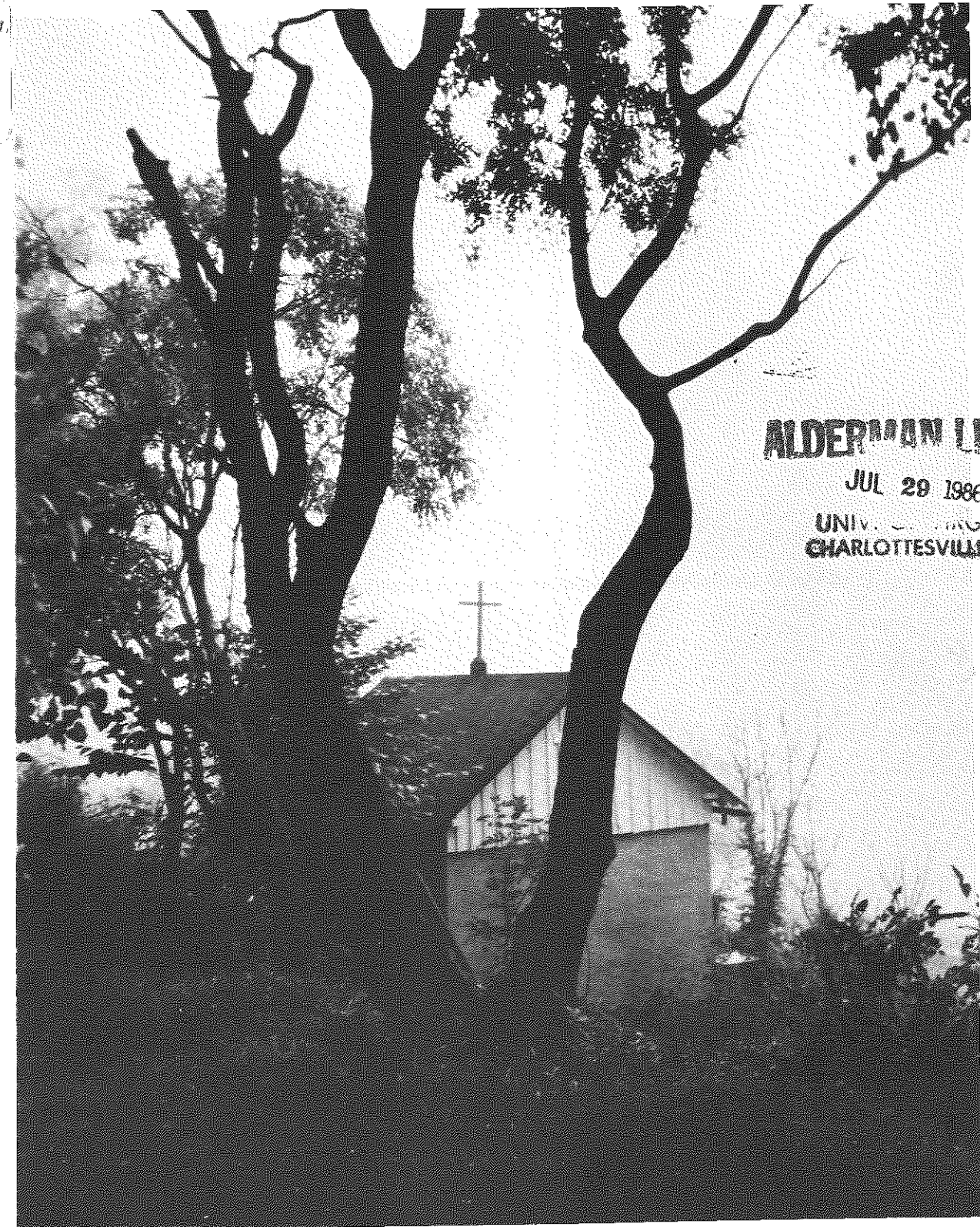


■ ■ **KATALLAGETE**

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UNCLE SAM'S SILO

Yes, Sonny, your Uncle Sam put this silo on our farm because he's proud of it and all this land. He's holding something in reserve just in case the Russians ask for it. What's in there gives the world food for thought if not for stomachs. Believe me, my boy, because that silo stands tall, we stand tall. What's in there no weevil can infest or rat destroy. When famine comes no one will rob it, even though it's got the biggest payload you'll ever see. And you can count on it. Once delivered that payload will bring the biggest kick-back you could imagine. After that there'll be no more famine and hunger, no more sowing, sweating and harvesting. Everything will be dark and peaceful as a winter evening. No need for sun to be shining, there'll be fires around the horizon where every city is being fed from silos overseas. Then everyone will be at permanent rest, even the cattle and sheep. And if you're able, you'll look at that silo and remember how proud your Uncle Sam was of you and this land with all its plenty.

Paul Quenon
Abbey of Gethsemani 1986



KATALLAGETE

SUMMER 1986

Volume 9, Number 3

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NOTICE

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Cover, photographs and "Uncle Sam's Silo" by Brother Paul Quenon, Abbey of Gethsemani, Kentucky

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About This Issue ...

We like to write about Murphy's Law between the covers of KAT. In late February, when the editorial plans began to fall into place, the good folk at Berea College let us know we'd have to vacate the offices. We moved to the new office with the cooperation and skills of Berea friends beyond the call of duty. The new office is great, an acre of hardwood floors on the third tier of a dignified old building. Temporary, yes. But the space is a challenge and we'll work on that. If you're in the area, stop by for a visit. We can talk in comfortable chairs, not standing against the walls for a lack of space as in the old days. There are "problems." An unnamed member of Berea/KAT has a case of vertigo that Hitchcock could have learned from when filming *Vertigo*, starring Jimmy Stewart and Kim Novack. We blindfold this person on the first floor going up, and on the third floor going down. So far, so good. We'll see.

Now ABOUT THIS ISSUE . . . Julius Lester reflects on current publications by and about Thomas Merton. Merton is special to *Katallagete*, writing in our second issue in 1966, and regularly thereafter; indeed, after his death, there were two articles by Merton on Faulkner, transcribed from talks to the monks at the Abbey of Gethsemani. Julius Lester knows Merton, writer to writer, better than many who knew him personally. Lester does not speak to it directly, but there is concern that Merton and/or his writings may become a cult. By "cult" is meant grasping in a "religious way" (in the worst sense of the word) a person and/or his writings as the one secure life-line in a political and religious world threatened by nihilism at the end of the twentieth century. That is, abandoning "the courage to use your own intelligence" (Kant; Merton would agree). John Paul II gives no hint of putting Merton onto the first rung of the ladder toward sainthood, but there is gossip about plans to enjoin the Pope to make plans. All we are saying is: go slow. Read and study Merton. This is a principle Merton's beloved Faulkner tried to communicate: I am what I write. Let the texts speak.

Beyers Naude' is Beyers Naude'. His life as a Christian in South Africa, his words in these pages, record his credit line. So a step sideways now, a word about G. MacLeod Bryan who made Beyers' seven-year autobiography available to *Katallagete*.

Mac Bryan is, in the words of the region, "somethin' else," for more years than either of us admit. Mac Bryan is a sort of

Elijah figure. We can know his "dates" and "places" from "Who's Who," but that does not tell us where he came from and where he's going. In the 'fifties, H. Richard Niebuhr invoked Mac to troubled Southerners at Yale determined to return to their homelands: "Check in with Mac Bryan. He's in touch. Talk with Mac." It happened in the early 'sixties I succeeded once removed to Mac's teaching post at a southern university, without, however, the "named chair" he held, but that was all right, the appointment being as close to apostolic succession as this Protestant tradition will ever realize. During my non-tenure, a severe theological-ecclesiastical crisis burned up, brought to a head on the campus of this university with a "conference." Mac came in late from Wake Forest, the icon of Elijah fed by a raven or challenging the Ba'als on Mt. Carmel. A statement had to be made. Mac was the catalyst. After the meeting, we talked about his involvement in the South African heresy of apartheid. Mac believed that his perspective as a white southerner might lend support to black and white Christians in South Africa.

I believe it did. Mac makes regular trips to South Africa. He became a friend and confidant of Beyers Naude' and others in the Christian Institute, serving as a link between friends in South Africa and in the United States. His biography of Naude' goes into the second printing this year. A great teacher, at Wake Forest and wherever, Mac's theological passion is mysticism -- a passion that endeared him to H. Richard Niebuhr. Perhaps this theological center of gravity describes Mac. Does it push the texts too far to say with all their activism, Elijah and Mac are mystics in the biblical tradition? No! How about that? Elijah confronting Ahab about selling himself to do what is wicked in the sight of the Lord, and Mac soaring over the Atlantic between the United States and South Africa reporting those who sell themselves to do wicked in the sight of the Lord. I think so.

Stanley Hauerwas contributes a cautious approach to the Christian faith and higher education. The issue is as old as education since the First Amendment. It changed dramatically albeit gradually since the Second World War, when men and women enrolled under the "G.I. Bill of Rights" in state and private (among them "Christian") universities and colleges. Pressures were there with the succession of social, political, cultural crises beginning in the 'fifties: racism, hunger, the Vietnam war, ecology, nuclear threat, Central America, etc., etc. Hauerwas asks gentle, tentative but required questions about the role of the Christian faith in higher education.



The media reports:

December 27, 1985. Terrorists made coordinated attacks at the airports of Rome and Vienna. The targets appeared to be people waiting to board Israeli El Al flights, or persons standing in front of an El Al desk; however, the gunmen shot more or less randomly. In all, nineteen people were killed and 112 were wounded.

9:03 a.m., in Rome's Leonardo de Vinci Airport, four men armed with hand grenades and AK-47s began tossing lead around El Al, TWA and Pan Am desks. The shooting stopped at 9:08, with fifteen dead (including three of the terrorists) and 74 wounded.

9:10 a.m., in Vienna's Schwechat airport, three men attacked people waiting to board an El Al flight bound for Tel Aviv. Three were killed including one terrorist, 47 were wounded.

A note found upon the body of a gunman in Rome read:

Zionists:
As you have violated our land, our honor, our people, we in exchange will violate everything, even your children, to make you feel the sadness of our children. The tears we have shed will be exchanged for blood. The war started from this moment.

The Martyrs of Palestine

April 5, 1986, 2:00 a.m. A bomb exploded in the *La Belle* discotheque in West Berlin. 230 were injured; two were killed, including Sgt. Kenneth Ford, U.S. Army. The disco was known to be a popular night-spot among U.S. military personnel.

April 14. "Today we have done what we had to do," President Ronald Reagan told the American public. "If necessary, we shall do it again."

Reagan was referring to an air-strike against military targets in the Libyan cities of Tripoli and Benghazi, in response to terrorist acts alleged to be

engineered and condoned by Libya and Colonel Khaddafi. The air-strike was a slap at Khaddafi for the alleged Libyan bombing of a night-club in Berlin April 5, in which one American soldier was killed.

May 19, 1986. South African "security forces" made raids into the nations of Botswana, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Forces composed of South African Army and Air Force units conducted the raids, said to be against African National Congress (ANC) bases located in the three countries.

While Botswana, Zambia, and Zimbabwe were called "defenseless" by a *New York Times* editorial of May 21, the raids were described as "the most spectacular and closely coordinated" that South Africa has performed against ANC guerillas. The three attacked nations stated that they support the ANC, the best known and most active of all anti-apartheid guerilla forces, but have denied that ANC bases exist within their countries.

South African President P.W. Botha claimed full responsibility for the raid and, likening it to U.S. retaliation against Libyan "terrorism," stated that he would be more than happy to attack ANC terrorists again, if necessary. Botha sees the African National Congress as a terrorist organization.

Sixteen hundred blacks have been killed in South African violence since September 1984.

May 23. A car-bomb exploded in a predominately Christian district of East Beirut, near a vegetable market. Eleven were killed while 84 including 25 women, were wounded. This raises the death-toll in Lebanese violence to 64 in the past three days. No one group has claimed responsibility for the bombing.

May 30, which in South Africa is a holiday celebrating that nation's becoming a republic twenty-five years ago, student protests in Johannesburg and Cape Town inspired the security forces of South Africa to whip, gas and arrest opponents of apartheid.

The most violence was at Johannesburg's University of the Witwatersrand, where, of 500 protestors, 50 were arrested. The police were liberal in their use of whips and gas. Less violent protests occurred in Cape Town, where out of 100 protestors, two were jailed.

The students were mostly white.

June 3. Beirut, Lebanon. Shiite Moslem militiamen crushed an outgunned and outmanned Sunni Moslem faction yesterday after a bitter 15 hour battle in the streets of West Beirut.

Police said 53 people were killed and 242 were wounded in the battle between the two militias and during the 16th straight day of fighting in Palestinian refugee camps.

Yesterday's fighting was the heaviest in Beirut in weeks. Tank, cannon and mortar fire set buildings ablaze. Wounded civilians huddled in doorways as gunmen raked streets with fire from automatic weapons and recoilless rifles.

Police said 32 people were killed and 127 wounded in the Shiite-Sunni confrontation, while 21 were killed and 115 wounded in clashes between Amal militia and Palestinian guerillas around the camps.

June 10. Crossroads, South Africa. Hundreds more shanties were burned, the second day of a battle between rival blacks that is laying waste to this squalid squatter camp. Fourteen people are dead and 50,000 people homeless. Men fought in a cold winter rain with guns, axes, iron bars, rocks -- any weapon that came to hand. Crossroads is a sprawling shantytown 12 miles east of Cape Town that the government has been trying to bulldoze for years. Young activists, known as "comrades" have challenged the Crossroads Committee that has controlled the camp since its founding in 1975. The "comrades" accuse the "fathers" of corruption. South African police made little, if any, attempt to stop the violent confrontation between the black antagonists.

June 11. Johannesburg South Africa. The South African government imposed a nationwide "state of emergency," detaining more than 1000 people in an effort to forestall demonstrations expected on June 16, the tenth anniversary of the uprisings in Soweto. All non-residents were forbidden to enter the township where ten years ago more than two hundred were killed. Soweto, a short distance from Johannesburg, has a population of two million blacks.

President P.W. Botha explained the "emergency decrees" to his Parliament: "I am of the opinion

that the ordinary laws of the land at present on the statute books are inadequate to enable the government to ensure the security of the public and to maintain public order." The "emergency decrees" enable any member of the South African police, the army or the railway police to use whatever force necessary to compel obedience from anyone who disobeys orders to disband from any place. The decrees authorize arrest without charge and search without a warrant. Security forces may act with immunity from later prosecution. Curfews may be imposed, and unlawful strikes, boycotts and protests are forbidden. Television, media and photographic coverage of "any public disturbances, disorders, riots, public violence, strikes or boycotts" are forbidden.

A seven-month partial "state of emergency" restricted to districts near the principal cities of Johannesburg, Cape Town and Port Elizabeth was lifted March 7, having failed to halt daily protests and violence that has claimed in excess of 1600 lives in South Africa since September 1984.

June 16. Johannesburg, South Africa. Millions of blacks participated in a general strike throughout South Africa to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Soweto uprisings. A government spokesman said that there were no reports of clashes between police and blacks. He added that 21 of the 31 people killed since the emergency was imposed June 11 died at the hands of blacks and only seven were killed by security forces. Two whites and an Indian were killed, and 69 people wounded by a car bomb June 14 in Durban. The press has been banned from all black townships except by special permission of the government.

A friend writes:

"Wherever we turn, we find society riddled with violence. Violence is its natural condition, as Thomas Hobbes saw clearly in the 17th century: The individual had to be protected against violence. Starting from this premise, Hobbes came to the conclusion that only an absolute, all-powerful state, using violence, could protect the individual against society's violence. To support Hobbes's conclusion I could cite a vast company of sociologists and philosophers. I cite Paul Ricoeur, respected on both sides of the Atlantic: 'Nonviolence forgets that history is against it.' History is made by violence that is deemed legal. The sainted de Tocqueville, describing the effects of the white European coming on human beings, nature, wildlife, etc., in America, then explains the forms this legal violence took. 'In our time (1830's) the [American] Indians are being dispossessed step by step and, one might say, altogether legally...I believe that the Indian is condemned to perish, and I cannot but think that by the time the European has settled the Pacific coast the Indians will no longer exist...isolated in the midst of a numerous and dominating people...'

"There is an order of violence; there are laws of violence. A historical appraisal shows that violence is inevitable in all societies. So we must examine the consequences of that inevitability. If there is an inescapable order of violence we must be hard-headed as to the consequences. That is, we must never invoke the cliché of 'violence is the only way open for us, but wait and see. The results will be for the good!'

"The first law of violence is *continuity*. Violence goes on once it is used. Violence expresses the habit of making situations simple, whether the situations are political, social or whatever. A habit cannot be broken quickly. Once violence is used it will always be used because it is much easier and practical than any other political or social method. Violence simplifies relations with the opponent because it denies the opponent exists. When you repudiate the existence of the opponent, no other attitude can be adopted -- that is, no rational dialogue is possible. The argument is, 'violence brings clear and visible results: why go back to a dialogue that looks ineffectual and promises doubtful results?' So violence continues even if the initial use was a temporary expedient, to gain a higher political good.

"Studying violence for decades, I locate a second law: *reciprocity*. Jesus' famous words: 'All who take the sword will perish by the sword' (Matthew 26:52). *All* in italics: there is no distinction between a good and a bad use of violence. The use guarantees the result. Jesus states that violence creates violence that begets and procreates itself. Violence by colonialists creates violence by the anticolonialists exceeding the colonialists. Victory does not bring freedom. Inevitably the victory brings freedom to no one; the victor splits into groups perpetuating violence.

"The third law of violence is *sameness*. There is no way to distinguish between justified and unjustified violence -- violence that liberates and violence that enslaves. Each violence is identical with each other violence. Each act of violence is the same. Not only physical -- the soldier killing, the airman dropping bombs, the policeman bludgeoning, the rebel committing arson, the revolutionary assassinating. Sameness as a law of violence means that violence has no limits and condoning violence means condoning every form of violence. Once the way of violence is chosen, it is impossible to say 'so far and no further,' for the victim of violence is provoked to use greater violence.

"Violence *breeds* violence -- the fourth law of violence. 'To obtain our ends we must use a bit of violence but once in control justice, liberty and equality will reign.' [Stalin is the reputed source: 'to make an omlet one must break eggs.' Regardless of the source, that is what Stalin did. Solzhenitsyn records the *Gulag* in three volumes. Or, the Nazi slogan, *Wo gehobelt wird, da fliegen Spaehne* ('Where planeing occurs, shavings must fly').] This fourth law is not a moral but a factual judgement. What has changed is only who exercises violence. No state established by violence gives their people liberty or justice but only a show for those who supported the movement and plundering the erstwhile 'haves.'

"The fifth law of violence is this: those who use violence always try to *justify* both it and themselves. Violence is so unappealing that everyone who uses it produces lengthy apologies to demonstrate that their violence is just and morally warranted. One thinks of Leni Riefenstahl's remarkable use of film for the Nazi's (*The Triumph of the Will*). Violence is an expression of hatred, and only a completely heartless regime would be capable of simply affirming hatred without trying to exonerate itself.

"The critical fact about the state today is that force has become its monopoly. The state prevents other groups from using force: it is no longer acceptable that a party, union or clan should act by force; it is even less acceptable in the case of an individual -- he would simply be a criminal. For a long time the state hesitated with regard to groups. But in our day we see that precisely because groups still try to utilize force, the reaction of the state becomes hardened and more relentless. The police are decisive and uncontrolled. Some may object that the term 'force' does not apply in the case of the state; that a careful distinction must be made between force and legitimate constraint. For example, the argument goes, the police exercise legitimate restraint but abandon their proper function if force is used, at which point the citizen must protest. Legitimate constraint, it is said, is exercised by legitimate authorities within the framework of the law, and under the control of the law.

"This is a most reassuring form of idealism. But the question must be asked, what is legitimate authority? Theologians and political philosophers have failed to tell us. Certainly there are some excellent definitions and quite satisfactory criteria (e.g., A. d'Entreves, B. deJouvenel, J. Rawls). But to consider the practical situation, states which are able to maintain themselves are legitimate, and reliance on force does not change this legitimacy in the slightest. Legitimacy is the result of two complementary elements: support by the people and recognition by other states. The first element is purely artificial: the people always give their enthusiastic adherence to any government that asks for it. Plebiscites will always yield affirmative votes of from 90 to 99 percent. And a state is legitimate when it is recognized by other states. Even in the case of states violently antagonistic to each other a sort of solidarity among regimes develops. They all accord a measure of recognition to each other. The only condition is continuity.

"One other thing. It is now a well established tradition of government to observe the law when nothing is happening; but if something happens, a state of emergency is declared during which special laws will be in force. This happens precisely at the moment when some group tries to use force for its own ends. At that moment the state's reaction is pitiless: it abandons the framework of the law and engages in a contest of force with the group in question until it has quelled the rebellious group and made it re-enter the ranks. Put

differently, when the state is led by circumstances to employ force, it never observes the law, and we find ourselves in the presence of naked violence. The state is ready, of course, subsequently, to legitimize the use of such violence.

"I hardly need to point out how simple minded the distinction made by one philosopher is between a 'police' (internal), which would be legitimate as a means of constraint, and an 'army,' which would be on the order of force. In the realm of politics these two elements are identical. Therefore, the more the law adjusts to 'normal' (i.e., rare) circumstances, the more the regime becomes aggressive when threatened by the slightest danger, and what the regime calls a disturbance of public order becomes ever smaller, and is interpreted ever more rigorously. A carnival or a student demonstration that sometimes created considerable upheavals in the nineteenth century was not the object of constraint and penalties. In our day we know the brutal reactions to such events. And we are not referring just to isolated cases. Everywhere we find the same trend. The slightest manifestation of independence is immediately considered as a challenge to the state's power monopoly.

"An observation among Christians: neither exaltation of power nor search for vengeance will solve any human situation. In accepting death, Jesus Christ showed us the only possible way. We may refuse to take it. But we must realise that when we refuse we are left with one alternative--increasing the sum of evil in the world. And we ought to be

honest and renounce all pretensions to the Christian faith. Surely we must not use the suffering of the others whose side we take as an excuse for evading the only way that is open for faith. And if vengeance must be exacted, if a judgement, a condemnation must be pronounced, they are the Lord's alone. This holds on the social as well as on the individual level. To pretend to end exploitation by force is to eliminate the exploiter by violence, to exercise the judgement that is God's to exercise. There can be no use of violence without hate, without judgement, without abomination. Violence and revolution -- let them continue! But without the presence and justification of Christians. This does not mean, however, that Christians are permitted to judge those who do take part in violence and revolution.

"Will it be said then that the Christians are absent from the world? Curious that 'presence in the world' should mean accepting the world's ways, means, objectives; should mean helping hate and evil to proliferate! Christians will be sufficiently and completely present in the world if they suffer with those who suffer, if they seek out with those sufferers the one way of salvation, if they bear witness before God and man to the consequences of injustice and the proclamation of love."

So writes a friend.

JYH



Merton And Us

Julius Lester

1.

The monk is a bird who flies very fast without knowing where he is going. And always arrives where he went, in peace, without knowing where he comes from.

Merton

The summer of 1969 I received a letter from a major northeastern university asking if I would consider donating my papers and manuscripts to its library. Flattered to think that I had reached such eminence at age 30, I fantasized about generations of scholars going to the library's Special Collections and asking to see "The Lester Papers." Suddenly I pictured some assistant professor hot on the trail of tenure picking over my letters and manuscripts, convinced he'd found my life. The next day I sent the university a polite refusal. Yet, I admire (and wonder) about the men and women who give years of their own lives to someone else's -- interviewing friends, enemies and colleagues, poring over the subject's journals, letters, and manuscripts, visiting all the places where the subject lived. A first-rate biography is not only the story of the subject's life but a portrait of the relationship between biographer and subject. The finest biographers search for themselves in their subjects just as we read biographies for insight into how to live our lives a little better. At the same time, I understand and respect T.S. Eliot's request that no biography be written of him, a request that has been ignored, unfortunately. None of us knows our own lives. Who would dare presume to know and render the life of another? And isn't there something prurient in our curiosity about the life of another? Why are we not satisfied with the published works, the paintings, poems, or music the subject offered to the world? Was not his or her life in those? Why do we want, even demand to know more, to know what he or she was "really like"? We would shudder and die in a spasm of revulsion if we knew what we ourselves are "really like."

Since the death of Thomas Merton in 1968 books about his life and work have proliferated like dandelion fluff. I'm surprised that one of the networks hasn't put on a mini-series called "Monk," starring Richard Chamberlain as Merton, Charles Bronson as Dom James Fox, and Jill Clayburgh as the nurse with whom Merton "fell in love." (Of course, some producer would want to cast Madonna as the nurse. No way!) After all, Merton's story has a little bit of everything.

JULIUS LESTER teaches in the Department of Afro-American Studies and the Near Eastern and Judaic Studies Program at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. His most recent book is the novel, *Do Lord Remember Me* and he is completing an autobiographical work about his conversion to Judaism. Lester is a member of the Editorial Board of *Katallagete*.

Born in France and raised in England and America, Merton was an orphan by mid-adolescence. He fathered a child out-of-wedlock (the child and mother were killed in the bombing of London during the war), returned to America and attended Columbia University, where he was known as a good man to have at a party. Almost suddenly, however, he gave up smoking and drinking and women. (To give up one of those in a lifetime should qualify you for sainthood. To give up all three at once qualifies you for God.) He converted to Catholicism and after a long period of intense self-questioning, became a Trappist monk at the Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky, which, at the time, was as ascetic and demanding as any monastery of the Middle Ages. He became a priest and wrote an autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain*. Much to his publisher's surprise, the book was a bestseller without publicity or reviews.

Merton had gone to the monastery seeking to be hidden in God. Instead, he became world-famous. He continued to write--poetry, journals, essays on literature, race relations, the nuclear arms race, books of meditation, books on Zen Buddhism and mysticism. He became a thorn in the side of Catholic authorities, who did not know what to do with this monk-celebrity. He waged an ongoing war with his abbot (Charles Bronson) for refusing to permit him to attend conferences or travel. But the world came to the gates of the Abbey to talk with the monk-celebrity, and Merton, extroverted and exuberant, met with the hippies and the intellectuals, the theologians and scholars, and carried on a voluminous correspondence with people all over the world.

The monk-celebrity enjoyed his fame, flailed against the Catholic hierarchy which censored his manuscripts, sometimes preventing them from being published, and became dissatisfied with the restrictions of monastic life, giving some friends the impression that he wanted to leave it. At the same time, however, he campaigned relentlessly for permission to live as a hermit on the grounds of the monastery. Permission was finally granted. As hermits went, he was not exactly a model, since he continued to receive visitors, and it was not unknown for him to sneak over the wall in search of a cold beer and a plate of fried chicken. Finally, he was permitted to travel to Asia, where he was accidentally killed or died in a hotel on the 28th anniversary of his entrance into the monastery.

It would make quite a TV movie, but would it have anything to do with Merton? Only if one thinks *Jack Daniels* really has anything to do with bourbon. (Try *Makers Mark*, friends.)

The same can be said of the official biography of Merton, *The Seven Mountains of Thomas Merton*, by Michael Mott. From the pretentious literary symbolism of the title it is obvious that the biographer is an English professor. The biography itself is workmanlike but with as much of Merton's elan as a half-used roll of toilet paper.

If one needs the facts of Merton's life, *Seven Mountains* will more than suffice. However, the facts of a life are what is least interesting, as the facts of all our lives are the same: We are born, we fall in love (with someone or something), we have children (actual or symbolic), we suffer crises and traumas which we endure, are wounded or destroyed by, or overcome, and one day when we least expect it, we die, not really sure what our lives had been about and wishing we could have a little more time to find out. These are the facts of our lives, and whether they are enacted in a monastery, or a suburb of Dallas is just local color.

A life is a mystery, the most profound one there is. Anyone who has given birth or witnessed a birth or death becomes enslaved to a profound silence wherein he or she is humbled by the mystery of -- from whence came this life so newly-born? -- whence goes that life so newly gone?

What is sinful is how wholly we lose the sense of mystery about life in our years between birth and death. If a biographer is to be worthy of his or her subject, he or she must not only bring this sense of mystery to the life being described and explored, he or she must write from that place of mystery and awe within. In other words, the biographer must be a contemplative, whether he or she knows it. As Merton put it in a letter to Daniel Berrigan (February 23, 1964):

God writes straight on crooked lines anyway, all the time, all the time....And we I suppose are what He is writing with, though we can't see what is being written. And what He writes is not for peace of soul, that is sure.

Seven Mountains is devoid of any sense that we are what God "is writing with." Since that is absent, Merton is absent from the pages of his biography. Mott writes as if he is not sure that he likes Merton. Or, perhaps Mott's attempts at objectivity cause him to be critical only, so that he won't be accused of hagiography. The result is silliness, sometimes, as when Mott writes about Merton as Master of Scholastics:

And he could be funny, very funny, though he liked to set the jokes. When one of the students started humming "Begin the Beguine" in a lecture on the Beguines, he stopped this.

As a teacher, Mott should know very well that there can be an infinite number of reasons why one will not allow certain things in the classroom. Perhaps the humming student was always attempting to be the class clown. Perhaps what Merton had to say that morning was so important that he didn't want the class to start with laughter. To say that Merton stifled humor in the classroom merely because "he liked to set the jokes" does not follow from the example.



The profound and impossible challenge of biography is to render a life both as its subject experienced it and as those around him experienced it. Mott's failure is that he seems more interested in Merton the writer than Merton the monk. Though Mott tries, the biography gives no feeling for what the contemplative life is and how Merton lived it, what his struggles were with it and within it. Mott is very good at portraying the public Merton, particularly his role in and disagreements with the anti-nuclear movement in the early 'sixties and the anti-Vietnam War movement later in the decade. But Mott has no sense of the inner Merton, which is disappointing since he had access to restricted materials.

The most controversial part of the book is the "revelation" of Merton's intense, non-sexual love relationship with a nurse he met while in a Louisville hospital. There is

something charming in the story of this middle-aged monk acting like an adolescent boy. There is even courage in the fact that Merton, a monk, would allow himself such feelings, such pain, such struggle and such joy.

The relationship was not secret, either within the monastery or to Merton's close friends outside. But because Mott fails to give us a sense of the meaning and impact of the relationship on Merton's inner life, we are left with gossip and not story-as-revelation.

Though widely praised, Mott's biography is as sober and dull as an English Department faculty meeting. Merton was neither. His being was far more akin to Van Gogh's "Starry Night" - anarchic, exuberant, bursting with vitality, energy and fun.

2.

But what is life but uncertainties and a few plausible possibilities?

Merton

More modest in size is Monica Furlong's *Merton: A Biography*. It is also superior to Mott's. Focused on Merton's life as a monk and contemplative, Furlong chooses the far more difficult nuances of the soul's ever-changing colors for rendering her portrait.

For example, Merton was frequently ill and was hospitalized many times for operations. Where Mott gives the details of his hospital stays and his illnesses, Furlong links his illnesses and operations to his spiritual life:

Dom Eudes Bamberger has described Merton as having four times the psychic energy of most ordinary men but suggests that his psychic energy exhausted his physical frame....It may have been just this awareness of a tendency to live with a destructive vigor that drove him first to the relative seclusion of Gethsemani, and then to the further seclusion (imperfect as it was) of the hermit life, but even so his body paid a heavy price for the adventures of his mind and spirit. From the early 1960s onward, he suffered from a series of minor and major complaints, some of which caused him considerable distress.

Furlong is also quite good in describing Merton's life as a contemplative, especially his years in the hermitage, where his daily routine is not only described, but through Merton's own words, Furlong provides the reader with the sounds and sights of life in the hermitage throughout the day and the seasons.

One of the most remarkable facts about Merton is that he had only two hours a day in which to write. How he was able to write not only as much as he did but as well is almost beyond comprehension. Furlong brings us close to understanding, however. By her descriptions of the

contemplative life we sense that one of its fruits for Merton was an increased ability to concentrate and focus his energies wholly and completely on whatever task was before him. Thus, the act of writing itself, was an act of contemplation, another dimension of prayer. As Merton remarked in a letter:

Such writing as I do (when I work I manage to write quickly) is not any part of a career, nor do I even conceive of it as an apostolate. It is simply a way of meditating on paper. If others wish to share in it, they are welcome, because I too have no proprietorship over these thoughts which are not "mine" and which if they are given are not given just to "me." (Letter to Dona Louisa Coomaraswamy, January 13, 1961)

There was a difference between the act of writing and being known as a writer. In *The Sign of Jonas*, Merton wrote, "An author in a Trappist monastery is like a duck in a chicken coop. And he would give anything in the world to be a chicken instead of a duck."

Being an author is a public role. Merton wrote from inner necessity, and given not only the quantity of his published materials, but the journals and thousands of letters he wrote, one might say that he was compelled to write:

If the monastic life is a life of hardship and sacrifice, I would say that for me most of the hardship has come in connection with writing. It is possible to doubt whether I have become a monk (a doubt that I have to live with), but it is not possible to doubt that I am a writer, that I was born one and will die as one. Disconcerting, disedifying as it is, this seems to be my lot and my vocation....I have also had to accept the fact that my life is almost totally paradoxical. I have also had to learn gradually to get along without apologizing for the fact, even to myself....It is in the paradox itself, the paradox which was and still is a source of insecurity, that I have come to find the greatest security. I have become convinced that the very contradictions in my life are in some ways signs of God's mercy to me: if only because someone so complicated and so prone to confusion and self-defeat could hardly survive for long without special mercy.

While Furlong comes closer to seeing the contemplative writer in Merton as belonging to a whole, she shares with Mott a failure to see how Merton's relationship with Dom James Fox belongs to the whole, also. Since Merton's death, Dom James has been portrayed as the primary nemesis of Merton's life.

Merton is partially responsible for this. That it was a stormy and difficult relationship cannot be questioned. As Abbot it was Dom James who refused Merton's requests to

travel to conferences, to transfer to another monastic order and to be a hermit. Merton vented his anger and frustration in letters and to friends when they visited, giving the impression that Dom James viewed him as Gethsemani's prize commodity, like the cheese and fruitcake for which the monastery was famous, and if Merton were allowed to travel he might never return to the monastery, which would not look good for Gethsemani or the Church.

Yet, if the relationship between Merton and Dom James was as bad as both Mott and Furlong maintain, why was Merton chosen, first, to be Master of Scholastics, the third highest position in the monastery's hierarchy, and later, Novice Master, a position second in importance only to that of the Abbot? The Abbot who appointed him Novice Master was none other than Dom James.

As Novice Master, Merton was responsible for the education of those wanting to become fully-vowed monks. If Dom James was as antagonistic to Merton as Mott, Furlong and others would have us believe, why did he entrust the novices to him? Neither biographer mentions, either, that for the last fifteen years of his life, Merton was Dom James' confessor.

It is surprising and disappointing that neither writer quotes from Dom James' very moving account of his relationship with Merton, "The Spiritual Son," published in *Thomas Merton, Monk: A Monastic Tribute*. (Edited by Brother Patrick Hart, Merton's secretary, the volume appeared in 1974 and is a collection of essays by fellow monks about Merton. Together with the Furlong biography, the two provide a full and very human portrait of Merton.) Because so much has been written and whispered about the relationship between the two, and its adverse affect on Merton, it is worth quoting extensively from Dom James' essay, as it reveals much, which both biographies choose to ignore.

One of Merton's joys was taking walks in the woods outside the enclosure. Once, during a visit from one of the Order's superiors in France, it was mandated that such walks were not appropriate for cloistered monks. Merton was acting as translator, and Dom James writes:

I looked at Fr. Louis. His face flushed red and big tears filled his eyes. He quivered a bit, but never said a word. He remained silent, seemingly crushed. To think that one "exercise" which he loved so much, and legitimately, was to be denied him! Many thoughts ran through my mind, but I concluded that there was no need arguing then.

Dom James simply appointed Merton to the theretofore nonexistent position of "Chief Ranger of the Forests" to mark the trees to cut for firewood and carpentry work and to keep the forests cleared of fallen trees.

Sometime later the State Forestry Department was given permission to erect a tall fire tower on monastery property. The tower was made of steel and had a large cabin at the very top in which the Fire Warden would live to watch for forest

fires. Merton proposed to Dom James that he be considered for the job of Fire Warden, because the tower was ideal for a hermitage.

Dom James agreed and said that he would seek permission from the head of the Order in France. Permission was granted, but on one condition: Merton would have to be fully a hermit, with absolutely no contacts with the monastic community. The news was conveyed to Merton. Three days later he came to Dom James and volunteered for the recently vacated position of Novice Master.

Though in his correspondence Merton presents only the negative side of his relationship with Dom James, the Abbot observes that "During the twenty years we lived together, he never missed a week in coming over to the office to converse with me." Dom James writes further that:

Sometimes during Confession, our conversation would wander to extrinsic problems. Some five or ten minutes would pass, without either of us being aware of it. Suddenly he would cry out: "Hey, Reverend Father, let me give you absolution, and get you off your knees."

To which I would reply, "O.K., but first soak me with a good penance for being such a tough old Superior." He never would.

The most moving part of Dom James' essay is a letter he wrote Merton while the latter was on his Asian journey. Dom James writes eloquently of his desire to be a hermit and how many times his superiors had refused him:

My first reaction was to lean toward harsh and uncharitable thoughts in their regard, and even to question their motivations. But how wrong I would have been. Indeed to all outward appearances, it seemed that they were unjust and narrow. But looking through and beyond and above the appearances, they were merely instruments whom God was using to convey His will to me -- at that time....

...I would not be in the least surprised if at times I have indeed appeared as your "public enemy No. 1" -- your "bete noire" -- your haunting "Nemesis." But in reality, I am not so.

You never had -- nor will you ever have -- one who has been a more faithful and loyal friend and brother than myself. I never had any other motive in any decisions in your regard than your best -- not necessarily your best temporal interests -- but your best eternal interests. As Psalm 76 phrases it: "And I had in mind the Eternal Years."

...in regard to your present trip to the Orient which you desired for several years, and for which you did not receive permission, I was only an instrument in God's hands. God's time for it had not come.

Now His time has come....

That Dom James needed to write such a letter certainly indicates that his relationship with Merton was not an easy one. What is also clear, however, is the Abbot's deep need to know that he and Merton were reconciled, despite it all. This is especially poignant because, at the time the letter was written, Dom James had ceased to be Abbot and was living as a hermit, something about which he had sought and received Merton's counsel and advice.

Merton wrote back from Calcutta:

I have been waiting for a chance to thank you for your warm and gracious letter. I want you to know that I appreciate it. Certainly, you must not feel that I failed to understand the situation.

Personally, I never resented any of your decisions, because I knew you were following your conscience and the policies that seemed necessary then.

...Be sure, that I have never changed in my respect for you as Abbot, and affection as Father. Our different views certainly did not affect our deep agreement on the real point of life and of our vocation.

Even a cursory perusal of Merton's letters makes one question his saying that he "never resented" Dom James' decisions regarding him. The resentment and anger is strongly expressed in the letters. Yet, in these letters one can also hear Merton, the orphaned adolescent, reaching out for sympathy, approval and acceptance, presenting his case as one-sidedly as possible in order to receive in return the mother's love, the little boy in him still needed and craved. In that context, his letter to Dom James can be seen as sincere. What the ego may



resent and be angered by, the soul receives gladly. Like any of us, Merton spoke both from the ego and from the soul. In his final letter to James Fox, Merton would appear to be writing from the soul.

Despite Monica Furlong's unsympathetic treatment of the Fox-Merton relationship, her biography is filled with feeling for Merton the contemplative. Her choice of what to quote from Merton is always sure and illuminating. She does not overemphasize Merton the social and political thinker as does Mott. Neither does she seek to explain what she does not understand. She respects mystery and because she does, she takes us close to the mystery of who this man Merton was.

3.

The best my friendship can offer you is prayer, during the psalms at night, in my Mass at dawn. (I have a rare privilege, unappreciated and unthought of by almost all priests even here, of saying Mass just at sunrise, when the light of the sun falls on the altar, and powerfully lights up the mystery of the divine presence spoken of in so many, many prayers of illumination, like this morning's postcommunion: 'Come to meet us always O Lord with the heavenly light everywhere, that we may discern with clear mind the mystery of which you have made us partakers, and that we may enter into it with awe and love.'

Merton: Letter to Dona Luis Coomaraswamy,
January 13, 1961

There are some 3,500 letters of Merton's to over a thousand people at the Thomas Merton Studies Center at Bellarmine College. *The Hidden Ground of Love -- The Letters of Thomas Merton on Religious Experience and Social Concerns* is the first volume of these letters.

Selected and edited by William Shannon, the collection is unsatisfying for reasons that probably cannot be helped. Arranging the volumes by subject matter makes the reading slow and tedious sometimes. Regardless of how noble it is to be opposed to nuclear weapons, letter after letter on the subject can be tiring. After one has said he's "against" it, there really isn't much more to be said.

The editor has also chosen to arrange the volume chronologically by correspondent, rather than in straight chronology. There might have been an advantage in seeing the correspondence to, for example, Dorothy Day, in chronology if Merton's relationship to Day or any of his correspondents had changed in some substantial way. Because his relationships did not, this means of organizing the letters has little merit. However, Shannon says in his introduction:

The large majority of the letters were written over a relatively brief period of time -- which would tend to make a purely chronological arrangement awkward and confusing. Second and more important, the arrangement by sets to individual persons allows the reader to experience the

sequence, progress, and development of so many friendships that were important to Thomas Merton. And we need to realize that letter writing was for him a way of making friendships and of enabling them to grow.

One cannot but be overwhelmed by the scope of Merton's mind as revealed in these letters. Among the people written to are Thich Nhat Hanh, W.H. Ferry, Erich Fromm, Abraham Joshua Heschel, Zalman Shachter, Aldous Huxley, Daniel Berrigan, Dom Helder Camara, Dorothy Day, James Douglass, James Forest, Gordon Zahn, Rosemary Reuther, Paul Tillich, Martin E. Marty, Coretta King, two Popes, Jacqueline and Ethel Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson and D.T. Suzuki. Subjects discussed with astounding knowledge and in detail include Zen Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Sufism, race, Catholicism, Protestantism, Christianity and pacifism.

What becomes apparent in the letters is that there were many people living behind the name Thomas Merton-Father Louis. He is deferential and polite when writing to Orientals, courteous and respectful to Dorothy Day, argumentative and needy to Rosemary Reuther and downright obsequious to Church superiors. The intellectual content of the letters is quite high, so much so that the personal voice that speaks in the journals appears infrequently. Yet, the letters are studded with the simplicity and insight which characterize all of Merton's published work.

...the law of all spiritual life is the law of risk and struggle, and possible failure. (To Edward Deming Andrews, September 20, 1962)

Some of us only learn tolerance and understanding after having been intolerant and "absolute." In a word, it is hard to live with a strict and sometimes absurd ideal, and the ambience involved can be tragic, or salutary. (Ibid)

That is all I do. Throw stones in the air, and if somebody yells I know the stones came down. (To Daniel Berrigan, February 23, 1964)

The Lord has been very good and yet I still fight my way through the forests. This is to be expected. (To Sister M. Emmanuel, July 28, 1960)

It is so strange to advance backwards and get where you are going in a totally unexpected way. (Ibid)

J. was also horrifying me with tales of the sedate gambling places and Lake Tahoe, the ones that are prim and country-clubbish and which cater to decent people, with dealerettes in prim black dresses, and soft Muzak, and nary a drunk on the premises, and the nice old ladies coming up to gamble in busloads from the cities of the plain. I am utterly disheartened. What has happened to good old sin? Here I am behind these walls doing my bit and counting on the world to do its bit, with barrelhouse piano and the walleye guys in shades,

with long cigars, raking in the pieces of eight, and the incandescent floozies lolling over the roulette wheels...Tell me, Ping, am I wasting my time? Is all that utterly gone? I am shaken. How can I go into a week's retreat if all has...GONE? But maybe there is still plenty of evil in other fields. I take heart again and get back to the sackcloth. (To W.H. Ferry, January 18, 1962)

Why not cry out to God in any way you like, as long as you don't expect it to console you. (To Etta Gullick, August 31, 1962)

...pray as the Spirit moves you, but of course I would say follow the Mass in a missal unless there is a good reason for doing something else, like floating suspended ten feet above the congregation. (To John Harris, June 22, 1959)

...the anguish must always be there. But it must deepen and change and become vastly more fruitful. That is the best we can hope for nowadays: a fruitful anguish instead of one that is utterly sterile and consuming. (Ibid., September 12, 1959)

The concrete existential situation you are in here and now, whatever it is, contains for you God's will, reality. Your only job is to accept it as it is, because it is His will, and seek to fulfill it because it is the truth, not because it pleases you, gets you off a hook, or on a hook, or makes you feel safe, or whatever. But in order to do this you have to really believe deeply in God's love for you, and see that even the "evil" in your life can serve the purpose of His love, now that it is over and the effects have to be suffered....you may have a great deal to suffer, but if you accept it realistically and without too much fear, with real trust in Him, it will do great things for you. But it may be painful and confusing.... (To Linda Parsons Sabbath, January 29, 1966)

Reading the letters, one encounters the many faces of Merton directly and given how prolific he was in his published writings, and in his letters, which are now being made public, one wonders why any biography of him is necessary. Are not his own words enough? Certainly, in the quoted passages above, it is evident that Merton speaks in the generality but is writing of himself.

We live in an age, however, when we are not satisfied with what a person shares publicly of his or her life. My life has not been enriched by knowing that Joan Crawford beat her daughter, and it certainly has not kept me from watching Crawford movies on late night television. I do not care if Erroll Flynn (or anyone else) was (or is) gay. And the only conceivable reason for knowing who Shelly Winters has slept with would be to send them condolence cards.

Why is it that what a person offers publicly of his or her life no longer satisfies us? Is it that we are rapidly losing all sense of the private, the personal, the mysterious? Is it that we no longer know that there is a realm of the individual which is

the province of that person and God? Do we really think that we can truly know another human being?

I wonder if the answers to these questions may not lie in the fact that the further from the awe and mystery of our lives we live, the more intense the need to deprive the lives of others of awe and mystery.

Maybe that is why Thomas Merton was such a prolific writer. One can almost hear him chuckling and saying, "I'll confound them with words. I'll use so many words that they'll become convinced that's where they'll find me. Boy, I'll have them sitting in libraries for years looking for me in my words."

He ain't there, friends.

4.

...one of the marks of the authentic contemplative is a growing need to hide himself, to draw ever more deeply into secrecy, to efface himself, become invisible.

John Howard Griffin

On September 9, 1980, John Howard Griffin died of complications from diabetes in Fort Worth, Texas. He had been chosen to write the official biography of Thomas Merton. Though he began, increasing ill health prevented him ever working on it extensively.

Most remember Griffin as the white man who "dyed" his skin and travelled through the south for six weeks in 1959 because he wanted to know what it was like to be black in America. The subsequent book of his journey, *Black Like Me*, became a best-seller. If he is remembered for that book only, it will be a travesty.

Born in Dallas in 1920, he was educated to be a doctor, and was a recognized authority on Gregorian chants by the time he was 21. He worked in the French underground in World War II and helped smuggle Jews out of Nazi Germany. Forced finally to flee Europe or risk capture, he enlisted and was sent to the South Pacific, where an exploding bomb left him blind in 1946. He did not regain his sight until 1957, and saw his wife and children for the first time.

During the years of his blindness, he wrote two novels -- *The Devil Rides Outside* and *Nuni*. No summary of their plots and themes can do justice to their richness and depth. Both are serious and complex works. "Nothing like them has been written in American fiction of the modern period," wrote critic Maxwell Geismar. "For sheer talent, power and virtuosity of craft, Griffin ranks very high." Unfortunately, both novels have been long out-of-print, and while excerpts were published in *The John Howard Griffin Reader*, edited by Bradford Daniel, it, too, is out of print.

It is significant that Griffin's novelistic output is limited to the years of his blindness. There were many novels in progress, but, as much as he loved writing, Griffin was not a literary man. Besides *Black Like Me*, only two other books of his were published: *Land of the High Sky*, a short historical work about the Staked Plain area of Texas, and *A Hidden Wholeness*, which features the photographs of Thomas Merton.



The latter book may give a clue as to why Griffin did not fulfill himself as a novelist. He chose to fulfill himself as a human being. *A Hidden Wholeness* is as close one can come to holding a Bach cantata in one's hands. It features Griffin's text, some photographs of his, but mainly those of Merton, taken primarily at the Abbey of Gethsemani. The book is supposed to be about Merton, but it is really a co-mingling of Merton's spirit with Griffin's. The two were close friends, even spiritual brothers, each living out a part of life the other had chosen not to live, living a part of life through each other.

Merton was the contemplative in the cloister; Griffin was the contemplative in the world -- husband, father, social activist, journalist. What characterizes the work and lives of both men is contemplation as the "gift of awareness, an awakening to the Real within all that is real." Merton also described contemplation as "life itself, fully awake, fully active, fully aware that it is alive. It is spiritual wonder. It is gratitude for life, for awareness and for being."

This contemplative core in Griffin is heard also in his other works: "Nowadays we seek happiness and we seek love; in my day we believed we had to be happiness and love," he wrote in *The Devil Rides Outside*. In a letter to a friend he wrote about writing and also about himself: "The writing is basically nothing more than the overflow of this great love which causes men to throw out all the paraphernalia of what is in favor of what ought to be."

It was this abiding sense of "what ought to be" that compelled him to become a black man. It is this same sense that pervades his posthumous books *The Hermitage Journals: A Diary Kept While Working On The Biography of Thomas Merton* (Image Books, 1983) and *Follow the Ecstasy: Thomas Merton, The Hermitage Years, 1965-1968* (JHG Editions/Latitudes Press, 1983). The latter represents what of the Merton biography Griffin was able to complete, and is more than ample confirmation that he was the only one who could have rendered Merton's life as an act of contemplation.

Using Merton's unpublished journals as the basis for his narration, Griffin's technique is more novelistic than conventionally biographical. By paraphrasing as well as quoting from the journals, the reader lives in the hermitage with/as Merton. This is a radical departure for biography, a genre in which the biographer places him or herself between the reader and the subject and acts as interpreter and guide. Griffin does just the opposite; he removes himself, and even when he becomes part of the narrative, he mentions himself in the third person.

Because of Griffin's attention to the detail of Merton's dailiness at the hermitage, the reader begins to taste the various qualities of solitude as seen in deer tracks in the snow, or heard in the falling trees during an electrical storm. The reader feels the pain of Merton's bursitis, the skin allergy which sometimes made it impossible for him to type or even write by hand. It is a simple story Griffin attempts to tell, a story with no drama except that of a monk learning to be a hermit because that is how he has been called to love God. Thus, it is a story of dailiness, a story of recording what was eaten for breakfast, and of how hard the brightness of the stars on a winter night and how enervating the heat of a summer day. Because Griffin chose to seek the inner Merton through a careful rendering of dailiness, the inner Merton is revealed with a power the more conventional biographies cannot approximate.

Especially sensitive is Griffin's handling of Merton's relationship with the nurse. Using the unpublished journals, Merton's ecstasy and agony are experienced by the reader so that the story is removed from the level of gossip and becomes a story of revelation in which Merton learns how full his capacity to love is, something which he had always doubted. This doubt had made him question his capacity to love God. Through his love for the nurse, and especially the agonizing rejection of that love's consummation, the life of Merton the monk was deepened by the brave foolishness of Merton the man.

Also worth noting is how much warmer Merton's relationship with Dom James is portrayed in *Follow the Ecstasy*. Griffin allows Merton to speak for himself and in the

quotes and paraphrases from the unpublished journals, one sees clearly how much Merton not only needed but used Dom James to protect him from the world as well as his own weaknesses. Particularly moving is the sensitivity and caring with which Dom James handled Merton's relationship with the nurse.

Griffin's approach to the life of Merton succeeds only because Griffin risked himself. Where other biographers went to the libraries to read Merton's letters and manuscripts, where other biographers went to France to see what the house in which Merton was born looked like, Griffin went to live at Merton's hermitage.

The Hermitage Journals has more to say about Griffin than Merton. That is as it should be. Merton's life as a contemplative can have meaning for us only to the extent that Merton does not become an end in himself, a neo-hippie icon we look on and say, "Oh, wow!" If the life of Merton means anything, it is a call to what Griffin calls "interior intimacy...that kind of intimacy that melts all the crusts within one."

Griffin's journals speak with the same tones of authenticity as Merton's, not because Griffin is attempting to write like Merton, but because Griffin writes from that place of Oneness wherein all is and ever will be.

Words are like rubber balls that a man tries to throw up to the clouds. They will not reach.

To be moderate in matters of love is simply not to love. To be moderate in matters of justice is to be simply unjust.

Blemishes are for people who do not know about love. We hide our blemishes or minimize them for people who do not know about love.

Above all, Griffin loves that mystery which was his life, which was Merton's life. Only after his [Merton's] death did many of his friends know a great deal about him. His hidden life was quite deeply private and hidden. No one, not even those who were very close to him, really knew his "secret prayer." He revealed those facts of himself that were proper to each of his friends: but underneath this was his vocation as monk and hermit-- something between himself and God alone, something that had to remain secret because these things become distorted when known.

Perhaps that is my unease with all the books being written about Merton and his work. I do not fear damage to Merton. It is the damage to ourselves that terrifies me.

We have not sat in our own hermitages and therefore we no longer know that there are, indeed, some things that must remain secret. We no longer know that there are those things that are secret between ourselves and God. Even more, there are those things that are secret only to God.

Nothing belongs more to God than the secret of who another is.

My Seven Lean Years

Beyers Naude'

Introduction by G. Macleod Bryan:

Beyers Naude' was born in 1915. A graduate of Stellenbosch University, he became pastor of Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk in 1939. With others, he founded the Christian Institute of South Africa in 1963. He and colleagues at the Institute were "banned" by the South African regime on October 19, 1977, and the Institute closed permanently.

Naude' was inexplicably relieved of the banning order of seven years on September 26, 1984. He then set about assuming an even more critical leadership in the Christian churches' opposition to the policy of the South African Government. Naude' was the principal author of the Kairos Document issued September 25, 1985 and signed by 151 church leaders--modeled after the Barmen Declaration of 1934 (see Katallagete, Summer 1985 for George Hunsinger's "Barth, Barmen and the Confessing Church Today").



Naude's resistance began in 1960 when the delegates from his own Dutch Reformed body began publicly retracting their signatures from the Cottesloe Consultation, a relatively mild theological statement rejecting racism. Naude stood firm. In 1963, obliged to resign from his pulpit in Johannesburg, he preached his last sermon, "Obey God, Rather than Man." In August, 1972, he and four other administrators of the Christian Institute, then under threat of investigation by a South African parliamentary commission, publicly announced their refusal to cooperate by having their photograph made outside the buildings of the Christian Institute. Naude's subsequent trial became a cause celebre', the transcript of which was published in book form by the International Commission of Jurists, Geneva. The five persons issued a "here I stand" position paper in 1974 entitled "Divine or Civil Obedience?"

Naude' has a long history of outspokenness, which has not been quieted by endless harassment by the South African government and their police. He will not be silenced because, as he says in the last sentence of the accompanying statement, "To such a country I wish to belong and that is why I am here, in South Africa, and wish to remain here to offer myself in the service of all the people of our land until I die." He has visited America several times during the past year, once to receive a doctorate from Notre Dame, another to receive the Robert Kennedy Award. He was scheduled to speak in the United States in January of this year but was denied an exit visa. He is reported as saying in USA Today, November 15, 1985, "People have reached a point where they are saying enough is enough, we want our liberation and we want it now, and we are prepared to die for it."

This article is based on an address delivered on the occasion of the presentation of a Festschrift to Naude' at the University of Capetown, May 8, 1986: Resistance and Hope, edited by Charles Villa-Vicenco and John W. deGruchy (Wm. B. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1986).

G. MacLeod Bryan is Professor of Christian Ethics at Wake Forest University; friend and colleague of Naude' and others resisting apartheid, a witness and reporter about South Africa for three decades, and author of *Naude': Prophet to South Africa* (John Knox, 1978). The book will be re-issued later this year.

Shortly after 5:00 a.m. on Wednesday, October 19, 1977 the telephone rang in our home. I had been awaiting such a call for weeks. It was the voice of Helen Kotze, the wife of Theo Kotze, the Cape Director of the Christian Institute saying in short staccato tones: "They are raiding us! Be prepared!" The phone clicked and the voice was silent. I intuitively knew that the moment which we had expected for some time had arrived. The security police had moved in to destroy the Christian Institute, and my wife and I immediately prepared ourselves for what was to come. We hastily dressed and phoned around to ascertain what was happening but without success. After a hurried breakfast we drove to Braamfontein.

On our arrival at the Christian Institute offices in Diakonia House, we realised that the building was under siege. In the entrance hall security police were standing all around, and they separated me from my wife and from all other staff members. I was taken to my office, where they notified me that Jimmy Kruger, the Minister of Justice, had decreed that the Christian Institute be declared an illegal organisation and all its assets were to be confiscated and removed. For more than four hours a large contingency of security police with assistants packed all the documents of the CI into boxes and marked them according to the number of the office from which they had been removed. They were loaded onto trucks parked in the alley at the back of the building. The clamp-down on the Christian Institute was final and firm. Nothing would remain; nothing would be left behind.

For more than four hours I sat in my office watching all these proceedings and assuming the same action was taking place in our Christian Institute offices in Mowbray, Cape Town and Pietermaritzburg. Thought after thought raced through my mind: what were they doing to our staff downstairs, how would my wife take all this?—she had already experienced so much trauma since 1963 when I took office as director of the Christian Institute. How would our children react to the terrible blow being inflicted on us? What was happening to Theo and Helen and to the staff in Mowbray and to Cosmos Desmond and his wife in Pietermaritzburg? What would be the future of us as the staff? How would churches in and beyond South Africa react? These and other questions rushed through my mind. One thing I knew—although I had no prior indication of proof: a banning order was awaiting me as surely as the sun was shining on the walls outside my office.

As I left my office, I turned for the last time and offered a silent prayer: "Thank you, God, for your goodness in allowing me nearly forty years of ministry in your service." Then, feeling compelled by my faith, I added: "Forgive them, Father, for they do not know what they are doing."

Outside the building was a barrage of photographers and newsmen waiting -- but only one of them approached me with a simple but significant question: "Is it true that you have been banned?" I knew then that all the others around also knew I was banned. If they had not known, they would have rushed around me for comment. My reply was, "Yes, for a period of five years." I then turned around and walked away into the silence of the years to come.

As I drove home, my emotions threatened to overcome me, but as I thought of my wife, our children and our staff, I was sustained. Else, my wife, had already gone home, and when I arrived she was waiting at the front door. She embraced me, took my hand and said, "I am sorry, Bey." There was a long silence between us; a new life was awaiting us for five and possibly more years; a life more difficult than the forty years behind us. How would this affect our children, our friends, our personal relationship?

Many people, during the seven years of my banning, asked me whether I had any premonition of such an action being contemplated against me or other members of the Christian Institute. My answer was always: "Premonition -- no: but a gut feeling based on certain veiled threats made a few months earlier by one or more Cabinet Ministers, yes." That is why during June, 1977, I once told my wife that I had a funny feeling that the government would start acting against the Christian Institute very soon and that we should prepare for a banning order being served on me. This awareness helped me prepare psychologically for the event. This preparation was aided by having known others who had been banned during the previous number of years, people like Dr. Manas Buthelezi, Steve Biko and others.

After I arrived home, and before Else and I had time to share our feelings, the phone rang, and it continued ringing until late that night and through the next day. People were expressing their feelings in many ways: abhorrence, anger, sorrow, distress, concern, support. These emotions were conveyed in meaningful ways, and we were deeply touched. Bouquets of flowers arrived, our children arrived and friends and acquaintances streamed in to express sympathy and concern. Else and I realized that for five years, and possibly more, we would be forced to separate voluntarily in our own home the moment somebody outside the immediate family arrived -- me with one person at a time in my study or in the garden and she with the others in the lounge, kitchen or bedroom. For many years this ordeal would continue, with all the anxiety, tension and uncertainty that this would create -- because one never knew when the security police would arrive, knock on the front door and walk in to check on whether I was complying with my banning order or not. Thus I discovered very soon how an unjust law, with arbitrary powers entrusted to a Minister of State, forced banned people to police themselves at all times, day or night. The prospect of a life under a five year banning order had to be faced immediately. What should I do? What could I do? There were a number of options and possibilities I considered.

First, I felt motivated to think about, and possibly write on theology -- liberation theology, to reflect on issues of social justice and on the future of South Africa.

Second, I could start writing a diary or a book about my life, my ministry in the Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk, my theological and political conversion, my involvement in the Afrikaner Broederbond, my participation in the historical

Cottesloe Consultation, the history of the Christian Institute and my unforgettable experiences as director of this organisation, my growth in understanding of black aspirations and feelings through close contact with leaders of Black Consciousness movements (South African's Student Organization, Black People's Convention, and Black Community Programmes) as well as my association with the African Independent Churches since 1965 (All these options would be illegal if it could be proved that they were written with a view to publication).

Third, I could continue my ministry through individual pastoral counselling linked to continued study, reading and reflection.

The decision of what would take place during my banning was partly determined by events and developments outside our control -- namely, the stream of friends and visitors as well as people in need who came to our door, many times unannounced through fear or ignorance of what a banning order and the position of a banned person implied. Visitors arrived at all hours of the day or the night. It may sound unbelievable, but for the first twelve months after my banning (and beyond that period) the flow of visitors never stopped. At times we had quite a ludicrous situation in our home: a number of people, sometimes three to four at a time, sitting in our lounge (which looked more like a doctor's consulting room than the lounge of a private home), waiting to meet me in my small study or in the garden. Else was continually interrupted in her work programme, to answer the doorbell or the telephone, or to serve tea or coffee to visitors and friends. During this time she was still employed in a part-time capacity as the secretary/bookkeeper of the Christian Fellowship Trust, a programme allowing a few people to visit Europe on a short study tour. Very soon we discovered that our house was in fact serving a threefold purpose: it was the office of a pastoral counsellor, it was the office of my wife and it was our home.

Soon after my banning, I made a shocking discovery: there was no way in which I, as a human being, could live without breaking my banning order. One term of the order prohibits a banned person from participating in any way in political discussion, even if such discussion is intended to defend or support government policy! For me the choice was rapidly and readily made: I would under no circumstances allow the expression of my Christian convictions, my Christian concern and my judgment on political matters and events from a Christian perspective to be curtailed or restricted by my banning order. If this would lead me to being charged, I would gladly face a trial.

It was, in fact, not easy to comply with every demand of the banning order. I had to study and memorise the long list of premises I was not allowed to enter, educational institutions, trade union offices, factories or industries, publishing houses or any premises where material was being prepared with a view to publication. I had to memorise the municipal boundaries of the Johannesburg Magisterial District to which I was restricted in terms of my banning order and remember to sign the register at the Parkview Police Station every Wednesday morning. My wife and I had to live with the

awareness that our letters were regularly opened, our phone tapped (and of this I had ample proof) and our home under surveillance. Could we withstand and survive the stress and tension of such a life?

During this period of reflection, without any conscious effort on my part, I discovered that more and more people were coming to our home for personal counselling and advice. Some were white, many were black; all came with serious personal needs and problems. Some of these were related to the political situation, which affected their lives and those of their husbands or wives, their sons or daughters. As I listened to their dilemmas and concerns and reflected on them, it became clear to me that this was a legitimate demand people were making upon my time and life. This was possibly God's way of telling me that He wanted me to offer my service to these people.

Initially, I felt strongly that I should leave the country and face the future in exile to promote the cause of the Christian Institute. It was an agonising thought which I feared to share with my wife, because I knew it would cause her increasing distress and suffering. When I eventually did so, her response, after careful and considered reflection, was: "If you feel that it is your duty to go, Bey, then do so, but do not expect me to follow you. I cannot leave South Africa and our children behind." That, added to other considerations, made it easier to conclude that I could not leave the country under these circumstances. Many times during the latter years of my banning, I have asked myself what would have happened if I had left South Africa.

Several aspects of a banning order I believe should be emphasised. First is the personal one. People have asked what I found the most difficult aspect of my banning. It is a difficult question. I believe it is the lack of free social intercourse, the prohibition of meaningful political and theological discussion and the opportunity to relax in the company of a small circle of friends. These were the most distressing aspects of the banning order.

I had time to reflect on the principle of a banning order as part of the legal system of a so-called democratic country. I discovered personally that a banning was an injustice to every banned person. It is a moral judgment on any system which approves and implements such a practice of banning and detention without trial. It is a fundamental violation of the rule of law and the concept of justice. It cannot work and it is counter-productive. It can never stifle or kill the convictions and opinions which lead to the banning of such a person. It eventually has a serious detrimental effect on the leaders and the community sanctioning and upholding such an evil and inhuman practice. My thoughts time and again turned to the Afrikaner people who had devised and implemented this system, and I realised more than ever how they were dehumanising themselves and preparing for their own destruction by the justification of such methods to maintain their position of political power.

But there was also the practical side of a banning order. It has to do with facing one's feelings of anger, frustration and vindictiveness which inevitably arise. I discovered that I had to make a crucial decision with regard to those feelings: Would I allow such feelings to take root in my life, or would I do everything to insure that no such emotions would corrode my inner life and freedom? I requested Ilse to be on the look-out for any signs of anger or bitterness. This she faithfully did, and for this I thank God, and both of us have lived through this period and conquered any feelings of bitterness, hatred or revenge which otherwise could have destroyed us.

I consciously refused to allow the banning order to accomplish its intended goal. I decided, through God's grace that:

It would not rob me of the opportunity to think, reflect and plan for the future;

It would not stop me sharing and passing on my insights, analyses, discoveries of new values to other people -- even if this could only be done with one person at a time. Such discoveries of precious thoughts and new truths were like small seeds I was sowing all the time, certain in my faith that

the explosive power of truth would take root and grow in the hearts and minds of those with whom I associated during this period;

It would not stop me loving people and trying to understand them better, deepening my concern for their hopes, their joys and suffering and therefore becoming more sensitive to joys and suffering;

It would not stop me from growing as a human being and as a Christian;

It would not rob me of my inner freedom, my peace of mind, my joy of living, loving and sharing;

All this brought me to a firm conclusion: through God's grace I would never allow this banning to break my spirit, to distort my freedom of mind or my concern for justice.

It would never rob me of the deep conviction, inspired by my Christian faith and my sense of justice as I discovered time and again through the pronouncements of the Old and New Testaments that freedom will come to our land, that the unjust system of apartheid will eventually crumble and disappear and that our country and our people will be free.



I reflected deeply on the rise and crisis of the Afrikaner people: on their sense of joy and satisfaction at having attained their political ideals but also on the tragedy that they were now inflicting, in many ways, the same injustices on the black community the British had inflicted on them. Time and again I asked myself: when will our people discover that God's justice would not allow injustice to sustain a system of oppression such as the Afrikaner had instituted and was now desperately trying to uphold?

I reflected on the English liberal tradition in our country and saw the agony and confusion in the minds of many English-speaking white South Africans at not being able to understand why they were viewed with increasing suspicion by blacks and why liberalism was rejected.

I reflected on the ascendancy of black aspirations, the struggle within the black community to find means of achieving the goals of political liberation, the serious tensions and conflicts within the black society and the frustration and suspicion among themselves.

I reflected on the situation facing the student community, both black and white, and the struggle of students to discover for themselves what their future would be. I became increasingly aware of the growing frustration in the black student community, which I knew would lead to increasing resistance, rejection and eventual revolution.

I reflected on the growth of black political power and the emergence of black trade unions as an eventual process of change in the situation which we face. To me this was totally a new experience, as my theological training had in no way brought any knowledge, understanding or interpretation of the worker and of Christian responsibility towards his needs.

The establishment of the Alliance of Black Reformed Christians in Southern Africa filled me with new hope that the Christian message of unity and social justice would take deep root in the heart and life of the Church. I was encouraged by the consistent witness for justice which the Catholic Church was giving and its deep concern for the witness of students, workers and women in our country. I agonized about the future of the three Dutch Reformed Churches, especially the Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk, to which I belonged until 1980. In October, 1978, the national synod of the NG Kerk met in Bloemfontein and considered an urgent plea from the three younger black NG churches to unite with the NG Kerk. This plea for organisational unification was rejected by a large majority, and that decision was the turning point in my resolution to terminate membership in the NG Kerk and to join the black NG Kerk in Afrika. I could no longer, with peace of mind, and with a clear conscience remain a member of a church which had deliberately rejected the plea of the fruits of its own mission to unite into one non-racial confessional church across all boundaries of racial and ethnic disunity.

I also followed with increasing interest the growing concern of the ecumenical bodies and councils of churches outside South Africa in what was happening in our country. I was deeply grateful for the increasing involvement of the World Council of Churches, of the Catholic Church as a world body,

as well as of other organisations as they began to discover how seriously the developments in South Africa would affect the peace of the whole of the continent of Africa.

As years passed, I discovered a turning of the tide in the struggle for liberation in South Africa. The presentation and acceptance of the new constitution brought about a totally new situation. The National Forum was convened, and soon afterwards the United Democratic Front emerged as a basis for massive resistance to the new constitution, led by students, youth, black trade unions, women's groups, civic organisations and many grassroots people. A new determination to achieve liberation was born; a growing impatience to destroy the present system was emerging; the old sense of resignation on the part of the adult black community was overtaken by a new determination by the young people to stand up and initiate new moves toward liberation. This movement was gaining momentum day after day, and I became increasingly aware that nothing would stop it. I sensed the tragedy of the majority of whites in South Africa, who, having through all these years excluded themselves through lack of interest or concern, would fail to understand what was happening and would eventually be exposed to one shock after the other. I reflected on the efforts at reform and realised we were facing a tragic failure, because what was being undertaken was too little, too diffident, too slow and too late.

Whilst all these thoughts and feelings were still occupying my mind, Wednesday, September 26, 1984, arrived. It was 3:15 p.m., and I was busy discussing the situation in South Africa with three church visitors from Germany when three figures passed the window of the lounge of our home. I could only see the outline of these figures, but I immediately knew they were security police. I wondered what I had again done to incur the further displeasure of the government? I had requested my wife not to disturb us, as I only had a short time with these visitors, but on the other hand when I realised that they were security police, I did not wish her to experience any unnecessary shock. By the time I reached the front door, she had invited them in. I accompanied them to my study.

There I stood with these three men in front of me. "Is there anything that I can do?" I asked them. "Yes," they said, "we have a letter from the Minister of Law and Order which we are required to deliver to you." "Could I know what the contents of the letter are?" I asked. "Yes," they said, "the minister is lifting your banning order." I stood speechless and silent. I thanked them for delivering this letter, greeted them and accompanied them to the door. I entered the kitchen and said to my wife: "You won't believe it, my banning order has been lifted!"

My seven years were over -- the longest and leanest years of my life. No, I am wrong. I realise that in all probability they were the most difficult but certainly the most enriching experience of my life because this banning brought to fruition many latent insights, feelings, visions and hopes. I thank God

for what He was able to convey to both Ilse and myself. I thank Ilse and our children for their tremendous contribution of love in sustaining me through all these years. I thank my friends, the hundreds and thousands inside and outside South Africa who through the warmth of their fellowship and faith sustained both my wife and myself. I thank all those who in some way shared with us their sorrows, suffering, pain, hopes and joys. I thank the churches, church leaders and Christian friends in and outside South Africa who sustained us faithfully in prayer and through material support.

As General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches, I find myself in a new position of responsibility. I realise that God has prepared me for a wider and more meaningful ministry in the life of the church and of the community.

The crisis I have seen growing during the years of my banning order continues. I close with a comment on four interrelated areas within this crisis:

1. The political crisis of our land intensifies daily. The time has come for the government to lift the banning order of the African National Congress and the Pan African Congress, allowing these movements to operate as political parties inside the country. At the same time all exiles must be invited to return to the country, and all political prisoners released.

2. I appeal to both the government and the business sector to respond to black labor unions' demands in a creative and imaginative manner. It is quite clear that if their support is not ensured any attempt to persuade the outside world of industrial reform will rightly fall on deaf ears.

3. I appeal to the universities in this country, such as the University of Cape Town, which have traditionally supported the freedom of association to take the initiative in this regard. This historic concept of universities will have to be reviewed in order to make them universities of the people and for the people in the full sense of the word. This would imply an active and ongoing debate between university and trade union movements, between university and political groups, between university and educational groups operating at the grassroots level. Unless universities expose themselves much more to the initiatives and challenges emanating from such groups and organisations they will find themselves increasingly being regarded as irrelevant or even as resisting the struggle for liberation.

4. The churches of this land are torn apart by political division, ideological conflicts and doctrinal disputes. Now is the time for unity of purpose grounded in the total rejection of the heresy of apartheid. Unless the church is prepared to do this it will be rejected as irrelevant by the people of God who reach out for his gift in Christ of justice, freedom and life. This will imply that the white Dutch Reformed Churches will have to confess their betrayal of the Gospel through their theological justification and practical support of Apartheid. Equally the churches which have in principle rejected apartheid will have to confess their betrayal of the Gospel

through sinful compromise and fear to pay the price for their Christian convictions.

Where we go from here is the right of all the people of this land to decide. If this right is denied to some it will, I fear, ultimately be taken from all, as the country is plunged into total chaos. But there is no need for the present conflict, however serious, to develop into chaos and anarchy if we first respect and protect each other's human dignity and human rights and insist on each person's responsibility. A country which builds its future on truth and trust is a country which will have a place for all. To such a country and to such a community I wish to belong, and that is why I am here, in South Africa, and wish to remain here to offer myself in the service of all the people of our land until I die. □



How Christian Universities Contribute to the Corruption of Youth: Church and University in a Confused Age

Stanley Hauerwas

The Current State of the Christian University

seldom sees emblazoned on Harvard's shield its full motto--i.e., *Veritas: Christo et Ecclesia*. *Veritas* is challenge enough for the contemporary university.

The aims of Duke University are to assert a faith in the eternal union of knowledge and religion set forth in the teachings and character of Jesus Christ, the son of God; to advance learning in all lives of truth; to defend scholarship against all false notions and ideals; to develop a Christian love of freedom and truth; to promote a sincere spirit of tolerance; to discourage all partisan and sectarian strife; and to render the largest permanent service to the individual, the state, the nation, and the church. Unto these ends shall the affairs of this university always be administered.

So reads a bronze plaque in the middle of Duke University's campus. Yet at the recent inauguration of Duke's president, the university board chairman read this statement, leaving out "set forth in the teachings and character of Jesus Christ." That he did so is appropriate, as there is no evidence that teaching at Duke is decisively determined by adherence to Jesus Christ. To be sure, Duke Chapel stands in the middle of the campus and is used as the symbol of Duke on most campus publications but more in witness to its aesthetic than to its Christian nature.

Christians built and supported universities, because they thought them important for enabling us to live better as Christians. Now statements such as that on the bronze plaque at Duke are often seen by those who make up the modern university as quaint sentiments from the past and/or potential threats from the religious right. For example, one

Why and how this transformation took place involves complex social and intellectual questions. Even if I could account for the loss of Christian control of universities, that is not my primary concern. I am only interested in noting this change insofar as it helps us as Christians to understand our commitment and participation in the life of the modern university. I do not believe it possible or desirable to recapture Duke or Harvard as Christian universities. The question is not can Duke be Christian but rather how Christians can understand what they are doing, as teachers, administrators and students at Duke, Harvard or the University of North Carolina.

Some academics may think they do not need to have the issue put so contentiously, because they support or teach at less secular universities. The possibility of being a "Christian college" exists at smaller schools specializing in liberal arts education. In such contexts, it is possible to assert the union of knowledge and religion as set forth in the teaching and character of Jesus Christ, and to make a genuine attempt to determine the morals and character of students. Thus, the mission statement of Anderson College (Anderson, Indiana) reads, "Our mission is to be an institution of Christian higher education at its best. We understand this to mean building that quality program which will enable each member of the campus community to become stronger in body, mind and spirit; to experience what it means to love God and 'neighbor'; to purposefully adopt a style of servanthood in all of life." (Based on Mark 10:35-45; 12:28-33)

I cannot judge how well or completely Anderson College or the many schools like it accomplish this purpose. Yet I have general questions about the coherence and/or practicability of such mission statements in our society. Such statements confirm and comfort those who maintain such colleges, but I suspect the reality often belies the stated ideal. It does so not because anyone is willfully deceitful, but because we are dealing with fundamental issues and conflicts not easily resolved.

Bronze plaques such as that at Duke imply that there once was a golden age when it was possible to maintain "Christian

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universities." Owing to the pluralism of our culture, that time may have passed for universities, but now that mission may be carried on by smaller colleges with a more homogeneous constituency. Yet questions of how Christians are related to universities and colleges were no clearer in the "golden age" than now. The only difference is that living in our more secular culture, we are less able to avoid such issues.

For example, Anderson College's mission statement declares that as a "Christian institution of higher education" they are committed to building a "quality program." Yet the nature of that "program" is not spelled out. It usually takes the form of some pledge of commitment to the "liberal arts," which assumes there is an intrinsic connection between being Christian and having a "well-rounded" education. I know of no theological justification for such an assumption. After all, a "humanistic education" does not necessarily insure more humane students.

It is perhaps unfair to pick on bronze plaques and mission statements, because they are written at the highest level of generalization. Yet such generalizations too easily become ideologies that repress rather than encourage the critical



questions we must ask as Christians to understand our commitment to "higher education." For example, why is it assumed by those who wrote the words on the bronze plaque at Duke that advancing all forms of learning is compatible with the teachings and character of Jesus Christ? Such learning is done in the name of truth, but as we know in the university, truth is an essentially contested notion. Or why was it assumed that advancing such truth will necessarily serve the state, nation and church or even that those three social realities should necessarily exist in harmony?

We must admit that as Christians we have not thought hard about what intellectual difference Christian convictions make for what is considered knowledge. As a result, our universities and colleges increasingly look like anyone's.¹ Thus a "Christian liberal arts college's" curriculum looks like any liberal arts college's curriculum. When asked what makes a college Christian, academics appeal to campus atmosphere or to convictions of those doing the teaching. But it is not clear how those convictions (no doubt often quite genuine) make a difference for the shape of the curriculum and/or the actual content of the courses. Why should it, since those teaching at such schools did their graduate work at universities where they were taught to honor the autonomy of their fields? It is good to have a Christian teaching sociology or history, but we would be dubious if he or she claimed that being Christian made a significant difference in the course content. The same basic textbooks in economics, political science, biology are used in Christian colleges as in secular institutions. It would

¹George Marsden notes how in the rise of specialization, even evangelical colleges lost control over their curricula. "The Ph.D. theses, a demonstration of technical expertise in an area accessible only by specialists, became the prerequisite for entry into academic life. By contrast, nineteenth-century evangelical colleges have been havens for generalists, theologian-philosophers who provided the community with advice in economics, politics, morality, and often in natural science. The new specialists who were taking over by the end of the century could usually outclass the old-time teachers in any of the specialties. Moreover, their new concept of being 'scientific' meant simultaneously to specialize and to eliminate religiously derived principles from their disciplines. The technical achievements of this new specialization thus reinforced prejudices against evangelicalism, which had been heavily committed to the older generalist approach." Marsden says that the solution to this potential conflict was "to grant the authority of the new science and history, but to emphasize that this authority was limited to certain secular domains. Picking up and vastly accentuating a theme present in the thought of evangelical predecessors they now reseed the entire weight of their apologetic on the point that Christianity went far beyond that which mere scientific reason could reach. They differed from most of their predecessors in suggesting that Christianity had to do only with the aspects of things wholly immune from scientific or historical inquiry." "The Collapse of American Evangelical Academia," in *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God*, Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff, eds. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), pp. 221-223.

be terrible if Christian students lacked the intellectual frame of reference to act in our society.

Moreover, those who support Christian universities and colleges would be upset if the qualifier meant that the education students received might hamper their success in America. Education, no matter how much supporters of liberal arts protest, is meant to give students power they would not otherwise have. It is not simply the power to have a job but power from being introduced to the high culture of a civilization that underwrites and legitimates those who rule. In the absence of any epistemological and social alternatives, the Christian university has no choice but to perform that task.

Moral Education in an Allegedly Pluralist Culture

That Christian universities and colleges have found it difficult to maintain their identities intellectually and institutionally as Christian owes at least partly to their existence in an allegedly pluralist society. I emphasize "allegedly," as it is doubtful if genuine pluralism (the belief that the unity of political community will not be endangered by allowing the proliferation of groups) has ever been the working policy of America.² America is a nation with a plurality of religious groups that made it necessary to avoid any established religion as well as provide freedom for religious groups. This does not ensure that our social policy is in fact pluralistic.

John Westerhoff points out that since the national government took no responsibility for education, church-supported schools, with clear religious identities and orientation, were expected to induct persons into life in the new nation. However, the increasing need for national unity, loyal citizens, and common values combined with a growing rationalism, skepticism, and empiricism to give the original principle of separation of church and state a new meaning. This was understandable, but not expected. Freedom in education for religious identity (so long as it did not promote separatism) became freedom from religious identity on behalf of civil harmony. Thus the doctrine of separation of church and state had come full circle. Not only was the right to teach religion and interpret life and history from the perspective of a religious tradition prohibited in state schools, but public support of church-related schools was denied. A national commitment to the education of the public became identified with public education. The state's right and duty to encourage

higher education became the right and duty to educate. The result was a functional elimination of religion from its original place of central importance in higher education.³

In principle, pluralist social strategies should allow religious groups to maintain their own integrity, but in fact the result is the opposite. For as Westerhoff points out, the "church's interest in pluralism locates in freedom which is necessary for faithful life in loyalty to God alone. The state, on the other hand, defends pluralism from the point of view that order and loyalty are necessary for its survival and health."⁴ This contrast becomes critical in relation to the church's educational institutions, which often are justified insofar as they serve the state's sense of pluralism rather than that of the church.

In such a situation, the "religious college or university" trains students in virtues to sustain not the church but the society and the state. When they do so, however, they are not reinforcing the particularistic identity necessary for a pluralistic society but educating people to live in an open society. The latter differs from pluralism, because it assumes that a good society is one in which positions and associations are open to anyone, regardless of ethnic, racial or religious convictions. As Thomas Green has observed, what is often "described as an increasingly pluralistic society is in fact only an increasingly open society in which status is determined less by ascription and more by achievement or some other criteria."⁵ As a result, Christian colleges built and supported to maintain the integrity of religious groups have become the means of creating a society in which "differences between people are simply irrelevant as long as they do not inconvenience the conduct of affairs either in the polity, in the economy, or in the family."⁶ This "make-believe pluralism" produces people who live by an equally make-believe morality.

Not that the contemporary university and college, Christian and secular, does not morally train students. Contrary to frequent claims that the university today is amoral, most higher education initiates (or at least reinforces) in our students the dominant morality of our culture. It does this not by explicitly teaching courses in "ethics" but by the way colleges and universities structure their curricula. The morality thereby embodied I believe to be corrupt and corrupting, but it is a morality.

³John Westerhoff, "In Search of a Future: The Church-Related College," in *The Church's Ministry in Higher Education*, John Westerhoff, ed. (New York: UMHE Communication Office, 1978), p. 198.

⁴Westerhoff, p. 199.

⁵Green, p. 19.

⁶Green, p. 23.

²For the most penetrating analysis of pluralism in relation to education, see Thomas Green, "Education and Pluralism: Ideal and Reality," *The J. Richard Street Lecture* (Syracuse: Syracuse University School of Education, 1966), p. 10.

By suggesting that the Christian college corrupts youth, I do not mean that higher education has that much power. Rather, the university reinforces corruption already well begun. Quite simply, the university underwrites the assumption that morality is created through individual choice rather than by the shaping of our thorough disciplined discovery of the good. No better example of this view can be found than from those who want the contemporary university to teach values. Used cars have value, but values have little to do with any substantive account of morality. For universities to teach values--or help students clarify values--only reinforces the idea that the moral life is another form of consumer choice. That is exactly what we would expect a capitalist society to suggest as the basic form of morality. Thus, the university or college must convince those who come to it that any of their needs can be met. The university or college must appear to be a gigantic cafeteria. The student comes as a diner filled up by pushing a tray along the line, taking a salad of math or computer science, potatoes of philosophy (to be sure they are introduced to "big ideas") a little corn of literature (to insure they will be recognized as "educated" people), and finally some meat of the major in business, physics or history (the traditional pre-law major) to supply nourishment for their career.

Individual courses assume the same structure. That a course might actually teach students to be truthful is thought oppressive. Rather, each course should present alternatives so students can "make up their own minds." The teacher may argue that one position is better than another, but in doing so he or she must admit to stating "one opinion." (It would be shocking for a philosopher or theologian to argue that modern ethical theory is corrupt or corrupting and refuse to have students read modern theory.) A curriculum of such courses confirms the moral assumption that we are autonomous consumers whose power is increased by providing us increased choice in the market.⁷ In the name of objectivity, we refrain from trying to shape the lives of our students to change this image of what they are. Teachers can only hope that some student becomes so interested in their subject as to major in it

⁷In a review of recent books on higher education in America, Andrew Hacker reports a recent survey of liberal arts graduates revealed that over half of them had taken no work at all in economics or philosophy or, for that matter, chemistry. Frederick Rudolph says he encountered evidence of decline and devaluation at virtually every campus he visited. Higher education, he asserts, has become a supermarket where students are shoppers and professors are merchants. "The Decline of Higher Learning," in *New York Review of Books*, XXXIII, (February 13, 1986) p. 35. Hacker notes this tendency is reinforced as, "undergraduate courses now reflect the way disciplines are conceived at the doctoral level. This has been the real academic revolution" and has done more than anything to undercut the liberal arts. "Faculty members, to be true to their callings, feel they must spend much of their time discussing the work of their fellow professors." p. 37.

or pursue it in graduate school. But the notion that we ought to teach or shape our curriculums so as to change a student's fundamental moral stance is unthinkable. As a result, we leave students morally exactly as we found them--i.e., people who pride themselves on their autonomy, who believe all moral positions are "relative" or "subjective," since they are matters of choice.

The Problem of the Socratic Ideal for the University

Some may think my critique of the modern university is grossly unfair. The university reflects the primary moral values of its society. That is not peculiar, because the university has always mirrored the social order in which it exists. Those who hold up the liberal arts curricula of the past and the correlative model of gentleman-scholar-as-teacher fail to realize that such curricula and teachers reinforced class biases we now believe unjust. Contemporary curricula may be less coherent, but they are more open to the democratic ethos of our society.

This line of defense usually suggests that the task of the university is not moral formation but introducing students to critical inquiry and questioning. In support of such a task, Socrates is invoked as the standard or ideal of university education. Our task is not to give people answers but to make them relentless questioners of every unexamined assumption or piece of conventional wisdom. This is seen as a moral task, insofar as this kind of education makes people more aware of themselves and others. The university is morally justified when the examined life becomes our ideal.

I do not argue for a return to a liberal arts curriculum as more appropriate to Christian commitments. I do not believe such a curriculum existed as coherently as its defenders presuppose, nor do I believe a return to such curricula would be a moral advance. There is nothing inherently incompatible between practically-oriented education and Christian commitment to the university. Yet the modern university fails to provide any rationale for education other than the assumption that students taking a variety of courses will be better informed and possess more inquiring minds.

I do not suggest that the university fails in initiating students into the Socratic task of critical inquiry but rather that the Socratic method itself is suspect for moral development. This case is clearly made by Martha Nussbaum in "Aristophanes and Socrates on Learning Practical Wisdom."⁸

⁸Martha Nussbaum, "Aristophanes and Socrates on Learning Practical Wisdom." *Yale Classical Studies* 26, edited by Jeffrey Henderson (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1980) pp. 43-97. Page references to this article appear in text.



Noting that Aristophanes failed to understand the difference between Socrates and the Sophists, Nussbaum argues that Aristophanes rightly criticized Socrates' teaching for its largely negative effect. It is one thing for Socrates to assert that conventional morality and virtues lacked reasoned defense. It is another to engage people in dialectic with no substitute to offer (as Socrates confessed he did not) other than the examined life itself.

What Aristophanes saw, Nussbaum says, is that Socrates was indifferent to the antecedent moral training of those he engaged in dialectic. He mocked "habituation without acknowledging that it might be essential in forming a pupil's moral intuitions to a point at which the search for justification can appropriately begin. He entrusts the weapons of argumentation to anyone who will expose himself to teaching, without considering whether he is one of the people who will be likely to put the teaching to good use. He implies that teaching is sufficient and habituation is irrelevant. This intellectualism is what Socrates' pupils retain from his teaching: this insistence that moral teaching is the business of experts, not elders, that a technical training enables us to scoff at ordinary norms" (80).

Even though Socrates said he did not intend to undermine conventional morality, that was his teaching's effect. Because he emphasizes argument rather than character, anything is permissible if one is clever enough. Aristophanes (and Aristotle) criticized Socrates for failing to clarify the difference between his ironic aloofness and the immoralism of followers who concluded that conventional morality lacks adequate rational defense. Socrates failed to see that his method of inquiry requires an account of virtues (which he failed to give). He failed because he assumed that virtue is like craft or skill which can be imparted by an expert teacher. Preceding or further training is not required, apart from the teaching.

Yet, as Nussbaum points out, the assimilation of morality to an expert craft is questionable. "It neglects, as Aristotle points out, the crucial importance of early habituation and the training of desires; dispositions to behave morally are not like capacities to perform. A craft can be separated from the desire to use it well; a good doctor is also a good poisoner. It fails to identify with sufficient precision the aim or end of morals, that of which the expert is an expert producer. In most of the Socratic dialogues we find no positive account of the human

good" (84).⁹ Socrates' failure to see virtue as a form of habituation accounts, moreover, for his irresponsible selection of dialogue partners and students. He makes no attempt to determine his students' prior training or beliefs. As a result, his method of questioning often has unanticipated results, as his students easily conclude that they must create their own morality.

It does not matter if Nussbaum's and Aristophanes' critique is fair to every aspect of Socrates' position, but I think the obvious objection should be met. For who other than Socrates gives so impassioned a defense of living virtuously? Nussbaum agrees that Aristophanes overlooked much favorable to Socrates, but she maintains that "Socrates' concern with virtue and its justification, at least as depicted in Plato's early dialogues, leads to no clear or obvious results. In the one place, where the theory of the good does become more concrete, it is in a form that invites, rather than prevents, confusion with immoralism. It would not be unfair to say that most of Socrates' concern for virtue remains in the realm of personal choice and good intentions for others" (86). Thus, Socrates' prestige and influence have helped undermine conventional standards, whether he intended to do so or not.

Moreover, Nussbaum argues that the direction of Plato's mature work suggests he understood this. "Plato, from his perception of the great threat that open dialectic poses to social stability, and his belief that without social stability men cannot live good lives, infers the necessity of restricting dialectic to those who are both initially well-trained and outstandingly intelligent" (88). In short, Plato felt Socrates was too optimistic about the potential of the common man for moral growth and understanding. Unless we are well prepared, Socratic dialectic may be as destructive as therapeutic.

⁹Nussbaum's use of the notion of "expert" in this context seems anachronistic, but I suspect she has in mind MacIntyre's characterization of the "expert" in his *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), pp. 79-87. MacIntyre argues that the rise of the authority of the expert correlates with developments in epistemology requiring a hard distinction between fact and value in the interest of creating predictive sciences. Thus, the modern university is built to train experts rather than people of wisdom. The latter derive their authority from the knowledge of the unpredictability of our existence. If, as MacIntyre argues, the world is inherently unpredictable, then students of the modern university are not only being morally corrupted but misled by reigning epistemological presuppositions. Recent work in epistemology increasingly has undermined foundationalist assumptions used to justify, particularly in the social sciences, the methodologies of academic disciplines. I am not sure if Nussbaum means to suggest this critique by using "expert" in reference to Socrates, but she is at least correct that Socrates' (and Plato's) attempt to ground ethics in a metaphysics of necessity, while different from modern epistemologies, shares the desire to avoid unpredictability as integral to knowledge and morality.

As an alternative to Socrates, Nussbaum defends an Aristotelian view of education. Aristotle was no less concerned than Socrates that the virtuous must not only know where they are virtuous but must also justify their convictions. In contrast with Socrates, Aristotle argued that virtues are neither natural capacities nor pieces of learned wisdom but habits formed by practice in choosing and doing appropriate actions. Natural appetites are not bad, but through training the young must be trained to find pleasure in things reasonable adults agree are right: "a pre-rational training must prepare the soul for the full reasoned understanding of virtue. The good city, ruled by men of practical wisdom who have a clear and explicit picture of their concept of the good, will establish a system of training which makes use of traditional methods--but in the service of the full life of virtue to come" (90). Such an ethos depends on men of practical wisdom. For the good can be discovered only through deliberations of virtuous men weighing appearances to achieve the most nearly true judgments about significant matters.



Aristotelian justice is therefore not an underwriting of the conventional, since the wise man can justify his preferences. Nor is justice determined by some transcendental standard. Rather, the standard is judgments of people who have proved themselves wise. They are not "experts" in the sense of knowing something we do not know but special because they see "better and more clearly what we all, collectively, know. Thus moral argument and moral change will take place within a climate of reasoned debate, and will represent an attempt to reach the best possible ordered articulation of our moral intuitions" (91).

Aristotle's views are not easily applicable to political reality, where reason is seldom sufficient to settle conflict. Aristotle thinks a system of early education that imparts in all citizens a shared concept of the good holds out hope of moderating conflicts. Moreover, the system of laws which summarize decisions of men of practical wisdom also provides sanctions to chasten disorderly hedonism. The process of legislation helps train many about the good life. But most important of all, the ruler(s) must foster "friendship among men in the polis qua citizen, so that even if a law seems repugnant to an individual or a group, those men will be inclined to obey it out of good will to the regime itself and to their fellow citizens who are benefited by it" (93).

What do Socrates and Aristotle have to do with the modern university? The implications are direct and significant. If Socrates' method subtly led to corruption of the youth of Athens, the contemporary university's degraded Socratic method corrupts more directly. In the name of exposing students to critical questions through a chaotic curriculum filled with chaotic courses, we reinforce disdain for reasoned discourse. For our students are less prepared than Socrates' interlocutors to engage in reasoned discourse to know better the good and the true. They lack the virtues necessary for sustaining the life of the mind, because no community exists to direct them to the good.

Put differently, university education as moral education becomes problematic in our culture, which does not require the development of virtue and sees such development as an impediment to freedom. We lack a community of law and/or friendship to direct education. The contemporary university fails to challenge conventional assumptions and in the name of the Socratic method underwrites a false objectivity, believing objectivity is insured by giving every position a hearing. Thus, the Socratic method in the name of being anti-conventional underwrites a conventional morality based on the inviolability of each person's subjectivity. The only interesting question about our situation is whether our culture possesses resources for something like an Aristotelian alternative.

On Being Christian in the University

Much good education goes on at Christian and secular universities.¹⁰ Students continue to find teachers who provide them with visions of the good that become habitual ways of responding to the world. Teachers discover students who have serious moral convictions and intellectual commitments. Yet on the whole I think the picture I have drawn is largely accurate. Moreover I have no solution to offer.

The problem is not only in the university but in society and the church. The university can only be as good as the community that sustains it. The situation in the university is like the lives described by Robert Bellah and his co-authors in *Habits of the Heart*. The common difficulties their respondents face in justifying the goals of a morally good life outline a problem for all people in our culture--namely, "for most of us, it is easier to think about how to get what we want than to know what exactly we should want."¹¹ They suggest that people lack sufficient moral language to describe the good they do or want to do and instead must interpret the good they do in terms of "expressive individualism." I suspect the good the university does or those in the university want to do is unacknowledged because we lack the common language to celebrate that good.

For example, universities still give some people time and resources to study and teach about the debates over the Trinity. That they are allowed to do so is right and good, because through such study we maintain the essential memory necessary to understand moral and theological commitments of our forebears. But we cannot describe such study as crucial to the university's moral task, because it lacks "relevance." So we justify the university in terms that insure success in our society to sustain the study of the Trinity.

This is an odd situation, since the university more than any institution in our culture is committed to maintaining habits necessary for reasoned discourse so we can understand

¹⁰For a thoughtful discussion of what it means for Christians to teach at secular institutions, see Kenneth Hermann, "Beyond the Hothouse: Higher Education Outside the Christian College," *The Reformed Journal*, 35/11 (November, 1985), pp. 19-23. Hermann notes that Christians "must not view the university as merely a convenient place for evangelism or a fate to be endured while resting periodically in the oasis of fellowship meetings. It is certainly not an institution which Christians can justifiably abandon. It must be challenged on its own terms as an academic institution from a Christian perspective" p. 22. For all of its faults, the university offers one of the few places in our society for the development of civil discourse about the good.

¹¹Robert Bellah, et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 21.

what we should want. In the Aristotelian perspective, the university is the place where we should train those with the wisdom to help us all know better what is best about us. Such training comes by the discipline of confronting texts and figures of the past and present to continue the discussions of our forebears. For the university is the way a culture insists that its forebears have not lived (or died) in vain.

Such a perspective helps us see why a university could avow Christian identity. Such an avowal claims that past and present conversation partners are crucial if this community will know its good. To say that an institution is Christian means that certain matters cannot be left out of the conversation if we are to know better what it means to be Christian. Thus, the curriculum of a college which claims Christian identity would look different from that of colleges which do not. But more important, a Christian identity means that what is taught as history or psychology or sociology at such schools might be different. That is the most decisive challenge facing us as Christians if we in the university claim we serve the church and our society. The temptation (even at conservative Christian colleges) is in the name of being Christian to embrace pragmatic causes--"living simply, feeding the hungry, banning the bomb, challenging abortion--than with learning to think seriously and theologically" about every subject.¹²

We must think seriously about how the continued existence of the Christian college or university's nominal identification with the Christian past may allow us to avoid dealing with the hard intellectual issues facing us. The existence of Christian colleges and universities is the result of the hegemony of Christians in this culture acquired and sustained by force and power. The temptation is to count on that culture to sustain the Christian educational enterprise. If we do that, we fail to

¹²Nathan Hatch, "Evangelical Colleges and the Challenge of Christian Thinking," *The Reformed Journal*, 35/9 (September, 1985) p. 15. As Hatch argues, "The battle for the mind cannot be waged by mobilizing in the streets or on Capitol Hill; not by denouncing more furiously the secular humanists. If evangelicals are to help preserve even the possibility of Christian thinking of their children and grandchildren, they must begin to nurture first order Christian scholarship, which means of course freeing Christian scholars to undertake what is a painstakingly slow and arduous task--and one that has almost no immediate return on investment." p. 11. To drive that point home, Hatch asks, "How many Christians do you know who would tithe so that a Christian scholar can go about her work?" p. 12.

face our challenge and fail to serve the church or our culture. For that culture is now in deep trouble.

Perhaps the increasing secularism of our culture presents us with a new opportunity. As Christians lose power, they also gain freedom to challenge reigning intellectual paradigms in the study of religion and in other disciplines.¹³ They may find that they can make their own colleges more interesting intellectually, because they are not used to train people to be like everyone else but to sustain our differences as Christians. In doing so, we serve our society well, because our difference emblemizes what a genuine pluralism might look like.

Such a position must appear a self-destructing formula. What secular university would hire an economist who maintains that his or her Christian convictions make a difference in teaching economics? Where is this kind of Christian college to get financial support and students? I have no answer to such questions, though there are more possibilities than we imagine.

There is no solution to the primary moral issue I have drawn. Universities are not primary moral institutions but draw on the wisdom of a good society to initiate the young into the practice of virtue. Though the university is integral to sustain that wisdom, the university is poorly constituted for primary moral training. That must arise elsewhere. If the church is serious about the character of its education, it can do nothing more important than attend to the character of its youth.

¹³As Thomas Green suggests, "The educational function of the public schools is in relation to the efforts of public education. It is to assist in developing a sense of self-identity through historical memory and contemporary participational roles. The only difference is that in relation to public education the role of religion is to contribute to the sense of historical identity with the civic community and to prepare for the participation in polity, economy and the professions. In relation to its own members the educational tasks of the Church are to develop the sense of historical identity with the worshipping community in such a way that the participational roles in the civic community do not become idolatrous, that is, so that the way society is, is never confused with the only way it can be, so that the establishment in short can never be quite secure. Religious institutions, of course, do not do this now. It is doubtful that it ever could be done except in an advanced secular society in which common education is possible in such a way that people are not religiously and politically illiterate as they are now. That is why religious leaders should encourage the growth of a secular society. But to say that is a bit like asking them to commit suicide. It is that a man may have to lose his life in order to gain it." Green, p. 35.



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