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Cover and Above: Biet Ghiorgis (Church of St. George), Lalibela, Ethiopia, about 1200 A.D. Carved out of living rock. Photographs by Clark Worswick.
No one can make the Advent approach to the Christmas story, or reflect on the subsequent events, without bumping head on into the proclaimed and confessed fact of the virginity of Mary. And, in that connection, one ought to note with appreciation the modesty of St. Joseph. I do not propose here to argue the case for the virginity of Mary in the conception of Jesus, nor do I intend to expound the important theological part the emphasis on Mary, the "Godbearer," has played in asserting the true humanity of our Lord. I happily confess both of these realities. I propose rather to use them as a starting point for reflecting on the support they yield for the case for virginity and chastity among all human beings.

Virginity as an alternative to marriage, and chastity within the marriage bed, have fallen on hard days. Neither of these courses has been easy, ever. But in recent years we have been subjected to a many faceted onslaught which has attacked not only obedience to sexual integrity, but has gone at the integrity itself. It is one thing, of course, to support adultery and fornication in the name of some kind of religious devotion. The world is full of such religious rituals, advocated with endless love talk. It is another thing to affirm the integrity of virginity and chastity by acknowledging violations of the purity to be violations, and with the violation to stand clearly in opposition to the standard. But it is a different thing entirely to press the attack by making virginity or chastity itself a violation of the sexually normal, the sexually whole, the sexually healthy.

It is this new mode, licentiousness, defended as if it were the ground and truth of sexual freedom, that robs people of guidance and support for virginal and chaste lives. Each human being, and all of us together, suffer the consequences of such lawlessness. But it is especially the young who pay the price of this self-indulgence. I am advocating no double standard, one for the young and one for the old, or one for men and another for women. I am stressing that this attack is on the person of each human being and of all of us together. And young men and women, just coming into the blossom of personhood, undergoing the changes to-
ward adulthood, are especially vul-
nerable to deceiving words that
undermine the boundaries of per-
sonhood and identity.

While there are still numerous
supports for the life of virginity and
chastity, there has been an ever in-
creasing success to the promotion of
"medical and biological search for
sexual truths that shall make us free."
That is the opinion of Dr. Richard
V. Lee, a member of the Depart-
ment of Internal Medicine, Yale
University School of Medicine. In
an article addressed primarily to
the medical profession, published in
the Yale Journal of Biology and
Medicine, Lee emphasized the "pub-
lic and private health benefits result-
ing from sexual continence." This
article, "The Importance of Virgin-
ity in 1972," should, however, prove
itself helpful to people beyond the
medical and health professions.
Young people, as well as parents
and other adults who ally them-

selves with these young people,
should find it instructive and re-
inforcing.

Research and increased knowl-
edge of human sexuality and sexual
behavior have certainly contributed
to the resolution of some frightening
and difficult problems. But, Lee ar-
gues, knowledge of anatomy, phys-
iology, and contraception tell us
nothing about modesty, shame, or
pride.

While the author, appropriately
and properly, does not deal with the
fact of the wrath of God on fornica-
tion and adultery, or other sexual
abuses, he does speak about "... Na-
ture ... retaliating with a drama-
tic change in venereal disease epi-
demiology." He notes that we gladly
and freely boast to the young people
about the technical breakthroughs
in treating venereal diseases, and
freely ply the materials and informa-
tion to prevent pregnancy. But we
disregard "the most reliable and
specific, the least expensive and
toxic, preventative of both gesta-
tional and venereal distress—the
ancient, honorable, and even
healthy state of virginity."

"... A ... NEW SET OF OLD DO-
CTOR'S TALES IS IN THE MAKING."

"... Facts without guidance or
rules of behavior are not sufficient," he
says. To be freed from the fear of
pregnancy or sexual inadequacy are
desirable, but such freedom does
not constitute or imply freedom to
indulge in sexual license. And yet,
he feels, just such an equation has
been made, when "normality has
come to mean sexual competence
and orgasm from sexual intercourse
has become the standard of normal-
ity. The myths proscribing mastur-
abation are now being applied to vir-
ginity and a whole new set of Old
Doctor's Tales is in the making."

It seems to him that "... chastity
is an important aspect of medical
management deserving as much
careful thought and research as or-
gasm." The dangers of unwanted
pregnancy, complications of con-
traception and abortion, venereal
diseases, personal and family an-
guish surrounding sexual experi-
mentation, are all real. "There is
still a place," concludes Lee, "for
physicians to advise chastity."

Christian parents and adults who
ally themselves with the young can
take heart from Lee's support as they
practice chastity within their own
marriages and lend support to the
young people in a life of virginity.
And they have resources for such
living and such guidance. There are
still many people who chose for
themselves the route of virginity
and chastity. Nor are they so private
in their beliefs that they refrain from
encouraging others in this course.
Furthermore, Christians are wise
enough to know that not all fear and
conflict are unhealthy. Only the
foolish and the willful have lost
entirely the fear of shame and be-
trayal. If there is indeed a roaring
lion walking about, seeking whom
he may devour, it is sheer silliness
to think of it only as a kitty.

God has left numerous other sup-
ports for the virginal and chaste
life. As the Creator, he wills the
purity and truth of his creatures. He
has made us in all the concrete spec-
ificity of our sexuality. His will
and law so function within the con-
struction of our personhood that
sexuality is itself social, and sexual
intercourse is a social action. As the
Apostle teaches us (I Cor. 7), the
husband and wife do not rule over
their own bodies, but each over the
body of the other. The fornicator,
however, wants nothing but to use
the other for himself, as if he were
lord and master of his own body.
Nothing but confusion of person can
follow this robbery of the body and
this fraud with regard to the other.
Little wonder that there is such
widespread confusion about "per-
sonal identity." The very core and
mystery of personhood itself has
become involved in self-confusion.

SEXUAL ABUSE AND PERSONAL
CONFUSION

This use of sexuality as a way to
defraud the other of what is (or
ought to be) rightfully the other's,
is a violation not only of love; it is
also a violation of God's own mean-
ning for sexual union. Those who
will to act in fornication or adultery
via sexual union engage in an insti-
tution God himself has designed to
express the free giving to and re-
ceiving of each other. To turn this
action into a partial episode, or
serially to commit one's self to an-
other, is the kind of infidelity that
seeks with sexuality to re-write the
meaning of God in creating human
sexuality. The story, thus rewritten,
becomes incoherent. It is little won-
der that betrayals of fiduciary re-
lationships are threatening to dis-
solve even the most stable aspects
of our common life.

Our privatized notion of sexuality
and our innately informed opinion
that each of us is master over his own
body have contributed even more to
a general misunderstanding.
Through a man and a woman we
ourselves receive our own bodies
and lives. How shameless is sexual
abuse of that body which has no re-
gard for the body that bore it or for
the body that sired it. Even more
who have been joined to Christ Jesus by the Spirit, baptized people who are members of Christ's body, the church. Sin by means of sexual unchastity is a violation not only of the self and the other; it is a sin against the company, against the family and the church. Is it any wonder that "loneliness" and "alienation" are words most commonly used to describe the lives so many live? God is not mocked.

The case of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the modesty of her husband, St. Joseph, the surprising reinforcement from advice given to the medical profession, all these can serve as encouragement for us to a life of virginity and chastity. This is not a call for priggish unreality or joyless frigidity, for constipated emotions or horror stories, for double standards or a conspiracy of silence and fear. It is a call to regulate impulses, to oppose licentiousness. More importantly, it is an invitation to Christian men and women, joining all moral men and women everywhere, to live chastely in their own marriages and to support young men and women in their virginity.

We can join together in our congregations and friendships to nurture for the children of our time that kind of family ethos where chastity and modesty are known and virginity supported. The mutual edification of the members within the congregations can become part of the informed and wise ethos in which the young members of the congregation can be nurtured, reinforced, and guided during their own tumultuous years. They and we have nothing to lose but our sin and shame.

Jesus is indeed the grounds for the virginity of our beings and for the chastity of our souls before God. His offering himself into death for us and for our sins is the way for the chaste and virginal union with God. Those who through faith receive this donated sacrifice are indeed the ones who lack nothing for life or death. Hence, their union with God by that faith is not only the divine act that destroys their sin, past and present; it also covers their shame and guards them against the force of all temptation: the thought that if they do not yield to the temptation they will miss out on something of life. Rather, through Jesus God gives his Holy Spirit to hallow both sexuality and marriage. The case for virginity and chastity can be made with truth and freedom, for freedom. Let us make it courageously and winsomely.

ACTUAL CARL PIEPKORN:
1907-1973

Thursday, 17 December, the day the church in Advent begins to pray the great "O Antiphons," Arthur Carl Piepkorn, Graduate Professor of Systematic Theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, died suddenly. With his death, the church, and specifically, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, loses one of her most learned and pious doctors.

When I heard the news of his death, my imagination was aroused by the memory of the first things I had heard about him. As a young pastor in St. Paul, Minnesota, I had heard of the great learning of this man. The stories had become a kind of folklore in which it was said, "Piepkorn and God know everything." Racing to the edge of its possibilities, my imagination tried to picture the splendor and joy at the union between Omniscience himself, and that mind, now unmixed with the body of death. I imagine, also, there was great rapture, for Arthur Carl enjoyed his knowledge with the kind of meekness fitting to those who live in chastity toward God because the Spirit has united them with the One who is our purity from God.

THE CHASTITY OF FAITH TOWARD GOD . . .

Such a sign of Christ's victory among us on earth as was Dr. Piepkorn should stimulate all of us, especially those who are doctors and teachers in the church, to practice that chastity before God which is the true Christian faith. The temptation to and propensity for the notion that one belongs to himself infects us all, but none less than the gifted and learned. No discipline of studies, and no discipline of the spiritual life is sacrifice enough to unseat this notion. Only one sacrifice purifies us from this opinion, the sacrifice of that Captain of the host, that true Wisdom from God, Jesus Christ, our Lord. He is our chastity before God. The great sacrifice is not the one we make, but the one we receive. The great death to the drive for self-possession is the faith that receives the sacrifice given for us.

It is this sacrifice received that makes the confession of the Name and truth of Jesus Christ the great sacrifice of service in the world. My delight in Arthur Carl Piepkorn was not only the immense and disciplined mind, the trained and controlled piety, but the staunch, knowledgeable, unashamed confession of the truth of God. As someone has written of him, he was indeed the "most sweetly orthodox" teacher of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.
The confession on earth of the Name of that Lord who came to earth that he might take us to heaven is no mere passing opinion, fitting for a certain time or place. That confession rings from eternity to eternity and fills all the spaces of cosmos, for when that same Lord returns at the end of time, he will confess and acknowledge such confessors before his Father in heaven.

... AND COURTESY TOWARD THE FELLOW MAN

Dr. Piepkorn's disciplined piety expressed itself not merely in the secret chamber of his prayers or in the private ecstasy of his adoration. His was a piety and discipline that worked also in the area of his service, that of a teacher, and in the rough and tumble of daily life in the church. He was not niggardly in his giving. The gifts he so freely received and used with such rigor were, without hesitation, put to the service of the ignorant and the less gifted. Although his demands as a teacher were relentless, his patience was long and tough.

His courtesy was remarkable. Even though he knew so much and conceived of issues that many can hardly grasp, yet when he was the object of loose talk by minds less knowledgeable, less informed, and less formed, he did not retaliate with contempt. When one sets his love of the truth alongside the charges against him that he was propagating false teaching, one can only marvel at the truth that from his mouth there was no bitter or malicious talk. We ought to note this courtesy as a sign of grace among us from the gracious One he trusted.

To his family we extend our sympathy and urge upon them the kind of faith and hope in which Arthur Carl lived. To those in the church and the academy his legacy ought to be not only a cause for thanksgiving, but also encouragement for diligence in scholarship, fidelity in confession, and courage for service to our fellows.

CAN THE WORD OF GOD BE SILENCED?

Unfortunately, there has been more than one instance where the church and the state have conspired to use power to silence the Word of God. Not infrequently the leaders of these groups have imagined that the death of the speaker would enforce the silence. But there have been other devices used as instruments of power, more subtle than death, but shows of power, nevertheless. Not infrequently these actions have stricken Christians with dismay. There are laments enough in the sacred writings to indicate the urgency of the problem and the grief it generates for believers.

Such attempts ought not surprise the Christians when they happen, although Christians seem frequently to be taken by surprise. Surprise or not, the question is a life and death question for believers, for faith itself lives only on what is heard, and what is heard depends on what is preached of Christ. Christians ought really be occupied with the question regularly, for one does not have to look only at the dramatic events to be confronted with the issue of the silence of the Word of God. The subtle pressures of financial and occupational threats, the cluttered market place of counter gospels, the raucous sounds of life occupied with its own aims and goals, are grounds for Christians to wonder whether or not the Word of God is being silenced.

Can the Word of God be silenced? Can intellectual counter-claims, resolutions or edicts of churches or states induce the famine of the Word of God and precipitate a crisis of energy for faith? Can even the death of the messenger silence that Word?

The church has very old and wise ways of leading her children to contemplate this matter especially during the days of the celebration of the birth of Jesus. In the days following the celebration of his birth, she leads us to consider the martyrdom of St. Stephen, the murder of the Holy Innocents, and the evangelistic proclamation of St. John the Apostle.

The content of these celebrations remind us that church and state can marshal energies adequate to their purposes and goals. Religious passion and decisive action knew how to deal with the announcement of Jesus' birth or the disturbances caused by preaching the meaning of his suffering and death. God opened his mouth to speak his gracious Word, but people preferred either deafness or the endless echo of self-generated sounds.

But what must be noted is the mysterious marvel about God, that he chose to speak about his spontaneous good will toward human beings. His Speech depends on his will. If he remains silent we all become silent like those in the grave. No one of us can pry open his mouth. All our noise will not fill up the vast silence. But when he wills to speak about his mercy to us, no one can shut his mouth. Christmas time is especially the focus of silence and speech, for "when all was still and it was midnight, Thine almighty Word, O Lord, descended from the royal throne."

The Speech of God always finds man to be deaf to the sheer mercy of God. The deafness is not merely a birth defect; it is a willed shutting of the ears through preoccupation with the noises of internal assertions and passions. Are those who are deaf to God's Word able to silence it?

No; not even man's deafness can silence that Word. Within the Tribunal himself there is the eternal generation, the faithful hearing, the
animating life. And the marvel of the mystery of God's Speech is the creation of the mystery of the community of hearers. That community is called the church. From the unity of his being God utters the Speech that opens deaf ears to his grace and spirits them along into a community of speakers.

**THEY SHOWED FORTH GOD'S PRAISE NOT BY SPEAKING BUT BY DYING**

St. Stephen was able to preach the message of the new way God associates with men, a way God related himself ultimately with man in a law-free gospel. But the Holy Innocents did not speak. They died. Yet they, too, engage in the mystery of God's Speech. Of these martyred innocents it is said, they "showed forth Thy praise not by speaking but by dying . . ." The movement from Christmas to the days following, and from those days to the days of Lent and Easter, remind us that their death was not strange to the way of the Word made flesh. Precisely his glory is God's glory: the sacrifice into death is God's Speech in action to destroy death and to make a living community of eternity.

The Word made flesh is God's Lamb, an image deeply precious to the community. Equally precious is the image of this Word as the searching Shepherd, the one who himself has a flock. If the speaking God is the gathering Shepherd, the hearing people are the gathered flock. But what are sheep for? Certainly they are for shearing, for that is how their wool becomes clothing for others.

Richard Stith

**THERE ARE SHORTCOMINGS TO THE PRINTED WORD.** It is too mechanical and too pocketable for something so vital as abortion. But I'll at least try to use my words to give a feel for the world as I see it, a feel for the world I live in.

With abortion-on-demand, our public world has become for me a nightmare. I choose this word carefully. By nightmare I mean a world where irrationality and violence are casually accepted, where life becomes disjointed and senseless. Kafka's *The Trial* keeps coming to mind. My nightmare takes, however, three different forms. Let me describe them.

**Nightmare Number 1**

In this nightmare, the people around me suddenly start speaking a language I'm unable to understand. An example would be someone saying that an unborn child is not yet alive or not yet human, and so can be disposed of, whereas a pre-mature child of exactly the same age is human. This sounds like gibberish to me. Or, too, when someone tells me that an unborn

child is not human because it is not self-sufficient or independently "viable," this sounds crazy. I mean many of us, and certainly new-born infants, are absolutely dependent on others. *Any* baby would die if it were left alone. Of course, after birth whom the baby depends on may change; if it's premature, it may depend on a machine rather than on its mother. But I can't see how what the child is can be a function of where he is or whence he receives his nourishment.

When my wife was expecting, we read a lot of books published in the 1960s about pregnancy, and all of them spoke of the parallel development of the mother and the baby, not about the "fetal tissue" or "glob of protoplasm." *Life* also ran a feature about "life before birth" in 1965; and Planned Parenthood in 1963 distinguished birth control from abortion, saying that the latter takes "the life of a baby after it has begun." I don't doubt but that the new editions of these books may try to revise their language, and I don't mean to cite them as authority. All I mean is that the life and humanity of the unborn child were something which I thought everyone familiar with genetics and physiology took for granted. Now suddenly it seems as if the whole intellectual universe of discourse has changed. I don't understand either the new language or how such a change is possible.

Other people, instead of trying to say that the child's external source of food or its location determines its nature, look to its internal stage of development. They search for

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some qualitative difference in the unborn child itself, which will leave it legally or morally unprotected. But the problem they face is that those attributes of human life which the fetus lacks (e.g., ability to talk or to hope) the infant also lacks. And that which the infant has (e.g., the genes of a human individual, ability to feel) the fetus also has. Even with many minds at work on this problem, they have not been able to come up with a strong dividing line at any point in the process of human development.

As I see it, it is precisely the non-religious person, the person who must stick to the physical rather than to the metaphysical, who cannot logically deny the continuity of human life after conception. A religious person, on the other hand, might well believe that a human soul is infused into a merely animal body at any given point. In spite of biological continuity, he could assert a supernatural discontinuity. The lack of physiological and genetic knowledge as well as former religious beliefs may provide excuses for early practices of permissive abortion; but neither can excuse us today.

The abortion movement, then, seems to me to speak the non-language of 1984, and I don't know how to talk or even to think in such a world. How can one think without concepts, when "War is Peace" or "An Unborn Child is not Human"? The Supreme Court's abortion opinion shows the situation most clearly. Like the top of an iceberg, its assertions may signify a deeper and greater danger. To take but one example, I would have thought that the word "person" indicated a concept, which can be re-constructed from the particulars to which it is applied. If we agree that it is applied to the new-born (and even to slaves, as Justice Blackmun points out), we would have to see whether it reasonably applies to the unborn. But Justice Blackmun asserts, in effect, that a word means only the particulars which the speaker is thinking of when he uses it, and that those who used "person" were probably not thinking of fetuses. Thus south-sea islanders, too, would not be protected by the 14th Amendment unless they were in mind when the Amendment passed. Worst of all (since we can never know exactly what is in the mind of others), if we cannot hold others to consistent concepts, language itself becomes private and ineffective for communication. We can no longer think together in such a world, and power can no longer be limited by reason.

Nor does Justice Blackmun seem to want us to reason together. Conceding that life may begin before birth, he at the same time forbids the state legislatures to decide, on the basis of reason, when life has begun. It is hard to imagine a more sweeping destruction of political debate on a matter which the Court admits may involve the taking of innumerable human lives.

Yet even if Justice Blackmun or someone else could point to clear qualitative distinctions in the process of human development, such distinctions would be invalid. A development cannot without distortion be broken down into static stages. Suppose I'm developing a photographic negative which I know I'm going to like, and you come in part way through the process and destroy it. Now you say, "Look, the negative was still in the 'gray smudge' stage. You don't care about a gray smudge, do you?" Why, I'd think either that you had gone mad, or that you were trying to make a fool of me. Which is the way I feel when someone tells me an embryo has no value. Even if a non-developing embryo could be conceptually excluded from an adequate definition of human life, embryos do develop. Even if a "gray smudge" did not qualify conceptually as a "picture," I'd be angry at its destruction. (Permanent severe incapacity, as opposed to temporary lack of development, seems to me more rationally a disvalue. Thus, for example, euthanasia is for me a much more difficult issue than abortion, though in the end I would oppose both.) The chief difference between the unborn child and the negative is that from the moment of conception (and not before), the child is "developer" as well as "developee," providing both complete form and autonomous thrust, with the mother merely making the chemicals available.

It seems to me that life and the mind are both turning against themselves to deny their own foundations. I had always thought that the world made sense and that by thinking and talking about it with others one could begin to discern that sense. But if so many people can change their thinking so quickly on this topic, I've thought, maybe reason can't be relied on anywhere else either. In any event, ideas have recently come to seem to me a barrier rather than a source of unity with other persons, and I have almost wished for Orwell's interrogator to teach me to think "right."

**Nightmare Number 2**

Well, I think I really might have succumbed if I had not met one woman who supported abortion, but who agreed with me on the facts roughly as I have outlined them. She admitted that abortion-on-demand involves the taking of a human life without having to give a reason, but said that the value of total sexual freedom (the freedom from any worry about pregnancy) was sufficient to her to outweigh the value of the child's life. Or, again, a law student at Yale wrote to me: "faced with an undesired slavery, I would kill. I understand it to be killing, and I would do it." And another woman told me she thought that many at the law school would agree with this statement.

Now, both of these opinions may seem monstrous to some people, and maybe they are, but to me they were in a way welcome. In the case of the first woman, my feeling is primarily one of thankfulness. Maybe I would have made it anyway, but it's not impossible that her hon-
esty is what kept my head together. However, when I asked her to help make the facts public, she refused. She preferred that what I have called "1984" language continue to be used, thereby (hopefully) making the elimination of abortion restrictions more likely. And I do not think that her response is atypical. For example, in many abortion clinics euphemisms are encouraged—such as "termination of pregnancy" instead of "abortion," or "product of pregnancy" instead of "unborn child" or "fetus." The Court's language, too, may conceal a basic value judgment: that even if abortion takes human life it should not be prohibited. Our collective sanity might have been better preserved had the Court spoken more plainly.

So while the first nightmare seemed to involve a kind of mental suicide by our whole society, this second nightmare involves a 1984 world only for the masses. The elite are willing to call it killing, but only privately. And I personally prefer this second nightmare, because it allows me to "come up for air" now and then in private.

Whether such a system can be justified is another question. Of course many people in history have argued that it's good for the people to be ignorant. But I think this may be the first time in which it is argued that ignorance makes one free. Is someone free just because she is more likely to act, even though she is encouraged not to consider the lethal effect of her action? Can one make a free choice to kill if one does not know it to be killing? This kind of freedom is scary.

Nightmare Number 3

This nightmare is the same as the previous, except that everyone, and not only an elite, thinks that freedom from pregnancy per se is worth more than an unborn child's life. (If we thought only avoiding great hardships for the mother worth more than the child's life, we would approve abortion on conditions rather than on demand.) And the elevation of freedom over life is not only private. The state, too, through its laws and hospitals openly prefers freedom to life by helping the mother to kill her child, upon request. This is the best of all the futures I can see on the horizon.

I prefer this open acknowledgement of a "free-fire zone" among a class of human beings partly because it seems to involve no destruction of reason. But even more importantly, it would be much better than Nightmare Number 1 or Number 2 because it would not deny the existence of the unborn child, as human life, but would simply say that this life must yield whenever it conflicts with the mother's freedom. That is, insofar as the dignity of life did not conflict with freedom, that dignity would hopefully be respected. So, for example, the child might be anaesthetized before an abortion, so that its death would be less painful. This would cost the mother nothing. If it were delivered alive, the infant ("fetus" being linguistically no longer a correct term) would be protected by the law, rather than experimented upon or placed in a waste container as is now done. In fact, we could then stop treating even dead humans as waste (I'm thinking here of a photo showing a plastic bag full of what are clearly babies), and instead give them the equivalent of a "decent burial." After all, just because a mother wants an abortion does not mean society cannot treat that small body with some respect after the abortion.

In this third nightmare we have saved reason and a minimal decency. But abortion-on-demand still costs us something which even the murder of adults would not. Precisely its lack of development and its dependence (the characteristics used to justify abortion) place a baby in a fiduciary or trust relationship at least to its parents, if not to all adults. Abortion is a violation of this relationship as well as of life. Something deep inside me twists when I think of society helping the mother to reach down to destroy the little life within her. And all with a cool efficiency.

But, some ask, don't I think that the new freedom is worth even this price? To answer this question fully I would have to go back a few years to the days when I thought a different sort of revolution possible. In the counter-culture I saw what I thought was a rejection of the attempt of Western technology and capitalism to control the world we live in. I saw, or thought I saw, the rejection of the "lust for possibility" in favor of appreciation, response, and service. Like "grooving on" and following nature rather than eliminating or controlling it. I saw this as being unself-conscious and unself-interested, or at least as having a more enlightened self-interest than those who thought that happiness consists in having power. The
I think that merely not "wanting" one's already existing unborn child is no more a valid public reason for an action than not wanting Blacks as neighbors is one. Such self-seeking may be a sad fact of the human condition but it ought not to be publicly supported and encouraged—and certainly not to the extent that the state helps to kill those we don't want. (And the idea that one helps the child by killing it makes no sense to me. Only a fraction of unwanted pregnancies result in unloved children, after the mothers get to know the children; and only a fraction of the unloved children would find life so much a curse that they would wish they had been aborted, once they were old enough to consider the matter.)

Abortion-on-demand may be only a symptom, but if it indicates a raising of freedom to do whatever we want to the highest value, then it warns of a truly secular transformation. I think that thought as well as feeling may still succumb. For how can one be in complete control if one has to work within concepts and categories? Perhaps the kind of freedom which I found "scary" in Nightmare Number 2 is just where we are eventually heading. Perhaps the rejection of conceptual thinking by Justice Blackmun did have a purpose: freedom from the restraints which any particular conception of reality imposes. In fact I have heard a philosopher argue that the correct conceptual distinction between infants and fetuses is that we like the one and not the other. He also approved ignoring photos and controlling our language in order to keep our likes as we like them. Since he likewise argued that whatever we like we can decide to be right, he concluded that killing infants (except for deformed ones, which we don't like) is wrong but that abortion is all right.

I see the goal of our society to be a kind of space-travel; we're all going to be astronauts. The space ship is modern technology. We all have to work to keep it going, and we're always integrated into its demands. With the elimination of nature out in space, every last detail of life must be planned and controlled by man. But wait. The purpose of this total control is freedom. Yes, this future society is a unified system whose only goal is individual freedom. We blasted off in the first place in order to be free of the earth. And what is this freedom? The space-walk. Whenever it will not interfere with the functioning of the ship, we all get an equal chance to step out into space, to be free.

At last there are no trees and rocks to get in our way—and no babies either. There are no hills which are hard to climb up. In fact there is no up or down at all. All directions are equal. And with the aid of our handy back-pack rockets, we are in complete control. We are free to go anywhere we want, in the void.

Le silence Éternel de ces espaces infinis m'effraie.

The eternal silence of these infinite spaces fills me with fear.

Pascal
A WELL-PLANNED HAPPENING

THE '73 CONFERENCE ON WORSHIP HAS been described as "possibly the most important conference event of the century for Lutherans."1 Perhaps this is a bit too enthusiastic, and more than a quarter of the century remains to be unfolded. However, it is true that on this continent there has never been anything like the meeting at Minneapolis June 11-15, 1973. For the first time in history the Commissions on Worship of the three major Lutheran bodies, together with the Lutheran Society for Worship, Music, and the Arts, cooperated in evolving the concept of the conference, planning its program, and making all arrangements for the 50 workshops, seminars, lectures, worship services, and special events. Liturgiologists, musicians, and artists of all kinds responded with enthusiasm to varied programs. Almost 2,000 of them came to the registration desk.

The eight major addresses of the conference have recently been published in a paperback edition.2 The names of the authors will provide a hint of both the excellence and the perspective of the conference program: Joseph A. Sittler, Henry E. Horn, James F. White, Jaroslav Pelikan, Eugene L. Brand, Edward A. Sovik, Daniel B. Stevick, Wayne E. Saffen. Besides these headliners there were all sorts of presentations, some of them verbal and others largely non-verbal: a dance group, a puppet theater, a multi-media demonstration, art exhibits, electronic music, and outstanding music events. Under the last heading are to be noted the concert by the Martin Luther Kantorei from Detmold, Germany, the choral program by the Minnesota Symphony Orchestra and two choirs, and the masterful organ-playing by Paul Manz, together with brass instruments, at the opening service.

The conference program was in fact so rich and full that no one individual, running about to the several locations at which the events took place, could possibly take in more than a fourth of it. This was somewhat frustrating, but nobody seemed to mind too much. Nor was much complaining heard about presentations which were somewhat disappointing. On the contrary, a spirit of delight and joy permeated the entire five days. There was universal agreement that the very idea of the conference was an act of genius, and as the meeting came to an end, the repeated question was, "When can we do it again?"

CERTAIN IMPLICIT ASSUMPTIONS WERE intriguing in the '73 Conference on Worship. One of them is that, over against the current depressing statistics of church attendance and contributions, there are "several strong and healthy factors," as Richard Koenig pointed out in the July 1973 issue of the Forum Letter. These are: "a new interest in the Church's community life, a burgeoning of the arts in religion, and—let it be said honestly and appreciatively—the careful shepherding of official commissions and their common agent, the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship." The meeting at Minneapolis was strong evidence of a healthy and widespread spirit of renewal. It was in fact the church come to life.

For the church, according to the Augsburg Confession, is to be found wherever a group of believers assembles to use the Word and Sacraments. This was done at Minneapolis, and it did not occur to anyone present to question the unity of faith which joined the worshipers together. They rejoiced to hear the Word preached at the three Eucharists by President Marshall of the LCA, President Preus of the ALC, and President Jacobson of the ELCC. (President Preus of the LC-MS did not attend the conference.) They prayed and sang together (what tremendous singing!) and together they received Holy Communion (twice in Central Lutheran Church and once, at a service of contemporary music, in the Minneapolis Auditorium). One cannot help remarking on the contrast between this spirit of joyful unity and the painful divisiveness which was evident at another church convention in New Orleans a few weeks later. To this writer, at least, it would seem that unity in the Spirit of Christ is much more likely to be experienced in corpo-

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1. A. James Laughlin, Jr. in Church Music 73-2, p. 38.
rate worship than through doctrinal quibbling. The people at Minneapolis rejoiced in their freedom from the distrust and the spirit of condemnation which are destructive of oneness in Christ.

This is not to be understood in an anti-intellectual sense. Obviously most of the conference was devoted to the sharpening of skills in the art of worship. To say that Christians are privileged to get strength and joy from the experience of corporate worship is not to imply that there is to be any slighting of techniques. On the contrary, just as a good artist is characterized by his careful attention to details, so is a liturgiologist. Unfortunately this principle was not observed as well as it might have been by those who were in charge of the conference Eucharists. At the first of these there were too few persons distributing Holy Communion, with the result that the service became unduly long; at the second, we understand, there was some confusion about the method of distribution; and at the third, the arrangements for bringing the bread and wine to the altar left much to be desired. Care and foresight would have eliminated these difficulties—which underlines the common fault of clergymen to leave such arrangements until the last moment. The practice has even been defended under the rubric of desirable spontaneity!

TWO QUESTIONS OF A MORE SERIOUS NATURE, may be raised by way of reaction to the second and third Eucharists. The first is that the method of intinction is—in the opinion of this writer—the least desirable way of giving Holy Communion. It may be admissible in certain emergency situations, but in general practice it is well to remember that our Lord said, "DRINK". Intinction—so the scuttlebut at Minneapolis reported—was vetoed shortly before the second Eucharist, and a method substituted by which the sacramental wine was poured into plastic cups held by the individual communicants and later discarded in ???? People in this hygienic age will go to great lengths to avoid becoming contaminated!

The other question is even more serious: Why at the third Eucharist was not all the bread and wine brought to the altar at the time of the offertory and consecrated by the eucharistic prayer? Why was most of the bread and wine subsequently brought forth from a room behind the altar, thus raising at least a momentary doubt whether they would be consecrated at all? Is consecration not thought to be necessary? Is there some disagreement among Lutherans on this point? If so, would it not be well to attempt to arrive at consensus? Perhaps our somewhat divergent European traditions would indicate a conference on eucharistic theology. No doubt we all believe in the real presence of the sacramental Christ. But there seems to be some difference in practice concerning the liturgical implementation of this faith.

When all this has been said, however, it remains signficant that every full day of the conference began with a celebration of Holy Communion. This may be contrasted with the Lutheran young people's gathering at Houston last summer, at which there was no Eucharist at all. People involved in the renewal of worship are unanimous in regarding the Eucharist as central to the life of the church and in stressing the frequency of its celebration. That this principle has not yet penetrated to all sections of the church is regrettable. Hopefully the '73 Conference on Worship will lend additional impetus to the practice assumed as normal by the Augsburg Confession: Holy Communion every Sunday and Holy Day.

It is quite possible that the '73 Conference on Worship would not have taken place had it not been for the mutual interaction and the unified activity engendered by the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship. By the time of the Minneapolis meeting the Commission had issued five booklets: an order for the Celebration of the Eucharist with four musical settings, six seasonal Services of the Word, two forms for Marriage, and two volumes of hymns. More recently a sixth publication has appeared, containing a revised calendar, including a whole new list of "commemorations"; a three year cycle of readings, as well as a revision of the historic pericopes; up-dated collects; and introductions to all these items. The changes suggested by this volume will, it is hoped, be introduced in the churches during the current church year.

The first five booklets (with the exception of the Order of Marriage) were in daily use at the Minneapolis meeting. Other booklets are scheduled to appear shortly, notably one containing the Rites of Initiation (Holy Baptism and Confirmation) and the Order for Burial. It is the intention of the Commission to publish a more definitive, hard-cover volume before the end of the decade, the contents of which would include a revision of the liturgical and hymnological materials previously published, as well as a core of older hymns, about 400 in number. Possibly this material will be divided, one book containing hymns and the other the liturgy; at this writing no decision about this has been arrived at.

IN ALL THIS PIONEERING ONTO NEW PATHS it will be the nice responsibility of the ILCW, as well as all the participating churches, to keep theology and liturgy in tension, that is, to keep the official publications doctrinally accurate without forfeiting artistic excellence; secondly, to keep a balance between the vertical and horizontal aspects of worship, that is, to strive for deep adoration and high joy in participation at the same time; and finally to plump for parochial services which will include both Word and Sacrament. If by the grace of God the church can contrive to retain its hold on good tradition while being unafraid to assimilate good contemporary innovations, the present unsettled seas can be navigated successfully. More conferences on worship will help the church to do this.

THERE IS A RELIGIOUS DIMENSION TO THE Watergate affair, which we as Christians will not want to overlook. It offers a remarkable corroboration of the dynamic of sin as the narrative of the Fall unfolds it to us (Genesis 2-3). Thereby it exposes in a penetrating way how our own natural wisdom (original sin) deceives and kills us.

Consider first the garden. Though it belongs to God, it is given to man as his home, the context in which to enjoy God’s bounty. More than that, it offers the challenge to “till and keep it,” to harness its resources by the creative capacity of man’s mind and hand as an extension of God’s own creativity. The privilege of work, the joy of achievement, the wonder of imagination—all this belongs to man in the garden by God’s gift and call. The Watergate story too begins in a kind of garden. Bright and eager young men find themselves in a unique and privileged station—associated with the White House staff or the Committee to Reelect the President. They share in the challenge to dream and to work, and in the authority to make dreams come true.

The voice of God is heard in the garden. It speaks blessing and encouragement, offering a wide array of options, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden.” But the voice also prescribes a limitation. The options do not include one tree, called the tree of the “knowledge of good and evil.” For man is not God. He cannot know, as God does, the ultimate consequences of his actions. The mere fact that something looks “good” and attractive does not prove that it is good. Neither is something necessarily “evil” simply because man’s first impulse is to abhor or dislike it.

Therefore man needs to remember God his Creator, look to Him, and listen eagerly to the voice of His wisdom, call, and commandment. “Fear me first,” God says, “before you yield to the dread of anything that merely looks ‘evil’ to you. Love me first, before you give way to the lust of your eyes and grab for what merely
looks 'good' to you. *Trust* me first, before you trust the impulse of your own desire or fear. 'Love your neighbor as yourself,' considering what is good for *him*, or evil for *him*. For you are not God, not the center around which everything revolves. The day you put yourself in that center, you will surely die!"

That voice was heard in the garden. The bright and eager men in the White House heard it too. "So they are without excuse," St. Paul says.

A contrary voice comes on the scene, however, offering the tree as opportunity. "Are you sure you heard right? Was the voice really God's? Is the limitation necessary? Does it apply in your case? Is it not debilitating? Look at that fruit, good, attractive, within reach! The greatest landslide in the history of presidential elections! The vindication of a name often defeated, maligned, despised! Shared glory! Accumulation of personal credits! The delight of power and more power! Part of a team! Contempt for the enemy! Manipulation of people! Justification of 'dirty tricks' as part of the political game everybody plays! Moral virtue redefined as aggressiveness and conformity to the enthusiasms of the in-group." The voice of God is forgotten, repressed as foolishness, inapplicable, transcended by the driving vision of a higher cause!

Then, abruptly—a taped lock discovered, intruders arrested. It is "the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden." His suppressed Word is remembered. The commandment takes the form of accusation. Eyes are opened, and men know they are naked. "Sin revived, and I died," as St. Paul puts it (Rom. 7:9). The impulse of fear generates secrecy. There is desperate need to cover. A conspiracy of fig leaves creates the appearance of a common innocence. An unwritten code declares, "I will not expose your nakedness, if you don't expose mine." Hide in the garden, behind a poised pretense of indignant decency—at least till election day! For the great dream must yet come true, the bubble must not burst!

"There must be pressures in society and government...to enforce that high-tensioned order we call civilization."

"Where are you?" God's voice calls. "What's going on here? Why are you hiding?" When the voice refuses to go away, silence and hiding are no longer possible. An obvious first fragment of truth emerges, "I was afraid, I knew that I was naked." Afraid—of being seen, known, accused, judged, condemned. The grand dream has turned sour and hollow. The first deceit was impelled by unbridled desire, the "knowledge of good." The new deceit of cover-up is impelled by fear, the "knowledge of evil." Arrogant man has dreamed to be "like God." Terrified man summons all the resources of evasion and bluff to escape the reality that he is only dirt after all, to escape death.

The inquisition continues unrelenting. "Who told you that you were naked? Why this show of right, this shabby cover? What did you do?" The pressure of questioning begins to crack the conspiracy of common defense. The team disintegrates. The game is up. It is every man for himself, each intent on preserving what innocence he can, retrieving what respectability he can. "The woman you gave me, she started it," says Adam. "He did it." "All I did was..." "That serpent, he beguiled me." Fingers are pointed, one at another.

There is great longing for relief, for the investigation to go away. It isn't worth all this! There are more important things to be doing! But God is a jealous God, neither mocked nor bluffed. He will not have treachery in His garden. Therefore the man who has become like God, "knowing good and evil," is "sent forth from the garden, to till the ground from which he was taken." And those bright and eager young men? One by one they are sent forth from the White House to finish what they have begun, to create a life for themselves as they can by their own wisdom and sight, by a craftiness impelled by desire for what looks "good" and fear of what looks "evil," without the Word of God to trouble them, without the knowledge of God to limit them. There is no future, no returning. The pall of death has fallen. A flaming sword guards the way of the tree of life.

The real terror of this story does not lie, therefore, in what may now happen to our American government and institutions. Indeed, government may even become better for it, for a while. Given this character of man, this universal force of sin, there must be pressures in society and government to create at least some illusion of justice and to enforce that high-tensioned order we call civilization. God Himself will see to that.

The true terror rises within ourselves, when we discover, each of us, that this is me! We cannot succeed for long in standing outside of it crying, "Shame! Scandalous!" "For in passing judgment upon him you condemn yourself, because you are doing the very same things," says St. Paul (Rom. 2:1). In our hearts we are no different from those men. We long and dream for that which will inflate our arrogance, but when any shame of ours is discovered, we cringe in fear, cover ourselves with a pretense of righteousness, try to bluff through, hope the spot-light will turn away or miss us—just as they did.

It is clear that the salvation of men cannot come by governments. If all judges, ourselves included, are also found clothed in fig leaves, how can a nation become righteous? We thank God for governments and what they can do, but we must have a greater hope.

Therefore we flee to that other Word of God, speaking comfort to us out of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God's investigation was completed. He had found "all gone astray, all alike corrupt, none righteous, no not one" (Ps. 14:3), none, that is, except that one whom He had sent. Then, at the very moment when all men had been "consigned to disobedience," our God, by the death of that one Son of His, "had mercy on all!"

*The Cresset*
(Rom. 11:32). For our sakes Jesus, trusting "the knowledge of good and evil" to His Father, walked squarely into that "flaming sword" so as to take into Himself its wrath and death, and open to us the way to the tree of life.

In the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God's investigation was completed. All had gone astray—except that one whom he had sent to open up for us the way to life.

That Word alone silences the accusers. It speaks forgiveness and peace, honor and life! By that Word all fig leaves and cover-up become unnecessary. The mercy of our God clothes us with the new garment of His own righteousness in Christ Jesus our Lord!

By that voice you can know God, trust Him, and hear Him gladly. Truth and freedom are in that Word! When your natural impulses of desire and fear arise, you can submit them to God. Does He say, "It may look good to you, but I say, 'Let it go,' or 'Wait till I choose to give it'?"—then do it His way, not in fear of law, but because you know and trust Him. But if God says, "I know this way looks evil to you, but walk it anyway for my sake and your neighbor's,"—then do it God's way, trusting His angels to be with you and deliver you from all your fears. But if you fall, and then hear the sound of the Lord your God walking in the garden, don't yield to the impulse to hide! Run to Him, confess it all, throw yourself in all shame on His mercy, and let Him clothe you again in His love and promises. That is life and hope for you, and for the world, even the world of Watergate.

The alternatives are as clear as life and death. Moses put it so very well, "See, I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil, . . . blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice, and cleaving to him; for that means life to you" (Deut. 30:15-20).

FIRST AID

Study gently but dispassionately
his skinned knee,
the cut, the sliver, the bruise
(hiding always
your involuntary shudder —
sudden heart scrape,
astringent nerve puckering)

and calmly tend the wound.

Ann George
LALIBELA

LALIBELA in Northern Ethiopia is a monastic township of some 5000 inhabitants, situated at an altitude of about 8500 feet. Until a few years ago it could be reached only by a four day ride on muleback; today there is an airstrip nearby.

A dozen churches and chapels grouped on both sides of a mountain stream called Yordanos seem to justify the assumption that here the creation of a “new Jerusalem” for the Ethiopian Orthodox Church had been intended and Lalibela is still an important center of pilgrimage today. The religious buildings are monolithic, that is, they each were hewn and carved from the mass of living rock, a reddish tufa. They stand inside sunken courtyards or deep pits which their excision has created. These are connected by trenches and tunnels, and frequently surrounded by niches and caves that once were used as cells for monks and as places for burial. There are numerous religious paintings, painted geometric designs and bas-reliefs inside the sanctuaries. Tradition ascribes the monuments to the Ethiopian King Lalibela who reigned about A.D. 1200. In the 1520’s, Francisco Alvarez, the first
European to see the rock churches of Lalibela, write in amazement: "I weary of writing more about these buildings because it seems to me that I shall not be believed..."

The photographs (except those of the crosses) are from an ethnographic and visual documentary project in Ethiopia carried out by Robert Gardner under a grant from the National Sciences Foundation. All photographs were taken by Clark Worswick, except as noted. The exhibition was originally prepared and designed at the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Harvard University. The Smithsonian Institution distributed the exhibition which was shown at Valparaiso University in November, 1973. The descriptive text here printed is from that exhibition.

Below: Pendant Cross. Courtesy Dr. and Mrs. Ted Schwan. Tradition assigns this design to King Lalibela: three crosses signify the Trinity; twelve small crosses, the apostles; six thorns, Christ's crown.
THERE IS widespread consensus all along the political spectrum that American foreign policy should in future be rather less flamboyantly global than it has been in the years since World War II. President Nixon in fact now fears that his own doctrine may have received too-enthusiastic a reception; recent Administration comments reflect concern that the public may not be as clear as it should be on the distinction between lowered profiles and neo-isolationism. Semantic problems aside, a good case can be made in support of the Administration’s concern. No one of any sense denies that American foreign policy needs rethinking, but there is considerable evidence that the American people are, as so often in the past in foreign affairs, off on an erratic polar swing in their confused search for the national interest.

"The United States needs a realistic sense of limits in its foreign affairs, without thereby creating either a Right-or-Left-wing version of a new isolationism."

American foreign policy has normally been characterized by a pervasive moralism. American foreign policy has normally been characterized by a pervasive moralism. From the earliest days of the Republic, the superstition has persisted that the United States was set off by a benevolent providence to serve as moral example to the rest of the world. Whether that belief took the form of virginal isolation or paternal domination, its substance never wavered — not, at least, until recent times. Not until Vietnam. Our current superstition, in that disaster’s aftermath, is the old moralism stood on its head. From the vainglory of America as moral paragon we are descended to the bathos of America as moral pariah. It is difficult to determine which attitude is the more sophomoric. One thing is clear: until the nation makes some sense, moral and political, of its Vietnam involvement, it will be able to make little sense of its proper place in the world.

Vietnam, by any reckoning, was a national disaster. We shall be a long time binding the wounds of our injured nation. But that disaster, that error, that fault was essentially political and strategic, not moral. George McGovern committed an obscenity in comparing American military action in Indochina to Hitler’s extermination of the Jews, and there is nothing in what was done to civilians in Vietnam that begins to compare in sheer monstrousness to the bombing of Hiroshima, or Nagasaki, or Berlin, or Dresden. Those who condemn American policy in Vietnam on the basis of civilian casualties, and who are not willing to make the same judgments concerning World War II, simply cannot think straight about this moral issue.

More than that. The United States was not in Vietnam to find living space, or to dominate the yellow races, or to find and maintain a market for its goods, or to demonstrate its world-hegemony, or to perpetrate any other kind of New Left nightmare. It is a sign of our moral confusion concerning Vietnam that we give serious attention to the fevered rantings of Noam Chomsky and those like him. America’s intervention in Vietnam was not prompted by ignoble motives and was not conducted in some peculiarly barbarous manner; we must look elsewhere for the moral lessons of this ugliest of all our wars.

"In simplest terms, Vietnam was a Korea that didn’t work."

In simplest terms, Vietnam was a Korea that didn’t work. In both cases, the United States acted to prevent the expansion of communism in an area where at least a substantial portion of the local population was anti-communist; in both cases, America in the process found itself propping up, to use the familiar and pejorative phrase, an authoritarian regime. It is instructive to recall that the Korean War was considered by 1952, just two years after its inception, to be a major liability to the Democrats in the Presidential elections. Dwight Eisenhower managed shortly after his inauguration to arrange a cease-fire and the war petered to an end.
In the afterglow, Korea became a symbol of support for collective security and of America's determination to face up to communist military expansion. Can anyone seriously doubt that Vietnam would be viewed much the same way had it been successful? Those who doubt might be enlightened by a perusal of public opinion in the first several years of American involvement. Vietnam was not, in its early days, an unpopular war. There was no particular reason why it should be.

But it didn't end. And when it didn't, when more and more people were dying to less and less purpose, the legitimate moral questions arose — not over the purposes or conduct of the war, but over the increasing disproportion between whatever benefits might come of continued conflict and the inevitable human sacrifice of modern war. It no longer made sense, in human terms, to kill and be killed in the rice paddies of Indochina. That lack of proportion was what made Vietnam in the end an immoral war, but it is worth emphasizing that the Korean War, had it dragged on for as long a time and with no more significant end in sight, would have been equally immoral.

Which is to say that what was morally wrong by 1968 was not necessarily so in 1961 or 1963 or even 1965. Radical social critics like I. F. Stone have gained respectability and even stature because they, so the theory goes, saw from the beginning the evils of the Vietnam venture. It is worth noting that I. F. Stone saw, with equal vigor and also from the beginning, the "evils" of American action in Korea. In both cases, what he saw was determined by a political philosophy that would normally position him somewhere near the lunatic fringe of the American political spectrum. Yet in our current overheated atmosphere, he, along with figures like Daniel Ellsberg and the Berigan brothers, becomes a liberal cultural hero.

In the end the major lesson of Vietnam, moral and political, is that the United States must learn the realistic limits of its role and influence in the world, and while that means abandoning messianic globalism, it should not mean a return to the concept of Fortress America. (A minor lesson might be that limited wars, whatever their intrinsic merit, cannot successfully be conducted in a political democracy, not, at least, if they become protracted.) What we need is a realistic calculation, without tears and without illusions, of America's true place in the international scheme of things.

We might begin by recognizing that we are in no real sense a revolutionary society, bicentennial rhetoric to the contrary notwithstanding. In this the New Left is largely right: America on the international scene is, in many ways, a bastion of the counter-revolution. Our 19th century support for revolutionary movements is in every sense a thing of the past.

THE DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION is not the revolution of the 20th century. In any case, our revolutionary message even in the past had less to do with political ideology than with economic achievement.

David Potter reminded us 20 years ago in People of Plenty that America's real message was not "democracy revolutionizing the world" but "abundance revolutionizing the world." His point was that abundance allowed us the luxury of democracy, and that America's relative success as a society was intimately tied to its middle-class prosperity. It is not Tom Paine but Ben Franklin who is the real patron saint of the American people.

Economic prosperity is now more or less commonplace in western Europe, which erodes American distinctiveness, and much of the rest of the world is persuaded that the road to stability and wealth is not that of parliamentary evolution but of socialist revolution. We clearly have no business intervening in every situation where Marxist revolution occurs, but it does nothing to clarify the aims and purposes of our foreign policy to deny that the representative revolutionary of modern times is our enemy. He knows that, even if we don't.

This is an understandably hard thing for Americans to accept. Our tradition of liberal democracy inclines most of us to instinctive support of "progressive" movements, and the illusion that any ideology of the Left is by definition progressive dies hard, especially now that the sad lessons of the Popular Front period of the 1930's are receding from memory.

Liberals resist the logic of the international situation, and hope at least to stop short of being anti-revolutionary; thus the tendency to insist that our proper stance is not anti-communist but only non-communist. In terms of our relations with communist governments, this position makes eminent sense; in terms of ideology, it is simply incompatible with the basic traditions of American democracy. A liberal democrat should no more object to philosophical anti-communism than he does to anti-fascism.

Our response to the authoritarian governments in large parts of Asia, Africa, and Latin America should be pragmatic, not ideological.

The natural preference for American governments since World War II has been to encourage and support social democratic movements. This is fine among the advanced industrial nations, but among many, probably most, of the Third World nations, the search for social democracy — for the Third Force of middle-class liberals that will smite reactionaries and revolutionaries alike — is largely a chimera. Most of these nations simply lack the objective conditions or the political traditions to make an effective liberal democratic movement possible.

Yet from eastern Europe after 1945 to Latin America in the 1960's
the American search for the Third Force has continued with earnestness and persistence. The State Department's immediate postwar dreams of a series of social democratic governments in eastern Europe ran contrary not only to Stalin's rather different plans for the area but also to the realities of the situation; a Bulgarian New Deal was never much of a possibility. In more recent years, the exalted rhetoric of the Alliance for Progress—with all the brave and dangerous talk of a "peaceful revolution"—had its predictable consequences in frustrated hopes, bitter recrimination and, in the end, an increase in anti-American feelings.

WHAT MUST BE FACED IN foreign affairs, even more so than in domestic matters, is that there often is no good policy readily available to the government. The evidence is overwhelming that for large parts of Africa, Asia, and Latin America the political prospect for the foreseeable future is one form or another of authoritarian regime. That essentially is their business and there is little the United States can or should do about it. Our response to such governments should be pragmatic, not ideological.

Such response should, for example, avoid double standards of judgment or intervention. It was wrong, everyone agrees, for the CIA to incite a rebellion in 1954 in Guatemala, yet some liberals talk as if a CIA-engineered overthrow of the Greek government would be quite acceptable and even proper. This is dangerous double-bookkeeping.

We should accept any government that does in fact control a country. We should give what support seems prudent to those governments that work effectively toward stability and prosperity for their societies, whether those governments be of the Left or the Right. The question of our attitude toward violations of civil liberties is an extraordinarily complex one and is not readily subject to broad generalization. Again, though, it is important to maintain a single standard toward violations from Left and Right.

It is important as well to avoid stereotyped preconceptions concerning which kinds of government gain support from their people and can produce economic progress. Myron Weiner has made this point shrewdly in his *Modernization*:

Unfortunately, we tend to assume that those authoritarian governments which speak in a radical and revolutionary language have popular support, while conservative authoritarian regimes do not. All too often we also naively assume that a revolutionary regime is more capable of carrying through social and economic reforms, facilitating national economic growth, and maximizing economic equality than is either a conservative authoritarian government or a democratic regime.... No casual relationship and, indeed, no significant correlations exist between forms of regimes and rates of growth.

What should be paramount in determining our relations with any foreign nation is the attitude of that government toward the United States.

Perhaps the point of paramount importance in determining our relations with any foreign nation is one that is entirely obvious but which is frequently ignored, especially by liberal critics: the attitude of that government toward the United States. It is simply absurd and self-defeating for us to take a more hostile attitude toward governments friendly to the United States and its interests than toward those that are not. A mature foreign policy certainly does not call for super-sensitive response to all foreign criticisms of the U.S.; most in fact are far better ignored. But neither does it make sense for the nation to become so Olympian in these matters that it does not by its actions indicate it knows the difference between its friends and its enemies. In general, then, right-wing authoritarianism should, in itself, be neither more nor less acceptable to the United States than left-wing authoritarianism; judgment on all such regimes should be based on their international behavior, their attitude toward us, and their performance toward their own people.

It might be argued that all this is excessively nationalistic and self-interested, and insufficiently directed toward relieving the great human tragedies of poverty, ignorance, racism, and tyranny. There is admittedly a fine line between realism and callousness even in theory, and the pitfalls in practice are considerably greater.

Certainly the United States is not powerless in areas of humanitarian concern. It can and should, for example, separate as much as possible diplomacy from economic aid, at least in relation to the developing countries. The call to channel aid to such countries through multilateral agencies such as the United Nations and the World Bank seems entirely reasonable and would jeopardize no important national interest. It might even deflate some of the tiresome and reflexive Marxist rhetoric concerning neo-imperialism and "informal empire."

We should not delude ourselves, however, that such actions will easily or quickly bring prosperity to the Third World. Although the poorer countries need and deserve our aid, their economic fate, as their political fate, is essentially in their hands, not ours. The experience of the Alliance for Progress surely should warn us against promising what we cannot deliver and raising hopes that are not in our province to fulfill. To do otherwise is not just to create a purposeless instability but also to convict ourselves of hypocrisy.

Humanitarian actions in matters of civil rights and civil liberties are even more problematic. Questions of what precise actions we should take in response to the plight of Jews and intellectuals in the Soviet Union or of Blacks in Rhodesia and

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South Africa are not easily answered. Without going here into the details of these or other cases, it is easy to demonstrate that vigorous American stands could as well hurt beleaguered minorities as help them. It would be horrendous for us to make other peoples, particularly those we seek directly to aid, pay the price for our moral gestures.

There is also the question of cost to other valid national interests by such actions. Is it right, for example, to give official government support to persecuted Soviet Jewry at the risk of endangering better relations between nations that can blow each other and everyone else off the face of the earth? To argue that there is an easy moral answer to that question, on either side, is to be a moral simpleton.

WHAT ALL THIS AMOUNTS to is the simple proposition that there are real limits to what the United States can accomplish in affecting the affairs of other nations. Liberals and conservatives alike these days pay lip service to that notion, but both tend to be inconsistent in its application. Conservatives want us to leave South Africa and Greece alone, but think that by putting the screws to China and the Soviet Union on trade we can substantially alter their internal policies, or, if we can't, we should try to make them international pariahs; liberals, on the other hand, while applauding friendlier relations with dictator Mao get morally exercised over support of dictator Franco, and think that if we really wanted to we could make the Greek colonels go away.

To return to our starting point: the United States needs a realistic sense of limits in its foreign affairs, without thereby creating either a Right-or-Left-wing version of a new isolationism. The national interest, an imperfect and perhaps too-flexible concept, is nonetheless our best guide to maintaining a proper balance. We owe such a policy of intelligent restraint to ourselves and to the rest of the world.

TO A STUDENT KILLED DURING THE SUMMER IN A CAR-TRAIN ACCIDENT

That day in class
When Thoreau mourned the sleepers under the rails—
Somewhere the engine had already started its charge,
Gaining momentum
As you sat there
Considering simplicity,
Delicate head raised,
Dark hair winging your rapt face—

Did you hear the whistle?

FLYWAY

By the river where snags aim flights
Of arrow-wakes northward
Snow geese in southbound wakes in November
Swirl against gray skies
Drift in white patches on green wheat
Shrilly scrawl
Wavering lines across the slate horizon
Pierced by shafts of light
Shot through dark clouds
Plummet toward the golden corn.

Ann George

December, 1973
The World’s Big Circus

with a

Touch of Nostalgia

THE APPARENT NECESSITY to “market” a work of art has always puzzled and frightened me. A thousand and one reasons may lead to the creation of a book, but there is only one way of creating interest in a book: promotion. The literary market is worse than any horse market. Books are being made into best-sellers far in advance or doomed to accumulate dust in warehouses and then be remaindered for a song.

Permit me to be personal. None of my readers who may have liked some of my theater reviews over the years know that I have published a book, Facets of Comedy, a year and a half ago. It is out in hardcover and paperback. It received some very good reviews here and in England. It has sold a couple of hundred copies and netted the author $65.25 so far. Shall I admit how many years of research and actual work went into it? I would be ashamed to do so. I did not write and peddle the book. It was commissioned by an editor of Grosset & Dunlap who was fired in the process of changes in the editorial leadership. The new war cry was: Business! The author be damned! The new editor paid a Hollywoodesque advance of five zeroes behind a nice netted the author $65.25 so far. Shall I mention all this because of the international circus called the Frankfurt Book Fair. The biggest and smallest publishers, all together 3,184 from 59 countries, exhibited their ware amounting to 248,000 books. The horse-trading, euphemistically often called “package deals,” went on from booth to booth, agents trying to sell their authors or kidnap others. And in the midst of all this whipcracking and some daring tightrope acts of selling and pushing, authors are being made or, with a money-minded shrug of the shoulder, eliminated. Within all this din one can watch some funny and disarming clown numbers: still unpublished authors trying to pierce the deaf ears of a publisher.

Reichskanzler Willy Brandt opened the Buchmesse with an improvised speech praising that little nation in the Mideast where so many people live who were once persecuted in the country famous for its Kultur and annual book fairs. These were decent words of a brave man who, a few days later, betrayed the interests of that little nation in order not to betray the Wirtschaftswunder of his country and its needs for oil. The speech which the Bundeskanzler did not deliver so that he might pay homage to a great historic moment was published later. He intended to say a few good words about the very people who set a whole industry in motion, who deliver the mental and verbal oil for the book market Wunder in 59 and more countries, people nicknamed authors. His speech would have opened with the justified question: “Is not the author that factor in the industry of literature who is least accounted for, although all accounts state his name and his titles? It seems that one simply relies on his existence. One presupposes him and his willingness to work as a natural phenomenon like silver, gold, or other treasures of nature which are there to be exploited. . . . An author must have stirred some interest through talent and accomplishments before he is at all recognized in this complicated wickerwork of connections and pulls. . . . The first edition of a paperback hardly equals the monthly salary of a skilled worker: but if the book ought to be good, the work of three or six months must be invested.”

As an aside addressed to all clowns in the world’s biggest circus: The last statement, if right and not an insult to the professional writer, would only reflect the mad pace of our jet era whose style is speed. Moreover, even such a (probably) decent man and (seemingly) upright politician as Willy Brandt should not have scrapped such important words in favor of the author, words which the book industry would have applauded as the empty gesture just right for the opening of their deals which do not always necessarily adhere to geometric squareness.

A FRIGHTENING FEATURE of the Frankfurt Book Fair was the wave of Hitler literature. The voices of the promoters screamed that Hitler was “in”; the epithet of a “fascinating personality” was used without clarifying whether this word leaned toward a negative or positive connotation. Some of the titles were: Hitler in the Spanish Era, England in Hitler’s Political Calculation, The Hitler-Luddendorf Trial. Even more tempting seemed the title: Hitler’s
Mein Kampf Yesterday—Today; more cryptic in its naked simplicity:
Adolf Hitler. There was a ‘funny’ book: Victorious Against Hitler; another book whose indecisive and yet telling title, Adolf Hitler—Heil und Unheil, cannot very well be translated without killing its subtlety. A juvenile tried to reawaken Hitler’s greatness in the young: When Hitler Stole a Pink Rabbit, and I was dumbfounded to learn that a Jewish publishing house in Germany came out with a joke that tells what would have happened if Hitler had been a Jew: Abraham Hitler. I felt nauseous when the tantalizing title, Who Was Hitler? looked questioningly at me and, since I knew the answer, my equilibrium was quickly restored.

We have had our goodly share in a perhaps justified wave of nostalgia with a number of musicals trying to cash in on our memory in the good old days in the twenties and thirties. But now that a Hitler film is out and Hitler memorabilia are auctioned off at record prices, it may sound pardonable that the German book market is vociferously attuned to the latest circus slogan: Hitler’s Return or The Great One Riding a Chameleon on the Crest of the Nostalgia Wave.

A second aside: A few years ago I still had difficulties in explaining the word nostalgia to German speaking people. The dictionaries translated it with Heimweh, thus limiting it to the yearning of being back home. But within the last year or so, the German language adopted nostalgia, and the word Nostalgie now looks as German as Image, Test, Trend, Understatement or Man Power. Is this Heimweh for Hitler a passing fad or a harbinger of worse to come?

THE NOSTALGIA WAVE HAS overflooded some of the theaters. One of the best examples is the Theater am Neumarkt in Zuerich, so far known for its experimental stance. It remained experimental by somersaulting with nostalgic zest. Why go back to the 20’s or the turn of the century with its Jugendstil when there was a much earlier wave of romantic escapism, a period in which sentimentality danced a wild Reigen with broken hearts, hearts torn between their own feelings? It was about two hundred years ago when Goethe’s young Werther could not master his feelings like his creator. When Goethe’s betrothal with Lili Schoenemann had dramatically come to an end, Goethe wanted to rid himself of the uncertainty of his feelings. In the spring of 1775 he wrote a play called Stella in which one man loves two women. It is a youthful play in which the blissfulness of love moves dramatically from one ecstatic outbreak of feelings to another climax of the same kind. Surfeited with emotional exultation, struggling with pietistic influences and fraught with a dialogue in which every sentence ends with an exclamation mark. It is an unbearable play which, when taken by its word, becomes ridiculous.

Horst Zankl staged Goethe’s “play for lovers” with a touch of the Jugendstil and made his actors move in an exaggerated choreography à la Isadora Duncan. It became superkitsch and most embarrassing where it was most “literal.” Zankl was not the first to succumb to the temptation of topping all nostalgia. The play was done on several German stages recently. In his uncertainty of how to cut through the Gordian knot of love, Goethe’s first version came to a happy ending which had to be ‘immoral’: The two women decided on living together with the man whose love they were willing to share rather than to lose. Goethe was reproached by most of his contemporaries, mostly by sentimentalists, for not having liberated love from eros and turned with the help of the twin sisters of resignation and frustration to the solution of friendship. Much later, in 1805, when he was cultural Czar in Weimar and had moved from storm and stress to classicism, Goethe was induced by Friedrich Schiller to write a tragic ending. The hero shoots himself and Stella ends her life by taking poison.

The Theater am Neumarkt played both versions. Teenagers were invited to vote which version they preferred. I have been living on tenterhooks ever since, not knowing which way the voting went. The feelings for the women’s lib movement may have supported the non-monogamous ending. Whatever the result, sex remained uppermost in Horst Zankl’s mind. The next step turned backwards to the struggle of the suffragettes at the end of the last century and the writers who tried to liberate sex from the fetters of bourgeois hypocrisy. The spirit of D. H. Lawrence, who extolled the raw, natural passions and saw the only hope for happiness in man’s instinctive forces, might have been sought after. However, years before Lawrence came to regard sex as a sacred mystery, two German dramatists dealt with the flesh frankly: Frank Wedekind and Arthur Schnitzler. Wedekind is already a vital part of the nostalgia wave. Schnitzler, I am sure, will soon be rediscovered.

Wedekind felt that “the flesh has its own spirit.” He fought a whole life against ‘dirt’ by showing how beautiful the human body is in its holy function if given the freedom of its spirit. That he is a misunderstood moralist is shown by his long one-acter, Death and the Devil, which followed Stella in the Theater am Neumarkt. The young Goethe thought that man was not made for a monogamous relationship. In Death and the Devil Wedekind damned marriage as a phony institution and celebrates orgies with his thoughts of how far more praise-worthy is any whore who works on “the market of free love” with serious devotion. At least, the Marquis Casti-Piani thinks so, a moralist, cynic, lecher and procurer who finally shoots himself when he learns from one of his girls that the pursuit of sensuality as the final purpose in life is self-defeating (“... for it was nothing but a hellish urge!”).
A comedy effect is achieved when a lady representative of The Society for the Abolition of White Slavery, a virgin, of course, awakens to the realization that the most human in man is the most beautiful. Pure carnal passion flowers in her and triumphs at the end when she kneels over the dead Marquis saying: “You would never have dreamt of this sense than goodness.

Wedekind was obsessed by the ideas that nature is pure and nakedness noble, that society is a circus and man a beast. As a satirist he displayed pathos and ethos. In his fashion he was religious, although he did not believe in God. But he was fully aware of good and evil, and he dramatized evil to make us see the good. One of his characters says: “We do not battle for art. We fight for religion. Art is our tool of warfare.”

Wedekind is undoubtedly ‘in’, a word used here as if it were the best German idiom. The play with which he has always been most identified is his Spring's Awakening in which he treated the traumatic sexual experiences of teenagers and the hypocritical Victorian attitude of teachers and parents toward their problems. This play has recently been seen on many German stages and had two different productions simultaneously at the theaters in Basel and St. Gallen. Eighty years ago this play was revolutionary and today its copulation scene in the hayloft and the one of masturbation in the toilet has no longer anything unnerving and daring about it. But both productions were keyed to the actuality of this question, and the audiences reacted as if they witnessed a new avantgarde play. It seems that the problems of puberty are eternal, defying all fads.

THE ZUERCHER SCHAU Spielhaus rode the nostalgia wave with Bertolt Brecht’s first play, Baal, premiered in 1923. It was written within a few days as a challenge to another inferior play by a now forgotten German dramatist. Baal has the youthful, volcanic power of an undisciplined writer of great talent, obviously influenced by Wedekind and Georg Buechner. The hero is an amalgam of Villon, Rimbaud and Verlaine, and a vision of Brecht as he saw himself: a poet, a genius, an egocentric, a drunken and lecherous god of fertility, a mixture of Dionysus and the semitic god Baal, a lonesome figure crying out for tenderness while escaping into cruelty.

No doubt, it is a fascinating idea to dramatize the outsider, the asocial creature who cannot help breaking laws until life breaks him. The play consists of eighteen little scenes and has a cast of forty-two. It has expressionistic features and surrealistic highlights in a dramaturgically bad structure. This outcry against society and all establishments of yesterday, today, and tomorrow is difficult to master on a stage. The approach of the Schauspielhaus was visually much too realistic, it had no chance to succeed without stressing the unreal, eerie, fantastic. The play can only be done with projections and lighting that paint the mood with Daliesque daring. The realistic stage images doomed the wonderful efforts of one of Germany’s great actors, Hans-Dieter Zeidler, in the title role.

He sang Brecht’s songs with the tender voice of an unreal within-ness which should have characterized the whole play.

Brecht often doctored this play, and there are several versions of it. Finally, in 1954, he restored the first and last scene as they were originally written, and he noted: “... I leave the play as it is since I do not have the strength to change it. I admit (and warn): the play lacks wisdom.”

Baal, he thought, was his worst play. Why then would any theater want to stage it? It may not have wisdom, but the play has atmosphere, that kind of atmosphere which fits the nostalgic feeling of a period and shows some magnificent facets of the world’s big circus: daring, flamboyance, brutality; disrobed souls and bodies; sensuality in its most ecstatic despair; life crying out in senseless yearning for a life lived to the full; nostalgia as yesterday’s dream of all those who do not have the courage to live with the reality of today’s dream of a possibly wiser and more beautiful tomorrow.

BOOKS

POLITICS, MEDICINE, AND CHRISTIAN ETHICS: A DIALOG WITH PAUL RAMSEY.


The title of this book might well be misleading to anyone who is not familiar with the writings of Paul Ramsey, prominent Protestant ethicist. One might be anticipating a book having to do with the ethical questions which arise when probing the relationship between politics and medicine, especially when a book on this topic is so badly needed at this time. Actually the book is about the ethics of Ramsey in the two areas where he has done most of his work, politics and medicine. These two areas are treated quite separately by Charles Curran, a Roman Catholic who has done most of his writing in moral theology. The reader who may be interested in only one of these areas will find it quite easy to isolate the issues about which he is concerned. At the same time one of the weaknesses of the book is that so little effort is made to
bring these two different realms of ethical discourse into closer relation.

Charles Curran is eminently well qualified for his task, and he provides a perceptive and lucid analysis and critique of Paul Ramsey's work. His work provides us with a unique opportunity to see two powerful traditions of ethical discourse in dialogue. Though there are many points of contact with the tradition of moral theology in Ramsey's thought, there are also unique Protestant emphases from which Roman Catholicism has much to learn. Curran's greatest contribution is to provide a systematic analysis of Ramsey's writings in politics and medicine so that his thought is readily available to those who may not have the skill or the patience to struggle with Ramsey himself, whose style is often abstruse and somewhat turgid. I find Curran to be very exact in his treatment of Ramsey, always close to the evidence and careful to note when he is making his own interpretations or critique.

Curran reviews and analyzes Ramsey's work on such political subjects as power, force, the multinational system, justifiable revolution, guerilla warfare, and nuclear deterrence. The special focus of his analysis, however, is on the justification and conditions of the just war. This is appropriate since Ramsey has written two major works in this area: War and the Christian Conscience and The Just War. Ramsey sees Christian love as both justifying the use of force and limiting this use. That Ramsey appeals to Christian love as the criterion for his judgment is typical of his understanding of the role of Christian ethics. Ramsey restricts the teaching function of the church in political as well as medical ethics to specifically Christian warrants, and more particularly to Christian love. Theologizing out of the Roman Catholic tradition, Curran argues for a broader perspective that would include reason and natural law. The theological justification for this position rests on the doctrine of creation and the assumption that particular moral judgments should be made in the light of the whole of God's action and not just a particular aspect of it. Much of the dialogue between Ramsey and Curran revolves around this issue, especially in the section on politics.

Curran quite rightly points out that Christian theology tries to understand the purpose and function of the state in terms of its relationship to the work and plan of God. According to the natural-law approach, it is the nature of men to form political communities so that they can accomplish together what they cannot accomplish as individuals. The state has an essentially positive function of achieving the common good. Ramsey represents the Protestant tradition, rooted deeply in Lutheran concepts, which sees the origin of the state not in human nature but in human sinfulness. The state is an order of preservation to keep the chaos and disorder of sin from spreading in the world. This section of the book provides the occasion for a lively debate between these traditions, especially since Curran represents Ramsey's position so faithfully.

I was personally much more intrigued by Curran's analysis and critique of Ramsey's work in medical ethics. Curran notes an important shift of emphasis when Ramsey moves from politics to medicine. There is no more vigorous proponent for the sanctity and worth of individual human life in the field of medical ethics than Ramsey, a concern that often seems to be overlooked or played down in his political ethics. In his writings on the just war, Ramsey justifies direct killing of combatants and indirect killing which he refers to as collateral damage. The cases of justifiable killing in his medical ethics are almost nonexistent. Curran argues that Ramsey does not give enough importance to the value of individual human life in his political ethics and accords too much importance to the individual in his medical ethics. It might be argued that the context is entirely different, but why should the concern for order and the welfare of the community be so dominant in one and the concern for the individual and the sanctity of his life be so dominant in the other? One answer might be that Ramsey is concerned in both areas to point out the limitations and also the sinfulness of man which are all too often forgotten by contemporary theologians and ethicists. Thus he argues against utopian schemes which maintain that politics can exist without force or that genetics can bring about a new human race.

In my judgment the great strength in Ramsey's approach to medical ethics is his emphasis on the alien dignity of man. What Luther affirmed for the forgiven sinner under the second article, that he is gifted with an alien righteousness, Ramsey affirms for every man under the first article, that he is gifted with an alien worth. Ramsey stands solidly opposed to a labor theory of values, which says that man is what he produces and is to be judged on the basis of what he contributes to society. It is on the basis of this principle that Ramsey can stand solidly opposed to abortion, arguing that we are never much more than fellow fetuses at any time in life and that all the worth and dignity we have comes as a gift from God. Another characteristic of Ramsey's approach to medical ethics is his concern for The Patient as Person, the title of a book which contains what I believe to be the best of Ramsey's work in this area. He stresses the importance of the whole man as being more than his medical or biological aspects, which enables him to argue humanely for some limitations on the extraordinary means that are often used to prolong the dying of some patients.

Curran supports Ramsey's position in almost every area except genetic and reproductive engineering. Though he agrees with Ramsey's stern warnings against the utopian vision of those who would tamper with genes and even clone a new race of men in the image of past
saints and geniuses, he rightly criticizes Ramsey’s reactionary tendency to oppose any innovation in medical science where manufacturing is more the model than therapy. Curran’s extensive critique of Ramsey in the chapter on genetic and reproductive engineering, which covers most of the issues in medical ethics, is by itself worth the purchase of the book.

The main thing wrong with Ramsey’s approach to political and medical ethics is that there is absolutely no bridge between them. That Curran does not even note this omission simply indicates that the politics of medicine has been ignored by ethicists in general. I can think of no area that is in greater need of careful ethical treatment. For a brief and yet penetrating introduction to the problem, read “National Health Insurance and the People’s Health” by Robert Mendelsohn in the June, 1973 issue of The Cresset.

THOMAS A. DROEGE

I should like to have entitled this review “Rediscovering Reger,” but I think it would be more appropriate to call it “Discovering Reger.” Audiences of symphonic and organ programs have heard much of Reger’s music. However, although Reger wrote two hundred songs, no serious singer has recorded them to date, and many of his chamber works have not been performed in recent years.

“What we ask of him, as of all composers, is an individual and compelling voice,” says a statement on the record jacket. And I believe it is largely true. Perhaps Reger does not have a compelling and individual voice to listeners of our day, but I think he should be given another chance, as were Mahler and Bruckner. Witness that Mahler has become a staple in the repertory of many major symphony orchestras and that Bruckner is running a close second.

The music of Reger can be described best from these two recordings as being Misterioso and Sturm und Drang (freely translated as Mysterious and Stress and Strain). There is little of singable lyric line or much of driving rhythm which we are accustomed to hearing from the masters of the past. The music of his contemporary, Rachmaninoff, does have these qualities in abundance and that may be why Rachmaninoff appeals more and communicates better to the listeners of our day.

Reger’s music is characterized by a superabundance of chromaticism with frequent momentary key changes and his melodies are fragmentary, difficult to remember and identify. These elements cause difficulties for the new auditor. Reger thought he was a radical innovator, but really, he was a child of late romanticism. He is not capable of shocking the contemporary auditor; in fact, he sounds quite old-fashioned. This, of course, is my reaction to these two chamber works.

The artists on this recording are superb. The recordings were a result of the Marlboro Festival. Located in Marlboro, Vermont, the Festival, founded by the great pianist Rudolf Serkin, is devoted to the performance of chamber music. Serkin’s role as founder and guiding light makes this Festival a most logical place for unusual chamber music to be performed.

Let us take a cue from this activity and see if Reger has something
to offer the musician of our day. He deserves to be rediscovered—or discovered.

W. H. KROEGER

LA PIETRA DEL PARAGONE (The Touchstone).

Opera Buffa by Gioacchino Rossini. Anne Elgar, soprano; Beverly Wolff and Elaine Bonazzi, mezzo-sopranos; Jose Carreras, tenor; John Reardon and Raymond Murcell, baritones, and Justino Diaz and Andrew Foldi, bass-baritones. Kenneth Cooper, continuo. The Clarion Concerts Orchestra and Chorus, Newell Jenkins, conductor. Vanguard: Stereo-VSD 71183/4 or Quad VSQ 30025/6/7 Stereo $11.84.

Gioacchino Rossini (1792-1868) is one of the most fascinating figures in the history of operatic music. Although he lived to the age of seventy-six in a day when age expectancy was about thirty-six, he had achieved virtually world-wide fame by the age of forty through writing almost forty operas, many of which were successes and the rage of his time. After this he never wrote another opera! His greatest opera was a hit from its inception (Il Barbiere di Siviglia) and is annually played in the great and small opera houses of the world. In the past fifteen years there have been revivals of other Rossini operas, the most striking being Cenerentola. Here we have the first commercial recording of his first success, La Pietra del Paragone. It is said that after the governor of Milan heard the opera, he exempted young Rossini (then twenty years old) from the military draft.

The plot, as early Nineteenth-century operas go, is fairly plausible, although the last episode seems a trifle contrived. The Count Asdrubale (John Reardon) has taken a fancy to three different women: Clarice (Beverly Wolff), Aspisia (Elaine Bonazzi), and Fulvia (Anne Elgar). He decides, with the help of the poet Giocondo (Jose Carreras), to fabricate a letter in which his whole fortune is claimed by a mysterious foreigner as payment for a debt. Upon hearing of his misfortune, Clarice is the only lady who declares that she still loves the Count. The Count appears in disguise before the entire company, including Pacuvio (Justino Diaz), a very bad poet, and MacRobio (Andrew Foldi), a silly critic. (Rossini uses both of these characters as vehicles for making fun of various sectors of the theatrical profession.) The Count reveals his identity and declares Clarice to be his true love. In the second act Clarice assumes a disguise and in turn tests the Count’s love. Of course, there are many other episodes along the way.

The opera brims with beautiful ensembles, and the entire performance is outstanding. The conductor, Newell Jenkins, captures the spirit of the work and keeps the pace moving when it should move. The continuo is beautifully realized by harpsichordist Kenneth Cooper, whose ornamentation adds some very humorous comment to the whole. The orchestra and male chorus are almost flawless. Three male singers are superlative—Diaz, Reardon, and Carreras. (I would like to hear a recording of Faust with all three.) Jose Carreras possesses a mellifluous voice in the tradition of Gigli, without the latter’s eccentricities. Beverly Wolff is a singer with an extraordinary technique, fine diction, and perceptive musicianship, but I would have preferred her voice in the role of the Baroness. The role of Clarice calls for a more sensually beautiful voice (Horne, Berganza, or de los Angeles, perhaps?). The other two ladies are adequate in their roles, but their diction flaws their portrayal. Andrew Foldi is adequate and effective in the part of MacRobio, but his vocal production is tight and the tones are not always well focused. The positive side of the recording, however, far outweighs the debit.

The sound, for the most part, is beautifully reproduced on Dolby surfaces. There are a few spots where the orchestra overbalances the singers, and where room resonance could have been better controlled. The total impression is that this is a beautiful performance of a significant item in the Rossini repertoire. I would like to see it revived in the theatre.

JOSEPH McCALL

A Point in Time...

still years of our Lord—A.D. (Anno Domini)—and take their count from that Point in Time.

I dream that next year Christmas will take us into a New Year. It will escort us with all our presumptions and vanities into a year of renewing. It will be a time for thinking not just of final things, but of ultimate concerns—not just of endings, but of our ends. It will be a point in time to think of the events of our days, but above all, of the acts of God—not of the point He made. It will be time set in the context of eternity.

But I’ve given enough time to dreaming. Besides, here it is December 31, and I still have to get Esther seven swans a-swimming.
A Point in Time

The sales girl, the mailman, and countless parents express relief that the season has been endured. Since the "holiday season" doesn't wait until Thanksgiving anymore, by All Saints' Day we see the advent of jolly old Saint Nicholas. Is it any wonder that, after weeks of Yuletide displays and jingles, we become satiated? By the time the Great Day itself arrives, many go into it looped and come out of it pooped. There is a rush to take down the lights, through out the tree, and get rid of the trash. Christmas has become tiring.

Christmas, of course, is not over on December 26. Christmas is supposed to be a season, not just a day; and the 25th is not the end, but the beginning of that season. The "twelve days of Christmas" begin on December 25. By December 26, we've only gotten to two turtledoves, with all those gifts to go. Imagine: shopping days after Christmas!

But we don't celebrate the festival that way. Almost four centuries after Shakespeare, who would title a play *Twelfth Night*? After the first night, we've had it with Christmas, and let's get on to New Year's Eve. We're not geared to thinking of Christmas as a season which spills into and christens the next year. In our upside-down world we observe an inverted Christmas. The festival itself becomes mere epilogue. The service books and hymnals still do it right, to be sure—Advent until December 24, Christmas from Christmas Eve to Epiphany, and on Epiphany the follow-through with the coming of the Wisemen. (The Magi didn't jet in with the angels nor a la Jonathan Livingston Seagull think themselves to the manger together with the shepherds—they cameled in later.) However, even in the church the church year is bent to fit the holiday season and the academic year. Many Christian congregations have no services on Christmas Day—by then it's over. May the Christ forgive the mess we make of His mass!

Let me dream: that next year we conserve our Christmas energy, cool down the Yuletide fervor, drive the calendars at only eleven months per year. We would arrive at the Christmas season for Christmas, rather than for Hanukkah—or would it be discrimination to have our festivals "out of sync"? We then could take the day and "season" it for twelve days. We might lack the profundity of Tiny Tim, who said, "I will honor Christmas in my heart and try to keep it all the year." And we would fall short of the spontaneity of the eight-year-old who claims on the day after Christmas, "Only 364 days to Christmas!" But we would have the season where it belongs. In our celebrating we would be neighboring our Eastern Orthodox brethren who celebrate their Christmas on January 6. And the Lord of Christmas, alpha and omega, would be the living end of one year, the live beginning of another.

It would be helpful for us to have our New Year's Day set in the middle of our Christmas, rather than as a caboose for a long train of holidays. When we recount the frustrations of a dying year and fear the uncertainties of the future, we need more than a pinkish infant waving at a bearded nonagenarian—we need the Child of Bethlehem given by the eternal Father. But the need is scantily met. We have a shortage of the Gospel at the end of the year.

The point is: there was a point in time—at God's appointed time, for God's anointed Son. Once upon an eternity, God took time. And as our time passes and our times change, we do well to set the changes in a celebration of God's eternal plan. We should not go silent into New Year's Night, but we need Old Hundred more than Auld Lang Syne.

Particularly this winter, life is slowed down. December snows, lowered thermostats, a cooled-down economy, and the winter of our national discontent all conspire to usher in a bleak new year. But for such a time—in such a bleak mid-winter—Christmas was born. The weary, displaced couple didn't go to Bethlehem to celebrate or worship, but to pay and bear—and flee. Bethlehem's housing shortage, Herod's political dirty tricks, Joseph's non-evadable taxes, and Mary's unaborted burden were set in a context of divine plan. Mary's time of fullness developed in God's fulness of time. In Bethlehem, above all other places, the worst of times and the best of times conflicted.

The literate Greeks have more than one word for most things. There is *chronos*, time in general; and there is *kairos*, time of event or decision. There is January 1; and there is Christmas. God's "kairology," can sanctify our chronology. A Christmas season celebrated after Advent preparation would take us into a new year of grace. Back to the Greeks: there is *neos*, new in time; and there is *kainos*, new in quality. There is the newness of writing a different year; there is renewal of faith and life. A continuing Christmas could replace the mere novelty of 1974 with hope reborn—a year without fear.

Our calendars remind us that our days have been given to Woden and Thor; the months give allegiance to Janus and Julius; but our years are (Concluded on page 27.)