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Comment on the Significant News by the Editors

The Facade

A couple of months ago we had a few things to say about the distinction between power and authority. As a new administration settles in, it might be worthwhile to look at this same subject from another perspective.

We take it as axiomatic that power is freefloating. Authority is the lawful right to wield power. It may be conferred by the voters of a city or county or state or nation; by the board of directors of a corporation or university; by the national convention of a church body; or by any number of other "duly authorized" individuals or agencies. But power is always seized—sometimes by the man who happens also to possess authority, quite often by someone who has no claim at all to authority.

When a President appoints a Cabinet, therefore, we cannot know, until some time has passed, whether the secretaries of the various departments are actually the movers and shakers or whether they are merely facades behind whom other, sometimes anonymous, men direct the course of policy. As a facade, the Nixon cabinet seems not much better or worse than most. We shall have to wait and see whether it is anything more than a facade; whether, for instance, Secretary Rogers can shake the State Department out of its sleep narcosis, whether the Attorney-General can actually overrule Mr. Hoover on policy matters, whether Secretary Laird can claim the final word on military policy and expenditures.

The President, in introducing his cabinet, noted with pride that the men he had chosen were generalists, by which we assume that he meant men of broad interests and competences. Those of us who are involved in the business of higher education will watch with considerable interest how these men perform, because their successes or failures may help us to resolve a question which has long troubled us. That is, if it is one of the principal functions of higher education to prepare young men and women for constructive leadership in the years ahead, which route ought we to take—the route of general or liberal education, producing the generalist, or the route of technical or professional education, producing the specialist? Which (to return to our original topic) is the route to power?

Our money, although at rather short odds, is on the specialist, even though our heart is with the generalist. We suspect that the new secretaries are in for experiences of frustration such as they have never known before. We hope we are wrong, but our experience of bureaucracies has been that real power lies with the specialist on permanent appointment. Secretaries come and go. They stay.

The Walker Report

Most of us believe what we want to believe, and if facts get in the way, so much the worse for the facts.

The assistant managing editor of this magazine was in Chicago during the disturbances of last August. His report was essentially what we have since read in the Walker Report. On the basis of that report we wrote an editorial protesting the "clubbings and beatings that had taken place on a particular street corner of a particular American city." Making full allowances for the intense provocation, we nevertheless maintained that it was reasonable to expect professional policemen to maintain discipline within their own ranks. In only slightly different (and stronger) words, this is what the Walker Report says.

We are satisfied, therefore, that the Report was a fair statement of what actually happened. We are pleased to see that the Chicago Police Department has taken disciplinary action against a number of the policemen involved. But we are not at all sure that the events which happened in Chicago last August and which
the Report details have been taken as seriously as they need to be taken by that great majority of us who were not directly involved in what happened. Some of us, indeed, have shown a disposition to discount the Report or even to read into it a kind of apologia for the excessive and unlawful conduct of those policemen who were involved in what the Report condemns as a “police riot.”

The refusal to accept facts once they have been demonstrated is an act of intellectual dishonesty. The inability to become indignant when power is flagrantly misused is clear evidence of moral insensitivity. And the failure to speak and act against injustice when one is persuaded that injustice has been done is sin.

We can not undo what was done in Chicago. But we can make it clear to the civil authorities in Chicago and in every other community in our country that we will not tolerate a repetition of those events. The responsibility to do so rests especially heavily upon those of us who carry enough clout in our communities that mayors and chiefs of police would be reluctant to risk our disfavor. One doesn’t have to get shrill about it. A few quiet words over a cup of coffee can get the message across. Police do not riot without at least the tacit support of the community power structure.

Apollo 8

If it had been our choice to make, the money we have spent on the space program would have gone into making Planet Earth a fit place for human beings to inhabit. There is so much that needs to be done and so many, in our own country and abroad, who might have had a better chance in life if we had invested in human beings what we have spent to find out that the moon is grey and has a surface that looks like a dirty beach.

But, of course, that never really was the choice. Harlem, Bedford-Stuyvesant, the South Side of Chicago, Hough, Watts — these were never really in the running for the funds which we have invested in Houston and in Cape Kennedy. Where the monies diverted from a space program might have gone, we do not know. But it is most unlikely that they would have gone to the poor. For we have not yet learned to care about the poor. They are the lepers of the modern world, condemned to live among the tombs and to cry “Unclean! Unclean!”

So, given the real choices that were open to us, it may be that we chose the best of them when we decided to shoot for the moon. The astronauts have shown us what men can do when they are “fully stretched,” and because this is an intangible thing it would be hard to put a dollar and cents value on it. Competence and courage, grace under pressure, a sense of humor

under the shadow of death — these are rare qualities these days, and to have the attention of a large part of the world focused upon men who possess them in special measure may well be worth every dollar that we have spent in underwriting their adventures. The style of an age is set by its heroes, and men like Bloom, Lovell, and Anders offer a welcome contrast to the celebrities whom Hollywood and Madison Avenue parade across the stage to the scrap pile.

It might be worth noting that these real, authentic heroes have almost nothing in common with the fake heroes that television and the films have been offering us. Let the record show that the captain of the first manned space-craft to orbit the moon was a lay reader in the Episcopal Church, that his comrades were an Episcopalian and a Roman Catholic, that all three were good family men, and that when they needed great words to express feelings which men had never before needed to express they found them in the Book of Genesis. And given this wide gap between fact and fiction, let the writers of fiction bring their fantasies in line with the facts.

Blackmail to a Non-State

It is good to have the men of the Pueblo back, and few have shown any disposition to quarrel with the legerdemain by which their release was accomplished. But there remains, at least in our mind, a nagging anxiety about the way things were handled. What it comes down to is that a ransom was demanded, and we paid it — paid it, indeed, with a cancelled check, but paid it nevertheless. And we paid it to a government which had permitted, if not authorized, the mistreatment of prisoners of war in contravention of the most elementary principles of international law.

What we could have done, or can do, about it is another matter. A journalist can indulge in the catharsis of writing grumpy editorials and the more belligerent among us can recommend moving into North Korean waters with guns blazing. And, of course, there is always the standard solution of throwing the whole matter into the lap of the United Nations. But all of these are merely ways of letting off steam. Whatever their value may be for exorcising the memory of a past indignity, they offer no promise of a world so organized that the indignity will not be repeated.

For us, the clearest lesson that came out of the whole Pueblo incident was that mankind can no longer afford the anachronism of the national state. Both in North Korea and in South and North Vietnam we have been placed in the ridiculous position of having to deal with non-states as though they were real, and there is nothing to prevent the proliferation of these non-states in the future. We can not afford this kind of global balkanization. In every area except the poli-
tical mankind is moving toward a world community, and it is just for this reason that the drawing of still more boundaries is both absurd and dangerous. It is never safe to treat fiction as fact, as we have done in Vietnam, in Korea, in parts of the Near East, in parts of Africa, and even in the very heart of Europe.

At some point along the line in our diplomacy, we shall have to make it clear that we shall not deal any longer with non-states, that we shall no longer haggle with office-boys, that we shall take our quarrels and grievances to Mr. Big himself. We may not yet be ready for a global government, but we may be ready to take the first step of asserting a global law of agency which would make the principal (any one of the major powers) liable for the acts of its agent (any one of the score or more of puppet states which we and other major powers have created). The kind of world order that might result from such a step would no longer rest more upon compulsion than consent, but at least it might reduce the incidence of international hoodlumism.

The Joy of Our Salvation

So many times these past few years when we had just about had it with young people and were almost persuaded to accept the counsels of the hard-liners something has happened to flush out our irritation in a great wave of empathy. It happened again this week. The winter number of our campus literary magazine came out. This is an example of the sort of thing it said to us:

If you ever come to me for comfort I will tell you: we're all lost in the same darkness.

Kathy Carino

Discount this as one will on the grounds that Weltenschmerz which has always been characteristic of sensitive youth, there is still a cry here which sounds across the generation gap and echoes in the hearts of those of us who have not yet hardened our hearts to sorrow and pain and injustice. And if any word of hope and comfort has been given us, we ought to speak it, even at the risk of seeming to be merely mouthing pious cliches.

So, then, what shall we say? Only this, perhaps: that your darkness is no greater and surely no more frightening than ours. Perhaps there are only two differences between us: we have become accustomed to it and we have learned that, incredible as it must sound, we are not really lost in it. There is a Hand which reaches out from time to time — much more seldom than we might wish — to steady us, to nudge us away from the fatal misstep, to pick us up when we trip and fall.

No doubt this sounds like preacher talk. It has been one of the great embarrassments of our latter years to discover that what we were once so ready to dismiss as mere preacher talk happens to be, quite literally, the word of God. After years of heavy — and unsatisfying — theologizing we have had to settle for little pinpoints of light and, for the rest, go it on faith.

But as the darkness deepens — and, Miss Carino, is does the farther one goes down the road — these little pinpoints and the gentle pressure of the unseen Hand make the whole question of comfort irrelevant. It is not comfort that we really want, but Joy. And take it from one who, at your age, would never have believed it: that is exactly what is waiting for you out there in the darkness.

Karl Barth and Thomas Merton

In choosing to call Karl Barth and Thomas Merton home on the same day, God seemed almost to be trying to nudge us away from our always too narrow conception of the variety of Christian experience and witness toward a clearer understanding of that diversity of gifts which is the treasure and the strength of the Church.

Professor Barth was one of the great teachers of the Church of the 20th Century, a man who spoke as an intellectual to intellectuals. His volumes of closely reasoned theology were not for the ordinary man. But by recalling theology “to the Bible in which God talks to men” Professor Barth came remarkably close to fulfilling his own stated purpose of trying to “counterbalance the humanism of the 19th Century, when men were over-confident in their own ability to run the world.” His Biblically-rooted view of man as a creature enslaved by sin and yet free under grace did much to rescue Christian theology from the shallow ethicalism of the late 19th and early 20th centuries and gave it something to say to an age which has better reason than perhaps any previous age to understand both the glory and the tragedy of man.

Thomas Merton was a Trappist monk, a poet, and a novelist. His writings spoke more directly to the heart than to the mind. If a once great word had not been debased to a merely visceral level, he might properly be called a mystic. His insights were those of the contemplative whose heart had its reasons which reason cannot know. And his writings were the products of an intuition formed and informed by Scripture and the great tradition of the Church. People read him because they were hungry for beauty and he gave them a Beauty greater than they had hoped for or, in some cases, desired.
Barth and Merton were two examples — and only two — of that infinite variety of saints, apostles, prophets, and martyrs which once prompted from a worldly-weary agnostic the observation that “Christians are wrong, but all the rest are bores.” One of the great joys of life in the Christian community is the almost daily surprise that God does indeed speak at diverse times and in diverse manner through all sorts of people, from the most sophisticated scholar to the retarded child, from the poet to the politician. Within this community millions of us have, according to our Lord’s promise, found life, and that more abundantly. May we remind our humanist friends that they have a standing invitation to join us?

Toward Denver — V

Over the past two years, the issue of pulpit and altar fellowship with the American Lutheran Church has become, for most of the clergy and many of the concerned laity of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod, non-negotiable. Lines have been drawn and reputations have been committed and there appears to be a growing disposition on the part of all parties to the controversy to ignore any Synodical resolution that they find unacceptable. In this respect, the Missouri Synod is experiencing the same travails as are all other churches. The day of the monolithic institution obedient to centralized authority is past. The Missouri Synod must consider how it is going to live with this fact.

One way is, of course, the traditional way of fragmentation. Minorities can splinter off and set up on their own, seeking within smaller fellowships a unity of heart and mind that they did not find in the larger fellowship. The history of such groups in the past has been one of disillusionment and contentiousness, followed by further fragmentation.

A second way is the way of a latitudinarianism which asks no questions so long as a man keeps his dues paid up. This is, we fear, the way which a growing number of clergy, at least, are finding more and more attractive because it offers a means for preserving certain cherished associations without having to share the mutual woes and bear the mutual burdens which those associations entail. The old school tie becomes the tie that binds, and the fellowship of kindred minds degenerates to the good-fellowship of men who have been to the same schools and enjoy getting together from time to time to recount the escapades of their prep school and seminary days.

There is a third way, in our judgment the only way the Missouri Synod can hold together without succumbing to an unscriptural and unconfessional latitudinarianism. This is the way recommended by Richard Baxter: “In necessary things, unity; in doubtful things, liberty; in all things, charity.” Applied to the problems that await us in Denver, this means clearly distinguishing what is of the essence of the Gospel from those many things on which Christians may, without binding or perverting the Gospel, disagree. This is, admittedly, easier said than done. But the Spirit is in the Church and He is willing to lead us into all truth if we come together more willing to listen to Him and to each other than to deliver the set speeches which we have so laboriously been working up for the occasion.

Letter from the Managing Editor

Dear Boss:

Twenty years ago today, Dr. Kretzmann called me into his office and asked me whether I would rather volunteer to take over The Cresset or have it dumped in my lap by assignment. There being no tertium datur, I volunteered — with the understanding that when he found someone professionally qualified to do the job I would be allowed to return to my maps and rocks in the geography department.

So, in February, 1949, my first issue appeared. And now — twenty years, 208 issues, 750,000 words, and one nervous breakdown later — I would appreciate some clarification of the terms of my appointment.

Viewed from the perspective of geological time, I suppose that twenty years is a mere Augenblick. But in terms of historical time I believe that it is comparable to the time murderers, rapists, traitors, and other major felons are expected to put in discharging their debt to society. The question therefore arises whether an interim appointment is, in effect, an indeterminate sentence or whether it has some sort of terminus ad quem with the possibility of time off for good behavior.

If the latter be the case, I would like to apply herewith for parole. Without urging too strongly the debatable matter of good behavior, I believe that I can honestly say that I could have been worse. And I have reformed — so fundamentally that I am willing to give you my solemn undertaking that, if this request should be granted, I would never write another word for print. As I envision my life on the outside, it would be spent fruitfully — or, at least, harmlessly — in introducing undergraduates to the Koeppen system of climatic classification and the mysteries of the erosion cycle. I do have some minimal understanding of these things, which is a great deal more than I can say about most of the things I am required to editorialize about these days.

Meanwhile, and with all good wishes for a blessed Candlemas, I remain

Your obedient servant,

jhs (35578576)

The Cresset
Evidence exists in history of strange decisions made by men who, on the day they made them, were either off their feed, in love, or thinking about something entirely different at the time these decisions were made. Man has somehow survived these vagaries on the part of otherwise clear-thinking leaders, but it is a little frightening to think that one's life could be affected by decisions made in this manner.

Whether in business, industry, or government, the modern method of making decisions is the committee. Few persons in positions of leadership make major decisions by themselves anymore, preferring to set the facts before a group in order to bring collective thinking to bear on the problem. A feeling also exists that for a decision to be made by an individual is not a very democratic way of doing things. It is not the purpose here to argue the merits or demerits of this practice; suffice it to say that many decisions now made by committees could have been made equally well by individuals.

What really goes on in a committee meeting? An observer might see a group of men around a table with one man on his feet talking and occasionally referring to a chart on the wall. What would most impress the observer is the concentration the men present are displaying, the attention they are giving the speaker's remarks. Three of the men are concentrating on the chart, apparently looking for errors, two are looking the speaker right in the eye, and several others have their chins in their hands, obviously in deep thought on the problem at hand.

Are they all so engrossed in what the speaker has to say and so concerned over the problem? Of course not. Take those three who are looking at the chart. The young man is admiring the colors on the chart which remind him of the dress his date wore last night. The man next to him seems to be looking at the chart, but his gaze isn't focused and he is really wondering what his wife's reaction will be to his missing his usual train home, since this meeting is running late. The third chart watcher has been distracted because a dip in the chart (poor sales that month) makes an outline of a beard and he is pondering ways of getting his guitar-playing son to shave.

Of the two looking the speaker in the eye, the one is trying to figure out how the speaker, in view of his inane remarks, ever got to be a department head, and the other one is wondering what effect his vote, which will be on the other side of the issue from that of his boss, will have on his promotion. Of those deep thinkers who have their chins in their hands, one is worrying about his health and specifically concerned over whether his present stomach discomfort is the result of a hurried lunch or the first sign of ulcers. Another is wondering whether his daughter is really serious about that nut she has been dating. The others present are thinking about what they are going to say on the issue when and if the present speaker ever quits and are half listening for clues.

Is this an average committee meeting? Well, probably not, for in most meetings a few will be paying attention. But something on this order does occur so frequently in meetings that it makes one wonder about the process.

One reason for the lack of concentration is the frequency of committee meetings and the fact that so many of the same people are always present. As a result, most members know what everyone else is going to say before he says it, so there is little suspense in the average committee meeting.

Human nature in operation is, however, the main reason concentration is so minimal at committee meetings. During those long periods of repetition and redundancy, the average man starts thinking about the subject which always interests him most, himself. We all spend a good part of our day thinking about ourselves, our health, our family, our golf game. It so happens that the average committee meeting furnishes an ideal setting to continue such thinking. In addition, one's attention span is just so long and when the speakers are talking extemporaneously there is often little to hold interest.

Admittedly, out of this chaotic collection of thoughts at a committee meeting a decision, and as often as not a good decision, eventually evolves. But we would be fooling ourselves if we thought the rightness of the decision was the result of the complete concentration on the subject by everyone present.

Tourists in Washington, D.C. who visit the House or Senate chambers frequently express shock at the fact that, except for a speaker and two or three other members, the floor of the chamber is empty. This strikes me as an example of good sense, since the Representatives and Senators have learned they can find more valuable use for their time than sitting in a glorified committee meeting.

February 1969
bit of new interest in the Enemy's pernicious theories

Dear Wormwood,

May I be among the first to congratulate you on your new position as head of American operations. Some time ago your uncle Screwtape dropped a hint to the effect that our new man would be someone from outside the States — new blood, as they would say here. That he turns out to be one of Screwtape's own kinsmen, personally tutored by him early in his illustrious career, is more than we had expected. We have been watching your work in Britain with keen interest, your task being a formidable one, if we are judging the situation accurately. A few years ago, for example, we watched a man was led to glance upward approvingly every now and then at the flagpole and started studying the design, and in fact or change a shade of color here and there, and in fact they even began to think about what the flag represents. Before we interposed we lost a few borderline cases. Fortunately it has been mostly the harmless theologians who have been thus transfixed.

On the brighter side, however, we have been noting with admiration your most recent coup in England: persuading the Post Office to place on its Christmas stamp a picture of children enjoying their holiday toys. This is superb. It strongly confirms in my mind your suitability as my successor in America. As you may know this is the line we in the States have followed for years: the encouragement of materialism, the dedication to THINGS as the chief end and purpose of life. I think there is scarcely any of the formerly religious holidays and festivals that we have not managed in some way to reform. My predecessors and I, in fact, have had no small success in giving Americans THINGS as their own native deity for daily adoration. I am looking up at my office wall right now at the motto concocted by one of our young wags, which reads: "Come, thou Almighty THING." However, materialism does get a bit tiresome as a perennial campaign, and I am therefore much impressed by the way your Christmas stamp effectively carries a double message. Besides the materialist message (which might be expressed by one of our American cartoon characters as: "Happiness is a good THING"), your other messages is one which we have so well taught to Americans: "Give to those who have," Americans understand this. A child who already owns things obviously has experience in making the best use of things. Just as his father, with one million dollars, establishes by that very fact his right to two million or ten. While your starving brat merely gobbles up the morsel you hand him, with no grace or aplomb. Or else he responds so pathetically, say, to shoes for his bare feet that immediately you feel pained at not doing more. Americans want to be happy — always remember this. It's in their Declaration of Independence. They insist that when they give a gift they deserve a warm glow in return. Never let up on this. The Enemy insists that giving is most often painful. That's what he means by his everlasting prattle about Sacrifice. We have done a good job of keeping these notions separate, Sacrifice and Pain. This even in spite of that ridiculous Teutonic martyr Bonhoeffer, with his clever little polemics against "cheap grace." He has gotten in our way a couple of times, the damned (wishful thinking!) phrasemaker. But our propaganda division is doing a good job conveying the idea that he is just another of the theologian's fads. Well-meaning and intense, but slightly demented and wholly impractical idealist. Brain probably affected by prison diet.

But Wormwood, my eminent successor, I ramble.
Your arrival here is scheduled for sooner than I expected, and I am instructed by our Father Below to fill you in on the programs currently in operation here. This is a formidable undertaking in a field so ripe for harvest and so diverse in its makeup. We are at work on all fronts, and in some quite ingenious ways, if I may adopt a bit of American braggadocio. Every new year here has shown the inexhaustible arsenal of techniques that lie at our hand. If, since those awful days when the Enemy suddenly led shiploads of his devotees to these forbidding shores, we have risen to this New World challenge and managed to make this a major stronghold, the progress is due in no small part to the techniques provided us by these resourceful Americans themselves. The Enemy amuses himself by calling each of these little vermin an actual imago Dei, and, I must confess happily, this imago Dei business does seem an inextricable part of their consciousness — insofar as first-person arrogance is concerned. Every one of these Americans, with nice disregard of the First Commandment, thinks he is the Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth. Every fiber of his being reponds with fervor to the Enemy’s injunction, “Subdue the earth.” Our success in channeling this feverish energy is devilishly well seen in such accomplishments as the splendid efficiency of their nuclear weapons, the irreversible filthying of their air and water, the cerebricide of their television programming, and so forth. Their ingenuity has only one small limit. Never yet have they been able to produce anything that we have not subtly been able to corrupt. With our gentle assistance they are ruthlessly subduing their precious earth in the same efficient way that our late and magnificent Fuehrer subdued the Jews!

So then, my magnificent Wormwood! My retirement from this particular office comes at an auspicious moment. The reins of power — say, rather, the pushbuttons of diabolic control — change hands in a period of relative prosperity for us. I am directing that White Papers be prepared for you on each of the facets of our enterprise. My only task in this congratulatory letter will be to apprise you of one small but important scheme currently underway. It is a particular pet of mine, and I commend it to you with two main reasons in mind. First of all, it is a pivotal operation in our whole nationwide structure. So much of the other work we do currently is directed entirely in our work. The less the imago Dei who realizes that the Enemy is right, however improbably or outrageous or subversive he may seem, is lost to us. Deception is therefore our chief undertaking, day in and day out.

My particular pet project in the Department has to do with the “religious dimension” of American life. Often, as you know, we are able to ignore the religious angle entirely in our work. The less the imago Dei thinks about his vague Deus the better. But what does one do about those Americans who are religiously inclined? Or, and this is still a problem we face, what about those who have been religiously conditioned in some way or other, whether by parents or in a day school, or quite by accident at that tepid hour called “Sunday school”? This problem is my personal concern, for here is where some of the more challenging and subtle techniques of deception come into play. After so much seasoning and experience, on this front and others, I like to flatter myself as something of an artist. I therefore take particular pleasure (insofar as any moment of our lives can be called pleasurable, living under the searing gaze of the Enemy) in deceiving those people who are most on the lookout for deception. Project Somnoparsonry is the name, admittedly a bit flamboyant, that I have privately affixed to my pet operation. Let me construct a bit of the rationale for this project before going into a few of the technicalities.

Over the centuries we have, of course, relentlessly terrorized and fragmented the Church — that preposterous mystical entity which the Enemy’s emissaries have absurdly adjectivized as “holy, catholic, and apostolic.” I need not dwell on this at length, but let me merely summarize some of our stratagems — if for no other reason than to show that residence with these blithely ahistorical Americans need not blunt one’s acute sense of our tragi-glorious past. Be sure your knowledge of history is a working knowledge — that is a principle impossible to overstate. Americans neither learn history nor acknowledge their vacuum of ignorance. The game of deception is the easier to win when the victim himself has taken the first giant step. Explore history with me for half a moment, and consider some of the ways we have disrupted the Church.

1. We have subtly maneuvered the Church into irrelevance. We have set the clergy apart from the people, fostered the use of dead languages, successfully caused Change to be horrifyingly regarded as a synonym for Evil.

2. We have made good use of our secular allies, whether emperors, commissars, presidents, or barbarian Goths, to rend the fabric of the Church. And we have also dyed that immaculate fabric — giving the Church at different times the hue of an army, a lobby, and a successful gray flannel business enterprise.

3. We have fully exploited the technique of subliminal persuasion, especially in the last hundred
years, planting the nagging conviction in his supporters that the Enemy has absconded from his world.

4. We have, through our Language Laboratory, gradually contrived to make the Enemy look positively ridiculous — his shepherd metaphors, his quaint Trinitarian "1611 or Fight!" has been our successful diversionary tactic enlisting defenders of that splendidly impregnable (and wonderfully misleading) King James Bible.

5. We have, through our Wolf Corps, marched a steady phalanx of so-called false prophets into the bloodstream of the Church. (This will be your introduction to the mixed metaphors and other sublime tortures that language undergoes in these states — Americans are as careless of words as they are of history.) We have provided German theologians to render the Enemy's blindingly simple Word polysyllabically complex, and we have sent bearers of adiaphora to dump their burdens into his so-called River of Life, effectively polluting it.

So the whole history of the Church, in short, is one of steady siege by our various forces. For sheer drama it is hard to beat, and though it seems to be taking longer than Our Father expected, we grow increasingly confident that the Enemy will one day find all his followers prettily exhausted (though most have not the faintest idea what they are fighting), their lamps unoiled, and the elevators in their high-rise headquarters firmly stuck in the sub-basement.

My point, at the risk of redundancy, is that we are a gigantic holding company of sorts, engaged in extremely diverse enterprises while holding to the single aim of profiting Our Father's cause and driving the Enemy out of business. The Enemy's followers, meanwhile, are generally a train of rabble unable to see what we are doing. Thus the average American pew-sitter will blame the theologian for all the Church's strife, the theologian cringes at the denominational bureaucracy, the bishop or synodical secretary gnashes his teeth at the stingy, stolid layman. The Left takes a rapier to the Right, the Right scatters pellets at the Left. The lugubrious Middle takes a third helping of the Ladies' Guild baked beans and passes gas in both directions. Over the centuries we have kindled this kind of enmity until its fumes swirl into the nostrils of the Enemy and through the halls of his mansions, with an unabated strength that makes any of our American smog areas look, by comparison, like the clear brisk air of your Lake Windermere. I frankly do not know how he stands it. How much opposition was required, eons ago, to produce that fit of temper called the Deluge, I have never been quite able to ascertain. But I cannot help thinking that our own efforts in these latter days cannot but soon produce a flash point. (Not an idle metaphor, you will notice, since he is on record as promising "the fire next time").

Notice, however, (and this is what I have been leading up to), that there is one party, amid all the recriminations, who seldom gets blamed for the Church's stum-
bles one-eighth full of Christian Brothers. Smiles at the front door, with a programmed handshake and tape-recorded quips. A Somnobeliever. He thinks there is a God and thinks he believes in Him. Especially at night, and when Christmas brings a bottle of Liebfraumilch. His God is a comfortable idea, like pitter-patter on the parsonage roof or the boy's deciding to go out for football rather than theater. The kind of idea to go to sleep by. Now I lay me down to sleep. Graceful sleep. Sleeping Beauty. No snoring. Nobody disturbed. *Stille Nacht.*

This, from California to the New York island, from the redwood forest to the Gulf Stream waters, is the man for you and me. The crucial link in the Enemy's chain. This is the man who sets the pace and example for the so-called faithful in one hundred thousand green-lawned parishes. Not the far-off bishop or district president, not the obsequious head deacon or senior warden or committee chairman or active clubwoman. The Enemy stands or falls in the United States with the parish pastor. Your parishioner in America does not buy books even at the modest rate of the English; he does not know that there exist religious periodicals other than his denominational slick. If inclined to read he will follow the timid suggestions of his pastor, which is to say the shorter and more innocuous leaflets put out by his particular sect. There is virtually no theological influence on the average American dolt other than that wielded by his pastor, and so you will see why I place so-called faithful in one hundred thousand green-lawned parishes. America is still unique in taking its Sunday service with some degree of blessedly naive seriousness. None of the other activities of the Church's week will normally touch him (unless he is dragooned into oblivion as a scoutmaster), but on Sunday he is still mildly open to influence.

*Our somnocleric, therefore, is taught to conduct a somnoservice. This means that he allows no dangerous and potentially provocative activities to take place within the Sunday service. We do let him contemplate them on occasion, with either frivolity or furrowed brow, but the quicker we snap off the train of thought the better. Two minutes dallying with a new idea suffices for him to take pride in his open-mindedness. I cite then various absolute proscriptions, at random:*

1. No reading of Scripture from the lectern by laymen. *Danger to us:* Any kind of active involvement can jolt the pew-slower into wakefulness. He will have to plan ahead how to read the selection, perhaps even decide to compare two or three of those deplorably popular new translations. He may start to think about the text, especially if he is required to speak a word of introduction. In talking the text over with the pastor the conversation might turn to other things such as social questions of the day. Our sleeping layman may begin to find that the Enemy's ethereal Truth is also Truth for this very day. Any time a minister and a layman have a serious tete-a-tete we are in trouble. Keep them on golf, Communism, and the relative merits of competing toilet fixtures for the parish hall. *Our prefabricated Rationalization provided for the Somnoparson:* The hoi polloi gum up the works; keep them out of the chancel. Furthermore, they speak with slang in their mouths, and the time spent with them in study of the text and principles of articulation could be better spent. (Never let him go on to figure out how better to spend time.)

2. No composing of original prayers. *Danger:* This forces the Somnoparson to stir. To think. About what he has a right to pray for. What he has no right to pray for. How to make the distinction clear to his congregation. About language — how to make a mundane request or thanksgiving tingle on the ears of his hearers out front and Up Above. About analogous situations or trials in the history of the Church and her people which may be referred to for instruction in the mysterious ways of the Enemy and for the consolation that history sometimes uniquely provides. If a prayer of intercession — about the hands and pocketbooks and cars and kitchens of his immediate congregation, which may be a part of the Enemy's answer right there. *Rationalization:* There is no satisfaction (we know this means "sleeping pill") quite like the old familiar words. Besides, our modern corrupt language doesn't have any dignity of expression (notice the image of the Enemy in his mind as a white-bearded grandfather). And the time and effort could be better spent.

3. No tinkering with the liturgy, especially using new hymns or more hymns or folk hymns, or doing chancel drama instead of sermon, or (beware of this one) inducing some of the young people to devise a contemporary service. *Danger:* Despite initial resentment, some of the parishioners are actually bound to like some of the new things. Nothing, for example, livens a dead hymn like singing it to guitar accompaniment. And those who dislike, and protest, leave themselves wide open to be confronted with good reasons for the new things and then may go home to probe around in their fuzzy consciousness for the real reasons behind their ire. Which, being found, may seem so stupid that they open their mouths and join the festivity. Or, if they're still disgruntled, a debate with the minister and the enthusiasts may take place, in which each side is bound to learn something about the reasons and motives of worship. A very dangerous text may trample into their thoughts somewhere along the way, the injunction of that hippie Hebrew troubadour: "Sing unto the Lord a new song." *Rationalization:* Some of our best members (that means "biggest givers") are set in their ways and will stop coming. (This one is classically untenable, of course — it assumes that changes must be sprung on the people with no advance indoctrination. Poor Somnoparson — we carefully contrive to make him utterly innocent of elementary psychology and human nature.) Also, the traditional glory of Sect X is our ancient and hallowed form of Sunday worship.

February 1969
(Which means, we're asleep and the bed is warm; bridegroom, don't disturb.) And doing something new just two or three times a year makes it seem as if it's done just for novelty's sake and doesn't mean anything (this one is beautiful too: as if there were something pernicious about novelty; as if women never went to the hairdresser and men never bought new ties — novelty for the sake of arousing interest in themselves.)

4. No adapting to circumstances. Such as: coming down into the center aisle to conduct the service, when the Somnworshippers won't move up front; talking conversationally to the people instead of preaching at or over them every week; stopping in the sermon to ask for feedback; using regular bread for Communion instead of commercially-engraved papier-mache. Danger: In each of these examples an effort is being made to reach out, to touch, instead of merely fulfilling a ritual and chalking up one more Sunday-after-Trinity out of the way. To come down to the congregation, both physically and verbally, intimates that the minister really has something he earnestly wants to put across. The same thing regarding a pause for feedback. People who seem to care are generally the ones who get listened to. Fortunately, our Somnoparsons generally have dark pseudo-gothic naves in which to babble, so that from the pulpit they cannot see the eyes of their Somnosheep gently closing. As for the Communion, the thought must never cross the minds of either sheep or shepherd that the Last Supper was exactly that — a farewell meal among friends, not a mystic rite involving ritual words and a half dozen subtle points of theology. For members of the congregation to bake the bread and buy the wine would bring it all down to earth, which is precisely where it started to begin with. Rationalization: Any change, no matter how small, might possibly be somehow heterodox doctrinally. Better boredom than risk. And word might filter out about the strange doings at St. Lyndon, killing any chance of a prestigious call. And the best yet: Any change, no matter how small, is the opening wedge to anarchy. We have been exploiting this one with crashing success lately — and not only in ecclesiastical situations.

5. No treating the congregation as a congregation. A with-each-other group. (What do those women's groups do? What did the church council wrangle over on Monday night? What doctrines are the Sunday School teachers stumbling over? The confirmation class won't buy the Old Morality?) Danger: Breaking down apartheid in the congregation itself is one step towards a grand and strong unity of all the Enemy's people, a specter which looms larger now than I can ever remember it in the past. If the confirmands, for example, won't gobble up the old morality cliches, we want the minister to keep it quiet. A series of discussion sermons frankly confronting the issues with parents and other laymen might electrify people into the kind of serious reflection that confirms their Faith rather than shakes it. Which, of course, is what a Confirmation class is all about. As for the Church Council, the issues that divide it (build or not build, cheap or solid, expand or retrench) are always ultimately theological. That is, what is the purpose of the Church here in Cancerton? To get the whole congregation to work in the issues, through sermons and discussions, almost invariably is a means of clarifying matters and making honest men out of the closeted debaters. The more secrets, factions, wheels spinning, gavels pounding, and tale-telling, the better. We dare not let Sunday become the day on which the Church as a family meets for mutual exchange or growth. The next step would be for the family to look outside its stained glass panes at the family behind the oak doors in the next block or behind clapboards down by the tracks. So far we have labored creditably in making "ecumenical" a dirty word. We keep ourselves on guard lest the Enemy's silent longing for ecumenicity within and without the congregation be discerned. Rationalization: Things must be done decently and in order — confirmation class meets on Thursday at 4 p.m., and the Sunday service is the Sunday service. Moreover, nothing ever happens in the women's groups or the men's club (our Somnoparson doesn't see, of course, that that itself is the very reason for examination and reformation). And the Council's dirty linen is the last thing one wants to air before the whole congregation (except that a good airing is often an effectual means of purification).

6. Finally, no acknowledgment of the twentieth century from the pulpit or lecure. Zacchaeus, yes, and the Woman of Nain. The wedding at Cana, and the feeding of the five thousand. But not the mortgaged family whose new neighbors are black, or the new black neighbors with angry Christians next door. Or the abortion in lieu of wedding, or the feeding of five hundred thousand in some distant Himalayan valley. Danger: Your churchman may suddenly realize that religion is nothing if not a ten-foot pole designed to reach out and touch life. He is to wield the pole himself, and his faith is to give him the will. For the Enemy demands two absolutes of him — absolute loyalty and absolute neighbor-ness. Your average white middle-class pew-sitter dare never see that NEIGHBOR is an acrostic word; that all of the following, and more, have claims upon him:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neglected</th>
<th>Elderly</th>
<th>Indigent</th>
<th>Grouchy</th>
<th>Handicapped</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Orphaned</th>
<th>Ruthless</th>
<th>Sunderly others, next door and around the world</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

In short, all the kinds of people he wouldn't dream of touching with a ten-foot pole. He must never be led by his pastor to see that things are waiting to be done, things other than ten cents to March of Dimes and a
can of tuna on the altar on Thanksgiving. He may sud-
denly discover that political activity, ad hoc action
groups, protest marches, and other “Communist-in-
spired” disruptions are the hand of his God helping to
to right a capsizing world. He may suddenly realize
that his Jesus was never “respectable” or even fastidious
about his methods. If that day should come, when
the necktie loosens and fear of the state, of the neighbors,
of the boss, of the property value yield to loving fear of
the Enemy, the influence of Our Father Below is in
grave jeopardy. Rationalization: Very easy, this. The
Church and the World are separate; the Church dare
not mix into politics. Be subject unto higher powers.
(You’ll notice that by inventing an incorporated body
called “the Church” they have neatly evaded all respon-
sibility. You’ll hear them say that one individual can’t
do anything, and of course the Church itself can’t mix
in either. They fail, happily, to see the hosts of mid-
dle positions — even something as unventuresome as a
discussion group or a letter to the editor. It’s their
white-bearded God again. They feel he might be em-
barassed to have the guaranteed annual wage or sex
outside marriage talked about under the shadow of the
crucifix.)

So, Wormwood, you get some idea of the Somnopar-
sion as producer of the Somnoservice. Judged against
all the norms and precepts for worship laid down by
the Enemy, it is vapid, disem boweled, blank, featureless,
and superficial, polite, decorous, decent, and orderly.
It is pagan. I could give many further details, but
will refrain for the time being. There is the Rump-Pew
Contact Quotient, for example (please don’t take these
jocular designations too seriously). The R-PCQ means:
keep them sitting. No standing for hymns, nothing so
scandalous as the congregation actually making a pro-
cession up to the altar with their offerings. Easier to
sleep sitting down — delegate all motion to as few
people as possible, which also insures that those few
will develop a splendid pharisical pride. But I believe
I have made my point. I will only point out, in con-
cluding, the effective coverage of the Somnoservice.
It is designed for all categories of churchgoer; of our
operations can claim such a blanket effect. Obvi-
ously it infuriates the restless individual — new convert
or old faithful — who expects that a live religion will
be in motion and reverberation rather than limp as a
fish on ice. He may fume from time to time, but it
doesn’t take too long before he capitulates to The Way
Things Are. Very few people seek to be rebels, despite
some curious suspicions to the contrary. Our restless
fellow falls asleep with everybody else. If the fortieth
recitation of rendering unto Caesar doesn’t get him,
the forty-first will. The second category of churchgoer
that we cover is the sporadic fellow. He comes on Es-
aster and Christmas Eve and monitors the show at two-
month intervals between. Every monitoring session
proves to him that he isn’t missing anything. He may
notice that the altar has fashionable new clothes, or that
the Somnoparson’s sleeping hair is turning gray, or
that the new organist is a bit skittish. But it will be the
same standard brand liturgy, the same centrally-pro-
duced, quality-controlled Seal-of-Good-Housekeeping
prayers. He has the faint suspicion that religion is sup-
posed to mean something — seventy million Americans
can’t be wrong — but he notices that the Church hasn’t
yet found out what it means. Or else has forgotten,
and can’t make the words work right, or has fallen to sleep
over the whole tedious thing. Naturally the largest
category to whom we appeal constitutes the seventy
million themselves. These fatted rumps are our bastion,
our Chinese Wall. In fact, our art studio has recently
done a large canvas for me, depicting thousands of
padded rumps as a background for cavorting quar-
dollars and funeral home fans. The former being the
price of beer and therefore the right amount of Sunday
homage to the Enemy, the latter being the central item
that stands out in the childhood memory of any Ameri-
can churchgoer. The rump, of course, symbolizes flac-
cidity and torpidity, since what the Somnoservice does
for these millions is to deflect them from the ever-
living Enemy and his ever-active Technicolor world
and focus them on silent films of old Palestine, watch-
ed in stupor and obese comfort.

Well, dear Wormwood, I go into all this in excessive
detail, and will spare you this in any further com-
 municates. I do chiefly by design, however — to stress
to you that comprehensiveness of program and scrupu-
ulous attention to details are the keys to accomplishment
on this continent. Aspirin, hair coloring, and nasal
decongestants are sold here by means of the most care-
fully-devised advertising campaigns, after meticulous
analysis of the consumer’s whims and weaknesses. We
cannot fail Our Father Below by any less effort. Of
course, the fact that occasionally even the most prom-
ising schemes go awry is sobering caution against over-
confidence. We ask ourselves of each new project:
“Is this in danger of becoming an Edsel, an Ebenezer?”
(I’ll explain the allusions some time.) So if I exude a
peculiarly American optimism and confidence, please
take it as only an awareness of the exciting challenge
here, not as a cry of victory achieved. I cherish your
uncle’s incisive quip, “One of our great allies at present
is the Church itself,” but I know also how mercurial
this ally can be, and how mysteriously — might one say
miraculously? — this Sleeping Beauty has managed to
awake in the past. It is no accident that so many of her
hymns carry an exhortation highly dangerous to our
slumber campaign: “Wake, Awake,” “Awake, My Heart,”
“Awake, My Soul,” and so forth.

So we are pouring considerable resources into Pro-
ject Somnoparsony. Our success in America depends
to a good extent on the gleaming black shoes of her
sleep-walking clergy. Let them wake up, and they’ll
be scuffing up their shoes in slums and smoke-filled
rooms — wherever the action is and wherever the
pathetic little cardboard people of the Enemy need to
be loved into dimensionhood. And a preacher on the loose is sure to have laymen at his heels pulling strings and shoveling manure with the most infuriating energy. For this whole nation in these hectic times does have insomniac tendencies. Too frequently I notice people on the verge of opening an eye and then soon wanting to love and be loved. Sometimes one mere whisper of pastoral leadership and a quick cup of bracing love, and they're off to do us in. There is a pernicious song, fortunately not in the Top Twenty, that portrays this awakening-into-caring which is death to us:

Lovin's really livin';
Without it you ain't livin', boy.
You're just gettin' up each day and walkin' around.

That is by Ian Tyson, the male half of the singing duo known as Ian and Sylvia. If I were you, I would try to convince people he is a Communist.

Yours truly,
Thorncrust

P.S. Reading this over, I see one caution is needed. I have been a bit playful and sarcastic in my description of American somnolence, but please do not consider that the picture is an exaggeration. Your first impressions may be misleading. In your preparatory reading you will be alarmed by a number of religious magazines, some arty and iconoclastic, others erudite and thoughtful, still others conscience-stricken and urgent. As a master deceiver yourself, do not be deceived by them. They are written by a small intellectual coterie and address themselves to the consensus views of that coterie, in the received language and approved allusions of that coterie. They have neither power nor influence. Our Somnoparson seldom reads them, and if he does idly pick one up he notices that everything in it is irrelevant to “our situation here”. They represent the pleasant acrobatics of a few believers endowed with a facility for language, just as good cooks harmlessly act out their Christianity with bake sales. Most of these magazines seem to begin with the letter C. Not only in your reading but in your firsthand observations you will have misgivings about my accuracy. You think, perhaps, that I am describing past eras — the complacent clergy of the eighties and nineties, the glassy stupor of the forties and fifties that you have seen satirized. You will arrive in New York and see poets with beads giving readings in church halls, glimpse a priest here and there on a motorcycle, and even perhaps find an unselfconscious interracial parish. You will seek out the “action” on some of the American campuses and find many of the principles of the Somnoservice alarmingly absent. You will find some of the city clergy working long days in thankless services for individual people who have never been taught how to manipulate the power structure. You will find some who don't write books and articles, but just keep on going — unsung Samaritans where the road to Jericho trails among the canyons of megalopolis. Very well. Then look further. Step into the more stately city churches, and the ones that don't advertise in the Village Voice. Venture into the rural churches and those in tree-lined streets. Decide for yourself which is more prominent: the hum of people going about the Enemy's business or the carpeted hush of deathlike slumber. While we have not yet won the battle, and while we are over on our guard, we are nonetheless strong in America. With both humility and pride I make the assertion.

**Return on an Interior**

Child-adult, the fear is as fresh
as the old knock on the gut
I knew when feathers black on noon
would chase us back into the house,
or as the grip on the eye when father
took the stick and beat the snake hay house.

Around these dusty bends in time,
highway and plough path bound
by oak and cedar, brook and scotch broom,
around blind crooks and corners
laced in the sun I will not go now;
perhaps a route of words.

Words, these pupae
curl in stiff cocoons and sleep out
time's suspense until the break.
My words nest inside in my fear
while ghost of beast and fowl and snake
scream down the turnstiles of angry blood.

Listen,
an ancient whip-o-will
mocks me to sleep. The silver shapes
sport in scotch fields, wheat fields
woodshed, barn and orchard. At night
they are white and comely as a dream.

In the wake
the brown moths flutter at the sun;
in the hard glare these are downed
as fowl are shot, dusted,
scourcd and tempered by a name.
My wizened aunt made broth of the old bird,
my father a belt of moccasin.

Margaret Gibson
The old man — to whom courtesy had given the title of rabbi — carefully put away his *tefflin* in the red velvet bag that he had carried with him for over half a century and raised the blind. Outside it was still dark, though the sun was up. But it was a street of tall buildings that did not permit sunlight to enter. Presently he would heat the coffee and toast the leftover *Challa*. Then when it was less dark outside he would walk the eight or so blocks to the Coast Avenue *Shule*, though generally on weekdays there was no morning service. The *minyan* formed only on Shabbos.

Long ago, however, he had made peace with these conditions. So if nobody troubled to come to *minyan* should he eat out his heart? God did not demand the impossible. But each morning he walked down to Coast Avenue in the expectation that his presence might be needed.

The coffee boiled but it was too weak or stale to give out a satisfying aroma. He turned off the burner and got out his cup. He prepared breakfast here and took his evening meal with Mrs. Fischelman who lived on Mulberry Street. She swore by the memory of her dead mother that she kept a kosher kitchen, though the rabbi was dubious. Yet something he had learned was not to probe too deeply when no good could result. She did the best she could. That was sufficient.

Now he poured the coffee and almost at once he heard the rattling outside. He moved cautiously to the door — it was a matter of a few feet across the tiny room — but the knob was being turned.

"Yes," said the rabbi. "Yes."

A tall man in a white shirt stood before him. He was young and there was something wild, disorganized about his eyes. They seemed to be popping out of his head. The rabbi noticed them first and he was frightened, for this was not thought to be a good neighborhood.

"I saw you through the window," said the man, "when you raised the shade."

Only then did the rabbi notice the dark skin and, too, the definite air of hostility or fright about the man. There was a breathless quality in the air between them, a moment of waiting, of seeking for the common bond, until the rabbi said again, "Yes? Yes?"

The stranger walked to the table. The pot no longer steamed. "If it's not asking too much," he said, "I could sure use a cup of coffee."

Silently the rabbi got a cup. He put it on the table before he noticed that it was chipped. He exchanged it for the one he had put out earlier for himself. "I have no milk," he said as he poured, "but there is a non-dairy substitute."

"Black," said the man.

If he pulls a gun, thought the rabbi, now can I placate him? There was little to take from this house, least of all cash. The old man lived on a tiny state pension check. "Here is bread," he said, "and margarine and beet preserves."

The man grabbed the fork and dished up heavy portions of the preserves, which he spread thickly on the bread. Then one after another he gulped down two cups of coffee, while the rabbi — embarrassed and even wretched at this naked evidence of a man's hunger — could not bring himself to eat or even touch coffee.

"Thank you," said the man. He raised his head and examined the rabbi.

"Another cup?"

The man shook his head, nibbling at the crumbs on the white table cloth. Now he looked at the rabbi with an empty stare. Finally he grinned. "Well," he said, "I betcha I know what's on your mind."

His speech, the rabbi noticed, was not consistent. Sometimes the man spoke with precision, sending out each word with care as if he were afraid that he might slip on one; then again he slurred his words as if he wanted to emphasize that his was not an educated voice. Now he wagged a finger at the rabbi. "Yeah, I know what's on your mind. You think this is a hold-up."

The rabbi again was conscious of his fear. "Perhaps," he said, "yes, possibly. It is a bad neighborhood and —"

He hesitated and the man picked up the unspoken words, "and — and I am a nigger."

The rabbi caught the ugly sound the man made of the word. He moved his head in protest. "I did not mean —"

"Yeap, you can see a nigger and immediately start to think of a hold-up. Now don't deny it, you Jewish rabbi."

"Then maybe I am not going to be held-up," said the rabbi, wondering where his guest had learned about him. "But if I am suspicious, will you allow that, considering it is —" He made a gesture with his hand.
to indicate the street.

"Considering that it is a black dangerous neighborhood. But why is that? Because Jew landlords keep it a slum, to make more fat profits for themselves."

"My landlord, I am told, is the First National Bank and Savings Company, which may or may not be Jewish."

"Well," said the stranger, "they're all out to skin us." He picked up the cup, saw that it was empty, and put it down.

"If you like, I can brew another cup," said the rabbi. He half-rose from his chair, hoping that the man would take the hint and leave.

"Nope, I had me enough coffee, but this bread is sure good-tasting. Besides, I ain't eaten since last night. Been out on a picket line."

The rabbi raised his head. "A picket?" he asked. But he remembered. There was something about the public school building in the district. It had been declared unfit for youngsters to use, and when its doors were opened in the fall there were strong, angry protests.

"We ain't never gonna let them alone," said the man. "Night and day — day and night we're gonna hound 'em."

"The school at Lowell and First?" asked the rabbi.

"That's it," said the man. "You ought to come out and help. Leave all them books." He glanced around contemptuously. "I betcha that's all you do all day — just sit here and read those books."

"Yes and no," said the rabbi. Actually he had less than enough books to fill a small shelf. "I spend much time in the synagogue. And now if you will excuse me —" He rose, but something that came almost instantaneously into the stranger's eyes made him back against the chair.

"You ain't gonna go no place, and you are aware of that, ain'tcha?"

"There might be services at the synagogue," said the rabbi.

"You just sit down, Jewish rabbi. Because I've got to get me some rest. I ain't been off my feet since yesterday noon, and besides outside I'm just liable to get myself arrested."

The rabbi frowned. He disliked any kind of brush with the law.

"They went out and got their damned white judge to issue an injunction."

Again the rabbi pushed back his chair. "No," said the young man, "as soon as you get outside you'll call the cops for sure."

Sitting down — for there was nothing else he could do — the rabbi smoothed his beard with his fingers. "You do not know me," he said.

"I know white men."

"But you called me a Jewish rabbi, which strictly speaking I am not."

"It was your card on the door," said the young man. "A harmless conceit on my part," said the rabbi. "But you are right in part, for like a rabbi I devote myself to study."

"Listen, Jewish rabbi," said the stranger, and his eyes in the moment seemed to pop out of his head in anger and sheer frustration, "These books ain't half as important as helping us down on Lowell Street."

Outside from St. Mark's Tower the clock chimed. The morning was getting on. It was just possible that this was one of those mornings when his presence would be urgently needed. He stirred restlessly and turned his attention to the young man. "There's children out there, mister, and they've been denied a proper education. They can't get no education in a place with substandard conditions —"

"Now excuse me, but I will be late. There might be a minyan waiting. Do you know what a minyan is?"

The young man shook his head.

"To form a congregation, to have organized prayer, you need ten males — ten males past the age of thirteen."

"To form a congregation?"

"Yes. To praise God for keeping us alive."

"And you couldn't get your ten holy men to come out and relieve us on the picket line!"

"No," said the rabbi. "I cannot come with you."

"You know, Jewish rabbi, all my life I been up against people like you. The Ku Kluxers we can fight, and we can hold our own against the John Birchers, but it's you — you good people who won't help — you're the ones who bug me."

The rabbi went to the front door and opened it. The morning wind blew a flurry of dust and debris in his face. The young man behind him slammed the door. "I said you weren't going." The rabbi had picked up his prayer book from the stand by the door. "And put that book down," continued the young man, "put it down and come with me down the street."

The rabbi could not keep from smiling, though there flashed through his mind the possibility that he might have to grapple physically with this young man.

"You do not understand me and I cannot convince you. I have no business on your picket line," he said and walked back to the small kitchen. He put the book on the table and cut another slice of bread from the loaf. The young man had followed him back. He examined the book. "Why, it's in German," he said.

"German and Hebrew. It was printed in Breslau."

"And I bet they put you in a concentration camp."

"Three years," said the rabbi.

"You were lucky."

"Others in my family did not survive. But that was many years ago and one must forget. Thank God, a man can forget!" The rabbi indicated the slice of
bread on the plate. "Now if I may have the book I must leave you."

But the young man still held the book. He opened it at random and looked at a page here and there. "What's that?" he asked, pointing to a dark stain that ran through some of the pages. "Blood," he said. "That's human blood."

The rabbi shrugged. "In a concentration camp why shouldn't there be blood?"

"My God," said the man, "this book is covered with blood stains."

The rabbi took the book. "Yet would you believe me...even in the camp we had minyans — we prayed daily; we even held two Bar Mitzvahs. But then you do not know what I'm talking about."

I know. That operation was performed on me too."

The rabbi laughed. "That was something else." He stopped and looked at the book. "Sidur. We call this a Sidur. A prayer book."

"That's your book," said the young man, "and you hold on to it something fierce, just like they say. But you wouldn't help us get a chance to get educated in a place that'd be fit for children to be. Now let me tell you...I went to a two-room school down southway, in Rusk Hill County. We had a teacher who couldn't... before they could destroy me. I came north and got involved in civil rights, and I've been working ever since. Ten years. I've been around — Birmingham, Atlanta, Selma, Watts. You just name the place —"

"I have heard about some of them."

"Detroit was one place I missed because they had me locked up at the time." The young man grinned. "But that's where I like to be — where there's action."

"Let me ask you a question...you never went back to school after the sixth grade?"

"Went back to school, hell!" Again the young man turned his popping eyes on the rabbi. "I've been out fighting so others could go to school."

The rabbi looked at him with a slight sense of increased curiosity, as if finally placing him into his own private scheme of things. "We have a saying...he spoke in a softer voice now — "if I am not for myself, who is for me?"

"I am fighting to make things better for other youngsters, and you ain't too old to give us a hand. Those books can wait. There will be time to study after there are decent schoolhouses for all children."

"Goodbye," said the rabbi. "I will leave you. Take a nap. Help yourself to coffee. The bread is there. My place is at the synagogue."

"I don't feel tired anymore," said the young man. "I am going back out there and relieve some of my buddies. That bread of yours sure picked me up."

The rabbi, surprised that he had no resistance from the young man, walked out the doorway with him. They parted at the corner. The rabbi had eight blocks to walk to the synagogue and he thought that if he passed the barricade he would have to explain it all again, to each of those intense and passionate young men who would block his way.

**From the Chapel**

**Who Knows How the Lord Thinks?**

By ELMER N. WITT
Youth Ministry Study Director
Church Youth Research

*How rich are the depths of God — how deep his wisdom and knowledge — and how impossible to penetrate his motives or understand his methods! Who could ever know the mind of the Lord? Who could ever be his counsellor? Who could ever give him anything or lend him anything? All that exists comes from him; all is by him and for him. To him be glory for ever. Amen. —Romans 11:33-36 (Jerusalem Bible)*

One of the traps of religion is to get to believe you have "everything," including God, figured out. Those of us in church bodies intrigued with dogmatics, the framing of Christian doctrine, often create the appearance of having the Lord cornered neatly in a box, or a building, or a book. More frequently than not we give the impression that we have God somehow completely analyzed, crystallized, synthesized, systematized, and epitomized. With all reverence and due devotion, we get to imagining that we actually know the mind of the Lord.

In the face of this, our text bluntly asks, "Now really, who knows how the Lord thinks?"

This is not an impudent question. It's a very old question. The Psalms, Job, Isaiah, and I Corinthians attest to this. It's a very relevant question. Life in a technological world, and especially the burning social and ethical questions of our day, affirm this.

February 1969
How does the Lord think? Is everything from Him and by Him and for Him, as the man says? And if so, what are His motives, His methods, in producing everything from Himself and by Himself and for Himself? Just what can man expect from God today, say in contrast to yesterday or a hundred years ago? Is God still around? What is He doing? And how can we know?

These are legitimate questions about the hidden God, deus absconditus...justifiable inquiries into the “mysterium” God prepared before all worlds...valid probing, not into the death of God, but into the life of God.

Our text says we are on the receiving end, the learning end, of these questions. We have not been God’s counselor. We are not His resource people. The following five observations are made in the spirit of learning more about the God Who is beyond comprehension.

First observation: we tend to limit the activity of God.

Most of us associate the Lord’s presence and activity with church and churchly activities. The Scriptures teach that God gets through to people through the power of His Spirit in the sharing of His Word. So we focus on the occasion when the Word of God is obviously shared...in worship, in Holy Baptism and in the Eucharist.

And God is unquestionably present and active here.

Many of us go further and associate the presence and power of the Lord with churchly things in general, with church meetings, the calling of a minister, church committees, church activities, even church budgets.

And God is related to all of these.

Alongside these comparatively formal associations, we have considerable experience in sensing the presence of God at significant and major events in our individual and corporate lives. We are especially aware of Him at the birth of a child, at any death, on the occasion of serious illness or an operation. Generally, God is assumed to be more intensely present in moments of crisis, like during a narrow escape on an expressway, in the last moments before our jet touches the runway, at the blastoff of a government space flight. And in even more mundane critical moments, like applying for a new job, taking a final exam, at a wedding, graduation, or inauguration of the President.

And truly, God is present and active in these instances.

Second observation: God’s presence and activity are unpredictable.

The text before us emphasizes the improbable and unpredictable thinking and action of God. Paul specifically warns the Gentile believers not to look down their nose at the Jewish non-believers. God had done the unexpected and the incredible: He had taken the Gentiles into the family of God in place of the non-believing Jew. The unexpected and illogical taking back of the Jews, says St. Paul, is a clear possibility for the God who isn’t tied down to human motivation and earthly patterns.

Paul is trying to free his brethren from stilted and rigid thinking about the Lord. “Quit trying to out-guess God!” he says. He echoes Yahweh’s words from Isaiah: “...the heavens are as high above the earth as my ways are above your ways, my thoughts above your thoughts.”

This is true about God Himself — what He’s really like — about His motivation — why He does things — and also the methods of His activity — the way He accomplishes His goals. The book of Proverbs hints that it is “the glory of God” to conceal a matter. In other words, “It’s just like God to do some totally unlikely and inconceivable thing!”

That’s what Paul is saying: God is like that. This is an untidy picture of God. And most of us don’t want our religion, much less our God, to be untidy (or is it unmanageable?). We hasten to complete the paradox: there is a reliable, predictable forecastable view of God. He is love. He is holy. He is determined. He is overwhelming. He is mighty patient. He is unquestionable just. And much more.

But to know and believe and confess this, is not. St. Paul tells us, the same as having God figured out. All of the revealed and forecast-able things we know about God is not the whole of God. There’s always more to God. Besides, we just never know where He will show His love, how He will reveal His holiness, what shape His patience will take, in what way His justice will be achieved. It’s impossible to figure out His decisions and trace His ways.

All of which leads to observation three: God is present and active in many ways today, especially related to the suffering of men.

Or, to put it another way, there are powerful signs of authentic experience of God around us today in shapes and symbols that we have not yet learned to perceive and talk about.

For instance, God is at work in individual Christians and congregations in the core cities, on college and university campuses, and in the very heart of political, social, and economic turmoil, in people who have not been crushed out of existence but who find life and hope in the midst of their struggle.

For instance, God is at work in Black People who have learned the joy of being black and who want to be black in the face of the distortions of our racist society. This is evident in individual blacks as well as in many Black organizations.

For instance, God is at work in the increasing number of unexpected and unpredictable movements committed to help free men from the institutional bondage surrounding so much of our lives. We see this in priests and laymen organizing, welfare recipients
expecting to be treated as human beings, students working for their right to learn also through participation in the democratic process.

For instance, God is at work in the amazing, unanticipated sensitivity to right and wrong currently demonstrated against human indignities, against the tragedy and shame of poverty and malnutrition, against avoidable destruction of human life in compact gas chambers, on endless federal expressways, or Indonesian countrysides.

A prophetic and sensitive few are changing the mood of an entire nation. Is it possible to look beyond the inevitable perversions, overstatements and extraordinary trappings and recognize a prophetic minority? Does one have to be starry-eyed to discern that what is taking place is so constructive, so courageous, so profound, and so surprising that it can be understood in no other way than God's presence among us?

And where else would we look for the Lord whose decisions and ways are beyond explaining? Scripture and experience teach that He will first appear — whether we see Him or not — among the suffering. The Old Testament called Him the God of the sojourners, orphans, and widows. Christ Himself made it pointedly clear that our relationship to Him is known and seen and expressed in helpful service to those in need, the blessed "least" of His brothers. God is to be found among those who are in the wrong corner. He is to be seen among the oppressed, the poor, the deprived. The recognition of the presence of God is in itself of God's mercy for all men in His life, death and resurrection, are in the business of discerning the times. Although we cannot and will not figure out all the implications and ways of God's activity among men is the equivalent of expecting impossible things from the future.

For God is at work among us, even when we don't know or see Him. His kingdom, all the trouble He has gone to and is going to in behalf of the healing and well being of man, is more even than His church. It is the total determination of God to give man His kingdom.

Which makes the fifth observation inevitable: this perspective of God's activity among men is the equivalent of expecting impossible things from the future.

What else?

How rich are the depths of God — how deep His wisdom and knowledge — and how impossible to penetrate His motives or understand His methods!
“Of the making of many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.” In our day, as in no other, these words of the Preacher have come true, and the Divinity School at the University of Chicago must take its share of responsibility — at least for the making of many books. Now they propose eight volumes of select essays, to be published under the series title, Essays in Divinity. If the first volume is any indication of the quality of the other seven, there will be little weariness of spirit, though there may be moments of temporary fatigue from the cerebral stretch.

The truth of the matter is that this new bill of fare from Chicago promises to be an up to date source of excitement indicating the present state of religious thought and pointing daringly to its future. The occasion for this publishing splurge is the one hundredth anniversary of the Divinity School and the seventy-fifth anniversary of the University of Chicago. General editor of the series and Dean of the Divinity School, Jerald C. Brauer, proposed that seven conferences made up only of Divinity School graduates and present faculty should bring forth these eight volumes of Essays in Divinity to mark the occasion. Each volume will contain essays focusing on a particular problem. Since this series is to mark Chicago's own contribution to the field of religious and theological studies, the list of contributors is accordingly limited. However, this can be no great loss, for if one were to compile a list of leading thinkers in each of the fields of divinity study, Chicago would easily place its share in those elite ranks.

The first volume in the series is entitled, History of Religions: Essays on the Problem of Understanding (University of Chicago Press, 1967, $8.00), and is edited by Joseph M. Kitagawa with the collaboration of Mircea Eliade and Charles H. Long. The General Editor's preface points succinctly to the focus of this first group of essays.

The theme of this volume is the problem of understanding or hermeneutics as seen from the perspective of the History of Religions... It involves the development of a methodology adequate to interpret and understand the data of religion, and it also embraces the attempt to correlate religious forms, beliefs, and actions in the context of contemporary culture. It looks both to the past and to the present, but it tends to see the present from a perspective supplied by an analysis of the religious forms and vitalities of the past. (p. ix)

When one reads the essays in this volume, he can no longer relegate the study of man's varied religious experience and its colorful expression in beliefs and rites to the realm of the dusty museum shelf. These writers discuss the study of religion (non-Christian as well as Christian) as though it could make a real difference in our theology and our self-understanding. For the late Joachim Wach such a study "prepares one for a deeper conception of one's own faith." (p. 4) In this regard we recall another essay by the same scholar in which he expresses the same challenge even more directly. He says,

If it is the task of theology to investigate, buttress, and teach the faith of a religious community to which it is committed, as well as to kindle zeal and fervor for the defense and spread of this faith, it is the responsibility of a comparative study to guide and to purify it. (The Comparative Study of Religions, Columbia University Press, 1958, p. 9.)

In this same vein the very title of the late Paul Tillich's essay, "The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian" (pp. 241 ff.), could cause some squirming for those who think Christian theology must start by negating all non-Christian forms of religious experience and then proceed to theologize in a kind of religious and intellectual Christian ghetto. Indeed, it is not clear exactly how Paul Tillich might finally have allowed his theological thought to be "guided and purified" by the study of the history of religions, but it is significant that in this, his last formal presentation before his death, he has picked up the challenge and tried hard to point the way to "the Religion of the Concrete Spirit." This very pointing to the History of Religions as the future context for the development of Christian theology is a fascinating and exciting proposal for this writer, who is in some fashion both a Christian theologian and a student of the history of religions. I can only hope that my systematic theology colleagues will take the challenge seriously.

There is one, Thomas J. J. Altizer, whose name is known to all who read the weekly news magazines, who has in fact taken seriously the significance of the history of religions for Christian theology. The problem for most of us is (1) we don't like what we think he might be saying (and when we hear the slogans he uses, we aren't easily inclined to investigate his proposals with any seriousness); and (2) even when we do investigate, we suspect that his "radical" theology lacks both the necessary continuity with the Christian tradition and sufficient clarity to reveal the path ahead. The Altizer essay included in this volume is, not surprisingly, entitled, "The Death of God and the Uniqueness of Christianity." Every Christian likes to hope that Christianity is "unique," but few have a sufficient knowledge of the non-Christian religions to be able to make an honest and convincing statement of that uniqueness. Altizer has the credentials and has made his case in this essay for the uniqueness of Christianity. But his case is made in the light of his own "radical" Christian theology. Nevertheless, his essay has once and for all emptied himself of transcendence by becoming flesh and remaining always incarnate in history, points the way to a discussion of Christian uniqueness which deals responsibly with the non-Christian traditions.

As we noted at the beginning of our comments upon the Wach, Tillich, and Altizer essays, the study of the history of religions can never be regarded as a simple (or even quite complex) description of "the pagans" or "the others." It is, for these thinkers, no museum of idols and fertility cults, but rather the context outside of which all Christian theology must run the risk of provincialism. That is not to say that the future of Christian theology lies in some grand syncretism (note the red flag word), but rather that it cannot do its work adequately while it still ignores the totality of man's experience of the Sacred.

The search for a viable hermeneutic in the History of Religions must always set itself toward the present and the future; that is, right along with the question "How can we go about the task of understanding?" we must ask the question, "How can such understanding, when it is attained, contribute to self-understanding?" In his essay, "Archaisms and Hermeneutics," Charles H. Long concerns himself directly with both of these questions. He speaks of the meaningful interpretion of religious symbols, gained from our study of History of Religions, "into the life of modernity." (p. 84) The historian of religions seeks to elucidate an "intelligible something" in the structure of religious symbols, which in turn should lead to an opening of ourselves and permit us to order unexplored areas of our lives. Our return to the archaic and traditional religious forms does not express a desire to merely trace causal connections. It is a return to the roots of human perception and reflection undertaken so that we might grasp anew and re-examine the fundamental bases of the human presence. (p. 79)
Here and elsewhere we find Dr. Long concerned to break through the temporal and spatial limitations imposed upon us by our place in history and, through the discovery of archaic and traditional modes of self-apprehension, to enlarge and enrich our own mode of being as human. Thus, beyond its significance for Christian theology, the History of Religions holds significance on a purely humanistic plane as well.

Mircea Eliade's "Cultural Fashions and the History of Religions" is an attempt, from the perspective of the History of Religions, to shed light upon the contemporary milieu. It is a fact of intellectual history that, for reasons that are often difficult to comprehend, certain viewpoints become "cultural fashions." Eliade notes as a recent example of this the tremendous popularity of Freud's Totem and Taboo. In spite of its being discredited, almost as soon as it was published, by outstanding scholars from a variety of intellectual disciplines, it was regarded for at least three generations as sound scientific theory — it became a cultural fashion. It is Eliade's contention that the success of certain ideas or ideologies reveals to us the spiritual and existential situation of all those for whom these ideas or ideologies constitute a kind of soteriology. (p. 25)

Soteriological trends, even in anti-religious cloaks, immediately attract the historian of essay in against the pessimism and nihilism of some. All three have something in common: they are a score of ideas or ideologies constitute a kind of soteriology. (p. 25)

Thus, these are magic names, indeed, for those individuals who enjoy the entertainment world of a century ago, when these matchless productions of W. S. Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan captivated the later Victorians. It was an enchanted era — beginning with what might be termed the fullest flowering and imminent passing of "the Immortal Boz," the emergence of "Alice" and that well-known duo, the master detective and his biographer, the retired Army medic. It was an era that encompassed the great limners — Leech, DuMaurier, and Tenniel — and those charming versifiers, Edward Lear and the author of "The Bab Ballads."

Rather extensive investigation and research has produced many data concerning the early activities and works of Charles Dickens, Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, et al; but relatively little has been done in this direction for the lovers and followers of the Savoy Operas. Jane W. Stedman, of the University of Chicago, and currently a Professor of English at Roosevelt University, has undertaken what must have been a delightful task in assembling and editing, in Gilbert Before Sullivan, a collection of the very early works of W. S. Gilbert, whose name is no inextricably linked with that of the composer Arthur Sullivan.

The book contains the complete text and some of the music (by one Frederic Clay) of six one-act plays written by Gilbert and staged between 1869 and 1875, long before his association with Sullivan. They were written for a famous theatrical couple of the time, Priscilla Horton and her husband, Thomas German Reed, whose "Gallery of Illustration" offered respectable family entertainment to those proper Victorians who eschewed the usual theatrical productions of the era.

The book is illustrated with some of Gil­bert's own line drawings and some contem­porary photographs. It includes the complete score (words and music) of "Ages Ago" — the forerunner of "Ruddigore" — and the first publication of "Our Island Home." Four other one-act plays, currently very hard to find, have been included; Miss Stedman has earned the undying gratitude of all who can never get enough of the Savoy productions. The book is an excellent companion volume and supplement to Leslie Baily's The Gilbert And Sullivan Book, which was republished by Burt Franklin of London two years ago.

Worth Noting

Gilbert Before Sullivan

Edited by Jane W. Stedman (The University of Chicago Press, $6.95)

Pinafore — The Pirates — The Mikado — these are magic names, indeed, for those individuals who enjoy the entertainment world of a century ago, when these matchless productions of W. S. Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan captivated the later Victorians. It was an enchanted era — beginning with what might be termed the fullest flowering and imminent passing of "the Immortal Boz," the emergence of "Alice" and that well-known duo, the master detective and his biographer, the retired Army medic. It was an era that encompassed the great limners — Leech, DuMaurier, and Tenniel — and those charming versifiers, Edward Lear and the author of "The Bab Ballads."

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Amynatas and the Lamentations of Amynatas

By Walter F. Staton, Jr., and Franklin M. Dickey, Eds. (University of Chicago, $10.95)

Bibliophiles charmed by pastoral poetry will be delighted by this elegant edition of the Latin Amynatas by Thomas Watson, close friend of Christopher Marlowe, and its translation into English on facing pages by his contemporary, Abraham Fraunce.

The Amynatas, for which Watson, one of England's superior late Elizabethan poets, was best known in his own time, is a shepherd's lament over the untimely death of his sweetheart, the country maiden Phyllis. For ten successive days Amynatas pours out his grief to hills and dales, fountains and streams, and other surroundings of nature until he himself finally succumbs and dies. Jupiter and the other Olympians thereupon decree that his shade shall be united with Phyllis in the Elysian Fields and that his body shall be metamorphosed into a faire flower called Amaranthus. "The Amynatas is therefore not only a pastoral poem imitative of the Idylls of Theocritus and the Bacchae of Vergil, but also an aetiological myth reminiscent of Ovid's Metamorphoses.

Fraunce's version, though designated by the translator as paraphrastic, is not excessively longer than the original. Both are composed in dactylic hexameters. Most students of metrics, with the notable exception of Matthew Arnold, have regarded the classical dactylic meter as uncongenial to English poetry, preferring in its stead iambic blank verse as used, for example, by Shakespeare. Fraunce, moreover, based his hexameters, not on the natural word-accent of the English, but like the Latin on the quantitative metrical iuctus. Consequently, where accent and iuctus do not coincide, his lines are naturally off-beat and so, when scanned quantita­tively, lack the musical rhythm of the Latin.

Staton, the editor of the Amynatas, provides a valuable introduction devoted to a bibliogra­phic description of the poem and to a consider­ation of the qualities of Watson's versification and Latinity. Here he is overly apologetic in defending metrical licenses in Watson that are not uncommon occurrences in classical poetry and actually accepted as legitimate. Further it would be more appropriate to judge Watson's Latin, which is quite good, not by the prose writings of Cicero, as Staton does, but by the poetry of Vergil.

Dickey is equally meticilus in his editing of Fraunce. His introduction offers a description of the four editions of the Lamentations as well as an appraisal of Fraunce's rendition.

A model of fine printing, this volume has been published under the auspices of the Newberry Library by the Renaissance English Text Society.

EDGAR C. REINKE

February 1969
Mozart: Master, Genius, Transcendent

By WILLIAM F. EIFRIG, JR.

Even when offered as a birthday present, Johann Chrysostom Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart has no need of my praise. His frail young figure triumphs over the destructive forces of time without anyone's help. To be more precise, I should note the victory of things temporal over the person of the composer which were themselves overcome by the more enduring might of his music. The paradox at the center of the Mozart biography is well enough known. A young man possessed of stunning creative powers can find no successful position, can scarcely maintain a livelihood, and dies with little notice. Yet the self which is his music establishes its superiority over all rivals and enjoys a liveliness renewed in each generation. But paradox is the essence of Mozartian art.

The Age of Reason has much to recommend it. An optimistic confidence in those rational powers which are uniquely human can serve to keep man manly and temperate. We misunderstand the age, however, if for “reason” we read our current notion of “intellect.” Reason for the eighteenth century was more like what we, as well as they, call “common sense.”

In musical matters the return to common sense as a basis for judgment was realized when the heavily ornate, fantastically pompous, irrationally intellectual style which suited an earlier age was abandoned for a more reasonable address of the ears. By mid-century, though already noticeable at its beginning, terms of approbation were “simple,” “elegant,” “natural.” A polyphony of many sinuous lines gave way to the homophony of a melody clearly outlined and supported by succinct, direct harmonies. The ever-expanding melody of former times lost its place to a melody most often in four-measure phrases, of separable parts, and growing by the processes of analysis and reduction. Contrapuntal habits of thought were replaced by symphonic logic.

Baroque was the adjective invented by an age prizing restraint and symmetry to identify that in the previous style which seemed misshapen and grotesque.

Reaction to baroque musical style took several routes. Each affirmed that aspect of musical art considered by its proponents failing in the works of their fathers. A galant style, cultivated especially in the France of Louis XV, was delectation for refined ears. A style enjoyed in northern Germany emphasized the humbler emotions and appealed to sensitive souls. The Metastasian reforms of operatic libretti sought to retain nobility of gesture and seriousness of purpose for that medium while the tremendous popularity of opera buffa can only be explained as a preference for the mask of comedy over the mask of tragedy.

Each route had travellers willing to battle with those who would suggest other paths. The polemics of eighteenth-century pamphleteers and periodical writers make amusing reading today. It is difficult from our vantage point to understand why all the strife. The reader senses the importance of each position for its defenders only when he recognizes the stakes. The battle is not over bits of music, pretty sounds, adequate performances but over the meaning of life itself. Publish your musical preferences and you confess premises and assumptions by which you live.

Mozart's genius resides in his music but is not merely musical, for in the synthesis of eighteenth century musical styles effected by his works the composer affirms the interdependence of the several attitudes. This is no mere compromise nor a co-existence. What Mozart claims is the truth of each position within a higher truth. Ultimately life is understood only by juxtaposing the tragic view and the comic, the sensible and the sensitive. No one perspective is complete enough nor is the whole an amalgamation of all. By maintaining several views concurrently a man lives a balanced life and realizes his humanity most fully.

Probably this truth is incapable of philosophical proof. Certainly language and logic falter at the task. It remained two hundred years ago for a musician (I am tempted to join those who would say “THE musician”) to achieve its expression. In the finest of Mozart's compositions it is there: the serious with the comic, the frivolous made the equal of the sentimental. Measure follows measure in an irresistible logic, opposite flowing out of opposite. A single movement can mislead; taken with its companions its importance becomes proportionate. The concerto was a favorite medium for Mozart for its intensifies the coordination of differences. The operas are the vehicles most congenial to Mozartian thought. There life is presented in types but never in the abstract, and the interdependence of drama and music serves always to realize the wholeness of life in all of its perspectives.

I heard all this the other night at a concert of his music. Divertimento, concerto, symphony - twenty-year old master, twenty-nine-year old genius, and thirty-two-year old transcendent - we rejoiced in the sounds and ideas, those of us gathered in that hall. And the program notes summed it up. “Mozart sounds, in its double sense, what cannot be named, those deep recesses of the human spirit where opposites are identical, where joy is grief, comedy is tragedy, and laughter another way of weeping - or vice versa, if you so wish it. Paradox is a prime constituent of the human personality, and of the world we live in; it is one of the main-springs of Mozart's art.”
The Theatre

In Black and White, Or Is It White and Black?

By WALTER SORELL

Theater, I was told, is supposed to reflect life, and it certainly does these days. Since we now live at a time and place which makes me often shudder at the thought of having to get up in the morning and to face life — well, I'm sure, you got the analogy by now.

It is with a certain trepidation that I enter a theater nowadays. I know I should enter it like the home of a beloved, and I assure you I love it deeply. But I do enter it as if it were a house of shame, expecting some sort of sensation without the ecstatic feeling of elation. To give you an example. Last month I spoke of William Gibson's "A Cry of Players" at The Repertory Theatre of Lincoln Center. I did not tell you at that time — I suppose I needed the aesthetic distance the play lacked — that there was a scene of jealousy between Will Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway in which, among other things, they described their extra-marital love experiences. He tells her of the joys and variations the female organ offers, and she tells him of the varied length of the male organ. This precedes a consummation of love on stage with the lights being dimmed. To put this discussion into phony Elizabethan English doesn't change the fact that this is all very clinical, tasteless, disgusting, sensational, and untheatrical.

Now you know what I mean. Next to it the racial question. It is very much on our mind, so much so that nowadays your skin color decides how safe it may be for you to show yourself on certain streets in your city. In the not too remote past the cry was loud that the legitimate theatre on and off-Broadway ignored the Negro. Now we have at the St. Marks Playhouse a very good Negro Ensemble Company which, in fact, is mighty good and has come up with some exciting plays about the color problem. Ray McIver's "God Is A (Guess What?)" is a morality play in a wonderful production, taking everyone to task in parodies and with biting satire. A black man refuses to flee from two lynchers and believes that God Almighty will rescue him ("Baby boy is on that other-cheek kick"). God of course is a black God and tired of the wrongs committed in His name and issues an eleventh commandment: Thou shalt not Lynch. The show is much fun, and behind the fun is the bitter accusation that Christianity is practiced in a "funny" way in America the Beautiful. The distance from "Green Pastures" to this black comedy is a light year in the awakening of a race rising in the shining armor of militancy.

Then there is Rochelle Owens' "Beclch," pronounced Beklek. But however you pronounce it, this play about a white queen in dark Africa is with all its symbolism an extreme of perversions and filth which best exemplifies the vomit of contemporary creativity. "Big Time Buck White" by Joseph Dolan Tuotti originated in Watts and is not really a play — who cares these days what a play is! — but a meeting of an organization called Beautiful Alleluia Days. The discussion is at first full of white back-lash humor at its worst until Big Time Buck White appears to address the meeting. The mood changes suddenly to a black mood. He stands on his podium and replies to — I assume — prepared questions from the audience. He is intelligent and electrifying. The humor that preceded his act becomes darker by the minute. Dick Williams, who is the leading character and director of this non-play, is excellent.

"Riot," a play conceived and created by the OM Theatre Workshop of Boston was presented at the Broadway United Church of Christ. Again, a panel discussion about race problems. But this panel discussion is like the playing of an orchestra to the stage action which takes place in the body of the hall and consists of violence and rioting which then engulfs the whole auditorium. The idea is to make the audience feel what it is like to be in the midst of a riot. A frightening theater piece, though not a play. The theater is a moral institution, Friedrich Schiller said at the end of the eighteenth century.

The Forum is the experimental stage of the Repertory Theatre of Lincoln Center. It opened this season with "Bananas" by John White, a witty, non-sequitur kind of burlesque which tries to capture the nonsense of the world through the nonsensical actions and reactions, or rather non-actions and non-reactions, of a few burlesque players. This would have been a great idea for a one-act play. The full-length defeated its purpose. The acting was superb and proved that the burlesque show's the thing. No nude, no filth, no perversion, no Negro. But this was not the reason why the play which isn't a play failed as a play.

A play doomed to fail most of the time is Bertolt Brecht's "The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui" because it is one of Brecht's weaker plays, full of traps for director and actors. The Minnesota Theatre Company gave it an exciting, well-thought-through, beautifully acted production. Robin Gammell as Ui and the entire cast brought relief to Broadway. This was great theatre thanks, in the main, to director Edward Payson Call, who understood the devious ways of Bertolt Brecht.

That night I was not sure whether I should not emigrate to Minnesota.

February 1969
The Visual Arts

Good Taste, Bad Taste, Personal Taste

By RICHARD H. W. BRAUER

This above all, to thine own self be true. . . William Shakespeare

The sun melts all Moscow into one spot which, like a mad tuba, sets one's whole inside, one's whole soul vibrating. No, this red unity is not the loveliest hour! It is only the final note of the symphony which brings every color to its greatest intensity, which lets, indeed forces, all Moscow to resound like thefff of a giant orchestra. Pink, lavender, yellow, white, blue, pistachio green, flame-red houses, churches — each an independent song — the racing green grass, the deep murmuring trees, or the snow, singing with a thousand voices, or the allegretto of the bare branches, above, towering over all like a cry of triumph, like a Hallelujah forgetful of itself, the long white, delicately earnest line of the Ivan Velikiy Bell Tower. And upon its neck, stretched high and taut in eternal longing to the heavens, the golden head of the cupola, which is the Moscow sun amid the golden and colored stars of the other cupolas. To paint this hour, I thought, would be the most impossible and the greatest joy of an artist.

Wassily Kandinsky

If you do not like olives, just eat a dozen and you will.

Stephen C. Pepper

Recently I received in the mail from a picture-of-the-month club an ad with the come-on “How to make a blank wall become a tribute to your taste. . .” It suggested that with their pictures on my wall the world would see that I had “good taste.” Then, after about two pages of small type about the fame of their artists, the rarity of their pictures, etc., just a word or two was included regarding the personal pleasure the collection might bring. Obviously the ad’s main pitch was focused on my desire to look good rather than on my need to have a good look.

Women are subjected to similar pressures from their housekeeping and fashion magazines which promote fads in “good taste” in everything from draping windows to draping themselves. Surprisingly, even the art world has its own fads and arbiters of taste. As a result, many of us are led into worrying about conforming to current “taste” rather than developing our own particular understandings and esthetic satisfactions. To avoid following blindly these tastemakers, most of us need to be in closer touch with our true feelings and sensibilities.

Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), one of the key innovators and theoreticians of twentieth century art, built his whole approach to art on paying attention to what he called the principle of inner necessity. When he painted, Kandinsky put down colors and lines out of his inner feelings of the elements. He became the first to commit his career to the idea that these inner feelings were stated more clearly when they did not also represent something. Paintings such as Improvisation with Green Center, though looking somewhat “underwater,” have no representational intentions; nor do the more geometric, airy forms in Intimate Conversation.

Kandinsky called the internal feelings the spiritual in art. To experience it the beholder’s visual sense should be unprejudiced and alert, and his inner responsiveness spontaneous, ready, and full. The quotation describing Kandinsky’s experiences on seeing Moscow at sunset explains his emphasis. He saw with the intensity and freshness of first impressions. His senses were alive; his associative responses vivid. Habit and absent-minded attention had been put aside. His own sensibilities had been used; his own feelings had been faced.

It is important to realize that such experiencing is a wide-ranging testing of the visual environment for quality rather than the reinforcing of a few set preferences (“I don’t know anything about art, but I know what I like.”) Since it is, after all, possible to like something of common quality and to dislike something of great excellence, such a willingness to open up to works that seem strange and difficult can help to enlarge one’s taste. Taste can be developed.

For instance, it was only a few years ago that I managed to receive any satisfaction at all from a painting by Kandinsky. In fact, most of his paintings still irritate me. They seem so disorganized; so filled with vague and vaguely related fragments of lines, colors, and shapes. But every once in a while a painting of his will seem better organized, or I will find myself liking the sense of freedom the sketchiness such works as Improvisation with Green Center have, especially when compared with Landscape with Green Poplars. The latter seems much more flat, heavy, and spatially shallow. And so I find my taste is changing and stretching. At any rate, as I see more of Kandinsky’s paintings; as I learn more about his ideas in relation to major developments in twentieth century painting; and as I clarify more of my own values regarding art today I expect to be able to experience his paintings with more discernment and critical perception. Sensibilty, information, and values — on such does an enriching personal taste grow.
Wassily Kandinsky, *IMPROVISATION WITH GREEN CENTER (NO. 176)*, 1913, oil on canvas, 43 1/4" x 47 1/2". Arthur Jerome Eddy Memorial Collection. Courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Wassily Kandinsky, *INTIMATE COMMUNICATION*, 1925, drawing for painting from the book "From Point and Line to Plane".

I choose to be against the war in Vietnam.
I choose to be against war, any kind of war.
I choose to take this anti-war stance in the face of some substantial arguments raised by the readers of The Cresset who like to argue by mail.

Standing in the Christian culture, they like to quote the Sacred Literature. And always they quote Romans 13: “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore he who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed.” Consequently, assert the pro-war people, if the government declares war, God has declared that war. So, if Uncle Sam lays the sword on you, you have a divine obligation to go, to Vietnam if necessary. The same argument can be built out of I Peter 2, 13-14: “Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right.” So what is wrong? What is right?

People who cite these passages are insisting that obviously anti-war attitudes and behavior are immoral and dare not be praised. This kind of interpretation almost places God on the side of war.

But my country right or wrong? The Sacred Literature does not command me to obey my country in everything it does. I am willing to listen: what is a right war? What is a just war? If we are not certain about the answers — why fight in Vietnam while we are still arguing the point?

One can hardly be unaware of the defense argument. According to this position, the United States is in Vietnam to protect its people and our people against the Communist threat — just as we fought Hitler and Mussolini to contain the Fascist scourge and thus to keep the world safe for democracy. The argument is constitutional: “We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect union...provide for the common defense.” Almost fifty per cent of the powers laid down for Congress in Article I, Section 8, deal with the role of Congress in the waging and managing of a war. As if to give the Constitution effect, the United States has other skirmishes to its credit: wars against the Indians, the American Revolution, the Civil War, Korea, and Vietnam.

When has the nation really been at peace? For all its claims to peace, the United States has spent most of its history at war. I have a feeling that many Americans like war, even want war, perhaps in the spirit of Coriolanus: “Let me have war, say I; it exceeds peace as far as day does night; it’s sprightly, awaking, audible, and full of vent. Peace is a very apoplexy, lethargy; muddled, death, sleepy, insensible.”

I know that people have reason to argue that war is necessary and inevitable in our “dog-eat-dog” world. So it is easy to keep your powder dry while you talk peace.

Nevertheless it is still a silly business.

Silly, as for example, in the case of my nephew. Just turned nineteen, he was called to three months of boot training, was then granted two weeks at home — and on to the worst of it in Vietnam.

Says one of my antagonists: “That is good for the boys. It will teach them about life.” If my antagonist is a fair example, the boys will return to Legion meetings, bragging about how they killed commies, and will manage to revive their enthusiasm at the post’s stag parties.

All this is good for the boys? How can it be good for our boys: killing people, fighting and living in mud and swamps, relaxing in curious places, alienation from all that is noble — a vulgar style of life? It still looks like a silly business to me.

What also gives me pause is that threat of atomic technology! For years and years nations have relied on arsenals of guns and ordinary bombs to resolve international conflicts. That all is bad enough. But now man has outreached himself with atomic warfare. And it will happen.

Mankind simply has to look for new devices to create and maintain the peace or be destroyed.

Why prolong the age of extermination? But we will. It is still a silly business.
Spatio-temporal creatures that we are, it is not surprising that we have come to put considerable stock in the old slogan, "There's a time and a place for everything." One minute, for example, is about the right time for commercials that appear on TV, twenty-minutes is as long as we expect a sermon; last, fifty minutes does nicely as a period of learning in college, and one hundred minutes seems optimal for the cinema. What are we to make, then, of films which last longer than that? In particular, what are we to say about movies which press their luck and carry on for two and a half hours (not including intermission)?

In general, movies which play a Road Show Engagement — which being interpreted means $2.50-4.00 reserved seats, at most two showings a day, and a pause for butter-crunched popcorn somewhere between the exposition and the climax — are unsatisfying, on balance. No doubt this is due in part to our expecting more from them, which we naturally do because they cost more to see than do their less pretentious cousins. Besides, as I remarked in these pages not long ago, it's hard to make a really good film, one which thoroughly satisfies even modest expectations; thus abnormal expectations run a proportionately greater risk of remaining unmet. But there are other reasons why the Super-Films often disappoint, reasons having especially to do with the nature of a Road Show-type film.

When a producer decides to go for broke by turning his script into Road Show material, he's got to find an angle that will interest his financiers enough to entice them to part with the extra millions such a production requires. The angle varies from film to film, but what it is can easily be spotted when you see the finished product. Julie Andrews is the (obtuse) angle in "Star!" Barbra Streisand the hooker in "Funny Girl," The Bible in "The Bible," sights and sounds in "2001: A Space Odyssey," David Lean in any of his films — "Dr. Zhivago," "Lawrence of Arabia" — Shakespeare in Zeffrelli's latest endeavors, "Romeo and Juliet" and "The Taming of the Shrew." Once the angle is decided on, the producer has to spend the money the angle has won him, and where the money goes is no secret in the final product. Casts of thousands, authentic recreations of strange locales, or stunning action sequences are frequent choices for the newly-won millions in the budget. In a word, the money goes for spectacle.

Yet it is hard to keep the masses happy even with such circuses as periodically parade across the screen, and so these circuses frequently seem like stale bread indeed. A people accustomed to war and moon shots and riots and Presidential chats all in its own living room is unlikely to find anything in a movie theater to compare with what was on the evening news. Which is not to say the movies have nothing to offer — just that what they offer is usually best done in under two hours, and at a price less likely to make you blench at the box office window. Movies aren't a substitute for life; they best depict a small slice of it.

Still, there are some first-rate Road Show films — pictures that reveal an acute angle in their conception and a good deal of brilliance in their execution. Current among these is the film version of the London-Broadway musical "Oliver!" It's a fine, fine film.

Without a doubt, the credit for the film's worthiness goes, in about equal parts, to choreographer Onna White, set decorator John Box, Ron Moody (who plays Fagin) and Jack Wild (The Artful Dodger), and photographer Oswald Morris. These are the key contributors to the film, as I see it — though their associates in the project are manifestly able as well. The Production numbers stand out as the signal achievement of the film; they rival or top anything on the screen since "West Side Story," and in scale and detail even overshadow the song and dance sequences of that cinema masterpiece. The plot line of "Oliver!" is not long or strong enough to hang one of Fagin's handkerchiefs on, but that is no matter. The film is entertainment, a musical spectacular, and as such it lives up to its billing as Road Show musicals almost never do.

The film makes little pretence to being a faithful, not to say literal, adaptation of the original Dickens story. That is all for the better, for who could do justice to Dickens on film? What counts is that it offers us a full two and a half hours of visual and musical delight — and at today's prices, $3.50 is not too much to pay for that. In today's world, when delight is so hard to come by, we can thank the people of "Oliver!" for giving it to us at all.

The measure for judging the Super-Film — as indeed it is for any film — is the answer one must give to the questions: Did it do well what it set out to do? Was that worth doing? The answer, for "Oliver!", is an unqualified Yes to both questions. The Super-Film typically stumbles in doing well what it does, since it commonly mistakes quantity for quality, form for substance. "Oliver!" sets its sights on target and scores nicely, richly. It offers a charming evening and tuneful, warm memories. That was its point, and that its achievement.
Lenten Remembering

Very soon now I shall again walk up the hill behind my house to go to the chapel on Wednesday evenings... It will be Lent again and as the shadows of early evening fall over the campus the chapel lights will shine in singular compassion to welcome us forlorn children of the twentieth century to a few moments of silence and singing... We will come from all over the campus — part of a procession which is longer than any other in the history of man... Ahead of me, almost lost in the distance of time, are people like Adam, Moses, David, Isaiah, Peter, John, Paul, Augustine, and Luther... Behind me in the procession are these young men and women who to to school here... A host of others, too, whose names I don't know... The procession whose beginning and end is a cross... Walking in such a line, I remember some things which need remembering...

I look at the trees and remember... Here in my town the trees are tall and straight... The elms and maples of Indiana... Long ago, in the Garden, they were gnarled and short... The olive trees of Palestine... There is no moon tonight, but long ago through the twisted branches of the olive trees the Paschal moon lighted the twisted hands of Him to whom we shall sing tonight... Never in all their years of heat and cold have the olive trees seen a stranger thing... He and the eleven who were left after one had gone into the night by another way had come to the hill of olive trees for the last time... Eight rested in one place, and three slept in another place... Only for Him there was no rest... Tortured hands, lips moving in agony, great drops of blood dripping into the dust from which man had come, and to which one Man had to return so that there might be a higher destiny for all others... The trees He had created and the moon He had set in its course heard His crying in the night... A strange story... The same pen that told us how a great army of angels honored with their carols God made a Child now tells us how one angel came and strengthened God made Man, despised and forsaken of all other men...

I remember, in our angry and prideful time, other things, too... Only twice in the story which we shall hear again tonight did He utter a meek reproach... Once to Peter: “Simon, sleepest thou? Couldst not thou watch one hour?”... Once to the man who had left the Upper Room too early and too late: “Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?”... Man in every sin of mind and heart will forever deserve one or the other of these reproaches... To sleep while He does His work in the world, to betray Him with a kiss — these were new sins that night... Since then, however, they have been done a thousand times.

I remember Peter... Under the olive trees he had his moment of blind bravery... He forgot, as I so often forget, that the plans of God are not to be helped or hindered by the sword... The ear which he severed from the head of Malchus, the servant of the high priest, was immediately mended by the suffering Servant of God: “Put up again thy sword into his place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword...”... Peter learned that later in life... The old, beautiful legend of Quo Vadis tells the story:

Peter, outworn,  
And menaced by the sword,  
Shook off the dust of Rome;  
And, as he fled,  
Met One, with eager face,  
Hastening cityward,  
And, to his vast amaze,  
It was the Lord.

“Lord, whither goest Thou?”  
He cried, importunate,  
And Christ replied —  
“Peter, I suffer loss,  
I go to take thy place,  
To bear thy cross.”  
Then Peter bowed his head,  
Discomfited;  
There, at the Master’s feet,  
Found grace complete,  
And courage, and new faith,  
And turned — with Him,  
to Death.

So we —  
Whene’er we fail  
Of our full duty,  
Cast on Him our load —  
Who suffered sore for us,  
Who frail flesh wore for us,  
Who all things bore for us —  
On Christ, the Lord.