

4-1991

The Cresset (Vol. LIV, No. 6)

Valparaiso University

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C^{the}resset

April, 1991

A Review of Literature, Arts, and Public Affairs





C^{the}resset

Valparaiso University
Valparaiso, Indiana 46383

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April, 1991 Vol. LIV, No.6
ISSN 0011-1198

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Cover: Ernst Barlach, German 1870-1938 *Das Wiedersehen*, (Christ and Thomas), 1926 wood carving.

Back cover: George T. Lopez, American, b. 1903. *Temptation in the Garden*, 1976 wood carving. 25 3/8 inches high. University Fund Purchase 77.1



IN LUCE TUA

Comment by the Editor

Unless I See . . .

Our friend Fred Niedner likes to say that Thomas, called Didymus, is our twin. That seems a particularly good thing to recall, now in these days after Easter. Thomas is earnest. He means well. It is of course an injustice that a person who gives one of the most ringing affirmations of faith in Jesus Christ should be known, centuries later, as the doubter. But Thomas knew how hard it is to know what is right. It has always interested me that Thomas missed the first appearance Jesus made to his disciples there in the upper room after the Resurrection. Why had he stayed away? Sermons have often pointed out to me that separating himself from the brethren was part of Thomas' fault: if he hadn't been off by himself, he would have seen Jesus when all the others did. People who stay home from church miss the chance to see Jesus.

Well, that's probably true of the meetings of the gathered community these days, but was it true for Thomas? Why had he stayed away? Maybe he was trying to sort out the issues. Maybe he was trying to clear away the distractions of too many conversations and not enough reflection. Maybe he was attempting to distance himself from a tangle of argument and counter argument, recrimination, second guessing and general communal misery. I wonder whether he didn't have the right idea.

When he heard that the disciples had seen Jesus, he gives a curiously modern response. He wants a verification of the disciples' excited news. He puts his finger right on the most central element of the whole business—the wounds are the mark of the Messiah. That doesn't seem suspicious or doubting to me; that sounds like someone who is closer to the truth than anyone else around, except maybe the lucky ones who saw him in the breaking of the bread. Maybe Thomas, by himself—and thinking—remembered the words he had heard and understood more about the mission of Jesus than the people who gathered anxiously together to share their fear and their ignorance. In any case, when he saw the Lord, he was ready to understand what that sight meant for him.

"My Lord and my God."



It's because of Thomas, and our twinship with him, that he is on our cover this month, for we have gathered here articles about a number of issues hard to think about, and characterized by doubts of all varieties. Many problems lie within, considered by a number of good minds and good hearts, often much troubled by the intractable nature of the subjects they take up here.

To begin, a poem by the Dutch poet Jan Willum Schulte Nordholt, which we print by kind permission of the author, and the translator. Dr. Ten Harmsel is retired from the Department of English at Calvin College. Professor Nordholt's Thomas is demanding and serious, not Hallmark's idea of a response to Easter, but a salient one for most of us Thomas-twins. Rick Barton has contributed some recent writing out of a long history of his involvement with issues of race, from an environment where most of us had hopes of good outcomes. Educated people, caring people, thoughtful, committed, fine people. If they can't make a difference in the way races meet each other in our society, is there no hope at all? Barton's answers are not hope-filled. "Unless I see..."

Michael Becker asks some surprising questions about economics and the Garden of Eden and Nobel prizes. I wouldn't have thought they went together, but he's convincing. And Jim Combs, looking at popular culture, sees disturbing patterns beneath our games and toys, our national scrapbooks of names and faces from the news. Ed Senne, with another letter prompted by his summer trip, ponders whether Muslims and Christians in Nigeria can make a nation, or are headed for another collision between the children of Abraham.

Though she might prefer to be represented in these pages by her more usual work in literary criticism, Carol Gilbertson of Luther College has allowed us to print a Chapel Talk she delivered last year on their campus. For an issue devoted to the great imponderables, her meditation on death seemed not just appropriate, but necessary. And to close, Gil Meilaender has written a review essay on two books about abortion in America, providing good guidance as we search for ways to make our communities responsive to the full range of issues so frequently misdescribed by the shorthand "choice" and "life." It should be no surprise that the back cover of this issue features a wood carving of a couple in a garden, looking at a tree.

Next month, we will have articles on the spiritual in art, and on liturgy and *Brideshead Revisited*, as well as an interview with California artist John August Swanson. Bu, because of its concentration on problems and pain, the April issue is, more than most, a *Cresset* to put down often. In between sessions of reading, I recommend stints of gardening, or at least washing windows in the spring sunshine.

Peace,

GME

Thomas

Als God bestond dan viel hij met ons samen
hier op de aarde waar wij mensen zijn,
was hij het brood van ons, was hij de wijn,
was hij de stem waarvoor we ons zouden schamen.

Was hij de groene ziel bij ons van binnen,
de vleugel die ons hart had aangeraakt,
het licht waardoor ons leven was ontwaakt
en onze pijn en wildernis van zinnen.

Hij is een glans die langs de sterren gaat,
een adem in het ontoegankelijk licht,
hij is zo heilig dat hij niet bestaat

as ik hem niet aanraak met deze hand,
hem kus met deze mond, met dit gezicht
hem in mij opneem en hij mij verbrandt.

Jan Willem Schulte Nordholt

Thomas

If God existed, he would join us here,
take up our human lot, both yours and mine,
if he could be our bread, or were our wine,
or be the voice which makes our shame appear,

if he could be the green soul deep inside,
the wing which touched the beating of our heart,
the light by which our life got its new start,
or knew our pain, the desert of our pride.

He passes by the stars — a gleam of mist—
a breath of light that's unapproachable.
He is so holy, he does not exist

if I can't really touch him with this hand,
or kiss him with this mouth, with my own face
devour him, burning up in his embrace.

translation by Henrietta Ten Harmsel



DIALOGUES IN BLACK AND WHITE

Fredrick Barton

"My house was robbed," I told my friend Ed Washington. We were having drinks at a favorite New Orleans French Quarter bar, and I had scheduled this meeting precisely in order to give Ed this news. He rubbed a hand across his tawny, freckled forehead and combed his fingers through his graying nap of hair. "Robbed," I snorted bitterly. "Or, more properly, burgled."

"I'm so sorry Rick," Ed said. "Did you lose a bunch of stuff?" Then instantly he was angry. "Lousy city. In another decade we're going to be in a stinking jungle. Every man for himself."

I explained to Ed that though the burglars had messed things up pretty badly, they appeared to have made off with nothing more than a new TV, a camera, and some inexpensive items of my wife's jewelry, all covered by our homeowner's insurance. Nonetheless, I confided, I felt violated.

And then with considerable self-recrimination, I went on to tell him that I was also guilt-stricken, because I presumed the thieves were black.

And so we arrived at the reason for our meeting on this particular occasion, the reason that arose from the most obvious difference between Ed Washington and me. Ed and I both grew up in New Orleans, and we're about the same age. We're both writers (Ed's our city's most celebrated investigative journalist). We have similar political views, and we're both passionate about basketball. Only I'm white, and Ed is black. Ed grew up riding on the back of the bus and sitting in the "Colored Only" balcony at the movies with his high school dates. Ed attended underfinanced black schools while I went to white schools with all the latest facilities. That's the difference. I'm white and Ed is black. And sometimes that's all that seems to matter.

Ed nodded at me without blinking, then slowly

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fishes in his shirt pocket for a pack of cigarettes. This was something else we shared: the vice of smoking. Recently, I'd stopped buying and now smoked only his cigarettes whenever we went out together for drinks. Ed stabbed the smoke to his lips and lit up, pushing the pack toward me as he did so. I declined with a shake of my head.

Ed inhaled and then exhaled his first puff before finally responding to my revelation, "So why are you telling me this, Rick? Am I supposed to say it's OK, say forget it, pal, it's just a *little* racist?"

I didn't say anything. He dragged on his cigarette. I sipped my drink.

"So what?" he said after a moment.

"So I don't know, dammit. My house has been robbed. I'm outraged. I can't stop seeing strangers messing up my things. And the strangers I envision are always black. And that is racist. I know it. But I can't stop it. So I want to talk to somebody. And that means you. My friend."

"Your black friend," Ed said quietly.

I let the distinction pass and sipped again at my drink. After a moment, Ed asked if the police had any suspects.

"Only the Labiches," I told him.

The Labiches are my neighbors, an older black couple who live a block and a half from my renovated shotgun cottage in one of New Orleans's sundry Uptown neighborhoods where gentrification is a house-by-house phenomenon. Louvetra Labiche cleans house for me and my wife. Her husband Julius does the yard. Julius does the yard for most every white family in the neighborhood, it seems. Ed had met both Louvetra and Julius at the house on this occasion or that.

"Why are the Labiches suspects?" Ed asked.

"Because they have their own set of keys to my house."

Ed nodded. "And because they're black," he added.

"And because they're black," I acknowledged. I inferred as much from the attitude of the policemen who took my burglary statement.

I felt incredibly tired.

"Louvetra and Julius Labiche didn't rob my house," I said. "Somebody smashed in the back door with a sledge hammer."

"You never know," Ed said sarcastically.

"They have keys," I pointed out. "Why would they bust open the back door when they have keys."

"So you'd never suspect it was them," he replied.

"Exactly what the cops said, before they went round to the Labiches' house and pestered them with insulting questions this morning."

Julius had called me that morning after the police had left his house. "Mistuh, Rick?" he'd said, with the interrogative intonation he always used when he addressed me. "Mistuh Rick, me an the missus just had some policemen here. Sumpin bout somebody bustin into yo house. You knows bout that?"

I explained that my house had been burgled and apologized to Julius for unintentionally getting him involved.

"Whassis biznis with my ballpeen?" Julius asked. "Thems policemen wants to know what kinda tools I got. I tooks 'em out to the truck and shows 'em what all I got. And they was might inersted in my ballpeen. Ax me if I ever used it over by yo house. I tole 'em sho. I used it at you house when I broke up that ole patio when you an Miss Joyce put in that new back poach."

"The cops think someone used a sledge hammer to break into the back of my house," I said.

"But now Mistuh Rick," Julius said, obvious concern in his voice. "You don't think I had nuthin to do with that, now do you? Louvetra and me been woikin fo you an Miss Joyce fo a lotta years."

I didn't believe that the Labiches had anything to do with the burglary, of course, and I tried to assure Julius that I didn't. But I wasn't very successful at easing his worry. When we rang off, I promised myself to find some gesture that would make the Labiches more comfortable with the notion that I in no way numbered them among the suspects.

"You going to get them a skin pigment transplant?" Ed asked now when I told him of the phone conversation with Julius and my subsequent resolve. Ed did something then that I don't remember his having ever done before. He took the cigarette from his lips, pinched it between the index and middle fingers of his left hand, and laid that hand lightly on my right forearm.

"Look, Rick," he said. "What can I tell you? You act like you want absolution. Only I'm not a priest." When Ed removed his hand to smoke again, my arm was slightly damp where he'd touched me, and as the perspiration of our contact cooled, I could feel the spot where his hand had lain.

"I want more than absolution," I said. "I want to be free of racist presumptions."

"Ah," Ed said. "Then you have serious troubles. Because you will not be free of racist presumptions until we succeed in creating a society which is free of racism."

"All white men are racists, then. That's what you're saying and I..."

"What I'm saying is that all *men* are racist. I kind of hate that word, by the way. Or at least I hate it in the context in which we're now talking. It's a term loaded with such devastating judgment. I might say that you have made a racist *presumption* — about the guys who robbed your home, whoever they were. But I would never say that you were *a* racist. A racist wouldn't be having this conversation with me."

Ed held up a finger to indicate he wasn't finished, lit another cigarette and took a deep drag before he continued. "So let's use that word with its more historic fashionability: *Prejudice*. All men are *prejudiced* toward things and people of their own kind, and against things, to whatever slight degree, which aren't of their own kind. I know that I am. I'm not proud of it, but I know that I am. I'm suspicious of white folks. I'm particularly suspicious of white folks' attitudes toward black folks. As I've told you before, when we first met, I was suspicious of you. I heard that cracker accent of yours. I learned you were a local boy, went to segregated schools in this town. I figured, shoot, this boy and I won't ever have a thing to do with one another. That suspicion, of course, toward you or whomever, is prejudice. You can't help where you grew up any more than I can help my skin color. You can't help how you talk. But I pegged you as another one of *them* before we'd even spoken a word."

"Or had a chance to watch me knock down that twenty-foot jumper," I said, "or witness how well I can go to my left."

Ed laughed, took another drag on his cigarette and then said as he exhaled, "But let me tell you something that may illustrate my main point. I was invited back to my high school a couple of years ago, you know, one of those functions where a successful grad comes back and tells a convocation of students how they can make it too if only they work hard and eat their Wheaties. Place is just as black as when it was a segregated school. Course all the schools you went to are just as black now. Anyway, I gave the kids the standard rap, Wheaties and all, and then I got to talking with them about their responsibility for the city they live in. I read them some statistics about the rate at which this city was becoming a black town, about the years that saw us elect first a black mayor, then a majority black City Council and so forth, the obvious

point being that they were gonna run this town in a few years and they better get ready or they'd make the usual mess of it."

"And they liked that," I said.

"Sure they liked it. What's not to like, hearing you get to be the boss. But then I read some other statistics to them, namely that blacks dominate this area's drug use and commit most of this area's crimes. And that blacks are also most of the crime victims."

"And they didn't like that so well."

"Of course not. And then one of their social studies teachers stood up to report about a survey he'd done with his students on their social attitudes. One set of questions asked them to imagine they'd heard on TV or read about a crime, any crime. Then they were asked to identify the race of the criminal. They all picked black. But when they were asked to identify the race of the victim, guess what, they all picked white."

Ed snorted, took another drag from his cigarette and added, "So you get the picture?"

"It's a complicated picture, but yeah, I guess I..."

"We're prejudiced against ourselves," Ed interrupted. "Now part of this prejudice is based on reality. Blacks do commit most of the crimes. We could do a whole socio-economic analysis of why this is, but there's no denying the fact. On the other hand, blacks are also most often the victims. But black-on-black crime doesn't get reported nearly as often as black-on-white. News media bias for stories about the latter give black-on-white crime a disproportionate weight in public consciousness. And blacks buy into that disproportion as readily and ignorantly as whites."

"But none of this exonerates me—for my prejudice."

"Hell no it doesn't exonerate you."

"So what do I do?"

"You know exactly what you do."

"Yeah?" I said.

"You do what you're doing. You fight it. You fight all of it. You fight it in yourself. You fight the society that nurtures it. You don't ever give those who accommodate it or benefit from it a moment's peace. You get the goods on 'em, and you do what you can to bring 'em down."

Our discussion of my troubled reaction to the burglary of my house segued into a more general exploration of the racial problems in our city. And after a time, the conversation didn't go so well. Ed and I agreed that our city had been severely damaged by the extensive white flight in the last three decades. And we agreed that the runaway population explosion in the black underclass was straining municipal services

beyond the city's capacity to deliver. You couldn't allow people to starve. But as a result of already inadequate efforts to attend to the needs of the poor, the grass in the parks and on the city's neutral grounds wasn't being cut. Policemen, firemen and teachers were relocating to communities offering higher salaries. The city seemed caught in a vicious downward spiral from which it couldn't escape.

My suggestion was simple, however much an instance of political pie in the sky. I was impressed that the Texas state constitution inhibited the tax advantages of suburban escape. Affluent citizens of Houston or Dallas couldn't outrun their responsibilities to the urban centers which made their luxurious livelihoods possible. If they moved to the suburbs beyond the city limits, the residents of the city could extend the city limits far enough out to recapture them.

But such a strategy wasn't possible in Louisiana. And centuries old political boundaries had placed New Orleans in a geographical straitjacket. It could not expand beyond the crowded confines of Orleans Parish. Meanwhile, the suburban residents of mostly white Jefferson, St. Tammany and St. Bernard Parishes enjoyed the benefits of New Orleans without the obligation to pay their share of the cost of keeping the city safe and clean. Our metropolitan area has more than doubled in size since 1950. But the municipal population is actually smaller. Since 1960, the city itself has lost more than sixteen percent of its population, over 100,000 people.

What my argument to Ed boiled down to was an observation that our city as an organic place was being crippled by arbitrary political distinctions. Those distinctions allowed the resident of suburban Kenner in Jefferson Parish to have better schools and safer neighborhoods than the resident of Carrollton inside the city limits. It allowed the resident of Covington in St. Tammany Parish to escape paying for the policemen who patrolled for Saints games at the Superdome. And it allowed the resident of Chalmette in St. Bernard to enjoy the festivity of Mardi Gras without having to pay for the colossal clean-up costs afterwards.

"Fundamentally," I asserted to Ed, presuming I was preaching to the converted, "the system is anti-democratic. The burden of government is not being shared equally by all who enjoy its benefits."

Ed sat silent over his drink while I sipped fervently at mine.

"And in the long run," I added, "though I'm sure you couldn't convince them of this fact, the residents of Kenner and Covington and Chalmette will suffer for the advantages they've enjoyed. In fact, I think they're

suffering already. Oil went kaput. And the kind of high-tech, low-pollution, light industry we need to locate in this town to turn our economy around won't come because our educational system is too damn poor and our crime rate is too stinking high. And that hurts the people in the suburbs, too. They don't belong to the underclass. But a lot of them are out of work and facing relocation because there aren't any jobs on the horizon."

"So what are you proposing?" Ed asked.

His head was over his drink, and his voice was oddly flat in tone.

"I'm proposing metropolitan government, of course. Whoosh." I snapped my fingers. "Kenner and Covington and Chalmette are no more. They become just neighborhoods of one united metropolis. No different than Carrollton and Lakeview and Gentilly are now. Everybody suddenly the same. One police force, one fire department, one tax structure. We'd still have to get a sensible real estate tax system and assessors who wouldn't peg the price of everything a nickel under the homestead exemption. But we might have a fighting chance then."

I felt like the prophet of a new day that would, of course, never come. But I had enough alcohol coursing through my veins that I suspected my brilliance was about to be proclaimed simultaneously by Tom Brokaw, Dan Rather and Peter Jennings. Imagine my surprise, then, when my friend and ally disagreed with me.

"I could never support such an idea," Ed said.

At first I misunderstood him.

"Well I'm not suggesting that the nitwit legislature in this state would ever enact such an idea," I said.

"I'd lobby against it if it were being considered," Ed said.

"Why in the world?" I want to know.

"Because, man, if we had metropolitan government, we'd go back to being ruled by white men," Ed said. "I am a black man, don't forget. And I grew up in this town being ruled by white men. I rode on the back of buses and watched white men take seats from elderly black women. I rode on buses and streetcars driven by white men when black men couldn't get driving jobs. I was bossed around by white cops when the very idea of a black police officer was a laughable as the idea of a Martian police officer."

"Come on, Ed, that's . . ."

"Don't interrupt me, man," he said. "This city is rotten now. White people think it's rotten now. Well, understand something. It's always been rotten for black people. Only there's a difference now. We've got a black mayor, and we're gonna keep on having a

black mayor. We've got a black majority City Council, and we're gonna keep on having that, too. We've got black cops, and as time goes along we're gonna have more and more black cops. See what I mean? We've got black judges now. And we're gonna have more black judges. We're not going back to the days when whitey ran things and put his brother in charge of this and his cousin in charge of that."

I admit being taken aback by the intensity of Ed's response. We have been friends for a long time. We have discussed a lot of issues. And we have hardly always agreed on things. We certainly do agree, however, on the fact that our city is in serious trouble, diseased with poverty, infested with drugs and crippled by political corruption. Furthermore, we agree that white flight has robbed the city of its tax base and made a mockery of public school desegregation. So I was shocked that he was so hostile to my theoretical idea for fording metropolitan area whites to assume their fair burden for putting the city back on its feet.

"Ed," I said. "You've built a career exposing political corruption. You can't seriously mean, then, that racial politics are more important to you than good government."

Ed looked at me and laughed, as he shook his head.

"This is all just bull," he said. "We both know that. But since we're arguing it, what makes you think your metropolitan plan would translate into good government?"

He had me there. In our state the term "corrupt politician" was considered a redundancy. Still, I thought he was missing a significant point.

"OK," I said. "Good government is too much to expect. But making everyone assume a fair share of the tax burden isn't."

"At the price of disenfranchising the black people of this city, the cost is more than I'm willing to pay," he asserted.

"What disenfranchising black people, Ed? What are you talking about?"

"I'm talking about a black majority city. Which is what we are now. You're talking about a white majority metropolitan area, and I'm telling you I wouldn't go for it."

"I read an article in *Newsweek*," I said. "About the new suburban poor. One of the case studies was this suburb of Chicago called Ford Heights. All black town. Population of ten, fifteen thousand. Something like that. Doesn't matter. But all of them are poor. And there aren't a lot of prospects for things getting any better. The point is that the people in Ford Heights are worse off than poor people in Chicago because of the services Chicago is able to provide for *its* poor.

Cheap public transportation. Job counselling. Certain municipal welfare programs. And so forth. Folks in Ford Heights have none of that. There are recreational programs for kids in Chicago. Ford Heights is so broke they can't even afford to open the municipal swimming pool. Can't begin to afford the insurance even if they could afford the cost of the water and the salary for lifeguard."

Ed lit up a new cigarette.

"I'm sure you see what I'm driving at," I said. "I'm obviously not saying that the poor people in Chicago aren't disadvantaged and miserable. But I am saying that the poor people in Ford Heights are more disadvantaged and more miserable. They're more miserable because they don't have access to the tax money of all the rich folks on the north side of Chicago."

I toyed with the idea of smoking one of Ed's cigarettes.

"You see what I'm saying?" I asked, pushing the pack of smokes away from me.

Ed took a drag off his cigarette and didn't answer.

So I continued, "I'm saying that I want to know what keeps our city from becoming an urban Ford Heights. The city becomes ever more black. Its tax base erodes away as more and more white professionals give up on the city and move to Jefferson and St. Tammany. Or Timbuktu for that matter. And pretty soon the city is incapable of providing even limited services. We don't get the side streets paved in this town now. How long is it before this place becomes like Port-au-Prince or Caracas. Sky scrapers downtown. Dirt ruts for neighborhood streets. When I was growing up, I thought New Orleans was one of the emerging leaders of the modern world. Now I'm afraid I'm going to die in the Third World. And I haven't moved fifteen blocks."

Ed crushed out his cigarette and proceeded to tap a fingernail against his teeth.

"You remember a city where the City Park Golf Course was so nice the pros played the New Orleans Open there," Ed said. "You remember a rental house in Audubon Park where you could rent paddle boats and canoes or a bicycle built for two."

"Exactly," I said.

Ed snorted.

"Exactly," he said. "And now that rental house in Audubon Park is boarded up and the boats and bicycles are gone Godknowswhere."

"Yes," I said. But uncertainly. His tone suggested he was setting me a trap.

"And the golf course in City Park gets in such bad condition sometimes you can lose a ball in ankle-deep grass in the middle of the fairway."

"Well," I said, "I don't play golf, actually."

"Well neither do I, Ed said. "I don't play golf because when I was growing up, that nice City Park Golf Course wasn't open to blacks. And I never went boating in Audubon Park lagoon for the same reason. Do you see *my* point now? The city I grew up in was like this Ford Heights you were talking about. I don't have your memories of any time when New Orleans was a city of the modern world. It was always a Third World to me. See, we agree that this town is rotten now. But you seem to think there was a time it wasn't rotten. And that isn't true to the experience of anybody black who grew up here. But there *is* something different now. And that's the fact black folks are running the show. We've got problems. And we've got plenty of our own political crooks. And we may not get it done. But we *know* the white man isn't going to get it done. He ran things for more than a century after the Civil War, and as far as black people are concerned, he didn't even get started. So don't talk to me about some metropolitan government scheme where the white man takes over again."

"Come on, brother," I said, "we can . . ."

Ed put his hand on my arm and stopped me.

"Don't call me 'brother,'" he said.

He said it quietly, without menace or even rancor, but I was cut to the quick just the same. I shouldn't have called him "brother." I had never done so before. I wasn't the kind of person who aped a hipness I didn't have. But the fact is, I had always thought of Ed Washington as a kind of brother, as a soul mate. I thought of us as belonging to the same fraternity of people who looked at the world in similar, cynical and angry ways. But he was right; we weren't brothers. And we couldn't be. Not yet. For though we were both natives of New Orleans. And though we both loved the city of our birth. We couldn't be brothers. Because I had grown up white. And he had grown up black. And that remains all the difference in the world.

On the way home from having drinks with Ed Washington, I stopped at the giant Winn-Dixie on Tchoupitoulas Street and bought a pot roast and a few other food items and household supplies. Before returning to my house, I passed by the Labiches. The light was on in the living room, so I stopped. Louvetra answered my knock on her door. She was dressed in a plaid calico house dress and pink fuzzy slippers.

"What you doin' out this late, Mistuh Rick?" she asked. Before I could formulate a precise answer, she turned into the house and called out, "Julius, Mistuh Rick's come visitin' like he don't know it's the middle the night."

I laughed as I was supposed to, and bumped the plastic grocery bag I was carrying against my thigh. As I stepped into their tiny over-furnished living room, Julius appeared, slipping the suspenders of his work britches up over the shoulders of his long-sleeved T-shirt. He and I exchanged greetings, and then I said to Louvettra, "I just stopped by to tell you it doesn't make much sense for you to come over to clean tomorrow. The people who broke into my house have left it pretty much uncleanable until Joyce and I get everything all sorted out again."

"You need some hep with that, Mistuh Rick?" Julius inquired. "Louvettra and me could stop on by tomorra evenin' and lends you a hand."

I told him no, that it was mostly a sorting things out job that Joyce and I'd have to do ourselves. "Anyway," I said to Louvettra, "I know you count on your work, so I wanted to drop your check by."

"You knows I don't like takin' no check when I don't do nothin' for it," Louvettra said.

This was a ritual we had gone through before. She felt she ought to make such a statement, but she knew I wouldn't be dissuaded. And the unspoken understanding between us was that she deserved to be paid. The Labiches each worked for us only one day a week, but my attitude, and theirs too, was that they were salaried, rather than hourly wage earners. They always did things around our house in addition to their specific duties. The least I could do was honor their industry and loyalty by making sure they didn't lose income due to circumstances beyond their control. So after some ceremonial squabbling, Louvettra accepted the check, folded it in half and slipped it into the waist pocket of her dress.

"I'll find you an extry day to make up," she said.

"I'll get the house extra dirty and let you make it up that way," I responded.

"I bet you do," she said, smiling and nodding her head.

"Julius," I said, "I'm real sorry about the policemen bothering you this morning."

"Wudn't none of your doin'," he shrugged.

"Well, anyway," I said. "I wish you hadn't been bothered."

We stood looking at each other for a silent moment, and then I said, "Well, Louvettra's right, it's the middle of the night, so I better be running on." I turned toward the door to leave, but then I stopped and said, "Oh, I almost forgot." I handed Louvettra the grocery bag I'd been holding. "You know how bad we are about letting things go bad in the bottom of the ice box, and I figured I better bring it over to you before I let it go to waste."

"Thank you, Mistuh Rick," Louvettra said. "This'll make up some fine stew."

As I stepped onto the concrete stoop in front of their house, Julius said, "I be by and do yo grass on Thuzdy. Just like always."

The Labiches are not educated people, but they are far from stupid. They could recognize a fresh piece of meat, and they no doubt deduced exactly why I'd brought it to them: not because I was a good person; but because I was a guilty person.

On the drive around the block to my house, I reflected on what pitiful offerings we bring to buy expiation for the sins of twenty generations. □



WE'VE GOT OURS, YOU GET YOUR OWN

Michael Becker

Last fall the *Chicago Tribune* exhibited proper civic pride by heralding the winners of the Nobel Prize in economics with a front page article. All three winners are Chicagoans, or completed major portions of their work in Chicago. Not only that, but the work of all three forms a fundamental part of the canon in the field of finance. That young offspring of economics which flourishes today, not within the college of arts and sciences but in that house of pragmatism, the college of business, has gained legitimacy.

Or so I thought as I taped a carefully trimmed copy of the *Tribune* article to my office door and added my own caption, "Three out of Three Economics Prizes go to Finance People." I announced the prizes in my finance classes as well. And since then I seldom fail to note, as we encounter their discoveries over the semester, that these are the contributions of Nobel Laureates, Merton Miller and Franco Modigliani, William Sharpe, or Har-

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ry Markowitz, as the case may be. (Miller's frequent partner, Modigliani, received his Nobel earlier for work in economics outside the field of finance).

Shortly after I posted the article a colleague said she had seen a column in the *New Republic* suggesting that the Nobel prize in economics be abolished. My old insecurities suddenly returned. The sense that business is juxtaposed against the arts and the sciences and is inferior to both has many expressions. Some of my more sensitive colleagues in the College of Business here at Valparaiso continually detect signs of disdain from those in arts and sciences. On some level, I suppose, scholars in every discipline despise every other discipline, but the "worldliness" of business seems to place it in a special category in the University. At dinner the first night of a creative writing conference we introduced ourselves around our tables. Among the mostly teachers, students, and full-time mothers, I stood out as a financial executive. When I so introduced myself one of my table mates replied, "Ah, the enemy."

After classes I rushed to the library and scrambled through the stacks of magazines. Robert J. Samuelson, who writes a column on economic affairs for *Newsweek* and *The Washington Post* asserts in the October 3, 1990 issue of *New Republic* that the Nobel prize in economics has outlived its usefulness, and that each year it goes "to economists whose contributions to human well-being or knowledge are more obscure than the year before." That the economics prize was added in 1948, sixty-seven years after the other prizes were established in

Alfred Nobel's will makes it a "pseudo Nobel" in Samuelson's words, one that "basks in the reflected glory of the first five prizes for physics, chemistry, medicine, literature and peace." The "only people left who think that economics deserves a Nobel prize are economists," he says.

The prize "confirms their [economists] conceit that they are doing 'science' rather than the less tidy task of observing the world and trying to make sense of it," according to Samuelson. "This, after all, is done by mere historians, political scientists, anthropologists, sociologists, and (heaven forbid) journalists." Samuelson considers himself a journalist, not an economist. One wonders if he is suggesting that economists have conspired to prevent journalists or anthropologists from getting Nobel prizes. A similar conspiracy among journalists presumably keeps sociologists, political scientists, and (heaven forbid) economists from getting Pulitzer prizes.

Doing "science" and "observing the world and trying to make sense out of it" seem pretty much the same thing. What distinction is Samuelson trying to draw then? The disciplines eligible for Nobel prizes never did comprehend all fields where contributions to humanity might be made. The purest of pure sciences, mathematics, is absent from Alfred Nobel's list. Among those who never got prizes are Freud, Picasso, and the Beatles, yet their contributions to humanity are, arguably, well in excess of many who have received Nobel prizes. Samuelson is not arguing that there should be prizes for anthropology, sociology, or jour-

nalism. He is arguing that there should not be a prize for economics which he seems to feel is equally unworthy among the "social sciences" he names.

As a finance professor in need of a column topic, it seems it is my destiny to defend the prize in economics. But where to begin? I might research the hundreds of Nobel Prizes since 1901. Surely I could find discoveries in science which turned out to be trivial or to contain major errors. I could find Nobel laureates in literature who are unreadable and whose principle ideas are out of date. Samuelson suggests that Markowitz' work on portfolio theory merely corroborated the folklore that investors shouldn't put all their eggs in one basket. Why not suggest that the discoverers of DNA and such genetic material merely corroborated the folklore that cows have calves and dogs have puppies, that like begets like. This would be an easy project and would raise a few cheap laughs at the expense of the other Nobel disciplines.

A more interesting question, I think, is where does Samuelson's attitude come from? And why do some in the college of business have this sensitivity about their contributions as compared to those in arts and sciences? And why do I, at least a little bit, agree with Samuelson and share the uneasiness of my colleagues?

Science prior to the Fall in Genesis consisted of classification and naming. It came explicitly from God's command that Adam name the animals, the beasts of the field, and the birds of the air (Gen. 2:19). In the earlier creation story (Gen.1:28) humanity is created to have dominion over all the earth's creatures. In the primitive mind, to know the names of things is to have dominion over them.

The first science is thus zoolo-

gy. By extension we might look upon Yahweh's command as encompassing the naming of plants and minerals as well, then naming their component parts and finally describing how the components work together to form the animal, the plant or the stone.

Had Alfred Nobel established prizes in Eden, he could have included physics, chemistry and physiology (as distinct from medicine, there being no disease or death in the garden). He could endow no prize for peace, the perpetual environment of Eden. And no prize for economics as its fundamental raw material, scarcity, did not yet exist. No prize for literature as well. There were no issues of good or evil to explore, nor a lost paradise to look back upon, nor any need for a future paradise to hope for.

There was a limit placed upon the first parents' science. One tree was forbidden, the one that gives knowledge of good and evil. Such knowledge does not exist in Eden and to inquire into it is to lose the garden. Of course that is what happened, and Yahweh's curse was that Adam should eat of the ground which will bring forth thorns and thistles to him, and eat bread in the sweat of his face until he returns to the ground (3:17-19). At last, work and scarcity, the stuff of economics.

Chemistry, physics and physiology, of the Nobel sciences, are the pre-Fall disciplines. Medicine (which is coupled with physiology in the prizes), peace and economics are post-Fall, as is literature. No one read novels in Eden. Genesis itself was written after the Fall. Immortals do not write history.

Economics, along with sociology, political science, and other post-Fall sciences must deal with the cause and the result of the Fall, the sinfulness of mankind. No wonder they receive less respect than the

"pure sciences." The post-Fall sciences deal with the activities of people. Economists look at the world and note that people are greedy. Greed must be taken as a fundamental assumption in economics—consumers maximize utility. Chemists and physicists are rarely forced to make such value-laden assumptions.

In finance class we start by defining the primary goal of the corporation, to maximize the wealth of its shareholders, an objective clearly motivated by the greed of investors. The goal is best achieved by exploiting the greediness of other people, making and selling them products which make them better off. That this leads to a world where most people attain more satisfaction than they might otherwise does not fully mitigate against the fact that economists deal in the unsavory subject of post-Fall humanity.

In the desert the Israelites regarded the law in a way which is all but unthinkable today. They not only respected the law (with frequent and well-publicized lapses), but they believed that the law was a gift from God. What order was possible among a dozen squabbling tribes without the law? If there had been large scale businesses and organized financial markets in the deserts of Sinai, the Israelites could have perceived them as the gifts they are. But not today. Law, which is clearly a post-Fall discipline, is hardly regarded as a gift by the average person. Neither are the laws of economics. But how could we do without them?

The pure scientists will continue to enjoy a higher level of respect than social scientists, insofar as respect is achievable in today's society. Such scientists are also labeled eggheads and nerds. Even the failures of pure science, nuclear weapons, environmental pollution, and such, are not considered fail-

ures of pure science. They are quickly disowned. The fault is not in the physical forces, the chemicals nor the atoms; it is in humanity. And that is the scholarly material of the sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, economists, and the whole sorry log of social scientists. Natural science deals with the good, as in "pure natural ingredients." Social science deals with the source of all problems which is humanity. Social as in "social disease."

Why should there be a Nobel prize in economics? The Bank of Sweden endowed such a prize and convinced the Nobel committee it was a legitimate addition. In many ways economics is harder to do than natural science. One is not allowed to smash one's subject to pieces to see how it works, for one thing. If literature, which makes art from the study of human relations, is proper Nobel material, why not economics, which makes science of the same material? And doesn't the distinction between natural and social sciences seem a little bit artificial, that is to say, unnatural?

There are prestigious prizes in all fields of endeavor. Perhaps the Nobel prize does carry more prestige than most. Does it seem unjust that there is no prize for music or journalism? So, lobby the Nobel committee. Raise the endowment funds. Under \$20 million should do it, I would say. In the mean time we economists have got our prize. You get your own. □

Surprise in Leningrad

It's true! In this city people really stroll down avenues hand in hand, children chase other children for no apparent reason. Old women use canes because their knees no longer hold them, so they walk with short unsure steps, and they use canes. And so do young soldiers in uniform, at least I saw one, walking, limping along with a friend who looked from his face to his leg then back again as if they were somehow joined, and they were, with his wince-pain-walk. Young lovers walk leaning on each other, as canes need legs. And boys give flowers to girls who hold them to their noses and look up at their boyfriends wishing they could be alone in some quiet room. And they make babies here, and they make love, and they make babies here, and they love them and swing them in arms, in parks, in sun, in shade. They love children here, they dress them in love, ribbons red and blue, colorful coats, and shoes.

Alexander M. Jacobs



Death Cultures

James Combs

In the wake of contemporary events, I think it might be wise to consider whether the United States has become a death culture. The idea of a death culture has been around for a long time, with for instance the "Freudian Left" who came to see all human cultures as battlegrounds of *eros* and *thanatos*, life against death. Indeed, the idea runs through studies of long-term social change, such as Huizinga's *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, with the rise of death imagery in the context of changes that were undermining the medieval order. "No other epoch," wrote Huizinga, "has laid so much stress as the expiring Middle Ages on the thought of death." The *danse macabre*, the grotesque imagery and poetry, indeed the widespread celebration of death in the Europe of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries suggest a culture obsessed with death.

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In the modern world, the notion of a death culture as an explanatory concept has probably been most applied to Nazi Germany. Nazi culture seemed in retrospect to be singularly committed to death, with systematic death at the core of policy, the celebration of death in paramilitary rituals and in organizations such as the SS, the "Order of the Death's Head." There is even the suggestion that such a society might even commit itself to its own self-destruction, in a sense committing suicide by bringing on its military defeat and immolation in an apocalyptic "twilight of the gods."

In 1963, the idea of death culture was applied to the United States by anthropologist Jules Henry in his book *Culture Against Man*. After a highly critical and incisive examination of various aspects of American society (high school, nursing homes, advertising), Henry concluded by discussing briefly what he called two cultures: "In Western Culture today one must make a distinction between the culture of life and the culture of death...The culture of death, which every day draws more and more of the elite," studies war. This "elite of death" is hard at work perfecting the rationality of death, while "the culture of life" is "scattered, inarticulate, frightened and confused." Thus "the forces of death are confident and organized" and thoroughly in command: "Death struts about the house while Life cowers in the corner."

Unfortunately, Henry didn't elaborate. Apparently he wished to limit the idea to the military-industrial complex. Yet the concept of a culture is a much more inclusive notion, and would involve a complex of habits and results

widespread among the populace. Culture is not then solely the province of a technocracy at work at more efficient warfare, although Henry is correct that such a highly-regarded and well-funded activity is a culturally defining one. If the United States has become a death culture, it is because of the evolution of the general culture, which has given great support to scientists refining instruments of death in secret laboratories. If we are a death culture, it is because we want it so.

A death culture by definition would be one that promotes death. By contrast, one would expect a culture of life to be one that promotes life. Beyond that, the distinction becomes one of subtle differences. A life culture, for instance, would value vitality and spontaneity, one would think; it would be child- and youth-centered, since those groups are so full of life. But if a culture devises ways to crush vitality and discourage spontaneity, then one suspects that it wants to impose the value of death on life, robbing the young of the joy of living that is supposed to be the province of youth. A death culture would not be just murderous in the military sense; it would also kill the spirit. Its conquests would not be only of armies; it would also defeat vitality. It would find poetry as suspect as weapons, and play as dangerous as maneuvers. In that sense, such a culture would suffer from Weberian "rationalization," transforming everything into a stifling bureaucratic maze which demands conformity to procedure and the exaltation of routine.

Yet the proliferation of bureaucracy is not in itself sufficient condition for the advent of a death

culture. A bureaucracy can administer health care, environmental protection, and peaceful resolution of conflict. A true death culture would worship and care for dead things, and if it threatens or neglects life, then so much the worse for life. By investing much in weaponry, for example, a death culture transforms them into totems of value, to be worshiped as our protectors and benefactors. Military "hardware" (such as the Patriot missile) is accorded an exalted status, while instruments of life (inoculation programs for poor children) are held in contempt. The bureaucratic State at the center of a death culture would be the guardian of dead things—not only weapons, but also the dead measures and instrumentalities of power (money and property, armies and machinery, titles and procedures).

Similarly, a death culture would find that significant elements of the society are happiest when at war, or at least engaged in acts of hatred. Vietnam demonstrated the extent to which many people love war, and were willing to visit years of the intense administration of death on a small Third World country. The Iranian hostage crisis further showed how many people wanted the annihilation of Iran, regardless of the consequences, and blamed President Carter for his restrained, and perhaps civilized, approach to the problem. The Iraqi war betrayed no such restraint, and many people relished the widespread destruction not only of the Iraqi military but also civilian populations. Observation of the replay of such strikes on TV was exhilarating to audiences now inured to the carnage under way. A death culture would find war entertaining, and dismiss as sentimental nonsense the tender-minded notion that there is something wrong and even sick about a culture which

enjoys such fare. Since a death culture is about the business of the destruction of life, then the death of those who are hostile or merely in the way is to be enjoyed as just deserts.

The government of a death culture would then be responsible for the production of deadly results. It would reserve that right over and above any objections of its citizenry in favor of the protection of life. Thus the "right" to go to war, including nuclear, chemical, and biological warfare, would be exalted even if citizens might object. The same authority applies to the use of a military-intelligence-police network in order to enforce widespread secrecy and conduct surveillance on the population. Thus, radiation danger at government plants is kept secret from the population surrounding the plants, and those who object are subjected to surveillance. "National security" becomes the central metaphor of a death culture, security most of all from critics and dissenters who become stigmatized as idealists who do not share the value of death.

A life culture's response to the social problem of poverty and exclusion would, one thinks, be nurturing—better schools, nutrition, day care, slum clearance, and so on. But in a death culture, the maintenance of deprivation and agony at the bottom is important to sustain. A death culture hates people for being different, so the millions on the bottom become objects of hatred, so much so that they must be sustained in their condition. Thus the response to ever-growing poverty and misery in the "underclass" is to build more prisons and expand the death penalty and prison terms. We wish upon them living death—unemployment, slum life, homelessness, neglect of health, early death, high infant mortality rates. We do so, one might

conclude, in order to satisfy our desire for officially-sanctioned death.

A death culture would be led by those who are themselves dead. Not physically dead, of course, but dead in the depth of their imagination, the extent of their compassion, and their commitment to life. A glance at the faces in George Bush's cabinet or the Council of Economic Advisors shows the grim visages of a solemn priesthood charged with the conservation of death, all of whom will someday be rewarded with honors in Pharaoh's tomb. There is in such groups of the mighty no growth, no learning, no daring; one cannot imagine a heretical thought or a truly innovative proposition. The language and ethos of a death culture would exclude a youthful or irreverent suggestion. The leadership of a death culture is adamant in its certitude, certain unto death of the "principles" in which it believes. Death-in-life is a condition of existence at the top, the result of too many committees straining at reports in too many meeting rooms on too many beautiful summer afternoons.

The popular culture of a death culture would be oriented toward the celebration of savagery. The games, programs, films and so on of a death culture would be murderous, with fictional solutions tending toward the violent. Heroism would often serve no higher or community purpose, but would rather simply be an expression of the hero's power, the ability to "blow away" enemies. And a death culture does need enemies. One suspects in the 1990s the enemy of choice will be Moslems. Over the last decade, we have demonstrated our willingness to expunge both Moslem militias and civilians, and this is likely to continue in the near future, as the United States enjoys the widespread hatred of the Moslem masses and many

Moslem governments. The Iraqi war may be only the opening round in a series of violent clashes with Islam. We may then expect that American popular culture will chime in with negative stereotypes of Moslem peoples, reinforcing our perception of their enmity and justifying our willingness to do them death.

Whether the concept of death culture has any explanatory power remains uncertain. There are countervailing forces of life in American culture, opposed to the promotion of death by governments or popular attitudes. But Henry's conclusion long ago may be correct: the forces of death may have the upper hand. Why this is so is a matter requiring

much further investigation: an aging population, an unimaginative and hidebound elite, entropic forces in American society, a hatred and fear of the different world that encroaches. But such a culture clearly will be in conflict with the young, the innovative, the new population that is clamoring for power. If a culture of death cannot adjust to changing historical circumstances, then it may itself die, atrophied by its own commitment to death.

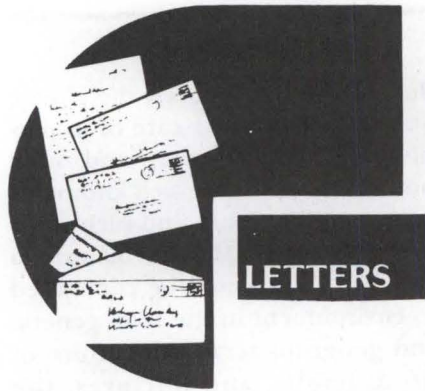
Exactly what a culture of life would be is not at all clear either. At minimum, such a culture would seem to be one committed to the well-being of its citizens, and willing to measure that in empirical terms. The shameful statistics which

demonstrate how poorly the United States does in taking care of its people compared to other, and often not as rich, lands are well known. A culture of life would find such statistics intolerable. More nebulously, a culture of life would be committed to environment in the most general and generous terms: a culture of life inhabits, and nurtures, the Earth for future generations. Perhaps in the coming years, this will be the locus of the struggle for the American soul—whether we produce a culture of death that destroys, or a culture of life that creates. In that case, the historical drama will indeed be one of life against death. □

Holy Words

For Druids all words set down on rock,
cut deep or not,
were holy words:
The writing made it so.
My words suffer in the hope for holy.
My pen tacks down the writhing line,
searching to find a word
for thoughts
still shifting
and a place
for phases turned out
homeless.
I hope for holy words,
illuminated, gloriously,
with gold and balanced design.
Instead I find a tortured line
twisting meaning
out of pain.

Elizabeth L. Hudgins



Letter from Nigeria

Edgar Senne

We waited in the Lagos domestic airport for our flight to Kaduna in the north. What a contrast there was between this domestic terminal and Lagos International, where we had entered Nigeria three days earlier after our flight from Tanzania. Once we had made it through what seemed like a chaotic procedure for checking the baggage, we followed the hand-written signs directing us to the traveler waiting area. The area was quite large, low ceilinged and apparently windowless. There was scarcely enough light to read a newspaper, though it was high noon. Naked forty watt bulbs dangled from their fragile-looking wires, doing their best to break up the darkness. A hundred shops, each with its own eager merchant, lined the perimeter with the full range of merchandise for the traveler. The long, dark waiting-room benches,

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high-backed with rounded seats, reminded me of the small town mid-western train depots of my childhood. But, here they seemed to double as beds for the homeless.

A tall Nigerian man, regal in traditional robes and stunning head-piece, received a pedicure, not seeming to notice the young man who so carefully administered it. Cripples, both congenital and accidental, circulated among the waiting travelers. Several of them maneuvered about on all fours, with walking pads for knees and elbows, barely able to raise their glance high enough to catch the eye of the potential donor. Children with platters of sweet treats balanced atop their head, pleaded for buyers. A blind man sat in the middle of one aisle, barely allowing room for traffic to move around him. On the small cardboard box in front of him were the words, "Thank you."

This scene was coming to be a daily experience for us. Everywhere we went, the poor, the crippled, the sick and the deformed were in our view. Children would approach our bus, one hand up to receive a donation, the other making gestures of eating. The feelings this aroused in us were painful and confusing. For a while there is the instinct to hand out money, but how much of that can a traveling professor do? Guilt, pity, anger at the omnipresence of the needy and resentment toward the society that lets this happen — all these feelings churned inside us.

Why are scenes like this so surprising to us? Is it because most of us do not meet the needy on a daily basis? Unless we move about the inner city, we can go a long time without seeing the pleading eyes of a hungry person or a sick and

deformed person sitting in the filth of the streets. Such people live in our society, but our affluence allows us to create agencies for their care and, at the same time, to hide them from our daily view. Their absence from public view allows us to nourish the illusion that it is normal to be normal, healthy and "well-healed."

No public address notices of planes coming or going could be heard in this terminal. A tiny chalkboard displayed some flight information, but I think it was at least one day behind. It was a full forty-five minutes after our scheduled departure time, when I saw a crowd moving out the door and onto the tarmac. They boarded a nearby plane, and the word was passed that it was headed for Port Harcourt. Our plane, we now learned, was the one fifty yards beyond. I sat on an old landing gear tire and munched more than enough of the dried fruit from my shoulder bag, watching and waiting for the Port Harcourt flight to depart. Just when I expected the boarding steps to be rolled away, the door reopened and the passengers were ushered out and across the way where they boarded "our" plane. What's going on here? An attendant explained that these passengers had been waiting since early morning, and now their plane is discovered to be "spoiled." So, they'll take "our" plane, and sooner or later we'll get another. "What a way to run an airline," we confided to each other, as we stood around exchanging jokes about the "spoiled" aircraft.

Before long, a rush of people moved toward the "spoiled" plane. "Hurry," we were told, "we're going

to Kaduna on this plane." We grabbed our carry-on bags and hurried as best we could, but the line was already long. I was sure that not everybody could get on that plane. As a matter of fact, I wasn't so sure I even wanted to get on an aircraft so recently described as "spoiled." Incidentally, we never did learn what had gone wrong with that plane.

The line moved slowly, and I had visions of our separated delegation: little groups of professors from North America, hopelessly lost in the middle of West Africa, just a few hundred miles southeast of Timbuktu. Suddenly, a flight attendant pushed past the line and motioned the people to step aside. "First, we will board the group from North America," he said. How fortunate—and, at the same time, how embarrassing! What was this special treatment? Was it some remnant of the "Yes, Master" mentality of colonial days? Heads hanging to avoid the eyes of those whose priority was being lowered, we boarded and took our choice of seats. Then, came the rest, still smiling and friendly. Somewhat over-filled, the plane took off, and I prayed more than usual that God would get us safely to our destination in this our "spoiled" aircraft. "Oh, yes, Lord, please forgive us for our place of privilege, and grant that those who got bumped will not have to wait too long."

Nose pressed against the window just over the right wing, I had the impression that Lagos spread out for a hundred miles, village pressed against village in a never-ending chain called a city. I wondered if the people in those villages knew they were part of Lagos, or if their affairs were run much as they had been for decades. Then the villages became more scattered and the rain forest spread out as far as I could see. Forty-five minutes into the flight, we came into the semi-savannah region of the north. The patches of reddish brown soil

became larger, exposing from time to time a circle of thatched huts, some neatly groomed little fields and an occasional herd of Fulani cattle.

Five hundred miles from Lagos, we landed safely in Kaduna, where we were met by a bus and station wagon, ready to transport us fifty miles up the road to Zaria. It was a high speed ride on the best piece of highway I had seen for a long time, no doubt built in the euphoric days of the oil booming 70s. Along the way, the frequent appearance of the mosques told us we were in the Muslim North. Our driver flew along at 130 kph, too fast for comfort, and scarcely slowed at all as we sped between two halves of a village. He leaned on the horn with a long continuous blast, and some mysterious hand seemed to reach out and gently clear the people and the goats from our path. Somehow, it worked, and we made it to Zaria and to the Kongo Conference Hotel, designated accommodation for special guests of Ahmadu Bello University. Having already developed a taste for Nigerian beer, we celebrated our safe arrival in the hotel's open-air bar. Somewhat later, as we made our way to the restaurant for dinner, we heard the voice of the muezzin, taped and amplified over the city, calling all Muslims to their evening prayers.

For eight days Zaria was our headquarters and Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) was our principal host. Founded by the government in 1964, it is a large university, well equipped with buildings serving an enrollment in the neighborhood of twenty thousand. The reception by Vice Chancellor A. Mohammed was like an event of state, which in a way it was, since his appointment is by the President of the Federal Republic, Major General Ibrahim Babangida. The highlight of the moment was to ascend with the Vice Chancellor to the roof above his

tenth floor office, there to view with him the whole campus as it stretched out on all sides. His flowing robes accentuated his sweeping gestures, and I felt like we were on top of the palace of a king, viewing his kingdom spread out all about him.

Lectures by ABU faculty people had been scheduled for us. The list of titles indicates something of the scope of our lecture/discussions with our Nigerian faculty colleagues: "Introduction to Nigerian History, Culture and Politics," "Integrating International, African and Nigerian Issues into the Curriculum," "Christianity in Nigeria," "Islam in Nigeria," "Nigeria's Structural Adjustment Program," and "Women in the Changing Nigerian Society."

Though grateful for the academic fare and for the give and take with peers, our most memorable times were the direct encounters with the people in the villages and markets. On Sunday we were bused a hundred miles north from Zaria to Kano, capital of Kano State and a trading city on the edge of the Sahara for more than a thousand years. Still today, the camel caravans and their traders visit the markets of Kano, keeping alive that ancient network of ideas and goods that crisscrosses the Great Sahara.

The Camel Market of Kano is unforgettable. Fifty or sixty camels, some too old and tired to earn their keep on the Saharan routes were here to be sold for glue or beef stew "helper." (Just an unverified suspicion.) But, there were young camels as well, ready to be sold for a lifetime of burden-bearing on desert trails. In addition to the camels, the market was almost overrun with Fulani cattle and goats. Though it took some heated negotiation and generous bribes, we were finally allowed to photograph the camels and their keepers, and one of our group even took a brief precarious

ride on the back slope of a camel's hump.

The Hausa and Fulani are the dominant ethnic groups in this part of the northern region. The Hausa are a long established agricultural people and the Fulani a nomadic pastoral one, apparently originating in Senegal. For many centuries they have been found along the lower edges of the Sahara, along an east-west line running through several of the modern countries of West Africa. The Fulani herdsmen seem to have negotiated grazing rights in and around the Hausa fields, an arrangement not without conflictual moments.

It was one of these Fulani, Shehu Usman dan Fodio, scholar and preacher, who had led a *jihad* in the early years of the nineteenth century. It was a militant campaign to purify the religion of Islam in the northern region, where many of the rulers were allegedly combining Islam with elements of traditional paganism, a practice which was forbidden by *Shari'a*, Islamic law. It was this successful *jihad* that established the Sokoto Caliphate or Fulani Empire and secured the Muslim character of the northern region.

The Kingdom of Zazzau, with its capital at Zaria, was a part of this Empire and was governed by an Emir. As a political institution, this Emirate of Zaria survives to this day, primarily because both the British colonial government and the post-independence governments of the Federal Republic of Nigeria have chosen to govern by utilizing the prestige of such traditional rulers.

The Emir of Zaria favored our delegation with a formal audience. It was a pleasant surprise, since it is said to be rare that foreign visitors are so favored. After an appropriately long wait in the courtyard in front of the Emir's palace, we heard the blast of a bugle and were marched into the palace hall by a

corps of palace guards, attired in their green robes and red turbans. The Emir was seated in royal attire on a throne-like couch. With a slight nod he acknowledged the prostrations of each attendant and member of the guard. As we were shown to our seats around the perimeter of the hall, the court praise singer stood off to the side and sang the glory of the Kingdom of Zaria and its long line of Emirs.

The Emir addressed us with a quality of English that hinted of his Western education. The atmosphere was almost familiar when he spoke of his recent trip to the U. S. for the graduation of his son from a Big Ten university. We asked, "What is your actual role as Emir of Zaria in today's Nigeria?" He answered, "I listen to the hardships of my people, and I try to intercede for them and to make their life a little better."

Our next stop was the Federal Territory of Abuja, located in the center of the country and designated as the new capital. For now, most of the government ministries remain in Lagos, and most of the governing is done from there, but the modern city of Abuja is well along in its construction and may someday become the actual ruling center. Two elegant hotels and a golden-domed mosque are the architectural highlights. Had not our cameras hung like sacred pendants from our necks, we might have been allowed to look inside that new mosque. But, alas, one of the building guards took exception, and we were sent away.

As we checked into the luxurious Abuja Hilton, the lobbies were still full of the delegates to an important political convention which was just ending. They appeared to us like wealthy potentates, some in their traditional robes and others in expensive Western suits. Judging from the animated conversations and competitive atmosphere in the elevators and snack

shops, the politicking was not yet complete. This convention was one of the steps toward the goal of changing to a civilian government in 1992. At this convention, a two-party system was being put in place and critical positions being filled.

It's worth remembering that, since gaining independence in 1960, Nigeria has had something less than stable government. There have been only two periods of civilian rule to date, 1960-1966 and 1979-1983. For twenty of the thirty years, we have seen military governments in place, with six successful coups and attempted coups too numerous to mention. The present military ruler, General Ibrahim Babangida, is promising to orchestrate the return to civilian rule in 1992, but we found few people, either on the street or in the universities, who believed it would really happen.

This political situation is also charged with religious tension. It was clear to us at Zaria, and was to become even clearer when we got here to the University of Ibadan, that many Muslims were anxious to make Nigeria a fully Islamic nation. Their ambition is understandably frightening to Christians, who, remembering the burning of churches in the early eighties, fear that another *jihad*, like that of Usman dan Fodio in 1804, is a real possibility. According to them, the northern region, with its strong Islamic culture and its history of powerful kingdoms, has had more than its share of influence in Nigerian politics ever since the unification of the country.

Professor Obaro Ikime, Head of the Department of History at Ibadan University, was one of those faculty people scheduled to address our delegation. However, soon after our arrival, we were told that he would not be able to join us, because he had been detained by government officials several months

earlier. It seems that this courageous professor had read certain "official" documents to a gathering of students and faculty in the university chapel on April 28.

One of the documents is called a "communique" from the Islam in Africa Conference, and the other is a letter from the General Manager of International Operations of the Arab African International Bank in Cairo. Assuming their authenticity, these documents raise two very controversial matters. First, they state that President Babangida has already made Nigeria a member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) by making a donation of \$21 billion to its Development Fund. Further, the communique lays out a detailed set of objectives for the systematic Islamicization of Nigeria, including the replacement of all Western legal systems with the *Shari'a*, Islamic law. Second, they imply massive government corruption. Though it is illegal for a citizen to send money to banks outside the country, the letter from the Arab African International Bank states that President Babangida is the "operator" of a "special secret deposit account," holding a balance in excess of \$57 billion. Three other accounts, each under the operatorship of a top Nigerian government official, are listed with balances ranging from \$15 to \$25 billion.

The government has been accused of these things many times and has simply denied the truthfulness of all charges. What was different about the occasion in question was the fact that, on the same day that Professor Ikime read these documents in Ibadan, a coup was attempted in Lagos. The first the radio reports had said it was successful, setting loose considerable celebration on the university campus, but later it became clear that it had failed. The coincidence of

these two unrelated events triggered Professor Ikime's detainment. He was held, without charge, for exactly three months. We were attending a reception at one of the Vice Chancellor's chalets when the Governor of Oyo State called to inform the Vice Chancellor of Professor Ikime's immediate release.

The next day, I was coming back from the library when I heard the sounds of a large crowd singing and chanting. I looked up the street and saw several hundred students dancing around a little yellow VW "Bug," as it edged its way toward the center of campus. It didn't take long to figure out that this was the return of Professor Ikime, and that he was being welcomed back to the campus as a hero. The crowd gathered in the courtyard of the Faculty of Arts complex for a joyful celebration. Student speeches were bold and defiant, and Professor Ikime quietly admonished, "We must let nothing stop us from telling the truth."

So, what will happen in 1992, when the civilian government is to be put in place? Will the process that leads up to that time be free and fair? Will manipulation and intimidation dash the hopes of the optimistic? The Nigerian Christians with whom I spoke kept saying, "We can only pray that the Lord Jesus will help us through it."

On our last Sunday in Ibadan, several of our travel-weary delegation managed to make it onto both of the TV network news reports. It had nothing to do with our worthiness, of course, but with the importance of the occasion we were witnessing. It was the ceremony of graduation in the Adult Literacy Program, being held in a village called Akufo. Michael Omolewa, who had arranged the Nigerian segment of our journey, was the Director of Adult Education at Ibadan University and the person in charge of the Adult Literacy Pro-

gram. This day's graduation event was symbolic of his outstanding leadership in the campaign for literacy. As a matter of fact, his program received the 1989 UNESCO International Literacy Award.

Joining us on our bus to Akufo that Sunday morning was the second highest of all the chiefs in the Ibadan Union, Chief E. O. Adeyemo. His honorific title is Otun Olubadan, which means the Olubadan's Right Hand. This honored elder was well into his eighties, tall, slim and steady on his feet. He himself was an educated man; he was going to the ceremony at Akufo to add his prestige to the literacy campaign.

As we approached the village of Akufo, a runner went ahead to tell the welcoming musicians and dancers that the Otun Olubadan was here. This, we were told, made a big difference in the specifics of their performance. In particular, the talking drums announced the presence of this dignitary. In spite of my untrained ear, I found the drumming energizing and beautiful.

The musicians danced around the chief as he made his way in dignified procession, accompanied by his son in Western attire. We moved toward the pavilion where the ceremony would take place. People of the village joined the dancing, mothers with babies on their backs, old men, old women and children of all ages. Most interesting of all was the praise singer who danced along a few steps behind the honored guest, loudly singing the history of the Ibadan chiefs in general, the honor of the Otun Olubadan in particular and the praise of the local village chief. As he sang, people pressed money against his forehead in token of their appreciation. His delight was especially evident when the Otun Olubadan pressed a rather large bill upon him.

Inside the pavilion, all sorts of

village dignitaries gathered on the dais. It began with prayers, first a short Muslim prayer in Arabic, then a much longer Christian prayer in English. The speeches that followed were delivered in Yoruba and then repeated in English. As the name of each graduate was called, she or he would come forward and bow to the ground before the Otun Olubadan; he in turn would hand them the certificate and congratulate them with a handshake. It was a noticeably thrilling moment for one elderly village chief, as he received his certificate of literacy.

Television camera crews, their technology appearing totally out of

place in this thoroughly rural setting, were busy panning the audience, giving to the North American professors in those front rows far more than their share of footage. When the formal ceremony was completed, the printed program called for "Merriment." The crowd danced the dignitaries out of the pavilion and to the waiting vehicles. The question of the day rattled through my head: will Nigeria achieve its goal, 100 percent literacy by the year 2000? It will take a lot of graduations like this to make that a reality.

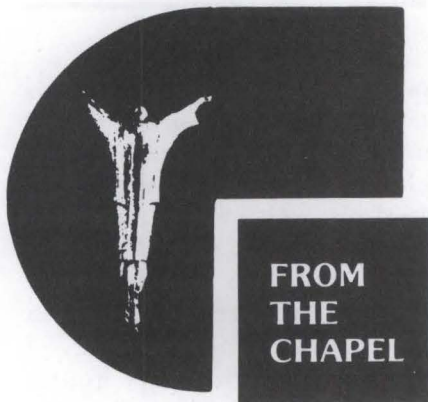
Soon we'll load the bus and take leave of our new friends at

Ibadan University. We'll drive to Lagos for our flight to London and from there to Newark International. Our six week travel seminar in Africa has come to an end. It will be nice in many ways to get back home, but still it is not easy to leave this great adventure behind. I have learned very much, but it will take some time to bring it all into perspective. One thing is sure, the journey has changed me, and I am determined that it must make a difference for my students and perhaps also for some of my colleagues back home. □

To Robert Frost

Outside of my window a blue spruce bends
outward over the side walk where it ends.
The path becomes then sand and scrubby grass,
a narrow stretch where only one can pass.
Our family should have paved it long ago
just like so many other tasks let go.
Now it has become a part of the place,
a refuge for thistles and Queen Anne's Lace.
Then one summer a batch of chicory
appeared, bright blue like pieces of the sky
Somehow broken off and come close to us
But the neighbors complained, made such a fuss.
Folks make a practice of getting rid of weeds.
It goes with culture, civilizing needs.
I wonder how the serious world will hatch
its prickly ideas without a weedy patch.

Alexander M. Jacobs



Aria

Carol Gilbertson

In Mendelssohn's dramatic aria the prophet Elijah movingly pleads to God for the closure of death, which he sees as a welcome relief after his disappointment with himself and with the failures of the Israelite people. But he sings from the point of view of one dying rather than from the point of view of one grieving.

Surely one of the most profound trials we live through is the death of someone close—a friend, a spouse, a parent. For the Christian, this may be a harder trial, since it forces a believer to face head-on the difficult question of what happens after death. If a dead loved one is—in some way that remains an awesome mystery for all mortals—bound for a life of eternal bliss with God, why should death be so utterly devastating and terrifying instead of comforting?

Carol Gilbertson teaches in the Department of English at Luther College. This talk was given at a regular chapel service in October, 1989. The congregation heard Mendelssohn's "It is Enough" and Faure's "Pie Jesu" as part of the service.

Last year I had some time to think about death and grief, since I was on a sabbatical year, doing independent research at the University of Durham in England. The year was rich with new friendships, study, writing, and family trips in England, Norway, and Greece, and I gloried in it, though death whispered through the richness. My father died in May 1989, just two months before I left for England, and my English department friend, Dennis Jones, died in August 1990, just three days before my return. Those two deaths now set off those months abroad like grim parentheses.

But in addition, my year saw many other deaths. When my uncle died last November, he was the third uncle I had lost in 20 months. Together with my father's death, this death meant four giants of my childhood had gone, four grand masters in the art of living Christian lives. For them it was not an art, of course; all ministers in the Lutheran Church, they lived lives of simple integrity—deep faith and married devotion—and they preached God's grace with no legalism or judgment. They truly did what Paul exhorted the Corinthians to do: "be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain" (I Cor. 15:58).

Death spoke to me again and again last year. Nearly every month a letter or phone call brought news of the death of another friend's father—until by June I had felt the deaths of ten of my friends' fathers, each killed at a different age by a different illness, but all mourned and remembered by a son or daughter. In Cheikh Hamidou Kane's novel *Ambiguous Adventure*, the char-

acter Samba comes to realize that whether the soul is immortal or not, his dead friend Old Rella is immortalized in the lives of her daughter and her grandson. Even more profoundly, she will live forever in the memory of those who knew her and who knew those whom she has affected. Her labor has not been in vain, and her life has become a work of art.

When, like Elijah, Socrates faces his own death in Plato's *Apology*, he argues that it would be hubristic to fear death, since that fear would suggest that he had a knowledge of death that he does not have. But he goes on to assume that death must be good because either it is a total loss of consciousness and thus a welcome rest; or else it is the soul's migration to another world, in which case he can anticipate eternally continuing the conversation that takes us as humans on a dialectic road toward truth.

Socrates, of course, does not talk about some of the other effects of his death. He does not speak about his death's immediate impact on his family and friends; he does not acknowledge that they will mourn his death precisely because they will lose his voice in their earthly dialectic in the Athenian polis. But he also does not say that his dialectic will live on in this world long after he dies. His art of philosophy, preserved through collective memory, will render him immortal no matter what happens to his soul after death.

When my uncles died, I wept for the loss of my past, a world that I no longer lived in but yet a world that I depended upon and continued to draw strength from. When my father died, I mourned the loss

not only of my past but of my present and future. Without a father, I will never be the same; without this particular father, my *world* will never be the same. I don't believe that our bemoaning of such chinks in our world's wholeness stems only from our basic conservatism. It's not that we cannot stand losing part of our neatly tucked-up world, where we are comfortably not challenged to think and act in new ways. I think it's rather that the person who is lost to us in death is one whose rich presence daily *opened* our world, who made it *less* rather than more limiting. In the English Department we have lost one voice in the ongoing conversation. Just now we are without one crucial part of our dialectic toward truth, and without that voice, we must limp along until we learn how to construct a new choral mix that will take us there in a different way, with a different harmony.

When we mourn such deaths, I find, we mourn, on the one hand, as though there had never been such a loss. We mourn, on the other, as though this was simply one of many such deaths in an endless chain of human mortality, part of a cosmic pattern. We may feel this more in a small community where over the years we watch many loved friends die; each time we feel that we cannot live without the dead one, but each time we do. What is striking is that double consciousness that we experience while grieving: we feel both that we shall never survive such a dreadful change in our lives, and somewhere inside we also know that we shall surely survive and build new lives, as generations before us have done.

All deaths are the same, and yet Death's closure brings into sharp relief the unique greatneses of a person's life. For those left living, death calls forth the beauty of the

life, which was felt before but never seen whole. It is exactly this doubleness that brings power to art that is about death. The distinctions of this individual death and the original images the artist brings to the work raise the artwork out of conventionality. But it is the very commonness of death that allows us all to participate in the art; death's sameness makes the work wondrously universal.

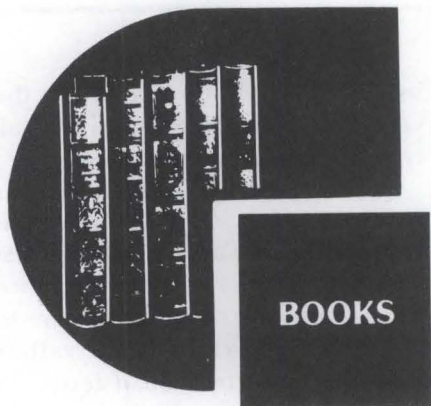
Facing death with reason intact called forth serenity and eloquence in Socrates. When Gabriel Faure's father died in 1886, Faure wrote his *Requiem Mass*, taking his text from the Mass for the Dead; while he was composing this work, his mother also died. In this great work, it is as though Faure glimpsed a life beyond this one, and though he may have been thinking particularly of his own parents' destinations after death, he created for all of us a transcendent world of pure spirit that music can hint at and move all of us toward.

A specific confrontation with death, either as the dying one or as the mourner, brings forth great art; but great art in turn helps all humans to see the oneness of death's spiritual beauty. Like music about death, poems about death use language to transform painful loss into a thing of beauty. The language objectifies the poet's particular pain and elevates it, making it a pleasurable thing for all readers; poetic language ritualizes and memorializes the deep grief we all feel. In "The Exequy," Henry King's seventeenth century elegy for his dead wife, the poet talks of her former, bright presence as the "clear sun" that illuminated his life and fortune. Since she whom he has called his sun, is now buried under "earth," he finds himself calling her death and burial an "eclipse" of the sun. Through a chain of progressive

images, the poet arrives at his remaining life as a journey toward reunion with her, with each temporal hour seen as another spatial step toward his "west," which represents his death, but also the place where his dear "sun" has set, where they will finally live forever together in "that calm region" of "no night."

Language, with its gentle music and its power to both name and transform, helps us through grief. At funerals we love, through tears, to sing together the hymn "Children of the Heavenly Father" because it faces and labels our loss directly, reminding us that it is a unique loss, like a father's loss of a child. And yet that hymn suggests, in comforting, lyrical language, that we should not worry because this is a death like all others; there have been many other losses like this one, and there is still room for one more in God's massive bosom.

We are drawn to music that transforms our deep, particular grief into universal beauty through word and melody. Art, like death itself, allows us to see a specific good life of godly labor as a created beauty; but art also transports us beyond the particular, to glimpse that undifferentiated transcendent world which we who are still living cannot fathom. And though we living die a death with each new grief we suffer, we somehow feel, through this language and this music, that we shall live and never die. Consider the power and comfort of Paul's poetic words: For "Lo! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed." □



BOOKS

Review Essay

Abortion: The View from Harvard Law

Gilbert Meilaender

Laurence H. Tribe. *Abortion: The Clash of Absolutes*. W.W. Norton, 1990. pp. 270.

Mary Ann Glendon. *Abortion and Divorce in Western Law*. Harvard University Press, 1987. pp. 197.

It took a certain amount of *chutzpah* for Laurence Tribe to write *Abortion: The Clash of Absolutes*. His basic theme is seemingly simple: The abortion debate in this country pits an absolute of life against an absolute of liberty, and there seems no alternative but conflict. Nevertheless, he seeks "ways of approaching issues like abortion that avoid pitting these absolutes against one another." He wants to challenge "the inevitability of permanent conflict" and "lay the groundwork for moving on." We anticipate therefore some kind of compromise that

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may move us beyond deadlock.

How might we achieve such progress? Should laws regulating abortion require parental consent or parental notification when a pregnant minor seeks an abortion? No, neither of these is workable or attractive. Might law mandate a waiting period between the time a woman seeks abortion and the time it is performed? No, such laws would not achieve their purposes and would set up unnecessary obstacles for some women. Might we use the law to specify reasons for which abortion could be sought rather than letting choice alone be determinative? No, such laws are neither desirable nor enforceable. Shall we continue to permit government to fund childbirth but not abortion, on the ground that *Roe v. Wade* recognizes abortion as a liberty but not an entitlement?

No, this position—actually upheld by the Court in decisions after *Roe*—is "really no compromise at all" and should be abandoned. Might we use law to restrict abortion to certain facilities, limiting the proliferation of abortion clinics? No, such restrictions are neither medically wise nor justified. Should we move the cutoff date for permissible abortion earlier in pregnancy, permitting only relatively early abortions? No, although any time limit is rather arbitrary, *Roe*'s is probably a better compromise than these proposals.

One begins to suspect that Tribe's notion of compromise is that of a man coming to terms with . . . well, with himself. The fundamental aim of Tribe's book is, therefore, not likely to be achieved. Apart from its search for "compromise," the book contains journalistic history of

the abortion debate in this country, legal argument, and moral argument. On the first of these levels the discussion is rather pedantic and of limited usefulness. More important, however, Tribe's journalistic forays fall short of even-handedness. Behind pro-life arguments he regularly discerns covert sexism that is less interested in protecting fetal life than in denying women sexual freedom and keeping them permanently subordinate to men (because they are hostage to their biology in a way men are not). Even when pro-life advocates accept abortion in certain circumstances—e.g., pregnancy resulting from forcible intercourse—Tribe sees here only evidence that they ought also accept abortion when pregnancy results from contraceptive failure (since then too pregnancy is unwanted). If one fails to be as persuaded about this as Tribe is, that suggests that one's chief concern is not abortion but the "guilty" nature of the woman's voluntary sexual activity. If Tribe expects the people he describes in this way to recognize in him a sympathetic advocate of compromise, he is, I fear, deceiving himself. Better that, I suppose, than to think him disingenuous.

When he writes on matters of constitutional law (to which, in particular, one long chapter is devoted), Tribe's prose is more lively. If one is seeking a clear discussion of relevant issues—judicial restraint, a right to privacy, "incorporation" of the Bill of Rights through the 14th Amendment, unenumerated rights in the Constitution—chapter five will provide it, even if it is not a discussion with which all of Tribe's fellow scholars will concur. Even here, however, one

may sometimes notice sleight of hand. In examining what a constitutional "right of privacy" might be, Tribe first characterizes the Court's *Griswold v. Connecticut* decision (1965) as recognizing that "the liberty clause protects the right of a married couple to decide whether or not to use contraceptives." But two paragraphs later he feels able to assert that the right discerned in *Griswold* was really a "right to engage in sexual intercourse without having a child." And he then finds it peculiar that none of the justices who seem willing to overturn *Roe* have expressed disagreement with *Griswold*. Perhaps the move from his first to his second characterization of *Griswold* is less obvious to them!

Or again, I am not persuaded by a claim which may at first seem obvious. Tribe argues that "laws restricting abortion do not merely burden women disproportionately; they directly burden *women alone*." Much depends on what one means here by "directly." That we do less than we ought to hold men responsible for the life and welfare of children they father, I will certainly not deny. But to the degree that we do hold them responsible—and ought in far greater measure to do so—they too are and would be burdened by such restrictions. The burden can never match the unique one borne by women in pregnancy, but Tribe rests far too much of his case on such moves for us not to worry about them.

Indeed, this issue—disproportionate burden to women—is also the linchpin of Tribe's moral argument. In certain respects, in fact, he regards the argument of *Roe* to be stronger as a moral than a legal argument. That is, he holds that even were it clearly the case that the fetus is every bit as much a person as the rest of us, it would still be morally wrong to *require* a woman to make the significant, intimate, and personal sacrifice that foregoing

abortion involves. "When the law prohibits a woman from freeing herself of the fetus that is inside her, the law appears to work a harsh discrimination against women *even if fetuses count as persons*." In no other case do we *require* each other to be Good Samaritans, though, of course, we may praise such action on many occasions. If, for example, a child cannot survive without an organ transplant which only the child's father is suited to provide, we do not require such sacrifice of him.

What Tribe fails to note, of course, is that we also do not require such sacrifice of a mother if she is the suitable donor. Perhaps what our law would reflect if abortion were regulated is not the institutionalized sexual inequality Tribe thinks he discerns, but some sense of an important difference between organ donation and abortion. When a man (or a woman) declines to serve as organ donor, and when we in turn decline to compel him or her to do so, what does *not* happen might be termed a kind of rescue operation. But potential donors, even if they are not required to rescue the imperiled person in need of an organ, are not permitted to aim at that person's death. That I decline to make the bodily and personal sacrifice of giving you my kidney does not entitle me to asphyxiate you, nor does it entitle me to stop others who might wish to offer you a kidney. If aborting a fetus only meant ceasing to carry it while permitting others to sustain its life—which, of course, it cannot medically mean, at least for the present—the analogy might seem more persuasive. Declining to donate a kidney and aborting a fetus may both be actions that *result* in death, but they differ in the important moral sense that only the latter can be said to *aim* at death. And if the day comes when it is medically possible to stop carrying a fetus without at the same time aiming at

its death, we will be able to test the validity of the analogy more carefully in our actual practice.

Tribe himself wavers at this point. He sees clearly that the right articulated in *Roe* is probably best described as the right to a severance procedure—the right not to have to continue to carry a fetus, rather than the right to a dead fetus. "A 'right' not to have a biological child in existence—the right during pregnancy, for example, to *destroy* one's fetus rather than simply being *unburdened* of it—is analytically distinct, and seems harder to support." Yet, when Tribe briefly takes up such a possibility late in his discussion, he wavers. Abortion as a severance procedure—with fetuses gestated to term in an artificial placenta or, perhaps, an adoptive mother—would, he fears, violate the pregnant woman's rights "by rendering her womanhood inconsequential and marginalizing her distinctiveness as a woman." Perhaps he is correct, but this is an astonishing argument to hear from Tribe, and it comes rather late in the game. It is, after all, *his* view that has cast the issue in terms of rights, that has imaged the woman as free of her natural procreative possibilities, as if she were not distinctive in precisely such biological ways. It is his view, in short, that has broken the natural human bond that connects a woman with the child she carries—and it is a little late at this point for him to worry that such a view carries dehumanizing possibilities.

The conclusion of Tribe's analysis is this: Each side in the abortion argument must make a concession. Pro-life advocates should concede that a good bit of their opposition to abortion has been grounded not in concern for the sanctity of fetal life but in sexist attempts to control women. What must pro-choice advocates in their turn concede? Well, they must grant that if a pro-life position were imposed by law, all

rights, even those of the unborn, would be jeopardized! Thus, we do not, after all, face a clash of absolutes. It is not *life* (of the fetus) versus *liberty* (of the pregnant woman). It is *liberty* (of women) versus a *way of life* that pro-lifers wish to preserve, a way of life that relegates women to second-class status. If both sides will simply make these concessions, we shall have progress. Perhaps *chutzpah* was a bit weak to describe Tribe's work. And any reader who doubts the accuracy of my summary here is invited to examine at his or her leisure the last full paragraph on p. 241, in which Tribe draws his argument to a close.

Among Tribe's colleagues at Harvard Law School is Mary Ann Glendon. Her book has a quite different aim from Tribe's and leads in a quite different direction. Glendon seeks to do comparative legal analysis. In particular, she examines abortion and divorce law in the United States and Western Europe with an eye toward the following puzzle: How is it that the United States, while sharing in the overall liberalizing trend of Western family law, "often occupies an extreme end of the spectrum when cross-national comparisons are made" on the issues of abortion and divorce?

I will not attempt to reproduce the comparative data Glendon has assembled from this country and the nations of Western Europe, nor will I take up her discussion of divorce, interesting though it is. In general she wishes to argue, following a suggestion of Clifford Geertz, that law is more than a mechanism for adjudicating disputes or advancing interests; it is also "a way that a society makes sense of things." It interprets social data when it brings them within legal categories, and its own language in turn helps to constitute society as it influences the way citizens perceive the moral reality of their lives. The question to ask of a body of law is, therefore: What

story is it telling? How is it giving symbolic expression to certain cultural ideals?

Glendon's "venture into cultural hermeneutics" leads to the conclusion that even among those countries permitting abortion on demand during the early stages of pregnancy the U.S. "is alone . . . in forbidding *any* state regulation of abortion for the sake of preserving the fetus until viability" and alone "in that even after viability, it does not *require* regulation to protect the fetus." Glendon examines in some detail the legal situation in France and (what was) West Germany. In the involved, difficult, and—in the case of West Germany—constitutional debates in those countries, Glendon discerns less willingness to structure the entire debate in the language of individual rights (whether fetal right to life, or a woman's right of privacy). A richer, more nuanced moral language permits a variety of considerations into play in shaping a mediating position. From Glendon's standpoint, at least, this means that the two absolutely opposed positions described by Tribe are in certain crucial respects actually "locked within the same intellectual framework, a framework that appears rather rigid and impoverished when viewed from a comparative perspective."

This impoverished perspective might, Glendon allows, be considered rather masculine, since it seems chiefly to value autonomy rather than interdependence. Indeed, "*Roe*, with its emphasis on the separateness, the rights, and the self-determination of individual women" appears to her to be "a very 'masculine' decision." By contrast, the decision of the West German Constitutional Court that she examines, emphasizing responsibility for others and communal bonds, "seems more reflective of what [Carol] Gilligan and others have identified as feminine values." And

perhaps it is significant to note, as Glendon does, that *Roe* has often found its strongest support among relatively young white males. Ultimately, however, she wants to argue that the story told by *Roe* is not so much a masculine one as it is a "distinctively American" one in "its lonely individualism."

This kind of communitarian analysis has received much attention in recent years. Thus, although Glendon is always interesting when she develops the ways in which our law focuses on the individual abstracted from familial and communal bonds, she is here on well-trodden ground. Still, she does give a good explanation of what it would mean to supplement a relatively less permissive abortion law with a national family policy which tried to think of and support individuals as situated individuals—situated within the family and other institutions mediating between individual and state. She grants that we might not wish to imitate France, which awards a "medal of the French family" to persons who have raised large families in an exemplary fashion—bronze for four or five, silver for six or seven, and gold for eight or more children.

But she does think we should be looking for ways to symbolize and communicate the value our society places on raising children. Glendon concedes that she cannot establish empirically a correlation between the "stories" told in the laws of the countries she examines and their respective rates of abortion. Nonetheless, she argues, even a relatively ineffective legal norm may shape a climate of opinion that keeps abortion rates lower than they would otherwise be. There is something intuitively plausible about this claim, unless we assume that law plays no educative role at all. J. David Bleich tells a story about Rabbi Israel Salanter.

The Sages declare that a transgression, when repeated, comes to be regarded as

innocuous. Rabbi Israel queried, "If it is regarded as innocuous when committed for the third time, what is it the fourth time?" To which he responded, "The fourth time it is perceived as a *mitzvah* [duty]!"

Indeed, although he tends to be critical of Glendon's thesis, Tribe himself suggests that in our society the right to decide for abortion is "now widely viewed as an individual right"—a fact which he attributes in part to "the effect both of the passage of time and of the sixteen-year reign of *Roe v. Wade*."

It is, however, hard to know whether Glendon's approach can really be adequate to the issue of abortion. In recent years we have generally preferred to solve divisive public arguments about life and death not through extended and sustained ethical argument in the public realm but through the compromises of public policy. But is this "a way that a society makes sense of things"? Or just a way of surviving? Certainly it too is part of the way American liberal individualism handles moral disagreement—via public "consensus" that minimizes divisive differences—and it is surprising that Glendon is not a little more wary of it. Nevertheless, she has written an important book in search of genuine—not contrived—moral compromise. No *chutzpah* here. For that we can be grateful. □

BOOKS

Arthur J. De Jong. *Reclaiming a Mission: New Direction for the Church-Related College*. William B. Eerdmans, 1990. Pbk, \$12.95.

Arthur J. De Jong served as president of Muskingum College, Ohio, for a decade prior to assuming the presidency of Whitworth College, Washington, last year. Throughout this relatively brief, but often repetitious extended essay, De Jong uses the term "liberal arts" in the conventional way: the humanities and fine arts, social and natural sciences and mathematics. *Reclaiming a Mission* is a call to church-related (church-affiliated) colleges and universities consciously and purposefully to carry out their distinctive mission as Christian institutions of higher education.

De Jong deals principally with mainline Protestant denominations and their affiliated colleges, using categories put forward by Martin Marty:

Colonial—Congregational, Presbyterian, Episcopal;

Frontier—Methodist, Disciples of Christ, Northern Baptist;

Continental—Lutheran, Reformed.

De Jong begins his study with a review of changes since World War II in mainline Protestant churches, in American society, and in higher

education. Public universities expanded significantly during this period and Protestant churches placed greater reliance on the work of campus ministry. Church-related colleges struggled to hold their own in the face of diminished church interest and support. Public universities came to dominate higher education in numbers and in status. Most faculty at both public and private institutions pursued graduate studies at major public universities, whose pluralistic, secularistic educational philosophies were dominated by disciplinary divisions, specialization, and narrow-focus, value-free inquiry. In surrendering their leadership role to the large public universities, church-related colleges lost their distinctive mission and uniqueness. The structure of large, research-oriented universities, based upon a distinct separation of academic disciplines and specialization in those disciplines, was adopted by smaller, principally undergraduate colleges, including church-related institutions. Instead of attempting to influence the total lives of their students, as they had in the past, church-related colleges adopted from the secular universities the concept of 'value-free' approaches to the educational process. As a result, the impact of the church-related college on the moral and spiritual dimensions of students was greatly diminished. All too many of these colleges became proponents of what De Jong calls the Cartesian-Newtonian paradigm.

A paradigm is an outlook, a set of assumptions, a viewpoint, a particular estimate of reality, a belief-system about how things are, a shared set of assumptions. According to the Cartesian-Newtonian paradigm, the world is basically a closed, completed, unchanging system where no transcendence is possible. In place of the nineteenth and early twentieth century Cartesian-Newtonian mindset, De Jong

puts forward the post-modern science paradigm associated with scientists, scholars, and intellectuals like Weichert, Einstein, Heisenberg, Bohr, Rutherford, Gödel, Polanyi, and Wheeler. In this paradigm, the world is viewed as open, infinite, and subject to random, unpredictable development in ways that allow for a transcendent God to be active in the world. This paradigm allows openness to the realm of the spirit and promotes concern for the right use of God's created order—a dynamic order that is open to meditation and contemplation, worship and prayer.

According to the author, the church-related college can reject the reductionism and secularism of a closed, machine-like world and embrace the transcendent. One is free to see a vast universe where there is awe and mystery, able to integrate faith and learning, open to pursue wholeness. In forming educational goals and adopting pedagogical techniques that encourage openness, reflection, creativity and imagination, the church-related college will spend time and energy to maintain a sense of community. Under the encouragement of Christian tenets and the post-modern paradigm, these colleges can unite living and learning, create fellowship, provide human linkages, and thus form and sustain community. Such colleges can readily affirm moral and spiritual value-commitments, wrestle with value questions in both curricular and co-curricular settings, and produce graduates who, because of their ethical stance, understand and are concerned for our shrinking world, the central importance of the ecological system, and straightforwardly address issues of peace and justice and human freedom.

Arthur De Jong summarizes the central thrust of *Reclaiming a Mission* in his introductory comments:

If there is to be a new *raison d'être* for church-related colleges, it will be achieved only when they have grasped more fully our changed context, when they realize more fully how captive they have become to the model provided by the large, secular university, and when they ground themselves upon Christian tenets and a paradigm consistent with those tenets. The changed context compels the church-related colleges to regain their integrity, unique identity, and mission. The church must present its point of view in the marketplace of ideas called higher education. In partnership, these denominations and their colleges must be a presence in contemporary higher education. (xi)

Reclaiming a Mission revisits, in light of new circumstances in American higher education, topics and issues addressed in the last four decades by such writers as Howard Lowry, *The Mind's Adventure* (1950), Elton Trueblood, *The Idea of a College* (1959), Bernard Ramm, *The Christian College in the Twentieth Century* (1963), Manning M. Pattillo and Donald M. Mackensie, *Eight Hundred Colleges Face the Future* (1965), The National Commission on United Methodist Higher Education, *A College-Related Church: United Methodist Perspectives* (1976), Merton P. Strommen, *A Survey of Images and Expectations of LCA Colleges* (1976), Robert Rue Parsonage, *Church Related Higher Education* (1977), and especially Edgar M. Carlson, *The Future of Church-Related Higher Education* (1977) and Richard W. Solberg and Merton P. Strommen, *How Church-Related are Church-Related Colleges* (1980).

Reclaiming a Mission is both an affirmation and a polemic, often repetitious, and unnecessarily critical of the mission, character, and essential contributions of public higher education in America. At the same time, it is properly prophetic in calling for clarity of purpose and

renewal of the special mission of church-related higher education. Arthur De Jong has made a contribution to the analytical and critical study of public and independent (church-related) higher education in America. Used as a discussion and debate piece by college and university boards, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and support organizations, *Reclaiming a Mission* can contribute to the assessment and renewal of Christian higher education in America.

Robert V. Schnabel

William R. Estep, *Revolution within the Revolution: The First Amendment in Historical Context. 1612-1789*, with a foreword by Bill Moyers. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1990.

Countering obscurantism by writing a book may seem quixotic, but that is the intent of the author of this provocative work. William R.

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Estep, a much published professor of church history at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, has produced an informed and passionate history of the role of Baptists in pioneering and establishing First Amendment religious freedoms in American life. He is a prophetic voice among moderate Southern Baptists, urging his people not to abandon their libertarian birthright for a bowl of Fundamentalist porridge. Also, he wishes to remind others not of his denomination that these precious liberties were historically rooted in religious commitment and not merely in secular Enlightenment theory. As he states his purpose, "In an increasingly intolerant age, it is good for us to retrace the painful steps of those who first discovered in the gospel the demand for an uncoerced faith and articulated their insights with incredible courage" (xvi). In short, this is an important and engaging book aimed at all interested in church and state issues in America.

Although the book is a brief history of Baptist thought and action in pursuit of individual religious freedom from the Reformation through the American Revolution, the controversy with the New Religious Right is starkly joined. Indeed, the overtly historical bulk of the work is introduced by a foreword by Bill Moyers and initial chapter by the author, entitled "Under Siege" which explicitly state the current relevance of this history, a point then repeated baldly at the conclusion. Such an approach lacks subtlety. But in these circumstances, subtlety is probably no virtue.

The burden of Moyers argument is that, ultimately, the Fundamentalist goal is more political than religious. He charges that, "Through an intricate network of public and private alliances, the leaders of the inerrancy faction have committed themselves to a partisan

strategy of collusion between church and state that also makes a mockery of the historical Baptist principles of religious liberty" (viii). The main beneficiaries of this cynical betrayal of tradition are "an increasingly authoritarian" clergy and "the Republican Right." While more charitable, Estep is equally adamant. To him the attacks on the First Amendment arise from "Misunderstanding, misinformation, and/or distortion" (2) he wishes to dispel.

Driven by this passion, the history well captures the grandeur of the Baptist struggle in portraits of such heroes as Roger Williams, Isaac Backus, and John Leland. Yet the historical interpretations reveal weaknesses, mostly anachronisms and distortions derived from the intense denominational focus. For instance, to term Charles Chauncey "a Unitarian" (115) is both a chronological and theological error. Similarly, one of Roger Williams' rivals is castigated for "self-serving designs" (92) without explanation. But these problems only slightly detract from a strong work on a vital topic.

Richard P. Gildrie
Austin Peay State University

Uwe Siemon-Netto. *The Acquittal of God: A Theology for Vietnam Veterans*. New York: Pilgrim Press, 1990.

How do you transform the tragic despair of thousands of Vietnam veterans who still suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder into hope? How do you communicate the Christian gospel of forgiveness and reconciliation to Vietnam veterans who have "flipped off" God for going AWOL in Vietnam and for abandoning them to rejection and loneliness when they returned home?

These are the questions with which Uwe Siemon-Netto struggles as he develops a theology for Vietnam Veterans and as he pleads for "God's acquittal of the charge of desertion." Drawing from his five years of experience as a war correspondent in Vietnam and his work as Chaplain Intern at a Veterans Administration Medical Center, the author vividly describes the painful suffering and darkness experienced by the Vietnam veterans, both in the war zone and in this country upon their return. Drawing from the theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, he relates Bonhoeffer's theology of the cross to the present theological needs of the forgotten Americans.

To help the individuals with which he worked in rap groups deal with their bitter experiences in the light of a God who did not desert them but is present in the midst of their pain and suffering, the author had them discuss and reflect on portions of Bonhoeffer's essay, "After Ten Years." His book is structured around these discussions. Each chapter includes, first, a quotation from the essay, a summary of what this might mean to the veterans, and, then, a recorded exchange of the rap group as the individuals reflecting on the reading. The chapter titles clearly reveal the development of the book: "The Stolen Time," "Encountering Evil," "Making Choices," "Where America Failed Its Veterans," "Good from Evil," "Making Sense of the Veterans' Pain," "A World Come of Age," and "The Communion of Saints."

The theology presented by the author can best be summarized by the following quote, "God does not will our pain, which is part of the human condition; God does not delight in it. Far from deserting us, God will turn suffering to our benefit."

The problem I had with the book is that the author seems to

have written off the Church as being effective in ministering to the veterans. I think he unfairly criticized the Church as being one of the groups which categorically rejected the Vietnam Vet. Examples were drawn from only the individuals in the rap group and not from vets who are actively involved in a Christian congregation or who have been assisted by the Church's ministry. I think it is unfortunate that the author seems to feel that only persons with like experiences can identify with and understand the Vietnam vet, and, therefore, the only thing the Church can do to minister to this group of people is to train Vietnam veterans to be ordained ministers. I feel this undermines his whole understanding of the "Sanctorum communio," the community of saints.

All individuals who relate to Vietnam veterans or those who desire to have a better understanding of their situations will greatly benefit from this book. However, the real effectiveness of this work will have to be determined by the individuals for whom the book was written. Their responses will judge the true quality of this theology for Vietnam veterans.

Charles Lindamood

Law and the Ordering of Our Life Together. General Editor, Richard John Neuhaus, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1989.

This is the eleventh book in the Encounter Series, which presents essays and discussions from conferences sponsored by the Center on Religion and Society in New York City. Its contents tantalize and tease but in the end fail to adequately satisfy the readers longing for edification. This is due in part to the sweeping scope of the subject matter, as well as the juristical jargon often used by the participating legal experts.

In spite of the problems, this volume conveys valuable insights on some critical questions regarding the purpose and function of law in our society. Thomas L. Shaffer's provocative essay on "The Tension between Law in America and the Religious Tradition" evoked the most lively discussion. Schaffer, who teaches in the School of Law at Notre Dame University, suggests that when the law identifies itself too closely with government, corporate, or other interests, it must be viewed as idolatry by the religious tradition. From the positive side he depicts the religious function as providing a

"prophetic witness" directing the law toward the realization of human justice rather than the "maximization of profits."

Schaffer's thesis, while eliciting warm support by some of the panelists, is characterized as "quite wrong" by the unsuccessful candidate for appointment to the Supreme Court, Robert H. Bork. Bork dismisses Schaffer's moral and economic analysis, along with that of American Catholic bishops, as "developed without the benefit of a lot of worldly knowledge."

There appears to be a consensus, though not a unanimous one, among the participants that the growing emphasis upon 'rights' legislation is something to be lamented and corrected. A highly theoretical and not entirely persuasive essay by Richard Stith, from the School of Law at Valparaiso University, argues for placing a precedence on duty over rights. The positive rationale for 'rights' legislation is, unfortunately, never supplied.

In spite of its shortcomings, this is a book that contains enough treasure to warrant the exertion required to search it out.

Paul P. Kuenning

