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Paul E. Pfuetzer to Professor Silver, 3 October 1962

Paul E. Pfuetzer

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VASSAR COLLEGE

POUGHKEEPSIE · NEW YORK

Department of Religion

October 3, 1962

Professor James Silver
History Department
University of Mississippi
Oxford, Mississippi

Dear Professor Silver:

This is to express my personal and professional concern about what has been happening at Ole Miss. It still seems incredible, like an ugly nightmare. But it is all too true. Yet those of us up here who feel this concern need further information and guidance from those of you on the scene as to what we might appropriately and helpfully do to assist folks like you who are taking the pounding .

It is still hard to believe. When I was at Ole Miss four or five years ago, things seemed fairly relaxed; and administration, faculty, and students were moving carefully but confidently toward the day when qualified Negroes would be and could be admitted to the University.

Of course, something of the same things were going on at the University of Georgia where I was then working -- with fellows like Horace Montgomery and Ken Coleman -- in our classes, in organizations like the AAUP, and in personal contacts to prepare the University for the day which would inevitably come. It did come -- and the "wild guys" almost won the day when Holmes and Hunter were admitted at Athens. But the faculty, student organizations, ministers, and noble editors like Ralph McGill acted promptly and wisely, and saved the day!

Now this evil thing at Ole Miss! Some of us have wondered if there isn't something that we can do, even from this distance, to support the hand of those like yourself who are so deeply involved there. As personal friends, as college teachers, and as American citizens we want to help in ways that we can. The political interference in the University affairs, the violations of academic freedom, the physical violence to students and faculty--
and these make us wonder, too, whether the regional and/or national AAUP might not play a useful role in the situation

Are there professional, academic, or civic groups there which we might support, with moral and financial aid? Are there group or professional pressures which we might exert from this distance? If you have any wisdom or judgment on these questions, from where you are, please let us know. Some of my colleagues here, like Charles Griffin and Carl Degler, in History, may be writing to you. If you can find the time to reply to these inquiries, one reply would do for all of us here at Vassar.

Meanwhile, courage!! And know that many of us hold you in our thoughts and prayers.

Sincerely,

Paul E. Roberts