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Forum for U. W. A. E. U.

apologia

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Kontense

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The Apologia Editorial Committee

Cassy Nixon	Wiggle G. Flop
Jenice Neston	Yvonne De Vries
Margaret Willis	Snoopy (alias
Richard Silvester	The Head Beagle)

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Special thanks to Jen Murdoch for her Cover-up Organization

Editorial...

The editors of "Apologia" felt it necessary to state the aim of the magazine for the coming year. Understanding the meaning of APOLOGIA (as stated on the front cover) is perhaps the best place to start. "To be ready to answer" not only involves having an answer to give, but also implies that one must be able to give that "answer" in a satisfactory manner. The ability to communicate our views, our "answer" requires practice, and often a borrowed idea, some extra information, or a useful analogy from someone who has considered the problem more fully, or from a different viewpoint.

In other words Apologia is a place where YOU can express your ideas.

We hope that in this way E U'ers may get to know each other better and thus oil the cogs in the large bureaucratic wheel of the Union.

We also hope to prevent Apologia from becoming a depot for dry intellectual discourses; or in the other extreme becoming a "hep rag" which looks gas but says nothing.

Apologia will confine itself mainly to inter-Christian gabble rather than change its format to a more "evangelistic" approach. Magazines such as I.V.F., FOCUS, and HIS (available via the Lit. Officer) are better equipped to provide this type of approach. However we are sure that the magazine will still contain many articles which will be of interest to non-Christians and ask that you will make maximum use of these.

See you next issue.

Yours in Christ
Warren Flynn
Jan Heston
Marg Willis
Cassy Nixon
Yvonne De Vries
Richard Silvester

Jonah cont.

by R. Horton

Chapter 3. Compare the manner in which God is ever willing to give His children a second chance in the cases of the denials of Peter and the recommissioning of Jonah after the fish has spewed him forth on the land. (Also note the similarities between Jonah's plight and that of David in Psalm 51.) The greatest evangelists are those who know most fully the depth of God's forgiveness. It is necessary for us to appreciate what it cost God in Christ to afford us this great forgiveness. Yet even the prophets, like Jonah, can lose sight of just how great and how universal God's forgiveness is capable of being.

Jonah was reassured and strengthened and at an end of chastening, Grace had been renewed for him opening the way to the true holiness which derives from true accord with God. Now having once been delivered by God from his doom, he went and entered Nineveh without any qualms or fears, that these people might turn on him. No attempt was made by Jonah to enter the city discreetly -- rather he declared forthrightly that the city would be overthrown as soon as he was amongst its inhabitants.

The response of the city was one of repentance and the essence of the spirit of this repentance lay in the fact that the people believed God. Repentance is reliant on faith that becomes a converted Christian he has such a shattering emotional experience that his whole being including his soul is renewed in a realisation of the fullness of his salvation. The experience is emotional because life is the expression of emotion or passion. Thus a man is 'born again' into a new life whose passions are centred on and stem from faith in God. But a man's nature does not change; only the expression of it is altered in direction. The individual ego is replaced by God as the reference point in that expression. Thus Jonah could believe in his own forgiveness but not that of the Gentile Ninevites.

In Nineveh the repentance and faith was not fully manifested for doubt was mingled with faith. Forty days were allowed for the city to repent and there is no suggestion that repentance was immediate. Indeed it seems that much of the city responded only at the king's behest. (Note again the effect of the number -- three days are needed for resurrection but forty are provided for men to learn to believe in the fruit of God's word e.g. Christ in the wilderness, Noah and the Flood, Moses in the Forty years' wandering before the promised land.) A man may be a Christian and have faith but still not have full assurance in God. He may still doubt as the Ninevites did in being unsure of God's promise to forgive them if they repented (verse 9). The important point is that our faith -- whatever there is of it -- is all centred on the person of Jesus Christ. How can doubt be eradicated so that faith becomes assurance? Doubt never entirely disappears: even Paul admitted that we 'see but through a glass darkly'. However doubt stems from ourselves and our sin. To find assurance, we must look on Christ and decide if He is really reliable in all His promises. Such

decisions are made by studying the Scriptures and by considering our daily experience and that of the people with whom we are in contact. Many doubts, though not all, will often be dismissed in this way allowing us to grow in faith and belief. A Puritan maxim says: 'We are justified by faith alone but the faith that justified is never alone'.

Repentance indicates faith working at the very point of a person's failing. That is, we do not need to become 'good' first before we can turn to God for forgiveness. He accepts us as we are whenever we seek Him in faith. This explains God's action in not destroying Nineveh. The city was now changed from one full of evil to a new one repentant of its old sins. God had not changed His mind but the situation had changed. The city now no longer deserved overthrow.

Repentance is not a one time thing but must be a continuing process for we continue to sin. Although the Ninevites were now turned towards God instead of themselves, they could and would still misunderstand and disobey God and thus be in need of His forgiveness which would only be their's if they continually repented.

Chapter 4. In some ways this chapter seems an anti-climax but in this honest picture of Jonah's reaction lies the real purpose, meaning and significance of the whole book. Even Jonah, great prophet that he was, was nevertheless no more than we are who are small and weak. Jonah here seems irrational and without understanding as we are shown how God gives of His grace and forgiveness freely and without consideration of men on their merits. In his honesty, Jonah gives a true and accurate account of how he was angered at God's forgiveness and His decision against destroying the city. He was angry because he felt still that Nineveh might attack Israel, its enemy. Despite God's attitude to the Ninevites, Jonah continued to view them as a Gentile people and not amongst God's chosen ones. Furthermore they remained potentially treacherous. Sometimes there can be jealousy that God's grace seems to work more in some places than in others. This was perhaps Jonah's feeling -- he should, like us, have turned to prayer that this redemption might be poured out on his own people as well. We should rejoice in God's activities wherever they occur and pray that similar rains of grace may fall on our own homes and neighbourhoods.

When Jonah now prays to God he attempts to argue and assert himself which is folly on the grandest scale. Jonah could not see that God's actions have reason and purpose in them. We should praise God for whatever He gives is worthy of Him and deserved of us. Since God is the giver and creator of all we should be always thankful for the way in which He acts towards us in sustaining us. Jonah, on the contrary, proceeds to upbraid God for His actions instead of regarding God's mercy as a source of assurance of God's grace for his own people in His willingness to pardon. Jonah forgot his role in the action: he forgot that there could not have been a repentance of their sin in the people of Nineveh without his preaching of God's anger at the sin and His threat to overthrow the city. There would have been no repentance in Nineveh without Jonah's preaching! He forgot also that in the expressed will of God comes peace and joy. He was too busy being angry and sad that the Ninevites had been reprieved. God however is full of mercy and

slow to anger and that is why we are living in this day of grace.

When we pray it is because we realise that what we pray can only be achieved by God who in turn needs us to perform His will. We are God's messengers and His implements. Our prayers are sanctified by Jesus Christ who acts as our intercessor with God. Jonah however chose to assert himself before God thinking to direct the will of God to his own ends. Blind to God's mercy, he is also unable to see that God has any further use of him in this world and consequently seeks for God to take his life. Here again we observe Jonah denying God that which is His alone thus trying to mould God to his will, to his image. God alone is the creator of life and is the only One by whom it can possibly be taken away. Jonah has still not accepted himself and his place in God's world. To him, as to many who call themselves Christians, the hoped-for life after death is seen as eminently more desirable than the present mortal one. This attitude is a truly defeatist position which does not acknowledge that eternal life begins now, as soon as we repent and accept our salvation in the person of Jesus Christ. Man's place is in the world for it is here that there is much for us to do for God. Christ did not die to ensure us some future Elysium but rather to allow us to be at one again with God through His resurrection. The hereafter is not our concern: it is the present in which we are involved and are called to witness to God's grace.

Jonah wanted to go to heaven not because of his desire to be with God but because he was 'fed up' with his job and disgusted with God's way of doing things. Like most suicidals, Jonah was not so sick of life as he was of the habits of his life. In circumstances more to his liking he would ever have made such a request. God continued to make a great use of Jonah however, even though Jonah was probably unaware of the fact. In the story of Jonah itself lies a call to his people, the Israelites, and to us to repent and to turn from disobedience. In this way God continued to establish Jonah as great prophet.

The great vacuum in the soul of Jonah is not unusual. It happens to all those who have reached a great pinnacle in faith as they are used of God. Jonah had reached this point after the episode with the 'whale'. The powers of evil however (often our own pride) will do their utmost to drag us down again. Spiritual richness or enlightenment is always followed by a moment of spiritual darkness. Jonah didn't, couldn't completely believe that God had entirely 'repented' of His decision to overthrow the city. Neither did he comprehend that the very fact of his preaching was an indication that God was going to spare the city. God does not act except in love and mercy and the repentance of the city is an illustration of God's grace.

Unbelief and doubt are part of the lives of even the greatest of Christians. Confidence in the power to believe can be shaken by the most supremely subtle doubt. (Remember the serpent's 'did God say...?' in the Genesis account.) Much of the reality of God's personality is lost view when we choose not to see His mercy, forgiveness and understanding His great and everlasting love for His people.

Right to the end Jonah remains recalcitrant while God continues to indicate His mercy. Notice Jonah's foolish reply to the query : 'Doest thou well to be angry?'. How small are the arguements of mere man in the face of God! God is not willing that any should perish for He desires all to come into His kingdom i.e. into Jesus Christ. (N.B. John 3.16, 'For God so loved the world...'). God created the world and everything in it for Man. That is the sence of the last verse. God saves the cattle as well as the people of Nineveh because they need the animals for their continued livelihood and survival. God created Man and the world and He continues to sustain both.

Conclusion. The Book of Jonah then is about God and His love for all men. It is also about us and our making God in our own image. The story was intended for the chosen children of God and now that includes us. Our need of conversion and repentance is the theme. But like Jonah, we are much happier debating irrelevancies (such as the possibility of the whale) than trying to 'hear the word of the Lord'. What is most disturbing in the Bible is what we do understand quite clearly and this is why we often refuse to listen for God's word. Maybe we daren't for it might require too much of us; it might reveal us for what we really are. It is much easier not to pray for example, and thus we will not find ourselves hearing the words of Matthew's gospel calling us to 'Go ye into all the world...' This is God's commision for us all and we cannot escape it. The main theme here then is that of obedience. This is not a tale of a big fish at all; it is an account of a big God whom we must seek to serve according to His will.

"Thou seest, we are not all alone unhappy;
This wide and universal theatre
Presents more woeful pageants than the scene
Wherein we play in.."

Act II sc.vii from
As You Like It
Bill Shakespeare

on creation . . .



Is the world real,
 Or is it a dream?
 Is it just what we feel,
 Or has it a theme?
 Has it always existed,
 Or only a while?
 Has its birth been assisted,
 By error or trial?
 Did everything happen
 Without any cause;
 With a God of the Gap in
 To cover the flaws?
 If anythings such
 That we can't explain,
 We just lean on our crutch:
 "Bring God in again!"
 Such a God is too small
 I'm sure you'll agree.
 If God is at all,
 He made you and me.

Richard Silvester.

"Each of our moral, mental and bodily powers must have its development based upon its own nature and not based upon artificial and outside influences. Faith must be developed by exercises in believing, and cannot be developed from the knowledge and understanding only of what is to be believed; thought must grow from thinking, for it cannot come simply from the knowledge and understanding of what is to be thought, or the laws of thought; love must be developed by loving, for it does not arise merely from a knowledge and understanding of what love is, and of what ought to be loved;...."

Pestalozzi. (1746-1827)

The need to study other religions

by T. Tredrea.

In a humble stable whose lowliness was made more poignant by the busy and luxurious hotel above it, a tiny baby was born; given a life in which it would grow to, one day, shake the Earth to its core. Likewise, in every heart that bears the seed of love is planted, which if nurtured fondly, and sometimes reluctantly, will finally bloom forth and turn the intruders from its Temple, intruders like desire and intellectual pride. This upheaval will seem irrational to the mind, but the heart will know for what reason it has been sent into the Temple of the body.

In the film classic, "A 2001 Space Odyssey", a computer is piloting a spaceship until it attempts to kill the human occupants and take full control. It almost succeeds before the sole survivor breaks into it's 'mind' and methodically extracts the memory and reasoning programmes. As the computer's pleas for mercy are reduced, by degrees, to a slow, infantile baby talk, one is reminded of the command, "Be still and know that I am God". The surviving astronaut certainly experienced something of essential truth after he had taken control back from the computer. Why I like this episode with a passage of scripture is to make the point that we, also, must methodically deprogramme (and then reprogramme) the automatic pilot in our own minds, whose Tyranny of bigotry and half Truths we are to escape from. The resultant freedom does not mean sitting still and turning one's personality off (except in times of contemplation); it means taking upon, or into oneself a transcendent point of view and thereby being able to accept one's limits because they no longer matter. Then we are free to accept Reality and perhaps the Greater Reality of God behind it. Jesus had taken on a new point of view when he said, "Before Abraham was, I am".

We have strayed from the original idea of the heart, with its inner strength (not an effeminate intuitiveness), overturning the tables in the mind. Nevertheless, I felt it necessary to remind both myself and perhaps you that the reason for abandoning the process of rationalisation is exactly in order that we arrive at freedom and Reality.

At present, the misconception that the study of other religions is a fad of the lunatic fringe is a classic example of clinging to the rational. It is called irrational to look beyond Christianity when one has found God in Christ, but being rational leads one to condemn to Hell 400 million Hindus, 200 million Islamics, and 200 million Buddhists. Who can convince the blind man, unless he has an open mind, that an elephant is not a variety of snake, when he first grasps it by the trunk? An elephant is bigger than its trunk, and the Creator of the Universe is bigger than Orthodox Christianity.

cont.

In his book, "Religions of the World", D.E. Harding speaks of the need to study other religions:

"What do they know of England, who only England know?" the poet asks. Equally we might ask, What do they know of Christianity, who only Christianity know? The answer is: very little indeed. If you are a convinced Christian and confident of remaining so, then this book ("Religions of the World") ought to help you, by comparing your own with other faiths, to appreciate it and take it more seriously. Of course there is some risk in your daring to look, so far afield. You may possibly come to see in some 'heathen' creed aspects of Christianity which have been neglected or suppressed. You may even cease to call yourself a Christian at all. (Nevertheless it was the founder of Christianity himself who promised that the truth would make us free, and surely the faith that will not stand examination and comparison with rivals is hardly worth having. Most serious of all, there's a risk of your rejecting, along with the religion of your childhood, all religion whatever. Well, if this rejection means your ceasing to pretend to be a Christian and becoming at last quite honest about your disbelief (yet without closing your mind to further discovery) then I, for one, congratulate you. Many of us have to go through an anti-religious phase before we can exchange the faith we just happened to inherit for the faith that is truly our own. As for the convinced atheist, provided he's sincere and still open to conviction (and not merely anti-religious on principle, and as superstitious as any religious fanatic surely he's far nearer to the spirit of true religion than the hypocrite who cheerfully recites creeds and sings hymns he doesn't believe a word of and wouldn't dream of acting on. In fact, spiritual religion at its very best could be described as the most uncompromising and most sustained honesty, about ultimate things, and particularly about oneself. Conversely, formal religion at its very worst (which is only, in fact, anti-religion dressed up in pious vestments) is total dishonesty about these things. And one of the wisest helps in distinguishing the dishonest and false from the honest and true is our comparative study of religions. They can confirm what is best in each other - and show up the worst.

But it will be for you to come to your own, first-hand conclusions, in a fearless, questing spirit whose only aim is to discover the facts, even if they should prove very uncomfortable."

There are for you two kinds of religion: the first discourages your self-enquiry and just fixes you up with some pious formula, and the second leads you on to endless self-discovery and experiment. You can have which you like.

The Necessity to Choose

In any case, finding out what is for us real religion, and what is unreal, or meaningless or false, is just about the most important thing we can do in life. This being so, how every odd it is that, when we're choosing a new hat or a new tie, we go to a fair amount of trouble, and wouldn't think of automatically buying the first articles we happened to

set eyes on; yet when it comes to the articles of belief that govern our whole lives, the religious conviction that make all the difference between a life with meaning and a life without meaning, we take the first that's offered, and don't give the rest a glance. Nearly all men everywhere still uncritically adopt and hand on the beliefs of their parents and grandparents. In the past this was only natural: there was no means of comparison with other religions, and often no awareness that they even existed. But now, thanks to scholars who have translated all the important scriptures of the world into our language, and to outlines of religions (such as this book, "Religions of the World"), we do have a choice, and it seems a pity not to exercise it.

This ability (it might even be called a responsibility) to choose from such a vast field, is one of the great advantages of living now, when for the first time in history a man can truly confer upon himself citizenship of the world, finding his spiritual relatives and neighbours in practically any place or time he pleases.

And the real splendour of this new opportunity isn't that it promises still more knowledge of human nature in all its variety, or of the wonderful world we live in, but of something much more intimate and vital. For we shall find, in the course of a study of other religions, that religious discovery is only another name for self-discovery, aided by the greatest spiritual master of the world. Of course such an enterprise couldn't be easy or foolproof, and it may be necessary to read some parts (of this book) several times to understand them. But we don't have to be very clever. (In fact, though intelligence certainly helps, cleverness can hinder enormously: this way isn't for the smart of the knowing, but for simpler people, even child-like ones.) If we have even a little open-mindedness and sincerity and courage, we shall find the enterprise very worth while, and the rewards out of all proportion to our effort.

Reading :

- 1) Harding, D.E. "Religions of the World" 1969 Heinemann
- 2) Yogananda, Paramahansa "Autobiography of a Yogi. - most bookshops
- 3) Fowler, Levi. "The Agorrian Gospel of Jesus Christ"-
The Theosophical Society Bookshop,
1 Museum Street, Perth.
- 4) The Koran; The Song of God - Bhagavad-Gita; The Teachings
of the Compassionate Buddha.
The above Bookshop.
- 5) Brunton, P. "A search in Secret India" - Arrow Books.

"I really want to see you Lord"

George Harrison

Your Attitude

from The
Unchanging Commission

"Because of the natural tendency to seek for security, some hesitate to volunteer for service in lands where changing conditions may make missionary work impossible in a few years time. 'Is it right', they ask, 'to risk wasting several years learning a difficult language and then be forced to come home? And if I do have to leave the foreign field, will I fit into work back in the homeland?' Thus a trustful obedience that is prepared to leave the responsibility for the future in God's hands is supplanted by the spirit of fear which caused Peter to sink beneath the waves. 'He who observes the wind will not sow; and he who regards the clouds will not reap'. (Ecclesiastes 11:4, RSV). A spiritual harvest will certainly never be reaped by those who more conscious of the gathering storms than of the Lord of the Harvest at whose command they go forth. The horizon may be darkened with the clouds of war, the first ten years of service may not be completed, but who is to say that those years of language, study and feeble efforts to preach the gospel have been wasted? If the work is undertaken at God's command, there will undoubtedly be eternal results both in the life of the worker and in the lives of the people to whom he has been sent. Communism may close doors which are now open to the missionary, but if, during the few short years or months that remain, the gospel is preached and national Christians are prepared to carry on the witness when the missionary departs, who shall say that their work was in vain? Better far to burn out for God in a great effort to fulfil the Savior's last command than to watch doors close, knowing that in the day of opportunity the Church failed in her mission"

"But basically ignorance and lack of vision still constitute the greatest hindrances to missionary advance. Preoccupied with the rush of everyday life, we fail to meditate upon the meaning of Calvary, and as a result there is little personal devotion to the Saviour or understanding of His love for the whole world. The command to lift up our eyes and look on the fields is ignored and the majority of us are ignorant of the situation on mission fields throughout the world. There has been little instruction in Sunday school apart from an occasional missionary story and, as a result few have an intelligent grasp of the needs in the various mission fields. Many Christians Students have never read missionary Biographies and seldom see a missionary magazine. One student said he did not want to be emotionally stirred up and therefore did not read missionary biography. 'How shall they preach, except they be sent?' Says the apostle Paul. But how shall they be sent except they take time to study the need of the world and listen to the voice of the Saviour?"

D. Adeney

' "failure" is giving up too soon'

BARE

TAPE

Here is the first of a series of letters by that master of devilry and exploitation of human weaknesses Baretape (?). He is writing to Firewood, his nephew, who is trying to gain the authority over the life of the patient, as Hell's doctors call him, and to cure the disease that he is beginning to catch from that ubiquitous Jesus Christ. This first letter concerns Christmas; Hell will try to exploit even the memory of Christ's birth.

Dear Firewood,

How can you be so naive and foolish! You ought to know by now not to judge a book by its cover. You rave on and on about the "commercialisation of Christmas" and how it has been made an excuse to overspend and feed one's face. This remains only an opportunity, not yet a victory. It has the dangerous possibility of making the humans generous and thankful that they've been given a time for pleasure and company. This will happen unless you are on your toes (or hoofs as humans call them).

I must suggest also that in future you don't use normal temptations at Christmas time. The patient is protected from these by the spirit of the occasion. If you try to engender lust, anger, hate or dishonesty failure only awaits you. He will see those a mile off and won't react as desired. There is also the danger that he will develop a 'seeing eye' for them and even in drab times will be able to counter them.

You are best advised to convince him that Christmas will be the best, and most fun time of the year. Don't let him ask why it will be, because he will not find a satisfactory answer. Best let it lie in his mind, almost silent but always there. When Christmas comes, he will find half the presents he got he never really wanted, the Christmas dinner was either too small or made him feel sick, the day as a whole was rather mundance and appaullingly similar to all other days. Let him then think that if Christmas is like that, the rest of the days will all be of unbearable te dium. He will leave Christmas day with a heavy heart, knowing that he must face a whole year of dullness and boredom.

If your patient is of the religious type that goes for the "meaning" of Christmas, try to make him think that he birth of Christ is the most important feature of Christianity. What delight I feel that we have made Xmas bigger than Easter! It reduces Christ to a baby and makes humans feel that His main attributes were meekness, milness and childlikeness. It draws attention away from the Cross, that blasted weapon used by the Enemy in a cheating sort of way to smash our Father on the head. It makes the birth of the Enemy as a human more important than His resurrection. With Christmas, in drawing attention away from the crucifixion and the resurrection, we have really done a great job.

cont.

Do not be deceived, Christmas still has a lot of dangerous potential. If taken for its real value, a sign that the Enemy has broken into the world to save it from us, it becomes fatal, drained of all usefulness and filled with a poison for which not even we have the antidote. This is mentioned in some of those dratted songs known as Christmas Carols but fortunately, no-one ever takes any notice of the words to those any more.

Good luck and if you succeed, I've got a few politicians lined up for you. By the looks, they are all easy meat.

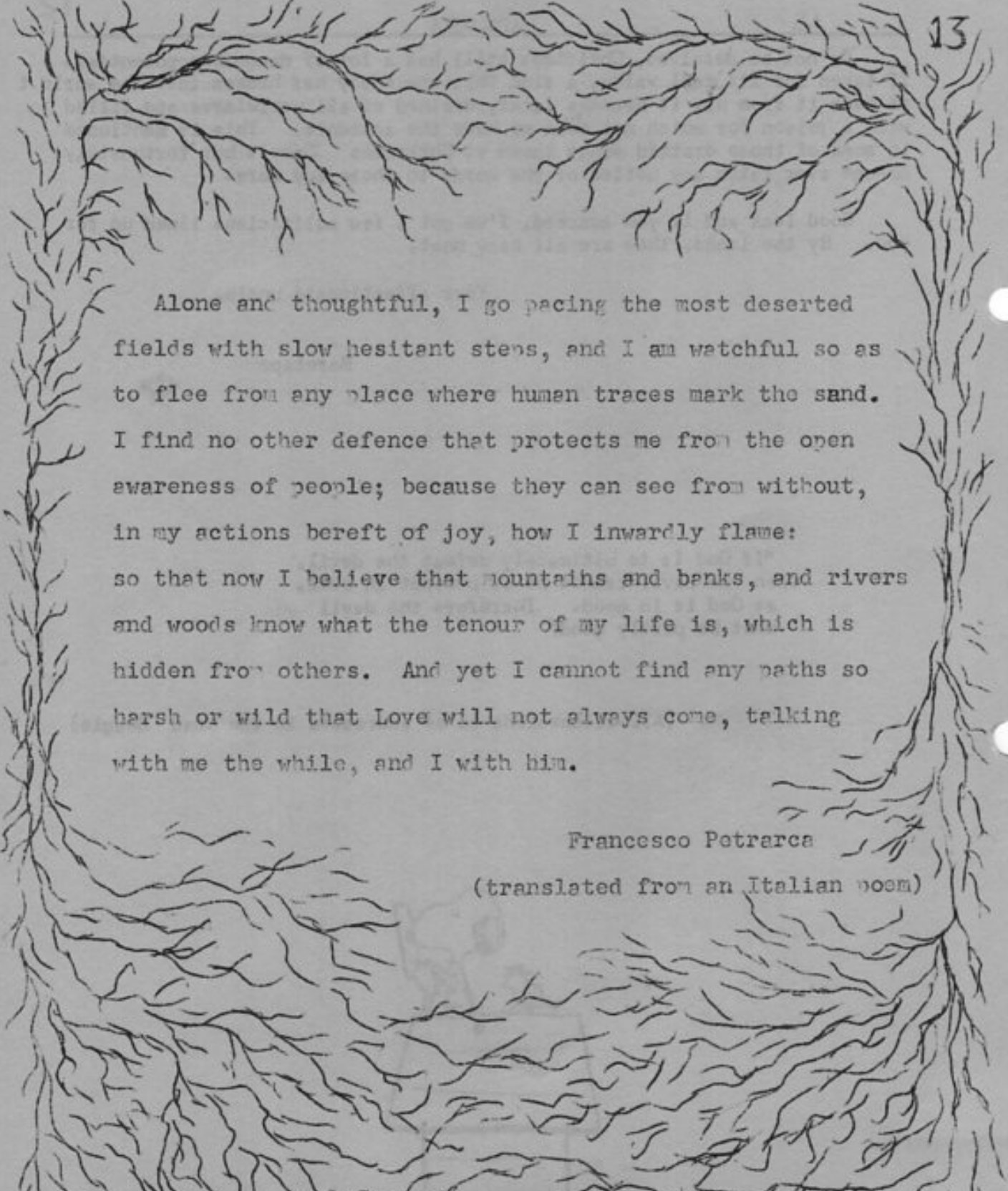
Your affectionate uncle,

Baretape

"If God is to ultimately defeat the devil,
then the devil cannot be as perfect in evil
as God is in good. Therefore the devil
must be partly good!"

(All discussions to be addressed to the Head Reagle)





Alone and thoughtful, I go pacing the most deserted fields with slow hesitant steps, and I am watchful so as to flee from any place where human traces mark the sand. I find no other defence that protects me from the open awareness of people; because they can see from without, in my actions bereft of joy, how I inwardly flame: so that now I believe that mountains and banks, and rivers and woods know what the tenour of my life is, which is hidden from others. And yet I cannot find any paths so harsh or wild that Love will not always come, talking with me the while, and I with him.

Francesco Petrarca

(translated from an Italian poem)