



The Good Padre

by

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Charity II, pride of the Papal Missions, hurtled along at two hundred and fifty light years as it finally entered the Milky Way Galaxy.

Father Reginald Suarezian Cajetan-Belmond, Jr., stripped to his yellow waist-high tights, reclined with feet raised against the bottom rim of a huge screen projector, his head reclined against the top of a plush-stuffed chair ensconced by a leering devil's head also having a Terran-type chicken body.

This good padre was mulling over his latest discussion with Halo, an alter-ego presence bound to every missionary sent out by the Papal Missions.

Man is not a rational creature, Halo had argued with a kind of smug preciseness. *Thus man is not human. It follows, therefore, that man has no soul!*

"The mere fact that I can communicate with you, a creation that is essentially a closed box filled with binary bits and holographic memories, proves that I, at least, am rational. Thus, by inexorable logic, I have a soul. On the contrary, your assertion of capability for judging rationality is illogical and inconsistent," he'd responded with his voice, almost heatedly.

Ever since the Papal-sealed device which he'd renamed "Halo," had locked his wine cellar, he'd taken upon himself this unnecessary joust. Tuned to each missionary's basic personality and neural structure, it not only provided the tight line back home light-years distant to Rome, but also a kind of exhilarating stimulus -- a changing and often disturbing viewpoint, sometimes the devil's advocate and at other times an unexpected sactimonious voice-of-conscience.

Father Suarezian slowly sipped at a concoction designed to supply minerals and vitamins while also replacing vital water. He thought back to his last verbal win over Halo with some distaste. He'd completed the Papal mission's work on Rrigou in the so-called Centrals System when, rather carelessly, he'd spoken his doubts on the essential rightness of Rrigou society. Halo, which controlled the ship and all its contents during vital emergencies, had frozen controls, insisting that the Good Padre thoroughly investigate the society's actual cultural worth. Since such an inappropriate evaluation could never be done, especially by one person, he knew hard work lay ahead to convince Halo otherwise. It was the time he'd successfully convinced the exceedingly bull-headed and oft-times literal-minded Halo that probabilism may be used when there is merely question of doubtful ethical law.

Then there'd been an earlier time when he'd fortuitously overcame the Selysnic mind-controller just prior to the government's collapse. Later he'd fast-talked one of the few remaining controller technicians into modifying his finger-ring to provide a certain survival advantage during his wide-ranging mission work. Argumentation with Halo over that simple protective action, it seemed, would never end.

"Oh! Where is the Rosetta Stone of logic, the key to my beloved wine?" he sighed aloud.

"Halo" he bellowed. After three days of quiet argumentation his shout brought the self-righteous electronic box to double-alert. All five red lights blinked on.

Good Padre? it questioned almost meekly, transmitting it's thought.

"I've heard that stealing is sometimes justified. How is this possible?"

Four lights blinked off at the question; apparently Halo had decided no real emergency existed and the inexorable game of logic continued. Under stimulus of Father Suarezian's bellow, Halo had already reviewed and checked ship's drive, navigation, reception of external energy and had found that all ranges conformed to standard technical encyclicals -- as Halo preferred to call technical manuals -- and "go" was good.



Theft in the strictest sense is the secret taking of something against the reasonable will of another. As long as each of these words and their meaning is verified it is quite incorrect to say that it is ever right to steal.

“My desire for wine is not a secret. There is no other will aboard ship but mine. Consult your encyclicals and find that you are not included in the count. Furthermore the wine is checked out to my care, to my responsibility. Therefore, I’m not asking you to open the wine cellar against the reasonable will of another!”

Again the Good Padre had raised his voice and two more red lights popped on, this time remaining on, but not because of Father Suarezian’s incredibly naive logic. The word “emergency” was being received by ship’s sensors. Halo’s chores did not and never would replace human judgment. All controls were suddenly responsive to the Good Padre through an externalized point-of-thought projected from the Papal-sealed device, now more appropriately resembling a saintly halo.

I’m sorry oh servant of servants. An emergency has been proclaimed on Procius. Humans call us. May I change course?

Father Suarezian relaxed. An almost saintly smile flickered across his broad, ruddy, very peasant-like face. “Since in extreme need all goods are common, extreme need justifies one in appropriating enough of another’s goods to alleviate that need, for then the thing taken really belongs to the one in need.”

I’ve recorded the signals from Procius, Halo now spoke with an urgency. We must turn.

The Good Padre leaned his head back against the chicken-with-devil’s head and continued his own inexorable explanation, “This license to steal must not be understood loosely. More may not be taken than is required to relieve the need, and there must be no other way of acquiring the necessities of life, such as in *asking* -- and though you haven’t asked, I certainly have asked for my wine.”

By now all five red lights were blinking rapidly. *Permission to change course is officially requested!*

“If one has a strict right to a thing unjustly in another’s possession he may take it by whatever means, provided other avenues of justice are not feasible and no damage is done to a third party.”

The lock on the wine cellar made an audible click. With a deep, smug and self-righteous feeling, Father Suarezian reached into the chilled area where his pudgy hand carefully selected one of the ancient grape-picker’s post-strike vintages, *California ’75*, a very old and tasty and bubbly wine indeed.

While the Good Padre slowly, carefully filled his glass to the brim, Halo, almost in frenzy, passed through its third and then fourth official request to change course toward Procius.

Father Suarezian patted his bulging, deceptively fat, middle girth, then, just as slowly and deliberately, in a most quiet voice, said, “Permission to change course is granted.”

Breakout always reminded the missionary of what limbo of the medieval ages must have been. Not a physical distress, but more of a mental condition. Breakout didn’t change lengths, angles or relative ordering of points or chemical reactions and electromotive flows. However, thought patterns became strange, often weird. During each breakout, Father Suarezian often practiced mental exercises to control and to spread grayness away from imaginary lumps of matter, and to strike clumps of solid particles together, sometimes forming huge dancing sparks. At other times he inverted the lumps to form mental images of inside-out matter, or networks of dough which spread through an imaginary continuum of grayness. *Perhaps*, he often thought, bordering on blasphemy, *this is how God had worked!*

Even so, his mind seemed to be able to reach a billion miles outside *Charity II*, a billion miles in



every direction from every point, creating a multiplicity of additional points and directions inside the grayness.

When he opened his eyes at breakout he carefully studied the view-screen. The sun, Procius IV, was surrounded by four planets, one a remote speck of light. Procius, it's second planet, was *Charity II's* destination.

"Give me a brief resume of Procius and its inhabitants," Father Suarezian ordered.

According to Papal records, Procius was Terran-colonized fifty years ago. It's ecology is similar to earth in many ways, though all native plants and animals are unedible. Procius' Apeman is strikingly similar to Terran anthropoids, having two double-jointed arms and legs, broad, strong, shoulders and neck, and a small cranial cavity. Its skull is at least three times as thick as those of Terrans', leaving little room for neural growth, thus, most likely little intelligence.

Procius City, the only Terran community, is supported primarily by use of Procius Apeman as primary labor. Procius Apeman is trained from cubhood, and is well suited to agricultural tasks. . . .

"What's the nature of the emergency signal?"

Halo played back the signal, it being short and repetitive: "Emergency, emergency, Procius Terran colony overrun by animals. Emergency, emergency, any Terran ship, berserked animals over-run the colony. Any ship, for God's sake, help us!" The last part was shouted in an ever-increasing frequency.

The Good Padre sipped at his zesty *California '75* vintage. He idly pondered how any animal, Procius Apeman or other, could possibly have taken over a well-planted Terran colony. He also wondered what Terran military authorities would expect after such an unusual emergency message. For that matter, what would his Papal authority outline as his limitations and duties?

Charity II drifted above the source of the emergency signal, a thick, green jungle canopy. Her gray generators throbbed smoothly, sending a slight vibration through a lightly shivering hull.

At first the frequencies received were shifted toward visible light which produced multi-colored swirls on his screen, then all motion stopped. A brilliantly lit white spot indicated that sub-space frequencies emanated from slightly above one of the larger trees. He enlarged the image and tuned frequencies back and forth, at last viewing the antenna tied to a tree-top and reaching slightly above the tallest branches.

A steep cliff, marbled with streaks of reds and greens, jutted far above the tallest tree. Occasional fancy colored birds glided in eccentric circles half-way between tree tops and the top of the cliff. Increased magnification showed shrubs and grasses on the plateau atop the cliff. Also on the plateau, drab and colorless, lay Procius City, a village of perhaps ten thousand Terran inhabitants during normal times. It lay circular at the center of green and yellow squares of well-tended fields. Rising high above the plateau a gigantic mountain peak thrust through tenuous clouds, its sides painted with dark tree-green, and above that tree line snow-white flashed brilliantly. Above this circlet of crystal white were thin pastel-grey cloud layers.

Needy Terrans in the clearing to our rear, Halo prodded unbid.

"View them, and land. Gently now!" Father Suarezian ordered, that last instruction wholly unnecessary. He carefully studied the ragged group of distraught humans as Halo came to a gentle stop, also opening the door-ramp to the outside world.

In the lead was an impressively huge man in well-cut blue and red military attire: boots, neatly buttoned shirt pinned with the Colonel's emblem at his shoulders, a leather gun-belt over one shoulder also belt-holstered around the waist, yellow cord overlapping his right shoulder, and numerous color-



ful ribbons and medals at his left chest. He pushed his way through some of the lethargic, ragged Terrans, to be followed by eight others equally well dressed in military attire but of obviously lower rank.

The Colonel momentarily paused, obviously somewhat surprised, shaken, even disappointed. He stared fixedly at Father Suarezian, who was wearing only plain all-grey trousers with an equally plain-grey, long-sleeved shirt having a white turned-back collar attached. A three-quarter length grey cape fluttered behind the Good Padre, embellished with a small symbolic burnoose, his mission's emblem printed there. The same emblem appeared on his dull, grey shirt at both of his shoulders. His beatific, rosy, cherubic, beaming countenance, and pot-belly did little to impress the Colonel, or raise hopes for judicial succor.

Father Suazerian noted first the severe lines of responsibility -- grim lines around tightened lips and around the Colonel's green eyes -- and then the depth of blackness of his beard which shaped itself so very much like an old painting of the legendary Will Shakespeare.

He hath a mean and hungry look, Father Suarezian paraphrased his thought to Halo.

Judge not lest ye be judged! Halo silently twitted back.

At last Colonel Potter extended his hand in greeting, "Great! Great! It was great luck that you received our weak signal. What military branch do you represent? I don't recognize your shoulder patch."

"Father Reginald Suarezian Cajetan-Belmond, Jr., His Excellency's Papal Errant at Large, Vicar Apostolic, Cardinal and Servant of the Servant of Servants at your service, Sir." He bowed as low as a portly stomach permitted, also displaying a bald, pink head, partially surrounded by an unshaped fringe of white hair.

"I belong to no Terran military service but to the service of God and his representative in New Rome and humans throughout the galaxies."

It may have been the Good Padre's imagination but there seemed to be a sudden relaxation in the Colonel's attitude.

"But your emblem! Does it not depict the hanging of alien life forms?"

Explain to him the true definition of humans Halo silently suggested.

Father Suarezian traced out the emblem's meanings. "The cross is the same one upon which Jesus Christ, Terran, was crucified. The Terran in the middle represents Him. The two nearly spherical-shaped now extinct extra-terrestrials, called Paiquells, hanging from each arm of the blessed cross, represents their equivalent in crucifixion. During the First Systemic Wars Paiquells chose to honor ethical integrity above their own racial survival."

As Father Suarezian talked he quietly surveyed the silently milling semi-circle of humans. Behind the Colonel were the eight well-dressed aides and behind them were dozens of Terrans -- men, women, children all dressed in rags or broad leaves. Mud plastered their hair and whiskers, painting pastel shades across their mostly exposed flesh. They didn't walk, they shambled; they didn't look at you, they stared; they didn't laugh or frown, their faces were motionless statues.

Behind the quiet, bony group was another group which, though somewhat healthier in appearance, they milled about more like animals than Terrans. *Certainly the spirit of God is needed among these people!*

Thou shalt not interfere with free-will, or the mysterious ways of others' social contract, Halo mix-and mis-quoted in apparent sudden and apparent alarm.

Father Suarezian completed his description of the papal emblem with, "This symbol, Colonel



Potter, represents the unity-in-death through Christ which He has extended to all beings with souls. He dropped his cloak swiftly, and then squarely looked into the Colonel's eyes, asking, "Has the native life form begun to show intelligence? Is Procius City actually being controlled by animals? Your message left much to be desired."

Without hesitation the Colonel explained that their necessary beasts of burden had always demonstrated some limited intelligence of the stimulus-response variety, but never before anything on the scale that would permit a coordinated assumption of power, as had occurred. "It has to be a Terran subversive who has somehow taken control of the animals."

"Ah?" Then I'm in time," Father Suarezian smiled. "Understand that as Papal Errant at Large, I'm also responsible for the souls of non-Terrans. My ship and supplies will be placed at your service but I must insist that none of the indigenous life forms be killed or hurt in any way until a thorough investigation. If a high order of intelligence has appeared th"

"Souls!" The Colonel's wrath was boiling as he turned to one of his aides. "Souls? Did you hear what I heard? Humans dispossessed and starving and we are to save their imaginary souls?" His apoplectic, red face turned toward Father Suarezian, and thundered, "You aren't the kind of help we need here. A military ship, yes! A supply ship, yes! You've nothing for us but sanctimonious words. You can serve us best by leaving immediately and calling down the help we need."

Father Suarezian, who had ignored Halo's quick, obvious switch to the role of devil's advocate, now just as easily ignored the Colonel's thunder. With utter simplicity he said, "I received your message. It said 'Any Terran ship. Emergency.' I am a Terran; *Charity II* is a Terran ship. I'm here to help"

Colonel Potter swept his men with a scornful and disgusted glance and signalled for them to follow him back through the dazed crowd. "Souls!" he snorted loudly. "He wants to save the apemen's souls!" A weak, mild laughter followed the Colonel. The whole crowd turned their backs and just as deliberately and slowly followed -- or shambled -- behind their apparent leader as the Colonel and his men walked swiftly away.

Two small children who probably also should have known better than to stand so long in the open before this simple, crazed, pot-bellied man in gray cloth -- who foolishly sought to save the souls of an alien species -- still stood before him. The younger, a girl of perhaps four years, thin, emaciated, held tightly to the hand of her equally skinny older brother.

You're not needed here. You should leave immediately, Halo whispered in his mind.

The oldest child's age was about seven. He had long brown hair, blue eyes and an easy smile. His four-year-old sister who held onto his hand with a firm brown grip, shyly peered at the portly man in gray from beneath long, beautiful black eye-lashes.

The Good Padre squatted the best he could before the young girl. His left hand fumbled for certain sweet compounds composed of specific proportions of carbon, oxygen and hydrogen. "I'm the Good Padre. What's your name?"

Had the little girl been alone, she might have fled. Her grip became even tighter and she hung her head, peering carefully beneath the fringes of her wrinkled forehead.

"She doesn't talk much." The boy's hand snaked forward to take the candy stripes from Father Suarezian's. "She's Theresa Anne Fabio and I'm Tony -- that's short for Anthony -- Fabio. I've seen pictures of men like you in some of dad's old books. Only they don't have capes like yours and their clothes were all black."

"Where do you live? Will you take me to your mothers and fathers."

Tony carefully divided the candy stick with Theresa who, in her hunger, forgot her shyness long enough to raise her head and plunge it into her mouth.



“Right now they live in a cave over that way.” Tony indicated the direction of the steep cliff beyond the jungle canopy. “All of us live there now. It used to be the home of the wild apes but they’ve taken over our city and we had no other choice or place to go. Now we live like animals -- just like they did -- they’re sick -- Mom and Dad -- can’t get up now -- and they’re skinny. Can you help them, Mister?” The last question was spoken with a semblance of confusion and a great deal of anxiety.

As they came near the edge of the green jungle growth there was heard a quick “pop-popping”. Guns, of course. Both the boy and girl began to run. The boy turned back to beckon Father Suarezian to do the same, shouting, “Colonel says we got to run whenever the apes raid. Don’t know why, they never get past the guard. I’ve never seen them shoot a gun, neither,” the boy said with some petulance.

Protect yourself. These are not your people, Halo shouted in his mind.

Father Suarezian followed at a rather slow dog-trot, but with enough speed to keep up with the two children. They entered jungle growth when almost immediately they encountered a nearly perpendicular cliff. The boy and girl turned along a beaten pathway at the cliff’s base. Either they had outdistanced the skirmish -- also placing much jungle foliage between them and the gun-shots -- or the fighting had stopped, for all sounds of gun shots had also disappeared.

Within minutes more -- scrambling and scraping between either the sharp out-cropping of the cliff or the sometimes jagged needle-like growths at the jungle’s fringes -- and the boy and girl crawled into a small hole at the base of the cliff.

They have no understanding or sympathy for your religion and beliefs. So now you can leave them, Halo persisted.

Undaunted and silent, the Good Padre got down on his hands and knees and pushed his portly way through a short, narrow tunnel. Crevices along the cliff’s wall provided sufficient light after visual accommodation had occurred. He stood erect brushing dirt from his clothes and studied the interior. Ahead was a small cooking fire surrounded by irregularly shaped stones of varying sizes. Dancing, yellow light flickered there and the pungent odor of burning wood with its grey smoke could be seen lazily drifting along hidden air-currents. Leaves and branches in various stages of lifelessness were scattered along the floor and wall.

In back of the tiny fire-place lay two thin, bedraggled humans, male and female. Their clothing was dirty and torn, barely clinging in spots. Directly in front of the two adults stood Tony and Theresa. They’d resumed holding hands.

Father Suarezian was shocked. The condition of humans milling about the ship with Colonel Potter was revolting - - dirt, lack of alertness, animal-like, stimulus-response behavior. But none there had the curse of starvation as did these two.

It’s difficult to have belief or understandthg when there’s no body, he finally answered Halo.

The Good Padre carried food and medicine to the trio Fabios daily. He was not a graduate medical doctor but, like others of his kind, he was well trained in both Terran and exo-biology, His two patient’s eyes had brightened again and their movements became swifter, more lifelike. He knew that many days of careful feeding must pass before their rib-cages returned to plumpness. With the two small children’s help, he stockpiled food and medicine in the cave for future use.

At last, when a kind of halting, week onversation became possible, he asked the recovering adults to “Tell me what happened here.”

Peter Fabio, former Procius City governor, took the lead, “One day everything was quite normal, the next, our beast’s-of-burden seemed to develop intelligence. They massed together in small groups



and rounded up every Terran, forcing them out of the city and onto the barren plain surrounding our gardens.”

“Couldn’t you fight back? Control them again? How could it go so easily?”

“Some did fight back. They were surrounded by the gigantic beasts and carried out. Others with access to fire-arms sometimes used them, sometimes not. When they were used, so many filled the slain ones’ places that the Terran was soon overcome and carried out anyway.

“The worse part was unknown to us until much later. Many people became dazed, as though they had lost their own intelligence, or transferred their intelligence to the beast’s brains. These humans were simply rounded up like so many cattle and herded outside on the plains.”

Father Suarezian expected unusual answers but the explanations he’d just heard seemed without precedent. He had to know more. He also had to be sure of the facts. “People lost intelligence? How many? What percent? Can you give me estimates?”

The governor’s wife pushed herself erect with twig-like arms, saying, “About half. I counted them the best I could because Peter here always needed figures like that to take before the council.”

“Where did the Terrans go after their removal from the city?”

“It was Colonel Potter, the new man, who found a series of Procius Apeman caverns that led us from the plateau to this place.”

“How did so many find any food at all? My ship records indicate that virtually all Procius’ organic matter is non-nourishing for Terrans.”

“The Colonel got it for us. He organized raiding parties that go back to our fields every evening, when the apes are less attentive.”

“Then why are some humans starved and others not?”

Peter looked at his wife briefly, then turned back. “I guess we were sort of in the Colonel’s way. Those who were capable of rational acts wanted to follow the old ways, that is, with Governor and Council. When they saw that the Colonel controlled the only guns, the only structured raiding groups and the only food source, we were left alone. After that we couldn’t even beg the Colonel for food. We couldn’t get near him. His bodyguards saw to that.”

Father Suarezian’s face turned toward the two small children. His question was answered by Peter before it was spoken. “He feels no threat from children and, so long as they follow his directions, he feeds them.”

Reflecting on the implications of what he’d learned and casting in his mind for a viable conjecture, Father Suarezian was grossly irritated by Halo’s mental insinuations. *Save yourself. Futile effort. Administer to the live not the doomed*, it whispered.

Father Suarezian found it nearly impossible to approach other citizens. Several days later on an early morning, there were visitors at his ship. Another unasked question was answered soon thereafter. Colonel Potter, flanked by two body-guards, commanded the conversation. “We’ve kept the people, even the kids, away from you for days. I’ve learned that you’ve been meddling with the governor and his wife.

“Once you learned how people felt about you and your supposed soul-saving, we were sure you’d leave us be. Why do you stay?”

Father Suarezian deliberately turned his broad back on the three men, pressing a hidden device at the side of his sleek ship which act brought about a canopy to protect him from the stark morning sunlight, and also a chair that neatly unfolded. He plunked his bulky form into the chair, twitting Halo with, *You could have warned me.*



I'm not permitted to interfere in the normal events of humans, Halo answered almost smugly.

The cleric's thick forefinger lifted almost ponderously as it was pointed at the Colonel. "Your emergency call brought me here. If you didn't want your people to be helped, why did you call?"

"I don't have to answer questions from one who goes around preaching that alien beasts have souls," the Colonel blustered indignantly. "You'll do us a great favor if you'll just leave, and signal a military vessel for us."

Father Suarezian was silent in thought for a moment, "I may or may not go, depending upon the answer to my next question. Why didn't you simply kill the governor and his wife rather than subject them to slow starvation and just as certain death?"

The Colonel looked at his two men and shrugged his shoulder. His next statement, said in a way which reminded the Good Padre of two men discussing a side of beef, displayed how close his questioning probe had come to Procius' real problems. Speaking to his two cohorts, the Colonel said, "Looks like we've got to make him disappear. If he stays, the awake ones will want to know why his ship can't be used against the animals in the city. We can't use his ship for our own purposes as it's too small and lacks fire-power for our purpose."

Turning back from his followers, the Colonel continued in the same matter-of-fact tone, "Padre, you just questioned yourself into personal trouble. We don't kill the governor and his wife because it isn't necessary for us to do so. Why make more trouble with the awake ones than we have to? Besides, since the emergency, former Procius officials are unimportant.

"Now -- immediately -- I'm ordering you to move this ship to the top of the plateau. We'll pick the landing." Deadly stun guns had suddenly appeared in the hands of the Colonel's two aides.

Father Suarezian neither moved nor spoke. *I'd advise following his orders!* Halo shouted in his mind. *Life is sacred. Even yours!*

When Father Suarezian was searched and placed in Procius City's new Jailhouse -- a crudely cobbled together rock building without heat or water -- his ministerial graduation ring became a matter of major dispute. It was decorated with the crucified Christ and hanging Paiquells, as well as the letters S.J., which stood for Society of Jesus. The ring had formed a part of his finger since receiving the Bachelor of Sacred Theology degree, and his finger had seemed to grow around it, so tightly was it placed.

"It's required," he'd explained, "as part of my faith. It assists me to concentrate in prayer."

"An icon!" one scoffed.

"A prayer-wheel!" another jibbed.

Nonetheless, though they searched and removed other small items, they did leave Father Suarezian's ring be.

Lies are intrinsically evil because they involve using a natural faculty in a way that is directly contrary to its natural end or purpose, Halo swiftly interposed, but silently.

Lying is speaking deliberately against one's mind. Truth is often relative to the understanding of one's listener -- and their need to know, replied the Good Padre.

"Wherefore putting away lying, speak ye the truth every man with his neighbor; for we are members one of another" -Ephesians 4:25, Halo's mental voice had seemed to take on a deep and sober quality.

True! One is never justified in telling a lie. Still at times one is obliged in conscience to veil the truth, for there are secrets to be guarded and detractions to be avoided. I could have answered them with strict mental reservations, giving them no clue to the particular sense hidden within my life.



You gave them no clue at all. You did use a strict mental reservation!

Compare my words again. I told them the ring assists in my faith, that it assists in concentration and that I need it in the performance of my daily prayer. Had they been bright enough they could also have seen that it might assist in their concentration, as well as mine, and that satisfaction of my needs is not necessarily their's; and that my prayers are not necessarily in their favor. If you weren't so smug in your protected metal container, aboard ship you'd see that I did use a broad reservation.

A lie is a lie, was Halo's only ecclesiastical response.

Life in prison was not bad during the first few hours. Father Suarezian settled himself comfortably on the furnished leaves provided, absent-mindedly counting knots in the rough hewn logs overhead as his agile intellect juggled pieces and happenings into place.

He had to explain the sudden appearance of intelligence on behalf of the beasts-of-burden which so crudely shared apelike form with Terrans. Of the Terrans he had personally seen -- excepting the Fabios, and the Colonel's men -- all were silent and brooding, almost lacking in the essential simian characteristic of curiosity and free will. But -- according to the governor's wife -- about half the pioneers were still normal though under devious control by Colonel Potter and his men. If the Colonel was so eager to see the governor's death through starvation, why would he also -- during the period of the governor's slow starvation and his anticipated death -- be eager for a visit from either military or transport-supply ship?

His agile mind constructed and discarded conjectures but always returned to a significant thought. He tried his final, most probable and dominating idea on Halo, receiving for his efforts the trite, curt statement, *Slander is sinful!*

Father Suarezian was unwilling to accept Halo's declaration of "act of sinhood," though certainly he was willing to follow a safe, cautious path. He waited prudently until but one guard was in evidence, and that one nearly asleep. He moved his ring on his finger for "prayer."

The guard, lean and craggy, having a long scar along his high cheek bone, sat carelessly at the end of the hall, his dirty high-top boots planted on a narrow desk and his rifle held by one hand and just barely sagging only inches above the floor.

Hands folded with a temple-like peak, Father Suarezian "prayed" in stern concentration.

The guard stirred. His rifle slid gently to the floor and the Good Padre concentrated his thoughts, sending complex wave-forms through his ring and outwardly into ever-stronger pulses.

Under certain conditions, two oscillators with different frequencies and phases may lock together in the same frequency and phase when they interact. The common frequency and phase can be anywhere between the free-running frequencies and phases of the two oscillators, depending on the parameters of their coupling.

A strong will, highly trained and daily honed, suggested to another nervous structure certain alternate courses of action. In response, that other nervous structure quickened above its quiescent level, sorting, entraining and detraining pulses in their modification guided by the appearance of its own will. The guard staggered upright, still sleeping.

Even in subharmonic resonance, a stable relation arises between two oscillators with one oscillator beating a frequency of the other oscillator. Entrainment and subharmonic resonance play a major role in keeping biochemical activities in the cell in proper time and phase relation. Tiny molecular arrays had been grown within Father Suarezian's ring that created a powerful coupler -- a willful and linked expansion of his "prayer."

At the time the ring had been modified at Father Suarezian's directions by means of a highly secret



art-technology, Halo had vigorously complained. Father Suarezian had replied, *Well, if you'd permit your high and mighty rule-book to bend slightly and come to my rescue, from time to time, I wouldn't need subterfuge.*

I'm not permitted to interfere with any act of human free will, was Halo's inexorable and highly frustrating response.

The guard sluggishly, mechanically lurched toward Father Suarezian's cell. There he fumbled momentarily, then selected the proper key from his right hand pocket, inserted it, and opened the door.

Father Suarezian continued to sit, still in attitude of deep "prayer." The guard stumbled back to his seat, slumped to his original position, sans rifle, and passed quickly into level-three sleep. Only then did the Father Suarezian walk through the cell door, past the sleeping guard and out into open streets of what should have been night-quiet.

He entered Procius City.

Apemen were everywhere. At first he ran from shadow to shadow behind the log buildings, there to stand steady while bands of them passed by. Once he had to dodge behind a metal scrap pile and quietly work his way opposite the position of one group, keeping the pile between himself and them as they moved willfully in opposite direction.

Yield to Caesar! Yield to Caesar! Halo parroted in his mind, which thoughts Father Suarezian ignored.

He silently and unseen passed several blocks of buildings before noticing peculiarities of their behavior. Not only did they move in groups -- usually three or four to a group -- but they acted as though behavior patterns were a group phenomenon, that actions were common to a group. If one moved its right, double-jointed appendage upward, all moved their's upward. If one swayed to a side, all strayed to the same side. He thought carefully about this peculiar herd characteristic, wondering if his earlier briefing on Procius denizens included this observation. He thought not.

He peered carefully from the base of one of the buildings and, finding the way clear, dashed forward to the next protective location, a street corner. Three of the Procius Apeman approached from the inside of a nearby building. Spotting him, they all stopped at once. The way they shambled he was sure that even with his girth and rotundity he could outrun them, so he tried to do so.

As though some invisible signal had been released, within minutes he was surrounded by dozens of them. Even in these circumstances he could not fail to note their lack of facial expression, their peculiar eye movements which, within clusters of three or four, seemed to move together, and their most strange manner of moving limbs or bodies together.

A group of three prodded him forward while the others returned to whatever their activities had been. They rounded another corner and, much to his surprise, stopped him there. All three of the apemen spoke in unison, saying, "Shlup shush."

Translate that, he ordered Halo.

You know I'm only an observer. Besides it isn't in ship's dictionary.

"Sen shen shlup shush!"

Fatter Suarezian strived under pressure of circumstances to recall any language like it. He could not do so. In attitude of prayer, again, he used his ring and willed his mind to blend with the beasts.

Certainly, if they have the art of communication and are rational, they are human, thus have souls; and, if souls, they belong to my mission and are my prime responsibility for now, though somewhat off my papal errant routing, he commented to Halo, who remained quiet for a change.

The way was easy. There was no will in the classical sense opposing his. Indeed, as the subtle blend of molecular fragments in his ring found the proper coupling, his mind slid forward as easy as



might have happened with a cow, horse, a Terran-type ape, or any other of the lower animals.

Contrary to normal animal behavior, though, there was rationality and a language and these facts, taken together with their apparent lack of indentifiable will, greatly conflicted with his Jesuit teachings.

Leave them! They must be creations of the devil for they are not natural, halo urged.

All of God's creations are natural, Father Suarezian replied with his sharpest mental cut. *In that sense, even the devil is natural for the devil is of God, too.*

The beast's thoughts wre ill-formed and probably even with the best linguist would never convey consistent meaning; but the linkage of their minds formed the needed bond, for the animals seemed to have a great communication need. Strangely, too, the mind-to-mind link was from the three before him to his mind and back again to the three -- not to any group hive mentality. Also, though the sense of independent will was small -- almost non-existent -- concepts were only partially common. Concentrating wholly, Father Suarezian was able to take their torrents of emotion and convert them into some sense and to know what was being strived for so mightily.

Help us! their emotion seemed to beat arrhythmically at him.

How? he impressed upon the shadow-thought.

Like a blackness within night, or a mist within a mist, his thoughts seemed to expand from the three before him *There is a thing that pushes us to be more than we are. We have intelligence now and we can reason amongst us and between ourselves and the thing. Had we more intelligence -- we might be fit; had we less we'd be uninformed and happy again. Our potential has been strained and we are wise enough to realize that cannot be truly wise. Not truly self-determined; not truly human. Kill us we beg you, for we are tormented -- or find us another way -- return us to our natural state!*

He'd received messages like dust, or like fine gossamer spider webbings Was the weight of the thought really so heavy? Or was it his own personality that projected the ideas, embellishing them from a reservoir of personal desire and need?

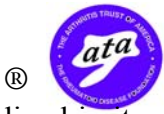
Then the tenuous linkage diminished even as his own self-doubt increased. Like a dream nearly forgotten, then recalled only with great efforts, he struggled to pull its pieces back into conscious mind. All the beasts' emotions were still there in depth. Behind was a hard, tight synthetic intelligence which tied together the raw and normal base floor of the animals' pulses. He felt the computer control of disturbed organic talandic temperature -- theta, meaning oscillation in the Greek. He had had personal experience with theta on the planet Selysnic. Theta, the observable quantity which incited our cellular energy, would be distributed among interacting feedback control systems regulating the activity of genes and synthesis of messenger RNA and proteins generally. Amplitude of each individual biochemical clock had been speeded up. Apparently, a new stable theta floor had been triggered within the cells of these animals.

He could sense a larger control pattern motivating the three tying them together; and beyond that, even fainter, seemed to be a larger network. Is this genuine communication from the beasts? Or simply his own mental projection imposing itself on what now seemed to be a delicate dream?

Halo whispered nothing.

The apemen prodded him through the streets in the same manner they had done to the former Terran residents. He guided their prodding, however, by judicious use of his mental projections through his ring. It seemed to focus mental energies back into whatever was linking the beasts, disrupting its operation for short periods. His ear frequently recoiled from their "Sen shen stylus shush." or "Coo see go choo grllke; coo see go choo grllke" said over and over.

At last, after much eye-searching he found what he knew had to be. A strange needle-board antenna atop one of the buildings -- the object of his search -- was recognized at once. Selysnic citizens had



lived in its shadow for several generations and each building and square foot of land area had been bracketed by one of these.

He continued to steer his escort, and there was little resistance to his deliberate entry into the building that held the peculiarly shaped antenna. In a cage, center of room, stood one of the Procius Apenan. At its head were round metal plates from which wires trailed in two directions. One set apparently traveled to the needle-board antenna on the outside pole atop the building. The other set blended itself into a single thick strand which followed back to massive electronic gear to be seen on the other side of the entrapped animal.

The caged one also made noise. Father Suarezian strained his hearing and his intellect, listening. "Coo see go choo grllke; coo see go choo grllke," it said over and over.

Bending his head to ring finger, Father Suarezian pressed the raised Paiquells symbol again and concentrated on the beast's apparent communication efforts.

There was still the feel of disturbed biochemical oscillators -- genes, ribosomes, and enzyme actions coupled through bleak metabolite pools -- and the faint pressure of electronic technologies overlaying the disturbance. This close to a primary generator his mind felt like slipping into a damp, cool cave on a hot, dusty day, when the full sun has beaten into the back with blistering pressure. Strange corners of the beast's mind opened and "welcomed" the Good Padre, and he could feel its strange, lonely fight against the recurring theta patterns being constantly cycled by the automatic equipment in the rear.

Faintly at first, but stronger and stronger his own nervous structure also asorbed and shifted emotional meanings, he could barely discern the thought like a descending whisper, *You see? Do shoot. Kill?*

Side-band energy, extending from a recess in the beast's mind and riding the patterns almost freely, extended Father Suarezian's feelings and knowingness far below Procius planet's consciousness plateau into the minds of the hundreds of men who were huddled in bewildered, animal-like ignorance somewhere outside. Just as reducing amplitudes of biochemical oscillators and decreasing theta increased biological clocks, so, part of the same system, and simply a subharmonic of the whole pattern, decreased the Terran biological clocks. From his earlier knowledge of Selyenic mind-controls, as well as the little he had gained from Brother Joseph who had constructed his ring, he knew that the colonist's level of technology had not been equal to the task of pulsing talandic energy for all human gene structure variations as well as those of the Procius apemen. This explained why only about fifty percent of the Terrans were living the lives of beasts while the others, having sufficiently different gene structures so far as the talandic generator was concerned, was left unaffected. It also explained why he had not come under control of the generator on his arrival and probably also correlated with the momentary startlement shown by Colonel Potter when he stepped off his ship's walkway. Even during the Selysnic troubles, at its very height, Father Suarezian's gene structure was sufficiently different from others to leave him in possession of most of his faculties

The half of the colonists under the network's control was unquestionably an abomination. Some of the controlled Terrans picked scabs from their bodies, combed small indigenous lice from their hair and ate them when found, though non-nourishing; while some sat listlessly waiting for their every move on the pattern of pulses extending from the machine and the complex progress contained within it.

Every once in a while a strong Terran mind pushed its ray through the daze and through a sheer act of will-power, overcame the talandic temperature changes. At such times -- and these periods seemed to correspond to periods when the apemen also gained their slight freedom of self-direction -- torrents of energy poured from the encaged beast now before him. It seemed to concentrate on the sole task of



overcoming and bringing Father Suarezian back to norm with the others in the network.

It was only later that Father Suazerian learned how the Procius Apeman was conceived of a single cell that fissioned into identical threes or fours, thus explaining the strange triple and quadruple coupling which the patterning controller produced, causing three or four groups of the beasts to act in essentially similar ways and timing.

Like the other beasts, the one now before the Good Padre had deep writhing pain and aversion to life. Born of a beast, with beast body and beast emotions, and desires, its primitive span of associational control had been stimulated and augmented far beyond the range of its genetic endowment. The beast's mind, stimulated by a computer nearly as sophisticated as Halo, had become just sufficiently cognitive to realize how truly unintelligent it was, and how unsuited to the world of thought. Had it been able to vocalize feelings it might have said, "I have become just aware enough to realize that I can never be aware in a human sense; I was content with my lot; I beg you to return me to it."

And, from the same central, burning tissue of emotion came the urgent appeal, again and again, to "Kill me!" such was it's torture.

What hath God wrought? devil's advocate asked.

The thought occurred to Father Suarezian that God's mercy should be extended to the beasts. Halo chose that time to prod in his new role, *Thou shalt not kill; it has rationality and therefore a soul.*

For just a moment the Good Padre thought to debate the issue with the advocate, then shrugging his shoulders, he reached for the electronic control panels and turned the switches to "off." As he lifted a metal chair with intent to bash electronic assemblages again and again' Halo shrieked *Private Property!* in his mind.

Had the Good Padre been as saintly as he often imagined himself to be, he might have paused quite casually to reply in the words of St. John's Christ, "Are not the earth and the fullness thereof of the Lord's? If, therefore, our possessions are the common gift of the Lord, they belong also to our fellows."

Had he been as evil as Halo often depicted him to be, he might have merely stated that "Ends justify means!"

Being neither saint nor sinner, the Good Padre ignored the irrelevant shriek in his mind and battered away. Parts protected of heavy metal panels were torn out with bare hands and delicate molecular integrated circuits embedded in ceramics and plastics were smashed with the heavy chair leg until only dust remained.

He knew what he was about, though an outside observer might have felt he was swinging at nothing but broken rubble. After reduction of the assemblage to rubble, he sifted it carefully, piece by piece, until he found the small, flat electronic circuit he knew to be hidden somewhere in the total complex.

The four animals he'd guided to this room visibly sagged; their bodies snapped into blissful sleep to recover from the terrible drain upon their metabolism and from the unavoidable over-stimulating external pressures.

The thud of heavy boots sounded through thick logs, whence Father Suarezian quickly swallowed the tiny electronic device, also pushing his bulky body over the window-sill through the back side of the building, and running as quickly as he could toward *Charity II.*

The Good Padre at last heaved a mental sigh after moving the ship far from the captive Terran colony. Halo hadn't pestered him for nearly an hour, and the wine cellar was still unlocked. He had debated over another *California '75* but settled on the more modest *Arizona '98.* Though darker and heavier, it satisfied for the moment.

Feet up on the nearby table, his heavy bight pushing against the tilting chair, stripped again to his



shorts, he gave his first orders, "I return to course."

The ship followed instructions perfectly, probing with its gray-beam for the planet's harder core, then slowly lifting away from the planet's atmosphere. All five of Halo's red lights were on. *The Chair of Charity also obliges us to assist our neighbor when he is in need. There is much hunger, sickness and dislocation. Colonel Potter still controls the situation.* Halo whispered unctuously.

Father Suarezian broke from his light reverie, producing a snort, *Why you hypocritical piece of electronics. Where were you when you were needed yesterday? "Yield to Caesar!" you said. I suppose you'll nag me -- the supposed voice of my supposed conscience -- the remainder of the day.*

For a change Halo kept prudently quiet, though its five red lights stayed blazing red.

The Good Padre's mood seemed to change in direct proportion to the increase in air inside the Arizona '98 bottle. In fact, it was he who initiated the dialog again. *There were only a small number of talandic energy controllers -- mind controllers as the unscientific called them -- which escaped the general destruction of Selysnic. They were carefully constructed of sensitive molecular relationships under careful control of an even more tightly controlled guild. Virtually all who could build the devices were killed -- there could have been but one device under Colonel Potter's control.*

What of Brother Joseph who changed your ring?

"Ah yes, Brother Joseph. He's a fine trappist who neither speaks nor mixes with the outside world. I've heard stories about his past but then you know how the priesthood wipes out one's past. If he were once a guild member who could now tell? Watching him hoe and weed potatoes most every daylight hour?"

The Good Padre continued his meditations silently even though Halo's five red lights glared brightly. As though no longer able to stand the strain, it broke the quiet saying, *You must go back and help the humans with their good fight against the Colonel.*

I am a servant of God not a policeman, the Good Padre smirked. Besides, haven't I recently heard it said that they were not our kind of people? They had no understanding or sympathy, for our religion or beliefs? They didn't want us there?"

My function, as you well know, is to assist in maintaining your theological balance. Now you mock me. Halo shouted, and the red lights blinked on and off wildly.

The Good Padre quietly, slowly sipped his wine, and later that evening read his tattered, well-worn volume of Saint Ignatius Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*, until sleep took him. Halo's lights glowed red all night.

It wasn't until after celebration of the morning mass and the finish of breakfast that Father Suarezian spoke to Halo again, saying, *Check the energy reserves. Can we reach the Papal Legate on St. Aquinas yet?*

Yes, came Halo's immediate reply.

"Very Well. Transfer this message in standard Papal code. Also ask for return transmission to insure its accurate receipt."

Ready, came the instant reply.

Father Suarezian puckered his bald forehead in thought and began speaking his message. "*Charity II, on special mission for the Holy Father of New Rome, was slightly delayed by an emergency call asking for help from any Terran ship. The call came from Procius II, second planet of the Procius sun.*

"Look in the tables for the coordinates and add those in," he directed of Halo.

"The escaped Selysnic Colonel -- called Potter, but probably uses it as an alias -- and eight aides had invaded the small Terran colony at Procius II bringing with them a forbidden and outlawed talandic generator, apparently one of the very few to escape capture or destruction with the destruction of the



former Selysnic dictatorship.

“Charity answered the call for assistance, Your Excellency’s representative was rebuffed by the same Colonel Potter who, together with the talandic generator and deception, was able to keep half the Terran colony under mind-control, reducing them to the level of beasts. He was able to starve those not under his immediate programming and to pretend defense of the remainder by faking attacks of aliens against them. The same talandic generator was used to stimulate the biologic clocks of the indigenous life forms known as the Procius Apeman because of their coincidental but superficial resemblance to the Terran ape.

The stimulation backed by special computer-organic links gave the beasts the semblance of human cognition. This pseudo reason, intellect, and will made them appear to be human, thus with soul, by definitions contained in Papal Encyclicals.

“Peter Fabio and wife, governor of Procius City’s colony, and half of the members of the Terran colony were, and still are, in desperate need of emergency medicine and food.

“Your Excellency’s representative deduced from the facts noted above and from the inconsistent behavior of Colonel Potter -- that is, his calling for military help while noticeably starving and illegally controlling the will of others -- that an attempt would have been made to capture any such help, using both the talandic generator and his assistants. At least half of the humans to arrive in succor could have come under the sway of the talandic generator and during the confusion, the remainder would easily have been captured by Colonel Potter and his men.

“I am sure Your Excellency will ensure appropriate transmission and routing of this message so that immediate aid will be provided the Terrans in the swiftest possible manner.

“I also recommend tentative talks be established with Procius City residents for purpose of placing one of our missions there.

“End of message and God Bless you!

“This proceeding is under the seal of Father Reginald Suarezian Cajetan-Belmond, Jr., His Excellency’s Papal Errant at Large and is to be relayed to the Holy Father in New Rome at once.”

Halo transmitted the message as directed and the Good Padre smiled to see its five lights blink off, at last.

It was only much, much later that two of Halo’s red lights blinked back on. Enough unpleasant noise was generated by Halo to awaken the Good Padre from a sound sleep. *The wine cellar must stay locked.* Halo transmitted. *Now on that proposition, that the existence of soul defines the beingness of “man” -- or that the very concept of “man” is defined by the existence of “soul,” I have found three clear-cut rebuts.*

“Carus Deus” *Dear God*, the Good Padre mumbled and thought to himself as he scrunched his whole head under his blanket to shut off the sound.