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ANOTHER OF THE MAGICAL names is seen in obituaries to appear thereafter only in the histories. No more new music, no more concerts, no new recordings while old recordings become collectors’ items and the companies consider reissues of the cherished sounds—Mood Indigo, Take the A Train, Black, Brown, and Beige, Such Sweet Thunder. Edward Kennedy Ellington, the “Duke,” is dead at 75.

But the era closed even before he died. The era of the big bands, the swing era, concert jazz are pieces of nostalgia for those who lived in those times and are bits of history to be studied and kept alive in appreciative recreations by those born long after. Ellington lived to see swing pass into bop, and bop into cool jazz and rock and soul. The annual Carnegie Hall concerts from 1943 to 1950 were commemorations of a style achieved and the new works there heard were additions to the canon of Ellington classics. The Pulitzer Prize of 1965 and the Presidential Medal of Freedom of 1969 were seals of approval upon a work accomplished, a life impressed upon a nation’s culture and the civilization of the world.

The Duke wanted it that way though. He probably had no regrets for the passing of time. It was his purpose from the days of his first bands to create a style distinctively his own and to build fine music in that style. His success came in a 1927 New York engagement; the thirties were the time appointed for his talents. The first hits sound not much different from the later and latest numbers, except, perhaps, in degrees of subtlety and complexity. (The same can be said of the music of Mozart.) What is that cohesive style? It's the Ellington sound; what else can one say? Use up the treasury of adjectives—sophisticated, velvet colors, mechanical smoothness, driving harmonies, deeply expressive, even a bit haughty and austere—and the sound is no better understood. Listen to it and the sound is never forgotten. It is a sound born in a moment of history and shaped by the culture of the people at that moment but never sounding dated, for the composer was a man who knew some of the unchanging human experiences. It was this intuition of life's richest meanings that made the Duke and Shakespeare understanding partners. Such Sweet Thunder is a remarkable co-operation of persons separated widely, seemingly, by time, geography, culture, and opportunity. Black, Brown, and Beige Ellington called “A Tone Parallel to the History of the Negro in America.” I don't mean here to judge its accuracy as history nor to claim its validity as spokesman for today's blacks. I do mean, however, to praise a spirit that remembered its conception even while it lived a life of individuality. To know where you come from and who you are and to have the magnanimity to love both is not given to many men.

DUKE ELLINGTON MADE NO special claims for himself as a musician. His successes were not his own but were shared with the members of his band. He cultivated music
scored for a big band, jazz that was written down rather than spontaneously created, but often Ellington's ideas were reformed as a player suggested an alteration or as the whole band happened on a happy accident in the run-through of the score. Billy Strayhorn became after 1999 his musical alter ego. So closely did they collaborate that often neither was able to identify who was responsible for certain ideas. Ellington was always generous in sharing the honors. The musicians, though, knew what the listener always suspected: it was the person of the Duke that got it all together.

Paul Whiteman in 1924 meant to make jazz respectable and to bring jazz into the concert hall. Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue is a monument to Whiteman's ill-fated attempts. It is an unfortunate oddity with enough genius in it to keep it in the repertoire of major orchestras. Gershwin and Whiteman were mistaken in assuming that a marriage of the jazz band and the symphonic orchestra could last. Neither partner ever was happy in the union. More successful because more honest was Benny Goodman, who could one night lead his band in the King Porter Stomp and the next solo with the New York Philharmonic in the Mozart Clarinet Concerto.

It was Duke Ellington, though, who demonstrated what jazz could do seriously. His tone poems are not pretentious, lengthy, or contrived. They are music about serious matters in the experience of the musician, music that speaks directly in the language of a particular musician. Constant Lambert, a fussy Englishman who had no patience with the seriousness of Stravinsky and Schoenberg, pronounced Ellington "the first jazz composer of distinction."

Someone else probably should have written this appreciation, someone more knowledgeable and more experienced in the world of jazz music. I know Ellington's music only casually. I cannot say that I hold it in special affection. My training, inclinations, and experience are with orthodox art music. But this I know full well, the music of Duke Ellington holds my attention. When he does something musically, I like to listen. He said once, "Good music is music that sounds good." I'm for that. There is no need to play a silly game of choosing lasting works from among all those written. It is quite enough to know that in this world it is given to man occasionally to hear the voice of an exceptional spirit speaking beautifully his own language. Let us now praise famous men, among whom is Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington.


IN MEMORIAM:
Richard Geoffrey Kroenke, 1908-1974
Louis Albert Wehling, 1910-1974

During the days of final examinations and preparation for graduation, Valparaiso University lost two distinguished and long-time colleagues. Their deaths, within a few days of each other, made a special impact on our academic community, not only because they were a stark reminder of our own mortality, but also because their lives had been lived with quality and the finest vigor of the scholarly world.

These two colleagues were quite different from each other. Dr. Kroenke was quiet, deliberate, almost shy in manner; Dr. Wehling was witty, holding and strongly asserting well-informed opinions. But both loved the life of the mind, the interchange with students, and the continuing quest for intellectual clarity. They were cultivated men, gentlemen of God, men who reminded the scholarly community that devotion to God manifests itself not only through devotional works but also in hallowing that vocation into which God has called one.

In his baccalaureate address, President Huegli summed up the contribution of these two departed colleagues. His word to the graduating class and the gathered academic community also serves The Cresset in its tribute to them:

In closing, let me commend to you the example of the two professors whose deaths brought sadness to our campus during the past week. Professor Louis Albert Wehling and Professor Richard G. Kroenke served the University with faithfulness for a combined total of almost 60 years. They were quite different in many respects. But they had this in common: as God's men they had found the good life. It may not have led them to fame or wealth. But it did provide them with a great sense of satisfaction that what they were doing counted for something to the benefit of other people. They have left behind an affectionate memory of dedicated service in the hearts and lives of their students, their colleagues, and their families. In the way they lived, they taught their best lessons. We shall always be learning from them.

May the Spirit of God enable you to hear His call in your vocations, so that your lives will be a courageous witness to the wonders of divine grace all your days.
In memory we shall cherish them and relish anew the gifts they brought to us. To their families, and all those who grieve with them, we extend the comfort and consolation of our Lord Christ, the Destroyer of death and the Bringer of the life that does not die.

Food, Fuel, and Fasting

And now it is announced that there is a shortage of baling wire! Fortunately that shortage did not come in the heyday of the Model-T Ford. Such a felicity in timing, however, is not very comforting to farmers, cattle feeders, meat buyers, and meat eaters. Oh well, a number of the little comforts are going anyway. Even the little comfort of humorous relief to think of the happy coincidence in that William Simon was the director of the Federal Energy Office is gone. One could enjoy the management of the fuel shortage in the context of the children’s game “Simon Says.” Every news release reinforced the memory of that game. The point was to do what “Simon” says, however zig-zag the course. One was in trouble (penalized to the end of the line) if one were so foolish as to do what Simon did without having the authorization of “Simon says.” Even that little comfort is also gone.

Present in the shortages, however, are factors which afford larger comforts and stiffen the determination for patterns of action and ways of living. Whether or not President Nixon’s announced program to lead the nation to a status of independence with regard to fuel production by 1980 proves to work remains to be seen. If there is to be any reality to the promise, a crash program ought to be under way for the development of fuel resources and new fuel supplies. Since there are many factors involved in such a program, there ought to be the widest range of participation in its development to ensure both breadth and coherence.

One of the most serious deterrents to such a program is the unfortunate atmosphere of mistrust that debilitates the kind of single-minded support necessary for such a program. The shortages are real enough and solutions difficult enough. But compounding the difficulties are the mistrust and apprehension related to information about both the problems and the solutions. At times one gets the impression that the policy was the old adage, “Fix the blame, not the problem.” At other times one has the suspicion that the President is so busy with the Watergate matters that he has no energy left to deal with the energy problems. In short, people are uncertain about the information they receive. There is no certain comfort that the mounting pressure of the shortages will lead to clearer and more honest information. It could lead to greater accusations and deceit.

**Forced Fasting**

Far more comforting is the potential for molding new values and ways of life that the shortages may force on many people. Already automobiles are less lethal and highways less like Death Alley—simply because of reduced speeds. But much more promising is the fact that the fuel shortage will impel us to deal with a basic and most naughty presupposition: cheap fuel. This assumption of cheap fuel has fed the gluttony with which it was consumed. The gap between available supply and necessary expenditure of fuel is widened enormously by the thousand and one assumptions whereby fuel is consumed unnecessarily. The size and horsepower of private automobiles, the notion that trucks are preferable transportation to rail and water, the insistence on creature comforts in living, commercial, and industrial quarters contribute to a consumption that ought to be curtailed. What we have neither the will nor the strength to do by inner choice will be forced upon us by external conditions.

The food shortage, along with the fuel shortage, affords Christians, especially, a sense of adventure and compassion. Stimulated by the shortages, there can be a revival of the salutary discipline of fasting. Christians have good grounds for engagement not only in production but also in the reduction of consumption. Many of us eat too much. Food, that good bit of creation meant to serve us, becomes rather our enemy. Listen to the incessant talk about dieting and the continual complaints about food—even while people are eating it. Would it not be better, as Father Capon has suggested, that we fast, for the fast is always in preparation for a feast? The voluntary restraint on intake would not only make us more keenly aware of the large number of people in the world who are always hungry. It would also heighten our awareness of our responsibility to care for the earth, increase our appreciation for those who produce, market, and prepare our food, and assist us to receive our bread with thanksgiving, corresponding to the superfluous joy with which God gives it. And it would give us something extra to share with those in need.

**Crash Programs with Determined Action**

At the top of the list of things to do ought to be the application of a well-honed machete to the bureaucratic jungle. The roller coaster ride the nation had with gasoline allot-
ments warned us that an entire people can become incoherent from such "management." The experience in the Chicago area where allotments were made, not delivered, revised and not delivered, and then delivered in a crash program, shows that such a plan not only fails; it confounds and irritates the people involved. The debacle of the coal strike in England should also furnish ample warning. The workers ended up in conflict not with management but with the government, the very agency that regulates prices and production.

In no area should our determination be more stiffened to allow the free flow of the market to be controlled enough than in the area of farming. In all the ambiguities of surpluses, shortages, supply, and demand, I would much rather trust the grit, the wisdom, and the will to survive of the farmers than the host of managers who work neither with the soil nor with the people who populate the market place.

Indeed, there should be a crash program for development of new fuel supplies. In the meantime, there ought to be sharp curtailment of the use of raw fuel materials for making synthetic fibers. By removing the special privileges to those industries more materials would be available for fuel, fertilizer, and agricultural development of raw materials for clothing. Furthermore, the use of coal for a basic source can be done simultaneously with the determination to clear pollution. Those problems are technical; there is no reason to use the panic of a shortage to weaken the will to clear the pollution.

The crash program ought to include also the determination to increase mass transit and rail services. Some of the funds for such development could come from the sale of gasoline. Why should we be the only country in the world where gasoline is so cheap, while at the same time continue to frolic at will in automobiles that drink gasoline like gasoholics? Let the market determine the price on gasoline. Some of the extra profits could be put back into development, but the lion's share ought to be directed to the development and financing of metropolitan mass transit systems and rail passenger services.

Determination and vigilance must be exercised. The shortage can (and very likely will) be used to pressure people into unnecessary or foolish compromises. Pressure to relax the need for eliminating or curtailing pollution is one such example. Another frightening prospect is the investment of American money and technical skill in developing Russian oil resources. The goals of the people governing the Russian nation are clear. These goals do not include assistance to the United States! Remember the wheat deal. Indeed, there must be international trade and mutual assistance. But safeguards must be adequate for making all members play by the same terms.

All in all, the prospects for new values, for a leaner life, and for a heightened determination to take control of what must be brought into order, make the present shortage situation a threshold for maturity. There may be comfort enough in that fact.

The Cresset is pleased to add its contributions to those that noted the centennial of the birth of Willa Cather. Two items in this issue of The Cresset are given to our readers to assist them in joining the commemoration in the most appropriate way: by reading the works of Miss Cather.

The assignments to our colleagues were rather simple. We asked Warren Rubel to reflect on the works of Miss Cather, considering her especially in the context of American life and letters. We are confident that readers will find his reflection helpful, not only for an understanding of Cather's work, but also for insight into the American spirit—a kind of prologue for the bicentennial celebration of our nation.

To Gail Eifrig we posed the assignment of leading people into a reading program of Willa Cather. We asked her to imagine a group of people before her who knew little or nothing of Miss Cather's works. The only characteristic of the group (we suggested) was a desire to read Cather with the help of a knowledgeable, sensitive, and avid reader of her works.

We offer the materials to the reader with this simple suggestion: use these articles on Cather as a stimulus and guide to lay out for yourself a summer (or fall) reading program. For Cather, who wrote, "A book is made with one's own flesh of years. It is cremated youth," such a reading program would be the most fitting tribute.
I urge the potential reader with the gentle thesis: "If you like legitimate escape, even momentarily, from the Watergate mess, from the sulking depression that follows reading Robert L. Heilbroner's An Inquiry into the Human Prospect, from funky art, from blatant film violence, from strident television, and from all that makes so much of our culture appear arid and absurd, then your likes should lead you to Willa Cather."

DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON ONCE INSISTED THAT our significant reading and learning follows from our interests rather than our obligations. Yet obligated interest prompted my first reading of Willa Cather. Like most American boys reared in the American myth, my early reading followed from frontier East to spacious West. Simultaneously fighting and admiring the Wyandots and the Iroquois, I indiscriminately devoured the works of one David Altsheler as a young teenager. I then unsuccessfully tried to sustain interest in several of James Fenimore Cooper's Leather-stocking Tales, nibbling at the historical interludes and distantly regarding Nattie Bumppo, Chingachgook, and Uncas. Fascination for our country grew with Francis Parkman's Oregon Trail and La Salle and the Discovery of the Great West. By the time Willa Cather's Death Comes for the Archbishop appeared on our reading lists, interest met not-painful-obligation in this story of the Navajos, Kit Carson, and the establishment of Christianity in the American Southwest.

Some years later, as I studied the memorial plaque for Willa Cather in the B. G. Goodhue-designed capitol building in Lincoln, Nebraska, I remembered how two general impressions of Death Comes for the Archbishop stayed with me: first, the sense of the land, particularly the sun refracting in carefully observed gradations from the New Mexico landscape; second, the lonely strength and dignity of the human beings who moved across that once remote part of America. Father Jean Marie Latour had remained for me one of those fictional models who, mistakenly or not, shape our young hopes of what is possible in the real world. A kind of clerical apogee of a special French blending of heart and reason, of sympathy and administrative dispatch, of severity and refinement, Father Latour gave himself rigorously to people and church and to his garden of transplanted fruit trees from Auvergne. The golden ochre cathedral hewn from the rock in the land he came to love and die in was a fitting monument to the way he kept sacred his time and his place.

With the centennial celebration of her birth last year, I was prompted to read and reread some of Willa Cather's work. Using no conscious method, I randomly selected titles from collections of her work in Moellering Library. As I discovered later, I had read the works backwards, beginning with Shadows on the Rock (1931), Death Comes for the Archbishop (1927), My Antonia (1926), The Professor's House (1925), and O Pioneers! (1915).1 Partly to my surprise, I found the limited experience moving me to nudge a listener or potential reader with a gentle thesis: If you like legitimate escape, even momentarily, from the Watergate mess, from the sulking depression that follows reading Robert L. Heil-
Miss Cather’s stories imitate oral histories as these pass through the alembic of the author’s selective consciousness. 

“The primary effect of her work, it seems to me, . . . is one of a nostalgic, even archaic sense of distance in time, coupled with passionate feeling for her major characters; the oppositions between distance and passion are paired by our seeing passing human lives interacting with the permanence of the land.”

For over two thousand years theorists have not been certain about the relationship between art and life. We know that somehow prose fiction, which comes on the literary horizon much later than poetry or drama, imitates life. It may be more precise to say that prose fiction imitates some of the ways we use words to talk about life. More specifically, Willa Cather’s fiction appears to be a selected imitation or representation of biography or autobiography. Her stories are unlike biography or autobiography in that Miss Cather does not imitate these genres by using extensively documents in the form of letters, diaries, newspaper articles, speeches, or old court records — those natural utterances that separate history from fiction or that lend plausibility to much historical fiction.

Her stories are about people and places, personal histories. Many times the stories are told in the first person, but even then we sense that the speaker is talking about himself or herself in such a way that events and ideas are objects of conscious reflection. But even more, we are almost always aware of a narrator’s voice, an author’s controlling vision. In short, her stories imitate oral histories as these pass through the alembic of the author’s selective consciousness.

To say that her work imitates biography or autobiography is to ground her work in a historical perspective. That perspective suggests both limitations and possibilities. There is a muted, even distant quality to her narrative style. Her work obviously lacks the subtler electric compression of poetry, yet there are passages shimmering with lyrical beauty and with precise word choice “beyond the singing of it.” Nor does she seem to have great dramatic skills or even sustained capacity for capturing the illusion of effective dialogue. By comparison to a younger peer, like William Faulkner, who was beginning to experiment with stream-of-consciousness techniques, trying to wrap fictive reality around the reader, her work seems tame indeed. Or by comparison to an older peer, like Henry James, whose work she admired and whose fiction probes the nooks and crannies of consciousness, her literary canvas seems narrow, even thin. But she had different purposes and a different temperament. The primary effect of her work, it seems to me, though that effect varies with each work, is one of a nostalgic, even archaic sense of distance in time, coupled with passionate feeling for her major characters; the oppositions between distance and passion are paired by our seeing passing human lives interacting with the permanence of the land. As Jim Bur-
den (the narrator) expresses his reactions to "Antonia, we get the force of Miss Cather's work:

Antonia had always been one to leave images in the mind that did not fade—that grew stronger with time. In my memory there was a succession of such pictures, fixed there like the old woodcuts of one's first primer: Antonia kicking her bare legs against the sides of my pony when we came home in triumph with our snake; Antonia in her black shawl and fur cap, as she stood by her father's grave in the snowstorm; Antonia coming in with her work-team along the evening skyline. She lent herself to immemorial human attitudes which we recognize by instinct as universal and true. (p. 353)

Her works then are meditative traps. She arouses in the reader a contemplative awareness, a fascinating and gradually intense interest in story and people and place. These are mediated by a carefully selective eye and a controlled voice. That voice stays in the middle range not because the speaker is incapable of ecstasy or despair. She knows what it must be to blow the top of one's head off (as Emily Dickinson spoke of poetry) as well as she knows the abyss. But she puts a frame around the picture. She sees the essence of narrative art in restraint, sympathetic but essentially cool modulation of the voice. That apparent disinterested tone may put some readers off. But that sense of distance has its distinct advantages too. First of all, it lends an especially human quality to her work by giving both author and reader a renewed glimpse of the importance of selective memory in human experience. If written words are the tools that arrest the motion of life and make it possible to share in some way the incommunicable past, then memory is that peculiar capacity or agency of mind which keeps the past or an image of the past present in human consciousness and which keeps alive in consciousness those tenuous connections that give human beings identity in time. Our technology may give us computer banks and other analogous storehouses of memory or facts, but the human mind selects, judges, evaluates, and shapes significant forms. In fact, for Jim Burden, the narrator of My Antonia, it is precisely that integration of mind and feeling, of what John Dewey would speak of in another context as "qualitative thought" that kept him from being a scholar. After working through Dante and Virgil's Aeneid with Professor Cleric, Burden reflects:

Although I admired scholarship so much in Cleric, I was not deceived about myself; I knew that I should never be a scholar. I could never lose myself for long among impersonal things. Mental excitement was apt to send me with a rush back to my own naked land and the figures scattered upon it. While I was in the very act of yearning toward the new forms that Cleric brought up before me, my mind plunged away from me, and I suddenly found myself thinking of the places and people of my own infinitesimal past. They stood out strengthened and simplified now, like the image of the plough against the sun. (p. 262)

As Burden continues, it is not simply a matter of the mind choosing to remember. Rather the past to the quickened mind is alive in the present. A passing statement in Death Comes for the Archbishop effectively points out the incremental patterns of memory in Miss Cather's work. When the aging Father Latour returns from the funeral of Father Joseph, his lifelong friend and companion, the narrator comments:

Curiously, Father Latour could never feel that he had actually been present at Father Joseph's funeral—or rather, he could not believe that Father Joseph was there. The shriveled little old man in the coffin, scarcely larger than a monkey—that had nothing to do with Father Vaillant. He could see Joseph as clearly as he could Bernard (Father Latour's new young assistant) but always as he was when they first came to New Mexico. It was not sentiment; that was the picture of Father Joseph his memory produced for him, and it did not produce any other. (p. 394)

In the last few weeks before he dies Father Latour contemplates not so much death, which is coming for him, but the "Past he was leaving." He notices that he loses his perspective on his memories and that "calendared time" ceases to count for him. He sits in "the middle of his own consciousness." None of his former states of mind are lost or outgrown. "They were all within reach of his hand, and all comprehensible."

That integration of consciousness which is possible because life is rather an "experience of the Ego and in no sense the Ego itself" (p. 396) indicates the route to the persuasion and poignancy of Miss Cather's work. The significance of her notion of memory is made available to us all as a peculiarly human prerogative. In fact, that is why we tell stories and listen to them or read them. When the Count de Frontenac approaches his death alone "without pretence and mockery," the narrator of Shadows on the Rock comments:

He would die here, in this room, and his spirit would go before God to be judged. He believed this, because he had been taught it in childhood, and because he knew there was something in himself and in other men that this world does not explain. Even the Indians had to make a story to account for something in their lives that did not come out of their appetites: conceptions of courage, duty, honour. The Indians had these, in their own fashion. These ideas came from some unknown source, and they were not the least part of life. (p. 286)

Quite paradoxically then, Miss Cather's antiquarianism, her immersion in the past, seems to flow from a conviction that the past is dead only to those who consider it dead. Her artistry seeks to make that past as alive in
consciousness for her readers as it was for her characters and as it was for her as a novelist.

Moreover, because narrative distance moves hand in hand with translucent style, brilliant descriptive passages increase the range of feeling the reader develops for people and place. Let Faulkner's genius crowd all consciousness of one mind in one single undulating and pulsating long sentence to get his Lord's Prayer on a pinhead. Let Henry James's confidante take us through all those eddying convolutions of mind that politely educated people are capable of. The neat thing about Miss Cather's narrative technique is that it is sufficiently transparent so that the slightly careful reader will probably not only not misunderstand her, he or she will have ample time to merge and emerge from the story being read both to experience narrated events in the story and to reflect on them. In short, words and diction and cadence are means to an end. Miss Cather puts her reader at ease. One does not feel threatened or intimidated by her manner. It is not difficult to put her novels down after finishing a shorter or longer segment. It is very easy to pick them up. Although one might be tempted to suggest that this is so because style and content are wisely adapted to each other—which they are—or because these really are simple fictional chronicles about relatively simple or at least single-minded people, which they may be, there is more at stake.

Like the poetry of Robert Frost or William Wordsworth, the surface simplicity of her diction and imagery, even of her anecdotal stories within stories, gradually releases for the reader a sense of the complexity as well as sensitivity of her vision. True, Miss Cather confines herself to a rather narrow room. But by placing people in transition, and in the old fundamental conflicts with the land, with the evil in themselves and in others, and with the contingencies of chance, Miss Cather arouses in the reader a large sense of the joy and the terror that lie knotted in the heart of human experience.

EACH OF US WILL PROBABLY DIFFER ON what facet of her work we consider complex. Some might say it rests in the way her art conceals her art. One facet I found of interest in her two most popular works, My Ántonia and Death Comes for the Archbishop, is her treatment of the gap between experience and reflection, between act and word. Part of the force of My Ántonia comes from our gradual perception that the vitality of Ántonia, her tenderness and warmth and beauty, would be lost from memory without the mind and words of the narrator, Jim Burden. To Jim Burden and the nameless purveyor of the manuscript in the Introduction, Ántonia Shimerda, the immigrant Bohemian girl, is the embodiment of "the country, the conditions, the whole adventure of childhood." Our narrator, suggests the Introduction, is also an inveterate Romantic who loves his land with passion. What is more, when he hands in his "formless" string of memories about what Ántonia's name evokes, he first writes Ántonia, then frowning, prefixes My to the title. The gesture is not trivial, for it gives us a genuine glimpse of that muted yet sympathetic tone that moves through the novel.

This story is about Ántonia. But our only access to her is through Jim Burden's consciousness, and he is the spectator ab extra. He looks on with an outside eye. The two, Ántonia and Jim Burden, although they possess together a precious and incommunicable past, cannot transcend the fact that most of that precious past was private and incommunicable. That does not mean that they are mere motes in the light of history or brief scratches on the face of eternity. Rather it heightens our sense of the fragility and strength of words. Ántonia's importance for the reader takes on significance because our appreciation for her grows as we grow with Jim's expanding awareness of what suffering and quiet verve, what tenderness and strength of will characterize and motivate Ántonia. A lifetime separate the lovely child living in a cave we hear about in the beginning of the story and the toothless mother of ten or eleven children who smiles at Jim Burden in sudden recognition across twenty years at the end of the story. We fashion our view of Ántonia in retrospect, and the perspective for that retrospect is the growing sophistication of Jim Burden to what matters in human life.

A similar kind of complex vision is evident in Death Comes for the Archbishop. In this, her reputed masterpiece, the reader's awareness of "point of view" affects the structure of the work and conditions our response to it. The story of the two saintly missionaries, Father Joseph Vaillant and Father Jean Marie Latour, is told as if Father Jean were the controlling consciousness and intelligence in the work, and he is. But by using a third person narrator with a kind of "limited omniscience," Miss Cather keeps us perpetually aware of our watching Father Jean also. This little step backwards gives the reader that necessary detachment for seeing the Archbishop steady and whole. For example, I mentioned earlier how Father Latour had remained for me a heroic type. It is interesting how that young estimate has been tempered in subsequent readings. I read once that Death Comes for the Archbishop is really fictional hagiography. We have here two vitae, a kind of St. Peter in Father Joseph and a St. Paul in Father Jean. And Father Jean keeps Father Joseph from fanaticism. Father Joseph, reflects Father Jean, always wants his miracles to be against nature not with it. Father Joseph is the reckless lover of God and men, faithful but improvident, following his nose, as he puts it, rather than his mind, living in the present and not in the future. Many times near death but cheating it, wasting away and yet living, he is a kind of miracle against nature. His is an unconscious immersion in life and people.

Yet if Father Jean preserves Father Joseph from fanaticism, Father Joseph's presence reminds Father Jean and the reader of the gaps between merely cultured intelligence and radical love. While Father Joseph real-
izes that a cathedral should be built, he hangs back when he sees the care and concern the Bishop has for the building of the Cathedral. And I think we hang back a bit too. It is not just a matter of Father Jean's controlled intelligence and Father Joseph's wild impulsiveness. Father Jean's intelligence and detachment, his coming from a good family and his cultivation all contribute to his being the effective Archbishop he becomes. It also makes him more of a spectator than participant in the life and the memories that crowd in upon him. That does not diminish our regard for him. He is the "miracle" with nature rather than against it. His complexity and mental fullness, his outrage for the unjust ways the Navahos have been treated, his profound respect for the mysterious sources of Indian religion and ritual, his being torn between dying in France and dying in America, and then choosing to come back to New Mexico because the light and the wind in the morning make him feel young again, his knowing that he is cold, un pedant—all this suggests both the kind of character norms that form the backbone of Miss Cather's work and the humanity of those who never quite meet the norm.

THE NORM IN HER WORK SEEMS TO BE AN equilibrium between opposing forces which, when the tension is just right, gives us an instinctive sense of proportion in people and places. In its broadest sense that norm finds its precarious fulfillment in entire communities of people when there is considerable development of the arts of peace. Although The Professor's House may seem to be one of her less typical works with its contemporary academic setting, its sharpest insights come once again from setting the past vibrating against a present increasingly distorted by disrupting economic and social values. The one significant human relationship in the novel is between history professor St. Peter, whose specialty is Spanish Adventurers in America, and a young scientific genius, Tom Outland, who is killed in Flanders in the second year of World War I and whose early life story is especially marked by the discovery of an unknown tribe of cliff dwellers high in a New Mexico mesa. The Cliff City, with its granaries and amphitheatre and high tower, possibly used for astronomical purposes, brings a kind of awe to the young discoverer. The young man comes upon pottery and fragments and the mummified body of a young woman, the mouth still fixed in a cry of pain, and the unburied remains of some old members of the tribe kept in a burial vault. Later, Father Duquesne says to Tom what could be a summary of the primitive contest subtending Miss Cather's work:

Like you, I feel a reverence for this place. Whatever humanity has made that hardest of all starts, and lifted itself out of mere brutality, is a sacred spot. Your people were cut off here without the influence of example or emulation, with no incentive but some natural yearning for order and security. They built themselves into this mesa and humanized it. (p. 219)

That humanizing of the land is what gives bite and vitality to these novels. It also shapes the central contests, because the land is not easily won or contained or managed in a specially human way. The land in its wildness and brutality destroys the sensitive and the sick. The flat land numbs the incurious and uncaring. It dulls the imaginative and it turns orderly people to pale respectability. It becomes the mute setting for the lonely, the hateful, and for all who are capable of greed, avarice, adultery, spite. But when the norm appears in human beings, it carries with it that sense of tense balance between passion and judgment which makes Willa Cather's characters more than merely interesting. Pierre Charron of Shadows on the Rock is a colonial prototype. Miss Cather writes:

To both Auclair and Madame Auclair, Pierre Charron had seemed the type they had come so far to find; more than anyone else he realized the romantic picture of the free Frenchman of the great forests which they had formed at home on the bank of the Seine. He had the good manners of the Old World, the dash and daring of the New. He was proud, he was vain, he was relentless when he hated, and quickly prejudiced; but he had the old ideas of clan-loyalty, and in his friendship he never counted the cost. His goods and his life were at the disposal of the man he loved or the leader he admired. Though his figure was still boyish,
his face was full of experience and sagacity; a fine
bold nose, a restless, rather mischievous mouth,
white teeth, very strong and even, sparkling hazel
eyes with a kind of living flash in them, like the
sunbeams on the bright rapids upon which he was
so skillful. (p. 200)

That description does not leave too much to the imagi-
nation and it has a decidedly romantic ring to it. It also
illustrates how her strong characters are essentially in-
tegrations of energies associated with culture and civili-
zation, with the family, the individual, and finally na-
ture itself. This kind of character, interacting with land
and place, modulates throughout her work: Father La-
tour with his French architect and New Mexico stone,
giving us a Midi Romanesque Cathedral in Santa Fe;
Antonia Cuzak with her tall hollyhocks surrounding her
Bohemian home and with her faun-like boy Leo and
all her children living from the land some distance from
Hastings, Nebraska; Professor St. Peter with his view of
Lake Michigan and his attic study in the old home, ris-
ing from a nearly accidental death to take up his life
from the ashes of a marriage grown old and loveless;
and Alexandra Bergson, the Swedish girl with the beau-
tiful hair who, faithful to her father’s dying legacy,
with love and prudence tames the wild Nebraska land.
People, the land, and chance: these three elements Miss
Cather seeks to anneal in her work. When the design
succeeds, the reader feels those efficacious clicks in
consciousness and bone that signal us that we are in the
presence of a genuine artist.

IN DISCUSSING THE THEORY AND PRACTICE of fiction in contemporary culture, Frank Kermode
discriminates among “traditional moderns,” “transi-
tional moderns,” and “schismatic moderns.” His dis-
riminations both identify the value crisis in our West-
ern tradition and clarify the ways in which the writer’s
making of fiction reflects the brokenness of our times.
Basically the question seems to be how much we can take
in trust from the past. For the schismatic, the past is
dead and may be ignored. For the transitionalist, the
relationship between past and present is a question held
in absurd suspension. For the traditionalist, although
that trust dare not be dishonest, the past provides us
with a true sense of order. All concerned writers are
stretched on a creative rack between two poles: one pole
pulls the writer to offer to his reader necessary conso-
lations. Working with basic apocalyptic paradigms of
beginnings, middles, and endings, the writer offers us
fictional concords, past and present stories out of which
comes our sense of meaningful potential for the future.
Because these stories are fictions and not myths, be-
cause they are maps of reality and not reality, these
stories help us make our way through the modern maze.
But because these fictional consolations must be honest
fictions, the writer is stretched toward another pole.
Even though the works are fictions and not realities,
their honest tie to reality, according to Kermode, in-
duces “the proper sense of horror at the utter indiffer-
ence, the utter shapelessness, and the utter inhumanity
of what must be humanized” by the fiction.2 Of course,
depending upon one’s vantage point, it may be as diffi-
cult to be honest about the proper moments of surren-
der to the joy at the heart of things, to the cruciform
shape of love, and to the exaltation of genuine human
hope. Although she anticipates the struggle of the mod-
ern, Willa Cather’s work cherishes those earlier moments
of auspicious transition and growth in America when
men lived by their beliefs rather than their fictions. And
her fictions tend sometimes to end too satisfactorily,
especially when we consider the pain and suffering of
the people and the bleakness of the landscape she pre-
sents to us. Because her settings and her focus are on a
past before atomic fission, new technologies, multi-
international business complexes, and space trips, the
very steadiness and wholeness of her vision is perhaps
no longer even accessible to us. Yet one sees in her work
that same kind of honesty and that yearning for truth
and love for the human and for what is good that have
given reasonableness and passion a permanent place in
human memory. In remembering and searching the past
with her, the reader once again discovers quiet and un-
hurried possibilities for the future.


"Freedom so often means that one isn’t needed anywhere."

O Pioneers!
Someone who can’t is playing “Chopsticks” on the out-of-tune piano in the chapel and deep in the kitchen bottle gas gives off the blue odor of Bible Camp that mixes in with campfires, ashes, wet cement and Lysol bathrooms—and my father’s cardboard college suitcase lies unruffled on the stool by my bunk the soap clearly marked LUX after five days and all my washrags folded square as only mothers can—and two girls giggle about boys over in the corner, who snuk in late after the campfire and the singing from the boat full of counselors to the campers on the shore where a cross soaked in gas blazed the Gospel while we sang Hallelu, Hallelu Jacob’s Ladder and Living for Jesus the boys on one verse, girls on the other all together in the end and we huddle around the warm light; looking down into the dirt we scuff with tennis shoes, we testify for Jesus while the group hums “I will not be afraid” and later boys rasp in their throats and ask the girls beside them, smelling of Noxema Heavensent and Ban to come along to the canteen for coke and maybe for a walk out to the point where the stars twinkle on the small lake.

The preachers and their wives sit in the main cabin laughing they are telling Norwegian jokes—when all the kids are bedded down the men will drive toward Puget Sound to buy the women blueberry pie.

Tomorrow one of them will give the Bible study on a short book of Paul—in Philippians we’ll underline the word JOY (Jesus/Others/You) one hundred times and memorize the promises, one for every day and learn the abc’s of the epistle packing ’postles Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and one of the counselors will play Gospel songs on a saw and answer questions campers have about holding hands in church and later after lunch and quiet time when we have broken down in groups to witness for our Lord, I will ask a preacher’s wife what does “divers” mean (thinking of water) and she will say, greatly alarmed, that God will someday deal with us for wearing clothes of divers (meaning mixed) material—and don’t I love my Savior?

Ah, yes I do—the swimmers on the float glisten as they buddy up to whistles and yes I do, Forever Yours and Snickers caramel on my tongue and yes I love my Jesus walking in the dark where lovers walk near water-lilies he’s the bright and morning star and down at the end of the lake, far away and on a green hill the cross is burning down crimson in the water and the clear laugh of women sounds across the lake where the preacher’s car turns to bring home blueberry pie.

We are the blessed little flock beloved of the Lord—a twinkling in the Father’s eye.

GRACIA GRINDAL

May/June, 1974
Valparaiso University's Advent-Christmas Vespers, December 13, 1973. Multi-slide projectors were used to display images on the brick walls of the Chapel of the Resurrection. The painting here projected is Hallelujah! (Creation 7) by Richard Brauer based on Psalm 96:11, "Let the heavens rejoice and the earth exult, The sea roar, and its fulness."

All images accompanying this article are by Richard Brauer.

VISUAL ARTS — RICHARD H. W. BRAUER

Images for Worship

Doubting Thomas did what we all try to do when we want to test reality; he returned to elementary seeing, hearing, and touching. Compared to abstract thought and changeable feelings, such encounters of our eyes, ears, and hands can be reassuringly concrete. Furthermore, those encounters bring to our awareness expressive elements from raw life whose meanings are not limited by the explanations of conventional thought and feelings. It follows, therefore, that in the search for expressive worship, the use of elements of almost primitive directness and candor are often found to be very effective. That is, the expression becomes more convincing and believable when the forces speaking to our senses appear as objective facts, simply presenting themselves.

Such an approach in visual expression today is one in which color, shape, and pattern, and in which materials, tools, and processes speak primarily as forces in their own right rather than secondarily as servants of depictions. For instance, following an idea by Reinhold Marxhausen written in the Christmas, 1972, issue of Response, we at the Chapel of the Resurrection last Advent placed bands of aluminum foil in the nave and in the narthex so that our eyes could directly experience their flashing reflections. These silvery lights (and delicate metallic rustling!) helped to heighten our awareness of the meanings and realities of Christ's promised coming (see Chapel interior photograph).

Similarly, the images for worship accompanying this essay emphasize abstract forms rather than literal depictions. These images have been developed over the years out of a desire to create self-sufficient visual statements on the Christian themes of creation.

Sun and Cell, (Creation 1), 1959. Casein on board, 14-1/4 x 21-1/4".

Sanctuary of Heaven, (Creation 2), 1959. Casein on board, 15 x 20".
Collection, Rev. and Mrs. Norman H. Brauer.
and redemption. In the creation images, obviously whatever there is of representational "picturing" is set at a very general level of abstraction. For instance, only the vague, basic structure of the appearance of a descending dove can be seen in *Breath of the Spirit* (cover, *Cleansing-Renewing Spirit*, and *Omnipresent Spirit*). Rather than focusing on "picturing," my efforts centered on finding formal and symbolic structures equivalent in some ways to the structure of Christian ideas. For instance, *Sun and Cell* is a modular pattern based on a point-like grid of equilateral triangles or their skeletons and is used to visualize elemental energy. The expressive power derives from the aggressive wholeness of the triangular unit plus the tradition of its use as a symbol for the Triune God.

For the last two years various images from this creation theme have been included in the projected images accompanying the readings in Valparaiso University's Advent-Christmas Vespers and in its Easter Vigil.

The images were part of a series of multi-slide projections on the brick walls of the Chapel of the Resurrection (see Chapel interior photograph). Included in the series visualizing the Genesis account of creation were also non-representational paintings by Jackson Pollock, Bridget Riley, Mark Tobey, Piet Mondrian, Mark Rothko, Frank Stella, and others. A progression from images of a
modular field of points to that of moving
lines, to that of color, to that of stable planes
seems to parallel the account of going from a
formless creation to a mighty wind, to light,
to the firmament, and to the earth, water,
and plants.

IN THE REDEMPTION IMAGES, the
equal-armed cross has, in its striking visual
shape and symbolic meanings, great expres­
sive power. It is an archetypal form of tense,
conflicting wholeness which C. G. Jung felt
parallels the structure of the psychological
self, and which Christians see as symbolizing
Christ and the redeemed life he offers. The
expressive character of the cross-form can be
varied by changing its proportions and so
emphasize or reduce the tension of the arms
against each other or against their unity. I
have developed three different cross-form
proportions as surface shapes on which to
structure images. The smallest and most
harmoniously compact is called the Revealing
Cross. With this cross three related images
have been developed, each characterizing a
different aspect of divine revelation due to
Christ's coming: light rays revealing hope in
Advent, light rays revealing the goodness of
life at Christmas, and light rays revealing
Christ's divinity at Epiphany.

Next, the proportions of the Lent/Easter
cross, the Transforming Cross, are more
elongated and linear. This gives the arms
more independence and their positions more
conflict. Furthermore, the image upon this
cross emphasizes unrelentingly this conflict­
ing opposition, while at the same time trans­
forming or unifying it by an underlying
continuity. Finally, the largest and the most
stretched out proportion is that of the cross­
form for the Pentecost season. More than
any of the others, its arms thrust out into
the surrounding space, as though, through
the Holy Spirit, Christ's life enters and acti­
vates the Christian's life. This Activating
Cross can be used for images expressing
many variations of outreach, growth, move-
ment, and breaking-apart tension. In effect, the activating cross images are visual structures intended as being, in a diagrammatic way, equivalent to the structures of Christian aspiration and experience.

Though these cross images were developed initially for their own sake without practical applications in mind (as were the creation images), they have since been found adaptable to varied communications and worship uses. For example, The Cresset logo comes from this series. But the most complete use of the cross-forms has been in my design of the 1974-75 Appointment Calendar, a September to September calendar published as a devotional aid by the Campus Ministry Communications (LCUSA), 130 North Wells Street, Chicago, Illinois 60606. In this calendar, crosses in all three proportions have been used and combined with photographs and drawings to mark the church year. Appointments are written onto the design so that one’s own events are seen against the larger events of nature and the major events in the story of God’s love in Christ Jesus.

Of course, many other directions in visually convincing religious imagery today might be taken. But by these examples I mean to demonstrate that the self-evident art of forms and materials can help worshippers towards a “ten-fingered grasp” of religious realities.
This Psalm exhorts the redeemed to give thanks for the rescue God has achieved for them. And they are to say so. LET THE REDEEMED OF THE LORD SAY SO!

The faith that confesses is faith expressing what it lives on. Such faith is receiving the Word of forgiveness of sins and deliverance from death, picking up that word, and singing it out in a playback that includes itself in the message. Faith comes by hearing. That's how faith is created in you. Given that fact, the word of faith must be spoken so that you may hear it. You who hear it are those who speak it. Confessors of the faith are called witnesses: they are saying a message they have received, and in saying it, they themselves are included in it.

This morning we shall engage ourselves in this double action of hearing the word of rescue and redemption, and, having listened as people addressed, we shall follow the exhortation of SAYING SO.

The exhortation of the Psalm is to contemplate the host of circumstances and situations in which the redemption of the Lord is operative. Having observed these situations, we are to sing out that redemptive word. Let us listen now as the cantor introduces this Psalm to us.

Read Psalm 107:1-3.

Are there here those people who are wanderers in the earth? Like gypsies they move from day to day, without a past and without a future. Do any of you live the desert existence, with life dried up and dull? Are there those who are lost, knowing not where they go? And what of the burning thirsts, the gnawing hungers that lead people to guzzling from bottles, trying to assuage that thirst of soul, popping in and out of bed, seeking companionship for a lonely, desolate life? They who have no city to live in, no way to raise the drooping spirit. Let them cry to the Lord, for his redemption is to lead them on a straight way, building for them a city in which to live. Sing out the thanks that grows from thirsts that have been satisfied and hungers that have been stilled. In the city of God’s dwelling they have been nourished by
the water gushing up in them, the Spirit given in the water of Baptism and nurtured by the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper. Indeed, in death they have eaten the food of immortality. Let the redeemed of the Lord SAY SO.

Read Psalm 107:4-9.

With some of you it is different. You are the rebellious souls, people who have spurned God’s word for the husks and fodder of frivolous fads. Upon your souls there has crept a sadness, a burnt out heap of ashes that leave you grief-stricken, ashamed, and despairing. Chained to habits you yourself have forged, you are burdened and heavy laden under their weight. What once was so attractive, so necessary for your being and acting, has now become revolting to you and you are caught in endless inner self-litigation. Your hearts are not free and singing out in upright joy; they are bowed down and bent. Having mocked the counsel and wisdom of God you now lie imprisoned in the chains of your own rebellion. And in the closed circle of self-indulgence there was such a lonely going your own way that when you fell, there was no one to reach down and pick you up.

Remember what the Redeemer has done. He heard the cry of your trouble, shame, and rebellion. Into the gloom and darkness of the self-built prison chamber He strode with the strides of STRIDER. Give thanks that He breaks bars, cuts down doors, and sets you free. And let the redeemed of the Lord SAY SO.

Read Psalm 107:10-16.

Some of the rebel prisoners get sick. Theirs is not so much the rebellion of self-determined over-indulgence of themselves. Theirs is the hangover, the loathing of food and life itself. They are in fear, fear of life, fear of death. Already they see in themselves the decay of death. Life untended is growing into rank weeds, not a garden of rich fruit and beautiful flowers. Once they hated corruption and deceit; now their own souls are sick with their own corruption and deceit. The glue that held them together is letting go and life itself is coming unglued.

Hear this, if there are such among you. For the Lord heard the cry of distress of those sick unto death, sick of life, and sick of the corrupting decay present in them as well as in the world. For it is to them that the healing Word gushes from the side of the slain Lamb. That healing word is the delivering word, carrying them from death to life. Break forth then with sacrifices of thanksgiving. Exalt the name and deeds of the death destroyer. Let the redeemed of the Lord SAY SO.

Read Psalm 107:17-22.

But some of you are not lost wanderers; you know where you are going; you are not imprisoned in your gloom and grief; you are not sick and loathing life. Rather, you are the bold, the strong of mind and will, the highly endowed of body and person. You are daring and aggressive, and secure. Like daring sailors roaming the sea, plying their trade, you are the ones to let the mind soar, conquering space and gravity, wiping out sickness, and producing prodigiously with the belching rhythm of the great factory and the clicking, metallic whine of the computer. But then comes the staggering fact that the creative energies have produced even more destructive monsters. Then come the staggering waves of good impulses bringing horrendous results. As the strong and bold reel and stagger, God delivers them to the quiet haven. Even for these there is the spot of rest. They are glad. And they, the strong redeemed, lift up their voices in the midst of the congregation, extolling God. The redeemed of the Lord SAY SO.

Read Psalm 107:23-32.

Come together, then, all you needy, all you redeemed, and SAY SO. Let the whole congregation reflect together about its individual parts and the total redemption. God is living and life-giving. Deserts receive springs of water. Where the fruitful land has been wasted by evil inhabitants, there the deserts have pools of water. The hungry eat at the banquet of the Lamb; the lonely wanderers have the city of God where they belong and thrive. No longer a mob, they are become a city. Upon them all there is blessing, a great growth and increase. The haughty wander in trackless wastelands, but God raises the needy and makes a real community for them. The bent ones are straightened into an upright position and they are glad that wickedness has lost its foundation. Come now: be wise. Let the redeemed consider the loving-kindness of God. And let the redeemed of the Lord SAY SO.

Read Psalm 107:33-43.
WILLA CATHHER: AN INTRODUCTION

"It is not so important to place Willa Cather precisely in the ranks of American writers (supposing that such an unruly lot could be drawn up in ranks) as it is to remember and discover her there when we need her."

TO INTRODUCE A WILLING READER TO the works of a favorite writer is a task to which any teacher must look forward with pleasure. The difficulty lies in the word "favorite," for once affection has been admitted, apprehension follows. To be clear-eyed in judgment, to be carefully analytical, to be earnestly truthful in the assessment of effects, these qualities are necessary in teaching, but can one be clear-eyed about those works over which one cried as an adolescent? Is their impact too much involved with the circumstances in which they were first read? Does their emotion recollected and re-examined in tranquility contribute to a finer understanding or simply confirm one's blushing remembrance of a silly girlhood?

There is in all the work of Willa Cather an unembarrassed appreciation of sentiment, of feeling. The truth of the heart is acknowledged, even affirmed, as truth. There is a validity in what all men feel, and when the writer feels himself superior to that universal understanding, he is on dangerous ground. That life is good, that struggle is ennobling, that love is a gift with marvelously complicated potential for joy and sorrow, that art is infinitely difficult and to that extent infinitely valuable, that though charity may be the supreme virtue, faith is the one most necessary for human civilization—these are ideas whose commonality Cather supports and enlivens. A recent article marking the publication of a new edition of A Lost Lady for this her centenary year, notes that though her work has never stirred much critical interest, she is steadily circulated in public libraries, as the worn copies in our own library bear witness. This fact would, I think, please her, for though she took art seriously, she refused to let it be arcane. What is true and beautiful and good will be recognized, and there will be hearts and minds eager to receive it. Terminology like this worries us today, for we are so debased in our values that we respond to words like love, art, beauty, hearts, joy with an embarrassed giggle or an eyes-averted snicker, like schoolboys in front of a Titian nude, unable to cope with the vast gaps in ourselves. In the face of this hesitancy, Willa Cather stands quite unmoved. I like to imagine her vis-a-vis "literary" people as she appears in her most famous photograph, arms crossed over a wide bosom covered by a white middy blouse, her broad American face, homely as a geranium, her expression wise but not condescending, not arch, not even self-conscious, a cheerful, sane countenance. Surely she would smile, but she would appreciate seeing the penciled comment "Very Good!" on the last page of the library's copy of The Professor's House.

She had no illusions about the dullness and dreariness of Main Street, the deadening effects of age, security, commerce (or hard work and poverty), on the spirit's capacity for joy, and the sense of brightness in the human soul. But she was tender of weakness, and in her work she attempts to win these very hearts back to some sense of the joy and brightness of human life and endeavor, to take their vision of themselves and invest it with significance and nobility. And I see her looking at the Main Streets of our own ugly towns with her clear eye and her compassionate spirit, eager to make us feel again the strengths whose loss we

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“There were none of the signs of spring for which I used to watch in Virginia, no budding woods or blooming gardens. There was only spring itself; the throb of it, the light restlessness, the vital essence of it everywhere: in the sky, in the soft clouds, in the pale sunshine, and in the warm, high wind. . . . If I had been tossed down blindfold on that red prairie, I should have known that it was spring.”

My Antonia

sense but do not understand. I perceive in her work the mind of the artist who seeks a beneficial effect on the receiver, as though part of her goal is to strike from us a positive recognition of the good when we meet it—whether we pencil it into library books or no. Her intended effect on the reader is provoking a more careful, attentive reading than might otherwise fall to the ordinary summer book. The thoughtful reader undoubtedly senses much of the foregoing in Cather’s work without an article to emphasize it. The introduction promised in the title, therefore, comes in the form of some questions and assertions designed to allow or provoke a more careful, attentive reading than might otherwise fall to the ordinary summer book list. Assuming an appreciation, or at least a willingness to appreciate, the following should encourage the reader to examine the means by which Cather communicates, to discover the writer consciously selecting, rejecting, polishing, refining the multitude of details which combine in a masterpiece like My Antonia or Death Comes for the Archbishop.

BEGINNING NEAR THE BEGINNING

then, with her second book, O Pioneers!, the book which established her name in literary circles more elevated than the journalistic. To see the book more clearly, we must look first at the arrangement of the whole into five sections: “The Wild Land,” “Neighboring Fields,” “Winter Memories,” “The White Mulberry Tree,” and “Alexandra.” Each section gives an impression of its own, an impression so solid that a word or two could summarize it. “The White Mulberry Tree” is perhaps easiest—dramatic? melodramatic? tragic? If you find words for the others, what pattern emerges for the book as a whole? If dramatic climax is reached in the second to last section, what part is played by the last? Does this anticlimactic section contribute to the tone of the book? The loss of Emil and the gaining of Carl, what do these mean to Alexandra if you see the two as representatives of larger characteristics than their own individual personalities? That is, if Emil is a representation of youth, strength, vigor, erotic force, intellect, what are the corresponding and in some sense compensatory qualities of Carl Linstrum? This is as good a place as any to state what may be an obvious principle, but is always a troublesome point.

In the last sentence, I wrote “if Emil is a representation . . .” Too often writers of criticism fall into one of two traps. One is to become wrapped up in the writer’s biography to such an extent that the author seems to have little function beyond that of assembling a high-powered photograph album. These are the people who say things like “Emil is Willa Cather’s younger brother, and the trip Emil and Alexandra make to the river bottom farms is based on her experiences in 1893 when she made a similar excursion,” etc., etc. This is a particularly attractive trap when the writer is as autobiographical as Willa Cather, for there are hundreds of details which you can spend time matching up between life and novel. The other trap is to write about Emil Bergson as though he were a collection of qualities about which Cather wanted to make some comment, as though his name were a kind of code name for Youth, or Love, or Romanticism. Some, and teachers of English are unfortunately prone to this, will even go so far as to say “Emil is a symbol of the impetuous, doomed fervor of youth,” leaving the reader with the impression that when he has got all the other codes figured out—Marie is a symbol of sensuous pleasure, Lou is a symbol of pragmatic American business, Frank is a symbol of alien cultural patterns, blunted and blunted in the American set-
“Trees were so rare in that country, and they had to make such a hard fight to grow, that we used to feel anxious about them, and visit them, as if they were persons. It must have been the scarcity of detail in that tawny landscape that made detail so precious.” My Ántonia

— he can fit the meaning of the book together by substituting all the code meanings for names in the working of the plot. In defense of English teachers I will say that sometimes their language is a shorthand for their meaning. But the continual finding of “symbols” in literature is bound to be disheartening to readers, especially those who have not yet developed that keen eye for the chase that distinguishes those who make their living as courrier des bois in the forest of literature.

I would like to encourage readers to see characters in novels as largely as possible. That is, to watch Emil act in the plot as a character (e.g., how is his brotherliness established? is he protective? dependent? uneasy in constraint? does he seem to act like a brother in some way that conforms to your experience?) and to enjoy the “what will he do next?” that is the essence of story-telling. But you must also see the character with the full weight that Cather has given him. Some of his manner may be drawn from her own brother, but much is her creation. Why is Emil drawn to Marie? Why does he feel more comfortable with the French than the American community? What does his friendship with Amedee Chevalier indicate about his personality? When you begin to answer these questions, you must see Emil as more than simply Alexandra’s brother, more than a function of the plot. His actions make the plot, but his actions come out of his character, which is related to those big qualities that turned up before, doomed youth, its impetuous struggles to love and to be free.

Both character and meaning, statement and implication, object and symbolic representation must be appreciated if we are to see novels fully. Micawber’s inflated speech, Tom Jones’s winning smile, Maggie Tulliver’s restless face, Boom’s mind stuffed with fleshly images, Elizabeth Bennett’s quick temper, Gatsby’s off-hand charm, Mrs. Assingham’s fretful self-consciousness, all these are essential qualities, they cannot be dismissed, or laid aside in an effort to find out what the character is all about. Lay aside Bloom’s fascination with bodies and you are left with a phantom. Attempt to get below Maggie’s surface restlessness to plumb her depths, and she vanishes. The meaning must be seen in the character as given, fully sensed, fully savored. If you are suspicious or unwilling, you are not a reader of novels, and had probably better turn to philosophy.

Back, then, to O Pioneers! after that long interlude. The pattern of the telling is responsible for the elegiac tone, faint here, stronger in later books, but pervasive in all Cather. Loss and gain, seed time and harvest, the hot fervor of youth, the calm acceptance of maturity. One aspect of her work which makes symbol hunting so attractive is her frequent use of some detail for its evocative or connotative effect. One example in O Pioneers! is the appearance of ducks, and Cather plays with them, herself enjoying the descriptions of their feathery, sunny solemnity. Ivar’s wild ducks, the ducks Emil shoots at Marie’s urging and then regrets with her subsequent anguish (“They were scared, but they didn’t really think anything could hurt them”), and Alexandra’s memory of the solitary duck, “no living thing had ever seemed to Alexandra as beautiful as that wild duck . . . afterward she thought of that duck as still there, swimming and diving all by herself in the sunlight, a kind of enchanted bird that did not know age or change.” If you sense the way in which the ducks are used, you can tell more about the tone, about the feeling Cather means to transmit, though I would argue that they are present in all their duck-ness, not merely as symbols of freedom, creaturely passivity, or doomed innocence.

About the book’s central figure, not much can even be asked. She exists, like a monument. To some extent she embodies the author’s view of herself as an alien figure in her own community. But she is clearly meant to convey to the reader a sense of exaltation about the land itself. The community may be weak but the land is good. Alexandra does not tame the land; I don’t know that the word is used, but the wild land becomes neighboring fields. She has poured energy, will, intelligence, strength, and money into it, and it blooms. The face, turned to it with love and longing, sees its reward. That the reward is not the occasion of triumph is the particularly Catherian strain here. The blossoming of the land provides for a host of small people to pursue their small lives, looking on Alexandra with the mingled envy, respect, and fear that a powerful totem evokes in the ignorant. Her force, and the land’s, endure.
THE GRANDEUR OF ALEXANDRA BERGSON is at least partially the result of her reflection in the eyes of Willa Cather. The heroine of the next novel, Song of the Lark, published in 1915, is, in the concluding chapters, quite obviously glorious. She is the operatic diva Kronborg, surrounded by long-stemmed roses, floor-length furs, ovations and champagne, the stereotypical accompaniments of success in that form of art so permeated with drama that its performers seem never off-stage, the opera. The theme of the book is the nature of art, particularly as it concerns the subject to Cather herself; the struggle of the artist to achieve mastery of the art is so absorbing of itself that it needs no highlighting. Who can resist a story that begins “Once upon a time”? To be quite truthful, the opening sentence, “Dr. Howard Archie had just come up from a game of pool with the Jewish clothier and two traveling men who happened to be staying overnight in Moonstone,” is removed from the brothers Grimm by a considerable distance. Yet, from this page to the last, it is the progress of the life that fascinates the author. As in a fairy story, or an adventure, the perpetual “what happened next?” propels the reader, but the sense of adventure is odd, because on the face of it, nothing “happens” to Thea Kronborg. Born with a musical talent, she studies, works, sacrifices, develops, and finally succeeds. There are no unexpected reversals of plot, no hidden turns of character, the biography proceeds from childhood to maturity with steady pace.

The book is her longest, crowded with details (many of them quite extraneous to the theme of Thea’s development) to a greater extent than other Cather works. Do the long descriptions of Dr. Archie’s wife, Colorado, reform politics, Fred Ottenburg’s marriage add to the book, or help to fill pages? What is the difference between these narratives and, for example, the Mexican dance in Moonstone, the thoughts of the parishioners at evening service in Thea’s father’s church, the account of Ray Kennedy’s accident and death, the tramp who dies such an ugly death in the small prairie town? Much of the book’s surface comes from the life of the great American singer Olive Fremstad, whom Willa Cather interviewed as a journalist and came to know as a person, combined with autobiographical fragments of her own life. But the novel’s force lies in the vibrancy of that surface, the taste of the desert wind, the look of moonlight on sand hills, the sound of the cottonwoods, and Mexican voices soft and thrilling in a warm, desert night, the bitter, exhilarating wind on Michigan Avenue in Chicago, the cold weariness of physical exhaustion, and the correspondingly comforting warmth of furs and tea and lap- robes and well-built wood fires. Since all these details are so fully realized and the story so completely rounded off in Thea’s great achievement, what is responsible for the tone of melancholy that pervades the last part of the book? Hers is not a hollow victory, why does the reader sense defeat at the ending?

Most helpful in answering this question is the importance Cather attaches throughout the book to physical strength, to Thea’s body, its firmness, solidity, the muscles in her arms and neck, the qualities of peasant stubbornness in her physical makeup as well as in her mind, all these are emphasized and dwelt upon. They are not incidental to the plot, or to the “meaning” of the book. Note the episodes of illness, how they fall in crucial places for the book’s development. When you have followed this theme through the book, much of it seen through the person of a doctor, by the way, the significance of the ending will be clearer. That art is demanding is a commonplace, a cliché. Cather is at pains here to demonstrate the nature of that demand. It is all-inclusive, it is all but overwhelming, even to the strongest body, the firmest will.

Among its many somewhat digressive episodes is one in which Thea spends a recuperative summer on a ranch in Arizona. Near the ranch are the ruins of an ancient cliff city, and Thea spends time there, both she and the city sunlit, remote, silent. This is the first appearance in Cather’s work of the cliff city, which she is to use often. How does it function in this book? What does it provide for Thea? Her insight about the nature of art in relation to the artist is set in the canyon, it provides her unimaginative mind with an image for herself and her work. There are several points of convergence between the image and the object, so that the
cliff city, the ancient people, their footprints on the stone path, the bird flying in the wide spaces within the canyon walls, the pottery jars for water, all function for the author to illuminate different aspects of art, especially in relation to its practitioners.

One other large theme in Song of the Lark is the relation between the artist and society. This topic occupies the author in many books (indeed could be said to occupy most writers at some time or other), and it undoubtedly springs from her own uneasiness with the people from whom she came. Sometimes the alien figure is an artist, as she is here and in Lucy Gayheart, at other times the protagonist is simply an individual of heightened sensitivities or uncommon tastes, as in One of Ours, where the hero is a farmer. The citizens of Moonstone do not respond to Thea with warmth, understanding, sympathy, or encouragement. Even within her family, the admiration is grudgingly given and understanding comes only from her mother. The exceptions to this general position are revealing; they are Dr. Archie, Tillie, Professor Wunseh, the Kohlers, Ray Kennedy, and the Mexicans. What have they in common? And, further, though Archie, Tillie, and Ray are admiring and encouraging, the sympathy and intuitive understanding come from Wunseh, Kohlers, and the Mexicans. Later, Thea's teacher Harsanyi, her patrons the Jewish Nathanmeyers, her admirer and lover Ottenburg, are all part of the same pattern.

At this point we find the remnants of a full-fledged Jamesian passion which Cather underwent in her earlier years, when everything European was better, or at least more attractive, than anything American. Time and experience have softened her views, but with regard to art she is still quite decided. Non-Americans welcome art, whether they practice it, revere it, enjoy it, pay for it, earn livings by it, they are easy in its presence. In contrast, the Americans find it strange, and they react with suspicious hostility or pretentious acquisitiveness. Cather's treatment of this aspect of American mentality is either tantalizingly complex or perhaps just unclear. She is so basically tolerant and sympathetic to all human feelings that the suspicious fear of culture that Americans betray is very seldom a target of sarcasm or bitterness. She dislikes their insensitivity, she has suffered from it, she does not excuse it, but she is seldom contemptuous of the characters for this failing. The topic comes up again and again, indeed it is almost the major theme in One of Ours, and it is, I think, a touchstone for the unique combination of understanding and compassion that are hers. She cannot be so wholeheartedly condemnatory as Sinclair Lewis, for example, and One of Ours never displays the invigorating scorn of Main Street. But if an abundance of human sympathy weakens One of Ours, it undoubtedly is the informing and responsible element in one of her greatest works, My Ántonia.

MY ÁNTONIA, PUBLISHED IN 1918, IS SO widely known that almost no notes or introductions can increase the nearly universal regard in which it is held. It is an almost perfect novel, going from first page to last with the power and directness of an arrow from the bow. In it is gathered up all the greatness of feeling which Willa Cather observed in the women of her childhood in Nebraska, their strength, their endurance, their humor, their capacity to nourish and shelter and cherish into growth. The history of one immigrant girl, Antonia Shimerda, from her arrival on the plains as an inarticulate, ragged girl from Bohemia, to the large, glowing mother surrounded by her twelve children, orchards, and animals, is indeed the history of a place, but also a celebration of the female nature. Antonia, and all the imagery that surrounds her from first to last, is a paean about womanhood bearing up the earth, nourishing it with her own goodness and strength, loving it into fruitfulness as an image of herself.

Technically the book is as nearly perfect as anything Cather ever wrote. It is filled with scenic detail, as though she had used her memory's entire collection of pictures. Every reader has his own list of the most striking, and these are mine: the small group of Mr. Shimerda's mourners on the prairie singing "Jesus, Lover of My Soul"; the snow blowing around them "like long veils flying"; Lena Lingard running from Ole Benson's wife Crazy Mary; the four Danish girls at the laundry, rosy and white, "their gold hair moist with the steam or heat, and curling in little damp spirals about their ears," laughing and clean and strong; Antonia's little boys at the gate as the older Jim comes to visit; Antonia herself in the orchard. Whatever incidents they include, any list will indicate the strongly pictorial quality of the book.
The effect is as though her creativity has at last transcended naturally the limits of artistic discipline and poured itself into the pure communication of idea through scene and incident and character which is the absolute center of novel writing.

In her early work, the various stories Cather published in magazines and whose republication her will excludes, the effort of creating "symbols" to convey her "meanings" is evident. The author's busy hand is everywhere visible. Here, the pictures simply appear, and mean, and the writer's effort is so accomplished that it disappears. Every scene in My Antonia carries weight for the meaning of the book. I can indicate that perhaps most simply by drawing out the significances in the scene from my own list above. First, Mr. Shimerda's funeral, the isolation of the homesteaders from civilization, their primitive yet conventional responses to the elemental events of life and death, the defiance of the human spirit for its foes in the natural order, the heavy cost in life and suffering for the winning of the prairie to fruitful plain. In Lena Lingard's undeserved persecution by Crazy Mary are pictured two negative responses to the life on the new land: Lena's accommodating, graceful figure taking the course of least resistance while waiting the opportunity to leave; Ole Benson's Mary driven mad by the monotonous drudgery and brutal cheerlessness of her life turning to jealous fantasy as a means of escape. The Danish girls at the laundry are a positive response to the new land and the new life, the eager exchange of old world security in a peasant class for entrance into a dynamic society of labor by choice and advancement by labor. Hard work is seen as a source of enrichment of body and bank account, its liabilities a source of beauty. Antonia's boys at the gate show the variety of character springing from the combination of two individuals, each one accepted, cherished within the family, the family protecting itself, allowing intrusion only on its own terms, the family as center, as place, as the location and source of goodness. All of these are emphasized by the presence of the outsider, the family-less man whose union is dry and only rationally satisfactory. Then, finally, Antonia in the orchard, the coming together of incident, character, and scene into significance. Fruit trees require thoughtful establishment and great care, the investment of energy and body to follow the inclination of the will. Standing in her orchard, Antonia is the embodiment of that force which combines with the will to harvest fruit, combines in order that fruitfulness will come about. She is where fruitfulness takes place, and there are few more potent figures of this in literature than she. Great books not only reinforce the great ideas and truths about human nature, but in some ways they create and make them visible. What Mann's Dr. Faustus does for the image of man in the universe is done for women in My Antonia.

ONE OF OURS, PUBLISHED IN 1922, IS A peculiar novel in many ways, not a favorite with Cather's readers or critics. Its value lies in the way it demonstrates Willa Cather's basic sympathy with people. For a novel that intends to show the development of an individual who is alien to his own culture, and to portray the failures of that culture, One of Ours is amazingly tolerant and sympathetic to all. For every black mark against a character, the callousness of Claude's father, the shallowness of his brother Ralph, the coldness of his wife, there is an attempt, almost against the author's wishes, to give an explanation, to record an exception, to state a reason. When she describes Enid's lack of passionate love for Claude, she is at pains to explain a corresponding thwarted passion for ministering to the Chinese. And this explanation is not offered so as to make the reader scornful of Enid's values; they may be incomprehensible to Cather, or to Claude, or to the reader, but they are not laughable. They are as real, as human as Claude's striving to better himself. To read the book this way may do the author an injustice as an author; there is about One of Ours an ambiguity of intention that makes it appear to be always struggling to reach a steady point. The whole setting of the second part of the book, Claude's entrance into the army, the troop ship, and the experiences in France were all inspired by and derived from the letters of a cousin of Cather's who was killed in France. Thus they have a removed quality, and the male protagonist, always an attractive device to Cather, does not help her to achieve immediacy of feeling. The slightly off-key patriotism of the ending strikes a hollow note today, and it is difficult to say whether it sounded fully sincere in 1922. Cather, fully involved in the business of creativity, had paid little attention to the war while it was in progress. This belated piece of war fiction may have been a form of penance for
"She was a battered woman now, not a lovely girl; but she still had that something which fires the imagination, could still stop one's breath for a moment by a look or gesture that somehow revealed the meaning in common things. She had only to stand in the orchard, to put her hand on a little crab tree and look up at the apples, to make you feel the goodness of planting and tending and harvesting at last." My Ántonia

what later seemed heartlessness to her sympathetic spirit.

Here again, the memorable characters are Claude’s mother, and the family’s simple old servant Mahailey. The picture of the women in the lamplight of the sitting room, its image of fidelity and patience, is the most potent in the book.

A LOST LADY, PUBLISHED IN 1923, IS IN some ways a mirror of My Ántonia. Memories of a woman, set in order by a man who has known and admired her for a long time is a description that fits both. Yet how vastly different the books are. A Lost Lady is enjoying a renewed interest at the moment, partly on account of its new edition (though the cause and effect may well be the reverse) but its tone and character are not particularly attractive, as one might infer from the title. It is a story of struggle and defeat, and because the combatants are so unequal, the defeat is a grim one. Beauty pitted against ugliness, integrity against indifference, honesty against greed, fidelity against desire. In this book the virtues cannot win. They are even frail compared with the callous weight of evil. The note of inequality is struck often in the book, and most of the relationships it describes are unusual, or oddly assorted. The central observer and third person narrator is Niel Herbert, who is brought up not by father and mother, but by an uncle. The Forresters are not of equal age, and when Mrs. Forrester’s former lover is to be married she remonstrates that his chosen bride is too young. Nothing could be more oddly assorted than the awkward dinner party near the end of the book, where Mrs. Forrester attempts to civilize the town’s ignorant youth. An off-centeredness in all of this gives the impression of instability, threat, and impending disaster.

Marian Forrester is a marvelous creation for Willa Cather, partly because she is unlike any other of the novelist’s characters. Beautiful, charming, elegant, warm, sympathetic, brave—and wrong. Cather puts her before us through the devoted eyes of Niel, first as a boy, then as a young man, conventionally in awe of this utterly fascinating lady. She has even the attraction of devoted deference to her older, somewhat stately husband, Captain Forrester. She is the one point of light and gaiety, civilization, beauty, and romance in the omnipresent Catherian prairie town, here called Sweet Water. Every detail Cather can summon is gathered and arranged to show her off, with her long garnet earrings softly brushing the elegantly hollowed cheeks, pouring tea in the firelit drawing room for her dear Captain and his guests.

She betrays Niel’s belief in her, she has an obvious but underhanded affair with one of her husband’s friends, and when financial ruin overtakes the Forresters, she is coarsened by drink and corrupted by the crass veniality of Ivy Peters. But though Niel is surprised by this betrayal, the reader need not be. Indications of an ugliness at the heart of things pervade the book, which is the reason it seems unlikely from the pen of a writer ordinarily so sanguine about life. Can she mean that beauty is deceptive? That grace and civilization are indeed the masks of appetite? That courage is only a polite word for self-protection? The book is undoubtedly melancholy in its conclusions about this particular character. Are we to take them as statements about the nature of things in general? It is quite true that this book and the two following ones, The Professor’s House and My Mortal Enemy (really a novella) are different in tone from earlier and later works, as if the writer were undergoing a period of turmoil about her values and beliefs. They are all three filled with the images of defeat and despair, of failure which is not ennobling, loss which is not redeemed. It seems to me that the central question is whether or not the book is indeed about an individual struggle and defeat, or is a more general statement. Is Marian Forrester defeated in her attempts to create a fine life and character, or is the apparent fineness in her just an illusion? It is this question which tantalizes the reader of A Lost Lady.

WILLA CATHER’S NEXT BOOK WAS PUBLISHED in 1925 and demonstrates another shift in subject, though many familiar elements are in-
cluded in it. *The Professor's House* is again a novel of conflict, and its resolution is only slightly affirm­
ative. Professor St. Peter's acquiescence to his rescue from death at the end of the book is no more than that. Too worn by disappointment to desire life, he is numb to desire of any kind, and as he was resigned to die in an asphyxiated stupor, he consents inertly to be roused to life again. Outwardly successful both professionally and personally, he experiences an emptiness for which there is no remedy.

The principle image for the spiritual state the author describes is easy to find, for the various houses in the book are all laden with significance, and are explicitly referred to as signs or manifestations of inner truths about the characters. The book begins as the St. Peters move out of the house they've occupied for over twenty years, an old-fashioned frame house, ungainly and even uncomfortable, but familiar. Behind it is the professor's garden, half an acre of gravelled beds and paths, shrubs and flowers bordered by Lombardy poplars, all in the French manner. In the attic is his study, which he finds himself unable to leave, though he must "get used to the feeling that under his work-room there was a dead, empty house." His new house is hardly mentioned, except as a place he cares nothing about. But another important house is that being built by his daughter Rosa­
mund and her husband, Louis Marsellus, a large, showy Norwegian manor house, of all things, on Lake Michigan, "rather an ambitious affair" as its owner describes it. Most damning of all is its name, "Outland" after the novel's second hero, Tom Outland. Third among the dwellings is the cliff city discovered by Tom in the narrative which forms the middle third of the book, and is in some ways its moral core. "The little city of stone, asleep" and the tower, "the fine thing that held all the jum­ble of houses together and made them mean something"—these buildings provide the image which brings together the disparate histories of the weary professor and the youth.

Though it is divided into two such different sections, the book is a solid piece of masonry itself, and it is difficult to sort out the elements at the beginning, or on one reading. First, there is a consideration of the professor's life work, his objective view of his family, and his distaste for their affairs, particularly those of Marsellus, who has married the daughter who had been engaged to Outland and has thus inherited the patent on Outland's brilliant scientific discovery. Then there comes the intervention into the present of the long flashback to his first acquaintance with Outland, and then Outland's long narrative of the finding and losing of the cliff city. Then there is a brief conclusion in which the professor, staying late at his old study, is nearly asphyxiated by the gas stove and is rescued at the last by the family's old seamstress. At the end of the book St. Peter muses on the "mistake" which is making the end of his life so blank, "Perhaps the mistake was merely in an attitude of mind. He had never learned to live without delight . . . Theoretically, he knew that life is possible, may even be pleasant, without joy, without passionate griefs. But it had never occurred to him that he might have to live like that." St. Peter has realized his ambition but gone beyond his capacity for sympathy. His house is empty.

Outland was killed in his romantic venture to France in the war. His house, the mysterious and awesomely beautiful cliff city, has been stripped of its artifacts by carelessness and greed, but exists as it always has. It is remote, difficult of access, even damaged, but somehow eternally potent and sustaining, like the fairy tale draught of a reviving elixer. In the image of the cliff city Cather has centered all the affirmation of which she is capable in this book. The greater darkness of a troubled world in *A Lost Lady* has some antidote, for though the characters cannot, perhaps, enjoy the cliff city, it does exist. The beauty it exemplifies and demonstrates is real and indestructible. And after one other tangle with a fierce pessimism about human relationships in *My Mortal Enemy* (1926), Willa Cather was ready to move on to the last stage of her work, epitomized by her great book, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, published in 1927.

DEATH IS ITS SUBJECT, AND FAITHFUL­ness is the key by which the meaning of death can be read. Instead of a plot, the book moves in a series of episodes, each in some way an illustration of death, each providing a view of the faithfulness which makes the meeting of death fearful by its absence or joyful by its presence. The book is like a series of drawings or carvings about the life of a saint; indeed its organization may have been aided by Cather's memory of frescoes about the life of St. Genevieve by Puvis de Chavannes which she had seen in Paris. Its effect is quite the reverse of the dramatic narrative, for it has a static quality partly derived, I think, from the reader's knowing at the outset what the end will be. Thus, though the archbishop leads perhaps the most adventurous life of any Cather protagonist, our attention is drawn from the facts of his adventures to their quality. Here the question is not "what happens next?" but "how does it affect him?" I am not talking here about the ghastly old specter of the literature classroom, "Character development." What we observe in *Death* is the development, not of a
"The mesa plain had an appearance of great antiquity, and of incompleteness; as if, with all the materials for world-making assembled, the Creator had desisted, gone away and left everything on the point of being brought together, on the eve of being arranged into mountain, plain, plateau. The country was still waiting to be made into a landscape." Death Comes for the Archbishop

character, but of a virtue. For the purpose of all the episodes is to give the reader this primary understanding about life, that it is faithfulness which redeems it.

On one level of course, the book is about Christian missionaries, so that faith means specifically "the Christian faith," and Cather does seem to be speaking often in strictly religious terms at this point in her writing. But in another sense, she is describing a faithfulness to, rather than faith in; not belief so much as actions, but not even actions so much as quality. Father Latour's life is redeemed by Christ's sacrifice and his belief in it, but this is true of every Christian. The triumphant nature of this particular life is the quality of faithfulness that characterizes it. We are asked to consider Father Latour, the Archbishop, as a kind of Padre Faithfulness, going through the world to show us the nature of that virtue. And it is in the depiction of that world that the force of Cather's book is concentrated. It is a world in which faith is challenged at every turn. The episodes describe most of the familiar vices, greed, avarice, pride, gluttony, sloth, lust, and vanity, surrounding the priest and involving him in some way. The list above is personified in Magdalena's husband, Father Lucero, Fray Baltazar, Father Martinez, Doña Isabel. Perhaps more allegorical than anything else she wrote, Death fairly bristles with persons, scenes, and descriptions that beg to be read with Meaning. Look at the descriptions of Acoma, the ancient city atop the mesa, and Cather's long discourse on man's relation to a Rock; the scene in the Snake Cave, an adventure for a missionary priest, caught in a blizzard and sheltering in a cave sacred in some mysterious and dreadful way to a perverse Indian god. The almost comic story of Doña Isabella, refusing to tell her age, even if it costs her a fortune. The life of the hustling, vigorous, vulgar, Americanized West, restlessly pushing at the edges of Spanish culture and Indian civilization. Once again, look at the land itself, landscape as more than setting, as vital as a character, challenging, glorious, powerful, not productive for man's ends, only occasionally accommodating. And in the face of all this multitudinous detail—the Yankees, Mexicans, duels, love stories, quarrels, cruelties, deaths, celebrations, victories, liturgies, mules, blizzards, meals, and journeyings—the one heroic figure remains in the mind's eye. Death comes at the last, for the Archbishop one more adventure to be met, as all the others, with charity, with hope, and with faith.

It is this mood of quiet conviction that characterizes Cather's last two works. (Lucky Gayheart, published in 1935, is an aberration showing all her faults, her age, and her weariness.) Shadows on the Rock (1931) and Sapphira and the Slave Girl (1940) have a low-key note about them, though they are by no means poor work. Shadows is an historical novel set in Quebec, filled with eloquent descriptions of a hard life made meaningful and possible by loyalty, tradition, and care. Cather's long love of French manners and custom is here given its fullest expression. Saphire, which has its roots in her own family's Virginia history, is a good story, and it is told with all the craftsmanship she could bring to bear. But the fire is gone. Her final word had been said in Death Comes for the Archbishop, and having written that, she had nothing to add.

It is certainly a fashion at the moment for Americans to find within the heaps of nostalgic bric-a-brac those items worth restoring and reusing: the coffee mill, the canning kettle, the garden hoe, the bicycle, the steam engine, the windmill. In our reading, too, perhaps we may outgrow an adolescent pursuit of the evermore sophisticated to discover in the writing of the recent past that which is good and enduring. It is not so important to place Willa Cather precisely in the ranks of American writers (supposing that such an unruly lot could be drawn up in ranks) as it is to remember and discover her there when we need her.
From Shakespeare to Handke

THERE ARE AS MANY HAM­
­lets as directors and actors who ap­
proach this most famous character in dramatic literature. Perhaps too many books were written about this play, perhaps too many interpretations have tried to take it apart, to dissect it in order to reveal and unravel the secret of genius. Jan Kott pointed out that Hamlet is one of those few literary heroes who live independently from the bard’s text and the theater. His name has meaning even to those who have never seen nor read Shakespeare’s play. In this respect, Kott maintains, there is a similarity to Leonardo’s Mona Lisa. Although the statement is correct, the comparison is poor when there is an Oedipus, Don Quixote, Faust, or Don Juan. Hamlet’s complexity is proved by the fact that it is one of the favorite plays on the German stage.

Harry Buckwitz, director of the Zuercher Schauspielhaus, could not withstand the temptation and presented himself with the gift of staging Hamlet on the occasion of his seventieth birthday. As he stated in a published letter to the actor he chose as his Hamlet, Helmuth Lohn­er, he did not want to see that intro­verted character on-stage drowning in his meditations but an enlightened young man returning to Denmark from his studies with the revolutionary mind of Giordano Bruno who taught at Wittenberg. Hamlet, in the role of an angry young man, returned because he felt chosen to wipe out the corrupt feudal reign of his uncle. The time was out of joint, and he was convinced he had to set it right.

Buckwitz leaned on Bertolt Brecht’s interpretation of the figure: “Hamlet is an idealist and thrown out of gear through his clash with the real world. The idealist turns into a cynic. The question is not: to act or not to act, but to be silent or not to be silent, to approve or to disapprove.” This is why the monologue of “to be or not to be” came rather at the beginning of the play, which did not open with the appearance of the ghost. The beginning belonged to Hamlet expressing his disgust with the world and, after having received the ghost’s assignment, he could decide on rebellion (to be) or resignation (not to be).

In trying to bring Hamlet closer to our time in a political sense, the play had to be cut and streamlined at the expense of its psychological and lyric-dramatic within-ness. Ophelia’s tragedy was reduced to a minimum. There can be no doubt that Shakespeare was fully aware (and probably a bit frightened) of the tremendous changes in the society of his later days, and that those thoughts guided him in writing the play. But it was his genius to give it so many facets with deep insight into the mechanism and motivations of man that the political factors became marginal in comparison to the human and psychological problems.

Harry Buckwitz tried to solve his self-imposed task with a fast, cinematic sequence of the scenes in which action itself was the greatest incitement. He had the help of a young Hamlet, whose agility in movement and gestures was stupendous, and of Germany’s greatest stage designer, Wilfried Minks, whose basic set was of magnificent simplicity, which made Buckwitz’s idea feasible. It was, if nothing else, a different way of staging Hamlet and, although a great deal of the human marvel and depth was lost, it was a worth-while experiment and one highly acceptable on the level on which it functioned.

* * * *

THE ZUERCHER SCHAU­spielhaus fared rather well this season with quite a few successes, among which was a spirited production of Kiss Me Kate, which by now fits the nostalgia wave. All the more one wondered about the wisdom to show Balzac’s Faiseur, which was translated as The Financial Genius. Balzac was not only a marvelous book factory, he also had at least a hundred plot ideas for plays, of which some were merely sketched and nine completed. There are many autobiographical features in this play—it was written in 1848 during the golden days of the bourgeoisie and at the beginning of the capitalistic
era—and the hero, the speculator at the Stock Exchange of Paris, by the name of Auguste Mercadet, has much in common with Daumier's Robert Macaire. The masked types onstage were fashioned in the way Daumier made them immortal. 

Faiseur is at best a badly constructed period play, or a morality play of its era in which immorality triumphed.

There is a curious literary speculation attached to the story of this speculator, who manages to bamboozle the financial elite of Paris with the idea that he is waiting for his partner Godeau, who had disappeared to India with his fortune, and had meanwhile become a billionaire. It is likely that Samuel Beckett waiting for his Godot may have been inspired by Balzac's idea. Only Balzac, badly needing a happy end, has his Godeau appear, and a myth turns into a rich reality satisfying all creditors, marrying the speculator's ugly daughter, briefly, behaving the way comedy cliches demand. What may be interesting from the viewpoint of literary history need not necessarily be worth the theatrical effort.

Tom Stoppard's *Jumpers*—one of the most brilliant and bewildering plays of the last few years—received, under the title of *The Acrobats*, an elaborate and impressive production in the Schauspielhaus. Its stage is much smaller than the one of the National Theatre in London, and the play looked crowded in Zuerich. Perhaps with fewer acrobats and less choreography, the visual aspect may have been enhanced. Stoppard envisioned a tri-parted large stage on which the manifold external action can be kept separated from the actual, or rather virtual, satiric happenings onstage. The crime story with a body in the closet; an oversized television screen; a trapeze act plus strip-tease; a former musical star who lost her voice and equilibrium over man's romantic loss of the moon and became totally involved in her own involved being; and, above all, the appearance of the jumpers jumping to the ironic twists of the play—well, all this needs much space. The mere fact that the stage of the Schauspielhaus is too small for so much action made this weakness of the play a bit obvious.

It is a serious play making light of basic philosophic thoughts and their philosophers, while asking such questions as: “Man—good, bad, or indifferent?” or “How can we bring together humanism, materialism, and all other aspects of atheism with the notion of absolute morality?” The greater part of the action is taken up by the philosopher George Moore dictating a speech about the state of man. We are shown that George is more human than all his colleagues but comes to realize that kindness is logically independent from God's decisions.

The philosopher Alfred Jules Ayer wrote about Stoppard's *Jumpers* in the *Sunday Times* in April, 1972, and praised the playwright's daring to take issue with such basic problems as absolute values for which he tries to find confirmation in religion. As far as the Creator is concerned, George relies on the basic argument, which, from a philosophic viewpoint, cannot be defended, since it presupposes that everything must have a primary cause and must somehow end but not necessarily as a consequence of this cause. George needs two gods in order to triumph over his philosophic adversaries and his own dialectic confusion: one who created the world and another with whom to demonstrate absolute moral values. His tragedy is that he can prove neither and that he tumbles into nowhere after realizing that he killed his beloved rabbit and turtle. His death is insinuated rather than shown. And at the end—with a kind of fascism triumphant—everything is left unclear: who killed one of the jumpers who was George's adversary and his wife's lover, or how the Inspector Bein became Archbishop of Canterbury after having failed in his profession.

Never before have I come to realize how much a play can change in translation and in a new environment. A Lewis Carroll spirit permeates the original version of this play. Nonsense can be said with lightning lightness and make sense. The German language, in its convoluted heaviness, cannot so easily follow suit, and the depth beneath the frivolity of its witticism falls flat in its explicitness. This linguistic problem added its own complexity to the congested stage image and made the going heavy. What saved the play here was Gert Westphal's *tour de force* performance of George Moore, professor of ethics, who created a penetrating study of a German professor. Even though it had little to do with Oxford and Cambridge, his characterization held the attention of the audience and kept the play from failing.

**HORST ZANKL PREMIERED**

the latest Peter Handke play at the Theater at Neumarkt. Handke has become the leading dramatist of the decade in Central Europe. A premiere of a new Handke play is a European sensation, with critics coming from everywhere to view and review it. In many ways, the trip to the Neumarkt Theater may have been worth their while. The play is called *Die Unvernunftigen Sterben Aus (The Unreasonable Ones Die Out)*, and there the Handkean ambiguity begins.

Like all his plays, the *Unreasonable Ones* has an improvisational character, even though the dialogue is clearly spelled out (Handke advised the director: “Don't necessarily stick to the lette. of the dialogue.”) And what a dialogue! His famous Kaspar struggled with the word, the *Unreasonable Ones* suffer from loghoria. They cannot stop talking for almost four hours. They speak mostly to themselves about themselves. Memory is a major
point in the play and Handke’s world. The ability to remember, however, is not so much a nostalgic process as a phenomenon that Handke wishes to see as a form of life for the future. He also believes that at the moment of waking, people could tell most. They probably could if they could, as one of his characters insinuates.

Perhaps a paragraph from a Handke letter to director Zankl in answer to several queries as to the play’s interpretations is symptomatic of Handke’s way of working. One of his characters exits with an English phrase. The Regisseur was naturally perplexed. Handke: “By the way, I have a bad feeling about that stupid phrase ‘No hard feelings!’ which Paula says as her word of farewell. Perhaps it is too stupid. But I just liked it when I read it in an American mystery story. It does not really fit the seriousness of the hour. It might be better she would blow our hero a kiss.” But at the premiere she did say, “No hard feelings,” and I think it fits the play.

What is the play about? Top executives of the business world meet. They come to the decision to act in mutual understanding. But the hero of the play, Hermann Quitt, is an individualist, an iconoclast. He cannot help but turn against the pressure of a system of which he is a part. Even if it beautifully exploits the world of consumers, he must wipe out all pressures, must plot and scheme to destroy his confrères. He loathes a world in which nothing unforeseen can happen. Prices, production methods, and distribution were arranged among the “bosses,” but Quitt torpedoes the agreement: “I will ruin their prices and I will ruin them.” His old-fashioned ego triumphs against a systematized establishment. But at the end he finds himself isolated from everyone including himself. In his alienation and sensibility (read: looking into his inmost aloneness and the memory of himself) he envisions himself, in Brechtian manner, as his own phantom. And, after having killed the small shareholder who played the clown to all the other big capitalists, he kills himself.

Handke first thought that snakes should fill—or people—the stage at the end, but then had the butler dance with his master’s wife across the stage to lovely music. The butler—as all figures—is a type, the type of the awakening, rebelling man who feels suppressed. But he is no rebel wanting to change the world, he is out to imitate his master and improve his personal lot as he symbolically does when being united with his master’s wife. He is the heir who will go on mastering the world and exploit the exploitable. We feel assured he won’t be unreasonable. He will beautifully howl with the wolves.

A THREE-YEAR-OLD COMMENTS ON A SERMON

It’s silly
What he said.
He never saw
God, nobody
Saw God, me
I didn’t either.

How does he
Know so
Much what
He doesn’t know?

But the color
Lights and
Tingling bells
Were nice.

He should have
Rung the bells
Instead of talk.

He talks silly.
Bells are better.

CHARLES ANGOFF

May/June, 1974
IDEALISM, MATERIALISM,  
AND THE AMERICAN DREAM

I

EVERYONE AGREES THAT the ten years since the assassination of John F. Kennedy have been among the most traumatic in American history. Political assassinations, violent racial conflict, frightening urban decay, an ugly and unpopular war—these things have divided the American people and weakened their morale and collective self-confidence to an unprecedented extent. Among social critics a common manner of expressing the over-all dimensions of the crisis has been the observation that the American Dream has turned into a nightmare. People who use this phrase mean many things by it. In broadest general terms, they often are suggesting that that which was hopeful and idealistic in the American tradition has somehow recently gone wrong or been submerged, and more often than not they are likely to identify a surfeit of material success—or at least too great an emphasis on achieving that success—as being a crucial element in the nation's difficulties.

The Biblical judgment concerning those who gain the whole world but lose their own souls is frequently invoked. The concern of this essay is not so much the current state of the American Dream as the historical interplay between the elements of idealism and materialism that have always been crucial to the meaning of the Dream.

The very term American Dream is so protean, not to say nebulous, in meaning as to discourage too precise attempts at definition. In general terms, though, it has connoted the heroic triumph of the individual. From the earliest days of the nation, Americans argued that what set their society apart, what made it distinct from and superior to its European counterparts, was the opportunity it provided for the individual, regardless of origin, to achieve success, to realize his full potential. In European society, so the argument went, men's economic, social, and political destinies were largely determined by and at birth; a rigid class structure made it extremely unlikely that individual effort and virtue could overcome the liability of lower class origins.

In America, by contrast, a man was what he made of himself. The national self-image portrayed an open society whose gradations were determined by ability alone; those gradations, furthermore, were infinitely porous in allowing individual movement up or down regardless of circumstances of birth. (Movement downward, needless to say, received a good deal less attention in the national mythology than movement upward.) From immigrant slum to millionaire palace, from log cabin to White House: this was the American Dream in action.

This idealistic dream always had a substantial material base. Concepts of democracy, freedom, and individual dignity were important and significant in themselves, but they assumed palpable meaning and substance for most people in specific, often material, ways. If the promise of American life was the opportunity for the average man to strive for success, was not the ordinary best measure of success tangible improvement in material condition? The American liberal tradition emphasized that political democracy became truly meaningful only when accompanied by opportunity for widespread participation in economic abundance.

Yet the emphasis on material achievement, essential to the idealistic fulfillment of the American Dream, has also always been the serpent in the garden of American civilization. Always there has been the fear that the material drive would submerge the idealistic vision, that prosperity was becoming not one proximate goal but the ultimate end of American life. It is this counterpoint between materialism and idealism, with its subtle and complex elements of complementarity and contradiction, that this essay will examine briefly at various specific points in the American experience.

II

THERE IS NO MORE OBVIOUS or appropriate place to begin than with Benjamin Franklin. Franklin is still widely regarded as the most representatively American of all major figures in United States history. He has been called the first
Yankee, the patron saint of material success, an instinctive democrat, the perfect bourgeois, the greatest man of his age, the father of all the Kiwanians, the outstanding figure of the Enlightenment in America, and the possessor of a cheap and shabby soul. 1

Franklin, as his country's first and archetypical public philosopher, was the most important figure in the eighteenth century secularization of the American Dream. The Puritans of early New England saw their settlement as a City on a Hill, destined by God to serve as example and archetypical public philosopher, of the Enlightenment in America, and the possessor of a cheap and shabby soul. 2

Franklin was the century's most popular guide to the achievement of the secular good life, both individual and collective. As a public philosopher, he was primarily concerned with the search for human happiness, and he supposed that, both for individual citizens and for society as a whole, this meant the attainment of success. And Franklin understood clearly enough that material achievement had to be an important element in the measuring of that success.

So Franklin told Americans how to achieve prosperity and he blessed them in their endeavor. Tolerant of human frailty, inclined to take people as they were, he offered a utilitarian guide to the achievement of material, non-utopian, incremental progress. At his best, he was the good citizen offering pragmatic prescriptions for the achievement of the tolerable society.

His idealism, such as it was, avoided flights of utopian fancy. Religion interested him mainly for its public uses. Deciding early in life that Christian orthodoxy probably was not true, he nonetheless supported its continuance as useful both in producing desired behavior and in providing spiritual solace. Similarly, while it is true that he once embarked on an endeavor to achieve moral perfection, a mere listing of the virtues, mastery of which he considered essential to achieve perfection, reveals the project's essentially pragmatic purposes: temperance, silence, order, resolution, frugality, industry, sincerity, justice, moderation, cleanliness, tranquility, chastity. (He later added humility when friends suggested that, for him, this might well be appropriate.) Much is revealed by a marginal note in the Autobiography: "Nothing so likely to make a man's fortune as virtue."

The ten years since the assassination of John F. Kennedy have been among the most traumatic in American history. "Among social critics a common manner of expressing the overall dimensions of the crisis has been the observation that the American Dream has turned into a nightmare."

Franklin never forgot that men act through self-interest; in all his multifarious schemes for public improvement (and in fairness to Franklin it must be emphasized that he was a deeply, genuinely, and fruitfully public-spirited citizen) he always attempted to gear public felicity to private interest. 3 A stable, free, and progressive society required contented, hard-working, and optimistic citizens, and necessary to both goals was widespread prosperity.

Critics have long charged that the Franklinian virtues came at a terrible cost. Charles Angoff called Franklin the first Babbitt and insisted that he was "incapable of dreaming, of doubting, of being mystified"; similarly, D.H. Lawrence, attacking Franklin in particular and American civilization in general, argued that the bourgeois success ethic blinded Franklin and his fellow countrymen to any sense of tragedy or mystery, or to any true freedom and individuality. Anyone who has heard too many of Poor Richard's maxims or encountered some of the more self-satisfied sections of the Autobiography can sympathize with much of this.

Defenders of Franklin, however, argue that his table of public virtues was meant as instrumental, not final; that he was concerned in his popular writing with means and not ends. 4 The best case for Franklin is, in fact, made on the assumption that he was dealing with the proximate and not ultimate ends of men, that his preoccupation with limited material and social goals was rooted in the sense that men's highest spiritual needs and aspirations have little direct reference to the mundane realities and exigencies of political life. This is a crucial point, and one to which we shall return at the end.

Franklin himself was among the constitution-makers of 1787, the Founders who attempted to embody the American Dream in the institutional structure of society, who had to transform the idealistic hopes of a revolutionary era into specific political form and content. Their task was made no easier by their own considerable skepticism concerning human nature in general and political democracy in particular. (Richard Hofstadter remarked that the ideas of the Constitution derived from a combination of Calvinist theology and Hobbesian philosophy; he exaggerated, but he had a point.) There was general agreement at the Constitutional Convention that pure democracy was unworkable. Although they had only recently completed their rebellion against England, the Founders

generally thought that the British structure of government, with its judicious mix of monarchical, aristocratic, and democratic elements, was still the best available.

The unfortunate tendency of democracy in its pure form was to anarchy and social disorder—and thus usually, in the end, to dictatorship. The great chronic disease of democracy, it was widely felt, was class conflict. The euphoric idealism of the Declaration of Independence and the successful overthrow of British rule had, for a time, engendered new and widespread hope for a successful republican experiment in America. Representative democracy might succeed in the nation even if direct democracy could not hope to. But by the middle and late 1780s, with revolutionary hopes fading, the old fears returned. The society seemed not to be working. Foreign and Indian enemies threatened at the nation's borders, and domestic discord produced signs of decay within. The abortive Shays' rebellion in Massachusetts in particular—with its overtones of class conflict—reawakened the old skepticism about the workability of democracy and was an important element in the calling of the convention at Philadelphia to rework the Articles of Confederation.

There were three reasons why the Founders were determined, despite their doubts, to create a more stable but still clearly republican structure of government. First, there was simple political expediency; they knew the people would accept no other form, whatever theoretically might be best. Thus they could not introduce those monarchical or aristocratic elements (except in the greatly attenuated forms of an independent executive and an upper legislative house) that many of them would have liked to see included. They were republicans of necessity. Second, they were persuaded that there was such a thing as a science of politics. Wise men, guided by reason and experience, could create a constitutional structure scientifically checking and balancing political power in such a way as to produce the benefits of popular government while safeguarding against its excesses.

The third reason why the Founders felt that democracy was a reasonable risk in America—and the one most relevant to this discussion—was the predominance in the population of small freehold farmers. As students of political theory, the Founders knew that the sturdy independent yeoman had been seen since Aristotle as the most stable foundation of popular government. 8

**The American Dream . . . not only allowed the individual to improve his station, it required it of him. And the struggle for improvement and success . . . became measured increasingly in money and goods.**

James Madison, for example, the Father of the Constitution and a dedicated republican, once predicted that America might well have to restore monarchy when the supply of free land ran out—which he thought might occur by the 1930s. The end of free land would mean the end of widespread distribution of property, which in turn would restore that fatal conflict between rich and poor endemic in democracy, eventuating finally in disorder, demagoguery, and tyranny. 9

So we can see that for the Founders, widespread prosperity was not just one element in the American Dream of democratic individualism, it was essential to it. The Founders wanted a government conducive to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, but those grand goals were forever threatened by human limitations, especially among the masses, and by human cupidty. Those limitations and that cupidty had to be taken into account. Thus the Founders wanted a government firmly energetic but limited in scope and ambition; the government's relationship to the pursuit of happiness was limited to ensuring tranquility, national honor, and general prosperity. 10 Madison envisaged that the multiplicity of economic groups in a large republic might replace the murderous struggle of classes with the manageable struggle of interests, and he hoped that widespread prosperity—particularly in the form of agrarian land-holding—would produce such acceptable economic payoffs as to avoid domestic convulsion and bind the public in self-interest to a stable republican order. 11

Thomas Jefferson, the patron saint of liberal democratic idealism, likewise looked to widespread prosperity to preserve his virtuous agrarian republic. In the Louisiana Purchase at the turn of the nineteenth century, he bent his Constitutional scruples and his opposition to government debt not the least because he was convinced that the purchase of the vast area of land between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains would provide the basis for the almost infinite perpetuation of America as an agrarian society.

Jefferson was, of course, no materialist in any meaningful sense of the word. Agrarian prosperity was in his eyes entirely different in kind from commercial or industrial prosperity, which he devoutly hoped that America would avoid as long as possible. Farming was more than an occupation, it was a way of life—the only way of life, Jefferson thought, that could provide the moral basis for a free and democratic society.

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6. Ibid., p. 411.
11. Ibid., pp. 520-524.
Commercialism and materialism, he felt, were incompatible with the true democratic dream.

But the problem was that already by the time of Jefferson’s presidency, his agrarians were thinking of themselves less as sturdy yeomen than as incipient entrepreneurs. His virgin west was filled with traders and land speculators, and his farmers wanted not virtuous self-sufficiency but cash crops, commercial outlets, and the materialistic good life of the east. The commercial satan entered the garden long before the machine did.

Frederick Jackson Turner, the great historian of the American west, emphasized frequently the materialistic element in the frontier experience he saw as central to American development. Free land and abundance were basic to the frontier experience and he quoted in agreement someone who had said that the U.S. was “primarily a commercial society and only secondarily a nation.” The west, Turner said, was a place of vast resources and thus “another name for opportunity.” Though he stressed the idealistic element in the frontier experience, he saw full well the material base of it all; the west was the gate of escape for European paupers and eastern economic failures; in the west, “free lands meant free opportunities.”

By the 1830s, American society—east or west, agricultural or commercial—was thoroughly materialistic. Alexis de Tocqueville, the French visitor whose Democracy in America is still probably the single most perceptive work ever written concerning American society, said that “I know of no country . . . where the love of money has taken stronger hold on the affections of men.” This development evoked widespread uneasiness. Marvin Meyers has, in fact, suggested that the great political struggle of Andrew Jackson’s presidency, the eventually successful effort by Jackson to destroy the Bank of the United States, was in reality a struggle not merely to destroy the Bank itself but a larger conflict against, in effect, America’s commercial corruption, of which the Bank, by its size and influence, had become the palpable symbol. As Meyer sums it up, the Jacksonians, regretting the loss of an at-least-imagined agrarian arcadia, “blamed the Bank for the transgressions committed by the people of their era against the political, social, and economic values of the Old Republic.”

As Jacksonian egalitarianism spread, so also did materialism. The American Dream now not only allowed the individual to improve his station, it required it of him. And the struggle for improvement and success—indeed sometimes for identity itself—became measured increasingly in money and goods. Certain Jacksonians, dismayed at the egalitarian scurrying for wealth, could sound almost conservative as they fondly recalled what James Fenimore Cooper called the old “republican aristocracy” and the more deferential society in which that aristocracy had been based; as Cooper acidly remarked, “where nothing is fixed, money is everything.”

Not surprisingly, most Americans—despite intermittent Jacksonian naggings of conscience—overcame their uneasiness. If they occasionally worried about the effect of widespread prosperity on their national virtue, they more often celebrated that wealth as a very sign of virtue. American prosperity, they convinced themselves, was different from European prosperity. It was more widely distributed and was truly earned; it was not wrung from the oppression of the masses. Prosperity was a major justification of the whole noble republican experiment that America represented; without that prosperity, the nation’s example to the rest of the world would be far less impressive. Prosperity and democratic idealism were not contradictory; America’s wealth came from her free institutions.

In this general national mood of self-congratulation, the moral warnings of assorted evangelical ministers, transcendentalist philosophers, and literary social critics concerning the corrosive effects of materialism on national standards went largely ignored, or if not totally ignored, at least not really absorbed either.

Things have not changed all that much in this respect over the last 140 years or so. Industrialization made both the promises and pitfalls of materialism even more immediate, but attitudes changed little. Material wealth in the guise of widespread prosperity has continued to act as a central ingredient in national solidarity and collective self-justification for the Middle American majority, as well as providing a highly useful solvent to national conflicts and tensions; in the guise of materialism, that same wealth has been seen as engendering the whoring after false gods that is so central—even obsessive—a theme among critics of American society. Material success continues to be at once the vindication and the betrayal of the American Dream.

III

ONE THING HAS CHANGED.

America produces more intellectuals now than it used to, and so the criticism of materialism is more widespread and vocal than it was

earlier. This produces some striking results. Historians of modern America, to cite just one example, are most critical of those periods—the 1920s and 1950s, for instance—that have been most successful in material terms. The 1920s are summarized as the age of Babbittry and the 1950s become the locust years of Eisenhower blandness.

There are two things wrong with this. First of all, it reduces the actual complexity, diversity, and particularity of human existence to the sometimes grotesque simplifications of social historians. Easy generalizations concerning normalcy or conformity tell us little of how things really were, of how people actually lived in decades gone by. Not infrequently, the banality of the critics exceeds the presumed banality of the middle class masses. As someone once pointed out, much of the criticism of the 1920s consists of the not very remarkable observation that ordinary people lead ordinary lives. Furthermore, such renderings of the past serve conveniently to ignore, or at least relegate to relative insignificance, the fact that these decades produced more real prosperity for the great mass of their people than had ever before been enjoyed by any people anywhere on earth. Surely only the most callous of elitists can so confuse his priorities as to deride on grounds of aesthetic and social inferiority those ages in which the mass of men lived more comfortably and more securely than they ever had before.

Which brings us full circle to an earlier point concerning the proximate and ultimate ends of man and the relationship of those differing ends to the American Dream. During the 1950s, criticism of America’s material surfeit and spiritual emptiness spurred all sorts of people, liberal and conservative, to examination of the national soul and to concern that the nation must somehow recapture and nourish a higher sense of moral purpose. Observing this, and no doubt thoroughly bemused by the characteristically agitated behavior of American society, Harold Macmillan is supposed to have remarked, “If people want a sense of purpose, they should get it from their archbishops.” Macmillan understood, as so many contemporary social critics do not, the distinction between the public and private spheres.

One of the critics of Benjamin Franklin mentioned earlier complained that Franklin’s philosophy was spiritually inadequate compared to that of Jesus or Socrates. His observation was accurate, but not really apposite. The implementation of Jesus’ ethic would require a society of saints; that of Socrates, a society of spiritual and intellectual aristocrats. Ben Franklin produced a prudential and productive ethic for a mass middle class society, which is essentially what America has always been. Nations are not moral entities, and the state is more properly concerned with the things of Caesar than of Jesus or Socrates. The American Dream could and did produce relative democratic freedom and relative economic prosperity for a majority of its people; its failures in these areas are many and obvious, but those failures, like the successes, are most usefully understood and assessed in political and economic terms, not moral or spiritual ones. For the truly higher things, a man really ought to see his archbishop.

“For the first time, perhaps, since that land emerged from the waters of geologic ages, a human face was set toward it with love and yearning... The history of every country begins in the heart of a man or a woman.” O Pioneers!
An English cathedral, a German monastery, and an American university—what do these three institutions, reflecting different cultural and ecclesiastical traditions, have in common? They are all part of a world-wide network of Christian centers linked together by the symbol of Coventry Cathedral’s ministry, the Cross of Nails. The basis for the relationship and common concern, identified by the Cross of Nails, is Reconciliation. This principal aspect of the ministry of Coventry Cathedral grew out of the war-time destruction and subsequent rebuilding of the great cathedral in this industrial city of England. Recognizing that the theological dimension of Reconciliation had broad and varied manifestations in the world, Coventry has singled out Christian communities which have in their own way searched for “the wholeness of man in an age of fragmentation.”

In 1965 Valparaiso University was presented with a Cross of Nails by the Provost of Coventry Cathedral, the Very Rev. H.C.N. Williams. This symbol of reconciliation had been fashioned from three fourteenth-century nails which had been among the rubble left in the bombed-out shell of the medieval Cathedral Church of St. Michael following the saturation bombing by the Germans in 1940. The Provost saw the University’s struggle with the question: “What does it mean to be a Christian university?” as an attempt to find wholeness and unity within the fabric of higher education in the Christian tradition.

There are numerous ways that Valparaiso University has been active in the Cross of Nails network. For four years the university sponsored the International Program of Cultural Studies at the Cathedral. The University has also been the impetus behind a series of conferences, begun in 1972, on the general theme “Contemporary Spirituality.” Three Cross of Nails centers have been involved from the beginning—the University, the Cathedral, and the Benedictine Abbey at Ottobeuren in Bavaria. The first conference was held at the magnificent Baroque abbey in Ottobeuren and set the pattern which characterizes these on-going meetings—three papers (Lutheran, Roman Catholic, and Anglican), discussion, worship, and fellowship.

The second conference, entitled “Alive for One Another,” took place at the Cathedral in Coventry during November, 1973. Representatives from three other Cross of Nails centers were present in addition to the three original participants. (The next meeting, in September of this year, will be at the Evangelical Academy in Iserlohn, West Germany, and will focus on “A Spirituality for the New Europe.”) The three papers printed here were delivered as a part of the second conference. Dr. Herbert Zorn, for over twenty-five years a missionary for the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in India, has been living in England during the past two years. He has been the director of a special project for the World Council of Churches investigating theological education throughout the world. Dr. Zorn has been a visiting lecturer at Valparaiso University from time to time. Fr. Marian O.S.B. is Head of English and Mathematics at the school run by the monks at the Abbey. Fr. Marian was a prisoner of war “stationed” for two years in the southern part of the United States. The Very Rev. A.H. Dammers is the Dean of Bristol Cathedral (England). Prior to this recent appointment, Dean Dammers was head of the Department of Education at Coventry Cathedral. He was responsible for the initial organization of the Cross of Nails conferences.

Van C. Kussrow, Jr.
Pentecost Over Babel:
The Holy Spirit in a Divided World

That is why it is called Babel, because the Lord there made a babble of the language of all the world; from that place the Lord scattered men all over the face of the earth. Genesis 11:9

Now there were living in Jerusalem devout Jews drawn from every nation under heaven; and at this sound the crowd gathered, all bewildered because each one heard his own language spoken. They were amazed and in their astonishment exclaimed, "Why, they are all Galileans, are they not, these men who are speaking? How is it then that we hear them, each of us in his own native language? . . . We hear them telling in our own tongues the great things God has done." Acts 2:5-11

THE PRECEDING QUOTATIONS from Scripture raise the subject of this paper: Pentecost over Babel. The confusion of tongues depicted as the result of man's pride and rebellion in Genesis finds its answer in the establishment of Christ's church by the power of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Day. In today's divided world, the Holy Spirit speaks clearly of God's great act in Christ; he continues as the impulse of believers prepared to permit Him to use them for uttering His great truth of redemption and life in Jesus Christ. The parallelism between the two Scripture passages is striking enough both in the context of Scripture to be compelling and within the experience of the Church to continue to be persuasive.

The first thing to be said is the rather obvious admission that the multiplicity of languages in the world should not be viewed as an unmixed curse; such a view would be too simplistic by far. How impoverished communication would be if it all went on in one language! How much meaning and beauty is gained from the insights and expressions that rise out of the varieties of the European languages with which those of us here might be familiar? Imagine how much more is to be gained from the other languages spoken by the rest of the world's billions!

This admission does not change the fact of frustration when one tries to learn a new language. I speak from the experience of one who was practically monolingual until I spent a year in India learning the rudiments of a completely new language and continued to study and learn it somewhat better over twenty five years in that country. The frustration never left me completely, but the new depths and forms of communication which arose from familiarity with the Malayalam tongue and culture have made that frustration a light yoke indeed. The way in which that language has matured, deepened, and widened, received influences from other languages from near and far and begun to send out influences of its own is typical of how languages interact and develop the great art of communication.

The foregoing is to say that the power of the Spirit in communicating can be seen in the very nature and development of language even without the specific task of communication of the Gospel in word. A fullness of time had come in many ways on the day of Pentecost—think of the thousands who came from all around the Mediterranean basin on that day. That fulness is more and more evident in this day of swift travel and swifter communication. God speaks in many ways for those who will listen, in every time and every place.

Listening is vital, but it includes more than one's ears. In the Malayalam language there is only one rather clumsy expression for saying "Thank you." Literally translated, it means, "This is a great service." It is not used in everyday conversation. One might well conclude that this indicates that Malayalees are a rather ungrateful lot. Nothing could be further from the truth. The word is replaced by the act. When you receive something, you indicate your thanks by the way in which you receive it. Receiving it with your left hand is an insult, with your right hand is proper and with both hands is indication of respect for the giver. An accompanying bow with the palms of the hand pressed together completes the indications of respect and gratitude. The words "Thank you" are transformed into a dramatic form.

I have a reason for beginning this presentation with such general statements about communication. Certainly, there will be no time to treat them all at length or to prove them, even if proof were possible. However, I believe that the more restricted points which I will make do have implications of breadth sufficient to cover a great many areas of communication. My remarks will be restricted to the area of the ministry of the people of God under the
power of the Spirit. But let us not forget that if you consider the nature of the ministry you must consider the nature of the church; if you consider the nature of the church, you must consider the nature of the Gospel; if you consider the nature of the Gospel in its fulness, you have covered about everything.

I WOULD LIKE TO USE THE process of learning a new language as a practical paradigm for this paper. My steps in learning a language are practical, the result of my own struggle; I make no pretense at using a linguist's terminology. Learning a language for communication has four steps involved in it. First, learning simple words and the grammar to put them together; second, intonation and the "way things are said"; third, colloquial and dialectical variation; fourth, open communication, in which the rules are used, transcended, or ignored as the situation indicates. I am suggesting that the Spirit's working in a divided world can be understood in this fashion. For, just as we grow in our ability in a language through use and experience — and yet there is communication on a reasonably adequate level in each state — so we can understand the guiding of God's Spirit and can communicate that guidance in increasing measure as we are open to him; and yet “through our inarticulate groans the Spirit Himself is pleading for us” (Rom. 8:26).

Permit me to interject a remark at this point on text and context, a presupposition of the Word of God with which I present this paper. Put theoretically, I presuppose that we are speaking from the basis of God's Word, his revelation of himself through the ages and fundamentally in Jesus Christ. I also suppose that we agree that the canonical Scriptures are the vital text of this revelation. We find ourselves, then, in a continuing and creative tension between text and context. We are influenced by text both in the sense of the written text of Scripture and in the sense of Him to whom Scripture bears witness. Our attention is also drawn to the context both of the various times and places when God revealed himself to men and of the present time when He is revealing himself to us. I shall speak more of this later; right now, simply let me add that this context can have all the beauties and pitfalls of a shadowed subject for a photographer; it comes out right only if the light is properly directed. This applies to the context of history as well as the context of today. It is easy for us to misinterpret the context of history by a wrong emphasis on true facts; it is also possible for us to read the present context rightly. This proper reading comes out of an understanding of where and how text and context converge and, by their interaction, speak to us.

I make this point in order to establish the essentially Christian nature of what we are saying. After all, what is it that separates "listening to the Spirit of God" from pious self-delusion? What is the corrective that can sift out the personal feelings from this presentation, expose them for what they are, and leave us with a word from God's Spirit? It must be the understanding of the Word of God coming to us in the fulness of its text, yet speaking out of fluid context, fluid not only in point of time, but also in point of the experience with which each of us receives it. I would hope that our discussions will lay bare the relationships and let us hear the Spirit together.

Basic Vocabulary and Grammar

I SHALL NOT SPEND TIME on the most basic vocabulary of the Gospel. My reason is only the need to proceed further; I admit that it might be very helpful for us to consider what we mean by the good news centered upon God's act in Jesus Christ. Our vocabulary would grow tremendously. But that is not the subject.

The basic vocabulary and grammar which I wish to posit is the understanding of the ministry of God's people. Without arguing now about the importance, priority, or definition of ordained ministry, I submit that there is an unquestionable ministry of every member of the people of God. "These were his gifts: some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip God's people for work in His service, to the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-12).

The significant words are "to equip God's people for work in His service, to the building up of the body of Christ." I know that even in the edited Greek text there is some doubt whether a comma should come between "God's people" and "for work in His service." I would not base any sweeping conclusion on the fact that the New English Bible translates this without the comma, though I agree to the omission. But I do believe that the evidence of Scripture, Old and New Testaments, supports the contention that the entire people of God do have a calling for work in his service. I go one step further and see this calling of God's people to ministry as primary; out of it all other ministries are given their meaning by the Lord of the Church.

If the above claim is true, then the purpose of what we call the ordained ministry is to equip God's people for their ministry. This does not deny the task of a preaching and sacramental ministry with its function of building up a people faithful to their Lord; but it does emphasize that faithfulness to the Lord always implies faithfulness to his Gospel and his mission in the world. Therefore a preaching and sacramental ministry is directed toward building that kind of faithfulness.

Do not misunderstand this to imply a simplistically activist approach to church membership. Twenty five years in India in the midst of Hindus and Muslims have taught me that there are times when the loudest noise seals off the ears of
listeners and that the most effective voice is often amazingly silent in words but clear in deeds. Even the painful comment about quarreling Christians that they are no better than Hindus, when made by Hindus, has the grudging admission that Christians are meant to be something different, and often in fact are.

Another point needs to be added here, a point of "grammar," or relationship. Even the apostles, prophets, pastors, and teachers are themselves primarily people of God. Not only is the pastor or priest an equipper of the other saints, he is an equipper of himself as well.

This basic vocabulary is vital for our divided world, especially in those areas where the Gospel has come recently. It is interesting and a bit shaming that new converts are often extremely ministry-oriented, full of the good news and eager to spread it as far and fast as they can. Then, after a few years, or in the next generation, they get a different message and their enthusiasm wanes. It seems that they get a message from their spiritual guides and experts that they are not really all that well equipped to carry the Gospel forward and that it is not very important or wise for them to try to do so.

This message is certainly not from the Spirit, at least not from the Holy Spirit. Certainly the Spirit of "inarticulate groans" can speak through simple Christians! The basic vocabulary of equipping the saints needs relearning. Without that vocabulary, the rest of the language will be anomalous, ludicrous, and even tragic as the speech of one who translates literally from one language to another.

Intonation

and the Way Things are Said

I SUSPECT THAT IN THE DISCUSSIONS of this meeting some of our differences are going to arise out of differences in the way we say things. I do not mean the German-English difference as much as the subtler differences in meanings that we put to words that are theoretically understood by all. It is a caricature to say that the Americans here are activist conservatives, that the English are liturgical latitudinarians, and the Germans go down deeper and come up with more complicated conclusions than anyone else. But caricature is never utterly false; thereby hangs our problem of communication within this meeting of reasonably like-minded people.

If this is the case among us, imagine how much more complicated the case will be with those who speak other languages. Until the day I left India, I had to use a very humiliating introduction when I came to a person or group which did not know me. I had to say, "I am going to speak Malayalam ...." Only then would my first sentences be understood. Why? Perhaps partly because Malayalam is not expected from a white face; but also because my intonation and word choice were often defective. I can be understood, but not without effort.

Imagine the problems that this raises in the realm of communicating the Gospel in a non-Indo-European and non-Semitic language which in turn has no Judaean-Christian culture base and has not grown up in any of the philosophical categories which we use. The problem of communication becomes apparently hopeless. It reminds me of my frustration in learning to pronounce and distinguish the three distinct sounds for R in Malayalam; for months it was simply impossible; it is still not easy.

The "hopelessness" of this situation has, I believe, encouraged foreign missions and younger churches to listen to God's Spirit. Part, but only part, of the answer came in the term indigenization. It began, validly and simply, with an effort at finding indigenous forms for worship, church government, and forms of teaching. This spread and came into the very essentials of the Christian message. Pleas arose for Indian, Japanese, Korean, and African theologies. The validity of these pleas was rightly based upon the accusation that current theology is Western or American, English, German, etc. The result of the pleas was some sweeping and deep thinking as well as some superficial thought. Among other things the Old Testament was challenged as a preparation for the Gospel outside of the Judaean-Christian tradition; the Koran, Hindu Vedic books, Upanishads, epics, Puranas and Buddhist writings have been suggested as proper substitutes. The question of tribal and national customs, e.g., polygamy, has been discussed from many viewpoints. The line between adaptation of the Gospel and syncretism is no longer clear.

It is not the purpose of this paper to take stands on specific points here mentioned. Undoubtedly, however, the Spirit of God is urging us to look at the "intonation" of our theology in substance and practice. Whatever we may say of specifics, the divided world is a continuing reminder to us as laymen, preachers, teachers—as the people of God—that we are responsible not only for what we say but also for what people interpret us to say. If we realize this we can realize the importance of the task of God's people, not to be quiet because we might be misunderstood, but to speak, act, and live in such a way that our meaning, the Gospel, is crystal clear.

There remains something essentially narrow and stultifying in the preceding remarks. Just as learning intonation carefully can make you adept in language with nothing worthwhile to say, so a one-sided emphasis on indigenization can make you very adept in indigenous thought, but largely ignorant of the wider issues. Isn't it true that much of what has passed as heresy in the church's life has been one-sided? It has come from listening to the Spirit, but only in a restricted way. Every time the Spirit speaks to and through His people, this danger exists. To live fruitfully with that danger, we must go a step further.
Colloquial and Dialectical Variations

ONE COULD SPEND A GREAT deal of time explaining the problems of colloquial and dialectical variations. Translation doesn’t help because such expressions deal with symbols, metaphors, allegories, and the like. Whenever I felt proud of a particular linguistic effort in Malayalam or ended a long, involved discussion, I only needed to listen to casual chatting to get lost in the idioms. The humiliation reached its nadir when I thought I had understood the point only to realize that I was working with last year’s idiom which had taken a different meaning.

There is another observation about these colloquial expressions which strikes me as important. They often represent more in bridges from one language to another than ordinary speech. This was vividly portrayed in the experience of a fellow missionary. He had picked up a man who was trudging down a lonely road with a piece of machinery on his head. The man was illiterate and apparently knew little beyond the rudiments of his own language, let alone a word of English. Yet when asked where he was going, he explained that the rotor had burned out on the motor of the grain mill and he was going to repair it. Except for three connecting verbs, every word he used was English, for each word had been absorbed into the Tamil language.

I feel that this is significant for our study; just as languages are molded by outside forces, so the language of the church, even of the Holy Spirit, must be understood in each situation. This is more complicated than to say that the Gospel must be expressed in an African, Indian, Japanese, etc. way. The Gospel must be communicated in a way that relates to the entire setting or context. I am tempted to use the word “relevance” here; but I fear the word because it seems to imply too personal or private an interpretation.

A few observations about the Church of South India and its relationships with the Lutherans might demonstrate the point. Conversations and negotiations have gone on between them since 1948; I was involved since 1950. At first, lines seemed to be drawn so definitely that little hope of coming together existed. Lutherans said “Doctrinal agreement first, then union.” The Church of South India said, “Doctrinal agreement grows out of union.” The years of discussion produced agreed statements and a joint catechism for use in the various churches. The barriers haven’t fallen yet, but I suspect that the issues are far different, probably much more honest. Some of the issues have to do with the unequal power in numbers of the two churches, some with the problem of diluting rather generous foreign grants into wider constituencies, some with variations of the problem of caste, community, and social status.

Now all of these problems, as well as the opportunities to which they are directed, come out of the context, let us say, the Indian context. But when we say “Indian context” let us remember that we mean a context that, though basically Indian, has been heavily influenced by European and American forces, especially in the church. The India Evangelical Lutheran Church, in which I worked, for example, was a church begun in 1895 by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod through the efforts of four former Leipzig missionaries; during World War I it was shocked into development of national clergy because, though U.S.-supported, many of its missionaries were still German citizens and were interned and repatriated. It works in two language areas with attending communication problems. It has been self-governing since 1959, but its constitution shows strong affinity to that of its U.S. senior partner. It is currently under strong pressure from the U.S. toward conservative theology and less ecumenical directions. Politically, the India government discourages strong ties overseas. The context is varied to the point of bewilderment. This example could be multiplied by the hundreds in the churches in India alone, not to mention the rest of the Third World.

What then is the colloquialism of the Spirit in a divided world? I doubt that the message is the same in detail in any two places. Certainly it is never simple. The implications and directions of the Spirit’s language have to be listened to most carefully.

PERMIT ME TO EXERCISE the right of one who has seen the theological education scene in many parts of the world, a right of tentative analysis that requires a few grains of salt. In Madagascar, a political weather change has suddenly brought the Malagasy language to the fore, with plans to replace French as the language of education; the church is best equipped to do this task for it has been largely responsible for developing Malagasy to its present status. Tremendous opportunities for making a contribution up to and including a university department of religion await the churches if they can unite in this effort. Divisions between the churches threaten this opportunity. In Nigeria, a combination of economic growth through oil discoveries, a recent bloodbath in the Biafran war, increasing difficulties in gaining entry for foreign missionaries, and the mushrooming of independent churches all seem to call for a new look at the direction the church should take in training its ministry. In New Guinea, the thrust toward independence, the radical differences between coastals and highlanders, and an unstable economy make it imperative that clearer thinking be done by the churches in the form and content of theological training in a country with only 2,000,000 people, yet 500 languages. Add to all of this the understanding that much of the Third World is comprised of countries
divided and/or joined according to rationales established in the West, often with complete disregard for broader unity or difference of culture.

As I see all of these things, I am tempted to throw up my hands in despair of finding any common language of the Spirit. It is much like the scornful glances we used to receive when, returning to America for furloughs after six years, we used idioms and colloquialisms from the previous furlough. Or, more seriously, when I would learn a new idiom in Malayalam and try it out in speech only to realize that I wasn’t communicating at all.

We find ourselves, then, in the usual dilemma of the Christian in this world. We analyze the situation adequately and find ourselves with contradictions and questions more numerous and confusing than before we started the process of analyzing. Is there any answer to this problem of Babel?

Open Communication

WITHIN THE PROCESS OF communication there is a point where, despite fractured rules, inadequate vocabulary, and atrocious mispronunciations, real communication does take place. It has to do with relationships and mutual understanding of hopes and fears. We have all experienced it, I am sure, perhaps with someone who knows us very well, perhaps with someone with whom all the signals seem to work. This experience, I submit, is one of God’s great blessings to all of mankind.

It is precisely at this point in our paradigm that I see the Holy Spirit bringing the Gospel to bear upon a divided world. Throughout the stresses and strains in the Christian community, among the many divisions that exist within the unity of God’s people, even in the midst of arguments, often bitter, among God’s people, the Holy Spirit continues to operate powerfully.

I am trying to say that God’s Spirit works among us in our disagreements as well as in our agreements. I anticipate some disagreement with what I have suggested in this paper; perhaps that disagreement may go to my early presuppositions that ministry is basically and primarily the business of the whole people of God. Certainly, there will be criticism of one-sidedness, hedging my statements, and timidity in venturing into a more open approval of the Spirit’s working in non-Christian religions. These disagreements and criticisms will be welcome, not because I like an argument—I don’t—or because I desire a rhetorical martyr’s crown—may I be spared that!—but because in them we can permit the Spirit to work in this divided world of which we ourselves are part. We are dedicated to a common Lord and guided by a common Spirit; this unity cannot be negated by any of our differences or criticism. To use a distinctively Lutheran category, we all live under the forgiveness of sins. We are not saved by our excellence or lost by our weakness of thought, personality, or action. We are saved by God in Christ through the power of the Spirit Who leads us through our divisions into an over-arching unity.

This I believe to be true of our discussion group here. I also believe it to be true in a divided world, though I admit that here I make a broader leap of faith. That the Spirit of God is continually active in this world, I believe. That he is active in what seem to be most unlikely places, I know from Hindu and Muslim literature, as well as from personal encounters with non-Christians. That he continues to prepare God’s people to be his witnesses to the nations, I also know. His timetable and his methods I do not know.

I find myself very uncomfortable with those who program the Spirit. Some years ago, a Tamil program for a Pentecostal meeting came to hand. It was quite detailed and gave times for each part of the program. After songs, prayers, and a sermon, the time from 9:30-10:00 was assigned to “Waiting for the Holy Spirit.” With a chuckle, I wondered aloud whether the Holy Spirit had the same concept of time as these people or whether he had received the program. Yet, is this really different from much of the programming which is done in the church’s work today? My current task has to do with the viability of theological education in the Third World today. It seems that most of us presuppose that theological education means a full-time, fully-paid ministry, and look askance upon the volunteer ministries, for example, of the Pentecostals in Latin America as poorly prepared and inadequate; we take it for granted that theological education will follow the educational forms that have stood the test (or have they?) for centuries in the Western world; we distinguish between higher and lower theological education on largely academic grounds. I believe these are false premises.

I believe that the Spirit of God is saying something to us, not particularly about our own English, American, or German situations, but about a common Gospel for his divided world. He is saying something to us that should urge us to review our entire panoply of doctrine, liturgy, and scholarship and to ask whether this communicates his Word to the world today. Such a review would be very uncomfortable and disturbing, but “uncomfortable and disturbing” is also a good description of the first Pentecost.
Contemporary Life Style
for Persons and Groups

I. Analysis

"WHEREVER THE CORPSE is, there the vultures will gather" (Mt. 24:28). The prophetic church is always called upon to discern the signs of the times, to disclose, if you prefer imagery, the four horsemen of our contemporary apocalypse. Their names, according to my vision, are Poverty, Population, Profanity, and Pollution; four easily memorable Ps, and the thunder of their passage is already in our midst.

Poverty, world poverty is a familiar enough theme to us all, though comparatively few in the West have seen with their own eyes one of its major manifestations: thousands of human beings sleeping on the railway platforms, on the pavements, under the trees. Today I draw your attention only to its grisly attendants, violence and war. The endemic violence between Israel and her Arab neighbors, in Southern Africa, in South East Asia, even at a less intense level in Northern Ireland, has many and complex causes. But in each situation is one constant factor, a sharp distinction between the comparatively affluent groups and their poverty-stricken neighbors.

The threat of the population explosion is also familiar. We have all seen those terrifying graphs of escalating figures. But there remains an only too common illusion that this is someone else's problem, controlling the fecundity of the urban and rural poor. Far from it. For calculating the consumption of the world's resources the best yardstick is that of energy consumed. It has been expertly calculated that on average a baby born in the United States today (taken as representative of the richest nations) will consume five hundred times as much energy during his or her expected life span as a baby born in an Asian village. That another expert assessment puts the figure as twenty-seven times illustrates the problem we lay folk have with statistics! But the point is made that in terms of the consumption of resources the control of the population of the rich is even more vital than the control of the population of the poor.

Profanity, as you realize, is not perhaps the first word to come into our minds to describe the dangerous phenomenon of extravagance and wastefulness. But it begins with P and is accurate enough for the purpose. The experts may argue about whether our resources of coal and oil, copper and iron and manganese will last us twenty, fifty, or a hundred years. They may confidently or with less confidence predict that technology will make us independent of this resource or that. But nothing can affect the truth that sooner or later any limited resource will begin to fail; and sooner rather than later at our dangerously rapid rate of increasing consumption. This profanity is personal, too, fed by the way we spend our money. When first I gave serious attention to this subject I came across the fashion page of the daily newspaper. The pictures showed on the left a light jacket, shirt, and trousers for ladies selling at £110 in the center a coat at £92, and on the right dungarees at £60. More recently I saw a leather suitcase in a shop near my home selling at £48. These are examples, perhaps trivial examples, of a kind of madness that has gripped the Western world. No wonder we have galloping inflation. Are we so bent on self-destruction that people buy a pair of dungarees at a price that would keep an Indian mother and child for a year? Here, rather than in all that boring conventional pornography, is found the significant obscenity of our age.

Finally, pollution. In 1969 forty million fish died in the Rhine River in five days. There is so much chemical waste in that noble river that a photographer was recently able to develop his film in its waters. Some years ago our own Manchester Ship Canal actually caught fire and exploded, with fatal results. The very oceans are in danger of becoming a vast sump. Consider the motor car, basis of the prosperity of this and many another fine city and, make no mistake, an enormously convenient means to a richer life for millions. I own a small one myself. With it, however, we kill and maim indiscriminately—one killed on the roads of the world an average of every three minutes. We pollute our air with lead fumes and other toxic filth. We lay our land waste with acres of concrete and tar and we con-
sume at an ever-increasing rate the refined products of our vulnerable petroleum resources, to say nothing of our steel, rubber, and sophisticated plastics. It is perhaps not too late to outlaw its built-in obsolescence, insist by law on all practicable safety features, and include in its price its full social cost in terms, for example, of the hospital beds, expanded police forces, and insurance facilities that its use enjoins.

Poverty, population, profligacy, and pollution, the four horsemen of our contemporary apocalypse; abstractions which spell misery and death to countless people, born and yet unborn. But there is no cause, not yet at least, for despair. God has given us immense technical, intellectual, moral, and spiritual resources with which to fight the foe. Well over 90 per cent of all the scientists who have ever lived are alive today. Our technology is only in its infancy. The churches and other groups are more aware of their global, dare I translate “ecumenical,” responsibilities than ever before. It remains possible for us all to live together as citizens of planet Earth. As for ourselves as individuals and members of small and large groups eager to play our part, we have four main weapons to hand, again four Ps. And their names are prayer, prophecy, political action, and personal moderation.

Now so urgent and complex are the problems that confront us, so massive are the charges in personal attitudes and in political and economic systems that are necessary, that, it seems to me, only the love of God Himself, working of course as always through people, can avail. To pray is to invoke that love, align ourselves with its purposes, and receive inspiration for sacrificial action.

Secondly, prophecy. By prophecy I mean the making known of the word of God insofar as it is revealed to us. This means doing all that we legitimately can to influence public opinion, warning our generation that our greed denies another’s need, yet sounding also a note of sober hope.

Thirdly, political action. Prophecy is often closely associated with political action. But prophecy usually means words, and deeds as well are necessary. We have to work out policies and organize the necessary structures of power to carry them out.

And, fourthly, personal moderation, the theme of this paper. Perhaps this should have come first as it is the necessary psychological and moral basis for the other three. We cannot align ourselves with God’s purposes by prayer nor dare we prophesy to others, nor initiate political action with integrity unless we ourselves are trying to live simply that others may simply live. Nor, incidentally, will we get very far in this attempt unless we undertake it with mutual support of others. The pressures against simplicity of Life Style are very strong for all except the poor.

II. Personal Moderation

NOW I KNOW OF NO MORE urgent topic for discussion and action by Christian groups than this: open discussion of our personal use of money, leading up to the definition and implementation of a simplicity of life style appropriate to our age. Nor is it difficult to show that such simplicity of life style is in accordance with the Gospel. I shall here attempt no exhaustive demonstration of the point but merely confirm it with reference to one passage from the New Testament from those sane, sober, and realistic documents, the Pastoral Epistles. In the Revised Standard Version, the passage reads as follows: "There is great gain in godliness with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world; but if we have food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts with many pangs." (1 Tim. 6:6-10).

"There is great gain in godliness with contentment." The Greek word porismos, translated by gain is a financial one. The New English translation has “dividends.” Even from the materialistic, financial point of view, to be content with what you have is prudent and brings happiness. Certainly were such contentment normal, inflation would be contained “at a stroke.”

"For we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world." These simple words, stating so obvious a truth, strike us with such poignancy at the burial services of rich and poor alike. What then is the point of accumulating possessions? As Jesus said: "Set your mind on God’s kingdom and his justice before everything else, and all the rest will come to you as well" (Mt. 6:33).

"But if we have food and clothing with these we shall be content." The New English Bible translates skeptasma more accurately as “covering.” Perhaps in our colder climate we may properly extend the meaning to include a roof over our heads. And in fact there are many other things that we need to play our various parts in the world. The passage concludes with words which carry their own authentication, require therefore no further commentary from me, but are worth repeating.

"But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts with many pangs."

How uncanny an analysis of our present financial and economic
predicament! But who among us dares be the first to cast a stone?

III. Background to “Life Style”

FOR MANY YEARS NOW I have been concerned, along with countless others, with matters of this kind. It would be irrelevant to bore you with details. Suffice it to say that in September, 1972, I found myself at the ecumenical conference for Church Leaders at Selly Oak. I ought not to have been there at all. But our Bishop married a wife, and therefore could not go. He invited me to stand in. I chose to be a member of Commission Eight within the conference with the theme of “Man’s Stewardship of God’s World.” Within that Commission I found myself making the point that we dare not prophesy on conservation themes unless we ourselves were committed to a certain simplicity of life style. This point was well taken in our Commission and I was invited to put it to the Conference; it turned out to be the final point to be made in the whole Conference. It was couched in these words:

“Commission Eight, convinced that environmental responsibility and social justice on a global scale demand changes in personal as well as national ways of life, recommends to each of its own members and invites all members of this Conference to pledge themselves to a simplicity of life which is generous to others and content with enough rather than with excess; and that each should privately review his or her own life before God so as to implement this pledge, as necessary, by altered patterns of consumption.”

But of course to make a public statement is only a start. Since then I have been in correspondence with all the members of Commission Eight and with a few others who were at Selly Oak and have had many conversations with friends and acquaintances, including a number of young people and a number with no commitment to the church. Drafts attempting to define an appropriate life style have passed to and fro over a period of over a year. The result is to be found in the Appendix to this paper. In this process the following principles became clear to me:

First, that we do not need another organization, at least to begin with. “Life Style” must work through existing organizations.

Secondly, “Life Style” should be reasonably simple. Churchill’s usual demand that his advisers should “write down on one side of a sheet of paper” was a good guide.

Thirdly, “Life Style” should be designed for ordinary people, not for heroic ascetics. Here I was greatly encouraged by the sensitive and humane temper perceptible at many points in the Rule of St. Benedict, no less.

Fourthly, “Life Style” should neither be nor seem to be for Christians only. Care has been taken to include nothing unacceptable to humanists, adherents of other faiths, or other people of goodwill.

IV. “Life Style” for the Community of the Cross of Nails

THIS CONCLUDING SECTION is quickly done. One of the abiding joys of my own ministry is that the Provost and staff of Coventry Cathedral so readily and generously accepted my tentative attempts to work out a Common Discipline for them, and subsequently for various groups all over the world. It would be an even greater joy, and I am convinced a more significant one, if the Community of the Cross of Nails were to undertake Group Commitment to “Life Style” and so commend it to its member centers. The first step in such a process would be for this Conference formally to endorse “Life Style” and commend it to the Cross of Nails Centers for study and decision. It is not possible at this point in time to amend “Life Style,” for it is already published in its present form. Amendment may come later. And in any case it provides for flexible interpretation. There is no doubt that adherence to it by the Community of the Cross of Nails would give it a flying start of incalculable consequences.

“What I hear,” wrote a Chinese sage, “I forget. What I see, I remember. What I do, I understand.” You have had an opportunity to hear and to see. Now, if the cause seems good to you, is the time for action and so for understanding.

* * * *

Appendix

LIFE STYLE

The Aims of “Life Style”

The conservation of the earth’s resources and their equitable distribution are essential to man’s future. Life Style provides guidelines whereby we may live more simply that others may simply live. Not itself a new organization, Life Style is offered, not directly to individuals, but to existing groups and organizations.

Group Commitment to “Life Style”

Any club, group, society, church, or other organization (or indeed an ad hoc group set up for the purpose), whether local or with a wider reference, may join Life Style. This involves a simple commitment in writing on the form below and the appointment of a Correspondent. The Correspondent will:

1. Organize the encouragement of members of the group to undertake
personal commitment to Life Style (see below).

2. Keep an accurate list of those who are so committed.

3. Supply information to and otherwise keep in touch with the Central Correspondent.

**Personal Commitment to “Life Style”**

1. To make our decisions about the level and character of our consumption of goods and services as responsible citizens of planet Earth.

2. To make an approximate annual, monthly, or weekly budget of income and expenditure in the light of the previous commitment.

3. To give away for the benefit of those in need, particularly in the developing continents, such a percentage of our net disposable income as we responsibly decide (e.g. 5%).

4. In our purchases to resist obsolescence, scrutinize advertisements, and challenge wasteful packaging.

5. To be generous without ostentation and hospitable without extravagance.

6. To associate ourselves with some group or movement which promotes the conservation of the earth’s resources or their equitable distribution or personal simplicity of life or free discussion of our personal use of money.

7. Regularly to share with a friend, specially invited for this purpose, our experience as we work out our Life Style.

8. To encourage others to join in; and to accept our share of any financial responsibility for the development of Life Style that may become necessary.

*Note: Life Style is not intended to be a substitute for action in the political or economic fields but commitment to it will provide a psychological and moral basis for such action. The personal commitment to Life Style envisaged above is entirely consistent with reservations about this or that particular item of commitment (1-8 above).*
the real foundations of a healthy spiritual life; (c) a more acute consciousness of our being responsible for ourselves and of making decisions according to our conscience; (d) an emphasis on dialogue, pluralism, especially in monastic communities. Wider apertures towards other Christian and even non-Christian denominations—a new vision of the activity of the Holy Spirit, “bringing things to pass, wherever he wills.” (Cf. Vatican II, Decree on Ecumenicalism, No. 4.)

Encouraging moves, these. They clearly show that modern spirituality endeavors to avoid misunderstandings which had crept in even before the Reformation (unbalanced conceptions about subjective salvation, loss of spiritual unity, non-biblical language, too heavy a stress on reason).

Today spirituality tries to eschew one-sided self-centeredness and is reverting to the essential foundations of Christian existence: the incarnation (of God) and the union in Christ and the triune God (“the incarnational and communitarian dimensions of Christian life”).

“As God did not create man for life in isolation but for the formation of social unity, it has pleased God as well to make them holy and save them not merely as individuals without any mutual bonds, but my making them into a single people, a people which acknowledges him in truth and serves him in holiness. From the beginning of salvation history he has chosen men not just as individuals but as members of a certain community. . . . This communitarian character is developed and consummated in the work of Jesus Christ. For the very Word made flesh willed to share in the human fellowship” (“Gaudium et Spes,” No. 32). Thus modern spirituality can adequately be expressed by citing Michel Quoist: “When moving towards God the present-day Christian in his spirituality wants to advance with his whole being. The intuitive consent to doctrine alone does not suffice for him, neither does the inner turmoil caused by an emotional excitement, nor the enthrancement through an exuberant fancy, nor the prostration of an abject body. His whole person, whatever he is, all that makes up his day-to-day life, his work, his past-time, his relationships, his love-tokens, his struggles, the struggles of his fellowbeings, etc. . . . all that urges him to go towards God who comes his way in Jesus Christ—the Saviour. Every day he realizes that he is not alone, but part of a borough, of a factory, of kindred souls . . . of multiple human groupings, of a social class, of mankind. A whole people, on the move like him, accompanying and surrounding him, and it is as a member of this people that he wants to meet God.”

This aspect of spirituality is the necessary answer to the new conception of man and the world emerging today. In spirituality the main stress accordingly can no longer be put on “introversion.” It is the modern tendency towards matter-of-factness that will show to a concrete world with its multiple social, economic, political, and religious ties the way to a genuine, present-time spirituality.

Beyond the purely spiritual, Christian life today expects to co-operate in the development of the world—to help not only through Christian charities, but also through and with the power of love which Christ gives us and in which He has sacrificed himself for the world. “Christian charity would fatally be misunderstood, if looked upon only as remedy against acute destitution and not also as an agent in the structural modification of its causes and of social conditions. Christian charity is also anticipating and planning to prevent poverty in the time to come. If Christian charity shares in this world, it must needs share in its laws and in the framework of its reality” (Handreichung fuer den pastoralen Dienst [Mayence: Gruenewald-Verlag, 1970]).

NOW THE QUESTION ARISES: Does “dedication to others” demand “living together,” i.e., is it necessary, or a good thing, to live the new spirituality in a certain community? And further: How to live such a life? There have been such communities in the history of the church and they have enriched the life of the whole church. All the same, there is actually no received common opinion as to the point, framework, and spiritual impact of such communities. The more we live in a secularized world, the greater the necessity seems to be for a bond between the individual Christian and a “community of brethren,” to support him and to strengthen his faith and his hope. That, however, does not imply a disengagement from responsibility for the world, nor a resorting to a religious ghetto, let alone a bond joining him to a certain community.
e.g., a monastic one. For an enclosure is far from making a Christian community, nor does it of itself induce spiritual spontaneity.

Corporate spirituality depends essentially on the framework of a certain community; that is the main problem in our time. “Establishing a Christian community is a dubious enterprise, continually in danger of ending up one way or another in a ghetto. . . . In the last resort the Christian, according to the logic intrinsic to his faith, does not know a community other than that of the totality of mankind” (Cultures et foi, Cahier No 25 [janvier/fevrier 1973], 8).

Thus a Christian community will lie in the tension zone between institutionalization and spontaneity, as genuine spirituality can only grow in the tension zone between office and charisma. It is with this tension in mind that we must try to understand the numerous attempts in our time to create living communities. This is what Father B. Besret of the Cistercians once wrote concerning his experiment of Bosquen:

In the course of those years I lived the Church in my experience as a man, as a Christian, as a monk, as a priest, later as a superior of a community, and finally as the force supporting a new type of Christian community, characterized by the search for new ways of expression and existence in the world.

Besret turned the monastery of Bosquen (in Brittany, in the backwoods) into the focus of an “ecclesiastical communion.” That does not mean a settled “monastic community,” but the “broad” group of all those sharing in the same spirit, the same attitude towards things and man. This spirit of Bosquen means freedom, above all the emancipation of creative genius and a fervent quest of genuineness in words, actions, and gestures.” Even more specifically he adds about the life of this community:

To me, at least, it seems to be essential for a life according to the gospels that from time to time we assemble to worship in church, to awaken us mutually through listening to the gospels, to compare our manifold expressions of the same faith, to assist one another in difficulties, to share the occasions of our joys, to wonder and to give thanks” (all quotations: Wenn die Nacht wie der Tag leuchtet [Limburg: Lahnverlag, 1971]).

Special attention must be paid at this point neither to paralyze spirit and religious spontaneity by institutionalization, nor move to the opposite extreme, to discard the church completely. The fellowship of Bosquen seems to have a certain parallel in the New Testament, especially when we look at the first Christian community at Jerusalem as portrayed in the Acts. The Jerusalem community has been considered time and again as the model for monastic orders living in accordance with a certain settled institution. Of that community in Jerusalem it is said that “they gathered together every day in unanimity” in the temple and in homes, and that “they remained in the teachings of the apostles.” From such descriptions we may conclude that these gatherings fortified them in their faith (teaching). The importance given to those “gatherings” by the early Christians is corroborated by a historic event. Emperor Diocletian did not want to continue the persecution of Christians in the old style. Every Christian was to be entitled to live according to his faith. There was only one condition: Christian “gatherings” were to be discontinued. Those in charge of the church held the “gatherings” so important to keep up morale that they declined the attractive offer. The consequence was one of the most terrible persecutions of the Christians.

In applying this example of corporate spirituality to our time we have in mind a lively group in which there is frankness, fraternity, and the readiness to serve, to listen, to learn, and, above all, an openness towards the spirit of God. At the same time, a warning must be issued: do not create new trouble nor split up the community, as for example, St. Paul found in the Corinthian congregation. There is a criterion for assessing such a group: “You will know them by their fruits.”

ANY MODERN ATTEMPT TO live a Christian existence in a more or less set institution automatically suggests a question to a Roman Catholic: what about monastic communities? Are they, in their present shape, still capable of providing a mold for genuinely Christian corporate spirituality as we understand it today? Or is the time up for monastic orders? It seems so, sometimes, all the more so since members of communities concerned appear to agree. Spirituality imbued with an engagement in the world calls for a redirection of the spiritual life and usages. How are we to conceive a monastic community and its spiritual life — in our time? Do we, after all, have to keep monasteries in stock for modern man and the church of today?

Even for a Roman Catholic the second question is not that inappropriate. When discussing the chapter on monastic orders in the Constitution on the Church during the first year of Vatican II, a German bishop openly asked: “Monastic orders, such as they have become — i.e., not only this or that community, but all orders as we traditionally understand them lumped together — do they inseparably belong the church?”

We can, and must, go on analyzing the question still further. The church has time and again acknowledged the invaluable services rendered to her by the orders in past and present times. Thinking of the monastic orders as human reservoirs keen on serving the church wholeheartedly and at her bidding, we fail to conceive a present-time church managing without them. In this context, however, quite a different aspect is at issue: Are the
monastic orders of the church indispensible to the church as charismatic communities. from whom the selfsame church will in turn benefit spiritually?

One answer to the question is contained in the word “charismatic” itself. If vocation to a life pattern peculiar to religious life under “evangelical counsels” is charism (a favor from God), God alone will decide as to whom, when, and into what time He will call on individuals.

A second question is important to us: “Do we really live and develop the vocation given by God in our present-time monastic communities in such a way as to contribute to a genuine spirituality of the whole church and to give at the same time a sincere answer to the problems and questions of people in our time? For God does not distribute His gifts only to individuals, but for the profit and advantage of the whole (cf. 1 Cor. 12.).

It is a harassing question with many more answers possible. We would once again have to distinguish between (a) communities rather modern and in their life pattern rather committed to the world and (b) those with which monastic character proper still plays (or ought to play) an important role.

Since we have space to discuss only some aspects of corporate spirituality in monastic communities, I shall make the choice of those aspects on the basis of their importance to me.

1. Vatican II says that life under “evangelical counsels” in the particular form of a monastic order is an “exemplar” for mankind (Constitution Lumen Gentium, 44), continually reminding all Christians of their vocation, cautioning them — we tend towards a greater engagement in the world of today — against becoming totally absorbed in the world, and keeping them alive to eschatological reality. Such an assertion, however, would depend on bringing this exemplarism into reality. This requisite itself raises many questions today. Such “exemplarism” seems to me to be attainable more easily in a community unencumbered by tradition (Taizé for example) than in older orders where everything has been settled by rules. Today it is important to actualize the “evangelical counsels” and to make them fertile in such a way that the whole life of this community becomes a true answer to the needs and questions of modern man.

2. What are the needs and questions of modern man? Is it not, after all, with all our material needs, that are we simply asking for God? “Looking for God in truth,” finding him in the company of brethren, in the abbot, in the sick, in the guests and strangers, in obedience and fraternal conversation, in personal prayer and in community worship — such is the aim of the Rule of St. Benedict.

3. God has revealed his power by reconciling us with himself in Jesus Christ and by making all of us brothers and sisters (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11). A monastic community must show conclusively that human brotherliness is not a utopian idea, but a reality. It must give proof that the Gospels can really be lived, that it is possible to overcome egoism, enmity, and hate and, notwithstanding human frailty, to create an atmosphere of peace. To St. Benedict the monastic community is the testing range, where the monk is to show his mastering all assignments in all areas of human and Christian life. The “Stability of Place” prevents his evading human realities. (Family members, too, cannot look for another, maybe less exacting, community, whenever they please.) Representative of a number of passages in St. Benedict’s Rule pertinent to this monastic brotherliness are some sentences from chapter 72:

They (the monks) shall vie with each other in reverence. They shall bear their bodily and moral frailties with the utmost mutual patience. They shall excel one another in mutual obedience. Nobody shall seek what he thinks useful to himself, but rather what will be of use to the other.

This corporate spirituality can only be lived and thereby become a helpful exemplar for others if it is sustained by Christ’s gift of freedom and the assiduity to help one’s brother.

4. To Benedict unity and brotherliness are not synonymous with uniformity. I am sure there were several factors in St. Benedict’s time which made community life in the monastic congregation difficult. In his monastery were men of different nationalities, standards of education and culture, class and age. How Benedict wanted to master this pluralism is shown in a short remark in the chapter on the abbot (2): “He shall cling to each according to his capacity.”

Still more so than in St. Benedict’s time pluralism today will have to be, and will be, overcome. Such a conquest is only possible if we endeavor to understand our brother in his talents and interests, and to converse with him, listening rather than talking. This pluralism, on the other hand, will not disrupt unity if all of us are agreed on the gist of monastic vocation. But the evangelical value of a community’s intrinsic harmony is greater than the importance of accidental forms. And if a member truly wants to contribute to the well-being of the community, he must have the opportunity of expressing in his own fashion the values binding the community together. The less the common patterns of prayer, work, and life are adapted to each individual, so much greater becomes the danger of their losing their binding force. That does not mean that common patterns are out of reach.

5. Brotherliness as pure human relationship would not be Christian spirituality, even if practiced in a convent. Only if the regular Christian, in renouncing everything through the monastic vows, really discovers God’s love and can live on it, will he also be able to give his
brethren within and outside his community what they may expect of him because of his vocation. The longing of man (as time and again expressed by visitors to monasteries) for spiritual recollection, meditation, and meeting God cannot find its proper response in monastic communities if they do not seek God themselves in silence and meditation. Where the source dries up, there will be no water for those who are thirsty!

"Corporate spirituality" today does not only concern a secluded community of unworldly monks or an elitist circle of refined Christians, but also the whole church and all mankind. Its ultimate proof will be the propagation of the Gospel, even in the present time. Human beings in deepest woe will be without help, if Christian practice cannot draw them nearer to God and his salvation.

If today most monastic communities sincerely struggle for a life-pattern which "does not extinguish the Spirit," it is, finally, out of care for this testimony to their fellow-beings, out of genuine care for the afflictions of this world. It seems to me that in this search, now as ever, St. Benedict's Rule with its fundamental Christian teachings, its balance between obedience and dialogue, manual work and prayer, detachment from, as well as engagement in, the world can be a good guide. 

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ELEANOR AND MURPH'S PLACE
Bee, Nebraska
A sudden siren in the dust
beyond the tavern sends the men running—
y they bang through the screen door
puffing, red-faced:
"Who's is it?"
"West a here...seems like..."
"Marshalls?"
"...doubt it. Too far over..."
and
cards lay face up, face down
on the square old table—
foam clings to cold
rims of glasses
and
runs slowly, jaggedly down—
the big-bladed fan whirs above our heads and the big posters
boom the word DANCE—
CZESCH FESTIVAL AT WILBUR
and one-by-one they straggle back
with slapping and laughing—
"durned ole grass fire..."
"burned down Floyd's outhouse..."
"too bad he weren't in it..."
and laughter up and down the bar
and sweet smell of fish frying in the back-room kitchen,
and hats pushed back on heads
as they lined the bar for cold beer...
with bib-overalls and shirts reading
FUNKS HY-BRID and CO-OP
and
the ancient fire-engine pulls around the corner
and stops;
the room bounces with noise:
the four card players at the front table—
"I'll take 2 cards..."
"That all?"
"...hand like a foot!"
and the farmer in bib-overalls
drinks wine and beer boiler-makers
while the ladies from Seward smile and sip
sodas...
the fresh Perch bobs above the heads
as the bartender totes the orders from the kitchen
(which two boys help cut and ladies from town help fry)
SLAM!
-the screen door-
"...who's that come in? -(from the card table)
"...not from here..."
"maybe Lincoln..."
and as the Astronauts rove the moon
the corners of a far darker world are worn away
by fish and beer in Eleanor and Murph's Place...Friday nite...
(softball tomorrow at Beaver Crossing...)
thought, the patterns of his life, and attempts to probe the meaning of his existence as well as the writer's own.

It is interesting that often writers (poets, artists of all kinds) are thought to be bohemian because they are artists. If the plumber goes on a spree and is seen with a bright scarf or long hair nothing at all is said. However, the writer is caught in an interesting middle: should he exercise his right and wear what pleases him he may be thought eccentric; should he dress and act in a conservative manner he may be thought odd: certainly not an artist. T.S. Eliot once remarked:

"You know, someone told me once that I didn't dress like a poet! I suppose it is because I have always felt too Bohemian inside to want to register it on the outside!" (Amazingly like Thomas Mann's remark in "Tonio Kroeger.") Because it is a paradox it must remain so. There is no way out. And that is all right. The writer is not burning to be understood nor is he afraid to be misunderstood. The writer is comfortable with his friends, and these may include other writers or they may not. He lives and exists among his fellows. But the struggle is unseen and unheard. But the struggle is there every day. The writer exists within the bourgeois world of his fellow man, and the writer lives the frustrating role of participant and observer at the same time. He lives and he watches. Both are complete and genuine worlds existing at one and the same time. The sweat and agony of writing is a self-consumable fire: the common man will pick the best-seller list and read of bizarre lives and exotic people, while the writer sees the common man as he really is. Another writer may read the story or book or poems written by the artist; the common man will most likely not be affected by what has been written about him. It is a paradox.

One of the most common people in world literature was Emma Bovary. Gustav Flaubert devoted five years of his life to capturing Emma Bovary in all her bourgeois grasping of life. Emma's romanticizing of people and events is astounding. It is difficult to read the book without feeling a twinge of identification. Flaubert was almost monk-like in his devotion to his art. "Two weeks—one page!" he wrote to a friend. And yet this sacrifice to his art was aimed at one thing and one thing alone: the bourgeoisie. Flaubert's most private thoughts, dreams, aspirations, and yearnings rose to the surface as he poured scene upon scene onto the page creating in Emma Bovary the bourgeois person. And not being content with the superb characterization of Emma he proceeded to draw Charles Bovary, the bumbling country doctor, and Monsieur Homais, the druggist, and a host of other characters who share in the commonality of the bourgeoisie in their every waking moment. And yet when finished with his masterpiece Madame Bovary, Flaubert said

"Madame Bovary, c'est moi."

He realized all the longings to achieve, to belong, came from within himself. Flaubert was bourgeois. And yet he did not belong. He was in the midst of them, yet he was aloof from them. He poured five years of his life into the book that has become one of the world's greatest novels, and yet the common man does not often pick it up. Flaubert wrote about the bourgeois because he was part of it, and the bourgeoisie will not listen to him. It is a paradox.

Since it is a profound paradox and must remain so, perhaps it is best to let Thomas Mann have the final word—for those who will read it.

"I stand between two worlds. I am at home in neither, and I suffer in consequence. You artists call me a bourgeois, and the bourgeoisie try to arrest me...I don't know which makes me feel worse. The bourgeois are stupid; but you adorers of the beautiful, who call me phlegmatic and without aspirations, you ought to realize that there is a way of being an artist that goes so deep and is so much a matter of origins and destinies that no longing seems to it sweeter and more worth knowing than longing after the bliss of the commonplace...the work I have so far done is nothing or not much—as good as nothing. I will do better, Lisabet—this is a promise. As I write, the sea whispers to me and I close my eyes. I am looking into a world unborn and formless that needs to be ordered and shaped; I see into a whirl of shadows of human figures who beckon to me to weave spells to redeem them: tragic and laughable figures and some that are both together—and to these I am drawn. But my deepest and secretest love belongs to the blond and blue-eyed, the fair and living, the happy, lovely, and commonplace."

"Tonio Kroeger"
The Paradox
Of
The Bourgeois

THE WORLD OF ART AND literature is full of irony, but the greatest of all just may be the paradox of the bourgeois. The bourgeoisie has long been a favorite subject of writers; they are fascinated by its attitudes, mores, systems of thought and action. But when the mists rise and the air clears, it is the bourgeoisie that is seen perhaps more clearly etched against the panorama of civilization than anything else. The bourgeoisie: the middle class. The paradox!

Writers must have a great deal of privacy when they work; and since they tend to work a great deal, it follows that their lives must of necessity be private; at least as much as can be safely bought in these public times. But despite the need for privacy, the greater need for belonging exists, twin-like to privacy. The writer thinks, exists, and writes as a private person. Whatever public thoughts he has, he is at last alone when he puts pen to paper. It is indeed ironic, then, when we find that almost all of what he writes concerns the bourgeoisie: the common man.

Of course there is a common bond that fastens all men together with a cement stronger than reason or will. We are, after all, men. We exist in like shapes and think more or less alike. Our symbols are the same, our various cultures vary but little in the final analysis. We are all members of that greatest of all middle class, life. And it is to this fundamental binding of peoples that the writer addresses himself most often. He writes for the man to read. He wants the man to listen to him and to understand him. The writer writes not for other writers but for mankind.

Here is the paradox. A writer, an artist, cannot be a complete part of the common man because a writer just is not common in that kind of way. He needs to exist to write and for little else. That makes him different. He may look the same and do many of the things other men do but he is different and he is alone in his difference. His life is composed of islands of the minutest privacy. He exists solely for those moments when he can concentrate his special private light on the subject of all this thinking: man! A paradox! The writer sits apart from man and writes about man. The paradox is compounded when you consider that the man in the street will not read what the writer has written about him; the man in the street is obligated to the travails of the writer who cannot or will not be a more socially acceptable part of mankind. It is not that the writer eschews the common man. He is just not able to fit in comfortably with the commonality that he himself shares. It is ironic.

Writers who feel a passion for words, ideas, may find the material for their books in the very streets and houses that are considered most common. They do not prey on these houses with the people in them as some beast that stalks its kill. They do not approach their task as the scientist with notebook in hand to record this or that aberration. Rather, the writer listens, breathes, moves, and exists in the stuff of the bourgeoisie. He is bourgeois. But he is not. And there is the paradox.

CONSIDER THE STORY "Tonio Kroeger" by the great German writer Thomas Mann. Tonio is torn between his father's north—self-discipline, order, strength—and his mother's south—sensuality, bohemianism, letting go. These general kinds of feelings are easily translated into what Tonio cares for and what he does not want to care for. But he is both at once. Too much of the bohemian life and he will not get any work done; but a too narrowly centered life of order will as surely stifle his innate curiosity and creativity.

Talking to his friend, Lisabeta, Tonio says:

"We who are set apart and different do not conceive it (life) as, like us, unusual; it is the normal, respectable, and admirable that is the kingdom of our longing; life, in all its seductive banality!"

The paradox continues when it is heard that "artists dress or act odd." Surely that nineteenth century notion should be laid to rest once and for all. Again speaking with Lisabeta, Tonio Kroeger says:

"Oh, leave my clothes alone, Lisabeta Ivanovna! Do you want me to go about in a ragged, velveteen jacket or a red waistcoat? Every artist is as bohemian as the deuce, inside! Let him at least wear proper clothes and behave outwardly like a respectable being."

And so it goes. The artist saves up hours and hours of many days waiting for that time when all his thoughts come together and he writes. He writes of the people in the streets and the people in the houses: he writes of the bourgeoisie. And the bourgeoisie, the common man, by and large pays little attention to the writer who chronicles his every

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