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**IN THE DECEMBER CRESSET - - -**

IN LUCE TUA ...................................................... The Editors ............................................... 3

AD LIB.: THE DEATH OF TRADITIONS .................... Alfred R. Looman ........................................ 7

FROM THE CHAPEL: SING JOY! ............................. Anne Springsteen ........................................ 8

ON SECOND THOUGHT ........................................ Robert J. Hoyer ....................................... 9

THE THEATRE: R AND G, THE MAGNIFICENCE OF TWO NONENTITIES ........................................ Walter Sorell .................................................. 10

A SPECIAL CHRISTMAS ART SECTION .................... R. R. Caemmerer, Jr ..................................... 11

MUSIC: THE RECORD CLUB BUSINESS ....................... William F. Eifrig, Jr .................................. 19


BOOKS OF THE MONTH: ........................................

- FLOWERS OF DELIGHT .................................. Sylvia M. Swarner ....................................... 22
- THE PROBLEM OF THE LAW .............................. Walter E. Rast ........................................... 23

LETTER TO THE EDITOR ...................................... J. Coert Rylaarsdam .................................... 24

PHOTOGRAPHY: THE CHANCEL OF THE VALPARAISO UNIVERSITY MEMORIAL CHAPEL .................................. Harry Wilson ..................................................... 25

EDITOR-AT-LARGE: SOME OBSERVATIONS ABOUT FAIR HOUSING ...................................................... Victor F. Hoffmann ........................................ 26

THE MASS MEDIA: BE FREE ON CHANNEL THREE ........ Don A. Affeldt ............................................ 27

THE PILGRIM ..................................................... O. P. Kretzmann ........................................ 28

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Comment on the Significant News by the Editors

A Non-Editorial on Christmas

We had hoped to introduce this section with an editorial about Christmas. After many attempts to write it, we have given up. All that is true and finally worth saying about Christmas was said, long ago, in language which no man since has been able to match, by the author of the Fourth Gospel. And most of what is being said about Christmas today, both by popular sermonizers and by the "with it" theologians, leaves us mourning with St. Mary Magdalene: "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him."

The meek and lowly of heart will come again this year as they have come for almost two thousand years to see those things which came to pass in Bethlehem, which the Lord has made known to us. It is the great glory of Christmas that, having come, they will see. Perhaps it is best to allow them to come in silence — to hear the story as St. Luke tells it, to listen to its theological exposition by the author of the Fourth Gospel, and to confess it in the words of the Apostles and Nicene Creeds. Perhaps we who trade in words, whether from the pulpit or the classroom, could best serve ourselves and our brethren by standing silent with them before the mystery of the Incarnation and allowing it to speak its own message to hearts which have been filled with the Holy Spirit in Baptism and nourished by the bread and wine of life in the Eucharist.

Unfortunately, it is not in the nature of preachers, theologians, and editorial writers to be still, even on the silent, holy night, and let God be God. We insist on wrapping the Word in our words and the result is that He appears among His people like some mummy, bound hand and foot. Instead of proclaiming a Savior, which is Christ the Lord, we offer men a doctrinal proposition with power neither to hurt nor to heal.

We are not suggesting — tempting as the thought is — that there is no longer any place for the sermon in public worship. Neither are we suggesting that those who have been called to explicate the Faith in the language of contemporary thought should abandon their enterprise. We are merely suggesting that the Incarnation, if it happened at all, was a mystery, and that in the presence of mystery one does not undertake the role of commentator; one falls down and worships. The shepherds knew that, the wise men from the East knew that, generations of simple Christian folk have known that, and if we do not yet know it, it is time we learned.

So our readers must look elsewhere if they feel the need for a commentary on Christmas. We shall be over there with the shepherds, wondering what it is all about, but sure that, somehow or other, it means that God is with us.

Clement Richard Attlee

As quietly as he had lived, Clement Richard Attlee slipped into death and history last October, leaving no memorial behind him except the new Britain.

Earl Attlee was one of the greatest and most successful revolutionaries of our age — great because he achieved the momentous changes of his prime ministership without shedding a drop of blood, successful because he managed to reconstruct Britain in the image of the good state which he and his colleagues had envisioned. Thanks to him, Britain passed with a minimum of pain from the glories of empire to the greater glory of a compassionate state in which the hungry are fed, the sick are cared for, and the aged have the opportunity to live out their days in peace and dignity.

Overshadowed in his lifetime by the towering figure of Churchill, Attlee has yet to receive his due as one of the greatest of Britain's prime ministers. But that recognition will surely come. And when it does come, the world will understand a little better than it has hitherto understood the deep significance of our Lord's dark and apparently nonsensical statement: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." For while it was Churchill's glory that he saved Britain from the threat of enemy occupation, it was Attlee's glory that he gave...
Britain back to her people, the little people who do not matter except to God and to those few men of power who look upon power as a trust to be used in the service of those who have no power of their own.

It was our privilege many years ago to spend the greater part of a day with Earl Attlee. He had by then retired from active politics and was doing the lecture circuit in the United States. After a lifetime of public service he was still a relatively poor man, forced by sheer economic necessity to lecture wherever he could pick up an engagement. We shall always remember him wearing those high-top shoes and that plain black suit and puffing on his pipe. At dinner that day, we kept trying to remind ourselves that here was a man who would be in the history books and who would, almost certainly, be buried someday in Westminster Abbey among the captains and the kings of ancient Britain. But even with an effort of the will, we could not really see anyone across the table from us but a kind, friendly, soft-spoken, and quietly humorous old man who might have been one of our senior colleagues.

That was the paradox of this great and good man. He was one of the few men we have known whom power did not corrupt. He deserves his memorial in the Abbey and the more lasting memorial which will be his in the hearts of his people.

Anniversary of the Nuclear Age

Twenty-five years ago this month, man achieved the first sustained nuclear chain reaction. The date was December 2, 1942. The place was the grandstand of the University of Chicago athletic field. The men who were primarily responsible for the successful experiment were Arthur Compton and Enrico Fermi.

We are not going to say what some of our readers are expecting, perhaps even wishing, us to say about this event. We are not going to say that the men who brought it off were guilty of hybris, that the world would be a happier and safer place if it had never happened, that man has allowed himself to become enslaved to his own cleverness. The myth of Prometheus is a pagan, not a Christian, illustration of hybris. The world has never been a happy or safe place. And man has not been enslaved by his knowledge or cleverness but by his ignorance and stupidity.

Compton, Fermi, and their colleagues did not create any new problems for man. They merely created a new context for age-old problems — a context which few of us, even after a quarter of a century of living within it, have yet shown any real capacity to understand. We have not yet gotten seriously down to the job of sorting out what is valid, what is obsolete, and what is merely meaningless in this new context. Worse still, there seems to be some inclination to hope that if we just ignore the whole thing it will go away and we can return to more familiar and, therefore, more agreeable contexts.

This is not going to happen, of course. And, for ourselves, we are glad it is not going to happen. Individually and as a species, man grows up by having to cope with new contexts and new situations. It is, to us, one of the many glories of the Creator that He chose to give His creature, man, dominion over the works of His hands and real freedom to exercise that dominion. We have no desire to be one of a race of automatons mindlessly responding to the impulses of some celestial programmer.

Of course this freedom carries with it risks. The risks consequent upon our discoveries in nucleonics are awesome, involving nothing less than the danger that we may turn these discoveries upon ourselves and literally destroy the world. But, again, we are free to choose our own destiny — free, and therefore responsible for the choices that we make. We are, we must confess, not optimistic about the long-range future of man. But even in our pessimism, we thank God that He created us a race of free men, and not of slaves.

Peekaboo

If people are going to be nervous and depressed, they ought at least to be nervous and depressed about something that is worth the physical and psychic drain. For such people, we recommend an article by Professor Harry Kalven, Jr., of the University of Chicago Law School in a recent issue of the journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Professor Kalven predicts that, by the year 2000, life in the United States will be "as private as an army barracks." He foresees the day when it will be virtually impossible to cheat, sit on a park bench, be a habitual criminal, or relax. Reason? Electronic snoopers will be keeping tabs on one's every move.

Already, Professor Kalven notes, "man can conceal microphones in tiepins, observe by closed-circuit television, and determine the contents of mail without opening it." In Great Britain, trucks patrolling the streets are able to spot radios and television sets in houses along the way. Our own Internal Revenue Service receives and files every scrap of information on our earnings and authorized deductions. And there is a proposal — which should be resisted — to build a great central depository of all kinds of information on every man, woman, and child in the country.

Having reached the age where everything that we enjoy is illegal, immoral, or fattening, our personal life is an open book which whoever runs may read. But we dislike Nosy Parkers on principle. The question is: Can we do anything about them?

The answer seems to be: Probably not. Most likely we shall simply have to quit cheating, sitting on park benches, being habitual criminals, and relaxing. The first three of these we are willing to forgo. But having spent the greater part of half a century perfecting the art of relaxation, we hate to see our own claim to distinction fall victim to "Technology and Progress. And we pity those tense souls who will still be around when the wild bells ring out the twentieth century and ring in the twenty-first.
Of course, it is possible that there will be no one around to ring the bells. For if Professor Kalven is right in his predictions, and if we are right in our belief that man cannot survive without a reasonable amount of privacy, the human race may have killed itself off by then in a frenzy of madness. One need not be a misanthrope to see such a possibility and an attractive alternative to the prospect of a world transformed into one great army barracks.

**Lines Written in Anger**

One should not write when he is cross—especially not for the good, grey Cresset. But we have been doing a slow burn for several days now over the reception that some of our fellow-editors gave to a news release issued by a group of young Lutherans who gathered last September in Chicago for a conference on war and race, and we think it is about time somebody gave it better treatment than it has been getting.

First of all, to get our own cards on the table, we disagree with many of the conclusions that our young brothers and sisters reached at their conference. We take it that there is ample space under the broad Lutheran umbrella for differences of opinion and judgment on social, economic, and political matters.

But we don't think that Lutheranism in the United States has yet degenerated to the point where we determine the validity of conclusions by the number or age of those who espouse them. It is at least possible that some forty young adults can be right and the rest of us wrong. At least there is precedent in the history both of Israel and of the Christian Church for a prophetic remnant's being right when everybody else was wrong. So we hope that we can have done with this wretched numbers game and start listening to what is being said, rather than how large a chorus is saying it.

Neither do we think that the evangelical way to deal with the concerns of any group of fellow Christians is to dump them in the wastebasket. It is, no doubt, one of the limitations of youth that it tends to see complex problems more simplistically than those who have had more frequent experience of getting their fingers burned. But ordinary decency would seem to demand that we at least give a sober hearing on the Vietnam war to those young men whom we propose to draft for service and possible death in that war. And we who grew up in the afterglow of rural America might, if we would but listen, learn something from a generation that knows the city and understands its problems.

The wonderful thing about these young people is that they care enough about the church to criticize her. Has anybody stopped to think what this means? Here is a generation growing up that doesn't give two hoots in Hades about the church and here are at least forty bright, "with-it" young men and women who still consider the church a living and potentially prophetic influence in human affairs. Reject, if you will, their opinions on social, economic, and political matters. But don't, for God's sake, make them feel despised or unwanted in their Father's house.

**What the Conference Said**

Now to a report of the actions taken by the conference. (Incidentally, in printing this report we depart from what has hitherto been an inviolable policy of not publishing press releases. We do so in this instance because we don't want our own biases to distort what these young brothers and sisters of ours are trying to say.)

- Resolutions that urge church bodies to remove the military chaplaincy from military structures and urge churches to affirm and support selective conscientious objection against particular wars as being 'in the best Lutheran tradition of freedom of the conscience.'
- Plans for 'beg-ins' at Lutheran worship services for victims of the Vietnam war.
- Recommendations that churches set up agencies for draft counseling that should provide instruction and advice prior to registration as to the implications of and alternatives to cooperation with the Selective Service System.
- Support for the goals and most of the methods of the Black Revolution in the United States, even though 'white Americans cannot understand that their racism lies at the bottom of the black man's rebellion.'
- Withdrawal of support to many financial programs of churches 'because of their overwhelming percentage expenditures on building and institutional maintenance.' In place of this increased support will be given to 'selected church operations, ghetto community organizations and peace organizations.'
- Plans for studies, speakers bureau and direct action with regard to both war and race. Direct actions would include sit-ins at draft induction centers, support for the October 21 marches against the war in Vietnam, and demonstrations during Lutheran observances of the 450th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation.'

**Comments on These Actions**

1. As we have said repeatedly before, we do not think that the United States can escape the responsibility, forced upon her by history and against the wishes of most of her people, of serving as a kind of policeman in a world which still lacks what it desperately needs, an effective world government. On the specific question of our involvement in Vietnam, we believe that Senator Mark Hatfield has offered some workable proposals. We shall comment on these in the next editorial.

2. We do not think that it is practically possible to re-
move the military chaplaincy from military structures; at least we are not aware of any workable models for such an arrangement. On the matter of selective conscientious objection we have already expressed our view that the church is entitled not only to ask but to demand this right for its members.

3. There is, as one of the Muhlenbergs put it, "a time to pray and a time to act." The act of worship is itself a service to God and should not, in our view, be interrupted even for the most nobly-motivated purpose. And we would like some clarification of the phrase, "victims of the Vietnam war." Does this include the great numbers of South Vietnamese who have been terrorized, mutilated, and murdered by the Viet Cong?

4. We believe strongly that most churches have been remiss in not providing adequate draft counseling for their young men who are forced to make the moral decision as to whether they will or will not participate in the Vietnam war.

5. We have, for at least fifteen years, supported the goals of the Black Revolution in the United States. We regret some of the methods that have been employed to achieve these ends in recent years, but we are not ready to condemn these methods categorically if they are the only effective means for forcing the white majority to abandon its oppression of the black minority. We do think that it is something of an oversimplification to lay the blame for the present desperate situation entirely on white racism. There is an equally vicious black racism. It is long past time for both of these racisms to be rooted out of our national life.

6. The church is not forced to a choice between making adequate provision for its own institutional needs and its calling to serve the world. Its members have the means to do both, and both need to be done. The notion that the church, in an age of large and complex institutions, can operate without adequate physical facilities and institutional structures strikes us as sheer romanticism. The problem seems to be rather that it is not using its physical facilities and institutional structures for the purposes for which they ought to be intended: to serve as instruments for making the presence of God real in a world which He is trying to reconcile to Himself and to itself. Let Christians once start giving as heartily as they sing and there will be more than enough money to do the Church's total job in the world—a job which includes both building cathedrals and relieving the oppressed.

7. Haven't we had about enough grandstanding? We would suggest that the time has come to quit making noises and start grabbing for the levers of power. There is an election coming up next year. Let's make sure that it changes the things that need to be changed.

A Way Out

Like many other Americans, we have been moved more and more toward the conviction that, one way or another, we must get out of Vietnam. The war is poisoning our national life. It has prevented us from coming to terms with urgent problems in our own country, alienated our best friends, and created a situation which seriously threatens the principle of civilian control of national policy. We have long since abandoned the argument that we could not withdraw without loss of face; we have already lost all the face that a nation can lose by continuing to wage a war which many of our own people and almost all thoughtful people in other countries consider immoral. The one argument for carrying on which has carried decisive weight in our thinking has been the contention that we cannot just abandon the people of South Vietnam to the reprisals which would almost surely follow upon our withdrawal.

Senator Mark Hatfield has now come forward with a proposal which takes much of the force out of this argument. If, he says, the "free" peoples of southeast Asia really feel threatened by the prospect of invasion, they have the manpower to deal at least as well as we can with the threat. Let them, then, provide the men. If they refuse to do so, we would be justified in concluding that they don't really believe that their security is threatened. If they do unite against the common danger, the world would know that American policy in Vietnam was based upon a realistic concern for the people of that area and not on a purely selfish regard for our own interests. And we would then be in a position to offer these indigenous troops many kinds of aid, material and financial, without appearing to be waging a white man's war against people of another race.

This strikes us as an eminently reasonable and workable proposal. Secretary Rusk has many times justified our involvement in Vietnam on the grounds that we are there simply to force certain people to let their neighbors alone. If that really is the issue in Vietnam, the logical question is: How do the people in the neighborhood see the situation? If they don't feel threatened, who are we to tell them that they are? And if they do feel threatened, why shouldn't they accept primary responsibility for doing something about the threat? And if they needed help, who would fault us for offering them such help as they themselves might request?

We expect Senator Hatfield's proposal to run into strong opposition from the military-industrial combine against which President Eisenhower warned us in his farewell speech and which seems now to be firmly in the saddle. If, by accepting Senator Hatfield's proposal, we could clip the wings of these people, that would, in itself, be a side benefit of no mean proportions.
The attitude of the average American toward tradition is one of ambivalence. We love tradition, but as soon as one is started we begin the process of destroying it. Among the traditions we seem bent on trying to destroy are those surrounding Christmas.

Evidence of our love for tradition is plentiful. An objective observer of the adulation we pour on any monarch visiting our shores would say we never outgrew the American Revolution, and that we still would prefer living under a King and Queen. Certainly part of the appeal of the John F. Kennedys was their resemblance to a royal family. I do not believe that what we want is a monarchical form of government, but what we are really after are the traditions which surround it, traditions that are lacking in a democracy. Basically what we seem to be seeking is a form of roots, a continuity that tradition furnishes.

The U.S. is the only country that attempts to start traditions consciously, though “starting traditions” is a contradiction of terms. Numerous events each year are courageously labelled “First Annual.” This expresses the committee’s wistful hope that the event will be repeated year after year. Yet as soon as a good tradition becomes established we seem compelled to begin the process of its destruction, unconsciously to be sure, by embracing it so whole-heartedly we smother it to death; or we overfeed it as if it were a Toulouse goose. Forced feeding may produce good goose livers but it has a tendency to kill traditions.

Examples of how we dilute and will eventually destroy even some of the strongest traditions are many. Some of our best and oldest traditions came from Europe. In the educational field, the wearing of a cap and gown was once rich with meaning when it was brought to America. Not long ago I saw a photograph of a group of children who were graduating from an Operation Headstart Kindergarten and they were dressed in caps and gowns. No one can complete a course in anything anymore, it seems, without being forced into a cap and gown, and consequently, this tradition is losing its grandeur.

Another tradition we have diluted to the point where it has lost its flavor is the standing ovation. This European custom was an award to performers or speakers whose performance or speech reached such a point of excellence that one was literally forced to his feet in applause. Now we give a standing ovation to anyone, whether the quality of the performance is more or less than a minimum of prompting. Among Lutherans, we give a standing ovation to any non-Lutheran speaker who, in the course of his remarks, says something nice about Lutherans. It is no wonder that the standing ovation has become meaningless.

What we have done with the lovely Christmas traditions that were handed down to us hardly needs explanation. The tradition of sending cards to a few friends as an expression of our wish for peace and goodwill among men has turned into an expensive project that is little more than a chore. By the time we finish addressing cards to everyone on a lengthy list there is little of the peace and goodwill feeling left in us.

The tradition of exchanging gifts with members of the family was once a reflection of our appreciation for God’s gift of His Son. Now we buy gifts for everyone we can think of including any garbageman, doorman, elevator operator, or hairdresser who has offered any service in the past year, however grudgingly it was offered; and what is more the gift is expected, if not demanded.

What has happened to the traditional carols and to the tradition of carolling is best noted by the fact that “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer” is played and sung much more frequently than “O Come, All Ye Faithful.”

Commercial interests have clutched to their collective bosom every tradition surrounding Christmas and they have clutched it until it has been either smothered or diluted to the point of meaninglessness.

The traditions of Christmas were so simple and so pure when we first adopted them that I would hope we could keep some of them in that state, that in our affection for any and all traditions we could, for once, not love these traditions to the point of destruction.
The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion—to give men a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified. They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.

— Isaiah 61:1-4

"Ho everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come buy and eat."

Ho everyone: Listen to Isaiah shouting! At least this once we ought to join him; get chins out of our hands; unglue ourselves from chairs and pews. At least this once we ought to shout and sing and look alive! The Word has gone out. The invitation has arrived.

Invitation for what? What are we celebrating? "...he was called Jesus..." Son of God, Savior. We can't afford to miss this celebration, not when this kind of food and drink is being served. We can't waste time primping before the mirror, trying to cover our pock-marked skins with powder and paint; trying to hide our deformed bodies with velvet and fur. Come! Come as we are! The Word has gone out. Today we are acceptable. No tally sheets, no statistics, no dressing up or down, no skills, no talents, no money, no work, no hymns, no prayers—nothing—will make us more acceptable than we are right now. We are honored guests. We are wanted at the table no matter where we were before, or how we looked, or what we said—no matter now. The Son, the Father's only Son, washes our hands and feet and gives us new clothes. He introduces us to the Father, and the Father, stretching out His hand, makes room for us at the table.

Eat, drink, and be merry for today and tomorrow and tomorrow we are alive!

Lord, have mercy on us.
We are so often hard-of-hearing: accepting Your invitation but only on our terms; hearing the Word about receiving Your Life but missing the part about giving up our own. We are so often distracted listeners attending the celebration but only on our terms; wanting to be seated at the Father's table but confusing this with instant happiness. We are so often completely deaf: writing our own invitations, organizing our own celebrations, talking a great deal and hearing nothing.

Christ have mercy on us.
Do not leave us alone listening to ourselves. Shout the lively Word into our ears so that in spite of our deficient hearing we will listen. Shout Your forgiveness at us with vigor that indeed Your Word will go in both ears and never stop coming out our mouths; so that we may be the constant stream of Your Word—health, forgiving, bringing new Life to each one who hears us speak.

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By ANNE SPRINGSTEEN
University Editor
Valparaiso University

Sing Joy!

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By ANNE SPRINGSTEEN
University Editor
Valparaiso University
sent to grasp, to clench, to smother, to choke. You are sent to give, to open, to unlock, to touch, to speak, to smile, to cry.

Do not misunderstand or obscure My words with convenient explanations. To feed the hungry means to give away your plate of meat and potatoes. To clothe the naked means to give away your shoes and overcoat. To give a drink to the thirsty means to give away your last cup of water. To die means to give away even your self respect. There must be nothing between us. There must be nothing in your hands but My hands. The world expects some contribution, some payment, some work by which your life can be recognized. Bring none of these to Me. Come with empty hands. Come with hands wide and fingers spread apart. You are given one day at a time, not to be scrimped and shivered and hidden and saved — one day at a time — to be given, offered, spent until there is nothing left.

Joy and fear do not live in the same house. With joy the Father sets His table for us. With joy He brings us to His house. With joy He calls us sons. Sing joy! Sing Joy! The Son, the Word of the Father, has lived with us, still lives with us. Walk out into the streets and tell the people. Show them how He did it: Break the loaf of bread and give it to the hungry ones who stand along the curbing. Pour a cold drink of water for the thirsty ones who watch from balconies and windows. Run after the frightened ones who crouch in darkened doorways. Shake hands with the lonely ones who have been pushed to the edge of the crowd. Put an arm around the crippled ones who need to lean on someone. Touch. Speak. Smile. Cry.

Do not be afraid. We are doing it for Him. We have His Name. We have His Word. We have His Promise. We have His Joy. How can we keep quiet?

Eat, drink, and be merry for today and tomorrow and tomorrow we are alive!

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On Second Thought

By ROBERT J. HOYER

Time and the force of institution tend to reverse the direction of a faith. We said, "I believe in one God, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible." In the centuries since, we have tended to explain the rocks and the trees and the mosquito by saying God, rather than knowing God by seeing the rocks and the trees and the mosquitoes. We have tended to deify love by saying God gave it, rather than learning to worship God by loving.

We are caught by the tendency. We found ourselves arguing with the biologist whether our God or evolution was the better explanation of a tree. We argue with the psychologist whether God or the social force is a better explanation of love. And when the infinite variety of things visible and invisible in heaven and earth present us with a something which does not fit our picture of God, we are gored on the question: could the God we describe make that?

A tree needs no explanation. It is there, we see it and feel it. Nor does love, we feel it and joy in it. Not even Tyrannosaurus Rex or the leech in a lovely fresh water spring need explanation, unless we think we already know our God and try to explain them in the light of our doctrinal structures. I have known Christians so perplexed by the problem that they have denied the existence of the dinosaur and blamed the leech on the devil.

God is the unknown and the unknowable. He has given us some signs so that in our darkness we may stumble onto some wisdom about Him. One of these is the tree. Another is love. And when I see the skeleton of Tyrannosaurus or watch the leech questing for flowing blood, I must listen again to these signs also to know my God. God is the name we give to Him who (or that which) made all these things and gave them to us. Jesus Christ is the culminating and explaining Word. But He who speaks that redeeming Word speaks also the word that makes the leech, and the city, and the tornado, and two billion light years of space and three billion of my fellow men.

I cannot know this God. I cannot pretend to know His reasons or His purposes. I cannot act as though I have the explanations when I have described God. But my faith and the faith of my fellow Christians is the answer to my perplexity and my fear, for all these things point in their way to a creating God. Every new experience is an experience of God, and what I know of God grows each time I see the new. I cannot fear, because there is Jesus Christ among the things I have experienced.
R and G, the Magnificence of Two Nonentities

By WALTER SORELL

And then there comes a play which takes your mental breath away. It suddenly seems as obvious as it is inevitable. One only wonders why it had not been written before within the last 365 years. The answer is simple: it had to wait until we got beyond the Theater of the Absurd — until Vladimir and Estragon, the two tramps from Beckett’s “Waiting for Godot,” became a living literary part of our existentialist existence and until we arrived at a point where it is evident and logic that tragedy should be grotesquely funny.

“Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead,” by the young British dramatist Tom Stoppard, is a stroke of genius. It successfully tampers with “Hamlet” and “Waiting for Godot,” and the knowledge of both plays helps to heighten the enjoyment of R and G. Certain scenes of Hamlet are seen through the eyes of these two supernumeraries, they are continued off-stage, the dumb-show interrupted by the King’s fury is played to its very end, and the world’s most famous monologue is hinted at before within the series of questions with the question to end all these questions: “Well, then, why are you behaving in this extraordinary manner?”

In this play, too, as in Hamlet, the players are charged to further the action. In “R and G” they also appear to brighten the scene and to explain the inexplicable. Asked by R or G why they perform a dumb-show before the spoken play, the chief player tells them that the unspoken is a good deal clearer: “You understand that we’re tied down to a language which makes up in obscurity what it lacks in style.” This intimates that there is a great deal unsaid between R and G, things that give the play — often living between the lines — its strange strength.

Their tragedy is anchored in their inability to choose against their not inevitable destiny. They could have backed out, but decided to go ahead with their commissions to accompany Hamlet to England. After Hamlet’s escape from their ship Tom Stoppard gives them again the freedom to choose between life and death by permitting them to read the letter which asks the King of England to execute them. They could have destroyed or not shown the letter. Rosencrantz comments on their decision: “There must have been a point somewhere at the beginning when we could have said no. But somehow we missed it.” The funny thing about our tragedies is that most of us miss recognizing this point and then never have the strength to change the course of events. Tom Stoppard recognized it by writing this play. He changed the course of his life and of theatrical events. Shakespeare has the King and Queen say: “Thanks, Rosencrantz and gentle Guildenstern. Thanks, Guildenstern and gentle Rosencrantz.” We are obliged to add: “Thanks clever Tom Stoppard.”
at evening you shall know that the Lord will come

Hallelujah! and welcome
THE LORD HATH SAID UNTO ME:
THOU ART MY + SON
THIS DAY HAVE I BEGOTTEN THEE
so the word of GOD became a human being and lived among us
the LORD hath made known HIS righteousness hath HE openly shewed in the sight of the heathen

DON'T TRADE HERE Y OWNERS OF THIS BUSINESS SURRENDERED TO THE RACE MIXERS

INTERSTATE HIGHWAY SYSTEM
EXPLANATION OF MAP SYMBOLS

COMPLETE ( ) TOLL ( )
UNDER CONSTRUCTION ( ) PROPOSED ( ) FREE ( )
Thy people
shall be willing
in the day
of Thy power:
in the beauties
of holiness
from the womb
of the morning.
THE LORD REIGNS REIGNS REIGNS REIGNS
HE IS CLOTHED WITH MAJESTY

Hallelujah!
We have come again to that season wherein some of us are assailed by pangs of conscience over the strange mixture of this world and that which is called the holiday spirit. Those sensitive to propriety, tradition, and honesty are uneasy at finding commerce and religion joined in the celebration of the year's end. But most have managed the compromise. While Christmas is no longer a Christian festival exclusively, Christians can celebrate wholeheartedly, and even join the bartering throngs, most of whom have less reason to celebrate.

The intrusion of commerce into the world of art is not limited to one season. We have endured its presence year in and year out for so many years that we scarcely notice its activities, let alone examine its effects upon our sensibilities. To question the influence of the art business in our aesthetic life may be tantamount to raising doubts concerning foreign policy or the economic systems of contemporary democracies. I certainly do not conspire for the jobs of instrument manufacturers, music publishers, or recording companies. I doubt the effectiveness of a Washington march protesting the commercial rape of Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms. I do, however, mean to react to the advertising ploys and merchandising gambits of record clubs.

When music lost the patronage of wealthy aristocracy — and it lost the patronage because the aristocracy lost its wealth — it turned to the only possible source of patronage in republican societies, the public audience. Since a count or a duke could no longer provide the musician his keep, he earned his way in society by selling his only marketable commodity. In the market place of the concert hall musical talent was sold to paying listeners. The publishing of scores, the sale of parlor instruments, and instruction for hourly fee followed from this. Beethoven became a shrewd bargainer with his publishers, Strauss was concerned more with his royalties than with the accuracy of another conductor's performance, and ASCAP arose to protect the composer's rights in an unfeeling world of buying and selling.

The composition is the commodity and the performance a service to be hired. The exchange was nevertheless between persons and the musical communication remained a human endeavor. The phonograph changed all that.

At first a recording was a substitute for the concert and a souvenir of performances experienced personally. Technical refinements — the long-playing record, high-fidelity equipment — blurred the distinction between illusion and reality. The playing of a recording became a performance of quality in its own right. The concert hall experience is no longer totally different from its reproduction. Now thousands, perhaps deprived of actual performances, can nonetheless experience music-making by the finest of musicians in their own homes.

But note the subtly altered approach of the record club brochure. "Now you can own ALL of the Beethoven symphonies for as little as $10.00." "Never before have we been able to offer you the complete works of Bach." "You'll want to have this performance for your very own." "Add this rare work to your collection." We almost expect to read "This composition was commissioned by us and will never be publicly performed. Surely you won't want to be the only home on the block without it."

No longer is the buyer offered an experience. Rather he is given the option of possessing an art work. When this sales appeal couples itself to the exigencies of production costs, the purchaser often ends up with a product of poor quality. The lowest bidder for a musical performance is more likely to make mistakes than the low bidder on a rocket part. The latter is bound by contract to deliver minimum quality. The record buyer can only hope that reviews have been accurate and fair.

A home filled with inferior reproductions of great paintings whose owners' visual senses have been dulled till they can no longer even differentiate between the original and the copy can be imagined. Can an unsuspecting public also lose its aural capacities through clever merchandising?

*Caveat emptor* remains good advice. Let the music buyer also beware. Though a great deal more is at stake, the selling of a piece of music is conducted no differently from the sale of a lawn mower. Lawn equipment can be useful tools. The tools need not be given up because of some inferior models on the market. But the man who cares about his yard makes it his business to get a good mower. The man who cares about his sensitivity to musical sounds will avoid being taken in by a glib salesman who appeals to the packrat in all of us. He takes a Beethoven symphony for his own whose ear is attuned to the sound of the composer thinking musically.

I hope that you will enjoy your Christmas recordings thoroughly but sensibly.
The Cool, Hot Signwriter

There is a cool, hot signwriter out west (L.A. of course) who, I'm sure, must have special connections at General Outdoor Advertising. It is easy to picture her slipping into their silkscreen studio and turning it into a modern-day medieval scriptorium. There she is, losing her cool, running around in sheer delight, like a naughty nun (a what?) adding her own accents to somebody else's slogans. The results haven't quite made the billboards, but they have been brightening up a lot of solemn, “sacred” places all over the country. Sister Mary Corita is her name. Counting our blessings is her game.

Thanks to the National Arts Committee for the 450th Reformation Anniversary, an exhibition of her prints is being distributed about the country and the Sloan Galleries at Valparaiso University has the show this month. It is an exuberant show. Obviously Corita likes life. And she likes it because she sees Christian meaning in it. By latching on to the vitality of the everyday supermarket, super highway, super city, slogan-thick jazz in which we all are so much at home, she has found surprising, relevant ways to say, “Don't forget, Christ is here! Come alive!”

Corita's art, like that of TV, is an art of the close-up. Looking at her work I get the feeling of having my nose...
pressed against a small section of a giant billboard. This feeling is doubled when Corita forces the beholder to come within inches to read her almost illegible script. Then one is really surrounded. Polite, passive distances just isn’t allowed. Shapes and words seem to be parts of larger shapes and phrases, and the whole print becomes a hot, cheerful fragment of a larger meaning. Immediate visual sensations and verbal meanings demand to be connected and explored for these meanings. For instance, in *Sky Magpie*, the beholder is asked to relate the day-glo pink descending “wings,” the blue background for “Sky,” the yellow-green “magpie” and “come alive,” and the scribbled poem which asks, “What is a paraclete?” Also, in other works, the beholder needs to savor connotations of an upward arrow above “In,” or the multiple meanings of “Sunkist.”

Or consider *Wide Open*, one of Sister Corita’s more strongly organized prints. The crisp, crude, commercial letters lightly crowd out margins, and in support of the word “Wide” they gently spread into each other. The words thus form an expressive positive-negative pattern against sweeping, colorful horizontal bands. The top band is a radiant butter yellow, and the middle is an urgent, answering blue-black. To separate two phrases, the narrow bottom band is divided into an olive green on the left and the complementary old rose on the right, with yellow letters running across the bottom. The words “In” and “Out” are pure scarlet. In total, the forms and words combine to provide the beholder with a bright, generous, forward-backward, swinging experience of being “Wide Open.” It is an experience that may move him to search out and do those things that will make this art experience also more of a life experience.

But with all those words in her work, “It is still art?” Certainly, although there is a danger for aesthetically weak work to be carried along on somebody else’s poetry. Yet the actual fusing of arts or mixing of media, as at Happenings, seems in itself to ring true to the “messy vitality” of much of modern life. Also, there is a long history of the successful mixing of the literary and the visual. Take for example the high arts of calligraphy in the Near East and the Orient, or the Medieval manuscript illuminations, or the composite art of William Blake. In that tradition, when Sister Corita shapes her modern calligraphy into a strong visual structure something more is expressed than what the words in ordinary form alone could say. What this expression usually offers then, is a bright, surprising realization of the Christian dimension in our everyday life.
People who are constantly surrounded by books either become oblivious to them and treat them as objects only, or they become "dippers." Realizing that a lifetime is all too short to do justice to the myriads of tantalizing titles, they settle for the crumbs, a crumb here and a morsel there. One of the fringe benefits of this sort of sampling is the delight experienced on discovering, among the writings produced by the world's greatest minds, a mutually held opinion.

In "dipping" certain key words leap off the page teasing the reader to explore. The writer springs to attention to such words as "librarians," "children," "art," and "music" in just about that order. Among the better paperbacks now so plentiful is a charming little one by Sir Winston Churchill, illustrated with his paintings in color and prefaced by an essay on the pursuit of hobbies. Among his remarks on reading he boldly asserts that the "great" literature is wasted on the young and immature. Shocking? Not really.

No ten to twelve year old, however precocious, has had the experience to absorb to the full the message intended in such works as Crime and Punishment or War and Peace. At best he can only comprehend the essential plot. He makes judgements based on his immaturity and describes certain characters as "dumb." His loss thereby is doubled. Satisfied that he has "read the book," rarely will he ever pick it up at a later date when living has better prepared him. At the same time he has wasted the hours he might have invested in a work geared to the level of his experience and to the very serious business of growing up. A boy who grows up in a city, under the shadow of a father he does not understand, will pluck them, according to his taste and interest, just as he pleases, whether they confirm or mislead him. He is brown. Jasper Makes Music, by Jane Horvarth, seeks to give dignity to the lower middle class negro, and Bright April by De Angeli gently but happily delineates the task of growing up as a Negro girl in Philadelphia. Of less literary merit but timely and worth attention is a story by Evangeline Morse, a social worker in Gary, Indiana, Broom Rabbit, Her Story. In this autobiographical novel Miss Morse gives us a picture of the sometime heartbreaking adjustments a Negro family migrating from the deep south must face within her own ethnic group. And yet another, Gilberto And the Wind, by Marie Ets presents a Mexican boy making a playmate of the wind, in much the same manner Ezra Keats makes his appeal in the Snowy Day — to the universality, not only of children, but of human beings in totality.

The point sometimes comes up: Why buy books at all, with libraries, book-mobiles, story hours end all? For the same reason one buys a record one buys a book: to have it when you want it most. Small children identify with books that personify inanimate objects. Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel captures a small boy's delight in large and powerful machines. To him they become objects of dignity and importance. The Little Engine That Could and Little Toot on the Thames fall into this category. For picture books they are expensive, but a whole summer spent with Mike Mulligan for $3.25 is a cheap but good investment.

Older children need books that will stand the test of time also, and can be returned to
as the spirit moves, not when the bookmobile, fine as it is, rolls around. The mood may have past and the inquiry have lost its urgency. Good poetry anthologies, books that foster a hobby, or books that satisfy a love of beauty in art are good investments for the older child.

Strong books build strong character. A child reads primarily for plot, but it must be a believable plot and the characters must behave in a believable manner, not stereotyped. True, he likes fantasy, even though he recognizes it for what it is, but it must be made believable.

A child may not be aware of ethical concepts in the books selected for him, but he is conscious of the "good feeling" inspiring literature creates within him and his reluctance to be finished with such a book but whets the appetite for more.

Cheap books give only passing pleasure and it is not possible to nurture a child's mind from the shelves of the same super-market that nourish his physical being.

The time eventually comes when children's books no longer satisfy and the world of adult reading beckons. Here again thoughtful parents are not without help. New this year, and edited by the National Council of Teachers of English, Books and the Teen-Ager guides parent and teacher through, let us say, the perils of book selection in this field.

Apropos of teen-age reading and of the present day religious controversy, a fine book by the wife of John Robinson, author of Honest To God, should be brought to everyone's attention, young or old. Seventeen Come Sunday is an attempt to put into focus personal beliefs in the light of modern controversy, and restate these beliefs in a way meaningful to a thoughtful and perhaps troubled young mind.

SYLVIA M. SWARNER

The Problem of the Law

Theologians at the university where this journal is published have been very much occupied in recent years with the question of law. This consideration has centered in the distinction between Law and Gospel as this is viewed as a pivotal issue in Reformation theology in general and in Luther's theology in particular. It is clear that this important concern attracts a host of additional issues to itself at the moment when Law becomes defined, as it is by Werner Elert, as "nomological existence." For then the very problems of reality and existence are drawn to the fore and assessed in just this light. It is for this reason that an understanding of Law, especially in the Old Testament, is crucial. We are fortunate to have two new books from Fortress Press on this very subject. The one by E.W. Nicholson (Deuteronomy and Tradition, 1967) is a new work written as a dissertation at the University of Edinburgh. The other (The Laws in the Pentateuch and Other Studies, 1967) is a translation by D.R. Ap-Thomas of various articles by the outstanding German scholar, Martin Noth, published originally as Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament. This book contains a wider variety of articles, but in this review we shall center upon the long article entitled "The Laws in the Pentateuch: Their Assumptions and Meaning" (published in 1940 as "Die Gesetze im Pentateuch: Ihre Voraussetzungen und ihre Sinn"), and a smaller article (published originally in 1938) on the words of Gal. 3:10.

"For all who rely on the works of the Law are under a curse."

"We begin with Noth's well-known contribution on the Laws in the Pentateuch. This work has had a great influence on the study of the Law in the Old Testament, and one can hear this scholar's position echoed in many works. Briefly Noth's view is that in the older history of the Old Testament the laws were found in the framework of the covenant between Yahweh and Israel. There they had their meaning as the dynamic expression of the life of the federation of tribes in league with Yahweh. What is fundamental to an understanding of the laws here is this relationship of the community in its covenant with God to the Law. The early pre-exile laws can only be understood, then, as an expression of a sacral community's life with Yahweh. This accounts for the character of the laws in this period, which evidence their formulation in the context of the tribal federation."

During the late prophetic age, however, which Noth calls a transitional period, the Law becomes less clear and more problematical. This is closely connected with the decline of the community's own interior life, her relation to Yahweh, heightened by the catastrophes of both the northern and southern kingdoms and the collapse of the old order. Prophets such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel raise the frightening prospect that the old relation of the covenant has been so seriously broken as to be irreparable, and they anticipate the formation of a new covenant. In the post-exilic period, however, we find few attempts to concentrate on the possibilities of living open to this new order. Rather, there is an attempt to re-establish the old and it is just along with this attempt that the contextual framework of the Law, and thus its meaning, changes radically over against the earlier period.

In this post-exilic period, therefore, Noth can speak of the elevation of the Law to an absolute entity. Now the Law is no longer laws in the sense of defining a historically bound relationship within a community. It becomes absoluted, ontologized, disconnected from any historical accident, timeless. It is in this period that the expression "the Law" becomes prominent, and its disengagement from the covenant tends to weaken the latter idea while drawing the juridical and legal aspect to the forefront.

When, then, the Pentateuch is epitomized as Torah by Judaism and is canonized as such, the force of the legal aspect reaches its apex. Such a view has implications for viewing Judaism as essentially a development out of the Old Testament law traditions into a hardened legalism, and Noth can suggest that when the New Testament confronts the matter of Old Testament law, it confronts a central issue not only in respect to Judaism but also "in human history everywhere and always, then and now" (p. 107). By this he would imply that the legalism characteristic of late Judaism is matched by many similar manifestations at other times.

One can raise the question of whether Noth adequately represents late Judaism, and there is reason to believe that he has emphasized too strongly the divergence of post-exilic Judaism from pre-exilic Israel, also in respect to Law. Nevertheless, if it is a case of over-emphasis, Noth has certainly been the scholar on whom we have depended for his careful work on the post-exilic period. What happens at this time in the face of the changes provoked by the disappearance of the old institutions is crucial for the development of Jewish history as we move toward the New Testament.

If we grant some validity to his basic thesis, it would mean that theology must pay close attention to the changes which come about under varying historical vicissitudes in the conception of the Law in the Old and New Testament. The point might be raised whether St. Paul is not combating an outgrowth of an essentially late Jewish conception of Law in such epistles as Galatians, just as the notion of "nomological existence" would seem to make greater sense in the light of the later period to which Noth points rather than the earlier. For, as Noth sees it, "Torah-logical existence" for the early federated tribes in covenant with Yahweh is far from the idea of "nomological existence," as an existence conceived under the threat of death.

Noth attacks this very problem in his second smaller article on blessing and curse. Here he points out that the Law in old Israel is not set forth as "an unconditioned and vaguely existing mass" (p. 131) over against which two possibilities are open, of receiving blessing or curse on the basis of either performing or not performing it. Rather, blessing is simply assumed as fundamental to the covenant. Israel does not earn blessing by performing the Law. Her doing of the Law only allows blessing and promise to continue. This explains the heavy emphasis on curse rather than blessings for the only alternative open to the people of the covenant for independent action is to transgress the covenant and thus

December 1967
place themselves under curse and judgment. The Law thus is the point at which Israel is called to manifest her allegiance to Yahweh. It does not hover incessantly over her existence as a dark threat.

For Noth, as also even more so for von Rad, the Law of Israel is scarcely viewed as lex semper accusans, at least not in the earlier period. For both of these scholars the Law is brought into the center of the covenant and, as such, defines the life within the covenant. Von Rad’s well-known work on Deuteronomy can almost transform Law into Gospel. But it may well be that the reality of threat within the Law — also in the earlier period — must be given greater recognition than Noth and von Rad have given it. Walther Zimmerli in his book The Law and the Prophets has taken issue with Noth and von Rad on this question just as he has attempted to guard himself from imposing an overarching conception of Law upon the Old Testament.

Nicholson’s study on Deuteronomy does not touch so strongly upon theological issues. At one place he does betray his own stance toward a theological assessment of Deuteronomy, and his position is close to that of von Rad. He writes: “The language of Deuteronomy is not, as W. Eichrodt has put it, that of the law but that of the heart and the conscience” (p. 46). This statement can be judged in the light of what has been discussed above in connection with Noth’s work.

As a study in the history of tradition in Deuteronomy this book can serve to introduce the reader who is unfamiliar with the problems of Deuteronomy to the discussions which have centered in this book. Since 1805, when De Wette first suggested that Deuteronomy was essentially the Law Code found in the temple which instigated Josiah’s reform, scholarship has assiduously examined the history of Deuteronomy. Nicholson comes to grips with a knotty problem in the book, the presence in it of northern Israelite material which has been reworked in terms of Jerusalemite backgrounds. The basic thesis of Nicholson is that Deuteronomy originated among a northern circle which fled to Judah after the destruction of the northern kingdom in 721 B.C. Here they formulated their older northern traditions into a program of reform with Jerusalem as the cult center for its application. Their program is actually taken up a bit later under the sponsorship of Josiah and made the platform for his reform outlined in II Kings 22-23.

WALTER E. RAST

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:

I am writing to record my reaction to “Turmoil in the Middle East”, a short editorial in the September issue of The Cresset. I do not know whether I agree that it is not the responsibility of journalist and statesman to “sort out the white hats from the black hats” in commenting on international political conflicts. I do not think I do. But that is a highly complex issue that involves a wide range of theological and ethical presuppositions and positions which it would not be prudent to raise for discussion in a letter. What I do think we can agree on is that a journalist must report the facts and, insofar as possible, avoid hiding the facts. The article’s moralizing is misleading because it has not respected the facts.

The State of Israel had its juridical genesis at the same time, and under the same international auspices, as its neighboring Arab states. There were no Arab states in that area, any more than there was a Jewish state, before the end of the First World War. The whole region was a part of the Ottoman Empire up to that time, for centuries. The collapse of that empire led to the carving up of its erstwhile territories. Mandated territories were marked out and assigned to Britain and France, under the auspices of the League of Nations: the Kingdom of Iraq, the Emirate of Transjordan, Lebanon, Syria, and the Mandated Territory of Palestine. Included in the last was the internationally recognized Jewish National Home, which was later to emerge as the State of Israel. There was no “muscling in”; and no one preceded anyone else. If there was any high-handedness, it was British rather than Jewish; however, the chief Arab spokesman at this international settlement, King Feisal I, a great uncle of the present Hussein of Jordan, was eminently satisfied with the settlement, including the establishment of the Jewish National Home. The Indian analogy does not fit. The later rise of Arab nationalism produced difficulties for the mandatory powers, and also for the de facto future of the juridically recognized Jewish National Home.

In 1947 Great Britain decided she would terminate her mandatory responsibility for Palestine. She asked the United Nations to take responsibility for its disposition. The UN decided to create two states in Palestine, one Arab and one Jewish, two separate political entities to form a single economic union. The community of the Jewish National Home accepted this decision and proceeded to organize the State of Israel, recognized as such juridically by the international community, including especially both the USA and the USSR. Whether the Arab community of the Holy Land might have found the UN decision acceptable at that time we shall never know; the surrounding Arab states took the decision out of its hands. Ignoring the UN decision, they united for a military attack on the new-born State of Israel. They did not liquidate Israel; but they did render the UN plans for Arab Palestine inoperable. Transjordan, particularly, conquered the old City of Jerusalem, which the UN had planned to internationalize; it also conquered what is now called the “West Bank”, which was to have been the heart of the Arab state of Palestine planned for by the UN. Transjordan annexed all the territories it had conquered and changed its names to Kingdom of Jordan. This act of aggression and annexation, of both Jerusalem and the core of Arab Palestine, was never undone by the UN, nor, as I recall, was there very forceful agitation anywhere that it be undone.

In June of this year, when Israel reacted to the Egyptian aggression in the blockade of the Gulf of Aquaba, she pled with Jordan to stay out of the war. Odd Bull personally carried the last form of this plea from Jerusalem to Amman on the morning of June 5. Jordan indicated its rejection of the plea by launching the bombardment of New Jerusalem. As a result of the so-called six-day war she lost all her conquests of 1948.

The realization of the original decision of the UN in 1947, to create two political states in the erstwhile mandated territory of Palestine, one Arab the other Jewish, is now, ironically, again a possibility and it under active consideration in Israel! It could still work, though at this time a much more ideal solution would be a peace treaty between Jordan and Israel that created an economic union to include both. There is as yet no sign that the Arab states outside of Jordan will tolerate that; and Iraq refuses to withdraw her army from Jordan to make sure it will not happen. In fact, if the Arab states have their way there will not even be an Arab state in the erstwhile mandated territory of Palestine, not now any more than in 1947.

So much for the facts, though there is a lot more. If your writer had been familiar with them, his little piece would have turned out rather differently, I think. I suppose there has never been a political state anywhere at any time with as long and elaborate an international juridicial pedigree as the State of Israel. The analogy of the Indians does not fit; moreover, it is not very flattering to the Arabs either.

I have not found the political leadership of Israel “arrogant”; on the contrary, they are very unassuming realists. But that may be a matter of opinion. Though they have never told me so in exactly these words, I do know that they often feel that they wish that they could get that apparently endless line of Christian theologians off their backs! They complicate their problems in the international arena more than either the USSR or the whole League of Arab States. Perhaps more than both together.

The Divinity School
The University of Chicago

Sincerely,
J. Coert Rylaarsdam

The Cresset
The Chancel of the Valparaiso University Memorial Chapel (photography by Harry Wilson)

December 1967
The movement for fair housing in Milwaukee has forced me to make some observations for which I am now seeking validation in one form or another.

1. The fair housing movement strikes at the basic economic and materialistic inclinations of the American man. The first anguished cry from the critics of fair housing ordinances is "integration and fair housing will destroy property values." In the first place, this contention has not really been corroborated. Moreover, what if fair housing and integration do lower property values? So what? Perhaps Americans must learn to put up or shut up, that is, quit talking about human rights or do something sacrificial in their behalf. Perhaps we all ought to read Acts 19, 19-20: "Many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the presence of everyone. They added up the price of the books and the total came to fifty thousand dollars. In this powerful way the Word of the Lord kept spreading and growing stronger." One should add that the road to hell might be paved with the skulls of Christians who have worried more about the building of expensive and ostentatious church buildings than the creation of programs that speak for the poor, that help the poor and the needy. It is about time for all of us to reach out for the derelicts of society without the constant calculation of our own self-interests and the nagging anxieties of institutional empire-building.

2. The fair housing movement has flushed out the false worshipers of individualism. The doctrine of individualism in the United States has bred the disease of social irresponsibility. Not too many weeks ago a prominent real estate man in Milwaukee expressed his individualism in this manner, crude and blunt, clear but somewhat vulgar: "If I build or rehabilitate a house in the Inner Core, I'm just concerned about that one house. I don't care especially what the other people in this block might think." Very often when a Christian in Milwaukee emphasizes that he stands naked in his sins before his sovereign God, he is simply saying that this is the only relationship that counts, that he stands in a relationship to his God by his faith and that he really does not have to worry about other relationships and about man's inhumanity to man. When a man talks about his home as his castle and about his private rights to property, he assumes that his home is his creation and that he can do with his home as he pleases. His home, however, is not his creation, is not the work of his hands. Far from it. His house is the work of a parade of contractors, architects, salesmen, plumbers, lumbering interests, and electricians. His house is made possible by a corporate structure that gave him a job, by economic structures that provided materials and savvy — and all that by a group of so-called private individuals in a grand-scale network of cooperation. Nor may the homeowner do with his property as he pleases. He must place his home under the control of garbage regulations, fire and police laws, and the dictates of planning ordinances. His property would not last very long without the protection of criminal and civil law, without insurance legislation, or without provisions against tort action. To hold on to rugged individualism in the face of these empirical realities is to remind one that there are several ways in which people can suck the corners of their blankets.

3. The fair housing struggle has made it more clear, at least to me, how tough it really is to identify with other men, particularly with persons of minority groups. A Negro is a Negro. A German is a German. A Jew is a Jew. A German Lutheran is a German Lutheran. I for one have not been able to crawl into the skin of a Negro, into the machinery and processes of his culture. Consequently I cannot really know his history no matter how much I know about his history. I cannot really know about his fears, his anxieties, and the pattern of his rising expectations. As well-intentioned as I might be, I have tried to do things for the Black Man I should never have attempted. Where I can (speaking psychologically), and when I remember, I get off my white horse and off my egocentric kick to let the Black Man tell me a few things. In turn, I am asking the Black Man to listen to me and to watch me turn myself inside out and upside down and to hear how I really feel and how I really want to help.

I owe the Black Man more than he owes me. In Milwaukee he is teaching me a great deal about myself. He is also telling me that there is a great potential for patronizing in the manner in which Christians handle the Gospel.

For all this I am thankful. I have needed this therapy for a long time.
Until very recently it was thought that the major media of our day existed in order to amuse or inform people within their reach. Ends other than these have occasionally been confessed or charged — the influencing of opinion, propagation of the cultural faith, bondage to the consumer economy. Lately one of the media, television, has been used increasingly to address viewers in a manner heretofore reserved largely for preachers and politicians. Editorials by managers of local stations now commonly follow the dinner round-up of local action, and even the networks have begun to sanction direct comment on the news by reporters and analysts. Eric Sevareid does the job for Walter Cronkite, Frank Reynolds and Peter Jennings sound off for ABC, and Huntley and Brinkley have taken to sharing their sound stages with regular correspondents who give their best, or only, thoughts on the matter at hand. When the networks are persuaded to devote a full hour of dinner or late-evening time to the news, we can expect an increase in this cracker-barrel mode of reportage. Amusing as these comments, analyses, and expressions of opinion may be, the fact remains that their intent is to bring about a certain point of view in the watcher; where once the point of these broadcasts was to inform the viewer, increasingly their point is to reform him.

Perhaps the time is right to suggest that TV expand its efforts to affect the viewer in ways beneficial to him. A prime field for research and trial would be mental health. Since many Americans have neuroses, personality tics, and general difficulties relating well to others, perhaps means could be devised to provide therapy in one form or another via television. That would make possible psychological help for millions who could not afford counseling, or otherwise would not seek it. The problem of this sort the professional psychologist is not the source of all, or even most, of the answers. Participants address themselves to the others’ problems, and do not long survive as pseudo-psychologists. Criticisms and suggestions are based largely on the impressions the participants have of each other on the basis of their acquaintance in the session itself. Thus a critical comment is more likely to take the form of “I can’t stand your constant bragging” than of “Clearly your mother weaned you too soon.” So unlike possible results of televised psychoanalysis, no great damage would likely ensue from televised group therapy — not even a further spread of pop-psych. A danger of the proposal is that people might become too direct with each other as a result of an evening before the tube. But less total tact in the world seems a small price to pay for more and better human relationships.

Is there something perverse in suggesting that the media be actively used to promote the realization of cultural values? Perhaps this question is best countered by another: Isn’t it perverse not to use the means at our disposal to achieve our professed ends? Doubtless the movement of television and radio into such uncharted seas of public reformation would have to be accompanied by checks and reviews to insure the service of the public interest. But faintheartedness never was an American value, and means are always justified only by the ends they serve.
Dear Son:

It was almost midnight last night when I drove home from Chicago... A cold November rain beat against the windshield, and a bitter wind wailed across the prairies... Suddenly, just where the road turns away from the lake, I noticed snowflakes mingled with the rain... Winter had come... It was time to write you another letter about Christmas...

As I drove the rest of the way, the fields turned white with that still whiteness which is the charm of our northern winters... These nights, these long and quiet winter nights, are made for silence, the sweet and mortal memory of other days when the way ahead was much longer than it is now, and the going by of the years was broken into the happy march of days free of care and unburdened by fear... I slowed the car down and tried to think of all the things that I would like to have you know and remember in 1990... the things you will need then as we need them now, when all our hearts are so far away from Christmas...

Perhaps, I thought, we ought to begin with the little things... The things of the earth... I hope you will be in a place where you can watch the seasons come and go, the wonder of spring, the turning leaf, the galleries of the stars, the joy of summer, the frozen grief of winter... You will need the awareness of these things as a constant balance against what men do in the innocent earth and the unheeding years... You will find it, I hope, a strange and comforting contrast... And you will, I fear, need that in 1990 even more than we do in 1967...

I hope, too, that you will have other things... The light from the windows of home on autumn nights, a few books, a fire, music now and then, good friends who can make life vocal as the hours turn toward morning... And always, from the far shore beyond the years, the sound of singing, fainter now than ever in 1967, but perhaps stronger again in 1990...

And that brings me to Christmas... My trip to Chicago was to attend a meeting in which we talked about the problems of the Church... The problems were great, and we talked, not too wisely, about education and missions and plans and programs and surveys... I should confess to you that I have been doing that for a long time now and that I am very tired of it... Perhaps by 1990 you will know that there were two things wrong with what we did in 1967: first, we talked much too long, and did not act enough; and secondly, we talked only about abstractions... We were little, bewildered, anxious people, and we thought we could do something about the world's darkness by talking about the light instead of being it, living it, and loving it with every beat of our hurting hearts...

Many years have now come and gone since I wrote my first Christmas letter to you... War was on the earth then — just as it is now; men hated and feared and died — just as they do now; peace came silently to a few on Christmas Eve — just as it does now...

As each year comes to Advent, I like to think that your faith in Christmas has grown deeper and wider... Once the joy of a child over the Child made real by lights and toys and laughter it should now become the thoughtful joy of a man — the ancient peace which you can know but never understand... the vigilant spirit hearing at Christmas the pulse-beat of eternity... Some time Christmas 1967 will be long ago for you and you will know either the treachery of Time or the sureness of heaven and only the enlightening or darkening years will tell that story...

A few days ago I saw again the lines written by a friend thirty years ago:

With measured pace unto the lectern place
Passeth the priest and reads:
"In the beginning was the Word..."
Strange, mystic words — so heard!
For, lo, is all not over?
The Vine is riven, the Winepress trodden,
The last Drop shedded by the Divine Lover
Sodden with love for sinned and shriven;
And 'e'en the little acolyte
Holds snuffer ready for the candlelight
(His mind on cake and applesauce)
The while responding "Deo gratias"!
Softly as she far chiming golden bell
Inlaid with angel minstrelsy,
Intoned beside the glassy Sea,
Heralds this cradling of our years
And sounds the knell for darksome fears:
"In the beginning was the Word..."
Believe not, Mortal, that thy days
Lose bitter-barren through Time's portal
And no good hopes betide: for those immortal,
Fair words of John herald to men
A Christmas lovely now as when
"In the beginning was the Word..." Amen.