

Broken by Love

By ROBERT E. JONES FELDER

I RETURNED to the Gammon Theological Seminary in the Interdenominational Theological Center in September of 1960. Shortly after my return, I was elected to represent my student body on the Committee on Appeal for Human Rights.

This committee was composed of student representatives from six Atlanta colleges. Our job was that of planning and leading the freedom struggle in Atlanta.

The committee had taken its name from a document issued in the Atlanta papers as an appeal to the citizens of Atlanta and throughout the country to lend themselves to the removal of barriers that caused my people to be denied a basic human right—freedom. This document is today the guide to the aspirations of the Atlanta Negro citizens, and is now a part of the Congressional records of our country.

Today, I am able to record that "dreams do come true," and prayers are still being answered. After a year's struggle and many sacrifices, my dreams came true—my prayers were answered as Atlanta merchants peacefully desegregated the lunch counters.

As I met with major citizens, listened to the prayers of humble hearts, sat-in, was jailed, led a group on the first freedom ride into Alabama with the students of the Atlanta schools, I wondered how long it would be before the truth would reign in the South. The results of today, lead me to know that "God's truth is marching on" in the South.

Out of the Negro's struggle for freedom in the South, has come the idea that there has been born in the South a "New Negro." While this concept is not necessarily false, it seems more logical and accurate to consider the history of the race. Careful consideration of the Negro's history would reveal that this is not necessarily a new Negro, but an inevitable maturation and a maturing determination on the part of a race of people to be free.

In view of the established usage of the word existentialism we may conclude that this level of maturing determination is an exis-

tential level. This level calls for more direct action and less debate. The new state of maturity forces the religions of the Negro to be compatible with time. No longer does he have the notion that freedom is the reaction of prayer, but he now has the pray-as-I-go plan.

The inevitable existential maturation salvages itself upon two distinct elevators of "Faith." These elevators seem to be alleged carriers of "freedom riders" from their valley of hesitation.

In the valley of hesitation, or days of "Uncle Tom," the Negro was not really mature in his determination and his yearning to be free because the appetite for freedom was minimized and unnourished by the need for the undaunted leader(s) with techniques.

The monopoly of hope once offered by the allied forces of the Christian faith and the NAACP is no longer the only elevator whose creed echoes . . . "Going Up." More and more, the doctrines and creed of the "Black Muslims in America" attest to the fact that there is another elevator and another criteria for freedom.

This elevator is run by the principle of "an eye for an eye" and knows but one stop—Black Supremacy!

The elevator of the Christian forces advocates going up by the nonviolent technique.

The fuel for the Christian or allied elevator is taken in words of assurance, "Blessed are ye, when men

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shall revile you, and persecute you for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." This allied elevator has but one stop—the mezzanine of equality.

Time marches on and the move upward continues. The call of these two faiths now resounds in the once deaf ears of a race now determined. Existentialist—Going Up! There are two elevators going up. Make sure you choose the right one.

It would perhaps be permissible to propose that the sit-ins mean that this generation is an existential one. We are no longer debating, but have taken a stand, determined to be free. It is obvious that this generation of young collegians, though products of their heritage, and heirs of their forefathers maturing determination, will be a generation that will partake of the ideal of freedom.

Basically, this student-prompted action means that "Jim Crow" must go. It is the feeling of this group that the revolution is in a sense unfinished.

It is interesting to note that the participants of these movements are not expecting to obtain the goal without sacrifices. I have witnessed many giving of themselves. All who would attempt the nonviolent technique must realize that with it goes no assurance of security. The price of freedom will never be on sale. One must be willing to give himself, his time, his energy, his all, to the Christian technique of love and nonviolence.

The students' confidence in ultimate victory can be found in the theme song, "We Shall Overcome." An occasional victory will give added strength to face crisis, however, it is necessary to understand our opponent and realize that the roots of these traditions are planted deep in the soil of many generations.

The Atlanta story is being written day by day as is the struggle for all of the oppressed, especially in the South. Although each of us may not feel he can practice nonviolent techniques, everyone can give to the cause. The contribution may be in the form of respecting a boycott, giving financially, donating products, giving ideas, encouraging a fellow existentialist or just paying allegiance to the "Pray-as-I-go Plan."

President Kennedy's inaugural message suggested that Americans should ask themselves, not what the country can do for me, but what I

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WE BUILD THE CHURCH

—For A Purpose

By W. W. REID

A DEVOTED church trustee, urging the erection of an educational building beside the worship edifice, said recently in my hearing, "A church that is building is a growing church, and it gets the attention of the people in the community. A church that is not building is not growing; it is dead or dying."

Now I am sure there are many laymen and many ministers who would subscribe to this opinion. But I fear it needs much by way of qualification.

By this standard, Jesus was far from being a "success in his ministry: he never placed a cornerstone, bought a piece of property, left a single church building, nor raised any man-made pulpit to "impress" any community or any nation with his message. He didn't even have a parsonage in which to lie down at night: though friends gave him shelter, and "the trees were kind to him." The hilltop and the boat pushed out into the stream were his pulpits; the grassy slopes and the seashore were the seats that found favor with his congregations; the path through the cornfield, the road around the lake, and the dusty village street were the carpeted aisles and the sawdust trails that led to the Holy Altar.

By the "ever-building" standard, the great cathedrals that take centuries of building must be greater "successes" than the humble frame meeting house in the nearby village; and so must be those churches of various denominations that spread themselves over more and more acreage, erecting new structures for larger and larger staffs, growing in the pride, and envy, and esteem of "the world." And the church that, through hundreds of years, has acquired vast properties by the legacies of men and women seeking "merit" or doing "penance"—an institution secure in finances from rents and leases—-independent as a business organization: is its "success" in the eyes of men also "success" in the eyes of God?

I think we need to keep in per-

spective the *purpose* of the church. If—as we often summarize—the goal of all Christian activity, the goal of the church, is to bring men into harmony with, and into obedience to, the will of God, and to bring men into harmony with all other men, their brethren ("love the Lord thy God . . . love thy neighbor . . ."), we are faced by some questions: Is this (or any building) an avenue or a service to men in reaching this goal of the Christian life? Does the busyness of the church—that which attracts the attention of the community—aid individuals or groups in reaching out toward the ultimate goal? Is the "care of the institution" an aid or a hindrance to the best use of time, means, and talent toward "building the Kingdom"? Does the multiplicity of buildings and busyness clutter the road or does it help the congregation toward achieving the intent of the founder and the founders of any given church?

Now in our type of civilization and in our northern climate, I am quite sure we are agreed that a building or buildings are probably required to carry on a ministry of education and of service most effectively. But buildings of stone or wood are not an end nor even an absolute necessity: the end is the *building of men of faith and character, and through them the building of Christ's Kingdom upon earth.* The hut or chapel where men are built is a "successful church" and hallowed ground: the cathedral or bejewelled edifice that "attracts the attention" of millions but leaves souls unreached, minds uninstructed, and motives unpurified is a mockery to God. Ask our young people who are now deciding for the Christian life or the Christian ministry *where* they were when they made their choice. You will be surprised how many were in camp, or by a lakeside: how few were in a great edifice.

I am not speaking against church buildings: we need thousands more of them. But I am suggesting that they are only a means to an end; and we must watch that all our

energy does not go into the means, and the end be forgotten or lost to sight. A church *can* be *dying* even when it is building and its membership growing.

I was told the other day of a church (not Methodist) that discontinued its early morning service because the offering at that service averaged only \$17 per Sunday. And I thought of that unknown Scottish minister who, on a stormy night, preached his sermon to one lone lad who was destined to become his country's greatest missionary. Which clergyman was building?

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can do for the country. While this idea is ideal for the strength of the country, the young existentialist going up declares: "It is not that we love our country less, nor desire freedom more, but incidentally recall that WE WANT TO BE FREE."

Today, in some way, you may have the opportunity to act for freedom! Each presentation of tradition will not be an opportunity for victory, but this day you may plant a seed of love and be content, for seeds today bear fruits tomorrow.

As each day becomes "Action Day" in our thought and deeds, I recommend that our maturing determinations be seasoned by the thoughts of the Apostle Paul: though we give our bodies . . . in the process of going up . . . and have **not** love, we are nothing.

"God's Truth is Marching On" and we are going up! The walls of traditional segregation and discrimination are coming down, but finally as existentialists, we may sit-in, wade-in, boycott or freedom ride, the Supreme Court may grant verdicts in our favor, merchants may eventually yield and the government may give itself to justice, freedom and equality, but, we are but sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal unless these barriers and traditions fall—broken by love!