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KATALLAGETE



SPRING 1978

Cape Town

Dear friends,

The banning of Theo, Beyers, Cedric, Brian, Peter, David and Donald and the Christian Institute itself--plus, what is worse, the detention of so many of our friends--has become world news. Our Christmas letter was being prepared at the time that action was taken against us. Now we are trying again, after some weeks of confusion and readjustment, having lost many addresses among the office records.

We wish to thank all who have rallied around us so magnificently, with expressions of love and support--letters, 'phone calls, telegrams, personal visits and gifts. We have been quite overwhelmed by the wealth of friendship but are finding it impossible to write to everyone personally. Please accept this as a personal expression of our appreciation.

We are very aware that the fellowship of Christians continues and is, in fact, strengthened by adversity. It becomes clearer, daily, that Christ's way is not any easy road and that we must be prepared to suffer for our faith. God grant us all the strength and courage to face the days ahead of us.

With love from us all.

Helen Kotze and family.

WHAT DOES A BANNING ORDER MEAN?

The banning order on Theo states that the Minister of Justice is satisfied that he engaged in activities which endangered or were calculated to endanger the maintenance of public order and in consequence would be restricted until 31st October 1982.

These restrictions (there is not space to mention all), include: Theo's inability to leave the magisterial district of Wynberg, which is one of a number of magisterial districts in Cape Town. This means he may not travel into the city, e.g. If he needs to visit his dentist, he requires special permission. He may not enter any Black, "Coloured", or Indian area, even within the Wynberg district. He must report every Wednesday morning to the officer in charge at the Claremont police station.

(continued on inside back cover)

KATALLAGETE

Journal of the Committee of Southern Churchmen

Spring 1978

Volume 6, Number 4

EDITOR

JAMES V. HOLLOWAY

KATALLAGETE
Box 2307 - College Station
Berea, Kentucky 40404

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ABOUT THIS ISSUE. . .

“The American vice is explanation.” So writes an intelligent participant in American culture.

The point is well taken. What is there to “explain” about the banning and worse in South Africa? Our friends are in trouble: Theo Kotze, Beyers Naude, the women and men of the Christian Institute of South Africa; others, black and white, we do not know as friends but confess as sisters and brothers in Christ. Banned. Jailed. Some dead. All quite proper and legal. Caesar does what Caesar does. Take the banning of Theo and Beyers and the others. It jars the memory. Luther was banned. Our recollections conjure fiendish and conspiratorial actions by a Pope (his name and number now forgotten) and the last (or was it the last?) Holy Roman Emperor: all quite proper and legal.

So what is new “about this issue”? To us, the comfortable and well-read, the novelty is the legal stratagem: *banning*. A sixteenth century device in “our world come of age.” But “the American vice is explanation.” What needs “explanation” about the use of *banning* against Theo and Beyers and the others? Nothing. Absolutely nothing. Theo and Beyers, the Christian Institute of South Africa, the others, “did” nothing that needs “explanation.” They are witnesses to Christ’s reconciliation, described in, say, Galatians 2:18-21 or 3:26-29 or Second Corinthians 5:14-21. Nor does the action of the government of South Africa require “explanation.” Caesar does what he does.

Without “explanation” (or with it) we comfortable and well-read write to the President and the Honorable Andrew Young to protest the banning of Theo and Beyers and the others. Rightly so. The President and the Ambassador have before them the same tons of paper

“explanations” we have before us, including the “free world’s” official and private support of the government of South Africa, which is to say apartheid, which is to say, the banning of Theo and Beyers and the Christian Institute, and the others. What can the President and the Ambassador “do”? — assuming the best about their intentions? They are trapped by their Office, by grand strategies in politics, finance, economics. Otherwise, they would have conscripted time on television, and with the whines or intense speech patterns each have mastered, summoned from us a deluge of letters and telegrams, protest marches, prayer breakfasts of the second-born and spirit-filled, demanding . . . FREE THEO AND BEYERS NOW! TELL THE WORLD ABOUT THOSE IN PRISON AND THOSE WHO HAVE DIED! The President and the Ambassador have not, cannot and will not summon our help because they cannot use it, do not need it and probably don’t even want it. They can do only what their Office dictates and they will do what they do with the “American vice of explanations.” We embarrass grand strategy on politics, finance and economics. Yes! Let us continue our letters — if for no other reason than the President and the Ambassador cannot and will not make use of them and may endure a moment of personal awkwardness when their Office dictates that the letters be deep-sixed. Reason enough to write the letters. But let us who write remember — and perhaps remind the President and the Ambassador — that banning is banning: in Central and South America, the Gulag Archipelago, the “free world” or Southeast Asia. All quite proper and legal.

We must be careful here. This line of thinking must not become the *mea culpa* to lift from us the reality of what is happening to Theo and Beyers and the others. A few weeks ago a newspaper editor refugee from the banning testified before the United Nations Security

Council that South Africa is on the brink of racial holocaust. About the same time the DRC *Africa News*, the leading journal of South Africa’s Reformed Church, sanctioned the banning with an overlay of pious unction that we comfortable and well-read know so well from experience: “We accept that the authorities must have had sound reasons for taking such drastic action”; the faithful in Christ must “pray for those in authority who bear a grave responsibility in these matters and carry the burden of maintaining a just and equitable future for our people.”

No. Diversions are not acceptable. But perhaps our concern for the banning will be heightened, made more precise, if it bursts memories about the American way of banning. With *citations*, not “the American vice of explanations.” (After all, what happened at Kent State in Ohio was the *citation* that woke up some white folk, north and south, to what happened at Orangeburg, South Carolina, a year earlier.) Some of us were involved one way or another, so we begin with the *citation* of the banning of Koinonia in the 1950’s — the Koinonia acres within easy range by bicycle or pickup or telephone from Plains, Georgia. The banning of Koinonia in the 1950’s — legal and para-legal not unlike the banning of the Christian Institute of South Africa. Koinonia was not legally confiscated. But insurance was dropped; seed, feed, tractor parts and repairs were not available locally; the school board turned their heads to the children of Koinonia families, and Plains, Georgia remained Plains, Georgia. Injunctions, threats and then actual shootings into their buildings forced Koinonia to move under cover of night their summer camp for white and black children to Highlander Folk School in Tennessee. Highlander: itself later banned and their property confiscated by the sovereign State of Tennessee. All quite proper and legal. Who remembers the banning of Owen Lattimore, John Henry Falk (now playing out “Hee Haw!”), John Stewart Service and the others during McCarthy’s domination of Truman’s second term and Ike’s first, barely two decades ago? Or Mrs. Hamer, Ed King, Medgar Evers, Jonathan Daniels, James Reeb, the babies at the Sixteenth Avenue Baptist Church in Birmingham, and all the other individuals and organizations in Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, Kentucky, California, New York, in recent memory? Malcolm? Martin? Even the Ku Klux Klan: disclosures of the activities of the FBI during the past twenty years? No good to say that this sort of thing is no longer “all quite proper and legal.” It

happened then. It can happen again. Lincoln suspended *habeas corpus*. American Indians on reservations; Japanese Americans in concentration camps. That Caesar does what Caesar does is part of our legacy.

“About This Issue” is what *Katallagete* has been about in the thirteen years of its life. It is the issue of Christ and Caesar and the Grand Inquisitor all over again. How could it be otherwise? It concerns what Christians ought and ought not expect from Caesar — governed by Catholics, Baptists, Episcopalians, Quakers, the second-born or the spirit-filled. We agree with those who insist that discriminate judgements are necessary. The legal and political apparatus of the United States is not the same as the legal and political apparatus of the the Union of South Africa, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, or the Republics of Argentina, Paraguay or Indonesia, or the People’s Republic of China. We know all about that. We share with everyone, including Solzhenitsyn, the concern about relative justice and discriminate judgements on political processes and “human rights.” But there is another judgement that suffers no qualification by the Christian: governments are governments; Caesars are not Christ, whether the Caesars are Baptists, Quakers, Presbyterians, Catholics, Methodists, re-born, spirit-filled, prayer breakfasters or Christian Marxists. The judgement is fundamental in Scripture. The history of the Church gives off hints. Caesar is not Christ nor Christ’s Body. As Caesar, the State is tempted to become “christ” because the power at his disposal is so great that he seeks to make it total. All quite proper and legal. With the Christian’s sanction if possible; without it if necessary. Luke 4:1-13. For the Christian to make incessant demands on Caesar serves only to heighten Caesar’s temptation to become total, to be truth. Where, then, is the Christian witness?

Another memory comes forward as *citation* “about this issue.” It is always a questionable affair to cite one’s own text. We do so now because we are convinced that Theo and Beyers and the others would encourage this bit of self-examination. Remember that the following incidents took place during times when liberals remained euphoric about the success of the civil rights legislation. The American dilemma was then and remains today the American tragedy. □

JYH

. . . AND PLAINFIELD

To repeat: evidence increases by the hour that we in this nation have decided to *solve* the race problem by police methods, that is, using the very methods by which we sought but failed to *control* it for over a century. Nashville, Jackson, Baton Rouge, Atlanta, especially Houston. And now Newark. And *Plainfield*. All quite proper and legal. One cannot but be reminded of the "Enabling Act," whereby Hitler quite properly and legally consolidated his control over the German nation on March 23, 1933, the German Reichstag voting 441 to 84 in favor of this "Law For Removing the Distress of People and Nation."

The truth is that our racism is bringing us to the brink of a police state in the dress of democratic constitutionalism and liberalism. It is happening here. Most recently and most obviously on July 19th. In Plainfield, New Jersey, the State Police and National Guard, in battle dress, bayonets and small-arms drawn, made a house-to-house search of a Negro ghetto. They had no search warrants but the action was nonetheless "legal": the liberal Democratic governor of New Jersey had declared a "state of emergency." That homes were ransacked and locked doors smashed is the testimony of newsmen, T. V. pictures and lawyers for the American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey.

July 19th was also the day that the House of Representatives in Washington, D. C. responded to the despair in the Negro ghettos by passing an anti-riot law. This would make it a crime against the nation to cross state lines with the *intent* to incite a riot, and then to perform an act which did so incite. The bill passed by a vote of 341 to 70, after and probably because the Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Emanuel Celler, warned, "the basic disorder is the discontent of the Negro, disenchantment as to promises made but not fulfilled, the dreary slow pace by which he achieves equality. This bill . . . would arouse his anger and frustration more deeply. His leaders ask for better housing for their fellows. You offer them jails. His leaders ask for better facilities for education. You read them a riot act. They ask for decent living. You feed them a drastic statute. They ask for more employment. You give

jobs in prison garb. You cannot fight fire with fire. You can only fight fire with water, you can only fight the distress of the Negro with the lotion of human kindness, with constructive and not negative action."

Since this journal began two years ago, we have tried to say that the sure consequence of relying exclusively on law and politics to resolve America's racism will be a confirmation of that racism *in* and *by* our legal and political system. It is happening here: on July 19th, when the State Police and the National Guard of New Jersey without warrants but quite legally entered, searched, and ransacked the homes of a certain category of citizens who had been charged with no crime and whose distinguishing activity was that their color restricted them to the American ghettos of squalor and despair. It is happening here: on July 19th, when the House of Congress representing the people of the fifty states of this nation voted 341 to 70 a bill clearly racist in origins and directions, it announced to all black citizens: "By a proportion of 341 over 70, this nation holds the Negro responsible for the 'race' problem. Herewith be informed of how the citizens of this nation intend to deal with it and to judge you through our political system."

All quite proper and legal. And just the day before, the Rules Committee of that same House of Representatives had indulged itself in a paroxysm of racist humor about a "civil 'rats'" bill—a measure designed to appropriate \$20. million a year for two years to rid the ghettos of rats. Committees of the House had taken testimony that at least 14,000 people a year, mostly babies in their cribs, are bitten, sometimes fatally, by rats. The following day the paroxysm continued, and the House of Representatives refused, 207 to 176, to even consider the bill. \$40. million for two years was an extravagance in the face of this nation's determination to persist in the war against human beings in Southeast Asia, a war that was costing upwards of \$2. billion a month. The debate on this vote, and the vote itself, are required subjects for the meditations of all Americans. Along with Nashville, Jackson, Baton Rouge, Atlanta, Houston, and now Newark. And Plainfield.

(KATALLAGETE, SUMMER 1967)

THE CULT OF IRREVERENCE: THE STRETCH

David R. Tiffany

Mud everywhere. A rotting, rain-slick plank for a footbridge. Unredeemable, rusting junk on the hillside. The rear end of a '57 Dodge, the burned out, windowless hull of a battered '51 Chevy half-ton, the porcelain-white shadows of former washing machines. An old yellow schoolbus behind the unpainted shack. The odor of burning coal permeating the cold, damp mist of a gloomy, late-afternoon Kentucky winter day. Garbage thrown from the front porch, too cold to stink and too fresh to rot. Lean, mean, hungry dogs riding shotgun. . . .

The weather in Kentucky is not forgiving in the winter. There is a penetrating, damp cold that seeps through the cracks in a home and causes a person's joints to moan. Kentucky is a hauntingly beautiful state with some of the richest farmland in the world, yet, a few miles away, some of the worst poverty in America. There is opportunity in Kentucky. Industry has come in, and the coal counties have boomed. However, there are still some 300,000 homes that have no indoor plumbing. Homes where families come together in the living room to sit by the King of Heat and make the winter stand. . . .

Perhaps it is depressing that there are so many uninsulated shacks in Kentucky that people are forced to live in.

But perhaps it is good. The winter stand is a time of communion; people come together and talk. It is a tradition that some of us have seen pass. It is a time to listen to the wisdom of another generation and visit with people like Mrs. Bird People who have "arrived"

I came to Mrs. Bird one afternoon years ago and found an energetic, strong seventy-year-old matriarch of an impoverished rural stretch of State Route. She was to become my spiritual advisor; I came to realize that she was a person who had been through more of life than I could ever imagine. That afternoon, with a few sons and grandchildren sitting around the dark interior of that shack, she told me the story behind the pictures on the walls. Some of her twelve children had "done good" — they had joined the great pilgrimage to the North and had found jobs in the mills and foundries. They were the servants of industry. Some had stayed and brought a new generation of children to the stretch of that State Route. Before he died a few months before from pneumonia, her alcoholic son George and his bastard son Jess had lived in the old, boarded up school bus out back. Now, Jess sat beside his grandmother stoking the fires. Beside Jess sat Ralph, a peculiar reminder so common to the homes of the rural folk of that part of the country — the child who remains a testimony to the once endemic scourge of rubella. Ralph sat in the corner, born during the wrong year of the Depression, unable to talk and unable to hear.

DAVID R. TIFFANY is a carpentry and cabinetmaking instructor in an orphanage in Ecuador.

I had come to the house on that first occasion to see if Jess might be interested in getting involved in the recreation program. It was funded by a nearby college as a community outreach program. I had gone to the stretch to develop a program to deal with the nearly universal school dropout rate of the area. There was an urgency in working with Jess before it was too late, that is, when he turned sixteen.

Both Jess and another boy sitting across the room expressed an interest in the program. Jess did not come into the program — he dropped out of school that spring and started “doing a lot of drugs.” He ran away from home, got busted for car theft and drugs, and wound up in the care of the state. I did get to know the other boy, Johnny. He was another of Mrs. Bird’s grandchildren, and he opened up that afternoon and talked about the past that I felt Jess would have rather forgotten.

Johnny told me that he had grown up in the mountains outside of Hazard and had moved down out of the mountains when he was in the fifth grade. He stated that he had “gone to school one day, and I saw all them niggers there, and I wasn’t going to school with no bunch of niggers. So I dropped out.” He was twenty-one, and I had the impression that he wanted the jewels that dangled beyond his reach, yet cognizant of the fact that the only job he had ever held was hanging burley. There is something very sobering about spreading one’s feet four feet apart, on two four-by-fours, twenty feet high in the heat and humidity of a Kentucky tobacco barn, covered with sweat and bugs, and realizing that this is the only job one is qualified to do. And there are only four good weeks of work a year. . . .

I went away for the summer and later heard that Johnny had shot down at pointblank range, and in the back, a fourteen-year-old girl because she said she did not love him. Nobody was surprised.

I had ridden my bicycle down the stretch of road many times before I first visited Mrs. Bird, but I had never thought that the stretch was a separate spiritual as well as geographical entity. I never thought of the stretch as a part of the culture of poverty, separate in its bleakness, but merely as one of a number of areas around the county that had an abundance of dogs, dirty, sassy-faced kids, and shacks that were hardly inhabitable. The stretch never had any of that poor-but-proud look to me. I did realize that people had to live there, and there was no romanticizing that. The more I came to know the stretch, the more I realized that it was a death

ship. It was a place where one lived by doing the very worst jobs or a place for those who carried a card of a different nature and lived on the dole. Life had been redefined here, and it was a culture that took and did not give back.

I was initially drawn to the stretch not because of any altruistic or missionary response, but because I thought that life was really lived and celebrated there. Although I had been past the stretch many times before, I came to think about the stretch after I had bought an old pickup truck and was running it down the stretch to blow the carbon out of the cylinders and see what it could do. I was looking for a “statement” that could express the spirit of cruising the open road, enjoying my youthful absurdity and preoccupation with the immediate, when just out of town one of those characteristic cars of the stretch passed me. It was a fourteen-year-old, slightly rusted, suspensionless, beat-up Chevrolet sedan that threw out an impressive cloud of blue smoke as it wove from side to side. I noticed that the eight or nine people crammed into that car were having what appeared to be the most outrageous free-for-all fight ever to go on within the confines of a car pushing seventy down the highway. I followed that car and mile-after-mile witnessed shoes and shirts come flying out of the windows. There was uproarious laughter. Those people were having the time of their lives throwing each other’s shoes out the window. My generation sought such exercises as a deliberate intellectual exercise of the absurd, but there was something about the stretch that made such activities seem natural. I had been down the stretch — the only really straight stretch of road in the county — with friends in cars with threadbare tires at a hundred-and-five. There seemed to be a joy that on this one state road there was no Law.

I suddenly realized I knew the neighborhood when that old sedan stopped at the store on the stretch. I felt that this dog-heaven was a separate spiritual as well as geographical entity. My generation talked about “arriving” and I felt that I had seen a vision. I soon started shopping at the store and shooting pool with the kids after I moved out into the country nearby. I found comfort in the people of the stretch. I started seeing beauty in the casual disregard many on the stretch had for safety or anything sacred. There was nothing pretentious here, and there was no hypocrisy. There was the concern only for the immediate and for the sensuous.

I came to know John’s family particularly well when most of the six kids living at home got involved in the

recreation program. The fourth child of Mrs. Bird, Beulah Bird Jones, and her family were neither typical nor atypical of the area, but simply a family with a unique history, like all of the rest. However, I got to know them particularly well in the three years I worked in the program, and I found that the Jones family is a part of the culture of poverty that exists despite the efforts of others to eradicate it. Despite government and mainstream church efforts, and the good intentions of concerned people on the outside, there is something about the culture of poverty that defies understanding by those looking from the outside in. There is something about Mrs. Bird and her children and their children that allows us to make facile categories, but denies understanding.

Beulah Bird Jones was born forty-eight years ago in a bleak, muddy coal camp in the mountains of Perry County. She talks little of the past because there is little worth talking about. She was a child of the Depression, when Kentucky coal camps were feudal armed camps, and miners and their families lived and worked in desperate conditions. Beulah stayed at home and helped to raise her eight younger brothers and sisters. She escaped at the first opportunity, by marrying a thirty-nine year old miner when she was fifteen. Harrel broke his back three years later in a cave-in inside a small, mule-mine. Beulah could not support two young children and a broken old man by herself, so she left Harrel. She was too young to be willing to pay the price of the coal camp, too young to accept the fate that coal has exacted in injuries to its men, women and children.

Beulah married a wild young veteran of the Pacific theater, Eldridge. To a coal miner who had grown up in the violence of the depression years in the Kentucky coal fields and who had been through the island campaigns, nothing was sacred. It was a marriage filled with fighting, drinking and having babies, and lasted only four years. He got drunk and was shot dead over some whore in a tradition that has thrived since the first white men came to Kentucky a hundred years before.

Mrs. Bird claims that Eldridge’s father was a folk hero of sorts in Perry County who, during the height of the Depression, “used to sit on the back porch and shoot niggers walking down the tracks.” The tradition has survived yet another generation. Johnny, doing life in Eddyville for the shooting of the fourteen-year-old girl, was one of Eldridge’s few tangible contributions to the world.

Beulah, then twenty-eight, with two husbands behind

her and four children to support, married a fifty-year-old, unemployed, unemployable alcoholic who had never worked a day for pay in his life. Beulah brought six more children into the world in the next ten years. These children I came to know. Beulah is a woman so worn out by struggle that her influence has been lost. She sits by the King of Heat, her body so worn out from poor nutrition and having babies that it has lost all elasticity. She rarely talks — she has found her redemption, or at least her oblivion, in the incessant glare of the television.

The family moved thirteen years ago to the stretch because Beulah’s uncle, Mrs. Bird’s brother, Chester, owned a store and the string of shacks nearby and offered them a place to live. The Beulah Bird Jones home is much the same as Mrs. Bird’s home: a four room shack without water or insulation. Around the King of Heat is a television and people sitting in ragged, broken furniture. There are dirty clothes scattered everywhere. The kitchen floor is rotting out; elsewhere the pilings have settled so the back of the house has a noticeable slope. There are three stoves in the kitchen lined up side-by-side, each a gift of the local churches. The front burner on one works, the oven on the next, and the timer on the third. Garbage is thrown behind the house to rot and get trampled on by kids playing basketball on a makeshift hoop. It is not too bad during the winter, but during the summer the smell and the flies are overpowering. I remember one hot September morning being amazed by the number of flies on the door screen, only to realize that the flies were on the inside. . . .

The Beulah Bird Jones family has not abandoned pride entirely. Each summer they move everything out and clean the house. They give the house a new paint job. I came back last autumn and found a bright yellow-green exterior and deep purple inside walls and ceilings. The choice of colors is always extraordinary — I have seen the inside walls military green, fire-engine red, and that same, somber deep purple.

Children come and go as they please. There is no discipline — Beulah never raises her voice — and the children do nothing that they do not want to do. There is no fixed bedtime, no set mealtime. The family never eats together, but “pieces” when hungry. There is usually a pot of chile on the stove, and the children seem to exist on that and bologna sandwiches, coke, and moonpies.

Many times I have been offered "a cold dog" (an uncooked hot dog) more in seriousness than in jest. Surprisingly, the six children are still alive, but they are sick often. The family has a hard time shaking colds, and they seem to come down with all the mysterious ailments endemic to the stretch. A few months back the entire family was out of circulation with an itch they referred to as the "heavie-jeavies."

Beulah's husband, Old Man Jones, is rarely home. He is usually away on a drinking binge in one of the sleazy bars in town. He comes home when recovering from a hangover. His children are cruel and tease and taunt him much of the time. He is a distant figure, incoherent much of the time, in poor health. He has a gaunt, haggard look, a tobacco juice drool, a perpetual three-day stubble, horribly stained teeth. He has little to do with Beulah or the children, and he is irrational and dangerous when he deals with them. An old man of seventy, he is feared and hated by his children.

There are six children living at the Beulah Bird Jones home now. Susan, the oldest, is a child of twenty who rarely comes out of the woodwork. She dropped out of school when twelve and has spent years sitting in a corner of the shack. School officials never came around to ask why Susan stopped coming to class, and few now know that she is alive, or ever lived. No one outside of the stretch knows her. She never engages in conversation. Her eyes stare at the floor and suggest only a fleeting glimpse inside. She is neither deaf nor dumb and, no doubt, dreams many of the same dreams of other young women of the stretch. She dreams of experiencing love and having babies, yet she is chronically shy and unsure of herself. She rarely leaves the strip because the Jones family has no car. So she has no friends. She is not unattractive, but she does not look like a young girl about to bloom into womanhood. She has the figure of a child suffering from malnutrition and junkfood — skinny legs and bony hips, a distended stomach that suggests flabbiness.

Moses is as extroverted as Susan is withdrawn. A year or two younger than Susan, Moses was so obnoxious in school that he was encouraged to quit. He is a short, pudgy young man with a shaved head and a forty-

dollar-a-week potato chip, soda pop, and Twinkies habit. Moses works regularly, but he is usually broke, because he blows his money on immediate needs. His life is in the here-and-now, with nothing left for the following day. Moses talks non-stop and is well liked by those who get to know him. He used to sit around the store and complain incessantly about the demands that Eula and Lily were making on his "services." Eula and Lily were two low-rent community call girls who lived on the stretch and who were the focus of a great many jokes by the kids of the stretch. Totally outrageous escapades, entirely unbelievable except for the convincing manner in which Moses recounted them were a constant topic of exchange by the teenage boys. There is a strong tradition of telling tall tales on the strip, and certain individuals assumed legendary characteristics. Moses carried on the tradition of cultivating colorful stories about the idiosyncrasies of the various people living around him. I came to appreciate that Moses and those he told his stories about were people who understood their uniqueness and that they cultivated that uniqueness as an assertion of their individual autonomy.

Moses is a school janitor and has become an industrious individual. Like a great many on the stretch, he works hard yet hardly works. Moses has quit his job a number of times on the slightest provocation, once because he suspected that someone was talking behind his back. Seemingly inconsequential incidents provoke a walkout, and that scenario is not confined to Moses. Many of the men of the stretch, men with four or five children and a pregnant wife to support, would quit work over the most trivial of incidents. They did not believe they ought to work out of necessity and were unwilling to put up with the vicissitudes of their jobs. However, Moses and most of the others were such good workers that their bosses would inevitably come down to the stretch after each incident and ask them to come back to their jobs.

Moses became involved in our recreation program, and he never failed to embarrass me — especially when I brought him into one of the "cultural" events at the college. He had an exquisite impression of The Three Stooges, but he always picked the most inappropriate settings — the middle of an auditorium waiting to hear a chamber music recital. I found comfort in that: in an institution embroiled in a proliferation of technical jargon, he was a true pioneer in the usage of esoteric babble. He was never afraid to engage any member of the college with his "hey snu, how 'bout some oolu" dialogue. I seriously doubt whether college officials and the numerous women he posed the question to had any understanding of its significance. But the other kids of the stretch

would beat on the ground in hysteria. That seemingly meaningless statement had a very explicit meaning to the kids, and they became hysterical when Moses would ask the eminent for sexual favors. The stretch had a great many inside jokes like this one about the eminent.

Moses drives a 1963 Dodge. He gave someone fifty dollars for it. There was no registration or title for the vehicle for it had been sitting around in the nearby field for a couple of years. So Moses borrowed a set of plates from a car in town. Since no one ever bothered to register Moses when he was born, he had never bothered to get a driver's license because he cannot prove to authorities he is alive. His mother is not sure when he was born or which year it was. Because he does not have a driver's license, he does not have to have auto insurance.

Moses purchased a small color television and paid a couple of hundred dollars more than he needed to for it. He bought the thing at a ramshackle backstreet store in town. This is symptomatic of the way his kinfolk buy their goods. They do not patronize chain-stores and will pay a big difference for the personal relationship that a small, back-ally store offers them. They do not buy groceries from a supermarket, where there are better prices and better selection, but instead prefer the run-down "country stores" that offer a scant selection of fresh meat, fruit or other perishables, but the abundance of snacks, processed foods and soda pop.

The store that Beulah Bird Jones' uncle owns has a thriving business.

Robby is seventeen, scion of Beulah. He dropped out of school a year ago because he wanted to become a professional baseball player and because "school is a waste of time." I tried to argue with him that he needed to stay in school. In the unforeseen event that he was not able to break in with the Cincinnati Reds, a high school diploma might help him get a decent job. He replied that he had a cousin that "dropped out in the ninth grade and had made twenty thousand dollars last year in the coal-mines." He then asked me how much I expected to make a year as a teacher, after seventeen years of schooling. Among Mrs. Bird's brothers or sisters, or children, or grandchildren no precedent has been set to finish high school. Not one has made it past sixteen years of age.

Robby is a big, strong kid who spends his summer days playing sandlot softball in town. He talks mostly about baseball statistics and girls. He has few friends and

leads a dull life during the winter sitting around the King of Heat in Chester's store. He is not excited about anything because there is not much for him to get excited about. There is nothing for him to do and he realizes that it is a long time until tobacco hanging time.

Zachariah sits through life. He is fourteen and in the eighth grade. He sits in his classes with the expression of a shackled veteran of forty years of exile. He has that face of utter boredom and contempt, in school only because he is tired of being fished out of the poolhall by school officials. He has faced the reality that he must go to school but he knows that he has failed. No teacher is willing to battle him twice and his teachers are satisfied if they can get through another day without another of his outbursts. He is unteachable, and his teachers know that there is nothing they can do except put him back in the fourth row, fourth seat, and forget about him. He is, in the eyes of teachers and townfolk, an incorrigible, and everyone knows that he will drop out, like his brothers and sisters before him, the minute he turns sixteen. Nothing can touch Zachariah; his teachers know he is a problem that will come back to haunt society once he leaves school. Teachers suspect there is a place for Zachariah, that he will end up like his brother Johnny, staring at the watchtowers of Eddyville.

What can be done with Zachariah? Today he only throws rockfilled snowballs at passing cars hoping for a little vengeance. His teachers know the symptoms. What compels an extremely shy and insecure kid to explode periodically in passionless outages? Why is a kid at times almost lovable so totally suspicious of others? Why does he so often speak in that colorless and inaudible monotone? His teachers appreciate that he is not an idiot, although his aptitude scores are low. He has a street-smartness honed by a basic instinct for survival. He just is not much of a student by public school measures.

Zachariah is intellectually capable but he does not "apply himself." By any scoring of school performance he is a failure. Zachariah is two years behind in reading and arithmetic work; he failed the sixth grade. His attendance is irregular and his teachers are content that he come to class and be quiet. His mother supports, or is at least not overly concerned with, his ill-defined sickness

routines. His school knows they lack resources to inspire in him the intrinsic worth of a formal education. He never studies at home. Perhaps there is something about Zachariah going home to a four-room, uninsulated shack dominated by too many human bodies, the stench of rotting food and dirty clothes, the blare of the television, a home totally lacking in the printed word, that prevents him from making academia.

There is an alienation in Zachariah caused by forces both overt and covert. Subtle, seemingly insignificant, events that curriculum planners fail to understand, have ramifications that explode inside Zachariah, a child of different social and economic background than the other students, and make him feel as though the mainstream were on the other side of the Continental Divide. In a nation of perpetual motion Zachariah exists motionless. He has no way of getting around on his own or with family — the school buses leave five minutes after classes are finished — he is prohibited from the one thing that keeps so many of his peers in school — sports. Zachariah goes back to the stretch to play with a closed circle. He has never experienced the transcending element of school sports that encourages team efforts and confidence. He has not learned to compete with a world-at-large. He shys away from organized competition. Zachariah lives by his own rules, and his thrills have become more volatile. . . .

Zachariah has been in trouble with teachers, administrators and many of his peers for much of his life. He is belligerent toward anyone who attempts to dictate anything to him. He has a spark of life essential for survival. He respects force — his quiescent moments often give way to explosions of anger and frustration. I found that after I had tried everything, I did not know how to keep Zachariah in the recreation program and get him to stop doing some of his illogical actions — throwing rackets at other kids' heads while playing racketball. I threw away my liberal training and understood that there is one effective way of dealing with Zachariah. Sometimes you just have got to kick his ass. . . .

Zachariah fights. He does not do it out of boredom but because fighting is the most aware, the most immediate. There is in him the here-and-now pursuit of life and fighting provides the ultimate intensification of life. It is an adrenalin high that compares to nothing else. Zachariah is not mentally unbalanced. He is, in the

words of his school principal, "the product of a welfare society that takes everything and gives nothing." Zachariah has learned the lesson of the streets: no one will take care of him, except himself. His aloofness and fortress-mentality is a necessary barrier to Zachariah that preserves his autonomy. Zachariah has learned that when one ceases to believe in one's self, one ceases to exist. In his world, lambasted on all fronts, he has retreated behind barriers.

Zachariah is usually dirty, with worn and beat-up clothing. He sometimes goes weeks between a sponge bath, and he often has a filth-caked face and a very noticeable odor. His younger brother has many of Zachariah's mercenary characteristics, but I have little reason to believe that Jimmy will not end up like Zachariah. I do have hope that at least one member of the family will finish school. Rebecca, the youngest child of the family, is in the fourth grade and is a straight-A student who is often "citizen of the month." She has a bubbling vitality and enthusiasm that I hope will never be destroyed by the home environment. The principal of her school believes that the reason Rebecca has done so well is that the middle-class teachers have been sympathetic to her because of her physical deformity. She has a curved spine and one leg that is two inches longer than the other. This could have been corrected by surgery, when she was younger, but her mother refused to allow the operation, believing that operations were against the will of the Lord and that the Lord would correct the problem with her leg and spine. It has been said that the Lord does work in mysterious ways, and perhaps Rebecca's physical deformity will be her passage out of the closed circuit of the stretch. She excels in her work, and strongly dislikes having to go home at night. Perhaps someday she won't. . . .

If psychological descriptions were made of the family as a whole, it would read something like this: Life is troubled with the conflicts that arouse hostility and breed an antagonistic atmosphere that is anything but a calm, friendly and cooperative home environment. The family is pessimistic and destructive instead of optimistic and constructive — they enjoy a brutal fight and they enjoy violence. They are not satisfied but they have a difficult time articulating their dissatisfaction. Their frustration is beyond comprehension. They have a class-bound awareness of American society's multi-tiered social and economic stratification and they lack any hope for achieving any upward mobility. Zachariah once told me

that he felt he had "the bottom seat of a double-decker outhouse"; for this reason, the family has a self-contained, narcissistic, antisocial and affectionless atmosphere. Life is a fight all the way, and the family is unstable, for only the outer needs of the individual are ever satisfied. There is a very weak self-image based on the realization that in the eyes of others they are failures, but at the same time they have the powerful urge to assert themselves and declare their personal autonomy and self-worth. However, they are not unfamiliar with failure and they have come to accept it as inevitable. This is a deficiency-oriented attitude that some call the "culture of poverty."

The family members have definite exploitative attitudes, and their attitudes regarding relationships with others reflect this. There is concern only for immediate gratification through leisure-and-thrill activities. In their outlook toward the outside world they are anti-authority, and they view the outside world with extreme distrust. Their behavior characteristics are inconsistent, non-methodical, and non-routinized. There is very little that controls the behavior of the family. The one realization that the children have is that unless one fights one will be destroyed.

It is difficult for anyone to rise out of such a bad home situation. The only escape is to flee the county. The stretch is not a Leper's Colony, but it has assumed a separateness from the mainstream. There is an isolation from society, but it results not only from the rejection by the mainstream of the Jones family, but from the Jones family's refusal to surrender its identity. It is easy to look from the outside in and argue that this isolation is a defensiveness based on the resentment, fear and suspicion of the outside world. However, the Jones family has little desire to move into the mainstream. They look with disdain at those who have submitted to zoning laws and who have lost the freedom to throw garbage out the back door and to walk out the door and answer the call of nature without any guilt or reservation.

Except for the religious of the stretch — the old men and women who have been through it all — there is a fundamental enjoyment and cultivation of the irreverent. This irreverence is focused within an awareness of the very fundamental religious nature of the stretch. It is not a reaction based entirely on the failure and corresponding disappointment and frustration from aspiring for elusive jewels, but an irreverence born in an absolute celebration of the immediacy of life. That celebration has a here-

and-now orientation. There are no mortgages to any future responsibility or concern for schedules or deadlines. There is only a preoccupation with the present that comes from the realization that one lives in the present, and not the past or future. There is no room for delayed gratification — it is a live-now versus invest-in the future orientation, not a pride versus powerlessness dilemma that the outside is so prone to assume is the problem. Indeed, to the outside observer it is difficult to accept or understand how some people can live in such abject poverty, how kids can play behind the house without noticing the rotting, stinking trash, and how parents can fail to notice the thousands of flies that swarm inside their house in the heat of summer. Somehow, they exist oblivious to it all.

There is hope for kids like Zachariah. There is hope that he will not destroy himself in his nihilism, that he will resolve the conflicts that tear him apart. Among the old folks of the stretch — many of whom are kinfolk to Zachariah — there is an intense awareness of who they were and are. These folks — especially the poorest — know themselves and are at peace with the operating systems. There is a separateness of the stretch that has developed out of an attempt to avoid the ills of urban fracture. The world of the stretch does not require one to fight his way out of his individual world to glimpse the order of the whole. The stretch is more unified and harmonious, even in its alienation from the whole, because it is a world that is manageable in scope, size and implications. I found comfort that the mellow old men of the stretch reassured me that they had once lived lives like Zachariah.

Among the youth of the stretch, nothing is sacred. However, the old men of the stretch do not see kids like Zachariah as amoral, but rather as "feisty." The irreverence of youth is seen not as a problem but as a stage in life that every individual there must go through. The elderly accept the actions of Zachariah with the perfect resignation of being inevitable. There is on the stretch the notion that the greatest sinners have the potential to turn into the best of saints. I was once told by an old man after making an innocent comment about the virtues and beauty of one family of teenage girls that I should "go off and join the Merchant Marine and do absolutely everything there is to do, and then when you have gotten it all out of your system come back and marry one of them girls."

There are two worlds on the stretch that remind one of St. Augustine's metaphor. There is a city of God, and the city of man, and the two are in constant tension. The resolution of the tension by the individual results in a remarkable metamorphosis. Many of the old kinfolk of Zachariah are among the most remarkable Christians I have ever known. They exude an awareness of life gleaned from having gone through it all. In the process of finding their faith they have found a philosophy to understand the problems and suffering of others.

Poverty is ugly. Poverty breeds ignorance and conditions and situations that one would scarcely think possible to tolerate. However, poverty also presents the opportunity for the great transformation of the individual. The old folks understand the search of the young, and they understand that irreverence is necessary, for it focuses the primary and fundamental question of man's existence — what the nature of man's relationship to others and to God is. In the youth of the stretch there is an element of traditional rural society present that assumes that there is a certain sacredness to values, and that it is necessary that one flaunt them only to give added credence to the basic truth of those values. However, one almost inevitably returns to embrace those values.

The assertion of the old men is that moral man must come to his understanding and action from the other side of life — by whoring, drinking, and falling flat on one's face in utter misery — and that one must experience hell before one can glimpse the possibility of heaven. To the people of the stretch life is hard and harsh. Nothing is easy. Life is somewhat of a joke, and the only way to get through the physical and emotional hell is to laugh at it. There is no room for self-delusion. The old men argue that self-delusion comes from those who use their material possessions and comfort to shield them from the reality of the world. Those who seek the shelter of air-conditioning during the torrid Kentucky summers, or the comforts of a "paper job," are the people who are cutting themselves off from the potentials of life — their avoidance of suffering keeps them from developing a cultural and class transcending understanding of the real world.

The concern of those of the stretch is not with safeguarding their world. There is no attempt to perform alienating and meaningless labor in order to reconstruct life on the weekend. The people of the stretch — the forty

or so people who are in some way kin to Mrs. Bird — live there because it is, in part, a refuge from the tyranny and compulsion of conformity. This is the cult of irreverence — the freewheeling don't-give-a-damn outlook on life that is based on the understanding that when one has nothing there is nothing to lose. The fear of ostracism has been reduced to a minimum. There is little that outsiders can do to control or direct the youth, for their conduct is the most outrageous mockery of the religious arguments of the Pentacostal Holiness and Primitive Baptist churches of the area. The laws of man have never quite been internalized. The stretch offers the individual an area where the confines of government and law-and-order have not been institutionalized. The "law-and-order" of Zachariah and his peers is self-regulating.

Zachariah and his brothers and sisters do understand the essentials of life, and I believe in those kids and have faith that they will come through. Those kids listen to their great-uncle Elmo, an eighty-six year old man who has been through it all and who has truly "arrived." I have seen him turn toward the mountains and tell me that there are only three things one needs in life. You have got to have a good and loving wife. And you have got to love the Lord. And there is nothing like a good team of mules. . . . □



YOM KIPPUR WAS DIFFERENT

Paul Greenberg

Yom Kippur was always different. Other Jewish holidays grew out of some historic event: A minor revolt in the world's voluminous military history, the assassination of a governor, a slave uprising, a palace intrigue. Or they were determined by the agricultural rhythm of a far-off land, with harvest festivals arriving at slightly skewed times, and prayers for dew being offered up when snow was on the ground.

Some holidays acquired whole layers of historical accretions. Like Passover. The time of the Exodus was also the traditional time for Easter pogroms in the old country, and the anniversary of the uprising against the Nazis in the Warsaw Ghetto . . . nothing was forgotten.

Leopold von Ranke, the founder of modern, German, scientific history, called the Jews the most historical of peoples. He might have been on safer ground if he had called us the most antiquarian. That one remembers everything doesn't necessarily mean that one learns from anything. Von Ranke should have made that distinction for, being a German, he knew that history was an exact science — like everything else.

But Yom Kippur commemorated no historic event. It was a day unstained by history and other calamities. A day of atonement and awe, fasting and petition, for taking responsibility and making resolves, for confession and forgiveness. A trial before the High Judge. Solemn, but not sad. Awesome, but not really fearful.

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The fast was pure, exhilarating. It was a day between you and Him. A white fast. Unlike the black fast of Tisha b'Av, the anniversary of the temple's destruction, first by the Babylonians and then the Romans. Yom Kippur was not a day to ingrain the past, but to cleanse it.

If Yom Kippur was a trial, the stern Judge was secretly on the side of the sinner. "For He desireth not the death of the sinner," says the prayerbook, "but that he turn from his evil ways and live." And who would not turn aside from evil on such a day, new and clean, knowing that "Penitence, Prayer and Charity avert the severe decree." The Day of Atonement was never as severe as its name.

But that was before the Yom Kippur War. The very name has an absurd ring, like the Christmas Bombings. The words don't go together, yet they did. I first heard the news of the war at worship, as I imagine most Jews did. And will hear of it there again, and remember even if it is not mentioned aloud. The keening sound of the shofar, the call to conscience and inner peace, had been restored to its place in history: The ancient summons to war.

This year we had planned to spend Yom Kippur in Vancouver, British Columbia. It had all been worked out. Planning it ahead with the travel agent, it had seemed all right. But once there, seated on the metal

folding chairs on the second floor of a Reform temple in Vancouver, watching the families arrive with their children, the boys looking the unnatural way they do in ties and jackets, the little girls conscious of their clothes, it got to be too much. All Jewish children now seem the young of an endangered species, and our own were at home in Pine Bluff, where we should be.

So this year there was to be another sin to confess: Traveling on the holy day. Yom Kippur was to be spent in transit: Shacharis (morning prayers) in Seattle, Musaf (the additional service) over the Rockies, Mincha-Maariv (afternoon and evening prayers) getting in and out of Chicago. . . . It was an easy fast. What with customs and the luggage and changing flights, there was no time to think on it. The problem of when to end the fast, whether at the setting of the sun in an earlier time zone, or the traditional 25 hours after it had begun — offered some diversion. It was the easiest fast ever.

“Have an easy fast” was the customary greeting on Yom Kippur when I was growing up. But the rabbi and a few of the old men in the congregation would never say that, exactly. They would say, Have a good fast. Or a meaningful fast, or a fruitful fast if their English were sufficiently high-tone. It slowly dawned on one growing up that it wasn’t just a chance variation on the conventional greeting, that a good fast wasn’t necessarily an easy one.

It hit me somewhere out of St. Louis and over the Ozarks, as the sun set outside the cabin window, turning the clouds and the plane and the light inside that sad, reddish orange of a late Sunday afternoon. “Ne’ilah,” I thought. The last prayer of the Yom Kippur service, the Closing of the Gates. I hadn’t realized that I had said it aloud until my wife turned to me and asked, “What?” “Oh, nothing,” I replied. It was the last chance to make amends, to offer vows, vows that could be offered to G-d freely now, for the night before one had recited the Kol Nidre, the escape clause, the release from All Vows to G-d during the coming year. Though beware ones to man; they must be kept. Only one’s fellows could release one from such a vow.

Now, behind the clouds, the gates were closing. It was time for a last prayer and all I could think of was the blood red dying sun and a metaphor from a short story of A.B. Yehoshua’s about the war named for this day: “Toward dusk, the sun began to ooze as though it too had been bombed and our faces, the track, the weapons in our hands were stained scarlet. . . .” The gates had closed on

the old Yom Kippur four years ago. To kill and be killed, whatever the justification by The Law (what a poor translation of the Torah), was still the ultimate profanation of the Sabbath, of this Sabbath of Sabbaths, for which a war was now named. The day had been dipped in red.

The thought of prayer was replaced by pictures of arrows on a map, strategy and tactics and bootless speculation. By newspaper headlines and wirephoto pictures of four years ago: The floating bridges across the canal. A giant poster of Anwar Sadat, Hero of the Crossing, set up at the point of embarkation. Egyptian and Syrian generals congratulating each other. The farce of the Bar-Lev “line,” that disconnected series of dots that Israeli military genius had deemed sufficient. The lined face of Golda Meir, who had listened to the men, and World Opinion, and decided against a full call-up and pre-emptive strike. Who knows how many might have been saved, on both sides, if she had followed her own instincts? A useless question and one she must now ask herself every day of her life. The speeches at the United Nations, same as they are now. The Israeli detachment emerging from some bunker along the canal, carrying the Torah and going into captivity in Egypt once again. Dayan in a panic, urging retreat on both fronts, back to the very edge of the escarpment in the North, back to the mountain passes in the desert, advising that it was the only way to avoid the destruction of the Third Temple. But the old lady had learned better than to listen now. Not by might, not by power, but by My spirit, saith the Lord.

The arrows on the mental map change. A turnaround comes in the north, a holding action in the south. The road is open but the Egyptians do not come. There is word of a task force somewhere behind the Egyptian lines, trapped and wiped out every day by Cairo Radio. Arik Sharon drives between two armies into Africa. World Opinion demands a cease fire lest Pharaoh’s army get drowned. Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia dispatch troops to the Syrian front; Antiochus needs help. Headline in Daily News: Og King of Bashan Joins Fray. The Israelites are back in Egypt like a cloud on the land, no one knows exactly where by day but a pillar of fire by night. 101 kilometers from Cairo and closing. Egypt’s Third Army is cut off, sustained by food and medicine allowed through the Israeli lines. The war is over, and so is Yom Kippur. Welcome back to history, Jews. You will have no respite from it, not even on this one day, especially not on this one day.

The hero of the Crossing now has gone to Jerusalem speaking of peace. *Baruch haba, Havenu shalom aleichem*. Blessed be he who comes, we give you peace. “For He desireth not the death of the sinner, but that he turn from his evil ways and live.” SADAT IN JERUSALEM. The hope is as heartfelt as the pain that last Yom Kippur. All want to believe, to trust. Even to forgive, if one had the right, if one’s own son were rotting in the desert. There was a popular Hebrew song after one war or another: *Ma Avarech*, What Will I Bless. About a boy before the battle who had been blessed with everything — a smile of warmth and light, the ability to see and feel, hands to pick flowers and sea shells, legs that could dance without end, and the chorus was “G-d, had You only blessed him with Life. . . .”

To hope, to trust, even to forgive is not to forget. Forgiveness has no meaning if there is no remembering. To remember is the Jewish and, yes, a Southern calling. When they roused Shimon Dubnow, the Jewish historian, out of the Riga ghetto, he looked around at the others with him and told them to remember, to get it all down, to let nothing be forgotten. They were his last words, cut short by the Latvian auxiliary policeman who shot down the mumbling old Jew.

Write it down, every scrap, nothing must be forgotten. History is a faith, too, and now it has absorbed Yom Kippur as I travel home to my children, whose major concerns, thank G-d, are with comic books and gymnastics, who have to be taught what a pogrom is in Sunday School, and might confuse Adolf Hitler with Charlie Chaplin on account of the moustache.

The sun is down, the gates are closed. Perhaps they never opened after 1973. Or 1939. I remember a whispered Yiddish phrase of my childhood during the Second War. *Mir hargit die Yidden*. It was whispered so my grandmother in the back bedroom would not have to hear what she already must have known by then: *Mir hargit die Yidden*. The Jews are being killed. My English-speaking mind did something strange to the passive voice in Yiddish and I heard it as “We’re killing the Jews.” I didn’t think it strange or unnatural either that Jews should be killed in Europe or that we were doing the killing. Aren’t all the recitations of our sins on Yom Kippur in the first person plural? Our Father, Our King, Forgive us for the sin wherein we have sinned in. . . and then follows four pages of things that would scarcely enter a child’s mind. Wherein we have sinned in killing Jews. Yet the cantor approaches the ark Kol Nidre night asking that the

congregation not be held to account for his sins, nor he for ours. A peculiar mixture, Yom Kippur, of individual guilt and collective responsibility. But not very noticeable when you’re growing up with it. No doubt there is an explanation that one will learn at the proper time.

My mother had an older sister named Tema, who looked after her like a daughter during the First War when my grandmother was out trying to dig up some food when the Germans and Russians weren’t fighting through their village. The Germans were more welcome. They were correct and paid for what they took, even if it was only in scrip, and besides the German units might include a Jewish boy or two. Later, in this country, my mother couldn’t believe it at first, when she heard about Tema, and all the others. To her the Germans were Science and Enlightenment; she had always insisted on a German doctor or at least a German-trained one. But she came to believe, and to remember. My mother was a remembering woman. I heard a lot about Tema. There is a faded picture of her in an album, but the one up here, in my mind’s eye, engraved there by my mother, is sharp forever. Nothing is forgotten.

I have a niece named after my Aunt Tema. Her name is Tammy. The transmutation is very American. Tammy and the Stranger starring Debbie Reynolds. Somehow it’s not the same. But Tema is still there, every time I look at my niece. Bound up in the bond of eternal life, as it says on Jewish tombstones. While my mother was still alive, I used to have a daydream about Tema, that somehow I had managed to find her, alive and well, if much older than the picture in my mind, and I drive her down to Shreveport in my old white Mercury coupe, the first car I ever owned. And we come up the back steps into the kitchen, and I say, “Ma, look who I brought ya.”

Where could I have found her? Who knows? The dream doesn’t say. Maybe from one of the historians who are always shaving a million or two off the Jewish dead in Europe, or from the professor at Northwestern who has found that it never really happened. If they can save millions and determine who shall live and who shall die, like G-d Himself on Yom Kippur, then surely it’s not too much to ask them for one Aunt Tema. Now that my mother is dead, I don’t have that daydream any more. Occasionally I dream it at night.

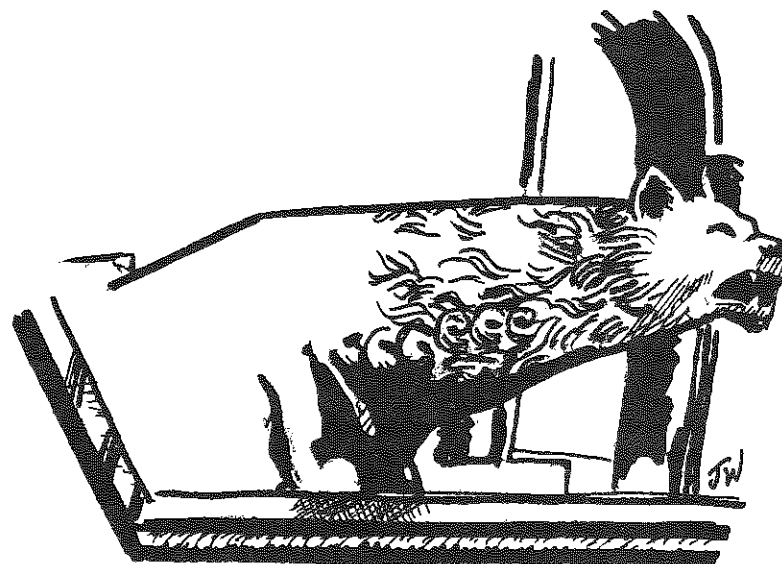
Mir hargit die Yidden. Well, in a way we did, didn't we? We didn't get them out, we didn't believe what we knew would happen, what every Zionist orator for years had said would happen, if anything understating the case. Europe is one vast charnel house for Jews. From the forests of Russia to the English Channel. From Babi Yar to Vichy. Some of the towns of Eastern Europe were the scenes of pogroms *after* the war, against the survivors of the death camps. But the European nations still pass even-handed resolutions assuring the remnant of Israel that it has nothing to fear if only it will compromise a little with the Palestine Liquidation Organization. Just bare your necks a little, Jews, and all will be well. Your worries will be over. Europe is always ready to volunteer as an auxiliary policeman. It has experience.

I once asked my friend John, an Armenian born in Jerusalem who went to work with Arab refugees in Beirut, to sum up the political philosophy of the PLO, with whom he obviously sympathized. He deliberated for a moment, then pronounced: "Socialist." He had it half right, I thought. If only he had put "National" in front of it, I would have given him a hundred. Jimmy Carter, bless him, was talking this last Yom Kippur about getting his friends the American Jews to pressure the Israelis into the usual Reasonable Concessions, as though we had any right, as though we could tell them, or ourselves, ever again that everything would be all right, that after all the National Socialists of all nations are

civilized people incapable of such things. One would think an Armenian in the Twentieth Century would know better. So much for national stereotypes.

When the plane landed at Little Rock, the sky was black, the air familiarly warm. Food would taste only as it does after the fast — important, precious, each bite to be savored and blessed. And yet one delays eating to hold on to the fast — its sense of elation, its cleanness. But the spirit is gone with the day, with time, with history. It is no longer in our power to grasp it, or Yom Kippur. At least not in this generation, not after 1973. We can only remember it. And everything else. As Dubnow told us.

Once Yom Kippur was different. If it had its historical associations, like the prayer for the martyrs, nevertheless it was whole at the center, pure and untouched. In days of yore, it is said, the Children of Israel had no more joyous festival than the Day of Atonement. The daughters of Jerusalem would dance in the vineyards, challenging the young men to choose brides on the basis of beauty, merit and family. (How Southern, too.) Betrothals would be announced that day. And if Yom Kippur had grown more introspective since, it was no less a day of health and affirmation, free of struggle and blood at its core. It was a pause in history. No more. Now even that latter-day Yom Kippur seems like the days of yore, mythic and inaccessible, something for the archaeologists. Yom Kippur *was* different. □



THE BETRAYAL OF THE INDIVIDUAL: THE EXECUTIONER

Jacques Ellul

When it became necessary for the first time, back at the dawn of history, for men to kill a member of their own clan, great terror fell upon them all at their inexplicable crime. They were being forced to tear out a piece of their own flesh and to destroy spiritual powers; the man who slew his brother was laying sacrilegious hands on the mysterious balance prevailing between good and evil.

The first great step, therefore, was somehow to evade the responsibility. This was done by regarding the guilty person as slain not by men but by gods, as handed over to the gods for punishment. He might be set adrift in a boat with his hands and feet tied; he might be immured in a cave with a minimum of food, as a guilty vestal virgin later would be; he might be driven out into the

desert, unarmed with a flask of water, as a scapegoat loaded down with the sins of the people.

In that view of the world, a man did not kill his fellow clansman; he simply handed him over to the offended gods, and no one knew what went on in that encounter of criminal and divinity. In some mysterious way, vengeance was taken, and the order that had been disturbed was restored; the whole business was now a private matter between the guilty person and the divine powers. It would be an oversimplification, therefore, to say that the vestal virgin was killed by being entombed. Society refused any responsibility for her death, and it was not being hypocritical. The guilty party's death was a judgment by the god, and it was not for man to act as the god's substitute; in playing the part he did, man acted not as an executioner but as a priest and a magus, for no mere human being had the right to intervene in the solemn encounter of the criminal and the god. As for ourselves, we may no longer believe in the same divinities, but we do maintain that man's encounter with death is a solemn moment, and indeed the uniquely decisive moment of life. It is good that at this moment man should be alone, for he really is alone, and that, free of ceremonies, false consolations, and false terrors, and free especially of the

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false presences and the lies, he should be for a moment face to face with his destiny.

Times changed. Transgressions multiplied and the social body closed ranks to defend itself. The balancing of crime and punishment began to seem a balance that society and men must maintain. Man came to think of himself as delegated by the gods in important matters, and he accepted his responsibility. He distinguished between ritual slaying and slaying for revenge; between offenses against the divinity and offenses against the clan, the group, and the family (though not as yet against the individual); and between kinds of penalty. He agreed to act as substitute for the divinities of the lower world in inflicting death; thus, though the gods were still called upon to pass judgment by way of the ordeal, it was man who now decided to carry out the judgment.

The judgment and the penalty were now seen as distinct, whereas previously they had been regarded as a single decision, with men inferring guilt from the fact that the penalty had been inflicted. Now the penalty was the mechanical execution of the judgment of guilt. It had to be mechanical: there could be no escape from it, no forgetfulness or pardon. Once the gods had pronounced the guilty verdict, man carried out the sentence, for he had no one else to depend on in seeing that the effect automatically followed from the cause.

Thus the executioner appeared on the scene: the man garbed in red so that the victim's blood might not be visible, but also because red was the color of hell; the man who was masked so that the people, who hated him, might not be able to recognize him, but also because the face of the man who kills without a personal motive becomes intolerable, and because the man whose face is exposed to the fires of the sacred cannot turn that face, unmasked, to men. The executioner was the object of fear and detestation, and his eyes bore the look of one who had done the unforgivable. He lived alone and outside the village, for what woman would be willing to share his covenant with hell? The executioner was also a sorcerer, because he destroyed life, and the village could not accept his shame and uncleanness.

The executioner was no less accursed than the victim who was handed over to him. He was brother to the condemned man whom he slew, because the entire community shifted its sins onto the shoulders of both. Contact with him rendered others unclean, and the sight

of him inspired fear.

At this stage, the whole business still had an aura of mystery. The executioner did his work in darkness, and the dungeons of the Inquisition, like the execution chamber of the Châtelet, was underground, down where the rough-hewn rock walls seeped water, and the air was filled with smoke from resin-soaked torches. The people did not know what went on there. All was secret, and only one man — not the priest, but the executioner — stood between the condemned man and the god. Down there, brother indeed slew brother; both were iniquitous, both criminals. Meanwhile, up above, the people of the town went about with the bad conscience that prevented them from looking at the executioner as he emerged through the barred gate.

Soon, however, men began to cultivate more correct feelings in this area. No longer did the god condemn, but the state—and who could believe that the state might be unjust or act without authority? No, it was necessary to relieve man of his bad conscience, which seemed to say that his justice was no justice at all. Man was part of the state, and if the state was just, then man should regard himself as likewise justified. If the need to kill arose, then it was good to kill at the command of the state.

The executioner was now no longer connected with the supernal or infernal powers; he was simply an instrument of the state, carrying out not divine decrees but the just judgment of the authorities. There was nothing mysterious about it now. At the same time, however, it was only right that the punishment should inspire a salutary fear, since this would prevent new crimes; fear of the sacred was to be replaced by fear of the police. The punishment had therefore to be dreadful and public, so as to make a deep impression on the community; it had to touch the imagination rather than the religious sense. Consequently, the scaffold was built at the center of the larger town. An execution became a solemn ceremony, a festive occasion with the people milling around, frightened yet experiencing the sensual pleasure the horrible can arouse, and with the state looking on from the balcony at the evidence of its power.

The role of the executioner had changed. He was now not a mediator but simply an agent, not a sorcerer but a functionary; his actions were no longer mysterious and sacred, but public and dramatic. He was no longer tarred with the same brush as his victim, but stood on the other side of a barrier: he now represented justice and was executor of the state in its loftiest role as arbiter of life and death.

The people, however, were not so easily convinced. This man continued to be for them the focus of certain spiritual beliefs, and they could not look on his face without a feeling of horror. For the people retained an innate respect for human life and knew quite well that doing the killing in the light of day changed nothing: it was still a dark deed. The executioner might, therefore, no longer be accursed, but he remained a pariah. He was unlike anyone else, he was brother to no one, and the death he dealt out on orders surrounded him with a solitude no one dared enter. Formerly, each member of the community had felt bound to the executioner by his own bad conscience, for the executioner, though living apart from the community, was nonetheless a member of it and carried its sins on his shoulder; unlike the priest, he was detested, since he was indispensable to the community and yet a cause of shame to it as well; no one could look into his face without seeing in it a reflection of his own guilt, and therefore all chose to ignore him and pass him by. Now that the executioner had become an agent of the state, he was simply absent from among the people. He no longer bore the sins of the people but performed a function for the state and, having become a stranger to his victim, he became a stranger to society as well.

Though disavowed by both the living and the dead, the executioner still exercised a strong personal attraction. His ill-repute might be intensified when it took seven blows of the ax to dispatch Marie Antoinette, but he could also win admiration if he were a virtuoso with the sword. But then came the machine. Whether it employed rope or iron, a machine was surer, more capable, more unflinching than the hand. The part played by the executioner became less extensive, and at the same time his appearance and position changed.

Civilization now pushed its way into all the mire and slime and brought hygiene with it. It was regarded as unhealthy to expose the populace to such spectacles. Besides, the fear of punishment did not become any less when the punishment was hidden. In fact, bringing the tortured man before crowds often turned him into an object of public sympathy, whereas the blood of martyrs does not become the seed of confessors if the simple are not allowed to attend the ceremony. The heroism of condemned men can change the course of history, and

the state only loses prestige when its enemies face death in the presence of all. Far better, then, to make the whole business much less dramatic. The gallows are therefore erected in a courtyard; the midday sun no longer shines on justice at its work, for the cold dawn sees the victim out.

The executioner no longer dresses in red; little if any blood is shed now, and reason has proved that demons do not exist. Nor is the executioner masked, since the only persons present are the judge, the lawyer, and the priest—all of them accomplices in the one act and possessing powers that make them brothers to the executioner. They can all look at one another without laughing. The executioner, in addition, is no longer a public figure; his name is known indeed, and his face by those who have seen him, but these people do not point the finger at him.

The executioner lives in the city; he is a citizen, a voter, father of a family, and, all in all, a decent fellow. His face is a reassuring one, for he is a democrat; besides, we know that under a liberal and free-thinking republic death itself is no longer fearful. The executioner now carries out a public function; he is a civil servant. Could anything be more reassuring or less frightening than that? Why, the man has a country cottage and grows roses there! In addition, he really has little to do with the inflicting of death: all he does is press a button, and the button may even be in another room. The blade falls, the trapdoor opens, the spark crosses the gap—and death goes with it. But who summoned death? The executioner is now only one personage in the drama; he is even forgotten amid the parade of the high and mighty. His action has become as respectable as his person and his function.

And yet the executioner is a real person. In any instance, there is only one executioner. His action is ordered according to ceremony and controlled by the authorities. The whole of society is present when he carries out his task; everyone knows how the entire human community is still fascinated by the finger that pushes this special button. People may talk about it only to themselves, but somehow the secret is faithfully passed on, and those who are in on it still feel the cold sweat on their brow, as did the earliest primitives before them.

Soon, however, there will be no more secret horror. "Life has spun on its furious heel," and the world is now simplistically divided into the good people and the bad people. He who is unjust in the eyes of the state no longer

has the right to live. He is punished not for a positive, carefully delimited crime, but because he does not fit into the precise, delimited framework of justice. Because he does not agree with the rest of us, he is evil. He does not simply do evil, he incarnates it.

If a person does evil, we may hope to set him straight by modern methods. But what can be done with the person who incarnates evil? There is no alternative but for him to disappear, so that the evil may disappear with him. He will descend the iron staircase with its wrought-iron steps and treacherous pitch. The spiraling movement brings him to a windowless room with clean, unadorned cement walls, lit harshly by a cold electric light that is as luminous as the truth and as straightforward as the distinction between good and evil. In this room there are no shadows, for there is nothing to hide, and if the room is underground, that is solely to make the technical side of things easier.

There is no furniture in the room, since there is nothing to be done there, and besides, furniture is a sign of evolution. But evolution stops here: there is only a drain-channel running around the cement floor and emptying into the main outlet. The man looks around at what might well be a room in a clinic, and as he does, a report behind him announces that the job is done. There is no time any more for ceremonial or supervision in connection with executions; evil is now incarnate in too many forms, and we must hurry and get rid of it in the simplest and easiest way we can. There is not even an official executioner now; the person who pulls the trigger is only someone from the crowd. There are many who can play the role; many, perhaps, who want to do it, for it is an honor, a role that contributes to the safety and well-being of the community.

"Play the role"? But it really is not a role any more. It is simply part of life, and the executioner is probably anonymous. No one in the crowd is likely to recognize him. As at the dawn of history, he is unknown; but it is no longer a mask that renders him anonymous, only the crowd itself. He is anonymous because he melts into the mass of men, whereas in olden times he was anonymous because he was cut off by his hood. Anyone in the group can be or become the executioner, if he is worthy of this supreme service. And if he be in fact unknown, everyone honors him like the unknown soldier, for he is part of the communion of the just.

How far we have come from the primitive darkness in which the executioner was linked to the community by bad conscience and a sense of having violated the sacred, as well as in the desperate effort to restore balance and justice (an effort that certainly required victims). Now we are all bound together by a good conscience and by the certainty that we require no pardon, since an execution is simply a hygienic act. Yet mystery remains, and in this respect, as in the practice of executing men underground, we are at one with the primitive ages. But the mystery is no longer a mystery of iniquity: it is a mystery of goodness. For, by his action, the executioner reaches the heights of goodness and justice to which the collectivity may aspire. This is all the more true to the extent that he acts without either sadistic anger or compassion. When a man harvests grain in order to feed his family, does he think of the life that quivers in the plants he is cutting down? The executioner is in a similar position: for him the victim has become a thing—and that is the other side of the mystery.

The evil the collectivity sees and uncovers in the wrongdoer turns the latter into a neutral object. The Middle Ages brought to light the evil lurking in sorcerers, and then burned them at the stake in order to assure their eternal salvation. Today, social hygiene has eliminated the individual as one who can be saved or lost. What he was previously and what he may become subsequently matter little; the guilt the state sees in him cancels him out even before his death. As machine technology removes the human dimension from the act of execution, so do organizational techniques make the act an act of the collectivity, and psychological techniques make it a normal part of life.

"There is no mystery about the executioner," said reason, fifty years ago. "There is still a mystery," says our age, "but a splendid and encouraging mystery." For all the executioner does now is carry out a "physical liquidation." Are the words mere hypocrisy, or a euphemism tossed up by our technical civilization? No, they imply, and with justice, that the condemned person is already dead: he has placed himself outside of the truth and of justice, and by that very fact has ceased to exist; he no longer has any personal, spiritual life; he is merely a relic, a set of physical organs that continues to exist but has no reason for doing so. The executioner merely

restores proper order; death comes from his hand in response to a death earlier inflicted. And in his new role, which is a sign of new worlds opening before us, the cold bright light of the execution chamber makes him look like an archangel.

Yet, even when he had reached this point, there was further progress still to be made. This object which was only seemingly alive—the condemned man who was already dead—could still be of service. In a world where utility is the universal law, how could such a source of wealth for society be neglected? Rational methods had stripped the condemned man of his tragic relationship with death; now they went a step further and shifted him over into the category of the useful. This individual is no longer another person; the veil of personality has been removed. He is now nothing but a zombie—but everything must be used.

There was a time when we were horrified to learn that soap and fabric were made out of the corpses in the concentration camps. But why were we horrified? After all, it was a simple piece of technology. And those, Christian theologians among them, who said the young survivors of the airplane wreck in the Andean Cordillera were right to have eaten the bodies of their companions, have thereby justified what was done in the concentration camps. Eat a corpse to save your own life? After all, why not? The free-thinkers have shown us that the condemnation of cannibalism was simply a survival of absurd taboos. How can the body be something sacred?

Yes, yes, of course. But then why not use human bodies to make preserves if society needs them for its survival? We are already enlightened by the Green Sun. And how can we fail to believe that the overall needs of society are infinitely more urgent, decisive, justifying, and objective than the empty stomach of the man who, after a bit of resistance, eats his neighbor's arm? In this case there is no resistance, because the necessity is collective. Never has society been in a better position over against the individual. Never has society been so exalted, and never has it so utterly denied the individual.

Even this service rendered by the man already dead is not enough. After all, the individual belongs body and soul to his society. Even his soul? Of course! How, then, can we let it depart before it has completely emptied itself, before it has been wrung out and made to yield its full contents? The person who will shortly be executed may still have some secret he ought to yield up, some

secret that would disappear when his mouth is forever shut. Yet no secret should remain secret. The living person should be spied on, filmed, photographed in his innermost recesses, heard by a thousand ears, known in every least detail of his behavior, and filed away in the great electronic brain.

But suppose something is still hidden there? Some tiny detail society needs, that may be lost? Then use torture. The man must speak. He must give voice to what he himself perhaps no longer knows, something buried so deep that no psychoanalyst could bring it to light. Torture can get at it. The hypothetical relation, which is as important as the real; the sigh suppressed; the aspiration kept hidden: society must have knowledge of them all. Everything must be known so that everything may be calculated and the calculation may be correct. But is torture just another name for repression? Nonsense! We have got beyond that sort of thing. Is it sadism? The question shows a radical misunderstanding, but one in which we find reassurance, for we can parallel it to the terrible wickedness of a Massu, that is, of an individual. But, in this business, there are no individuals on either side!

Torture is something scientific, the torturer is a technician, and the victim is a fragment of society that must utter its confession. Torture as practiced by our ancestors? Torture in the Middle Ages? These have nothing in common with torture as used today. In ages past, torture was originally a form of sacrifice to the gods, before whom all felt the same terror. Later on, it was a way of inquiring into the destiny and sins of a person, the sins being known in all their specificity, particularity, and individuality for having been confessed under torture.

In all those instances, the victim was an individual and acknowledged as such. We have turned the clock back on that sort of undisciplined progress. The fact that society is abstract and technique neutral enables us to avoid embarrassing questions. Yet who speaks out in indignation? The purveyors of good conscience and the signers of protests are ready to close their eyes to tortures inflicted on the enemies of their cause; of course, since these enemies no longer exist as human beings. The tiger cages are an utter disgrace; but the subtle tortures of the Cultural Revolution? a mere unimportant detail! And if

we find ourselves pushed back from position after position because the evidence is undeniable, well then, we must save the republic—or democracy, or socialism, or the revolution—must we not? In every instance, society comes first.

The torture that is commonplace today is not the re-

sult of chance or of a regression to barbarian times or of a particular regime or of an accidental turn down the wrong road. It is the strictly logical consequence of this denial of the individual, in which the West has denied itself, body and soul, to the profit of the collectivity, of objectivity, of technique. For, even if there be no more soul, there is still this final service the condemned man must render to society: he must survive, for the social good, in the form of the tiny secret he yielded up before being swallowed by death. □



25 YEARS; A REPORT FROM THE EMPTY GRAVE

Daniel Berrigan, S.J.

FATHER BERRIGAN's most recent books include *America is Hard to Find*; *Lights on in the House of the Dead*; *Prison Poems* and, with Thich Naht Hahn, *The Raft is Not the Shore: Towards a Buddhist-Christian Awareness*.

The summer of '77 I celebrated a totally unexpected event. I have survived in the Catholic priesthood for twenty-five years, and for thirty-eight years in the Jesuits. In any case, it seemed a good time for some rather serious, playful and joyous stock-taking. Which on reflection came down to some self-questioning like this: how are your symbols going, are you still trying to imagine the real world, are your eyes seeing, your ears hearing, your heart beating, and this in a world which is largely dysfunctional? In a culture which lies there, terminally ill but still kicking? In a world of the blind, and poor and deaf and dumb? Or again, living as I do in New York, the question took this form, "Are you still alive in the 'urban morgue'?"

I am, on the whole, happy to report a firm "yes" to these questions. One way of showing myself that I am alive and on the move (though rather deep in middle age, happy, cross-grained, angry, and still loving) is to reflect that I am still, after some 35 years of it, at the job and the joy of writing poetry. I also write prose in many forms and in many subjects, they tell me about 27 volumes of offense in all. The poetry seems a greater index of vitality to me, closer to the soul, a better kind of sensor to translate the edgy way life has been going. So in this report, I wanted to concentrate upon the poetry, a kind of running commentary. Through it I have been able to seize on and elaborate a number of crazy events, as well as a number of sane ones. Everything from the notorious exile and law-breaking, the underground, and prison in the 60's and 70's, through the laborious and burdensome bread and butter daily survival routine, the setbacks and moods, the downers and uppers, that life shoves in all our faces, no matter who.

May I say before going further, that gratitude is a kind of mystifying and constant angel of mine. I am so grateful for everything. Grateful for 25 years of priest's work, for 38 years among Jesuits, for my parents and my family. And for these poems, which seem to me undeserved and even miraculous. Poems that are a kind of dark bulb of existence. A perennial root that in spite of all keeps coming on and up. And I don't mean this gratitude

is a merely ceremonial salvo shot off on occasion. An expression of gratitude, like a perennial root pulled up at the end of summer, comes out with a load of dark earth attached. I don't know whether I serve things best by cleaning the root off, or whether I should merely toss the root on the cellar floor, all the dirt and worms attached. All that dark uncertainty. All that is sinuous and seemly, even when the bulb appears dead to the world.

Well, I was thinking as I put these notes together, about the past year, that alone, and where it had taken me. Work in a cancer hospital in the city, to the Pentagon, on to court and jail once more. Bouncing around the country like a shuttlecock, facing large numbers of people with my own uncomprehending and dazed eyes. Stealing like a con artist, those rare days when I can "get lost" in order to reclaim a lost article, my own soul. And meantime, with almost a Greek sense of harsh necessity, watching my country go down a foul drain of waste and want, of violence and anomie. And watching my church, a kind of death watch in many ways, a post-Vietnam post-mortem. A wake, as the Irish used to call it; compounded of triviality, and soul-tripping, and nostalgia. Watching also my beloved Jesuit Order. Toe-to-toe with the culture in so many ways; mending its cyclone fences, sporting its mod clothing, talking the language of psychology and corporate management and liberal politics.

I confess, of course, to being a part of all this. Who is not? I am guilty. I like and honor in this regard Paul's admonition, "Do not be conformed to this world," even when I honor those great words only in the breach. I translate the words though, in my own way, "Try to be marginal as possible to all this madness." Thus I found my way this year to a terminal cancer hospital in New York, where I could not do much for anyone, but where I could clean floors and hold the hands of the dying and serve them food and drink (much more really than I can do for my dying country, for my church, for my order). Again I went to the Pentagon where the stench of death is so severe as to shrivel the soul. There I chained myself to the doors with some friends like a vertical corpse and was dragged away like a horizontal one. So it goes.

I also write poetry, because this is a way of submitting my anger to a strict discipline. I do not want to live in the world and not be angry; neither do I want to die just

yet. Nor do I want my anger to burn useless like a waste flame from an oil stack. Wanting to live, nursing my flame, I write. It is a way of surviving. It tells you your soul is kicking, that it is your own. Indeed that it is inalienable property, not to be trespassed on by the mad tinkers and triflers, whether of the pentagonal or the charismatic variety.

Believe me, I would like to be faithful. I remember in this regard the blank stares I drew once in Ireland at a retreat for saying to a company of sisters and priests that I had been searching for years for someone to be obedient to. That was a conservative statement, a profoundly traditional one, and so I meant it. For I am persuaded in Simon Weil's phrase, that obedience is a need of the soul. That without this proper scope and corrected shape and admonitory word, we languish and inflate and grow foolish to ourselves.

Indeed, I reflect, what reason have I to trust myself or to walk in my own light? I have reason only to go in fear and trembling, a kind of vessel of darkness. Indeed, I have only to look within or around me to see the catastrophic result of Biblical disobedience, the loss of human measure and modesty. I saw my country grow blind beyond healing, violent beyond imagining, dumping an Armageddon on a distant and inoffensive people, without reason, outside any rule of law. In such a mad time, I used to ask myself, was I to aid my country? Was that the way to be a Christian or a Jesuit? Or was I to resist my country? And if the latter, to whom could I go with my anger, my conscience and my torment? Who would say to me: you must resist? Who would say: break the iniquitous law, it is a chain on all our limbs? Who would say: your direction is just, walk in it, and I will walk with you?

I hope that our "no," the "no" of my brother, my family, and my friends to the war, our continuing "no" to the nuclear build-up, the arms treaty, the doomsday machines being planned and built — that this "no" is uttered within a larger "yes." Paul says in his letter to the Christians of Corinth that Jesus is the great "yes" of the Father. A "yes" to all creation and community, to all decency and candor, to all gentleness and courage; to the whole range of human charisms. We cannot forget though that this "yes" was uttered in the days of His humiliation; in the form of a bloody "no" to the principalities of this world, to state and to Church. A "no" which earned for Him the prompt verdict of capital punishment.

I would like to be found faithful on the day of the Lord, and I have a poem to offer on this theme. The poem, I think, should not require preliminary tutoring. It means to say something quite simple. Whenever a government, even a revolutionary one, gets established, I know I'm an outsider again. I would like to be the friend and advocate of every new kid on the block, especially those who get worked over by a neighborhood bully called Sam. But the speed with which the new kid hitches on to the methods of the bully never ceases to appall me. I find that I have to hitch on to other ways, peoples, clues. So the poem turns from the international scene (a conventicle of bullies, if ever there was one) and lingers around an old man and his dying wife who use to run a store on my street in New York.

FIDELITY

Coming up Broadway, a fruitless evening
reception at UN, the 'revolutionary ambassador'
resounding like a stale ash tray or like
the secretary of any state you mention & reflecting

sadly, the old game starts again
before the bloody flag is hoisted dry.
Life's an Orson Welles turn out of Graham Greene;

the train rushes into a tunnel, our hero in fatigues
saunters down the careening aisle
of the 3rd class carriage
expansive, macho
he disappears into mirrors

Minutes later he stands there in diplomat's stripes
stiff as a sword cane. He's hardened, molten to mirror.

Alas, folks, freaks, minority spirits, we've lost again.
It rains on Broadway, tears of knowledge.
I look for a store to buy a pen to blacken and blear
a page, tears or rain. I'll walk to 104th Street

where my old friend the picture framer
propped a photo of his dead wife in the window.

Rain worsens
knowledge goes under

He was inefficient and faithful
she was propped in a wheel chair like a cauliflower
in a stall, months and months. Every hour or so

lit a cigarette
put it to her lips.
One day
a crazy old black woman
named by me, Crazy Horse
came by
leaned convivially over

the speechless mindless creature, yelled
"how are you dearie?" and kissed her like a luv.
I've long pondered fidelity. You can't know

even Gerald Ford that lethal dummo might be snatched
from mad comics by his cancerous wife. When the old woman
grew hopelessly ill, the cramped
musty curiosity shop closed at 2 p.m. each day; he took a taxi

to Misericordia hospital
sat there at bedside
all evening. One day
slight good news;
"she ate something, they've

stopped the intravenous feeding." A merciful interlude only;
she died that night in his arms. On this foul foot path
mule track, death mile, oblivion alley, bloody pass
Broadway, pith and paradigm of the world, cutting the
50 States of Amnesia like a poisoned pie; a swollen Styx
an Augean drain ditch

a lotus blooms.

He looks up grey faced as I come in. 'she went peacefully
your green plant was by her bed'.
Leave it at that. Still, wishing I could summon
for myself, for my friends, someday

for the world at large
the self damned
the hypocrites, the power brokers
the 'revolutionary ambassadors'

a bare whiff
of that bloom

like hand laid on hand signifying a sacrament.

When I edged in sideways
past the morose dying
woman, her wheelchair
lodged like an embolism
in the body politic,
her skin wrapped like a rodent's
in a moth eaten muff
I came
not off magical Broadway
into Ripoff Boutique
but where
springs have source

stream meeting stream signifying a sacrament

To someone like myself, on my anniversary, the
question of Jesus arises, of faith in Him. Looking back I
could never think when or whether I had been introduced
to Him. Was there such a point? I doubt it. I take it that
this was the genius of my parents and of their parents and
so on back. We had put on Jesus with the flesh and bones
of our race, had taken him in with our mother's milk.
There was no conscious point of time in which we met
Him. He was consubstantial with us, in the clumsy
old-fashioned phrase. How precious that was and is to
me! Jesus a reality both majestic and immanent, a dweller
in the bloodline as well as in the clouds of heaven.

But wait a minute, something intervened. It was not
that easy. Since 1970, I have been underground and
fleeing the law for some four months, in and out of jail
repeatedly. The big cultural billboards are all out of
countenance with me: those that puff the face of Jesus as
well as that of Uncle Sam. I had written a book while
underground. It came from reading John of the Cross; I

called it *The Dark Night of Resistance*. And I still love it.
I wrote that book to express a sense that, while I had been
gifted with the reality of Jesus, I had also been "had." At
least "had" in a certain supposition about Him, which
my fitful and nightmarish life had proven false, if not
absurd.

This supposition went something like this: that the
reality of Jesus could be taken in, apart from the reality of
the Cross. I had to question this. Could I come to some
vital sense of Christ without having my life literally
blown apart? Could I merely tread the old track in the old
cassock, or indeed in the new mod chic duds, and still
hold to my heart anything but an illusion? It came to me
that the question was really asking me to start over, to
retrace my steps, organically. To go into reverse, to turn
around.

And something else struck me. The millennial induc-
tion of Jesus into our worldliness, our armies, our fas-
cism and violence and fear, had not only betrayed me, it

had undone Him as well. Western history was not only hostile to me, it had set its face against Christ. Could Jesus know Himself as we imagined Him? Could we know him anymore in such robes as had been thrust on Him by the Constantinian Arrangement, so often repeated; Christ of the battle grounds, Christ of the colonizers, Christ of the consumers, Christ of racism, Christ of Roman diplomacy, Christ of the White House, Christ of the masses and the Pentagon prayer rooms, Christ of tax exempt property, Christ of the army chaplains and Executive prayer breakfasts? What had we done to Him? Why, we had split His soul in a thousand fragments. He had as much need of recovery and rebirth as I.

Or this at least was my poetic conceit. That He and I together would step back and back and back, into a kind of fetal darkness, reduced to an egg, to one cell even; and

TO CHRIST OUR LORD

To believe
you have to disbelieve
unstitching like love's sweet
cheat, the day's meticulous rainbow

But these, jackals
on the spoor of jackals
eat you like dead bees
for lust of the honeycomb
scatter you, death's parage.

Then priests wheel in like bears on unicycles
overtrained, underpaid
like motorized brooms they love debris
their vocation;
 bees' husks, taffeta remnants
confetti, all that's left
of the dead parade

O golden goose named Pharoah
 they made you glorious
 only for their kitchen —
for lust of that savory
 paté ROMANITÀ
 Roman goose

thereupon I would recover something of a saving ironies and oppositions, the yin and yang, the dialectic contentions in which alone the truth would exist and persist.

A new beginning, a making new. The poem that came from all this, as you will shortly see to your dismay, is a kind of nightmare. But in its light, which will indeed be dim, I would be willing to venture the following, in prose.

Given the gods of most of us, Christ must be an argument against God's existence.

Given the Christ of most of us, the real Christ must be as dumb as an unhatched egg.

Given the mad leap of the Gerasene swine over the brink, the only sane direction for humans is: get back!

Given the gnostic confabulations of the charismatics and teilhardians, some folk had better go slow.

guardian of San Angelo
 honking the devils off the sacred
 precincts
we found you dead and scattered
 for lust of a golden egg
 no sooner born
than, closed, clouded like an eye

You brood there in the dark
 like your own egg
you glimmer there in the dark like a
 world ransoming pearl —

 like a petrified tree
 your heart of stone
 your gospel a stone
you
an argument against God's existence
and the jackals chorus —
 if he were not if he were not

Unto myself then! I step back back back

what is done is undone
 what is believed is disbelieved

I whisper
 like the first day of winter
 disbelieve!
 and close my eyes
 like a wintry animal
and stop my heart in its shroud
and forbid life, and life giving metaphors.

On to my third poem. My sense of the Catholic Church is at base quite simple. I love it, and wish to live at peace in this communion. That is the basis I go from. The trouble is that neither my Church nor myself normally operate at base. Indeed all of us step off base every morning of our lives to function in a Church and a world which are literally off their rockers. Off base. Off their base as well as ours. Worlds apart from us and our suppositions and visions. The Church in America is desperately struggling to keep even a remote resemblance to the community of Christ. More often than

not, it loses rounds in this struggle; by default, by cop-out, by bargaining away the patrimony, by a thousand different oaths of induction into Caesar's bed and board.

I don't want to dwell on all this. The plight of millions of American Catholics, I think, is roughly parallel to the plight of millions of other Americans. That is, we are generally decent, thoughtful, resilient, anxious to live in a way that is not coercive or death dealing. Still it cannot be denied that we decent people do many indecent things in the great world. That furious and desperate world is our judge. It cannot be denied we coerce and grab,

instead of taking our rightful share, or sharing our rightful take. That the love of possessions is a sickness with us. That we form a vast support network for international sins of omission: omission of food, omission of housing, omission of dignity and a share of humanity.

Indeed all of this could make a kind of spurious sense in America, if it brought a sense of well-being or content even to our own people. We know it does not. In our case the law of the universe rises up like a squad of furies crying, "Too much is too little." Our war with the universe comes home. The nuclear nation nukes itself long before it announces Armageddon. What indeed holds together today? Does marriage, or friendship, or public integrity or oaths of office or vows of religion? And above and beyond all this, debts and regret and wrongheartedness — our leadership, political and religious (it is all pretty much the same). And it ranges from the absolutely appalling to the downright dead.

What are we to do with our lives? The saving institutions are bankrupt. We have to start over in the church as well — picking over the bare bones of what has been reduced and rendered like the flesh of animals. It is a sorry business, it barely produces a living.

My poem, however, is playful as well as serious. I saw once in the transept window of Chartres Cathedral four evangelists perched on the shoulders of four prophets. The conception was breathtaking and stark, a

O CATHOLIC CHURCH

I would love you more if
 you would mother me less, if you
 egged on like a shrew by expensive shrinks
 and your own shrinking shadow
 weren't such an
 Amazon of Order

balancing act. The one below must take the weight of the future, the one above must see further, must tell what he sees, must use all that borrowed strength and height to deal a further prophetic word. Even as I reflected on the scene, it became a kind of circus act. As though the two, prophet and evangelist, stood there on a high wire, part of the great circus of creation that we call the Church. Where the actions are all death defying. Where animals and people are in concert and in conflict. Where freaks are on view. Where the drab routine of life in the world is relieved and refreshed and shaken up. Where indeed (this goes for the best circuses) no one does merely one thing. Where roles and costumes are interchanged, where all sorts of menial and skilled people do every skilled and menial thing, under the great central pole in the vast airy tent.

There is another image in the poem. The old voyagers used to speak of sailing by the stars. It seems to have worked rather well. It required, of course, a detailed knowledge of those celestial orbs, more accurate by far than the sketchy geography they had of the earth's surface. More to the point of a poem, the stars peopled the heavens with a company of glory; heroes and demi-gods and goddesses granted the earthbound an ephiphany, stretched the human gaze upward.

At least one of those stars stood firm, we are told, while the other creatures and creators danced about it. The North Star: I thought that very nice as fact and metaphor. The North Star gave point to the action above and direction to the action below, corresponding quite neatly to the double universe spoken of by the Greeks and borrowed by the author of the letter to the Hebrews and the Book of Revelation. In any case, enough prose; here is the poem.

Sometimes I dream of you, a
 circus act; I'm performing
 under the tent's navel, swinging out
 over and over, hundreds of feet up
 ½ million eyes down there are peeled,

can't believe the act; and you're the
 anchor rope, the
 lynch pin, the
 center pole

no; better, its
 your act and mine!
 our skills, our courage perfectly mutual —
 tonight you're on my shoulders;
 the long horizontal pole vibrates with the subdued
 energy, passion, anguish of the world
 North to south pole, everyone in touch with everyone
 horrendous, exultant news passing through the light grip
 of your hands and mine
 and we move
 and we move it
 and we are moved

Making one body vertical functional ecstatic —
 a figure of the future?
 A window of Chartres, evangelists on the shoulders of prophets
 two freedoms making a less imperfect freedom
 one held breath
 impales two bodies, one heart beat
 eyes on the twanging wire, hands
 fused with the steel pole

Then sometimes I dream you're the north star.

And (this is no dream)
 though I am forced to eat papier mâché for breakfast
 and fret for the death of my friends
 served up like cat and dog food
 to alley cats, to mad dogs —
 noble souls whose only offense is
 they oppose the recycling of kangaroos into
 the elegant eclair shit of
 Park Avenue pimps

Still
 if you are the north star you should say so now and then;
 not incessantly,
 not with a xerox blizzard from outer space
 but with a word from a starry mouth
 heard softly here and there, but with authority too

— a forefinger pointing
 — a voice saying 'north'

We could infer the other directions;
 south, east, west; and their
 finer divisions, down to the hair lines.

But not knowing north from south, our true direction,
 this is our madness!
 And you could relieve it!

Pope John, from northern Italy, once helped. □



CHRISTIAN RESPONSES TO THE NAZI STATE IN GERMANY

Carl Scovil

For twelve years from 1933 to 1945 the Christian church and a Nazi state co-existed in Germany with such rare public disagreement that one might think the two were in complete harmony. The purpose of this essay is to show how radically those institutions differed in essentials, how the Nazi state attempted to undermine the church, and how individual German Christians were sometimes forced to decide whether they were citizens of the church or the state, of Jerusalem or Rome.

To understand Nazism, we must first recognize the nihilism at its center. Although Hitler sometimes spoke of God or Fate, he had no sense of a moral order to which he was answerable. At the heart of life lay a moral vacuum; there was no inherent moral meaning since life's essence was valueless conflict; struggle was the law of human as well as natural existence. "In eternal struggle mankind has become great," he wrote in *Mein Kampf*. "In eternal peace it would perish." "Nature uses *all* (italics mine) means," he continued, "to keep the strong and the weak apart that the strong may flourish

and the weak die."

Life's goal was victory in this conflict and victory required a resolute will. Alan Bullock, one of Hitler's many biographers, tells us that no word was on Hitler's lips more frequently than "will." Leni Riefenstahl's panegyric to Hitler, filmed at the 1934 Nazi Party Congress in Nuremberg, was appropriately titled "The Triumph of the Will." For Hitler fanaticism, that is, absolute devotion to one's self-realization, was essential to victory, essential to his version of secular salvation.

This salvation came not to the isolated individual but to the group, particularly to the nation, reconceived as the tribe, bound supposedly by the ancient ties of blood and kinship. Since such a past was clearly no longer possible for the German people, Hitler with the aid of men like Goebbels and Rosenberg had to create the myth of Nordic tribalism; the more unrealistic the reality, the more extravagant became the claim.

The German was not supposed to exist as an individual but only as a member of the tribe. The tribe gave him identity, purpose and a means of survival — food, a job, a house, clothes, often a uniform; these were welcome prospects to many Germans after the chaos of the Weimar experiment. The individual no longer had to exercise his will; his will was the will of the tribe as defined by its Leader. Thus came the litany: "Ein Volk; ein Reich; ein Fuhrer."

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But the tribe could not exist without an enemy. An enemy was essential since all evil had to be projected; no tribal guilt could be admitted since the tribe must be considered pure, right and absolute in all respects. The enemy became the scapegoat for all problems. Hitler spelled this out in *Mein Kampf*. A great leader, he said, will not "scatter the attention of the people but always concentrate on a single enemy." He will "make quite different enemies appear to belong to a single category, because the knowledge of many enemies all too easily brings weak and unsure characters to begin doubting the rightness of their cause."

The enemy was primarily the Jew. Hitler included other peoples in his category of *Untermensch* (the sub-human) — the gypsy, the Slav and the black; but it was always and ultimately the Jew who was the cause of Germany's ills. Hitler never changed that cant. In his last official statement dictated twelve hours before his suicide, Hitler denied that he or Germany had wanted war in 1939 but were forced into it by international statesmen either descended from or employed by Jews.

If the Jew was the enemy, then salvation lay in ridding Germany of Jews — first by pressuring Jews to leave Germany through violence and vilification and then, once the war began and the borders closed, by killing them. Sartre speaks of the naive and terrible optimism which lies behind such anti-Semitism: "When he has fulfilled his mission as the holy destroyer, [he believes that] the Lost Paradise will automatically reconstitute itself." From this perspective one can understand the Messianic sense of self-righteousness with which Himmler imbued the members of his Death's Head Squadron, that special section of the SS which actually exterminated Jews. Salvation meant cleanliness; the German land and the people must be cleansed of this terrible infection, this projected evil in their midst. Such was the fruit of nihilism.

Christian faith holds a very different picture of the universe and human life. God creates this world and rules this world, although within self-imposed limits, having given mankind the freedom to fulfil or destroy himself. Humankind is made free in order to discover God's will. Salvation, however, lies not in individual self-fulfillment nor even in group fulfillment but in submission to God's will, which is the redemption of all. Since humankind is curiously infected with self-love, with the will for self-fulfillment apart from others, God tries to help mankind find salvation through sending His son in

perfect submission to His will; through this gift God helps mankind to find God as man can never do alone and unassisted. This gift of help is always present, though humankind may usually reject it.

Needless to say, such a world view was too pessimistic and too quietistic for the kind of optimism which Nazism hoped to foster in its search for race-fulfillment. If the people themselves embodied the right, there was no being and order to which they must answer. There could be no self-doubt, no sin and no confession. Mankind was the maker of meaning; no other creator — or redeemer — was needed.

The public statements made by Hitler and the Party on religion varied between mild approval and neutrality. To be sure, the branches of Christendom were "valuable props for the values of the people" according to *Mein Kampf*, yet the state should not get involved in religious matters. Article 24 of the Nazi Party platform put the matter succinctly: "We demand religious liberty for all religious confessions within the State in so far as they do not endanger its existence and do not offend the moral sentiment and the customs of the German race." The Nazi party assumed, of course, that religion would be solely concerned with life after death; in the words of one minister of religious affairs, "It has nothing to do with the practical affairs of life." Religion must stay out of politics, and in a totalitarian state politics is everything; it is any area of public or private life which the state chooses to regulate from elections to abortions. Said Hitler in the fall of 1933, "We have brought the priests out of the party political conflict and led them back into the church. And now it is our desire that they should never return to that area for which they were never intended." Such an attitude assumed not simply the eclipse of the Christian church as an independent variable in German society, but the virtual extinction of that church. There is no doubt in my mind that Hitler intended to eliminate the church entirely once the war was over. In his model Nazi state, the Warthegau, hundreds of priests were sent to die in concentration camps, dozens of churches were closed and those few churches that were allowed to continue had to receive state approval for every service or class that were held. In Albert Speer's designs for postwar Berlin there were no building sites for churches.

Hitler's immediate aim was not the destruction of the church but coordination of the church with overall Nazi strategy with his plans for all German society. If we view his strategy in territorial terms, it was an attempt to invade the church's historical space — first by denying it space outside the church and then by controlling the space within. First the state proscribed such "outside" activities as pilgrimages, retreats, religious processions, rallies and church-sponsored hikes. The state incorporated both Catholic and Protestant youth organizations into the Hitler youth and eliminated the Catholic trades unions, the Catholic Center party and all Catholic daily newspapers. Priests and pastors were eventually barred from teaching in the public schools. Simultaneously the state invaded the church itself. Diocesan newspapers were first curtailed and then banned; Gestapo agents attended all services to report any special collections or unfriendly sermons; even church bells were removed and melted down supposedly for the war effort. All this was done with the intent of reducing the church's "political," and therefore (in the eyes of the Nazi state) inappropriate influence.

If it appears that the church's self-defense consisted primarily of defending her own territory, even that too-restricted a strategy should not be minimized or misunderstood. To defend one's own space in a totalitarian state is a significant act. As Karl Barth pointed out, "the Church, like man, has not only a soul, but also a body . . . without which she can have no soul . . . And if the Church struggles against this death by strangulation, . . . she defends her body for the sake of her soul. . . ." Cardinal Faulhaber in defending a young priest defined his concept of the church's space: ". . . as long as he was forbidden to address meetings outside the church he obeyed the law, but when he was forbidden to preach in a church he obeyed the dictates of his conscience, for . . . the law of God must come before the law of men."

Because the Protestant and Roman Catholic confessions had such different histories, Hitler dealt with them in different ways. With the Vatican he signed a Concordat which both limited the influence of the church on German society, and, supposedly, protected the church in that more limited sphere. With the Protestants Hitler used a different tack. He tried to get the eighteen separate Lutheran territorial churches and the scattered Reformed churches to organize a single national church headed by a national bishop, Ludwig Mueller, who was already Hitler's appointed commissioner for church affairs. To Hitler's continued frustration this scheme never worked as he had planned it. Over a hundred parishes and two

Lutheran territorial churches (Bavaria and Wuerttemberg) refused to join the National Church and formed their own organization, the Confessing Church. During the first six years of the Third Reich this church held its own synods, elected its own councils, ran its own seminaries, examined and ordained its own pastors, took special collections and, despite the pressure without and tension within, lived as a free church in a police state. Even by the end of the war scattered parishes and congregations of the Confessing Church still existed independently of the National Church.

The weapons of the Nazi state against dissident priests and pastors were fourfold — propaganda, edicts, economic sanctions and violence, either unofficial violence in the form of beatings by gangs or hired thugs, or official in the form of imprisonment, torture and execution. Although the state used all weapons at all times, in the early days of the church struggle it used primarily propaganda, edicts and unofficial violence; latterly it used sanctions and official violence more frequently. The response of the dissidents varied also and decreased with the severity of the weapons used against them. Initially, propaganda was met with protests, debate, sermons, referendums, appeals — in short, with nonconformity. Many pastors took part in this phase of the resistance. Edicts, however, had to be met with disobedience, and fewer pastors were willing to take this step. Economic sanctions and violence could only be met by suffering, that is, by enduring the reprisal and, in rare cases, by resistance.

A pastor's ability to oppose the state depended not so much upon his so-called courage, as upon his ability to perceive the issues at stake. The sin that preceded what we call cowardice was confusion. The virtue which preceded what we call courage was clarity. This clarity was not a simple intellectual thing, for many well-educated professors, lawyers and doctors as well as churchmen used their intellects to justify obedience to the state. The clarity which resulted in opposition to the state was the clarity that comes with faith, the ability to perceive the penultimate as the penultimate. We understand this distinction better by examining three responses of German churchmen to Nazi ideology.

If we borrow H. Richard Niebuhr's typology, we might call these three responses the Christ of Culture, Christ and Culture and Christ Against Culture.

The Christ of Culture

For one group of ministers, called the German Christians, there was no conflict between the demands of church and state. They believed that the two were saying the same thing. Christianity, rightly conceived, was the so-called "positive Christianity" described in the Nazi Party platform. This meant that the ancient witnesses to Christian faith, scripture and the church confessions found their fulfillment in contemporary history. History became the preeminent source of revelation. The German Christians proclaimed in their constitution, "... we recognize in the great events of our day a new commission of our Lord to his churches." Bishop Mueller of the National Church said in his installation sermon, "In the triumph of this German freedom movement we hear the call of our God. ..." Mueller's successor, Hans Kerrl, put the matter more crudely: "Doctor Zoellner and Bishop Galen have tried to make it clear to me that Christianity consists in faith in Christ as the Son of God. That makes me laugh. ... True Christianity is represented by the Party ... the Fuehrer is the herald of the new revelation." Although these German Christians enjoyed a brief popularity in the Protestant church, they broke with tradition so radically and so offensively that most Lutherans and Reformed pastors ignored or opposed them after a few months. They were never a significant faction in Christian politics after 1933.

Christ and Culture

A second position held that there was no conflict between the demands of church and state because they dealt with two entirely different spheres — one with the temporal and one with the eternal. The state was responsible for ordering the city of man, the church for preparing citizens of that city for the city of God. The proponents of this so-called "Two Kingdom theory" went a good deal further than its original proponent,

Martin Luther, would have gone. This theory became in effect a Gnostic heresy, a claim that the church need not witness to God's Lordship over history, since religious truth was "spiritual;" it needed no body. It surrendered the world to princes. Romans 13 was quoted a good deal more often than Revelations 13. Priest and pastor alike held this view, cleaving scrupulously to so-called "religious" activities and avoiding so-called "politics," just as the Nazi state wished them to do. This was the view of most German clergy. Certainly they knew the state was inimical to the church. But I believe most of them refrained from outright opposition not simply because they felt there was more to be lost than gained, that is, not simply from reticence or cowardice, but because after centuries of German church submission to the state they felt that opposition would be improper. One official of a small sect put it this way: We had no martyrs because of our decision to remain neutral and cooperative. ... "so long as we could work and prosper we were determined not to endanger our freedom by challenging the state."

Christ Against Culture

There was a third position that held that conflict between church and state was inevitable because the state had overstepped its bounds. Not only was it invading the church but it was presuming an ultimacy which belonged only to God. Against the apparently overwhelming power of contemporary events stood the judgement and the grace of God, as attested to, not by history, but by Scripture and the confessions of the church. A few churchmen considered it their duty to speak the word of judgement and extend the word of forgiveness in the name of God and in the language of Christian Scripture and confession. The first article of the confession adopted at Barmen by the Confessing Church states:

Jesus Christ, as he is attested for us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God which we have to hear and which we have to trust and obey in life and in death.

We reject the false doctrine, as though the Church could and would have to acknowledge as a source of its proclamation, apart from and besides this one Word of God, still other events and powers, figures and truths, as God's revelation.

Karl Barth put this point another way in responding to the claim of some Christians that the church ought to make it easier for people to join rather than hinder them. "The Church," he said, "has not 'to do everything' so that the German people 'may find their way into the church,' but so that within the Church people may find the commandment and the promise of the free and pure word of God. We are obliged to be what we are and true to the mission entrusted to us; to serve the Word of God within this nation. ..."

To the state this position appeared not only reactionary and hopelessly antique, but disloyal and dangerous as well. After all, if society was to be completely coordinated with the will of the tribal leader, any instance of nonconformity threatened the whole enterprise; it challenged the ultimacy of the state and the finality of the leader's will. Individuals who took this position suffered a whole range of reprisals already described.

The debate between these positions — between loyalty to Christianity and Nazism — took place on three levels: between church leaders and the state officials and propagandists; between the various church leaders themselves depending on which position they held; and within the mind and conscience of the church member himself or herself.

The decisions were difficult. If you were a pastor, would you urge your parish to join the Confessing Church? If you joined it, how far would you support it? Would you read to your congregation the church's rebuttal to Rosenberger's latest book or the church's refusal to cooperate with the new minister for religious affairs or the church's protest against Gestapo interference, knowing that you might be imprisoned for you-never-knew-how-long, leaving your family without means of support and your church without a pastor? Would you read prayers for your imprisoned colleagues or take up a special collection for them — against Kerrl's latest edict? Would you sign your name to the letter which the Confessing Church sent to Hitler in May 1936? What would you say at the funeral of a Nazi officer? Would you pray for peace on the eve of the Czechoslovakian invasion and risk not only the charge of treachery but prison and perhaps death as well? If you were preparing for the ministry, would you attend an illegal seminary run by the Confessing Church, knowing that after graduation your choice would be either an indigent parish that could barely support you or the rank of private in the

army? Would you protest the exclusion of Jewish converts from the Christian church? Would you protest their persecution and deportation, and their extermination? Would you help to hide Jews in their flight from execution? If you were a youth, would you resist the almost overpowering campaign to force you to join the Hitler Youth? Even your getting a job would depend on that. If you were a layman, would you take part in religious pilgrimages or retreats, though they were banned? If the Nazi state demanded that you resign from the church in order to keep your job, would you do so, knowing that if unemployed you might not even get welfare? If you were editor of a church newspaper, how far would you cooperate with the state so that you could continue to publish? If you were a teacher, would you take the loyalty oath to Hitler so that you could keep your job? If you were a bishop, would you risk opposing the state and losing your position, knowing you might be replaced with a far more zealous supporter of Nazism?

These were the decisions which men and women faced everyday in Nazi Germany and perhaps these questions convey some sense of how overwhelming seemed the power of the state, how useless seemed resistance and how remote seemed any source of authority transcending the apparently ubiquitous authority of the state.

It is refreshing as well as surprising to note that there were individuals who acted with a freedom which transcended the terror of that time. Karl Steinbauer was a young pastor in 1936 with a wife and daughter. He refused to ring the church bells after the annexation of the Rhineland, explaining to the police chief, "I can't celebrate a swindle." He spent a week in the local jail. A year later he tore down a Hitler Youth poster which criticized confirmation classes and he promised the police chief that he would take down every such sign that was put up. When ordered by the Gestapo and urged by his bishop to leave his parish, Steinbauer stayed and spent three months in the district prison. He disobeyed an order to desist from preaching and spent another several months in prison; he opposed the Anschluss with Austria and went to Sachsenhausen concentration camp for almost a year; upon his release from Sachsenhausen he was drafted and sent to the Russian front. At the time the war ended he was waiting to stand court martial for seditious preaching which, it was claimed, undermined the morale of German soldiers. Steinbauer's Bible was well-marked and dog-eared. He smiled at me as he leafed through it. "I never bought the two-kingdom theory, not even in

seminary," he said. "But I knew that I must serve God and not men."

There were others. Paul Schneider was the first pastor to die in opposition to the state. He like Steinbauer refused to leave his parish or to stop preaching. Tortured and starving, he was imprisoned in a small cell near the parade ground where he chanted the Bible verses during morning roll and shouted to those who beat prisoners, "I have seen you and I will accuse you before God." Julius von Jan was one of the few church leaders who protested the terror of the Crystal Night. "... this is the seed of hatred that is once again being sown," he said, "[and] what a terrible harvest will ensue if God does not grant to us . . . genuine contrition." For this sermon he was beaten by a gang of thugs from a nearby town, imprisoned by the Gestapo and finally released to the care of another diocese.

The Christian protestors are too numerous to list in this essay. They include Kurt Gerstein who broadcast the truth about the death camps, Franz Jaegerstaetter who refused to serve in the army, Bernhard Lichtenberger who daily led his Berlin congregation in prayers for the Jews, Father Ramp who opposed the Nazi mayor of his village, Maxmillian Kolbe who died for another prisoner in Auschwitz, Helmut Moltke and Alfred Delp who were planning a postwar government for Germany, the six thousand Jehovah's Witnesses, two thousand of whom died during those fateful twelve years and 97 per cent of whom spent some time in prison, as well as the men and women of the Confessing Church who in small ways and sometimes great ways refused to cooperate with Hitler's plan to control the churches. These people testified by their actions to an order transcendent over the order of the Nazi state. They represented the third option — Christ over culture.

We cannot understand the nature of their resistance unless we understand the true nature of Nazi power. Nazi power did not rely primarily on physical violence and the threat of violence, but rather on its initial ability to convince people that its picture of the world was true — that life was struggle, that there was no meaning to life beyond victory in the struggle or at least survival, and that these prizes could be won by supporting the National Socialist Party. Such an ideology enabled the Nazis to move from 200,000 votes in the 1925 elections to 17 million votes in the 1933 elections. Such an ideology brought within a few months in 1933 the capitulation of trade unions, courts, universities, lawyers guilds, medi-

cal associations, musicians, artists, industries as well as churchmen who should have known better. What is terrifying about Nazism is not just the blind obedience which it aroused in its adherents or the unquestioning terror which it aroused in its opponents, but the consent which lay behind both obedience and terror, the acceptance of the Nazi world view, a world where death was the final failure and therefore the one thing to be avoided. Vitalism can be a disastrous philosophy of life when the will to live becomes the rule for human life. I heard a Hungarian Jew who worked in Crematory Number 1 in Auschwitz say, "No one who has not lived through such circumstances can imagine what the will to live is. Everyone is capable of doing the worst things just to survive. Everyone wanted to survive."

It was consent to this world-view which enabled Nazism to grow and thrive. How could the Nazis have eliminated six million Jews without the consent of millions of others — the consent of neighbors who asked no questions about where their friends had gone, the consent of clergy who did not preach against the killing of the Jews as they had protested the killing of the senile and the insane, the consent of those who transported them to Auschwitz, Maidanek and Buchenwald, and even the consent of Jews themselves who cooperated with this engine of death? Consent was the sin which made the Nazi state possible.

The handmaiden of consent is guilt. Everyone cooperated with the state and almost everyone felt to some degree guilty. No one was pure, not even the martyrs. There was no resister who was not also a collaborator. Guilt perpetuates itself and the Nazis knew how to use guilt to force people to support them. The evil of Nazism was apparent to all but its most devoted followers; yet a whole people supported this state, often against their better judgement and in violation of their consciences. "What could one do?" was the "explanation" given, but the question denies that frightening freedom which belongs to all of us; it denies that initial act of consent from which all other acts follow. Nazism is a guilt-producing phenomenon; it is hard even to study it without a sense of shame and without asking, usually in self-reproach, "Where was I then?" or "What would I have done in those circumstances?" Within the philosophy of Nazism there is no resolution to guilt except continued obedience — or death.

Christian faith offered an alternative to consent and guilt. It offered freedom and forgiveness. The Christian was free to disobey the state, not just in fear, but joyfully, for he belonged ultimately to an order which transcended the political nightmare of the Nazi state and to that order he would eventually return. He was commanded to render to Caesar only that which was Caesar's and never to burn incense before the imperial image. Such a command could be obeyed because with it came a promise of forgiveness. One dared to face one's guilt because one was forgiven, even if one continued to feel guilty. One could face guilt, confess it, live with it, perhaps without ever feeling completely at ease, and this was better by far than the denial of complicity and guilt which characterized so many postwar Germans. After the war it was Christians such as Martin Niemöller who spent eight years in Dachau, Hans Asmussen who helped to write the Barmen Confession, Theophil Wurm who brought his churches into the Confessing Church and other Christian leaders who had resisted Hitler, who signed the Stuttgart Confession of Guilt in 1945: "With great pain we say: through us endless suffering has been brought to many peoples and countries . . . we accuse ourselves for not witnessing more courageously, for not praying more faithfully, for not believing more joyously, for not loving more ardently. . ." Ironically as Nazis in Nuremberg were preparing to protest their innocence, Christians in Stuttgart were confessing their guilt. And this gave them the freedom to shake off its power and the deadly influence of Nazism.

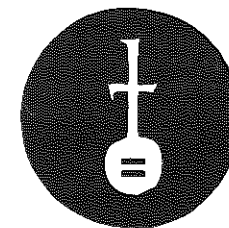
I wish to make one final point. One cannot read the history of Nazism without being impressed by the tawdriness, the pettiness, the routine, the lack of imagination, the sheer boredom of it all. It was as true of the local party meeting as it was of the long, tedious suppers at Berchtesgaden. Leni Riefenstahl's efforts notwithstanding,

Nazism was a bore. The philosophy of vitalism was curiously lacking in vitality. One is reminded of Simone Weil's comment: "Imaginary evil is romantic and varied; real evil is gloomy, monotonous, barren, boring. Imaginary good is boring; real good is always new, marvelous, intoxicating."

In contrast to the ennui of Nazism was the sense of significance felt by many who suffered for their convictions. This is described by Mihajlo Mihajlov in an article entitled "Mystical Experience of the Labor Camps." He says:

. . . arrest, prison, and camp — simply to say, the loss of freedom — have formed the most profound and significant experience in their lives. The paradox is complicated by the fact that, although they underwent the most extreme spiritual and physical suffering during their imprisonment, they also experienced a fulfilling happiness, undreamed of by people outside the prison walls. (Kontinent 2, New York, Doubleday, 1977, p. 105)

There are few instances of joy to be found in the Third Reich, but one unfailing source is the letters which were written to mothers, fathers, wives, children, sweethearts, pastors and friends by those who had been sentenced to death. One finds in these letters a lightness of spirit which simply dances above the sodden reality of their impending execution. "The hour has come," Father Lambert writes two hours before his death, "the hour of liberation; there has been nothing but darkness; now the day is dawning." "This is the end," says Bonhoeffer to his friend, "for me the beginning." "God's name be praised," writes Johannes Prassek in his New Testament, "Today I have been condemned to death." Such words as these and many others (see Gollwitzer's *Dying We Live*) and the lives of those who wrote them also bear witness to an order which transcends the apparently overwhelming world of political power. □



REVIEWS

DRAGONFLIES

Will D. Campbell. *Brother to a Dragonfly*. The Seabury Press, 1977. \$9.95.

This is a book about two brothers, Joe and Will Campbell. They love one another.

The story is simple and straightforward because love is simple and straightforward; the story is complex and complicated because love is within the boundaries of time's ambiguities, contradictions, absurdities and mysteries. Love is between individuals thrown into time. Love may serve as hints and metaphors of the Kingdom of God, but short of the Kingdom, love remains within the relativities of time, and history. And that is that.

The particular time and the peculiar history give Will Campbell's book a dramatic and, in spots, a haunting dimension. The rural deep South during the Depression and Roosevelt's programs, the Second World War and

the G. I. Bill of Rights, the gathering and then storm of Movements for political justice and racial equality in the 1950's and 1960's. But: the setting of Campbell's book could be *any* place, *any* time — Seattle, London or Calcutta. The center of gravity is Joe and Will, not the times and the places.

It is a grievous error to read Campbell's book as one more of those chronicles about the "New" or "Unreconstructed" or "Carter" South. Alas, some who ought to have known better have been seduced by current fixations about the South and have reported to readers and clients that this is a "Southern" (even a "Faulkner-type") story. This is a mistake. It misleads. Campbell's story is not about the South but about two brothers who love each other. If there is a "Faulkner" quality, it is Faulkner's own explanation about the South in his writings: he attached no particular importance to it. The South was merely the region, the time and the history

Faulkner happened to inherit and to live.

In *that* sense, the South is in this book. But keep the focus on Joe and Will Campbell. Read the book existentially, not sociologically. This is a story about brotherly love — not the maudlin and erotic trash that gluts the media and a lot of books and magazines today. *Review* a love story? When love is "reviewed," put under microscope or analysis, the story is denied. Love cannot be "reviewed," only listened to, with soul and innards; talked about, yes, but not "reviewed." Whoever hears Campbell's story (and perhaps not everyone can, or even should, hear it) might receive a few gifts: metaphors and hints about one's life and one's life with others. The reader might relate to, grasp, certain character's in one's self, or one's self in certain characters in the story. Joe or Will; maybe, though less likely, Joe and Will; Lee Campbell; Sister; Carlyne; "Thad Garner," and others. The story then becomes an arrow on target. If not, not. The story must not be redefined or reduced to Southern sociology or camp psychology or psychiatry.

So much for one "review" of the story of Joe and Will Campbell's love for each other.

But, *the setting!* Reflections about the time and place are necessary. Some reviews already threaten Campbell's book with a different life, as it were, by fascination with the southern exposure. More to the point, the setting of the story about Joe and Will, while "accidental" is, nevertheless, *interesting*. Understand the setting by the story of Joe and Will, not Joe and Will through the setting. And what then? The particular time, the peculiar history enclosed within *Brother to a Dragonfly* includes the great "events" which forged in part the notions of those who today believe they control the levers of our political and economic destiny — even though the evidence piles up that in fact the "levers" control them. (After all, what is the difference, as far as public policy goes, among FDR, HST, Ike, JFK, LBJ, Nixon, Ford and Carter?) Campbell's book also draws parentheses around the years when mainline American

Protestantism and Catholicism made irrevocable decisions about relating the Gospel of Jesus Christ to political and social events. (The dialogue between Will Campbell and P. D. East is stilted, yet comes through as another word about the Gospel and political and social events. Less stilted and more to the point is the recital of events surrounding the "Religious Emphasis Week" at Ole Miss, and Joe and Will's response thereto.)

Moreover: *and mark this well!* The setting also includes the time and events of those who were then and remain today without political and economic power and who suspect that their voices were then and are now absent from the world's chancelleries. The powerless in a world of power — the powerless in the shops, schools, rock concerts, petty bureaucracies and cults, in the fields, mines, factories and beauty parlors, on tractors and in charismatic movements — may have only a vague notion of their powerlessness. But they also have a nauseating sense that the great "events" of the past forty years have not only passed them by, but have done them in, because they trusted in the great "events." This is serious business. Resources of candor and reconstruction among the powerless, which in the past supported the crisis-events, may no longer be available for exploitation when the powerful call upon the powerless to once again pull their charred chestnuts from the fires of disorder, violence, anomie. The powerless may turn cynical and hostile to the crisis-makers, indifferent and without interest in the great "events." They may be turned off, spaced out, sucked into the idiot tube's commercials, sports, rock concerts, or born-again or filled with the spirit — at the very moment crisis-demands are made on them by the powerful who choreograph the great "events." To repeat, this is serious business. The "accidents" of time and history in Campbell's book, read with the focus on Joe and Will, speak to *that* "setting."

The stakes of Campbell's book are the often invoked but more often ignored distinctions between "facts" and

truth. Truth is not the "facts" which abound in newsmagazines and television and in the monographs of the social and religious sciences. They record "facts" in abundance — and what is worse, with a nostalgia that is downright alarming. There are insidious social and political implications in nostalgia. (The gossip spreads that the television productions of *Roots* and *Roots* follow-ups tranquilized the consciences of millions of whites of all political persuasions. The truth is we have not "overcome." Many of us, black and white, believe that we have because the "facts" and our surly "will to believe" prove that we have. But we haven't.)

What about truth? Say, for example, the truth between two men and boys who love one another — the facts interesting but accidental? The truth between two biological brothers — and is there not more to Joe and Will's brotherhood than blood? — cast willy-nilly on a very specific all-the-world's-a-stage? The truth of our times — wars, depressions and wars and recessions, inflations, murders, famines, scandals, violences and all the rest? The truth about our times focussed in the love of two brothers to whom somehow and sometime a gift was

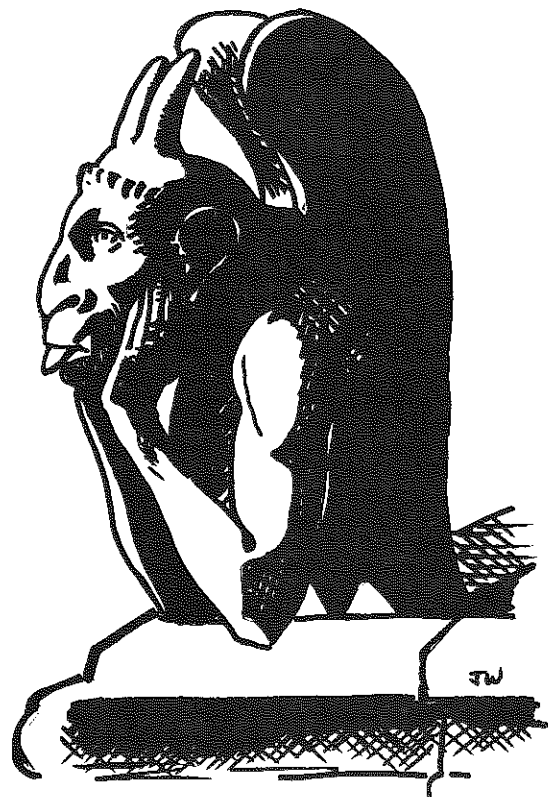
made that they become other than brothers in blood, in a particular time, within a peculiar history.

Truth of this sort is with *Brother to a Dragonfly*. It is a love story, not a re-telling of social and political events in the South over the past forty years. In these pages are hints about the Gospel's notion of *God's time*; in our day we ignore *God's time* only in pain and suffering and with peril of judgement.

All that said. It is important that it be said. *Brother to a Dragonfly* is in truth a story about Joe and Will Campbell, men and boys to whom it was given to become brothers and who therefore love one another.

Let the reader commence. □

— Narké



KATALLAGETE

FROM JULIUS LESTER:



April, 1978

Dear Friends (and enemies):

Well, here in New England winter is receding. Reluctantly, but surely. It'll probably take me until mid-June to get warm, sho' nuf'. The winter of '78 led me to ponder one of the deep theological questions of my life: Why weren't my parents Hawaiian? Or, how come it was my foreparents had to get themselves kidnapped during the slave trade? Much of February was spent in deep reflection on these questions, especially when I got a \$238 electric bill.

Be that as it may. The point of this letter is not my electric bill (though I wish it were). Instead I ask you to turn your attention away from the vicissitudes of my life and yours, away from "Hawaii Five-0" and "Kojak" (which has been cancelled, dammit), away from the Cincinnati Reds and Boston Red Sox. (I know I'm asking a lot, but there's a good reason.) I'll even be bold enough to ask you to turn your attention away from your Farrah Fawcett-Majors poster. (You think she reads *Katallagete*? Maybe somebody should send her a gift subscription.) Instead I ask you to consider this magazine you're holding in your hands. (And if you're lying on the floor picking your teeth and looking at the magazine but the cat is sitting on it, well, I don't know what to say.)

Many of you who are holding this magazine in your hands are doing so illegally. Because of a computer foul-up, many of our subscribers who were up for renewal in November never received the renewal letter I wrote at the time. (We aren't sure whether R2-D2 or C-3PO is responsible, but when we find out, we're going to spank it with back issues of *Christianity & Crisis*.) So, if you search your memories and realize that it has been a while since you renewed your *Katallagete* subscription, tell the cat to go bring you your checkbook and renew now.

Also, everybody look at the front or back cover of this magazine or wherever the mailing label is stuck on. If you see on your mailing label the numbers 0603 or 0604 those are not the numbers for the daily lottery or your blood type. To tell the truth, I don't know what those numbers mean, except that it is time for you to renew also. Don't ask me how I know that, 'cause I don't know how I know that, but it is true.

Our efforts to make *Katallagete* a magazine wholly supported by its readers have been gratifying. You are an incredible group of people and the responses to letters such as these has been inspiring. That's a corny word, but I mean it.

We are still not in a position where we are wholly reader supported, but our hopes are much higher that that will be possible than they were when we made the decision to attempt to be dependent on our readers.

The financial base of any publication which does not take advertising is its subscribers. And central to that is the renewal of subscriptions. The renewal of your subscription is extremely important, so I hope that those of you who are presently up for renewal will use the envelope with this issue of the magazine to renew. Renew your subscription to *Katallagete* and renew your life! (Even Coca-Cola don't claim to do that much

for you. Bourbon-and-water? Well, that's another story completely.)

Also, I'm sure that each of you knows someone who might appreciate receiving the magazine. And I don't know why we call Katallagete a magazine since each issue is quite literally a book of collected essays of original thinking unlike anything you will read in theology today. So send a friend (or an enemy) a gift subscription to four books which just happens to be called Katallagete. (Incidentally, there are all too many people in this world who don't know how to pronounce the name of this book-magazine. The accent is on the third syllable and the word has five syllables, not four. Now that should keep you and the whole family busy for an evening.) Gift subscriptions are important, and perhaps Farrah would appreciate one. Richard Nixon could certainly use one. (God only know what Jimmy Carter could use. The man is giving the South a bad name and that's hard to do.)

Well, I think you understand what I'm saying. And if you don't, it don't matter. Spring is here and I think I'm going to go out and look at a crocus. (It was a rough winter friends.)

It is obviously time for me to hush. Renew! Renew! Renew! And help a Christian get religion and give'em a gift sub.

Take care.

Love,

Julius Lester

I wish to make the following Tax Exempt donation for Katallagete: \$

He is prohibited from attending any gathering, i.e., himself and more than one person--As far as we are able to ascertain, this includes family, so that Theo and I cannot meet together with one of our children. (This would not apply if there were children living with us at the time of banning.)

Theo is expressly prohibited from attending:

Any social gathering--understood as persons having social intercourse with one another.
Political gathering--understood as a gathering where policy of any State is propagated, or discussed.

Lars or students for the purpose of
discussing them.
A common purpose, whether such
is unlawful.

Instruction to any person of whom
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book, pamphlet, record list, placard, poster,
and it is illegal to quote him.

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University College, College, school or other
is situated.

may communicate with one another in any
Theo is effectively cut off from his former
many other friends.

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with more than one at a time. (There appear, in fact,
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Breaking his banning order makes him liable to a
prison sentence of up to three years.

For a better understanding of all this, I suggest you might read "Law,
Order and Liberty in South Africa" by Prof. A. S. Mathews (Juta and
Company--Cape Town).

Banning is a cruel restriction (making a person his own gaoler) but we
must come to terms with this. With the love and support of so many
friends we feel we can transcend all these circumstances and remain
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Take care.

He is prohibited from attending any gathering, i.e., himself and more than one person--As far as we are able to ascertain, this includes family, so that Theo and I cannot meet together with one of our children. (This would not apply if there were children living with us at the time of banning.)

Theo is expressly prohibited from attending:

- Any social gathering--understood as persons having social intercourse with one another.
- Any political gathering--understood as a gathering where any principle or policy of any State is propagated, defended, attacked or discussed.
- Any gathering of scholars or students for the purpose of teaching or addressing them.
- Any gathering having a common purpose, whether such purpose be lawful or unlawful.

Theo may not give any educational instruction to any person of whom he is not the parent (therefore not to his grandchildren).

He may not prepare, collate, print, publish, distribute or dispatch any document, including any book, pamphlet, record list, placard, poster, drawing, photo or picture, and it is illegal to quote him.

He may not enter any place or area which is the premises on which any private university, University College, College, school or other educational institution is situated.

No two banned persons may communicate with one another in any way, which means that Theo is effectively cut off from his former colleagues, as well as many other friends.

It would seem that church attendance and preaching fall into the category of "forbidden gatherings," but as a Christian minister he must be faithful to his calling and he has preached several times since his banning. However, he may not greet members of the congregation at the door, as this would be socializing.

At home, Theo may see only one person at a time, so that, if several visitors arrive, we are reduced to a sort of "musical chairs" to ensure that he is never with more than one at a time. (There appear, in fact, to be instances when meeting with one other person is illegal, if it is by appointment.) Breaking his banning order makes him liable to a prison sentence of up to three years.

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Journal of the Committee of Southern Churchmen

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