

nitions. Under the umbrella he delivers a great many hip-shooting generalizations about American culture, America today, the incompatibility between American and Christian directions, etc. Since he uses a shotgun for his *obiter dicta* it would be surprising if he failed to make a number of solid hits. (Norman Mailer as a "phallus-totin' granddaddy and metaphysician of the gut," for one that keeps the metaphor.) But he has a long way to go to reach Annie Oakley. Dr. Martin cannot see Mary McCarthy's "humanist in the bathtub." The idea that American society is unalterably structuralist or "scientistic" and so hostile to religion, is like saying that it is constitutional and so hostile to radical change. Such dollar theses are finally unacceptably inflated.

The chief flaw of this otherwise valuable analysis is the assumption that crucial events have and will come about no matter what, that they are antecedently determined. It is remarkable how often the words "inevitable," "unalterable," "unavoidable," and their cognates come up in these pages: "The change is so great that today certainly and inevitably all men living and all men about to live and to take their places on this planet earth are destined to enter this particular frame of human dimension." The controlling metaphor of historical section, "The Trap-Gate of History," is telling. And the only response one can make is that there is no proof of historical inevitability, the grounds for which must be outside reason. The assumption of inevitability, however, makes all the difference in what one can hope for from human events.

Fortunately, and despite all, Dr. Martin has other resources of interpretation than the inevitabilist creed. He speaks thus of the Holy Spirit:

There is nothing so ungovernable as the Spirit. It vivifies. It destroys. The Spirit goes where it wills, does what it wills, is no man's slave, obeys no beck, is at no man's call, chooses its favorites, rejects any front-runner it so pleases, can evoke order from chaos, dismal failure from a brilliant beginning, and success from total disaster.

Just so and, one might add, "is not Time's fool." It is an eloquent passage, by no means the only one in the book, and one with which Pope John would have heartily agreed. It should signify that, in William James's phrase, "an ever not quite yet" applies to all human last judgments, including those in the present book.

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SR/APRIL 8, 1972

BLACK CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM: New Directions for the Black Church

by Albert B. Cleage, Jr.

Morrow, 312 pp., \$8.95; paperback, \$3.45

Reviewed by Anthea Lahr

■ Christians believe that God is love. Albert B. Cleage, Jr., believes that God is power, black power. "... Jesus, the Black Messiah, was a revolutionary leader, sent by God to rebuild the Black Nation Israel and to liberate black people . . ." Elsewhere Mr. Cleage writes: "As long as black people are talking about love no one is worried, but when we start talking about power everyone is worried." For Mr. Cleage, to believe in a God of Love is to believe in a slave theology, in a philosophy of God that was designed to uphold white supremacy. Of course he is right that the Church as a kind of theological corporation is part of the oppressive white power structure. But the Church as an extension of the family that Jesus started with the apostles is a brotherhood that includes Mr. Cleage and all the people he despises. And he belittles other black leaders—Ralph Abernathy, Jesse Jackson, Roy Wilkins—because of their commitment to integration. Integra-

tion, however, is the key to Christianity. Not just integration of all peoples under God, but integration of all aspects of the personality. Jesus healed and to heal means to make whole. Separatism is the opposite of healing.

Many people have attempted to appropriate God for their own purposes (Hitler's official "philosopher," Alfred Rosenberg, tried to prove that Jesus was an Aryan). Although we can presume that God is on the side of liberation, it is a blasphemous limitation of His power to believe that Christ was a Black Panther sent down from heaven, who was "putting together the basic cadre for the Black Nation." Christ died for the whole world, not just for liberals and radicals. We are all chosen people.

Mr. Cleage's diagnosis of the source of the oppression of his people is unassailable. It is not a random group of white individuals, but an intricate power pattern that will do anything, even integrate, to survive. So Mr. Cleage views integration as a way of perpetuating the oppression and threatening black identity: "We do not want to become a nonpeople." Yet what is the alternative? However badly treated, black Americans are Americans and Mr. Cleage's plans for a black nation are mostly rhetoric. As a spiritual entity, a black nation could be

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created in the same way as the peoplehood of the Jews, who preserved their identity through their faith and suffering for thousands of years. Black people, though, have suffered enough.

For two thousand years the Church, as an institution, has been used to subdue the powerless. In medieval Europe, as later on the slave plantations, they were kept docile by threats of fire and brimstone and the promise of a better afterlife. Mr. Cleage rightly wants to change that and make the Church (alas, he is only concerned with his particular form of black church) a force for liberation and justice. On the other hand, can black nationalism be Christian when it "rejects nonviolence both practically and philosophically"? And, on a more practical level, can a black revolution succeed without white help—especially from the media? "You wonder what happened to the Black Revolution," Mr. Cleage writes. "White people just took it out of the paper and off TV." Yet he fails to draw the obvious conclusion from this—that we all need each other.

Mr. Cleage does not wish to break down race barriers ("I make a special effort to fly first class so I won't have to hold inane conversations about race") nor will he validate the other, often heroic efforts of black revolutionaries ("No Black people in America are really trying to structure a Black Revolution except Black Christian Nationalists"). This exclusiveness bodes ill for black freedom and Christianity alike. Yet Mr. Cleage's basic premise—namely, that "Black people want the power to control their own destiny, to define their own identity and condition"—is inarguable.

Saint Paul, whom Mr. Cleage calls "an Uncle Tom who wanted to identify with his white gentile oppressors," defined true integration: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Like Paul, Mr. Cleage has a fine anger and pride: "We are going to be ourselves. We are going to love ourselves and look at the world through our own eyes." But if we truly love ourselves, we will love others, because we cannot love ourselves if all we find inside is vengeance and hate.

Anthea Lahr is a free-lance social critic.

LITERARY I. Q. ANSWERS

1H (*The Arrangement*), 2F (*A Mind That Found Itself*), 3J (*I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*), 4G (*Catcher in the Rye*), 5A (*The Snake Pit*), 6B (*Tender Is the Night*), 7I (*Lady in the Dark*), 8D (*Anatomy of a Murder*), 9E (*Portnoy's Complaint*), 10 C (Chekhov: *Ward No. 6*).



AN AMERICAN DEATH: The True Story of the Assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Greatest Manhunt of Our Time

by Gerold Frank

Doubleday, 467 pp., \$10

Reviewed by Fred J. Cook

■ It was the evening of April 3, 1968. Lightning crackled, thunder crashed, rain drummed in a steady deluge on the roof of the meeting hall in Memphis, Tennessee. And Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., seemed to defy the elements and fate as he made his last great, impassioned speech—during which he described a number of threats against his life. Gerold Frank, who recreates that scene and the atmosphere in a city almost hysterical with tension, probes the minds and describes the emotions of many who heard Dr. King that night. Later they recalled that they had never known King to speak that way before, almost as if he were in

another world looking down at his past on earth.

This is Gerold Frank's account, quoting Dr. King:

"Like anybody I would like to live . . . a long life; longevity has its place." He sounded cool, reasonable now, stating what any reasonable man would wish to say and feel. "But I'm not concerned about that now . . ." His voice began to rise. "I just want to do God's will!" He was carrying his audience with him. "And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain . . ." His voice continued rising, its cadences greater, more rolling. "And I've looked over—and I've *see-ee-n* . . ." He lingered on the word, his voice high-pitched, tremolo-like, the high singing voice of a violin, it pierced one, "the—*Promised Land*." Cheers and applause, and cries from the audience. "I may not get there with you, but I want you to know, tonight, that *we-as-a-people-will-get-to-the-Promised Land!*" Each word intense and high, and building up again, after a pause in a quick rush, a torrent of words: "So I'm happy tonight I'm not worried about anything I'm not fearing any man!" To a crescendo that swept everything before it: "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord!"



In Harlem on September 20, 1958, a demented woman stabbed Martin Luther King, Jr., with a letter opener, seen protruding from his upper chest (top left); in Oslo December 10, 1964, Dr. King holds Nobel Peace Prize gold medal (top, right); in Memphis March 28, 1968—flanked, on left, by Bishop B. Julian Smith and, on right, by the Reverend Ralph Abernathy, Dr. King (below) leads civil rights march: "Like anybody I would like to live . . . a long life; longevity has its place. . . . But I am not concerned about that now . . . I just want to do God's will!"

At 6:01 the next evening, Dr. King, standing on the balcony of his room outside the Lorraine Motel, was slammed violently backwards by a high-powered rifle bullet which, according to the official reconstruction, was fired from the bathroom of a rooming house across the street. A man who called himself John Willard and who was later identified as James Earl Ray had registered there in mid-afternoon. A small-time crook, Ray had failed at almost everything he undertook, his only notable success having been his escape from the Missouri State Penitentiary the previous year.

Gerold Frank reveals a flair for drama, as well as a solidly researched familiarity with local moods and events, as he sets the scene. The summer of 1967 had been a nightmare in Memphis: wild rumors had swept the city until almost everyone waited in dread for the incident that would spark an explosive racial war. The spark had not been struck then. Now, in 1968, a garbage men's strike, the refusal of the city administration to reach a sensible agreement, a march led by Dr. King that got out of hand and turned into a riot had revived and intensified the old fears. Dr. King returned to lead another march, a peaceful one—and was assassinated.

All of this is told with the sweep and excitement of a novel. The weakness of *An American Death* comes later, when Frank takes up the vital question: Was the murder the work of a psychotic loner or the product of a conspiracy?

Frank handles this issue much like a detective story writer who gives the reader a number of clues which lead to only one conclusion, then in the final chapter knocks the props out from under all of them. Thus, in the end, Frank comes down on the side of the official verdict: The murder was the work of a lone assassin; no conspiracy was involved.

To arrive at such a verdict one must resort to a host of rationalizations. Where did Ray, never in the past much more than a nickels-and-dimes holdup-man, suddenly get the \$7,000 he spent in his months of liberty? Ray insisted that most of it came from a mysterious contact named Raoul, whom he couldn't or wouldn't identify further. Frank theorizes that Ray must have pulled a number of successful holdups; but, though thousands of FBI agents worked on every aspect of the case, there is not one iota of evidence to support this. How did Ray, the bungler, suddenly become a wily expert at smuggling diamonds, heroin, marijuana across U.S. borders? Frank does not answer this question, but it would seem only logical that Ray must have had contacts and guidance.

Frank's handling of another sensitive issue—Ray's use as aliases of the names of four Canadian citizens who were remarkable look-alikes—is especially suspect. Frank pictures Ray, after his escape from Tennessee to Canada, as hunting through old newspapers for birth notices, then hanging around the homes of the men he identified in this fashion to determine whether they looked like him. This has to be pure imagination, and it does not explain how Ray had come to use *previously* the names of two such look-alikes, Eric Starvo Galt and John Willard.

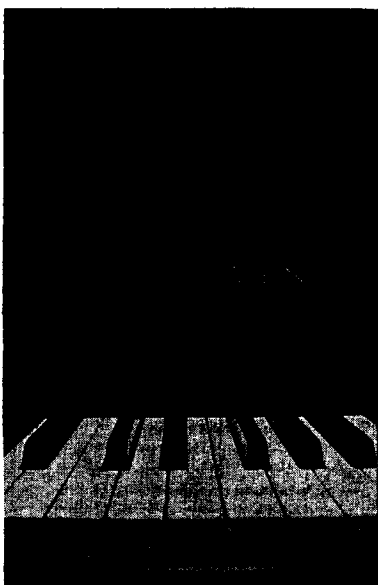
The assassination investigation was

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much muddled, both here and abroad, by some indications that two men were using Ray's aliases. Ray's arrest at Heathrow Airport in London on June 8, 1968, resulted in vast confusion. Scotland Yard announced that the arrest was made at 11:15 A.M., as Ray was transferring from an incoming Lisbon flight to one bound for Brussels. But subsequent investigation had Ray leaving a London rooming house at 9:30 A.M. to go directly to the airport to catch a Brussels flight. Had two men, using the same unusual Canadian alias, Ramon George Sneyd, been picked up? Frank brushes off the question, ignoring the fact that Scotland Yard six months later (as Harold Weisberg demonstrated by reproducing the correspondence) was insisting on the accuracy of its original Lisbon-transfer announcement.

Frank concludes there just never were two men in London using the Sneyd alias. Yet Bernard Fensterwald, Jr., former counsel to U.S. Senate committees and head of the Committee to Investigate Assassinations, had obtained from London landladies through on-the-spot interviews descriptions of two Ramon George Sneyds. One of them, according to his landlady, had left behind the paraphernalia of a drug addict—and James Earl Ray was not an addict. The landlady added that when she told official investigators of this discovery they warned her quite crossly never to speak about it.

Gerold Frank's book, then, while a fascinatingly written tale, is something less than the whole "true story" about the murder of Dr. King.

Fred J. Cook is a free-lance who has written frequently on criminal topics.

REPORT FROM ENGINE CO. 82

by Dennis Smith

Saturday Review Press, 215 pp., \$5.95

Reviewed by David W. McCullough

■ Those little boys who dream of becoming firemen when they grow up don't know what they may be getting into. In the South Bronx, where Smith's Engine Company 82 is located, the neighbors, mostly non-English-speaking Puerto Ricans, know that all they need to do to summon help is to pull the handle of the corner fire alarm. As a result, Fireman First Grade Dennis Smith and his colleagues in the New York Fire Department are called in to care for drug O.D.s, to settle marital spats, to break up brawls, or simply to relieve the tedium of a hot summer night. One day Company 82 races off, first, to treat the

victim of a hit-and-run accident, then to rescue the guilty driver when an angry mob decides to teach him a lesson; on another day it encounters a naked madman wielding a carriage whip; and time and again it is called to alarm box 2743 on the corner of Charlotte and 170th Street, where the Company finds nothing but a handful of men drinking beer from cans wrapped in brown paper bags. Smith says that his firehouse responds to more false alarms than does any other in the city. "In the city of New York last year, firemen responded to 72,060 false alarms," he writes, "an average of 197 daily."

There are, of course, also fires to be put out. In the course of an average day Company 82 douses the flames in four or five automobiles abandoned by owners or car thieves. Frequently the men find themselves fighting fires in deserted buildings where blazes have occurred in the past. (I suspect that the Company must be tempted to let these firetraps burn to the ground so as to be done with them once and for all.) Then, too, there are the serious fires: apartment fires with life and property to be saved.

In the intervals between true and false alarms, a number of mundane details must be attended to: sweeping the firehouse, cooking meals, studying for advancement exams, holding meetings to decide such questions as how much should be set aside from each man's paycheck to buy a dishwasher for the Company's kitchen.

Able to describe routine matters without making them seem dull and equally capable of chronicling moments of high drama, Smith is an author who hardly seems typecast for the role. Indeed, he often comes across as a character out of an old Pat O'Brien movie. He plays a bagpipe in the Emerald Society band, is married to an understanding wife named Pat, and has three young sons, Brendan, Dennis, and Sean. Raised in a midtown Manhattan slum, Smith quit school at fifteen; now, like many New York policemen and firemen, he lives in the suburbs and feels a deep distrust for the city. Thirty-one years old ("at times I feel fifty"), Smith earns about \$11,000 a year and regards himself as "a professional fire fighter."

On the other hand, stashed away in his locker at the firehouse, along with copies of *Playboy* and *Saturday Review*, is a well-thumbed edition of the poems of Yeats—echoes of which turn up in unexpected places in his book. For example, in an account of the early stirrings of a bar-room brawl, Smith remarks that time "is a circling tower."

There is something about Dennis Smith and his fellow firemen at Engine Company 82—Irishmen almost to a man