PRESS & TELEVISION

Newsmen in 1963 enjoyed some advantages. The official information from Dallas was essentially correct, while some initial statements from the Reagan White House erred—e.g., the word that the President had not been hit. Scare stories did circulate in 1963 (that the Vice President had been shot, that a plane carrying Cabinet members was in danger), but broadcast journalists generally stuck to facts. Rumors were reported only with confirmations or denials from official sources. Newsmen reassured the nation by accurately stressing the continuity of government.

Last March, however, several rumors were aired as "facts." All three networks falsely "confirmed" the death of Press Secretary James Brady. From the hospital, NBC's Chris Wallace reported that Reagan was undergoing "open heart surgery." Back in the studio, his colleague Edwin Newman briefly raised the specter of conspiracy, noting that some of Reagan's entourage had looked away from the gunman just before the shots.

Burned by a hostile Nixon White House, many TV newsmen in 1981 were "frantic with suspicion" of White House and hospital officials. But this only partly explains their willingness to transmit unchecked rumors. Television journalism, says Mayer, has passed into new hands. Most TV newsmen today lack newspaper experience prior to 1964—when the Supreme Court loosened slander laws in *The New York Times* v. *Sullivan* and removed most of the financial risk to news organizations of "getting it wrong." Moreover, a television broadcast lacks the permanence of print. The false report over the air doesn't linger to cause embarrassment; there is less incentive to curb the "scoop mentality."

Mayer suggests that, during a crisis, news teams should cite their sources when relaying any information or interpretations of events. Journalists are not obliged to calm the nation, he concludes. But they do have a duty not to raise false alarms.

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Jesus as Psychologist

"The Galilean Sayings and the Sense of 'I'" by Erik Erikson, in *The Yale Review* (Spring 1981), 1902A Yale Station, New Haven, Conn. 06520.

Jesus' sermons and parables reveal a concern with human psychology —as well as with moral instruction and spiritual transformation. So contends Erikson, a Harvard psychologist.

Jesus delivered most of his sermons in Galilee, a fertile, northern region of Roman Palestine with a mixed Jewish-Gentile population. Wedged between rival empires and ground underfoot by numerous conquerors, the populace had, by Jesus' time, sunk into despondency, rallying only occasionally in response to messianic leaders. Jesus' cures

and miracles raised their hopes of political independence and spiritual rejuvenation.

But, says Erikson, Jesus sought more. He used parables to instill in his listeners an "inner light" that would better enable them to understand their own longings and behavior. Jesus' first known reference to this "light" was in the Sermon on the Mount, when he declared, "Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house" (Matthew 5:15). According to Erikson, Jesus spoke of what psychologists today call a sense of *I*—an awareness of oneself as the center of one's universe that individuals must possess to comprehend their place among their fellows.

Crucial to developing a sense of *I* is a person's childhood relationships with parents. Jesus may have shown an understanding of this when he appealed to God at Gethsemane as "Abba" (an Aramaic term Erikson likens to "Daddy"). Indeed, he emphasized that "whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it" (Mark 10:15).

The "inner light" enables an individual to break down the barriers that separate human beings from God—and from one another. Thus, Erikson believes that the central message of the parable of the Prodigal Son concerns not the steadfast love of the father (God) but the errant son's need to understand himself before he can live with his family. And, Erikson argues, as people feel more comfortable with their inner natures, they are more able to risk behavior that is morally right but that violates social norms or upsets political authority. Thus, by advancing the development of human consciousness, Jesus accelerated the evolution of human conscience as well.

Born-Again Shinto

"Shinto in the History of Japanese Religion" by Kuroda Toshio, in *The Journal of Japanese Studies* (Winter 1981), Thomson Hall, DR-05, University of Washington, Seattle, Wash. 98195.

Shinto has endured as Japan's indigenous religion since prehistory, resisting submergence by such imported faiths as Buddhism and Taoism. At least, that is the view held by most Japanese. Yet Kuroda, professor of humanities at Osaka University, maintains that Shinto did not emerge as a fully independent religion until modern times.

An amalgam of folk beliefs, rituals, and nature worship without a clear doctrinal structure, Shinto is the font of both ancestor and emperor worship in Japan. The word *Shinto* appears in the eighth-century *Nihon Shoki*, the best-known ancient collection of Japanese legends, but it seems to have had several meanings then: "popular beliefs in general"; Taoism (which had been coming in from China for seven centuries); the power of local deities and ancestor spirits, known as *kami*.

Then, in the eighth century, the Empress Shōtoku took up Buddhism, making it the state religion. Modern scholars have argued that objections by the nobility led to heightened *kami* worship, to the organiza-