# THE DEATH AND LIFE OF BISHOP PIKE

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# THE DEATH AND LIFE OF BISHOP PIKE

*William Stringfellow*
*and Anthony Towne*

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By Stringfellow, William, and Towne, Anthony

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FOR
*Scott Kennedy*

# Foreword to the 2007 Edition

## Treasure in an Earthen Vessel

> But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.
>
> —2 Corinthians 4:7–12 RSV

> The credibility of the resurrection as an ultimate promise for humanity rests upon specific trumps over the power of death which occur in common life. Death, in many guises, pursued Bishop Pike relentlessly, and in many instances did Pike live in the resurrection, transcending death's power.
>
> —William Stringfellow & Anthony Towne, *The Death and Life of Bishop Pike*

Anthony Towne and William Stringfellow bore witness to the gospel and to America.

For the small and normally soft-spoken lawyer Stringfellow and the bear-like but even more soft-spoken poet Towne such witness was the essence of their Christian vocation. As life partners and co-authors, fellow polemicists and theologians, Towne and Stringfellow discerned the scope and power of death manifest in the culture in which they lived. More importantly, they lifted up the people whose very lives challenged death's omnipotence in this life and bore witness to the power of life—both in this life and over death.

Stringfellow and Towne's vocational collaboration was made evident in their notorious choice to publicly support anti-war activist Father Daniel Berrigan. The Jesuit priest, his brother Philip Berrigan, and seven others had burned Selective Service files with homemade napalm at a draft board office in Catonsville, Maryland in 1968. The prophetic protest against the war in Vietnam resulted in felony charges and a trial for "the Catonsville Nine." The federal court found them guilty of destruction of U.S. property, destruction of Selective Service files, and interference with the Selective Service Act of 1967 and sentenced them to several years in prison.

Stringfellow attended the trial of the Catonsville Nine as defense counsel and spoke out on behalf of the defendants. During Dan Berrigan's months-long flight underground from federal authorities following his conviction, he was clandestinely hosted by Towne and Stringfellow at their Block Island, Rhode Island home. The pair described apprehension of the fugitive priest by FBI "bird watchers" in their book *Suspect Tenderness*. Stringfellow and Towne identified Daniel Berrrigan's life, work, and civil disobedience as signs of the presence and power of what they understood to be the word of God breaking into human history—resisting, challenging, and overcoming the power of death.

The Nixon White House conspicuously confirmed the potential consequence of such vocation and witness by threatening felony prosecution of Stringfellow and Towne for extending hospitality to Berrigan. Their legal defense was disarmingly straightforward: hospitality is simply a Christian responsibility; abiding by the dictates of a lie-telling, rights-suppressing, and war-making nation is not. When Rhode Island's Episcopal bishop, not known for his radical views, joined others protesting their prosecution, the U.S. backed off "the Block Island Two," dropping the case against Towne and Stringfellow. The nature of Stringfellow and Towne's vocation was also conspicuously confirmed in their choice to write about the late Episcopal bishop James Albert Pike. This foreword serves to reintroduce these books: *The Bishop Pike Affair*, originally published in 1967, and *The Death and Life of Bishop Pike* (1976).

*The Bishop Pike Affair* describes the convoluted sequence of events spanning the years following charges of heresy against Pike by several fellow bishops. Towne and Stringfellow wrote their account soon after the culmination of the heresy charges at the 1966 meeting of the House of Bishops in Wheeling, West Virginia. At that meeting, the Episcopal bishops adopted a "compromise" statement in what proved to be the vain hope of derailing momentum towards a full-blown public heresy trial. The book's cover promises a "documented behind-the-sanctuary report on a battle for belief that rages in the American Church today." The story ends inconclusively, however. Before the final gavel sounded, Pike and two other bishops brought everybody up short with their last-minute demand for due process and an investigation of the "rumors, reports, and allegations, affecting [Pike's] personal and official character."

A number of bishops clearly found Pike's public ministry—as Dean of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City in the 1950s and later as Bishop of California in San Francisco—an outrage that threatened their worldview and the faith. They considered accusations of heresy against Pike momentous and seriously overdue. Stringfellow and Towne argue persuasively in this book that opposition to Pike had little to do with theology. Rather than regard for doctrinal niceties or theological truths, accusations against Pike hinged on his "social radicalism" on issues such as "birth control, the liberation of women, the racial crisis, McCarthyism, capital punishment, abortion, fair housing, the plight of farm workers, censorship, civil liberties, the Vietnam war, [and] resistance to illegitimate authority, among a host of others."

The church establishment was primarily concerned with preserving what they thought to be the church's image. They viewed a public trial for heretical beliefs against one of the nation's most prominent churchmen an embarrassment to be avoided at all costs. Unfortunately, as the authors spell out in great detail, among the costs sustained by the church leadership were demonstrations for Pike's right to a fair hearing.

For perhaps too few others, including Towne and Stringfellow, the heresy debacle was a foreboding taste of an impending reality in the American churches. While the pursuit of heresy charges against Pike met with mixed success, the forces arrayed against him were flexing muscles that only grew in strength in the coming years. McCarthy-era techniques and economic bullying succeeded in removing from power the very presiding bishop who oversaw attempts to diffuse the heresy controversy, an unanticipated cost of attempted compromise. Political and economic reactionaries would come to exercise enormous power within and control over the Episcopal church and would eventually hijack Protestant Christianity in the United States. Stringfellow and Towne describe those reactionaries as "substantially unconcerned with theology as such," and "very absorbed in maintaining or turning back the status quo in every respect, socially, racially, politically, scientifically, educationally, religiously." They speak ominously of a group that "possesses an economic influence and a mental temperament to further these aims." Forces of political reaction and supposed religious orthodoxy continue to wield enormous influence over the American church and public life, with ever-appearing and disastrous consequence.

Stringfellow and Towne's account of this lurid heresy affair includes their penetrating and at times humorous observations. The appendix consists of many relevant documents and public and private statements and correspondence. The Bishop Pike Affair describes how "the most controversial ecclesiastical personality of the times," attracted attention and concern because people both inside and outside of the church "at least recognize in the bishop a Christian, and an ecclesiastic at that, who is living in the present century." In other words, his example was viewed sympathetically by many people in the United States and around the world. Pike provided Stringfellow and Towne a particularly edifying example of a Christian living their faith at the intersection of the gospel and America.

The Death and Life of Bishop Pike takes up the matters foreshadowing Pike's vocation, his prominent place in the twentieth-

century American church, and the unusual events surrounding his death.

For the biographers "doing theology" was part and parcel of a Christian's vocation. Doing theology meant seeking out and understanding death's reach into all of our lives, including numerous mundane and banal expressions such as earning a livelihood and suffering illness. Doing theology also encompassed elevating those signs of life overcoming death, moments in which sanity is preserved, conscience asserted, and peoples' humanity defended. Their writings, including these two volumes on Bishop Pike, affirm these dual realities—the ubiquitous reach of death and the steadfast triumph of life.

Towne and Stringfellow saw the reign of death as daunting in its all-encompassing reach, but they also affirmed that life has the final word. Death's power may be consuming, restricting, and dehumanizing, but those who would follow Christ are unfettered in their humanity and their freedom. Stringfellow and Towne grounded this powerful assertion in the lives of ordinary people and the lives of sometimes not-so-ordinary persons such as Bishop James A. Pike.

Writing about Pike was not simply a matter of biography or historiography. For Towne and Stringfellow Pike's death and life illumine the gospel. These men understood that the revolutionary nature and contagious power of Christian faith locate in and emanate from the message that death does not have the final word.

From that perspective, they assess Pike's childhood and especially the maternal influence on his growing up and maturation. They appraise Pike's rapid ascendancy in the field of law, in the church, and in American public life. They detail a life ensnared in controversy, both public and private. They provide the fullest account in print of Bishop Pike's three marriages and what the authors describe as Pike's "moral ambiguities," including the disturbing circumstance of a paramour's suicide. They offer insight into the personality that beguiled, outraged, or inspired so many both within and beyond the church. They considered Bishop Pike "remarkably obtuse politically," a person constantly attributing "high motives to his enemies and detractors, minimizing or overlooking evidence to the contrary."

Nevertheless, in their final analysis, Pike possessed truly catholic interests and extraordinarily variegated talents. This was a man who did not tire of his mind or the use of it: of asking questions, of seeking more knowledge of every sort, of changing, of growing, of listening, of thinking, of learning about everything and about anything. He had a restless, relentless, questing, insatiable curiosity for living. He was an open, intuitive, risking, audacious spirit. Bishop Pike has been frequently called a prophet; we consider that not quite precise; we think his genre is pioneer.

In 1968, as a first year student at the University of California at Santa Cruz, I had the great blessing to travel to Israel and Europe with Bishop Pike. This was because my sister Diane Kennedy and Jim Pike fell in love and worked together the final three years of his life. I worked as a research assistant and "gofer" for both of them the last year and a half of Bishop Pike's life and with Diane for several years after his death. My views of these two books are heavily influenced by this brief but intense experience. Reading Towne and Stringfellow's work, I learned a great deal about how the charges of heresy against Pike fit into his life as a whole. Most of the conclusions that have been drawn from a broader study of Pike's life were confirmed by my experience of Jim Pike. We share several impressions, including uncertainty about purported communication between the Bishop and his deceased son.

On a few points, however, my views differ from the authors. For example, the question of communication with the dead assumes too great a place in the public's understanding of Bishop Pike and, so far as I am concerned, takes up too much space in the Stringfellow and Towne biography. The popular press may well have portrayed that psychic communication with his son, Jim Jr., obsessed the bishop in his last years, or that such obsession drove the bishop mad. During what turned out to be his last years, I had occasion to closely watch this very public figure and I consider these impressions ill founded. I saw Pike use his visibility and considerable energy and skills to oppose the war in Vietnam and to help people, including clergy, who

found themselves leaving or being forced out of the institutional church.

I vividly recall Pike's excitement when he telephoned Diane and me from the Baltimore trial of the Catonsville Nine in October 1968. Pike was extremely proud that Stringfellow had arranged for him to join as legal counsel at the defense table. He complained that—except for Protestant theologian Harvey Cox and Dorothy Day, founder of the Catholic Worker movement—no bishops or church leaders were present at the trial to support the defendants. Standing alongside and speaking on behalf of the Berrigans and other anti-war protesters was for Bishop Pike a natural and compelling extension of his pastoral, teaching, and prophetic ministries. I often heard Pike say during the final eighteen months of his life that he was far more concerned with "life after birth" than "life after death." As Towne and Stringfellow wrote, "Resurrection . . . has to do with life, and indeed, the fulfillment of life, before death." Contrary to widely held opinions, my observations confirmed that Pike's dedication to life after birth guided how he apportioned his time, energy, and formidable gifts.

Stringfellow and Towne describe how controversy swirled about Jim Pike's marriage to Diane Kennedy. Following their marriage, which took place in our family's Methodist church in San Jose, California, in December 1968, Bishop Pike was effectively barred from his public ministry by his successor, the new Bishop of California. This prompted a public announcement of Jim and Diane Pike's decision to leave the church, made April 1969 in a national magazine. But this decision was perhaps too greatly influenced by Jim Pike's concern for the impact of continuing controversy on his marriage to Diane. He wrote to the presiding bishop the following September, saying that he was not yet foreswearing his demand for a full investigation of charges against him, leaving open the question of his staying in the church. Pike sent the letter immediately before embarking to the Middle East on a belated honeymoon. Soon after arriving in Israel, Jim and Diane Pike sojourned in a small rental car into the desert east of Bethlehem. Their destination was the wil-

derness above Qumran where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered and where they believed Jesus fasted, prayed, and withstood his "temptations."

Through a series of mishaps, the Pikes were forced to abandon their car in the desert. Diane miraculously survived an overnight ordeal, hiking through rugged terrain to reach the Dead Sea and find help. Stringfellow and Towne were among the millions of people waiting for word of Pike's fate. I was with the search party that, nearly a week later, discovered Pike's body in Wadi Mashash, west of the Dead Sea. He had died of a fall and exposure to the elements on a craggy canyon wall. I clambered up the steep canyon wall to join Diane, who was waiting in an Israeli army vehicle above, as Bishop Pike's body was lifted by a helicopter from the steep wall of the desert canyon.

My first exposure to Towne and Stringfellow was reading Stringfellow's *Instead of Death*, a gift from Diane, as a high school church summer camper in the mid 1960s. Jim Pike spoke often of William Stringfellow and Anthony Towne. One of his favorite stories—recounted with great energy, waving of arms, and reenacting of ritual—recalled his anointing Stringfellow with borrowed petroleum jelly in the hospital while Stringfellow was recuperating from a life-threatening operation. I met Stringfellow and Towne personally in 1969 following Pike's death. Diane and I visited Block Island to reaffirm Pike's request that they write his biography. As part of their preparation for this assignment, we four traveled together in Israel and the occupied West Bank of Palestine in 1970. In October 1972 Stringfellow and Towne invited me to New York City to join with anti-war activists from around the country to "talk about the Gospel and America." I was living on the California coast so we joked about having America surrounded. I helped with research on the Pike biography. I continued close contact until Towne's death in 1980 and Stringfellow's in 1986. Jim Pike was a common bond of friendship and source of inspiration for the three of us.

Their strong affinity with Bishop James A. Pike stretched back a decade and a half at the time of Pike's death in 1969. This affinity

cannot be understood only by the peculiar combination of being both lawyer and theologian that Stringfellow and Pike shared. Nor can it be explained by Stringfellow and Towne also being Episcopalians or aligned with Pike on social issues. Surely there were plenty of lawyers, theologians, even lawyers and theologians, as well as Episcopalians and social activists, with whom Towne and Stringfellow felt no particular affinity and for whom they lacked the deep affection they felt for Bishop Pike. Rather, their bond stems from Stringfellow's and Towne's comprehension that a great deal was at stake in the ways in which the gospel and America intersected in the life and vocation of Pike. It implicated the whole body of Christ:

> Whatever happens to Bishop Pike, or to his enemies and detractors, or to his friends and followers, does not matter nearly as much as what is done about the issues—as much for the world as for the Church—which have become stark and, so to speak, incarnate in the case of Bishop Pike. (*The Bishop Pike Affair*)

Pike's demand for an investigation of the charges against him surprised his accusers and the church leadership. His place in the church was left unresolved at the end of "The Bishop Pike Affair," due to his demand for an investigation of charges against him. Ironically, his status as bishop was also left unresolved when he died in the Judean wilderness nearly three years later.

In their many written and spoken words Stringfellow and Towne argued that the gospel is not about religion, rituals, beliefs, or behaviors by which believers will somehow win favor in God's eye. They railed against the idolatry of false religiosity—patently manifest in American racism, militarism, and poverty. Towne and Stringfellow contrasted "American religiosity" with "biblical faith or theology." They understood that death itself was arrayed against Bishop Pike. It was the same battle they fought standing beside Daniel Berrigan when "the target of that assault was our humanity—the very *esse* [sic] of our humanness: sanity and conscience." It is no wonder that

their biography of Pike highlights an early incident in his life, the first episode of which there is detailed knowledge in which Pike ventured his own intelligence against prevalent authority, in which he sought to redeem his conscience against conformity, in which he risked approbation and success for the sake of conviction, in which his independence broke through and his talent to question and problem challenge and search took clarity as his vocation. As both friends and enemies of James A. Pike concur, this became at once his most admirable and engaging and his most irritating and provocative characteristic. They summarize these various traits as evidence of Pike's "capacity for courage."

Anthony Towne and William Stringfellow appreciated at the deepest level that the forces of life and death contended within, around, and over Jim Pike. His triumph was recognition that "Life is a gift" and that "Faith . . . the acceptance, honoring, rejoicing in that gift . . . freedom from moral bondage to death . . . enables a person to live humanly and to die at any moment without concern."

According to Stringfellow and Towne, Bishop Pike "moved—through a lifetime—from church dogmatics to confession of the gospel, from 'smooth orthodoxy' to personal faith, from—in his own words—the 'ontological' to the 'existential.'"

Quitting the church . . . represented a penultimate act of faith for him. This was the issue of religion vs. the gospel, ecclesiology vs. theology, doctrinal recitals vs. confession, authority vs. conscience, the Church vs. Jesus, idolatry vs. faith. As James A. Pike became less and less religious, it can be said that he became more and more Christian.

By their witness to the transformation of Bishop James Pike in these two works, William Stringfellow and Anthony Towne say more about healing and forgiveness than about conflict and controversy.

Scott Kennedy
Easter 2007
Santa Cruz, California
kenncruz@pacbell.net

# *On the Status of This Book as Biography*

The body of James Albert Pike was found, dead, in the wilderness in Judea on September 7, 1969.

During his lifetime, Pike was thought so controversial that the term became as much a prefix to his name as his title as bishop. The media consistently depicted him as "the controversial Bishop Pike" and that is how he was regarded both by those who knew him personally—and loved or hated him—and by those multitudes, inside and outside the Church, who beheld him as a celebrity and who were often attracted and sometimes provoked by his public role.

Bishop Pike's reputation as controversial rests, in part, upon the passion and persistence of his participation in public issues—birth control, the liberation of women, the racial crisis, McCarthyism, capital punishment, abortion, fair housing, the plight of farm workers, censorship, civil liberties, the Vietnam war, resistance to illegitimate authority, among a host of others. In an era in which most ecclesiastics of high rank were devoting their energies to churchly housekeeping, the nurture of religiosity, and miscellaneous soothsaying, Pike's involvement in disputes such as these was deemed controversial *per se*.

The bishop's concern for matters of the Church often rendered them publicly controversial, too, where they might otherwise have remained of pedantic or esoteric interest to churchpeople only. Thus, the recovery of Christian origins, studies of the historical Jesus, the reform of ecclesiastical due process, the ordination of women, ecumenical renewal of the Church, the credibility of traditional dogmas, the semantics of apologetics were among the is-

sues within the Church which, because of Bishop Pike's articulation and advocacy, evoked widespread public interest and argument. This happened, over and over again during Pike's career, because of the way in which such controversies became personified in Pike, as in the repeated accusations of heresy against him, or in the censure he suffered in the House of Bishops, or, earlier, when he was barely confirmed in his election to the episcopacy, or, later on, when he was ecclesiastically ostracized. Simultaneously, the same gifts, through which Pike attracted great public attention to the Church and to the Church's controversies, agitated the concern of many Christians for social and political issues.

Controversy also attended more private aspects of Bishop Pike's life—sometimes with heavy imputations of scandal—in his various marriages, in his alcoholism, in his sexuality, in the suicides of his eldest son and of a mistress, in his parapsychological inquiries, in speculations about his mental health. The circumstances of his death became immediately notorious throughout the world. And, in death, his name and his influence virtually haunt the Church and continue to incite controversy.

If in life and in death, and in memory, Bishop Pike remains controversial—even though some of the issues with which he became associated have quieted—that points, we think, more to the personality and character of James A. Pike than it does to any particular causes or controversies or to the tides of opinion. This person possessed truly catholic interests and extraordinarily variegated talents. This was a man who did not tire of his mind and of the use of it: of asking questions, of seeking more knowledge of every sort, of changing, of growing, of listening, of thinking, of learning about everything and about anything. He had a restless, relentless, questing, insatiable curiosity for living. His was an open, intuitive, risking, audacious spirit. Bishop Pike has been frequently called a prophet; we consider that not quite precise; we think his genre is pioneer.

Some say that Pike was mad. They conclude, specifically, that in the latter years of his life, after expending himself so extravagantly in so many ways for so long, he was rendered insane. While working on this book, we have encountered such opinions—commonly volunteered with a certain eagerness—many times. If no more, this is one way of coping with the phenomenon of Bishop

Pike. In instances, his madness is alleged with condescension, as if to assert the stability or the reasonableness of those making the accusation more than either to diagnose or to defame Pike. Others no doubt use similar terms about the bishop's state of being as a way of evading or equivocating or dismissing views which Pike articulated. There are survivors who harbor such hostility toward Pike that, though he be dead, they propagate his madness as if to persecute or to kill his memory. In this book, attention is given to the matter of madness; it is sufficient for now to notice from the frequency with which the subject is mentioned in post-mortems of Bishop Pike that Pike's existence and Pike's life-style and Pike's pioneering facility have been profoundly threatening to very many persons, and they still are. We are, in this connection, of course, deliberate in invoking as introits to the sections of this book passages from the Corinthian correspondence attributed to an earlier controversial Apostle, in which St. Paul explicates his vocation for the edification of those who, among other things, thought him mad.

This is a way of saying that the very quality of his person which occasioned Bishop Pike's repute as controversial, and which since his death in the wilderness has convenienced gossip concerning his sanity—that characteristic of Pike which we identify as the spirit and capacity of the pioneer—make him a fresh and a contemporary figure. If some of the specific issues which were incarnated in his witness have by now been bypassed or concluded that does not make Pike passé. His life was something more than a brilliant, transient flash. To write today of James A. Pike involves more than reconstructing a chronicle, more than nostalgia, more than biographical recall. To read of Pike now means a risk of being exposed again to the vitality of his humanity and, thus, a risk of being challenged in one's own humanity because of that exposure.

We have written before of Bishop Pike in occasional articles and, at length, in *The Bishop Pike Affair*, the book about the so-called heresy charges against the bishop and the attendant scandal in the Church. These matters are treated in this book, with the vantage of some additional facts and a knowledge of the disposition of the case, if not the controversy, which the previous book, written in 1967 in the midst of the tumult, could not have.

It was while *The Bishop Pike Affair* was being written that Pike

asked us if we would one day write his biography, a suggestion to which we gladly agreed. We supposed, at the time, that it was a distant task, one which we would undertake years hence, assuming we survived Pike. Comparing his energies with our own, we entertained doubts about that, but the commission was accepted nonetheless.

Those doubts were not facetious. Little more than a year later, Bishop Pike, accompanied by Diane Kennedy, who was presently to become his third wife, canceled other commitments to visit the Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center in New York City and there administer unction to one of us then in profound illness. With the pastoral intercession of Bishop Pike, among other happenings, that crisis passed and Stringfellow lived, but in less than another year, Pike had died while lost in the Judean desert.

We received the news that Jim and Diane were missing on September 2, 1969, at our home on Block Island. Stringfellow was still slowly recuperating, adjusting laboriously to changes in diet and exercise, work and rest requisite for survival. Since his medical regime made it necessary for him to have nourishment every few hours, around the clock, he could sleep only in intervals, and would be awake periodically each night. Perforce, Towne adapted to this schedule. It had become a habit in the household during the years of illness and convalescence to leave a radio turned on to a twenty-four-hour news broadcast, so that when waked intermittently during the night one was instantaneously informed of events. (This is dubious practice, and probably pernicious, since the news is being relayed during episodic sleep. We have found it sometimes has a confusing impact upon dreams, rendering their recollection more difficult and their interpretation impracticable. And this custom may make perception of the news ambiguous. One wakes up, and listens to the latest reports, but finds the news already vaguely familiar.) So it was, subliminally, as if part of a dream, though later plainly, that word reached us through the radio that the Pikes were lost in the wilderness in Israel. When morning broke, we used the Book of Common Prayer to intercede for Jim and Diane, and for those who were searching for them. In the days that followed, along with millions of other persons throughout the world, we attended the search: waiting and hoping, praying, and comforting one another with recollections of the

lore of Bishop Pike. Diane made her way to safety on September 2, and, despite her own ordeal, marshaled the effort to locate Jim. Scott Kennedy, her brother, who had assisted Jim in the research in Christian origins which had so obsessed Pike in his last few years, flew later in the week to Israel to participate in the search and to be with Diane. We were in contact by telephone with Diane and Scott during that week.

Our vigil ended the morning of September 7. About three o'clock we woke simultaneously. "I think he's dead," one of us said. "Yes, he's dead," the other replied. Then, after a while, the silence between us was interrupted by the radio carrying the same news.

Some months after that, when Diane and Scott had returned to the United States, they came to Block Island. It was during that visit that Diane ratified and renewed Jim's request to us to write this biography, and to urge that we begin the work right away.

And so we did. Towne went promptly to Israel, together with Diane and Scott, and with the bishop's mother and his aunt, to survey the scene where the Pikes had become lost and where Jim's body had been found. The work of interviewing countless surviving friends and enemies and assorted acquaintances began. Pike's letters, papers, and diaries were retrieved and the prodigious task of arranging and auditing them was started. But these efforts were soon overtaken by certain other events. One was the interruption occasioned by the seizure of Daniel Berrigan, S.J., at our Block Island home by the federal authorities and by the subsequent indictment of us for allegedly harboring a fugitive. In due course, the indictment was dismissed by the court, but defending ourselves against this political prosecution hindered concentration on the Pike biography for almost two years. We do not begrudge that time, for we are confident that Bishop Pike would have supported us in this involvement most heartily, specifically so since he had entered a special appearance as a defense counsel in the trial of the Catonsville Nine, and since he had publicly committed himself to resistance to illegitimate political authority.

Then there have been problems directly related to the subject of this book, those having to do with the personality and history of James A. Pike. This man was so versatile in his interests—his concerns were multifarious and ecumenical and, somehow, simul-

taneously pursued—that any attempt to treat his life chronologically would be too prosaic to furnish an accurate impression and would be apt to give a sense of diffusion that would be misleading. At the same time, there is heavy redundancy in the life and death of Bishop Pike. Again and again, similar themes are sounded; over and over, he returns to the same queries; repeatedly, he reopens issues. Weighing both elements—diffusion and redundancy—caused us to reject a chronological principle as a distortion of Pike's story. Taking both as clues, however, we tell of Bishop Pike by focusing upon themes recurrent in his death and throughout his life, relating particular episodes within that framework as they seem to us to pertain particularly to his death and to his life. Thus this book has two sections only, each divided into many mini-chapters, one part about the death of Bishop Pike and things portending or otherwise pertaining to his death, the other concerning his life, that is, his public career, personal relationships, work and activity, thought and belief.

A risk inherent in this arrangement of the biographical material is that what may be gained in coherence is lost in oversimplification, that the ambiguous or contradictory aspects of the subject's life may be minimized by the emphasis upon the main topics, that the thematic schema may be self-serving. About all we can say now is that we have been aware throughout this work of such risk, that we have sought conscientiously to avoid arbitrary or artificial interpretations, that we have tried hard to be loyal to the factual truth. In doing so, we give tribute to Bishop Pike in the biographical method we have adopted because if there was anything central to Pike's very being as a person it was his passion for the truth empirically related and verified.

Of course, we recognize that we do not put down here the whole truth about Bishop Pike, despite the diligence of our inquiries and research. There are a number of living persons who retain an interest in spreading particular versions of Pike as a person or prejudicial views of certain of Pike's involvements and activities. That is, we suppose, the case to some extent with anyone who dies, so far as some relatives or friends or enemies are concerned, and is all the more so where the one who dies has great celebrity. There are, as well, certain people who are dead now, and whose knowledge of Pike, or of significant happenings in Pike's

life, has been buried with them. That is a limitation for any biography.

Recognizing factors affecting this book such as these does not, however, address what has been our most serious problem in writing of James A. Pike. *That* is the event of our affection for him. We have wondered, from time to time, whether our own long-standing friendship with Jim, dating back to the mid-1950s, constitutes a basic disqualification for our writing his biography. We have not been especially worried that our love for Pike would cause us to romanticize his memory in this book. Our esteem for him, as has already been intimated, includes a sufficient regard for the truth to safeguard against that. Quite the contrary, a romanticized version of Pike's life would only dishonor him as a person. The problem has been how to tell the full story of Bishop Pike, insofar as circumstances avail that, without furnishing titillation to those who steadfastly remain Pike's detractors and enemies. We have not been tempted to exaggerate Pike as a hero, pure and undefiled, but we have been tempted at some junctures while writing this biography to rationalize some of Pike's moral ambiguities, or what some might label his scandals, because they are matters which we had, long since, comprehended and accepted within our affirmation of Pike as a human being. We have not wanted to suppress anything, it would be an ironic disservice to the memory of this friend—of all people—to do so, we trust we have not done so, but, at the same time, we are sensitive because of our affection for Pike to how he is, in his death as, at times, he was in his life, a target of ridicule and condescension, and we have not wanted either gratuitously or inadvertently to nourish such sentiments.

Our effort to cope with these matters has concluded, as we trust this book verifies, that the truth furnishes its own perspective and proportion, and that Bishop Pike, as we have all along been acquainted with him, would want neither more nor less than that in the recounting of his biography, knowing that no human being has judgment over him. As for the petty, as for the jealous, as for the pietistic, as for the judgmental, we notice that those eager to throw stones betray their own moral vulnerability, as Jesus once mentioned.

A bibliography of Pike's writings is appended here, and there

are photographs of his life included. The official autopsy of James Pike is reproduced, that being the only available information about his death and the manner of his death and the source from which one can surmise the final experience of Pike in the time in which he was alone in the wilderness. The medical authorities who examined the body have told us that Bishop Pike was so radically dehydrated that it is likely he suffered remarkable hallucinations in the time immediately before he died: sights terrible and marvelous, comparable, perhaps, to those the lore of Christianity attributes to St. Jerome's experience in the wilderness. To anyone so much discomfited because Bishop Pike was a pioneer or to anyone so amazed by his acceptance of himself that he needs to conclude that Pike was insane let it be published that, in those last hours in the wilderness in Judea, Bishop Pike was, indeed, mad.

A straightforward account of our sentiments concerning Bishop Pike is included in the epilogue, in the form of a homily delivered at a requiem for the bishop celebrated at St. Clement's Church in New York City one week after his body had been found in the desert.

William Kirby Tillou
Anthony Towne

Maundy Thursday, 1975
*Eschaton*
Block Island, Rhode Island

Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men; but what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience. We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to be proud of us, so that you may be able to answer those who pride themselves on a man's position and not on his heart. For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you.

II Corinthians 5.11–13

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors acknowledge, with gratitude, the assistance and cooperation they have received during their work upon this book from very many persons.

Especially, in this connection, they wish to name Diane Kennedy Pike, Scott Kennedy, Pearl Chambers, Ethyl Larkey, Esther (Pike) Fuller, Gertrude Platt, Philip Adams, Darby Betts, Dean Julian Bartlett, Trevor Hoy, Armand Quiros, David Baar, Bishop John A. T. Robinson, Robert Cromey, John Riley, Bishop and Mrs. George Barrett, Bishop Stuart Wetmore, Canon Edward West, Robert Hutchins, Harry Ashmore, Justice William O. Douglas, Frank and Barbara Kelly, John Cogley, Prof. David Flusser, Prof. Amos Wilder, Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, Alex Liepa, John Orth, William Stemper, Bishop Edward Welles, Bishop John Krumm, James Feron, Dr. Ian Stevenson, Major Enosh Givati, Jane Kingman-Brundage, Ena and Harry Twigg, Mrs. Hannah Tillich, Prof. William H. Hensey, Jr., Moshe Decter, Gerald Gilmore, Will Maslow, Rabbi Arthur J. Lelyveld, Harlan Spore.

They desire also to express thanks to the staff of the George Arents Manuscript Library at Syracuse University which accomplished the inventory and preservation of Bishop Pike's letters and papers pursuant to his testamentary gift.

# CONTENTS

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

# CHRONOLOGY

| | |
|---|---|
| 1913 | James Albert Pike is born in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, on February 14 to James Albert and Pearl Agatha Wimsatt Pike. |
| 1915 | His father dies of tuberculosis. |
| 1921 | Pearl moves to California with her son. |
| 1924 | Pearl is remarried to Claude McFadden, an attorney. |
| 1925–30 | Attends Hollywood High School, Hollywood, California. |
| 1930–32 | Attends (Jesuit) University of Santa Clara, Santa Clara, California; drops out of Roman Catholic Church and Santa Clara (1932). |
| 1932–36 | Attends (one year) University of California and (three years) University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California; completes undergraduate arts program and graduates from law school. |
| 1937–38 | Attends Yale Law School, New Haven, Connecticut; earns doctorate in law; moves to Washington, D.C., as an attorney with the Securities and Exchange Commission; establishes law firm of Pike and Fischer; marries (1938) Jane Alvies. |
| 1940 | Divorces Jane Alvies Pike. |
| 1941–45 | Serves during war in Washington, D.C., first in Naval Intelligence and later as an attorney with the U. S. Maritime Commission; marries (1942) Esther Yanovsky; is ordained a deacon of the Episcopal Church (1944). |
| 1946 | Jim Jr., second of Jim and Esther's four children, is born; is ordained priest by Bishop Angus Dun in Washington, D.C. |
| 1947 | Earns degree in divinity from Union Theological Seminary, New York City. |
| 1948 | Pearl marries her third husband, C. B. Chambers, a retired railway employee. |
| 1947–49 | Rector of Christ Church and Episcopal Chaplain at Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York. |

| | |
|---|---|
| 1949–52 | Chaplain and Chairman of Religion Department, Columbia University, New York City. |
| 1952–58 | Dean of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York City. |
| 1958–66 | Episcopal Bishop of California, San Francisco, California. |
| 1966 | Suicide of Jim Jr. (February); returns from five-month sabbatical in Cambridge, England (March); resigns as Bishop of California (May); joins Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, Santa Barbara, California (August); accused of heresy by Bishop Louttit and others (September); censured by the House of Bishops (October). |
| 1967 | Suicide of Maren Bergrud (June): divorced by Esther Pike (July); Toronto television séance with Arthur Ford (September); vindicated at General Convention, ending heresy battle (September). |
| 1968 | Attempted suicide of his daughter (February); marries Diane Kennedy (December). |
| 1969 | Announces intention to leave institutional church (April); forms the Foundation for Religious Transition, Santa Barbara, California (April); is severed from the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions (June); dies in the Judean desert, Israeli-occupied Jordan (probably on September 2); is buried in the Protestant Cemetery in Jaffa, Israel (September 8). |

# INTRODUCTION

Jim Pike was an event. To know him was to be deeply affected by him in one way or another. Even to be in the same room with him was to be touched in a personal way by him—to be stimulated into a response.

Jim Pike was fully, dynamically, energetically alive. His rhythm of being was much faster than most people's. He lived in double-time, and thus accomplished twice as much, had twice as many experiences, felt twice as deeply, risked twice as often as most people would in the same number of years.

Images flood in for me whenever I turn my attention to him. During the last week of his life, we were in Paris together. We had spent two days in the Louvre, walking, absorbing, appreciating. I was wrestling with "traveler's trots," visiting every public rest room and feeling more and more tired and weak as the day wore on. It was midafternoon when Jim saw a museum map which described the Museum of Man as an anthropological history of human evolution, with an emphasis on the cultures people have developed over the ages. "We have to see that museum," Jim said with great excitement.

So we caught a taxi and rushed across the city to the Museum of Man—with one stop along the way so I could explore yet another public facility. There was less than an hour left before museum closing time, but that did not deter Jim. He was just like a kid turned loose at a circus. He took hold of my arm, dragging me from one display case to another with enormous excitement and curiosity. "Look at this," he would exude, pointing out and commenting on nearly every item in each case.

At the end of the first room, I was too tired to feel like going on. Spotting a chair, I said, "I'll wait for you here." "OK," he said, not pausing for a moment in his exuberant exploration. Two

minutes later, he was gesturing to me wildly from the display case he had moved on to. "Diane, you can't miss this," he called. I dragged myself off the chair and over to where he was. He poured out in a stream of enthusiastic recounting all he had just learned about *this* culture, *this* phase of human evolution. I agreed with what energy I had left that it was indeed fascinating, and went back to my chair. Only moments later he was at my side, taking me by the arm to show me his next discovery. *Everything* was exciting. No matter how tired I was, in his enthusiasm he couldn't imagine that I would want to miss *this*.

As the guard ushered us out of the museum that day so they could lock it up, Jim said to me, "Next time we're in Europe we'll come to Paris just to see this museum. We'll spend an entire day here. We'll hire an English-speaking museum guide to tell us all about each display. Imagine," he said, almost ecstatic at his discovery, "the entire history of the human race is here in summary form, with actual replicas of the costumes and artifacts of each culture and age! Why, you could get a complete education from this one museum!"

Such was his response to life in every new moment. It was as though he had never before been exposed to the history of humanity. He was as a child, humbled and delighted by the magnitude of all there was to learn. And he wanted to know it *all*, to experience everything.

His curiosity was insatiable. Perhaps that's why he had read both the dictionary and the phone book from cover to cover by the time he was five, and a whole set of the Encyclopaedia Britannica before he was ten. He rushed at life, embraced it, experienced it fully, and welcomed the new whenever and however it presented itself.

So vigorous was his interaction with life that most persons experienced him as a whirlwind of energy. Some were delightfully stimulated by that, others were threatened; some stood in awe, others were overwhelmed; some felt their lives to be transformed and made new by a simple encounter with him, others found him too much to take—exhausting or frustrating because he was never still.

I delighted in his strength and forcefulness of energy. I found it stimulating and challenging. It kept me on my toes, growing every

moment, but it did not overwhelm me. I *could* absorb it, and did. And I could match it in strength if I needed to. Moreover, I experienced him in his stillness on many occasions.

The last week of our life at home in Santa Barbara was typical of his way of engaging with life. Jim had determined he would catch up with all his correspondence before we left on our trip to Europe and Israel. He was also finishing research on the book on the historical Jesus which he, my brother Scott, and I were to write, and gathering reference materials to take with us on our trip. Five secretaries had been working full time for several weeks: Jim gave them dictation in tandem and they took turns at our various typewriters, preparing letters for his review.

In the midst of the rush of the last day, when all five secretaries were making one final effort to finish their work and Scott and I were rushing about packing and readying reference materials, Jim kept an appointment he had made several weeks before. The man who came to see him felt Jim to be his last resort. He was convinced there was a plot by government agents to drive him crazy. He was an Austrian baron who had fled from his country during the Second World War. Through a series of events which he recounted at length, since coming to our country he had lost all of his money, several jobs, and eventually his wife, finally ending up in various institutions. Jim had agreed to see him because he had said that no one was ever willing to listen to his story; people kept dismissing him as insane.

Jim sat with him in the living room, giving him his full and undivided attention for at least three hours, while around them swirled a veritable whirlwind of last-minute activity. We were astonished that anyone could concentrate in the midst of the turmoil, but Jim was so totally focused on the baron that he seemed unaware that the rest of us were around. As far as he was concerned, when he was talking with someone, especially in a counseling situation, no one else *was* around.

At length, he and the baron rose and came into the kitchen, where about four of us were waiting to consult with Jim about one matter or another. Jim introduced the baron all around, exclaiming, in the perfect calm of that quiet energy which many people never experienced in him, what a fine conversation they had had. Then he turned to the baron to tell him goodbye. He

reached out and embraced him fully. The baron's eyes filled with tears and his whole being softened.

After Jim's death, which came only eleven days later, I received a letter from the baron. He said Jim had saved his life. Everything had begun to change for him after that afternoon's conversation. He had recovered his health, had new employment, and was well on his way to a life of fulfillment and joy again.

Such was the impact Jim had on many, even in the midst of a bustling rush of activity, *because* of the intensity of his energy and because of his single-minded focus on whatever he gave his attention to.

From the time I first met Jim, which was only three short years before he died, I was challenged and inspired most by his aliveness. I was impressed that at fifty-three he was willing to give up his successful, powerful, and influential position as Bishop of California and to launch out on a new life. He was a sign of hope for me that persons can remain fully alive and growing at all ages and in all periods of their lives. In an age of such rapid change, it was refreshing to know someone who not only did not fear change, but actually welcomed it.

In the short time we shared together, I was to see that willingness to change and grow manifest over and over again as Jim found himself in new circumstances and made responses to them. Life was, as he used to say, a process of growth through encounter.

Most persons who heard Jim speak in person or on television knew well his brilliant mind, and certainly that was one of his most powerful and formative personal attributes. But only those who actually approached him in person to shake his hand or speak to him touched that childlike quality which I feel made him so alive and so able and eager to grow. The ingenuous little boy in him was the aspect that responded to each person as a friend, totally open to whatever interaction ensued. He was spontaneous, forgiving, full of humor, and insatiably curious. People would often be caught completely off guard, and thus be disarmed, by his complete lack of guile and his totally straightforward openness. The free child within him was incredibly resilient and enabled Jim to live almost totally in the here and now.

The Chinese philosopher Mencius said, in 372 B.C., "A great

man is he who never loses the heart of a child." If that is so, then Jim Pike was a great man. He grew to eschew the other values usually associated with greatness: accomplishments, power, position, wealth, and fame. He gained those things and found them hollow. It was life itself that fascinated him, and increasingly he gave value only to the quality and style of life he felt Jesus to exemplify—that of a "man for others," fully human, giving of himself in selfless love to other persons that they might discover fullness of life as well.

I have been amazed many times over, since Jim's death, at the vast numbers of persons all over the country and in other parts of the world who have written or spoken to me about the impact Jim had on their lives. While I knew he was famous, I hadn't realized how deeply and personally he had touched the lives of so many—even people who had never met him or seen him in person. For many people he became a symbol of hope, freedom, openness, fearlessness, and courage. By his own willingness to risk growth and to challenge what he viewed as illegitimate or unjustly exercised authority, he inspired them to dare to be a little more fully who *they* were and are.

It is difficult to capture that quality so often called "charisma" in a book *about* Jim. I observed it over and over again as he engaged with people in the privacy of our home, in his office, in small groups, or in huge stadiums and gymnasiums filled with thousands of people. It was a quality that often brought a hush to the room when he entered and then sent forth rushes of excitement and bubbling delight the moment he opened his mouth to speak. It was the quality which so captured people's hearts that they hung on his every word for hours at a time, even when I was sure they could not be understanding all he was saying. It was the quality that made one of his fellow bishops say to him at the end of one of those many struggles in the House of Bishops, "Jim, the thing that makes me the angriest about you is that I can't stay mad at you and I can't dislike you." To know that quality fully, you really had to experience Jim directly, either in person or through his books.

However, this biography partakes of something of the essence of Jim's charisma, in the rhythm and structure of its format as well as in its content. It is sensitively written and assembled by

Anthony Towne and Bill Stringfellow, friends of Jim's who knew, understood, appreciated, and loved him as fully as any I have met. For those who knew Jim, the book will reawaken their sense of his energy and person. For those who did not, here is a glimpse of a uniquely creative and energetic man, who in Mencius's terms was indeed great.

I am deeply grateful that the patterns of our individual lives were such that I had the joy and the privilege of knowing Jim Pike the last three years of his life. When people ask me what he was like, I always feel inadequate to describe him. He was an event which I wish I could share. This biography now provides a vehicle for such sharing, and it has been my joy to cooperate with the authors while they were writing it.

I commend Jim Pike's spirit of aliveness to you. May it quicken in you that quality of all-encompassing eagerness to be, to do, and to know, which is of the nature of being fully and magnificently human.

Diane Kennedy Pike

# PART ONE

## *Sojourn in the Wilderness*

> For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of the affliction we experienced in Asia; for we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself. Why, we felt that we had received the sentence of death; but that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead; he delivered us; on him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.
>
> II Corinthians 1.8–10

Jim and Diane Pike drove out into the Judean desert in the late summer of 1969 to continue what amounted to their honeymoon.

Diane was driving the white Ford Cortina roadster they had rented two days earlier upon their arrival at Lod airport in Tel Aviv, and Jim was charting their course from a crude map they had been given by Avis at the same time. Before heading out into the wilderness they had stopped near their hotel on the Mount of Olives to pick up two Coca-Colas. They had nothing else with them except the clothes on their backs and the usual tourist paraphernalia.

It was not a prudent safari. Their intention was to pursue what the map indicated to be tertiary roadbeds winding deep into the desert up the backside of cliffs overlooking Qumrân on the Dead Sea and joining up eventually with the road to Jericho. In terms of distance this was a manageable undertaking. They had started out from Jerusalem just after noon and had they been able to proceed routinely at a moderate pace they could have expected to be back at their hotel readily by late afternoon. There would even have been time to pause now and then to take pictures and to savor the atmosphere of the wilderness.

Unsafe at any speed, the Ford Cortina is not a vehicle Ralph Nader would have chosen to navigate a tertiary road in the Judean desert, and harder though they may try, Avis is not the place most of us would have turned to for a reliable map of a wilderness. Two Coca-Colas might refresh a honeymoon at Niagara Falls but for a nuptial adventure in a barren canyon hard by the Dead Sea a five-gallon jug of water would seem more like it.

What in the world were they doing out there? That is the question many people were to ask at the time. Part of the answer is that few of us would care to attempt an answer to the same question in relation to a fair number of experiences into which we have somehow calamitously blundered. That we have nevertheless survived to ponder the question proves that grace is multifarious. And that leads us to another part of the answer, which is that Jim

and Diane Pike were not most folks. They *would* honeymoon in the wilderness of Judea. Were that not the case we would not have occasion to write this book, nor you to read it.

The Gospels tell us that Jesus spent forty days praying, fasting, and meditating in the same wilderness and that he suffered there three remarkable temptations at the hands of Satan. That is notorious. We have all heard about that, but how many of us have stopped to wonder what in the world Jesus was doing out there? Bishop Pike did wonder about that. He had a hunch, supported by some recent scholarship, that Jesus might have gotten into the desert from the Essene community at Qumrân where he could have been a member or a guest as a young man. That is why the bishop wanted so badly to venture out into the desert and up behind the spectacular cliffs overlooking the excavations of Qumrân. He wanted to see for himself and to share something of the environment in which Jesus may have undergone his notorious wilderness experience.

Jim and Diane Pike, passionately drawn to one another, in love, were passionately drawn into their desert ordeal, now also notorious, by a consuming curiosity about the person of Jesus and the origins of the Christian faith. Their safari into Judea was neither capricious nor frivolous. It was a quest more compelling and hazardous than the quest which is the substance of every honeymoon.

For the quest of true love, the quest of one another, Jim and Diane were superbly equipped, but for the quest of Jesus in the Qumrân wasteland they could not have been more inadequately outfitted.

## *The Community of Qumrân*

In the spring of 1947 two Bedouin shepherds discovered in a small cave, high up the face of a cliff overlooking Qumrân on the Dead Sea, nine jars, eight of them empty but the ninth of which contained three sheepskin scrolls, one more than twenty feet long and destined to be identified as the Scroll of Isaiah. The scrolls were sold in Bethlehem for almost nothing. Parts of them were later resold to Hebrew University and the rest to the Syrian Superior of St. Mark's in Jerusalem. Early in 1949 the small cave

(Cave I) was excavated by scholars, who found other scroll fragments, much pottery, and some linen which was dated, on the basis of a carbon 14 test, as A.D. 33 plus or minus 200 years.

In 1951 excavation of the Qumrân ruins was begun, and in the first room to be cleared jars of the type found in Cave I were unearthed, and a coin of A.D. 10. That same year in another nearby cave (Cave II) more fragments of scrolls were discovered. This led to a systematic search of thirty-seven other caves, in one of which (Cave III) rolls of copper with clear Hebrew characters were found. In the fall of 1952 Bedouin made the largest discovery of all, innumerable scroll fragments, in a cave (Cave IV) on the face of a spur not more than a hundred yards from the Qumrân excavations.

The scrolls and fragments of scrolls discovered in and around Qumrân have come to be known collectively as the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Excavation of the Qumrân ruins was completed in 1956. What it disclosed was a primitive stone habitation, but with an elaborate water system dependent upon rainfall, designed to accommodate an ascetic religious community. Scholars of the matter seem of a consensus that the inhabitants of the place were Essenes, a sect of Jews who flourished, if ascetics do flourish, for a century or so B.C. and another century or so A.D. There were several communities of Essenes. They were distinguished by a taste for communal organization, severe discipline, and a theology dualistic though exempt from gnosticism. The Qumrân community seems to have been in placid residence for about a century when it was dispersed by a great earthquake in 31 B.C. In 4 B.C. the sect returned and restored the place. There ensued a second placid interval disrupted in A.D. 68 or 69 by Roman legions which sacked the buildings and massacred the community. Except for occasional squatters the ruins appear to have been undisturbed from that time until the recent excavations.

The Essenes of Qumrân had a remarkable library. They cherished it. When the Roman legions descended upon them the Essenes hurriedly hid what they could of that library in nearby caves. Besides the virtually complete Scroll of Isaiah fragments of nearly every other Old Testament book have been recovered from Caves I through IV and the ruins themselves. Those scrolls an-

tedate by a millennium the earliest previously known substantial Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament. The significance of their discovery for Old Testament studies is incalculable, and efforts to calculate it will be going on for a long time to come.

Other manuscripts and fragments have been recovered, commentaries and tracts produced by the Essenes themselves, which illuminate hitherto obscure background of New Testament literature. Many of the esoteric passages of the New Testament are prefigured in Essene texts, and our understanding of the New Testament is being enhanced by scholarly work directed at the influence of Essene theology on the early Christians. Historical research into the origins of Christianity has been profoundly enriched by the recovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The ruins at Qumrân are not much to look at unless one has a thing about ruins. To be excited by them, as Bishop Pike was, one would need to bring to them, as he did, knowledge of what had gone on there and imagination to reconstruct the scene as it must have been when the community eked out its Spartan career and suffered its terrible calamities. Bishop Pike visited the ruins more than once, exploring them with exuberance and delighting in every detail of what must have been for the most part a tedious endurance. He had scrambled up to peer into the caves overlooking the ruins. He was familiar with the recovered scrolls and the scholarly works about them, and he was in conversation with some of the ablest of the scholars. For Bishop Pike Qumrân was a decisive eschatological event not only in its historical posture but also in his personal spiritual biography.

Fascination with the Qumrân event is what tempted him to undertake that improvident wilderness sojourn.

## *An Interview in Tiberias*

Late one rain-swept afternoon in January 1970, several months after Bishop Pike had been found dead in the Judean desert, his mother, Mrs. Pearl Chambers, an intrepid octogenarian, who had survived three husbands and one son, her only child, settled wearily into a beige armchair in the lounge of a hotel in Tiberias, glowered balefully out a window at the Sea of Galilee, glanced at a

nearby tape recorder as though it might transmit some loathsome disease, poured ritualistically two cups of a pungent tea, and consented to reminisce. Her delivery was persistent, impeccably precise, and disarmingly flirtatious. To have interrupted her reverie would have been to have committed a gratuity. To utter the past was to utter a gospel. Mrs. Chambers recollected that past with authority suggesting that she had sensibly allowed herself to forget whatever no longer mattered.

Ethyl, she announced, rhyming her sister's name with *lethal*, would be unavailable that afternoon. The Mount of the Beatitudes had exhausted her. Mrs. Larkey, Ethyl, Bishop Pike's favorite aunt, a lady then in her late seventies, alert, spry, and diffident, had been Mrs. Chambers' companion off and on, especially at times of misfortune, throughout her long life and had joined her once more in that capacity for a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and to the bishop's grave in Jaffa. Mrs. Larkey had more likely been refreshed by the Mount of the Beatitudes. It was Ethyl's habit to defer to her elder sister, and she may have had an intuition that Mrs. Chambers preferred, that afternoon, to hold a solitary court.

Mrs. Chambers had told the story of her life more than once, and it was a fascinating story. "When I lived in San Francisco," she began, "there was a friend of mine that always wanted to—she kept after me to write my life because I would tell her so many things about James." (Bishop Pike's mother invariably called him "James," never "the bishop," and never, as most people close to him did, "Jim.") "She was interested, of course, in that. I had had some very interesting things happen in my lifetime. I told James that this friend wanted to write my life story. He said, 'Write it yourself.' Of course, I never did." It is a pity she did not.

Pearl Agatha Wimsatt and James Albert Pike were married in 1907 in Kentucky, where they had both been born and raised, and they moved almost immediately to Oklahoma to claim forty acres of land he had purchased from the government and which they proposed to homestead. He had just graduated from college and it was his plan, once the claim had been proved up, which would take a year, to enter medical school. He wanted to be a doctor. She had done some teaching before their marriage and intended to return to it while her husband pursued his medical education.

To prove up their claim a house had to be built, the property fenced, and the forty acres of land cultivated. Neither of the newlyweds had ever lived on a farm. The ground turned out to be full of mesquite, a tenacious woody shrub with cantankerous roots. It would be necessary to engage a hired man in order to clear the land. There was no money for that so Pearl secured a position as teacher in a school some miles away, and in a matter of months she had connived to have her husband named principal of the place. "I told him what to do, of course," Mrs. Chambers confided *sotto voce*. Between them they collected salaries totaling $125 a month, which to them seemed for the times a "princely sum." The house got built, the property fenced, the land cleared, and in due time a crop of cotton was planted.

James Pike's health, meanwhile, had begun to fail. His illness was certainly tuberculosis, though Mrs. Chambers chose not to identify it, perhaps because she could remember when TB was so feared that people did not care to mention it. The couple, on recommendation of his doctor, went to Alamogordo, New Mexico, where they lived in a one-room shack made half of pine boards and half of canvas. She supported them by playing piano with a dance orchestra. She also played background music for silent films in the local movie house, becoming one of the earliest practitioners of that quaint and fugitive art. His health responded enough to the climate that they were able to return to Oklahoma, arriving with ten cents to their name, "enough in those days for two cups of coffee and two doughnuts." Fortunately, the cotton was ready to be harvested.

Their obligations under the Homestead Law were now fulfilled, and they were able to prove up the claim. He was too ill to work, so they sold the homestead and bought a home in Oklahoma City. Despite a prohibition against married teachers in the city schools she persisted in applying for such a job and eventually got one. Several months later she discovered she was pregnant. Her mother came from Kentucky to help out, and early one morning in February of 1913 Pearl Agatha Pike went into prolonged, difficult labor. A doctor was summoned. His attentions were immediately required by James Pike, who collapsed and had to be put to bed and sedated. Pearl's mother, who had borne five children of her own, took a dim view of the doctor's handling of her

daughter's condition. The infant, she insisted, was "stuck" and would have to be forcibly extracted. Throughout the long day and into the evening the doctor stubbornly demurred.

Finally, just after midnight, at the breach of February 14, 1913, the doctor did intervene, and the fifth Episcopal Bishop of California was yanked from the reluctant entrails of his mother into a fallen world. He was promptly endowed with the name of his stricken father. Nearly sixty years later Mrs. Chambers remained adamant in the conviction that only the malingering of the doctor had made of James Albert Pike a Valentine baby.

"When he was one year old," Mrs. Chambers recalled, "I entered him in the Better Babies Contest at the State Fair, and he received the First Prize, the highest score out of four-hundred babies, and when he was two years old he won it again, both years. I thought you would like that. He started out a winner." But his father was not so favored, and ended up a loser. In 1915, when the boy was two, James Pike died and Pearl was left with young James. She would stay a widow for the next nine years.

Not long after her husband's death Pearl brought her mother and her sister Ethyl to Oklahoma City, and the three women established a household, the center of which was Pearl's son. The two sisters worked as teachers, and the mother took care of young James. One day in 1915, some months after his father's death, the boy would inquire of Pearl, "You're to Granny; I'm to you; you're to Ethyl—who's to me?" Somebody was missing.

"He always wanted a sister."

Mrs. Chambers wanted a nap before dinner.

## *Descent into Wadi Mashash*

> JERUSALEM, Wednesday, Sept. 3—Dr. James A. Pike, former Episcopal Bishop of California, was reported missing last night in the Judean wilderness west of the Dead Sea.
>
> Dr. Pike's wife, Diane,

> walked into a work camp this morning at Ein Feshka, on the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea, after an all-night trek to seek help when their car broke down.
>
> Israeli police and army authorities mounted an intensive search for the controversial 56-year-old churchman but had to postpone it at sundown.

So began James Feron's front-page story for the New York *Times* of September 4, 1969. Bishop Pike, who had been front-page news off and on for two decades, churned up headlines on front pages the world over for the better part of a week during most of which he lay dead in the Judean desert. Death is nothing if not solicitous. The anonymous die anonymously and the celebrated with celebrity. There is no way Bishop Pike could have slipped unnoticed into oblivion. He died as he had lived, in an elegant, flamboyant disarray.

> Dr. Pike has been to Israel on several occasions, a prominent Jerusalem churchman said, adding that he rarely made contact with church people when he came.
>
> The area of the search is rich in Biblical history. It is just north of the sites of Sodom and Gomorrah and across the Dead Sea from the hills of Moab, where Moses finally viewed the Promised Land before he died.
>
> Ein Feshka is close to

Qumrân, where the Dead Sea scrolls were found. The area is riddled with caves.

Death in such circumstances, as James Feron in the *Times* seemed to convey, cannot be ordinary. But the progress of Jim and Diane Pike out into that wilderness in their Ford Cortina had had a strangely ordinary aura about it. They did not seem to feel that they were doing anything unusual, and they had no idea at all of the extraordinary catastrophe that lay ahead. To them it was another day, another adventure—as all the days of their time together had been. Nothing more sinister lay ahead of them, so far as they could see, than what lay behind them.

The narrative of the drive out into the desert, the getting stuck of the Ford Cortina, the abortive efforts to free it, the decision to proceed on foot toward the Dead Sea, the collapse of the bishop, Diane's decision to go on alone through the night, her astonishing ordeal and miraculous survival, the search for the bishop, and the discovery six days later of his body in the depths of Wadi Mashash have been definitively rendered in Diane's book *Search*.* Her book, written in the very aftermath of the events of that dire and dreadful week and completed within two months of the bishop's death, is thorough, straightforward, vivid and urgent, and humanly engrossing. To her account little need be added save some details here and there, recollections of others who played some part in the search, the crude contents of official records, and the ambiguous perspective afforded by relative detachment.

> The scenery was beautiful. There were Arab villages on both sides of the road on hillsides, and a very dry riverbed off to our left, which we believed to be the Valley of Kidron. We commented about the strange beauty and I took some pictures. Each time I stopped to take a picture Jim made a comment manifesting minor impatience. "I don't see what that really shows," he would say. He never liked taking pictures while traveling, but he loved sharing them with friends when we got home.
>
> "It helps capture the mood," I responded. "It shows what the houses look like and gives you a feeling for the desert." We both sensed that feeling—an indescribable sense of elation

* Garden City, N.Y. Doubleday, 1970.