The Cresset is listed in the Book Review Index and The American Humanities Index.

3 IN LUCE TUA Tend Your Treasure; Notes from the Editor's Notebook
7 Harold H. Kolb, Jr. CLASSIC AMERICAN NOVELISTS: UNINVITED GUESTS
13 Rakel Liehu FINNISH POEMS. (Translated by Berhnard Hillila)
14 James M. Childs, Jr. "WOMAN BEHOLD YOUR SON! SON, BEHOLD YOUR MOTHER"
16 Walter Sorell RUMINDATIONS IN ZURICH
17 J. Barrie Shepherd TRADE SECRETS
18 J. H. Bowden THE BIBLE AND OTHER NOVELS
21 Arlin G. Meyer CHRISTIANITY AND LITERATURE: AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY
27 BOOKS
28 Clark W. Leorns REFLECTION; LEAVES

ALBERT G. HUEGLI, Publisher
KENNETH F. KORBY, Editor

Departmental Editors
Richard H. W. Brauer, Visual Arts; Design Advisor
Gail Eifrig, General Books Reviews
Theodore Jungkuntz, Religious Books Reviews
Joseph F. McCall, Recordings
Jill Baumgaertner, Poetry Consultant
Dorothy Czamanske, Editorial Assistant

Contributors
Walter Sorell, Theater
Albert Trost, Politics
James A. Nuechterlein, Politics

Editorial Board
Jack A. Hiller, Walter E. Keller, Carl H. Krekel, Dale G. Lasky, Dolores Ruosch,
John Strietelmeier, Sue Wienhorst

Business Managers
Wilbur H. Hutchins, Finance
JoAnna Truemper, Administration and Circulation

THE CRESSET is published monthly except July and August by the Valparaiso University Press, Valparaiso, Indiana 46383, as a forum for scholarly writing and informed opinion. The views expressed herein are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the preponderance of opinion of Valparaiso University or within the editorial board. Manuscripts should be addressed to the Editor and accompanied by return postage. Letters to the editor for publication are subject to editing for brevity. The Book Review Index lists Cresset reviews. Second class postage paid at Valparaiso, Indiana. Subscription rates: one year—$3.00; two years—$5.50; single copy—35 cents. Student rates, per year—$1.00; single copy—15 cents. Entire contents copyrighted 1978 by the Valparaiso University Press, without whose written permission reproduction in whole or in part for any purpose whatsoever is expressly forbidden.

EVANGELICAL Catholic Lutherans are a minority in America, in an environment attuned to reformed protestantism. The temptations to be like Esau are persistent—and, it seems to me, successful in a great measure. The anxiety to be liked, acceptable, and successful has enticed many Lutherans to mimic, copy, and adopt the mentality and the methods of reformed Christianity. The threats of loss, exclusion, and even extinction have crowded many Lutherans to turn to the religious assumptions, the religious models, and the religious vitalities pervasive in that protestant environment. And in the midst of theological conflict, where the fear of being robbed of one’s treasure drives people to look for “saviors,” champions, and fellow warriors, many Lutherans have stated the problems in terms of that reformed theological tradition and borrowed its vocabulary to wage the war.

In general, words like “evangelical,” “catholic,” and “Lutheran” have been drained of their gospel and sacramental energies. In their place political words, “conservative,” “moderate,” and “liberal” have (theologically) furnished religious energy for the nurture all too often of the adamic in human nature and (in church matters) have justified the use of political and economic power to attempt to establish the truth, to secure purity, to effect unity, and to govern pastorally.

The mistrust of the Word of God reflected in this shift, and covered over by a zeal for the Bible without evangelical knowledge, has left a vacuum for the governance of the churches that has been filled with pseudo energies of rule, regulations, and bureaus—a notion congenial to the conception of church governance in the reformed protestant tradition. There is manifest a persistent desire to “tune the pulpits,” not to the faithful use of the office of the keys but to a key that conforms to slogans. While the humming of such slogans may give the impression that all are indeed singing the new song of salvation, the fact may be that what is heard is only the whir of success—religiously defined, of course. Religious pluralism is a reality for us all—even for those who would arrange matters otherwise, had they the power. But religious pluralism—for all its benefits and advances in the protection of dissenters, unbelievers, and heretics from legal, political, and economic coercion—has an ironic character among us. It has developed a religious ghetto that is a subtle attack on the reality of the church, that new and ultimate creation of God as he is remaking humanity. The gospel of toleration transforms itself from the negative value of guarding each in his beliefs to become the sanctification of religious self-gratification. Each person or group says, “I believe such and such. It is good and true for me. I make no assertions about its truth and goodness for you.” A “nation of behavers” has nurtured an anticonfessional claim that has only one absolute confession: tolerance. However, take away the universal truth claims and you have taken away Christianity. The passion for the truth of the Christian gospel has been cooled by a timidity nurtured on solipsism. With the loss of the faithful passion for truth, the passion for privatism increases: the loss of faith means also the loss of love.

The presence of religious pluralism may be (not must be) a signal of disunity and division among the churches. Real disunity and division are hostile to the work of Christ and his gospel; they are also contradictory to the organic character of the church as the new humanity. The ecumenical movement has become a passion—perhaps slightly cooled in the present hour—to glue things together, to establish and maintain a unity. For some the ecumenical passion is alive chiefly as a hope, even if its energies are at a low ebb. For others, the most vigorous form of the passion is opposition to the movement, as if unity were neither good nor desirable. In this facet of the religious life also, evangelical and catholic Lutherans have been confronted with options that more often entice them to barter away their treasure than to tend it. Or, if they were tending it, they were tempted...
to tend it to the end of an ideology or organization rather than to that end of love for the brethren that marks the aim of truth. Like Esau, many have come to think that the only way to survive, unite, and grow is to barter the blessing for a mess of pottage. What good is the blessing if one is dead—not by martyrdom but by starvation!

Ecumenical activity has often habituated itself to shaving off the harsh and disjunctive realities embedded in the confession of truth. It seemed unity could be achieved in that way. But too frequently such unity has been about as solid as scotch tape mending a broken mirror. However, the weariness with divisions, the frustration of not being able to rebuke, or be rebuked by, the brethren, and the aspirations for unity have combined to stir up a spirit for unity. In the face of this environment, this activity, and this spirit, evangelical and catholic Lutherans are called to tend their treasure with faithful vigor.

Schismatic Thinking and Bad Glue

THERE IS REAL SCHISM in the fallen world. By definition, sinners are those who will to divorce themselves from God; and they will to marry themselves to themselves. In that same world, God’s wrath is an energy that will not allow evil to divide reality forever. With death as the pay off for sin and the execution of the sinner by God, God undoes all the glue man contrives to hold things together. The pain of the antinomies of human life and the blindness of man the sinner in the things pertaining to God lead him always to dislocate and misname the schism. On the grounds of the misnomer, wilfull man constructs unities of religion, reason, and civilization that will not hold. The real schism of sin and death is seen most clearly when the law of God is understood and used as his rightly ordering all things retributively to the end that sinners are rightly divided from their sin. The evangelical Lutheran understanding of God’s law ought not be bartered away for the protestant notion that God’s law is primarily legislation about moral and religious behavior, conformity to which is the aim and end of the law.

This difference in understanding God’s law leads also to a different understanding of the life of the evangelical in his vocation and in the quest for justice in the city. The goal of the evangelical Christian is surely the conversion and salvation of all mankind. However, the practice of holiness in the sphere of vocation is the practice of partnership with God in the works of God for the ends of God. The majesty of God who thinks up people, feeds and governs them, blesses and punishes them, and provides for them through the services of man is borne in the humility of faith, not in the pride of position or pursuit of proof that one is pleasing to God. Justice in the city can be served even if there is not the conversion of those who are beneficiaries of that justice. Evangelical and catholic Lutherans need to tend the treasure they have in the truth that God uses different means to achieve different ends in retribution and in the forgiveness of sins. The protestant passion to divide God and Christians from the world because not everything he does is conversion, or to lump all God’s activity together as if retribution and the forgiveness of sins were different stages on the same continuum, ought to be addressed by tending the proper distinction in God’s works, leaving the true unity in God and the faith that holds to him.

The Wedge in the Head

SCHISMATIC THINKING and bad glue are seen most dramatically at work in those deepest vitalities of the evangelical church: Holy Baptism, Absolution, Holy Communion, and thinking about the church herself. The water of Baptism is split from the Word of God and the work of the Spirit in such a way that Baptism is not the heart of justification by grace through faith (the death of the sinner with Christ and the raising of the new creature to live in righteousness and holiness before God) but becomes the outward expression of a prior possession. For all the talk about “born again,” very little is anchored in the regenerative activity of God in Holy Baptism. One could get the impression that spiritual rebirth is autogenetic. Evangelical and catholic Lutherans must tend their treasure particularly at this point for the sake of God’s honor, for the sake of their fellow Christians, and for the sake of the world. And it is no tending the treasure when those who assert the unity of water, Word, and Spirit in the act of Baptism are the very ones who leave the new life untended in personal and congregational discipline.

A similar split is manifested in the spoken word of forgiveness. The Word of God in the mouth and in the ear are divided from the heavenly reality—as if nothing changed in heaven by the speaking, hearing, and believing that absolutism. Rather, the steps for coming to Christ and making a decision for him receive center stage. The use of the key that unlocks the prison house of sin should not be bartered away for the pottage that nurtures itself on its own experience.

The mind of the church has been split in her thinking about the Lord’s Supper. What is said about Jesus, the enfleshed, crucified, and risen Christ is deemed to be inappropriate when connected with the bread and wine of the Holy Meal. What our Lord says about the bread and wine in the Supper, while it may be true in some sense, is said to be unable to carry the whole truth of what is said about Jesus Christ. The presence of that redeeming Lord, both the Server and the Food at his Table, is divorced from the bread and wine. Such as outlook, based on the principle that the limited world cannot carry the unlimited grace of God, alters not only the Sacrament of the Altar but also the understanding of the church and the world in which she lives. In place of that real unity given by the Lord in his uniting his body and blood with the bread and wine, a substitute unity is offered in ritual, in eating and drinking, or in the sense of celebration. Evangelical and catholic Lutherans will tend to the treasure of the Lord’s Supper, particularly to its salutary and blessed
The church has a similar wedge in her head in thinking about herself. The one church, united by one Spirit in one Baptism, living by one faith on that good news, has been divided into two and therefore many. She has been turned from hearing and confessing to seeing and not seeing. She who lives by faith is now invited to think of herself with the language of proof. The predicates “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic” can be applied (some say) only to an invisible reality.

Others claim these predicates only for an ecclesiastical structure yet to be achieved. That local, living organism that carries the keys, hears the Word of God, believes, prays, forgives, loves, etc., that new humanity that lives by repentance and faith is thought to be unable to bear these predicates. The one church has become two. And to get them back together into one, puritan tactics of eschlesiastical power are used, conformity is called for, and a papacy becomes essential. In a century that seeks to create the new humanity and the new society, and does all this with gospels that have no Christ, albeit they have many excruciating crosses, evangelical and catholic Lutherans ought to tend the treasure of the gospel of the grace and glory of God.

Will all be glued together by a common opinion about the Bible? To hear the contending parties in the battle for the Bible, one could be led to think so. But perhaps they are like the foxes of Samson: the heads were pointing in opposite directions, but at the tails where the fire was, they were tied together. The bequest of reformed protestantism to Christianity is a view of the Bible as a book with rules for salvation and for living. More knowledge of it and trust in it is more holiness. With a reverential spirit (induced by piety or learning) one extracts morals and rules to obey. Faith is obedience. Now evangelical Lutherans are also catholic; that is, the canonical scriptures are the governing norm for all doctrine and life, that which has governed and normed the church from the beginning. But they are also evangelical. The word of death is for dying; the work of life is for living. The entire Bible is not the object of faith in the way the Gospel is the object of faith. The point of inspiration of the scriptures is not a security apart from using the scriptures. The point of inspiration by the Holy Spirit is for that spirited word clearly to bring repentance and faith and holy living in conformity with the crucified and risen Lord Jesus.

The unerring arrows of the King are sharp in the hearts of the King's enemies; the consoling and vivifying absolution never misses the broken heart of the sinner. But death is not life—until it is death with Christ and life with the risen Jesus. The security that (in principle) there are no errors in the Bible is not to be confused with the use of the scriptures to repent, to grow in faith, and to live in holiness: in short, to become wise in salvation.

If we do not tend the treasure we have received, we can be sure no one else will tend it. If we are ashamed of our treasure, or if we are so arrogant as to imagine that we have no roots—all has begun with us—we will be found not only faithless but also loveless. Is there nothing from us that God wills to give our neighbors in the church and in the world? Has God been merely messing around when he has taken the trouble with countless thousands who have worked, suffered, and tended the treasure so as to give it to us? Faithfully tending the treasure given by the faithful God is the root of humility. And if that tending is for the sake of the neighbor, as well as for the honor of God, it will impel the neighbor to tend his treasure too. We shall all be richer and more united. Surely loyalty can be twisted into chauvinism, arrogance, and triumphalism. But loyalty (fidelity) does not necessarily produce these undesirable qualities. Esau did more damage than Jacob. Peter is preferable to Judas as a model. KFK
energy to administer such a program should be expended.

The money extracted from those who must and wish to use large amounts of petroleum should (simultaneously) be devoted to the development of extensive systems of public transportation. Rethinking our patterns of passion for each one traveling to and from work in his own automobile and the reconstruction of new patterns of travel can be done not merely by making the price of petroleum products uneconomical for the old patterns. Alternate patterns must be provided.

One of the areas in which I would like to see a radical change in thinking is the extensive busing program for education. This entire scheme is, in my opinion, wasteful of energy: human energy and time that does not necessarily or directly contribute to the excellence of education; and energy which not only ought to be saved, but the saving should be put into the tools of teaching and learning.

**IF HOMOSEXUAL BEHAVIOR**—including homosexual marriages—is considered a life-style, why should there be legislation for it? A society does not legislate for a life-style, although it may find it necessary to legislate against certain life-styles because of their lethal character to the society and the race.

It continues to perplex me that homosexual behavior should be called a "life-style." It would be more accurate to label it a "death-style." Perhaps that is true of whatever life is styled: it is a way of preparing for dying and death. But homosexual behavior is so dramatically a dead-end street. Human sexuality is never only for reproduction; but whatever more human sexuality is, it is never less than the mode of reproduction. The complex disorder that is homosexuality and the burden of bearing it—especially for those whom Christian grace of therapy cannot heal—surely call forth from Christians and other compassionate human beings the utmost understanding, assistance, and support for living a full life that restrains homosexual practice. But to practice the disorder, or, if not to practice it, then to exalt homosexual conduct as a viable alternative for sexual behavior and relationships is to encourage personal confusion and social destruction.

God made man male and female when he made them in his own image. The order of exchange and interchange in a heterosexual world reflects the way God is both in his discreteness and in his unity. The substitution of the homosexual mode of exchange and interchange is the introduction of disorder that leaves each of the sexual beings staring into the dark blankness of himself. There can be no living union, for there can be no life-giving union. One can indeed pervert the male/female relationships and unions. But even in perversions and immorality, one cannot escape the reflection of the divine love, nor can one escape in principle the intrusion into the union of a new, warm, living being that demands alteration of life in relation to another. Homosexual behavior is confusion of the sexual being for it disorders the exchange; it is barren and dead for it is—in principle—not a life-giving union.

Understanding, compassion, and support for those who carry the burden of homosexuality can furnish them orderly and fruitful lives in a heterosexual world, even while they restrain the practice of their desires. Such care for them sustains them also in an order and in some degree of sexual clarity. But to applaud the practice of homosexual activity, to legislate for such practice as a "life-style" is to contribute to the deadly disorder and to foster sexual confusion.

**FOR SIX YEARS** the present editor has carried the privilege and the burden of the editorship. It has been a profitable time for him, a time of learning and hard work. Now the time has come to pass the editorship to other hands.

Appreciation to the authors, poets, artists, and reviewers—and to the readers—is of such magnitude that the full feeling of it cannot be carried, much less expressed. However, such incapacity does not in any way absolve this editor from expressing his deep gratitude to each and to all who continued with and joined in the work of *The Cresset*.

Review journals, as well as a variety of other magazines, are having to struggle for their lives. Perhaps that isn't all bad. In addition to the support *The Cresset* has continued to receive from its authors and readers, its continued existence reflects the determination of the staff and publisher to keep audible in the church and the society a journal that ranges as wide as Valparaiso University—including its Lutheran theological and religious interests.

Excellence is also served by the pressure to stay alive. While the judgment of excellence is better left to others, this editor has learned one thing quite clearly: God lies in the details. If, in the present barbarity, we have done nothing more than "to stand," we have achieved all—and more—than we hoped.

We extend our best wishes heartily to the new editor, Richard Lee. His experience as editor from 1968-1972 and his familiarity to our readers as film and TV critic will be assets for his taking up again the task of editor.

Every step in each issue of *The Cresset*, as well as each issue itself, calls for determination, judgment, artistry, and passion. To attend the details and not to lose the scope calls for a range of interests, a supportive staff, and an alert readership.

Lee certainly has my support. I am confidently hopeful that he will continue to receive the support of those colleagues, contributors, and readers who have come to cherish *The Cresset*. May their tribe increase.

Last, but certainly not least, I want to express my hearty appreciation to the publisher and to the Board of Directors of Valparaiso University for their determination to keep alive this aspect of Valparaiso University. May both *The Cresset* and the University flourish together.

KFK
LATE IN THE EVENING OF NOVEMBER 2ND I finally heard what I had been listening for, without success, for almost a year—the mention of a classic American author. 1976—an election year piled on top of the Bicentennial—was a year filled with speeches and editorials and news specials and debates. What a gorgeous opportunity to open the texts of the major American writers and hear again their versions, their judgments, of our national experience. In a year of definition of American culture, of the American character, of American visions and revisions, one would expect we would turn naturally to the great American writers, the men who have best defined our culture and our character; the men who—in Samuel Johnson’s phrase—are the chief glory of every people. However, discounting an oil company ad with someone impersonating Hal Holbrook impersonating Mark Twain, it was a turn I was unable to discover until the midnight hour on November 2nd when NBC’s Catherine Mackin, covering the Senate races, announced that Muskie had won in Maine. Senator Muskie had been in trouble, she explained, because his constituency felt neglected by a man who spent too much time in the national spotlight in Washington. Therefore he campaigned extensively in his home state and spent a great deal of energy, Robert Frost style, mending fences.

It was a single, tiny drop, after a year’s march across the desert. And a brackish one at that. Maine, after all, was not Robert Frost’s state. New Hampshire, Vermont—but not Maine. And it wasn’t mending fences that he wrote about, but mending walls. And his point, of course, was that good fences do not make good neighbors, or good politics. It was a poem that Frost took delight in reading in Moscow after the stand-off in Berlin: “Something there is that doesn’t love a wall.” In that poem he describes his neighbor, who believes in mended walls, as an “old-stone savage” who “moves in darkness.” For all the reference made to our authors in that public year, we might as well have been stone-age savages. Americans have not turned to their classic books to light their way in the darkness.

This failure seems especially strange in that it was a highly referential year. Notable Americans had been invoked again and again: John Adams (and his family), Mr. Jefferson (as he is known at home), Paul Revere (who is also benefited from the crafts boom), Nathan Hale, Benjamin Franklin, Robert E. Lee, Lincoln, Edison, Henry Ford, Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman (now claimed by both political parties), John Kennedy. But where were Melville, Hawthorne, Emerson, Henry James, Faulkner, Hemingway? Outside of the universities, these names seem not to be meaningful. What is the fault with them, or with us, that our authors apparently do not speak to our public life?

To our students, you and I explain why the books we explain are the keystones of the American experience. But we seem to talk only to ourselves. No one out there seems to be listening. Why?

In this current series you have been discussing such works as The Scarlet Letter, Huckleberry Finn, The Red Badge of Courage, The Great Gatsby, The Sound and the Fury, and The Old Man and the Sea. They are a distinguished group of books—registered and certified American classics which span almost exactly a century. There are many obvious differences between 1850 and 1952. It is a long way from the rocky coasts of Massachusetts Bay to the balmy shores of the Gulf of Mexico, from Hawthorne to Hemingway, but these books are, curiously, very much alike. Each focuses on a single protagonist: Hester, Huck, Henry, Jay Gatsby, Quentin Compson, Santiago. The singleness of these protagonists is striking. They don’t have families in the normal manner. They don’t grow up, work at jobs, get married, and have children. Each character is an outsider, set in opposition to, rather than inside, a community. This may not, at first glance, appear uncommon, for many a novel begins with a disfranchised hero peering in through the windows of society.

Harold H. Kolb, Jr. teaches in the Department of English at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. This article is a slightly revised form of the lecture Dr. Kolb presented as the conclusion of Valparaiso University’s Department of English Bicentennial lecture series on classic American novels; for the most part, the lecture form has been retained. Dr. Kolb notes the following credits: the quotations unidentified in the text are from John Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity”; Michel-Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur, Letters from an American Farmer; J. D. Salinger, The Catcher in the Rye; C. C. Walcott, American Literary Naturalism: A Divided Stream; R. W. Emerson, “Fate,” Harper’s (1976). He expressed indebtedness also to Leo Marx, Robert Kellogg, and Paul C. Wilson; and to the following works: Edwin Cady, The Realist at War; S. E. Morison, Oxford History of the American People, and Dee Brown, Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee.

June, 1978
What is unusual here is that these outsiders remain outside. Hester Prynne "drear and desolate," "sad and lonely," lives out her life at a "cottage by the sea-shore," still wearing the scarlet symbol that divides her from the community. Huck's only recourse against a corrupt civilization is to "light out for the Territory." These characters do not, as do characters in many classic European novels of the period, mature into, become integrated into, society. Each protagonist in these American works undergoes a series of painful experiences and discovers a complexity of self and culture which leaves him (or her) either defeated, or disillusioned, or—in half the books—both.

The question that you (presumably) have been addressing seriatim—"what makes this novel a distinctly American classic?"—comes back collectively with a chill. Here we have a group of distinctly American classics, which concern

- an unrepentant adulteress
- a river waif who is hounded for befriending a runaway slave
- a coward who is shot at in the trenches
- a sentimentalist who is shot in his swimming pool
- a Southerner who goes to Harvard and commits suicide
- a fisherman without a fish (Santiago doesn't kill himself, although his creator did, like his father before him)

Anguish, loneliness, fear, pain, despair, death—all set in an American social landscape that isolates, destroys, and embitters. It is a social landscape that at its worst is full of knaves and at its best is full of fools. In 1897 Mark Twain pondered a name that would define such a society when he created the setting for The Mysterious Stranger. "Hasenfeld," he wrote. Then he changed it to "Eseldorf." Rabbitfield, or Asstown. Apparently Columbia, New Canaan, Jefferson, Harmony, Olympia never occurred to him.

The world of these classics doesn't seem to be the America described by the hero of Grand Rapids or the savior from Plains. It doesn't seem to express the spacious skies, the amber waves of America, the Beautiful Dream. The key word for all six novels occurs on the last page of The Great Gatsby:

"Gradually", says Nick, "I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes—a fresh, green breast of the new world. Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby's house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams; for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder."

What is the key word here? Flowered? Fresh? Enchanted? Wonder? No. Those words and the concepts they so brilliantly evoke are summoned up and then destroyed by "pandered." "Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby's house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams." The American dream is not only dead in 1925 when the trees have been destroyed; it was an illusion even in 1492 when the virgin timber stood fresh and green. It has always been an illusion.

What is remarkable about The Great Gatsby and these other acerbic classics is the way they fail to conform to the declarations that have filled our ears and the images that have wearied our eyes during the Bicentennial months. And they are not a biased sample. If we pick up our other classics—Moby Dick, The Portrait of a Lady, McTeague, A Hazard of New Fortunes, The Education of Henry Adams, Main Street, Wineburg, Ohio, An American Tragedy, The Grapes of Wrath, to say nothing of The Awakening, Native Son, and Invisible Man—we find a shelf of volumes almost completely out of harmony with the America described in the press, television, and political oratory. Why is this so? Whose version is correct? What is the American experience?

IN ORDER TO DEFINE IT, we must first consider the authorized standard version of the American experience, enshrined in our textbooks and proclaimed in every Presidential address, on the back of every cereal box. The familiar litany begins with Columbus' discovery of a new land, a "vacant wilderness" (the phrase is Perry Miller's), uncharted, unnamed, spacious beyond measure and rich beyond dreams. It was a land that soon began to attract venturesome Englishmen to its southern shores and pious ones to its northern. These ambitious settlers loosened the shackles of European caste and intolerance and established colonies led by enlightened planters and godly and learned ministers. Even before he landed at Salem Harbor, John Winthrop expounded the promise and the premise of America. On the pitching deck of the flagship Arbella he declared that "the God of Israel... shall make us a praise and glory, that men shall say of succeeding plantations: 'The Lord make it like that of New England.' For we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill, the eyes of all people are upon us." Surrounding the city were the farms where Crévecoeur in the next century found the essence of America in terms, although they have drifted from the theological to the political, that provided a euphoric chorus to Governor Winthrop's sermon:

Here are no aristocratical families, no courts, no kings, no bishops, no ecclesiastical dominion. . . . We are a people of cultivators, scattered over an immense territory, communicating with each other by means of roads and navigable rivers, united by the silken bands of mild government, all respecting the laws, without dreading their power,
because they are equitable. . . . We have no princes, for whom we toil, starve, and bleed: we are the most perfect society now existing in the world.

Whether the terms were theological or political, America was a new beginning in a new land, released from the constraints of space and time, of geography and history. Westering across the Atlantic and then across the Appalachians, the colonists were free to reform society in a Lockean state of nature specially blessed by a favoring providence. Such self-reliant confidence was bound to conflict with the old world claims of an absentee landlord, and the colonists then rose to full stature and shook off the chains of tyranny:

“We must indeed all hang together, or most assuredly, we shall all hang separately.”

“I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country.”

“Put none but Americans on guard tonight.”

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.”

At the time of the Revolution the new American states lay huddled in the East, clinging to the Atlantic shore. But impelled by the postwar surge of nationalism, the continuing lure of the Northwest Passage, and the shrewdness of Thomas Jefferson, who purchased a million square miles of heartland continent for two cents an acre and sent a pair of army officers from Virginia overland to the Pacific—the great race across the continent began. It wasn’t until November, 1805—three centuries after Columbus—when Meriwether Lewis and William Clark rowed to the mouth of the Columbia River that Americans began to know what they had. In 1669 Virginia Governor William Berkeley had attempted to organize an expedition to find the “East India Sea,” figuring they would need provisions for a ten-day trip.

Starting in 1804 it had taken Lewis and Clark eighteen months, one way, to reach the Pacific; and they left from St. Louis. Behind Lewis and Clark came the frontier and behind that washed waves of outpost, settlement, village, town, and city. Out of this process, advanced by the trappers and traders and farmers who beat back the wilderness and the savages it concealed, came the continental fulfillment of our manifest destiny to control North America from Nantucket Island to Monterey Bay, from Sault Sainte Marie to the Rio Grande, from sea to shining sea. This destiny was interrupted and then accelerated by the Civil War, and in the last three decades of the nineteenth century America exploded with a roar. The cornucopia of nature that had produced game, fertile soil, and timber now poured out oil, coal, and iron with a careless superfluity that promised to flow forever.

A land measured in millions of square miles, without geographical or language barriers, linked by pure and navigable rivers, seasoned by a temperate climate, impelled by an increasing population and an accelerating technology—the United States leapt to maturity among the major nations in 1900, the year we surpassed the steel production of England and Germany combined. And after world wars against tyranny and fascism, won by American ideals as well as American military and industrial power, we were—in 1945—alone at the summit of world leadership. First in a two-power, and now in a five-power world, the self-reliant and independent citizens of what is now the world’s oldest democratic state continue to represent and defend the cause of human freedom.

That is green breast version of America, the version that panders to our dreams, to the American legion and the DAR and the Voice of America, to the news and entertainment media, to the Bicentennial Commission, to public oratory, to political debate. That is Gerald Ford’s America. It is the America, according to Jimmy Carter, that existed before 1968 and will exist again after January. It is false, but the difficulty is it is also true. Or as Holden Caulfield puts it: “It’s partly true . . . but it isn’t all true. People always thing something’s all true.”

THERE IS, OF COURSE, ANOTHER TRUTH about America, a truth composed of irony and paradox and stupidity and hypocrisy that began when Cristoforo Colombo set sail from Palos, Spain for the eastern shore of fabulous Cathay. He carried a passport to the “regions of India,” a letter of introduction to the Emperor of China, and an Arabic interpreter. A better sailor than mathematician, Columbus figured it was 2,400 miles from the Canary Islands, where he stopped for provisions, to India. He was off by 8,000 miles, and saved from mutiny and starvation by the accidental landing on Guanahani Island, as the Arawak inhabitants called it, on the 12th of October, 1492. Making what Samuel Eliot Morison calls “one of the worse guesses in history,” Columbus stepped ashore and named the natives “Indios.”

He never realized his mistake, and never in any of his four voyages did he set foot on the northern continent. But history has had its revenges, for rather than being called Columbia, the lands that Columbus stumbled across—known at first as the Indies, the West Indies, the New World—were ultimately misnamed for Amerigo Vespucci, a Florentine cargo merchant whose exploits and discoveries rest solely on his own ingenious accounts.

A German geographer, Martin Waldseemüller, pasted “Amerige” on the southern new world in his Cosmographiae Introductio in 1507, and Mercator picked it up in 1538 for both continents, where it stuck.

The “discovery” of a “new world,” a “virgin land,” a “vacant wilderness” was a piece of arrogant nonsense propagated by fewer than a hundred European sailors on a double continent that had been settled in the Pleistocene epoch and had, in 1492, a population of some twelve million native inhabitants. “Virgin land” is a white man’s term, insidiously white and male, yet it is not inaccurate. The Indians lived lightly on the land, and had done so for thousands of years without altering...
its surface. It was white men who ravaged the trees, tore open the prairie, dammed the rivers, and slaughtered the buffalo. Mark Twain described how the process worked in his Sandwich Islands lecture:

Then the white people came, and brought trade, and commerce, and education, and complicated diseases, and civilization, and all sorts of calamities, and the consequence was the poor natives began to die off with wonderful rapidity.

From the initial ironic "discovery" the ironies fast compounded. Puritans were no more interested in freedom of religious worship than was Archbishop Laud, and many a Quaker had scars on his back to prove it. Virginia, in 1619, established the first legislative assembly in North America. And docked the first slave ship. Or perhaps the first two, for, in addition to the cargo of blacks under Dutch sail, another ship in 1619 brought ninety women to Virginia from England, who were given as wives to settlers willing to pay the freight charges of one hundred and twenty pounds of tobacco each.

Jefferson had said that all men are created equal, and helped to create a democratic republic with a president elected by the people. In the first election for which we have accurate voting records, that of 1824, 363,000 people went to the polls and voted for Andrew Jackson over John Quincy Adams by a ratio of 4 to 3—153,000 to 116,000. The fact that Adams was chosen as President in the House of Representatives is less startling than the fact that only 363,000 voted (for the four candidates)—three per cent of a population of eleven million. No women voted, nor blacks, nor Indians, nor—for the most part—poor or property-less whites. State voting laws varied a good deal—in New Hampshire one had to pay a poll tax; in Rhode Island suffrage was restricted to freeholders and their eldest sons; in Virginia there was a property ownership requirement of 25 acres of settled or 500 acres of unsettled land. What the Declaration of Independence really meant was that all white gentlemen who owned property or paid taxes were created equal. Revolutionary as that may have been in its time, Jefferson knew that it was not revolutionary enough. The problem of slavery, he said, rang "like a fire bell in the night": "I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just." Jefferson's fears were not shared by most of his countrymen. In a drive for land, wealth, and power whose success astonishes even us, they proceeded to exploit, invent, tear down, and build up. The latter part of the nineteenth century has been given a good many names by scholars: the age of energy, the age of accumulation, the age of excess, the choro civilization. Mark Twain came close with _The Gilded Age_. But V. L. Parrington hit it exactly—"the Great Barbecue." And round that barbecue was born a new America, one whose elements seem perfectly familiar three generations later: runaway technology, heedless consumption of resources, exploitation of labor, racism, unassimilated immigrants jammed into cities built on a philosophy fashioned by realtors and speculators, and through it all the worship of money, speed, and size.

On the 13th of January, 1895, the New York Times reported the first National Bicycle show—"Larger and Better Than Any Previous Show":

Special attention will be paid to the decoration of the big amphitheatere, so that, aside from the real up-to-date exhibit of cycle accessories, the interior will present a spectate never before equalled in this amusement palace. There will be an electric sign extending across the entire east end of the amphitheatere, which in itself will be a marvel. This device will be 108 feet in length by 35 feet in width, and will contain 2,192 lamps of 29,147 candle-power. The words on the sign are, "First National Show. under the auspices of the National Board of Trade." Between the letters SH and OW there will be a bicycle 20 feet in length by 13 feet in height, with wheels having a diameter of 8 feet . . .

Aesthetic effects were not neglected, for this exhibition, like many others in the period, was dedicated to culture as well as technology:

The other decorations will be made on a very extensive scale. From a line to the center of the trusses supporting the roof will be suspended an immense canopy of streamers in white and shrimp pink. . . . Immense curtains of white and shrimp pink will be hung from the upper tier. . . . Where these curtains meet at the center of the spaces, trophies consisting of flags, shields, etc., will be artistically arranged. As a background for the groups of flags, shields, and ancient armor in the center of the floor will be erected a "Temple of Liberty" in white marble effect.

NOT EVERYBODY COULD COME TO THE great National Bicycle Show. Not, for example, the workers who had gathered a few years earlier in Haymarket square to protest the killing of a laborer who had been campaigning for an eight-hour work day. This orderly and peaceful meeting was charged by the police led by Black Jack Bonfield, someone threw a bomb, and a wholesale riot broke out. The police rounded up all the radicals they could find and brought eight to trial—one for each dead policeman. There was no direct evidence, and very little evidence of any kind. One of the defendants was known to be a maker of bombs. The identity of the bomb thrower was never established, but Judge Joseph Gary held that "if the defendants had agreed to overthrow law by force and if Policeman Degan had been killed in pursuance of such a conspiracy, they were guilty." All eight were convicted; seven were sentenced to hang and one received a fifteen-year prison term. The convictions were upheld by the Illinois Supreme Court and implicitly by the U.S. Supreme Court, which

---

**The Cresset**
ruled that it had no jurisdiction. And they were upheld by the American public, whose attitude was accurately measured by the humor magazine *Live*, which ran a cartoon showing seven shrouded figures hanging from a gallows. The joke was explained by the caption: “Seven Up. A Game that will be Played in Chicago Next Month.”

Native Americans were also sparse in attendance at the great National Bicycle Show. A few years earlier a group of 350 Sioux Indians had been rounded up as a prevention against disturbance following the killing of Sitting Bull, who wasn’t the first American, nor the last, to be shot while trying to escape. The Sioux had given up their guns, but the troopers decided to search the tents for axes and knives. They found one man who still had a rifle—Black Coyote. When he did not comply with the order to surrender his gun—Black Coyote was deaf—they grabbed him and spun him around, the rifle went off, and the troopers opened fire with carbines and then with Hotchkiss artillery guns. One hundred fifty-three Indians were killed outright, and as many others, wounded, crawled away to die in the snows of a Dakota blizzard. When the soldiers herded the remainder into wagons, there were only four men and forty-seven women and children left. This is known in our history as the Battle of Wounded Knee, and it took place at Christmas, 1890.

That was the year the land ran out. Jefferson had said there would be land for a thousand generations. He was wrong by 992. By 1890 the frontier was declared closed and the remaining territories were quickly organized into states, filling in the continent from Nantucket to Monterey, from Sault Ste. Marie to the Rio Grande—places and names of Indian, Spanish, French origin; left behind by those who had been shoved out. Manifest destiny this was called, a self-fulfilling phrase that gave providential sanction to the inevitability of driving the Indians down the trail of broken treaties, grabbing New Mexico, California, Nevada, and Utah from Mexico, and, at the end of the century, collecting Puerto Rico and the Philippines in what the Secretary of State called “a splendid little war” with Spain.

As our power multiplied in the twentieth century manifest destiny assumed new international phases and new names—“making the world safe for democracy” and “containment”—names that also clearly indicated which side had a monopoly on the truth. A relatively straight line, labeled simply power politics, can be drawn from the South Kingstown swamp where the Narragansett Indians were destroyed in King Phillip’s War to Yorktown to the halls of the Montezumas taken by Winfield Scott to Wounded Knee Creek to San Juan Hill to My Lai. A parallel line might be drawn from Haymarket and Homestead and Cripple Creek to the Chicago Democratic Convention of 1968 and Kent State and Attica.

THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE IN ITS FULL dimensions is thus curious and contradictory. It is one of limitless horizons and smog-filled skies, of the doctrine of tolerance and the fact of prejudice, of the hand of brotherhood and the sword of conquest. If America is an epic adventure, it is also both comedy and tragedy. If Americans were daring, idealistic, and generous, they were also foolhardily, materialistic, and callous. And like many dualisms, these are but symbols of infinite variety and diversity which have not been clarified by the clichés of superpatriots or the calumny of supercritics. Our national debate is relentlessly simplistic. Perhaps because our political life is tied to the law, and lawyers, our politics seem to drift into advocacy and opposition, pro and con—the fallacy of versus. Love it or leave it doesn’t offer enough choice. The thoughtful American is one who wishes to stay and have a lover’s quarrel with his land.

And that is precisely what the classic American novels are all about. They take their premises from the ambiguities, the dualities, the complexities, the paradoxes, the lack of resolution of the American experience. Hester Prynne’s letter stands for angel as well as adultery. Huck’s sound heart provides a counterforce to the corrupt currents that wash down through the shackly towns along the Mississippi. Gatsby’s sentimentality is simultaneously appealing and absurd. Santiago loses, but like Oedipus he wins heroic stature in his suffering, his endurance, his recognition of the limits of human striving. “I’m sorry,” he says to the marlin as the sharks tear away its flesh. “I shouldn’t have gone out so far. . . . Neither for you nor for me.” *The Red Badge* demonstrates that complexity governs narrative technique as well as theme—a fact that the critic ignores at his peril. There are no satisfactory simplistic readings of complex books.

Here is the conclusion to *The Red Badge of Courage*:

Henry Fleming “felt a quiet manhood, nonassertive but of sturdy and strong blood. He knew that he would no more quail before his guides wherever they should point. He had been to touch the great death, and found that, after all, it was but the great death. He was a man. . . . Over the river a golden ray of sun came through the hosts of leaden rain clouds.”

How do you read that passage? What do you make of the concluding golden sunshine? Critics have expended enough animosity on this point to make the inky battlefields of journals rival the smoky struggle at Chancellorsville. Some maintain that Henry goes through a step-by-step maturation process and finally conquers his fear, a victory of self-hood symbolized by the golden ray of sun. Others contend that the sunshine is merely Crane’s final ironic sneer at man’s illusions in the face of “the insanely grotesque and incongruous world of battle.” Both sides, in my opinion, fail to respond to the richness of the book which itself is an attempt to respond to the complex richness of American and human experience. The ray of sun is simultaneously straightforward and
Ironic. If you focus on Henry, there is a genuine pattern of perception and growth and maturation. If you focus on the environment around Henry—the confusion and chance of war, the pettiness of man in an indifferent universe, the sunbeam is ironic. These two readings are not contradictory. The world is chaotic and confusing, and man's role is uncertain. Henry Fleming is not able to solve these problems of existence, but he has at least worked out terms which make life possible for him. And that, according to Crane, is about the best one can do. It is also what Huck and Hester discover, and Ishmael, and Silas Lapham, and Isabel Archer, and Nick Carraway, and Lambert Strether.

It is precisely on the grounds of this complexity that the classic American novelists have pitched their tents. And this is precisely why their works tend to be ignored by those whose mission it is to simplify, to reduce, to construct a past which never existed. Public rhetoric about America leaves out enormous areas of the American experience in its search for self-congratulation. It is naive, simplistic, and smug, and it shuns the depths that are explored in our great books. "Let us honestly state the facts," Emerson told a Boston audience in 1851. "Our America had a bad name for superficialness. Great men, great nations, have not been boasters and buffoons, but perceivers of the terror of life, and have manned themselves to face it." The difference between those who orchestrate our public life and the writers of our best books is often the difference between boasters and buffoons and perceivers of the terror. This is one reason the classic American authors were not invited to draw up to the Bicentennial feast.

THERE ARE OTHER REASONS. One of them goes beyond public rhetoric into the larger sea of the lowest common denominator—popular culture itself. The defining characteristic of popular culture is its tendency to give the people what they want, to reinforce the status quo, to gild the platitudes, to enshrine the clichés. The staples of our major works—ambiguity, complexity, satire, criticism—are apparently not, for the most part, what the people want. And we might cite what seems to be the increasingly non-literacy of our culture. The recent flurry of interest over falling SAT and ACE scores in verbal ability implies that our schools are at fault, but if there is a decline, the schools probably reflect the larger problem in the society as a whole. A nation that conducts its business by telephone, stores its information by computer, and is entertained by the 30,000 moving dots of the television screen is not likely to encourage compositions on the part of the young or to revere the written words of the past.

But all these, so far, are comfortable reasons. They are safely beyond our control, perhaps beyond all control, and they give us the satisfaction of belaboring the barbarians. There is another reason for the neglect of our authors that is within our control and is not nearly so comfortable. It concerns the study and teaching of language and literature in America. Here I think we have cause to shift uneasily in our professorial chairs. It is foolish for us to complain that Johnny can't write and doesn't read and doesn't care when that, after all, is our job. How long would a university keep a swimming coach who complained that his charges preferred to drown? Surely we must share the blame for society's failure to appreciate, to make use of, the works we designate our classics. The problems with the profession of English in America must rest, at least partially, with the English professors. How good is our teaching? How important is our research? How compelling is our leadership in American intellectual life?

We have struggled to keep teaching a free profession, but our very success has brought its problems. No other profession, with the possible exception of prostitution, is conducted behind closed doors, unevaluated, unresponsive to a larger public, where the customer pays his fee and can take it or leave it. With few formal restraints, teaching demands constant self-criticism. The first problem a teacher has is that he is worried about his teaching; the second problem is that he is not worried. We may keep up with recent criticism and add marginalia to faded lecture notes, but how often do we re-evaluate our courses, our goals, our values? If I were the dean of a faculty and could have only one wish, I think I would make every teacher burn his lecture notes at the end of every year. We must, of course, master our subject areas. That is where teaching begins. But that is not enough, especially when we face an audience increasingly sophisticated in techniques of presentation. We have one advantage over television. Knowledge is an active process, a reaching out rather than a taking in, an imposition of relations on the chaos of experience. Television is passive—relentlessly, interminably, boringly passive. It gives us an advantage we had better make the most of, for if our teaching becomes passive we cannot compete, even with the ads. Alfred North Whitehead knew this, although he died the year that tiny snow showery screens first appeared in our living rooms and Americans, who invented the TV table and the TV dinner, completed the destruction of mealtime begun when John Montagu, the fourth Earl of Sandwich, was unable to pull himself away from the gaming table. Education, Whitehead tells us, must be dynamic, alive, active. It must be useful. It should be joyful. If our students are grim, plodding, bored, let us remember that they hold the mirror not up to nature, but to us.

What about our research? Never have so many done so much with so little. Falsely modeling ourselves on the sciences, whose research has necessarily and usefully led down narrower and more specific paths, we have lost our audience. Our critics write for other critics while a hundred and fifty million Americans stare blankly at game shows and soap operas and waiting police chases which make the Indian pursuits of James Fenimore Cooper, who invented the genre, seem ingenious and civilized, according to Gene Lyons, whose exuberant
condemnation is at least partly accurate, if the pedantry that characterizes much of our research "prevailed among Egyptologists at private institutions it would be of no concern to the public. But what is at issue is the transmission of literacy and literary culture within our society. And while those skills and values appear to many observers to be going the way of sand painting, literary academia indulges itself even more than ever in hobbyhorse 'research' of a kind that used to be done primarily by potty Church of England vicars when it was too rainy for croquet." If we are going to win the battle for literacy and literature, our scholarship must have ideas as well as industry; it must have importance for society as well as for specialists; it should reach beyond the limited circulation of myopic journals. Why doesn't the intelligent layman read our literary journals? Perhaps because he is an intelligent layman.

We looked in vain for our classic authors at the great feast of the Bicentennial. But until our teaching excels and excites, until our research makes a public contribution, and until our profession becomes not a closed priesthood but an open ministry—one which provides a corrective force against the simplicities of popular culture and political rhetoric, we should be careful about casting stones. We ought to be wary of complaining too bitterly about America's failure to find illumination at the shrines of our classic authors, when it is our task to light the candles.

At the seashore you can't turn your back on the sea.

(Rakel Liehu, Savikielellä minä ylistän, p. 41)
Translated from the Finnish by Bernhard Hillila

The first poem I wrote was about the sea, the strongest force that I knew. Now I write of the human heart, stronger by far than the sea.

(Rakel Liehu, Savikielellä minä ylistän, p. 23)
Translated from the Finnish by Bernhard Hillila

Thirteen can't be divided by six. Leave the riddle of the world, go and wash a beggar with your own hands.

(Rakel Liehu, Savikielellä minä ylistän, p. 71)
Translated from the Finnish by Bernhard Hillila

The heavy rain of darkness has gone to the bottom of the spring: The little village sleeps. I too will go to dreams to meet myself.

(Rakel Liehu, Savikielellä minä ylistän, p. 33)
Translated from the Finnish by Bernhard Hillila

The Cresset is pleased to present Bernhard Hillila's translations of some poems of Rakel Liehu, "one of the exciting contemporary poets of Finland," according to Dr. Hillila. These poems, first published in 1975 in Savikielellä minä ylistän (I Praise with a Tongue of Clay), Werner Söderström Oy, Provo, Finland, were selected by the translator "to illustrate the style and range of her [Liehu's] work." In the translation, the Finnish style is followed: initial words are not capitalized, unless there is some other reason for using the upper case.

June, 1978
"WOMAN, BEHOLD YOUR SON!
SON, BEHOLD YOUR MOTHER!"

JAMES M. CHILDS, JR.

John 19:25-27

IT IS CUSTOMARY, I believe, for preachers meditating on this third word to extol Jesus' godly virtue of care and concern for his mother. In the true spirit of the Fourth Commandment's directive to honor and love our parents, Jesus provides for his mother's welfare by committing her to the care of his beloved disciple. In this act of filial piety several things are conveyed about Jesus' work and the meaning of his death on the cross.

This thoughtful gesture may well be considered yet another example of Jesus fulfilling the law on our behalf with a purity of motive and purpose that we could not hope to attain. We are reminded of how the New Testament tells us that Jesus placed himself willingly and completely under the Law, being the same as we are, except without sinning. Thereby the perfection of his sacrifice on the cross is underscored.

This act was certainly a vivid display of self-giving love in that Jesus, though suffering the agonies of his darkest hour, was still able to selflessly turn his attention to his mother's needs rather than his own. He knew that
not only would she require someone to care for her but also, at that hour, she herself was doubtless suffering an unspeakable agony at the sight of his crucifixion. Parents here today can well imagine Mary’s pain. Perhaps the statement the elder Simeon made when Jesus was brought to the temple as an infant came to her mind, “... a sword will pierce through your own soul also.” Surely, that was happening now. So in love he reached out to her from his cross. Any of us who have experienced suffering or trouble of any kind and have fallen prey to the temptation to become totally absorbed in our own problems at the expense of concern for others cannot help but be moved by this act to both repentance and new resolve. Jesus is the prototype for our life of love. St. Paul’s words to the Philippians come readily to mind:

Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore, [for this reason] God has highly exalted him.

Indeed, this eloquent act of self-giving love for Mary reminds us of the meaning of the whole crucifixion event of which it is a part. That is, we are reminded that he died for us; he sacrificed himself for others; he came to serve not to be served; he died reaching out to us in love that we might live.

IT IS THIS LARGER MEANING OF THE CROSS that gives additional import to the words of our text, “Woman, behold your son! Son, behold your mother!” Beyond their immediate significance for Jesus’ mother, Mary, and his beloved disciple, these words point to a significance for our lives as well. In the mystery of the cross a new family relationship is forged for all of us. Jesus’ sacrifice was one of atonement, one that brings together again that which was separated. In that he bore our sins in his death so that we might have forgiveness and new life, we who were estranged from the Father now become his sons and daughters, brothers and sisters of Jesus, the Christ, and children of the Father.

It is in this wise that Jesus was able to invite us to pray, “Our Father,” employing the Aramaic word, Abba, the word for intimate address that a child would use when speaking to his loving Father.

In the loneliness of our sin’s alienation from both God and one another we are accepted by God into his family, no longer to wonder whether or not we belong, no longer to wonder whether or not we are people of worth.

In praise of God the psalmist once wrote that the Lord is “Father of the fatherless .... God gives the desolate a home a family to dwell in.” In Jesus’ atoning death for us these words reach a new depth of meaning. God does indeed bring us into his family. In a real sense, then, the third word of Jesus from the cross can be understood as spoken directly to us, as well, for it points beyond its immediate significance to a larger truth: that our loving Father has, through the death of his Son, drawn us into a new and everlasting kinship with him.
RUMINATIONS IN ZÜRICH

MIRACLES HAPPEN IN OUR time if we consider them as coincidental events surpassing all human expectations and having that extraordinary effect of wonder usually ascribed to a supernatural cause. The scientific mind of our age has felt compelled to reduce such miracles as the burning bush to the miraculous reality of a burning oil well or the parting of the Red Sea to the tidal phenomenon it probably was. We are now used to operating with such down-to-earth notions as "timing" and "know-how," depriving ourselves of the belief in a destiny tied to the miracles of reality.

* THE ARTIST is a strange creature. The slightest and most insignificant impression going unnoticed by anyone else may stimulate him. This does not negate what Jacob Burckhardt said, namely that "passion is the mother of great things." Great events also may influence and inspire the artist, even though he may have no part in them. His work may not reflect these great events at all, but the fact that they brushed him slightly may be sufficient stimulation to make his creative urge start on whatever it may be. Art is born in total intimacy with oneself, regardless of the outside world, or rather without the artist becoming aware of it. Whenever art was separated from religion, its function and scope diminished. But we cannot imagine any society without art, and no art ought to exist without social significance. Art is always the work of an individual, and the greatest works of art have come forth in small communities rather than big ones. The industrialized societies have, by necessity, lowered the aesthetic standard and, through the need to market a work of art, they turned it into an artistic product. It is significant that we speak of a book market and art investment. Since the artist does not work in a vacuum, the whole complexity of society puts pressures on him, and his economic dependency soon becomes overshadowed by the problem of various psychological adjustments he is compelled to make. There is no dearth of talent, and one may argue that it is easier today than ever before to market one's artistic ware. Our age has created and is celebrating its technological progress with "commercial art." This is a contradiction in terms, but the one thing that "sells." Thus, potentially great artists are sacrificed on the altars of industrial needs. From the early years of our youth our sensibilities are wilfully reduced to a minimum, and then we are no longer able to experience what should and could convey a heightened pleasure of life. The atrophy of our sensibilities has been constantly growing in accordance with what we call progress.

On the other hand, it was an elite only that was in the forefront of the great artistic accomplishments of Renaissance man. Ezra Pound maintained with the arrogance of an aristocratic mind that culture is made by twelve people. The painfully obvious fact is that only a relatively and surprisingly small percentage has actually ever participated in the cultural life of a city, of a nation. What then does determine the culture of a people? Already Hegel suggested that art "on the side of its highest possibilities" has become a thing of the past. It was Hegel who introduced the notion of alienation, of which a great deal has been made in our time. Marx gave alienation political significance in his Kapital, and Brecht made capital of the idea.

Man's estrangement from his potential ability alienates him from his better Self. We are now educated, or rather doomed, to become passive, dull-witted, bored television-watchers. And since man cannot stop the march of progress he will soon become a three-dimensional tele-visionary. We have accepted scientific progress as man's fate, and with it we have lost our ability for inner prayers. This age has discovered man's psyche and lost any feeling for his soul. By the same token, in destroying the mystery of holiness we have destroyed the mystery of beauty.

IT HAS BECOME CLICHÉ that every life is a longer or shorter novel—the one more tedious, the other more exciting, depending on our temperament and the inner strength to come close to the fulfillment of our wishes. However, it may be more important to realize that every life is hiding a secret which one rarely finds out, most often not even the person who carries the secret with him all the time.
MUCH TOO SELDOM do we become aware of what a blessed experience it is to be just human, and what a unique adventure it remains to become human.

IT IS NOT ALWAYS EASY to be heard when we speak. It is even more difficult to be understood. But sometimes a gesture is louder and a glance more explicit than words. Nothing can deliver us from our innate loneliness, fear, and guilt. But finally it will be a tiny word we are waiting for, a gesture, a glance that shows the way for the "I" to find the "You." Only in the I-You which becomes the You-I is the consolation for all discrepancies. A great deal of fulfillment lies in this consolation.

LIFE IS LIKE A VIOLIN SOLO which we play publicly. But we only learn to play the instrument while playing it for everyone to hear. This makes it obvious that we can never live long enough to profit from our mistakes. All the more should we be aware that time is everything that we possess. And how do we treat it? If we had to stand trial for everything we are doing to time, how we maltreat, rob, and rape her, we would have to go to prison for life. And many alone for it their whole life without knowing it. How often would I like to follow the advice of Bernard Berenson who once said he would love to stand at a street corner with his hat in his hand and beg all the passers-by for only one of their wasted minutes.

AT CERTAIN POINTS IN LIFE it is important to stop in order to gain distance from oneself and life—perhaps only to become aware of how little, how insignificant we are in the complexity of our time. Such caesura may help strengthen the impression that our life consists of fragments which only fate connects as if they were a whole.

WHENEVER WE CREATE A work of art, we should do it in the spirit that tells us this is the very last thing we would ever be able to do.

EVERYONE can look and does so, but only a chosen few can see.

I HAVE LEARNED to believe in miracles, in the miracle that may wait for me by mere chance at the next corner to reach out for my hand, to surprise me with a beautiful gesture, to say a word that has depth and meaning, to help me across the street, or to walk with me a short while so that we can both wonder about the smallest wonder.

To be able to believe in such small miracles which may turn out to be the greatest experiences, we need some strength and an abundance of love. This strength and love must, for instance, make it possible to read between the lines, an ability which we are never taught in school and must learn by listening. Nothing is so correct and important as it is said or written. The real truth always lies between the things and words.

TRADE SECRETS

Things tend to take over.
You might even say
he was murdered by his medium,
painter withering on fumes,
carver crushed beneath
slip-chain hoisted block
of grinding granite.
My grandfather the tram cleaner
died of gangrene long after
one ran over his foot, or so
I heard.

Nails and wood, of course,
for him. Turned on him and tore
beyond the quick of his raw
carpenter hands and feet.
Getting back, maybe, after years
of chisel, saw and adze.
Construction workers know
all about it. That man
inside the George Washington
Bridge knows it too well.
When you work too long with
something you get careless,
lose the cunning, then watch
out—especially with people.

J. BARRIE SHEPHERD

June, 1978
ONE SUMMER, toward the end of a graduate course in twentieth century American Literature offered at one of the franchises run by the state of Indiana, the class was asked whether they had suggestions for reading lists for future classes. They were teachers, most of them, of subjects ranging from kindergarten through high school English, and the question was asked only partly to get new titles; it was also designed to elicit responses that would show how successful had been the nearly completed list they were reading. Most were working on MEd degrees, with only a few going for an MAT or MA; hence the literature course they were completing was strange for most of them. So I asked. Immediately the brightest among them (a Ball State BA—I recall her well) said Gone With the Wind, by Margaret Mitchell. Now, bright as she was, this person by no means intended anything so ingenious as did Leslie Fielder when he recently called it the best of the thirties writing, nor was she American Studyish. Fiedler, on William F. Buckley’s “Firing Line,” saw in it an allegorical treatment of American depression defeat, and said its great popularity qualified it as great any way; besides, the characters were memorable. Instead of finding Rhett, Melanie, Scarlet (née Pansy, till an editor changed it), Ashley, and Mammy memorable, they seemed to me stereotypes. I said so. No good! The faces in the class rejected that. Besides, Miss Mitchell’s gender being known, it would be only seconds before the Male Chauvinist shibboleth would be voiced; once that was done—the class was overwhelmingly female—all would be lost. I thought quickly. Perhaps I could divert them; often I begin courses in English with the assertion that I understand writing pretty well, except for two points—

James H. Bowden, Associate Professor of English at Indiana University Southeast, New Albany, Indiana, received his PhD in American Studies at the University of Minnesota. In addition to publishing poetry and essays in various journals, he is now at work on a book on Peter DeVries for the Twayne Series.

1 Indiana University—Purdue University at Indianapolis (Columbus Center).
why people write and why other people read what the first group writes. Then sometimes one adds a third uncertainty: why do some others become critics? Few students get the joke that if you don't know the answers to those two (or three), you really don't know anything about literature. It was customary to let it pass at first as a sort of rhetorical question about which I was agnostic and had no answer: others wrote it, they read it, I criticized it, and none knew why. Now would be the time to confess my real faith and thereby divert them. I would tell them why.

Then a sentence came to me, solving the Mitchell problem: "She wrote only one book," I said, "and critics don't know how to deal with such writers." Slowly the faces eased; then heads nodded. I had won. And deservedly, because one book isn't enough. What we want from our writers is for them to create for us a world, a cosmos out of chaos. No one can do that in one book. Except one book, the book, the Bible, which does do it, although of course it does it by being one Big Book made up of many little books. So the thesis is in no way disrupted by this cavil, although not all persons immediately perceive this unity: an Episcopal priest (A.T. Mollegen of the Virginia Seminary) told of loaning a Bible to a Buddhist monk visiting his school. Subsequently he noticed the monk avoiding him, once time enough for the Buddhist to have read the Book had passed—until finally the fellow was cornered. Embarrassed, he could only say "Yours is a book of Funny Stories."

The Buddhist was of a religious tradition that attached little importance to history; certainly his tradition looked not at all to a succeeding and cumulative revelation in history. Thus he was utterly unprepared to read the Bible. American undergraduates are somewhat better off, although Lionel Trilling has written that "No one will say that a lively sense of history is one of the intellectual virtues of the American people." Compounding the problem of the Buddhist monk is a difficulty mentioned by Keith Miller, speaking at a Christian Writers' Conference: "we are people of the Book," he said; "it is very much in the background of our culture, and accordingly we tend too much to believe the printed word. Since the Gospel is in print," he said, "that which is in print is supposed by us to be Gospel."

THUS WE READ ALL BOOKS in the light of the Book: writers want to put a cosmos together, readers want to see it put together, and critics are those poor souls who imagine some particular writer has done this job exceptionally well (or poorly, or, at the least, significantly). That even persons not well trained in literature grasp this point—once it is voiced to them—is made plain by the quick comprehension of it once that summer class in American literature received it. A similar stipulation is in fact made by those who award the Nobel Prize in Literature: the winner must still be producing it after having produced lots of it over an appreciable period of time. (And, some would add, it must be of satisfactory propaganda value at the moment.) Probably those who award these distinctions do not have in mind for their standards any reasons that include conceiving of the Bible as the proto-novel; more likely, they—and this is true of critics generally—look on the corpus as a sort of Salvation History. The devout—even those who earn their bread by teaching literature—will be quick to prefix pseudo to this, insisting that only Scripture will do. But secular literati sometimes get quite hot over the worldly revelations they are partisan to. All these efforts seem somewhat partial when compared to the achievement of the Book.

Certainly the Bible also has drama and poetry of various sorts in it, as well as essays and biography; but none of these is the dominant genre in our time; none of these is currently well adapted to the evocation of a world order. Only the novel does that at present. Since the development of the printing press, long poetry has lost ground as the genre suited to the sustained suspension of disbelief necessary to such a creation. Drama is powerful, but in comparatively small doses: a 500-page play, or the equivalent of a novel of that length, would be unthinkable. Certainly a series of such plays would be hideous to endure. And essays alone do not entrance the reader. Thus the novel remains.

And the Bible is God's novel. (Well, to be theologically orthodox one would have to say the world is His novel; but the Bible is the written record.) In the beginning He apparently has it well plotted as to what is going to happen: Adam and Eve will organize and name and will obey and it will go well. Then happens what always happens to authors who imagine (only God creates) free characters: instead of their doing what the author wants, they do what they want—and it is even so in God's novel. The tricks He uses subsequently are those standard to any other plying the same trade: new persons are introduced, disobedient ones are discarded, some are drowned, spokesmen are sent in to get the message clear, but they are all too often disregarded. There are pleasant passages long on enjoyment and somewhat light on instruction (Canticles and Ecclesiastes come readily to mind) and some (Psalms) that mix those two and even add a bit of prophecy. Of course there is Epic and History.

The Author from time to time got disgusted with His effort. Nevertheless, assurance has been given of the...
Author not discarding the whole manuscript and starting over or going into some other line of expression. (Although the Midrash has it that there have been earlier efforts which were thrown away, and with one of them an unsatisfactory heroine called Lilith. Some say she should not have been dropped, and that she's trying to get back in.) Anyway, even though it did not go nearly so smoothly as the Author apparently envisioned at the Beginning, still by hook or crook—not the most felicitous phrase, admittedly—He did manage to bring it into agreeable shape. Better than any Yocknapatawpha and, unlike the efforts of that fellow Faulkner, the Author filled his book not only with damnation and endurance but also plumped out with grace. So much for Volume one, thirty-nine books in all.

Finally, doing what authors rarely do, save in desperation, He got into it Himself. And wound it up, or at least has given a satisfactory dénouement to the many questions raised in the first portion of the manuscript: the silence is ended and the questions answered—answered as much as important and complex questions can be. Take Job, for instance. Moderns currently like losers more than winners; hence they resent the reader's giving him everything back twice over. They'd rather that he were left sitting in ashes being chastised by a deity (and a wife) who insults him.\(^5\) The New Testament shows more clearly what happens finally to a perfectly just man who suffers in-between the garden variety mystery story and the Mystery Story, and these need to be pointed out lest students think the latter as trivial as the former.** That is so because Scripture is Five Dimensional; rather, if any writing is five-dimensional, it is.\(^6\) But that point takes me back to where I began, that there is one Book, one Novel, that is prototypical for the study of all others. Looked at in this way students can be led to see how other writing somewhat approximates it, although necessarily in limited fashion. The whole canon of English literature doesn't create such a world, and it's too long anyway. (This would be so, even were it not in large part dependent on Scripture to begin with!) For these reasons the Bible deserves to be taught as a novel; it is the novel. It's the other works that sometimes don't measure up.

---

5. In the thirty-some years since *Oklahoma* opened, audience sympathy has passed from Curly to Jud; at a recent performance of "Little Red Riding Hood" by the Louisville Children's Theatre, pre-teens in the audience gleefully pointed out a hiding Little Red to a seeking wolf—"She's in the tree, she's in the tree"; and of course Judas is the one from whose point-of-view *Jesus Christ Superstar* is seen, and those who thought it unfair for a black to have been cast in that role in the film didn't realize he had the best part.

6. Scripture is decidedly Theistic: a deity totally separate from His creation progressively reveals Himself to one people; when they have been brought far enough along for the Final Revelation, they get it. Then and only then is the salvation pattern clear and the latters are grafted on to the original stock. It is historically given, not pantheistically.

7. Other categories of External Literature are Sci Fi, Mayhem, and Horror. Porn, the lowest sort of writing, is one-dimensional—in it the people are things, and they prefer life that way.

8. Four-dimensional writing is that in which the characters are rounded out (three-dimensionally) and who endure through Time.

9. Five-dimensional writing does as much as four-dimensional, and invites the Other in besides.
ABOUT ONE YEAR AGO Kenneth Korby approached me about the possibility of running a series of articles in The Cresset developing a theological-literary criticism. Although I did not give him any commitment at the time, his comments stimulated my thinking about a topic which has long concerned me—the relationship between Christianity and literature. Why Christianity and literature? The answer, I suspect, is self-evident. My field is literature, many of the readers of The Cresset have an interest in theology, and most of us are Christians.

Given this audience and my own interests and training, I discovered that there are two quite different approaches I could take to this topic. Since many readers of The Cresset have some training in theology and I have been trained in literary criticism, it would be possible and profitable to assume a professional approach, examining the relationship between theology and literature and attempting to work out a theory of theological-literary criticism. Considerable work has been done in this area during the past thirty years,1 and graduate programs like the one at the University of Chicago have offered PhDs in Theology and Literature. My problem with this approach is twofold. First, I think there is properly only one kind of literary criticism, although contributions to it can be made from various perspectives, including a theological one. Secondly, in order to deal with the relationship of theology and literature successfully, one must have professional training in both of these disciplines, and I have no training as a theologian. I will, nevertheless, comment on this relationship later in the paper. The second approach is basically a layman's approach, based on the assumption that those most interested in the relationship of Christianity and literature are either Christians or readers of literary works, or both. A layman's approach might be construed as a "lazy man's" approach, but I think it is possible to raise most of the central questions from this perspective without encumbering the discussion with a lot of technical literary and theological jargon.

One more prefatory comment. The recent professional interest in the relationship between Christianity and literature appears to have arisen, ironically, from the fact that the two have become separated. From the Middle Ages through the eighteenth century, it was unnecessary to struggle with this question of relationship the way we do today, because literature was written in the context of a society that adhered to an essentially Christian world view. This does not mean that all literary figures were exemplary Christians (or even that they were Christians), nor that the subject matter of the literary works was inherently Christian; but it does mean that the writers were members of a society that accepted the Christian faith, and that their conception of the nature of man was basically Christian. Religion determined the basic pattern of the image of man and the concept of human nature. Shakespeare's view of man is exemplary:

What a piece of work is Man! [says Hamlet] How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! in form, in moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god; the beauty of the world! The paragon of animals!

By the eighteenth century "Man" had been scaled down somewhat and in Pope's words, had become "the

---

1 See "Brief Checklist of Recent Books" at the end of this article. Interestingly, the authors of these books have connected "literature" with almost every term except "Christianity." Vincent Buckley joins "poetry" and "the sacred"; Helen Gardner, Giles Gunn, and G.D. Tennyson and Edward Ericson all use "literature" and "religion"; Sally TeSelle, Martin Turnell, and Amos Wilder relate literature to "the Christian life," "the Christian faith," and "the Christian tradition," respectively; and Henry Zylstra reflects on literature and "life, education, and religion."
glory, jest, and riddle of the world," but man's relationship to the universe and to God was still seen basically in Christian terms. It was the Romantics, of course, who shattered this image of man and the traditional views of Christianity.

For Byron,
Our life is a false nature—'tis not in
The harmony of things,—this hard decree,
This uneradicable taint of sin,
This boundless upas, this all-blasting tree
Whose root is earth, whose leaves and branches be
The skies which rain their plagues on men like dew—
Disease, death, bondage—all the woes we see—
And worse, the woes we see not—which throb through
The immedicable soul, with heart-aches ever new.

The essential difference between traditional Christianity and High Romanticism is one of the starting points: the orthodox Christian believed that God created man, whereas the Romantics believed that man makes God.

It is not my intention to trace the decline of religion and Christianity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, nor to indicate precisely how this has affected the view of man at various stages in literary history. Kenneth Hamilton, Professor of Systematic Theology at United College in Winnipeg, Canada, does this effectively in his little book, In Search of Contemporary Man. In Chapter II, "The Lonely I." Hamilton traces the Aristotelian world view that dominated Western thought through the eighteenth century and the modern scientific world view that replaced it during the past two centuries.

"When the glass showcase of the Aristotelian universe was shattered," Hamilton says, "it was this objectively situated piece of reality, man, that was lost. Man suddenly found himself without a home in the universe." In this modern world,
Life and meaning exclude each other, for the scientific universe is self-contained. It provides man with space to roam in, but no place where he can be at home. Man can go anywhere, but what is he? What is his highest good? If he shouts his question to the heavens which science knows, no answer comes back from those infinite spaces. So he must ponder the question within his own breast, a lonely "I" parted from the whole observable world of things.

In Chapter III Hamilton suggests that this shift in world views is accompanied in the twentieth century by "the loss of the presence of God."

Yet the modern mood is, more often than not, a mood indicating a felt lack; the sense of the loss of God alone accounts for it. So, the world is described, perhaps, as meaningless or absurd. We are hurt by the loss of a Creator who saw that His creation was good because it reflected His own perfection. Again, there is a constantly recurring theme in our literature: that of the man who is pursued and harried for some unknown crime. The classic expression of the theme is in the novels of Kafka; and there is something of Kafka in almost everything that has been written since! ...

Thus, even if we do not admit that the death of God is our problem, we are haunted by the loneliness we meet with in three forms: absence of Goodness, absence of Eternal Law, and the Abyss of incoherence.

However, it is precisely because of this sense of loss—the loss of faith, the loss of God, the loss of belief—that the relationship between Christianity and literature becomes such a vital question in the twentieth century. What we have in modern times is the dilemma of the Christian writer in the Age of Angst, when a Christian, either as a writer, a reader, or a literary critic, is in a minority. (We have a rubric for a topic course at Valparaiso University called Minority Voices in Contemporary Literature. "Black writers are studied under this rubric, as are Jewish writers, and one could make a convincing case for placing Christian writers there as well.

WE TURN, THEN, TO THE nature of the relationship between Christianity and literature in our present age. The basic question or problem can be stated as follows: How does one discuss the religious or, more narrowly, the Christian elements, motifs, or characteristics of any given work of literature without turning literature into a surrogate for philosophy or religion on the one hand, or reducing religion to any and every work's dimension on the other. Stated in a different way, one might ask: How does a Christian read, experience, and respond to a literary work while both remaining true to his Christian faith and commitment and respecting the autonomy of the work itself? I would suggest that there are several different ways in which these questions can be answered, several ways in which the terms literature and Christianity can be conjoined; and while all of them have a degree of validity, some finally are more profitable than others.

It might be useful, however, to look first at the nature of the artistic process itself. M. H. Abrams, in his book The Mirror and the Lamp, suggests that there are four basic elements in any comprehensive theory of art:

(1) the work, the artistic product itself,
(2) the artist, creator, or artificer,
(3) the work, the artistic product itself,
(4) the artist, creator, or artificer,
verse, arguing that art is essentially an imitation of external reality. This theory has been the most dominant in the work of art and the audience, the universe, or the audience.

Aristotelian mimetic or imitative theory focuses primarily on the relationship of the work and the universe, arguing that art is essentially an imitation of external reality. This theory has been the most dominant in the work of art and the audience, the universe, or the audience.

Abrams goes on to describe and categorize a number of different theories of literature that have been developed over the centuries, distinguishing them on the basis of the degree to which they focus on one of these four elements, that is, the work, the artist, the universe, or the audience.

The pragmatic theory of art, emphasized in the work of literature, according to Gunn, argues either explicitly or implicitly, "If you grant me my initial premise or set of conditions, then such and such would, or at least could, follow from them." Literature is not merely an imitation of external reality but an interpretation or projection of what the artist imagines. It should suffice for the moment merely to call attention to this distinguishing characteristic of the literary work.

Let me enumerate, then, some of the possible ways I think we can view the relationship between Christianity and literature.

One approach would appear to be a biographical approach, to limit the relationship between Christianity and literature to those writers who are confessing Christians. As I suggested earlier, until the post-Renaissance era, this was a viable approach, since most writers, if not professing Christians, wrote from the perspective of a Christian world view. The dangers and limitations of taking such an approach today are immediately apparent. The effect, as I see it, of viewing the problem in this way would be to subdivide literature into two categories—that written by Christians and that written by non-Christians. Likely there would be a sizeable third category entitled "Not Sure" or "Uncommitted." The initial problem is that such a tack does inevitable injustice to the whole notion of what constitutes literature because it focuses on the beliefs of the author rather than on the intrinsic worth or merit of the work of art. Secondly, it leads to a dangerous and pernicious kind of censorship. I have had enough experience with church library committees and parochial school boards to know what "literature" consists of if the primary consideration of a book's worth is the author's Christianity. Finally, such an approach leads inevitably to a kind of parochialism which is antithetical to the very nature of literature. Much of the power and appeal of literature is its capacity to extend the reader's horizons, to broaden his outlooks, to enable him to think and feel otherwise than he does.

I am not arguing against distinguishing between Christian and non-Christian writers. What I am warning against is the danger of using the author's Christianity as a standard of judging the literary worth of the work itself. A biographical approach to the relationship between Christianity and literature is valid, but it is ultimately too limited in getting at a Christian's response to and his appreciation of literature.

A second approach to this question of relationships is a thematic one. It is closely related to but broader and

---


8 Ibid., p. 27.

9 Ibid., p. 23.
more varied than a biographical approach. The attempt here would be to identify literary works dealing with fairly obvious Christian, or at least religious, subject matter or theme. J. Hillis Miller asks what it means to say that religious meanings are present in a poem or a play, and he answers:

It may mean the following: The poet belonged to a certain culture. Among the elements of that culture were religious beliefs. These were part of the world view of his age, and naturally they enter into his poems, since all men are subject to the spirit of their times. To take this view is to accept that historicism which, as I argued earlier, tends to turn religious themes in literature into something other than themselves.

This has become a very popular approach in the twentieth century, and by this time religious themes, ideas, patterns, and motifs have been identified in almost every work of literature. One should expect this, of course, since the heritage, both actual and literary, of every English writer has been predominantly religious and ultimately Christian. As avant garde as any twenty-century writer may consider himself to be, he cannot finally free himself completely from the influences of the past.

My quarrel with a thematic approach to the relationship between Christianity and literature, however, is over its ultimate value. In the works of writers like Milton, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Graham Greene, T. S. Eliot, Charles Williams, Christopher Fry, Flannery O'Connor, and others, the subject matter is quite overtly Christian, and the tendency is to focus on the precise nature of the Christian themes, ideas, or vision embodied in the work. Where the author's religious or Christian point of view (or lack of it) has been less obvious, the tendency in recent criticism is to find religious and/or Christian themes, ideas, patterns, language, or images there anyway. So the relationship between Christianity and literature becomes a kind of game one plays, tracking down Christian references and Biblical allusions until every decisive change in a character's life is seen in religious terms as a conversion, and every character who has a "J" and "C" in his initials and who happens to stretch his arms during the course of the novel or play becomes a Christ figure. Christ figures have been discovered in so many works of literature that literary critics may be on the verge of rediscovering that man is created in the image of God, or at least in the image of Christ.

A thematic approach to the question of relationship has the advantage over a biographical approach of focusing on the literary work itself rather than on a professed or assumed Christianity of the author, but it still faces the danger of separating or isolating the Christian or religious elements from the work itself rather than viewing them as integral to the work of art as a whole. Cleanth Brooks warns against this danger in The Hidden God when he says: "If we read such Christian writers as T. S. Eliot or W. H. Auden merely for the sake of the overt prechaments that their works may be felt to make, we shall probably miss their significance as Christian artists. For if we cannot apprehend their art, we have lost the element that makes their work significant to us; they might as well be journalists or pamphleteers." The tendency is to take a false shortcut by pouncing on a "Christian" idea, theme, allusion, or reference, lifting it from the context of the work, and examining it as a theological statement, an article of faith, or a bit of dogma. To isolate any element of a novel, play, or poem from the plot or basic progression of the work as a whole is to violate its essential literary nature.

A corollary danger is the temptation to impose a Christian interpretation on an experience or sequence of events that is not inherently or uniquely Christian. J. Hillis Miller says, "Religious themes in literature are without religious significance unless they spring from a direct relationship between the poet and God, however much they may take a form dictated by the age. If human history is made by men alone, then religious elements in culture have only a human meaning." A third approach to the question of relationship might be to change the terms slightly and examine the relationship between literature and theology rather than literature and Christianity. As I said earlier, I am not qualified to comment very intelligently on this relationship, but this is precisely where the emphasis has fallen in the past two decades. If theology is construed in its broader sense as being the field of study that treats of God, His attributes, His relation to the universe and to man, then it would seem appropriate that such study would also take into its range of vision the imaginative works of God's creatures that deal with man's relationship to man, to the world, to the universe, and to God. Throughout history this has been the concern of all great works of literature.

Recent writings in literary and theological journals suggest that just such a dialogue has been occurring. As early as the 1950s Amos Wilder noted in his book, Theology and Modern Literature, the extensive activity of theological faculties with the study of literature. An acquaintance of mine who is a New Testament scholar at Calvin College Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan, spent his sabbatical in Cambridge, England, at the time when I was living there. In our conversations, I was surprised not only by his broad knowledge of literature but also the extent to which literary texts are being used in seminary training.


12 Miller, p. 43.
It strikes me that the emerging dialogue between theology and literary criticism is most healthy. This would also seem to be the opinion of Amos Wilder of the Harvard Divinity School:

There surely can be no objection to the concern in some theological faculties since the thirties to alert the churches to the significance of modern letters. Nor can objection be made to the efforts of the theologian-critic to repossess his religious tradition and to review its language through an engagement with the contemporary arts and sensibility. Nothing but good, moreover, could come from his critique of the bad taste associated with a more recent religious aestheticism. In all such areas qualified churchmen have sought first of all to carry over into the consciousness of the religious institutions and into the religious arts the standards of excellence and of artistic integrity defined by the most perceptive critical circles of the time. . . .

But the situation is changing today and the role of the theologian in criticism appears in a new light. We see an increasing number of religious scholars who are also trained in literary studies. Their base of operation is often now in the university rather than in the seminary, and in departments in the humanities rather than in those of religion. Meanwhile teachers in departments of language and literature, especially in dealing with our modern classics, often find themselves involved in issues which even under strictly literary assessment require religious and theological expertise and empathy. 13

A FURTHER DEVELOPMENT, I suspect, has been the influence of the New Criticism on methods of Biblical explication and interpretation. Whether the effects of this influence have been desirable, I am not qualified to judge, but it does point to what I see as one of the inherent dangers in developing a kind of theological criticism of literature. It must be remembered that literature (or literary criticism) and theology (or theological criticism) are distinct disciplines, and the dangers of a theologian attempting literary criticism are as great as those of a literary critic attempting Biblical or theological criticism. The danger on the one side is amateurism and on the other dogmatism. The critical tools and categories of the theologian are not the same as those of the literary critic, and dual training is necessary before one can acquire any degree of professionalism in theological-literary criticism.

Secondly, the theologian faces the same danger that any other professional person does, namely that the peculiar nature of his profession can often limit or distort his perspective of another discipline. Just as the prior dogma of many Marxist critics in the fifties distorted their vision of literature so the prior dogma of a theologian can, I suspect, blur or limit his vision. The analogy is not totally apt, but the point, I think, is valid.

The final way in which one can view the relationship between Christianity and literature is what I would call a personal approach, the emphasis falling, in Abram's terms, not on the author, not on the work, not on the world recreated, but on the audience. In many ways this is the most healthy and stimulating point of interaction between literature and Christianity. And such interaction is, of course, inevitable. There are critics who argue the necessity of divorcing one's personal views of life and belief from his response to a literary work, and to an extent this is true. But it is finally impossible. One cannot ultimately separate life-attitudes from aesthetic judgments precisely because one's view of life is all-encompassing. As T. S. Eliot reminds us, arts and letters are too important finally not to be referred back to what is at stake in the human story. Just as every work of literature has, what Giles B. Gunn calls, its own informing or presiding assumption, its shaping cause, its embodied vision, its metaphysics, so every reader who confronts that work has his own world view, his vision of reality, his set of beliefs. 14

And for me, at least, it is precisely the clash or direct confrontation of these differing visions of the world that makes the reading of literature such a powerful, invigorating, and profound experience.

IF THE MOST POSITIVE interaction between Christianity and literature occurs in the confrontation a Christian reader has with a literary work, then several conclusions would seem to follow. It should follow, first of all, that a Christian's experience in reading literature is not necessarily best served by reading works written by "Christian" writers, nor by works that have an explicitly religious subject matter, but those works, in the words of Catherine in Jane Austen's Northanger Abbey, "in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humor are conveyed to the world in the best chosen language." There can be legitimate disagreement over which poems, novels, and plays accomplish this lofty goal most effectively, but a reader's view of life, whether it be in agreement with the author's or not, should not be the sole, or perhaps even the crucial, factor in making that determination.

Such a basic assumption would also suggest that the stronger and more complete a Christian's vision of the world is, the deeper and more meaningful will be his reading of any great work of literature. For, in order for any interaction between two visions of the world to occur, it is necessary for both the author and the reader


14 Gunn, p. 28.
to embody and hold not just prejudices, points of view, and half-baked notions of the basic questions of life, but comprehensive visions of life. Novels such as War and Peace by Tolstoy, The Brothers Karamazov by Dostoyevsky, Moby Dick by Melville, Huckleberry Finn by Twain, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man by Joyce, and The Rainbow by D. H. Lawrence embody very different visions of life, but each contains a comprehensive vision that touches powerfully on life at many points. To read such novels is a confrontation. It is, as one of my undergraduate teachers says so beautifully,
to have entered a universe comprehensive in scope and intensive in quality. It is to have confronted the moral issues of men, not in the skeleton of theory or the bones of principles, but in the flesh and body of concrete experience... It is a vision of life profoundly seen, greatly embodied, and valid. 15


Thirdly, I would suggest that a personal approach to the relationship between Christianity and literature, and the significant interaction resulting from that relationship, is in itself the best way to sharpen the faculty of discrimination that is necessary both in being a Christian and in being a reader of literature. Reading literature will likely not make anyone more, or less, religious, nor will it make him a better, or worse, Christian. But literature can make a person more fully aware of who he is, of what the rich potentialities of life are, and of what it means to be fully human. When brought into contact, both literature and Christianity have a way of informing and transforming each other.

Finally, it should be emphasized that although for the purposes of analysis I have cited four different ways in which the relationship between Christianity and literature can be viewed, a more comprehensive analysis would likely argue for an eclectic approach to the problem—granting the author his own vision of reality, whatever that may be, maintaining the integrity of the work of literature as a complete form and action in and of itself, and taking into consideration the Christian's own view of the world.

I would also reiterate that in this essay I have focused on the relationship between literature and Christianity rather than on the relationship of literature to religion or theology. The three are, of course, integrally related, but they should also be kept distant.

We live today in what is frequently called the post-Christian era, and the values, norms, and beliefs of this age are reflected in contemporary literature. We likely cannot change that fact; we certainly cannot neglect it. The role of the Christian reader, then, as well as the Christian writer and Christian critic, is to maintain that productive tension and even, at times, contradiction between the Christianity he professes and the humanism, nihilism, and absurdism that informs so much contemporary literature.

CHRISTIANITY AND LITERATURE: A BRIEF CHECKLIST OF RECENT BOOKS

SELF-REALIZATION AND FAITH: Beginning and Becoming in Relation to God.

Self-Realization and Faith is the Lutheran Education Association's Yearbook for 1978. Within its one hundred pages the author attempts to show the interrelationship of human development and faith. One of his primary concerns is to show that faith acts and manifests itself differently at different stages of life. He believes that faith does not have the same shape in children as in adults and that it is as important to recognize the reality and validity of development in the area of faith as it is in the area of the intellect and emotions.

One of the concepts connected with development that the author keeps returning to is the idea of readiness. At different stages in his/her life a person's faith will be ready for different tasks. In suggesting what tasks are appropriate for various stages of life, Droege makes use of Eric Erickson's "Eight Ages of Man." He devotes an entire chapter to outlining these eight ideal stages that Erickson states a person could advance through between infancy and maturity. In two subsequent chapters he seeks to show how the insights provided by Erickson on the nature of infancy are helpful in understanding the role of faith in infant baptism and how the insights provided on adolescence are helpful in understanding the role of faith in confirmation. Faith manifests itself in the infant as basic trust and in the adolescent as identity formation. In the last chapter we are given a cursory glance at the readiness of faith for the peculiar tasks, opportunities, and joys of adult life. As man deals with them in faith, his faith matures and he grows in the realization of his/her self.

Droege is to be congratulated for his attempt to relate the insights he has discovered in the world of psychology to the belief system of his Lutheran faith. To make that attempt is to act in the best tradition of Christian scholarship which seeks to understand the relationship of all things to Christ. Furthermore, the author is to be commended for his willingness to do his thinking in public and to thus give opportunity to others to share in it and to criticize it. I think that is an act of courage, particularly because very few of us have written or spoken publicly about the interrelationship between faith and self-realization.

To say I commend Dr. Droege is not to say I agree with him. His attempt to relate the insights of Erickson to the Lutheran theology of infant baptism, for example, is a commendable attempt, but I think it is an attempt that fails. Droege does not clarify the relationship between the self of the infant that trusts its mother and the self that believes and trusts in God. Droege states that just as the mother's love calls into being the self of the child, so God's action in baptism calls forth the self of the baptized child. That in itself is a helpful observation, but it poses several questions. Is the self that is called forth by mother love the same self that is called forth by God's love? If I read Droege correctly he believes it is. If so, what is the meaning of new birth in baptism? Is it the birth of a new self? Lutherans have always spoken as though it is. If the self called forth by the mother and the self called forth by God are the same self, how does this relate to baptism being that act by which we die with Christ and rise with him? In Lutheran theology, while there is both continuity and discontinuity between the self born of woman and the self born of God, the stress most frequently is on the side of discontinuity. In Droege's dealing with this tension the stress is on continuity while discontinuity is largely ignored.

It appears to me that Droege's theology is sometimes taken captive by his psychological categories. His stress on development in faith seems to do away with the element of repentance in faith. Granted there is a tension between these two aspects; my criticism is that the tension is not dealt with. Faith is defined too generally and is too rarely explicated in terms of belief in Christ and being conformed to him.

Finally, a comment on the title, "Self-realization and faith." It is a challenging title. I think it demands comparing the methodology of humanistic psychology with the methodology of Jesus inherent in the words, "If a man wants to save his life he will lose it. If he loses his life for my sake he will find it." Droege doesn't do this. The strongest criticism that he levels against humanistic psychology is that self-realization is finally negated by death. I think this criticism begs the question. The problems inherent in self-realization occur not just at the end of life but also in the middle of it. Self-realization all too easily deteriorates into the worship of self and consequently becomes nothing else than masturbation.

In my judgment self-realization is the great heresy of our day. Consequently, the question of the relationship of faith and self-realization is no trivial one. Dr. Droege, therefore, as I said before, is to be commended for breaking into print on this subject. And, even though I am critical of the way he relates faith and the self, I am pleased with the opportunity to put the statement into print.

PAUL PFOTENHAUER
REFLECTION

The old lady slouching through this college cafeteria
reminding us all of death
The sick old man faltering with his tray
have no place here
The little boy running ahead
the baby crying
They all embarrass us, those who remind us
Of who we have been or will be
We, the anonymous age who gather securely here,
Look into the glass and turn
At first we are too young we think
And then we are too old

LEAVES

Bouncing in the rain leaves
Sound the applause
Green and silver clap together
In a cheerless, unison welcome;
Drops tumble leaf to leaf
Oblivious to the music of a green-living world.
Masses hailing limb-bound masses.

A rain of fire would summon
A welcome as cheerless, as unison
Inciting millions to twist
Alike in ecstasy and terror
Clamoring and clapping as before
Yet geen-blackened.

CLARK W. LEMONS