutions he must change himself. He and his comrades must become new men, for it is from new men that the new institutions will come which, in turn will create the new society.

Those words are from the introduction to my *Revolutionary Notes* and that phrase, "new men," was Che Guevara's. But it was also Merton's for he had titled one of his books *The New Man*, (and it is not romantic idealization of Che or an insult to Merton to say that the two were spiritual brothers.)

The revolution I talked and wrote about had only one purpose: to transform humanity into vehicles for God. I kept His name out of my writings, knowing that the mere sight of it would mean I would be unread by many whom I wanted to reach. But the word is not the thing. "Revolution does not mean us against them," I wrote in the midst of the Newark rebellion of 1960. "The revolutionary is a midwife seeking to give birth to the full potential of man. Involved in that most difficult of all births is our fighting against them, but let us not confuse that fight with Revolution . . . one can never say that he is a revolutionary. One is only in a constant state of becoming revolutionary, of becoming more human."

As long as I could believe that those who read me understood, even subconsciously, that I was talking about oneness with God, I could continue to be a part of "the movement." But I deluded myself, for I had not realized that what we called the revolutionary movement had erred with its very first step—the enunciation of Black Power. I was caught up in it, too, and not until the transition was made from the slogan "Black Power" to "Power to the People" did I begin to question where we were going. I didn't want any part of a revolution whose aim was the acquisition of power. Power could not be used compassionately, by an individual or some mystical grouping called "the people." Power was unequivocally evil.

I increasingly realized that I had articulated a concept of revolution which bore little relation to the reality of

revolution. The winter of 1969 I knew, in a frightening moment of insight, that my life would be no different or safer if Eldridge Cleaver occupied the White House. Indeed, it might be worse. He talked of love, but I could feel no compassion in him, no challenge to his followers to walk in the path of Being. And I was afraid.

I continued to write and speak. I had to, because I was unable to confront myself with the truth of what I saw happening within "the movement," as people raised clinched fists high into the air and shouted "Power to the People." My mind would play a strange trick and I would see outstretched arms and flattened hands and hear, "Seig, Heil!"

□ □ □

The confrontation with myself finally came when I accepted an invitation from Jim Holloway to speak at Berea College, where he taught. It was an overcast day when I arrived and as we drove from the airport, I slumped in the seat and let the Kentucky hills wrap me in their quiet. And perhaps it was something in the peace of the hills that caused me to remember that the Abbey of Gethsemani was nearby. A few questions got Jim to reveal that he had known Merton and I regretted that I had come to the area after he had died. But talking of him for the first time in years brought me faint whiffs of something I'd once loved to partake of and there was a moment of wishing that I could return to it, that somehow my life had veered from where I had wanted it to go.

Once we arrived on campus, I was introduced to some black students and put in their care until I spoke that evening. The black students closed around me like foxes around a rabbit and I didn't know what to do, there being no briar patch to dash into. I had become increasingly uneasy speaking at colleges, because as I stood before the audiences, looked out and saw the black students seated in a section at the front and the whites behind them, I knew that I was supposed to be the voice for those black students. I was to apply the whip to 'whiteness,' to be the avenging voice of the race. I could never do it. Of course, anger coursed through me as it does all blacks, but that anger did not comprise the totality of my being. I persisted in believing that whites were human, in spite of themselves, but I had internalized too much Merton to ever regard them as anything more or less than pitiful mortals like myself in need of as much love as I myself was. Love was God's language and while I might find myself incapable of loving at a given moment, the attempt to love was always within my grasp and the one thing I could not do was to refuse to make the attempt. As I stood before those college audiences and felt the pain of the black students, felt their need to live through me, to have me be their symbol and their spokesman, I felt they were asking me to refuse to treat whites as human beings and treat them as whites, as objects to be assailed with the pain of black lives. I refused.

That gray day at Berea I felt particularly trapped, because I wanted to sit with the white students, too. They were southerners and that meant we shared a history and that our lives were inseparable. But the black students surrounded me like Secret Servicemen, not protecting me from assassination, but unconscious agents of the act themselves.

That evening as we walked toward the chapel where I was to speak, a white girl approached me. She hugged her arms tightly around her, as if she were forever alone with no one to hold her but herself. When she spoke to me, her eyes fluttered up to mine and down to the ground quickly. There was a slight quaver in her voice, which was not shyness, but fear. She was afraid as she looked at me and saw a black person phalanxed by unsmiling, hard-eyed young blacks. And her look told me that she thought I was one of them. And I didn't know what to do, not wanting to make the black students feel that I was rejecting them, yet wanting to let the girl know that who she saw was not me. I wanted to ask her to unclasp her arms and throw them around me so that I could cry for what was happening to me and to her and to our poor, pathetic world.

To whatever she asked me, I made a joke, knowing that the only weapon I had was to make her laugh, but my joke bounced against her fear and plopped at my feet like a dead fish. She looked at me, bewildered, muttered something and hurried away.

I spoke that evening, masking the deep pain I felt at having been unable to communicate with someone who had wanted to communicate with me, and hoped that she heard what I said, because I spoke to her that evening. But afterwards, she left without speaking to me again. And that night I resolved to stop speaking publicly until I had the spiritual strength not to let myself be captured by black students who used me as a club in their battle against anguish. The black students who invited me to their campuses did not want *me*. They wanted their version of me, which bore no similarity to the reality of the am-of-my-I. Equally, the white students who were so relieved that I did not curse them out for being white assumed that I was not like black students who rejected them. Neither group could understand that I was both of them, in more ways than they knew.

Merton's speaks of "the man who is fully born" as one who is "identified with everybody" and is "all things to all men . . . able to experience their joys and suffering as his own, without however becoming dominated by them." Whether I qualified, it was an ideal I tried to live by. To be "fully born" was to be vulnerable, to be open to the pain of others to the extent of making that pain one's own, and when I stood before those audiences, it was not to bring them a "message" but to be vulnerable and let my words come from my vulnerability and touch theirs. (Any speaker has the same experience if he is not as concerned with what he is going to say as he is with to whom he is saying it.)

□ □ □

The change had begun when I left Berea the next day and before the year was out, I would have ceased to call myself a revolutionary. If revolution was the overthrow of governments, I wanted no part of it. Once again God used Jim Holloway to speak to me. Jim called and asked me to write an essay about Jacques Ellul. I'd never heard of him, but I said, O.K. and that summer of 1969, I read through all of Ellul's works and particularly in *The Political Illusion*, I could feel myself coming back to the beginning, back to the person I had been almost ten years before when I had gone into the world, a contemplative without a cell. Ellul affirmed the renewed contact I had had with Merton through Jim and those Kentucky hills Merton had so often looked on. When Ellul said that a political solution to a political problem was only a reinforcement of the problem, I knew that I had been right back in 1960 when I had told friends who were sitting-in: "Oh, you may desegregate the lunch counters, but you won't really change anything."

It was to be another two years, though, before I returned wholly to the point from which I had started. I had to confront myself in the void which had been created when I ceased to live within the context of "the movement," which had been my entire life for four years. At the same time my marriage was hurtling toward its inevitable dissolution. I was thirty-one and had thought my life would be a harmonious whole by that time, but there it was, coming apart like a sweater bought at a bargain basement sale. But it was Emerson who pointed out, "God will not have His work made manifest by cowards," and I have the feeling that periodically, God wants to see what we're made of, those of us in whom He risks Himself. He sets out to destroy us, pushing us to our limits and if we survive, He is surprised and gratified, and without bothering to say, "Congratulations," He gives us more work to do.

□ □ □

Somehow I survived the disintegration of my life and with the pieces lying around me, began again. And there, almost as if I had summoned him by a magical incantation, was Thomas Merton. *The New York Times Sunday Book Review* asked me to review the first of his post-humous works, *Contemplation in a World of Action*. To me it is his most eloquent book, for in it he speaks more directly of the contemplative life than he ever had before, and in so doing, distilled the wisdom gained from his own contemplative existence.

The monk is not defined by his task, his usefulness. In a certain sense he is supposed to be "useless" because his mission is not to *do* this or that job but to *be* a man of God. He does not live in order to exercise a specific function; his business is life itself . . . monasticism aims at the cultivation of a certain *quality* of life, a level of awareness, a depth of consciousness, an area of transcendence and of adoration which are not usually possible in an active secular existence. . . .

But this time I did not long to enter a monastery, because the challenge of Merton could be met in "active secular existence." The task was to first free one's self from the disease of doing and painfully make his way toward Being.

. . . a true and mature identity does not consist in the ability to give a final solution to everything—as if the "mature person" were one for whom there were no longer any mysteries or any scandals. We discover our identity when we accept our place and our way in the midst of persons and things, in a historical situation, that we do not have to completely understand. We simply see that it is our own place and decide to live in it, for better or for worse. In the light of this simple and primordial acceptance, a natural consent, an obedience to reality that is already analogous to the obedience of faith, we can finally "be ourselves."

My task, upon which I had already embarked before reading *Contemplation in a World of Action*, was to no longer accept the definition of black which had been bestowed upon me. Race and culture were abstractions, emphasizing the differences between people and allowing no means of letting others into our selves. The black movement of which I had been so integral a part may have been a political advance, but it was a spiritual retreat, an acceptance of the values of the slave masters. It was they who had conceived and defined black and placed certain values upon it. To change those values and definitions from the negative ones of the slave masters to positive ones (Black is beautiful) was to participate actively in turning one's self into an abstraction, an object, a thing, a non-person. And between two objects, there is no possibility of an I-Thou relationship.

□ □ □

To be free I had to cease to be black and be the am-of-my-I. My racial identity was a part of that, but only a part. It was the equating of racial identity with the whole of the personal self which turned people into objects. Freedom came only from selfhood becoming Selfhood.

What is meant by identity . . . we are talking about one's own authentic and personal beliefs and convictions, based on experience of one's self as a person, experience of one's ability to choose and reject even good things which are not relevant to one's own life. . . . Identity in this deep sense is something that one must create for himself by choices that are significant and that require a courageous commitment in the face of anguish and risk. . . . It means having a belief one stands by; it means having certain definite ways of responding to life, of meeting its demands of loving other people, and in the last analysis, of serving God. In this sense, identity is one's witness to truth in one's life.

Merton challenged me to be my Self at a time when people demanded that I be black, but to define myself as "black" was to do nothing but invert the "nigger" American society had tried so hard to make me believe I was. The challenge of Merton was the perpetual struggle to vulnerability.

To love our brother we must first respect him in his own authentic reality, and we cannot do this if we have not attained to a basic self-respect and mature identity ourselves.

And I am more and more convinced that there isn't anything else to living but that. Love is impossible without a continual confrontation with the self, without the achieving of a basic level of identity. "Love," Merton writes. "Is it an act? Or, is it a happening?" And there he touches it precisely. We conceive if love as something "to do." It isn't. It is an emanation of Being, happening because we are living from the still point within ourselves, because we have learned "to wait upon the Lord."

"Whoever dwells among wolves," wrote that Christian pilgrim, Nikos Kanzantzakis, "must be a lamb—and not

care a jot if they eat him!" Like the lamb, we must be still, dumb before the impending slaughter, looking upon the descending butcher's blade with round, wide eyes, understanding what is about to happen and if it must, it must. It is not important. Which is not to be construed as apathy in the reign of Richard the King. No, but let us understand: Kings are not dethroned by peasant revolts. Kings are only dethroned when no one needs to create them. Let us understand that governments are our creations, not God's, because once we stand on "our own feet before God and the world," as Merton writes, "and take full responsibility" for our own lives, it will be impossible for governments to exist.

Then, what are we to do? Nothing, for the world is about to expire from our doing. "Be still and let Him do some work" □

THE BLUMHARDTS

Vernard Eller

My understanding of the Christian Gospel and of the witness I desire to make to it have been influenced most directly by the writings of two men—or rather, one man and another pair. The first of these is Søren Kierkegaard, a name widely known in theological, philosophical and literary circles. The name of Blumhardt, on the other hand, is known hardly at all. Yet although neither knew anything of the other, it was my study of Kierkegaard that led me to the Blumhardts—Johann Christoph (1805-80) and his son Christoph (1842-1918).

Reading in the Swiss theologian Emil Brunner, I came across his testimony to the effect that the best of his own predecessors were "two great figures of Pietism—Christoph Blumhardt, in Boll, and Kierkegaard." After reading the work of the men themselves, I came to concur heartily with the pairing proposed by Brunner (and have since discovered that, in addition to Brunner, a handful of other noted scholars also have made the pairing for themselves).

Now is a propitious time to try to help other people discover something of the same thrill and joy from the Blumhardts that I received. At the 50th anniversary of the death of the younger Blumhardt, Plough Publishing House produced an inexpensive little volume,

Dr. Eller is professor of religion at La Verne College, La Verne, California, and a minister in the Church of the Brethren. Among other titles, he is the author of *King Jesus' Manual of Arms for the 'Armless: War and Peace from Genesis to Revelation; The Sex Manual for Puritans; The Promise of the Kingdom.*

Action in Waiting (Rifton, N.Y., 1969, \$2.50). It is, beyond doubt, the best entrée to the Blumhardts now available. It consists of two parts. The first is an essay written as a review of one of the younger Blumhardt's devotional books and as a way of recommending him to a wide circle of readers. The author is Karl Barth. The second half is one of Blumhardt's sermons—one that gives the reader a rather good insight into the totality of his thought. It, of course, is directed to laymen, as all of the Blumhardt writings are. For those who have their appetite whetted by *Action in Waiting*, Plough also has a bigger bite in reserve, *Christoph Blumhardt and His Message* (\$3.95).

□ □ □

The elder Blumhardt, Johann Christoph (1805-1880), was educated for the Reformed ministry and, after a brief time as executive for a missionary society, became pastor in Möttlingen, an obscure village in southern Germany. His career was uneventful until, in 1842, he had to deal with one of his parishioners, a young woman, Gottlieben Dittus, who suffered some sort of severe disorder and whose household was visited with strange psychic phenomena. Blumhardt concluded that the case was the same as those reported in the New Testament as demon possession. Discovering that he had no wisdom or power that could help, he and the girl prayed together: "Lord Jesus, help us. We have watched long enough what the devil does; now we want to see what the Lord Jesus can do." This prayer-battle continued for almost two years without change—the situation deteriorating, if anything.

But finally came the moment of crisis. At a point when Blumhardt's prayer and the girl's trouble were at a pitch, Gottlieben's sister (who happened simply to be in the room looking on) in a strange voice suddenly uttered the cry, "Jesus is Victor!"—and it was all over. Gottlieben later became a servant in the Blumhardt household and lived there the rest of her life, but she was never troubled again. Blumhardt understood the voice to be that of the demons who had just been conquered and expelled.

There is much in this story at which modern readers inevitably will look askance (and in the story to follow as well), but it must be said that both of the Blumhardts were solid, unflappable characters with nothing of the fanatic about them. In fact, as we shall see, rather than doing anything to encourage sensationalism or a personality cult centering upon themselves, they took deliberate steps to dampen any such tendencies. Nevertheless, very strange and wonderful things did take place.

□ □ □

"Jesus is Victor," the words that signaled the miraculous healing, became the touchstone of Blumhardt's ministry. He would have given them three different interpretations. First, at a specific time in the past Jesus had become victor. His death and resurrection had marked a turning-point of God's work in the world; the powers of this age had suffered an irreparable defeat, and their ultimate demise was as good as accomplished.

Second, Jesus, now, in our very midst, is active in his role as victor. What he accomplished with the tormented girl is only one small instance of the sort of victories he wants to work and is working in the life of mankind today. Jesus' power over sin, death and the devil is as active and accessible now as it ever was during his earthly ministry or in the life of the Church.

Third, the fact that Jesus *became* victor and now *is* victor is a guarantee that in due course he *shall* become victor in the complete and final sense. The Kingdom of God, that is, the day when all things, the total life of society and of the world, shall be wholly as he created them to be and as he purposes for them—this day already is coming to realization through the victories of Jesus, and no power on earth can prevent its coming. The world of which we are a part—whether it understands its situation or not—is a world in process of redemption.

Jesus' victory in the demented girl led immediately to a breaking-in of kingdom power that transformed the entire village of Möttlingen and attracted people from miles around. The congregation experienced renewal to a degree quite beyond even the dreams—let alone the accomplishments—of modern programs of church renewal. There were many healings, conversions of some of the Church's most determined opponents, radical transformations of life and character. Marriages were saved, enemies were reconciled, there was an outpouring of evangelistic zeal and missionary fervor—

all under the conviction that, because Jesus is victor, the Kingdom of God has become a real alternative for life here and now.

As might be expected, this sort of going-on at Möttlingen aroused the opposition of many of the church authorities. Blumhardt's vision of Christianity was larger than the church institution could manage. As Christoph the son later described his father: "For him, Christianity was not a completed and finished religion by means of which individuals find salvation. It was the real rule and government of God which has an historical beginning and continuation and which will be perfected on earth by God's becoming all in all. His thinking and acting were determined solely by the preparing of God's Kingdom upon earth and the increasing dominion of his will. It was capsulized in the cry, 'Jesus comes, yea he comes soon!'"

After a few more years at Möttlingen the pressures toward churchly conformity became so restrictive that Blumhardt gave up his pastorate and for all intents and purposes his connection with the Church. He moved a short distance away to Bad Boll, where he purchased an abandoned resort hotel and made it into something of a retreat center, a place to which people could have recourse for a period of spiritual renewal, study and pastoral counsel—and a place where Blumhardt could be free to operate according to his own leading.

He continued this ministry until his death, the testimony of his life perhaps being best summed up in a hymn which he composed at Möttlingen and which remained popular in Blumhardt circles:

Jesus is victorious Lord
Who conquers all his foes;
Jesus 'tis unto whose feet
The whole wide world now goes;
Jesus 'tis who comes in might,
Leads us from darkness into light.

□ □ □

Christoph was born in 1842, at the very time his father was becoming involved in the struggle with Gottlieben's demons. As his father had done before him, he took university training pointing toward a Reformed pastorate. However, before taking his first parish he became disallusioned with the Church (and with theology) and so decided simply to return home to Bad Boll and act as a helper there. Upon his father's death, then, he took over as housefather and continued the work until his own death in 1919.

In time, the younger Blumhardt became quite renowned as a mass evangelist and faith healer. But after a very successful "crusade" in Berlin in 1888 he drastically cut back both activities. Regarding his preaching he said: "I am terribly sorry when people say that I am a famous preacher . . . I want to be a man of *experience*. I have no interest in merely talking about these things. I want to stand before you as a witness!"

Similarly, regarding his work of healing he said: "I

KATALLAGETE

do not want to suggest that it is of little importance for God to heal the sick; actually, it now is happening more and more often—although very much in quiet. However, things should not be promoted as though God's Kingdom consists in the healing of sick people. To be cleansed is more important than to be healed. It is more important to have a heart for God's cause, not to be chained to the world but to be able to move for the Kingdom of God!"

Die and Jesus will live was the motto motivating Blumhardt during this phase of his activity: "[The salvation-only Christians] hop around in raptures crying, 'Oh, what bliss!' One is left completely speechless at the sight of these hopping, blissful people. They are happy; they are saved. Not I! While the world is teeming with sin and it is next to impossible for God's Kingdom to be upheld, while God's Name is being blasphemed and even good people no longer have any zeal for God, they are all in rapture? Very seriously, I would like to ask these Christian lazybones: 'What are you seeking? Yourself or God? Your own cause or the cause of the Lord?' Clearly, for Blumhardt, 'to die' meant not only to renounce one's old life in favor of the new but also to renounce one's own interests and concerns in favor of Jesus' concern for the world.

This thought brought Blumhardt into a "turn to the world" and his own version of secular Christianity from which, it is clear, Dietrich Bonhoeffer's thought later stemmed, but which, also, in Blumhardt, was better balanced than the turn for which Bonhoeffer has been made the excuse).

The motto now was: "*You men are God's!* Whether you are still godless or already devout, in judgment or in mercy, in salvation or in damnation, you belong to God! . . . Listen, man: You are God's; no hell has any claim on you. The greatest sin is to degrade your personhood, for I tell you, you belong to God."

To go this direction has the effect of moving the proclamation of the Gospel out of its customary course: "Today one must be a man of God *in the world*. . . Now it is no longer a matter of confessions and churches; those times are over. Certainly I have no desire to be a person who overthrows things, but in actual fact what is left is nothing but ruins. . . The Kingdom of God is taking on colossal dimensions these days. We have to come out of our little rooms, out of our isolation. The Kingdom of God comes onto the streets where live the poorest folks, the outcasts, the miserable. There the Kingdom of God comes. It extends into the heavens and into hell—to all the people."

With such a faith it was inevitable that Blumhardt become directly involved in the social movements of his day. His new motto became, "*Surely the Christian world order [i.e., the world order that has been established by so-called Christian culture and with the connivance of the Church] is not Christ's world order.*"

"Today a storm is raging all over the world, for the world seeks a master. Even while she does not know

it, she seeks her Christ. If the children of God do not cry out, then the stones must cry out. There must be a quivering and quaking so that Jesus Christ can enter into the world at some point. . . .

"We must not be silent. The social struggle of millions in our time is not a coincidence. It is related to the struggle of the apostles and to the quiet struggle which was fought by other men in other times, the struggle in which we also want to fight. The ferment of the nations, the agitation of the poor, this crying out for the right to live (a crying which can no longer be silenced, which has been given into the mouths of even the most miserable of men)—these are signs of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . .

"Our cause has become so 'spiritual' that people have drowned in spirit . . . How, in days such as these, can we speak about 'spiritual' blessings to people who look up at us with eyes full of hunger and misery? . . . But the Savior is with the poor, with the poor who have no voice. . . . The Savior goes first to the poor and miserable, passing over the pious."

Under the impetus of this concern Blumhardt chose, in a public and conspicuous way, to cast his lot with Democratic Socialism, the much maligned workers' movement that then was fighting tooth and nail for the rights of the working man. Although it brought upon his head the wrath of both the civil and ecclesiastical establishments, he addressed protest rallies, ran for office on the party slate, and was elected to a six-year term in the Württemberg legislature. He was asked to resign his ministry.

Blumhardt started out as a very active and energetic legislator, but as time passed he greatly curtailed this activity and bluntly declined to stand for a second term of office. Clearly, the pattern was of a piece with his earlier retreat from mass evangelism and faith healing. He was not reneging upon his earlier thought and actions. Even while explaining his withdrawal he could say: "In the social movement there lies an all-embracing concern for the pure human life, the general concern that men be helped. This has been accepted by wide ranks of the people and is an echo of God's desire that all men be helped. 'Christianity' never has given as conclusive expression to this principle which comes from Jesus."

Nevertheless, out of his insider's knowledge of the party and the legislature Blumhardt had come to the conclusion that a different strategy was called for. "The social movement as we see it today still belongs to the world which will pass away. It does not represent the fellowship of mankind that one day will come through the Spirit of God."

□ □ □

Blumhardt's disillusionment with Democratic Socialism and the even greater disillusionment which comes toward the close of his life with the dark years of World

War I brought him to a final position and a final motto: *Wait and hasten*. The call that comes to the Christian still is to give himself completely in the cause of the Kingdom, to do everything in his power to help mankind toward that goal; but at the same time, he must be calm and patient, unperturbed even if his efforts show no immediate success, willing to wait for the Lord to bring the Kingdom at his own pace and in his own way. Far from being inactivity, this sort of waiting is itself a very strong and creative action.

"We must quietly stand by the one and greatest Lord, Jesus Christ. . . . Waiting is a great strength. Waiting is a great deed. . . . Let us arise in the knowledge that a Christian is a helper in this hope, full of the strength of waiting. . . . A truly waiting people, true Christians who wait for the day of God's mercy upon all men, may gently spin the thread and twine it about the nations, tying them with our faith and preserving them for the day of Jesus Christ. What a coming of Christ that would be if many Christians were to say, 'I too want to do something; I want to be a strength in quiet, through my waiting for the sake of others.'"

□ □ □

Although virtually unknown in this country, the Blumhardts have been very influential in Germany and thus upon the course of modern theology. Their work had a deep impact upon Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, Paul Tillich, Oscar Cullmann and others. Many of the Blumhardt emphases come through with special clarity in the writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Through Bonhoeffer, then, although through direct influence as well, the Blumhardts have been significant in the development of the contemporary "theology of hope." However, my own opinion is that, on the current scene, Jacques Ellul, the French sociologist-theologian, is the truest representative of a Blumhardtian position.

Nevertheless it may indeed be the case that the Blumhardts' greatest hour is yet to come (particularly if present efforts carry through and more of their literature becomes available in English for wide reading among both theologians and laymen). If this happens, they may be in position to provide one especially significant service, namely, helping to create a rapprochement between the evangelical and more liberal wings of the Church (and this on the congregational level as well as that of denominational negotiation and cooperation).

The Blumhardt witness stands as an ameliorative judgment upon both groups. Blissful, hopping evangelicals of "salvation-only" tendency would do well to give heed when Blumhardt asks, "Whose cause are you seeking—your own or God's?" And liberals had better prick up their ears when Blumhardt observes that "too strong a defense of prevailing opinion disrupts the pure service of God" and that the Kingdom is hampered "when men are filled with the hope that they and they alone can create a blissful humanity." The Blumhardt position is strongly social (even cosmic) in its orientation and,

at the same time, profoundly biblical. Perhaps evangelicals could pick up a little of the former emphasis and liberals a little of the latter—and the whole Church be the better for letting the Blumhardts point it more truly toward the Kingdom of God and the coming of the one whose Kingdom it is. With them, we all could say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

□ □ □

The "theology" of the Blumhardts does not come to us in commonly accepted form; they did no dissertations, wrote no books or journal articles, lectured at no universities, participated in no symposia. What we have from them is simply (many of them taken down during delivery), table talk, informal Bible studies, and meditations. And although this fact may keep them from ranking among the theological elite, it has a great advantage in pitching their thought at a level where laymen can connect.

What follows here is a sermon preached by the younger Blumhardt in January 1882. It is found as item #9 in Volume I of the German edition of his collected works. The translation is that of Dr. John Regehr, President of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Winnipeg, Manitoba, done in connection with his doctoral study, *The Preaching of Christoph Blumhardt* (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1970). It is used here with his permission.

This piece is at once very typical of the Blumhardt style and yet exceptional as a capsulization of that which is most basic in his thought □

Wait for the Lord

Our soul waits for the Lord; he is our help and shield. (Psalm 33:20)

This is an appropriate word for Bad Boll; by lot on New Year's Eve this verse became our portion. "Our soul waits for the Lord." Yes, this is what one says in Bad Boll; and it shall not remain something we merely say, but we want to be those who in truth wait for the Lord. But for what purpose do we wait? Do you suppose that our waiting is simply a kind of religiosity, by virtue of which we are perhaps differently tuned religiously than other Christians? Is this to be only a particular religious coloring that signifies nothing further? This may be the practice of some who say that they wait for the Lord, but nothing in their lives is changed in consequence of it. Our waiting for the Lord is to result in deeds of the Lord, and for this reason we in Bad Boll are of this opinion: If I wait for the Lord, the Lord will soon come. In Bad Boll one should not understand those who say, "I wait for the Lord, but it will be long before he comes." If I say this and believe it, why do I wait at all? Then I had

better leave it be altogether. This I say to all of you: He who does not in all things expect God soon, is not waiting; even if he affirms it ten thousand times that he is waiting for the Lord, I do not believe it. If, for example, you come into severe illness, and in it you wait for the Lord, can you postpone the expectation of his answer twenty, or thirty years, or even longer? Impossible! If it is to be real waiting, you must expect God to do something already today, and in consequence of that, maybe tomorrow will already bring his decisive help. For him who waits for the Lord, all that already comes into view which through his waiting he hopes for. I think of the waiting as something that is alive in me, and obviously that which is alive is maintained through bread. Now, what is the bread of waiting? The bread of waiting is the deeds of God. Without the deeds of God, the waiting of the heart dies. We must not expect too much from our hearts; surely we do not consider ourselves to be so strong that we can say, "I wait for the Lord, but for the time being I don't need him. I'll manage somehow." Yes, we will manage alright, but how? In an ungodly way, just as the world manages, where God is permitted to be nothing but spectator. It ought not to be that way; but rather, when I wait, my waiting is grounded in the acts of the Lord; my waiting acquires its durability because the Lord performs acts, and my waiting finds its goal in a great act of God performed upon me and all creation.

We have experienced that the Lord is our help and our shield, and that is why we can wait. And we have experienced that always the Lord is our help and shield suddenly, surprisingly. For this reason we always wait for the Lord in such a way as to expect an early manifestation from him, and we cannot imagine that there will be boredom when we are dealing with the Lord. "He is our help"; that is, he snatches us out of the evils into which we have come, body and soul and spirit. It is not necessary, of course, that there be outwardly visible, grand miracles; if done in the secret places, and quietly, things are set right again, and we do not remain tangled up in the evil; then we are helped. Those who wait already have the help while others see only misfortune and ruin; they notice that the Lord sets to work immediately to remove the evil, and thus are assured of the near and complete salvation. And how easy it is then to remain patient, even though that which is burdening and threatening persists. But it is unbearable when one is caught in some evil and then must admit: "The Savior is not at work here."

Of course, I know very well that there are many people in the world who see in themselves and in others the most unhappy conditions; they can bear in themselves the worst kind of evil with the evasion: "That's simply the way I am."

It does not matter to them whether the Savior sets to work with them or not. In the same way they view the misery of the world. It is a matter of perfect indifference to them whether or not the Savior puts his hand to the problem; they are a little sorry that things are the way they are, but even that does not trouble their hearts for long. But one who waits for the Lord cannot feel this way; he wants to see God's action everywhere; and when there is something amiss, or distorted, something sinful or pitiful in the world, he wishes day and night that God might set to work, and remember his name, which is called "merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Exodus 34:6). And God put his hand to the task; his hand is ready to grasp the whole world and through Jesus Christ to switch it onto another track, pleasing to himself. It is those who wait who know how much in earnest God is about it, and they see in our time how much has taken place. If we wait for the Lord, we do not wait to see the beginning of our redemption. If those who believe that we must postpone the consummation of the kingdom of God indefinitely would consider how much God has been at work already, they would be surprised. We are truly no longer waiting for the beginning; we are waiting for the end. We stand in the midst of the acts of God which are aimed towards the end; and if someone ridicules us because we wait for the Lord, expecting the end soon to come, he simply does not know what the waiting ones experience. Those who wait for the Lord experience so much of the intervention of God, that they have no more time to make calculations for the distant future; but rather for today and tomorrow they are in a state of readiness to experience new things, and each day they are prepared to expect the greatest event of all, the coming of the Lord. We in Bad Boll want to be such who wait. Believe it! God lays hold and moves forward! He is at work with our misery; he is at work in our hearts; he is at work on our bodies. Wait for the Lord! Each day something happens, and it happens quickly, and suddenly. In the same way, quickly and suddenly, before you know it, the end will come, the great help from God which we await for all the world.

□ □ □

But the Lord is also our shield. There are innumerable dangers for one who waits, particularly when he is moving forward. The last times are, outwardly judged, the most evil times. We must experience this as well. Yet God permits us to make the daily experience that we are protected children. Often we only become aware of this in retrospect. When suddenly some terrible evil breaks in on us, which frightens and scatters all the people, we are

tempted to think: "How can God permit such a thing?" But soon we become aware that in the midst of the greatest danger we have experienced the greatest protection. God must show us in what great danger we stand, how everything in the world is set toward destruction, and how much on guard we must be, even in Bad Boll. If it were otherwise we would become too secure, and who knows but what we might become disabled in our waiting for the Lord if we were not subject to sudden storms, which are, of course, only a wee fraction of the distress in which the world lies. But to those who wait for the Lord, God is a shield. This we may experience, and this is an encouragement to us for the remainder of the time of waiting. Come what may, God is our shield against innumerable dangers of death that surround us; we know ourselves secure with our Savior, who guards us and protects us, and we make daily experiences of the saving deeds of God while we wait for him. Yea, our soul knows nothing else but help from above, a shield from above; nor can we do with anything less. This we learn more and more, and once we have learned it, we receive the confidence that from above a mighty help is available for all the world, just as we have it in smaller measure for ourselves. If only all the needy people had as much of it as they can have already in this time through waiting on the Lord, then we would be half in heaven already.

But how few wait on the Lord in this way! Many Christians are surprised when they hear tell of some extra-ordinary thing that has happened to those who wait for the Lord! They wait, and expect nothing; they believe, but anticipate no change; and because nothing happens with them, they don't believe it happens to the others either. Learn it more and more, all of you who have already found the Lord to be a help and a shield. Things are not nearly what they should be with us either; specifically we are lacking in unity and in oneness and in purity of heart, to which heart alone God can be anything. But it is our determination to wait for the Lord day and night, and no day passes in which we are not affected by the help and the shield. In fact it is loathsome to us when anyone believes he can manage without the acting of God. Who could possibly wish for help other than that of the living God? Can these tiny means of help that we may apply here and there for our physical well-being offer competition for the help that comes from the living God? Is your life made secure with food and clothing? Can we be satisfied with that? If it is to be true help which we experience, it must be help

that comes from heaven, and comes daily. Therefore, wait for the Lord! Otherwise you are useless, and your cause must come to an end.

If God were thus honored on earth, how the blessings would come down on us in torrents! But it is hard for the individual to wait for the Lord, when no one waits with Him and the majority opposes it; then the goodness of God cannot come to a great many people for whom one is waiting upon God. Those who wait do not wait only for themselves; it does not even occur to them in their sleep to wait only for their own person. If I wait for the Lord, I wait on behalf of the whole world, to which I too belong. The Chinese are as much on my heart as my own person. But here we are waiting, and others are not waiting with us, and that is hard. Yet ultimately those must succeed who wait for the Lord, and suddenly it will become bright over the whole earth to the praise of God, and of our Savior, Jesus Christ. May He give joyful hope and victorious confidence into our hearts even in the darkest days, so that we may wait through to the end, and be saved at last.

□ □ □

Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.
(Matthew 28:20)

The Savior's being with us has reference to the end of the world, not to its continuance. All the days of the disciples of Jesus are work days looking forward to the consummation of the Kingdom of God, with which event the present futile world will come to an end. In the special sense of our text Jesus is not with a person who spends his days for the sole purpose of sustaining his earthly life. The Lord does not wish to spend too much effort on the ongoing of the world. After all, it is all corruptible, and there is nothing left to be done but to wait the wearing out of the decaying structure and the creating of a new one. For the time being we must do the best we can with what we have, and not be frightened excessively when at times something collapses under our feet; we are simply to be loosed from everything earthly. Never again will the disciples of Jesus be really comfortable, but in view of the end of the world one can bear that which is inconvenient. Even the last great tribulation can be borne easily in view of the end. In all our work let us be careful to fix our eyes not on the continuance of the world, but on its end. Then the Lord will be with us always, and he will see us through our current needs as well. □

recognize this and in fact he will perish. Does not the torn picture deny these tenets? This struggle for oneness under God is not new. The Jews still don't accept the Arabs, Pharisee the Publican, caucasian the colored or even like-kind. Northern Ireland serves as a good example of this.

The torn picture represents a destroyed dream, indeed it creates a nightmare. Many of us thought we were further along than this torn picture presents. Evidently we have misread the signs of the time. Did not Jesus pray that His own would be one? Is it really too much for us to dream this way?

The torn picture expresses a real fear. Some people threaten us even after they are dead. This was true of Jesus. The Jewish leaders paid the Roman soldiers to say someone stole His body. We may try various ways to destroy a person but if he has lived and died for a worthy principle he will continue to live.

The torn picture drags before our eyes latent hostility. All of us have some things wrong with us. Once in a while we are reminded of this by the action of others. We need to allow this event to speak of us at the point of our need. You will remember that Jesus condemned hatred and encouraged love even for one's enemy. Last Tuesday ABC presented a program "Suffer The Little Children." In this program, which dealt with the civil struggles of Northern Ireland, a psychiatrist stated that we are raising a new generation of bigots. The children there witness the hatred and warfare. They carry their toy guns which one day will be replaced with the real ones. Is this what we want? I don't really believe we do!

Jesus Christ held up a real hope for mankind. He said by word and example that all people can have and should have an abundant and fulfilling life. The torn picture denies this.

Consider with me the scripture lesson from 1 John. The writer of John's epistle was an apostle of love. In 1 John 4:7-12 he points out the source of love for our fellowman and not hatred for our fellowman. Verses 9-10 state that we love because God in Christ loved us.

"In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the expiation for our sins." R.S.V.

Verse 7 issues an invitation for us to love one another. No restrictions are evident. No select group is candidate with the exclusion of any others. Indeed our love for each other is expression of God's ownership of us.

"Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, he who loves is born of God and knows God." R.S.V.

Verses 11-2 express love for others is a duty. This love can and will take on new dimensions as it is practiced under God's leadership.

"Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us."

There are dangers to those who would love without restrictions. Jesus could testify to this. No one can pay a greater price than He did. On the other hand, hatred demands a much greater price. One becomes embittered, afraid, suspicious, and self-centered. Life becomes an ordeal to endure. Sadness, not happiness, becomes the order of the day. Not only does it affect us but the influence spreads to others. Our attitude and action are transferred to our children. Often violence results.

The Christian will want to cast his lot on the side of love. He will be willing to take the chances for he knows as did the writer of 1 John 4:18 "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear." Love from God inspires fearless love for our fellowman. Hate grows from suspicion and fear.

Ponder in your mind this closing verse "If anyone says, I love God; and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen." R.S.V.

A wounded German soldier lay at death's door. He was in desperate need of blood. Some was about to be transfused. The soldier asked what kind it was. "Good ole British blood" was the reply. "I won't take it" replied the soldier. Fifteen minutes later he died. We may deny brotherhood and dependance. That is our privilege. But to do so brings death!

the COMMITTEE OF SOUTHERN churchmen

Post Office Box 2215
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37214

Return Postage Guaranteed
Address Correction Requested



Non-Profit Organization
U. S. Postage
PAID
Nashville, Tennessee
Permit No. 1634

48 22901 ALD SRI SP 0
ALDERMAN LIBRARY
SERIALS-1-PERIODICALS
UNIT OF VA
CHARLOTTEVILLE VA 22901