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Les folios

En passant la souris sur une vignette, le titre de l'image apparaît.

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OF COMPASSION AND CIVILITY

Now, here's to you at your next
dinner-table.

Shakespeare (Vincet)

On May 12, 1963, The New York Times ran a full page ad : "A College President Taxes a Stand on Campus Crime." Two-fifths of the page showed three blown-up faces presumably owned by as many S.O.S. carrying between them a placard with the single word "Amnesty" on it. Since the ad was sponsored by that virtue-breathing, Bible-burping institution known as the Yankee's Digest, it is safe to assume that the picture had been duly X-rayed and its high protein content carefully computerized prior to being brained to the Times' consumers. Cut out of a far less ominous shot, the greatly enlarged grinning long-haired fist-clenching fang-sporting trio was meant to open one's innocent eyes to the graphic evidence that "our" campus are besanguared with dean-and-president-eating cannibals. As for the placard, what could be more illuminating? Who, pray, who indeed but past, present or future ones would ever think of agitating for amnesty? In fact, no perfectly prefigured was the picture that no caption was called for ; even a cursory glance told one that the Republic was ripe and ready to go to ~~the~~ pot. Still, take heart, men of good will : luckily, not all college heads are edible material. First there were Professor Baykewitz and his cops, now comes Father Novburgh and his civility. That's what the ad was all about - Father Novburgh's civility spread out over a "message" he wrote to the University of Notre

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Some students and faculty, and which the President's face felt
hickey-bound to display beneath those most uncivil faces.

Now, were it not for that civility business, I would have no
particular quarrel with the Reverend. To judge from his prose,
he is no more paternalistic than any self-expecting college pres-
ident can any bump into nowadays. Like any one of them, he has
been lately quite dissent-conscious and disengaged-prone. Never
short of an historical utterance, like mine with this that "Youth...
has much to offer - idealism, generosity, civilization, service."

His is the liberal's liberal esp about "our often non-glorious
civilization", "our world's wrongs", the "burning issues of our
society" and other such clichs - saying mine without further ado,
saying it in the possessive form, thus attesting youth's solidi-
arity with a realist youth dissident, a realist of which youth is
the universal victim if only because the Reverend and his peers
do their holy best to sold it in their own likeness. But let us
be fair. Whereas it takes his peers scores of unpublishable books
to peddle their restorative pop, the Reverend took it upon him-
self to squeeze into one jumpy message the sum total of the
intellectual and moral warps, twists, quirks and sophistries
proper to his cast. Such an impressive deed was quite naturally
destined to reach the kitchen entrance of Olympus, so much so
that Jesus-Dixon had the author explain his recipe to chef Agnes.
Therein must have been a most civil confrontation : no use of
hisses was reported.

Benneth Father Beeburgh's voice of academic resonance, too, the
show can last, the growl of the established order. Himself a

Learned docteur is pedantic generalities, he says "lines of the
limit", "open society", "moral operations", "legitimate means",
"academic communities", etc., as if these were pure and sacred
entities forever screwed into the fabric of life. And, last but
not least, he speaks of civility: just let youth be civil enough
and he will kindly ~~listen~~^{listen} to their grievances. Somehow it does not
occur to him that this brand of bureaucratic kindness is precisely
what today's youth loathes most; that american or French, German
or Japanese, youth have no moral lessons to receive from those
whose main function, whatever the rationalizations, is to stim-
matically supply the ideological addleheads for the blood-spattered
bomb-glutted mess in which we live; that it is sheer impudence
to demand civility in the profane sense of urbanity while 11.5
million people are on the verge of starvation in a country burst-
ing with private and corporate profits; that it is a ministerial
joke to demand civility in the theological sense of natural
goodness while the campuses are open to neopak merchants and
military acrons bent on detouring confused youngsters into
becoming educated killers. Somehow it does not dawn on him that
the students' inviolability - whatever that means - is not aimed
at college presidents and faculty as such, but at the repressive
mystifications they embody.

"Complicated social mechanisms out of joint", offers the Rev-
erend, "are not adjusted with sledge hammers." No sir. Not
since last Sunday's sermon. That's why, to mention only a few
pieces, Vietnam is being adjusted back into joint with volleys
of American bubble gum, and Czechoslovakia with Balaboi Theatre
ballerinas, and Africa with Egypt~~ian~~-imported radishout. In Greece,

Afghan, China, Indonesia, Brazil, South Africa, you name it, whenever "normal operations" go very savage banners are out and civility is in. Except in Studentland. There foot-mounted young men and women spit, bark, rip and rape, while armed with tear-gas spray and lollipop sticks amateur cops can rationalize about civil terms of separation. You see, it isn't so if they do not "recognize the validity - sometimes even the necessity - of protest regarding the current burning issues of our society." They do, they do. Their educational philosophy may be about as exciting as Mortimer Adler's and their social thought about as fresh as Jeremy Bentham's, but they do allow for protest - well, yes, quite readily as since there it is with or without their recognition. After all, less cocky than celluloid governors, they understand the need for safety valves : discord fit marie concordia. Not all their Latin was lost on the dons. Dissent, they reckon, is the reverse of consent, and discord makes concord more valuable. In fact, with the schools as attuned to "our world's wrongs" as a bishop's mitre to a burro's rump, and more young men joining the 70,000 G.I.s already slaughtered in Vietnam, and the truly brave ones being crazed and cracked in the military stockades, and millions of dark-skinned people rotting away in the ghettos, there better be some legitimate steam-letting - "assured, expanded and protested".

Where does self-righteousness stop and corruption begin? Or is it plain paternalistic noncooperation? - "assured, expanded and protested..." Merle Kalra as a scholar in the Judeo-Christian tradition of civility would say. Overseeing their domains with the mental make-up of factory foremen, superintending them

in the overt and vague interests of the establishment, now university presidents finally propose to rule the students' curriculum as well. But - why not, indeed? If multi-million dollar corporations can be ~~swallow~~^{swallowed} up by more operators, why shouldn't well-read doctors be able to manipulate hot-tempered youngsters? There is nothing fundamentally improper ~~with~~^{with} anger and rebelliousness if properly managed; granted the right planning, promoters and professors, it could even become a collegiate ~~sport~~^{some} like football, hurdles racing or ~~such~~^{such} cultural leapfrogging. Courses in accurate popcorn sniping, four-letter words phonetics, love-ins and other ~~causal~~^{causal} tactics could be taught; then once or twice a year the safety valves would be opened, time-honored saturnalia revived, mock deans and presidents chosen by lot from among Black Power and S.P.W. activists, and such a gush of pink steam released into the ionosphere through U.N. inspected coils that overcame with a new sense of duty toward higher education Dixie henchmen would filibuster against accomplice haircuts in the armed forces and the U.S.A. applaud till their dentures fell~~le~~^{out}. Yes, there is no saying the ~~what~~^{what} of understanding university presidents could muster if only the students were ever so little amenable to civility.

But what if they aren't? What if those "storm troopers" - Harvard's dean Ford dixit¹ - refuse, nay, spurn academic's modest proposal to assume, expand and protect² for them their own dissent? Well, any model university president will evidence with

1. See Harvard Today, Special issue, Spring 1969.

2. A civil albeit standard formula with sovereign States and ~~moffison~~ musilling in on your territory. (Strictly for the record. No offense intended.)

the easiest of chores and diagrams that academic communities thrive on pure ideas and knowledge; that unbiased verities and absolute truth are their sole pursuit; and that though as a rule scholars are only human beings, so ingrained is their objectivity that never do they give one the sack for giving them the lie. But debunking an academic is utterly different/challenging academics. One thing is to hold that some particular doc is a fraud, another that the whole institution stinks. In the first case one may be quite wrong and hence forgiven, in the second case one may be quite right and hence unforgivable. When the latter happens, exit Dr. Jekyll and enter Mr. Hyde/stone. Roaring with relish and prosperity he grabs the bullhorn, calls in the bullies. "Those of you who want trouble, stay there; the police will see that you get it."³ They will, they will. And with an malignant display of meanness, too. How about a vignette for civility seclots to gargle with? Protesting a brutal arrest, a faculty member "was thrown down, handcuffed, laid away with a riot stick pressed to his throat. An officer squirted urine in his eyes. Another came from behind - 'How do you like this, you fancy-pants professor?' - and cut his head open with a blow from a riot stick that knocked him cold."⁴ Or that student whose camera was snatched, the film ~~defaced,~~
~~burnt,~~ and while one cop said, "'No one's looking' (they) fractured his ribs, damaged a lung, thrust a riot stick under his genitalia and hoisted up and down", in pursuance of which "they charged the boy with attempted murder."⁵ Those were but two of the many facts

3. Leo LITWAK, Associate Professor of English : "We Need a Revolution", Look Magazine, May 27, 1969.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

performed by six hundred cops eager to muddle each other in the scholarly task of settling right one college gone left. Harder, they said. Not a single don was physically harmed by the students on all the campuses taken together, whereas scores of students have been maimed and a few killed by the cops. "No one's looking..." It seems that for once "the law" was mistaken. There was Dr. Jekyll's alter ego, ^{and} cockeyes he : "This has been the most exciting day since my tenth birthday, when I rode a roller coaster for the first time."⁶ So be it. Which brings one back to the Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh.

To all appearances the Reverend is not a two-sword-wearing scoundrel. "Compassion", he says, "has a quiet way of service." Thus one feels a sense of loss that he didn't witness "the law" in action at San Francisco State College. A great protester in his own right against brutality, he might have had the good fortune of being rewarded for his compassion with the fancy-pants-professor treatment - and O the rejoicing in Heaven where true Knights of ~~the~~ Faith are rather scanty these days. For he would have taken a stand against campus chaos - cracking heads, breaking ribs, damaging lungs, he who queries with sorrow, "Must it be so? Must universities be subjected, willy-nilly, to such intimidation and victimization whatever their good will in the matter?"

Or would he? Looking more closely at the Reverend's tearful question one realizes with a start that the intimidators and victimizers are none other than the students who, having found "a cause - any cause, silly or not... get a few determined people to form a confrontation at any cost of boorishness or incivility."

6. LooLTWAK, *ibid.*

All right, suppose there's in the rub : does it warrant surrendering the campus to the police? Or is there more to it than just belligerence and incivility - more than picketing the administration, disrupting a lecture or two, taking over a building, let's not be stingy - for deans and presidents to summon the cops, which they know is tantamount to smashing heads and ribs and lungs?

The answer, as it were, is spelled out in the Reverend's message : "If someone invades your home, do you begin a dialogue, or do you call the law?" The object of this rhetorical question, don't you see, is to state the humble fact that a college or a university is the president's and faculty's - not the student's - home. True, the students may be admitted on the premises, they may even become "members of the community"; but beyond that they are basically homeless there, seasonal squatters at best, and should they make a show of vanity like infringing on the proprietor's entrenched privileges, then... then... if that kind of trouble comes to the Reverend's homestead - and he "personally hope(s) it never does" - then... then the offenders "will be given 15 minutes of meditation to cease and desist." 15 minutes. To the second. Given - O Notre Dame. With fear and trembling. *à* each heart an inward meditation with itself alone. Pascal-like. 15 minutes. On the dot. Cease and desist. Marche au crève. Those who do not, list them carry the blame and the penalty.⁷ Some will be suspended, others "charged with trespassing and disturbing the peace on private property and treated accordingly by the law." Meaning by the cops. Meaning broken skulls, broken limbs, broken teeth. Upon which "the university as we have known

7. Father Hesburgh's emphasis.

"and lowered it" will be adjusted back into its [old] good joints, and with it, fair enough, the invincibility of the young suffrage disseased in their own cup of blood.

"Compassion has a quiet way of serving": Father Desburgh's niche is all set in Mr. Hayekow's club.

Jean Malaquais