

eagles dwindles to insignificance when confronted with the massive claims of the Astrodome Stadium in Houston, Texas, which made its debut last month with the opening of the big-league baseball season. Where but in the Age of the Absurd would you find the outdoors brought indoors at an expense that would probably finance a national antipoverty campaign for years? Where else a baseball field with a vast expanse of velvety green grass, all under a latticework of glass? Where else a two-million-dollar scoreboard with built-in memory system, a 6,600-ton-capacity air-conditioning system, or a grandstand equipped not only with assorted restaurants for hoi polloi, but also with two private clubs (one charging a \$14,800-a-year membership fee) boasting multiple bars and private rooms for those who get bored with watching the games (and circuses?) for which this domed temple of grandiloquent sport was built?

Let's see: what was it that played such a part in the decline and fall of the Roman Empire?

## Selma, Friends, and Nonviolence

By RICHARD K. TAYLOR

HOW do most of us respond to the extraordinary commands of Christ: "Love your enemies"; "Pray for those who persecute you"? Many Christians argue that these are not to be taken literally, that they are meant to bring us to repentance by contrasting our loveless lives with the pure ethical righteousness of God. According to this point of view, it would be arrogant and misguided to feel that we can seriously seek to follow these commands in our actual life situations.

Friends traditionally have taken the opposite position, believing that the commands are to be applied not only as ethical guidelines in daily decisions but in the relationships of groups and nations. Yet how many of us—Christian pacifist or Christian nonpacifist—are ever *really* in the hostility-laden situation to which the commandments seem to be directed? How many of us are ever in the position where "men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely"?

The Negro citizens of Selma, Alabama, however, find themselves in this very position, and their response has been no less than amazing.

I accompanied a group of fourteen clergy and laymen who on March 9 went from Philadelphia to Selma. One of the first messages that we heard, in the church from which the various marches originated, contained a cry from a Negro minister: "Every morning

when I wake up I ask myself, 'What will they do to me today, what humiliation must I endure today?'" In attempting to exercise very simple rights—to register to vote, to assemble peacefully, to petition for redress of grievances—the Negroes of Selma have been literally reviled and persecuted. In a few weeks or months their spirits and bodies probably absorb more hostility than most of us face in a lifetime. What a temptation there is for them to react in kind, to hate back, to respond with violence!

I do not think that anyone who has been to Selma in recent weeks would claim that Negroes there are free of hostility. But we must affirm their extraordinary ability not only to control their frustration and make it serve useful ends but also to find deep and sustaining resources of love toward those who oppose them.

As we marched onto the Pettus Bridge over the Alabama River and then down toward the rows of State Troopers, standing where they had beaten the marchers of two days before, I could sense that those around me were not entirely free of fear, but that their fear was being transcended, that there was a willingness to suffer and a kind of relaxed openness to the burly, scowling police lining our route. People held hands; quiet smiles were exchanged; the Negro girl to my right took out a cloth to cover her face should the tear gas come. Photographs show calmness and even radiance in many faces.

Later, when we all had gathered again at the church, we learned that the three white ministers had been beaten. The Negro minister who was leading the service prayed for the ministers and for their families, then prayed for those who had done the beating, that God might reach into their hearts and redeem them. When I looked up from that prayer I saw a white Catholic nun directly in front of me wiping tears from her eyes. To her right a Catholic priest's cheeks were wet with tears; people everywhere were crying. The same thought must have been in most of the visitors' minds: "This is a community where men and women actually love their enemies, where they really try to overcome evil with good. This is a group of people who really want to be like Jesus, who 'when he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten.' We are having the privilege of experiencing authentic Christianity. This is what the church should be."

Still later I talked with Charles Billups, a Negro minister who some years ago had been picked up by white racists, tied to a tree, and beaten with chains. Reflecting on that experience, he said: "Those men who beat me taught me something—they taught me to trust in God. If I ever had any doubt about God, I learned to trust in Him then." Talking about Selma, he said that he hoped there would not be any violence and that he

Richard K. Taylor, a member of Abington Meeting, Jenkintown, Pa., is executive director of the Fair Housing Council of Delaware Valley.

would not like to see any of the State policemen hurt. "I don't know their hearts," he said; "they may actually be with me but afraid to speak out or not do their job."

Writing about a similar experience in another part of the South, a northern white minister told of the privilege of being associated with the Negroes' nonviolent movement for racial justice. I am sure that his words would express the feelings of many of us who journeyed to Selma: "The songs and prayers of these amazing people are still ringing in my ears. My soul has been fed. I only hope that dozens, hundreds, thousands of

my fellow white Christians from all parts of our nation can taste the joy of this experience."

To be in Selma was a joy, but in my mind it also raises a question for Friends. Are the few efforts that we are now making really all that we can do to support the nonviolent movement against racism and for the beloved community? Is not God perhaps calling us—we who have spoken for these many years about the power of nonviolence—to a much more thorough identification with the struggle for nonviolent solutions to the racial crisis?

## What Do Quakers Believe?

By EDMUND P. HILLPERN and JOHN K. YOUNG

WHAT are the forces which keep a Monthly Meeting together despite an amazing—and confusing—variety of experiences and ideas? Hoping to find out, we mailed a questionnaire to about eighty Friends—mostly overseers, elders, and chairmen of committees. A 75 per cent response convinced us that our concern is shared by many Friends.

This report tries to draw some generalizations from the answers we received, but our conclusions are necessarily over-simplified.

Most of those polled feel that what holds our Quaker community together is a common set of attitudes centering on respect, tolerance, a desire to listen, and a disposition to seek consensus rather than to be guided by doctrine. There is a strong group feeling that religion has to do with a desire to draw practical decisions and actions from a spiritual center which is shared with the Meeting.

It seems right to talk about the *search* as a "Quaker way of life." This may take many forms—a search for truth, for brotherhood, for mysticism, for knowledge—but it is always the quest for some good that we desire for ourselves as a community and for all men. Implicit in our searching is the knowledge that answers are not easy to find; as one Friend wrote, "Sometimes one has to wrestle with the Spirit."

The Inner Light, of course, is a symbol for the search. But as a mere doctrine the concept of the Inner Light is the common property of liberal Christians. What is distinctively Quakerly is the shared center. The solitary individual expects to be helped by the worshipping Meeting, to find this center again and again, and, together with the Meeting, to move forward towards the Kingdom.

Edmund P. Hillpern, a member of New York Monthly Meeting and chairman of its Subcommittee on Counseling of Quakers by Quakers, is a psychoanalyst in private practice.

John K. Young, also a member of New York Monthly Meeting, is a librarian and a graduate of Union Theological Seminary.

In attempting to classify the answers to our survey, the best we can offer is a continuum with, at one end, the Friend whose religious emphasis is on a personal God, on personal relationships, and on projects close to home (such as the school) and, at the other end, the social idealist involved in large schemes for peace and brotherhood, whose God is likely to be an anonymous force, not a person. Abstractions have no appeal for him unless they bear directly upon social problems (like civil rights or world peace) "here and now."

At the *extreme* end of this rainbow we find a small group of Friends absorbed with a burning conviction that there is little time left to achieve "the better world." Their ability to listen to "seekers" is sometimes weak.

Here are a few of the answers to the questionnaire, grouped under three headings: "What do you mean by 'God'?" "What do you mean by 'A religious experience'?" and "The meaning of life is. . . ."

### 2. What Do You Mean by "God"?

"God is the Supreme Being from which my life has emerged, to whom it returns, in whom I live and move. This Supreme Being is infinite and eternal and therefore beyond my finite understanding."

"God is a person, a spirit, loving us, his children, beyond our understanding."

"God is certainly *not* a person. It is the essence of all that is worth striving for and at the same time the power that makes striving possible."

"The concept of God is meaningful to me only in terms of personal experience and only in the human encounter. 'It is between man and man that we meet God.'"

"The word 'God' has absolutely no meaning to me. The universe is indifferent toward me. There is no relation between my own life and God."