

Reading 2C

QUOTATIONS BY PASTOR NIEMOELLER AND JOHN DONNE

Read each question first. Then, read the selection “Quotations by Pastor Niemoeller and John Donne.” Finally, discuss the questions. This much-quoted remark of Pastor Niemoeller’s originally did not include a reference to Catholics, but has been expanded by others because of its universal applicability.

Questions

1. What does Pastor Niemoeller imply about speaking up for the rights of others?
2. What does John Donne mean by “no man is an island”?

Pastor Niemoeller (who was imprisoned for opposing Nazi attacks upon the Christian religion):

“In Germany, the Nazis first came for the Communists and I did not speak up because I was not a communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak up because I was not a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists and I didn’t speak up because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics and I was a Protestant so I did not speak up. Then they came for me . . . by that time there was no one to speak up for anyone.”

John Donne (the 16th century English poet and preacher):

“No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were . . . Any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never seek to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.”