

trenchment it is difficult to maintain one of those major rallying points, anti-Communism. If the Marxist menace really were to wither away, American conservatism might go with it. All that I can see that might replace anti-Communism as a rousing conservative tenet is patriotism, but among such highly individualistic people as American conservatives patriotism would hardly be a summons to much more than mild goose bumps as the flag passes by.

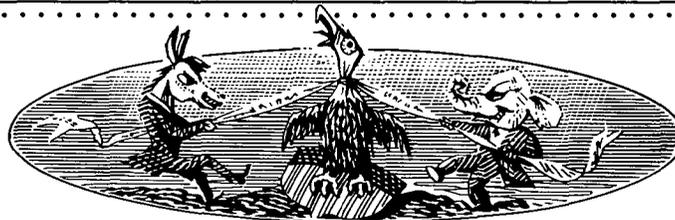
The detumescence of conservatism is not all that helpful to this Republican President. It is true that a vigorous conservative movement might fetter his freedom of action. Noisy criticism from the right could weaken him the way noisy criticism from the left weakened Jimmy Carter. But the American conservative movement has provided the Republican party with vigor and with foot soldiers ever since 1964. It is the major political base supporting the par-

ty. The Democrats have a dozen highly charged factions to support them. Their problem is to keep each faction from becoming an embarrassment. The conservatives are not so extreme. There is little to fear that they will embarrass the Republican party but rather that they will wilt away.

Finally, there is one other reason President Bush needs a vigorous conservative movement. That movement's intellectuals have devised appropriate

solutions to social problems that have defied the Democrats' favorite solution, big government. Without market solutions, say, to pollution or to child care, all George Bush is left with is a cheap version of the Great Society. His latest policy suggestions for child care and the environment come dangerously close to the old Great Society charlatany. Here again is evidence that the conservatives are not leading his center-right government. □

CAPITOL IDEAS



HERETIC AS HERO

by Tom Bethell

Bongo drums in the lead, the African American liturgical procession came solemnly down the aisle of Suitland High School's Anabelle Ferguson Auditorium. The congregation, a thousand strong for the 11 a.m. Eucharistic Liturgy, was all black and perhaps 75 percent female. Some had been waiting in their seats for an hour or more. Many were holding cardboard fans with plywood handles, dispensed free by local funeral homes. About twenty usherettes stood ready for any emergency, wearing nurses' uniforms and white cotton gloves. Suitland is way out in the Maryland suburbs; just about the entire congregation had arrived by car. But you had to walk the last few blocks because so many Plymouth Horizons, Dodge Omnis, Chrysler LeBarons, Chevy Camaros, Nissan Sentras, Broncos, Jeeps, Mercury Cougars, and Toyota Corollas were clustered outside the auditorium that every parking space was taken.

At last the proceedings were underway, and here came the rebel priest (as the *Washington Post* called him), Reverend G. Augustus Stallings, Jr., pastor of the newly formed Imani Temple. His assistant, or deacon, wore dreadlocks. Banners held aloft depicted an eccentric red, black, and green pattern remotely suggesting a cross. No crucifixes here, though. The bongos drummed, there was a monotonous shaking of beads inside some cylindrical African gourd, and the white-gowned female choir came loosely

steppin' down the aisle: Ah-men . . . Ah-go . . . Ah-men . . . Ah-go . . .

The balding, tonsured Reverend Stallings was wearing vestments with an odd, off-center, and noncanonical pattern in back. He seemed quite subdued, his hands held vertically together, Roman Catholic style, and proceeded up to the stage past a dozen unicams and swaying microphone booms. The media crowd was as usual on nonchalant safari, khaki jackets festooned with cameras and lens caps. But this is a story where the media have not been quite as impartial as they like to pretend. They have cast the Defiant Reverend as hero and wouldn't dream of giving him the Jim and Tammy Faye treatment.

Stallings is that authentic media-hero of our time, the defector or apostate. Not any defection will do, of course. One must defect from the central or core institutions of Western culture in order to achieve renown. And here was a black Catholic priest who was publicly and loudly walking away from the church, disobeying the local archbishop, James Cardinal Hickey, and starting up his own congregation with an "authentic" Swahili name, the Imani Temple. As he did so, he accused the Catholic Church of racism. Perfect! Marjorie Hyer of the *Washington Post* could scarcely restrain her enthusiasm, extolling in a series of page-one stories the "outspoken defiance" of "the charismatic black preacher." Here was a "David and Goliath story with racial implications," wrote another *Washington Post* reporter.

On the "racist" accusation, incidentally, I one day asked the Rev. Stallings if he wasn't going too far in using this word. "Oh no," he said. "The bishops used it themselves in 1979." And indeed they did, in a pastoral letter entitled "Brothers and Sisters to Us," a document that in retrospect seems ill-disposed toward the U.S. and ill-advised in its comments about the Catholic Church. ("Racism is an evil which endures in our society and in our Church. . . . The climate of crisis engendered by demonstrations, protests, and confrontation has given way to a mood of indifference. . . . RACISM IS A FACT," and so on.) Stallings merely echoed the charges, in if anything milder tones.

In response to Stallings's defection, Cardinal Hickey responded by suspending him from the performance of priestly functions. (Catholics who continue attending services by a suspended priest are in "noncompliance," as far as their own churchgoing obligations are concerned.) The Rev. Stallings responded to his suspension by saying: "I do not recognize [Hickey's] jurisdiction to determine who we are and what we are." He seemed not to grasp the church-state distinction, insisting on his (unquestioned) "rights to religious, spiritual, liturgical and theological self-determination," as though Cardinal Hickey were Cardinal Wolsey, and George Bush, Henry VIII.

On the one hand, Stallings insisted democratically that his legitimacy derived from the people, or congregation. The large turnout the week before at his service in the Howard University Law School chapel had demonstrated, in Stallings's view, that "the people

have spoken. . . . We will not allow someone [outside the black community] to decide what we are to do." A few days later he said in an interview: "We are saying [to Cardinal Hickey] that if you want us to remain" within the Catholic Church, "simply realize you have made a mistake, eat crow and go on to endorse what Imani Temple had the vision to do." Here he played the role of Defiant Heretic.

At the same time, however, Stallings insisted that he was still "in union with Rome" and "in communion with the Roman Catholic Church." Here he showed a sophisticated grasp of media dynamics and modern rebellion. No longer can you just state your principles and walk out, like Martin Luther. "If we had said we were going to be an interdenominational church, Hickey would have just cut us off," Stallings told an interviewer. "There would have been no need for all of the media focus, no need for people to make statements." In other words, you must both insist that you are obeying the urges of spontaneity and the need to liberate yourself from the repressive order, and yet (to get media attention) simultaneously insist that you are still working "within the system" to reform (i.e., subvert) it.

Media headlines have obscured the point that Stallings does not assert any doctrinal differences with the church. "I do not see the issues as being theological," he told Black Networking News, "because there are no theological, doctrinal or matters of faith with which we differ with the Catholic Church." What, then, is the dispute all about? "The question is," Stallings

replied: "How do we as a Catholic Church meet the profound spiritual and cultural demands of a people . . . who come out of a particular historical context . . . drastically affected by socio-economic, political and psychosexual issues."

If he is saying that black Catholics want to introduce culturally distinctive elements into Catholic service, then they are already doing so in about half

the black parishes in Washington, D.C. Stallings himself did this when he was for twelve years pastor of St. Teresa of Avila Church in Anacostia, and the archbishop did not object. In response to Stallings, the thirteen black U.S. bishops put out a statement noting their longtime support of "cultural adaptation of the Church's liturgy." (And in part, one can sympathize with those who seek cultural differentiation.

The music at Imani Temple was certainly preferable to the insipid "Peter, Paul & Mary" ditties that one must so often endure in Catholic churches these days.)

From the stage, Stallings faced the congregation and shouted, "We've come to PRAISE Him!" This was greeted by a tremendous wave of ap-

plause and bongo thunder. The regular reading from one of Saint Paul's epistles was replaced by a passage from *The Writings of Howard Thurman* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984). Perhaps the most noteworthy liturgical innovation was the invocation of "ancestors," in addition to saints. (Whether African ancestors really do mean more to blacks than European ancestors mean to whites is, I should have thought, an unresolved question, with very little evidence to support the proposition either way.)

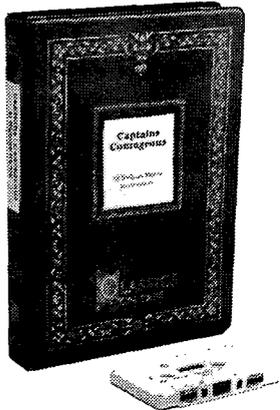
The reverend announced that he would be appearing on the Oprah Winfrey TV show at 4 p.m. on the coming Friday. "I know that some of you will want to set your VCR's while you are at your good government jobs," he advised. He said that services would be at the Suitland auditorium for the next two months. "We must commit ourselves to be ready to march into a new sanctuary by September," he said. This would entail not just "breaking ground, but breaking wallets" to pay for what could be a huge expense. "I'm not going to take a collection now," he went on to say with winning candor. "I'm going to wait till I preach. Because then I know your hearts will be ready!"

Much of his sermon was delivered at peak volume, with the reverend shouting into his microphone as though from one mountaintop to another. Media folk in the front rows, a few feet from the crate-sized loudspeakers, sat cringing with their fingers in their ears. "We ain't gonna try to take nobody out of nobody's Catholic Church because there's a whole lot of folk out there. . . . Too many folks are concerned about saving an institution when they ought to be concerned about saving their souls," he bellowed. Too many people are "brainwashed, indoctrinated, and preprogrammed." "We are going to worship any way we want to worship. I ain't gonna shortchange my people," or worry about "any ritualistic expression that has kept them in slavery for 200 years."

Most church folk "are so heavenly bound that they are no earthly good!" This cracked him up and he repeated the last few words, bouncing up and down on both feet, as though on a trampoline. Then he started to bounce around the stage as though he had a pogo stick under his vestments . . . So heavenly . . . bounce bounce bounce . . . bound that they are no . . . bounce bounce bounce . . . earthly good! The media were having a hard time trying to write it down and keep their eardrums intact at the same time, so deafening was the noise.

Abruptly he turned down the volume and minced quietly across the stage—a complete change of pace. "We're livin'

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in the last days, church," he said. "We can't simply be concerned about *image*." Here he reminded the congregation that "God loves a cheerful giver," and "the more you give, the more he will give to you." Huge baskets of cash and checks were duly collected, and a few days later it was reported that the Imani Temple had taken in \$39,000 in its first two Sundays.

Commenting the following week to an undiminished congregation, Stallings noted that they were paying \$1,000 a week for the auditorium, and that "we don't have any deep pockets." He added that the Archdiocese "may want some of the money, but we're not *giving* them any of it." He imitated the Diocesan voice: "'We sure would like twelve percent of it.'" Then, resuming his own: "Well, you can GET twelve percent of it—if you talk right."

After the service I jostled along with Stallings outside the auditorium, amidst a crowd of mikes and minicams (German television, Spanish television, ABC News), and found a moment to ask him "what the 'twelve percent' in your sermon referred to."

"The twelve percent would be the assessment on our offertory that the Archdiocese would require of us if we were collecting over—how much—six thousand and something . . ."

"Is that what you were paying the Archdiocese at St. Teresa of Avila Parish?"

"That was what we were *supposed* to be paying . . ." We were soon separated in the milling media scrimmage.

Sitting next to me in the auditorium had been a religion columnist by the name of Michael McManus, who later that week appeared on the Oprah Winfrey show with Stallings and enlivened the proceedings by accusing him of being a "protestor, or Protestant," not a Catholic. McManus mentioned to me that Stallings lived in a restored town house with a Jacuzzi and Chippendale antiques, and "drives a 1988 Acura Legend."

Charlotte Hays of the *Washington Times* managed to get inside Stallings's Anacostia house, called "Augustus Manor" on its brass door knocker, and the "Howard Hilton" by the students who sometimes stay there. "Hayden Blanc, Father Stallings's personal secretary, opened the front door, revealing an expanse of deep oak paneling, Oriental rugs and Chippendale-style dining chairs," Hays wrote. "It was like stepping into the pages of *Architectural Digest*. Mr. Blanc, an anthropologist and church restorer, said he is responsible for the decor. He proudly conducted the grand tour, from the mauve country-French breakfast room to the spectacular domed

marble bathroom on the third floor."

The Rev. Stallings told Charlotte Hays that "for black ministers to have something decent is only to inspire black people to have something. Too many people operate out of the framework that a priest shouldn't live well. Well, what I'm doing is establishing a home that can minister to my needs."

After the service there was an impromptu press conference. I asked

Stallings about the reports of lavish living.

"The normal way of life for a Diocesan priest is to live in a comfortable environment," he said, "starting with the Cardinal Archbishop of Washington." But unlike others, "I chose to make mine public." He said his stipend as a Diocesan priest had been \$783 a month. "And out of that you pay for your own car as well as your personal

effects. But I was very fortunate—I was blessed with an extraordinary gift of preaching, and so I preached the length, height, depth, and breadth of this nation." And was paid to do so.

"Is there a 'liberation theology' connection to all this?" an Italian journalist beside me asked.

Liberation Theology. Now if only Jim and Tammy Faye had thought of that. □

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CONGRESS IN CRISIS

Fred Barnes

SO YOU WANT TO REFORM CONGRESS?

To remind senators and House members why they were sent to Washington, we should cut back on PACs, the frank, campaign stashes, and lifetime tenure.

Everybody's got it wrong about campaign spending in Senate and House races, incumbent power, and political action committees. The real problem isn't money, though there's too much of it floating around. It isn't PACs—they're only part of the problem. Eliminating them is a step in the right direction, but no more than that. And the problem isn't one-party rule in Congress either. True, 34-plus years of Democratic control of the House haven't been good for America. But had Republicans ruled the House, there'd still be lots to complain about.

The problem is Washington. Something awful happens to our elected officials when they get to Washington. The longer they stay, the worse it gets. They get swallowed up by the political culture of the city. It's almost like *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* come true, except there's no need to put big pods by their beds at night. They absorb Washington's ways by osmosis.

This means they become skillful Washington politicians. Even the duds figure out what it takes to get along in Washington—and stay, year after year. They love the life-style in Washington. The city isn't a backwater anymore. Life is pretty luxurious. There are plays, art galleries, fancy foreign restaurants, pleasant suburbs, good schools for their kids (outside of Marion Barry's District of Columbia, that is). Washington is a wonderful compromise between New York and the boondocks.

Fred Barnes is a senior editor of the New Republic. This is the first in a series of articles in TAS on the Great American Congress in Crisis.

Too wonderful, it turns out. Many members of Congress cease representing their states or districts in Washington beyond the grubby pursuit of narrow special interests (retaining an Air Force base, getting a HUD grant, and so on). After a year or two on Capitol Hill, they become representatives of Washington to the folks back home. A few decades ago, they'd have been voted out of office if they put on Washington airs. Now they've rigged elections so they can't lose unless they're caught in a scandal.

In Washington, senators and House members quickly fall in with the permanent establishment of bureaucrats,

lobbyists, political consultants, journalists, lawyers, flacks, and representatives of businesses, unions, trade associations, and other special interests. It's not an iron triangle they join; it's an iron octagon.

The result is that real change occurs only fleetingly—when the voters register their desire for it in seismic terms, as they did in 1980 with the Reagan landslide. The momentum from that election soon dissipated. After mid-1981, things were back to normal. Virtually every social program, no matter how wasteful or redundant, survived. So did every Pentagon weapons system, regardless of cost-effec-

tiveness. And why not? In both cases, the programs had permanent friends in Congress.

I think strong campaign reforms are needed. The trick is deciding which ones and getting Congress to pass them. There's not much incentive now for Congress to act, since the current system serves incumbents so handsomely. It may take an election in which congressional ethics, perks, and money-grubbing—Washington ills—are a major issue. And I mean an issue that actually defeats some incumbents. That may occur in 1990, though I'm not getting my hopes up.



In judging proposed reforms, the standard should not be simply whether they curb PACs or reduce spending. The standard should be whether they make elections for the Senate and House more competitive, and keep members from adhering to the inside-the-Beltway playbook. Does a reform create incentives for them to reflect the broad interests of their constituents (the parochial interests will take care of themselves)? Does it make them more responsive to their constituents, less to organized interests in Washington? That's the test. Now, Washington provides powerful disincentives.

President Bush's reform package is good, as far as it goes. He would eliminate business, trade, and union PACs, and he'd restrict ideological PACs to donations of \$1,000 per candidate per election, not \$5,000. He'd force the disclosure of "soft money," which supposedly goes for party-building, but in 1988 was devoted to bolstering the parties' presidential campaigns. He'd prohibit incumbents from