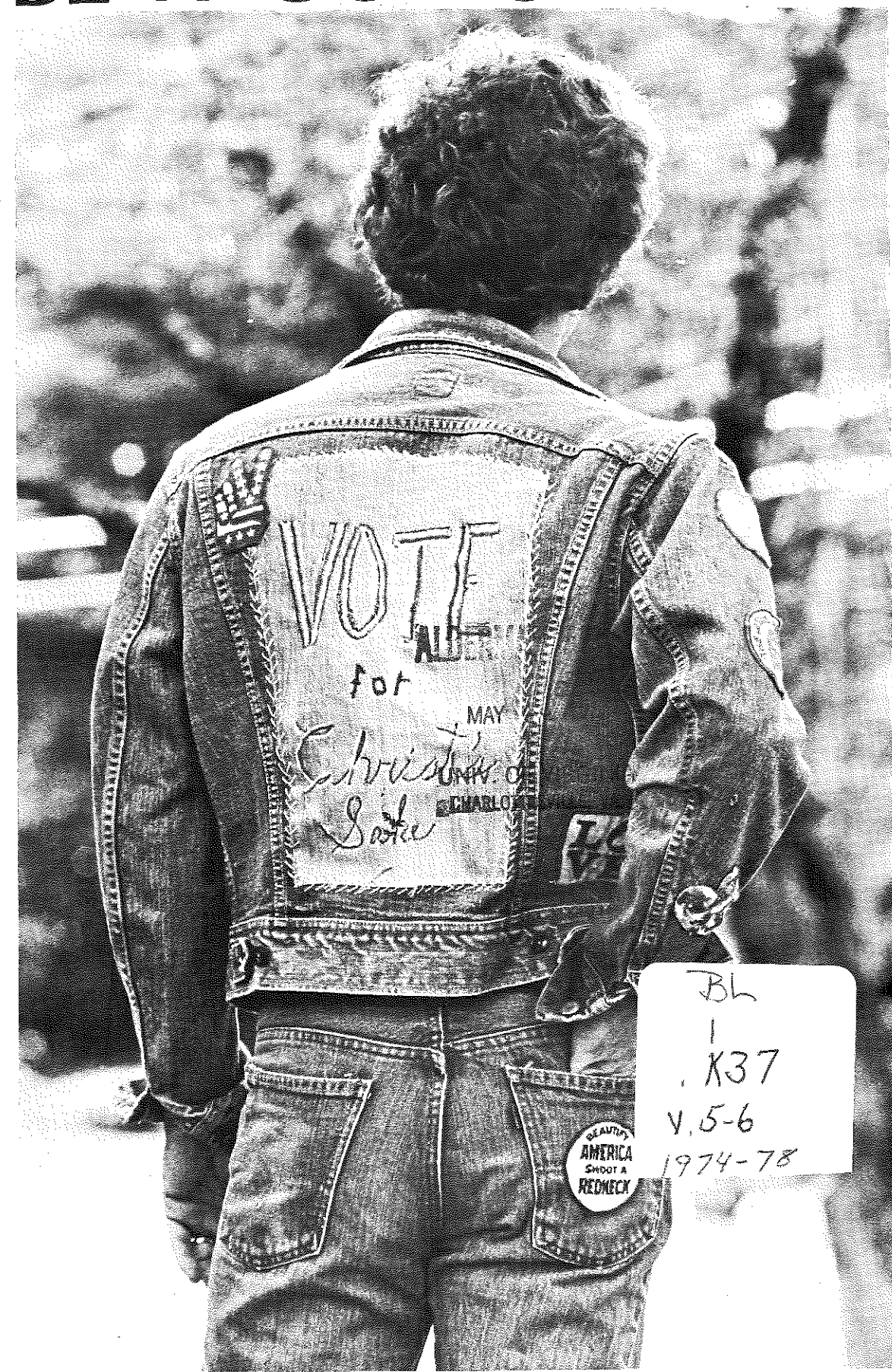


Per Am
BL
-
.K37

BE RECONCILED

5/1

KATALLAGETE



BL
1
.K37
V.5-6
1974-78

THE HECKMAN BINDERY, INC. N. MANCHESTER, INDIANA



KATALLAGETE BE RECONCILED

Journal of the Committee Of Southern Churchmen

BL
1
K37
Y. 5-6
1974-1978

SPRING 1974

Vol. 5, No. 1

About This Issue . . . John 3:16-17	2	
Come, Come, Ye Saints All Is Well	4	Julius Lester
"The World" in the Gospels	16	Jacques Ellul
Christianity in My World	21	Manas Buthelezi
Is "The World" a Problem?	28	Thomas Merton
The World of the Redneck	34	Will D. Campbell

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

Cover by Al Clayton

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 of Nashville, Tennessee © 1974, The Committee of Southern Churchmen, Inc.

Thomas Merton, "Is the World a Problem," © 1966 by The Trustees of the Merton Legacy Trust, New Directions Publishing Corporation, agents.

ABOUT THIS ISSUE..... JOHN 3:16-17

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

The accurate introduction to this and the next issue of *Katallagete* is Dostoevsky's "The Grand Inquisitor." That great parable in *The Brothers Karamazov* is a description of the "world" ("our" world) which confesses itself come-of-age. The words are inscribed in granite. In one column, the world's understanding of itself: educated, power-conscious, in touch with all bases of reality (the understanding accepted willy-nilly by Christians). In the other, the sentimental, powerless, irrelevant Jesus with his proclamation of how God understands the world He loves enough to allow Himself to be executed by it so that it might be saved.

□ □ □

Our situation today is much but not altogether the same. We find no contradiction between the world of John 3:16-17 and the world's understanding of itself carried by higher education, theology, newspapers, television and political figures. "God" is dead—and this, not by what we say and do but by *who we are*. What we have made of ourselves is more basic than what *God is* for us in Jesus. We do not believe that "God" but rather "we" "love" the world. It is, after all, *our* world. We made it into *our* image of *ourselves*: such is the mature, the responsible, the only meaning in our age come-of-age we can allow the world of John 3:16-17. It is what *we* made of that world in-our-image that authorized "God's" dispatch of Jesus to bring all mankind into our scheme of values and erotic live-styles. The world of John 3:16-17 is our pre-fabricated secular city,

loved by God because we first loved it, and are determined that we shall surely "save" it. Consider the seriousness and regularity with which our media—news-papers, TV, newsmagazines and journals (especially of Christian opinion)—carry articles about the problems that plague us in this era of Watergate and Energy-Crisis (or was/is it Eco-catastrophe, Vietnam, Civil Rights, the Missile crisis or McCarthyism) Who could read these agonizing and humiliating appraisals and deny that *we love the world*? So what if we pass into the hard times we are in now? So what is there appears no immediate or easy way out of the poet's assessment that "the world is too much with us"? Well, we remain steadfast, confident that we shall surely pass on through. Otherwise, why bother to write articles about the crises? It is our world of our understanding, in our control. We press forward with our analyses and documentations of the evils, contradictions, ignorances, determinants and "issues" (even the alleged "cynicism" of the "average citizen" in Spring 1974)—certain that we shall surely pass on through. Who can accept even a hint that it is just our passion for our own image in it that locks the world even more securely into its deceptions and deaths in the technological era? After all: we are come-of-age: the world is beloved not because "God" loves, but because *we* love, enduring forever and ever. Up With People!

Such is the meaning of "our" world.

□ □ □

But maybe it ought to be said in reply that we Christians know better than all that. We above all are far too sophisticated and educated to be caught in the verbal trap of arguing that our love for the world is the same as *God's* love, of denying that our love of the world "is indeed!" the very source of the world's self-understanding which is the prime cause of its hopeless-

ness and despair. When it comes to that, must we not also remind ourselves that we have studied The Fourth Gospel and read "The Grand Inquisitor"? Moreover, there is new hermeneutics, a theology of assorted "liberations" today (as yesterday a theology of "hope," day before yesterday a "secular" theology, and the day before that a "death of 'God'" theology and tomorrow a "theology of 'streaking'"), plus all sorts of medical, political, social and psychological relevances for the world of our reading of John 3:16-17.

But then, what about the reminder from Solzhenitsyn that "education doesn't make you smarter"? What about the obvious but unacknowledged fact that the contradiction between what we *say* (and who we *are*) has caught up with and perverted all expressions by our language? (This, one of the favorite tokens of Orwell's 1984, and possibly the most useful legacy of Watergate as well as contemporary theology.) After 1700 or so years, after the modishness of our God-talk and church discipline these past decades, the text-book recitations about John 3:16-17 do not carry the power of truth because we have perverted the Bible's word about God into our words about ourselves. So the words of God are become litanies without confession or compassion. Phrases about objects, things. Rehearsals without drama. Truth equated to style. Truth devoid of faith, of substance. No Jesus confronting the world with God's love, because *our* world is our "Christ." And so, no life in the Spirit. No Gospel, no good news. No joy. No joy.

□ □ □

We bring together in this and the next issue of *Katallagete* impressions which try to uncover what *The Gospel* has to say about the world. Individually, they take focus from different angles, but their intention is to provoke each of us to make our confession of how the world appears in the Good News of Jesus. Not the world as it comes to us and crushes us from theology, newspapers, television, educational institutions, research centers and crisis-oriented specialists on political and

social affairs. Not the world of its own understanding of itself. Instead, the world *the Gospels* describes to us: the world of John 3:16-17.

Surely the abiding (though long-since rejected) *vocation* of Christians is to *be true witness* to what Jesus tells us about God, and so about the world. Surely the *gift* from God to Christians is to *be* that vocation to the world God loves and saves in Jesus. That Word comes from God to the world not as fate, annihilation or destruction (which our world is very close to doing to itself quite apart from "God"!). That Word comes as life, hope, joy. Joy! As Jacques Ellul writes in these pages, wherever, whenever Jesus comes into our world (and He comes! He is God's Promise!) there is an openness, a fresh beginning, a new start, where there had been only "No Exit!"

Yea, Joy! Tom Merton: "the world cannot be a problem to anyone who sees that ultimately Christ, the world, his brother and his own inmost ground are made one and the same in grace and redemptive love." Julius Lester: "Why not? Why—not?"

Yea, Joy! For *our* "world" is surely world without joy. For *our* "world"—ourselves, our little ones—is immersed not only in anxiety and hunger but nearly swallowed inside our own bodies (of death?) as the final reality about the world. It is, after all, the scientists we authorize to have the final word about who is "dead". (What else can the drug scene be about?)

World without joy. Without the lightheartedness of the little ones Jesus likes to surround himself with because they are parables of the world (yea, even "our" world) *God loves!* The anticipation, the expectation, the trust of the little ones that . . . maybe! . . . just maybe! . . . a thing of joy is just about to happen! . . . just anywhere! . . . anytime! . . . in *God's* so-loved world! . . . Joy! . . . to us . . . *To us!*

It was the angel of *the Lord* who said: "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Great Joy! To All People!

The world in John 3:16-17.

Hallelujah.

J.Y.H.

COME, COME, YE SAINTS ALL IS WELL

Julius Lester

May
New York

I don't know why, but even after twelve years here I still think of myself as a southerner. It was the South which shaped and formed me. Its speech remains on my tongue and its rhythms within me. I do not understand northern blacks, their anger, their hatred of whites, and their hardness. I look at the black students in my classes at the University of Massachusetts. They never knew segregation, or what it was like to grow up without the slightest hope that society would change. Yet, they are more angry at whites than I ever was and walk around with faces as grim as death masks. I do not understand.

A couple of weeks ago I spoke before the black students at a small liberal arts college in Maine. I was not surprised when the evening began with the question: "Brother Lester, we understand that you have a white wife. How do you justify that?" It's a question I've had flung at me more times than I can remember in recent years and though I resent that fact that anyone thinks they have the right to question where I have been fortunate enough to find love, I always treat the questioner with a measure of that love which centers my life. (But I didn't have the nerve to tell them that I'd divorced the white wife they were referring to and had another one. To fall from grace once is forgivable, but twice? Don't be ridiculous, Julius.)

Love is its own justification, I said, knowing how little those words conveyed to an eighteen-year-old who mistakes genital palpitations for love. So I used the question as a means of talking about how people turn each other into abstractions, which is the first step toward hate. Of all the emotions, hate is the most deceptive, because it destroys the soul of the one who hates without that person ever knowing it.

"Are you saying we must love all white people?" some-

one asked belligerently. I shook my head, being incapable of that myself. One of Martin Luther King's errors was asking blacks to love whites. "No, but I am saying, don't *hate* white people, because you hurt yourself more than them. And if you want proof of what I'm saying about what hate can do to you, look at white people. You hate injustice, but not people. Frankly, you don't have the right to hate another human being." To someone who has found a good portion of his identity in hating, who has defined himself by a negative response to a dissimilar group, those words were incomprehensible.

Finally a black girl asked me, "Well, what do you believe in?" It was an odd question and a horrifying one, because what I heard was, 'If you don't hate whites, if you don't believe in black liberation, then I don't understand you.' My answer was inadequate: "Love and integrity." She looked at me, shook her head in disgust, and walked away, convinced, no doubt, that I was a prime example of what resulted from living with a white woman.

During the past year I have begun to feel like an historical anachronism, because as I get older, I find that concepts of virtue, honor, integrity, love and courage resonate with ever more meaning. To be human is to be the living embodiment of virtue, i.e., to carry "the quality of moral excellence, righteousness and responsibility."

But it is hard to know what virtue looks like in our society. One certainly won't find it watching the Watergate hearings. The Senate Committee lacks any perception of what has occurred and that includes our new folk hero, Sam Ervin, who seems to think quoting from *The Bible* is enough to qualify him as a Christian. I sit and watch and wonder, where in our civilization are the men of stature and character? I imagine what those hearings would be like if Thomas A Becket or Thomas More were asking the questions and the mere thought reveals the puniness of Baker, Ervin, and the rest.

I realized with a shock one afternoon that Jeb Magruder and John Dean are my contemporaries; we are of the same generation. Each of us is in our mid-thirties, products of the Eisenhower years, who finished college on the eve of the tumultuous sixties. I have to admit that I can recognize myself in the Magruder-Dean ethic

of amorality. But I have struggled against it; they have become technological Man, devoid of the knowledge of right and wrong. For such men the only virtue becomes the maintenance of State power, which they never question. Unfortunately, neither do most Americans, because no one seems to realize that Jeb Magruder is Adolf Eichmann. We look at him and even feel a twinge of sympathy, because he is such a nice-looking young man and so clean cut. And with his baby face and diffident manner, he looks harmless. We think fascism only comes with goose-steps and stiff-armed salutes. It just might come in a VIP case in the personage of men who look like Miss America's older brother.

It is not surprising that a young black student would want to know what I believe in, for it is difficult to find an American who believes in anything. In a nation of moral mites, a midget like Ervin becomes a giant.

Maybe that's why I feel the need to go back South for a while. Not to the Beverley Hillbilly South of Ervin and Baker, but to the backroads of Mississippi, for it was there that I learned something of virtue from the old black people who never knew a day that was not filled with hard work. They accepted the indignities and atrocities that were inflicted upon them. But they never became resigned and that is crucial. They knew that to "wait upon the Lord" was not to sit on the porch and be passive. They just kept inching along like a po' inch worm, and because they refused to hate, they were redeemed by their suffering. We forget that "to wait" also means, to serve, and the old ones accepted their living hell, but did not serve it. Northern blacks hate what is and thus, become servants of their hate. They sit on the porch with their heads in their laps, the blood-stained machet  in their hands.

Nashville

I felt a little foolish coming into town the other night and not being able to find the way to my parent's house. Nashville now has expressways, and at each exit there is a big green sign reading ATLANTA, CHATTANOOGA, LOUISVILLE, or MEMPHIS, as if no one would want to stop here. And except for Opryland and the Country Music Hall of Fame, there really isn't any reason to stop.

These past days I've been driving around the city wanting to see the boy who grew up here. I haven't been able to find him, because the city he knew has been razed. Nashville has been urban renewed into Anywhere, U.S.A. That boy grew up in a southern town, where slums bordered middle-class neighborhoods, corn grew in vacant lots and everybody sat on the porch in the evening. The slums are gone now, replaced by housing projects and brick houses that look as if they came from the toy department at Sears. Nashville is now a planner's blueprint and people don't even sit on the porch anymore, except some of the old ones. The people have been

urban-renewed, too, and my past has been trucked to landfills and dumps. The North won the war in ways that the South has not realized. Today I thought I saw a dove circling the city and hanging from its beak was a pair of MacDonald's golden arches.

June
Atlanta

I am here only to pick up Worth, a close friend from my SNCC days with whom I will drive to Mississippi. Atlanta has always been a sad city for me. Since Sherman burned it, it has been trying desperately to be the Chicago of the South and succeeding. It, too, has expressways and no traffic and I was told that it will soon have the first subway system in the South. Henry Grady would be proud.

Many people I worked with in SNCC live here now and most of them are leading the kinds of lives they would have led if they'd never been in the civil rights movement, i.e., comfortable and middle-class. That's so odd. One person just moved into a twelve-room house, while another tells me of the three bathrooms in his. It is almost as if The Movement hadn't existed for them, until they start to "Do you remember that time in . . ." and I suddenly don't. Unburied corpses stink and I find myself wanting to hold my nose in their presence. What is more sad than an old radical? At least be a crazy one, like the IWW organizers who still sit in dingy offices, plotting the revolution, drinking cheap wine and singing "I Dreamed I Saw Joe Hill Last Night," which they probably did. Could any of us now sing "We Shall Overcome" without being ashamed of ourselves for once having really believed it? We could not get through the first stanza without laughing. What had once given meaning to the lives of so many youth is no longer there and they fall back to the class definition from which they had previously derived meaning and identity. They were a part of The Movement, but the new values which The Movement tried to bring into being never became a part of them. Through it all, they remained securely bourgeois.

There were some of us who were not wholly defined by The Movement, by the romanticism of being SNCC field secretaries. Our commitment was to people and we never made the mistake of equating them with SNCC, The Movement or any ideology. When The Movement died, we didn't.

I saw H. last night. We met during the early days of Black Power and the initial link in our relationship was a mutual concern with religious values. There have been very few with whom I could share my search for God and H. understood and empathized with my doubts about Black Power and political action, which were then nothing more than feelings for which I was trying to find the words. As I moved to an eventual rejection of politics, he embraced it, becoming blacker than midnight in

a Louisiana swamp. In the spring of 1969 we were at a conference together, one of those conferences where the word black hung in the air like ragweed in September. While everyone else competed for the "I am the blackest" award, I took advantage of the fact that the only woman present was enamoured of me. (There is no accounting for the taste of some women.)

The next morning H. was sitting on the porch when I came out from breakfast. I sat down beside him. He was strangely silent and I knew why when he finally asked, a little too casually, "Have you ever thought about doing what Leroi did?" His reference was to Leroi Jones who'd left his white wife for a black woman. Of all people, I would never have expected such a question from him. He had been one of the few I'd invited to my home, who'd eaten my wife's cooking and played with our children. Had he been hoping all these years that I would leave my wife for a black woman?

My response was immediate and cold. "Yes, but not for the same reason." There was nothing more to say and I have not trusted him since. So I was a little nervous seeing him tonight, wanting to re-establish our old relationship, but afraid to make myself vulnerable again. There was some of the old gentleness in him tonight, but I am uncomfortable with his overriding concern with the lives of blacks, as if they were the only people in the world. Everyone hurts. Do I have the right to pick and choose whose suffering I will share?

I don't know. Who am I to say that he is wrong and I am right? Each of us must follow our own path and hopefully we are trying to get to the same Mecca, though we can't see how the other person will do it. I wanted to ask him, "Where is that God you once loved?" I couldn't. It would not have been a question, but a rebuke, a condemnation.

Lowndes County, Alabama

It was raining when Worth and I left Atlanta. This is the first time we've been on the road together since the spring of '66 when we criss-crossed the South searching for old blues singers. I photographed a lot of that spring and have my cameras with me now, anticipating the joy of once again freezing the images of southern life.

When we went through Selma, Worth began remembering, which is different from reminiscing. The latter is the attempt to recreate and relive, while the former is a moment of recognition not yet wholly understood. He had been SNCC's organizer in Selma before King's Travelling Civil Rights Circus came to town. We drove by the old SNCC office which had been directly across from the city jail, where the infamous Sheriff Jim Clark had reigned.

Worth laughed. "Jim Clark must have thought I was crazy to not only come into his town and organize, but to rent an office right across from the jail." We both

laughed, momentarily recalling the boldness of SNCC workers. Then he was serious. "But that's what you had to do to show the people that you weren't afraid."

I was driving now, having taken the wheel when we crossed into Alabama. Maybe it was remembering, but Worth didn't like to drive in Alabama. I'd known other ex-SNCC people who wouldn't drive in Mississippi. I slowed as we passed The Chicken Shack, in whose dark booths I'd sat many nights, drinking beer, and watching an incredibly thin, black-skinned girl named Rosie dance as if she didn't know that she was no longer in Africa. She would take the basic steps of whatever dance was then current and proceed to improvise as she worked her way into the rhythms of the three-minute jukebox record. Her blackness blended into the shadows of the dimly-lit cafe and suddenly, the darkness throbbed with a visual rhythm which was Rosie. When the music stopped, she was only an ordinary woman, but when she danced, I could've married her. The Chicken Shack's other attraction was the bird for which it was named, and I can say authoritatively that, at least in 1966, one could not find better fried chicken in America. Or maybe I was just so hungry in those days that my gourmet's palate found levels of taste and texture where none really existed. The Chicken Shack was, unfortunately, closed.

We passed the cafe from which Rev. James Reeb emerged to be murdered and then crossed the Pettus Bridge. "The Lawd was with me that day," Worth laughed. "I'd been in jail somewhere and had been released that morning. I was just coming back into Selma when I saw people running off the bridge. People were lying in the middle of the street, screaming. Man, if they'd let me out of jail an hour sooner, don't you know I would've been on that bridge, too. Thank you, Jesus!" he exclaimed. "That's one march I'll never be sorry I missed."

It is late afternoon when we cross into Lowndes County. We remember Mrs. Viola Liuzzo, the white woman from Detroit, who was murdered as she drove a young black kid back to Selma after the Selma-Montgomery March. The roads of Lowndes County are long and straight, bordered by deep forests, opening out occasionally into cotton fields, then closing in once more. It is fearful country and if one is not careful, he begins to think that the trees are carrying shotguns.

We drive through Hayneville, our eyes turning toward the court house in front of which Jonathan Daniels, a young white seminarian was murdered. "Damn!" I mutter in revulsion. "What're we doing, Worth? Taking the atrocity tour?"

"It's getting depressing, ain't it?"

SNCC came to Lowndes County after the Selma-Montgomery March and organized a black political party, the Lowndes County Freedom Organization. The organization still exists and blacks now hold several county posts. We stop by to see the Jackson Brothers, whose father was the backbone of the LCFO. The brothers had worked for SNCC and are still very active in the county.

It is good to sit and talk with them. They're people with whom I would not hesitate to trust my life.

Across the road from where they live is the old Freedom House. A Freedom House was the SNCC office and home for the local organizer. But that does not adequately describe the leaflets and flyers stacked in corners, the books, radical newspapers scattered over desks and chairs, the poster-covered walls proclaiming freedom for everyone everywhere from everything, and the mattresses flung over the floor, where someone invariably lay sleeping, day or night, for a Freedom House was also a way station for travelling organizers, friends and sympathizers.

What I remember most about the Lowndes County Freedom House, however, is the outhouse. It was a three-sided tin shed with no roof, which fronted onto a field. There was no toilet, only a board stretched over a deep hole. One sun-dancing spring morning I sat there, the wind brushing lightly against the exposed parts of my body and watched a man plowing the field. It was a moment outside history, a moment that had no connection with the social struggle taking place in Lowndes County and the South. I was performing a simple, elemental act, but I sensed that in just such an act was the meaning of life.

I didn't go across the road to see if the outhouse was still there. It is better to think that it is than to know that it isn't.

Mississippi

It was here that the blues evolved. Many young blacks feel now that the blues is passé, an expression of self-pity which we cannot afford. Maybe that is what they feel in themselves and do not want to confront, because the blues is a willingness to dance with life, no matter how painful life becomes. The blues is the knowledge of hell and the language which says that we not only survived, but like Dilsey, we "endured." And to endure is not only the ability to withstand punishment, it is perseverance, which is the ultimate triumph. The old ones used to smile and say, "Well, Lord. I'm still here."

I remember Dave Butcher in Moorehead, who sat on the porch, played his guitar and sang spirituals one afternoon. He let me record him, but refused to let me take his picture. "What you want with a picture of an old, ugly black man like me for?" he laughed. But I would not be put off and finally, he relented. He stood up, removed his hat and stared into the lens with such fierce honesty that the camera trembled in my hands. It was the same with Ed Paine on a plantation outside Drew. Both men were unafraid to say to the world, "This is me."

The present generation of blacks is unworthy of its forebearers. That is a harsh judgment, but in finally giving vent to those centuries of anger, we have lost something vital—that way of being in the world which Dave Butcher and Ed Paine and Fannie Lou Hamer

know, of living with adversity but not being controlled or dominated by it. The younger generation looks upon its ancestors as weak because they accept their oppression, or so it seems. The old ones had the greater strength, for they learned to live without hope while never giving into despair. My God, what a feat that is! We, however, rage at our hopelessness and impotence and are thereby consumed. Yet we do not suffer as they did, but our agonized screams blaze through the air like flaming arrows.

I want to be worthy of the old ones, to learn what they know about being human. It seems, however, that I may have to rely on what I've already learned, for the Mississippi I came looking for it not to be found. That same architect left Nashville and came here with his Erector sets.

I am ashamed of myself for hating this change. The living conditions of poor blacks have been improved. Why then am I so depressed? Because a house is more than a structure. It is a value system and I am afraid of what formica and plastic-wood paneling do to the soul. There is a difference between a lawn and a yard and I am seeing more of the former than the latter. A lawn is something you mow and look at; you sit in a yard, with a six-pack or two of beer by your chair, ready for anyone passing by who wants to stop and sit for a while.

Maybe I am romanticizing the poor and their picturesque shacks. But my grandmother lived in a shack outside Pine Bluff, Arkansas, that was little different than the one's in Nashville or here. I lived in that shack in the summer, feeling no difference between it and the more modern house we lived in the rest of the year. Grandmother didn't have electricity or running water and the outhouse was on the other side of the chicken yard (and ain't nothing more scary than walking through a chicken yard in your pajamas in the middle of the night). Despite her children's attempts to get her to change, Grandmother never thought her living conditions needed improving. Her water was delivered once a week in two big barrels by a man with a mule wagon and I realize now that because I dipped water from those barrels, I know water in a way that simply is not possible by turning on a faucet. I know water! Getting it from a faucet is more convenient, but looking back, I can't say that getting it from a barrel or a bucket was inconvenient. Only slower.

But we're only given two choices: a shack or a house that looks like it came in a cereal box. Thus, I feel caught in a bind, for if I reject the latter, I seem to be saying, "Let them live in shacks." But I am not saying that. I am simply refusing the preferred alternative. I do not want to retain the shack, but there is something about its spirit which it may be fatal to lose. "I was made by a person," it says, standing shakily at the edge of a cotton field. One looks at the wood and in its fibres one can touch the rains and winds which have aged it, the cold which cracked it and the sun which turned it gray. Through the cracks in the floor of Grandmother's house

I could see fifty years of junk which had been shoved underneath and forgotten. Having cracks between the floor boards is not a prerequisite for a house, but at least, it is human. Vinyl is not.

In my grandmother's world, a person made his/her life with their hands. Our lives are made in factories. My great-grandfather decided how he was to live and put up a four-room shack. Now I travel through the South and am astounded by the number of trailer parks bordering the highways. People live in metal coffins and call them home. Nothing damns America more than the fact that it is no longer economically feasible for a person to build his own house. It is cheaper to buy a metal box. At one time, it was only hoboes and derelicts who lived in boxcars. Now we call them trailers and raise our children in them. And we accept it as being normal and think our lives better than my grandmother's because for almost ninety years she chopped kindling wood, washed her hair in rain water, trimmed wicks of the coal-oil lamps and refused to ride in a car. Oh, God! When the insane takes on the appearance of normality, one is obligated to be a madman.

I was talking to a blues singer the other night. He is not old, being in his mid-forties, but he is of that other generation, which I was at least fortunate enough to taste. His music is of that other time, too, filled with quick subtleties and smiles, yet insistent in its rhythms and affirmations. "How come the young folks ain't takin' up the blues?" he asked me. He, too, was troubled by the changes, by sensing that he was the survivor of a world that was no more, and worse, one that the young did not know had existed. "I don't know," I told him. What else could I say?

I feel as if I am the last generation to have known the South before it becomes integrated with the rest of America. Pockets of the old South will always remain, but one will have to search for them as if they were Aztec ruins.

I want to go back to New York. I feel as if I no longer exist anywhere in the South. I have been murdered. I am the old Indian watching the tribe give up its time-honored ways and I am helpless to stop it. The young have not known what I know and thus, cannot even understand me when I talk. Civilization is passing me by. That is what they think. I see it in their eyes. People are now living in warm houses and I want them to go back to the teepees. Ah, old warrior. Go mutter to the wind.

Atlanta

I am tired, depressed, overwhelmed by a sense of loss. The South is changing and though change is inevitable, it should never cut one off from his past, or separate the generations so much that they gaze at each other with the bewilderment of people from different countries. I am at a loss as to how to transmit what I know to some-

one younger. My father's past overlapped my present and I am his son. The degree that my past overlaps my children's present is almost nil and maybe that's why I feel lost. I am a corpse to all future generations.

II.

July

Bird-in-Hand, Pennsylvania

Jeanne and I are going to see America. She is a little apprehensive, afraid that America is nothing more than gas stations, Burger Boys and people who look like Nixon. I know different, having travelled through most of the country during my thirty-four years. I am eager to prove to her that this is a beautiful country.

We are in western Pennsylvania, which on the tourist brochures is called Amish country, because the Amish hex signs on a few barns and covered bridges are the main attraction. I'm surprised at the number of tourists who have come and I wonder why. Are the Amish a side-show attraction, or do the tourists sense something here which they do not have and feel a need for?

The only people who seem indifferent to it are the Amish. Their one-horse covered buggies trot along the two-lane highways as if the line of cars behind do not exist. The black-suited, bearded men, the women in long, blue dresses and children seem unmindful of what a striking contrast they are to the world around them. I feel their presences as a rebuke to me and my way of life. Yet, there is nothing I want to do less than spend the summer days harvesting the thousands of acres of corn which border these country roads.

In recent years the Amish have begun relating more to our world, taking jobs in local tourist places and otherwise finding work outside their community. But it does not seem to have affected them in a profound way. Their numbers have not declined, nor have their ideals been perverted by their increased contact with the world. They seem to take from the world what they need—a livelihood—and leave the rest.

We visited Ephrata, where the Ephrata Cloister has been restored by the state. It was organized in 1732 by Conrad Beissel, a German Seventh-Day Baptist, which is about the oddest religious combination I can imagine. It was a celibate community, though married couples were affiliated with it. We toured the community buildings today and a more depressing experience I cannot imagine.

Beissel seems to have been one of those religious men who never knew the joy of God, for everything at the Cloister is deliberately designed to make one feel his worthlessness. Hallways are narrow to remind you of the straight and narrow path; doorways and ceiling are low, forcing you to bend on entering a room, presumably a reminder to be humble. The rooms are narrow and constricting. The beds, of course, were boards and the

pillows, wooden blocks. What a fearful view of the world they must have had to live in this place and call their lives religious. There is no indication that they had ever heard of, not to mention experienced, the love, compassion and grace of God. I was happy to leave and return to the hilly, narrow back roads, where corn tassels twinkled beneath the sun.

It is obvious that Conrad Beissel found the world of the 18th century as repugnant as I find this world. But there really hasn't been a time in recorded history when some did not want to withdraw from the world. The Desert Fathers certainly did not live in a world of Dairy Queens, yet they fled to the desert. Our world, then, is really not that different than the world has always been. How could it be? Its primary ingredient—people—has not changed.

Pleasant Hill, Kentucky

We spent a few days with J. and his family. Though he and I have known each other for five years, this was only the third time we'd spent a little time with each other. I was a little anxious about the visit, for a friendship which flourishes in letters may wilt under the exposure of personal contact. Thus, it was more than a little odd that I felt as if I belonged with his family, that, in reality, it is my family.

The family is the first world we know, the place where we first experience ourselves in relation to others, where we learn to love and cry. My own family was a world of solitary people, who never shared each other's lives. Not because we didn't want to, but we didn't know how. It is not surprising that I was unsuccessful in my own attempt to create that world called family.

Now I have a family, that is, five people with whom I don't have to be anything, but just me. This is also true of my relation with Jeanne, but even with two cats and a Russian wolfhound, we are not a family. So what is a family? I don't know, but I have one now.

I finally went to the Abbey of Gethsemani. J. drove me over one morning. I was a little apprehensive about going, confronting the place which has overshadowed my life. I was afraid that I would go there and regret not having come twelve years ago.

We spent the day with Brother Patrick Hart, who had been Merton's secretary. He had secured permission from the Abbot to show us parts of the monastery not usually seen by outsiders. I was deeply grateful. My immediate response upon entering the quadrangle behind the gatehouse was one of homecoming. The statue of the Virgin Mary which stands in the center, her arms extended from her body, palms outward, seemed to embrace me. We walked toward the Guesthouse over whose door are the words: GOD ALONE and so deeply did those words pierce me that I seemed to stumble inside myself. Never had I known a truth uttered so directly and so simply.

We entered the chapel and it is the first church of

which I could say conclusively that God was present. It is a masterpiece of simplicity, with high, white-washed walls. At the rear is the monk's choir, long and narrow, widening gradually into the main sanctuary. There, a large marble slab serves as the altar and behind it, a small, simple cross is affixed to the wall. The windows are high and long, of pale, pastel yellows and blues, abstract in pattern. The light coming through them dabs the colors on the wall. The chapel epitomizes Cistercian silence. The monks know that noise is not only aural, but visual. Thus the chapel did not clamor with stained glass windows depicting the life of Jesus, or with ornate columns. Everything had been reduced to essence, so that nothing interposes itself between you and God.

I simply stood, unable to believe that this place existed while at the same time knowing its existence more forcefully than anything I'd ever known. A few monks drifted in silently, bowed toward the cross at the front and seated themselves in the choir stall to pray. There was nothing pious about their doing so. It did not even appear odd to me. In fact, nothing was more natural than that chapel, those monks and me being there. Somehow, it was not *a* world within the world, as I had experienced the Amish, but that cloistered Cistercian world was *the* world. Which is not to say that I and everyone else can only find salvation by going into monasteries and convents. No, and if anything has been more destructive to Western civilization than Descartes' "I think, therefore I am," it is Kant's Categorical Imperative, the notion that an act is only valid if it can be extended into a universal law. To say that the monastery is *the* world does not necessarily lead to, "But what if everybody entered one?" Everyone won't, nor should they. But the monastery is *the* world!

It was late afternoon when we left. I went without regret or longing, even glad that I had not come before now, sensing that my soul would not have been ready for what it had received that day. We drove back to J.'s house through small, mean Kentucky towns, where even the sight of my black personage caused people to stop and stare. A few years ago, those hostile stares would have enraged me. Now, I could laugh, for their hatred had nothing to do with my reality and for me to respond with anything more than a chuckle, was to become mired in their narrow little worlds, perpetuating their existence. GOD ALONE. That is *the* world, the only reality. All else is unreality, a delusion, a nightmare. Saying that, however, does not pay the bills, or put money in the bank for my kid's college education. Yet, GOD ALONE is the beginning, middle and end.

Being here at Pleasant Hill, which was a Shaker community, underlines and reemphasizes my experience at the Abbey. Of all the religious communities, the Shakers were the most extraordinary. They knew something we do not, for they were able to free the creativity that is within each person and in their furniture, agricultural innovations and their cooking, we experience the grandeur that is each human being. The Shakers withdrew from

the world because they thought the end was near. Yet, they lived as if tomorrow would always come. That seems to be paradoxical, but is it? Isn't it merely an acceptance of the fact that each of us should live today as if the end were tomorrow? To confront death—be it one's own or the world's—is to embrace life. This should not give rise to hedonism, which is really fear expressing itself in sensual indulgence, but to an imitation of Christ, who knew of his end and when it would be.

The Shakers only expressed their belief in the coming end of the world by refusing to birth children. Yet, that was not the expression of despair I sense in so many young people who don't want "to bring children into this world." I have read nothing about the Shakers, so what I'm saying is based merely on my perceptions of them from being here these past two days in what was their community. But I think their decision not to have children was more an expression of "Why should we?" than despair at the kind of world in which those children would live. That is the question so few parents ask. I never did.

I wonder, as I did in Amish country, why people come here. For most, the Shakers are a queer people who made beautiful things. They do not question that the beautiful furniture, artifacts and kitchen utensils were not the aim of the Shaker life, but a result of it. To understand that, however, means question your own life. But the mere fact that tourists come from here indicates some unconscious awareness of their lostness and pain. With all the twentieth century "conveniences," it is so obvious that the Shakers had the better life.

New Harmony, Indiana

This is getting a little ridiculous. We were driving along, trying to figure where to go next and Jeanne reads in one of our travel books about this town which was the site of two religious communities in the 19th century. So, here we are. For two people who haven't set foot in a church in years, we certainly seem to be looking for something. Well, whatever it is, it's not here.

Unlike Pleasant Hill, the religious community that was here is scattered throughout the town and I just don't have the energy to go look for it. Quite by accident we came upon the Roofless Church, which is just that—a "church" with wall but no roof, the reason being that the roof will be put on when there's peace in the world or some such nonsense. There is something depressingly Protestant about it all. The "church" features a sculpture by Jacques Lipchitz, which is thoroughly modern and secular. It stands beneath a dome, whose shadow, says the tourist brochure, creates the shape of a rose. Now, ain't that something to write home about? The barn swallows, however, didn't read the brochure, and southern Indiana's entire barn swallows population seems to have built nests on the inner ledges of the dome. They have also rendered their aesthetic opinions about Lipchitz's

sculpture all over it and have come close to making the thing an acceptable piece of religious art. A few more years and they'll have turned it into a veritable masterpiece. The Roofless Church is the perfect example of religion which has its beginnings in intellectual concepts of the Spirit. The whole place is quite depressing.

The travel book informed us that Paul Tillich is buried here and I was eager to visit his grave. I should not have been. He is buried a few yards behind a rather good restaurant, The Red Geranium, and he would've been better off being buried in the restaurant. His gravesite is in what is euphemistically called, Paul Tillich Park. It is a tiny labyrinth of paths bordered by pine trees. Each path leads to a stone tablet on which is carved a quote from one of Tillich's works. At the end of one path is a bust of Tillich, beneath which lie his ashes. The whole thing is maddening and infuriating, being a maze, and one wanders and wanders, coming upon these quotes, all of which are Tillich at his most pedestrian. I alternated between anger and profound sadness. But when you die, your friends usually get their revenge. This "park" looks like the tail-end of a Labor Day picnic, except that it is too ugly to even litter. A few flip-top tabs and cigarette wrappers would have improved things a little. A used condom or two wouldn't have hurt either. Well, if you're ever in New Harmony and need a place to make out, (there are no motels here) I know the place. Even God won't catch you at Tillich's grave.

Nauvoo, Illinois

We've spent the day travelling beside the Mississippi River. Watergate seems irrelevant here, even non-existent. The county roads meander through midwestern hamlets that have been modified but not changed by the passage of time. The rich bottom-land alongside the river gleams green with corn and I think I could easily move into one of the white frame farm houses and be more than content to never venture farther than the general store.

We stopped at a roadside table by the river, drank coffee from the thermos and ate some of the coffeecake Jeanne bought at The Red Geranium. It was as satisfying a breakfast as any I've ever had. Then we scrambled down the bank to the river, stood for a while, took a few photographs and left.

We have been photographing a lot, laughing as we realize that neither of us has taken one picture of a person. Cornfields, barns, horses, churches and houses, but not people. Jeanne wonders idly if there is something wrong with her, but I know different. We are searching out the world and finding it, but not in people.

We've ended up in another religious community, or at least a former one. Nauvoo was established by the Mormons. Joseph Smith and Brigham Young had almost created an autonomous state here, when their frontier neighbors, feeling threatened, murdered Smith and a

number of other Mormons. Brigham Young moved the survivors to Utah. Today Nauvoo is trying to capitalize on its Mormon past, as well as its wine and blue cheese industry, but without mentioning why the Mormons left.

It is a depressing little town, perhaps because I am so aware of the massacre. But any trip across America is depressing, in part, if one remembers the massacres that enabled whites to take this country from the Indians. What is surprising, however, is how many Indian place names remain. Towns, rivers, counties are in the language of tribes that exist now only in those surviving words—Illinois, Iowa, Mississippi, Peoria, Keokuk, Sioux City—and on and on. The settlers took their land and took their lives, but retained their words. Why? It is like making a contract with ghosts. America is a vast cemetery.

There is a small gallery on the main street here with finer pottery, jewelry, paintings and drawings than anything I've ever seen in New York. All of it is made by craftspeople from Iowa and Illinois and being the Eastern snob that I am, I am astounded that such fine work can come from places like Davenport, Iowa. I am glad that there are people who did not feel, as I did, that they had to come to New York and be famous. Live in obscurity and do your work as best you can. That is the best way to be in the world.

I bought a framed piece of calligraphy done by a young woman from Rock Island, Illinois named Chris Wooten. It reads: "Come, come, ye saints . . . All is well." I don't know what it means, but, for some reason I had to have it. Maybe one day I'll figure out what it means.

Sioux City, Iowa

We left Nauvoo early this Sunday morning, crossed the Mississippi and went in search of Boonesport, Iowa, a ghost town. Crossing the Des Moines River at Bonaparte, I noticed two attractive young girls standing on the bridge, smoking cigarettes. They were the small-town girls who know in their ripe, pubescent bodies that there is more to life than Bonaparte, Iowa, but exactly what or where it is, they have no idea. So they hang out in the corner luncheonette, watch the boys shoot pool, and drop dimes in the juke box. Life aches within them, but there is no release. A few will escape, but most will not and in a generation, their daughters will take their places on the luncheonette stools. Life is a circle. So is a noose.

I would like to rent a bus and drive through all the small towns, looking for the young girls whose eyes look wounded, the ones who are always "in trouble," the ones who carry their bodies like offerings to the gods and know that there are none anymore, no sacrificial altars, no priests and priestesses to bring them eternal honor. All the gods have eight cylinders now and end up on the outskirts of town, piled on top of each other turning to rust. So the girls languish beside the juke boxes, waiting for someone to recognize them and when no one does,

they give up those young, pointed breasts to rough, fumbling hands and those limber thighs to some unfeeling conqueror on the altar of a car's backside and on Sunday morning, stand on the bridge and stare into the river, no longer known by themselves.

Rapid City, South Dakota

The world changed to wheat today. Everywhere the wheat shone yellow beneath the wide sky and I was a little embarrassed to hear myself repeat over and over, "They really are amber waves of grain!" But they are! And the skies are spacious and though I haven't as yet seen a fruited plain, I no longer doubt that it exists.

South Dakota is magnificent. I am not assaulted by the human ego, for it is impossible for Man to dominate this world of land and sky. Houses, cars, trains look as if they are being seen from a plane. People are reduced to the miniscule and insignificant place they occupy in the world. When compared to the sky or the great prairie, people are over-rated. Shakespeare should have lived in South Dakota and then he would have known that Man is not akin to the angels. Man is not even in the same category as a grain of wheat. If that sounds like misanthropy, it isn't. I am just exultant to feel myself in proper relationship to the universe. I am a grain of sand on an infinite beach and the knowledge makes me deliriously happy.

It was mid-afternoon when we stopped in Martin to eat and afterwards, decided to go to Wounded Knee. It was scarcely marked on the map, but looked to be at the juncture of two gravel roads.

As we returned to the highway, we noticed thunderheads piled on the horizon, lightning flashing in them. Something told me that the storm was over Wounded Knee. How I knew, I don't know, but the knowledge filled me and I was reluctant to continue and risk the possibility of being caught in a storm on an unknown country road miles from any help. Just as I was trying to decide if we shouldn't forget about Wounded Knee for this trip, an odd sensation came over me: "Do not be afraid. The Lord is with you." Why I trusted the feeling, I don't know, but it was so strong, so certain, that I smiled and said to Jeanne, who was looking apprehensively at the storm clouds, "Don't worry. We'll be all right."

Almost two hours later we turned onto a gravel road. The storm cloud towered over us now, but the sun still shone. It was to our right as we followed the road up and down the hills for ten miles, through pasture land where the cattle were as likely to be standing in the middle of the road. There were no houses to be seen. Only us, the cattle staring at us with vacant eyes, and the storm cloud.

As we started down a steep hill, the sky darkened and the clouds rumbled with low thunder. Suddenly there was no sun, and just as suddenly, we were at the bottom

of the hill and there, ahead of us was the junction where a large sign board announced this was the site of the Wounded Knee Massacre.

Just as I stopped the car, the lightning flashed, the thunder rolled and the rain came down in torrents. And I understood why The Bible described the shepherds as being "sore afraid" when the angels came to them announcing the birth of Jesus, because I trembled inside and my fear had nothing to do with the storm.

We got out of the car to stand in the rain and read the description of the massacre on the board. I looked into the soft mountains surrounding the junction, visualizing that day when the Cavalry had descended upon the Indians gathered at the spot where I was standing.

Jeanne pointed out the cemetery on the rise across from the junction and we drove up there and stood at the graves of the murdered Indians. Flowers lay on each grave and I nodded to myself, thinking that, yes, someone should place fresh flowers on these graves everyday. And then, it was only slowly that my mind allowed itself to accept what my eyes had been trying to tell it. The flowers were plastic.

We left, the rain coming down from the blackened sky. I turned on the car lights and we drove away slowly. We had gone less than a mile when the storm ceased and the highway was suddenly dry. The sun was shining again with languid evening light and almost reluctantly, I turned off the car lights.

We drove in silence for several hours through the deserted lands of the Oglala Sioux Reservation. No cars came toward us; there were none behind us. Occasionally we passed a house or a trailer, or saw a wrecked car at the bottom of a gully. We were alone and the fear was palpable within the car. I was afraid to know that the mysterious storm, which had begun with our arrival and ended with our departure from the junction, had been more than a coincidence. Reluctantly, I broke the silence, wanting to know if Jeanne had perceived the storm as a coincidence. She had not and the silence returned, trembling with a knowledge we could scarcely comprehend and were even reluctant to believe. But it was a knowledge so profound that it would not allow us to deny it.

I wished that I were an Indian shaman, a priest of the Great Spirit, who was accustomed to going off into the hills and being spoken to by God. I sensed in myself vestiges of just such a priesthood lingering, perhaps, in an odd-shaped gene bequeathed me by an African ancestor I can never know. But I live in a society which does not admit the possibility of God speaking as directly to us as He did to Samuel and Saul. We have systematically educated ourselves into believing that knowledge is perceived only through and with the mind. Thus, if God even tries to speak to us, we do not have the ability to hear Him. We have civilized ourselves into deafness.

But why am I, too, not deaf? Why me, Lord?

Little Big Horn, Montana

I belong to this land! It is me and I am it. I have never known such a feeling. I look out upon the rolling prairie and the blue-curved sky and it is the same world I experienced at Gethsemani. I am alive as part of the land and the sky. I am a clump of sagebrush! What a beautiful thing to be, for didn't God choose to speak to Moses through a burning bush?

I listen to the evening wind in the tall grasses and feel the spirits of Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull and the Great Spirit itself. To be here at evening, alone as the wind whistles gently out of the north is to know holiness, all pervading yet solitary, awesome yet ridiculously ordinary, mysterious but empty of all mystery. This land, this sky are Truth, which is the simple recognition of what is and the acceptance of it. Having accepted, I give myself willingly.

The monastery is the world.

III.

August Lawrence, Kansas

Almost two weeks have passed. We spent those last days travelling through more of Montana, looked for mustangs in the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Reserve, drove through Wyoming and saw herds of deer, laughed at magpies skimming over currents in Wind River Canyon, fell in love with horses (not mustangs) standing with their heads at each other's flanks, swishing flies away from the other's face, visited my friend Nancy, who lives in the mountains of Colorado with her horses, chickens, dogs, and John, and now, it is over. Jeanne flew back to New York from Denver, and it was mournful driving without her across Colorado and Kansas. I want to ask her why the Kansas sky is flat while Montana's is like the bottom of an inverted cup. She would know, because in her Celtic past there is probably a Druid priestess who lets her recognize what no one can call by name.

I have just completed five days as a resource person at a conference on religion at the University of Kansas and five days of listening to theological talk is almost enough to turn you into an infidel. I felt a little out of place among religious professionals—ministers, theology professors and seminarians—who couldn't talk without saying, "As Bonhoeffer says," or "As Tillich wrote," or "Moltmann points out . . ." I wondered if they lacked words of their own. What do *you* say, I kept thinking. Tell me about you!

Eventually they did, though never with words. But I listened to their emotions and I perceived that they were people who no longer had hope and thus, were in despair. They felt abandoned by God and no wonder,

for their religion was a politicized Christianity, which at the present time might be as good a definition of Protestantism as any. They feel that the Church is called upon to save the world, and I kept wondering what gave them the right to think they should save the world? And what were they saving the world from? Or for? But modern Christianity seems to think that it's *raison d'être* is to be found in good works—feeding the poor, sending clothes to Latin America, marching in Selma—all of which is fine, but let us not delude ourselves into thinking that we are doing anything, or even being religious by such acts. But we do indeed delude ourselves and when our good works do not alter the world one iota, we fall into despair and wonder what is wrong with the world. Nothing. The world hasn't changed since Adam. O ye of little faith!

I spoke on the third day of the conference and I told them that there is no hope. It doesn't even exist and as long as one thinks it does, he will think that his life has validity only to the degree that its impact on the world is for the good. But the meaning of life is not to be found in the effect we have upon the world, or what we think passes for the world. We are called upon to live our lives as best we can, to be instruments for God, and to die. Isn't that enough? It seems that it is not. In reality, our despair stems from the fact that we ourselves want to be God and we are not. Only God can change the world. We are merely human, curls on the waves, clouds that billow at midday and are gone by sunset. As long as the Church thinks that it should and can change the world, the Church will be a caucus group within the Democratic Party. I get the weird feeling, sometimes, that Christians think Jesus should be President.

Christianity should be the alternative to Caesar, and so intent in its virtue that Caesar will not be able to stand in the strength of its light. Instead, Christianity is a wing of Caesar's Bureau of Propaganda.

I'm glad I came, though. By the end of this week I loved so many of the people here—the minister of a suburban Chicago church, who was struggling with the racism of his members, the young seminarian recently separated from his wife, the campus ministers who didn't know how to reach out to the black students. I leave feeling that they gave me more than I them, because my life is such a solitary one, lived within the confines of my book-filled apartment, shared most wholly only with Jeanne and the typewriter. Each day they confront American despair and struggle with the pain of it, in themselves and those they must counsel. I am humbled by the courage they must exemplify, a courage no one ever sees.

I was most effected, though, by the Catholic nuns and a priest, who did not seem to be concerned with hope, despair, or any of the rest. Which is not to say that they were pious or dogmatic. Quite the contrary. They were fantastically ordinary! As ordinary as dirt and as holy.

I am tired. Tired of hearing my voice and tired of the voices of others. I look forward to the silence of

Gethsemani, where I will not have to open my mouth except to put food into it.

August 13. 1 p.m. Abbey of Gethsemani

Am in Room 215 of the Guesthouse. Outside my window the water tower, a tree and the sound of locusts. The silence is heavy, but not oppressive. It overlays everything like a handmade quilt and I nestle snugly beneath.

Will be here until Thursday morning and don't really know why I'm here, except it has been a long time coming. It doesn't have anything to do with Merton, except that he was of this place, but I am not here because of him, but because of what he learned here. At one time I thought I wanted to be a monk, but not anymore. Nothing indicates that that is my way. I am here to better learn how I can live the essence of the monastic life in the world. In other words, to more clearly define who I am and how I must live to be a more fluent tongue of God's. This, of course, will not be easy. Particularly since it is at the level of "dailiness" that I must better find that tongue.

5:00 p.m.

It's funny, feeling that I'm supposed to *feel* a particular something by being here. As if what it's all about is feeling. I do, however, feel something special looking at the cemetery behind the chapel, the statue of the Virgin outside the guesthouse. But feeling has little or nothing to do with Being.

7:50 p.m.

Compline was beautiful

August 14 1 A.M.

Am re-reading Merton's *Sign of Jonas*, perhaps my favorite book of his.

The inviolability of one's spiritual sanctuary, the center of the soul, depends on secrecy. Secrecy is the intellectual complement of a pure intention. Do not let your right hand see what your left hand is doing. Keep all good things secret even from yourself. If we would find God in the depths of our souls we have to leave everybody else outside, including ourselves.

If we find God in our souls and want to stay there with Him, it is disastrous to think of trying to communicate Him to others as we find Him there. We can preach Him later on with the grace He gives us in silence. We need not upset the silence with language.

1:35 A.M.

I think it is better being here than any place I've ever

been, even Montana. Maybe that is a typical first day reaction. We'll see what I feel on leaving Thursday morning.

4:00 A.M.

Vigils was not worth the anticipation. I'd expected a service permeated with mystery. It was a lot of words.

Going into Louisville the other day I wasn't struck by anything in particular. Although I felt completely alienated from everything in the world and all its activity I did not necessarily feel out of sympathy with the people who were walking around. On the whole they seemed to me more real than they ever had before, and more worth sympathizing with.

I wonder if it isn't easier to "sympathize with" people when one doesn't have to be actually and continually with them, i.e., one can apprehend their essence because one doesn't have to confront on so many irritating levels their "unreality." Thus, the problem becomes to communicate and respond to essence in the midst of "unreality."

7:00 A.M.

Lauds was beautiful and I just don't mean aesthetically. Listening to Gregorian chants on records is an aesthetic experience. Hearing them in the chapel here is experiencing something entirely different. Indeed, the chants here make even Bach cantatas seem secular. Bach, whom I loved more than anyone, I realize now, calls attention to his music. One is aware that this is great music, that this is a beautiful phrase or line, of the interplay of instruments and voices. In the chants the music does not direct attention to itself, but to God. There is no other way I can put it. Listening to it is not an aesthetic experience; it is a religious experience which goes beyond emotion to parts of the self which have been lying famished for nourishment. I wish I could pray, that I could lower my body and kneel, bow my head, and fold my hands. I envy the Catholics who come in, bow to the cross, make the sign of the cross, kneel and pray. I can't bring myself to do it. And anyway, what would I say? "Hi, God! What's going on?" Doesn't seem quite right.

One of the problems of being a guest at a monastery is resisting the impulse to act pious. I think this is what I was hinting at yesterday when I was wondering about "what to feel." When you're here, you think you should feel "religious," and I sense that in the other guests who look so serious. So I laugh at myself a lot.

1:00 P.M.

The food here is plain, but quite filling. Surprisingly so. Last night's supper was a bowl of clam chowder, bread and fruit salad and not having eaten since eight that morning, I despaired that it would fill me. It was

more than sufficient. The brown bread is a meal in itself. Really delicious!

I stay mainly in my room, except for meals and the chanting of the Offices. I like being alone. Haven't spoken in twenty-four hours and don't miss the human contact one bit. The rules of the guesthouse only allow conversation a half-hour after each meal and it is such a relief not to have anyone ask me where I'm from, what do I do, what do I think of the place, and all those dumb questions which wouldn't really tell them a damned thing about me. I don't dislike people, but they seldom reflect my inner reality or even point toward it.

Saint Hilary in the Night Officer says that the best way to handle the problem of rendering unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, is to have absolutely nothing of the things that are Caesar's and then he will have no claim on you.

August 15 8:40 A.M.

Lauds was simply exquisite this morning. I think it will be with more than a little regret that I'll leave tomorrow. Not because I dread going back to the world so much as not wanting to leave reality.

Noon

Just can't get into Mass. Today is the Feast of the Assumption and I sat through as much as I could, but I couldn't believe what I was hearing, could not feel God in the people around me and it all felt like church. And church is church. I cannot worship with others. One's life should be a continual worship anyway.

I do enjoy the other Offices—Lauds, Sext, None and Compline, but not Vigils and Vespers. But I touch something very real in the minor Offices.

2:30 P.M.

Went to None. In came two young girls in shorts and there went None. Ah, Julius.

4:20 P.M.

... it will not hurt me at all to realize that every-one who loves Truth is, in this world, called upon in some measure to *defend* it.

Begin each day, not with the news or rock music, but with Bach cantatas, Gregorian chants for one half-hour. Better Gregorian chants, because Bach can get emotional. The Spirit is beyond feeling. Then read something that further communicates the Spirit—Merton, St. John of the Cross, Meister Eckhart.

Say the prayers which God has given you here. (Yes, I finally did it.)

"O Lord, come to my assistance, Thank you for this life. May I live it well and according to Thy will."

"O Lord, it is good to be possessed by You. Make me worthy."

Afterwards, eat a simple breakfast. Bread and butter, tea or coffee, cereal and fruit. Do this whether you want to or not, even if you don't think you have time.

Emotion does a man great injury in this monastic life. You have to be serious and detached and calm all the time. Faith is the antidote: cleansing yourself of impressions and feelings and the absurd movements of a half-blind understanding by a clear penetration into the heart of darkness where God is found.

Is Merton talking here about "interior silence?"

6:30 P.M.

Vespers was good. I always enjoy the Offices more when I can sit to myself. Also it is better to sit in the back, where I cannot see the monks in the chancery below, but only the ceiling, the light coming through the windows.

I am glad to observe in myself that I do not feel that my spiritual life has been less or will be less because I am not a monk. Being here convinces me even more that my witness is in the world, a cigarette in one hand and a bourbon-and-water in the other.

August 16 6:30 A.M.

I will be leaving in a few hours. I could stay indefinitely. Not because I don't want to go back out into the world, but I like who I am here.

Yesterday morning when I awoke, I considered leaving. Why, I'm not sure, except a noisy neighbor in the next room had disturbed my sleep with his snoring. I napped during the day, worked on a poem, read. Then, during Compline last evening, it began to happen. Exactly what, I really can't describe. But a feeling of utter sweetness began to permeate me. It took me over, quietly and definitely.

I sat in the monk's cemetery for a while, then walked to the top of the knob across the highway opposite the statue of St. Joseph and lay in the grass and looked into the sky. It was a happiness unlike any I'd ever experienced. I seemed to be rocking gently back and forth in the bottom of the sky.

I came back to the monastery to sit in the chapel, but the outside door was locked. So I walked around the quadrangle and stopped before the statue of the Virgin which stands in the center. As I looked up into her face, I became transfixed, immobilized. I tried to move and could not. It was a more beautiful feeling than any I've ever known in the arms of a woman. And I, who during Mass yesterday could not understand how grown

men could be singing about Mary ascending into heaven suddenly knew that it was true! I looked at her and thought of the Immaculate Conception and, awe-struck, I whispered: "Why not?" Why — not?" If God is God, then, of course, He could and can do anything He so desires. Anything! And that yes, it is true, all of it—the Immaculate Conception, the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection and Assumption! It was literally true!

I stood there, hugging myself in delirious joy. I sat on the ground beneath her, my eyes never leaving her face, resting in the warmth of her embrace. Eventually, the feeling began to dissipate, but not the knowledge. That is within me now and I will never be without it again.

I do not regret leaving this morning, and, in fact, am looking forward to going out there, because I realize now that there is no "out there," that there is no separation between this monastery and that pained world. They are one. The monastery is simply the world without its infinite facades. Here is pure Being and life dedicated to It. That is the world, but one can never know that as long as he is of what is presented as the world, as long as he takes seriously what the world decrees as real. If people would laugh at President Nixon everytime he appeared in public, he would disappear. He depends on us for his existence and as long as we regard him as being real, he is. As long as we accept his definition of reality and seek to fight him, the values and world-view he represents, in terms of that definition, he wins. Nixon is absurd and if we would only stop and look and let the laughter bubble from us in unending cascades, we would be made whole.

Maybe I'm crazy, because one can laugh his way to the concentration camp. But so what? So what? Would not my laughter haunt my executioners and make my death unreal? I don't know, but I think it would, though I would be in the grave. That, however, has nothing to do with death.

I am eager to leave, to go into the world and more and more, not be of it. I cannot save the world; I cannot change the world. All I can do is say Lord, here I am. Use me. To submit one's life to that Divine Will is not to find peace, but to struggle and suffer. God does not provide answers because there are no questions. There is only that Divine Essence. There is no other reality, no other world.

It is time to go back to my students, to my radio show, to speaking at colleges, the bills, my children, Erlichman, Haldeman and all the rest. It will be enough if I become so real that I am ordinary, like prairie sagebrush. And maybe, just maybe, God will set me ablaze □

"THE WORLD" IN THE GOSPELS

Jacques Ellul

If we follow the Biblical scholars, it is customary today to distinguish three different meanings for the word "world" in the Gospels—especially in the Gospel of John. First of all, the Greek word *Cosmos* is held to mean essentially the world as we see and know it, in an entirely neutral perspective, the whole of things that make up the universe, without any note of approval or disapproval: i.e., an "object" in the scientific sense of the nineteenth century. (Included in this sense are the universe of ordered matter, the totality of the inhabitants of the earth, as well as the whole range of goods and things of this world.) In the second sense, the "world" denotes the sum-total of all the negative, ordering powers confronting God. It is important to note here the shift in emphasis generally. It is not implied that the world is dominated or possessed by these powers (*exousias*)—which would possibly entail a direct relationship between the first meaning and the second. Rather, *only* the "powers" are being taken into consideration, and that their combination, their conjunction, *is* the world. As for the third sense, the "world" is considered to be that which is loved by God and to which He gave His Son. It is neither a simple object, as in the first sense, nor the totality of revolt and sin, as in the second. There is, rather, a "cosmos" that God truly loves:

JACQUES ELLUL'S most recent books published in the United States include *Hope In A Time of Abandonment*, *Autopsy of Revolution*, *The Politics of God and the Politics of Man*, *False Presence of the Kingdom* and *The Meaning of the City*. Earlier works include *The Presence of the Kingdom*, *The Technological Society*, *The Political Illusion* and *The Theological Foundation of Law*. He is Professor of Law and Jurisprudence at the University of Bordeaux, editor of *Foi et Vie* and a member of the Reformed Church in France.

This article was translated by James S. Albritton.

essentially, the "world" of man and nature, insofar as the latter is intimately linked to the former; in short, "creation." In any case, the biblical texts are lined up under one of these three meanings. The underlying assumption is that God could no more love total sin than He could the world of stars and clouds inhabited by the rebellious powers.

However, I believe that this is an extremely deficient exegetical method. When confronted with a text as coherent as the Fourth Gospel (which has, of course, a variety of sources which John was nevertheless able to make remarkably coherent), it is less than serious to impose several meanings upon the very same word used by the same author—unless, of course, there is an intentional play on words. We must always begin by assuming the consistency of an author's vocabulary (especially within a single book), and therefore, the consistency of his meaning. Only when it is utterly impossible to reconcile the possible meanings of a word and the different contexts from which it is derived, should we let ourselves be tempted into looking for other meanings to facilitate our understanding of words and texts. The term "cosmos" clearly has different connotations according to the various uses John makes of it. But these connotations are no more than an enrichment and a deepening of the one, true meaning this word denotes. Hence, to establish *separate* categories for "cosmos" not only impoverishes John's thought, but alters the sum and substance of the texts in which the word is employed.

In order to allow for several senses of the word in one text, therefore, we must necessarily accept the idea that the author's thought is *dialectical*, and this is most certainly true in John's case. As I understand it, the "world" in the Fourth Gospel is indeed the universe we perceive as an *object*, i.e., the world of things. But it is equally and simul-

taneously the world of men, or what we would today call "society." It is as much the cosmos of the heavens and the earth as that of the "State" and "Commerce" (and, as such, it does *not* coincide in the strictest sense with "creation"). Yet this world constitutes precisely the arena of the rebellious powers. It is under the domination of sin and the fallen angels; it is completely permeated by these "evil" forces. Then, there is no qualitatively wicked "superstructure," to which a neutral, objectal "infrastructure" is added. On the contrary, there is a genuine inter-penetration between the two. Even in the texts where John speaks about the world without any perjorative connotations, it seems to me that his meaning is always the same. The world we experience is in fact the one of defiance and opposition to God, and our society as a whole should be seen in this light. And yet, this same world receives *simultaneously* (there is no "first of all," and then an "afterwards") God's love. In the well-known passage, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth . . ." it is obvious that John does not wish to imply that because God loves this world, it is not thereby quite so bad, or so filled with hatred. On the contrary: if God truly had no other alternative than to sacrifice His only Son to reveal His love for the world, then, the world must necessarily be a place of death, hatred, and estrangement—otherwise, everything God did would be meaningless. Furthermore, the words "whosoever believeth" explicitly indicate the ordinary, natural world of men, and not a supernatural universe. The universe of man is ultimately bound to the Whole, for man is both part and *pinnacle* of the cosmos, the world. It follows, therefore, that the rebellious world is loved by God throughout, indiscriminately. Nowhere in the Gospel do we find the notion of a neutral world made up of insignificant, invariable objects. Rather, the world constitutes a unified whole and includes the universality of its objects. The world is, at once, *lost* and *loved*.

In adopting this particular perspective, I fully realize I am *reverting* to a very conventional theological stance, which is considered by many to be outmoded. I am also quite aware of *returning* to a so-called "static" interpretation, which was supposedly "freed" by exegesis (giving rise, for example, to Tillich's "theology of culture"). My position is not, however, determined by a theological preference. It results, on the contrary, from an examination of the very foundations of those exegetical orientations discussed at the outset of this paper—orientations which appear to me to be scientifically erroneous, dictated by any number of theological presuppositions, and contrary to the established rules used by any "profane" historical inquiry.

We must, therefore, maintain the idea of a "world both *lost* and *loved*" in the same moment. Moreover, there is another facet of the Gospel of John that requires

our attention. The considerable degree of "momentum" in this Gospel is a well-known fact (and I wish to emphasize once again its *dialectical* character). This means not only that the narrative of events advances in time, but more importantly, that there is a progression *in meaning* in each fragment of John's story with respect to the previous ones—recapturing elements acquired in the previous episodes and producing a new and richer meaning. Most of this is widely recognized. However, when we apply this to the "world" as seen through John's eyes, we must then consider the "world" both in its actuality *and* in relation to God's promise. That is, we must understand the world not only in its historical development or its future, but indeed *in the light* of God's promise to the world. Actually, the momentum in the Gospel of John does not relate to an ordinary narrative, but to a *sacred* one—underscoring the formulation and fulfillment of God's promises. Accordingly, we should view the world in its deepest reality, and then, in relation to God's promise to the world. For this world is advancing toward a kind of fulfillment which is not included in the concrete, objective reality of the world. This fulfillment represents the completion of God's promise *for* the world. This in no way nullifies the present, sensitive, living reality. But inasmuch as God's promise is already present within it, the world is transformed.

□ □ □

Therefore, we must adopt a three-fold perspective about the world in the light of the Gospel (although all three are, in truth, inseparable). First of all, we must recognize the ambiguous, identifiable, actual world. Then, the world in relation to God's promise. And finally, the reciprocal action of God's promise on the present reality of the world. In order to give full consideration to these diverse elements, we cannot begin with what we see and know about the world. To understand the world, we cannot start by undertaking an objective analysis: while that would assuredly supply a precious amount of precise information, when taken in isolation from the other factors, it would be meaningless. In other words, if we attempt to discover what constitutes the world by looking at physics, physiology, sociology, or psychology, we will never uncover *anything else*—surely no spiritual reality. Likewise, if we begin, for example, with commonplace moral judgements, we can at best say that some aspects of the world are bad or negative, while others are good or positive; that some forces maintain life, while others lead to death. Or again, we may adopt some form of humanism. . . . But we will never fathom any ultimate reality if we proceed along these paths.

So, in order to understand (and not just analyze!) the world, we must begin with what the Bible indicates as the center of God's work: Jesus Christ. In other words,

if we are to comprehend *the actuality of the world*, we must commence with the Incarnation of *Jesus*—his *presence* on earth as described in the Gospels. In order to grasp the significance of *the world in the light of God's promise*, we must begin with the proclamation of the Second Coming of *The Christ*. And in order to grasp the *meaning of God's promise in the actual world*, we must start from the *incognito* of Christ's reign.

II. The World: in its Actuality

If man had indeed fulfilled God's design, there would not have been any reason for God's Incarnation into the human condition. The Incarnation reveals, therefore, what man himself was *never* really able to accomplish on his own. And when we contemplate the perceptible, accessible fact of the Incarnation, we at the same time discern—against a vivid background—the profound, naked reality of the world in which the Incarnation took place: the reality, I dare say, of how *God* views the world. For He never provides a direct revelation about what the world is. And we should never seize upon certain biblical texts by reading *only*: "the world is enmity against God." Passages of this kind are an integral part of the story of the Incarnation, but they cannot be isolated from the whole account. Only the center teaches us something about the peripheries—not the other way around! Thus, the Word of God does not in itself enlighten us about the exact nature of the world. It simply *describes* the world, or *discloses* its hidden realities as matter-of-fact occurrences. In essence, the Word of God enlightens us about His work accomplished in Jesus Christ. And through this—but *only through this*—is everything else laid bare. Consequently, we cannot learn about the depths of iniquity within us by directly consulting biblical texts concerning condemnation, or by recognizing our impotency in fulfilling God's law. But we *can* learn by contemplating the Cross. Thereafter, both the texts of condemnation and commandment find their meaning.

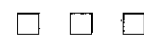
The same is true for the world. I believe that Jesus imparts four significant shades of meaning in the Incarnation: his relation to the Spirit of God; the decision of total obedience to the Father's will; the choice of non-power; and finally, an abiding openness. The first three should cause no particular difficulty, since everyone can recall the numerous texts that relate to them. I will simply offer a few comments concerning the fourth point. Whenever Jesus passes, situations are no longer closed, taken for granted, definite—whether it is a matter concerning the law, which must be transgressed but which He also obeys (e.g., the Sabbath, on the one hand; and on the other, the commandment given to the lepers to make the sacrifices required by law for healing); or the bonds between sickness, possession and alienation (*all* the miracles should be understood as the opening God establishes in closed situations); or categorizing of a

social (the Samaritans and the Jews; the rich and the poor. . . .) or political (the Zealots and the tax-collectors. . . .) nature; or finally, institutions (the breakdown of the family: "let the dead bury the dead"; as well as the creation of marriages: "let no man put asunder"). In every instance, the Incarnation of Jesus is an opening to God's *newness*—perpetually new, ever recreated newness. If we consider that the Incarnation was necessary because no man ever fulfilled God's promise and commandments, then its four-fold meaning reveals not only what man really is, but what the world is, in all its complexity.

Hence, the world is first and foremost the place of Jesus' Incarnation. But, it is equally the opposite! Thus we learn that the world (which is also our society, our living environment. . . .) is also the locus of the incarnation of powers that are alien to the Spirit of God—powers that are the replica and therefore are the opposite of and oppose the Spirit of God. Any effort to disassociate these two dimensions of the world in its actuality must be rejected—just as in trying to separate the "divine" and the "human" nature of Jesus. The Incarnation is true and total unity. There is truly nothing in this world which is not spiritual, and nothing within the universe of powers that is not found somehow in this world. Money, for example, is (in itself) both an economic reality and, indissolubly, a spiritual power. Political power is (in itself) a sociological reality and, indissolubly, a spiritual power. And so forth. Of course, when I say this, I am not indicating an objective, scientific reality, independent of man. I am not suggesting that the stars *are* (in themselves) angels. We know nothing about what is *in itself*. Since we must relate everything to ourselves, we only interpret what affects us directly. We can interpret nothing outside this relationship. Consequently, in a given culture, the stars can effectively become an incarnation of powers, insofar as the men of that particular culture believe this to be true. But, we cannot say this is only a belief, a psychological phenomenon, for a belief simply designates the place of the incarnation of powers. The powers, however, possess a specific reality and find embodiment in beliefs that for a time affix a religious value to a given object. The stars assuredly *do not* represent angels in the mind of today's layman, and so, are not considered as angels. On the other hand, we presently attach a compelling religious value to the State and to Politics, and therefore, powers are in fact incarnate in the State and in Politics. Consequently, we can witness the material reality of political organisms—and the faith and affection we accord to them—as well as their spiritual authority (which represents much more than our psychic adherence) which they increasingly embody *under today's circumstances*.

In the second place, the world is characterized by the non-obedience to God's will—expressed at the moment of Creation, as well as expressed in the unending call to life through communion with the God. The world lays claim to an autonomous existence—obtained through its

own endeavors and independent of God's will, which is love. Consequently, I do not maintain we are faced here with a problem of "*dis-obedience*"—implying that we are even now, straightway confronted with God's will and our choice to disobey it, as was the case with Adam (but not that of the world), or on the other hand, a decision of a free being (which the world is not). On the contrary, we are in fact confronted with "*non-obedience*": that is, a state of acquired independence, a state in which God's will has become alien to us. It is not a question of choice, for the world is no longer in harmony with God's will. It is absolutely self-indulgent. To formulate the notion of "obeying or disobeying" requires a definite *rapport* with someone else, whereas the world has removed itself from God's presence. We are dealing precisely with a state, a condition, a legacy—not a decision. (And it is in relation to just this peculiar context that the decision to *obey* God's will, to bear witness, represents an intrusion of strangeness and incoherence into the world). This non-obedience expresses itself, then, in closure, a closing! In its estrangement from God, the world withdraws within itself and recognizes only its own imperatives: it is closed to all outside influences. Imperviousness, exclusivity and closure are the perpetual signs of the world, for it entraps man in situations without exit, all the while promoting itself as an all-fulfilling, all-encompassing system. Every situation of this kind is a visible expression of the world. And so this is the source of such concepts as "destiny," "fatality," "chance," or "necessity" (*anake*). The same goes for "nature" (as opposed to creation) or "natural order" (which some still attempt to merge with *divine* order—whereas there is no "*divine order*" at all, but only a continuous irruption, innovation and new creation!).



The dual elements of autonomy/independence and imperviousness/closure lead us to many well-known attitudes: e.g., those who do not listen or do not hear ("who have ears and hear not" . . .), or the impossibility of true communication (the Tower of Babel). We are faced here with some of the fundamental characteristics of the world-in-itself, the actuality of the world. Furthermore, the Prince of this World is portrayed as a liar—the critical sign of the muddling of all forms of communication.

In this context of non-obedience and the impossibility of communication, facsimiles (or, semblances) become the most significant reality. And one of the most prominent facsimiles is love. It is quite obvious that when communication is impossible, love cannot thrive. And, of course, conversely. The world is the scene where love is dissimulated, and it always takes root in a facsimile, in an image of genuine love projected into a closed world. Moreover, the most intolerable form of love is the love of God: first, because all other forms of love, except this one, can be transferred to an *eros*, thus producing a

facsimile, an appearance only of love; and second, because loving God implies, above all, the most unbearable predicament of being loved by Him. So, the world yearns for and pretends to have reached adulthood and come of age. So, from its very beginning, the world rejects God's love and proclaims the death of the One who loves *all*, gratuitously, without payment in return. All of this (which I have only briefly outlined) is the result of the closing of the world upon itself.

But, reciprocally, this condition is manifested—within the boundaries indicated—by the quest for power. While the way of God's Incarnation in Jesus is a decisive choice of non-power, the incarnation of the powers in the world represents the genesis of the very power that characterizes the world. "Good" is always confused, therefore, with whatever increases, conquers or develops. The "struggle for life," "the survival of the fittest," "consecration by history," the obsession with growth reinforcing all competitive conditions—these are the many facets, the many expressions of this struggle for power. Severed from its origins, from that which would insure and regenerate its existence, and refusing the freely given relationship with God, the world is forced to stand alone, to become self-centered, and to secure its own future. And this can be accomplished only at the price of an ever-increasing power in an evolving, more and more complex world—which, in turn, becomes more unstable, as it feels itself less secure. This inordinate growth of power is frequently denounced biblically: the spirit of power in man is a common theme. It seems to me that this is no more than a reflection of an objective condition. That is, the sequence (from the Biblical point of view) does not appear to me to be spirit of power → realization of power; but rather: incarnation of *powers* → necessity for the growth of power → human spirit of power.

This, briefly sketched, is how I interpret the reality of the world as it actually is. However, the world's idea of power is also the power to control, to grasp, and this introduces a new dimension: a kind of "momentum"—which involves searching . . . growth, and consequently evolution. In considering the world in its actuality, I may have given the impression of analyzing it in a somewhat static, fixed fashion: *viz*, that power implies history. But history is not power alone. It is much more complex. And so we must now take account of God's promise to the world.

III. The World in God's Promise

Once again, we must begin with Jesus Christ. For we are promised that the Son of God will return, in all His glory (i.e., the total, universal revelation of Truth). We are also told that this event will be accompanied by a "judgement" on the one hand, and a "recapitulation" on the other. The Christ—in whom we find gathered the

contradictory attributes of being Lord and Comforter, Judge and Savior, Prince of Peace and Revealer/Annihilator of the world, as well as the source of the New Jerusalem. . . . We understand nothing if we try to separate these distinctive features (the wicked are destroyed; the righteous are saved), or if we place the events in chronological order (first, the judgment of the Great Babylon; *then*, the appearance of the New Jerusalem). Such separations, resulting from the product of a scholastic mind-set, *appear* to provide clear conceptions, but in fact they preclude any understanding of the biblical sequence. In reality, Christ is all: The totality of the world and its history is, in fact, situated in its relation to the totality of Christ.

How does this fact allow us to grasp the reality of the world in light of God's promise? First, we should bear in mind the fact that Christ thus fulfills all promises, and accordingly, the fullness of God's promises in Christ. We should equally bear in mind that the Promise has been made not only to the Jewish people, not only to the Church, but through them, *to all mankind*. Yet this totality of God's promise is inseparable from the world: there is not simply a world of things into which men are thrown, willy-nilly; likewise, there is not simply a world of rebellious powers which rule and manipulate humanity. The world is mankind *as a whole* and its history. Therefore, this world is placed within God's promise which Christ will fulfill. This very fact enables us to expose the world for what it really is: the fulfillment of God's promise compels us to behold the world in the light of the Promise. There is no immediate, direct passage into the Kingdom of God—just as there is no succession from human accomplishments into the New Jerusalem. It is the interplay of these powers that gives rise to history—what Marx understood (but interpreted positively). History is based on a game of "trial and error." Owing to its closure, the world continually searches on its own for answers to the problems that its power inevitably provokes. And it can find no better reply to its questions than the further increase of power. Likewise, the world endeavors to find outlets and forms of communication on its own terms, but this can take place only as the world fragments and circumscribes its own spheres of action by creating *new* boundaries between ever *smaller* units. All this can be witnessed by the fact that every increase in *responsibility* accorded to man implies a similar increase in the number of *failures*. Wherever man has attempted to become *totally* responsible, we immediately discover that he has neither produced nor achieved what he set out to do. This is not a casual judgement. It is a fact easily established. Such is the actual game of history.

Is it possible to imagine, however, a way out of these unending repetitions—repetitions which man insists are part of this creativeness and self-determination even when he acknowledges that they periodically end in complete failure, or else in congeries of expedients which inevitably give the impression of trying to cut pathways through a

teaming mass of errors and blind alleys? Clearly, this is not a question of denying the existence or the reality of history, or of reverting to the law of "Eternal Return." But we are, nevertheless, compelled to note the fact that repeatedly, man concludes every historical period by stifling civilization, and that this predicament is resolved only by a collapse and a new departure, in another direction. Historical epochs are always resolved by the process of nullification. And so, it is this kind of historical experience that is responsible for the interpretation of the God's revelation in Jesus Christ as the *abolishment* of history and the world. It is not because the texts of the Bible speak of judgment and (afterwards?) the New Jerusalem that we understand world history in this fashion. It is exactly the reverse: it is because the cumulative experience of world history shows us that *every* society tends to enclose itself in inextricable circumstances ending in catastrophe which open paths for fresh departures. This perspective is why we must interpret the revelation of Jesus Christ in the more traditional way. For the perspective on the world that makes Christ the abolishment of history leads to a world outside the promise of God—*without* the promise of Jesus Christ. In these circumstances, if there were an end to historical experience it could only be catastrophic. And this is precisely what is depicted in most science fiction novels. But it is also true of the resigned stoicism of some of the most notable biologists today, who accept as highly probable the hypothesis of the end of the human race—all the while encouraging us not to worry, since "LIFE" is all that matters, and man will surely be replaced by another form of "LIFE." There is also the perspective of certain technicians, who would replace man with an integrated "man-robot-computer" (Rorvik). Or finally, the ambiguous formulation of Marx, who asserts that we do *not yet* know what man is because we are still living in the "pre-history" of mankind: only in socialism will we discover a totally new human being—who Marx refuses, however, to describe and who, in any case, will appear only as the result of an all-encompassing crisis. The experiences of history, in sum, lead to a point of view in which either pessimism or agnosticism predominates.

This is not, manifestly, what the Bible proclaims to us. In fact, the Bible tells us of a world which is situated within the promise of God made in all faithfulness—which He will never betray because He always fulfills His word. Similarly, the Bible announces a *Promise* which is *already* present in the world. We must examine these two aspects in a bit more detail.

□ □ □

What is this promise of God? It is necessary to realize, in the first place, that man is not a contingency of life. Man is of such importance to God that He offered His Son on man's behalf. Indeed, man is final reality for God. He is neither transitory, nor negligible; nor is he incom-

plete, a nobody. The world of man is by no means insignificant: it cannot be destroyed by a throw of the dice. Precisely because it has become the total world of man, God takes the world just as seriously as man himself does—and certainly not because man's world is God's own creation: for if God created this world for that particular reason, He would simply be loving himself! Yet God's love is, by its very nature, *freely given*. Consequently, God loves this world precisely because it is different, because it is *man's* world. Man's history is not null and void, and without interest—for the very reason that it is *man's* history. And so, the world cannot be moving toward emptiness and death in the course of its history. However, insofar as man *makes* this world what it is (and, from an experimental point of view, each stage ends in crisis), will the hypothetical "final stage" of world history simply constitute the *final* crisis? Normally, this is just what could be expected from the world's attempts consider itself on its own terms. Nevertheless, God's promise endures. Does this mean, however, that beyond the crisis, originated and generated by man, God will take things in hand and create something else, something entirely new? If so, it would imply that man, in the interval, had obliterated both the world and its history. If so, then man will have also obliterated the history of the Incarnation—he will have erased God's work in history and in the world; he will have suspended God's salvation and promise in history. But these are the very things man *cannot do*. (It is here that the significance of the cross-penetration between history and eternity described in the Apocalypse of John can be found.) Since the reality of history continues, the world cannot be destroyed in order to make place for something else. Such a vision of God's judgment is far too simplistic.

As I sought to point out earlier concerning the Gospel of John, the Bible reveals that during the unfolding of His promise, on every occasion, God assumes the totality of the preceding promise, so to speak synthesizes it, and starting from that synthesis, grants a new promise. The same is true for the world and for history. We must expect a recapitulation, a reckoning—that is to say, that all of man's immense undertakings are progressively welcomed, collected and, I dare say, recorded by God. The whole, gigantic adventure of the world, as well as the most petty detail of man's endeavors, is thus rescued by God from the bottomless pit of eternity. Indeed, God redeems all; everything without exception, without loss of identity, enters into God's own work. Nothing is lost. Nothing is insignificant. But this recapitulation, this reckoning, has nothing to do with the all too famous image, whereby every human deed is inscribed on a heavenly register in order to establish a kind of *balance-sheet*—an accounting of salvation or damnation. It is has nothing in common with accounting. Recapitulation is truly a global redemption which God undertakes because of His own work, the "new creation" and the New Jerusalem—the whole work of

man and his history. But the result is not direct. There is no particular succession of events. Rather, it comes from a breakdown, a crisis; it is like a light passing through a prism—although in this case, the prism is not a passive object. It attracts the light, captures it, and transforms it. So the New Jerusalem is God's *creation*—using the materials of the history of the world, completely incorporating these materials into His creation. This creation is not the *realization* of *individual* human endeavors, since it finally completes the hopes, desires and designs of *all* mankind.

□ □ □

In other words, we have seen that one of the characteristics of the world is the failure of all of man's projects, which always produce something quite different from what was expected. But now, *all* that man lacked in being trapped in the world because of the resistance of the false presences of the world—*all* that man set out to accomplish in his search for greatness, nobility, goodness, beauty, truth, etc., . . . is *fully* realized. But it is God, through His grace, who gives this fulfillment. Thus we see in the fulfillment of His Promise—in the New Jerusalem—the inversion of the worldly processes: what was once closed is now open, in the New Jerusalem; what was once non-communication now becomes the essential relation with the Wholly Other; what was once asserted in non-obedience becomes the very reflection of divine will; what was once the choice of the exercise of power is now accomplished by a free gift—that is, in an appropriately radical powerlessness. And so the world is at once *inversed and fulfilled*, realized and transcended in God's recapitulation and according to His promise. And so with the destruction of the worldly powers (as well as the spirit of power itself, which is the sole reality destroyed and doomed to the Lake of Fire!) the history of the world is from that moment *annulled and fulfilled*.

IV. The Components of the World and the Two-Fold Drama of History

But in fact, the Promise—whose realization and content are found in God's revelation in Jesus—is not situated exclusively at the "end of time." Nevertheless by placing ourselves in the perspective of "the end of time," we can indeed understand it more readily. That is, we can better contemplate "The World within the Promise." But we cannot dissociate the actuality of the world from the world of God's promise. The two are clearly bound together, because the Promise of God is itself actual: it is not simply limited to its own fulfillment because it thrives—*here and now!*—in the world. So God's promise plays out a double existence in history. On the one hand, it is proclaimed as Promise in the actuality of the world. On the other, its final triumph assured, the Promise of

God acts (through Christians and the Church insofar as they live ardently in faith and hope) as well as "retro-acts" on the present state of the world. There is a kind of "feedback" of "the end of time" on the present. But this does not represent a superimposed dimension or an extraneous adornment. The world and its history are not, in fact, limited *merely* to what we can see and experience. The world and its history are totally, mutually, albeit discreetly penetrated in a way which is incomprehensible in terms other than faith by the actuality of God's promise. But this should never be construed as some sort of nebulous chance or sentiment, since we know that *everything* has already been fulfilled.

In short, the world embodies the mixture of those components we have already described *and* the mystery of God's promise (cf., the parable of the bond between the wheat and the tares, a bond so inseparable that one cannot be cut without the other). Here, for example, we can discover the significance of all the Parables of the Kingdom of Heaven which portray some hidden greatness in the world (the treasure in the field), or some minute, indivisible substance which is nevertheless alive and at work (the mustard seed). This is proof that the Kingdom of Heaven is already here. The significance of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse can also be viewed in this light: the history of the whole world embodies the paths of these horsemen. We know the red horse represents war and political power; the black horse, famine and economic power; the pale horse, the origins of death and its presence in life. There is controversy about the white horse, and although I cannot possibly go into this matter here, I am convinced that we are dealing with the Word of God (e.g., the white color; the connection with the other white horse in the Apocalypse [19:11]; the crown of gold; the ark; etc. . . .). This means that the world, in its historical dimension, is constituted by the correlation between the works which come from the Word of God, and the works coming from all other powers.

□ □ □

So, we must resolutely avoid two common errors. The first concerns the belief that God is in some way present, incorporate, *within* the world. (This idea can be found implicitly in certain theologies of culture, of "the death of God" or of "horizontalism"). On the contrary, the Bible always speaks to us in terms of an incomprehensible greatness which is never revealed in worldly forms or by observing the factual basis of world order. God's greatness is both radically different, yet situated in the world. But this is only its locus; it is not situated somewhere else—whether in some abstract "heaven," or in "another world." The second, and more frequent error is to imagine a God who is *outside* the world, and who rules as sovereign over everything from the lofty heights of the Seventh Heaven. Or, related to this, is

the tendency to place the whole burden on Christ, who then becomes the Pantocrator, and who here and now exercises his unswaying lordship over the world from atop his throne in the sky. We must always bear in mind that, although Christ is here and now our Lord, the proclamation that "He will rule the nations with a rod of iron" (and all similar proclamations) remains a *promise*—a future possibility. His Lordship has neither been actualized nor realized. The world as such continues on during our whole historical experience, as I have already attempted to summarize. God's love does not transform it automatically into servile mechanism. The world is indeed the very power that yearns to be, and proclaims itself to be, autonomous. But it never achieves or realizes this.

I would maintain, therefore, that by its very presence in the world, the Lordship of Jesus Christ is simply that which prevents the world from fulfilling itself in its own image of itself, from becoming completely closed, and from becoming what Sartre described as "No Exit." The Lordship of Jesus Christ, the Kingdom already come, represents the failure of all powerseeking, the misdirections of all great undertakings. The Lordship of Christ is the impediment to the world's final separation from God, to its complete self-indulgence . . . which is Hell. The Lordship of Christ embodies the presence of non-power which obstructs the progress of the worldly powers. It denotes the presence of communication through love. So the world retains its independence and its initiative in relation to God, who is always discreetly present, by His promise (which is never more than a promise), in all these undertakings, even though He never undermines or negates them. God does not impede man's projects with His omnipotence. Rather, He announces His promise and this alone brings about change. So, the world (and man) make their own history—but never according to their own aspirations. There is always a weakness, a breaking point, which opens the way to the New Jerusalem. Always something unexpected! In every instance, worldly endeavors produce, concurrently with their self-construction, a certain fulfillment of God's promise. (However, those Christians who would marvel in discerning this fulfillment through the eyes of their faith should constantly bear in mind that the world is still a rebellious power—and remains so! Such is the incredible authentication found in Goethe's Mephistopheles: "*Ein Teil von jener Kraft, Die stets das Böse will und stets das Gute schafft.*" ["A member of those powers which constantly try to do evil, but, in reality, do that which is good."] Mephistopheles remains, however, Mephistopheles!)

□ □ □

This sheds light on the problem of the dual perspective of history: are there two kinds of history—a history of the world and a sacred history? Or only one—the history of the world is precisely the action of God, who is the

source of everything (revolutions, States, etc. . . .)? In reality, the history of the world is both one and double. There is not a history of States and peoples containing a superimposed divine history, or either a sacred history—included, as a different thread in a rope, within the context of general history. The relation between the two is much more intimate. We are, in fact, confronted with a history that comprises the indefinite reactions between the powers of the world and God's deliberate choice of non-power: all the events that make up history are the result of this specific combination. But it is exactly for

this reason that God, in choosing non-power, hands over the care of the world to His earthly representatives as intermediaries.

God's final power, which surpasses all others, doubtless appears in history. But always as eschatological event. It does not belong to the world. This is why God is so frugal, why startling revelations are so subdued. Otherwise, there would be no world at all. Yet the world, in the context of God's love, remains the condition deliberately chosen and established by God to make way for the New Jerusalem □

CHRISTIANITY IN MY WORLD

Manas Buthelezi

I am a Christian and I hope to remain one because in the Christian Gospel I have discovered an assurance that the possibilities of my true humanity can be realized. Even though I often feel betrayed by fellow Christians, I have never experienced betrayal by the Gospel. Were it not for the Gospel, I would already have had every reason to regard whoever created me as the enemy of my humanity. In the Gospel I have discovered hope for my liberation toward true humanity.

It is against this background of expressed faith in the Gospel that you should try to understand what I am going to say. For my part, it is out of this Gospel-given hope that I have mustered the courage to say what I am going to say about the pathological state of Christianity in South Africa. Listen to me as to a fellow believer, speaking out of the depths of his overflowing and believing heart. If, in taking South African Christianity as a spiritual pathological case, my diagnosis and prescription here and there smack of missionary and evangelistic arrogance, kindly bear with me; I am simply moved by the black man's love for his fellow South Africans.

I shall call the first part of my paper "A Spiritual Diagnosis," and the second, "An Evangelistic Prescription".

I. A Spiritual Diagnosis

The Christian Gospel has been in this land for over 300 years. This is a long time if one considers the space

DR. MANAS BETHELEZI is Regional Director of the Christian Institute for Natal, South Africa.

of drastic changes which have taken place since then. Here I am not only referring to changes on the political map of South Africa, but also to changes in the very history of the spiritual destinies of the people of South Africa.

The modern history of Christianity in South Africa is a sad tale of gradual erosion in the expression of the spirit of Christianity itself. The institutional symbols of Christianity, the church and the ministry, are there but they are becoming to a lesser extent the visible incarnation of that which accounts for the uniqueness of Christianity, *vis-a-vis* the religion of our forefathers. Over the past decades, the church has been turned into a living monument of a race and color-orientated society. Is it not true that many church buildings are no longer houses for worshipping God, the Father of Jesus Christ, but have become heathen shrines of a race and color god? That is why even in this day and age some church synods still find it necessary to pre-occupy themselves with making resolutions about keeping their churches lily-white on Sunday. You see, a racially mixed service assails the majesty of the god of racism and color.

This is a negative appraisal of South African Christianity, you may say. Is it not true that there are more people who believe in Christ today than there were in 1652? Is South Africa not in fact the most Christian country in Africa percentage-wise? The conclusions drawn from answers to these questions cannot but be disquieting unless one fails to see beyond the mere quantitative theory of progress.

To my mind the ultimate criterion for the spread of Christianity is not just how many people go to church on Sunday, but how many people allow that which is unique in the Christian Gospel to shape their lives as

well as the spirit of their social, economic and political environment.

What is it that is unique in the Christian Gospel? It is the love of God in Jesus Christ that transforms strange neighbors into loving brothers. It is very often said that points of racial contact are points of friction. What is unique about the Gospel is that it changes points of contact into points of fellowship. Fellowship is by definition a situation of contact. It follows that there can never be Christian fellowship without human contact. Any deliberate elimination of points of human contact is a calculated sabotage of the essence of Christian fellowship.

About this uniqueness of the Christian Gospel, Christ said: "I give you a new commandment: love one another; as I have loved you, so you are to love one another. If there is this love among you, then all will know that you are my disciples" (John 13:34-35).

As if in commentary to this, Paul asserts in Galatians: "There is no such thing as Jew and Greek, slave and free man, male and female; for you are all one person in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

In Jesus Christ the divisions of mankind into warring nations as dramatized in the story of Babel, is resolved. In Christ mankind becomes a family, a brotherhood. This is the uniqueness of Christianity, otherwise white Europeans would have no business to leave Europe and come here to make Christians out of black Africans. This is the uniqueness which, according to my diagnosis, the South African way of life has done its share to undermine and almost destroy. We are all the poorer for it; ours is a Christianity in caricature. It seems that the white man, as the main architect of the South African way of life, has done his best to destroy the heart of the faith he brought with him.

When white missionaries came to Natal during the time of Shaka, they were hospitably received by the black people who did not know anything about Christ and who had every reason to reject the humanity of white people because they had never seen any white human beings before. They accepted them as human beings to such an extent that they were prepared to allow their black girls to marry them. The classical case in point is the British hunter John Dunn, who raised generations of colored people in Zululand from the black wives he was allowed by King Cetshwayo to marry. Of course, Cetshwayo did not know anything about the Immorality Act because white Christianity had not yet invented it. The Zulus could see a dignified human being behind the facade of a white skin.

You all know Henry Francis Fynn who was among the first white men ever to visit King Shaka. In his diary Fynn made a very touching description of the grand reception which he as well as his entourage received from the king. James Stuart, who edited Fynn's diary, made the following comments on Fynn's diary account:

The first meeting of Shaka with Farewell Fynn, and the rest of the party was manifestly a unique and memorable occasion. Instead of the formal, stiff and constrained ceremonial customary at such a moment. Shaka, whose heart had been mysteriously touched by the advent of British settlers to his shores, converted the occasion into a grand and dramatically planned festival.

This is not just an allusion to dead past history, but it is a commentary on the black man's open and loving attitude towards the white man, as I have grown to know it. When I grew up, white people, especially missionaries, used to visit our home as my father was an evangelist. I cannot remember a single occasion when a white person did not receive the best courtesy and the best catering our limited resources could allow. Many a black man can testify to the same. The lack of reciprocity when we visit white people's homes has not deterred us from giving them our best. In South African society there are many things which remind the black man of the fact that he is a rejected member of society. Indeed, white South Africa has rejected the black man as someone with whom a self-respecting patriotic white man can relate with any degree of intimacy in daily life situations. Whites who have not observed the convention, have ordinarily not escaped some degree of social and political censure bordering on the forfeiture of personal security. Even as lepers in society, black people on the whole have not withdrawn the hand of friendship and love stretched out towards the white man. Nothing less is expected of those who follow the way of Christ.

There is a pattern of racist outlook in the thinking and behavior of the average white, mainly Anglo-Saxon Protestant or Northern European, whether he happens to be in America, Asia or South Africa. As the respective histories of the United States and South Africa, in particular, demonstrate, the Northern European seems to be overly obsessed with his race and the fact that he is white. He translates this into his politics, economics and social theory. This tendency is not so pronounced in the Catholic Mediterranean or Southern European. The history of the colonies which belonged to the latter also bear out this contrast.

Be that as it may, white people, whether they like it or not, are our brothers. We owe them not just passive love, but creative and creating love. It is not enough for us to bemoan the pathological condition of South African Christianity; we must do something about it. To a medical doctor, diagnosis is never the end; it is a means towards a healing prescription.

II. Evangelistic Prescription

Black Christians as a group have not made any significant contribution in the evangelization of South Africa as a country beyond the people of their own race. This is out of proportion to their numerical strength as Chris-

tians. Among the main denominations, the Dutch Reformed Church is the only exception where there is a white majority. Black people can therefore never be taken as merely an appendage to South African Christianity. They are a factor to be reckoned with. The trouble is that hitherto they have not taken themselves seriously. Nowhere else is this better illustrated than in the negligible role they have played in the evangelization of South Africa.

In other words, black people have not preached the Gospel to *all* nations yet. They seem to have been conditioned into thinking of themselves as third grade "Kaffer" ambassadors of Christ, whose spiritual credentials do not in any way qualify them to carry the message of God to white people, for instance. They have underestimated both their integrity as ambassadors of God in South Africa and the universality of the scope of their mission.

This stands in sharp contrast to the evangelistic consciousness of white Christians who have always correctly understood themselves as being sent everywhere and to everybody. Here I am not by any means overlooking the influence of the colonial motif in European history; I am simply stating the basic essentials of the case of evangelism in South Africa.

As a black Christian, I feel obligated to thank white Christians for having realized that God did not send them to white people only, but also to me, black as I am. In saying this, I hope that white people will also be generous enough to reciprocate this sentiment of mine *as I feel moved at this hour that God has also sent me as a black person to tell them the Good News that God died in Christ to liberate the white man from the urge to oppress the black man.* This means to say that the Gospel as preached by the white man needs to be complemented by the Gospel through the black man.

I have already hinted that the Gospel as preached by white Christians was of such a kind as to harbor the reality of the white man's rejection of the black man. It was and still is a Gospel with a truncated expression of Christian fellowship. By Christian fellowship here I do not mean just worshipping together on Sunday, but also sharing together all the daily blessings of God which he continually showers on his children.

It is well-known that in this land the white man has grabbed for his own use the greater portion of the wealth God has meant for us all. God is angry about this and will definitely judge the white people. White people need to be liberated from the coming wrath of God. They need to be told that God also loves them; He wants to give them power to love the black man so that they do not find it nauseating to share a meal with him in a public restaurant.

I say this in full awareness of the existence of fringe groups in the white Christian establishment which have tried to stir the white Christian conscience into realizing the full implications of Christian fellowship. The Christian Institute is one of those fringe groups. However, as fringe groups, they have existed as voices crying in the ecclesiastical wilderness. It has very often been said that the leaders of the English-speaking churches have displayed a liberal and progressive stance which is very often out of touch with the grass-root membership of those churches. This is a euphemistic way of stating that the average white Christian still does not see any contradiction between professing Christian discipleship and rejecting the black man in his daily life. He has not been liberated into accepting the black man as his daily life brother.

Just to illustrate how patently true this observation is, a leading white statesman of this country has recently found it necessary to exhort white people to remember that black men also have souls. I would be shocked if any one here could stand up and say that this statesman—who will remain nameless—did not know what he was talking about. This poses a challenge to the black man: the white man needs to know that the black man was created in the image of God too. The black man must testify to the white man that he really has that image, otherwise any third person statement of that fact will not free some people from doubts. The image of God in the black man must urge him to evangelize the white man into accepting him as a brother.

If white people are lost, does it ever occur to the black man that he may be held responsible? Does it ever occur to black people that they have an evangelistic duty of getting the white man out of the spiritual darkness which has prevented him from seeing that the black man is his daily life brother? God will ask: "Black man, where were you when the white man abandoned my Gospel and went to destruction?" When the black man answers, "I was only a kaffir, how could I dare to preach to my baas?" God will say: "Was Christ's resurrection not sufficient to liberate you, black man, from that kind of spiritual and psychological death? Go to eternal condemnation, black man, for you did not muster courage to save your white brother."

□ □ □

This leads me to the following practical conclusions:

1. There is an urgent need for the establishment of a black Christian Mission to the whites in South Africa. This mission manned by blacks will have as a general aim:

- A. to enable the white man to share the love of God as it has been uniquely revealed to the black

man in circumstances in which the white man does not have experience;

- B. to preach love to the white man so that he may have the courage to see with consequence that his security is not necessarily tied to his rejection of the black man;
 - C. to give glory to God for what he has done for the black man in spite of everything;
 - D. to work for the salvation of the white man who sorely needs it.
2. It would be appreciated if some existing white church buildings could be made available to serve as mission

stations. This gesture on the part of white churches will serve as a realization of a meaningful partnership in mission.

3. The feasibility of this endeavour is assumed from the fact that there is freedom of preaching in this country. Whites do preach among blacks; therefore there is no reason why blacks cannot preach among whites.

This is not a neat outline of a program, but merely an expression of an idea. Who knows? It may come as a significant contribution towards the solution of some of our basic problems □

IS "THE WORLD" A PROBLEM?

Thomas Merton

*Et quand donc suis-je plus vrai
que lorsque je suis le monde?*
—Camus

Is the world a problem? I type the question. I am tempted to type it over again, with asterisks between the letters, the way H*y*m*a*n K*a*p*l*a*n used to type his name in *The New Yorker* thirty years ago. And as far as I am concerned that would dispose of the question. But the subject is doubtless too "serious" for a title heading a page with "Is the world a problem" running down the middle, full of asterisks. So I have to be serious too, and develop it.

Maybe I can spell this question out politely, admitting that there are still cogent reasons why it should be asked and answered. Perhaps, too, I am personally involved in the absurdity of the question; due to a book I wrote thirty years ago, I have myself become a sort of stereotype of the world-denying contemplative—the man who spurned New York, spat on Chicago, and tromped on Louisville, heading for the woods with Thoreau in one pocket, John of the Cross in another, and holding the Bible open at the Apocalypse. This personal stereotype is probably my own fault, and it is something I have to try to demolish on occasion.

Now that we are all concerned about the Church and

THOMAS MERTON was a member of the Order of Cistercians of Strict Observance, known as Trappist, until his death in 1968. His books of theology, devotion, poetry literary and social criticism include *The New Man*, *Seeds of Contemplation*, *Seeds of Destruction*, *Raids on the Unspeakable*, *Mystics and Zen Masters*, *Contemplation in a World of Action* and *Asian Journal*. This article, written in 1966, is used with the permission of the Trustees of the Merton Legacy Trust.

the World, the Secular City, and the values of secular society, it was to be expected that someone would turn quizzically to me and ask: "What about you, Father Merton? What do you think?"—and then duck as if I were St. Jerome with a rock in my fist.

□ □ □

First of all, the whole question of the world, the secular world, has become extremely ambiguous. It becomes even more ambiguous when it is set up over against another entity, the world of the sacred. The old duality of time-eternity, matter-spirit, natural-supernatural and so on (which makes sense in a very limited and definite context) is suddenly transposed into a totally different context in which it creates nothing but confusion. This confusion is certainly a problem. Whether or not "the world" is a problem, a confused idea of what the world might possibly be is quite definitely a problem and it is that confusion I want to talk about. I want to make clear that I speak not as the author of *The Seven Storey Mountain*, which seemingly a lot of people have read, but as the author of more recent essays and poems which apparently very few people have read. This is not the official voice of Trappist silence, the monk with his hood up and his back to the cameras, brooding over the waters of an artificial lake. This is not the petulant and uncanonizable modern Jerome who never got over the fact that he could give up beer. (I drink beer whenever I can lay my hands on any. I love beer, and, by that very fact, the world.) This is simply the voice of a self-questioning human person who, like all his brothers, struggles to cope with turbulent, mysterious, demanding, exciting, frustrating, confused existence in

which almost nothing is really predictable, in which most definitions, explanations and justifications became incredible even before they are uttered, in which people suffer together and are sometimes utterly beautiful, at other times impossibly pathetic. In which there is much that is frightening, in which almost everything public is patently phony, and in which there is at the same time an immense ground of personal authenticity that is right there and so obvious that no one can talk about it and most cannot even believe that it is there.

I am, in other words, a man in the modern world. In fact, I am this world just as you are! Where am I going to look for the world first of all if not in myself?

As long as I assume that the world is something I discover by turning on the radio or looking out the window I am deceived from the start. As long as I imagine that the world is something to be "escaped" in a monastery—that wearing a special costume and following a quaint observance takes me "out of this world," I am dedicating my life to an illusion. Of course, I hasten to qualify this. I said a moment ago that in a certain historic context of thought and of life, this kind of thought and action once made perfect sense. But the moment you change the context, then the whole thing has to be completely transposed. Otherwise you are left like the orchestra in the Marx' Brothers *Night at the Opera* where Harpo had inserted "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" in the middle of the operatic score.

The confusion lies in this: on one hand there is a primitive Christian conception of the world as an object of choice. On the other there is the obvious fact that the world is also something about which there is and can be no choice. And, historically, these notions have sometimes got mixed up, so that what is simply "given" appears to have been chosen, and what is there to be chosen, decided for or against, is simply evaded as if no decision were licit or even possible.

That I should have been born in 1915, that I should be the contemporary of Auschwitz, Hiroshima, Viet Nam and the Watts riots, are things about which I was not consulted. Yet they are also events in which, whether I like it or not, I am deeply and personally involved. The "world" is not just a physical space traversed by jet planes and full of people running in all directions. It is a complex of responsibilities and options made out of the loves, the hates, the fears, the joys, the hopes, the greed, the cruelty, the kindness, the faith, the trust, the suspicion of all. In the last analysis, if there is war because nobody trusts anybody, this is in part because I myself am defensive, suspicious, untrusting, and intent on making other people conform themselves to my particular brand of death wish.

Put in these terms, the world both is and is not a problem. The world is a "problem" in so far as everybody in it is a problem to himself. The world is a problem in so far as we all add up to a big collective question. Starting then from this concept of a world which is essentially problematic because it is full of

problematic and self-doubting freedoms, there have been various suggestions made as to what to do about it.

□ □ □

At present the Church is outgrowing what one might call the Carolingian suggestion. This is a world view which was rooted in the official acceptance of the Church into the world of imperial Rome, the world of Constantine and of Augustine, of Charlemagne in the west and of Byzantium in the east. In crude, simple strokes, this world view can be sketched as follows: We are living in the last age of salvation history. A world radically evil and doomed to hell has been ransomed from the devil by the Cross of Christ and is now simply marking time until the message of salvation can be preached to everyone. Then will come the judgment. Meanwhile, men, being evil and prone to sin at every moment, must be prevented by authority from following their base instincts and getting lost.

They cannot be left to their own freedom or even to God's loving grace. They have to have their freedom taken away from them because it is their greatest peril. They have to be told at every step what to do, and it is better if what they are told to do is displeasing to their corrupt natures, for this will keep them out of further subtle forms of mischief. Meanwhile the Empire has become, provisionally at least, holy. As figure of the eschatological kingdom, worldly power consecrated to Christ becomes Christ's reign on earth. In spite of its human limitations the authority of the Christian prince is a guarantee against complete chaos and disorder and must be submitted to—to resist established authority is equivalent to resisting Christ. Thus we have a rigid and stable order in which all values are fixed and have to be preserved, protected, defended against dark forces of impulse and violent passion. War on behalf of the Christian prince and his power becomes a holy war for Christ against the devil. War too becomes a sacred duty.

The dark strokes in the picture have their historical explanation in the crisis of the barbarian invasions. But there are also brighter strokes, and we find in the thought of Aquinas, Scotus, Bonaventure, Dante, a basically world-affirming and optimistic view of man, of his world and his work, in the perspective of the Christian redemption. Here in the more peaceful and flourishing years of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries we see a harmonious synthesis of nature and grace, in which the created world itself is an epiphany of divine wisdom and love, and, redeemed in and by Christ, will return to God with all its beauty restored by the transforming power of grace, which reaches down to material creation through man and his work. Already in St. Thomas we find the ground work for an optimistic Christian affirmation of natural and worldly values in the perspective of an eschatological love. However, this view too is static rather than dynamic, hierarchic, layer upon layer, rather

than ongoing and self-creating, the fulfillment of a pre-determined intellectual plan rather than the creative project of a free and self-building love.

In the Carolingian world view it somehow happened that the idea of the world as an object of choice tended to be frozen. The "world" was identified simply with the sinful, the perilous, the unpredictable (therefore in many cases the new, and even worse the free, and this was what one automatically rejected. Or, if one had the misfortune to choose it one went at once to confession. The world was therefore what one did not choose. Since society itself was constructed on this concept of the world, Christian society ("Christendom") conceived itself as a world-denying society in the midst of the world. A pilgrim society on the way to another world. It was fitting that there should be in the midst of that society, and in a place of special prominence and choice, certain people who were professional world-deniers, whose very existence was a sign of *contemptus mundi* and of otherworldly aspirations. Thus from a certain point of view this renunciation and unworldliness of monks became a justification of worldly power and of the established social and economic structures. The society that, by its respect for consecrated unworldliness, confessed its own heavenly aspirations, was certainly the realm of Christ on earth, its kings and its mighty were all alike pilgrims with the poor and humble. If all kept their proper place in the procession the pilgrimage would continue to go well. This is all obvious to everyone who has ever read a line about the Middle Ages, and its obviousness is presently being run into the ground by critics of monasticism. What these critics overlook is that though the theory was austere and negative, in practice the "sacred" and basically "clerical" and "monastic" Christendom produced a world-affirming, nature-respecting, life-loving, love-oriented, fruitful and rich culture. It had its limitations and its grave flaws. But the monastic and contemplative ideal of the Middle Ages, based on an ideological rejection of the world, actually recovered and rediscovered the values of the world on a deeper and more imperishable level, not merely somewhere aloft in a card file of Platonic ideas, but in the world itself, its life, its work, its people, its strivings, its hopes and its existential day-to-day reality. The world-denying monastic ethos found itself willy-nilly incorporated in a life-affirming and humanistic climate. No one who has really read Anselm, Thomas, John of Salisbury, Scotus, Bonaventure, Eckhart, and the rest can seriously doubt this.

Nevertheless, this stereotype hierarchic idea of the world's structure eventually ceased to be really fruitful and productive. It was already sterile and unreal as early as the fifteenth century. And the fact that the Church of the Second Vatican Council has finally admitted that the old immobilism will no longer serve is a bit too overdue to be regarded as a monumental triumph. The Constitution on the Church in the Modern World is

salted with phrases which suggest that the fathers were, at least some of them, fully aware of this.

In any case, one of the essential tasks of *aggiornamento* is that of renewing the whole perspective of theology in such a way that our ideas of God, man and the world are no longer dominated by the Carolingian-medieval imagery of the sacred and hierarchial cosmos, in which everything is decided beforehand and in which the only choice is to accept gladly what is imposed as part of an immobile and established social structure.

□ □ □

In "turning to the world" the contemporary Church is first of all admitting that the world can once again become an object of choice. Not only can it be chosen, but in fact it must be chosen. How? If I had no choice about the age in which I was to live, I nevertheless have a choice about the attitude I take and about the way and the extent of my participation in its living, ongoing events. To choose the world is not then merely a pious admission that the world is acceptable because it comes from the hand of God. It is first of all an acceptance of a task and a vocation in the world, in history and in time. In my time, which is the present. To choose the world is to choose to do the work I am capable of doing, in collaboration with my brother, to make the world better, more free, more just, more livable, more human. And it has now become transparently obvious that more automatic "rejection of the world" and "contempt for the world" is in fact not a choice but the evasion of choice. The man who pretends that he can turn his back on Auschwitz or Viet Nam and act as if they were not there is simply bluffing. I think this is getting to be generally admitted, even by monks.

On the other hand the stereotype of world rejection is now being firmly replaced by a collection of equally empty stereotypes of world affirmation in which I, for one, have very little confidence. They often seem to be gestures, charades, mummary designed to make the ones participating in them feel secure, to make them feel precisely that they are "like participating" and really doing something. So precisely at the moment when it becomes vitally important for the destiny of man that man should learn to choose for himself a peaceful, equitable, sane and humane world the whole question of choice itself becomes a stark and dreadful one. We talk about choosing, yet everything seems more grimly determined than ever before. We are caught in an enormous web of consequences, a net of erroneous and even pathological effects of other men's decisions. After Hitler, how can Germany be anything but a danger to world peace? To choose the world therefore is to choose the anguish of being hampered and frustrated in a situation fraught with frightful difficulties. We can affirm the world and its values all we like, but the complexity of events responds too often with a cold negation of our hopes.

In the old days when everyone compulsively rejected the world it was really not hard at all to secretly make quite a few healthy and positive affirmations of a worldly existence in the best sense of the word, in praise of God and for the good of all men. Nowadays when we talk so much of freedom, commitment, "engagement" and so on, it becomes imperative to ask whether the choices we are making have any meaning whatever. Do they change anything? Do they get us anywhere? Do we really choose to alter the direction of our lives or do we simply comfort ourselves with the choice of making another choice? Can we really decide effectively for a better world?

The "suggestion" that has now most obviously replaced that of the Carolingians is that of Karl Marx. In this view, history is not finished, it has just reached the point where it may, if we are smart, begin. There is no predetermined divine plan (although frankly, the messianism in Marx is basically Biblical and eschatological). After a long precarious evolution matter has reached the point, in man, where it can become fully aware of itself, take itself in hand, control its own destiny. And now at last that great seething mass of material forces, the world, will enter upon its true destiny by being raised to a human level. The instruments by which this can be accomplished—technology, cybernetics—are now in our power. But are we in our own power? No, we are still determined by the illusions of thought patterns, superstructures, devised to justify antiquated and destructive economic patterns. Hence if man is to choose to make himself, if he is to become free at last, his duty can be narrowed down to one simple option, one basic commitment: the struggle against the (imperialist) world.

With a shock we find ourselves in a familiar pattern: a pre-determined struggle against evil in which personal freedom is viewed with intolerance and suspicion. The world must be changed because it is unacceptable as it is. But the change must be guided by authority and political power. The forces of good are all incarnate in this authority. The forces of evil are on the contrary incarnate in the power of the enemy system. Man cannot be left to himself. He must submit entirely to the control of the collectivity for which he exists. "Man" is not the person but the collective animal. Though he may eventually become free, now is not the time of freedom but of obedience, authority, power, control. Man does not choose to make himself except in the sense that he submits to a choice dictated by the authority of science and the messianic collective—the party which represents the chosen eschatological class. Hence though in theory there are all kinds of possible choices, in reality the only basic choice is that of rejecting and destroying the evil "world"—namely capitalist imperialism and, in the present juncture, the United States. Hence the ambiguities of Communist dogma at the moment: the choice of peace is of course nothing else than the choice of war against the United States. In other words, we have turned the page of *Aida* and we are now playing "Take Me Out to the Ball Game," but it is the same crazy Marx Brothers'

opera. Freedom, humanism, peace, plenty and joy are all enthusiastically invoked, but prove on closer examination to be their opposites. There is only one choice, to submit to the decision handed down from on high by an authoritarian power which defines good and evil in political terms.

This, as I see it, is the present state of the question. The Church has finally realized officially that the classic world view, which began to develop serious flaws five hundred years ago, is no longer viable at all. There is something of a stampede for security in a new world view.

□ □ □

In this endeavor the dialogue with Marxism is going to be of crucial importance not only for Christians but for Marxists. For if it is a true dialogue it will possibly involve some softening and adjustment of doctrinaire positions and an opening to new perspectives and possibilities of collaboration. Obviously, however, the dialogue with official and established Marxism—the Soviets or Red China—is not to be considered yet as a meaningful possibility. But the conversations that have begun with the type of revisionist Marxism represented by the French thinker Roger Garaudy may certainly have some effects. But what effects? Good or bad? It is all too easy for enthusiastic Catholics, having tasted a little of the new wine, to convince themselves that "turning to the world" and "choosing the world" means simply turning to Marx and choosing some variation—Maoist, Soviet, Castroist—of the Communist political line. There is no question that since the Council a few Catholic thinkers and publicists in Europe and South America are tending in this direction. Their tendency is understandable, but I do not find it altogether hopeful.

The majority of Catholic thinkers today are, however, working in the direction of a modern world view in which the demands of the new humanism of Marx, Freud, Teilhard, Bonhoeffer and others are fully respected and often heartily endorsed. For them, the tendency is no longer to regard God as enthroned "out there" at the summit of the cosmos, but as the "absolute future" who will manifest Himself in and through man, by the transformation of man and the world by science oriented to Christ. Though this certainly is not a view which conservative theologians find comforting, it represents a serious attempt to re-express Christian truths in terms more familiar to modern man. It demands that we take a more dynamic view of man and of society. It requires openness, freedom, the willingness to face risks. It also postulates respect for the human person in the human community. But at the same time it seems to me that it may have serious deficiencies in so far as it may ignore the really deep problems of collective technological and cybernetic society. To assume, for instance, that just because scientific and technological humanism

can theoretically be seen as "perfectly biblical" ("nothing is more biblical than technology," says Père Daniélou) does not alter the profound dehumanization that can in fact take place in technological society (as Daniélou also clearly sees). The fact that men can now theoretically control and direct his own destiny does nothing to mitigate the awful determinism which in practice makes a mockery of the most realistic plans and turns all men's projects diametrically against their professed humanistic aims. The demonic gap between expressed aims and concrete achievements in the conduct of the Viet Nam war, for instance, should be an object lesson in the impotence of technology to come to grips with the human needs and realities of our time.



I have a profound mistrust of all obligatory answers. The great problem of our time is not to formulate clear answers to neat theoretical questions but to tackle the self-destructive alienation of man in a society dedicated in theory to human values and in practice to the pursuit of power for its own sake. All the new and fresh answers in the world, all the bright official confidence in the collectivity of the secular city, will do nothing to change the reality of this alienation. The Marxist world view is the one really coherent and systematic one that has so far come forward to replace the old medieval Christian and classic synthesis. It has in fact got itself accepted, for better or worse, by more than half the human race. And yet, while claiming to offer man hope of deliverance from alienation, it has demanded a more unquestioning, a more irrational and a more submissive obedience than ever to its obligatory answers, even when these are manifestly self-contradictory and destructive of the very values they claim to defend.

The dialogue with Marxism is an obvious necessity. But if in the course of it we simply create a vapid brew of neo-modernist and pseudoscientific optimism I do not see what has been gained, especially if it leaves people passive and helpless in the presence of dehumanizing forces that one seems quite able to identify exactly and cope with effectively. In this sense, the world is certainly a problem. Its idea of itself is extremely ambiguous. Its claims to pinpoint and to solve its own greatest problems are, in my opinion, not very convincing. Its obligatory answers are hardly acceptable. I am not in love with them!

When "the world" is hypostatized (and it inevitably is) it becomes another of those dangerous and destructive fictions with which we are trying vainly to grapple. And for anyone who has seriously entered into the medieval Christian, or the Hindu, or the Buddhist conceptions of *contemptus mundi*, *Mara* and the "emptiness of the world," it will be evident that this means not the rejection of a reality, but the unmasking of an illusion. The world as pure object is something that is not there. It is not a

reality outside us for which we exist. It is not a firm and absolute objective structure which has to be accepted on its own inexorable terms. The world has in fact no terms of its own. It dictates no terms to man. We and our world interpenetrate. If anything, the world exists for us, and we exist for ourselves. It is only in assuming full responsibility for our world, for our lives and for ourselves that we can be said to live really for God. The whole human reality, which of course transcends us as individuals and as a collectivity, nevertheless interpenetrates the world of nature (which is obviously "real") and the world of history (also "real" in so far as it is made up of the total effect of all our decisions and actions). But this reality, though "eternal" and "objective," is not something entirely independent of us, which dominates us inexorably from without through the medium of certain fixed laws which science alone can discover and use. It is an extension and a projection of ourselves and of our lives, and if we attend to it respectfully, while attending also to our own freedom and our own integrity, we can learn to obey its ways and coordinate our lives with its mysterious movements. The way to find the real "world" is not merely to measure and observe what is outside us, but to discover our own inner ground.

For that is where the world is, first of all; in my deepest self. But there I find the world to be quite different from the "obligatory answers." This "ground," this "world" where I am mysteriously present at once to my own self and to the freedoms of all other men, is not a visible objective and determined structure with fixed laws and demands. It is a living and self-creating mystery of which I am myself a part, to which I am myself my own unique door. When I find the world in my own ground, it is impossible for me to be alienated by it. It is precisely the obligatory answers which insist on showing me the world as totally other than myself and my brother, which alienate me from myself and from my brother. Hence I see no reason for our compulsion to manufacture ever newer and more shiny sets of obligatory answers.

The questions and the answers surely have their purpose. We are rational and dialectical beings. But even the best answers are themselves not final. They point to something further which cannot be embodied in a verbal ground. They point to life itself in its inalienable and personal ground. They point to that realm of values which, in the eyes of scientific and positivistic thought, has no meaning. But how can we come to grips with the world except in so far as it is a value, that is to say, in so far as it exists for us?



There remains a profound wisdom in the traditional Christian approach to the world as to an object of choice. But we have to admit that the habitual and mechanical

compulsions of a certain limited type of Christian thought have falsified the true value-perspective in which the world can be discovered and chosen as it is. To treat the world merely as an agglomeration of material goods and objects outside ourselves, and to reject these goods and objects in order to seek others which are "interior" and "spiritual" is in fact to miss the whole point of the challenging confrontation of the world and Christ. Do we really choose between the world and Christ as between two conflicting realities absolutely opposed? Or do we choose Christ by choosing the world as it really is in him, that is to say created and redeemed by him, and encountered in the ground of our own personal freedom and of our love? Do we really renounce ourselves and the world in order to find Christ, or do we renounce our alienated and false selves in order to choose our own deepest truth in choosing both the world and Christ at the same time? If the deepest ground of my being is love, then in that very love itself and nowhere else will I find myself, and the world, and my brother and Christ. It is not a question of either-or but of all-in-one. It is not a matter of exclusivism and "purity" but of

wholeness, wholeheartedness, unity and Meister Eckhart's *Gleichheit* (equality) which finds the same ground of love in everything.



The world cannot be a problem to anyone who sees that ultimately Christ, the world, his brother and his own inmost ground are made one and the same in grace and redemptive love. If all the current talk about the world helps people to discover this, then it is fine. But if it produces nothing but a whole new divisive gamut of obligatory positions and "contemporary answers" we might as well forget it. The world itself is no problem, but we are a problem to ourselves because we are alienated from ourselves, and this alienation is due precisely to an inveterate habit of division by which we break reality into pieces and then wonder why, after we have manipulated the pieces until they fall apart, we find ourselves out of touch with life, with reality, with the world and most of all with ourselves □

THE WORLD OF THE REDNECK

Will D. Campbell

*Bowed by the weight of centuries,
He leans upon his hoe and gazes on the ground.*

Not long ago I was on a program at a leading Southern university where journalists were gathered to discuss the South and its people, their religion, their racial attitudes. The morning was given over to the subject, "The Black Church Today." The speaker was a black man, a former professor of philosophy, holder of earned and honorary degrees, author of several books, a man highly respected in the academic world. His presentation was brilliant and entertaining. It was also filled with the dialect of his heritage and numerous racial anecdotes. (Perhaps this was what made it so entertaining to his all-white audience.) Whatever the reason, he was well received.

The afternoon topic was: "Redneck Religion." I was to be the leader of that discussion. I began by noting that the two titles ranged from one of extreme sophistication to one of extreme vulgarity.

"The Black Church Today" was a title filled with dignity, intellectual sophistication and liberal, academic acceptance. But the other title, "Redneck Religion," was just the opposite. I wondered aloud what the response would have been if the morning subject had been "Nigger Religion," and the afternoon had been given over to a discussion of "The Church of the Culturally Deprived and Increasingly Alienated Caucasian Minority." Of course, I knew already that the response would have been one of offense at this poor taste, this uncouth verbiage, this insult to a struggling minority, despite the fact that the term "redneck" is as filled with emotional intensity as the word "nigger"—though origi-

nally "redneck" was used in all good sport. Likewise, the term "nigger" was used originally in all good sport, with no harm meant at all. No harm, except that in both cases the words were, and are, used to describe a powerless, and to the user, unattractive group. Nevertheless, I had accepted the title assigned to me and proceeded with the discussion.

Like the morning speaker, I spoke often in the idiom of *my* people, the rednecks. But instead of being applauded, I was roundly attacked by the chairman as a fraud, posing as a "know-nothing" because he knew that I had graduated from an Ivy League school and "knows better than to use that kind of grammar." Needless to say, he also knew that the morning speaker had attended some of the world's finest universities and that his degrees and academic accomplishments far exceeded my own.

More recently someone I know quite well was doing a Coffee House Performance before a refined, ecclesiastical group of Episcopalians. He opened the gig with a currently popular country song called "Rednecks, White Socks, and Blue Ribbon Beer." It was received with much hand clapping, foot stomping, and cheering. But the House grew silent with hostility when he announced that his next song would be, "Niggers, Mudguards, and Red Ripple Wine." Moral: *Let's don't make fun of one another's favorite minorities.*

The point of the anecdotes is that both subjects in the symposium and both song titles had to do with two proud and tragic peoples. To argue now as to which is the more proud or tragic—redneck or nigger—would be futile. But a discussion of the origins of the tragedy of each is appropriate.

Much has been said and written of the origin of the tragedy of black people. Serious consideration of the origin of the tragedy of the "redneck" is both lacking and long overdue. (Note that I freely use the term "redneck," when referring to economically poor whites of the South. But note also something that black people have always known: that the camaraderie of the ghetto is camaraderie *only in the ghetto* and the outsider had best not try to join in.)

My colleague on the university program said that he loved his people more than he loved my people. He is a wise and honest man. For one who says he loves another's people more than he loves his own is either sick or lying. Blood is for a fact thicker than water. He said that he was proud of his people. Only the worst bigot would question his right to be proud of his black ancestors. To cite the reasons justifying his pride at this point would be a boring redundancy. But for quite similar reasons I am also proud of my people. I am proud because I know that historically they too were the victims of the seeds of time, seeds which they did not plant, but the harvest of which has been thrust upon them and that they could have done worse. And because I know that without the incessant manipulation by the politics of the privileged they would have done better.

*He leans upon his hoe
And gazes on the ground,*

And as he so leaned and so gazed his posture left that cervical area from the temporal bones to the first dorsal vertebra exposed to the searing, shrivelling, parching rays of the mid-day Southern sun.

And we named him "redneck."

As one who has been through the romance and drama of participation in the Civil Rights Movement of the 'fifties and 'sixties I know how easy it was, and is, to identify with the most obvious minority—in this case the Blacks—and dismiss a less obvious minority—the rednecks, woolhats, peckerwoods, po' whites—as "The Enemy." But there is a real sense in which the redneck has been victimized one step beyond the Black.

It is bad to have your back and your blood taken as happened to the Blacks. But there is a sense in which it is worse to have your *head* taken away. Through it all the Blacks knew what was happening, that they were suffering, and why, and who was causing it. And early in the game they set about the task of doing something about it. But we whites never got their head. The job on the redneck was more extensive because he had his *head* taken away. He still hasn't identified his "enemy."

Perhaps one reason why he hasn't identified the enemy is that he too, historically, was a slave. It was a more sneaky kind of slavery, so the redneck never had to acknowledge it. His was an indentured slavery: "Serve me for seven years and I will set you free." But freedom to what and in what context? Most often it was

a freedom to flounder, to drift, to wander westward in frustrating search of what had been promised him but never delivered—a secure life in a land of plenty.

Certainly I am not saying that all redneck history can be traced back to an indentured servanthood. The fact is that today very little of it can be so traced historically, because white scholars have never dwelt on it. By contrast, blacks created a culture out of their slavery, a history, art, music, literature. The white servant, ashamed to admit that his pregenitors had been brought to these shores in almost the same fashion as the Blacks, would be more apt to tell his grandchild that his fathers landed at Plymouth Rock. Such deception was bound to result in a schizophrenia which may account for more of the deepest hostilities, bigotries, and prejudices of the redneck than any other historical factor. If he were to conceal successfully and deny his own slavery, then the redneck had to dwell heavily on the slavery of others and justify it in some fashion, whether by fact or by fiction.

Who made the redneck

*... dead to rapture and despair,
A thing that grieves not and never hopes?*

No one, Mr. Markham. Though many have tried, they were never completely successful. For our redneck is alive to both rapture and despair. He is capable of deep grief and from one generation to the next he builds hope and passes it on. For the most part, politics has been seeped in his bones and sinew by those whose "politics" brought him over to the "new world" as indentured servants, and so his hopes have been pinned on many stars—from Shiloh to Tom Watson, from Robert E. Lee to Huey Long, and from General Nathan Bedford Forest to General MacArthur, Franklin Roosevelt and George Wallace. But each time his hopes have been appropriated by the gentry class and he has been left yet again stranded

*... stolid and stunned,
A brother to the ox.*

What forces of history have left him so is a matter of speculation. That speculation has ranged from hookworms which sapped his energy and ambition, to Thaddeus Stephens who gave him Jim Crow, and from the Anopheles mosquito which gave him malaria to Jefferson Davis who gave him his Confederate cause. But stranded he has been.

I believe that the South stands where she stands today—neither integrated nor segregated, neither bussed nor unbussed, neither an integral part of the nation nor a nation unto herself—because the redneck has never been a party to any of the alliances which have been formed or the truces which have been written. Maybe this is because he steadfastly clings to the Baal worship of Politics as Messiah to deliver him from his infirmities, or maybe it is because he has been deliberately manipulated

and used by the very persons upon whom he has depended for deliverance. But whatever the reason, the redneck, not the Black, has been largely the unseen and unacknowledged factor when it comes to the solution of what we seem to believe is our most pressing social problem: poverty/race/war. Moreover he has been used by us all as a whipping post. When we think *bigot* it comes out *redneck*. When we think *racist* we think *redneck*.

□ □ □

Yet it is my bias that the redneck is probably the *least* racist of any group in white American society. This is so because racism is not an attitude, a prejudice, a matter of bigotry. Attitudes can and have been changed and many of us have seen them change within ourselves. And though the vestiges of raw, naked prejudice remain in us all, we have somehow been delivered from the agony of it in its most primitive form. *Yet if we are white we are racist*. For racism is the condition in and under which we live. It is the structures in which we live and move and have our being. And we are, or seem to be, powerless to change them. By the accident of my white birth I could have become President, Governor, manager of a major league baseball team or pastor of the Roswell Street Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia. I can and do live where I want to. I can and do participate in a society every facet of which has afforded me the edge. I can change my attitudes. I can be educated out of a mind filled with hate and bigotry. But I cannot stop being a racist. It has nothing to do with how liberal, or radical, or enlightened, or educated or good I am. Nor does it have to do with how reactionary, conservative, ignorant or bad I am. It just has to do with *being white within these structures*. This fact subconsciously threatens us, so we must go on equating racism with redneckism. Yet there continues to be less real racism in redneckism because the redneck participates in the society from a base of considerably less power than the rest of us. Until and unless he is somehow brought in as a party to the truce, there will be no truce.

True, many alliances have been formed. First comes to mind the old paternalism, the *noblesse oblige*, which has now fallen into such disfavor as surely to be gone forever. But it was more than just paternalism. It was a working relationship between two groups, the aristocratic whites and the Blacks. But it failed. The alleged religion of the South was Judaeo-Christian, but the alliance between the upper-class white and the Black failed because the ethics of the Southern aristocracy was not Judaeo-Christian, but Greek and Roman; their politics was not democratic, but Stoic. By that is meant that among the Stoics ran the political conviction that sovereignty inheres *naturally* in the best man. The novelist and essayist Walker Percy put it so well nearly twenty years ago in an article on Southern Stoicism in *The Commonweal*. He reminded us that if this notion of the right to rule

were well-suited to the Empire of the First Century it was remarkably suited to the agrarian South of the last century. And he also reminded us of William Faulkner's Colonel Sartoris, who made himself responsible for his helpless freedmen, and the Lucas Beauchamp who accepted this leadership. This arrangement formed between them a bond which remains even today in a strange and violent sequence of cross currents. The nobility and graciousness which James McBride Dabbs so liked to describe in the "manners" of the South, had its roots, not in Christianity, says Percy, but in the Stoic notion of a hierarchy of creation whereby those at the top behaved justly, decently, and gentlemanly toward those at the bottom they ruled. "Not because they were made in the image of God and were therefore lovable in themselves," Percy insisted, "but because to do them an injustice would be to defile the inner fortress which was oneself."

□ □ □

The Christian doctrine is that God is sovereign, creates no hierarchy and that original sin will not allow those who grab the reigns of governorship and power to rule very long without doing it sooner or latter for their own sake. But in the Stoic notion of a hierarchy there was no place for the rednecks. The Blacks had been owned as property. The obligation to them was apparent to the noble Stoic. The upper-class white took care of his own as duty demanded. The notion of *noblesse oblige* was more than a myth created by historical novelists. Whatever we might say of it today, it was a fact of the time. The black Uncle Tom, also a man of dignity and manners like unto the dignity and manners of the upper-class white, interpreted the kindness and generosity of the aristocratic white to his people, and interpreted the demands of his people, meager though they were, to the white gentry. And between these two groups a sort of truce, which lasted for more than half a century, was drawn. There was peace. There was also stagnation because it was an uneasy peace, caused, I believe, by the fact that a large segment of society was not a factor in the truce—that is, the lower-class white masses, the rednecks.

It is generally assumed that this truce failed because the Blacks were not considered. They were considered, if for no other reason than that they were still useful to the gentry. But the poor white was not even needed and thus there was no Stoic obligation toward him. So several things happened. The white masses got restless. They stood in their cabin doors and watched Colonel Sartoris as he passed out the necessities of life to the Blacks, a house to live in, food, medicine, churches, a piece of land to farm, run money to make the year's crop, help when he got in trouble, while he was left destitute and alone, despite the fact that he might have been on the front lines at Chickamauga, and he resented what he saw. He had no one to help him with his physi-

cal needs, no one to help him meet his psychological needs. So he turned to hating. And it was a religious hate. His religion was not the educated and well-tutored Stocism of the aristocracy. His was a vague, varying and ill-defined folk religion, a combination of old wives tales, Indian lore, and half-remembered biblical passages passed around between visits from the circuit riding Methodist or Baptist preachers who came through on their way from Philadelphia to Natchez. Added to this was what he learned during the Civil War years.

The gentry still had a problem. The Black could not vote, at least not after President Rutherford B. Hayes came on the scene. Voting was not a part of the alliance. Nor, for the most part, was school a part of the alliance. While the redneck did not have those other things the alliance provided, he did have the vote. Since the Black could not vote, he did not need to be feared. Because the redneck could vote he was always a potential threat to the alliance between the Colonel and Uncle Lucas. A trump card was needed. There was one available and it was freely used.

The trump card was the black male, the poll tax, and disenfranchised women. Again in the Stoic tradition, women were no more apt to see the mantle of rulership fall on them than were slaves. They too were at the bottom in the hierarchy of creation. (While Christianity has had its problems with equal rights for women it has been at least ambivalent whereas the Stoic was of a single mind. In the time and place where he said it St. Paul's statement, "In Christ there is neither male nor female," was so controversial and so against the mainstream that we can almost forgive him for saying, "Let women be quiet in church.") But the point is that politics was man's business. And over liquors and cigars after dinner, or at the plantation commissary or cross-roads store, it was an easy matter to figure out a system whereby the voting redneck could be convinced that if he insisted on the egalitarian activities of the Populist movement or the Farmer's Alliance, his daughters would be ravished, in mass, by Black Bucks. In that wise the one advantage the poor white had, the vote, was negated and turned against him, by his own markings at the ballot box.

But this uneasy truce between the white aristocracy and the Negro had to crack, and it did. The two parties of the truce went their separate ways, the Uncle Tom to the Courts and the Civil Rights Movement, the aristocracy to sit tight-lipped and watch his world crumble around him.

What does all that have to do with the religion of the redneck? Everything. His religion has been and still is virtually synonymous with his politics and economics. There seems to be little doubt that it was "Christian" leadership which provided the morale which sustained the Civil War. Without that "Christian" leadership the War would have been a lost cause years before Appomattox. And one of the most tragic things about the institutional religion of the redneck is that it developed as *an institution* during the years of a defensive self-

consciousness about slavery when the South was living under the cloud of the threat and then the reality of war. Previously, the aristocracy possessed the ever so respectable steeples of Calvin and Henry VIII to preside over their altar fires and tea parties. So the Blacks who were "converted" received their instruction in the faith out of a sophisticated brand of orthodoxy. The poor white, scattered up and down the hollows and eddies of the rural South, most often had the quarterly or semi-annual visit of the circuit riders who were in fact cultured and well educated gentlemen. But between their visits, their religious experience was based largely on the half-remembered Bible verses, old wives tales, mixed with the Indian and other folklore mentioned above.

□ □ □

Nothing has been so grossly exaggerated as the religiosity of nineteenth century rural South. It simply did not exist. The climb to identity with the institutionalizing of *that* religion began and largely ended during the latter years of that century and the early decades of the twentieth. Later, the brush arbors gave way to white frame Baptist and Methodist buildings at virtually every crossroad, and steeples began to emerge in every town announcing to the world that redneck religion was on the way. In the towns, the peckerwoods, ridgerunners and woolhats and rednecks became what Faulkner made into a chronicle in his saga of Snopes. The Snopes' became the storekeepers and bankers and landlords and church leaders in the fashion so well described by Faulkner and like that Empire of the First Christian Century, it began to erode and rot away.

The rednecks built their towns in the manner described by Faulkner in one of his novels about the Snopes':

Ours a town established and decreed by people neither Catholics nor Protestants nor even athiests but incorrigible nonconformists. Nonconformists, not just to everybody else, but to each other in mutual accord. A nonconformism defended and preserved by descendants whose ancestors hadn't quitted home and security for a wilderness in which to find freedom of thought as they claimed and oh yes, believed, but to find freedom in which to be incorrigible and unreconstructable Baptists and Methodists, not to escape from tyranny, as they claimed and believed, *but to establish one*.

But before the rednecks of the mid-nineteenth century became the Snopes' of the twentieth a lot of things had to happen. We should also note at this point that there are now *two* definitions of redneck. The one I have been discussing is the underprivileged white of mill town and rural South. But there now emerges into power the middle-class redneck of William Faulkner's stories about Snopes. These are the ones the sophisticates use today to identify anyone with "hick" characteristics, or who doesn't behave according to liberal, educated and middle-class norms. The guy who drives a Grand Pix with lots of chrome to the country club, and burps or crepitates at a seated dinner party. Or a President of the United

States who toys with his partner's undergarments on the White House dance floor, as recounted by Robert Sherrill. I would insist upon a distinction between my honest-to-God poverty-stricken brothers and sisters in the boon-docks and hollers and the "successful" Snopes' described by William Faulkner or the political slob described by Robert Sherrill, and I am willing to admit that not all rednecks are financially poor. But the religion of both groups has the same basic root. And that root which provided the branch and arose to steeped heights went deeply into the soil of slavery and war. In short, it was a religion founded on violence.

□ □ □

Because the South had limited industrial resources the success of the Confederacy depended on the degree of intestinal fortitude developed by the man up the creek from the plantation owner's mansion, or by the overseer who was raising a regiment—that is, the poor white. For the first time since indentured servanthood the redneck was needed. But he had first to be convinced that he was a member of God's chosen people. So the church of the aristocracy went to work.

Already that church had settled the rightness of slavery. Now they had to create a religious community based on war in order to keep that war going. The Church has always had trouble distinguishing between nationalism and faithfulness to God, so all wars have had their priests to preside over the killings. Usually the religious community is established already and sides with Caesar without question. In the case of the redneck his religious community was not yet established. Since it was not, the recruitment for war and the imparting of religious instruction were simultaneous.

There is ample documentation for what happened to accomplish those two things in James Silver's *Confederate Morale and Church Propaganda*: "All nations at this late period must be born amid the storm of revolution and must win their way to a place in history through the baptism of blood," said Bishop Stephen Elliott of Savannah, Georgia in the despondent early days of 1862. James W. Miles of Charleston saw a "Divine Providence directing, with a steady and intelligent hand, the Confederacy, commissioned by God to contend for and illustrate great principles intimately connected with the progress of humanity." To the Reverend J. Jones of Rome, Georgia, it was a sacred war: "If the rescue of the holy sepulchre from the infidel Moslem induced three million of men to lay their bones on the East, shall we not willingly contend to snatch the word of God from the modern infidel?" Reverend Henry Tucker, professor of belles-lettres at Mercer University went before the Georgia legislature and proclaimed that "God is in the war. He brought it upon us." Charleston's Thomas Smythe urged that "by the peculiar Providence of God, the South had been given the high and holy keeping above all other conservators of the Bible." Bishop

Thomas Atkinson of North Carolina thundered that "We should go into this war feeling as did David, that he who does his duty to his country is but doing part of his duty to his God. To fight is now a religious duty." To Episcopal Henry Pierce of Mobile, "Our cause is just, nay, a holy one." Again, Thomas Smythe wrote that "God had entrusted to the Southern people an organized system of slave labor for the benefit of the world and a blessing to themselves while imparting civil, social, and religious blessings to their slaves . . . God now spake as with a voice from Heaven saying, 'Come out of the Union, my people.' Then came up from the millions of hearts the shouts, 'Go forward, God is with us of a truth.'"

Silver makes the point well. The cause of the Confederacy would have soon crumbled without the united and ecumenical efforts of its clergy providing the needed morale. Almost unanimously they identified Abraham Lincoln with the king of Egypt and Jefferson Davis was another Moses, leading his people to certain triumph.

Perhaps never before had there been so much evangelizing in the midst of battle. And it is this fact, I believe, that accounts for the rapid increase in church membership during the Jim Crow era. This fact accounts for the development of institutionalized religiosity in the region not present until *after* the Civil War was over.

□ □ □

The war was over—lost. A new religious community had been born which had received its theological training from some of the finest, most educated, minds of the day, when, during the war, the redneck had tasted a close association with the gentry for the first time since his fathers were brought over as indentured servants in the colonies. The gentry had left their religious markings on him as they had not bothered to do when their fathers had been indentured. Now the redneck was left to do with those markings what he would. And he would do much. He would span the breadth of Dixie with one of the most powerful religious machines ever known in the history of Christianity. He would build church houses, form congregations, split congregations to form new ones. Hundreds of denominations and sects were founded, then split with each division becoming even larger than the original. He would develop an evangelistic method with a fervor and zeal which even the hardest of hearts could not resist. He would take the antics of the aristocracy—card playing, dancing, drinking whiskey, fiddling and frolicking, and messing around on Saturday night—and make of them cardinal sins. He would build the biggest and most expensive theological schools with a tithe exacted from a people who often could not afford bread. He would demand the most rigid fundamentalist teachings of his young preachers and missionaries. He would become the most patriotic of all Americans, fighting her wars, defending her most reactionary political values and institutions, shunning the new, clinging to everything old. He would become the

champion of The Faith and The Nation for he would virtually equate the two. He would stand off from the mainstream of society with a suspicion bordering on open hostility.

And all of this would be an honest and basic faith. It would be true commitment. It would be belief in an unquestioning form. It would survive major theological movements as if they had never existed. Theological liberalism did not even touch him. His preachers heard of something called "Modernism" but that was merely something to preach against. His would be a rigid, individualistic faith with no trust in the Social Gospel movement even at the time of his most severe economic crisis. His response to the "God-is-Dead" theology would be 250,000 bumper stickers printed and distributed by the United Klans of America and found on thousands of pickup trucks around the South saying, "My God is not dead, sorry about yours": Signed "UKA"—which, one must say, even in the halls of contemporary theological schools seems to be an appropriate response.

It was and is a pietistic, individualistic, literalist kind of Biblicism. But let us make one thing strong and clear: he *believed it*. While others might argue the scientific impossibility of the sun standing still, he would calmly state that a God who is big enough to create the sun is big enough to stop it from moving without the world burning to bits—which again, I must say, seems to me to be a reasonable enough kind of deduction. And if a skeptic had some questions about the Jonah story, his response was that the Bible said a whale swallowed a man and that was enough to know. His teachers had been good teachers and he had learned his lesson well.

And then, just as he had been driven to the land by the bad faith of the rich, thousands, and then millions of his number were driven off the land by those who came to *help* him. Dressed in the sheep's clothing of T.V.A., A.A.A., and other New Deal agricultural programs which might have been spawned with good intentions for him but which were soon appropriated by the gentry and almost as soon exploited to the point that the end result was the current curse of agri-business with no place nor need for him. So yet again he was left stranded, this time without the hoe to lean on, only the automobile factories, the steel mills, the shipyards, the welfare lines. And as he was driven off the land with the increase of industrialism, the rise of the technological era and the parallel growth of agri-business he took his religion with him. In Pittsburgh and Gary, Chicago, Detroit and Dayton he would harbor a deep suspicion of Yankee Baptists and Methodists and would desert their names and join the over-night sects.

□ □ □

And such faith, such commitment, such refusal to enter the mainstream of society, such belief, such devotion to God and Country are not without precedent in the history of religion. Certainly a religion mingled with hate was not without precedent.

I believe the point can be made that the *original* redneck was not the southern farmer leaning against his hoe, was not the French peasant of painter or poet. The original redneck from a religious standpoint was the sects and cults among Old Testament Judaism. (I am well aware that the term "Old Testament Jews" covers a lot of territory. One cannot generalize much about Old Testament Jews any more than he can about rednecks, or Blacks, or contemporary Jews or Southern Baptists or Catholics.) The religious expression of our redneck historically was mingled with piety and with hate. The two have gone hand in hand, piety and hate. The same thing is true of a large segment of Old Testament Judaism. And there were adequate historical reasons in both cases.

Have you ever been to a Klan rally and heard the mournful sounds of "The Old Rugged Cross" sung by ten thousand voices as the faithful march around the thirty-foot cross, hurling their personal little lighted torches at the base, soaked with gasoline and diesel fuel until it is lapping its tongues of fire to the very sky above? And have you heard their prayers, "Give us men, strong men, of courage and devotion to resist the Devil and His advocates"? And have you heard such spirited psalms as:

*You niggers listen now,
I'm gonna tell you how
To keep from being tortured
When the Klan is on the prowl.
Stay at home at night,
Locks your door up tight,
Don't go outside or you will find
Them crosses a burning bright.*

Or the equally spirited singing of:

*Move them niggers north.
Move them niggers north.
If they don't like our Southern ways,
Move them niggers north.*

Perhaps you have never had that experience. But most of us have heard these words:

*If I forget you, Oh Jerusalem, let my right hand
whither away. Let my tongue cling to the roof of
my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not
set Jerusalem above my highest joy. Remember,
Oh Lord, against the people of Edom, the day of
Jerusalem's fall when they said, 'Down with it,
down to its very foundation.' Oh Babylon, Babylon,
the destroyer. Happy is the man who repays you
for all you did to us. Happy is he who shall seize
your children and dash them against the rocks.*

No. That is not part of a Klan ritual. It is part of the 137th Psalm. And the fall which the Psalmist was lamenting was so very important as to be effecting the lives of all of us today. The hate and piety of the Psalmist was not without reason.

Likewise:

*If I forget you, Oh Atlanta, Vicksburg, Oxford,
Donelson, remember, Oh Lord against the Yankees,
the night they drove old Dixie down! when Sher-
man said, "Raze it, raze it, burn it down to the
ground!" Happy shall be he who takes your little
Yankee babies and slams them against Stone
Mountain.*

The subject under discussion at this point is not right, wrong; justice, injustice; good, bad. The subject under discussion is human tragedy. Because of the nature of tragedy, the subject of the latter Psalm also continues to effect the lives of all of us.

□ □ □

Perhaps no book ever written is filled with more potential anti-Semitic material than the Old Testament, because it is an honest book, written by and about themselves. Perhaps the Assyrians were just as bad, but it isn't expressed. It doesn't come through. The very people who wrote the books were the elect, the "called of God", yet make themselves out to be true rednecks—contentious, forever murmuring, grumbling, hating, never satisfied. And in their acts of worship it often came through.

Especially was it true of some of their cults and sects, what might be called the Pentecostals of Israel. The Recabites, for example, described in Jeremiah 35: real stand-offs: have nothing to do with anything new; don't drink wine; don't build houses, plant fields and vineyards. Real kooks, oddballs. And the mainstream of their society saw them as the rednecks they were. Yet they really did believe something, and they were faithful to it and Jeremiah quoted the Lord as saying, "Because you have kept the command of your ancestors, and obeyed all his instructions," stupid though they might have been, "you will be blessed." And the Nazarites, defended by Amos, likewise standoffish but devout in what they believed; again, the Pentecostals of Israel, the rednecks. All part of Israel, called of God, nonetheless suspicious, contentious, distrustful, grumbling.

But the point is important enough to repeat that in both cases, the redneck of Israel and the redneck of Dixie, there was adequate historical reason for their discontent. They believed something enough to hate and kill about. They were not lukewarm, a quality described by the writer of Revelations as being worthy only of being spewed out of the mouth of God.

But a more important point still is that it was from them came the Messiah. It was through the likes of them, the most unlikely of all, that God brought forth the Christ. We think, "how interesting it is that our Lord was born in poverty, in such humble circumstances, not in a motif befitting a king!" A more interesting thing is that he was born among this family of haters.

Most of us suspect that if Christ came back today he would once again be born among the lowly—Black or hippie. But wouldn't it shake us up a bit if he came today and was born into a Klan family!

"Hey man, Jesus is back."

"Yeah? Who'd he look like? Ralph Abernathy or Abbie Hoffman?"

"He looked like Robert Shelton. He's wearing a robe and a hood!"

Surely now, you are not reading words glorifying the

Ku Klux Klan. What you are reading is an affirmation of the absolute sovereignty of God.

How quickly we make heroes. And how quickly we choose enemies. And how slow we are to see the tragedy of history and to come to terms with that part of it which is ours.

We are again in a time of ridicule against the redneck for starting what he calls his "Christian Academies" in the South—the little frame buildings dotted about the countryside or located in church houses to avoid integration. How we look down our liberal noses at such blatant bigotry! But dare we liberal, educated, cultured whites—dare we, talk about Christian academies? Who founded Emory and Vanderbilt and Mercer and Duke and Sewanee, or Yale and Harvard? Here are the *Christian* academies. And what have they stood for historically? It is they who have trained and *educated* the managers, the owners, the soldiers and the rulers of this present world. If there is any logic and any truth at all in the earlier paragraph of this essay which says the redneck is less racist because he operates from a base of little power then it takes no genius to see that these Christian academies are more racist, teach and carry out more violence and repression in one day than all the pitiful little "Christian academies" springing up in cowpastures will in a generation.

□ □ □

What then shall we say of our redneck brothers and sisters? Again, I hope that you do not judge this a simple glorification or romanticizing of either the redneck or the Klan. What I am trying to say is that the alleged redneck is a crucial factor to the social problem of race/poverty/war. I am trying to say that he, too, has been manipulated, used and abused, and that what makes a man like George Wallace so dangerous is that about ninety percent of what he says is true, factually and historically accurate. I am also trying to say that the redneck, even in this post-industrial, technological age, has hung on to a scrap of individualism. In this commitment, this dogged determination, this recalcitrant, complaining, murmuring, seething hostility and seeming helplessness, there may yet emerge deliverance from that body of death in the race and poverty which stalks and haunts and infects our land. If not, not; and death's shroud will blanket us all. What form the potential deliverance could take I have no notion. No predictions. Only the sign of Jonah.

So I leave you these words of the poet with which we began:

*How will the future reckon with this man?
How answer his brute question in that hour
When whirlwinds of rebellion shake all shores?
How will it be with kingdom and with kings,
With those who shaped him to the thing he is,
When this dumb terror shall rise to judge the world?*

And judge it, my brothers and sisters, he will. More precisely, perhaps he is judging it at this very hour. □

BOOKS FROM KATALLAGETE—Be Reconciled

A large number of you have asked. So here is a listing of the books which have been published from previous materials carried in *Katallagete*. We do not have facilities for sending the books to you. They may be ordered through your bookstore or directly from the publisher.

Paulist/Newman Press. Paramus, New Jersey 07652

Will D. Campbell and James Y. Holloway. *Up To Our Steeples in Politics* (1970) \$1.95.

Campbell and Holloway (eds). "... *And the criminals with Him.*" Luke 23:33: A first-person book about prisons (1973). \$1.25.

Campbell and Holloway (eds). "*Callings . . .*": Sixteen men and women ponder the jobs they do and what they believe they are called to be in the world . . . and the difference between the two. Contributors include Jacques Ellul, James G. Branscome, Vincent Harding, Matthew Kelty, Julius Lester, Heslip Lee, Diane Nash, Robert Coles, Ann Beard, Vine Deloria, Jr., Terrance Todd, Edgar Z. Friedenberg, Steven NICHESON, J. Louis Martyn, Campbell and Holloway. (1974) \$1.95

Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 255 Jefferson Avenue, S. E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49502

James Y. Holloway (editor). *Introducing Jacques Ellul*. Contributors include Holloway, James G. Branscome, James Douglas, Christopher Lasch, Julius Lester, Stephen Rose, William Stringfellow, Gabriel Vahanian, John Wilkinson, and an introductory word from Ellul. (1970) \$2.45

Campbell and Holloway (eds). *The Failure and the Hope: Essays of Southern Churchmen*. Contributors include Walker Percy, John Howard Griffin, Vincent Harding, Ann Beard, Thomas Merton, James G. Branscome, Fannie Lou Hamer, Pete Young, Campbell and Holloway. (1972). \$3.95

the committee of southern churchmen

Post Office Box 2215
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37214

Return Postage Guaranteed
Address Correction Requested

PERIODICALS ROOM



48 22901 AID SRLSP 0
ALDERMAN LIBRARY
SERIALS I PERIODICALS
UNIV OF VA
CHARLOTTESVILLE

VA 22901

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