The Cresset

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE,
THE ARTS, AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

TWENTY CENTS
Vol. XXXII, No. 3

JANUARY, 1969
IN THE JANUARY CRESSET - - -

IN LUCE TUA .................................................. The Editors .................. 3
AD LIB.: THE ITCH TO FOREKNOW ........................................ Alfred R. Looman .......... 7
MODERN POETRY AND THE AMERICAN IDIOM ................................... Jack Tracy Ledbetter ...... 8
POEM: SUMMER ARSON ................................................ Bonnie McConnell ........ 10
DAY OF THE POLYPOPS .................................................. Rudolph F. Norden ..... 11
CHRISTIAN THEMES IN TOLKIEN ........................................ Paul Pfotenhauer ...... 13
FROM THE CHAPEL: THE SIGN OF THE CROSS .................................. Erwin J. Kolb ............. 15
BOOKS OF THE MONTH
A CHALLENGE TO CONCRETE ENCOUNTER .................................. Sue Wienhorst and Arlin Meyer .......... 17
MUSIC: A CONCERT, A CONCERN, A CONFERENCE ............................... William F. Eifrig, Jr. .... 22
THE THEATRE:
"FAREWELL! A LONG FAREWELL TO ALL MY GREATNESS!" .................. Walter Sorell .......... 23
THE VISUAL ARTS: TO CELEBRATE THE IRREDUCIBLE .......................... Richard H. W. Brauer .... 24
EDITOR-AT-LARGE: THANKSGIVING, 1968 ..................................... Victor F. Hoffmann ....... 26
MASS MEDIA: RUBY, RAY, AND SIRHAN GO TO TRIAL ........................... Don A. Affeldt .......... 27
THE PILGRIM: REX GLORIAE NEVERTHELESS .................................. O. P. Kretzmann ...... 28
The President’s “Mandate”

Separated as we are from our English cousins by a common language, it is only natural that the introduction of peculiarly British political terms into our vocabulary should create a deal of confusion. So it is with this word “mandate.” Mr. Nixon, we are told, did not receive a large enough percentage of the popular vote to justify his claiming a mandate to govern. From this it appears to follow, in some people’s thinking, that he is under some sort of obligation to form a coalition government or, at least, to trim the exercise of his powers as President to the dimensions of his plurality in the election.

The fallacy in all this should be immediately apparent to anyone who has taken the trouble to read the Constitution of the United States. We are not a parliamentary democracy. We are not even or, at least, not yet — a plebiscitarian democracy. We are a republic operating under a constitution which provides certain procedures for vesting the powers of government in certain individuals and institutions. In the case of the Presidency, any natural-born citizen of the United States who shall have attained to the age of thirty-five years and been fourteen years a resident within the United States may become Chief Executive of the United States upon receiving a majority of the votes cast in the Electoral College and taking the oath of office on the day stipulated — just that and nothing more.

The constitution knows nothing of “mandates” to carry out this or that particular program or to ratify or change this or that particular policy. The only mandate of which it knows is the right and duty to exercise the executive power for a period of four years. And when the President takes his oath to “preserve and protect the Constitution of the United States” he is, among other things, accepting sole responsibility for the exercise of the executive power. From this it follows that coalitions, in the European parliamentary sense, are not constitutionally possible. And it follows also that when the President, in office, finds that it would not be prudent to keep certain promises which he made as a candidate he can not properly be criticized for having violated a “mandate.”

We voted for Mr. Humphrey. But as of January 20 Richard Nixon is going to be our President. He is as fully entitled to the office as he would have been if his election had been unanimous. And both for his sake and for the sake of the country we hope that he will take firm charge — not as the prime minister in a shaky coalition but as the President of the United States.

Professor Johnson

When President Kennedy took office eight years ago this month, the legislative program which he presented to the Congress called for speedy action on five “matters of particular importance.” These were 1) medical care for the aged, 2) federal aid to education, 3) housing, 4) the raising of the minimum wage, and 5) aid to chronically depressed areas. Long before the President was assassinated it was obvious that his program was in trouble. Much as we would prefer to forget it in the light of subsequent events, the newspapers in late 1963 were describing Mr. Kennedy as a weak President and beginning to speculate about the possibility of his being turned out of office in the 1964 election.

Lyndon Johnson picked up the Kennedy legislative program, enlarged it, and got it enacted, all within the space of a few months after he became President. The one great satisfaction that he must take with him as he heads back to the Pedernales is that, in the domestic area at least, he kept the faith with John F. Kennedy, who had chosen him as his Vice-President, and with FDR, the hero of his young manhood.
And, for whatever it may be worth, he also takes back to Texas with him the gratitude of millions of us whose lives are more secure and comfortable than they would have been had he not accomplished the things that he did accomplish in the domestic field.

We shall let history judge Mr. Johnson's Vietnam policy. It is very difficult to assess, in the heat of bitter controversy and in the light of still incomplete information, what options might have been open to any man whose fate it was to serve as President these past four years. Carlyle and his disciples to the contrary notwithstanding, history is more than the record of great men. There are times when the great man meets the great moment and the world is changed. But there are times also when the hour has not yet come, and no man can force its coming. Herbert Hoover could not have done in 1931 what his successor did in 1933. Maybe — we are not yet in a position to know — Lyndon Johnson could not have done these past four years what his successor will be able to do this year or next. One thing at least he did. He took full responsibility for his conduct of the war, atoning by his political death for whatever betrayal there may have been of his people's confidence.

All in all, Lyndon Johnson has served us as well as he knew how. As he goes from the Presidency to the greater dignity of a professorship we wish him and Mrs. Johnson happiness and rest and peace.

Merely Incidental?

Mr. J. Edgar Hoover has intimated that, if he were asked to stay on as director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the new administration, he would do so. Since in all likelihood he will be asked to carry on, it is appropriate to ask whether it is desirable that he do so. And that is not an easy question to answer.

One the one hand, Mr. Hoover has shown great courage and a deep knowledge of the basic institutions of this country in the many years he has served as director of the F.B.I. He could have, had he chosen to do so, made the F.B.I. an American version of the S.S. or the NKVD. Especially during the McCarthy years, he had to pit his convictions and his great prestige against the demands of many of his own admirers who wanted to convert the F.B.I. into a secret police force. That he resisted these pressures is all the more admirable in view of the fact that his own estimate of the Communist menace could easily have justified the conclusion that the ends justify the means.

But Mr. Hoover is getting along in years and there is some evidence that the bitterness of unfulfilled aspirations is beginning to overtake him. And surely this, too, is understandable. After forty years of hard, dedicated police work, he sees his country in trouble. In what respect? "In respect that it has these conditions existing — these riots, these lootings and the burning and arson of buildings, stores, in various parts of the country that should not be allowed to prevail." His remedy? "Vigorous law enforcement." And how about justice? The answer disturbs us and makes us wonder whether Mr. Hoover ought not to consider retirement: "Justice is merely incidental to law and order. Law and order is what covers the whole picture. Justice is part of it but it can't be separated as a single thing."

Justice is merely incidental to law and order. This is a strange new re-writing of the prophets and the New Testament and the American Constitution. If we understand our faith and our national tradition, both insist that the whole purpose of the civil order is to ensure that, in so far as may be humanly possible, every man shall receive his due. Granted that this purpose can not be achieved except within the context of law and order. It must nevertheless be asserted that when law and order are elevated from their proper role of means to that of an end, the stage is set for tyranny.

It may be that Mr. Hoover simply misspoke himself, in which case he would surely wish to withdraw this unfortunate comment. But if he really does mean it, his continuance in office can only serve to exacerbate the troubles which he deplores.

The Bishops Speak

The lead paragraph in a news story on the pastoral letter issued last November by the American Roman Catholic hierarchy reads as follows: "The stand of American Catholic bishops on Pope Paul's birth-control encyclical is designed primarily to keep peace in the church." The next sentence reads: "The bishops bypass doctrinal logic to leave an avenue of conscience within the church for Catholic married couples who wish to practice artificial birth control."

Well, that makes it all simple enough to the tired commuter on the 5:05. It is the old familiar story. The power structure finds itself in a bind. The peasants are restless. So, with cynical disregard for principle ("the bishops bypass doctrinal logic"), the top dogs give in just enough to cool it. And a great Christian community comes out of it all looking like a political party or an industrial corporation.

Would it be asking too much of the secular press to at least allow for the possibility that those who bear authority in Christ's Church might actually be motivated by a deep pastoral concern for the souls entrusted to their charge? These are not easy days to be a bishop. The winds of change which are blowing through our whole society have not left the Church untouched. Questions long believed to have been definitively settled are being reopened and it is not always easy to see, much less judge, the motives of those who are reopening them.

The Cresset
Meanwhile, millions of simple Christians are deeply troubled. The bishops recognize this: “Married couples faced with conflicting duties are often caught in agonizing crises of conscience. For example, at times it proves difficult to harmonize the sexual expression of conjugal love with respect for the life-giving power of sexual union and the demands of responsible parenthood.” And the bishops, too, are troubled, for they are bound in conscience to support the judgment of the man whom they consider, in the most literal sense, the Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth. He has given his judgment that contraception which closes the marital act to the transmission of life, deliberately making it unfruitful, is “objectively evil.” And this teaching is no innovation; it is merely a restatement of the teachings of at least two of his three immediate predecessors.

In the midst of such troubles and confusions, where can one turn for light and hope? The bishops turn, as Christians might be expected to turn, to the means of grace: “With pastoral solicitude, we urge those who have resorted to artificial contraception never to lose heart but to continue to take full advantage of the strength which comes from the sacrament of penance and the grace, healing and peace in the eucharist.” This is the same kind of advice that the humblest pastor might give to an alcoholic who, recognizing the objective evil of drunkenness, is yet unable to make good on his sincerely-intended promise never to touch the stuff again. And we would submit that, in giving this advice, the pastor is not trying “primarily to keep peace in the church.” He might very well have no other motive than to offer the love and patience and kindness of Jesus Christ to a soul which is deeply troubled. And that is what the pastoral office is all about.

**Will Anyone Listen?**

That the bishops are not afraid to stir things up when it is necessary to do so should be obvious from another section of their pastoral letter in which they recommend “a modification of the Selective Service Act making it possible, although not easy, for so-called conscientious objectors to refuse — without fear of imprisonment or loss of citizenship — to serve in wars which they consider unjust.”

This was obviously not a very diplomatic stand to take, for it is sure to irritate both the military and the political power structures. But it was a courageous and, from our point of view, necessary thing to say. By their silence the churches have given assent to an intolerable denial of the rights of conscience. And, in the process, they have abandoned a tradition which goes all the way back through Luther to at least Augustine: the distinction between a just and an unjust war, the observance of which has always been considered an obligation of the individual Christian conscience.

The statement carries all the more weight because, in an earlier statement, the bishops had given the war in Vietnam “tentative” approval as “useful and justified.” Now they ask: “How much more of our resources in men and money should we commit to this struggle, assuming an acceptable cause or intention? Has the conflict in Vietnam provoked inhuman dimensions of suffering? Would not an untimely withdrawal be equally disastrous?” In other words, can anyone except the young man who is actually confronted with the question of whether he will go to Vietnam and kill and possibly die decide whether this is a war in which he can, with good conscience, participate?

We doubt it. And therefore our whole understanding of the nature of the Church requires us to stand with those of our young brethren who, in their understanding of the will of God, refuse to participate in a war which, rightly or wrongly, they have judged illegal and immoral. We take great encouragement from the fact that 180 of the 188 bishops who subscribed the pastoral letter share our view on this matter.

**The Spoken Word and the Written Word**

A College Press writer is exercised because medieval university administrations are “persecuting” (his word) campus editors who use four-letter words of the sort long favored by Marine sergeants, mule-skinners, and the baser set of courthouse politicians.

We would not be so arrogant as to undertake to instruct the young, but we would suggest that this troubled young man lay seriously to heart the words of the prophet, McLuhan: “The medium is the message.” There has long been a misapprehension abroad that, since both speech and writing involve the use of words, they are two forms of the same medium. Not true — as we learned the hard way many years ago.

It was our thought at that time that we could get some first-rate feature articles for this magazine by tape-recording some of the lectures and speeches of colleagues and friends who had enviable reputations as lecturers and speakers. So we did, only to discover that not a single one of them could be used without such an extensive job of rewriting that the edited manuscript was, for all practical purposes, a new piece of work. And over the years we have gotten to know a fair number of highly-regarded writers; almost without exception they have been monosyllabic, dull, and banal in conversation.

The word cast upon the air and the word set in type are two different media. The spoken word is soft and amorphous and ephemeral and it is uttered in a context of facial expressions, gestures, and inflexions which permit it a range of nuances which is denied...
to the written word. There is simply no way of capturing in writing the connotation which a certain four-letter Anglo-Saxon word carried on the lips of a tough old career sergeant who left our engineer headquarters with the tearful farewell: “There ain’t a better (censored) outfit in the whole (censored) army than you guys.” He was not trying to be obscene. In the context, he probably was not obscene. He was summoning strong words to convey strong feeling. But we rather doubt that he would have used those words in a typewritten farewell note on the company bulletin board because he, unlike some apprentice journalists, had an intuitive understanding of the fundamental difference between speech and writing as media of expression.

And we are prepared to suggest that members of an academic community who lack this most basic understanding of the nature of their craft need guidance and perhaps even circumscription while they are about the business of learning it.

**Toward Denver - IV**

Every church convention needs some sort of keynote hymn. We have given our attention to this matter and we have come up with a hymn which we offer for the use of The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod at its convention in June. Recognizing as we do the precarious condition of Synod’s finances, we waive both copyright and royalties.

**Tune: Germany**

Where cross the crowded ways of life,
Where sound the cries of race and clan,
We raise the noise of inner strife
Unheedful of the pleas of man.

While hopelorn souls uncared for slip
From time into eternity
We ponder altar fellowship
With brethren of the ALC.

One, in Detroit, we heard Thy call
To be Thy mission to mankind,
To be Thy voice and hand to all
Whom Thou, through us, wouldst seek and find.

Still sounds Thy voice, but on our ear
A more alluring challenge falls —
Manoeuvres of election year
And great, all-in doctrinal brawls.

The dotted i, the true-crossed t —
On these we spend the hours of grace.
And, thus absorbed, nor heed nor see
The sorrows of Thy weary face.

Lord, foil us, shake us, break us, bruise
Our hardened hearts; our passions quell.
Then let us hear the great Good News
And, having heard, go out and tell!

**Letter From Mars**

Dear Editor:

I had occasion to visit your planet lately on one of my periodic research expeditions. (I am professor of sensate life at the Planetary University of Mars, specializing in the study of retarded civilizations.) Quite by accident I happened by your window and noticed that you were reading a book which, if I have translated the title correctly, was entitled _The Problem of God._

I hope that you will not consider me impertinent, but it would be enormously helpful to me in my research if you would be willing to answer a question which, I must confess, has me completely baffled. Why were you not laughing? I judge from the title — again assuming that I have translated it correctly — that it must have been a very funny book. (For surely speaking of God as a problem must be a bit of mock seriousness analogous to speaking of one’s wife as an hypothesis?) But if it was as funny as the title would seem to promise, why were you not laughing?

The question has some urgency for me because a number of my colleagues in the galaxy have questioned my thesis that the best single indicator of the level of a civilization is what I have called its threshold of laughter or, to put it in perhaps more scientific language, its sensitivity to the absurdity of the absurd. On Perelandra (I believe you call it Venus), which has probably the highest civilization in the galaxy, I am sure that no one would dare to utter the words, “The Problem of God,” at a dinner table; they would provoke such riotous laughter that people would be choking on their soup. But this is apparently not the case on the Silent Planet?

If it is not, then I think that I would have almost conclusive evidence for my thesis. And I would, at the same time, be able to explain the extraordinarily retarded state of your civilization. Which would be quite a feat, because one of the most baffling questions that we have been wrestling with for centuries in the galactic intellectual world is why the one planet on which God has actually lived should also rank lowest in the scale of civilization. One can hardly escape the hypothesis that His whole purpose in living there might have been to correct some radical defect peculiar to your planet and, therefore, inexplicable to the rest of us.

I realize that you have no way of getting your reply to me. If you would be so kind as to deposit it in the evergreen outside your window I will pick it up on my next visit.

Gleb
For those who are anxious to know what the future holds in store, this is a wonderful time of the year, for in late December and early January most magazines and newspapers feature forecasts and predictions for the coming year. At one time, the forecasts were limited to the status of business in the year to come, but more recently, predictions covering all sorts of events and calamities have become popular.

In regard to the forecasts on business or the predictions on who will make the All-Star team in any sport, I have a suggestion. Don't bother to read them now, but hold them until the end of the year or the end of the season when they will make more interesting, and certainly more amusing, reading. This is a sure cure for paying any attention to other forecasts or predictions in the future.

I am not contending that one should not think about the future, because certainly in some fields, such as business or the sciences, if one did not think about the future he would be ineffective in the present. And these forecasts, which are really reasoned extensions of current trends, do make sense if they are limited in scope.

The desire, however, to know what the future has in store for them seems to be an insatiable one in many people, to the point they will believe almost any prediction. In recent years, a number of women "prophets" have been writing syndicated columns for newspapers in various parts of the country. Their forecasts lean toward the spectacular or the tragic, but they are also willing to give predictions on more mundane matters. The basis for their predictions, I understand, is vibrations, or something on that order. Whatever the basis, what these Cassandras write is read and believed without question by millions of people.

Not long ago I heard one of these female prophets on a radio program in which listeners called in with their questions about the future. Within seconds, the prophetess came back with an answer or a prediction. Most of the questions, though not all, had to do with the love life of the listener, and the answers were accepted with obviously sincere thanks, so it was apparent the answer was believed. How the prophet could get the proper vibrations through the telephone in that brief period, I have no idea.

Most of the successful predictions and forecasts have been accidents. Orwell, in 1984, was not making a prediction, scientific or otherwise; he was writing a novel in which he was trying to make a point about impersonality. As it turned out, he was accidentally right about a number of things which didn't wait until 1984 to happen. But the most successful of the seers was Nostradamus, the 16th century astrologer, whose writings have been the subject of untold numbers of Freshman term papers. A description of every catastrophe in the last four hundred years can be found in the writings of Nostradamus. He had the secret of successful prophecy, a style of writing that was so general, so vague, and so broad, that his descriptions fit almost anything that could happen. All that a reader needs in reading his predictions is a lively imagination in order to spot the catastrophes he presumably covers.

Besides holding on to predictions for a year before reading them I have another suggestion for those who place credence in the utterings of the popular prophets. Reflect for a moment on a prediction that appears in every issue of every newspaper, the weather forecast. Men with the best scientific backgrounds, working with the latest instruments of science and technology, have a poor record of predicting as much as twenty-four hours into the future. And their predictions are based on visible and measurable factors. If these men cannot "see" into the future accurately for even a day, how can one possibly believe in forecasts and prophecies a year ahead, prophecies that must take into account change, chance, and human nature?

It must be their present insecurity that gives so many people this strong desire to know what is going to happen in the future. They know they are living in an era of rapid change and the future must seem to be a confusing, if not a frightening one. Or perhaps they feel that if they know what was going to happen they could avoid some predicted catastrophe, or they could change their ways in order to prevent something from happening.

For those who think they would do things differently if only they knew what the future held, may I suggest they take a look at what the Children of Israel did about the prophecies of the Old Testament Prophets, and those were real prophets.
Modern Poetry and the American Idiom

By JACK TRACY LEDBETTER
Teacher, Walter A. Maier Memorial Lutheran High School
Los Angeles, California

The question of the American voice, or idiom, in modern poetry is, more correctly, a statement of purpose and philosophic intent: for the question of the American idiom is largely a perjorative one that unfortunately has been left to the aestheticians as to the embalmers.

American literature in general and American poetry in particular has been for some time the step-child of the continent; this, in part, stems from the fact that Europe has been "at it" longer. However, this fact, while it is of some validity when discussing the relative output of the creative minds of the two continents, nevertheless cannot hold the key to the problem: Is there an American idiom? The rise of the novelists from the 1920s on in America shows that the creative spirit is free among our cities, freeways, farms, and lakes as well as in the green fields of England, the Lochs of Scotland, and the Universities of Germany and France. In fact, the poetry of America since the twenties has so far out-stripped Europe that the question of the American idiom becomes almost lost in the volume of books that are turned out each year by our writers.

When Walt Whitman was spawning his barbaric yawp (which incidentally choked the sensibilities of the literati then as does the melodious mash of Allen Ginsburg now) one hundred years ago, we saw the beginning of the American Idiom; an expression that was at once peculiar to the language and not readily knowable from the grammatical construction of our language, and at the same time indicative of the lyric and intensely dispassionate melody that belongs to the American people and the American poet. With Walt Whitman, the American Idiom became a reality.

The vehicle for Whitman's verse was a stange one indeed. The four-wheel iamb was not easily visible, nor was the rigid pentameter frame which shielded the contraption. However, when the readers and critics looked closely at the works, they found a terrific heat coming from the boiler; for Walt Whitman was running on all cylinders and he went at full speed whether in a lazy contemplative way or in a passionately descriptive way. In short, the boilers never shut down.

From Optimism ...

It was this constant running of the engine that made Whitman uniquely American. The overflowing of emotion, the constant repetition of central ideas, the playing with color and sound with ever an eye to the direction of the thing (if not precisely the form it took) — this was the American Idiom in the making. It was a poetic speaking in tongues; it was the sounds and sense of more than he could possibly have experienced as one man; it was more than is given a hundred or a thousand men to feel and know in one lifetime; it was, in fact, too much. It was an excess. Excess or not, it was Whitman, and it was American. If he saw too many dreams in a simple occupation of the cotton picker in Georgia, it was the simple dream of the colonists when they crossed the ocean that separated them from the security of the London streets to the wilderness of the New England coasts. If his catalogue of descriptions runs to too many pages and leaves the reader with too many emotions to feel, it is the catalogue of the whole of America with its many, many emotions of beauty, pain, insult, tragedy, despair, unremitting poverty, nameless courage, and inherent uniqueness: the overflowing spirit.

It is this overflowing spirit of optimism that is uniquely American. This pure stream of philosophical thought has been diluted and strained from the stoical Greeks to the golden men of neo-classicism, through the revolt of the spirit in the form of English romanticism. In short, this optimism is the American idiom: the American voice.

But the new voice is not the bland, caviling voice of the weak; nor is it the perpetual whine of the escapist who sees optimism in the budding of the rose and in the white-hot mushroom of the bomb alike. No, this optimism stems from deeper convictions as to the worth of the country, the worth of its men, and their God.

It is the kind of optimism that allows a crack at the jaw of society if one is needed; it allows for controversy, for correction, and for change. It is not the optimism of Edgar Guest, although it is partly that; nor is it the aesthetic and intellectual and societal nihilism of T. S. Eliot, although it may be partly that, too. It is rather the synthesis of the two — a synthesis that
resists the swelling of the eclectic sponge of most things that lend themselves easily to synthesis. Rather, this joining of philosophies and emotional outlooks brings with it a new spirit and reward, and a new idiom of expression.

With the blending of the minds, thoughts, and native expressions of so many hundreds of thousands of people it was only right that America should, in time, develop some sort of analogous voice that would be part and parcel of the component parts of this system of mind and voice that is the United States. Along with this voice would go the harmonies and dissonances of the writers, the official spokesmen for the people — the voices of America.

...To Pessimism

It is interesting to note that the past thirty years have dealt a strange hand to the reading public. It is increasingly difficult to read of hope, faith, courage, and optimism in the poetics of the American poets. One would normally ask, “Where has all the optimism gone?” Better ask: “Where have all the poets gone?” For it is true that the majority of the poets now writing are helping to build, brick by brick, the aesthetic wall that surrounds the fortress erected by Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot. The name of this fortress is pessimism.

Who has not read the “Hollow Men,” “The Waste Land,” “Prufrock”? Who, who reads, has not read with an acute feeling of despair the trials of J. Alfred Prufrock who, with mincing steps, creeps across the labeled Culture that is Eliot’s America. How many times has not the image of the hollow men, their heads stuffed with straw, been seen in the minds of the readers as these caricatures dance aimlessly around the prickly pear on some vast arid plain with nothing but the shadow of a non-existent tree falling across the scene that is perpetually hot from the eternally setting sun?

Or how many times has the reader not come to grips with the elusive Ezra Pound, determined to wrestle some great and noble truth from his seemingly endless lists of paranoic memorabilia such as the grocery list, the label on the crate in a ditch in Italy, or the ravings against the horrors of usury? And how many times has this not been given up with a reluctant but restful sigh, book laid on the shelf and forgotten, with a touch of regret — regret not so much for the lack of noble purpose found in Pound’s poems, but rather for the feeling of inadequacy felt to be in the reader himself.

Thus, in this land of green and sunshine, the American reading public is faced with the decision: to read or not to read. If the former is the winner — and of late too often it is not — then the reader must of necessity begin and end with one of the culture cultists, one of the dogmaticians who have left the world their pessimistic findings. After such an unhappy chase through the thousand literary references that must accompany an intelligent reading of both Pound and Eliot, it is no wonder that the reader turns to a collection of short stories, or hunts for the copy of War and Peace that has needed reading for ever so long.

From the optimism of Walt Whitman to the obscurity and pessimism of T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound in one century is quite a jump. The jump can, of course, be explained away in part by several factors: the great depression which left little or no feeling of positivism in the hearts of millions of Americans — including its writers; the mounting war machine which has been so often at the task of restoring or keeping the peace all around the world; the advance of technology and with it the crises of personality and, dehumanization that such an advance always brings about. But finally, the answers to the obscurity and pessimism of so much of our modern poetry can be seen to lie at the feet of history and imitation.

From the historical point of view — which by the way is deceptively all-encompassing — the move towards a more “subtle” (perhaps mature would suit the mood better) poetry is due to the aforementioned events and the natural selection that follows any period of productivity, materialistic and creative alike. The rich Renaissance brought with it the seeds of the safe and solid eighteenth century with its modes and moods laid down in neat but extremely narrow rows. This, in turn, led to the romantic overflowing of the spirit which in its turn led to the quiet but comically desperate attempt at a casual formality of the Victorian world. History does shed some valuable light on the literary movements but history alone cannot account for the total, almost supinely prostrate literary form the present age is experiencing, when writers by the thousands are literally wedged into camps and inundated by the moat that surrounds the towers of the mighties, the Pounds, the Eliots.

I mentioned imitation: it is a curse. No one who has ever written a four-line poem can deny his debt to someone else’s muse; this is the way writing is done, up to a point. But the past thirty years has seen writer after writer sign up in the Pound-Eliot camp with nothing more than the desire to write poetry and an obscure notion that he has come to the right store for his materials and inspiration.

The modern poetry of today is alive with literary allusions, quotations from the stockmarket and references to the Rosetta Stone, ancient Chinese figures and numerous snip and paste quotations from Goethe, Beddoes, Mann, and Catullus, to name a few. This literary pottage cannot be boiled, much less stirred, by the reading public without the aid of large literary ladles that enable the reader to differentiate between the sometimes shyly admitted prosaic statement and the aesthetic, enormously subjective pearls that the poet tells you are there. After careful consideration of this university poetry, the reader cannot but
play the role of the crowd in “The Emperor’s New Clothes” and applauded the esoteric flights of imagination of the poets. But are we talking of the reader generally, or are we talking of the critic? I believe, unfortunately, the critic. For the reader has long since retired to the front porch with War and Peace, or has left for the drive-in movie for a little honest entertainment.

Exceptions

The exceptions to this sorry poetic spectacle have been few and far between.

Robert Frost comes to mind quickly. Frost, with his enormous facility for communication, looms head and shoulders above the writers who would dabble in the realms of gold. But once mentioned, Frost often finds himself relegated to the corner of the bookshelf with things like Huckleberry Finn and the family Bible. Things which are read, yes, — loads of times — but are not discussed too often today, because they are just understood and perhaps not relevant in any kind of intellectual way.

Along with Robert Frost there is the master of Cornwall Hollow, Mark Van Doren, who surprises with his breadth of perception and content. Not satisfied with being the nature poet of New England, Van Doren has, along with Frost, become a standard for writers who, as Frost said of himself, “want to be understood.”

William Carlos Williams again spoke with the voice of optimism and gave full allegiance to Whitman. The world looked good to the New Jersey obstetrician; he wrote of the land as he found it and what he found was good. Even in Patterson, the epic creation of his happy struggle, the basic positive outlook is apparent. But these men, while giants certainly, are holding the fort alone. More and more writers are slipping into the deceptive rut of pessimism and obscurity plowed by Eliot and Pound.

The age of criticism is here, forcefully and influentially here. But through all the grey pages of criticism, and past all the straining verse of the literati, can be seen a movement. Not a movement really, rather movement that has never really stopped. It’s called poetry.

In spite of the rather closely guarded bastions of “modern poetry,” with the built-in slogans, cliches, and gods, the air is clear just over the far range of academia. The poets are writing. They are writing their personal, poignant, excessive, bold, and optimistic poems — and they will be good. Not each poem — not even each poet. But the poems are being written, and they will be read.

Soon the poems being written will be read because they are enjoyable to read. The readers will read them and decide if what they have read is to be reread, recommended, or rejected. The communal arbiter of poetic taste will no longer be needed.

The poetic spirit that is everywhere in the world is a free spirit, and free it must remain. The poets must be free to write, and the readers must be free to read and decide.

The American idiom is based on that word — freedom — and on no other. It alone can prove the key to finding the true idiom of this country. Some giant strides have been made since Whitman. More are needed, and will come.

Summer Arson

Between us now there are no words in any mutual language to be spoken to, and understood by, both. It is as if we were alien masks.

Once our words were eager and leaping as mountain rivers rich with the spring thaw. Tumbling, turning, glinting, they flooded our world with music.

Now there is total silence; or, somehow more terrifying, stumbling, distorted half-phrases — a circus of nightmare freaks surrounding our separate cages and giggling sadistically.

I am frightened by your voice, you deafen yourself to mine. Between us is one word only which we hear and understand, but we dare not free its syllables: It is our daughter’s name.

Bonnie McConnell
Day of the Polypops

By RUDOLPH F. NORDEN

Young adults, preoccupied with rebelling against their elders, failed in their responsibility to children. In this social dislocation, the "Lord of the Flies" took over for the God who died, and Pink Guards, led by Big Kid, ruled the roost.

In the mid-1980's came the counter-revolution — the anti-young adult rebellion. It did not originate with adults or members of the older generation. "Oldsters" had taken their lumps in the Sixties and were in no position to reverse the tide of history.

The cultural backfire began with the population bloc, not in back of, but in front of ruling young adults, namely with the children. Beardless subteens turned on bearded youth, churning a teenage-dominated culture into a child-dominated one. The anti-youth rebellion inaugurated the ultimate in a children's crusade and the rule of the enfant terrible. The child's century, idealistically envisioned by John Dewey, had dawned, but with a horror none had dreamed.

The event had cast its shadow before, as early as the mid-1960's. During the crippling 1967 snowstorm in Chicago children had participated in the looting of stores. A ten-year-old girl, who was among the looters, was caught in the crossfire of the shooting and was killed. Earlier in the year, a policeman and storeowner had caught two boys, aged 10 and 11, in the act of burglarizing a shop near the University of Chicago. The policeman reprimanded the lads and let them go. When the owner asked whether this were all, the policeman replied: "These kids are organized into gangs. If I turned them in, the gang would seek reprisals against me and my family." In grade schools, teachers feared for their lives.

The Bratnik Rebellion

The battle against society and against fathers and mothers had been won by others. This was the rebellion against the median big brothers and big sisters. It was now bratniks against beatniks.

Assorted factors combined to shift the action from high school and college generations to plain kids in grade schools. For one thing, sheer numbers helped. Kids were everywhere — kids and more kids. While some parents used birth control pills, others made up for the deficit by using fertility pills leading to multiple births.

Further, the tools of technology, prematurely slipping into the hands of the most irresponsible of all people — monstrous children — also helped. What happened was this: De-civilized wolf youngsters, reared in a lair of ultra-permissiveness and freed from the restraining influences of older brothers and sisters, combined their raw natures with the sophisticated devices of science.

All this could not have come about but for the third element in the juvenile counter-revolution: A totalitarian state. Behind the children's facade sat a calculating dictator. Big Daddy, who in another generation might have posed as Big Brother, descended to the children's level and proclaimed himself Big Kid. It was he who gave the orders. His tenet was simply that children, liberated from family and the society of older youth, were the agents of the Child's State. Bred on socialized farms, nurtured in socialized day nurseries, and educated in socialized schools, members of the Child's State were well conditioned for the takeover.

Someone coined a name for the new masters or "pink guards" running rampant over the land. Numerical massiveness suggested the Greek designation for many: "poly." Since this was a population phenomenon, one must add something of the Latin populus to the name. Linguistic niceties had long ago gone out with the humanities. To find a name, it was not deemed incongruous to combine "poly" with "pop" in a shotgun marriage of Greek and Latin syllables. The resultant designation for mongrel subteens now running the country was "Polypops." It was only by accident that the word rhymed with lollipops.

The "Post-Marital Sex" Set

The children's revolution was like a mad backwards party, setting itself against all the conventions of the young adults. Instead of letting their hair grow long, the Polypops shaved their heads cleanly, thus resembling a sea of bobbing billiard balls as they marched along city streets and country lanes. Beards needed no banning, since they were out of the question for this pre-puberty generation.

Turning all of youth culture into an upside-down cake, the Polypops exchanged pre-marital for post-marital sex. It was quite simple. Since relationships with parents and older brothers and sisters were dissolved, something had to be devised to take their place, namely "child marriages." They were purely companionate arrangements — more or less formal boy-girl relationships on short-term contracts. During the time these child marriages were in force, the practice of
sex was impossible, for these were children. However, when the age of puberty flowered into sexual potency the child marriages were terminated. Then post-marital life — and post-marital sex — could begin.

There was much talk about The Pill. Not meant was the kind that prevents conception — remember the Polypops were children and didn't need it — but a pill that had the power of doubling one's I.Q. The "get smart" pill added demonic sagacity to the native intelligence of children. The Pill possessed of dreadful reality what LSD had possessed of fantasy. While the latter made for dreamers and escapists, the former made for doers and terrible realists.

The Polypops, under the leadership of Big Kid, were ruthless in their quest for power. The "civil right" plank of older teenagers was promptly replaced by "civil might" demands. The catchword was "Child Power." Instead of urging the end of the war in Vietnam, Polypops called for the end of Vietnam in the war. Whoever desired peace was thought disloyal to the awesome "Lord of the Flies" — the god of primitive child impulses. Heaven's sanction was sought for blood lust by replacing the "God is Dead" slogan of the Sixties with the "God is Dread" claim of the Eighties.

The Polypop generation used its shrill voices to proclaim rather than protest. In their cultural revolution, the young hooligans protested nothing. No renewal of an existing order was sought. No objection to specific evils in the status quo was dramatized or celebrated. They simply annihilated current culture and filled the void with their own inventions.

As for ethic substitutions, "hate morality" supplanted "love morality," in the firm belief that agape was just a word in the Greek Lexicon and should stay there. Unlike their young-adult predecessors, they did not measure their conduct toward other persons by a claim of love but a claim of hate. To the scrap heap went "situation ethics," for Polypops recognized neither "situation" nor befitting "ethics." They declared for universal "laws," suited to their whims and leading, of course, to a "new Puritanism." Their zeal prompted the wholesale destruction of "art cinema" and "dirty books," as the Hitler Jugend had previously done. Why burn the books? The answer was simple: "Who needs them?"

The Polypops, given to Spartan rigor, made one great junk pile of all sport cars, Mustangs, and even Batmobiles. These status symbols and pleasure vehicles were not for them. Rather, they perfected an ingenious machine which, like a hamburger "with everything on it," was fully equipped to make it a lethal instrument: The Ratmobile.

Guitars are Banned

While preceding young adults were full of talk as they sat in their coffee-houses, the new usurpers preferred silence. Noise, with or without benefit of electronic equipment, was taboo in concert halls. Polypops would congregate in great numbers for the Ted Solomon Show which had promised rock 'n roll or folk music. Far from adding to the clamor on stage by feet stomping and shrieking, they sat in sullen silence. Moreover, by means of electronic devices of their own they were able to silence singers and instrumentalists by anti-vibration rays. Taktive and instrument-strumming angry young men had to yield to kids who nursed their anger in silence.

The instrument most hated in the mid-1980's was the guitar, which became the symbol of silent hate. On occasion Polypop storm troopers would break into churches, where guitar-accompanied religious masses were being celebrated, and smashed the guitars.

As the new counter-revolution developed on all fronts, it became more and more evident against whom it was directed. Older folks and their old-fogy conventions were no longer the targets. Older people, including teachers, parents, and preachers, were as much as dead. It was all right to have them around, but only as servants of the Child's State.

Whom, then, were Polypops opposing? None other than the generation immediately behind them — the young adult world. Those who had once rebelled against parents now bore the brunt of a junior-grade rebellion directed against them.

In another age, teenagers and young adults had loudly and boisterously complained of their inability to communicate with their elders, for they were committed to all things new: New morality, new art forms, new drugs, and new everything. With the tables turned on them, these same young adults now complained of their inability to communicate with the far-out Polypops. What impatient teenagers and young adults had once cast into the teeth of their parents, that the more radical kid generation now threw at them: The messy world they had bequeathed to children, the hypocrisy, the lack of moral perfection, the middle-class bias — the whole bit. It made for a sympathetic understanding of the predicament their elders were in during the 1960's, but now to no avail. These were the turbulent 1980's, and no losses could be retrieved.

There is a hierarchy of nature which, so to speak, puts dogs over cats, cats over rats, and rats over mice. Translated into human terms, this is the order which puts community over individual adults, individual adults over maturing teenagers, and teenagers over children. At least, one might conceive of such a social hierarchy, logically and chronologically speaking. When these balances are upset there is trouble.

The Polypops of our story came on the scene, if one figures backwards, because children had neutralized teenagers, teenagers had neutralized adults, and adults, because of their own built-in self-centeredness, had neutralized the community. When the proverbial cats are doing away with the dogs, and rats are busy doing away with the cats, the mice not only play but also become big, arrogant, and toothsome.
Christian Themes in Tolkien

By PASTOR PAUL PFOTENHAUER
Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church
Soquel, California

When I was a child I believed in angels. I can't at this time recall what I imagined them to look like. I do recall that I thought of them as extremely powerful and good company to have along on a dangerous mission. As I grew older my belief atrophied and finally disappeared. The cause for this, I imagine, was more closely related to the oloegraphs on Sunday School leaflets than it was to a positivistic education. After all, who can believe with any kind of abandonment in the effeminate angels of Sunday School leaflets?

Today, however, I again believe. I believe in angels with a certain passion and conviction. After all, I've met Glorfindel, Gandalf, and Galadriel. And after that experience anything less than belief strikes me as both foolish and dangerous.

It is this capacity to re-awaken the child, and the faith of the child, that I find so dangerously refreshing about Tolkien. He has the faculty of broadening and sharpening one's vision so that one again begins to look for and recognize the evidence of things unseen as well as things seen. The supernatural ceases to be more superstition and is again seen as very real, in fact, the guiding factor in the events of our life and world.

One of the central figures of The Fellowship of the Ring is definitely a supernatural figure. This is Sauron, the dark lord of the Ring and the power behind the forces of death and destruction. Although his presence is felt throughout the story, not once does one meet him as one does Gandalf or Saruman. He remains in the background, planning his deadly evil, plotting the destruction of everything good and beautiful, manipulating his forces, and constantly seeking domination over all things living. He remains hidden, but for all his hiddeness he is nevertheless terribly real.

Sauron is, of course, patterned after Satan, the dark lord of our world. Like Sauron he too remains in the background. And one can, if one so desires, deny his reality and dismiss him as being merely a Biblical or medieval myth. But after meeting Sauron, one is less apt to do so. In fact one is likely to begin to recognize our preoccupation with war, the voracity of our weapons industry, the accelerating destruction of our countryside, and the ugliness of our ghettos as being indications of the demonic at work in our midst.

A more significant, although a yet more hidden, personality in The Ring Trilogy than Sauron is the One who determines the outcome of events. He is the greater because Life triumphs over death, "everything sad becomes untrue," and because compared to Him the Shadow "is only a small and passing thing, there is light and high beauty for ever beyond its reach."

Significantly the word "God" is not even mentioned in the book and His power is nowhere clearly described, although it is alluded to again and again. But despite this, He is without a doubt very much present and is finally the prime mover in those events that lead to the defeat of Sauron and the return of the King.

His activity is alluded to for the first time by Gandalf as he narrates for Frodo the history of the ring up to the day it was "found" by Bilbo. Of its finding, Gandalf states:

Behind that there was something else at work, beyond any design of the Ring-maker. I can put it no plainer than by saying that Bilbo was meant to find the Ring, and not by its maker. In which case you also were meant to have it. And that may be an encouraging thought.

Elrond, at the Council of Rivendell, speaking about the fortuitous gathering of elves, dwarfs, men, and hobbits that has occurred, views this not as mere chance but as a call from on high. He says:

That is the purpose for which you are called hither. Called, I say, though I have not called you to me, strangers from distant lands. You have come and are here met, in this very nick of time, by chance as it may seem. Yet it is not so. Believe rather that it is so ordered that we, who sit here, and none others, must now find counsel for the peril of the world.

Later, after Frodo volunteered and was volunteered "as if some other will was using his small voice," Elrond states:

If I understand aright all that I have heard, I think that this task is appointed for you, Frodo; and that if you do not find a way, no one will. This is the hour of the Shirefolk, when they arise from their quiet fields to shake the towers and counsels of the great. Who of all the Wise could have foreseen it? Or, if they are wise, why should they expect to know it, until the hour has struck?

And, at the climax of the story on Mt. Doom, it is not the bravery, faithfulness, and endurance of Frodo, necessary as these were, that brings victory. The immediate and most unlikely cause is Gollum, but the Power that dared to use even him to accomplish the
necessary ends was Another. And here Frodo quotes an earlier comment by Gandalf, "Even Gollum may have something yet to do."

In all these events Tolkien is saying that events are finally shaped by a Power that remains unseen, goes almost unnoticed, and sometimes uses the most unlikely persons as His agents.

To say this is to say that I view Tolkien as a predestinarian. However, since that word has fallen on evil days, may I quickly add that to say that Tolkien is a predestinarian is not to say that he does not believe in human freedom. He most certainly does. His heroes make very real decisions — decisions which effect their lives and the history of their times. Frodo, despite the reality of being chosen, or, perhaps on account of it, freely chooses to be the ring bearer. Sam willingly and freely chooses to accompany him and continues constant in that choice. Faramir, given the opportunity to seize the ring from Frodo, states that he is bound by previous words that he had spoken, and thus shows himself among the freest of men. Gandalf, who speaks of destroying the ring as the counsel of necessity, demonstrates his freedom in counseling the choice of necessity.

Thus The Fellowship of the Ring can be viewed as commentary, and among the best I have read, on Augustine’s words, here quoted rather loosely, “Predestination and freedom are in essence the same. They are opposite sides of one coin.”

One of the recurring themes that runs through The Fellowship of the Ring is the theme of “The Temptation.” In the temptations that come to every hero in the book one sees mirrored the temptation of our Lord, the Christ, as well as the temptation of our age and culture: to use power to accomplish one's ends. Saruman uses the argument on Gandalf:

A new Power is rising. Against it the old allies and policies will not avail us at all. There is no hope left in Elves or dying Numenor. This then is one choice before you, before us. We may join with that power. It would be wise, Gandalf. There is hope that way. Its victory is at hand; and there will be rich reward for those that aided it. As the Power grows, its proved friends will also grow; and the Wise, such as you and I, may with patience come at last to direct its courses, to control it. We can bide our time. We can keep our thoughts in our hearts, deploring maybe evils done by the way, but approving the high and ultimate purpose: Knowledge, Rule, Order; all the things that we have so far striven in vain to accomplish, hindered rather than helped by our weak or idle friends. There need not be, there would not be, any real change in our designs, only in our means.

Boromir uses the argument on Frodo:

We of Minas Tirith have been staunch through long years of trial. We do not desire the power of wizard-lords, only strength to defend ourselves, strength in a just cause. And behold! in our need chance brings to light the Ring of Power. It is a gift, I say; a gift to the foes of Mordor. It is mad not to use it, to use the power of the Enemy against him. The fearless, the ruthless, these alone will achieve victory. What could not a warrior do in this hour, a great leader? What could not Aragorn do? Or if he refuses, why not Boromir? The Ring would give me power of Command. How I would drive the hosts of Mordor, and all men would flock to my banner.

The Ring itself tempts Galadriel and Faramir and ultimately gains control for a decisive moment over Frodo. Only the intervention of Grace in the shape of Gollum rescues him.

Significantly, despite Frodo's failure to destroy the Ring on his own volition, and Boromir's temporary fall, Tolkien's heroes resist the temptation to seize the Ring because they recognize that to use the Ring is to become a servant of the Ring. In this renunciation of power by his heroes, and in Frodo's ultimate inability to destroy the Ring, Tolkien seems to be acknowledging man's limitations. Man is not Lord. He does not have the capacity to control and harness anything bordering on ultimate power. For him to attempt to do so is to overstep himself, to become guilty of hybris. And from that folly the only escape is the repentance of a Boromir. Otherwise the inevitable result is the blind, puffed-up pride and then the diminishment of a Saruman.

Finally, the only way open for a man to deal with power over others is to forfeit it, to give it up, as Frodo did. And even this, this above all, cannot be accomplished without the aid of Grace.

This wisdom our age needs desperately both to discover and to practice. For we are faced by the temptation of our own Ring. The way to dispose of it we have not yet discovered and at the present moment voices are heard in the land urging its use — of course for a good purpose.

Parenthetically, the entire question of man's power over others is dealt with most acutely by Goldberry in her answer to Frodo's statement that all the land must belong to Tom Bombadil if he is Master.

"No indeed!" she answered, and her smile faded. "That would indeed be a burden," she added in a low voice, as if to herself. "The trees and the grasses and all things growing or living in the land belong each to themselves. Tom Bombadil is Master. No one has ever caught Tom walking in the forest, wading in the water, leaping on the hill-tops under light and shadow. He has no fear. Tom Bombadil is Master."

Another recurring theme is the Biblical one of the Suffering Servant who is willing to die that others might live. Gandalf, Aragorn, Frodo, and Sam, are each in their own way Christ figures. They willingly sacrifice themselves for the sake of others. In the ascent of Mt. Doom we see Frodo and Sam climbing their
appointed Golgotha in order there to lay down their life so that their world might be delivered. And while it is Frodo's task to carry as his cross the Ring of Power, Frodo himself becomes the cross that Sam has to carry. And it is in this event that the reality and power of the fellowship of the Ring is most clearly demonstrated. In the words:

As Frodo clung upon his back, arms loosely about his neck, legs clasped firmly under his arms, Sam staggered to his feet; and then to his amazement he felt the burden light. He had feared that he would have barely strength to lift his master alone, and beyond that he had expected to share in the dreadful dragging weight of the accursed Ring. But it was not so.

Tolkien graphically picture for us what his friend Charles Williams elsewhere described as the doctrine of co-inherence or substituted love. If Mt. Doom can be compared to Golgotha, the Field of Cormallen is Easter. I personally think that that chapter is the high point in the narrative. When I first read the section where Frodo and Sam received the praise of the assembled host, my appreciation of what St. John was speaking about in Revelation (where he describes the hosts of heaven praising the Lamb that was slain and is alive forevermore) was measurably increased. I began to see with new eyes what it means to celebrate and to worship.

As a concluding comment, I want to say something about the effect of Tolkien's range of characters on a person's view of his fellowman. The person who has met wizards and nazguls, elves and orcs, hobbits and dwarfs, isn't apt to despise or think lightly of the everyday experience of meeting another human. In fact he will treasure it. For at any meeting, if he looks closely, he is likely to discover a hobbit hiding in the wrinkles around a man's eyes or an orc in the sneer of another man's face. And if he is truly fortunate, every now and then he will come across someone who looks positively entish. Keep your eyes open.

From the Chapel

The Sign of the Cross

By ERWIN J. KOLB
Dean of the Chapel
Concordia Teachers College
Seward, Nebraska

Last year a Senior from the college came to me rather excitedly one day and said, “What's the right way to make the sign of the cross?” At that time I didn’t know whether there was a right or a wrong way and so I asked him, “Well, what do you think?” He then explained that he saw some students of Concordia making the sign of the cross going from the left to the right and he said, “I've always been taught that you should go from the right to the left and have your hand stop at your heart.” I thought that sounded pretty good so I half way agreed with him. But when he left it bothered me, because I thought, Well, as Dean of the Chapel, I ought to know a little bit more about the devotional practices of the Lutheran church. And so I began to talk to others who made the sign of the cross and I did some reading and some praying about it and I'd like to share with you some of the things I found and what I've come to know and believe.

When one goes to Scripture one cannot find that people there made the sign of the cross upon themselves. What one finds, rather, in the New Testament, especially reflected in the Epistles, is the centrality of the cross — that Jesus Christ and Him crucified is the center of life and faith for the Christians in the early church. Paul, for instance, in his little letter to the Galatians, near the end Chapter 6, verse 14, says, “But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.” In verse 20 of chapter 2 he talks more about this crucifixion thing. He says, “I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live, I live by the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Paul is making a comparison, of course: Just as Christ was nailed to a cross and died and then came back to life a new being, so, he says, when you and I come to faith in Him it's as if our natural sinful self were nailed to the cross with Christ and crucified there. And then we, too, must be born again. We have a new life, become new creatures. And this is what happens as Christ himself comes to live in me, Paul says. Remember how he said it in Romans 6 about Baptism: “We are buried with Christ by Baptism into death, that like as Christ is raised from the dead by the glory of the father even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

With this kind of thinking — of trying to keep Christ, his cross, his crucifixion central in one's thought through out the day's activity — it's easy to see how the cus-
tom developed in the early Church of making upon oneself the sign of the cross, as a kind of reminder that Christ was in them. And this is how it developed. Long before the cross was used as a religious symbol in churches or in buildings it was used as a religious sign upon people when they made it upon themselves. And so we can read of it, for instance, in the early church fathers. As early as the year 200, Tertullian writes like this: “In all our undertaking when we enter a place or leave it; when we dress or bathe; when we take our meals; when we light the lamps in the evening; before we retire; when we sit down to eat; before each new task we trace the sign of the cross upon our foreheads.” A hundred years or more later Chrysostom concluded a glowing sermon on the sign of the cross with these words: “When therefore thou signest thyself, think of the purpose of the cross, and quench anger and all other passions. Consider the price that hath been paid for thee, and then wilt thou be a slave to no man. Since not merely by the fingers ought one to engrave it, but before this by the purpose of the heart with much faith.”

It’s true that as this custom developed in the church it grew to excess and many superstitious practices came with it through the Middle Ages. By the time of the Reformation, Martin Luther threw out most of the uses of the sign of the cross. He suggested, though, that it be retained where it was beneficial and useful and those places were certain times in the public service such as the Invocation, the Benediction, in connection with the Sacrament, at the concentration of the elements, in dismissing the communicants, and in Baptism.

What happened after this in American Lutheranism, it seems to me, is that we followed Luther’s idea and kept the sign of the cross in our public worship services at the Benediction, at Communion, and at Baptism, but we discarded the custom of making of the sign of the cross in our personal devotional lives — which Luther suggested we keep. For instance, with the morning and evening prayer, Luther suggested in the Catechism that when you get up you bless yourself with the sign of the cross and say: “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” and then you begin the morning prayer. The same with the evening prayer. In the Large Catechism Luther suggested that parents instruct their children how to sign themselves. Now why the Lutheran Church kept Luther’s ideas about the signing in the public service, but not in our own personal lives, one can only guess. Perhaps it is because we did not want to be identified with the Roman Catholic church, which uses the sign of the cross a lot. Perhaps we did not want to appear pietistic. At any rate, for some reason it was not kept. Only in recent years have some people in the Lutheran church been suggesting that we again recover for our personal use this making the sign of the cross upon ourselves and there are differences of opinion among us as to how to make it and when to make it and to what to say with it. For instance, Paul Lang in a recent book entitled Ceremony and Celebration, suggests that you make the sign of the cross by putting the fingers of your right hand to your forehead, to your breast, to your left shoulder, to your right shoulder with the words, “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.” But Dr. Arthur Carl Piepkorn, in a pamphlet entitled The Conduct of the Service, suggests that you make the sign of the cross from your forehead to your breast, to your right shoulder, to your left shoulder, stopping at the heart and saying these words: “My Lord Jesus Christ came down from heaven and was incarnate for me and crucified for me and has entered into my heart.”

Who should make the sign of the cross? I used to think when I saw somebody make the sign of the cross in the church service — well, I used to wonder about that person. But now I realize I wondered only because of my own ignorance, my own ignorance about the historical use of the sign of the cross and its development, my own ignorance about what it can mean to an individual to cross himself. Now I will no longer wonder. Rather, I will praise God when I see people make the sign of the cross and I will say “Amen.”

Should you make the sign of the cross upon yourself? You know when you were baptized your pastor did it for you, and he said, “Receive the sign of the cross both upon the forehead and upon the breast in token that thou hast been redeemed by Christ the crucified.” Must that be the only time in our lives when we receive in a very personal way the sign of the cross? I rather think that if it helps an individual in his own personal devotions to make the sign of the cross upon himself, then he should do so. Not as a routine, not merely automatically every time he hears somebody say, “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost,” but when it is meaningful to him and when it helps him in his devotion. And it seems to me it ought to be doing these things. It ought to be, if I use it, reminding me of my baptism, when I was first brought to faith, when I was first signed. It ought to be a strengthening of my own thoughts about Christ. It ought to help me remember that Christ did come down and was crucified for me and lives in my heart; and if it does this, I think it’s proper for an individual to make the sign of the cross upon himself. For me, I think it is more meaningful to do it the way Dr. Piepkorn suggests, and that I do it like this, and say to myself (with the fingers together and the hand shaped as if in blessing), “My Lord Jesus Christ came down from heaven (Touch the center of the breast) And was incarnate for me (Touch the right shoulder) And crucified for me (Touch the left shoulder and stop over the heart) And has entered into my heart.” Amen.
**Contemporary Writers in Christian Perspective** (Roderick Jellema, editor; William B. Eerdmans, publisher) is an on-going series of pamphlets that deals with the work of contemporary writers and its relationship to Christianity. The series already contains some fifteen essays on writers as diverse as Edith Sitwell and Kathleen Raine, William Golding and Saul Bellow, Flannery O'Connor and Ernest Hemingway. The essays are introductory in character and suitable for readers without specialized training in theology, literature, or either. Because it has two basic concerns — one literary and the other theological — the series should appeal to readers who share either or both of these interests.

Although the series is addressed primarily to Christian readers and designed to introduce them to contemporary literature, its significance extends beyond the limits of the Christian community because the essays speak for as well as to that community. In addition, these essays are exercises in literary criticism, not in religious instruction or edification. As a result, they not only make a specifically Christian contribution to literary studies but also bring literary training and theory into the Christian conversation about literature. In these essays, then, we see Christians attempting to enter into a dialogue with the “world” by spelling out their relationship to it. Because they take up their discussion of contemporary literature at that point where theology and literary criticism meet, these men can make a distinctive contribution to each.

In giving serious attention to contemporary literature, the series invites its readers to give the twentieth century writer a fuller and more attentive hearing. Further, its recommendation of these writers implies that they are worthy of attention on theological as well as on literary grounds. Their works have a religious seriousness and a theological significance that have often passed unnoticed inside the Christian community as well as outside. The essays in this series set out to deal with this seriousness and its significance.

In their attempt to deal with literature, the series’ critics give the contemporary writer a hearing enriched and altered by theological concern. In return, their own theological perception has been quickened and modified by its encounter with literature. The theoretical justification for this enterprise lies, I think, in the integrity of the relationship between faith and life. The intimate and even organic character of the connection between them implies not only the possibility of their interaction but their interdependence as well. When one is cut off from the other or when the connection between them is denied, both wither and eventually die. Thus, faith must be brought to our encounter with literature not only because faith itself permits or even demands it, but also because literature requires it and suffers when it is withheld. Indeed, criticism itself is diminished in stature and crippled by its inability to give literature the full hearing and the balanced judgment it deserves when the critic denies or ignores the religious dimension present there.

For the Christian reader, this dialogue with contemporary literature offers the challenge of concrete encounter with the world in which he lives and to which he speaks. Such works give him an opportunity to see this world with the powerful clarity of vision that the imaginative writer can alone bring to it. In this encounter, the Christian can find the sort of self-understanding — both as a man and as a Christian — that results when one participates in and serves this world rather than fleeing from it in condemnation and fear. He will participate in the world that the contemporary writer depicts not simply because he listens attentively to it but also because he recognizes that the artist’s image of man — however savage or broken it may be — is also an image of the kind of men who are Christians. The demon peering back at us from the literary looking glass has features that belong to us all, and no one who, in repentance, acknowledges his fellowship with the world dare deny this. The contemporary writer’s story can also contribute to our self-definition as Christians, not because it is a reflection of the world in which we are forced — by our finitude and by our historically conditioned natures — to live, but because it is the world into which we have been sent as disciples and servants. Thus, as Preston Roberts has so often and now so poignantly insisted, we cannot know — or even really say — what it means to be and become Christian in our time by trying to go over, under, or around, the human predicament to which the contemporary writer testifies. It is only as we go beyond encounter and move through this predicament by acknowledging our participation in it that we will come to understand what its redemption means and what it costs.

I have said that the series speaks for the Christian community as well as to it and that, in doing so, it offers a specifically Christian contribution to literary studies. The non-Christian reader or the one who likes to isolate his faith from his experience may well view this whole enterprise with a jaundiced eye. He will be likely to find the series’ insistence upon the religious seriousness of contemporary literature inappropriate to its aesthetic character, unnecessary for a generation already well aware of its literary merit, or offensive to a world come of age in its ability to do without both religion and God. To such a reader, the series’ recommendation of the contemporary writer may well seem little more than a belated and irrelevant “Me too” added to the chorus of critics who have defended the literary merit of these works and to the praise of an audience that, by its very existence, testifies: “These men tell our story.” Yet, the theological recommendation is neither superfluous nor gratuitous. It is not merely an instance of cultural lag on the part of the Christian community, an example of religious impertinence, or still another case of pious patronization.

The significance of the series’ contribution lies in part in its peculiar ability to bring together the critic’s aesthetic and the reader’s human concerns in a way that neither of them can accomplish by himself. In doing so, these essays make a distinctive contribution to the critical discussion going on today. In addition, they enter this discussion by taking issue with those factions in both the literary and the religious communities which either deny a religious dimension in literature or question the religious seriousness of contemporary literature in particular. The series also responds to those who question not only the depth and breadth but also the integrity of the vision to be found in the works of the contemporary writer. Those who deny this integrity call the aesthetic stature of these works into question as surely as those who pointed to the truncated character of its faith attacked its religious stature. Thus, the Christian recognition of this vision as an integral and religiously serious one, though not necessarily a fully or even centrally Christian vision, adds a new and significantly different voice to the critical discussions of the twentieth century.

Contemporary Writers in Christian Perspective takes its place, then, in the critical arena and asks to be judged as literary criticism rather than Christian opinion. In order to give it the attention it deserves, the Cresset has assigned a joint review to three writers. As the first in this group, this essay will deal with the series as a whole and with its contribution to the literary and theological discussions of which it is a part. The subsequent
essays will deal with individual pamphlets in order to give a more detailed account of this kind of criticism's contribution to the discussion of a given writer and to the Christian's conversation with him.

**Authors with a Conscious Religious Tradition**

The essays in *Contemporary Writers in Christian Perspective* approach the meaning and function of the series' title in two very different ways. Some use the "Christian perspective" as a way of locating or restricting the critic's materials. Here, this perspective refers to Christianity's impact upon the writer's work. If applied to the series as a whole, this approach would necessitate restricting the essays to those writers whose work either reflected or somehow stood within the Christian perspective. Since the series has not confined itself to such writers, other essays incorporate the Christian perspective into their discussion in another way. They use it to refer to the point of view from which the critic looks at and functions toward the works before him. Here, the notion of the "Christian perspective" is not used to locate or restrict the critic's materials but to define his treatment of them. Since both approaches have been used — separately as well as in combination — neither provides an adequate way of describing the approach taken by the series as a whole. Under the circumstances, it is tempting to claim that the series offers no single critical approach and must be described merely as a group of essays written — presumably — by Christians. Certainly the essays vary so radically and in such important respects that its unity can justly be called into question.

If we are to find a significant basis for the series' unity, we must look for it, I think, in the editorial point of view that permits both approaches and provides a clue to the kind of criticism implicit in the series as a whole. We can describe this point of view if we argue that the series attempts to bring the Christian perspective to bear upon contemporary literature by asking its critics to come to terms with the vision of life expressed in the work of a given writer and with its relation to that of a Christian. Here, we have a use of the "Christian perspective" that will serve for the series as a whole and one that is — at least in part — definitive for the sort of critical approach engendered by the series. This use of the notion locates this perspective in the discussion itself, where it functions as an objective point of reference in terms of each critic describes and discusses the works before him. The "Christian perspective" does not function here as a literary or a critical concept, but is used instead as an objectively conceived Christian point of view. When it is used in this way, the concept functions rhetorically by locating the subject matter of each essay and by focussing the critic's discussion of his literary materials in terms of his concern for their relationship to Christianity. Thus, the series' solution to the problem of honoring both its literary and its theological concerns consists in its use of the theological concern as a rhetorical device that determines the subject matter at stake in its discussions. It is worth noting that, by relegating the theological concern to the rhetorical structure of the essays, the series chooses systematic separation of these concerns rather than the kind of systematic combination that is possible when the theological concern is permitted to shape critical method and literary theory.

In any event, the critical approach of the series is one that must be seen in terms of its peculiar subject matter rather than in terms of its materials or its way of handling them. The series is not concerned with Christian literature or with Christian criticism but with the relationship between the work of a given writer and Christianity. Since the rhetorical structure of the series requires that every essay concern itself with this relationship, the fundamental issue at stake in each is whether a given writer's work is Christian or not. Yet, the series' actual use of the "Christian perspective" to locate its subject cannot be responsibly described in terms as simplistic as these. The essays are intended as instances of literary criticism, not as exercises in theological commentary and religious judgment. As a result, the critical discussion to which the series addresses itself also shapes its approach at this point and therefore becomes important to a more precise understanding of it.

Anyone sensitive to the demands of recent critical theory will not confuse the task of the critic — even of the Christian critic — with a literary heresy trial or a witchhunt. Though both may fall within the domain of the religious morality of the series, the series requires that the critic expects the respect of his professional colleagues. As a result, the series' critics have been anxious to respect the literary character of their materials. Like many critics of our time, they also recognize and respect the autonomy and the integrity of the aesthetic enterprise and of imaginative literature in particular. They reflect this desire in their refusal to violate literature by judging it on religious rather than on aesthetic grounds and in their reluctance to offer final judgments of any sort. These men — like their colleagues — see criticism as something that is directed toward a better understanding of a writer's work. This process is in itself a way of valuing the work, and the task of evaluation consists in determining how well a given work does what it set out to do. Thus, such critics do not read literature in order to approve or disapprove of it on grounds that are exterior and therefore also irrelevant to his works. It makes no difference whether it is his orthodoxy or his lack of it, the religiousness or the secularity of his themes, or his status as a Christian or a non-Christian; all are irrelevant to the question of literary merit. These critics are more interested in what a writer has to say and how he says it than they are with an attempt to determine whether he has been right or wrong. Thus, the series' critics refuse to use the "Christian perspective" as a kind of yardstick by which to measure the writer's religious stature and then render judgment upon it. Instead, they use this perspective as a way of getting at and pointing to the nature of a writer's commitment and as a way of coming to terms with the religious seriousness and importance of his work, whatever the nature of his faith may be.

The series' use of the "Christian perspective" as a point of reference and a rhetorical — rather than a literary or a critical — concept is not consistent with the formalist's desire for a criticism that is formal, internal, and pure. Nevertheless, in their use of this notion, the series' critics reflect a similar desire to give serious attention to literature that is based on textual analysis and a similar preference for discrimination that is descriptive rather than normative. Although the issue at stake in each essay is the Christian character of a given writer's work, the subject of the essays is actually more complex. We have spoken of it as "the work and its relationship to Christianity" or "the relation between the vision of life expressed in the writer's work and that of a Christian." Both formulations reflect the series' use of the notion of the "Christian perspective" as a way of discriminating between religious positions without being either religiously or morally judgmen
tal.

The notion of relationship that is central to the series' critical approach also provides us with a basis for systematic analysis of the essays as items in a single series. If the works under consideration seem centrally controlled by the Christian faith, their relation to the Christian perspective can be described in terms of identity. In this situation, Robert Drake demonstrates that the Christian perspective has in fact informed and controlled Flannery O'Connor's work as a writer and that this perspective has itself been given a powerful interpretation by Miss O'Connor's stories. He does this by showing how this perspective affects her literary method and how it both gives and is given shape in the vision of life reflected in her stories. If, on the other hand, a writer's work does not seem to be Christian in any central sense, the critic may specify this relationship more precisely in at least three somewhat different ways. He may do what Ralph Mills, Jr. does when he points out that Christian themes and images play an important role in the poetry of Kathleen Raine but do not control her work as a poet. In Mills's interpretation, Miss Raine's work shows the impact of Christianity but has been most profoundly shaped by another religious vision. In a similar situation, however, Paul Elmen takes a very different tack. He attempts to locate and define William Golding's vision but does so...
finally in order to distinguish it from that of a Christian. Finally, the critic may wish to stress the similarities between two visions as Robert Detweiler does in his discussion of Saul Bellow. Mr. Detweiler locates Bellow's vision in order to respond to it in more positive terms by concentrating on those aspects of it that Christians can share and appreciate.

When an essay fails in its task of discrimination, it does so most often because the critic fails to complete the task of defining the relationship he set out to discuss. This happens whenever an interest in either similarity or difference is so sharp that it excludes or overbalances the other. If a critic looks too long at similarities, he risks being charged with intellectual confusion and with an attempt to "baptize" into the faith every writer whose work he admires. Such critics are anxious to establish a sense of community, but they do so at the cost of recognizing and respecting individual differences and their importance. Here, a false claim of conformity becomes the price of inclusion within the Christian perspective. On the other hand, the critic who concentrates too much upon differences may seem bent upon excluding all who fail to conform to his version of Christianity or prone to make mere difference the ground for condemnation. Such critics wish to protect the distinctive identity of the Christian, but they do so at the cost of mistaking difference for isolation and opposition. Exclusion, conflict, or both therefore become the price of individuality. Thus, a critic may be competent to deal with literary materials and conscientious in his preliminary respect for them, but if he fails to complete the task of discrimination, his theological commentary will seem guilty of religious imperialism all the same. It makes no difference whether this imperialism is carried on in the name of conformity or separation, for it goes beyond the need to make theological distinctions to a partisanship that warps the critic's judgment and reflects a concern that is basically extra-literary.

The faults described above are not failings of the series or its critical approach but defective instances of the rhetorical strategy employed in them. There are, however, at least three problems that do seem to reflect either limitations in the series' format, and editorial assignment or faults of the critical approach represented by the use of the rhetorical strategy.

The first problem consists in the number of essays which are not actually guilty of the faults described above but which nevertheless appear to be. This seems to have happened largely because the series' forty-eight page format and the editor's demand that each essay provide a preliminary introduction to the writer's work as well as a chronological survey of his works do not permit the critic space for detailed literary analysis or for an attempt to link literary discussion and theological commentary in a satisfying way.

This same arrangement also tends to make the distinction between literary discussion and subsequent theological analysis and commentary too sharp. When the two become separated or even seem to be linked in a merely mechanical manner, the theological concern will inevitably appear irrelevant, gratuitous, or worse.

Second, the series not only tends to encourage preliminary literary discussion that is merely succeeded and augmented by theological analysis and commentary, but it also uses the rhetorical strategy as a systematic way of isolating its literary and theological concerns from one another by assigning the theological concern to the rhetorical structure of the essay where it need not — and indeed, strictly speaking, cannot — inform or interact with literary theory and critical method. This desire to separate the two concerns is apparent in the publisher's insistence that the series' use of the Christian perspective as a point of reference has not been permitted to "compromise the form and content of the booklets," which — he hastens to add — are "specifically oriented toward literary criticism." If the separation is conscious, it is systematic and serious; if, on the other hand, it is merely unconscious, it nevertheless reflects an ambivalence about the precise nature of the series' task. Both the separation and the ambivalence flawed a number of essays. More to the point, however, the theoretical separation flaws the kind of criticism implicit in the rhetorical strategy itself and therefore poses serious problems for the individual essayist, who must either overcome the intrinsic weakness of the strategy itself or succumb to the separation implicit within it.

Finally, in using systematic separation and rhetorical connection of its literary and theological concerns, the series fails to meet the methodological needs only not of theological criticism but also of dialogue itself and fails as well to meet the theoretical demands of the critical formalist. The rhetorical strategy tries to avoid offending the critical formalist by refusing to make the distinctive claim of the theological critic that literature has a religious dimension intrinsic to it and by refusing also to claim that literature cannot, therefore, be fully read or understood until this dimension has been taken into account. Yet, this renunciation does not bring to the rhetorical strategist the acceptance or the approval of the formalist. On the contrary, the series avoids claiming that literature has a religious dimension only at the price of locating its theological concern in an extra-literary point of reference that is to be used for the sake of Christian discussion. As a result, the rhetorical strategy is open to the charge that it discusses literature in terms that are, finally, extra-literary. Thus, this strategy is not even successful as a critical dodge, an attempt to side-step the theoretical and methodological issues raised by its theological concern. Because the strategy entails discussing literature in extra-literary terms, the formalist will only conclude that it is not criticism at all. The essays deal with literature, to be sure; but, at the level of literary theory and critical method, the series cannot properly claim to be literary criticism and remains theological commentary that makes competent use of its literary materials. Perhaps the theological critic, who insists upon combining the literary and theological dimensions of his task so that they interact with and inform one another, need not be quite so harsh. Nevertheless, he must note that the rhetorical strategy fails to provide dialogue with a systematic foundation for its theological concern, with a theoretical basis for its claim to be a kind of literary criticism, or with a practical approach to the literary work which will be at once integrated as an approach and integral to the sort of literary object with which it must deal. As a result, the series seems at best — an enterprise in which theory and practice are basically at odds with one another and — at worst — one which discusses the relationship between Christianity and literature but refuses to permit or to facilitate dialogue between them. At most, this strategy must rely upon the talents of the individual critic for some way out of the dilemma posed by the strategy itself.

Fortunately, the success of the series and its essays does not rest on the rhetorical strategy or the critical theory implicit in it. While a discussion of this theory may shed some light on the individual essays — by pointing out the problems the authors confronted and by suggesting the sorts of solutions embodied in their discussions — these essays deal primarily with writers and their works, not with critical theory. Further, the essays' chief interest for the lay reader and for most critics lies in what the authors have been able to see and to say about the writers they discuss, not in the critical method they employ or with its ability to give the author his right to see or say what he does. Even if I have been correct in both my description of the series' approach and its theoretical failings, the essays themselves are not uniformly subject to the same description or to the same criticism. Further, few but the critical purist or theorist are terribly concerned about the need for consistency between a critic's theory and method and the actual judgments that he makes. Although individual essayists have, no doubt, been affected by and even afflicted with the series' approach, each must be judged in terms of his own solution to the problem of meeting the demands placed upon him not only by the series and its assignment but also by the critical discussion to which he addresses himself and by the dialogical enterprise in which he has consented to take part.

SUE WIENHORST

January 1969
CHRISTIAN AUTHORS

If we interpret loosely the key terms of the title of the series, "contemporary writers" and "Christian perspective," there exists a group of writers who appear to be natural for this kind of criticism. One thinks immediately of T. S. Eliot, C. S. Lewis, Charles Williams, Francois Mauriac, Paul Claudel, Graham Greene, and Evelyn Waugh, to name only a few. Several of these writers are already included in the series; and since this is an on-going venture, essays on the others, no doubt, will be forthcoming. These writers, by their own professions, are distinctly Christian; at least, they stand clearly in the Christian tradition and thus, in a broad sense, ask that their work be interpreted as Christian literature. Of the writers treated in the series thus far, those that belong to this group are: Charles Williams, T. S. Eliot, Graham Greene, Flannery O'Connor, Peter DeVries, and John Updike. Although these writers can be classified in a single group, they obviously differ greatly both in the nature of their Christian commitment and heritage and in the range and nature of their literary works. Thus, the critical approaches to each of these authors by the writers in the series also vary widely.

Given the 48-page format of the series and the amazing productivity of Charles Williams—over forty published books—the immediate problem Mary McDermott Shide­ler faced in her study of Williams is obvious. Where does one begin? The answer is probably equally obvious; with a description of his literary and theological world. But that does not really help to give focus to such a large body of works. Miss McDermott attempts to solve the problem by dividing the works into literary genres and classifying the major themes that pervade all his writings. Thus, after an opening description of "The Man and His Work," she uses his "novels as a medium for examining his interpretation of the world, his Arthurian poems for showing how he understands who and what man is, his plays for the consideration of the ulti­mating of life, and his non-fiction as the basis for a concluding—but not conclusive—estima­tor."

Such a task has the advantage of being carefully organized and allowing for some detailed examination of individual works, but at the same time it runs the risk of fragmenting the total vision of the author. Miss McDermott is rather careful to avoid this danger. Essentially, she sees Williams dealing with two worlds, the natural and the supernatural. His novels are an attempt to demonstrate how these two worlds are operative in all human affairs and ultimately coalesce into a single world, a universe, "in which things that we know by our senses and reason are continuous­ly interacting with things that we know by other ways." Williams' allegorical poetry, too, with its major theme of the identity of love, attempts to link the two worlds: human love as it images divine love. For Williams, love is the ultimate reality, "a means to human fulfillment and the perfect expression of the real nature of man."

Williams, of course, was never equivocal about his Christian commitment. As Miss McDermott states, he "believed that we are free to accept or to reject the Christian world view, but not to evade the choice, because evasion is equivalent to rejection." That Williams' Christian commitment permeated all of his writing, including literary criticism, Miss McDermott demonstrates conclusively; how successfully this vision is embodied in the literary works she sees more hesitant to determine. For me, the novels are a case in point. The plot of War In Heaven, for instance, is built on two lines, a detective story and an adventure story. Into these stories, however, are interposed the supernatural world of the Holy Grail and forms of witchcraft. This supernatural element, while it may be thematically justified, severely strains the credibility of the action. Even after heeding Miss McDermott's advice that "none of his books can be grasped at first reading," I still have difficulty accepting her thesis that through the "active union... of great opposite experiences and ideas" and through the interaction of the natural and supernatural worlds a clear vision of a single world has been dramatically and effec­tively rendered.

It seems a bit ironic that T. S. Eliot, who, more than any other twentieth-century writer, has been viewed as a contemporary Christian writer should elicit one of the least signifi­cant studies of the series. Yet little more can be said for Neville Braybrooke's essay on Eliot. It may be that so much has been written about Eliot that any short study attempt­ing to survey his life and his works would seem superficial. But I doubt that.

Mr. Braybrooke's approach is primarily descriptive—a lot of chit-chat about Eliot the man (He used the familiar T. S. Eliot signature already at the age of seven.) and a survey of the poems, plays, and criticism. Again, because of the bulk of Eliot's work, detailed commentary is impossible; but where­as Miss McDermott selected single works of Williams for close analysis, Mr. Braybrooke chooses to discuss almost all of the major poems and plays, commenting briefly on Eliot's poetic and dramatic techniques and suggesting a spiritual progression in the major poems. He notes Eliot's achievements in taking English poetry "out of its Georgian backwater and into the midstream of Euro­pean poetry," and in re-creating an interest in earlier metaphysical and symbolist poetry. He sees Eliot's most significant role, however, as that of a prophet, foreseeing Christianity released from its old structure and operative in the post-Waste Land world. But this is only hinted at in the final chapter. The real shortcoming of Mr. Braybrooke's study as part of this series is that no real attempt has been made to view Eliot's poetry and plays in or from a Christian perspective.

In Graham Greene Martin Turnbull more obviously assumes the role of a literary critic. This is not to suggest that he does not see Greene as an apologist for Catholi­cism, but it does imply that his judgments are based first of all on Greene's success as a novelist and dramatist. With Greene, the religious conflict is frequently the subject matter of his novels, and Mr. Turnbull recognizes that the two can hardly be separated. Thus, after an introductory section on Greene's background and early training as a novelist and another chapter devoted to the early novels—The Man Within and The Name of Action—Mr. Turnbull focuses on the "religious novels"—Brighton Rock, The Power and the Glory, and The Heart of the Matter.

In Mr. Turnbull's analysis of Greene's major novels, the dilemma of the "Christian" critic comes clearly into focus. Greene, of course, brings religion and literature together, but it remains the critic's task to inter­pret and judge the effect of this fusion. For Mr. Turnbull, Greene is only partially successful. He argues that Greene, like any serious artist, writes about the human condi­tion, but for Greene this condition is mani­fested primarily through sex and religion, or the flesh and spirit. In the novels this dicho­tomy frequently poses the conflict, but Mr. Turnbull sees it also as Greene's main weak­ness. In Brighton Rock the world of Greene is a world of a highly idiosyncratic religion, and Mr. Turnbull also finds "something ob­cessive, something unbalanced, about the writer's preoccupation with sexuality." His thesis, then, is "that there is something wrong with the quality of the religion in Greene's novels and that this is reflected in the language." He distrusts Greene's language: the images call attention to themselves, and "the words are not dictated by the sub­ject; they are put in from the outside."

Thus, Mr. Turnbull's examination of the novels becomes highly technical. He finds the ending of The Power and the Glory un­convincing both because of Greene's dramatic presentation of the action and the "moral confusion that is particularly characteris­tic of the protagonists of the Christian novels."

The implication is that in The Power and the Glory the priest's confusion is also Greene's. But if we see the pursuit motif clearly—the "Hound of Heaven" image—we can, I think, understand and accept the ending as Greene's method of portraying the power and the grace of God. God the Pursuer forcibly stops the priest in his pursuit from Him and brings him to his knees in repentance. This does not refute Mr. Turnbull's charge that language and action are frequently melodramatic, but it does explain the priest's "moral con­fusion."

Nevertheless, Mr. Turnbull's analyses of the novels are penetrating, and he does focus on Greene as a Christian writer. He has taken his task of writing an essay for this series seriously. His final chapter, "The
Dilemma of the Christian Writer," is especially significant. He indicates that if a writer is a Christian we do "expect (his) religion to be the uniting principle which provides an objective scheme of values that will enable him to place things in perspective.

But he also argues that truly Christian literature can only be produced by a society that is, generally speaking, Christian. He cites Dante, Chaucer, and Landlgand as examples. Because twenty-century man...is thrown back on personal relationships," Mr. Turnell wonders how great a Christian writer's impact can be. Yet, he does remain hopeful. He says that Greene does "remind us on every page that human beings...have immortal souls; that the alternatives salvation-compromising in her Christian commitment:

"...the great Guilt, the Great Displaced Person, but also the great Displacer of Persons.

"Displaced persons" also populate the novels of Peter DeVries, but his characters have been displaced into the suburbs, cut off from their natural roots. Whereas O'Connor's "displaced persons" are pathetic or tragic, DeVries' are primarily comic. Roderick Jel lemma, in his essay on DeVries, sees this clearly and avoids the danger of underplaying the brilliant comedy by focusing exclusively on what is serious, religious, and ultimately Christian. He sees that the "tragico-comic vision of [DeVries'] novels is unified by significant concerns...what can only be called a religious concern." In Chapters III and IV he examines five novels — The Tunnel of Love, Comfort Me With Apples, The Tents of Wickedness, Through the Fields of Clover, and Reuben, Reuben — attempting to analyze this tragi-comic vision. And although the emphasis in these chapters is on the comic dimensions of DeVries' art, Mr. Jellemia does note that the "bewildered, pathetic little men who people DeVries' world find...that they do not understand, that their world is strangely empty, that they cannot, for all their advanced knowledge, redeem themselves.

From a strictly theological point of view the solution to the problems of such a world would appear to be obvious. But DeVries' novels are not theological treatises, nor is he committed to Christianity in the same way that Charles Williams or Flannery O'Connor were. In many of his novels, DeVries has played the role of the skeptic, questioning traditional Christianity and its relevance to twentieth-century society. Andy Mackeral in The Mackeral Plaza, Don Wanderhope in The Blood of the Lamb, and Stan Waltz in Let Me Count the Ways are all, in part, rebellions against the Christian tradition, but, as Mr. Jellemia makes clear, rebellion and struggle are religious concerns. In the three novels just mentioned, the struggle is between belief and unbelief, and in The Blood of the Lamb, at least, between faith in God and rejection of Him. The comedy still exists in these novels, but the religious concerns become more central. Mr. Jellemia calls DeVries 'One of God's Clowns': "What he gives us is the comedy of Original Sin." He sees in DeVries finally a religious ambivalence: he is neither "a mischievous rebel who has turned against Christianity," nor "a Christian apologist. He is both of these equally — and therefore he is neither." What Mr. Jellemia suggests, then, is that although DeVries is not writing orthodox Christian novels the "religious concerns" are at the center of his tragi-comic vision of life.

Kenneth Hamilton, who has also contributed an introductory essay entitled In Search of Contemporary Man and a critical essay on J. D. Salinger to the series, takes a similar approach in his study of John Updike. Avoiding the claims that Updike is "an apologist for traditional Christianity" or "a skeptical critic of conventional religion," he examines Updike's fiction chronologically, focusing on themes and motifs that he sees recurring in all of his works. Some of the central motifs are: "a sense of place," opposed to the displaced person; the significance of faith, "Faith between persons, between man and all of creation, between man and his Creator"; the importance of the family as the natural human unit; sexuality; "natural piety"; and the question of belief in the existence of God.

What concerns Mr. Hamilton is not the nature of Updike's Christianity or humanism, but the conflicts and struggles that lie at the center of his novels and short stories. As with DeVries, these struggles are frequently of a religious nature. Mr. Hamilton sees the conflict between "natural piety" and a belief in God becoming central in the collection of short stories, Pigeon Feathers and Other Stories. He sees Updike affirming that "Man in his human dimension must have something to bind one day to the next. At the least he needs to express human piety. It is because our existence today is so fragmented that we feel alienated from nature, from one another, and from God." This alienation is further explored in Rabbit, Run. Grace is the force that can heal this rupture between man and God, but although the "motions of grace are present, yet the instruments mediating grace are woefully inadequate." So Rabbit rejects grace and exits running. Mr. Hamilton reads the next two novels more positively. Caldwell in The Centaur recognizes that perfect freedom in this life is dependent on God's having "visited the earth, giving grace upon grace, in Bethlehem." And Joey in Of The Farm is made to understand by his mother in the end of the novel that his natural piety was destroyed because "he forgot God."

It is worth noting that Professor Hamilton, a member of the Theological Faculty of United College in Winnipeg, Canada, and the author of a number of books in the field of theology, has done some of the most penetrating work in the series. Conversant in the fields of both theology and literature and skilled in the language of each, he fulfills, as nearly as possible, the lofty goals of the series: "to provide readers a better understanding of a given writer's work...of Christianity...and...of human existence because of the interplay between these two."

ARLIN MEYER

January 1969
The mind too easily, I suppose, makes associations of events, experiences, and ideas whose only similarity is that of occurrence. When the mind receives several telling blows within one month, it deals with them by coordinating them. Fully aware of the danger of fallacious reasoning attendant in such enterprise I should like to place in evidence a concert, a concern, and a conference and draw from them a conclusion bearing more import than will perhaps be apparent.

The New York Pro Musica is a group of musicians I have long admired. In every way they seem to epitomize the musician as opposed to the music-maker. Therefore the concert scheduled by this group for mid-November was eagerly anticipated, thoroughly enjoyed, and stored among favorite memories. Their program was the music of sixteenth and seventeenth-century Spain. For a quick two hours some splendors and some simplicities from that golden age were alive for our ears' pleasure and our minds' satisfaction. There were the records of a people who dominate pages of political history books but whose music is rarely touched upon by the music historian. Who but the specialist has access to these artistic testimonials?

Scarcely any city of size is without its art museum where one can reestablish contact with his past and study thought beyond the boundaries of present time and space. Paintings and sculpture are not too removed from each of us. Music of medieval and renaissance civilizations, however, goes mostly unheard. Of course a record catalogue can be used against my argument but, while I am grateful for the blessings of the industry, enough has been said in these columns to suggest my rebuttal. Reproductions are not hung in museums.

In the days before academic patronage of the arts it was assumed that wealth, status, and power obliged the patron to support artistic creativity for personal adornment and for the good of society. Schools were the repositories of the past where critical minds were developed by careful, studied application to the monuments of the past. With the passing of patronage to educational institutions and foundations academic groves came to be inhabited by both critics and creators. Current fashions even threaten to evict the prior inhabitant.

Most educators are concerned for a solution to this enforced cohabitation. Can a curriculum adequately and fairly patronize the historic as well as the futuristic? Earlier it was the university to which one turned for performances of old music. The collegium musicum is a venerable institution within ivied walls. Today collegia tend to be luxuries allowed only the larger and wealthier schools. Most organizations differing according to repertoire and academic purpose. Most have functions to fulfill, not unlike those of the football team, which take precedence. How shall a college keep the musical past a living heritage — music of all the arts must be lively — and how, at the same time, shall it cultivate the tentative, the spontaneous musical expression of the here-and-now?

At a conference of choral conductors on this campus in the same month that the concert and the concern were on my mind, a possible solution to the dilemma was suggested by a paper read there and by responses to it. The lecturer deftly laid out the ways in which musicians of the past organized themselves to meet the functional and artistic goals in the musical art of their various times. He charged that the American college has perpetuated the organizational schemes which pertain to only one set of goals, those of the nineteenth century, a state unbecoming representatives of universal knowledge and experience. It was suggested by the speaker and by his respondents that the position of colleges today demands of its musicians (students and teachers) a flexible organizational scheme. Is it unworkable to plan a cooperative of musical forces, singers and players, who group and regroup themselves according to the repertoire performed and the functions which evoke the performances? Perhaps a series of concerts presenting music of several periods would find a musician participating now as soloist, then as member of an ensemble, and even as instrumentalist or singer as the occasion demands.

We must have both: critical appreciation of our cultural heritage and creative sensitivity to the life of today. If it is the college or university that is obligated to society for both, then the musician in an academic environment must do like the juggler and keep several balls in the air at the same time. To have fewer than the greatest number of musical spheres in the air simultaneously is intellectually reprehensible and also makes for a rather dull act.
"Farewell! a Long Farewell to All My Greatness!"

By WALTER SORELL

Our two repertory theatres have come out with two plays each and present them, as befits a repertory theatre, in repertory fashion. The APA-Phoenix Company presented T.S. Eliot's "The Cocktail Party" first, a drawing-room comedy about God, and only God knows why. I have always been wary about the idea of choosing a psychoanalyst as a stand-in for God and letting him play with the destiny of a few characters. The play is now nineteen years old, but it has aged tremendously and creaks in its phony joints. The acting was bad and made the play seem worse than it is. In contrast to it, Moliere's "Misanthrope" received a wonderful production. This play, which is 302 years old, doesn't show any inclination to give its age away. In Richard Wilbur's translation it is a mocking joy.

The Repertory Theater of Lincoln Center turned twice to Shakespeare. It seems to be the dream of every actor to play Hamlet or King Lear. Lee J. Cobb, famed for his part as Willie Loman in "Death of a Salesman," an excellent actor, was absent from the stage for fifteen years. (What an abominable theatre system which offers no enticement and roles for such an actor for so many years!) All this time Cobb has dreamed of playing Lear on stage. Finally, the dream became fulfilled, but not King Lear. Or, let me say, his was a different Lear from all the Lear s so far. It was a low-keyed, middle-class Lear, deprived of his majestic dignity, hurt, and fury. This Lear was a Willie Loman, successful, rich, ready to retire. Desiring to invest his property in his children, he only expected to draw on their love for interest during the days of old age.

It has often been said that King Lear cannot be acted and, although this notion has been just as often proved wrong as not, Cobb's Lear makes one wonder whether there isn't something to that thought. Shakespeare wrote a part which starts on a climactic note that must be sustained and can be sustained through its various moods of growing madness. Cobb chose to make his entrance as a little old man, tired from the burden of ruling, yawning at a moment when he is ready to make his biggest transaction. His Lear is a far cry from the giant patriarch whose madness can only be explained through the injured pride of a great man, who cannot bear having wronged and been wronged. But Cobb was just a bit annoyed with Cordelia's stupid stubbornness. He put, from the very beginning, too much senility into this old man and thus almost made his other two daughters' harsh attitude seem justified.

I doubt one can play Lear con sordino. One critic rightly remarked that Cobb's madness would hardly get him admitted to Bellevue. It was not convincing, all the more since Philip Bosco's Kent had Shakespearean majesty and Lear's mirror image, Rene Auberjonis's pained fool, had more power in his crying fury than this Lear had in any scene — perhaps with the exception of the very last moments when Lear holds the dead Cordelia in his arms and laments that his poor fool is hang'd. But coming so late, this muted outcry — however moving — is too little. One doesn't feel that a crown, an empire, the illusion of greatness, the belief in human kindness had finally received their deathblow. "Farewell! a long farewell to all my greatness!" said Shakespeare in Henry VIII.

It needs a great deal of greatness — as a writer and man — and also a great deal of daring, a prerogative of youth, to write a play in which a character appears, called Will, married to a somewhat older girl, called Anne, whose home happens to be in an English town, resembling Stratford-on-Avon. Only George Bernard Shaw got away with it, but by then he was an old hand at playwriting, a mature practitioner of his craft, and even then he only wrote a delightful sketch about "The Dark Lady of the Sonnets."

The Repertory Theater of Lincoln Center presented a new old play by William Gibson, "A Cry of Players." It was written in 1946 when Gibson must have been in college, or not yet out for too long. His play has all the fire and fervor of a young writer living in Topeka, Kansas, determined to make his way to Broadway, as Shakespeare had to break away from Stratford to get to London. The play has all the essential ingredients for a good drama: a genius who cannot help finding his destiny, who must break away from his home and break out of the prison of matrimony. But in this case, living in Elizabethan England, he also cannot help breaking out into Shakespearean language. There's the rub! "Will you love, honor, and live with my vomit?" young Will asks Anne to make her understand his need for separation.

Gibson did not master the impossible: to make Shakespeare speak off stage in an acceptable, and yet Shakespearean, manner. But the drama of the genius is there, the genius who thinks of the future plays he will write more highly than about his wife's tears. In retrospect, we are glad that Anne Hathaway's tears did not keep him back. Frank Langella and Anne Bancroft are superb in the leading roles and save the play which isn't the thing, as Will will write one day, we are sure, when we see him run off to his immortal greatness.
When Mantle hits the ball out of the park, everybody is sort of stunned for a minute because it’s so simple. He knocks it right out of the park, and that usually does it.

Frank Stella

Art is a kind of hymn to the sense values of the world around us.

David Baily Harned

High on the wall over the intermediate landing of a grand, double staircase at Chicago’s Art Institute “skims” the shape of a shifting, crisp, monumental golden surface. Seen from the top landing twenty feet across the stairwell, the form looks like a great, quietly glowing heraldic fragment, or, less romantically, an enigmatic, disembodied system set loose by a computer.

Either way, it seems right at home where it is. Handsomely surrounded by the white walls of the irregular stairway space, its internal pinstripe pattern and resulting external silhouette echo the rising and falling of the light grey marble steps and of the trim, honey-colored wooden railings. It is surprising how the free, unframed action of the painting’s edge comes to grips with and seems to help shape the space of the room itself, much as do the parts of an in-the-round piece of sculpture. Strangely, the beholder is therefore forced to an awareness of the space of the room almost as though the room were a part of the painting.

In contrast, other paintings hanging in the stairwell having conventionally rectangular formats seem to intrude awkwardly and weakly into the common space. Furthermore, when attending to those “rectangular” paintings the important thing, obviously, is to block out everything else in the room, and to “enter into” the world of the particular painting, balancing one part against another, and responding to the interplay of the forces and parts within the frame.

Certainly most of the basic issues of Stella’s painting are also demonstrated within its borders, but to “enter into” his painting is not to experience a complex ordering of parts. Rather it is to be impressed with a radically simple whole. Though his painting is twenty feet long and seven feet high there still isn’t much to focus on within it. For example, the painting has just one paint color (shiny, dense gold) interrupted by one concentric pattern (made by leaving thin lines of unpainted matte white canvas). This unrelenting, standardized pattern creates the sense of one horizontal shape angled up on

the left and down on the right in one encompassing, exact configuration of reverse symmetry (that nevertheless optically gives the illusion of being longer on the right than on the left). And finally, the one taut, flat, continuous surface is firmly contradicted by the strong optical illusion of the planes buckling forward and backward along the diagonals. By using so few basic elements with such singleness of purpose Stella, it seemed, hoped to let the shapes, especially, speak with a primary force they had never been allowed to show before. It was as though he hoped to uncover a kind of nugget of irreducible, uncompromised visual clarity; one undiluted "homerun" sensation. Stella himself has explained: "All I want anyone to get out of my paintings, and all I ever get out of them is the fact that you can see the whole idea without any confusion... What you see is what you see."

But even more than that, Stella is most concerned to create works that are true to the medium of painting. Basically, a painting consists of a flat surface limited to some sort of a shape on which colors, lines, and shapes are marked. The eye sees these marks as capable of both asserting the flat surface and of creating an optical illusion of depth. To acknowledge and extend the power of these essentials, especially that of the relationship of painted shape to canvas shape, has been Stella’s concern in series after series of paintings over the last ten years. These works have been much acclaimed as a very influential and penetrating "form analysis" of the language of painting.

Reinforcing this pure, formalist approach, the title, From Nothingness Life to Nothingness Death, emphatically suggests that, despite its large public size, the painting has no hidden religious meaning or references to nature or to other things outside of painting. It is purely "artificial". Apparently the artist does not believe there are any overriding meanings to life other than the irreducible, utterly unified sensory experiences offered in such paintings as this. In other of his paintings he has used titles with very specific nouns, such as Union Pacific, or names of cities, apparently to keep the beholder’s attitude factual and not abstract.

Such concern for pure form should extend the possibilities of the medium and our own awareness and pleasure in the sensory world that God has made. But to isolate painting so completely from the other aspects of life seems artificial and, in fact, just not possible. Just as any mark on a surface does not just appear flat but automatically becomes part of an optical illusion of depth, so also does the mark automatically call up associations and metaphors of meaning. The Christian can celebrate with the artist his achievements of seeing and sensing clearly and unequivocally. But for the Christian another level of truth and clarity could be added if an artist would combine his form analysis of the visual media with an equally single-minded analysis of "archetypal" forms and symbols expressing the irreducible in Christian beliefs today. I think it could be done. It would be a smashing homerun.
This column was written during Thanksgiving services, like the preacher said, in the year of our Lord 1968.

Thanksgiving? Surely this is the year for Thanksgiving. We are living longer, are healthier, stronger, and even more alert — all these things in spite of our debilitating affluence. More and more people are getting an education, going to college, getting advanced degrees, and are consequently sliding with ease into the comfortable corners of the economic world.

But my preacher interrupted: how to give praise and thanks for those people who make our lives difficult.

We like to hear about people who make our lives difficult. We like to hear about the John Birchers and the bigots who oppose us in the civil rights movement. It gives us confidence to talk about the bigots, the people we think are less than we are.


In our Thanksgiving service, a stalwart worker in our church told us why he is thankful: This Thanksgiving Day is really one of our national holy days on which we can demonstrate one of life’s holy purposes, the giving of thanks; we accept many things as if they were due us; we are thankful for our jobs, our families, our grandchildren, our lifelong membership in the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod — these are all gifts of God; under our flag we enjoy freedom of initiative and enterprise; the church, we are thankful for it.

But the church.

My preacher interrupted: we have been living our Christianity in a kind of ivory-tower world; perhaps our church (he must have been thinking of our congregation) is more relevant and life-giving in conflict and tension.

The wonders of the world? Science? Technology? Are the instruments of science and technology to be used for evil ends? VietNam. The atom bomb. People confined to physical and psychological ghettos in this wonderland. Why do we find it so easy to go to war? What is the use of all this science and technology?

But my preacher interrupted: St. Paul could find things for which to praise and thank God in even the worst people and situations.

Praise and thank God for those preachers who say religious people as a church should not help poor people, or minority groups, or culturally different people to get better housing? Praise and thank God for those preachers who make fun of what we are trying to do in the civil rights movement? In a very real sense, these are my enemies. I certainly do not agree with them. Thank and praise God for them? But my preacher meant just that.

A black lady, really a princess among women, also testified to her reasons for thanksgiving: she is glad to make a plea for the poor in our Thanksgiving services; on this day we have the chance to pick up the problems of the bewildered in our society.

But the church? What has it really done for the poor? Where and when has the church really spoken for the poor?

But my preacher interrupted: St. Paul finds good to praise even in corrupt Corinth. My preacher sounds a little like Paul, who was bothered a great deal about the immoralities of the Corinthian Church but who nevertheless had a deep affection for it.

Then, another friend, a delightful girl who really makes black beautiful, expressed her gratitude in our Thanksgiving service: we are thankful to be alive, in this world, for Christ, for God.


But our preacher interrupted. Here he is again, my preacher, turning it all upside down again with his theme: “Fill your mind with those things that are good and deserve praise.” There he stands before the altar not only “confessing our sins of thanklessness, seeking God’s forgiveness, and asking for the gift of thankfulness” but also, for heaven’s sake, “giving thanks for our enemies and for the conflicts in our lives.” Our preacher keeps talking about forgiveness, about looking for and finding forgiveness, in the face of this brokerage of interests that is the focus of any congregation: black and white, rich and poor, liberal and conservative, payers and non-payers, we and they, the patient and the grumblers.
The Mass Media

Ruby, Ray, and Sirhan Go to Trial

By DON A. AFFELDT

The campaign is long over, and cries of "Law and Order!" are now seldom heard in the land. Yet we may expect to hear those cries again, for neither the persons who made them nor the persons who caused them to be made will have vanished by the time of the next campaign. At the moment, though, talk of The Law is apt to be less hysterical then it was in the fall, and will be again; besides, this month presents the American people with historic examples of the law at work. Hence, these thoughts:

In the view of most Americans the legal order consists of the legislator, the cop, and the judge. The legislator makes the law, the cop catches those who break it, and the judge slaps on the sentence. This crude view of the apparatus of our legal order perhaps derives from an older, simpler day when men were men and cops were cops and robbers were robbers and the cops were in business to chase the robbers and the robbers were lucky to live to see a courtroom. More plausibly still, this simplistic view of the legal order reflects the average man's limited confrontation with The Law. Traffic court is the only court he ever sees, and murder trials are the only trials he reads about. And when he says "There oughta be a law..." he means "Somebody should stop people like that from doing things like that to people like me." It's all very personal, very elemental, very clear-cut.

But this view of The Law can lead to no good when offered as an account of the operation of law in a complex society. It ignores altogether matters of procedure, for one thing, and for another it fails to reflect the institutional character of The Law. These matters are critical to the existence of a legal order in a democracy and deserve some attention.

Sirhan Sirhan and James Earl Ray will shortly go on trial, and Americans will carefully attend to those proceedings. Lawmen will make every effort to assure a fair trial for these criminally accused, and have already kept them tightly sequestered since their arrest. Noticing this, people are bound to wonder what justification there can be for the vast amount of effort and money that will go into providing fair trials for persons such as this, who everyone knows are guilty. In this day of instant communication and probing reporting, there is hardly a man alive in the country who doesn't already know the facts nearly as fully as will the juries which eventually decide their fate. What, after all, did we learn during Jack Ruby's trial?

This line of thought seems to me to be fairly persuasive, and I am prepared to admit that trials such as these are mainly justified, if you will, by rough analogy to trials for less cosmic crimes, less public-ly committed. Yet it is important how one goes on this analogy, for one might be tempted to argue that, just as these crimes leave the world untroubled about who the guilty party is, there is little doubt in most trials about the identity of the guilty party — and so, just as in the cosmic trials, so also in these lesser trials there is little or no justification for procedural safeguards or other great care for the protection of the accused. And we only have to go a step or two farther down the path of this reasoning based on the backside of an analogy to conclude that recent Supreme Court decisions are unjustified, that no good produced by those decisions can offset the evils they foster by tying the hands of the police, that persons who riot surrender their right to restraint on the part of law enforcement agencies, and the like.

So it is important how we decide about the justification of the Sirhan and Ray and Ruby trials, for this decision has consequences. Fortunately for us, we do not have to trust our own lights on the matter, for The Law in our society is not a matter of the will of the majority at a given moment, or even of the will of the cops or of the judge at the moment of arrest or the day of trial. The Law is an institution in our society, an institution which does not derive from, but must observe, certain limitations stated in the charter of our society, the Constitution of the United States.

The Bill of Rights, as well as recent Supreme Court rulings based on it and on its brother, the Fourteenth Amendment, issue from a rich and varied background of political experience in the ways of democracy, an experience which repeatedly reveals the critical importance of institutional and procedural safeguards in the legal order. Some may think that the general good is ill-served by certain court decisions based on safeguard-provisions, but it is clear that the courts and Founding Fathers thought these provisions themselves served the general good as well as anything might.

The plain man deserves legal protection even from certain operations of the legal apparatus of society — not because he might be innocent, but rather because he's a man. After all, we want our legal order to administer justice — and that requires that we treat the accused as an appropriate recipient of justice, which animals and stones are not.

No one in our society may take the law into his own hands — least of all the cop and the judge, without whose rational devotion to The Law we would all be lost.

January 1969
Rex Glorae Nevertheless.

What can one say now as 1968 becomes 1969? Our holiday cards this year read: "A Happy Christmas and a Blessed New Year — Nevertheless". With that last word we hoped to persuade our friends to look once more at the candles and carols of Christmas and the vigil light of New Year's Eve....the dim and darkening light of 1968....not in a spirit of fear and regret but in the sure knowledge that the lights of this blessed season are more real than all the apocalyptic events of 1968.

"Nevertheless"....There is always something of this as we face the coming of another year...."Despite"....despite the tragedy of Czechoslovakia and the hate in our streets....despite the growing stain of time and the long forgetfulness of our generation....nevertheless....we can face 1969 because we have heard the whimper of a baby and the still promise of a wandering star....They are clear and holy on the horizon of another year....

If our "nevertheless" is more poignant and desperate this year it is because we have almost forgotten something....Many years ago St. Gregory of Nyssa said an extraordinary thing...."Christ" he wrote "was rising on the day of His Ascension through the spheres of angels — and most of the angels did not recognize Him....'Quis est iste?' they ask. And the angels who are with Him — the two men in white whom the disciples saw — answer: 'Rex gloriae ipse est, rex gloriae! He is indeed the King of Glory'....

A strange and curiously modern story....The angels do not recognize the Son of God, the King of Glory....this man with the traces of His passion still upon Him....It is the same King of Glory the angels saw descending to earth when the Word became flesh, returning clothed with the same humanity but this time bruised by death and bearing the red garments of the wounds of the Cross....But His kingship is instituted....and it will be established forever on the Last Day when He will come to take visible possession of His Kingdom in the presence not only of His friends, but of His enemies....Until then His victory is going on in all man-

kind, in the world of men and angels, above and below all the heavens....Nevertheless....

There is great need, this New Year's eve, for a few in our time to murmur again: "Rex gloriae — nevertheless"....This is our world's great forgetting....We sing carols for the Child but forget the hymns for the King....

Is this not a good thing for us to remember as another year comes?...."Rex gloriae"....So much has He become the Lord of Lords....So much have our years become His years....So much has He changed — and will change — life and history....So much has He brought life and light and fire into the night of our loneliness and the desert of our years....

This is our only hope for 1969....the vision of the "Rex Glorae"....It is so long, so long since we have borne the weakness and privation of living without His conquering and comforting power....Tonight the snow is falling softly on our house and the noise of our world is stilled....but even above this silence we can hear the coming of His feet....not soft and quiet now, as on the mount of Olives or Calvary, but alive with the beat of growing thunder as the years go by....Hearing that, we shall be able, by His pity and power, to enter another year of the "Rex Glorae"....nevertheless....

Perhaps a special word for those of us who have seen many, many years?....It is also a part of the work of the King Who has visited us:

"The lapping sea of Time before his feet
Crept near; the wind was wild;
But he, who knows the King he came to meet
Saw it and smiled.

"Stepping without a hesitating word
Into the ebbing tide
As if he saw the footprints of his hand
Gleam at his side.

"Borne up by Love that gave as he had given
He crossed the midnight foam
And laid his hand upon the door of Heaven
Like one returning home."