

THE CHURCH 1974

Martin Kilson, the distinguished black scholar, recently argued in a vigorous article in the New York Times Magazine that blacks should be judged by the same academic standards as whites. His point was that other practices are little more than a sophisticated form of racism since such quotas assumed that blacks couldn't make it in a college unless they were given special favors.

Blacks, Kilson seemed to be arguing, have the right to be treated like full-fledged American citizens — no better and no worse than anyone else. Kilson — who is scarcely an Uncle Tom — has taken the same position as a number of tough young black scholars, such as economist Thomas Sowell, who want no favors from anyone.

I find such toughness admirable and am delighted at the plight of the white liberals who find the ground cut out from under them by such blacks as Kilson and Sowell. For in the liberal mythology of the black who needs special favors if he is to make it, white liberals have created a caricature and a racial stereotype as degrading as the minstrel show end man and all the other previous creations of the bigoted and guilty white conscience.

Unfortunately, not all blacks are immune to the effects of the seductive condescension of the white liberal. There was a time, not so long ago, when there scarcely could be a meeting on anything in the United States which would not be disrupted by a handful of blacks demanding confessions of guilt for all white people present. Blacks who permitted themselves to be caught in such stereotypes were merely doing what the white liberals present wanted them to do. They were one more product of white caricaturization.

Curiously enough, such black disrupters almost always worked for white-funded organizations. I remember one meeting in particular that was disrupted by a black cleric dressed in the hippest of clothes. A number of black political leaders in conservative garb sat quietly and discreetly by until the militant left to disrupt another meeting.

Without ever mentioning what had happened or explicitly refuting "the brother," one of the political leaders proceeded to say exactly the opposite thing that the militant had. When I pointed this out during a coffee break, the black politician said with ill-concealed anger, "That man was never elected to anything in his life, and never will be. I've been elected by tens of thousands of people in my district. Why are you white people more interested in listening to him than to me?"

It is now clear, I think, that most whites are much more interested in listening to blacks who have constituencies than blacks who have anointed themselves as spokesmen. But at least some of the disrupters have found a new audience. According to a recent issue of the Thomas More newsletter, Overview, Dr. James Cone, so-called black "theologian," did a splendid job in disrupting the consultation in Geneva, Switzerland, insisting on being called "Herr Doktor," and saying, "Well, why should I cooperate with you? I don't know you. Shouldn't you let me decide whether you qualify as an ally? Maybe the time has come what

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whites wait around until we let them help us."

Let us overlook the blatant racism of Cone's behavior. Let us also overlook that such clownish caving is a disgrace to American blacks. Let us rather ask one simple question: Who ever elected Prof. Cone to speak for anyone? When he speaks of "we" and "us" who are the "we" and the "us" he has in mind? What is his constituency? Who has authorized him to claim to speak for the American black population or for the American black experience. By what right does he claim that his particular kind of theological posturing represents anyone's experience but his own?

The available survey data suggests that Cone speaks for only a segment of the American black population, and a very small one at that. Come to think of it, it's very difficult to conceive of a tenured faculty member of Union Theological Seminary as being the victim of oppression. Most American blacks would dearly love to have it so good.

Ah, comes the reply from the white liberal, but Cone and indeed all other American blacks have been subjected to horrendous psychological pressures and have incurred grave psychological damages because of the injustices of oppression and racism. Cone is merely more conscious than most blacks are of how much the whole people have suffered and of what grave psychic damage has been done to them because of their "victimization."

It all sounds very plausible though, again, what it really is is the crypto-racism of the liberal.



FATHER FOX

Father Fox Slated For Northeast Workshop

Father Matthew Fox, author and specialist in the study of American spirituality, will give the keynote address at the Northeast Region's first religious educators' workshop. The program will begin at Mercy High School at 10 a.m. on Saturday, Feb. 16, with Father Fox's address, followed by a question period.

The theme for the day, Spirituality in our Lives, will be accented in afternoon sessions on value education, arts, prayer, and films.

The day will close with the celebration of the Eucharist by Bishop Hogan at 3:30 p.m.

Religion teachers from all regions are invited. Please bring your own lunch, beverage will be provided. Tickets are available at the region's parishes or by calling 586-1625. Late registrations will be accepted at 9:30 a.m. the morning of the workshop.

Journalism Major Wins Fellowship

Elmira — Kathleen Kozdemba, 19, a junior in the Journalism department at St. Bonaventure University, has been awarded a Newspaper Fund fellowship that provides special study, a summertime job and a gift of \$700.

She is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas E. Kozdemba of 1108 N. Main, a 1971 graduate of Notre Dame High School and a member of St. Casimir's parish. She has worked as a reporter and feature writer for the Elmira Star-Gazette and is on the staff of The Bona Venture, campus weekly.

The fellowship program, sponsored by Dow Jones, Inc., publishers, includes a three-week editing course in May at Temple University, Philadelphia, and a temporary job on the Hartford Courant copy desk.

Miss Kozdemba won the Gannett Newspapers Scholarship in 1970, the American Newspaper Publishers Association "Most Valuable Staffer" award in 1971,



KATHLEEN KOZDEMBA

and the Scripps-Howard Foundation Scholarship in 1971, 1972 and 1973.

Also named a 1974 Newspaper Fund fellow was William Reed of Huntington Station, L.I., a junior at St. Bonaventure.

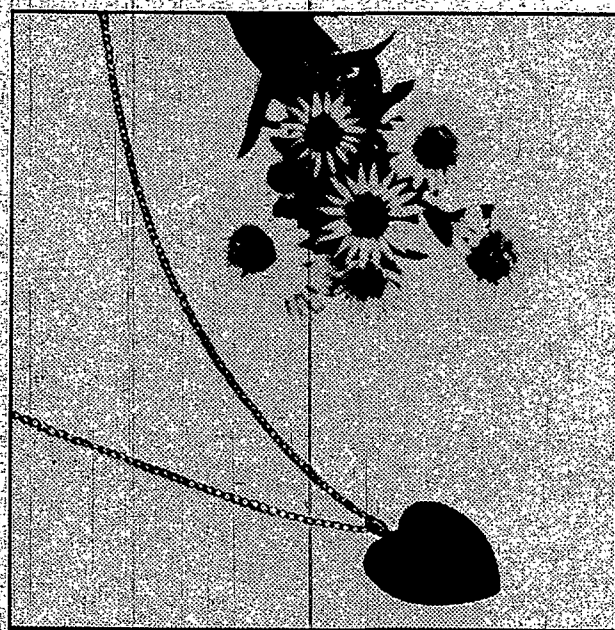


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