

Love Does Not Punish

Syllabus

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WHITE

Chapter one of, *Learning to be White* by Thandeka

This is a book about race, money, and God. It begins with personal accounts of the ways in which Euro-Americans become white, then describes the economic predicament this has left them in, and ends where the recollections began with dark revelations of feelings before memory and beyond white.

As an account of the process of becoming white, this book is filled with personal memories by Euro-Americans of small, seemingly inconsequential, defeats. Each defeat, however, when acknowledged, produces the disconcerting feeling that something about one's own white identity is not quite right. This sense of misalignment with one's own identity could serve as a definition of shame. And that is the place where our story begins.

Dan

In college during the late 1950s, Dan joined a fraternity. With his prompting, his local chapter pledged a black student. When the chapter's national headquarters learned of this first step toward integration of its ranks, headquarters threatened to rescind the local chapter's charter unless the black student was expelled. The local chapter caved in to the pressure, and Dan was elected to tell the black student member he would have to leave the fraternity. Dan did it. "I felt so ashamed of what I did," he told me, and he began to cry. "I have carried this burden for forty years," he said. "I will carry it to my grave."

Sarah

At age sixteen, Sarah brought her best friend home with her from high school. After the friend left, Sarah's mother told her not to invite her friend home again. "Why?" Sarah asked, astonished and confused. "Because she's colored," her mother responded. "That was not an answer," Sarah thought to herself. It was obvious that her friend was colored, but what kind of reason was that for not inviting her to Sarah's house? So Sarah persisted, insisting that her mother tell her the *real* reason for her action. None was forthcoming. The indignant look on her mother's face, however, made Sarah realize that if she persisted, she would jeopardize her mother's affection toward her. This awareness startled Sarah because she and her mother were the best of friends. *Nothing* Sarah had always believed until that moment could jeopardize their closeness. But now, she had glimpsed the unimaginable, the unspeakable the unthinkable. Her relationship with her mother she not absolutely secure. It could crumble. Horrified by what she had just glimpsed, Sarah severed her friendship with the girl. But the damage had already been done. Sarah's mother was no longer her best friend because Sarah now knew she could no longer count on her mother's absolute allegiance. Her mother's affection was conditional. It could be lost. After Sarah recounted her story to me, she said she had not thought of this incident in twenty years. She also said that until now, she had never consciously said to herself that for her the deepest tragedy in this incident was *her loss of trust in her mother's love*. Sarah, like Dan, began to cry.

The feelings both Dan and Sarah had cast off years ago in order to remain members in good standing in their communities had come back. The sentiments that had originally gotten them into trouble with members of their own racial group had returned. The recollections of early experiences of the discovery that their behavior must be governed by white racial rules of conduct produced tears. Why? Shame.

This answer did not come easily to mind. I first had to discover the question, which meant making sense of a series of incidents I could not explain using any of the racial terms I had long employed when confronting white racial intransigence. I readily used words like *racism*, *prejudice*, and *supremacy* to both explain and judge the patterns of white behavior that continually displayed themselves before my mind's eye. But in 1991, I was confronted with an experience that would not let itself be reduced to racial terms.

I had recently moved to a Massachusetts hamlet to teach at a local college. Several weeks after arriving on campus, I had lunch with a

member of the college staff. My luncheon partner, a fifth generation Smith College graduate with a New England

genealogy older than the state and a portfolio perhaps as wealthy, wanting to get to know me, asked what it felt like to be black.

I was not offended by her query. Her face was open; her eyes were friendly and engaged. She simply believed that *nothing* from her own background or experience could help her understand me. **I knew** better. I had been assigned a race by America's pervasive socialization process, and so had she. I thus believed that if she drew upon her own experience of being "raced," she might then be able to see what we had in common. But how could I make *her conscious* of the racialization process to which her own EuroAmerican community had subjected her? Searching for an answer to this question, I invented the Race Game and invited her to play it for a week.

The Race Game, as my luncheon partner very quickly discovered, had only one rule. For the next seven days, she must use the ascriptive term *white* whenever she mentioned the name of one of her Euro-American cohorts. She must say, for instance, "my white husband, Phil," or "my white friend Julie," or "my lovely white child Jackie."... I guaranteed her that if she did this for a week and then met me for lunch, I could answer her question using terms she would understand. We never had lunch together again. Apparently my suggestion had made her uncomfortable.

African Americans have learned to use a racial language to describe themselves and others. Euro-Americans also have learned a pervasive racial language. But in their racial lexicon, their own racial group becomes the great unsaid.' I wanted my luncheon partner to give voice to her whiteness as the racial unsaid in her life. By consciously referring to this unvoiced color, she would become aware of what it feels like to take on and maintain a racial identity in America. Or so I thought.

Later in the semester, I recounted this unresolved lunchtime saga to a faculty colleague, who immediately blushed and then responded Preemptively, saying, "Don't ask me to do that; I'm about to go on sabbatical." Why was the very prospect of playing the Race Game so daunting? Perplexed, I decided to describe these two responses to my Race Game during my next public lecture and then invite the audience to collectively reflect upon them. During the course of this public discussion, one woman challenged all of the other Euro-Americans present to play the Race Game for the rest of the day and then report back to me by mail. Enthusiasm ran high.

A month later, I received my one and only letter from these enthusiasts sent by the Euro-American woman who had originally proffered the challenge. She could not do it, she wrote apologetically, though she hoped someday to have the courage to do so. Courage? Why courage? What had I asked her to endure? What was she afraid of seeing? What didn't she want to feel? To glimpse? To know?

To answer these questions, I began a series of workshops with Euro-Americans in various parts of the country. I used church settings and regional and national meetings as venues for my project. Any occasion at which a number of Euro-Americans gathered to hear me speak became an opportunity. I conducted workshops at such national forums as the Common Boundary, an annual conference devoted to spiritual exploration and personal psychological development, and held public conversations on the topic at the first national Summit on Ethics and Meaning sponsored by the Foundation on Ethics and Meaning and *Tikkun* magazine. I asked Euro-American colleagues to tell me their stories and turned to strangers at dinner parties to learn their racial tales.

Of course, since my interlocutors weren't randomly selected, the accounts I shall present do not constitute a social-scientific survey, nor is this study a work of social science. I am a theologian interested in the way that issues of racial self-identity merge with religious sentiment and determine social behavior. I thus saw my interviews as a chance to enter into conversation with Euro-Americans who are not self-defined racists so that I could understand why it is so difficult for them to describe themselves and other Euro-Americans in racial terms. They do not hesitate, as I've pointed out, to make racial references to others, but they avoid making racial references to themselves and their own community, a gap in racial ascription demonstrated by my luncheon partner, who could easily refer to me as "black" but could not refer to herself and her companions as "white." So, too, was this gap revealed by the Euro-American woman who confessed her lack of courage to play the Race Game with other Euro-Americans. I wanted to know what feelings lay behind the word *white* that were too potent to be faced.

I began my queries simply. I asked Euro-Americans about their earliest memory of incidents that helped form their white racial identities. I conducted workshops to this end: to listen to Euro-American adults recount early memories of forming a racial identity. As a Unitarian Universalist minister, my venue was often but not always meetings of this liberal religious association with roots deep in Puritan America, New England traditions, Protestant ethic sentiment, and Congregational and Baptist histories.

In the remainder of this chapter, I present a sampling of these personal recollections, whose similarities cut across differences in religious affiliation, class background, and age. These accounts progress from simple to more complex as the persons I talked with reflect more deeply upon the feelings they had to put aside in order to remain a member in good standing of their own communities. As the reflections become more complex, the individuals' sense of moral failure and loss of self-respect deepens.

Frank

Frank remembers putting a coin in his mouth when he was five. His mother disgustedly told him not to put coins in his mouth because "niggers keep them in their underwear." Frank said he felt both confused and wrong. He knew that he would have to be more careful about what he did in the future.

Jack

When Jack was five, his parents gave him a birthday party and invited his relatives with their children. He remembers going to the gate of his backyard and calling his friends over to join them. His friends, black, entered the yard. Jack became aware of how uncomfortable his parents were with the presence of his friends among them. He knew he had somehow done something wrong and was sorry.

Mike

Mike, at age four or five, was walking down the street with his father and uncle. They passed by an interracial couple. The man was

between Euro-Americans who are not white supremacists. The Race Game commits this twofold affront in the following way.

To begin, the Race Game describes one Euro-American to another using the racial ascription *white*. This has a quite different effect from describing a fellow Euro-American as an ethnic type (e.g., Scot) or a color type (e.g., blond) or even a bodily type (e.g., short and squat). The use of the term *white* as a racial category in speech by one Euro-American to another Euro-American presumes that important information about the person being spoken of - and about the speaker and the listener - is being relayed or at least affirmed by the ascription.

This presumption, however, countermands a general assumption held by Euro-Americans for whom being white is not a conscious part of their personal identity structure (e.g., Dorothy). Like Dorothy, most of the Euro-Americans I interviewed did not think of themselves as white. The category has little *conscious* personal meaning for them. Rather, like Dorothy, they reserve racial descriptions for persons who are *not* white. Such descriptions say, in effect, that the person described is not one of us, not part of *our* white community but, rather, an outsider (e.g., black). But the claim "our white community" is hidden. It is the "unsaid" in the conversation as a result of a kind of gentleman's agreement about the limits of permissible topics for discourse. The Race Game breaks this coded way of framing reality. It says, in effect, that X is just like us, the normative community: white. Not only does the speaker turn herself or himself into an outsider because she or he has broken an unstated but fully present assumption racial exclusivity but, by explicitly acting as if her or his listener is also white, the speaker threatens to expose a hidden truth: neither the speaker nor the listener feels white enough.

We must remember the actual emotional content of the term *white* specifically, the feeling of being at risk within one's own community because one has committed (or might commit) a communally proscribed act.¹³ Such an act threatens emotional perdition: the loss of the affection of one's caretakers and/or community of peers. The child and then the adult learn how to suppress such risky feelings of camaraderie with persons beyond the community's racial pale in order to decrease the possibility of being exiled from their own community. And added to the loss of these feelings is the loss of self-respect resulting from discarding them.

Douglas felt shame because he now faced the feelings he had discarded in order to form his white identity. He thus felt incongruous with his own conscious self-identity. He had discovered feelings that did not cohere with his own sense of himself. This disjunction in self-awareness is the place of a small death, the death of an unadorned feeling. Here we find the relegation of a desire, the disappearance of an embrace, the emotional

remains of a rejection as tiny as a “never mind,” an unloved part of the self transformed into the feeling of being unlovable. Psychoanalytic theorist Leon Wurmser brings home this point in *The Mask of Shame* when he suggests that “[b]asic shame is the pain of essential unlovability. It is beyond speech. Ibsen called it the crime of ‘soul murder’ this bringing about of unlovability.” Shame is the death of an unloved part of the self because it, apparently, is just not good enough to be loved. As Wurmser notes, “The basic flaw for which one is ultimately ashamed is this painful wound: ‘I have not been loved because I am at the core unlovable and I never shall be loved.’”¹⁴

This denial of one’s own feelings in order to be loved is affirmed by one’s community and, as something psychologically familiar, tends to *become a personal value*.¹⁵ These personal values are embedded in the child’s group values. Collectively, these personal and group values become the basis for developing “a way of living with characteristic codes and beliefs, standards and ‘enemies’” to suit the adaptive needs of both the child and its group.¹⁶ When these ways of valuing are overgeneralized, however, they become prejudices against persons and groups who do not fit with this valuational scheme of things.

This definition of prejudice was developed by social psychologist Gordon W. Allport in his classic 1954 work, *The Nature of Prejudice*. My own work affirms Allport’s claim that the child cannot help but acquire the suspicions, fears, and hatreds that sooner or later may fix on minority groups because of the ways the child learns these feelings: discipline, love, and threat.¹⁷

My work, however, is not designed as a study of prejudice or as a discussion about racism or feelings of racial superiority. Rather, I am interested in the way in which the Euro-American child is socialized into a system of values that holds in contempt differences from the white community’s ideals. It is this focus on difference that I want to emphasize because when this difference is denied, we find an injury to one’s core sense of self that is hidden from view when

our attention turns entirely to the way in which *prejudice* is learned and transmitted. The Euro-American child learns to feel ashamed of its own differences from its community’s white racial values. By focusing on these feelings of shame, we can find our way back to the site of an injury to the child’s sense of self: an attack against the child by members of its own white community because the child is not yet white.

I believe that this racial attack on the Euro-American child must be both acknowledged and addressed if we are to understand the “culture of shame” that pervades Euro-American communities.¹⁸ This shame stems from a fundamental sense of unacceptability in the eyes of others and an essential sense of separateness and isolation from one’s own community of caretakers and peers.¹⁹ These patterns cannot be fully understood until both the source and the nature of the injury to the Euro-American are more adequately understood. The Race Game is one way to get conscious access to this racial injury because it exposes feelings that had to be set aside in order to stop the racial attack against the child by members of its own white community.

Exposing these denied feelings is the second affront brought on by someone who plays the Game. Both parties, initially unaware of the threatening feelings associated with the term *white*, inexplicably feel at risk of being exposed once the Game has begun. They feel, in a word, the onset of shame. Acutely uncomfortable, they scramble for safety. They flee the scene because the information uncovered, the facts threatening to break into (rational) consciousness, is not about their “race.” Rather, the exposed feelings pertain to the failures the persons felt in their own formative years within their own caretaking communities experiences from which they have yet to recover. As these persons become adults, these failures feel like moral failures that threaten self-worth.

The Race Game unearths proscribed feelings and, as such, is a trespass. To play the Game, one has to violate limits and break boundaries. One must step outside the rules for whiteness by disinterring one’s own feelings. Such a dig requires a step into the dark. Rather than take this step and “go dark,” both Douglas and his conversation partner fled the scene and retreated into the privacy of themselves. They chose to avoid the darkness of this place that lay between them. The Race Game spotlights this dark, foreboding place of castoff desires. If, in addition to indicting the

speaker and listener, the Game succeeds in indicting their families and communities because they were not-quite-good-enough²⁰ to raise a child as human rather than white, this indictment simply makes the players feel worse. Because it publicly exposes one’s experience of becoming white, the Game is intolerable. It is, in a word, shameful because it reveals the differences within the child that it had to deny in order to become congruent with its own caretaking environment. This induction process of the Euro-American child into whiteness is costly.

The child must begin to separate itself from its own feelings. This process of “self-alienation” can leave the child with a sense of “emptiness, futility, or homelessness,” which are the hallmarks of psychological child abuse described by psychoanalytic theorist Alice Miller in her book *Prisoners of Childhood: The Drama of the Gifted Child and the Search for the True Self*.²¹ It is this sense of being separated from one’s own feelings of

resonant camaraderie with one's own caretakers and peers, as a white identity is formed, that we must now explore more deeply.

black, the woman white. Mike's father and uncle began a series of critical statements about the man and descriptions of the kind of woman his companion must be. Mike remembers feeling uncertain and confused. He now knew that there was a certain way he must act when he grew up, but he was unsure what it was and whether he could do it.

Jay

Jay's parents took him on a car tour of the black area in his city when he was four. His parents knew he had never seen black people before and did not want him to embarrass the family by staring at "them" when the family went to New York on vacation the following month. Jay, now an attorney, told this story to me during dinner at his sister's home. His sister Fran, a colleague who had invited me to dinner, expressed surprise as she listened to the story of her older brother's formal induction into whiteness by their parents. "You never told me they did that," Fran protested. Jay smiled weakly and shrugged as if to say, "What was there to tell?" Nothing more was said.

Jackie

In high school, Jackie talked about one of her teachers so often as someone who was playing a formative role in her education that her parents encouraged her to invite him home for dinner. Jackie remembers her mother's flushed and astonished face when she opened the door and discovered that the teacher was black. After he left, Jackie's parents were outraged that she had not told them of his race, making Jackie feel she had done something wrong, that she had broken a rule that until that moment she did not realize existed. She was sorry she had embarrassed her parents and knew she must be careful not to embarrass them again in the future.

Sally

Sally's parents, strong civil rights supporters, preached racial equality both at home and in the streets. Sally was thus flabbergasted when her parents prevented her from going out with a high school friend who came to pick her up for a Friday night date. He was black. The parents sent him away and forbade her to date him. "What will our neighbors say if they see you on the arms of a black man?" Sally was furious with them and thought them hypocrites. But she submitted to their dictates. "What was I going to do?" she asked rhetorically. "Rebel? Not in my household. They would have disowned me."

Terry

Terry, who had grown up in a small New England town, never saw a black person until he went to college. In college, there were only a few black students in Terry's dorm, and they always sat together at the same table in the dining hall. Terry felt the urge to go over, say hello, and join them. But this would mean he would have to leave his own group of friends. Would he be allowed to return? He wasn't sure. Rather than risk rejection, for four years, Terry said, "I simply buried my head in my soup."

Dan

Dan, a well-heeled Boston Presbyterian minister, grew up in a New England town in which only a few African Americans lived. Dan and I had worked on several interfaith committees together, and whenever I was in town, we would get together for lunch. He told me his early memories as we lunched together in a small, elegant restaurant near Beacon Hill. When he was very young, his father, who was an alcoholic, told Dan: "Black people

are inferior.” Dan did not believe him. His dad lied about many things, so why should he be right about this? Dan next remembered going to Washington in 1952 with his classmates for their eighth-grade graduation trip. En route, Dan saw “colored” and “white” signs posted on bathroom doors and hung on the walls behind the public drinking fountains. Never having been in the South before, Dan found these signs both odd and troubling. He believed, however, that he was the only one in his group who had noticed them and sensed that there was something terribly wrong, because no one said anything about the signs not even his teacher. So he buried the troubled feelings that had been

prompted by these signs. At age fourteen, Dan was certain only he knew that something was radically wrong. America’s racial policies thus became his personal secret or so he thought.

I was amazed by Dan’s story. Segregation had never been a “personal secret” in my life, I said. I lived in Washington, D.C., and then Dallas in 1952 and at six already knew which stores my parents and I could enter and be treated decently. Whenever we went downtown, my father always prepared for the worst. He kept a small notebook in the inside pocket of his suit jacket. Whenever a salesclerk would not wait on us, my father would remove the notebook from his pocket, take out his fountain pen, walk up to the clerk, and say, “May I have your name, please?” This gesture usually filled the clerk with fear and sometimes brought the desired result: service.

Dan now elaborated on his earlier comments. He said that he came to realize that each sign indicated the benefits accrued to the whites. The facilities designated for this group were clearly superior in comfort, upkeep, and convenience to those for the coloreds. The signs clearly indicated that there was no middle ground of safety for the onlooker. Seeing them, Dan realized that one was either colored or white.

As Dan’s recollections continued, he told me the story of the fraternity incident (recounted at the beginning of this chapter) in which he told his colored fraternity brother to leave their fraternity house. After telling that story, Dan began to cry.

The couple at the next table tried not to notice Dan’s breakdown. The waiter avoided our table. As Dan regained his composure, I retained mine. I could see his pain. I felt empathy for his suffering but was troubled by his lack of courage. Dan’s tears revealed the depth of the compromise he had made with himself rather than risk venturing beyond the socially mandated strictures of whiteness.

I realized that being white for Dan was not a matter of racist conviction but a matter of survival, not a privilege but a penalty: the pound of flesh exacted for the right to be excluded from the excluded. As Dan’s tears revealed, the internal price exacted from him for his ongoing membership in the “white” race was psychic tension and discomfort.

To explain his distress as the emotional fallout from white prejudice or white racism would slight Dan’s own experience of having been at acute risk of being cast beyond the pale of the “white” world and into the realm of the “colored.” In going along with his fraternity, he stepped back from the brink of his social perdition. Dan had learned early on that one is either white or colored.

The nature of the agony brought on by his refusal to risk exile thus could not be grasped using the standard racial categories of judgment and damnation that assume discriminatory racial acts against others by Euro-Americans always arise from racism, prejudice, and bigotry.³ Such an approach would simply racialize the deepest level of Dan’s distress: his need to retain membership in his own community of caretakers and peers. The charge of racism would thus act like a prisoner’s stun belt used to exact a confession. His tears would count as evidence of his sinfulness. Dan’s internal turmoil, in a word, would become *prima facie* evidence of guilt. Although he is not a racist, Dan might confess his guilt as a racist because this was the only way to stop the charge of racism for his act and also because *racism* was the only category he had to express a deeper loss and regret: his stifled feelings and blunted desires for a more inclusive community. But Dan did not cry during our lunch together in the restaurant because he was a racist. He cried because his impulses to moral action had been slain by his own fear of racial exile.

Dan, in effect, was a wailer at the wake of his own moral standing. It was evident that his moral failure of nerve had brought on a loss of self-respect. But behind this moral failure was a more original fear: exile. Dan’s ability to set aside his own resonant feelings and act against his own moral scruples was initially not his own doing but his undoing. It was the attempt of the child to muffle its own feelings so that it would not be exiled.

We have only to remember Dan’s earlier silence as an eighth grader in the South looking at the colored and white signs. This silence reminded me of the ubiquitous fears and “collective feeling of vulnerability” of women who have an ancient, collective sense of being at risk. As therapist and educator Dana Crowley Jack notes in her book *Silencing the Self. Women and Depression*, many of her clients quite often forced themselves to stop thinking and judging their thoughts in order to silence their own voices and opinions. They muffled

their feelings of anger and resentment and thus, in effect, “stifled themselves” in order to avoid the threat of annihilation, conceal their feelings of unlovability, or hide those feelings and perceptions that they believed, if revealed, would be judged “wrong.”⁴

Dan, like these women, learned to stifle himself in the face of ancient, collective feelings of being vulnerable and at risk within one’s own (racial) community. But unlike the silence of the women who sought Dana Crowley Jack’s help, Dan’s silence was received by the world as a nonevent. The nature of the silence required for the formation of his white identity had yet to be noted in the chronicles of our nation’s psychic life. Rather, Dan’s silence would be explained as racist sentiment or liberal insouciance. Yet neither explanation explained the distress revealed by Dan’s tears.

Every Euro-American I asked could recount a process by means of which he or she began to think of himself or herself as white. Most of these accounts were initially recalled as *objectively* seamless events. A rupture with the primary group had not occurred. Still, there were striking differences between the stories. Jay’s story and the silence surrounding his initiation into whiteness by his parents had a different texture from the silence that pervaded Dan’s experiences. Behind Dan’s silence lurked an aching defeat. Behind Jay’s silence lay nothing. He had never told his sister about this event because he believed there was nothing to be said. Jay had simply learned something about the way things are: there are black people and “they” live/belong over there beyond the pale. It was as if everyone else already knew this. Jay simply had to catch up. The protocol associated with this new knowledge was equally self-evident: don’t stare at *them*. The deeper implications of the message Jay received would develop over time: don’t even notice that they are there. Such behavior, of course, is described by Ralph Ellison’s protagonist in *Invisible Man*: “I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me.”

After listening to several hundred Euro-Americans recount their early recollections of experiences that not only made them think of themselves as white but also taught them to act in ways that would keep them within this racial pale, I learned to doubt the validity of other Euro-Americans’ initial claims that there were no such childhood incidents in their own lives. Rather, I began to suspect that many of them had simply forgotten the incidents. My experience with Dorothy became typical of the kinds of encounters I now began to have with Euro-Americans who wanted to know something about the nature of *my* work but who could not think of themselves as “white.”

Dorothy

I met Dorothy, a middle-aged Euro-American woman, at a dinner party in an Upper West Side Manhattan apartment. We had been introduced by our host: Dorothy was a “poet,” whose most recent volume of poetry was prominently displayed on the coffee table in front of the couch on which we were seated; I was a “writer” working on white identity issues. After our host departed, Dorothy wanted to know what a “white identity” was. She did not have one, she assured me. She was simply an American. I could help her find hers, I responded, if she wanted to know what it looked like. Her interest piqued, she accepted the offer. True to form, I asked her to recollect her earliest memory of knowing what it means to be white. After a little excavation, she finally found the memory. It was this: when Dorothy was five, she and her family lived in Mexico for a year. Although her family’s housekeeper brought her daughter, who was also five, to work, Dorothy’s parents forbade her to play with the little girl. Dorothy, in fact, was never allowed to play with any Mexican children, and she and her two brothers were forbidden to venture beyond the gates of their backyard. Dorothy remembered her feelings of sadness and regret. The Mexican children and their parents seemed so much more at ease with themselves and each other. They seemed warm and physically close, unlike her own family, whose manners and expressions were cold and constrained.

Dorothy told me she had not thought of these feelings in years. She confessed that she now recalled how often, during that year, she wished to be brown. I suggested that the term *white* might not mean anything consciously to her *today* because it had too much negative meaning for her when she was five. She agreed and now expressed surprise that she had not written about these feelings, memories, or experiences in her work. She said much of her life had been devoted to freeing herself from the emotional strictures imposed on her by her parents. Most of her poetry was about them and the way they had drained life out of her. She reiterated her astonishment that this set of memories had not surfaced in her work. As she blushed, the resurrected feelings of the child seemed to disappear.

“You know,” Dorothy now said pointedly, “you are the first black I’ve ever felt comfortable with talking about racism.”

I said, “Why is it so easy for you to think of me as a ‘black,’ and yet until a few minutes ago you could

not make any sense out of

thinking about yourself as a 'white'? Further, were we really talking about racism? And if so, whose? Your parents'? Yours? That of the five-year-old girl who wanted to be brown?"⁵

Dorothy was silent for a long moment. Her silence was selfconscious and thus made me think of Dan's considered silence in the bus and his silenced protest in his frat house.

"I now understand what I've just done, and I'm horrified," she confessed. Dorothy was horrified because she now realized that if I were a black, she, too, must have a race: the one that had enraged her as a child. Dorothy realized that she had indeed learned to think of others *and* herself in racial terms. Not surprisingly, Dorothy now confessed that she was afraid to say anything else not because I might condemn her, she said, but much more tellingly because, as she put it, "I might not like what I hear myself saying." Her insights had outstripped her racial vocabulary. If she'd been forced to listen to herself continue to talk, she would have had to listen to a white woman speak in ways that the five-year-old child would have despised. She did not want to listen to such talk. Nor did I. Our conversation very quickly came to an end.

I eventually decided to use the term *white shame* to designate the complex of reactions called forth when Dorothy addressed her own contradictory racial statements, emotions, and mental states. I called the experience *shame* because it involved the discovery of an unresolved conflict within Dorothy that, when discovered, made her feel flawed. I called the experience *white* because of the racial context in which she had discovered her internal conflict.

Shame is an emotional display of a hidden civil war. It is a pitched battle by a self against itself in order to stop feeling what it is not supposed to feel: forbidden desires and prohibited feelings that render one different. Such desires and felt differences must be suppressed or blocked off in some way because one's community deems them to be bad.⁶ The ensuing internal battle often ends as a stalemate, a momentary paralysis marked by the red flag of a blush or the cold sweat of a frozen grimace. Experiences of shame are self-exposures that lower one's own sense of personal esteem and respect. They are private snapshots of embarrassing features of the self. Looking at these uncomplimentary mug shots, one feels shame as in the feeling that "I am unlovable."⁷ Such feelings actually result from the failure of the parents or caretakers to love the child adequately,⁸ *but the child blames itself rather than its parent or caretaking environment.*

Guilt, by contrast with shame, is a feeling that results from a wrongful deed, a self-condemnation for what one has done.⁹ A penalty can be exacted for this wrongful act. Recompense can be made and restitution paid. Not so with shame. Nothing can be done because shame results not from something one did wrong but rather from something wrong with oneself.

The experience of shame is thus a negative self-exposure, a revelation of forbidden desires. The self exposed is incongruous with itself.¹⁰ It is seen as who it is not supposed to be. It feels what it is not supposed to feel. It is aware of what it is not supposed to know. This difference between these two incongruous states of the self is the difference between a forbidden body-based feeling (the biological aspect of an emotion: an affect) and the way it is thought about. The affect + the thought = the emotion called *shame*. "

As noted above, I decided to call Dorothy's experience *white shame* because her feelings of shame were discovered within the framework of an examination of what having a white racial identity meant to her. Her discomfort with the term *white* as a locus for her own racial identity seemed akin to the predicament of a woman in a *New Yorker* cartoon who, standing next to her husband in a living room filled with partygoers, says, "What do you mean 'let's go home? We are home.'" Whiteness was not a comfort zone for Dorothy. White shame is this deeply private feeling of not being at home within one's own white community.

I developed the concept of white shame to refer to the pattern of feelings and behavior that I had begun to see emerge as I listened to various incidents recounted by other Euro-Americans and that was vividly displayed by Dorothy. The Euro-American child, I now believed, is a racial victim of its own white community of parents, caretakers, and peers, who attack it because it does not yet have a white racial identity. Rather than continue to suffer such attacks, the Euro-American child defends itself by creating a white racial identity for itself. It begins to think and act like its community's ideal of a white self. When the adult recalls the feelings and ideas it had to set aside in order to mount this defense, it feels shame. More precisely, white shame. Dorothy had recalled the feelings of the child whose parents wanted to love a *white* child. The parts of her that were not white had to be set aside as unloved and therefore unlovable.

Douglas

Douglas, a doctoral candidate in theology at a seminary in Chicago, served on the lecture committee that invited me to speak on campus in January 1997. As was my habit, at the end of my formal presentation, I invited the

Euro-Americans in the audience to play the Race Game and then call me with the results. The Race Game, I told them, has only one rule. For a week, the player, in all white settings, must use the word *white* whenever he or she mentions the name of a Euro-American. A week after the lecture, Douglas called. He had played the game.

When I returned to Chicago in March, we met and went for a walk in Hyde Park. I had not wanted to know the details of his experience until I was in his presence. I wanted to look at his face and observe his gestures and body language as he described his experience. I wanted to see what could not be said. A blush, for example. I did not interrupt Douglas as he recounted his experience of playing the Race Game for a week:

Every time I decided to play the game with someone new, I felt that I was about to be rejected, that the person would turn away, and that I would be shunned. I felt terrible. As soon as I met someone and started talking, invariably I would have to mention someone's name, which meant that I would have to say the word. Before I said it, I'd hesitate as if I were about to stutter, and I don't even stutter ever! I am never at a loss for words. But now I couldn't pronounce the word. I'd made a commitment to play the game so I steeled myself and by sheer force of will I said it: *white*. As soon as I said the word, the other person's face would pickle. Right away, very defensively, I'd say, "Oh, I'm playing the Race Game" and try to explain what it was all about. The other person found an excuse to leave as quickly as possible. Each experience was so awful that for two days I forgot that I was supposed to do it. It was a miserable experience.

As Douglas described his experiences, he blushed frequently. By inviting Douglas to play the Race Game, I had asked him to uncover *his* own feelings about his self-definition as a white. The feeling Douglas uncovered was shame an acute sense of exposure, loss of trust, abandonment, and humiliation that, as Helen Merrell Lynd notes in her book *On Shame and the Search for Identity*, are hallmarks of this emotional state.¹²

A point of comparison is in order. Douglas's feelings of being shunned and deserted as a consequence of playing the Race Game are in line with the fears of ostracism described in the personal accounts presented earlier in this chapter. Jackie realized that by inadvertently crossing a color line she had upset her parents. Sally knew better than to rebel when her parents prevented her from dating a black boy. But these earlier stories differ from Douglas's in the crucial sense that the child *did not choose* to call attention to its white racial identity. Nor did it even have one to call attention to.

Dorothy, for example, took on a white racial identity by not playing with the Mexican children, not by choice but out of obedience. As a child, she *had* to obey her parents or face the consequences: the risk of further emotional abandonment and perhaps even physical punishment. Imagine what would have happened to Dorothy if she had repeatedly defied her parents' proscription and played with the Mexican children. (During the entire five-year period of investigation for this book, I met only one Euro-American who, as a child, repeatedly defied her parents' wishes by playing with the "colored" kids on the block. This woman, as it turns out, left home when she was sixteen and is now an expatriate living in Paris.)

Unlike Dorothy and the others, then, Douglas *chose* to step outside the fenced-in area of his community. He *knew* that what he was about to do entailed big risks. He simply steeled himself and by sheer force of will overrode all of his internal warning signals and said the word: *white*. This took courage. We have only to remember the letter from the Euro-American woman explaining why she had been unable to follow through on her own commitment to play the game: she lacked the courage. Douglas was aware of the risks. Nevertheless, shame hit him like a Mack truck. What had happened?

Douglas was hit from two different directions at once: from the outside and the inside. Feelings of both guilt and shame overtook him.

Douglas felt guilt because of what he *did*. He violated an unspoken "gentleman's agreement" between Euro-Americans who are not self-proclaimed white supremacists. To understand this point more precisely, we must become clearer about what the Race Game actually does: it humiliates by publicly exposing feelings associated with becoming white, and it also violates the ground rules for discourse

***One Denomination's Quest for
Racial Justice 1967-1982***
by the UUA's Commission on Appraisal

"Perspectives and Conclusion," chapters 8-11

8. Perspectives

A. A psychological analysis of prejudice and racism

The damning indictment of American society as racist by the Kerner Commission' stops short of demonstrating the psychology of racism and its pervasive influence in institutional life. Franz Fanon,² James Comer,³ and others have written extensively on how social institutions promote racial practices that not only ensure domination and control by one group but simultaneously create good feelings regarding their policies and procedures. As a modal practice, then, institutions stage and sustain activities that perpetuate conflict between whites and people of color. These practices and outcomes diminish society's capacity to achieve a fundamental goal of American democracy: equal freedom and justice for all. The concept of racism is introduced here as an aid to understanding societal structures and processes that have oppressive results on interracial relationships. Most important, such an analysis would go to the heart of power arrangements, role relationships, and the traits one attributes to others. Additionally, this chapter presents an analysis of prejudice and attempts to provide a conceptual distinction between the two terms. Racism does not equal prejudice. The former is societal, while the latter is individual. Finally, this chapter discusses the relative merits of prejudice and racism and their respective implications for racial justice.

Race prejudice

Social psychologists in studying prejudice have focused on the individual: How do individuals become prejudiced? What is the effect of prejudice on others? How can prejudice be changed? Before proceeding with a discussion of race prejudice, however, it may be useful to examine the etymology of the word *prejudice*.

Meaning of prejudice. *Prejudice* comes from the Latin *praejudicium* and literally means before (*prae*) judgment (*judicium*). As such, prejudice can refer to favorable or unfavorable feelings toward objects or persons. In race prejudice this feeling is directed at members of out-groups and is usually negative, despite the fact that the prejudiced individual has had little or no knowledge of or experience with the object of his/her prejudice. Further, new experiences and information tend to be ignored or fitted into existing categories that support the prejudice.

How does prejudice begin? It appears that prejudice begins, innocently enough, in feelings of *ethnocentrism*. Through early socialization influences, individuals come to place a special value on their own groups. Child-rearing practices, media (especially television), and other social conventions usually create a strong sense of identity with members of one's own family and community. Often this is an unconscious or unintended effect. When carried to the extreme, ethnocentrism manifests itself in total submission to in-group authority.

Ethnocentrism is based on a pervasive and rigid in-group-out-group distinction; it involves stereotypical negative imagery and hostile attitudes regarding out-groups, and a hierarchical, authoritarian view of group interaction in which in-groups are rightly dominant, out-groups subordinate."

It appears from these observations that a central source of prejudice is the practice of teaching group identity and pride. Racial and ethnic group members tend to identify with and favor their own group members and to reject individuals from racial and ethnic out-groups. Some writers believe that this phenomenon is universal.

Racial stratification was initially established through force and then by law and social custom. Daniels and Kitanoj describe the almost parallel experience of each of the "immigrant" groups of Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, Mexicans, and blacks as they entered California, their consequent

encounter with prejudice and discrimination, and, in extreme instances, apartheid, expulsion, and extermination. Daniels and Kitano depict the “boundary maintenance” techniques of this “two-category” system:

The white majority group tends to develop and elaborate strategy to maintain the separation of itself and the minority group. Basically, the strategy is simple. Power-political, economic, and educational must be under its own control. Legislation should systematically lead to the subjugation and deprivation of people in the lower category. Voting, ownership of property, and other means of retaining power should be restricted; schools and other educational opportunities must be separate; occupations should reflect the dichotomy, housing must be segregated and antimiscegenation laws must guarantee no intermingling (“the mongrelization of the race”). The institutions of social control—the schools, the legal system, the courts, the judges, and the police—are to serve as representatives of the supergroup.⁶

The purpose of the two-category system is to maintain complete separation between the white and nonwhite races and to keep the latter groups in total subjugation. This purpose is accomplished through four stages ranging from social etiquette to genocide—if deemed necessary. The stages are: (1) prejudice, (2) discrimination, (3) segregation, and (4) apartheid, expulsion, or extermination (see table on page 174). The major premise for this system is the assumption of white superiority. The major variable upon which the discriminatory treatment is based is skin color.

In the United States race prejudice is now sustained by political, economic, and educational forces. These forces can fully operate without the involvement of prejudiced individuals. Through socialization, individuals become inculcated with the norms and practices of all of society and can operate without prejudice as a contributing factor. Racism can occur without the presence of conscious bigotry and may be masked intentionally or innocently. Carmichael and Hamilton had earlier referred to these forces as “individual and institutional racism”:

Racism is both overt and covert. It takes two, closely related forms: individual whites acting against individual blacks, and acts by the total white community against the black community. We call these individual racism and institutional racism. The first consists of overt acts by individuals ... The second type is less overt, far more subtle, less identifiable ... [and] originates in the operation of established and respected forces in society ...’

The most appropriate target of study, then, would be the system of social relations and institutional practices that results in the oppression and exploitation of people of color. Although this fact may seem obvious, most behavioral science research on prejudice has been directed at individuals, not systems, using a behavioral approach, as opposed to a study of attitudes. The behavioral approach argues that the appropriate focus of study is the societal forces that keep “black people locked in dilapidated slum tenements, subject to the daily prey of exploitative landlords, merchants, loan sharks, and discriminatory real estate agents.”⁷ This focus does not suggest that attitudes or motivation are unimportant, only that behavior may be more important. This distinction is especially important given the large number of studies that reveal discrepancies between behavior and attitudes.

Discrimination by prejudiced and nonprejudiced individuals alike has contributed to the negative experience of being an ethnic minority. Such practices have insulated most minorities from any reasonable hope of joining the mainstream. Discrimination in employment and admissions to colleges and universities based on test scores are cases in point. While “standardized” and “objective” instruments may seem fair and offer certain advantages in the selection process, they ignore the inequities in past preparation caused by discrimination against ethnic minorities in school and employment situations. Seniority systems established in companies long before company policy permitted the hiring of blacks create unfair advantages when seniority is the sole criterion for a reduction in the work force or for promotion and

advancements. Therefore, such procedures inadvertently perpetuate the effects of the initial discrimination, which may have occurred many years earlier.

At one time in the television industry, to be hired as a cameraman an individual needed first to be a member of the union. However, discriminatory practices prohibited blacks and others from gaining union membership and opportunities for training for such positions. Company executives were therefore not able to hire ethnic minorities as cameramen because none were members of the union.

The approach then must focus on the unequal consequences of institutional procedures irrespective of intentions. Earlier examples pointed to discriminatory effects attributable to institutional procedures established for ostensibly positive purposes (e.g., seniority systems, tests in employment) or the conscious use of mechanisms originally adopted for positive purposes but that are now being applied by individuals who wish to cause harm. It is difficult, if not impossible, to disentangle these effects. Therefore, strategies designed to reduce prejudice or to eradicate the discrimination produced by prejudice can be only minimally successful if they fail to recognize or to acknowledge these different motivational sources of the discriminatory behaviors.

Individual, institutional, and cultural racism

Studying prejudice as a departure from egalitarian norms is perhaps to miss a more important basic level of analysis the racism inherent in social structures (institutions, et cetera). If prejudice is a “prejudgment” by individuals based on incomplete or no information, why does it persist in the face of contradictory information? In what way do the structural forces in society contribute to its sustaining effect?

Finally, the focus on individual characteristics of minority group members seems to place the blame for race prejudice on the victims. Slavery was justified on the grounds that Africans were savage heathens.⁹ Victim blame explanations are pervasive in the research literature. A survey of the literature on black-white performance comparison indicated that in 82 percent of the studies the authors attributed blame to the blacks (victims) rather than to the system.¹⁰

Meaning of racism. In *Prejudice and Racism*, Jones” puts forth an analysis that shifts the focus from a concern with the objects or effects of prejudice (i.e., the symptoms) to the underlying structural factors (i.e., causes). The first concept in Jones’s model, *individual racism*, bears some overlap with the concept of race prejudice. Unlike race prejudice, however, individual racism emphasizes genetic factors inherent in one’s own groups as a basis for asserting superiority over other groups. Further, the individuals engage in behaviors designed to maintain group positions of inferiority-superiority. Individual racism is Social Darwinism in that it seems to support the concept that stronger and more advanced racial groups will naturally triumph over the weaker and less civilized ones.

The second aspect of Jones’s model, the expansion to *institutional racism*, had its origin in Carmichael and Hamilton’s¹² thesis on “black power.” The focus on institutional racism, unlike a concern with attitudes, has the advantage of using objective criteria in determining its existence. For example, evidence of gross racial inequities in institutional policies and practices is sufficient basis to substantiate the charge of institutional racism. The objectivity provided by this construct results from its lack of concern with intentions. The *consequences* of institutional policies and practices are what is important. If the work force of a company that exists in a predominantly black community is only 4 percent black, and all of those blacks are in lowlevel job categories, then it would be argued that this is an instance of institutional racism. This definition creates an even greater distinction between racism and race prejudice.

Cultural racism, the final aspect of the model, focuses upon the values, traditions, and assumptions upon which institutions are formed. Inasmuch as individuals are socialized in institutions, the concept of cultural racism embraces both individuals and institutions. When a dominant culture, through the transmission of values and other practices, ignores or omits

significant contributions of other cultural groups, it is exhibiting instances of cultural racism. Few Americans, for example, know that the technique for half-soleing shoes was developed by a black man, or that a black physician, Dr. Charles Drew, discovered the technique for fractionating blood into plasma. Similarly, differences in a racial group that are interpreted as negative, or are not rewarded by members of the dominant culture, represent instances of cultural racism.

Some social scientists have argued that the distinction between prejudice and racism is unnecessary in that it is only an explanation and is not sufficiently descriptive. These critics argue that racism is simply a pejorative term or swearword and lacks any analytical meaning.” Although the term has been used in this manner, that is not the position taken here. Prejudice is an attitudinal construct that helps one understand the negative orientation of one individual toward others. Presumably, there will be correspondence between negative attitudes and negative behaviors (discrimination). However, there are instances in which discrimination can occur in the absence of any evidence of prejudice. Furthermore, prejudiced individuals do not always discriminate. Racism, on the other hand, deals with adverse outcomes suffered by some groups as a consequence of historical forces and societal practices. The significance of this distinction is that it represents a shift in focus from assessing intentions (attitudes) to a direct analysis of social and institutional practices (behaviors), irrespective of underlying intentions, that operate to subordinate and keep some groups at a disadvantage vis-a-vis others.

The various forms of racism discussed above have in common an attention to practices and arrangements in society in which the status quo of disadvantaged groups is accepted as the natural order and/or is seen as a consequence of their innate capacities. It is the present and continuing institutional forces and societal practices that keep most people of color in disadvantaged positions in predominantly white societies.

From the above observations it seems clear that what is needed for an in-depth understanding of racial problems is a conceptualization that addresses the unequal consequences of present institutional arrangements irrespective of intent or historical justification. The concept of prejudice seems inadequate for this purpose because it requires the documentation of intentions a somewhat elusive pursuit. A conceptualization predicated on *racism* can provide the proper framework for this analysis, as well as point to a solution.

Pluralism or integration

Pettigrew¹⁴ is prominent among psychologists who defend the efficacy of integration. Specifically, he argues that only through equal status contact (integration) can the belief in inferiority and value dissimilarity be eliminated. He further suggests that any separation between the races simply increases forces that support prejudice including institutional forces. One aspect of this approach has been referred to as “structural integration.””

The idea here is that settings can be described in which individuals from different groups are in proximity. The settings can range from school to marriage, and the focus is on the environmental aspect of the setting. That is, little or no attention is given to the nature or quality of the interaction.

School integration, a salient issue for this culture, has occupied a prominent place in the research literature. According to Edmons and Cheng, school integration is “... a setting in which blacks and whites meet as institutional equals with each having equal access to the rights and privileges that characterized the schools.”¹⁶ This definitional approach differs from Yinger’s in that it does pay attention to the quality and nature of the interaction. While a large number of social scientists could agree with this definition, it does not fully capture the complexity of the integration process.

Two meanings of integration that have crept into common parlance are integration as *acceptance* and integration as *assimilation*. The former meaning implies that one becomes a member of a group (e.g., club, church) by being around to share experiences that in turn lead

to the outcome of being “one of them” accepted by them. The second meaning, assimilation, implies that one’s identity becomes that, or largely that, of the group, e.g., “we” think this way, “we” do it this way. The acceptance and assimilation meanings of integration are inadequate, or incompatible, with definitions of integration that acknowledge that people of color can become a part of society and overcome feelings of powerlessness and lack of self-esteem through the exertion of power over decisions that directly affect them. Interestingly enough, Allport’s” work on prejudice defined integration in this manner.

Allport emphasized the importance of “equal status contact” as a precondition for enhancing interracial relations. He states that “while it may help somewhat to place member of different ethnic groups side by side on a job, the gain is greater if these members regard themselves as part of a team.”

Prejudice (unless deeply rooted in the character structure of the individual) may be reduced by equal status contact between majority and minority groups, in the pursuit of common goals. The effect is greatly enhanced if this contact is sanctioned by institutional supports (i.e., by law, custom, or local atmosphere), and if it is a sort that leads to the perception of common interest and common humanity between members of the two groups.”

The hypothesis describes the nature of the contact necessary for integration, distinguishes it from simple segregation or racial dispersion, and highlights the need for interdependence between the affected group’s members as well.

Taylor¹⁹ takes exception to Pettigrew’s thesis and its hypothesized goal of integration and simultaneously builds on Allport’s equal status contact hypothesis. His objections are presented in the context of observations made above regarding the distinction between race prejudice and racism and are sensitive to Allport’s contact formulations. The Taylor analysis takes as its starting point the assertion that Pettigrew’s characterization of a “hypothetical black power ghetto” inadequately depicts the phenomenon that it was devised to explain. Pettigrew failed to understand the empowerment aspect of the black power movement; additionally, use of the term *integration* as a strategy and integration as a goal, in the means/end sense, lacks conceptual distinction and clarity. Consider, for example:

The overall strategy needed must contain the following elements: (a) A major effort toward racial integration must be mounted ... This effort should envisage by the late 1970s complete attainment of the goal ... (b)... strict criteria must be applied to proposed enrichment programs to insure that they are productive for later dispersal and integration.”

Philosophers have distinguished between ethics of acts and ethics of consequences (i.e., means and ends). Some systems of ethics consider that the moral value of an act is wholly a matter of the consequences that flow from it. Such systems are referred to as teleological. Another set of ethical systems tends to emphasize the quality of the action itself or the spirit in which the action is performed as determining its rightness or wrongness. These systems are classified as “formalistic.” The relationship between means and ends in Pettigrew’s arguments is confused in that integration is defined both as a means and as an end. From a formalistic viewpoint it is possible to conclude that Pettigrew’s approach is ethically sound as far as intent is concerned. However, the semantic fusion of means and ends makes it difficult to compare his approach with logical or rational alternatives.

It is also possible that what is at one time treated as a means only may in the course of time come to appear as an end. A church that whips itself into a state of enthusiasm and zeal in preparation for an effective canvass may in retrospect conclude that the *esprit de corps* achieved was of more value than the financial outcome of the canvass. Means and ends can indeed shift, but it is difficult to imagine means identical to ends at the same point in time. By partitioning means and ends it is possible to evaluate a given strategy as right (or wrong) if its total

consequences will be as good as (or less good than) those of some other strategy that might have been chosen.

Taylor's challenge to Pettigrew's arguments attempts to clarify the confusion of means and ends. The concept of empowerment is advanced as a strategy (or means) to accomplish an ultimate goal. The importance of empowerment as a strategy is its role in making equal status contacts between racial groups more likely. The concept of power as a precondition to equal status is just beginning to be acknowledged by psychologists. While it is missing from Pettigrew's analysis, it is central to the alternative discussed here.

Taylor argues that racial justice, not integration, should be the goal of our society. *Racial justice* refers to intergroup harmony predicated on the concepts of equity and fair play irrespective of racial identification. One assumption of a racially just society is that individuals from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds maintain their identities. This form of pluralism should ultimately lead to a valuing and appreciation of difference. Because of social and economic stratification and the oppressive forces operative in our culture, Taylor argues that the employment of empowerment strategies is essential to achieving racial justice. The empowerment conceptualization acknowledges that status equilibration is a necessary precursor to any oppressed group's effort to move from their existing situation to the desired goal of pluralism and racial justice. Furthermore, this conceptualization obviates the usage of the provocative and misleading term *separatist*, which connotes the perpetuation of racial segregation. It also implicitly transmits the idea that desegregation, in which racial barriers are relaxed or substituted by token integration, is inadequate and rarely involves the transmittal of power.

Giving blacks equal education, equal employment, equal income, equal housing, and so on, will never lead to perceived equality in the eyes of whites without the addition of power. Yet for many the unchallengeable, overriding goal in U.S. society has been integration. The end was critically considered; means were not, yet integration has become the means. Liberals have always supported an integrated society as a solution to racial problems. In fact, the commitment to that particular strategy is so ingrained that it freezes or restricts severely the ability to explore constructive alternatives when considering solutions to racial problems. Blacks have pursued integration strategies by seeking coalitions with the white power structure, rich and upper-class whites, philanthropists, entrepreneurs, middle-class white progressives (liberals), poor whites, and finally radical whites. In all cases, these efforts have met with failure, primarily because (1) internal power relations between blacks and whites were never resolved, (2) hidden conflicts between the interests of poor blacks and middle-class whites were never resolved, and (3) the latent racism of whites has never been adequately confronted. The black empowerment movement within the UUA began in a philosophical context that raised these very issues.

The 1960s witnessed a crystallization of these issues accompanied by a metamorphosis on the part of most blacks, including members of the black middle class who had separated themselves from their community, divorced themselves from any responsibility to it, yet never gained acceptance by the white community. The existence of this marginal class²¹ is the best evidence of the failure of integration.

Some years ago, in an issue of *Operations Research*, Ackoff and two colleagues reported the development of an untried approach to university aid in the ghetto. It was the assumption behind this approach that is of paramount importance: *The best way the white community could help the black community was to enable it to solve its problems in the way it, the black community, wanted to.* (This was the position articulated by the Black Affairs Council leadership.) They reported that leadership from the black community submitted a proposal that was funded by Anheuser-Busch Charitable Trust and the Ford Foundation for \$50,000 per year for two years. From this beginning, nine manufacturing firms that grossed more than \$11.5 million in 1969 and employed 125 people from the black community were established. Through university aid, loans from banks have been secured that have enabled additional businesses to

start up, including technical and managerial assistance. A credit union that permitted community individuals to join for only twenty-five cents was established to permit personal loans. The university has developed a program in business education for the disadvantaged in the area; scholarships to private suburban schools have been secured and an Urban Leadership Training Program has been established.²²

At the time of his article, Ackoff indicated that the leadership in the black community had established their independence from outer influence. Yet their planning required a sensitivity to potential sources of resources from the larger society of which the black community is a part. This undoubtedly required a skillful utilization of power in bringing about the ends compatible with aspirations of the black community and yet not compromising their independence. In conclusion, Ackoff indicated that these ghetto leaders have, as an ultimate objective, the dissolution of the ghetto by having it absorbed into the main current of the culture of which it is a part.

The Four Stages of Maintaining the Two-Category System*

	<i>Stages</i>	<i>Belief</i>	<i>Action-effects</i>	<i>Primary mechanisms</i>
	1	Prejudice	Avoidance	Stereotyping, informally patterned rules governing interaction
	2	Discrimination	Deprivation	More formal rules, norms, agreements, laws
Ordinary Solutions	3	Segregation	Insulation	If the out-group is perceived as stepping over the line, there may be lynchings and other warnings.
Extraordinary Solutions		A. Apartheid, concentration camps	Isolation	A major trigger such as war is necessary; out-group perceived as a real threat or danger to
		B. Expulsion, exile	Exclusions	the existence of the
		C. Extermination	Genocide	host culture. Or extraordinary mechanisms (e.g., Stages 1, 2, and 3) have failed.

* From R. Daniels and H. H. L. Kitano, *American Racism; Exploration of the Nature of Prejudice* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, 1970).

The analysis presented here agrees with all but the last conclusion from Ackoff. One of the key objections by blacks to integration is that it typically represents an absorption of the black community-culture, values, and all. For example, many UU churches fail to include music or poetry by blacks in their worship services. School textbooks often omit or distrust the role of blacks in American history. The implications of such outcomes are psychologically negative: Black children grow up without a sense of heroes among their race. Implicit in such a process is the indication that blackness is inferior, unimportant, or offers nothing of value or nothing worth preserving. Psychologists have presented evidence that such an outcome is destructive to self-esteem and levels of aspiration.²³ Black power advocates represent the most encompassing challenge to these psychologically negative dynamics by employing empowerment strategies designed to achieve the very conditions elaborated in the Allport contact hypothesis.

In the sixties these ideas were new to U.S. society and to the UUA. Resistance to change, commitment to traditional ideas of integration, concerns with "proper" procedures may have been among the myriad of reasons this experiment could not (did not) work in our society or within the UUA. Elsewhere in this report are an analysis of these issues, an examination of the BAC programs, and an attempt to assess what went wrong. This assessment should be instructive to future UUA endeavors in the area of racial justice.

B. Theological perspective

Everything has a moral, said the Queen in *Alice*, and the moral here seems to be that when we think we are being most generous, we may be guilty of being most selfish: of doing for ourselves what we imagine we are doing for someone else.

-Sydney J. Harris

“What is proclaimed and practiced as tolerance today,” wrote Herbert Marcuse, “is in many of its most effective manifestations serving the cause of oppression.”²⁴ It is difficult for even the most conscientious person to accept the extent to which he is fallible. Tolerance has long been an article of faith for religious liberals, who do not take kindly to the possibility that it, and more especially the practice of it, may serve ends they do not approve.

Unitarian Universalist commitment to racial integration was, has been, and is, a function of an institutionalized belief in tolerance, even as it is part and parcel of a desire to be generous. What are Unitarian Universalists to think, then, when it is announced that racial integration means racial disintegration, that what Unitarian Universalists have been serving is not the cause of tolerance but the cause of intolerance, not generosity but selfishness?

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., put the case squarely while he was a prisoner in a Birmingham jail. He wrote:

I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro’s great stumbling block in the stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen’s Council or the Ku Klux Manner, but the white moderate who is more devoted to “order” than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the pretense of justice; who constantly says, “I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action”; who paternalistically feels that he can set the timetable for another man’s freedom; who lives by the myth of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait until a “more convenient season.” Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.²⁵

Religious liberals at the onset of the black empowerment movement were placed on the horns of a dilemma. Their profound commitment to tolerance and to integration and to democratic process was challenged to match the demands of those who, even more vehemently than Dr. King, saw these articles of faith as stumbling blocks to racial justice. For some, there could be no compromising any of these principles; the ends do not justify abhorrent means, they argued. It was, for them, clearly a matter of right and wrong. For others, the wrongs they suffered would wait upon no such argument; too long they had waited while “good means” were turned to indefinite or bad ends. It was, for them, clearly a matter of wrong against wrong.

“Oppression is known only by the oppressed,” said Dietrich Bonhoeffer from another prison.²⁶ It is they who see most clearly from where they languish the “sin” of those who would rescue them, but for the fact that to do so would call for the use of imperfect means. From the perspective of Christian theology, the “view from the cross” is the ultimate arbiter, not the view from the foot of the cross. In modern Jewish theology, holocaust theology, it is the same thing: it is the view from Auschwitz that is the ultimate arbiter, not the view from outside the barbed-wire fences. How men and women shall decide, therefore, what to do in the face of raw injustice from the religious perspective is different from that which would determine their decision based upon a philosophical one. Not that the same issue cannot be described in philosophical terms. Paulo Freire, in his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*,

observes:

This, then is the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well. The oppressors who oppress ... by virtue of their power, cannot find in this power the strength to liberate either the oppressed or themselves. Only power that springs from weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both.”

To what extent, of course, Unitarian Universalists were able to identify the “oppressed” within their midst and, thence, to identify with them was and still is problematic. The question of color to a religious association that aspired to be color-blind rankled. A large number of black and white religious liberals found the accusation that their high-minded commitment to tolerance, integration, and the democratic process was “sinful,” that it “missed the mark,” that it served the cause of oppression, specious and self-serving. They rejected it and deplored the attempts made to establish a separate caucus of the “oppressed” within the Association, arguing that such action was, for all its claims on behalf of justice, merely a resort to sectarianism.

“Sectarianism, in religious terms, means a withdrawal from the larger unit, the whole,” wrote Daniel G. Higgins, Jr., in his doctoral dissertation, “The Unitarian Universalist Association and the Color Line,” the chapter entitled “The Soteriological Controversy.” 28

The whole presupposes inclusiveness. Separatism, whether imposed or voluntary, alienates the separatist and the whole of interchange. “It is stupid,” wrote Michael Novak, “to be alienated from everyone and also from one self.” 29

So the debate continued. And continues. After fifteen years, the UUA is, with the same issue still unresolved, a house divided. On the surface, the controversy seems to have subsided; Unitarian Universalists are again what they were before the upheaval and acrimony of the late sixties and early seventies; they are again, if not comfortable, at least settled in their principles those regarding tolerance, integration, and the democratic process. And yet, what are Unitarian Universalists to make of the retreat religious liberals have made from their earlier overt commitment to racial equality and social justice, the disillusionment of many members of color within their midst, the perceived apathy of many toward the persistence of institutional racism in the Association, the all-too-evident failure of Unitarian Universalist churches and fellowships to attract persons outside of the white middle class?

Possibly, a bit of reflection from another religious body that has experienced a similar dilemma would be helpful. A latter-day commentary by a study group of the National Conference of Christians and Jews cites how the ecumenical movement assumed that education and/or integration would move toward ultimate racial equality, but the lesson learned, they said, is that God is on the side of the oppressed rather than on the side of the powerful. What does that mean? Apparently, their perception has changed, moving closer to King, Bonhoeffer, and Freire. In this context, one wonders what has happened to the perception of the Unitarian Universalists. What lessons have they learned? Learning any, have they altered stated assumptions? For example, is it possible for Unitarian Universalists now to understand empowerment as a legitimate means to the desired end of racial equality, or is integration to achieve integration the only legitimate strategy? Religiously speaking, is it possible now to understand how important it is to justice and equality that those deprived of it be listened to and respected? Indeed, that they be empowered? But then, perhaps the real question is how shall empowerment, or more precisely, the *concept* of empowerment, be reconciled to Unitarian Universalist tradition? Surely Unitarian Universalists also must have learned that such a reconciliation is as essential to life as a religious community as it is to the charge laid upon them as religious liberals to serve the

cause of justice and equality in the world. In the language and imagery of Christian theology, “what of the view from the cross?” Certainly, it cannot simply be ignored.

Always, the first step toward reconciliation is awareness. And the first step toward awareness is remembering. The time has come for Unitarian Universalists to recall the events of these past fifteen years, not to disguise them or seek to disregard them. If there are wounds that need healing, let the healing take place, as ultimately it must, with fuller understanding, openness, and wisdom.

9. Summary of the past

Dispassionate examination of Unitarian and Universalist history in the areas of racial justice and race relationships in the United States establishes very limited grounds for pride. For a century and a half there have been numerous stirring examples of devoted and effective individuals in the forefront of action, first to abolish slavery and then to level caste differences among free and supposedly equal citizens. But the institutions themselves, constrained by their principle of congregational polity and by wide differences of view and perspective among the congregants, struggled with the same paralyzing uncertainties that beset the whole society.

One need not delve deeply into history to find this dichotomy. Probably an overwhelming preponderance of Unitarian Universalists were proud of the national media pictures showing the President of their Association marching in the very front of a crucial civil rights demonstration in Alabama, and took solemn inspiration in the death of a UU minister senselessly murdered in Selma, Alabama. The goal, a just society, was clear. But when it came time for a denominational march toward that goal, seemingly irreconcilable divisions about the means to organize that march arose, and the movement lurched and sputtered.

The denominational record of blacks in the ministry is a sour history. It is true that a black minister was called to the pulpit of a major church in 1969 and has filled it with distinction since, and it may be that sociological and psychological factors can be invoked to explain the paucity of candidates since Emancipation. But overt acts of discrimination, discouragement, and rejection have been documented. These have been among the causes that have made denominational performance fall so far short of its stated ideals. The outlook is not entirely dark at the present writing. Perhaps a botanical analogy describes the situation, both the general Unitarian Universalist bent and the approach to the particular issue of racial justice.

If a shrub is found to be ailing,

- conservatives opt for nurturing it back to health;
- radicals wish to tear it out by the roots, and replant better;
- liberals acknowledge and sympathize with both points of view.

The UUA is a liberal institution.

A summary of the black empowerment controversy in the Unitarian Universalist Association must finally acknowledge the radical conservative division that took place under the acronyms BUUC and BAWA. History tells that the division was not reconciled, but not out of historical necessity. This failure of reconciliation or resolution may have been the great failure of the institution. Whether due to latent racism in the institution or the impotence of the liberal address to social action, the results did little to boost denominational pride.

However, acknowledging such failure is not to say that BUUC and BAWA were themselves without accomplishments. The caucus approach succeeded in establishing a formidable organization that, with financial assistance from the UUA, was able to implement a number of significant programs. Dedicated to the principle of black control of black destiny through empowerment of black individuals and organizations, the caucus movement succeeded in gaining some of the necessary power. At a critical juncture, however, a struggle for control weakened

BUUC and BAG as effective organizations.

Black and White Action, the integration approach, was spearheaded by a church in which integration had been a successful way of life. The Community Church of New York City had not only substantial black membership, but also blacks in positions of top leadership within the church. BAWA was thus created not to test a theory, but to challenge the BAG concept out of proven experience. Despite little help from UUA funding, BAWA was able to engender programs designed to promote racial justice through racial integration. Yet with the paralysis of the black caucus movement the steam seemed to go out of the BAWA thrust on a continental scale. The fact remains that once the goading presence of BUUC had vanished, BAWA, too, went into eclipse.

During all this time and activity, the institution, the Unitarian Universalist Association, struggled with the pressures brought upon it by the controversy. An institution is composed of people with all their personal agenda, of its traditions subject to various interpretations, of its rules and regulations, subject to amendment, and of a certain amount of inertia. The people in control must decide whether to follow a policy line of their own choosing, to accede to the wishes of the majority as best they can evaluate them, or to compromise in an effort to please as many as possible, with the ever attendant risk of offending as many as possible. From the outside it is easy to blame institutional ills on “them,” the individuals in charge at a given time. Particularly in a voluntary association like the UUA, lacking clear and ongoing definitions of policy, leaders with the very best of intentions will face agonizing choices in what are basically political decisions.

Few human enterprises can be categorized as “successes” or “failures” even when the passage of years has brought historical perspective to the observer. In almost all successes there are elements of what might have been better, casualties suffered for the greater good, and similar blemishes. In most failures there are lessons learned, even if bitter, faiths strengthened or faiths modified, even better understanding of self.

What happened in the UUA black empowerment controversy that can be called constructive?

- An association of free congregations dared to grapple with an issue whose solution was not simply Right or Wrong, Yes or No, but to be found in the application of techniques whose validity stemmed from the core of an individual’s beliefs.
- Programs of value were funded and implemented in areas of education, politics, industrial production, and attitude shifting.
- The denomination, despite its desperate financial situation, allocated funds to assist programming. Many congregations and individuals donated money and/or purchased bonds for the purpose.
- Thoughtful people were forced to examine their own dearly held beliefs and motives, and could thereby gain self-understanding.
- Some people were exhilarated by being involved in an issue that probed their deepest principles and brought them fully alive.
- Viable, dedicated organizations grew up around the thesis of black empowerment and of integration, joined the Unitarian Universalist Association, and functioned for years in their chosen areas of concern.

And what happened that can be called injurious?

- Differences of view evolved into enmity. Leadership of the Association suffered disarray. Congregations divided into opposing camps. Dear friendships incurred permanent harm.
- Suspicion was engendered as to the use of some of the money.
- There was no long-term gain in black membership or interest in Unitarian Universalist congregations.
- The UUA suffered as an institution. Problems inherent in the divisions of power among the General Assembly, Board of Trustees, and Administration were exacerbated. Mistrust deepened.

- People were deeply hurt. Disillusioned blacks and whites, angered and disconsolate, went away from the denomination.
- The black empowerment organization, BAC, underwent a schism, and dissolved into a token group.
- The integration organization, BAWA, lost its momentum, announced its own demise, then contested the announcement.

Fifteen years after the Emergency Conference brought the racial justice issue into focus in a denominational sense, what effects remain of the controversy? First, in the context of the national experience, an uneasy hiatus has replaced the convulsions of the black revolution of the sixties. The black economic middle class is larger. More blacks are in government, from the local to the federal level. Many more blacks have enfranchised themselves by registering to vote and by voting. But the poverty-stricken still constitute an enormous depressed mass. Half a generation's time has passed, and blacks have made little, no, or even reverse progress in sharing in the nation's economic wealth. Unemployment among black teenagers is a national disgrace. The problems of blacks in the United States simmer on the back burner, ready to boil again.

The UUA may seem to have suffered many of the ills parallel to the national scene without even participating in the few gains. The "larger middle class" has not been reflected in increased membership in the denomination insofar as can be observed. (Statistics are not kept.) The whole cause of social justice seems to have disappeared, faded away in a fog of frustration, controversy, and bitterness bordering on despair.

Yet there has been a development that could signify a new awareness of great importance to the Association, the Institutional Racism Audit of 1980-82. The audit has been confined to the institution itself, the Unitarian Universalist Association. The institution has two aspects; it is a voluntary association of about one thousand congregations, which makes possible certain shared conveniences, and it serves as an instrument through which the congregations can transmit certain messages to the world. Its effectiveness in matters of tactics and politics, however, can be severely restricted.

The Emergency Conference of October 1967 was called in an attempt to decide upon tactics and political action, based on determined principle and philosophy. Though undertaken in a sincere effort to be relevant, effective, and timely, the concepts inherent in the name of the conference could have doomed its efforts: "The Emergency Conference on the Unitarian Universalist Response to the Black Rebellion." As fundamental differences of philosophy unfolded, it became evident that the built-in structural limitations made "the Unitarian Universalist Response" illusory.

The institutional UUA may hope to influence its constituents by education and example, but constituted as it is, it cannot coerce them. There is no argument, however, that the Institutional Racism Audit is within the province of the UUA, that it can and should examine itself as a discrete institution. The structural limitations do not mean that this religious denomination is permanently enjoined from raising its voice in matters of morals and principles in short, in matters of religion. But to do so without engendering the trauma of the black empowerment controversy, the institution will have to make changes in its address to social issues and in its structures and procedures.

10. Conclusions

The Commission on Appraisal's study has been an attempt to begin gathering an amazing wealth of materials and to construct the "large picture" of the black empowerment controversy of the 1960s and 1970s in the Unitarian Universalist Association. This picture had never been drawn before.

"Facts" of course may depend on one's point of view as well as access to information. Aware that it is itself one of these factors, nevertheless the Commission offers the following unanimous conclusions:

1. In the field of racial justice the UUA has not always been on the cutting edge. The denomination and its Unitarian and Universalist predecessors have had problems with institutional racism. Both institutional and individual racism have created (and still create) problems for black UU ministers, most of whom have left the denomination and/or the ministry, disillusioned by the abominable way the denomination has treated them.

2. The concept of black empowerment, important for the entire denomination, was developed and thrust upon the UUA by lay individuals who believed integration (in the traditional sense) was not working. The BUUC/BAC leadership exhibited a high level of creativity, skill, innovation, and honesty in the development of programs and organizational structure. A major effort should have been made in 1967 to involve BUUC leadership in denominational responsibilities. However, paternalism was, by and large, the mindset of institutional leaders. The failure or unwillingness to incorporate BUUC as a formal part of the UUA structure added to its difficulties, especially during the BHF litigation.

3. BAWA had equal leadership from both races. Both BAWA and BUUC/BAC offered a way for whites to be involved in collaborative ways in programs for racial justice. The inability of the institution to accommodate both BUUC/BAC and BAWA was fatal to effective action.

4. At the 1968 General Assembly in Cleveland, the denomination voted to permit BUUC/BAC to operate outside the traditional denominational structure, to fund them without dictating what would be done with the money or seeking an accounting. This approach became a problem when the concept of empowerment collided with the traditional ideas of accountability. The problem was one of *effect*, rather than *intent*; that is, the effect of the desire to impose traditional accountability on the use of money was paternalism, i.e., if the denomination could in effect approve or disapprove how the money was spent, then paternalism would defeat the basic premise of empowering blacks.

5. BUUC/BAC *did* account to the denomination, with audited and certified reports. Because these reports were not communicated to the denomination as a whole by official channels, enormous misunderstanding became an insurmountable problem. Communications went awry.

6. Though statistics were not kept, a significant number of blacks were alienated by the inability or unwillingness of the denomination to deal with black empowerment issues in a constructive way. There was also alienation and a turning away of blacks who felt an unwillingness of the denomination to deal with their desire to work within the denomination in partnership with whites. In truth, the UUA as an institution seems incapable of effective response to social justice issues when there is not substantial agreement. Congregational polity limits kinds of possible corporate action, particularly funding or creating offices (although these are not always the most effective kinds of action).

7. It is clear that prejudice is no longer an effective explanation of America's race problem-or that of the UUA. Pluralism is the most appropriate approach to racial justice and empowerment, because the "view from the cross" must be determinant; that is, the voices of the oppressed must be heard, their needs understood and served, rather than the principles and ideals of those who want to help but who are not themselves oppressed. Those who are not oppressed must overcome their own preconceptions in order truly to side with the oppressed.

8. This study has enlarged the Commission's understanding of and compassion for people on all sides of the empowerment question. The UUA is, after all, only a barometer for racial response among mainline churches and middle-class Americans.

9. The UUA still has no effective mechanism for meeting the challenge of racial justice. The Section on Social Responsibility provides a network and know-how, but it is underutilized in the area. The Racism Audit showed an unwillingness to admit that there is a problem of racism in the UUA. Although the audit provides a good checklist, most of the recommendations have not been successfully addressed.

The following are conclusions perceived by at least seven of the nine members of the Commission on Appraisal (not in each case the same seven):

10. *Integration* is no longer a useful term because it has no uniform

definition and therefore retards understanding (see Part A of Chapter 8). For example, it may mean “desegregation,” “assimilation,” or “acceptance in uniqueness.”

11. When it comes to racial justice, the UUA is “missing the mark,” blinded by the idealism of UUs.

12. In the empowerment controversy, a win/lose mentality soured the process of democracy. The philosophy and tactics of BUUC were perceived by many as nondemocratic; the data indicate this perception was an overreaction.

13. The hasty official embracing of BAWA at the 1968 General Assembly (Cleveland) siphoned off energy that was being generated by engagement in a revolution. The Ross substitute motion at the 1971 General Assembly to establish the Racial Justice Fund prevented the reconciliation of BUUC to the denomination (see p. 41).

14. There is a basic structural ambiguity inherent in the triumvirate of Board of Trustees-Administration-General Assembly. That ambiguity, along with the UU tradition and absence of a corporate credo, frustrated corporate action during the empowerment controversy.*

* The ambiguity is partly a matter of interpretation of Bylaws stating overall powers, and partly a matter of fiscal responsibility. In 1967, Frank B. Frederick, then General Counsel of the UUA, held that Art. IV, Sec. C-4.2 (“The General Assembly shall be the overall policy-making body of the Association and shall direct and control its affairs”) did *not* mean that the Assembly, in his words, “may by vote instruct the Board of Trustees to make a particular appropriation.” (Memo 5/8/69) The Board, he contended, under Art. VI, Sec. C-6.1, was charged with specifics of the duty to “conduct the affairs of the Association and ... carry out the Association’s policies and directives as provided by law.”

Proponents of the vote to give BAC \$250,000 for four years did think the Assembly could so direct the Board. *At that time* debate centered upon this interpretation.

In more recent years, the Board’s ultimate control has been based upon a different section of the Bylaws, which is unambiguous: Art. X, 1, which vests budget construction and administration in the Board, with the Assembly having only “consideration and recommendation of financial priorities” as its prerogative. There may be debate, whether the Board listens sufficiently, or whether Assembly directives are or are not financially feasible.

Successive batches of annual delegates, previously unacquainted with this situation, have felt dismayed to discover that their votes are, ultimately, only advisory, since state laws (Massachusetts and other states) vest ultimate power of free associations in their boards, which have continuous existence, not delegate assemblies.

11. Recommendations

I. That the UUA, at its 1983 General Assembly, accept this Report and designate it as a major item for study and discussion among member societies in 1983-84.

II. That the UUA General Assembly request the UUA Board to propose to the 1984 General Assembly a new body, with appropriate staff and funding, to begin a fresh response to the issues of racism, as a major priority for the UUA.

“The courage of Our Contradictions”
The 4th Minns Lecture on the
Black Empowerment Controversy and the UUA
1967-1970
by Rev. Victor Carpenter

LECTURE IV: The Courage of Our Contradictions: Perspective on a Time of Trauma

“With the decision in 1970 to end the funding of BAC, all effective Unitarian Universalist Association attention to racial justice ended too;” observed Unitarian Universalist Association Vice President William Schulz in his preface to Mark Morrison-Reed’s study, *Black Pioneers in a White Denomination*.¹ Schulz was correct in this assessment. During the 1970’s the denomination turned its attention to the empowerment of women, gays, the elderly and the young, preferring to ignore and bury in its collective psyche the negative feelings which the Black Empowerment Controversy had generated. But those feelings resembled unruly guests, who, having interrupted the decorum of a sedate house party and been summarily ejected from the premises, sneak back to take up residence in the basement of the house. From that locale they send disquieting signals of their continued presence to the dignified assembly in progress above stairs.

A decade after the divorce of BAC from the Unitarian Universalist Association, the Unitarian Universalist Association Board of Trustees authorized the conduct of an Institutional Racism Audit with itself the object of inquiry.² The Audit was conducted by Community Change, Inc. in conjunction with a Unitarian Universalist Association Internal Audit Team. In the course of its inquiry, the Audit Team noted the frequency with which the topic of the Black Empowerment Controversy arose. Repeatedly the Controversy and the feelings which it had generated were offered as reasons for the denomination’s failure to deal with the issues of racial justice. Noting the Unitarian Universalist preference for talking, if not as a substitute for action at least as a way of postponing action for as long as possible, one of the Audit team members observed that while Unitarian Universalists were willing and eager to discuss the Controversy on a rational and theoretical level, they exhibited great reluctance to state their *feelings* about what had happened. This led the observer to note, “The history of leftover feelings becomes a part of today.”³

The Audit went on to inventory what the team identified as “leftover feelings.” Those included anger, discouragement, suspicion and frustration, feelings which the Audit team pointed out continue to encumber white Unitarian Universalists and black Unitarian Universalists in their attempts to create authentic relationships.

The “left-over feelings” originate from unresolved conflicts within the structure of contemporary Unitarian Universalism. The Black Empowerment Controversy did not create these conflicts. The Controversy did serve to strip away some of the veneer that had obscured them. Our collective failure to confront the Black Empowerment Controversy or to identify the factors that prevent us from achieving a balanced assessment of its impact reflects a reluctance to confront our own middle-class acceptance of that posture. Some accounting of the negative feelings ostensibly generated by the Controversy can be traced to an attempt to “blame the messenger who brings the bad news.”

The ideological “bad news” becomes apparent from an examination of the following areas: our inability to understand or to generate sympathy for the nature and purpose of “mission” or “missionary activity”; our failure to perceive the revolutionary nature of participatory democracy; our reluctance to confront racism’s influence upon white as well as black people; our refusal to subject the concept of guilt to institutional application; our inability to distinguish between judgment as punishment and judgment as a means of grace.

Unitarian Universalists have historically abjured the idea of “mission,” defined as the propagation of the faith to those who lack awareness of it and who might benefit from its acquisition. Our failure to engage in “missionary” activity, has marked a significant difference between Unitarian Universalists and the main body of the Christian Church, which has regarded such activity as one of its main tasks from the very beginning.

Our rejection of missionary enterprises was based upon the conviction that such enterprise reflected a paternalistic arrogance and a theological imperialism which did not harmonize with our Unitarian Universalist principles of religious self-determination.

In truth, we have demonstrated our own brand of arrogance in our failure to understand the meaning of the missionary enterprise in terms other than caricature or one-way street. While correctly abjuring the role of the “white missionary bringing the good news to the black downtrodden,” we failed to understand the sense of identification with those in need and the gifts resulting from solidarity which underlies most missionary enterprise in the twentieth century.

Black people who come into this essentially white middle-class denomination discover the presence of the same kind of white arrogance that has been a part of Western civilization’s style of life. When they look closely at us they see this arrogance evidenced in the way we have responded to the inner city; they see it asserting itself in our theological schools; they see it exhibited in our ability to give but not to receive. And the

arrogance overwhelms any suggestion that some radical change in the process might be beneficial to our denominational health.

After citing numerous instances of this arrogance in the treatment meted out to the black pioneers who sought to make their considerable gifts available to the Unitarian denomination, Mark Morrison-Reed concludes:

“The Unitarian church was not integrated because it chose not to be ... Paternalistic in their racism, our leaders in the beginning of the twentieth century did not respect the black man. Slowly, over a period of decades, some Unitarians began to see their way out of this, but it was still difficult to break the patterns of segregation that were demographically and socially perpetuated.”⁴

A significant component of our failure to accept and support the initiatives of BUUC/BAC stemmed from our failure to perceive it in the context of “mission.” Denominational leaders were not prepared; nothing had prepared them to understand the concept of empowerment or the virtue of enabling people to develop their own style rather than become imitators of our prevailing white middle-class style. Denominational leaders were not prepared for the radical critique (again the missionary critique) that the orderliness of our religious life-style (expressed both in our worship and in our conduct of business) covered selfishness, narrowness and a support for the perpetuation of the status quo. Denominational leaders were not prepared to acknowledge that even as BUUC/BAC was dealing with and accepting funds from the white power structure of the denomination, its first allegiance was to the black community. BUUC/BAC’s goal was to make the black community and its lively power a conspicuous reality for a denomination that had scant previous knowledge or understanding of that community’s existence or leadership.

Few within this denomination had sufficient involvement with the black community to understand or appreciate the significance of BUUC/BAC as “mission a way to bind us in solidarity with the oppressed, on the one hand, and provide us with a radical and healthy critique of our own values and structures, on the other.

Writing on this controversy, Mark Morrison-Reed acknowledged that while we as a denomination had taken the leadership in responding to the Black Revolution in 1967 and 1968, we “quickly stumbled and fell, while at least one denomination which was slower to respond to the rebellion but had active missions in urban areas since the 1950’s strode past us.”

The church being referred to is the Reformed Church of America. Noel Erskin’s study, *Black People and The Reformed Church in America*,⁵ provides a detailed account of the formation of the Black Council of the Reformed Church of America and of its impressive and lasting response to the Black Revolution. The most significant difference between the Black Council of RCA and BUUC/BAC of the Unitarian Universalist Association is that a ready avenue of communication with the denomination was already in existence in the RCA, in the form of perhaps 25 inner-city churches which were predominantly black churches and embodied a black style of worship and a black consciousness. These churches acted as both buffers and conduits; serving to soften the impact of black rhetoric falling upon essentially white ears, on the one hand; acting as avenues for those ideas and programs and perspectives to gain entry and acceptance into the wider RCA community, on the other.

Rather than continuing and working to strengthen Unitarian Universalist inner city churches which were struggling (and continue to struggle) with changing conditions and demographic shifts, Unitarian Universalists largely abandoned these churches. We preferred to follow the white Unitarian Universalist flight to the suburbs. Whereas in the City of Boston there existed up to forty Unitarian or Universalist churches at the turn of the century, there are seven today. The Unitarian Universalist Association Department of Extension has only recently determined the appropriateness of aiding the inner-city urban churches which remain to us.

Morrison-Reed charges that BAC was “ready to dole out money to its needy clientèle-but not to engage creatively its religious partners.”⁶ The history of the controversy from 1967 to 1970 reveals an extraordinary degree of creative engagement at all levels. The main factor was not lack of engagement, but that engagement was limited to personal and group encounters without benefit of institutional mediating structures (mission communities) which might have provided the leaven, such as served the RCA so well in its dealings with black power.

I turn now to the issue of democratic process, which is commonly acknowledged to be the Unitarian Universalist methodology for “unearthing the truth.” As the Rev. Daniel Higgins states, “Our salvation lies in our willingness to be open and receptive to our chosen methodology. In his critique of the Black

Empowerment Controversy, Higgins charges that, “when Unitarian Universalists engaged this social issue ... they abandoned their theological method. They bowed down to Baal and sacrificed their methodology to the god of relevance.”” The impression given is that the controversy was something alien to and outside of Unitarian Universalism, demanding that we sacrifice our principles in order to engage in it, rather than an internal issue radically affecting our perception of ourselves and demonstrating that we had not fully appreciated the radical nature of the very democratic principles that we avowed. Rather than abandoning our democratic methodology, black Unitarian Universalists pointed out that we had never fully acted upon its precepts, since we had heretofore seen fit to exclude them from meaningful leadership roles.

One of the lessons to be learned from the encounter between black and white Unitarian Universalists is that the democratic process is essentially an encounter among people with differing interests, perspectives, opinions—an encounter in which the people reconsider and mutually revise opinions and interests, both individual and common. This encounter happens always in a context of conflict, imperfect knowledge, uncertainty. The conflict resolution achieved is always more or less temporary, subjected to reconsideration, rarely unanimous. What matters is not unanimity but discourse between equally empowered persons or groups. The fact that black Unitarian Universalists had no established and generally recognized power base called the democratic enterprise into question.

The democratic method affirms that only in political struggle can we recognize that the conditions under which we live are the result of human creation (and not the result of some given supernatural order). These conditions change as human beings change. Change occurs in the context of political struggle. In political struggle we take charge of our history-making abilities.

It was this affirmation of the democratic method in all its radical nature that empowered not only Unitarian Universalist black persons but also Unitarian Universalist youth to assert their needs and their unique perspectives during the period with which we have been dealing. They were met in their effort by those who, while giving lip service to the democratic process, did not perceive its radical nature; who operated on the implicit belief that hierarchy, bureaucracy and established expertise make sense, and that those who would reshape the denomination in radical ways must adapt to those requirements.

One day, as Albert Camus wrote, “a slave who has been taking orders all his life suddenly decides that he cannot obey some new command,” and he says, “No more”” Such an action occurred in the Emergency Conference in N.Y.C. in 1967 among black Unitarian Universalists and the denomination to which they had given their allegiance.

Historically such popular empowerment has appeared not only on the large, dramatic scale of revolution but also on the small every-day and local scale of a denominational conference, not only in the Russian, Chinese or American Revolution but also in the struggles of the Civil Rights movement and the women’s movement. It can begin with a small local incident (a bus in Montgomery, Alabama or a hotel room in New York City) and spread to mobilize a nation or a denomination (or the world).

What occurred within our Unitarian Universalist ranks was not a rejection of democratic method but a revolutionary demand that it be put into practice. Our denomination was simply the context for one more chapter in a relatively familiar recurring story: the persistent struggle pursued in the widest variety of ways, under the most diverse circumstances, of people finding ways to participate in the decisions that affect their lives—decisions from which they have been excluded by the formal institutions of power.

If we place the black empowerment controversy in the context of a listing of historical examples of efforts to enlarge the scope of participatory democracy, another truth is revealed. None of the examples could be said to have succeeded unambiguously. However, successful outcome is not the only measure of a movement’s significance. Even though the black empowerment controversy did not succeed in significantly changing the power structure and the power brokerage practices of the Unitarian Universalist Association, it provided an example of how an institution and its membership could be transformed in democratic directions.

Speaking against the tactics of separatism as being in violation of the democratic process (our theological method), Higgins continues the long-standing misapplication of theology to the concept of racial integration. Until the mid-1950’s, American theologians (both black and white) had taught that social progress and the unity of humanity depended upon the disappearance of all ethnic and racial identity and separateness. It was liberal religious dogma that the closure of sociological and spiritual space between races would eventually achieve nonsegregated churches and a nonsegregated society. ‘What though the Kingdom’s long delay and still with haughty foes must come, it gives us that for which to pray, a field for toil and faith and hope,’ we said and we believed.

Racial identity should be no bar to full fellowship and participation in church or society, we had made very clear. Where we were mistaken was in the supposition that white perceptions of human reality in American society and in our Unitarian Universalist churches were the (acceptable) qualified liberal democratic perception. We did not fully appreciate the role that our own racial identity (and our identification with the dominant racial values of this society) played in our perception of reality.

Black humanity in America is formed in the matrix of psychological and physical suffering, segregation, discrimination and the ever-present remembrance of a previous condition of involuntary servitude. Out of this condition has come a type of human being whose sensibilities and perceptions, religious and secular, are rarely identical with those who are “born and raised white” in America. This does not make such alternative sensibilities and perceptions invalid. Quite the contrary, they provide a necessary balance and corrective to the perception of white America. The black experience they carry within themselves, a depth and a richness, a passion for justice that enables the bearer to discern in the truths about the democratic method elements that white liberals have both forgotten and ignored.

To the extent that Unitarian Universalists (and the white American religious community in general) ignored or denigrated those values, by presupposing that the themes and motifs of an “integrated” (read “desegregated, but white”) church were normative for all Unitarian Universalists, Unitarian Universalism disqualified the black human perspective as effectively as black people had been disqualified by white politicians, white labor leaders and white business enterprises.

The rise of the Black Power movement after 1966, with its emphasis upon black solidarity, pride and self-determination, completed the destruction of integrationism as the dominant ideology of the black community *but not of the white community*. Throughout the period which we have been considering, the theological defense of integration did not lack for spokespersons who, in their zeal, failed to take into account the painful deracination and dehumanization which black people were called upon to suffer as the price of a powerless and humiliating assimilation into an essentially racist white middle-class liberal denomination and culture.

A critical ethical issue raised by the Black Empowerment Controversy revolved around the question of guilt. Throughout the Controversy those who were opposed to the denominational funding of BAC charged those who supported the funding with having been “guilt-tripped” themselves and of attempting to “guilt-trip” the denomination into support of the Black Agenda. Those leveling such accusations pointed to the fact that the Cleveland General Assembly in 1968 occurred six weeks after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

There is no question that the assassination had an effect upon those supporting the funding of BAC at Cleveland as it had an effect upon American society generally: the assassination was the supreme statement of racism’s corrosive effect and the ultimate measure of the failure of the nation to create a human and equitable society for white as well as for black people. The assassination of King symbolized how, on the level of power, racism is used to effect magical solutions of the unresolved social problems of the white community. But this awareness of the structural and institutional significance of the assassination was not generally shared in the denomination, which reflected the standard middle-class understanding of guilt expressed totally in individualistic terms.

Our middle-class society is imbued with the spirit of individual piety. Because of this emphasis upon individualism and personal responsibility for one’s acts, the singular person is isolated from owning significant responsibility for the social structure. The individual is encouraged to concentrate his/her moral energies on personal and interpersonal areas. The result is a feeling of being divorced from and having no significant responsibility for a society in which black people are oppressed and black leaders assassinated. The individual feels passive toward and not responsible for the evils which are inherited from the past or for the generally oppressive structure of the present social system. Guilt and innocence are treated as personal feelings (if one doesn’t *feel* guilty, then one *is not* guilty). Lack of personal guilt feelings is taken as sufficient evidence of one’s innocence. Statements indicating a guilt that is not individually felt or acknowledged as being one’s own personal responsibility are suspect, an indication of an ulterior motive or some personality disfunction on the part of the “guilt-tripper.”

Although personal guilt feelings were largely absent, there did exist throughout the denomination a sense that we ought to have overcome the structured dimensions of racism in our society, woven into the very fabric of our middle-class culture. While not personally guilty of slavery, lynchings, or other past systematic human degradations based upon race, all white people living in the society are guilty of allowing the residues,

the sublimations and the consequences of those past racist degradations to persist in our institutions, including our liberal churches.

Drawing upon his experience in Germany, James Luther Adams makes the point that, “Post-Nazi Germany provides us with a warning. In some quarters in Germany, the memory of the Nazi period has elicited only rationalizations that aim to explain away the evils of Nazism and responsibility for them. In attacking and revealing these evasions of responsibility, the more healthy-minded Germans have asserted that the rationalizations are bound to leave Germany corrupt; indeed, make it more corrupt.”¹.

Our past is still a part of the structure of the present. Not only is the past related to the present but actual personal guilt (whether acknowledged or not) is inextricably bound up with the guilt of institutions which systematically exclude and deprive. The problem is not how or whether we accept personal guilt feelings or, once accepted, how we deal with them. Library shelves are full of theological and psychological reflections on how to deal with such personal feelings. The problem is institutional. At the center of the individual self there is a will, and the will can change. But is there anything in institutions comparable to the will that can be induced to change for the better?

If we view institutions, and particularly the liberal church, as the product of social forces or the result of natural patterns of growth and decay reflecting social changes, then the answer to the question must be negative. But social organizations are not simply the products of social pressures. To be a viable institution the organization must have an inner logic; it must have a claim to legitimacy that invests the network of relationships within it with a sense of purpose and a sense of worth.

In short, an institution is more than the sum of its parts. The question, then, is what shape will the institution take? The shape and the character depend upon what the institution is at its core; the place where the institution’s basic values and purposes reside. These core values and purposes comprise the institution’s spirit, or, more appropriately, its spirituality, its ‘soul’

Black people have seen and made us aware that there is a core, a “soul” in institutions; middle-class Black Unitarian Universalists (come to an awareness of their blackness) made the rational, bureaucratic Unitarian Universalist Association aware of its “soul” How? By acting through BUUC and BAC to make us aware of the contradictions which exist between our honoring of democracy as an organizing principle and our acting upon its radical imperatives; by acting through BUUC and BAC to make us aware that integration (not merely as a high-sounding principle to be honored in our rhetoric but as practiced in the vast majority of our churches and our fellowships) had not been effective in freeing us from the effects of our racism.

Black Unitarian Universalists had been sufficiently *included* in the Unitarian Universalist movement and were sufficiently familiar with the Unitarian Universalist values and principles to be aware of the core, the “soul” of this religious institution. Black Unitarian Universalists had been sufficiently *excluded* to be able to identify the ways by which the Unitarian Universalist Association systematically but subtly denied and obscured and kept to itself the power of leadership and decision-making at its core. When Black Unitarian Universalists made their demands upon the institution, the incomprehending blankness of white faces was taken as evidence of an insidious attempt to sustain white power.

Black Unitarian Universalists could hardly be faulted for harboring such a belief. Even a cursory reading of Unitarian Universalist history for more than a century leading to this conflict had acquainted them with the fact that Unitarian and Universalist prophetic voices had been calling churches and fellowships to new involvement in the transformation of modern life and a new awareness of the suffering of the oppressed in the society. To the voices of the abolitionists were added the voices proclaiming the Social Gospel, women’s suffrage and child labor laws, the labor movement and the Civil Rights Movement. All of these had certainly occasioned intramural disputes and conflicts among us, but the occasion for these disputes and conflicts was the continuing effort to get the liberal church to throw its weight on the side of justice. The Black Empowerment Controversy was another chapter in this ongoing story.

There is no question that the Administration of Unitarian Universalist Association President Robert West or the Unitarian Universalist Association Board of Trustees was relieved by the disaffiliation of BAC in 1970. The decision presaged a return to “normalcy” from the perspective of denominational leadership. Individuals, churches and fellowships would have the opportunity to support black empowerment directly through the purchase of BAC Bonds, the means by which BAC proposed to fund the programs which it had undertaken. But the denominational connection between BUUC/BAC and the Unitarian Universalist Association was at an end. Denominational leadership could content itself with the conduct of its regular

business free from the pressures created by the Black Empowerment Controversy.

The divorce of BUUC/BAC from the Unitarian Universalist Association brought to an end the denominations concern for racial justice, as Vice President William Schulz has pointed out. It also marked a serious decline in financial contributions to the denomination. Programs had to be curtailed; denominational departments had to be reorganized because of the financial situation. Not until another decade had passed would the Annual Fund rise to the level that it had attained (in the purchasing power of 1968 and 1969 dollars) during the turbulent years of the Controversy.

Even more debilitating to this liberal denomination was the exodus of black people from our ranks following the Controversy. Because no figures of church membership according to race exist, it is impossible to determine with accuracy the numbers of black Unitarian Universalists who left the denomination. Several observers opine that as many as one thousand black persons actually terminated their membership in Unitarian Universalist churches and fellowships with which they had formally affiliated themselves. Others who had not formally joined our denomination but who had observed with growing interest and enthusiasm the movement toward empowerment turned to look elsewhere for liberation initiatives.

The loss to our denomination is not limited to the loss of persons. In addition we suffered the withdrawal of a unique and distinct perspective, a depth of understanding and a rich appreciation of the human condition that these black people brought with them. While they themselves were middle-class black people, they provided the denomination with the opportunity to discover first-hand that “the truth of freedom in the world is the truth of the truly disinherited and that the state of freedom is most accurately reflected in the lives of those at the bottom of society” Following the divorce of BUUC/BAC from the Unitarian Universalist Association, these gifts of perspective would largely disappear beneath the surface of white middle-class ideology which would reassert its firm grasp upon Unitarian Universalism.

Whites as well as blacks left the denomination in the wake of the Black Empowerment Controversy. However, the decline in denominational membership has been linked to a number of factors and concerns. In addition to the denomination’s involvement with BUUC/BAC and the black agenda, the escalating Vietnam War was proving a source of friction and stress.

Many persons who are close to an institution which is undergoing severe stress and inner turmoil wonder whether a house seemingly divided against itself can stand. They answer for themselves by getting out of the house. Others reach out to grasp modern society’s propensity for technique in the belief that sufficient sensitivity training, administrative skill and conflict management are all that are necessary to hold things together. Still others find that the moral legitimacy of the institution is severely compromised if not totally dissipated in situations of conflict, and they leave. While each of these responses found some favor with elements within Unitarian Universalism, none of them takes into sufficient consideration the durability of the institution or the enlivening power of its prophetic message.

The prophetic message is epitomized in a statement of Martin Luther King, Jr.: “If the church does not participate actively in the struggle for peace and for economic and racial justice, it will forfeit the loyalty of millions, because people everywhere will say that the Church is paralyzed; but if the Church will free itself from the shackles of a deadening status quo and, recovering its great historic mission, will speak and act fearlessly and insistently in the cause of justice and peace, it will kindle the imagination of humankind and fire the souls of people, infusing them with a glowing and ardent love for truth, for justice and for peace.” The Black Empowerment Controversy, 1967 to 1970, gave testimony of a church that did “participate actively in the struggle for peace and for economic and racial justice.” We can take pride in the fact that black Unitarian Universalists found this essentially white-middle-class denomination worthy of struggle and effort and involvement. We should take pride in the fact that we were the first denomination to vote a “reparational” amount of our denominational funds to the cause of black empowerment as defined by BUUC/BAC. By our General Assembly votes in 1968 and again in 1969 to fund the multi-racial Black Affairs Council, we were saying to black Unitarian Universalists and to the black community generally, “Don’t just take the money and go, but take us with you in a way that will contribute to a larger vision of a unified humanity for all of us, black and white alike.”

But after the divorce of BUUC/BAC from the Unitarian Universalist Association, we allowed ourselves to slip into “the shackles of a deadening status quo.” We retreated into a complacent arrogance as the denomination dwindled, urban churches closed, church school enrollment decreased, and the vital spirit of beneficent change in the area of racial justice moved away from us.

More than a decade later, the Black Empowerment Controversy remains buried below the surface of denominational consciousness, “a wreck” in the words of poet Adrienne Rich; a wreck demanding denominational recognition, exploration, retrieval.

I came to explore the wreck.

The words are purposes. The words are maps.

I came to see the damage that was done and the treasures that prevail...

The wreck I came for:

The wreck and not the story of the wreck The thing itself and not the myth.. 13

The Black Empowerment Controversy has created its own mythology. Much of that mythology is negative; a “wreck” is not a subject that readily invites approval. The period with which we have been dealing did end in failure, with the denomination’s leadership unwilling to provide the support mandated by the General Assemblies of 1968 and 1969.

Having taken the initiative among religious communities to honor the formation of a Black Caucus in our midst and to support black empowerment, we did fail to sustain the momentum of our initial efforts.

And yet these failures should not obscure the hope and promise which BUUC/BAC’s programmatic efforts and initiatives brought to the black community or the good will and interracial understanding which those programmatic efforts generated for Unitarian Universalism during a time when open hostility toward the racism of the white middle class was apparent.

The Black Empowerment Controversy left an aftermath of pain and frustration, tension and anguish with which the denomination still must deal. But balanced against this negative residue, there is also a legacy of vitality and enthusiasm generated during the period of the Controversy and reflected in the array of journals, fact sheets, newsletters, and broadsides which flowed from denominational presses. The flow dwindled to a trickle after the Controversy as the denomination returned to bland standardization.

The period of the Controversy was “the best of times and the worst of times” during which we confronted our contradictions. We discovered that we were a denomination capable of great outpourings of energy and devotion as well as great contradictions of fear and anger. The contradictions which the Controversy generated remain largely unresolved. They continue to generate both pain and confusion.

Some measure of that confusion results from our failure to apply the concept of judgment to this period. Judgment as a prevailing condition is apparent in two contrasting reactions to the same event. Recalling the hours immediately following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., one white Unitarian Universalist Minister spoke of how the community in which he lived and served was gripped by a paralyzing terror. An atmosphere of profound immobilizing despair settled upon people. The society was collapsing, and there was nothing to be done. Another white Unitarian Universalist minister, attending a conference of FULLBAC when the news of King’s assassination was announced, was also profoundly affected. He recalls being gripped not by paralytic impotence and despair but by a sense of inescapable prophetic demands that the time for courageous action in the cause of racial justice was categorically imperative.

The assassination of King was, by any accounting, a judgment upon white middle-class society. A sense of having been tried and found wanting was manifest in our liberal religious community. But the two differing reactions to that sense of having been tried indicate the difference between judgment as deadening punishment and judgments as positive lifegiving, life-affirming summonses to action.

The concept of judgment is often equated with punishment. This is a serious error. Punishment is not judgment but rather the result of judgment rejected; the result of one’s refusal to accept responsibility which thereby leads to isolation and its accompanying despair. On the other hand, judgment accepted leads to a renewed sense of community; a sense of partnership with others who are struggling to right the wrongs of a society gone awry. Judgment accepted means admitting complicity in a grievous situation, accepting responsibility and feeling empowered to strive to correct that situation.

This lecture has already addressed and rejected the concept of guilt as inadequate to any but the most superficial understanding of the impact of the King assassination upon this period. The concept of judgment affords a positive assessment of the denomination’s achievements during the Controversy without diminishing or demeaning the struggles undergone or the anguish experienced by those who shared and shaped this chapter in Unitarian Universalist history.

The Black Empowerment Controversy provided Unitarian Universalism with its most rigorous testing during this century. It demanded a width of imagination, a depth of sensitivity and a contagion of zeal. These are the marks of a religious transformation. No amount of high rhetoric or pious posturing can cover their absence. The Controversy did, and will continue to, transform us, as its meanings and resonances continue to impress themselves upon us. In all of the confusions, the angers, the tensions of that time it is possible to

hear a new kind of rushing of the whirlwind of God.

FOOTNOTES, LECTURE NUMBER IV 1. Mark Morrison-Reed, *Black Pioneers*,

Preface

2. *Institutional Racism Audit*, Report to the Board of Trustees, Unitarian Universalist Association by Institution Racism Audit Team and Community Change, Inc., April 1981
3. *Ibid.*, p. 47
4. Mark Morrison-Reed, *Black Pioneers*, p. 146
5. Noel Erskin, *Black People and The Reformed Church in America*, (Reformed Church Press, Lansing, IL, 1978)
6. Mark Morrison-Reed, sermon delivered First Universalist Church, Rochester, NY
7. Daniel G. Higgins, "Color Line Controversy;" p. 17
8. *Ibid.*
9. Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, (New York: Random House, 1956) p. 13
10. James L. Adams, "Our Unconquered Past;" *Unitarian Christian*, 1967, p. 4 11. Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, (New York: Orbis, 1973) p. 15 12. quoted by James Lawson, "The Church and Direct Action" *Proceedings of the Second National Conference on The Church and Social Action*, (Society for Common Insights, Vol. II, No. 2, Nov. 17, 1978) p. 31
13. Adrienne Rich, "Diving Into The Wreck;" *Poems, Selected and New, 1950-1974* (New York: Norton, 1974) p. 197

***“The Superiority of Moral over
Political Power”***

by Adin Ballou

The Superiority of Moral over Political Power

Adin Ballou,

<http://www.adinballou.org/moralpower.shtml>

What is moral power? The power which operates on the affections, passions, reason, and moral sentiment of mankind, and thereby controls them without physical force. It comprehends every description of influence, which, without applying or threatening to apply physical coercion, tends to determine the will, conduct, and character of human beings.

What is political power? The power of the State, body politic, or civil government, operating under the forms of law, and compelling, or threatening to compel subjection to its requirements by physical force. It comprehends every description of influence founded on the authority of the State, which either applies or threatens to apply physical coercion.

Taking these two powers, as they exist in this country, and as they are available to philanthropists and moral reformers, let us contrast them. We affirm that moral power is superior.

In respect to general objects, moral power is superior

It is the object of moral power to regenerate public sentiment — to superinduce a right public opinion and WILL in the great mass of the people. It is the object of political power to overawe and coerce, by penal laws, delinquent and refractory individuals. Moral power converts the majority to righteousness, in spite of ten thousand difficulties. Political power expresses the new public will in the forms of law, and by physical force, applied or threatened, overawes the minority, and coerces the unwilling few into apparent subjection.

Moral power does ninety-nine one hundredths of the work, and political power, in its official robes, with a half unsheathed sword at its side, follows after, claiming all the credit. Which is the superior?

In respect to the numbers who exercise power, moral power is superior

Moral power is exercised by every human being, in greater or less degree, and is reflected from every created thing. It is vested in the patriarch and the new born babe; in the prince and the beggar; in the philosopher and the idiot. It comes forth from beast, bird, fish, insect, trees, plants, flowers, fruits, winds, fires, floods, earth, sea and skies, with all their infinitude of startling, grand, pleasing and charming objects. All these address themselves to the affections, passions, reasons and moral sentiment of mankind. They all tend to determine his will, conduct and character. Deeds, words, signs, gestures, looks; tones, tears, sighs, animate and inanimate forms — yes, silence itself — more expressive sometimes than speech, concur in the result. The guilty fly at the movement of a leaf, and hear heart-searching admonitions in the moans of the passing wind. A falling apple suggested to great Newton the law of universal gravitation, and revolutionized astronomical philosophy throughout the world. Poets have gathered inspiration amid the vast wonders and inimitable beauties of nature; and God's chosen saints have been, rapt in deeper adoration by contemplating the grandeur, order, and loveliness of creation.

Moral power is everywhere, in all things. It is exercised by, or at least reflected from, the innumerable hosts of universal nature. But political power is exercised by only a handful of human beings. It is vested, nominally, in the voting citizens, and exercised by their chosen representatives in the several departments of government. And who are voting citizens? Exclude all females, all

minors under twenty-one years of age, all paupers and persons under guardianship, all slaves, all un-naturalized foreigners, and many others for want of the requisite property qualification. The residue will be voting citizens, amounting to less than one fourth of the whole nation. Deduct from these, the sick, helpless, indifferent, and scrupulously conscientious against voting, and the average proportion of actual voters to the mass will be one to six, or more likely one to ten. Of these, there must be a majority, or strong plurality to determine any important issue. The dominant party furnishes nearly all the offices of government, and is itself managed in all its principal doings by a subtle few behind the curtain. The whole political power in every country is virtually in the hands of a mere fraction of the people.

In respect to the prominent details of operation, moral power is superior

Moral power unites male and female in marriage, multiplies human beings, subdues the earth, increases wealth, forms neighborhoods, and builds cities. Political power takes the census, levies taxes, trains soldiers to do its fighting, and assumes the office of protecting the people.

Moral power educates the people, intellectually, religiously, morally, socially and, industrially. Political power tickles their ambition, uses up their faculties, consumes their substance, and punishes a few of their grosser crimes. Moral power is busy in the nursery, in the schoolhouse, academy and college, in the laboratory, the library, the study, the hall of science, the meetinghouse, the conference room, and the sick chamber. Political power is busy managing caucuses, overseeing elections, legislating, holding courts, guarding prisoners, hanging murderers, punishing criminals, and executing all manner of legal processes.

Moral power is instant in season and out of season, endeavoring to reform and bless society. Political power is watching jealously every movement among the people that threatens to lessen its consequence, reform its abuses, or cut off its revenue. It clings with a death-grasp to all its prerogatives, immunities, formalities, honors, and emoluments.

Moral power traverses the highways and byways in search of the fallen and lost to restore them. Political power cares little for these things. It knows how to punish but not how to restore. Moral power reforms thousands of drunkards, and thereby prevents ten thousand crimes. Political power honors respectable drunkards, and often protects the manufacture of the drunkard's ruin. Yet if one of them, in his madness, slays a man, or burns a house, it ostentatiously arrests, tries and hangs him.

Moral power is putting forth mighty energies to abolish slavery, and elevate four millions of degraded beings to the rank of manhood. It is exerting its multiform influence to regenerate a corrupt public sentiment, and to superinduce a will in the people of the United States to let the oppressed go free. Political power hinders and obstructs the progress of this reform by every possible means. It is wedded to slavery, and will uphold it till a new public opinion compels it to stand off.

Moral power is earnestly engaged in abolishing the horrid custom of war. Political power is doing all it can, by precept and practice, to preserve this custom.

Moral power is trying to bring about universal reformation, holiness and happiness on earth. Political power is chiefly concerned to keep things as they are.

In respect to instrumentalities, moral power is superior

Look at the number and efficiency of these influences which moral power is every where employing to enlighten and improve mankind. Though many of them are sadly perverted, and need to be rightly directed, yet from their peculiar nature, endless variety, and universal activity, they are capable of producing stupendous results. There is Religion, acting directly on the noblest and, for good or evil, mightiest faculty of human nature, with all its elevating hopes and awful fears, with its myriads of ministers, altars, congregations and Sunday schools; its prayers, sermons, magazines, newspapers and tracts innumerable; its Bible Societies, Missionary Societies, Tract Societies, Education Societies and Theological Seminaries; its sanctity, piety, learning, zeal and devotion. Is it not alone an overmatch for all the forces of political power? Political Power could not stand a month against the undivided influence of Religion. If the Religion of this land could be perfectly Christianized in its doctrines and duties, every evil now connected with political power would presently vanish away before it.

Next comes education; in the nursery, the infant school, the common school, the high school, the academy, the Lyceum, the lecture room, the college, the university. Count up all these, with their school books, apparatus and libraries, their teachers, preceptors, tutors and eminent professors. What have we in the province of political power corresponding to all this?

Literature follows and perfects education. Think of the authors, editors and publishers; of their works, from the alphabetical primer to the huge folio; textbooks, histories, biographies, scientific repositories, encyclopedias, fiction, romance and sentiment in every variety of prose and verse; all that a man knows, thinks, imagines or suspects, written and printed in countless volumes, annuals, quarterlies, monthlies, weeklies and dailies! If one of former times could say with truth, "Let me write the ballads of the nation, and I care not who writes it laws," what shall we think of the concurrent influence of education and literature, acting upon the people of this country, though all these appliances? What has political power to compare with it?

The higher arts and sciences are not to be forgotten. The painter and sculptor are copying nature on canvas and marble. All that is awful, sublime, sacred, pure, touching, exquisite, strange, facetious, laughable, fascinating — all that can move the soul, or ravish the imagination, is found among the productions of genius. The engraver follows after, and enables the press to scatter broadcast an endless variety of pictorial representations. And, as if all this were not enough, the Daguerreotype completes the work.

Music, with magic powers and resistless charms, as she chants the sweetest strains of the poet, asserts her importance among the instrumentalities of moral power. The miracles of Orpheus are almost equaled by modern masters. Who has ever listened to the simple, pathetic, soul-subduing, heart-purifying strains of our Hutchinsons without confessing the majesty of music — the potency of its sway over all the feelings of our nature? Could we bring every band, every choir, all the masters of this captivating art into the service of Temperance, Freedom and Peace, what would they not accomplish for our world?

Still more important, moral power claims as peculiarly its own, what political power disdains — the INFLUENCE OF WOMAN. And who can estimate this influence? It is one that commences mysteriously with the first pulsation of life, and, constantly operates till the unconsciousness of death. What does not the mother, sister, lover, wife, and friend, do for man? Alas, that the influence should ever be abused, as it sometimes is! But it need not be abused. It may all be consecrated to the redemption and perfection of the race. Much, very much of it is already consecrated to that end. Where is the great or good man, of ancient or modern times, or where is the great and noble

enterprise, that ever wrought out blessings for humanity, unsanctioned and unaided by women? While heroes are riding their war-horses victoriously over the slain, or swimming in blood to a throne, the good mother is nursing and educating, in obscurity, benefactors for a degraded and suffering world. Unnoticed, unknown, unasked and unthanked, woman nourishes, refreshes, chastens, elevates and sustains human society. All that promises to reform and restore poor fallen humanity, true-hearted woman is among the first in faith, hope, charity and good works to promote. Her affection, gentleness, loveliness, taste, sympathy, delicate intellect, zeal, patience, devotion, perseverance, and tact, her counsels, prayers, tears, smiles, all together, exert an influence over mankind, to which political power with its mighty armies and navies must ever succumb. When women become what they ought to be, and do what they may do, Intemperance, Slavery, War, vindictive punishment, covetousness, cruelty and crime will pass away forever. Then will the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Last, we bring into this category the numerous family of voluntary associations: charitable, humane, philanthropic and moral reform societies of every description. All these are instrumentalities developed and employed by moral power. And who can estimate the good they have done, or the evil they have prevented? Witness their benevolence, self-sacrifice, truthfulness and zeal.

See they myriads of wretched drunkards lifted from the gutter to sobriety, respectability and comfort. See millions of men and women prevented from becoming the victims of intemperance. Hear with what faithfulness and moral courage the poor imbruted, helpless slaves are pleaded for by devoted men and women, in the presence of political power, wealth, and false religion. Voices are everywhere crying in the wilderness, and in the city, against the wickedness of the oppressor, and the heartlessness of the mighty. Every corner of the land is searched as with candles, and the nation is beginning to ferment from center to circumference as with leaven. The foolishness of preaching and publishing the truth is gradually working the overthrow of tyranny and cruelty. Meantime, War with its gory machinery is manfully assailed, and exposed in all its hatefulness, by the sons and daughters of Peace. Their weapons are not carnal, but yet mighty in this holy conflict.

Degraded and forsaken females are sought after, and taken by the hand, with tears of entreaty by the Sisters of Moral Reform, and many that were morally dead are brought to life. The guilty and endungedoned criminal, once unfit for sympathy or compassion, feels the blessings of Prisoner's Friend Societies; is visited in his dreary cell by brothers and sisters of charity, who dare to tell him he has a Father in heaven, an interceding Redeemer, and angels of mercy that seek his salvation. And when political power has done with him, if he escapes with his life, these brothers and sisters take him by the hand, find a home for him, and do all they can to restore him to society as a good and useful member. Others again are busy improving the condition of seamen, so long neglected; in rescuing the drowning, relieving the penniless sick, affording refuge to the abandoned, an asylum to the orphan, and to the unfortunate insane; befriending the destitute, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, giving eyes to the blind and soundness to the lame; enlightening the ignorant, reforming the vicious, preventing pauperism and crime; in fine, blessing the bodies and souls of mankind. Such are the instrumentalities of moral power. Such are its unostentatious but mighty and manifold works.

In the face of all this, let political power look up and present its vaunted resources. Behold its swords, its muskets, its cannon, its powder and ball, its forts, arsenals, dockyards and ships of war; its regulars, its militia, its banners, caps, feathers, tinsel epaulettes, parti-colored uniforms; its jails, prisons, gibbets, pillories, whipping-posts and stocks; its courts, processes, and technicalities; its congresses, general assemblies, town meetings, caucuses and vigilance committees; its wire-

pullers, pipe-layers, venal newspapers, and brazen-faced demagogues, all crying like the daughters of the horse-leech: Give! Give office and salary! Mighty as political power is, in physical force and money; terrible as it sometimes is in vengeance, what is it compared with moral power? And what is all the good it does compared with the good done by moral power? Why then is it so dreaded, courted, lauded, and sought after, even by professed philanthropists and moral reformers?

In respect to priority and independence of action, moral power is superior

Moral power is natural, spontaneous and independent in its action. It originates ideas, feelings, and sentiments, and changes of human conduct. It operates not only without, but against political power, and obliges political power to conform to its dictates. As an illustration, look at the rise and triumph of the Christian religion. It had no political power. It was a babe in the manger. Political power slew fourteen thousand innocents to make sure of its death. But it survived and grew up to maturity. Herod and Pilate, Jewish power and Roman power, crucified, slew, burnt, tortured and persecuted. Yet it prevailed in spite of the whole. It was never mightier; never more rapid in its progress. So it has been on a small scale with the Temperance Reform. It commenced in the face of all the untoward laws of political power, as well as of all the habits, popular customs and prejudices of the age. Yet it grew in strength and numbers to the astonishment of the world. It never advanced more rapidly and triumphantly than when it relied wholly on the resources of moral power.

Not so with political power. What important change was ever brought about for the public good by political power alone? It originates no such changes. It never thinks of making any such changes, till moral power has suggested them, and prepared the public mind to acquiesce in them. Political power is artificial, mechanical, and incapable of doing anything good, without the creative preparative and sustaining influence of moral power.

In respect to freedom and elasticity, moral power is superior

Moral power is not restricted to times, places and set forms. It is not confined to certain classes of persons, within certain limits of latitude and longitude, not to particular classes of conduct and character. It is chained to no arbitrary processes. It is free and elastic as the mountain air. It is at home everywhere, among all human beings, at all times and places.

Not so political power. It is restricted on every side by Constitutions, laws, regulations, precedents, formalities and usages. It must not meddle with person or property, unless at a particular time, within particular geographical limits, with certain preliminaries, and according to certain technical forms of proceeding. Its every process, this side of war, is liable to be hindered, and even quashed, by reason of some constitutional, legal, or technical defect. A governor is elected by a single vote, or loses his election by the accidental omission of a letter in his name on half a dozen ballots. A whole estate is lost or gained by the inadvertent omission or insertion of a word in some document or record. Political power operates through a complex and cumbrous machine, with immense internal friction, and very awkwardly accomplishes a small amount of good at an enormous expense.

Other respects in which moral power is superior

Moral power operates through all its multiform processes, and accomplishes its magnificent results with little show, and at its own expense. Political power puts on its robes, sounds a trumpet, and parades its machinery before the public eye, at the expense of the public. It taxes them as heavily

as they will bear, compels them to pay the assessment, and takes care to secure to itself an ample remuneration.

Many people continually magnify the benefits conferred on the people by governments, and the execution of the law. But whatever government may do for the governed in any way, it always takes care to see itself and its principal functionaries well paid. The fable of Justice Monkey, eating up the cheese for two litigant cats, is not malapropos. They who are fortunate enough to live above political power are fortunate indeed.

Moral power, being unostentatious and disinterested, exerts a purifying and ennobling influence on the character of its votaries. We are all made wiser and better by humble and unselfish acts to render others so. And every moral philanthropist feels that his own soul has grown in grace just in proportion to the fidelity and self-sacrifice with which he has labored to promote any great and good cause. This is not the least important part of his reward. But political power has the contrary tendency. It generally renders its devotees more selfish, corrupt, hollow-hearted, and tyrannical. Many a decently good man has gone into the labyrinth of politics and held office to his own moral ruin. And few ever came out more fit for the kingdom of heaven; unless driven by disgust from its sorceries. It requires no ordinary virtue to maintain one's moral integrity against the seductions of political power.

Finally, moral power has devised and accomplished nearly all the good that has been done among mankind since the foundation of the world. It has discovered, invented, and perfected all manner of improvements — mechanical, chemical, intellectual, social, moral and religious — which distinguish and adorn the most civilized, enlightened, and Christian portions of mankind. It has done most of these mighty works in poverty and solitude, with little or no countenance from political power or its worshipers; and not unfrequently in spite of their most deadly opposition.

On the other hand, political power seldom patronizes the benefactors of their race till they are quite able to take care of themselves. It generally starves, crucifies, or stones them, and afterwards erects monuments to their memories, or garnishes their sepulchers. It is busy with its own schemes, luxuries, pleasures and self-preservation. It has deluged the earth with blood, and persecuted many of the most righteous causes that were ever proposed to the consideration of man. Moral power has always been struggling to reform political power, and has with great difficulty succeeded in clothing it with its present respectability. All the good there is in it, has been wrought out with toil, tears and sufferings by moral power. And it never will become what it ought to be, till moral power shall have completely saturated it with Christian principle. Then will it cease from all craft, fraud, intrigue and violence, and wisely coerce the few that may need coercion at all, only by an uninjurious, beneficent physical force, which shall equally secure the individual and public welfare.

Moral power is therefore incomparably superior to political power, in respect to their general objects; to the numbers that exercise them; to the prominent details of their operation; to their instrumentalities; to priority and independence of action; to their freedom and elasticity; to their disinterestedness, their expense, their influence on their devotees, the service they have rendered mankind, and their very nature and tendency throughout.

Has not this superiority been sufficiently demonstrated? If not, let the panegyrist and dependents of political power show the contrary. Let them rail, ridicule, declaim or denounce. But with humility, sincerity, and manly honesty let them reason. If they can prove that political power is not per se necessarily evil (which no sound mind affirms), let them go farther and prove, (what we

deny) that as it is now, and is available to moral reforms in this country, its exercise is directed by Christian principles, or likely to patronize any great moral enterprise of the age. Let them proceed a step further still, and show if they can that it is the mission, or any part of the mission, of our reformers, to descend from the use of moral instrumentalities, and rely on those of political Let those who are called to testify against the iniquities of the land, and to regenerate its corrupt public sentiment, adhere closely to their work, and be careful never to endorse politically the very errors, falsehoods and vices which they morally rebuke. And may the Infinite Father, the exhaustless source of moral power, pervade the wide world with its redeeming influence, till the majesty of its excellence shall subdue the nations, and the universal chorus salute the skies:

Glory to God in the highest! on earth peace, good will to men!

A Plea for Capt. John Brown
by Henry David Thoreau

A PLEA FOR CAPTAIN JOHN BROWN

(on the day of his sentencing, 1854)

by Henry David Thoreau

I trust that you will pardon me for being here. I do not wish to force my thoughts upon you, but I feel forced myself. Little as I know of Captain Brown, I would fain do my part to correct the tone and the statements of the newspapers, and of my countrymen generally, respecting his character and actions. It costs us nothing to be just. We can at least express our sympathy with, and admiration of, him and his companions, and that is what I now propose to do. First, as to his history. I will endeavor to omit, as much as possible, what you have already read. I need not describe his person to you, for probably most of you have seen and will not soon forget him.

I am told that his grandfather, John Brown, was an officer in the Revolution; that he himself was born in Connecticut about the beginning of this century, but early went with his father to Ohio. I heard him say that his father was a contractor who furnished beef to the army there, in the War of 1812; that he accompanied him to the camp, and assisted him in that employment, seeing a good deal of military life- more, perhaps, than if he had been a soldier; for he was often present at the councils of the officers. Especially, he learned by experience how armies are supplied and maintained in the field- a work which, he observed, requires at least as much experience and skill as to lead them in battle. He said that few persons had any conception of the cost, even the pecuniary cost, of firing a single bullet in war. He saw enough, at any rate, to disgust him with a military life; indeed, to excite in him a great abhorrence of it; so much so, that though he was tempted by the offer of some petty office in the army, when he was about eighteen, he not only declined that, but he also refused to train when warned, and was fined for it. He then resolved that he would never have anything to do with any war, unless it were a war for liberty.

When the troubles in Kansas began, he sent several of his sons thither to strengthen the party of the Free State men, fitting them out with such weapons as he had; telling them that if the troubles should increase, and there should be need of him, he would follow, to assist them with his hand and counsel. This, as you all know, he soon after did; and it was through his agency, far more than any other's, that Kansas was made free.

For a part of his life he was a surveyor, and at one time he was engaged in wool-growing, and he went to Europe as an agent about that business. There, as everywhere, he had his eyes about him, and made many original observations. He said, for instance, that he saw why the soil of England was so rich, and that of Germany (I think it was) so poor, and he thought of writing to some of the crowned heads about it. It was because in England the peasantry live on the soil which they cultivate, but in Germany they are gathered into villages at night. It is a pity that he did not make a book of his observations.

I should say that he was an old-fashioned man in his respect for the Constitution, and his faith in the permanence of this Union. Slavery he deemed to be wholly opposed to these, and he was its determined foe. He was by descent and birth a New England farmer, a man of great common sense, deliberate and practical as that class is, and tenfold more so. He was like the best of those who stood at Concord Bridge once, on Lexington Common, and on Bunker Hill, only he was firmer and higher-principled than any that I have chanced to hear of as there. It was no abolition lecturer that converted him. Ethan Allen and Stark, with whom he may in some respects be compared, were rangers in a lower and less important field. They could bravely face their country's foes, but he had the courage to face his country herself when she was in the wrong.

A Western writer says, to account for his escape from so many perils, that he was concealed under a "rural exterior"; as if, in that prairie land, a hero should, by good rights, wear a citizen's dress only. He did not go to the college called Harvard, good old Alma Mater as she is. He was not fed on the pap that is there furnished. As he phrased it, "I know no more of grammar than one of your calves." But he went to the great university of the West, where he sedulously pursued the study of Liberty, for which he had early betrayed a fondness, and having taken many degrees, he finally commenced the public practice of Humanity in Kansas, as you all know. Such were his humanities, and not any study of grammar. He would have left a Greek accent slanting the wrong way, and righted up a falling man. He was one of that class of whom we hear a great deal, but, for the most part, see nothing at all- the Puritans.

It would be in vain to kill him. He died lately in the time of Cromwell, but he reappeared here. Why should he not? Some of the Puritan stock are said to have come over and settled in New England. They were a class that did something else than celebrate their forefathers' day, and eat parched corn in remembrance of that time. They were neither Democrats nor Republicans, but men of simple habits, straightforward, prayerful; not thinking much of rulers who did not fear God, not making many compromises, nor seeking after available candidates. "In his camp," as one has recently written, and as I have myself heard him state, "he permitted no profanity; no man of loose morals was suffered to remain there, unless, indeed, as a prisoner of war. 'I would rather,' said he, 'have the small-pox, yellow fever, and cholera, all together in my camp, than a man without principle.... It is a mistake, sir, that our people make, when they think that bullies are the best fighters, or that they are the fit men to oppose these Southerners. Give me men of good principles- God-fearing men- men who respect themselves, and with a dozen of them I will oppose any hundred such men as these Buford ruffians.'" He said that if one offered himself to be a soldier under him, who was forward to tell what he could or would do if he could only get sight of the enemy, he had but little confidence in him. He was never able to find more than a score or so of recruits whom he would accept, and only about a dozen, among them his sons, in whom he had perfect faith.

When he was here, some years ago, he showed to a few a little manuscript book- his "orderly book" I think he called it- containing the names of his company in Kansas, and the rules by which they bound themselves; and he stated that several of them had already sealed the contract with their blood. When some one remarked that, with the addition of a chaplain, it would have been a perfect Cromwellian troop, he observed that he would have been glad to add a chaplain to the list, if he could have found one who could fill that office worthily. It is easy enough to find one for the United States Army. I believe that he had prayers in his camp morning and evening, nevertheless.

He was a man of Spartan habits, and at sixty was scrupulous about his diet at your table, excusing himself by saying that he must eat sparingly and fare hard, as became a soldier, or one who was fitting himself for difficult enterprises, a life of exposure. A man of rare common sense and directness of speech, as of action; a transcendentalist above all, a man of ideas and principles- that was what distinguished him. Not yielding to a whim or transient impulse, but carrying out the purpose of a life. I noticed that he did not overstate anything, but spoke within bounds. I remember, particularly, how, in his speech here, he referred to what his family had suffered in Kansas, without ever giving the least vent to his pent-up fire. It was a volcano with an ordinary chimney-flue. Also referring to the deeds of certain Border Ruffians, he said, rapidly paring away his speech, like an experienced soldier, keeping a reserve of force and meaning, "They had a perfect right to be hung."

He was not in the least a rhetorician, was not talking to Buncombe or his constituents anywhere,

had no need to invent anything but to tell the simple truth, and communicate his own resolution; therefore he appeared incomparably strong, and eloquence in Congress and elsewhere seemed to me at a discount. It was like the speeches of Cromwell compared with those of an ordinary king. As for his tact and prudence, I will merely say, that at a time when scarcely a man from the Free States was able to reach Kansas by any direct route, at least without having his arms taken from him, he, carrying what imperfect guns and other weapons he could collect, openly and slowly drove an ox-cart through Missouri, apparently in the capacity of a surveyor, with his surveying compass exposed in it, and so passed unsuspected, and had ample opportunity to learn the designs of the enemy.

For some time after his arrival he still followed the same profession. When, for instance, he saw a knot of the ruffians on the prairie, discussing, of course, the single topic which then occupied their minds, he would, perhaps, take his compass and one of his sons, and proceed to run an imaginary line right through the very spot on which that conclave had assembled, and when he came up to them, he would naturally pause and have some talk with them, learning their news, and, at last, all their plans perfectly; and having thus completed his real survey he would resume his imaginary one, and run on his line till he was out of sight. When I expressed surprise that he could live in Kansas at all, with a price set upon his head, and so large a number, including the authorities, exasperated against him, he accounted for it by saying, "It is perfectly well understood that I will not be taken." Much of the time for some years he has had to skulk in swamps, suffering from poverty, and from sickness which was the consequence of exposure, befriended only by Indians and a few whites. But though it might be known that he was lurking in a particular swamp, his foes commonly did not care to go in after him. He could even come out into a town where there were more Border Ruffians than Free State men, and transact some business, without delaying long, and yet not be molested; for, said he, "no little handful of men were willing to undertake it, and a large body could not be got together in season."

As for his recent failure, we do not know the facts about it. It was evidently far from being a wild and desperate attempt. His enemy Mr. Vallandigham is compelled to say that "it was among the best planned and executed conspiracies that ever failed." Not to mention his other successes, was it a failure, or did it show a want of good management, to deliver from bondage a dozen human beings, and walk off with them by broad daylight, for weeks if not months, at a leisurely pace, through one State after another, for half the length of the North, conspicuous to all parties, with a price set upon his head, going into a court-room on his way and telling what he had done, thus convincing Missouri that it was not profitable to try to hold slaves in his neighborhood?- and this, not because the government menials were lenient, but because they were afraid of him. Yet he did not attribute his success, foolishly, to "his star," or to any magic. He said, truly, that the reason why such greatly superior numbers quailed before him was, as one of his prisoners confessed, because they lacked a cause- a kind of armor which he and his party never lacked.

When the time came, few men were found willing to lay down their lives in defence of what they knew to be wrong; they did not like that this should be their last act in this world. But to make haste to his last act, and its effects. The newspapers seem to ignore, or perhaps are really ignorant, of the fact that there are at least as many as two or three individuals to a town throughout the North who think much as the present speaker does about him and his enterprise. I do not hesitate to say that they are an important and growing party. We aspire to be something more than stupid and timid chattels, pretending to read history and our Bibles, but desecrating every house and every day we breathe in. Perhaps anxious politicians may prove that only seventeen white men and five negroes were concerned in the late enterprise; but their very anxiety to prove this might suggest to themselves that all is not told. Why do they still dodge the truth? They are so anxious because of a

dim consciousness of the fact, which they did not distinctly face, that at least a million of the free inhabitants of the United States would have rejoiced if it had succeeded.

They at most only criticise the tactics. Though we wear no crape, the thought of that man's position and probable fate is spoiling many a man's day here at the North for other thinking. If any one who has seen him here can pursue successfully any other train of thought, I do not know what he is made of. If there is any such who gets his usual allowance of sleep, I will warrant him to fatten easily under any circumstances which do not touch his body or purse. I put a piece of paper and a pencil under my pillow, and when I could not sleep I wrote in the dark. On the whole, my respect for my fellow-men, except as one may outweigh a million, is not being increased these days. I have noticed the cold-blooded way in which newspaper writers and men generally speak of this event, as if an ordinary malefactor, though one of unusual "pluck"- as the Governor of Virginia is reported to have said, using the language of the cockpit, "the gamest man be ever saw"- had been caught, and were about to be hung. He was not dreaming of his foes when the governor thought he looked so brave. It turns what sweetness I have to gall, to hear, or hear of, the remarks of some of my neighbors. When we heard at first that he was dead, one of my townsmen observed that "he died as the fool dieth"; which, pardon me, for an instant suggested a likeness in him dying to my neighbor living.

Others, craven-hearted, said disparagingly, that "he threw his life away," because he resisted the government. Which way have they thrown their lives, pray?- such as would praise a man for attacking singly an ordinary band of thieves or murderers. I hear another ask, Yankee-like, "What will he gain by it?" as if he expected to fill his pockets by this enterprise. Such a one has no idea of gain but in this worldly sense. If it does not lead to a 'surprise' party, if he does not get a new pair of boots, or a vote of thanks, it must be a failure. "But he won't gain anything by it." Well, no, I don't suppose he could get four-and-sixpence a day for being hung, take the year round; but then he stands a chance to save a considerable part of his soul-and such a soul!- when you do not. No doubt you can get more in your market for a quart of milk than for a quart of blood, but that is not the market that heroes carry their blood to. Such do not know that like the seed is the fruit, and that, in the moral world, when good seed is planted, good fruit is inevitable, and does not depend on our watering and cultivating; that when you plant, or bury, a hero in his field, a crop of heroes is sure to spring up. This is a seed of such force and vitality, that it does not ask our leave to germinate.

The momentary charge at Balaklava, in obedience to a blundering command, proving what a perfect machine the soldier is, has, properly enough, been celebrated by a poet laureate; but the steady, and for the most part successful, charge of this man, for some years, against the legions of Slavery, in obedience to an infinitely higher command, is as much more memorable than that as an intelligent and conscientious man is superior to a machine. Do you think that that will go unsung? "Served him right"- "A dangerous man"- "He is undoubtedly insane." So they proceed to live their sane, and wise, and altogether admirable lives, reading their Plutarch a little, but chiefly pausing at that feat of Putnam, who was let down into a wolf's den; and in this wise they nourish themselves for brave and patriotic deeds some time or other. The Tract Society could afford to print that story of Putnam. You might open the district schools with the reading of it, for there is nothing about Slavery or the Church in it; unless it occurs to the reader that some pastors are wolves in sheep's clothing. "The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions," even, might dare to protest against that wolf. I have heard of boards, and of American boards, but it chanced that I never heard of this particular lumber till lately. And yet I hear of Northern men, and women, and children, by families, buying a "life-membership" in such societies as these. A life-membership in the grave! You can get buried cheaper than that.

Our foes are in our midst and all about us. There is hardly a house but is divided against itself, for our foe is the all but universal woodenness of both head and heart, the want of vitality in man, which is the effect of our vice; and hence are begotten fear, superstition, bigotry, persecution, and slavery of all kinds. We are mere figure-heads upon a bulk, with livers in the place of hearts. The curse is the worship of idols, which at length changes the worshipper into a stone image himself; and the New Englander is just as much an idolater as the Hindoo. This man was an exception, for he did not set up even a political graven image between him and his God. A church that can never have done with excommunicating Christ while it exists! Away with your broad and flat churches, and your narrow and tall churches! Take a step forward, and invent a new style of out-houses. Invent a salt that will save you, and defend our nostrils. The modern Christian is a man who has consented to say all the prayers in the liturgy, provided you will let him go straight to bed and sleep quietly afterward. All his prayers begin with "Now I lay me down to sleep," and he is forever looking forward to the time when he shall go to his "long rest." He has consented to perform certain old-established charities, too, after a fashion, but he does not wish to hear of any new-fangled ones; he doesn't wish to have any supplementary articles added to the contract, to fit it to the present time. He shows the whites of his eyes on the Sabbath, and the blacks all the rest of the week. The evil is not merely a stagnation of blood, but a stagnation of spirit. Many, no doubt, are well disposed, but sluggish by constitution and by habit, and they cannot conceive of a man who is actuated by higher motives than they are.

Accordingly they pronounce this man insane, for they know that they could never act as he does, as long as they are themselves. We dream of foreign countries, of other times and races of men, placing them at a distance in history or space; but let some significant event like the present occur in our midst, and we discover, often, this distance and this strangeness between us and our nearest neighbors. They are our Austrias, and Chinas, and South Sea Islands. Our crowded society becomes well spaced all at once, clean and handsome to the eye- a city of magnificent distances. We discover why it was that we never got beyond compliments and surfaces with them before; we become aware of as many versts between us and them as there are between a wandering Tartar and a Chinese town. The thoughtful man becomes a hermit in the thoroughfares of the market-place. Impassable seas suddenly find their level between us, or dumb steppes stretch themselves out there. It is the difference of constitution, of intelligence, and faith, and not streams and mountains, that make the true and impassable boundaries between individuals and between states.

None but the like-minded can come plenipotentiary to our court. I read all the newspapers I could get within a week after this event, and I do not remember in them a single expression of sympathy for these men. I have since seen one noble statement, in a Boston paper, not editorial. Some voluminous sheets decided not to print the full report of Brown's words to the exclusion of other matter. It was as if a publisher should reject the manuscript of the New Testament, and print Wilson's last speech. The same journal which contained this pregnant news was chiefly filled, in parallel columns, with the reports of the political conventions that were being held. But the descent to them was too steep. They should have been spared this contrast-- been printed in an extra, at least. To turn from the voices and deeds of earnest men to the cackling of political conventions! Office-seekers and speech-makers, who do not so much as lay an honest egg, but wear their breasts bare upon an egg of chalk! Their great game is the game of straws, or rather that universal aboriginal game of the platter, at which the Indians cried hub bub! Exclude the reports of religious and political conventions, and publish the words of a living man.

But I object not so much to what they have omitted as to what they have inserted. Even the Liberator called it "a misguided, wild, and apparently insane-effort." As for the herd of newspapers

and magazines, I do not chance to know an editor in the country who will deliberately print anything which he knows will ultimately and permanently reduce the number of his subscribers. They do not believe that it would be expedient. How then can they print truth? If we do not say pleasant things, they argue, nobody will attend to us. And so they do like some travelling auctioneers, who sing an obscene song, in order to draw a crowd around them. Republican editors, obliged to get their sentences ready for the morning edition, and accustomed to look at everything by the twilight of politics, express no admiration, nor true sorrow even, but call these men “deluded fanatics”- “mistaken men”- “insane,” or “crazed.” It suggests what a sane set of editors we are blessed with, not “mistaken men”; who know very well on which side their bread is buttered, at least.

A man does a brave and humane deed, and at once, on all sides, we hear people and parties declaring, “I didn’t do it, nor countenance him to do it, in any conceivable way. It can’t be fairly inferred from my past career.” I, for one, am not interested to hear you define your position. I don’t know that I ever was or ever shall be. I think it is mere egotism, or impertinent at this time. Ye needn’t take so much pains to wash your skirts of him. No intelligent man will ever be convinced that he was any creature of yours. He went and came, as he himself informs us, “under the auspices of John Brown and nobody else.” The Republican Party does not perceive how many his failure will make to vote more correctly than they would have them. They have counted the votes of Pennsylvania & Co., but they have not correctly counted Captain Brown’s vote. He has taken the wind out of their sails- the little wind they had- and they may as well lie to and repair.

What though he did not belong to your clique! Though you may not approve of his method or his principles, recognize his magnanimity. Would you not like to claim kindredship with him in that, though in no other thing he is like, or likely, to you? Do you think that you would lose your reputation so? What you lost at the spile, you would gain at the bung. If they do not mean all this, then they do not speak the truth, and say what they mean. They are simply at their old tricks still. “It was always conceded to him,” says one who calls him crazy, “that he was a conscientious man, very modest in his demeanor, apparently inoffensive, until the subject of Slavery was introduced, when he would exhibit a feeling of indignation unparalleled.” The slave-ship is on her way, crowded with its dying victims; new cargoes are being added in mid-ocean; a small crew of slaveholders, countenanced by a large body of passengers, is smothering four millions under the hatches, and yet the politician asserts that the only proper way by which deliverance is to be obtained is by “the quiet diffusion of the sentiments of humanity,” without any “outbreak.” As if the sentiments of humanity were ever found unaccompanied by its deeds, and you could disperse them, all finished to order, the pure article, as easily as water with a watering-pot, and so lay the dust. What is that that I hear cast overboard? The bodies of the dead that have found deliverance. That is the way we are “diffusing” humanity, and its sentiments with it.

Prominent and influential editors, accustomed to deal with politicians, men of an infinitely lower grade, say, in their ignorance, that he acted “on the principle of revenge.” They do not know the man. They must enlarge themselves to conceive of him. I have no doubt that the time will come when they will begin to see him as he was. They have got to conceive of a man of faith and of religious principle, and not a politician or an Indian; of a man who did not wait till he was personally interfered with or thwarted in some harmless business before he gave his life to the cause of the oppressed. If Walker may be considered the representative of the South, I wish I could say that Brown was the representative of the North. He was a superior man. He did not value his bodily life in comparison with ideal things. He did not recognize unjust human laws, but resisted them as he was bid. For once we are lifted out of the trivialness and dust of politics into the region of truth and manhood. No man in America has ever stood up so persistently and effectively for the

dignity of human nature, knowing himself for a man, and the equal of any and all governments.

In that sense he was the most American of us all. He needed no babbling lawyer, making false issues, to defend him. He was more than a match for all the judges that American voters, or office-holders of whatever grade, can create. He could not have been tried by a jury of his peers, because his peers did not exist. When a man stands up serenely against the condemnation and vengeance of mankind, rising above them literally by a whole body- even though he were of late the vilest murderer, who has settled that matter with himself- the spectacle is a sublime one- didn't ye know it, ye Liberators, ye Tribunes, ye Republicans?- and we become criminal in comparison.

Do yourselves the honor to recognize him. He needs none of your respect. As for the Democratic journals, they are not human enough to affect me at all. I do not feel indignation at anything they may say. I am aware that I anticipate a little- that he was still, at the last accounts, alive in the hands of his foes; but that being the case, I have all along found myself thinking and speaking of him as physically dead. I do not believe in erecting statues to those who still live in our hearts, whose bones have not yet crumbled in the earth around us, but I would rather see the statue of Captain Brown in the Massachusetts State-House yard than that of any other man whom I know.

I rejoice that I live in this age, that I am his contemporary. What a contrast, when we turn to that political party which is so anxiously shuffling him and his plot out of its way, and looking around for some available slaveholder, perhaps, to be its candidate, at least for one who will execute the Fugitive Slave Law, and all those other unjust laws which he took up arms to annul! Insane! A father and six sons, and one son-in-law, and several more men besides- as many at least as twelve disciples- all struck with insanity at once; while the same tyrant holds with a firmer gripe than ever his four millions of slaves, and a thousand sane editors, his abettors, are saving their country and their bacon! just as insane were his efforts in Kansas. Ask the tyrant who is his most dangerous foe, the sane man or the insane? Do the thousands who know him best, who have rejoiced at his deeds in Kansas, and have afforded him material aid there, think him insane? Such a use of this word is a mere trope with most who persist in using it, and I have no doubt that many of the rest have already in silence retracted their words. Read his admirable answers to Mason and others. How they are dwarfed and defeated by the contrast! On the one side, half-brutish, half-timid questioning; on the other, truth, clear as lightning, crashing into their obscene temples. They are made to stand with Pilate, and Gessler, and the Inquisition. How ineffectual their speech and action! and what a void their silence! They are but helpless tools in this great work. It was no human power that gathered them about this preacher.

What have Massachusetts and the North sent a few sane representatives to Congress for, of late years?- to declare with effect what kind of sentiments? All their speeches put together and boiled down- and probably they themselves will confess it- do not match for manly directness and force, and for simple truth, the few casual remarks of crazy John Brown on the floor of the Harper's Ferry engine-house- that man whom you are about to hang, to send to the other world, though not to represent you there. No, he was not our representative in any sense. He was too fair a specimen of a man to represent the like of us. Who, then, were his constituents? If you read his words understandingly you will find out. In his case there is no idle eloquence, no made, nor maiden speech, no compliments to the oppressor. Truth is his inspirer, and earnestness the polisher of his sentences. He could afford to lose his Sharp's rifles, while he retained his faculty of speech- a Sharp's rifle of infinitely surer and longer range.

And the New York Herald reports the conversation verbatim! It does not know of what undying words it is made the vehicle. I have no respect for the penetration of any man who can read the

report of that conversation and still call the principal in it insane. It has the ring of a saner sanity than an ordinary discipline and habits of life, than an ordinary organization, secure. Take any sentence of it- "Any questions that I can honorably answer, I will; not otherwise. So far as I am myself concerned, I have told everything truthfully. I value my word, sir." The few who talk about his vindictive spirit, while they really admire his heroism, have no test by which to detect a noble man, no amalgam to combine with his pure gold. They mix their own dross with it. It is a relief to turn from these slanders to the testimony of his more truthful, but frightened jailers and hangmen. Governor Wise speaks far more justly and appreciatingly of him than any Northern editor, or politician, or public personage, that I chance to have heard from. I know that you can afford to hear him again on this subject. He says: "They are themselves mistaken who take him to be a madman.... He is cool, collected, and indomitable, and it is but just to him to say that he was humane to his prisoners.... And he inspired me with great trust in his integrity as a man of truth. He is a fanatic, vain and garrulous" (I leave that part to Mr. Wise), "but firm, truthful, and intelligent. His men, too, who survive, are like him.... Colonel Washington says that he was the coolest and firmest man he ever saw in defying danger and death. With one son dead by his side, and another shot through, he felt the pulse of his dying son with one hand, and held his rifle with the other, and commanded his men with the utmost composure, encouraging them to be firm, and to sell their lives as dear as they could.

Of the three white prisoners, Brown, Stevens, and Coppoc, it was hard to say which was most firm." Almost the first Northern men whom the slaveholder has learned to respect! The testimony of Mr. Vallandigham, though less valuable, is of the same purport, that "it is vain to underrate either the man or his conspiracy.... He is the farthest possible removed from the ordinary ruffian, fanatic, or madman." "All is quiet at Harper's Ferry," say the journals. What is the character of that calm which follows when the law and the slaveholder prevail? I regard this event as a touchstone designed to bring out, with glaring distinctness, the character of this government. We needed to be thus assisted to see it by the light of history. It needed to see itself. When a government puts forth its strength on the side of injustice, as ours to maintain slavery and kill the liberators of the slave, it reveals itself a merely brute force, or worse, a demoniacal force. It is the head of the Plug-Uglies.

It is more manifest than ever that tyranny rules. I see this government to be effectually allied with France and Austria in oppressing mankind. There sits a tyrant holding fettered four millions of slaves; here comes their heroic liberator. This most hypocritical and diabolical government looks up from its seat on the gasping four millions, and inquires with an assumption of innocence: "What do you assault me for? Am I not an honest man? Cease agitation on this subject, or I will make a slave of you, too, or else hang you." We talk about a representative government; but what a monster of a government is that where the noblest faculties of the mind, and the whole heart, are not represented! A semihuman tiger or ox, stalking over the earth, with its heart taken out and the top of its brain shot away. Heroes have fought well on their stumps when their legs were shot off, but I never heard of any good done by such a government as that.

The only government that I recognize- and it matters not how few are at the head of it, or how small its army- is that power that establishes justice in the land, never that which establishes injustice. What shall we think of a government to which all the truly brave and just men in the land are enemies, standing between it and those whom it oppresses? A government that pretends to be Christian and crucifies a million Christs every day! Treason! Where does such treason take its rise? I cannot help thinking of you as you deserve, ye governments. Can you dry up the fountains of thought? High treason, when it is resistance to tyranny here below, has its origin in, and is first committed by, the power that makes and forever re-creates man. When you have caught and hung all these human rebels, you have accomplished nothing but your own guilt, for you have not struck

at the fountain-head. You presume to contend with a foe against whom West Point cadets and rifled cannon point not. Can all the art of the cannon-founder tempt matter to turn against its maker? Is the form in which the founder thinks he casts it more essential than the constitution of it and of himself?

The United States have a cottle of four millions of slaves. They are determined to keep them in this condition; and Massachusetts is one of the confederated overseers to prevent their escape. Such are not all the inhabitants of Massachusetts, but such are they who rule and are obeyed here. It was Massachusetts, as well as Virginia, that put down this insurrection at Harper's Ferry. She sent the marines there, and she will have to pay the penalty of her sin. Suppose that there is a society in this State that out of its own purse and magnanimity saves all the fugitive slaves that run to us, and protects our colored fellow-citizens, and leaves the other work to the government, so called. Is not that government fast losing its occupation, and becoming contemptible to mankind?

If private men are obliged to perform the offices of government, to protect the weak and dispense justice, then the government becomes only a hired man, or clerk, to perform menial or indifferent services. Of course, that is but the shadow of a government whose existence necessitates a Vigilant Committee. What should we think of the Oriental Cadi even, behind whom worked in secret a Vigilant Committee? But such is the character of our Northern States generally; each has its Vigilant Committee. And, to a certain extent, these crazy governments recognize and accept this relation. They say, virtually, "We'll be glad to work for you on these terms, only don't make a noise about it." And thus the government, its salary being insured, withdraws into the back shop, taking the Constitution with it, and bestows most of its labor on repairing that. When I hear it at work sometimes, as I go by, it reminds me, at best, of those farmers who in winter contrive to turn a penny by following the coopering business. And what kind of spirit is their barrel made to hold? They speculate in stocks, and bore holes in mountains, but they are not competent to lay out even a decent highway.

The only free road, the Underground Railroad, is owned and managed by the Vigilant Committee. They have tunnelled under the whole breadth of the land. Such a government is losing its power and respectability as surely as water runs out of a leaky vessel, and is held by one that can contain it. I hear many condemn these men because they were so few. When were the good and the brave ever in a majority? Would you have had him wait till that time came?- till you and I came over to him? The very fact that he had no rabble or troop of hirelings about him would alone distinguish him from ordinary heroes. His company was small indeed, because few could be found worthy to pass muster. Each one who there laid down his life for the poor and oppressed was a picked man, culled out of many thousands, if not millions; apparently a man of principle, of rare courage, and devoted humanity; ready to sacrifice his life at any moment for the benefit of his fellow-man. It may be doubted if there were as many more their equals in these respects in all the country- I speak of his followers only- for their leader, no doubt, scoured the land far and wide, seeking to swell his troop. These alone were ready to step between the oppressor and the oppressed. Surely they were the very best men you could select to be hung. That was the greatest compliment which this country could pay them. They were ripe for her gallows. She has tried a long time, she has hung a good many, but never found the right one before.

When I think of him, and his six sons, and his son-in-law, not to enumerate the others, enlisted for this fight, proceeding coolly, reverently, humanely to work, for months if not years, sleeping and waking upon it, summering and wintering the thought, without expecting any reward but a good conscience, while almost all America stood ranked on the other side- I say again that it affects me as a sublime spectacle. If he had had any journal advocating "his cause," any organ, as the phrase

is, monotonously and wearisomely playing the same old tune, and then passing round the hat, it would have been fatal to his efficiency. If he had acted in any way so as to be let alone by the government, he might have been suspected. It was the fact that the tyrant must give place to him, or he to the tyrant, that distinguished him from all the reformers of the day that I know. It was his peculiar doctrine that a man has a perfect right to interfere by force with the slaveholder, in order to rescue the slave. I agree with him. They who are continually shocked by slavery have some right to be shocked by the violent death of the slaveholder, but no others. Such will be more shocked by his life than by his death. I shall not be forward to think him mistaken in his method who quickest succeeds to liberate the slave. I speak for the slave when I say that I prefer the philanthropy of Captain Brown to that philanthropy which neither shoots me nor liberates me.

At any rate, I do not think it is quite sane for one to spend his whole life in talking or writing about this matter, unless he is continuously inspired, and I have not done so. A man may have other affairs to attend to. I do not wish to kill nor to be killed, but I can foresee circumstances in which both these things would be by me unavoidable. We preserve the so-called peace of our community by deeds of petty violence every day. Look at the policeman's billy and handcuffs! Look at the jail! Look at the gallows! Look at the chaplain of the regiment! We are hoping only to live safely on the outskirts of this provisional army. So we defend ourselves and our hen-roosts, and maintain slavery.

I know that the mass of my countrymen think that the only righteous use that can be made of Sharp's rifles and revolvers is to fight duels with them, when we are insulted by other nations, or to hunt Indians, or shoot fugitive slaves with them, or the like. I think that for once the Sharp's rifles and the revolvers were employed in a righteous cause. The tools were in the hands of one who could use them. The same indignation that is said to have cleared the temple once will clear it again. The question is not about the weapon, but the spirit in which you use it. No man has appeared in America, as yet, who loved his fellow-man so well, and treated him so tenderly. He lived for him. He took up his life and he laid it down for him. What sort of violence is that which is encouraged, not by soldiers, but by peaceable citizens, not so much by laymen as by ministers of the Gospel, not so much by the fighting sects as by the Quakers, and not so much by Quaker men as by Quaker women?

This event advertises me that there is such a fact as death- the possibility of a man's dying. It seems as if no man had ever died in America before; for in order to die you must first have lived. I don't believe in the hearses, and palls, and funerals that they have had. There was no death in the case, because there had been no life; they merely rotted or sloughed off, pretty much as they had rotted or sloughed along. No temple's veil was rent, only a hole dug somewhere. Let the dead bury their dead. The best of them fairly ran down like a clock. Franklin- Washington- they were let off without dying; they were merely missing one day. I hear a good many pretend that they are going to die; or that they have died, for aught that I know. Nonsense! I'll defy them to do it. They haven't got life enough in them. They'll deliquesce like fungi, and keep a hundred eulogists mopping the spot where they left off. Only half a dozen or so have died since the world began.

Do you think that you are going to die, sir? No! there's no hope of you. You haven't got your lesson yet. You've got to stay after school. We make a needless ado about capital punishment-taking lives, when there is no life to take. Memento mori! We don't understand that sublime sentence which some worthy got sculptured on his gravestone once. We've interpreted it in a grovelling and snivelling sense; we've wholly forgotten how to die. But be sure you do die nevertheless. Do your work, and finish it. If you know how to begin, you will know when to end. These men, in teaching us how to die, have at the same time taught us how to live. If this man's

acts and words do not create a revival, it will be the severest possible satire on the acts and words that do. It is the best news that America has ever heard. It has already quickened the feeble pulse of the North, and infused more and more generous blood into her veins and heart than any number of years of what is called commercial and political prosperity could. How many a man who was lately contemplating suicide has now something to live for!

One writer says that Brown's peculiar monomania made him to be "dreaded by the Missourians as a supernatural being." Sure enough, a hero in the midst of us cowards is always so dreaded. He is just that thing. He shows himself superior to nature. He has a spark of divinity in him. "Unless above himself he can Erect himself, how poor a thing is man!" Newspaper editors argue also that it is a proof of his insanity that he thought he was appointed to do this work which he did- that he did not suspect himself for a moment! They talk as if it were impossible that a man could be "divinely appointed" in these days to do any work whatever; as if vows and religion were out of date as connected with any man's daily work; as if the agent to abolish slavery could only be somebody appointed by the President, or by some political party. They talk as if a man's death were a failure, and his continued life, be it of whatever character, were a success. When I reflect to what a cause this man devoted himself, and how religiously, and then reflect to what cause his judges and all who condemn him so angrily and fluently devote themselves, I see that they are as far apart as the heavens and earth are asunder.

The amount of it is, our "leading men" are a harmless kind of folk, and they know well enough that they were not divinely appointed, but elected by the votes of their party. Who is it whose safety requires that Captain Brown be hung? Is it indispensable to any Northern man? Is there no resource but to cast this man also to the Minotaur? If you do not wish it, say so distinctly. While these things are being done, beauty stands veiled and music is a screeching lie. Think of him- of his rare qualities!- such a man as it takes ages to make, and ages to understand; no mock hero, nor the representative of any party. A man such as the sun may not rise upon again in this benighted land. To whose making went the costliest material, the finest adamant; sent to be the redeemer of those in captivity; and the only use to which you can put him is to hang him at the end of a rope!

You who pretend to care for Christ crucified, consider what you are about to do to him who offered himself to be the saviour of four millions of men. Any man knows when he is justified, and all the wits in the world cannot enlighten him on that point. The murderer always knows that he is justly punished; but when a government takes the life of a man without the consent of his conscience, it is an audacious government, and is taking a step towards its own dissolution. Is it not possible that an individual may be right and a government wrong? Are laws to be enforced simply because they were made? or declared by any number of men to be good, if they are not good? Is there any necessity for a man's being a tool to perform a deed of which his better nature disapproves?

Is it the intention of law-makers that good men shall be hung ever? Are judges to interpret the law according to the letter, and not the spirit? What right have you to enter into a compact with yourself that you will do thus or so, against the light within you? Is it for you to make up your mind- to form any resolution whatever- and not accept the convictions that are forced upon you, and which ever pass your understanding? I do not believe in lawyers, in that mode of attacking or defending a man, because you descend to meet the judge on his own ground, and, in cases of the highest importance, it is of no consequence whether a man breaks a human law or not. Let lawyers decide trivial cases. Business men may arrange that among themselves. If they were the interpreters of the everlasting laws which rightfully bind man, that would be another thing. A counterfeiting law-factory, standing half in a slave land and half in a free! What kind of laws for free men can you expect from that?

I am here to plead his cause with you. I plead not for his life, but for his character- his immortal life; and so it becomes your cause wholly, and is not his in the least. Some eighteen hundred years ago Christ was crucified; this morning, perchance, Captain Brown was hung. These are the two ends of a chain which is not without its links. He is not Old Brown any longer; he is an angel of light. I see now that it was necessary that the bravest and humanest man in all the country should be hung. Perhaps he saw it himself. I almost fear that I may yet hear of his deliverance, doubting if a prolonged life, if any life, can do as much good as his death. "Misguided!" "Garrulous!" "Insane!" "Vindictive!" So ye write in your easy-chairs, and thus he wounded responds from the floor of the armory, clear as a cloudless sky, true as the voice of nature is: "No man sent me here; it was my own prompting and that of my Maker. I acknowledge no master in human form." And in what a sweet and noble strain he proceeds, addressing his captors, who stand over him: "I think, my friends, you are guilty of a great wrong against God and humanity, and it would be perfectly right for any one to interfere with you, so far as to free those you wilfully and wickedly hold in bondage." And, referring to his movement: "It is, in my opinion, the greatest service a man can render to God." "I pity the poor in bondage that have none to help them; that is why I am here; not to gratify any personal animosity, revenge, or vindictive spirit. It is my sympathy with the oppressed and the wronged, that are as good as you, and as precious in the sight of God." You don't know your testament when you see it. "I want you to understand that I respect the rights of the poorest and weakest of colored people, oppressed by the slave power, just as much as I do those of the most wealthy and powerful." "I wish to say, furthermore, that you had better, all you people at the South, prepare yourselves for a settlement of that question, that must come up for settlement sooner than you are prepared for it. The sooner you are prepared the better. You may dispose of me very easily. I am nearly disposed of now; but this question is still to be settled- this negro question, I mean; the end of that is not yet."

I foresee the time when the painter will paint that scene, no longer going to Rome for a subject; the poet will sing it; the historian record it; and, with the Landing of the Pilgrims and the Declaration of Independence, it will be the ornament of some future national gallery, when at least the present form of slavery shall be no more here. We shall then be at liberty to weep for Captain Brown. Then, and not till then, we will take our revenge.

THE END

***Preface and A way of Walking
and Acting in the World,
from
Being Liberal in an Illiberal Age
by Jack Mendelsohn***

Preface

You count your blessings, and you carry on. If I were to propose a creed for liberals, which I am not about to do, this would be it. The most powerful liberal instinct is a grating hunger for more freedom, more justice, more fairness, more inclusion, more fulfillment for more of earth's creatures. It is a hunger requiring a goatlike digestive system that can thrive on brush and weeds in the absence of rye grass and clover. Staying liberal means savoring small successes and digesting constant frustrations.

To a liberal, every age is illiberal. Forget perfection; that's not the issue. Remember instead the failings, the shortcomings, the repression, the egocentricities, the hypocrisies. In the human condition, they are unfailingly present. But so, too, is the struggle against them and the small successes, the blessings. Remember them as well!

I begin with the question, How shall we live while we live? What uses shall we make of our free will? These are the bedrock questions. In answering them it matters profoundly what our faith is, what we believe, and what choices we make about our loyalties and loves.

I made my fundamental choice long ago. I wanted freedom. Freedom to μ think, express, question, examine, grow, and change. Freedom to be myself. Freedom to prove, nurture, and develop myself. But freedom without a firm foundation of faith and a sense of history is perilous and fragile. Life's tragedies ride roughshod over a freedom without faith. I anchored my faith in the great legacy of the liberal spirit. I belong to that legacy and it belongs to me.

I wanted my life to count for something. I wanted my freedom and my faith to be embodied in works of love and justice. So I set myself the lifelong task of intimacy with ethical responsibilities and moral meanings. That task is as fresh to me today as it was when I entered the Harvard Divinity School in 1942. My failings have been, and are, depressingly frequent. I have needed much forgiveness from others and myself. But my sense of the holy in our relations with one another and my compassion have never ceased to grow.

I knew from the start that I did not want to go it alone, that I wanted to be rooted in religious community, to be art of a spiritual circle of approving and encouraging eyes, to savor the world and to save it, in the company of like-minded others-in worship, celebration, fellowship, study, service, spiritual discipline, and social action. Exercising my free will, I found this in the Unitarian Universalist movement and in each of the congregations it has been my privilege to serve.

If I had been looking for perfection, I would long since have excommunicated myself. Fortunately, being intimately acquainted with my own imperfections, I was not. We are not perfect. We are as subject as any to the ravages of the repressed unconscious and egocentrism. What saves us is that great old legacy of the liberal spirit. We will not stop examining. We will not stop questioning. We will test the validity of our concepts, our character, our reasoning, and our behavior. Our imperfections appear and objects to be "saved." To use Martin Buber's phraseology, the individual is dealt with not as a *Thou* (a person), but as an *It* (a thing). The natural tendency of most people is to behave as they are treated and to treat others in a similar fashion. Thus people come to think of themselves as functioning according to the same mechanical laws as their material possessions. If something goes wrong with your computer, you go to a service center to have it set right by experts. But persons are not computers. They become like computers when they lose faith in their own unique inner capacities.

Then they click and buzz and whirr along, machines in a world of machines. Religion is external to them. It “fixes them up.”

Essentially the same effect is felt from the crosscurrents of society. They disrupt us, alienate us from a sense of intimacy with our world, and eventually they alienate us from ourselves. The result is that we no longer live our lives from the inside out, but in terms of the various stereotypes imposed on us. We make machines that act more and more like persons, while persons act more and more like machines.

Simplify, simplify! said Thoreau, who could put down twenty-eight dollars for a refuge on Walden Pond and regain his soul by turning his back on the world. Thoreau, let us remember, had no family to support. Anyway, twenty-eight dollars would not buy much of a retreat these days.

Our predicament has burgeoned since Thoreau’s time, and it has little to do with the pocketbook or the price structure. It involves the depth areas of human selves: feelings, emotions, values, conscience, reason, belonging. These are being crowded out by the ersatz products of the media, politics, marketing, and **evangelism**.

The function of depth religion in all of this is to take a stand, in community, for the inner person, to rescue the *Thou* from its *It* status, and to guide the *Thou* to the riches of untapped treasure within the depths and heights of persons.

As a Unitarian Universalist, I dedicate my life to the creative religious behavior of seeking persons, who learn to live in close touch with their times, who refuse to be psychically numbed to its problems, and who undertake to resolve them both within themselves and in their activities in the world. I can best summarize what I believe our liberal religious enterprise is up to with this paraphrase of John Winthrop’s sermon to the Puritans approaching Massachusetts Bay in 1630 aboard the ship *Arabella*: We must love one another. We must bear one another’s burdens. We must not look only on our own things, but also on the things of our sisters and brothers. We must rejoice together, mourn together, labor, suffer, and overcome together.

One truth is clear enough. We’re all in it together. As Lewis Thomas wrote: “We have all the habits of a social species, more compulsively social than any other, even bees and ants. Our nest, or hive, is language; we are held together by speech.... Our great advantage over all other social animals is that we possess the kind of brain that permits us to change our minds. We are not obliged, as the ants are, to follow genetic blueprints for every last detail of our behavior. Our genes are more cryptic and ambiguous in their instructions: get along, says our DNA, talk to each other, figure out the world, be useful, and above all keep an eye out for affection.” If ever there was an exhilarating description of liberalism, this is it. The essential meaning of our lives, even in the midst of all that is so calamitous, is not in becoming part of a mechanical interplay of mechanical forces, but to seek more enthusiastically than ever in our shared thoughts and activities the evolving goals of our emerging spiritual selves.

Our present state is certainly oppressive, but it need not be the end of the road. Our capacity for folly is unmatched by any other species, but, as Thomas said, so too is our capacity to “talk to each other, figure out the world, be useful, and above all keep an eye out for affection.” I am a liberal because I want to take my stand with a legacy, a spirit, that pulls for the positive possibilities in the human endowment. I am a Unitarian Universalist because I want to ally myself with others who are consciously striving, **in** a covenanted religious community, to explore and reveal the creative heights and depths within the human frame, one that fosters thinking, loving, and developing whole human beings.

The mysterious life force, of which we are remarkable manifestations, possesses a buoyant power, which in human terms can be fulfilled only as we better know and transcend ourselves. I am a Unitarian Universalist because our religion zestfully celebrates human reason, that unique gift for better knowing and transcending ourselves. I warmly applaud English psychologist Margaret Bowden when she says of reason, “We’re not just talking about ... logical-mathematical-scientific problem solving, we’re talking about human life, human beings, human worth and human values, and if we’re not, we jolly well should be.”

It is the task of reason in this wider sense to point our way, to seek out the right direction for travel. It is by reason that we know what ought to be. It is by reason that we find meaning in moral decision. It is by reason that we grow responsible. It is by reason that we come to care for ideals, for standards, for criteria, for the arts of logical distinction and cultivated judgment. By reason we understand the meaning of self-giving and the importance of having a self to give. By reason we see that struggle for the life of others is as fundamental as struggle for the life of self; that interest in the life of others is deeply woven into the fabric of the life-process; that we are not born to be incarnate centers of selfishness. The self is private, personal, and precious, but it is not isolated from other selves. It is wholly unique, but it only shares not commands the universe.

All this we learn and know because the faculty of reason is our birthright. When loved and used, reason affirms that we are human because we are capable of being deepened and that until we are deepened we cannot know the fullness of joy.

I do not want to leave the impression that our garlanding of reason ignores faith. Far from it. Helped in recent years by the faith development thought of theologian James Fowler, we have begun to think of *faith* as a verb, not a noun; we faith together as a fundamental style of life, a way of relating to self, to others, to power(s), to boundaries such as death and finitude, and to sources of being, value, and meaning. We participate in a common faithing.

We faith to relate ourselves to creation not by having dominion, but as participants in a symbiotic arrangement, a wondrous, coherent body of connected life. We faith to relate to others in caring, not possessing, ways. We faith relationships as a source of common energy by which we find strength to live our lives with courage and compassion, to stand upon our own two feet, to seek our unique destinies, to make our special contributions, and to extend a helping hand. We faith a strong sense of religious community, not to shut ourselves in or others out, but to make us better people, to rekindle our joy and zest in living.

We faith a church that is not merely a structure, but a center of sanity and inspiration in a deranged world; that is not merely a place of private cultivation and retreat but a temple for renewing and revitalizing our beleaguered values; that stands as a symbol of humans aspiring together, tracking truth together, and demanding social justice together; that has within it the exuberance of play, the blessings of shared worship, a symmetry with life's rhythms; and that resonants with silence, song, critical inquiry, and social action.

We faith with and for our children and youth, that they will not be mirrors of ourselves, though they should fully know where we stand and may learn from us our best traits. But we faith their freedom to go forth to discover, multiply, and live their own values.

We faith to become more centered, more spontaneous, more genuine, more constant persons. But we faith also not to get so wrapped up in ourselves that we turn aside from the struggles against structures of injustice and oppression.

We faith not to love life but to hold it loosely, knowing that we must die, knowing that we must constantly strike a balance between what we desire and what we can do, that it is only in imaginary worlds that we can do whatever we wish or have whatever we want, that often we must choose and act amidst confounding paradoxes and ambiguities. We faith to know how important it is to be aware of small successes and happinesses, and that savoring them is itself an experience of liberation.

Human nature and its champion, liberalism, suffer these days from a wretched press. Those who would like nothing better than to take control of *our* lives are palpably encouraged that this is the best of all times for fastening on us their pet pieties, nostrums, orthodoxies, and chains. There will be fatal days for the liberal spirit, and for a human nature determined to take control of its own spiritual destiny and biological survival, if today's generation is without stalwarts who distill from the essence of the predicament the wonder of halting, imperfect, but coping solutions. Unitarian Universalism provides, not by any means an exclusive, but a special and inclusive place for such stalwarts. These many years of laboring in its vineyards have both chastened and deepened the pride I take in calling it the religion of my heart and mind. My choice of Unitarian Universalist

religion is a personal one, consciously made among possible alternatives, and does not in any way imply that we have a monopoly on the practice of the liberal spirit in religion. The very act of choosing, however, implies something that is dazzlingly unique about being human, something that is ultimately dependent on achieving relationships of functional congruence; that is, an experienced sense of belonging, of giving and receiving love and loyalty within a community of faith that was, is, and is to be. The liberal spirit is today beleaguered and besieged, attacked from all sides, but particularly by a surging radical right in religion and politics. That this has always been so, in varying degrees, and is likely to go on being so is historically verifiable. But such verification comforts only in collaboration with the liberal will not to be morally confused within. Now is always the best time to redefine, revitalize, and reconnect the liberal spirit to the human future; and especially now, when we can starkly add, if there is to be a human future.

Jack Mendelsohn
Maynard, Massachusetts
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A Way of Walking and Acting in the World

Human life is a struggle -against frustration, ignorance, suffering, evil, the maddening inertia of things in general; but it is also a struggle for something which our experience tells us can be achieved in some measure.

Julian Huxley, *Evolution in Action*

The more we try to say precisely what is in our hearts, the more we find that we are speaking for multitudes of strangers the world over. The deeper we get down to our own fundamentals, the more deeply we represent those of other people. Like all human beings, I live on borrowed time. I never know when my time will run out, but I do know that it will run out. I have no way of knowing what tragedies will befall me at the next step, the next ring of the telephone, the next rising of the sun. My notion of spiritual fulfillment is learning how to accept this fate with a ringing affirmation of all that makes life worth living.

The liberal spirit is my inspiration to be a creative, cooperative human being, in spite of the fact that life may crush me at any moment and death may blot me out. As a skeptic about such matters, I cannot comfort myself with supernatural promises. I know that human existence contains irreducible elements of tragedy and incompleteness. I know that I can never really comprehend the totality of things. I am finite. For me the fundamental question of life is not why but how. How shall I live while I live? This is the bedrock question. In answering it, it matters very much what I believe. As we read in the Apocryphal book called *Ecclesiasticus*:

Accept no person against thine own soul,
And let no reverence for anyone cause thee to fall. But let the counsel of thine
own heart stand:
For there is none more faithful unto thee than it.
For our minds are sometimes wont to bring us tidings, More than seven watchmen,
that sit above in a high tower.

It takes strong girders of conviction to keep the counsels of thine own liberal-spirited heart standing. Heinrich Heine, the German poet, was gazing with a friend at the cathedral in Amiens.

Asked the friend: "Tell me, Heinrich, why can't people build piles like this any more?"

Answered Heine: "My dear friend, in those days people had convictions. We moderns have opinions. And it takes more than opinions to build a Gothic cathedral."

I think of this exchange when I dwell on the massive attacks directed against the modern age, and its alleged inspiration, liberalism, usually uttered, in William F. Buckley, Jr., fashion, with a scornful curl of the lip.

Modernity's ambiguity, confusion, and sheer madness are enough to send the dazed rushing pell-mell toward certainty and direction. The limitless reaches of science and reason collapse into uncertainty and anxiety. "Where, oh where, is our center?" is a bleat of our times. The open mind? Why, it turns out to be nothing but a sieve. Even the most respected scientists say so. Take Niels Bohr's "Every sentence that I utter should be regarded by you not as an assertion but as a question." And Jacob Bronowski's "There is no absolute knowledge All information is imperfect." Modernity's only certainty is everlasting uncertainty. All that was thought to be solid dissolves in the air, adding to the pollution.

A generation hungering for certainties is like a vacuum. It sucks in evangelists of reactionary nostrums bearing conservative labels. Thus we are well launched into an era of regressive politics and regressive religion, in which the liberal spirit is at the head of a line of perceived evils, followed in no particular order by abortion, welfare, food stamps, affirmative action, sex education, the United Nations, aid to the Third World, disarmament, Soviet expansionism, and on and on.

What exactly is this satanic liberalism? To me, and by and large to history, it is a way of walking and acting in the world. It means celebrating and practicing the importance of persons: their inherent freedom to think, speak, associate, hear, read, see, and learn; not perfect freedom, but responsible freedom, become manifest in the particulars of our lives. It means warmly embracing political democracy and constitutional, compassionate government. Among its meanings are social justice, popular education, equal opportunity and access, peaceful resolution of conflict, broad tolerance of diversity, the scientific spirit of inquiry, a rational outlook, a relativistic philosophy and ethicosocial religion.

In my life, the liberal spirit is wholistic. It informs my being in all of its dimensions-spiritual, political, and social; private and public. I recognize, with appreciation and respect, that this is not a universal condition. There are numerous religious liberals who are conservative in their politics and religious conservatives who are liberal in their politics.

I claim no heavenly sanction for my all-embracing liberal way of walking in life's paths. Still, those who join me in trying to practice it are apt to be puzzled by the fervor with which it is smitten hip and thigh, not just by partisans of the right, but of the left as well.

Disparagement of liberalism from the right is normal and seemingly eternal. But today, the liberal spirit is exuberantly despised by many on the left. Black, feminist, and Third World liberationists, and many peace activists, often have that special Buckley-like curl to their lips when they pronounce the word *liberal*. Yet, as I shall point out, *liberation* and *liberal* come from the same Latin root. *They* are kin.

A solemn look back to Martin Luther King, Jr., may be instructive. Dr. King was steeped in liberalism. Liberals loved him when he spoke for nonviolence in Montgomery. Liberals loved him when he wrote his stirring letter from the Birmingham jail, where he was incarcerated for opposing Bull Connor's police dogs and fire hoses with freedom songs. Liberals loved him at the the Lincoln Memorial in 1963 when he linked his dream and the dream of black people with the liberal dream.

But how quickly frightened liberals deserted him when, at Riverside Church in 1963, he said that

the struggle for justice at home and for an end to the war in Vietnam were one and the same. Liberal leaders raced to thaw television cameras and into print to accuse him of jeopardizing the civil rights movement by linking the two issues. We can only guess his thoughts when many of those same keepers of the liberal flame finally came around to saying what he had said three years earlier.

Liber, with whom both *liberal* and *liberation* are connected, was the Roman god of fertility and wine. It was natural, therefore, that *liberal* came to be applied to what was generous and open, to the unrestricted and unfettered, not bound by established mores to the orthodox and formal. Nor was it unnatural, in the eyes of certain respectables to whom the suggestion of a pregnant universe was distasteful if not downright treatening, that *liberal* evoked the licentious and chaotic. This we can understand. More difficult to understand are liberationists whose derision concentrates on liberalism rather than on reaction. Kinship struggles are often nasty.

To a certain extent, anti-liberal diatribes are a fashionable expression of human meanness and frustration. We all have a scurvy streak in us that we are bound to express. Now it is open season on liberals, who frequently respond by splenetically attacking one another.

Frustrations among liberationists are very real. They have to be vented somewhere. So why not on liberals, currently a pretty defenseless lot? In addition, the cyclicity of liberalism is an old story. Liberalism, religious and political, flowers, gets locked into transient programs, trends, parties, and tactics and withers, only to flower again. During its withering periods, reaction always takes heart, which is certainly true today, and liberals enter into a kind of choleric introspection. Nor is there anything historically original about those of more radical bent snapping at liberals for being mere reformers, when root-and-branch revolution is what is obviously needed. This too is an old story.

The trouble with too many liberals, according to radicalized blacks, women, youth, gays, and peace activists, is their complacent spirit. Yes, they have a decent concern for social change. But where is the passion? Where is the sense of their own oppression? Buried in middle-class standards. That's where it is. Tucked into the benefits that infuriatingly unjust social structures have bestowed upon them. Yes, they would like to share these benefits with the less fortunate, those who have been locked out and denied access, but at little or no cost to themselves and their children.

The evils of society burn a hole in the soul, say liberationists. We have a gut reaction, a kind of upset that can never be adequately expressed by the liberal's "decent concern."

How is this gulf to be bridged? I speak as a liberal in search of redemption and reconstruction—one whose soul is full of holes burned by the evils of society. If liberalism is to arise from whatever malaise withers it, if it is to reach out, it must be a humbled, radicalized, stretched, and shriven liberalism. It must be a liberalism with a monumental abhorrence of hypocrisy and cant. It must be a liberalism that knows, not just a decent concern for oppression, but a personal experience of it and a profound sense of agony and outrage. In brief, it must be a liberalism ecstatic enough and disciplined enough to celebrate, demand, organize, institutionalize, suffer for, and exult over profound social and individual change.

I speak then for a transformed liberalism. Scavenging for hope in this task does not mean donning "conservative" clothes and calling oneself a neoliberal. As for the self-styled conservatives of this age, typically they are nursers of their own resentments and defenders of their own interests.

On the other hand, there is no genuinely effective radical movement.

That leaves liberalism, however disarrayed and weary its troops, among whom there is a distressing loss of heart. But this is characteristic of liberalism, which is experiencing, as before, the agony of its success. Years ago, pioneers like Jane Addams and John Dewey helped launch a liberalism that was high on mental freedom and social compassion. They

succeeded. Millions of people were introduced to new appreciations of economic equity and civic participation. The trouble with liberalism is that once it's successful as it has been in so many realms - from women's rights to minority rights, from universal public education to protection of the environment, from progressive taxation to Medicaid-liberals don't know what to do. All of this is accomplished, yet illiberalism flourishes. What should liberals do, not just to beat back reactionary assaults, but to gird for new positive thrusts?

Here are some possible revisions of the liberal idea, which once again might make it, in new shapes and forms, a powerful social force.

First there is the advocacy of a new theory of intellect, a new mode of perception, a new way of acting. Liberalism has always been right in its devotion to reason. But reason has been interpreted too narrowly for the present age. We assume that what we call reality exhausts reality, that what we call the human story is the real human story, and that our western symbols are universally binding to all humanity. Shall we try to persuade, or even force, all of earth's men and women to become like us? Do North American mind-sets and world views represent the best of what the world is capable? Will human value truly be advanced if North Americans over the entire planet in their present image?

What liberals also need is an infusion of intelligent subtlety, which is not a reaction against reason but an extension of reason, a way of looking at reality that snatches reason from the hands of textbook scientists, logicians, and technologists. What is needed is an expanded consciousness, capable of taking more seriously the data for reflection and reverence that come from feelings, instincts, insights-in short, from the whole realm of creative imagination. We keep trying to live like scientists, when in fact most of the important decisions we make-choosing a spouse, changing a job-are not scientific at all. And because we try to live like scientists, many in the world become convinced that we are spiritually underdeveloped and lacking in soul.

Liberals who permit new forms of consciousness to express themselves may get on the move again and be threatened by new successes. Wouldn't that be something?

A reminder is in order. Respecting ambiguity and distrusting absolutes is not bad. Questioning received opinion and the authority of doctrines that defy reason is a reassuring means of perceiving that irrationalism underlies many seductive "certainties" peddled by slick, thriving hucksters. The liberal spirit takes the questions of the age seriously and doesn't try to answer unasked or wasteful questions. It accepts our human finiteness and fallibility and rejects unrelenting certitude. This emphasis on openness (humility?), far from being like a sieve, can be a robust listening to other possibilities, as well as a shield against salvationist nostrums and premature closures.

Where, then, is the solid ground on which liberals plant their feet? How about a rich menu of values, goals, priorities, and agendas? There is a special kind of derision reserved for these "abstractions." But how impalpable are they really? Not at all, if you stop to think about how most of us try to live our lives. Values, goals, priorities, and agendas are the very stuff of the weal and woe of life. Bless the liberal spirit for beckoning us to treat the stuff with intense seriousness and saving humor.

The effectiveness is uneven, to be sure, but the liberal spirit helps its devotees to risk experiencing the tangles and riddles of modern life, free from blanched fevers where truth is never gray. The raw reality is that we live and die in the embrace of imperfection and relative judgments. Returning the embrace seems a reasonable faith by which to live.

Despite these earned hallelujahs, liberalism faces the waning of the century with tired blood. It is so pummeled that many are diagnosing brain death. The heart still beats, diagnosticians say, and the outer extremities still respond in Pavlovian fashion to external stimuli. Some, whose wish is parent to the thought, claim that liberalism's death certificate and autopsy are at hand. They already know what the findings will be: death by hyper confusion. Alas, a massive vascular accident induced by overextended uncertainty. Too much indulgence in paradoxes and

ambiguities.

Others surmise that the overriding affliction of liberals is elitism: walling themselves into discrete, precious enclaves; each absorbed by some special cause, some unique set of ideas to play with. Requirements for admission can be seen as quite cliquish. Most people rebel against a steady diet of critical intellect. They hunger for transcendent nourishment and are frustrated by too much search and too little discovery. Frustration in turn will extend an uncritical welcome to almost any kind of metaphysical mooring, possibly something caring and sensitive, often commercial gimmickry, and in too many instances cruel claptrap. Yet, no amount of jeering and lecturing will discourage those who feel driven to take the gamble.

It is liberals who take a risk by denying the extreme spiritual discomfort of openness without commitment. Doubt is important in faith, but only if it is a means of keeping faith activated and enlivened. Doubt as an end in itself is deadly. There is nothing liberal about indifference to the human need for spiritual direction. To think so is to betray ignorance of the human condition.

We need to remind the world of the affirmations of liberalism if we expect it to listen to liberalism's complaints about quacks and rascals. The need for centering points in a careening world is real and rightful. Groundedness and rootedness are positives, not negatives. They are the crux of any transforming ministry to life. Liberals take notice. If we view liberalism as, in D. H. Lawrence's words, "an uprooted tree, with its roots in the air" (letter to the Reverend Robert Reid), nothing less than strenuous affirmation will supplant it. To say that we do not have the whole truth is not to say that we have no truth. Like Saint Paul, we see through a glass darkly, but we do see. Openness without wholeness and commitment is a clanging cymbal.

I was grateful when there came an invitation to share with a gathering of Midwestern religious liberals the articles of liberal faith undergirding my social activism. It was an exciting task of self-examination and distillation - elementary and elemental. In the end I described four liberal/liberating convictions by which I live.

1. I am life that wills to live in the midst of life that wills to live.
2. Separating the essential from the nonessential is what I call being spiritual.
3. Power, ethically understood, is the ability to achieve moral purpose.
4. Nothing is settled; balance is blessedness.

Nietzsche wrote: "We are unknown, we knowers, to ourselves Of necessity we remain strangers to ourselves, we understand ourselves not, in our selves we are bound to be mistaken" (*Thus Spake Zarathustra*).

I respect the wisdom in this. But, as with so much of Nietzsche, it is overstated. I know myself imperfectly, but I am no complete stranger to myself and to what makes me tick. I am not "bound to be mistaken" in what I believe that I believe.

In addition to being a person, spouse, parent, and grandparent, I am a preacher, counselor, teacher, and would-be prophet. The sheer mess of human conditions that cry out for deliverance -from poverty, oppression, and bondage -appalls me. I experience human suffering and degradation as my own pain. I don't just read about them and think, Isn't that terrible? As a responsible advocate of human life and dignity, I hurt, and the hurt grips me at the roots of my being.

I also experience life as grace-filled wonder. Statistically, the possibility of any of us being here is so infinitesimal that the mere fact of our existence is confounding. As E. B. White put it in the *New Yorker*: "If the world were merely seductive, that would be easy. If it were merely challenging, that would be no problem. But I arise in the morning, torn between a desire to improve (or save) the world, and a desire to enjoy (or savor) the world. This makes it hard to plan the day."

As for the cosmic meanings of human life, I am content with a deep and abiding modesty. I simply do not know. But as for the finite meanings of human life, experienced in dazzlement and deliverance, in rights and repression, in surprise and struggle, in living and dying, I have no uncertainties. These meanings are real. They matter. I cannot and will not abdicate the quest for

finite human fulfillment. If, cosmically speaking, human life is a trip to nowhere, so be it. I will not live my life, precious gift that it is, according to that rubric.

So, there is a special joy in sharing what sustains, directs, chastens, and validates my bittersweet journey along the boundaries of such a liberal faith.

Life as Gift

I am life that wills to live in the midst of life that wills to live. My life is a gift, a grace, if you wish. I had nothing to do with planning, creating, or initially shaping it. With my gift of life comes a unique endowment human consciousness: a drive not only to be, but to be fulfilled. As I grew and developed, it was impressed upon me that my will to live and to be fulfilled existed in the midst of other wills to live and to be fulfilled. I learned that I could look out from within myself and see a life view, a world view. How then might I best express gratitude for my own gift of life? By reverencing not only my own will to live and to be fulfilled, but that of others. How could I do this? By sympathy, obviously. By self-development. By discipline. By encounter. By associated effort. We do not live alone. We live together. We depend on one another. To forget that is to become spiritually lost, like fiery particles flung off from the solar system and quenched meaninglessly in outer space.

For me, the great teacher of this spiritual and ethical affirmation of the gift of life is Albert Schweitzer, an exemplar of what I think is liberalism at its best, namely that progress does not come easily or automatically. Quite the contrary. His view of human beings (including himself, of course) was pessimistic. It was his willing, hoping, and acting that were optimistic. It is the same for me. I shut my eyes to none of human nature's aberrations. I do not believe that human reason is an all-sufficient force for good. My liberal faith is anchored in our membership in one another and in a consciously embraced ethical spirit generated by this truth.

Being Spiritual

Separating the essential from the nonessential is what I call being spiritual.

I found this phrase, years ago, floating in one of Corita Kent's gossamer paintings. It has since hung on my study wall, where I can contemplate it each morning.

There has never been, nor will there ever be, enough time or opportunity to learn everything, to do everything, or care evenhandedly about everything. We can never be completely satisfied or satisfiable, adjusted or adjustable. We continually run out of energy, ability, and courage. We are hurttable. The temptation is ever upon us to exercise influence we have not earned and do not possess.

To be spiritual, for me, means knowing all of this and still offering up thanks for the privilege of being what we are. There is in us the stuff out of which new, affirming experiences are fashioned. So build we up the human beings that we are.

"Love the moment," says Corita Kent, "and the energy. . . will spread beyond all boundaries.

"Flowers grow out of dark moments.

"Your each moment is vital because it affects the whole. "Live in the dark moment.

"Life is a succession of moments; to live each one is to succeed."

So, it is not essential to me to set precise meanings to the word *God*. I know that only by living my limited moments will I grope toward truths about what God may be and what we are.

That's why I worry about dying, but not about death. Before I was born I knew nothing about life, and it certainly didn't worry me then. Death may be yet another state of being, or it may be a nonstate of nonbeing. I cannot know. Why should it worry me any more than life did before I was born?

But dying is an experience, an act in which I will be the central participant. It is essential to my spirituality to meditate upon that and to prepare for it as best I can, to think through the possible

scenarios.

Like Henry David Thoreau, “I wish to learn what life has to teach, and not, when I come to die, discover that I have not lived.” I want to immerse myself in the streams of intimacy and history. I want to live in this death-oriented world without letting death have power over me. I want to live in the fullest possible awareness of a true belonging, not just to those who are nearest and dearest to me, but to the times in which I live—the causes, emergencies, issues, desperations, and hopes.

Power and Moral Purpose

Power, ethically understood, is the ability to achieve moral purpose.

A crucial dimension of the gift of life and of its will to live in the midst of life that wills to live is the use of power. A liberal (and liberating) faith, in both its personal and communal forms, must come to terms with the realities of power. Social action is the exercise of power. Ethical social action is the exercise of power for implementing the demands of justice, equity, and love.

Power is two-dimensional. One dimension is an expression of ultimate reality, or, as many would say, of God’s law and love. The other dimension is the exercise of human freedom. Understanding power as ultimate reality, or as God’s law and love, means that in exercising it one is compelled by the ethical necessities of being fully human: to seek human community in the fulfillment of interdependent spiritual destinies, of life that wills to live in the midst of life that wills to live. Power understood as human freedom is our response to the possibilities in creation, which are both personal and institutional.

Power, ethically understood, is the ability to achieve moral purpose. It is the capacity, inherent in our being, “to bring good tidings to the afflicted; ... to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, ... to comfort all who mourn” (Isaiah 61:1-2).

The idea of power and the exercise of power must never be viewed as alien to the liberal spirit. Power is a basic dimension of being and a basic dimension of the personal and institutional liberal life. It is both desirable and necessary in implementing the demands of love and justice.

Martin Luther King, Jr., taught that “one of the greatest problems of history is that the concepts of love and power are usually contrasted as polar opposites. Love is identified with a resignation of power and power with a denial of love ... What is needed is a realization that power without love is abusive and that love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice. Justice at its best is love correcting everything that stands against love.”*

These words, to me, are a veritable manifesto for an empowered liberalism. I say, Amen!

As a Team

Nothing is settled; balance is blessedness.

If I had to give a six-word definition of normative liberalism, this would be it. Take, for example, these two familiar areas of experience: innovation and tradition, and spiritual nurture and public action.

*Martin Luther King, Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968).

Innovation and Tradition.

In the Book of Acts (17:21) there is a description of those who hung around the Areopagus in Athens as “people who spent their time in nothing except telling and hearing something new.” This is an impression we liberals frequently give. Trendy. Zealots of the latest. Innovators. Prizers of telling and hearing the new (as well we should be). But we also have a magnificent history, bequeathed to us by the labors and sufferings of forebears, known and unknown: thinkers, confessors, apostles, prophets, and martyrs. We are a rooted people, we liberals, who should be everlastingly respectful and proud of our tradition and inheritance.

Many of the problems of our common life in the liberal spirit rise from losing our sense of innovation or tradition. We get into trouble when we slip into an idolatry of only one. It is essential to our genius to love the making of new wine, but it is also essential to our genius to savor the mature, full-bodied wine of our heritage.

Nothing is settled; balance is blessedness.

Spiritual Nurture and Public Action.

Inward and outward; personal growth and social witness. Once again, nothing is settled; balance is blessedness. We have swung between these “birches” for as long as our history runneth.

Emerson put it this way: “These wonderful horses need to be driven by fine hands” (Society and Solitude). The liberal spirit is for healing our everbattered souls: in solitude, in touching intimacies, in deep, searching disciplines. But we are in the world and must act in the world- as free individuals and as community persons. Nothing is finally settled by that either. We often act in hollowness. Spiritual preparation, private and communal, for acting in the world is crucial. Everything that has to do with our common humanity and how it is nourished is important. Everything that stretches from self to society and from society to self is important. These wonderful horses need to be driven, as a team, with fine hands. Balance is blessedness.

These days it is easy to despair of liberalism’s weaknesses, so it is of consequence to be aware of our present and potential strengths. One of these is our enduring function of living on the boundaries -between mind and body, the internal and the external freedom and necessity, individual and community.

We have never had a better opportunity to live not as one-side-or-the-other partisans of left brain-right brain, mysticism-empiricism, intuitiverational, piety-society, nurture-nature, but as agile boundary-dwellers, at home on both sides of the borders: pilgrims of the reconciliations that must come if the human race is to survive.

As one familiar with significant voluntary associations of liberal bent, I know how rich the opportunities are for such valuing communities - as relatively stable, preventive arrangements against personal and social pathology and as centers for the generation of liberating change.

We liberals are members of a historic movement with accrued status and moral authority to stand as a counterpoint to the death of moral goodness. We who speak the language of the liberal spirit and live out of its bosom can be key figures in the struggle both to save and to savor the world. If this sounds inflated, remember that Daedalus’s warning to his son Icarus was not just against flying too high. It was also against flying too low.

Security

I am not a liberal because it gives me security. No one should try the liberal spirit looking for that result. What liberalism appeals to in me is what Carl Sandburg, in “Man the Moon Shooter,” described as the “moon shooter” part of our nature:

The shapes of change
ai ai they take their time asking what the dawn asks giving the
answers evening gives till tomorrow moves in saying to ... the

moon shooter`
Now I am here -now read me -
give me a name.'

We humans, in Sandburg's eyes, are moon shooters: restless, roving, inquisitive creatures, ever striving for unknown futures. There is no real stopping place, no status quo. There are always the next shapes of change to come.

It was Christmas Day, 1983, late afternoon. Our family, twelve in number, four generations, was in the midst of a high-decibel, high-calorie holiday dinner, when the phone rang. It was Jesse Jackson. 'Jack,' he said, "a Merry Christmas to you and Joan and the family."

"Same to you, Jesse, and to Jacqueline, and all your kids."

"Jack, I want you to go to Syria with me, to get Lieutenant Robert Goodman and bring him home."

"When do you plan to leave, Jesse?"

"Probably on Wednesday, three days from now. The Syrians say we can see Goodman and that Assad will talk with us. They say they aren't going to let him go, but I think we can get him. I want you with me."

"Jesse, let me talk it over with my family, and I'll get back to you."

The family talked. They were accustomed to the "moon shooter" nature of my relationship with Jesse Jackson. With their blessing, I flew off to Damascus on December 29, 1983, as a member of the Jackson mission. The rest is history. We brought Lieutenant Goodman home. Indeed, there are always the next shapes of change to come.

But what about rest for the weary soul? Moon shooting is exciting. But we are also creatures in need of tranquility. What place is there for inner quiet and peace? Not only do we need the thrill of change, of movement, but we also need dependable things, reliable things, steady things, things that stand fast while we think our way through the enigmas, puzzles, and horrors of a swiftly changing world.

Sandburg raises an ancient problem. We are indeed moon shooters, but we also long for solid ground beneath our feet. Where will we find that solid ground? In what thoughts, what beliefs, what faiths? In the midst of change, on what can we depend?

Robert Frost warmed to these questions in his narrative poem "The Star-Splitter," which tells the story of Brad McLaughlin, described by Frost as a "Hugger-mugger" New Hampshire farmer.

He burned his house down for the fire insurance
And spent the proceeds on
a telescope
To satisfy a life-long curiosity
About our place among the infinities.

At first, Frost tells us there was some mean laughter, but soon the townsfolk began to reflect:

If one by one we counted people out
For the least sin, it wouldn't take us long
To get so we had no one left
to live with, For to be social is to be forgiving.

So, Brad McLaughlin bought his telescope and took a job as ticket agent for the old Concord railroad, a job that gave him leisure for stargazing. He and his friend, the narrator, spent countless hours in the evening looking up "the brass barrel, velvet black inside, at a star quaking in the other end.'

We've looked and looked, but after all where are we? Do we know any better
where we stand, And how it stands between the night tonight
And (someone) with a smoky lantern chimney? How different from the way it ever stood?

Frost has pondered the questions about security and raised some new ones about serenity. Is it abnormal to want serenity? Can we be moon shooters and still be serene? Can we find serenity in the stars or in anything outside our own being? If we cannot find serenity in the stars, can we find it in what the stars help us to learn about ourselves?

Let's go back again to that solid ground beneath our feet. In a spiritual sense, where are we likely to find it? By leaps of irrationality? In unquestioning obedience? Does this universe make life easier for us if we subscribe to the right creed, follow the right leader, or pledge the right allegiance? We must be morally myopic to think it is that kind of universe! Where then is security? Where is the solid ground? If we want an answer, a strong answer, one that does not try to blink the facts or sentimentalize the realities, we can hardly do better than the tough thoughts of the tender-spirited Emerson: "Nothing is secure but life, transition, the energizing spirit. No love can be bound by oath or covenant to secure it against a higher love. No truth so sublime but it may be trivial tomorrow in the light of new thoughts. People wish to be settled; only in so far as they are unsettled is there any hope." And then Emerson startles us with a conjecture that we never rise so high as when we know not whither we are going.

Obviously Emerson offers us little in the way of lulling assurance. If we never rise so high as when we know not whither we are going, most of us would have little trouble soaring free into the stratosphere. Perhaps there is more to this than first meets the eye. Possibly it is just such a time as ours, when it is impossible to know exactly where we are going, that we are literally forced by our problems and challenges to rise to new heights of coping and achieving. Is it, after all, so important to know precisely where we are going, as long as we know the general direction in which we want to travel and the stronger, warmer companions we will need for the journey? What more should we ask than the solid reliance on the faith that somehow, because of the nature of what is required of us, we will respond and rise higher than we dreamed possible? If only a wiser, nobler humanity is equal to our present problems, then a wiser, nobler humanity we will be.

By no stretch of the imagination can this be called security. At least it is not the kind of security that makes us feel smug and safe from the barbs of life. "Nothing is secure," says Emerson, "but life, transition, and the energizing spirit." With this perspective, we achieve a larger and revitalized conception of liberal faith. If we would find solid ground beneath our feet, we must have courage enough to give up illusions of a protected life and accept our role as servants of life, agents of transition, and incarnations of the energizing spirit, subject to all the stresses and shocks of life, but confident and buoyant through them all. This is the liberal spirit at its greatest, not a petty search for protection or a pinched hope of piecemeal benevolence, but the wonderful adventure of life itself, as solemn as a world that is dying and as supple as a world that is waiting to be born; as expectant as souls who see clearly what is required of them and rise empowered to make and meet a better future. This kind of liberal spirit is solid ground, and when we have discovered it and made it our own, nothing can take it away.

What of serenity? We will not find it in tranquilizing sermons that are on the self-help shelves of bookstores. Many of the pulpit recitals and cozy, expensive seminars devoted to serenity and success are geared to those who seek an easy way and can afford it. There is no easy way. The road to serenity is as rigorous as any we will ever travel. Serenity comes not from escaping the realities of life but from being in the midst of them. The best human beings have always been those who achieved serenity by taking upon themselves the pain, fear, suffering, cruel passions, and murky guilts of human inhumanity toward other humans. Whether we speak of a Catholic Sister Teresa a Jewish Martin Buber, or a Unitarian Joseph Tuckerman, we know that this is the truth of the matter. No one comes by serenity cheaply. To gain it, we have to meet its requirements; we have to do the deeds and make the choices that bring serenity in their wake. For each of us, it means making, not just alone, but in the disciplined company of others, the difficult choices, the demanding choices.

It means wading into the river of history and accepting one's place in it. It means breaking bread at a common table of memories and aspirations, rejoicing in identification with causes,

emergencies, movements, parties. As William Ernest Hocking put it in *The Coming World Civilization*. “Failure to accept responsibility, refusal to take a stand on vital issues, timid rejection...of the ties of a true belonging, these are denials of life -in effect they are deeds of death.”

The greatest and most emboldening of blessings is the will to care enough about the times in which we live to know where and to what moral ends we want to put our efforts on the line. This is, in Hocking’s words, “life with shape and character.” No one can consciously choose the lower against the higher and know inner peace. Serenity is involvement with the unserene.

We began with two poets: one who speaks of us as moon shooters, and another who spins a yarn about a farmer who sought solace in an ill-gotten telescope. We found them raising profound questions about security and serenity. In each case, the answer came back: Look within and look around you! The tasks of finding solid ground, of making peace with oneself and one’s times, are tasks in the midst of change, challenge, and conflict. If we break under the weight of our burdens, we break, isolated, from within. If we master life, that mastery also comes from within, but is connected. All of life is change, and we cannot escape it. We look for strength and peace, and where do we find them but in being useful, being whole, being warm members of the human family, of adding our weight to what is called for by the deep nature of life.

That’s what the liberal spirit is about, has always been about.