The Cresset

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Reflections on Explorer

Some of our best friends have been chiding us about our apparent failure to get sufficiently exercised over the dawning of the space age. We have been told that we are smug and complacent. We have been advised that this is the time for all good men to display an attitude of healthy panic. This is it, these friends of ours tell us, and we had better work up a bit of steam if we don't want historians two hundred years from now talking about us the way they talk about the meat-heads who thought that Columbus was just a kind of show-off.

What these friendly critics forget is that the ultimate tribute is the tribute of silence. It is not the happy husband but the jaded playboy who speaks easily and knowingly about the mystery of sex. It is not the expert on Bach but the shallow dilettante who thinks he has the Mass in B Minor all figured out. We have seen some of the comments that parsons have rushed into print under the guise of theological illumination of the satellite achievements and, in our humble opinion, most of these comments have accomplished nothing but to display the naivete of the commentators.

We recognize the accomplishments of Russian and American scientists as magnificent achievements of the human intelligence. We recognize these accomplishments as portents of a new age. Among the many deficiencies in our own background is an almost total ignorance of astronautics and all of its related fields. We are not proud of this deficiency, but there it is. And taken along with a complete lack of prophetic insight it leaves us singularly unqualified to offer any intelligent comments on the shape of things to come.

We do think we are qualified, though, to repeat certain things which the wisest men of every age have said about certain problems which have remained constant through all of the permutations of man's long and tortured history. Some of these men wrote by inspiration and thus had access to insights which even the wisest among us could not pretend to enjoy. And these are the things that we have been trying to emphasize. If they sound trite, that is not our fault.

Chief among these things which we have repeated is the directive which will be as applicable to Buck Rogers, five centuries hence, as it is to any one of us living today: to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before God. We think that these are absolute commands, not to be tempered to the winds of any particular time or place. And we have warned that it is sin, on the one hand, to permit another nation’s superiority in weapons to paralyze our will to do justice, just as it is sin, on the other hand, to allow our own superiority in weapons to make us deaf to pleas for mercy.

We have tried to remind ourselves and others that, in a time of crisis, one must answer the question of his own responsibility by “considering his station according to the Ten Commandments” (Luther). If we had the talents and the training of Dr. Teller, Dr. Oppenheimer, or Mr. von Braun, we would have to give serious thought to making a direct contribution to the exciting work which is being done in missiles, satellites, and rockets. Lacking their training and talents, the best we can do is stay out of their way and serve God and man with the talents that we have. No one would suggest that so obviously gifted a man as Mr. Leonard Bernstein should leave music to work on rockets or to pontificate on their probable significance. The millions of us who are less talented than Mr. Bernstein will be well advised to stick to our lasts and not become busybodies in other men’s affairs.

Finally, we have tried to remind ourselves and others that even the most world-shaking event falls into humbler perspective when it is viewed under the aspect of eternity. Augustine was neither smug nor complacent when he spent his time writing The City of God while the barbarian raged at his gate. Had
he been responsible for the military defense of the empire he would probably have had no business writing a book, even so great a religious classic as the Civitas Dei. But the point is that he was not responsible for the military defense of the empire, possibly because God had more important work for him to do. And in our age, too, there are more important things than the defense of the nation or of Western civilization or even of organized Christianity. Under the aspect of eternity what is most needful today, as always, is the Christian ministry of reconciliation, the snatching of souls, one by one, as brands from the burning.

So congratulations to everyone who had a part in launching Sputniks I and II and Explorer I. And now, if you will excuse us, we must get back to our work.

Horrible Examples

One of the reasons why we are so hesitant to sound off on matters that lie so far outside our limited area of competence is that for the past decade we have been called upon to deal, in a professional way, with a stream of books and articles on the general topic of "Religion and Science," particularly biological and geological science. If any man has a hankering for the dangerous life, let him try to walk a straight path through the no-man's land that divides the dogmaticians on both sides of that argument.

On the one side are the dogmaticians of science to whom God is a myth and even Urey is nothing more than a good guy who went wrong on metaphysics. ("Metaphysics" is the scientific dogmatician's swearword for any concern with the reality of things.) As far as these people are concerned research is a big game. Since truth is unknowable, the game is pointless and purposeless except as a distraction and it is perhaps because they don't want their pleasant game transformed into meaningful work that they reject, with such bitterness, the assertions and demands of religion. Or perhaps the reason is even simpler. Perhaps it is because they really don't know what religion is all about.

On the other side are the dogmaticians (in the non-technical sense) of religion, to whom Science is a person, like the Devil, and all scientists actual or potential Mephistopheles. These people swear by a Book which they have memorized but never read. Proclaiming it the revealed Word of the Eternal Wisdom, they claim to have plumbed its depths by exploring its surface and they resist every attempt to illuminate the meaning of the words in which the Word has concealed Himself. Their science, commonly, is derived from college textbooks written by glib teachers for undergraduates, and their assaults upon science, too often, involve the setting-up of straw men whom they then gleefully proceed to tear apart. Most of all, their arguments are often directed against statements torn from their context or twisted to give a false impression of the author's position.

We are not trying merely to vent our spleen on a lot of atrocious reading that we have had to do in years past. This is our own problem and we have dealt with it by refusing to subject ourself to any more of the stuff. But we are concerned when such stuff is given wide-spread circulation among those who lack the background to judge its merits. At the present time, it seems to us, the honest scientist must say that there are certain religious difficulties raised by the problems of his field which he lacks the competence to resolve satisfactorily and the honest theologian must say that there are certain difficulties raised by science which have not yet been satisfactorily resolved. The man who is neither a professional scientist nor a professional theologian is not likely to be offended either in his faith or in his intelligence by an admission of unsolved problems. But casual and even dishonest handling of important problems is a crime against reason and a sin against God.

An Interesting Proposal

Whenever we run low on Letters to the Editor, the easiest way to replenish our supply is to something good about the Pope, something critical about the President, or anything at all about Walter Reuther. We know a number of people who think that Mr. Reuther ought to be president of the United States. We know a vastly greater number who think that Mr. Reuther ought to be shot. Our own position is somewhere between these extremes. We think that Mr. Reuther is an exceptionally intelligent and courageous man, scrupulously honest but a bit arrogant in his assumption that those who disagree with him must be stupid or selfish or both.

Recently Mr. Reuther has put forward a proposal for a labor-management-consumer profit-sharing plan which, whatever its merits, is not likely to get much of a hearing just because it was Mr. Reuther who suggested it. The basic idea behind the plan is that production cut-backs in the automobile industry and in other industries are the result, among other things, of a growing spread between productive power and a declining purchasing power. To alleviate this condition he proposes a profit-sharing plan under the terms of which all company profits, before taxes, in excess of ten per cent of invested capital would be divided up so as to give one-fourth to non-executive employees and another fourth, in the form of rebates on purchase price, to automobile buyers. As might be expected, leaders of the automobile industry have denounced the Reuther proposal as unrealistic, opportunistic, and socialistic. And for all we know they may be. It is a tricky thing indeed, trying to determine what corporate profits actually are.
It is even harder, since it involves a moral judgment to determine what a fair profit is. We doubt that it would be wise to refer either the moral question or the question of fact to either Mr. Reuther or Mr. Curtice for decision.

But it would be interesting and possible even enlightening to know what the actual profits of the automobile industries are, making all due allowances for profits that might be reasonably re-invested for planned improvement and expansion and for a fair return to their stockholders. This would not, in itself, answer the question of what is a fair return but that is a question that could be referred to good and reasonable men who are well acquainted with the overall investment picture and should be able to say whether the automobile industry's profits are in line with other corporate profits.

Mr. Reuther has suggested that some sort of investigating committee along these lines be set up and it is hard to see what honest objection there could be to such a proposal. Both labor and capital are responsible to the society which makes possible their rewards and either one should be happy to give an accounting of its stewardship. We do not overlook the fact that Mr. Reuther speaks for a special interest and that the chief interest of his constituency is to derive the greatest possible profit from the surplus productivity of our economy. This happens also to be the chief interest of management and of the consumer. If we could start from some substantial facts, rather than a lot of emotional name-calling, we would have reasonable grounds for judging Mr. Reuther's interesting proposal.

Egypto-Syrian Union

One of the unhappiest conclusions that we have drawn from reading history is the conclusion that so often it takes a great evil to produce a great good. In our own national history it took a tragic civil war to settle the question of whether we were a nation or a federation of nations. In more recent history, it took a fearful social revolution to accomplish what intelligent Czarist Russian leadership might have accomplished in the way of building up the industrial and military strength of the present Soviet Union. And now it would appear that once again a good thing has happened for the wrong reason.

Those of us who heard former President Truman on a recent “See It Now” film with Ed Murrow were impressed by Mr. Truman's appraisal of the potentials of the eastern Mediterranean region. Those of us who have been there know it as a pitifully poor corner of the world, in places overcrowded almost beyond belief, in other places bare and unoccupied. And everywhere there is poverty — not merely hard times but grinding poverty. And most pathetically of all, no one has seemed to care. The poor have no time to care, the rich are inured to the situation, and political leaders who might have performed the office of physician to their sick countries have chosen instead the role of the vulture.

And yet, as Mr. Truman pointed out, these lands need not be poor. True enough, many of them are drylands and most of them have lost much of their original wealth in soils and minerals by long and rapacious exploitation. But even allowing for all of that there is much wealth still to be developed. But the development must be on a regional scale in this part of the world because the nations individually are too limited in size and in resources to go it on their own.

Egypt and Syria have now taken just the sort of step that an unprejudiced advisor would have suggested. It seems very likely that they did so for the wrong reason, probably out of hatred for Israel with perhaps a few pan-Arab delusions of grandeur floating around in the background. But the union of these two rather dissimilar countries is, in itself, a step in the right direction. To Egypt it could mean an outlet for her landless millions. To the Syrians it could mean an opportunity to throw off the political and economic lethargy of the past three decades and get about the business of developing her potential wealth.

Unfortunately the event itself is overshadowed by suspicions of the motives which prompted the union. Many Arab nations, with good reason, mistrust the ambitions of President Nasser, and nations outside the Arab world doubt Nasser’s ability to play footsie with the Soviet Union without ending up as a lackey for the Kremlin. To what extent Col. Nasser’s acceptance of aid from the Soviet Union may be the result of Western sympathy with Israel is hard to say. But his growing importance in the Middle East suggests that we shall be forced, before long, to lick him or to join him. In either case, our relations with Israel will need to be re-examined.

Read!

If everything goes as expected the Congress will, by the time these remarks appear in print, have set aside the week of March 16 to 22 as the first National Library Week. It might be noted in passing that the initiative for this action was not taken by some Congressman with a passion for libraries but by the American Library Association and the National Book Committee. The interest of these two groups in this matter can be deduced from the statement of purpose of National Library Week which is to encourage the people of the United States to do more reading.

There is no Heavily-Subsidized-Magazine-of-Opinion Week so we hope that the ALA and the NBC will not mind if we hitch onto their week. We share with them a desire to encourage the people of the United States to do more reading. We suspect that we share with them also a hope that this additional reading will be
reflected in the annual profit-and-loss statements of those of us who merchandise words. After all, poverty may sometimes be a moral necessity but it is not, in itself, a virtue.

Having hitched onto the week, we would like to contribute something to its success. But since we have neither silver nor gold we can offer only that which we have, advice. And that advice is just this: If you want people to read, give them something to read.

Reading, like church attendance and many other good things, is the product of disposition and habit. People never read or go to church or brush their teeth because someone said they ought to. They do these things because, at the outset, somebody said they had to and in process of time they found that they wanted to do them. Reading is not the sort of thing that a parent can be forced to make his child do but it is the sort of thing that many of us can help the child to want to do once he has been forced to get down to it. And we can make him want to read by giving him something to excite his imagination and to take him out of the confined world of childhood in which he is so unwillingly imprisoned.

Nothing has done more to kill reading than the assumption that the child wants to read about other children unless it be the equally asinine idea that the child wants to read for edification. Children are savages and the process of civilizing them ought to be gone at slowly and carefully so that they do not react against the process by attaching themselves even more firmly to the works and ways of their savage natures. Narcotics addicts are permitted to taper off on a withdrawal diet and the human savage ought to be allowed to taper off, as it were, on a withdrawal diet of bloodshed and violence. Throwing a child into the aseptic company of Dick, Sally, and Jane at too early an age is a shock to the emotional system comparable to throwing a narcotics addict into a clean cell with nothing but milk on the table. In the long run milk will be better for him than heroin, but not just now.

We are not, here, making out a case for a children's version of Mickey Spillane or Grace Metalios. For one thing, they are not needed. There is already a sufficient store of good spine-tingling stuff in the old legends and fairy tales if somebody will only expurgate the sermons that have been sneaked into them and restore the gory details that gave them their immortality. Bring back the gnomes and witches and dwarfs, the black-helmeted evil knights and the sinister Oriental.

Make reading a delicious risk of life and sanity by feeding the youngsters books to be read between the covers on a cold night with the wind whistling at the windows and watch the book sales go up.

And don't be too surprised if the upturn in book sales should be reflected in a downturn in the kind of crazy, brutal juvenile crime which might be expected of a generation which has never learned to commit homicide by proxy.

How About That?

The following theatre review appeared in the January 16 issue of The New York Times and was written by Mr. Brooks Atkinson:

"Things have changed a little since the fifteenth century, Walter Sorell has brought an old morality play up to date. He calls his version 'Everyman Today,' and it was played yesterday afternoon in the James Memorial Chapel, Claremont Avenue at 121st Street.

"Even in modern terms this classic about Man and Death is a sobering speculation on the grim ordeal of Judgment Day. Mr. Sorell . . . has written his 1958 model with the admirable bluntness that characterizes the original English version, also with reverence, humanity, and a little humor.

"Modern religious plays are susceptible to the weakness of argument and abstractions . . . Mr. Sorell's drama is not altogether free of moral discussions about 'power' and 'science,' which are not so simple and personal as 'gluttony' and 'greed' — the sins of the original version. There is a tendency to veer away from vices that are human and earthy.

"But nothing said here should suggest that 'Everyman Today' is not a moving morality drama written by a man of taste, principle, and theatre knowledge. There is nothing in either church or theatre much more terrifying and chastening than the ominous cries of 'Everyman, Everyman, Everyman' that seem to come from the portals of Purgatory.

". . . Mr. Sorell's drama has literary and dramatic qualities worthy of its ageless theme. Here, by the grace of God, go the lot of us."

Mr. Atkinson notes in his review that "Everyman Today" was produced as an experiment in religious drama by Union Theological Seminary. Not mentioned in Mr. Atkinson's review was the fact that "Everyman Today" was originally published as the feature article in the April, 1955, issue of The Cresset.
"It Takes A Heap of Livin'"

By Alfred R. Looman

I don't, as a rule, go around quoting Edgar A. Guest, but his line, "It takes a heap of livin' to make a house a home" contains an axiom I would like adopted by the editors of "home" and "home" furnishings magazines. The editors of these publications and of the home furnishings sections of women's magazines must have the impression that young homemakers are as gullible as the readers of movie magazines.

These periodicals normally contain good and practical ideas on cooking, gardening, repair work, and house building, but when it comes to furnishing the house, they are completely unbelievable. If you have paged through any "home" magazines you know what I mean.

In going through one of these magazines, I have come across a photograph of a living room that will serve as an example. The upholstery is taut and smooth and the pillows have no dents. A mosaic coffee table contains a large, empty glass jar, a piece of Inca sculpture, and a clean ash tray. Although the fireplace is set in a white wall the wall shows not one trace of soot. A table lamp, with a high ceramic base, stands on the edge of an end table.

I would be scared to walk into that room, and once there, even if I failed to knock over the lamp or the sculpture, I wouldn't want to stay for there is no place to sit without musing the furniture. A glass wall separates this room from the patio where, significantly, the couple and their two children are peering in at the living room. I share the feeling they must have, that this room would go well in a museum but not in a home.

This issue contains a number of photographs of the ideal living room, but none is an improvement on any of the others in livability. Where, in any of these rooms, are the newspapers and magazines? Don't these people read? Where is the wife's sewing box and the basket of sox ready for darning? Where, since not in the ash trays, do smokers put cigarette ashes? Where are the stray toys, the occasional marble or piece of Tinker Toy? Doesn't anyone ever stretch out on the sofa? These are questions which require answers, and what I would really like to see is what this room looks like after a family has used it. It just may be that our own living rooms are considerably better for living than these perfect ones.

Another of the ideal rooms pictured in this issue is a library. It is done in bright colors and the book covers match the draperies. An attractive, colorful, but uncomfortable looking sectional sofa half circles the room. Beside the book shelves, a coffee table, and a radio, this is the only furniture in the room. The only light comes from a pull-down ceiling fixture over the coffee table. This room is just not conducive to reading. What it needs is a slightly shabby overstuffed chair and a bridge lamp, for who wants to kneel over a coffee table in order to read a book?

One of the kitchens shown has the antiseptic appearance of a hospital operating room. The counters and sink shelves are completely bare. There is no evidence that these homemakers own a coffee pot, a Mixmaster, any condiments, paper towels, or pot holders. If they do they must be almost inaccessible, though I have a theory that after paying for this kitchen they couldn't afford any of these things.

A bedroom on display has a dresser top completely free of keys, change, cuff links, or earrings, and so much closet space that one shelf is empty. You know that the room hasn't been lived in.

I get the impression the editors of "home" magazines have no children for they lack an understanding of what children can do to any room. In one living room scene, they show a little girl playing with blocks and she is occupying just one cushion of the sofa. Not one block is on the floor or on any of the other furniture. And in a photograph of a child's playroom, a curly-haired moppet is on the floor with just one toy, a jack-in-the-box. All the other toys are neatly placed in the shelves and drawers provided for this purpose. I am not an authority on the play habits of little girls, but I do know that if this room were occupied by small boys, it would not be possible to distinguish the pattern of the rug since it would be covered by toys.

I had an insight into how these editors work when a friend of mine had his home photographed by one of the "home" magazines. The editors, decorators, and photographers carted in a lot of stuff to give the rooms the effect they wanted while my friend stood patiently by. It was not until they wanted to substitute a professional model for his wife that he put his foot down.
Mary E. Wilkins Freeman and Ruth Suckow: New England and the Midwest

By Abigail Ann Hamblen

Since the mid-nineteenth century there is no section of the United States, from the “deep South” to the Northwest, which has not had its spokesman in American fiction. Every racial group from the California “migrants” to the Georgia “crackers” has been present in the colorful short stories and novels that have helped Americans to understand the almost astonishing diversity of their country.

Names like Bret Harte, Helen Hunt Jackson, George Washington Cable, Sarah Orne Jewett, come to mind, and many more follow. Most of these writers may not be major ones, but they are of real significance. And once in a while even a “minor” writer can achieve universality. The work of Mary E. Wilkins Freeman and that of Ruth Suckow exemplify the best in so-called “sectional” writing. They are interesting when placed side by side.

Mrs. Freeman (1852-1930) was New England bred in the bone — born, the daughter of a carpenter, in Randolph, Massachusetts, later taken to live in rural Vermont. During her impressionable years she knew no other environment but New England, and no other persons except New Englanders.

Later, after her New England stories had achieved success, after she had moved to New Jersey to live, she became merely another purveyor to the lending library. Her first stories, filled with the atmosphere of her childhood, are short, compressed, of their kind perfect. It is hard to believe that after them she would write such a novel as By the Light of the Soul, which drips with sentimentality. She was of New England, rooted deep, and it was at the peril of her art that she tried to uproot herself. Van Wyck Brooks says, “It was a pity that her later books obscured the stories of her prime. Tragic at first, they became pathetic and often sentimental, because Miss Wilkins had a village mind. As long as she wrote in terms of the village, she possessed the village integrity and all the grand inheritance of the Puritan faith; and this gave her a profundity that made her point of view, at moments, all but universal.”

Mrs. Freeman’s first stories take the reader to the hills and stony pastures, the elm-shaded villages and the old houses of her native region. The atmosphere is authentic, unforgettable. Nothing could be more vivid than the description of the fisherman’s wife’s kitchen-living room:

> The room, though comfortable and clean was poorly equipped, with the exception of various articles that were at direct odds with all else.

There was a cooking stove, on which the chowder was steaming. There was a kitchen table set for a meal with the commonest utensils, save that in the center, ready for the chowder, was a bowl of old Japanese pottery which would have adorned a palace. Martha did not think much of this bowl, which Joe had brought home from one of his voyages. She considered the decorations ugly, and used it to save a lovely one from the ten-cent store, decorated with pink rose-buds. Martha could understand pink rose-buds, but she could not fathom dragons, and ugly, grinning faces of Oriental fancy.

There was a lounge with a hideous cover, two old chairs worn into hollows of comfort, two kitchen chairs, an old clock, and a superb teakwood table. Martha did not care that either. The contortions of the carved wood gave her a vague uneasiness. She kept it covered with an old fringed spread, and used to set her bread on it. On the mantel, besides the clock and three kerosene lamps, was a beautiful old Satsuma vase, and a pressed glass one, which Martha loved. The glass one was cracked, and she told Joe she did not see why the other vase could not have suffered instead. Joe agreed with her.

The native rhododendron bush, heavy with great blooms, lifts itself proudly in the centre of one story. The cinnamon roses lend their fragrance to another. There are great stones jutting out in the very barnyard of one farm home; there are vast heights entirely surrounding another property. The drifting snows, the sullen frosts of New England winters fairly make themselves felt. Reading these stories, we are truly there, in the writer’s native land. We see New England and we savor the bitter-sweetness of its air.

And what Mary Wilkins Freeman does for New England, Ruth Suckow, years later, does for the midwest. Miss Suckow’s gift of description is as fine as Mrs. Freeman’s: “There was something lush and rank about the Mid-western summer — the moisture of the heat, the deep green grass, the loftiness of elm-branches with their dense foliage, the hot nasturtiums along the walk to the barn.”

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1New England: Indian Summer, p. 464
2The Best Stories of Mary E. Wilkins, selected and with an introduction by Henry Wysham Lanier, p. 390.
3The Bonney Family, p. 3
As Mrs. Freeman did, Miss Suckow passed her young, impressionable years among the people of whom she was later to write. The stamp of intimate knowledge is on all her work. She knows the thick-speeched German farmers of Iowa, sons and daughters of immigrants, with guttural-voiced parents hovering in the background. See, for example, the deftness with which, in 
Country People, she describes the courting of two of these awkward young German-Americans at a picnic:

There was an exciting incongruity between their halting self-conscious talk and the warm, thrilling animal intimacy of their hot, moist palms in the long fine grass. The shouting from the races down on the level ground came to them long-drawn-out and dreamily distant. They were aware of the little green things that jumped about in the grass and of the heat of their two hands on the cool earth near the grass roots.4

She knows, too, the faded refinements of the ladies whose roots were in New England, who had been brought as brides to the farmlands and villages of Iowa. She knows the petty mores of the small Iowa town. She makes them all vivid in The Bonney Family, The Odyssey of a Nice Girl, and most successfully and fully in her finest novel, The Folks. The account, in the latter, of the Monday Club meeting is one of the richest examples of her descriptive writing. She is at her best when she shows Annie Ferguson’s anxiety to have everything as “nice” as possible when she entertains the club, when she shows Annie’s shining pleasure in her comfortable home with its cleanliness and order, and her half-fearful devotion to the dependable husband who stands aloof from little feminine desires. Silver spoons, tiny chicken sandwiches, starched doilies and all the other details attendant on the preparation for the “ladies” are made very real. Then there is the description of the meeting itself:

Everything had gone beautifully. Mrs. Bird made such a lovely leader. Her chair near the large front window still had a slightly official look, made gracious by her sweet, elderly presence, in her nice dark gray winter dress, with her silvery-gray crimped hair, her watch chain, her breast pin that was a cluster of dark bright garnets, the rings on her worn, delicate hands. There was a rustle of satin from the chair where Mrs. Hoagland sat, opulent and smiling. Mrs. Stark always had such a fine paper. And she was very pleasant today, although some of the ladies felt a little stand-offish toward her, knowing how — coming from the East — she criticised Belmond.

At roll call they had answered with their favorite quotations:

4Country People, pp. 44-45

Mrs. Stark, everyone had wanted to hear what she would select! It was a long quotation from James Russell Lowell, recited impressively in her precise New England voice. ‘Truth forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne!’ Mrs. Bird always gave something so nice, something that seemed to belong to her. ‘Stay, stay at home, my heart, and rest. Home-keeping hearts are happiest.’ Mrs. Ferguson would have liked to copy that down. She herself had sat trembling, nervous, until Mrs. Viele had reached her name — ‘Anna Ferguson’ — because she had done nothing like this since she had stopped teaching and got married; and then she had repeated, in a faint voice, feeling tears close to her eyes, those lines that she had remembered from her school-days, and that had always seemed to her the prettiest lines in the world — ‘Silently, one by one, in the infinite meadows of heaven, Blossom the lovely stars, the forget-me-nots of the angels.’ A little breath had gone up from all the listening ladies.5

Only very close knowledge could produce writing like this. Down to the last window curtain and front walk and church steeple Miss Suckow understands a small Iowa town. And down to the last fence-post, the last field, the last silo she knows her midwestern country-side.

Both Mrs. Freeman and Miss Suckow are “realists,” perhaps almost unconsciously so. Mrs. Freeman, surveying her New England scene, sees little that is gay; dryly honest, she writes what she sees. Her New England scene, sees little that is gay; dryly honest, she writes what she sees. Here are two old sisters, reduced to one decent gown between them, having to take turns going out to church and sewing circle. Here is grandmother, struggling to keep her small orphaned grandchildren, driven to steal a few cheap toys from the village store for their Christmas. Again and again in her stories we observe bitter poverty, a poverty which makes precious a loaf of bread or a spoonful of honey.

Though poverty in Miss Suckow’s tales is not as prevalent as in Mrs. Freeman’s, nor so acute, it is there, and, as in the earlier writer’s, is often joined to pride. A mother and her daughter sell their jewelry to provide their husband and father with a good tombstone; they keep their old home together by taking in tourists and schoolteachers to room and board. An elderly minister with his sickly wife faces certain destitution when the church committee tells him that in the interests of the whole group he had better resign.

Seemingly so very similar, writing of the country people of their native regions, the small-town life they knew, Mrs. Freeman and Miss Suckow yet exhibit a

5The Folks, pp. 60-61.
decided difference: the type of women about whom they write. Even a very casual survey of their respective writings shows this difference.

We were impressed, always, when reading Mrs. Freeman’s tales, of the strength, the vigor of her Louisas, her Hannahs, her Marias. They are women whom life has used, and used hard; or, oddly enough, they whimper because his few little wants in food must supply grows lower and lower. She can to alleviate their situation, which she knows dwindles down to nothing during the year. The food The potatoes have to be planted again. Louisa’s money her mother daily reminds her.

In “Louisa” Mrs. Freeman tells the story of a girl twenty-four years old, the only support of her mother and her ancient, senile grandfather. Since she was sixteen, she has taught the village school, and taught successfully. But one of the members of the school committee has a daughter who wants the school, and Louisa is deprived of her job. Their tiny farm is miserably poor. Alone, the girl plants the potatoes, only to have her old grandfather dig half of them up, in the gleeful conviction that he has found food. The potatoes have to be planted again. Louisa’s money dwindles down to nothing during the year. The food supply grows lower and lower. Once Louisa even hires out to rake hay for a neighbor. The old man whimpers because his few little wants in food must be denied; the mother alternately sobs and scolds. Louisa simply goes ahead, calm and quiet, doing all she can to alleviate their situation, which she knows is desperate.

There is a solution to her problem — one of which her mother daily reminds her. Young Jonathan Nye, owner of a prosperous farm, has taken a fancy to Louisa, and comes to call. If the girl would just encourage him a little, be nice to him . . . ! It would be a comfortable marriage, and one which would solve all their troubles. Louisa simply tells her mother that while she has nothing against the boy, she does not want him as a husband. He finally ceases calling.

And then, on a very hot day, when the only food available is green stuff from the garden which her mother’s weak stomach can no longer endure, Louisa takes a difficult step. Seven miles she walks through the burning heat, seven miles to the home of a crusty old relative who bears her dead father a grudge. Coming before him as he sits smoking his noontime pipe, she asks simply for help. He growls that her father cheated him years ago, and he can spare her no money. And, simply still, Louisa, standing with dignity, flushed with the terrible heat, says they need food. At this the old fellow lays out several things, and says she may have them. When she says she is not able to carry them all, he replies gruffly to leave what she can’t take, and goes off to his barn.

Seven miles through the burning sunshine of a midsummer afternoon Louisa carries, by stages, a ham, a basket of eggs, a sack of flour, and a sack of meal. Back and forth she goes, and she gets it all home. Her mother scolds her, but tenderly, and then tells her the school is to be hers again the next fall. The girl who has it is giving it up to begin preparations for marriage, it is thought, to Jonathan Nye. Louisa has not sold out, and life has come full circle.

Then there is the story of Inez Morse (“A Taste of Honey”). Inez’ father has worked hard all his life trying to pay off the mortgage on his little farm, and when he dies he still owes several hundred dollars. As he lies dying, Inez promises him that the mortgage shall be paid. He goes out of life in peace, and she takes up the struggle to get the property clear. She and her mother have just the barest necessities, with no “extras” at all. For instance, they keep bees, but there is never a bit of honey on their table. All must be sold to help wear away that terrible debt. Just once does Inez give way to a whim: she buys herself a bow of scarlet ribbon to wear at her throat. It is the only silly feminine thing she ever does, and it somehow points up the extent of her self-denial.

A young man comes courting. He wants to marry her, and Inez likes him. But the adamant mortgage is there; it is always there, and with it her solemn, loving promise. She asks her lover for three years during which she can erase the debt. And she does erase it; but the day she goes to tell her triumph to the man, she learns he has chosen another to be his bride. The three-years’ wait was too much to ask of him. Inez has kept her integrity at the price of her happiness.

In still another story (“Calla-Lillies and Hannah”) Hannah Redman bears the burden of her lover’s guilt. Money is taken from a table in the room where she is sewing “by the day.” Everyone assumes she has stolen it. In reality, her young man, who has come in to speak with her before going on a trip, has taken the money, for it is a sum owed him by its owner, his uncle. Hannah does not know the young man is only picking up what is rightfully his, but when it is missed, she makes no mention of his having been in the room. Branded as a thief, she can get no more work to do, nor can she rent out any of the rooms of her old home. She cannot even sell her father’s gold watch chain: the jeweler is afraid it might be a stolen article! She is ejected from church membership.

Alone, unfriended, she sees want creeping nearer...
and nearer. A poor old relative is dependent upon her, and this ancient woman adds her whinings and complaints to the girl's suffering. But Hannah's head is never bowed as she goes about the town and attends church. She is not a thief, and she does not intend to act as if she were; nor does she ask for pity. The strength of love and loyalty is in her, and she does not falter. At last, only when her senile dependent is desperate thing, is never bowed as she goes about the town and attends church.

And on that day her lover returns, hears the whole story, clasps her in his arms. The following Sunday, before the church congregation, he tells the whole story, and proudly announces Hannah as his bride.

These are only a few examples of the strong women who inhabit Mrs. Freeman's world. Any serious reader of her stories cannot fail to be impressed by the fortitude of her heroines, their singleness of purpose that is almost terrible in its strength, their pride that dares anyone to pity them.

When we study Ruth Suckow's Mid-western women, we find an odd contrast to Mrs. Freeman's New Englanders. The latter are seen fighting circumstances, pitting themselves against the forces of nature or life or their own instincts. The former seem just to accept the world - some easily, others with a sad kind of brooding. They are as sensitive to pain - perhaps more so - but they do nothing actively to combat their circumstances. The case of "Susan and the Doctor" is one in point.

Smart, beautifully groomed, Susan has always been attractive to men, and has had much attention from them in the small town where she lives. Susan is also clever, determined, and efficient.

She had never depended upon her father for a living. She had never depended upon anyone. She had borrowed money and taken a business course and then asked old Henry Houghton for a place in the bank; and it was upon that first meager and grudging admission that she had lived and put money aside and paid for the always fashionable perfection of her tailored clothes and the smartness of her hats.

The doctor, handsome, grave, solitary, attracts her, and she makes a play for him, only to find herself involved in a passionate, unsatisfying "affair," which goes on for years. The doctor cannot marry because he has dependent upon him his old mother, and an ancient, dull-witted aunt. Susan's small, immaculately-kept apartment, her beautiful little dinners, refresh him; her tenderness and yielding love are what he craves and he takes it without a qualm. She gives up her whole life to him.

... to his demands for secrecy and seclusion.
... This was the only way it could be for him - so he thought; and she, Susan, was the only woman in town with courage to take him as he must be taken. The straight and narrow loyalty that made her a standby in the bank held her to him in tense, undeviating devotion.

When his mother dies, however, he cannot bring himself to marry her. Restless, he feels free for the first time in his life. He begins to pay attention to another girl, and finally he breaks off his affair with Susan. Her hopes, her dreams are done. Looking in her mirror, "The brown eyes stared back, with sparkle worn out of them, from a face not altered from its familiar contour but from which the living texture had faded." Her pain is more than she can bear; it is like the pain of losing a living part of one's body; and it is a pain filled with a desperate wonder. Why had this happened to her?

She feels unsettled, thinks of going West, getting something different to do. Her proud spirit asserts itself momentarily. She might find an interest "at the end of a long dim vista of change. She was not finished." And then, with a final surge comes the agonizing admission "But it was finished - her affair with the doctor ... her heart: yes, her life after all ..." Slim and hard and self-reliant, Susan is yet conquered by her own terrible, insistent femininity. She acknowledges to herself that her life is "finished."

In "Mrs. Kemper" Miss Suckow gives the picture of a woman who, outwardly fortunate, blessed with a good home, faithful husband and successful sons, feels within herself a dreary sadness. For she can never really claim her home, her children, her position in the little town, because she knows she has never awakened love in her husband. She has not truly earned the possession of a successful matron because her husband, kind and considerate as he is, has never once said, "I love you." Mrs. Kemper does not fight her situation; indeed, what is there to do? She simply lives on in her quiet, undemanding way, tasting daily the bitter cup of defeat, unsweetened by any personal feelings of pride.

The story "Experience" tells of a young woman whose lover has died, and who is at home with her parents for the summer. Her agony at her loss is almost unbearable. Everything she sees seems to accentuate her grief; she is racked with it. In her unhappiness she pays a call on an old friend, a gentle

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6Children and Older People, p. 20.
8ibid., p. 38
9ibid., p. 40.
maiden lady of whom she has always been very fond. This woman has taken care of a senile father until his death; she is now alone. As Elizabeth sits in the kitchen, watching her deft, neat movements as she bakes a cake, something becomes apparent to her. Miss Gurney has never truly either loved or suffered — and so has no understanding of what life is, and no real depth of feeling. In a panic, Elizabeth clings to her own sorrow, realizing that worse than pain is the numbness that can know no pain.

Generalizations are always inaccurate. It is wrong to say that all of Mrs. Freeman’s women are undefeated. Betsy Dole, in "The Village Poetess," burning her poor doggerel after learning her verses are no good; Candace Whitcomb in "The Village Singer" fighting a bit after being asked to retire from the choir, but then succumbing to a slow fever, giving up, dying — these do not end up triumphant. Yet neither do these stories leave us desolate. There is a sense, in them, of life lived fully and richly within its narrow limits.

Nor are all Miss Suckow’s women overcome by fate. Poor Bert Switzer of "Midwestern Primitive" is a fighter; she is determined to make a "go" of her tea-room in a tiny mid-western country town, but bravely, absurdly modeled on a city establishment. Her labor, her energy, are boundless, like the strength of her will. And she cannot understand why her guests enjoy so much the conversation of her old German mother, who is heavy and homely in her dark calico. The garrulous old woman seems to impress them a great deal more than the dainty table garnished with paper flowers and bright napkins! In “Mrs. Vogel and Ollie” there is Ollie, a splendid, vital character, who lives with her “original” old mother, and keeps her happy. Underneath both these stories we find a sense of sadness, of defeat, such as the accounts of Mrs. Freeman’s struggling women never give us. We feel it, for instance, in this bit from the last-named story:

Ollie began to cry. "This place is so full of memories of Mother! Sometimes I don’t want to stay here at all. Otis Witherspoon told somebody he couldn’t bear this house with the light gone from it. But I did a lot to keep that light shining! Oh, they could all come back, and I’d bake cake and cookies, if they’d just recognize they wouldn’t have had all those good times if there hadn’t been somebody to stand at the stove! Well, I know I’m ordinary. Maybe cooking was my part.”

The difference between Mrs. Freeman and Miss Suckow is well illustrated by a study of their respective manners of writing. Their styles differ as much as their native regions differ. Mrs. Freeman’s attitude toward her characters seems cold and detached. Her sentences are barbarously plain; they are laconic, in the New England way.

Miss Suckow, on the other hand, while also detached and objective, somehow breathes a warmth through her lines that goes from them to the reader. At times her long sentences have almost a lushness, like the sunny verdure of an Iowa summer. Her tone is gentler than Mrs. Freeman’s, softer, but in its own way as poignant. Some of her stories, such as that of Susan, are filled with such suffering that we cannot read them without pain.

Geography may tell something. The fir-crowded hills, the ragged, fierce edges of rock, the reluctant springs and triumphant winters of New England would, in time, produce artists whose chief quality is an unself-conscious economy of word and line. Life after life, generation after generation pitted against the blind brutality of stony land and lashing gales would cause emotion not to die, but to become dry and compressed and withheld, giving forth a fragrance faintly bitter like the withered rose-leaves of the old compotes. It does not suffuse us, this scent, but it is never forgotten, either.

Miss Suckow’s country is wide and green and fertile, warmed by a generous sun, watered by small and winding rivers. Life is not easy, but it is rewarding here; give hard work to the land, and it yields eagerly. The sweep of fields and skies and rolling hills is friendly and expansive. And those who live here, after a while, find bounty entering into them: laughter and tears come easily; exuberance is common.

Here it is of interest to contrast two descriptions of women. Mrs. Freeman’s Sarah Penn in “The Revolt of Mother” is seen thus:

She was a small woman, short and straight-waisted like a child in her brown cotton gown. Her forehead was mild and benevolent, such as the accounts of Mrs. Freeman’s struggling women never give us. We feel it, for instance, in this bit from the last-named story:

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Miss Suckow shows Alma’s mother in “An Elegy for Alma’s Aunt Amy.”

That atmosphere of a Middle-Western lady, ample and unassuming and comfortable, emanated from the thin figured voiles she wore in the spring, and from the worn smoothness of her wedding ring. Her figure was slightly massive, and a younger person looking at her felt an instant sense of protection and ease.12

10 Some Others and Myself, p. 64
11 Century Readings in American Literature, edited by Fred Lewis Pattee, p. 823.
12 Some Others and Myself, pp. 10-11.
We cannot place one above the other. To understand the wide pageantry of American life, we need to see both the fighting Sarahs and the mothers "ample and unassuming and comfortable." We need to see them in relation to each other fully to appreciate just what life does to women. Mrs. Freeman and Miss Suckow, each in her own way, have shown us. They have done other things with their art, but nothing more valuable than this.

**VERSE**

**SPRING MORNING**

Sun lying on lawn.
And fruit tree blossoms.
Sun making bright patchwork
Through a window pane.

Air tugging at the leafy ears
Of trees.
Air dancing with the flowers
And the grass.

Birds,
Myriad birds,
Winds stir,
And the warm deluge of spring.

SAMUEL M. SARGENT

**DEATH IN THE AFTERNOON**

Death should come in that wan grey hour
When night is giving way to dawn
Or sunset's chrysoberyl flower
Slowly dying on evening's lawn.

But during burnished afternoon,
While glory is diffused through space
And life dipped up with a golden spoon,
It seems a scorpion on lace.

Death's sombre ministries belong
In realms where living limps or nods,
And weather is estranged from song
And destitute of dreams and gods.

LORI PETRI

**WE WRITE IN SAND**

we write in sand
what mind will say
living swirls of signs before us
leaning on demarcations
of uncharted lands.

we write in sand
what the heart decries
learning the language of emotions
leading embarcations
to uncluttered lands of light.

we write in sand
with stick years
wedging words between time
and stillness, and marking out
the tired ache of cold mortality.

HARLAND RISTAU

**SONG IN SCARCITY**

Text: "He Cares for You"

I could not call you frugal, winter sun,
Nor wan, nor thin, nor anything that would
detract from glory or demean, to me,
The blessed splendor your antiquity
does lend, as grace, to stubble, stone, and reaching
Humble hungriness of branches bare and bleaching.

I do not call you meager, winter sun,
To cheat myself, and you, of all the wondrous
Filtered recompense you give.
Of the blighted things that live
On the winter face of earth, none is drying with
notice;
And we clasp a certain pledge, winter sun,
That the Maker who has flung you
As custodian of heaven
Keeps with you the watching of the earth,
For the meanest have His promise, every one,
As the grasses keep the gold of winter sun.

BILLIE M. ANDERSON
In the political sense, power implies the lawmakership authority and the international assertiveness of a state. It has given neutral service to the good and bad in man and human will. Some think power always corrupts. Others believe that the great quest to harmonize force and morality is advancing toward fulfillment. Such divergent analysis leads back to the problem, and interpretation, of man’s natural endowments. Is he burdened with original sin and eternal worldly frustration? Or can he perfect himself and his society? The Lutheran accepts the consequences of natural sin and usually identifies the perfectable optimist as a humanist.

Until the 18th century, the Christian church imposed the major ethical restraint on the secular ego of western man. Since then it has been separated from decisions of state as even the “moral” governments responded more and more to the humanitarian ideal rather than the Christian conscience. Religious freedom seemingly led to Christian neutrality in the realm of politics. Most historians applaud this development. Some of the more spiritual-minded hope that a consolidating global society can find new bonds of brotherhood in a more universal humanistic, or deistic, experience. Only the few lament the Christian elimination and reckon it as a cause of the western collapse. One of these latter men is Gerhard Ritter, outstanding Reformation scholar and Germany’s foremost political historian.

Ritter confesses to a Lutheran perspective to history. The world is evil and sinful man’s efforts at correction are doomed to repeated failure. His moral quality rests in the effort, not the result. And the basic life assignment is salvation of the soul, in good or bad worldly circumstance.

Ritter discerns a struggle on the European stage between God and the devil. Since the Middle Ages, secular ego and nationalistic passion have gradually neutralized Christian constraint. Men and states heeded boundless worldly vanity, fetish and anger. Now, in this 20th century of total war, the frustration of self-centered man is starkly evident. Witness to his own barbarism and frightened by uncontrollable technology, the godless European has lost his self-assurance. And, says Ritter, his life nerve will not be restored unless he revitalizes his Christian faith and action. For not only does he confront communist brutalization, but culture itself must stagnate where man “no longer feels himself bound to an eternal world but moves only in the immanent and in the momentary.” This spiritual analysis tacitly includes America for we, too, share the European experience and destiny.

The problem of ethical power begins with Christianity. The Greeks and Romans were oblivious to religious conscience and they exercised either secular wisdom or levity with amoral naivete. In the words of Thucydides: “The strong do what they can, the weak suffer what they must.” This reflected the unity, or spontaneity, of classical thought and deed. Such naturalism lost its dignity in the massive misery of the Alexandrian and Roman empires and was eventually discredited by Christian ethics. The ever multiplying Roman Christians began to examine their state with an earnest conscience. And their transcendental interests increased as the empire world disintegrated. Unassailable spiritual strength in this world, and redemption in the next, became of primary importance.

It was in such historical context that Augustine compared the worldly state with sinful man and subordinated both to the city of God. But he urged maximal Christian enlivenment and influence in this be-deviled world. For it now seemed clear that Christ would not yet descend and the Christians would have to purify their earthly habitat as best they could. Such was Augustine’s dualistic concept of Christian effort in an evil world and his pessimistic idealism oriented the Medieval outlook. The problem of ethical power was engaged, formulated and thereafter given spotlight attention in the life and thought of western man.

The Medieval church and state were in balance. Christian regulation and remorse usually managed to check the secular interest. The Medieval European did not live like a saint. He too coveted, killed, and suppressed. But he was ever conscious of sin and damnation. Many a strong-willed noble wound up his life on a pilgrimage, or a crusade, or he gave land to the church. Parsifal typified the militant knight who found nobler Christian remorse, humility, and insight. In the symbolism of Huizinga: “However tall and threatening the houses of noblemen or merchants might be, in the aspect of the town the lofty mass of the churches always remained dominant.” The Medieval ideal was spiritual, even in the world of material interest and despite the irreverent exception. The fabled two swords of Christ, church and state, were understood as partners in holy authority. And until about 1300 it was generally accepted that the papal
sword instrumented the higher will, and reward, of Christ.

This equilibrium between church and state was then destroyed by the dominating ego of the national kingdoms. France and England shook free of Roman tutelage to keynote the advent of European secularism. Grass-root heresies, merchant indifference, and dynastic pride together reduced papal leadership to figurehead status. Church corruption and discord further propelled the decline. Christian counsel was removed from decisive policy deliberations and the secular monopoly began. The national kingdoms led the break from the church but the new realism blossomed most rapidly in Renaissance Italy. It was in this small-state labyrinth that Machiavelli examined and codified the new laws of Realpolitik. He idealized the robust amoral efficiency of the Romans. His prince was enjoined to govern through fear, not love. Unwilling to accept any ethical regulation by the church, he tolerated Christianity as a convenient opium of the masses. His principles have since been much maligned and generally practiced.

Renaissance cynicism was seriously checked by the Reformation as men were turned back to faith and church loyalty. Once again the European rulers mixed religion and politics, but now inspired more by confessional conviction than by Christian humility. Germany's Lutheran princes assumed control of their new churches and professed the role of the Christian patriarch. Ritter accepts their sincerity and describes their principalities as "Christian police states." The Catholic despotisms in France, Spain, and Austria fused church and state interests into their respective dynastic policies. Dutch and English Calvinists fought for religious and political freedom and their political psychology acquired an indelible glow of righteousness. Regardless of confessional variation and fixation, however, European politics once again were conditioned by church interests and Christian thinking. But this recovery was short-lived.

The religious war in France ended when Henry VI secured his bid for the crown by changing from Protestantism to Catholicism. A few decades later Cardinal Richelieu helped northern Germany and Sweden ward off a Catholic triumph in the Thirty Years War. Dynastic interests again prevailed over church desiderata and secular politics renewed its monopoly. Europe's Christian family of nations was transformed into a more mechanistic concert, or balance, of power. This change of heart was further sustained by the rationalism of the late 17th century and given humanitarian purpose by the 18th century enlightenment. The egocentric, virtuous man of the Enlightenment confidently contained war and perfected society in his elevating march to happiness. But a reaction was not far distant which would replace both reason and Christianity with the new religion of nationalism.

The French Revolution superimposed its own creed of political passion on all past traditions. According to Ritter, the deification of patriotism and national ego has been its paramount contribution to western man. The nationalistic fetish has fired Europe's spiritual and political energies ever since. States and peoples canonized their law, interest, and assertiveness; they admitted responsibility to no other force. Both Christian and humanitarian restraints were swept aside by the emotional and technological dynamics which have followed. The stage was set for tyrants who would brandish limitless sovereignty in the name of the people; the excesses of Robespierre and Napoleon forecast the criminal demagogues of the future.

The French legions transmitted their new religion throughout Europe with demonic fervor and elements of it took root everywhere. Liberal improvements were general and the right to representative government was seeded, if not immediately fulfilled. But the deeper incubation spawned an exhilarating nationalistic pride which would possess human freedom and eventually drive competitive Europe into crazed self-destruction.

The fated climax broke in the 20th century. Egotistic national sensitivity colored natural rivalry and disagreement into ideological paroxysm. The vast hurt and hate of World War I was sealed by a peace treaty which justified punitive opportunism with moralistic condemnation. Inability to arrange a settlement at Versailles in part triggered the mad response of National Socialism. The godless European psychology was beyond moderation and reconciliation. Remaining proprieties then were angrily swept away by World War II and the very bone and spirit of European civilization perilously damaged.

Some 75 years ago Nietzsche mockingly informed his readers that "God is dead." This pastor's son offended righteous ears but his critical finger jabbed the very cancer lump itself. Now the devil stands in the doorway and western society cannot regenerate itself unless it give heartfelt denial to the Nietzsche taunt. European recovery depends on a revitalized sense of Christian humility, charity, and brotherliness in classroom, shop, and hall of state. Says Ritter: "Today it is no longer a mere question of the western culture. Today it is a question of our very spiritual existence ... On which the successful construction of human society is founded. The very basic question of our time concerns the reality of God ... That which has collapsed in these last years, finally and irrevocably, is the attempt of the European man to build and sustain a realm of humanity, of political order, of national cultures, of international community without a genuine faith in God."
While my own play “Everyman Today” was being performed — a play which recognizes the moral urgency of every man to plead with every man, which realizes that man’s responsibility has grown beyond his own threshold, that his guilt is no longer a merely personal but a collective guilt, — I had occasion to see two plays which express the spirit of our cataclysmic time, the dread of man’s future in the light of his past. They are both “Everyman” plays, only with negative signs or connotations.

Neither Eugene Ionesco’s “The Chairs” nor Samuel Beckett’s “Endgame” believe in man and his Creator any longer. They laugh at man’s hopes and endeavors to save his soul and to live his life in more than only one dimension. “The Chairs” is a lesson more lightly conceived and friendly in tone. “Endgame” is fierce and triumphant in its finality.

Ionesco’s message is presented with great theatrical skill. It is, in fact, a brilliant hocus-pocus on the meaninglessness of meaning, on the farce of seriousness, on the comedy of where the sources of the tragic lie.” I am not sure that — as the program note says — this play tries to discover true theatre, though I am inclined to think that it pushes “farce, burlesque and parody to the bitter end.”

The bitter end is the realization that our life consists more or less of illusions and that all that is left is a jumble of jumbo-sized or dwarfed memories. An old man and an old woman reminisce about life. He sees in her his wife and mother, she in him the hero of her life who has a serious message to deliver to mankind, and she has invited an orator to verbalize it for him. Out of the wings enter imaginary people, old friends of theirs and strangers, too, and from all corners and all doors they drag in the chairs to make them sit and wait for the orator. I have never seen a stage more crowded with no people, but this, too, seems to be meant symbolically. Our lives are crowded with people of no significance, and out of our illusions and delusions emerge the memories of our lost hopes.

When the orator finally appears—he is really somehow alive — his message to mankind is mere gibberish, as was “Everyman’s” long speech in “Waiting for Godot.” It is the same train of thought or no thought in which man indulges to while away his time, or all that can be said about mankind and life makes no sense anyway. The place where all this goes on is surrounded by water, and, terrifying symbol again, the room with all the chairs and their invisible visitors is the lighthouse surrounded by the nothingness of life.

The nothingness of life is the great theme of Beckett’s “Endgame.” As in “Waiting for Godot” which, in its bitter satire on the futility of life, looks in comparison with Beckett’s new play like a hopeful tirade, we again encounter symbols or abstractions of man rather than human characters. Again we find the figure of the slave in juxtaposition to a tyrant and two extraneous appearances of man’s memory or conscience in the shape of the tyrant’s father and mother who exist in two asheans.

Life is conceived in the most macabre mood imaginable. As in the lighthouse of “The Chairs” the slave looks out of the window and all he sees is “Zero, zero and zero.” Life is the image of lovelessness, ruthlessness, and labor of Sisyphus dimensions. No, I forgot to say that Beckett adds boredom, pain of mere existence for which there is no longer any pain-killer and simply nothingness to paint his perfect picture of the world.

No doubt, Beckett is a poet of the theatre, and so is Ionesco. They may write in such cynic elusiveness because they feel mankind faces a blank wall behind which may wait death and destruction or the solution to man’s coexistence. And, based on the experience of history, they give up hoping. Or they only try to find the best dramatic expression of this age of anxiety. Or, simply, they are philosophers of nihilism and laugh at the expense of those who still go to the theatre to be entertained, to be enlightened, to forget the burden of their day’s drudgeries in the magic of make-believe. Beckett’s and Ionesco’s laughter seems to tell every man he no longer needs to be afraid of hell. He is already right in it.
From the Chapel

Cherished Communion

By Oliver E. Graebner
Professor of Psychology, Valparaiso University

The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.
A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit.

Proverbs 15: 2, 4.

It has been said that animals gather for familiar smells; humans gather for conversation. There is little doubt that among college personnel, instructors and students, getting together for mutual talking in the formal class-room setting, as well as the informal speaking over the coffee cup or just sitting in relaxed posture while words flow back and forth in endless procession — this activity is indigenous to the college campus in a peculiar sense. We all spend a great deal of time just talking with one another. But the peculiar phenomenon of college is the talk-fest, commonly called the bull-session.

Shall we this morning talk about the Bull-session and see how it measures up to the announced topic for today, "cherished communions".

What is the bull-session for? Why do they occur? As we all know, they just seem to happen without plan; men, women, happen to gather at a given spot: in the coffee shop, beside the coke machine, in a lounge, in a dorm room, in the prof's office and we begin to speak about some — someone makes an observation — 'I think Dr. Simon became unconscious in that balloon and didn't realize half of what was going on' — or, 'are you a pragmatist?' — or 'what do you think about Prof X?' — or 'I tell you, college students can't spell,' and on and on they go. What is the purpose of the bull-session? Is it the place for information? Is it the place for impression? Is it the place to parade brains and impress the unworthy listeners? Is it the time for fighting with words, a matching of wits? Is it practice in hard thinking? Is it the place to air pet peeves, to let off steam, to strengthen prejudices? Is it the place for the loudest ass in the barnyard to hear himself bray? Is it the place where the highest and lowest moments in intellectual and emotional and spiritual life find expression?

You will probably agree that no topic is too sublime or ridiculous for a bull-session, and at times, none is too sordid or dirty to serve as center of attention. It is a sort of open season on ideas; using a word-gun, you can take a pot-shot at anybody or anything. The usual restraints of home, family, friends who know you are absent and you can let yourself go as you have never been able nor will again be able later in life. Talk is free and you are encouraged to express yourself, to say just what you think.

May I make a few observations regarding bull-sessions.

a. Not all words or thoughts that come into our minds need to be spoken. One sign of healthy maturing, regardless of age, is the ability at times not to say anything, to close my mouth and say nothing. At times, silence is golden. You are the keeper of mind and mouth.

b. Weigh and choose your thoughts. They are yours, the fruit of your mind; you must take credit for them, you must take responsibility for them. What you say is intended for somebody to hear. Think before you speak.

c. Weigh and choose your words. They are YOU in sound, they represent you more nearly than does your physical self, your height, weight, color of hair, the hang of your coat and dress. Your words are YOU in sound. When they are out, you cannot recall them.

d. Remember that you do affect other people — by your silence, by the nod of your head, by condescending air, by cynical leer of the lip, by statement of your ideas and your beliefs, by stupid words, by wise; by belaboring the obvious.

ey. Ask yourself, "When I talk, what kind of topic is really worth-while, which is typical of my interests, what do I usually say? Am I usually knocking someone or something, am I projecting my own fears or furies to others? What is typical of the level of my understanding as I speak? What do I enjoy hearing and talking about? Should my topics be changed, improved? Could the topic be sanctified by a sort of spiritual renovating? Should I get off to myself at times and say with Isaiah, 'Woe is me, I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips'?

f. And then there are those confidential conversations with friend, roommate — what shall I divulge and what keep to myself? There are boundaries of propriety on the part of the listener beyond which it would be unwise to probe and pry; there are privacies which belong only to self; there are matters which had best be kept
within oneself for a time, for with time one gains better perspective. You need not spill every passing notion that rattles about in your noggin.

g. As a listener at bull-sessions, how do I hear: Like a fool or with discrimination? Can I, do I try to sort out facts as I listen, so that I am able to identify the clear fact from emotionally-laden ideas. Bull-sessions are notoriously long on producing heat, but not necessarily much illumination. When people get together for talk, chances are they will discuss, disagree, person to person, person to group and it is so easy to become so engaged with finding defenses for one's stated viewpoint that objectivity is lost and it becomes a melange of words. In a discussion, can I keep my own emotions under control or do they interfere?

h. Perhaps most important of all observations we wish to make is this: What conversations, what bull-sessions do I join? Do I discriminate? Do I feel free and strong enough to leave the group when I want to, or object, or do I feel trapped? Am I afraid of derogation, of my own reputation if I leave — lest they talk about me when I have gone? Do I know when to leave the group? Can I get up when I find it is getting to be wasteful of my time or when it is inappropriate conversation, or evil, or circular talk which is getting nowhere? Do I recognize important issues? In a group, am I warm on important issues or am I eloquent only on trivial?

We recognize that bright and brittle conversation which ripples with repartee and inspires intellectual joustings are man's delight. Nothing stimulates like powerful thrusts of the mind, expressed in words, written or spoken. There is in addition in the bull-session the socializing ingredient. Man as a social being gains most socially by conversation. It is probably socially beneficial to engage in some group sessions in this manner. One learns group interaction and one's place in the milieu of his peers by contact. And there are no doubt group sessions which help remove kinks and warplings of the human personality. There is nothing quite so deflating to one's pomposity after one has made a great and significant statement and is filled with the rosy glow of one's own superiority as to see one of the group get up and leave with an eloquent "Aw, nuts."

May I present six criteria for bull sessions by which we may judge their ratings. If you want to identify a LOW-BROW bull session:

1. It should be in poor taste.
2. It should show complete lack of restraint, anything goes.
3. It should debase the noble, ridicule the sacred, applaud the evil.
4. It should use as much profanity as possible, the name of God, Jesus Christ, should occur about every third word.
5. It should play upon the elemental drives and passions of man, lust, promiscuity, sexual conquests, surreptitious dealings, lack of integrity — the low stoop.
6. It should be generously sprinkled with dirty jokes.

If on the other hand you want to identify a UNIVERSITY bull session:

1. It should promote good humor which evidences honest self-objectivity. Not the venting of one's prejudices or hates or conflicts, or frustrations.
2. It should build and not tear down reputations, religious beliefs, values.
3. It should seek the truth — in personality, in knowledge, in values — dealing with basic issues.
4. It should give training in correct thinking, reduce emotionalism, not feeding the fires of mere excitement.
5. It should be defensible before God.
6. It should explore the best of learnings and the best of our thinking. It could, it should be a university experience — something that could happen in its own way only on a university campus, a gathering place of world-wide knowledge, and specifically, a Christ-oriented atmosphere.

In theological terminology, we call the best of the bull sessions "cherished communions." Christians in all ages have felt the impress of words on life. Nicodemus came to Jesus by night. "How can a man enter into the kingdom of heaven?" "A man must be born again." "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" "He that serves," came the answer. "If I be lifted up will draw all men unto me."

Here gain the basis for judgement in regard to all your conversations. Here cleanse your mind, fortify your talk, grow in knowledge and wisdom. If you are not discerning, if you have no independence of thought, you will sit in the company of foolish men and women who itch for the plaudits of hearers, by whatever crudity or cruelty aroused.

The "Letter From Xanadu, Nebr." has been discontinued. The letters were obviously misunderstood by some and apparently deliberately misinterpreted by others. We are not concerned about the "others" but we did not want to risk offending those who in all good faith misunderstood the satirical intent of the letters.

— The Editors
Liszt Was An Organist, Too

BY WALTER A. HANSEN

It is safe to say that the average concert-goer and discophile does not think of Franz Liszt as an organist or as a composer for the king of instruments. Yet those who undertake to assay the importance and achievements of the famous Hungarian artist must give careful consideration to the fact that throughout his long and phenomenally successful career he had a deep interest in the organ. He has gone down in history as one of the greatest pianists of all time and as a man who, in many respects, completely revolutionized the art of playing the piano. Furthermore he was an exceptionally able conductor, and no one would have the hardihood to deny that he accomplished much as a composer.

But what about Liszt and the organ? M-G-M is issuing a series of discs on which Richard Ellsasser plays the organ works of Liszt that are available in print. I have received two of these discs: Fantasy and Fugue on the Chorale Ad Nos, ad Salutarem Undam and Prelude and Fugue on B-A-C-H (M-G-M E3577) and Variations on Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen and Evocation a la Chapelle Sixtine (M-G-M E3576).

In recent months my work has given me the opportunity to drink deep draughts from Hans Joachim Moser's Musiklexikon, the third edition of which was published in Hamburg in 1951. Moser is one of the most erudite musicographers of our time.

When I received recordings of Liszt's organ works, I decided to find out what Moser has to say about the man who wrote these compositions. Since it is not easy to translate Moser's somewhat cumbersome German into smoothly flowing English, I shall reproduce in my own words some of the statements he makes about Liszt as a composer.

Moser declares that in the fields of harmony, orchestration, and form Liszt must be numbered among the greatest trail blazers (Anreger) in music. He concedes, of course, that these accomplishments did not make Liszt one of the greatest of the great among composers. Sometimes Liszt's way of writing has a tendency to degenerate into noisiness. Furthermore, his music is often excessively sweet.

Occasionally I myself have written that in Liszt's music one frequently finds a curious mixture of syrup and gunpowder. Yet it would never enter my mind to turn up my nose at his compositions; for I know that only an ignoramus would venture to deny that the Hungarian master's influence was, and still is, far-reaching and widespread.

When listening to Ellsasser's excellent performances of the works I have mentioned, I thought of Moser's remark that even as ardent an admirer of Liszt as Felix Weingartner, who had been befriended by the famous composer-pianist and later became a great conductor, declared that the much-discussed Hungarian trail blazer never acquired real mastery in the art of polyphonic writing. Then I asked myself: Does the fugue which Liszt construed on B-A-C-H not reveal unmistakable skill in the use of polyphony? My own answer is yes. It is an arresting work. Richard Wagner, as you know, did not acquire fame as a writer of fugues. Yet the fugue he incorporated in the prelude to Die Meistersinger is an example of craftsmanship of the finest kind.

Then I began to wonder about the workmanship exemplified in Variations and Fugue on Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen, which is founded on the basso ostinato in Bach's cantata for the Third Sunday After Easter and on the basso ostinato in the Crucifixus of Bach's Mass in B Minor. At the end Liszt introduces the Lutheran chorale Was Gott tut, das ist wohl getan. Here, too, I find phenomenal skill.

I do not hesitate to speak of the Fantasy and Fugue on the Chorale Ad Nos, ad Salutarem Undam as a masterpiece. This chorale is sung by the Anabaptists in Giacomo Meyerbeer's The Prophet. Does anyone have the right to say that Liszt's composition is the work of an amateur in the art of counterpoint? decidely not.

The Evocation a la Chapelle Sixtine is completely different in character. It is a tone poem. This is highly impressionable music.

When Weingartner made his statement about Liszt's lack of outstanding competence as a contrapuntist, he was undoubtedly thinking primarily of the Hungarian's piano, orchestral, and choral compositions. He knew that these works reveal Liszt as a master of chromaticism. In them the famous composer-pianist does not emerge as a great contrapuntist. But the four organ compositions I have mentioned prove conclusively that Liszt had the ability to use counterpoint with outstanding skill. In addition, they abound in color. More than one composer has taken leaves out of Liszt's book.
The practical result of this approach can best be illustrated. Fife deplores the lack of information on Spalatin (p. 205, fn. 8) but does not refer the reader to Gertrud Hens, Georg Spalatin, Weimar, 1956. The reader is told that Karlstadt’s role in the Reformation is seldom properly evaluated (p. 238, fn. 76) but is left ignorant that new insights have been opened by Ernest Kaehler in Karlstadt und Augustin, Halle, 1952.

The “strain of violence” in the Luther family (p. 5) is generally accepted in the older literature. One of those “older” scholars, Boehmer, corrected himself on this point (cf. Road to Reformation, p. 9.)

Even if Fife disagrees with Boehmer on this point, we should at least expect a reference. The bibliography lists only the first edition of Der junge Luther — now in at least a sixth edition and with an evaluation (Nachwort) by H. Bornkamp since the third — and makes no reference to the English translation (Road to Reformation, Muhlenberg) which would be of most interest to the English reader.

New and penetrating insights into Luther’s great treatises of 1520 have been given by Wilhelm Maurer, Von der Freiheit eines Christenmenschen, Goettingen, 1949. An examination of this (p. 49) might have warned Fife against the fatal identification of Luther’s antithesis between flesh and spirit with the homonymous antithesis of German Idealism (Fife, p. 547). The confusion of the two must result in a radical misunderstanding of Luther. The same is true of Fife’s assertion that Luther in 1516 and 1517 “laid hold on the essential ideas of German mysticism and held them tightly” (p. 220); this assertion rests on Luther’s use of the terminology of the mystics but disregards his radical reinterpretation of their content (cf. Boehmer, Road to Reformation, pp. 143ff).

The book is remarkably free of typographical errors. We note that Scheel, Martin Luther I is — through what could be a perpetuation of Bainton’s typographical error — listed as having appeared in a second edition in 1921. Actually the second edition appeared in 1917 and the edition of 1921 is the third. It is a relatively minor but disturbing weakness that Fife uses the first edition. The quotation at the top of p. 262 is misleading because of an obvious typographical omission. Those disparaging remarks of Luther are not an evaluation of his own book but rather of indulgences, (Read: “This was his private view of indulgences in the work . . . ”)

We hope that this indication of the limitations of this book will in no way place its extreme usefulness in doubt. We are deeply obligated to Fife for this survey of the older literature; we could be only more indebted if he had included the newer literature.

The interested reader is referred to the annual editions of the Luther Jahrbuch as the best source of current bibliographies on Luther. Since it has been out of print since 1941 we note here that it was published again last year (Lutherisches Verlagshaus, Berlin) and that this 1957 edition includes a selected bibliography of the literature from 1952-54.

The publishers are to be complimented on their willingness to risk publication of a book with such detail in text and footnote with such extensive references to resources in a foreign language.

They have thereby performed a service for Lutheran theology — not the least part of which may well be giving its denominational publishing houses a bad conscience.

Robert Schultz
FROM BOSSUET TO NEWMAN: THE IDEA OF DOCTRINAL DEVELOPMENT
By Owen Chadwick (Cambridge, $3.00)

The growth and expansion of the Roman Catholic Church in our time has no doubt been exaggerated, yet for an institution which was scheduled to have died off a good while ago, she has embarrassed and amazed many observers by her evident vitality. The history of this communion since the Council of Trent (her birthday) is a much neglected area in modern Protestant studies. These two volumes are important contributions to an understanding of the lines along which a sclerotic and excessively conservative body has learned to live dynamically and effectively in an unfriendly world.

The books are not of equal value, and only one of them deals exclusively with Roman Catholicism. The study on doctrinal development by the rising Cambridge historian Owen Chadwick deals with a question which plagues Protestant and Catholic thought alike: In what sense is Christian revelation final and in what sense does it continue? If the faith was once given to the saints in the Bible, in what sense are doctrinal and confessional formulations authoritative? For example, was the Trinity a matter of revelation for St. Paul or was it only implicit for him and had to wait several centuries to be explicitly revealed in creedal formulations? Is there, in brief, a development of doctrine?
The main argument of the counter-Reformation asserted that Protestantism was heretical because it was new. "Nothing new can be true." Rome, by contrast, never varied; for in all places and at all times she has always taught the same. Thus the first century of controversy between Rome and the Reformation was patristic and historical in character, the Evangelicals on their part maintaining that their teaching agreed with the ancient church and that it was Rome which had become corrupt without the church. Trent had set the Reformation was patristic and that it made little difference who was merely the explicit unfolding of what had been implicitly revealed. They argued that the unfolding by human minds, no matter how learned, always contained an element of uncertainty. Only clear revelational statements were absolutely certain. Furthermore, the power of historical criticism began to reveal itself. The great French Benedictines had begun their celebrated work on historical and patristic texts. Was it really true that St. Gregory's doctrine of the Trinity was more complete than St. Justin's? Is it truly so certain that an ox and an ass were present when Jesus was born? that Jesus was conceived on March 25 and born on December 25? Is it possible that Jesus' house was not miraculously transferred from Nazareth to Loretto?

The critical view of history had already established important documents as forgeries. This new spirit combined with the effectiveness of the Protestant appeal to patristic authority to undermine the standard Roman polemic. One typical but suggestive reaction was the attempt by Father Hardouin to demonstrate that most of the fathers, heretics and classical writers were the fictitious products of a scheming group of forgers in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries!

On the Protestant side, the historical critical movement coincided with mounting confidence in reason to diminish the importance of the fathers and to create the theory of the private interpretation of the Bible. Jettisoning the Reformation tradition, an English divine now could say: "The Bible, the Bible alone is the religion of Protestantism!" Both ideas have subsequently enjoyed a prosperous history!

Newman's unique contribution was the formulation of an idea of doctrinal development which managed to combine historical authority, but in such a potentially explosive way that conservative Romans insist it is a foreign element in the body of the church. Chadwick admirably expounds this theory by exhibiting its context as well as internal structure, and indicating the problematics it creates.

Here is historical writing at its finest: a model, never dull, pervaded by a gentle and subtle humor. We meet a fascinating collection of figures who are paraded out as they launch the ideas, suspicions, and problems which still dominate today's religious world.

Of MacGregor's book it must be said that the subject is exciting and sustains the reader. The illegal and unblushing political machinations by which the 1870 infallibility decree was agreed upon against powerful, learned and respected opposition within the Roman church is an amazing story and needs to be told. The book is worth reading, includes a Latin and English version of the Vatican Decrees which gives it some scholarly value. On the whole the legal question dominates, and the theological issue is obscured somewhat by a discussion of democracy in the the church.

Both books are too expensive and should be made available in less expensive editions. Still the Chadwick study, even at this price, is too tempting to be passed up.

We should note that the problem discussed by Chadwick awaits satisfactory solution, both in Lutheranism and in ecumenical Christendom. The 'then' and 'now' of authority must meet somehow. The existentialist-pneumatic disregard of the 'then' is as unsatisfactory as historicism or Bibli-cism. An over-emphasis on ecclesiastical authority ultimately overthrows both Bible and history. Chadwick exposes the historical roots of the modern form of this problem.

RICHARD BAEZLER

PROPHETY AND RELIGION IN ANCIENT CHINA AND ISRAEL

By H. H. Rowley (Harper, $2.75)

The book consists of six lectures delivered by Prof. H. H. Rowley of The University of Manchester under the Jordan lectureship in comparative religion at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London. Under the terms of the lectureship Prof. Rowley was obliged to bring two major religions together in a comparative survey of their structures and motifs. Internationally known as a scholar and prolific writer in the field of Old Testament studies, Prof. Rowley has also had the benefit of a first-hand acquaintance with Chinese religions by virtue of having served as a missionary teacher in that land. The present volume of lectures contrasts Hebrew prophecy of the 8th and 7th centuries B.C. with the thought and activity of the Chinese sages who were roughly their contemporaries, in particular Confucius, Mencius and Motzu.

As a working definition of prophecy which encompasses both the Hebrew prophets and the Chinese sages Prof. Rowley offers the following: a prophet is one who is in the state of announcing a message which has been given to him. "Both Hebrew prophets and Chinese sages spoke primarily to their own age a word that was relevant to the conditions of their day." The author takes it for granted that the Chinese sages, like the Hebrew prophets, were "spokesmen of God," imbued with a sense of divine mission and moral earnestness. Two chapters entitled "The Prophet as Statesman" and "The Prophet as Reformer" provide a phenomenological comparison of the vocation of the Chinese sages and the Hebrew prophet and show that in the area of practical activity there were indeed many points of likeness. Had the two groups confronted one another they might well have found much in common.

It is when the author treats of "The Prophet and Worship" and "The Prophet and God," however, that the similarity breaks down. He concludes that Mencius was almost totally indifferent to matters of worship, that Confucius was largely interested in ceremonies for their own sake, that is, as a kind of social discipline, and that "sacrifices and prayer were his concern." The Hebrew prophets, by contrast, were radically critical of the sacrificial cultus of their day and protested against the hollow forms, far more than the Confucians did. Their essential purpose however was to vindicate worship as "fundamentally the presenting of oneself before God" rather than as the correct performance of sacrificial rites. This of course relates directly to the respective views of the nature of deity held by the two groups.

Prof. Rowley counters the general assumption that the Confucian view of deity (T'ien) was one of an impersonal providence with the assertion that worship of the Chinese sages are indeed replete with references to a personal deity. Heaven "knows" Confucius, grants him conscious protection and entrusts him with a mandate. Nevertheless Heaven is remote and man's attitude is one of distant deference. There is no possibility of intimate communion with God. "Worship was but the offering of reverence and not the receiving of grace." The Will of Heaven led to a highly ethical approach to life among the people.
Sometimes certain events are “underplayed.” Certainly there is more to be said concerning Luther's letter to Henry VIII (p. 150); Luther's love of ale was more fierce than implied here (p. 182); everything was not so friendly either during or after the Wittenberg Concord of 1536 (p. 188); and Luther said others things about Calvin than those stated here (p. 204). But aside from these criticisms, which could be leveled at one place or another against any biography, Kooiman is fair to the point of being “too formal” in his presentation.

I am going to get my wife to read this book!

WALTER OETTING

GRAVEN IMAGES: SUBSTITUTES FOR TRUE MORALITY

By Dietrich Von Hildebrand with Alice Jourdain (David McKay, $3.50)

This is the third member of the trilogy about what the authors call “true morality”. While it presupposes an acquaintance with the first two books (“Christian Ethics” and “True Morality and Its Counterfeits”), an understanding of the basic language of philosophy and ethics and a nodding acquaintance with some of the terms of Roman Catholic theology will suffice to make the book understandable.

The purpose of the authors is to expose those substitutes for true morality which, while they are not the real things, do have moral connotation. The authors distinguish between two types: the formal substitute and the material or qualitative substitute. Included in the former are such things as tradition, loyalty to state, and liberalism, while the latter is exemplified by honor, humaneness, altruism, self-control, etc.

After a general consideration of moral blindness and its role in the development of substitutes, the authors state their case. They then proceed to analyze several examples of each type of substitute mentioned to illustrate how they are perversions of true morality. The book closes with a brief but penetrating description of Christian morality.

If the old adage that “he who distinguishes well teaches well” can be extended to mean that “he who distinguishes much teaches much”, this book is a pedagogical powerhouse. The reader is directed on every second page to “distinguish between this manifestation and that, this type and that,” etc. etc. etc. This type of thinking exercise, however, is rewarding in a book of this kind, because the authors are always able to make a good case for their distinctions.

A Lutheran leader stated a few years ago that he felt the Achilles’ heel of American Lutheranism was the weak connection between sanctification and justification.

Certainly our church has often failed to outline the “how” of leading a life that gives thanks unto God the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ. This book is one effort in that direction which deserves careful study. It is mainly negative by reason of its subject matter. The section on “honor” is particularly good.

The authors’ Augustinian bent, which leads them to consider man primarily in terms of his “basic direction of will”, leads them to some penetrating criticisms of what they consider perversions of true morality in sections of their own church body, and makes them more congenial to Lutheran readers than many other Roman Catholic writers.

KENNETH MAHLER

GEORGE WHITEFIELD, WAYFARING WITNESS

By Stuart C. Henry (Abingdon, $3.75)

Stuart Henry is a professor in the department of religion in Southern Methodist University. He is also a former Presbyterian clergyman from Mississippi.

This study of George Whitefield is divided into two parts. The first deals with his life, his relationship to John and Charles Wesley, the general reaction of the people to his preaching, how he began his Bethesda Orphanage in Georgia, etc. The second part of the book deals with Whitefield’s theology and how it was received. This is the more interesting part of the book.

Whitefield’s theology began with the Bible, although the Bible “was not necessarily the source of his dogma (p. 98).” The author continues, “The doctrines that he preached were biblical to the extent that he buttressed them with quotations from scripture, not in the sense that they originated from the Bible.” Interesting! Then he adds, concerning Whitefield’s faith, “Such then, was the theology that Whitefield professed. It was also the theology that he preached. But it was not necessarily the theology that informed his actions . . . Whitefield’s professed theological creed was not identical with the vigorous faith by which he lived (pp. 114-5).” Interesting indeed!

The author concludes with a discussion of contemporary reaction to Whitefield both within Christendom and without. He mentions the reflections of such people as Samuel Johnson, Horace Walpole, Samuel Foote, Henry Fielding, and William Hogarth. These are most fascinating. And for all the world they remind us of many strictures on Billy Graham, except that we don’t seem to take Graham as seriously.

For anyone interested in the Great Revival period in American and English history this book is interesting. The eight page bibliography is valuable.

WALTER OETTING

THE CRESSET

BY FAITH ALONE

By K. J. Kooiman (Philosophical Library, $6.00)

The author is professor of church history in the University of Amsterdam. The book is a biography of Martin Luther. The purpose of the writer is stated in the Foreword, "As a clergyman, I wrote this book with my parishioners in mind . . . I trust this may be a means whereby the figure of Luther, whose work retains a real significance for our times, may gain greater familiarity among a wider circle of readers."

Your reviewer, as a parish pastor, feels that the author has succeeded. By Faith Alone ought to be read by many laymen and women in our church. Unlike many other biographies of Luther, this volume not only combines scholarship with a deep feeling for the subject, but also has the virtue of simplicity. It is not a vast amount of research material, encyclopedic in nature, but actually an account that will fascinate many who otherwise know little or nothing of the life and work of Martin Luther. These are noble virtues in any book. However, and we feel this ought to be said even though it has nothing to do with the character of the book itself, By Faith Alone will not find its way into the libraries of churches and schools where it ought to be because six dollars is quite a price for 218 pages.

Do not come to the book looking for the wrong thing. The title might deceive you into thinking that this is an analysis of Luther’s faith or a development of his theology. It is not. It is simply a history of Luther’s life. Possibly this makes Luther a bit too “wooden,” unlike the dynamic, alternately fear-filled and joy-filled, doubting and yet believing man that he was. Other biographies have done a better job here.

J. A. SCHERRER

CONFUCIANS BUT DID NOT, AS IN THE CASE OF THE PROPHETS, ISSUE IN THE EARNEST COMMUNICATION OF THE MESSAGE RECEIVED BY THE PROPHET AS GOD’S REVELATION TO MEN.

The citations employed by Prof. Rowley in the lectures show the author’s erudition and his masterful grasp of two fields. The results of the inquiry, while interesting from the standpoint of comparative religion, are of course meaningless from the standpoint of theology. Ultimately it is impossible to approach the antecedents of one’s own religious heritage from the dispassionate standpoint of an objective, neutral observer, and to compare them with a tradition alien to one’s own. Either one is compelled to take a standpoint within the circle of revelation or outside of it, and Prof. Rowley, while trying at all times to be fair, implicitly lets it be known that he stands within the circle. This is why the contrast is ultimately meaningless.
American humanism is a point of view - as its unifying element. Humanism is a point of view - "man as man, a being in his own right, whatever one's religious view of him might be - that was the original intent and meaning of humanism in the West" (p. 96). Granted the recovery of that view, the prospects for the world under an American cultural leadership are not dismal. (Chapter IV.)

This little volume has two virtues that commend it for reading: the author's en-gaging style and the subsidiary thesis that American humanism is so promising precisely because it is non-theological. That thesis is probably more true than most theologians (except Tillich) would admit and less true than H. M. Jones believes. At any rate our author does not possess the virtue of systematic rigor and so his book is something less than a morphology of American humanism.

Robert Scharlemann

DALI ON MODERN ART

By Salvador Dali (Dial, $5.00)

Have you a friend who "hates" Modern Art? Here at first glance seems to be the perfect book for him, to confirm him in his prejudices. But on second glance, here is not the book for him; the case against the established masters, for example Matisse, is stated so exaggerat ed and so pungent, that it may well be lost. In spite of himself, the erstwhile critic may rise up in defense of the maligned, simply to spare the dignity of his race.

There is no doubt that Dali is enjoying himself hugely in this work, posturing not only as the world's great genius, but slightly less modestly as Spain's great gift to the list of intelligent critics of art. With a flair for shocking statements and a delight in the alliterative, this elegantly-mustached egoist denounces impressionistic and cubist art as decadent and degrading, while for the purest of the pure abstractionists he comes up with the simplest of the simple obliterations: "Piet," "Niet."

In fifteen well-chosen phrases he describes the general characteristics of the phenomenon known as Modern Style Architecture, a majority of which scathing phrases might equally well have been turned against Dali himself. For one who is so delirious in the desire to startle with the outspoke n word, this genius is curiously restrained in describing modern architecture in every word which could mean bastard, but in refraining from using the word itself. This seems to be the chameleon measure of the man: from lucid prose to bombastic tergiversation: from pyrotechnics to the gentle spirit lamp.

But the critic has his moments. His comments on the Modern Style home are mordant, and there are perhaps many intelligent people who, having witnessed the travesty that has been made of the mobile, will agree that "the least that one can ask of a piece of sculpture is that it should not move."

Dali's manifesto for the future of art with its emphasis upon a "monarchic and Catholic cosmogony" is well designed to stir up controversy. If the author accomplishes nothing more, his brief comments on Seurat's "chromosomatic confetti" should arouse a curiosity to see the current Seurat exhibit at the Chicago Art Institute.

LENORE RICKELS

THE SCENT OF FEAR

By J. H. Williams (Doubleday, $3.95)

This off-beat narrative contains several components of the novel of adventure. However, it is not fictional, but autobiographic, and the adventures related occurred strictly in the line of business. They are unusually interesting partly because it is an unusual business, but largely because the author is an unusual man.

Williams was for thirty years in the employ of a British teak company operating in Burma. The first two books concerning his experiences dealt with the mutual trust between man and other animals which must exist if work is to be accomplished by their cooperation. His speciality is elephants; in fact, his nickname is "Elephant Bill." In this third book the emphasis is changed to trust between man and man. The thesis is stated in the Foreword: "If you trust a man, you can never be certain that he will not deceive you; but if you don't trust him, you give him every excuse to deceive you at the earliest chance... You are far more likely to provoke an attack by being prepared for it than if you are unready and unsuspicuous." To a limited extent, this thesis is proved.

The greater part of the book deals with an expedition to the Andaman Islands, immediately south of Burma, which Williams was requested by his company to undertake in order to estimate the amount of teak and other hardwood available there, and the difficulties which would be encountered in getting it to market. It was a strenuous and dangerous assignment. The Burmese convicts who served as laborers during the four months' trip were, at Williams' insistence, unaccompanied by armed guard. He considers their exemplary behavior a perfectly normal reaction to his treatment of them: they responded to trust by being worthy of it. It would seem to an outsider that the impossibility of either escape from the island or survival on it as fugitives might have also been a factor.

In another portion of the volume, the newcomer, Archie, who is both unready and unsuspicuous, is robbed of payroll money and gun. Elephant Bill doesn't fail to suggest that hereafter Archie himself guard the elephant carrying gun and cash.

Most books dealing with life in a British Eastern colony show British characters who are government officials, either military or civil. This one is different. It does include civil officials as it touches lightly upon the hidden running feud existing between Government and Trade, but the emphasis is upon British entrepreneur and native workmen, and the frequently cordial relationship between them.
Williams is a specimen rare in literature. He is the man of action, the survivor of many hairbreadth escapes; he is the exponent, albeit unorthodox, of Big Business; he is the representative of a race which often considers itself superior in all respects to all others. Yet his book gives clear evidence that the author possesses, in addition to humor, a firm respect for the individual, accompanied by a scrupulous sense of justice (is one the corollary of the other?) and an acuity of insight as welcome as it is unexpected.

We are allowed glimpses of a very tender love story. Do any of you know whether or not Mrs. Williams' given name is Susan?

DORINDA KNOPP

THE OPEN DOOR

By Helen Keller (Doubleday, $2.75)

Helen Keller is unique in two ways: because of the nature and degree of her achievements, and because she has provoked only universal admiration during the years (longest of any living American) in which she has been in the public eye. Any difference of opinion existing about Miss Keller is perforce quantitative, not qualitative.

This new book is composed of extracts from Miss Keller's previously published writings. They include aphorisms as well as more amply expressed thoughts, and therefore vary in length from one sentence to several paragraphs. The form in which they are presented is attractive. The pleasing impression which this slim volume achieves is due partly to the luxurious use of paper. Top and bottom margins are wide. Each selection begins on a fresh page. Paragraphs are deeply indented. The impression is heightened by the use of large, flowing, shaded initial letters, embellished, as are also page numbers, with vignettes. Though less ornate than their prototypes, they appear to be linear descendants of the sixteenth century Italian "Imperialle" style of penmanship. The body of the text, set in Garamond type,* is widely spaced between lines.

In content, the book is as modest as is its author. It lays no claim to profundity or brilliance, but achieves wisdom and gentle luminosity. It represents Miss Keller's personal application of general truths to present day life. Its one central theme is faith: faith in God and the soul's immortality; faith that the good in mankind ultimately outweighs the evil; faith particularly in the youth of this country and its ability to transform worthy ideals into realities. On the negative side, the author speaks out against intolerance, against public apathy to good government, against the frantic quest for cradle-to-grave security, against reluctance to face change. She believes that these and other weaknesses reveal lack of faith.

The style is simple, sometimes eloquent, often poetic in ability to reveal to the reader the astonishing gamut of Miss Keller's sensory and emotional perception. One particularly fascinating evidence of distinctive sensitivity is her recurring mention of the human hand — its strength and delicacy, its versatility and cunning. It seems quite plain that civilization of any known type would never have evolved without the hand; but has anyone mentioned it previously? For the author, the hand symbolizes all achievements of the human race, and also all potentialities. For her, as for William Blake, Michelangelo, and a host of lesser mortals, the Hand of God symbolizes omnipotence.

Like any other distillate worthy of being savored, the contents of this book should be sipped, not gulped.

DORINDA KNOPP

*NOTE (Re "Garamond" type)

There follows a much-ado-about-nothing tale:

Having mentioned the distinctive capitals used in the book, I thought perhaps it might be well to give a casual reference to the other kind of type employed. Arduous comparison convinced me that there were slight differences in some letters between it and my sample of Garamond. Mr. Keller, beginning by assuring me that it wasn't Garamond, came around full circle during the some twenty minutes of his time which he so kindly spent upon the problem, and ended by assuring me it was Garamond. The slight differences which bother me are still unexplained. I suggested that it be called a variation of Garamond. He said, no, it was definitely Garamond.

Naturally, none of the readers will care what kind of type it is, and I should much rather leave it out than get it wrong. However, the probability of being guilty of error is outweighed by the certainty of being guilty of ingratitude. Anyone who pays for solicited advice from a specialist is entitled to ignore it if he wishes. Anyone who scrounges it should at least have the courtesy to follow it.

Blast my not-too-bright bulldog tenacity, anyhow. At rare intervals, when the issue is important, it is commendable. Here, as often, where the issue is completely inconsequential, it is merely maddening.

D.K.

FICTION

NOT BY BREAD ALONE

By Vladimir Dudintsev (Dutton, $4.95)

Along with the Russian earth satellites comes a novel that has caused a great deal of discussion and controversy in Russia and throughout the world. The story pictures the struggle between the individual and officialdom, that is, the Russian idea of state supremacy.

Everyone tried to ignore the independent young inventor, Lopatkin. His invention was continually rejected and was declared to be too expensive. Lopatkin stubbornly believed in his invention even though it was imitated by two inventors hired by his enemies, Drozdov and Shutikov. These two chief bureaucrats cleverly and ruthlessly tried to suppress the gullible Lopatkin. They brought him to Moscow from Murga, an isolated factory community, and filled his heart with false hope while they studied every aspect of his invention. When they no longer needed Lopatkin, they accused him of rebellious action against the state's wishes and sent him off to a Siberian labor camp. Just when Lopatkin's future looked most dismal, help came from an unexpected source — Drozdov's wife, Nadia. The novel ends with Lopatkin's troubles only partially solved. He still has many obstacles to overcome.

The author, Mr. Dudintsev, has written a very realistic, human story, adding many intimate, personal touches. The characters experience a variety of passions, revealing Mr. Dudintsev's ability to understand and interpret the human mind. The numerous and lengthy descriptive passages in the novel enable the reader to understand why the characters act as they do.

Mr. Dudintsev spends over half of the novel introducing the characters and the situation. His first descriptions, although very detailed, are vague in meaning. One might suspect that this is a device to retain the reader's attention throughout the book, for everything is not fully explained until the final passages. This reader became a little impatient waiting for the author to unfold the main plot.

One must read this book very carefully in order to capture the true significance of the work. Every word is in its place for a special purpose — that of setting forth, in narrative form, Lopatkin's theory that "Man can live not by bread alone."

This theory forms the central theme of the novel. One must also praise the translator for putting the novel into very readable, diplomatic English, still retaining the essential Russian color and tone.

JANICE BRASS

THE SOUND OF THUNDER

By Taylor Caldwell (Doubleday & Company, $3.95)

The Sound of Thunder is the story of an American family during the years 1904-1937. It is also the story of warped ideals and twisted beliefs. But most of all, Taylor Caldwell's book is the story of Edward Enger, the boy who grew up too soon. Heinrich Enger, the little, rosy-cheeked, Socialist father did not feel that he was committing a great wrong by removing
the fourteen-year-old Edward from school and putting him to work in the family delicatessen; Maria Enger, the massive, outwardly frigid, but all-seeing mother did not fully realize what would be the final outcome of the sacrifice of her second son. Edward himself was at first pleased that he was chosen to assist his four brothers and sister, all of whom were, supposedly, geniuses. As the years passed, however, it became all too apparent that the Enger family contained only one genius, Edward, and that he was using his hard-gained power to control a group of individuals who were too weak to remove themselves from his grasp and to follow their natural bents, which all of them had been pursuing secretly over the years. Margaret Enger was the person who had the most opportunity to release Edward from the frustrating and torturing world in which he existed; but Margaret loved her husband too blindly and did not come to a full realization of what happened until it was almost too late.

America was going through great struggles at the time, too. The years before and during World War I, the time of depression, and the ever-increasing threat of Communism give Taylor Caldwell's book a background which is both haunting and believable. Edward's constant battle against power held by a few, while he himself was occupying a prominent position in the business world, is so representative of the confused existence of man in a confused world.

The author also has the ability to create living word pictures. The reader cannot help seeing a sky which "dreamed in a soft blue," or "a willow's long hair (blowing) in green dishevelment." The frequent use of the word "dusty" gives the novel a haziness which the reader is frequently unable to pierce. And through every chapter thunders the theme of a storm — a storm which is present not only in Nature, but in a mankind which is constantly striving to reach God and thus acquire tranquility. The characters are difficult to understand and leave the reader with a puzzled feeling of whether to admire or hate; but The Sound of Thunder is a readable, though occasionally verbose, book.

**Stephanie Umbach**

**SOME RECENT RECORDINGS**

*By Walter A. Hansen*

**LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN. Fidelio.** Presented by Leonie Rysanek, Irmgard Seefried, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Ernst Haefliger, and Gottlob Frick with the Bavarian State Orchestra and the chorus of the Bavarian State Opera under Ferenc Fricsay. A remarkably fine performance of this great masterpiece. Two discs. Artistically boxed. Decca. — **NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC 'CELLO QUARTET.** This unique organization plays music by Emanuel Moor, Bela Bartok, Antonio Vivaldi, and Josef Jongen. One of the most fascinating recordings I have received in a long time. One must hear it in order to realize what a 'cello quartet can do. The players are Laszlo Varga, Nathan Stutch, Martin Ormandy, and Anthony Sophos. Decca. — **JOSEPH HAYDN. Symphony No. 92, in G (Oxford) and Symphony No. 104, in D (London).** The Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra under Hans Rosbaud. Excellent readings of two wonderful symphonies. Decca.
A Minority Report

Conservatism is not Rugged Individualism

By VICTOR F. HOFFMANN

During the last several months, the writer of A MINORITY REPORT has been brought into frequent and close contact — both by correspondence and face-to-face confrontation — with persons who claim, in some cases almost violently, to be conservative. A fair share of them maintained that a firm stand on "rugged individualism" gave them the passport to the conservative society.

But how can this be? If the individual is in some measure centering the status quo or a tradition brought to him by the mysterious operations of history, he is no longer strictly on his own. He is no longer the rugged individualist for he is depending on someone else or something else for his values.

Not a few of these people talked to and written to claimed a conservatism-individualism pattern rooted in their versions of Christianity. Statements such as the following very often appeared as defense strategy: "The just shall live by his faith"; "I stand naked in my sins before my God." But just how much of an individual is the Christian personality even according to the orthodox Christian pattern: the Christian believes that God has created him, redeemed him, and sanctified him. The orthodox Christian would confess that God, a force outside of himself, has changed him from a child of the devil, also a force outside of himself, to a child of God. Accordingly an orthodox Christian would argue that he cannot look to himself for salvation — but only to God. Actually to try to maintain a "rugged individualism" is to claim ultimately that man is masterless. To maintain that man is a lawless atom is within the Christian view to maintain an unsupportable fiction.

Pay close attention some day to the words used in the Christian worship service: the church, holy communion, the love of God to man, the love of man to man, the human love of God and the neighbor, the light of the world, collections for Christian universities and the synodical budget. These are not the abstractions of rugged individualism. These words refer to social concepts and notions. They refer to human relationships, to relationships that lead out and into ourselves from and to the outside. They certainly do not refer to individual atoms existing alone.

The operations of Christ in the Holy Land — even though He and His disciples were about as unique and eccentric sometimes as people can be — were conducted within the social dimensions of the day. The disciples and the apostles together with Christ were conducting a social operation at the same time that they were reaching out for individuals: the extension of the church, healing the ill, curing the blind, driving the moneychangers out of the temple, and feeding the five thousand. Christ and His disciples were outgoing personalities, living in part according to outgoing relationships — reaching out to other people. And other people reached out to them.

It seemed to this columnist that many of these concerned persons worried about as much about their rights to property as they did about conservatism and individualism. One certainly does not blame them: all of us worry about our property, our mortgages, our taxes, and our insurance. But even in the area of our property rights, our notions of rugged individualism are undergoing some changes.

The concept of "individual possessory holdings" has actually shifted to a concept of a vast corporate economic system of power, of impersonal power. More and more economic systems are owned by stockholders who own only in part and who manage not at all. Most of the stock is controlled by a minority of the stockholders. This happens because "ownership is so widely scattered that working control can be maintained with but a minority interest." (Berle and Means, The Modern Corporation and private Property.)

Small wonder that the erudite Roscoe Pound wrote in an issue of The Kentucky Law Journal: "Today the typical man ... finds his greatness not in himself and in what he does but in the corporation he serves. If he is great, he is published to the world not as having done this or that, but as director in this company or that. If he is small, yet he shines in the reflected glory of the corporation from which he draws a salary."

This kind of organization story is being repeated among the churches, the universities, the social organizations to which we belong, and the labor unions.
Sights and Sounds

TV Presents Two Excellent Musical Programs

Many fine programs were presented by NBC TV during the winter season. Two merit special consideration, for both were programs of more than passing interest. The first of these is the Metropolitan Opera Company’s production of La Perichole, Jacques Offenbach’s delightful nineteenth century three-act opera bouffe; the other, Dialogues of the Carmelites by the NBC Opera Company and the Symphony of the Air.

In a preface to the booklet which comes with RCA Victor’s excellent recording of La Perichole Howard Taubman, the widely read music critic of the New York Times, says: “In his field of the operetta Offenbach was one of the greatest craftsmen of all time... For Offenbach’s music has a durable joyousness. It can be transplanted from the 19th to the 20th Century, from France to America, without sacrifice of its gusto or freshness.”

La Perichole has its origin in a folk tale which stems from the early eighteenth century. Prosper Merimee included one version of the legend in a volume of short prose plays published in 1825. Forty years later Merimee fashioned the story into a highly effective libretto for the Offenbach score. Subsequent revisions of the libretto resulted in the version which we know today. The English translation, which was prepared by Maurice Valency for the Metropolitan Opera Company’s revival of the work last fall, retains the flavor and the verve of the original text with a touch of the distinctively modern idiom.

The TV production of La Perichole was outstanding in every way. Laurel Hurley was both lovely to see and vocally satisfactory as the impudent and impetuous La Perichole. Freely translated, this word means “the flirt.” Theodore Uppman’s magnificent voice and fine acting ability stood him in good stead in the role of the street singer Paquillo. Cyril Ritchard, one of the most gifted and most versatile players of our day, portrayed the Viceroy with superb artistry. The supporting cast, the chorus, and the ballet contributed in large measure to the excellence of the presentation. Under the able direction of Jean Morel, Offenbach’s enchanting music and Merimee’s gayly satirical libretto were presented with authority and conviction.

Dialogues of the Carmelites, under the brilliant direction of Herman Peter Adler, is in sharp contrast to the bright, lighthearted La Perichole. Dialogues is a poignant and somber drama. Set in the tragic days of the French Revolution, this is a story of the triumph of faith over doubt and fear. The libretto was written by Georges Bernano, the music is by Francis Poulenc, who is considered by many to be the most gifted among contemporary French composers. Winthrop Sargent, noted critic and musicologist, has said: “In Dialogues Poulenc has created the strongest French opera to appear in a generation. This work may well mark a return of French opera to its great nineteenth century standards of craftsmanship.”

Since the USSR launched Sputnik I and Sputnik II several months ago, the entire world has become acutely conscious of the potential power of missile weapons. Both Where We Stand (CBS) and Missile Men (Wide, Wide World NBC) produced impressive programs devoted to the development of the missile program in the United States.

On the lighter side, TV viewers were privileged to see the first two in a series of fairy tales introduced and narrated by Shirley Temple. Beauty and the Beast and Rumpelstiltskin were thoroughly delightful entertainment.

Another significant achievement in telecasting was a stunning production of Thornton Wilder’s Pulitzer Prize-winning novel The Bridge of San Luis Rey. Some of the brightest stars in the world of the theater appeared in this exceptionally well made adaptation — notably Judith Anderson, Eva Le Gallienne, Kurt Kasner, and Hume Cronyn.

Sid Caesar and Imogene Coca, whose departure from TV was mourned by countless admirers, have returned in a sparkling new comedy series. Blast in Centralia No. 6 (Seven Lively Arts, CBS) retold the story of a terrifying mine disaster in a stark and gripping documentary.

Sayonara (Warners, Josh Logan), adapted from a novel by James Michener, makes a moving plea for racial tolerance and racial understanding. Produced in Japan against an authentic background, Sayonara has been acclaimed as one of the top ten films of 1957. Marlon Brando portrays the American major with fine success, and lovely Miiko Taka is appealing and convincing as the girl he loves. The supporting cast is exceptionally strong.

Two outstanding sea stories are being shown at present: Pursuit of the Graf Spree (Rank) and The Enemy Below (20th Century-Fox).
Again the Church faces Calvary ... No fact in the long story of man is more timeless than the Cross ... Nineteen hundred years ago the nails were driven, the hammers rang, and the blood of the world's Redeemer became a holy stream to wash away the guilt of all the world ... But the world and the world's Savior were not done at twilight on Good Friday ... The Cross became the one continuing shadow over the world of men ... It is here today ... It is boundless, endless, eternal, everlasting ... Nineteen hundred years ago the voice of the Crucified was stilled only for a brief moment, to become the voice of all ages, the Everlasting Mercy, and the Immortal Presence ... In a world of griefs and graves it is our last joy and our only life ...

It is the timelessness of the Cross and the nearness of the Crucified Presence which must be clear to us who may be so close to the end of years ... It is timeless because there is no end of sin ... A few moments ago I paged through the section of the hymnal devoted to the Passion of our Lord ... How the pages ring with sin and woe and despair! ... Still the nails are driven and the hammers sound ... Yesterday's transgression, today's faults, tomorrow's faithlessness press the crown of thorns more firmly on the Wounded Head ... Under the cold and dark reality of sin man without the Cross staggers to his doom ... In all the world there is no more persistent and stubborn fact than the fact of sin — the sin of our weakness and our pride, the sin which crucifies our Lord again ... As it reaches up and down into every nook and corner of life and living it results in the weary load of suffering and anguish, wars and rumors of war, agony and pain, which are the common lot of humanity ... The terror of sin!

... Even Oscar Wilde knew its angry meaning:

O smitten mouth, O forehead crowned with thorn
O chalice of our common miseries!
Thou for our own sakes that loved Thee not hast borne
The agony of endless centuries.

If the timelessness of the Cross were only the timelessness of sin, there would be no light and no hope for the sin burdened heart ... There is another side ... The Crucified Presence is the timelessness of forgiveness, of the blasting out and the washing away of sin ... 1900 years ago three men were hanging on three crosses, bleeding, weeping, thirsty, dying ... Two were meeting death on their own behalf ... One was meeting death for the world — for us ... Our sins were His ... Our suffering was His ... And — the angels sing of it — our forgiveness came through His death ... His tears became our joy ... His wounds were our health ... His death is our Life ...

Today this truth must now be burned into the heart of the world ... Ellen Fowler, in her story of The Farringdons, tells the story of a girl who, attending divine services, saw the Figure of the Crucified in the great east window: "As she looked at the Figure which the world has wept over and worshipped for nineteen centuries, she realized that this was the symbol of all that she was giving up and leaving behind her — the final signs of that religion of love and sorrow which men call Christianity. Slowly her eyes were opened, and she knew that the figure in the east window was no sign of an imaginary renunciation, no symbol of a worn-out creed, but the Picture of a Living Person, whose voice was calling her, and whose power was enfolding her and would not let her go." When that last veil is lifted by faith in Him, the cry of heart and flesh for the Crucified Presence is answered forever ... It is the first truth and the last, the truth that makes all other truths and leads to Life Eternal ...

We face Calvary ... Now is the time to feel and know again the life and strength of the Crucified ... Twenty-five years ago, in the mud of no man's land, Joyce Kilmer said it for all of us who now live: "My shoulders ache beneath my pack

(Lie easier, Cross, upon His back)

Men shout at me who may not speak
(They scourged Thy back and smote Thy cheek)

When shall my fickle soul forget
(Thy Agony of Bloody Sweat?)

Lord, Thou didst suffer more for me
Than all the hosts of land and sea.

So let me render back again
This millionth of Thy gift. Amen."