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

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Cover: Charles Burchfield. The Tree that Reached the Sky. c. 1947. Watercolor. 54 x 30". Frank K. M. Rehn Galleries, N.Y.C.
With this issue of The Cresset we mark with pleasure the fact that Walter Sorell, a contributor for twenty-five years, has become a kind of dean of our columnists. We have asked two distinguished and competent colleagues to express our appreciation for Sorell and his contributions.

FOR WALTER

The Editor's Note says that "In April, Sorell will have been an active contributor to The Cresset for 25 years." I know that to be a fact; it was my honor, as managing editor in 1951, to accept Walter's first, unsolicited manuscript and it was my joy almost every month thereafter for eighteen years to open the envelope from 25 West 64th Street, New York, New York, to see what torture or ecstasy had been his lot in the previous month's theatregoing.

But, acknowledging the fact, I still find it hard to accept it as truth. You know how it is with the friends of your young manhood. You and they are too busy organizing lives and careers to savor all of the potential joys of friendship just yet. In a few years it will be less hectic and then you can settle down to cultivating each other's friendship. Meanwhile, there is the string of quickly dashed-off notes, there is the occasional meeting at the airport.

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And then suddenly one middle-aged man finds himself confronted with an invitation to say something nice about another middle-aged man, his friend for twenty-five years whom he has actually seen face to face exactly three times in all those years. What does one say? Pompous things about a "dean" whom one
still pictures as a young rebel in his early thirties? Nostalgic things about an old friend whom one still looks forward to getting really to know?

Walter, working together on this little magazine we were given a friendship that we probably would not have been able to create under more leisurely circumstances. The work and the friendship were, and are, of one piece. And for that there is only one appropriate word: Thanks.

JOHN H. STRIETELMEIER

TRIBUTE TO WALTER SORELL

VISITING CAMPUS LAST year to lecture on the occasion of an exhibit of his paintings in Christ College, Walter Sorell spoke to an attentive audience about his expectancies from himself as a professional writer who paints as an amateur. This "temptation to versatility," which he had observed and written about in other men of talent and genius and to which he happily succumbed, was mirrored in the persuasiveness of his own words about limitations and possibilities in the expressive world of the visual arts. This versatility of interest characterizes most of his work. In his case, moreover, head and heart, tongue and voice, hand and gesture converge, and the eloquent effect is one of serene restlessness.

Of the several tributes one might offer to this patient and steady contributor to The Cresset, I think an appropriate one is this: in an age of specialists and functionaries who necessarily speak and write from their mastery of technique, Walter Sorell is a professional with style. His column, whether on topics of the theater or of the nature of the comic or of the spirit of the place, reflects the large and coherent personal vision of the generalist. The specialist develops a competence that often rejects expression in other areas, what Thorsten Veblen called in another context "trained incapacity." A generalist, from long experience and lively interaction with the knowledge, love, and beauty of the past, develops for himself and for his reader in the present those critical discriminations that are based on sympathetic openness (Gefühlt is Goethe's and Sorell's unembarrassed term for imagination at work in the human sensorium) and disciplined and cultivated judgment. Thus he writes with confidence and legitimate authority about many of the provocative issues that surround "making in the arts" in our time. How fortunate for readers of The Cresset that the nooks and crannies of this man's sense and sensibility have been with us for a quarter of a century.

WARREN RUBEL

Ordass: Bishop and Faithful Witness

WE ARE PLEASED TO BE among those who salute Hungary's Bishop Lajos Ordass on his 75th birthday, celebrated on 6 February. Neither are we ashamed to praise God for the faithful testimony of this man who has defended the church of Christ in his homeland and has suffered imprisonment (in 1948 he was imprisoned for twenty months, five of them in solitary confinement, and for six years, until October 1956, he suffered house arrest) for his testimony and work. His fellow countryman, Cardinal Mindszenty, who died in 1975, was more well known as a symbol of resistance against the communist regime of Hungary. But Ordass has become the symbol of the firm, stout, and indomitable faith of Christians who know that the Lord of truth and righteousness is conqueror even of sin and death.

When the young man who had been ordained at the age of twenty-three, was, in 1945, elected bishop at the age of forty-four, he began the kind of episcopal care of even the most remote and scattered churches in his diocese that reminds one of ancient, not modern bishops. His continued contacts with the churches throughout the world, especially through his association with the Lutheran World Federation and the Scandinavian churches, became avenues for his testimony to other Christians and ways he could remind the suffering Hungarians that they were not alone in their suffering, but were joined with members of Christ's body all over the world.

Bishop Ordass was restored to his episcopal office in October 1956 and gave a ringing testimony to his faith in Christ the Lord at the Minneapolis assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in 1957. After his return from that assembly, Hungarian officials of the State Office for Church Affairs stepped up their campaign against him; in the following year, Bishop Ordass was again removed from his office.

The present state of the bishop's health is not known. In "retirement" he has not been permitted to speak publicly or to defend himself. He has had several heart attacks. And even now, while the reigning bishop tours America, describing how good the relations are between the church and state in Hungary, the bishop is unable to speak publicly. We are skeptical of the reports about the congenial relationships that now exist in Hungary. However, Ordass' testimony for the truth of Christ also gainst the religious accommodation in the face of threats and lust for power, will remind us not only of the threats of communism, but even more of the victorious life of those who trust Christ.
NOTES FROM THE EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

IN THIS ISSUE OF THE CRESSET we continue the series on Lutheran colleges and universities. The narration of their self-understanding as colleges with a specific and identifiable ethnic background plus a conscious participation in the scene of American higher education has proved to be of great interest to our readers.

WARREN RUBEL'S exploration of issues involved in interpretation of texts addresses itself to the controversy in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, but not only to that controversy. We think Rubel's article demonstrates not only years of reflection on these matters but also a sensitive and thoughtful word to all of us engaged in the activity of interpreting texts.

THE PRESENTATION OF THE Burchfield material in this issue of The Cresset rounds out a three stage presentation, corresponding to three stages in the development and production of the artist. Representative prices of the early watercolors of Charles Burchfield were presented and discussed in The Cresset, January, 1974; Burchfield's middle years were represented and discussed in November, 1974. With Joseph S. Travato's, "The Nature of Charles Burchfield," The Cresset presents a more extensive discussion and exhibit of the third and final cycle of Burchfield's work.

The Cresset is pleased to have joined in this suggestion of Richard Brauer, its Design Advisor and Visual Arts Editor. As an art critic and historian, and also as the Curator of the Sloan Galleries of American paintings and Director of the University Art Galleries and Collections, Professor Brauer maintains that the work of Charles Burchfield is valuable to keep before the eyes of art students. He holds that the contents of the Burchfield work, as well as his style and technique, are valuable for students of art in their own development. As the exhibits of Burchfield on campus, and lectures about him, have been used for the instruction and pleasure of students, so The Cresset is pleased to bring representative reproductions and critical comments on Burchfield to the attention of its readers for their instruction and pleasure.

CHICAGO MAY BE A VERY interesting place to live, although one who lives in the relative safety of a quiet university town of northern Indiana might say that as an indulgence to his fantasy. Chicago is surely interesting to watch, interesting to listen to. There was, for example, the intriguing battle between Mayor Richard Daley and the incumbent governor, Dan Walker. Daley did his work: he succeeded in blocking Walker from being the Democratic candidate for governor. At the same time, in Daley's own city, Ralph Metcalf, a former member of the Daley machine, carried off a stunning defeat of the Daley machine. Metcalf broke with the machine, took the case to the machine, and gathered a broad base of support to defeat a chosen opponent.

And yet, it may be, as the highly interesting and independent radio personality Studs Terkel said, "The Ersatz show-biz campaign is under way." Chicago may not have Broadway; they do have Daley. And we guess that Jimmy Carter will have to have Mayor Daley's support to gain the nomination for the candidate on the Democratic ticket. It follows from this fact of directing the "Ersatz show-biz," that Adlai Stevenson III will be the vice-presidential candidate.

And then, there is in Chicago the business of the "The Fun Bus." This literal bus furnishes the place and the materials for a birthday party on wheels. For $49.50 they will drive up to your home and put on a birthday party for ten children. Each additional child costs $2.25. They take care of everything. According to some of the children interviewed, this arrangement is fine: there are no parents around! And, best of all, according to the owner-driver-planner, "the mess is picked up and driven away."

Maybe the children who think it good not to have their parents around for the birthday celebration are taking their revenge on parents who, as Chicago-based Ann Landers discovered, regret that they had children. One must not make the mistake of attributing too much to Chicago, although it contributes a good deal to the life of the country, and certainly Ann Landers (despite the collapse of her own marriage) merely reported on the mad passion in the pursuit of happiness. But the Landers' report from about 10,000 parents, in which about two out of three wish they were not, signals that many even consider marriage something like "playing house."

If liberation means that duty, obligation, accountability, and sacrifice are enemies, whether one refers to marriage, citizenship, or political office, surely 1984 has arrived. Such liberation is slavery to an encapsulated self, pleased only with scratching its own itch. Its despair at being itself leads it to attack not only the "other," but itself as well.
THE ENEMY OF THE MAN

the wind spitting snow
goes angrily over the hills
he mumbles at the coming sun
but his fear is great

perhaps like the wolf
he goes to get his brothers
perhaps like the wolf
he will come again in the night

i go gathering sticks
which i hide under the stone
if the wind returns in the night
my fire will drive him away

the enemies of the man
have long memories
the man
has a longer memory.

NORMAN H. RUSSELL

THE SPEAKING OF THE STORM

in the early night
the storm came to the south
sat down there to speak to itself
i listened

i listened
the storm kept speaking
the storm said nothing of importance
i slept

i waken
it is the morning
i hear an old speaking
the storm still sits in the south

i listen
the storm speaks more softly
the storm says nothing of importance
i go on.

THE DECISION

he is stupid
he will listen to me
i will twist and turn his mind
like a new arrow i am making

he has no sense
i will pretend to listen to him
when he is through with his speaking
i will tell him what to do

i do not understand
why he can not understand
he is more stupid than i thought
i must pretend to be angry with him

what did he say? i have forgot
it does not matter
his words are like the howling of the wind
meaning much less

there is no giving sense to one
who has five warriors for brothers!

my brothers and i have spoken
sense into that idiots head!
JOYCE HAMILTON ROCHAT

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE "WORD"

IN

T. S. ELIOT'S "GERONTION"

THE VIEW OF MAN'S "CONDITION" WHICH T. S. Eliot presents as the background to his poem "Gerontion" is indeed a bleak one. He projects through Gerontion, his representative and symbol, a society which is adrift in a spiritual vacuum, feebly stirred from time to time by sensations of hopelessness; it is a society in which the ground of the heart-of-man, characterized by "Rocks, moss, stonecrop, iron and mists" (1:12) is itself the wasteland.

The view of spiritual chaos establishes the tone, the setting, the cadre of the poem. Eliot has set the stage very carefully; his modern man lives in a "decayed house," his soul having been sold out to materialism. He is a man lacking a stable core, and, through this image, Eliot shows us the secularization of a civilization that has rejected the center which gives meaning to existence. The poem is a statement: it is man's abandonment of Christ and the absolutes that are in Christ that has laid the foundation for the sterile, terrifying, Angst-ridden existence of the twentieth century.

But Eliot's view of Christ is not the naive and hackneyed stereotype frequently projected by traditional religiosity, nor is he advocating that we "get religion." In fact, the indictment against structured religious orthodoxy as having simply and catastrophically failed mankind is what the poem is all about, and the poet's view of Christ is the dynamic, virile, robust figure who is actuated by love, beauty, creative force, and spiritual light (or truth or goodness or wholeness of perspective, or whatever is the opposite of self-seeking self-centeredness). These are the absolutes that frame eternity and they are not merely represented by or superimposed upon the character of Christ. They are the elements that make up His character and of which we were given the option of holding a finite portion. But in "Gerontion" the poet tells us that mankind, aided and abetted by the church, opted against the God-Christ who is unconditional love, and, having constructed for ourselves a hollow Christ, we have become hollow men. There is nothing to affirm the perfection and the worth that human nature demands. Lacking this, man finds existence to be irrelevant and in his desperate conscious effort to restore form out of chaos, he must create substitutes for what he has cast off.

Gerontion, speaking for his poet-creator, traces the history of mankind's defection. As the prototype of the attitudes that have surfaced in our own time, he points to the skepticism that prevailed at the time of Christ when, he tells us, "signs" were taken for "wonders," and he quotes the request, "We would see a sign!" (1:17)

Specifically Gerontion here alludes to the scene in the twelfth chapter of Matthew in which the Pharisees accused Christ and demanded that He prove that He was the Messiah. What they wanted was some prodigious feat of magic such as Christ calling down a star from the sky or levitating a mountain or causing the sun to streak down at midnight.

Actually the Pharisees had no valid reason to make such a request. Within the context of verse 38, Matthew describes several miracles that Christ had already performed. In the temple, the man with the deformed hand had approached Christ and asked to be healed. Christ told him to stretch out his arm, and when he did so, the hand became normal, like the other one (v. 13). The Pharisees ignored the miraculous nature of the incident and, instead, hedged and quibbled about whether it was "legal" to heal on the sabbath day. Christ left them to quarrel among themselves and went into the crowd, healing "all the sick among them" (v.15), crowning this day's work with the healing of the devil-possessed, blind-mute (v. 22).


Joyce Hamilton Rochat is Associate Professor of English at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan. In The Cresset, February 1975, she published, "T. S. Eliot's 'Gerontion': Wisdom Literature of the Twentieth Century."

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Beyond all these miracles, minor by comparison, was the fact that the Pharisees were face to face with the God-Christ. Gerontion calls Him "The word within a word" (1:18), or the promise of eternity that God had given to man in the Scriptures. And, having come into the world as a babe, "unable to speak a word" (1:18), He now stood before them in the flesh, the concrete form of the abstract promise. This was the "wonder" of the universe, the all-surpassing "sign."

The Pharisees had said "We would see..." (emphasis mine), but Gerontion implies that this was untrue. They did not wish to see and the protagonist says that the "word" remained "Swaddled with darkness" (1:19), the "wonder" went unrecognized by the Pharisees. Christ had opened the eyes and unstopped the throat of the demon-possessed man, who, through the miracles wrought in his own flesh, could both "see" or understand, and "speak" or testify of Christ's divinity. The crowd had also been able to "see" Him through the miracles of healing. But the Pharisees remained self-blinded. Gerontion pictures them as being like the people of The Waste Land who lamented the winter that kept them warm.

April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.
Winter kept us warm, covering
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
A little life with dried tubers.
Summer surprises us...
With a shower of rain; 3

In this, Eliot's longer poem, "April," the spring of the year, is "cruel," arousing the wastelanders from the stupor which numbs the pain and fear incumbent upon the "human condition." "Gerontion" makes the same application but with a spiritual connotation: "In the juvescence of the year/Came Christ the flowering Judas" (1:25). Elizabeth Drew believes that Eliot here picked up William Blake's symbol of the tiger as fire and light. 4 Certainly the figure is apt: fire and light are perfect symbols for the dynamic absolutes that are part of the God make-up, absolutes that flow through and encompass a vision of what human existence could be. It is not a vision that denies but, rather, affirms reality of which the scope transcends its own limitations to a deeper, higher, broader, more substantive locus.

There were also the absolutes that were operative in Christ's culminating miracle of the healing of the blind-mute. Christ came to him as pure fire—as love and creative force to restore the incomplete and deformed human creation. He came as pure light, opening blinded eyes to the beauty and the truth that exercised evil. Gerontion, interpreting, sees Christ as coming to illumine the way to a fully aware spiritual life with its attendant aching joy and beautiful pain.

But, like the wastelanders, the Pharisees, lulled to inaction and forgetfulness, did not want to be disturbed from their lethargy. Matthew tells us that, having ignored the miracles and denied the God-Christ, the Pharisees called a meeting to plan His arrest and death. Eliot, through Gerontion, pictures them as rejecting the tiger who would "devour" their darkness; the living Fire and Light was a threat to their complacency and apathy which they were prepared to protect with lies and treachery and, finally, betrayal—their "depraved" and unregenerate springtime, their "flowering Judas" (1:21).

While they set tone and example, this rejection and betrayal were by no means exclusive to this early period of mankind's history. Gerontion describes the unbelief and complacency of the scribes and Pharisees as being the archetype of those attitudes taken by men all through the centuries, attitudes that peak dramatically in the godless twentieth century in which unregenerate spring becomes the permanent season. As Gerontion's mind leaps the span of time and space, he sees that Christ was meant to be all things to all men of our era as well as to the men of Pharisaical times: "To be eaten, to be divided, to be drunk/Among whispers" (11:22-23) by Mr. Silvero, who represents the Jews, by Hakagawa who symbolizes the Oriental peoples, by the Latinate Madame de Tornquast and the Germanic Fraulein von Kulp of the western world. These people are symbol and representative of those members of modern society who turn from the "word" to substitutes of their own creating. Gerontion's meditations suggest that this defection extends to both Eastern and Western cultures; the Jews and the Orientals and the Gentiles alike have rejected the fire and the light that would shatter their specific darkmesses, turning, instead, to search out and to worship the gods that cannot fill the emptiness.

Christ came as absolute beauty to Mr. Silvero. But Mr. Silvero turns from absolute beauty, choosing, instead, its pale reflection in the man-made beauty of the famous products of Limoges. For Mr. Silvero (his name suggests where his value emphasis lies), though he handles china and porcelain with "caressing hands," beauty alone is not sufficient; it must also have material importance which, though secondary here, is nevertheless, destructive. It must pay dividends, must supply financial benefits, and so Mr. Silvero, who could have found quietude in absolute beauty, "Walked all night in the next room" (1:25), troubled and concerned over his investments.

Christ came to mankind as pure creative force. But Mr. Hakagawa, the Oriental whose preoccupation is with the arts, turns from the pure force, taking for himself other gods, "bowing among the Titans" (1:26). For absolute creativity, he substitutes human creativity. From the rich spectrum of infinite color, he turns to


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earth-wrought hues; he prostrates himself to forms that, however dramatically high-lighted, remain for­ever canvas. Like Mr. Silvero, he half-exists, with nar­rowed vision and crippled senses only partially aware. Christ came as absolute light. Madame de Tornquist longs for spirituality but she, like the Jew and the Oriental, cannot bear the agony and the joy of fire and light. She recognizes the mystic powers of the universe, however, and “in the dark room” she shifts the candles (11: 27-28). Like the Pharisees, she asks for less than is given and, in blindness, she chooses to worship the powers of evil. Having rejected the absolute light that “devours” spiritual darkness, she is guided by the tiny, false flame of the candle that serves only to make the darkness visible.

Christ came as absolute love. But Fraulein von Kulp, who “turned in the hall, one hand on the door” (1. 29), is on a substitute quest. God is pure love, outward-flowing, but Fraulein, the prostitute or adulteress as the case may be, has chosen self-consuming lust, a reflection as false and as feeble as Mme. de Tornquist’s candle held against the Source of light. In her own way, Fraulein is also one of the atrophied vision, dwelling in darkness.

THE POEM IMPLIES THAT LIKE THE PHARI­see, modern man has killed off his God and annihi­lated his absolutes. Through his wasteland paradigms, Eliot shows that though man craves freedom and in­tensity of experience and joy he has, as a whole, opted for dread and fear and despair. But implicitly built into the poem is the suggestion that man is always confront­ed with a choice. By emphasizing negation and rejec­tion, Eliot implies affirmation and acceptance. Man can ignore the opportunity to embrace the absolutes, busy­ing himself like Silvero and Fraulein von Kulp with substitutes. Like Gerontion himself, he can live the non­questing life and at the end still wait for the rain that does not “surprise.” Or he can reach for the absolutes as he would for the stars, believing they will lead him beyond frustration and hopelessness. In the context of Eliot’s biblical allu­sion, is the quotation of a prophecy describing Christ in whom there is “final victory,” who comes as the “hope of all the world” (vs. 18-21). Gerontion tells us that “The tiger springs in the new year” (1:48) again to “devour” us in our darkness. The change in tense from past to present suggests that fire and light are still the alterna­tive to despair and darkness. Thus Gerontion implies that man’s “redemption” still is open to him, for if Christ is incarnate, so are the absolutes that make up the fiber of his character. They announce to man that beyond fragmentation there is form, beyond futility there is significance, beyond chaos there is beauty, beyond existence there is life. And while there are no guaran­tees on this side of the border, mankind, by grasping his finite portion of these absolutes and holding them firmly to the core of existence, may find that it was not all just a ghastly joke after all.

FROM A VATIC LANDSCAPE

1. He reminisces

Where two rivers sky out, you saw me. I was a wave, and a wave took me, carried me, out to where the slow sea swirls, encircling islands of a strange desire.

There were three ships, and seven stars, and wind. Not to say that it all moved. But as a seed pod bursts, I was scattered, took root, and sprouted.

There were faces that I grew that bore the common features of the mad. And the woman who looked on, she too knew, and would not speak. Secure then, I spoke from the earth, and the echoes rang through the vault of stars. And I did not think to question, and yes, it was so, I had travelled, I had spoken knowing little, in a voice as strange to me as to my fellows.

All this was known. There came a time when words were as shattered glass, the potential to draw blood recognized, acknowledged, deemed irrefutable. Such things must be mentioned.

I want to lay the truth bare now. I want to see time as the limiting factor, or the motions of the heart, not the wearisome expanse of static landscape. There is a sleeping country I have seen, and I’ve heard of a dawn in which those sleepers shall stir, shall wake. I want to be there when it happens.

NORMAN FINKELSTEIN

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“IN ITS EDUCATION THE SOUL OF A PEOPLE is mirrored,” according to Lord Haldane. If so, the soul of the Finn in America is mirrored in large measure at Suomi College. In the greatest free mass migration in the history of man some forty million immigrants came to America, and approximately one percent were Finns. It was predominantly the courageous religious folk who left Finland to settle first in the new land. Committed Christians of the Lutheran Church tradition subsequently founded Suomi College.

The immigrant Finns, whose migration peaked between 1890 and 1920, were like the Puritans who founded Harvard in 1636, mainly people of “the book” who feared nothing as much as an “uneducated ministry” and believed that all should master learning in the tradition of one of the most literate people in the world.

The infant Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church founded Suomi College in 1896 in Hancock, Michigan, the focus of the older Finnish immigration. Since that time the college has continued as a mission of the Church in the light of changing conditions both within the Church and without.

The mission of the college has unfolded in three discernible stages, with its internal turbulence, rich in contradictions, each gradually coalescing into another: the founding and early period, the stage of services directed to the second generation, and the third phase seeking to serve American society within an enculturated church. The major turning points - 1923 and 1962 - were provoked by social and educational forces centering upon ethno-religious and cultural developments.

Ralph J. Jalkanen received his AB from Elmhurst College, his BD from Suomi Theological Seminary, and his PhD from the University of Chicago-Loyola. Among his published works are Finns in North America: A Social Symposium (Michigan State University Press, 1969) and The Faith of the Finns: Historical Perspectives of the Finnish-Lutheran Church in America (Michigan State University Press, 1972).

THE EARLY YEARS: 1896-1923

MOST FINNISH IMMIGRANTS WERE LARGELY unilingual, unskilled, poor, and rural in background, and so sought work wherever they could gain employment: in mines, logging camps, railroads, ore docks, factories, fisheries, farms, and sawmills. In their poverty they were unpracticed in the art of philanthropy, Christian or otherwise. But they lived the American dream; by improving their lot, building and supporting churches and preserving the American heritage of education, in which the children would have more education than their parents. This impulse was so strong, moreover, that these immigrants, disadvantaged by language, poverty, and isolation, established a college. Only a few years after the first significant wave of immigration they evidenced a richness in faith, religion, commitment, and hope, and they worked and gave endlessly to create a new life in the triad which makes up our free society: religion, education, and democracy.

For most of its history, Suomi College has been dominated and supported by the laity of the Finnish Church whose congregations were small and poor but led by democratic clergymen such as J. K. Nikander, J. J. Hoikka, and K. L. Tolenen. Resources for the infant church were in short supply. In the beginning, the church consisted of only four pastors and nine parishes, and at its peak counted some 40,000 baptized souls in addition to a broad constituency in its membership. But indefatigable writers and touring speakers got the institution off to a start with eleven students in rented quarters on September 8, 1896. The first permanent building, Old Main, was completed in 1899 in Hancock after considerable debate as to its site.

The first period was marked by the ideal of a two-part leadership process in which the student would himself become a teacher, especially during the summer, when he had the obligation of teaching others in the Finnish communities in the interest of maintenance of the Finnish language and traditions, preservation
and upholding of morals and religion, and the preservation of the heritage and culture. The objectives of the early phase were to provide positions for upwardly mobile persons in the Finnish secular and religious communities, provide the possibility for learning the English language and other skills required in the new world, and to train Finnish youth in order to be qualified to embark upon new opportunities.

The supporting church, based on the folk church model in Finland, provided an institution with a broad perspective regarding immigrant needs, focusing from the beginning on such utilitarian skills as teaching accounting and American history in the English language. However, the main thrust was in Finnish, making a knowledge of the language a basic requirement for admission to the Preparatory Department and fluency in the language a requirement for admission to the Academy. Courses in this period included Religion, Finnish, English, Arithmetic, Geography, American History, General Science, Drawing, Accounting, Music, Physical Education, the History of Finland, Latin, Greek, Physiology, Geometry, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and Algebra.

The Commercial Department, which became the largest division, was formed in 1906, the same year in which the Seminary graduated its first class. Members of the faculty and student body were almost uniformly Finnish, so Suomi was built upon and functioned mainly as a transplant of a Finnish European model of education with support and orientation provided by the immigrant church.

THE SECOND GENERATION: 1923-1962

IN THE SECOND PERIOD OF ITS EXISTENCE Suomi College continued its evolution as a Finnish American institution, under great compulsion to conform to its American environment. The second generation of Americans of Finnish descent were served in a rigidly disciplined college environment designed as a social apparatus to transmit the culture.

Under the leadership of John Wargelin, the Preparatory Department was phased out and the Junior College firmly established with outside evaluation and encouragement of its work provided by the University of Michigan. The Academy was abandoned in 1930, marking the closing of the residual of the first phase of the institution's history.

This stage was marked by internal and external struggles. The advancing acculturation process in the church, religious concerns involving attempts at creating a more "evangelistic" institution in the American mode, ethnic and traditional folk church needs, emerging educational and linguistic developments in reference to non-Finnish faculty, historical events, problems related to resources, ideological debates and religious training in the interest of the transmission of the existing culture were all involved.

The Seminary, too, made demands upon the college and constituency as a new American-born ministry (high-school and, later, college-trained) looked to the institution for legitimacy, excellence, and responsiveness to the environment in church and society, and problems created by an increasing enrollment of larger numbers of students.

The College and Seminary seemed driven by countervailing forces. Continued use of the Finnish language in instruction, continued search for and recruitment of instructors trained in Finland for the Seminary, a search for American instructors fluent in Finnish, and the pull of the future to train non-Finns, especially in the commercial and music departments, and later in the Seminary, were all "bones of contention."

In spite of these struggles, John Wargelin presided over the trend toward the Americanization of Suomi College. He struck a favorable balance of forces by hiring instructors from Finland such as Martti Nisonen, Rafael Engelberg, Kosti Arho, Ilmari Tammisto, Raphael Hartman, and Alma Gronquist (Mrs. Alfred Haapanen), paralleled by Finnish-American instructors in the persons of Waino Lehto and Wilhemina Perttula, to name only a few whose tenure gave continuity to their labors.

Under V. K. Nikander, son of the founder, Finnish was maintained in the Seminary, but the Junior College instruction was increasingly provided by both Finnish-Americans and Americans of quality and commitment to the purposes of the institution.

Bernhard Hillila brought a clear demarcation between the Seminary and Junior College when the latter separated into the liberal arts, music, and business divisions. Edward J. Isaac, whose tenure was cut short by his untimely death, continued the era of the 1950s in the history of the institution. This phase was given a sense of closure during the administration of David T. Halkola, the school's only lay president, through the merger of the Seminary in 1958 with the midwestern seminaries of the proposed Lutheran Church in America. Initiated by the consistory of the Suomi Synod, Raymond W. Wargelin gave strong leadership in the merger of the Finnish Lutheran Church with the most Americanized of American Lutherans of German, Swedish, and Danish descent into the Lutheran Church in America in 1962.

The presidents serving the college from its inception onward to the present have been: J. K. Nikander, John Wargelin, Antii Lepisto, V. K. Nikander, Carl J. Tamminen, Bernhard Hillila, Edward J. Isaac, David T. Halkola, Raymond W. Wargelin, and Ralph J. Jalkanen.

ON SUOMI'S SERVICE TO AMERICAN SOCIETY (1962- )

RESEARCH HAS DEMONSTRATED THAT ALTHOUGH education makes students more independent, less authoritarian and prejudiced and more interested
in aesthetics, what most colleges—including Suomi College—have done for students was predetermined by the kinds of people who were admitted in the first place. While small private schools offer students more personal attention and therefore potential for growth, the selection process at Suomi College, at least until recently, had already assured a group of like-thinking students who fit the “image” the college created. In the first two periods of its history the college mostly served students self-selected on the basis of their Finnish heritage.

There is evidence that the college provided students with competencies in understanding a rich cultural heritage, the tensions of a developing world, and the major concepts in science, philosophy, mathematics, and a deepening grasp of the Christian faith and practice. The college gave its students the significant basics of a liberal education characterized by tolerance of ambiguity, greater autonomy, creative imagination, more flexible control of impulses, and better self-concepts—all marks of the educated person.

With the merger into the new church, the college completed the enculturation process by becoming more completely an institution serving American society, fully accredited by American standards, but, by definition, an organization which looks to the future, lives in the present, but has not lost sight of the past. There is evidence that as American culture matures, it becomes more accepting of multicultural differences, provides ethics with positive identification with America's past, and creates understanding of a pluralistic society in which each adds strength to the whole. The American black made legitimate the idea of cultural pluralism contrary to the basic assimilationist tendency of the past. Once pluralism is acceptable for one group it must be so for all; so the Finns in America too benefited from a new lease on their ethnic individuality, and from a discovery of the past in order that they might become better Americans.

Arnold Stadius regarded this phase in Suomi's history as a period of expansion. It certainly was one in which the aspirations of the forebears found a certain fulfillment in a period of consolidation and a greater sense of stability. In it the new church created imbalances, but education—and life itself—thrives on imbalance and growth. During this time, the constitution was changed, the institution developed for itself one of the outstanding boards of private church-related colleges, found a new sense of mission under new societal and church conditions, created a master plan for program and physical plant based on Eliel Saarinen's early sketches, grew in enrollment, programs, and course offerings for new clientele, and increasingly became an institution of higher learning of which Finns could be justifiably proud. Certainly many among the 4000 alumni became interested in ideas, learned how to read, learned how to use libraries, and learned to think in ways they simply would not have done in another setting. Many were inspired by model teachers whom they will always remember: Alma Van Slyke, Soine and Sylvia Torma, Arthur Hill, Armas K. E. Holmio, Arnold Stadius, and many others. Intellectual and educational interests and pursuits are far above average among the approximately 120 clergy of the former Suomi Synod who found their challenge and opportunity at Suomi College and Theological Seminary.

ON THE PRESERVATION OF ETHNIC VALUES

IN THE LAST ANALYSIS, THE ROLE OF SUOMI College in the life of the Finns in America must be measured against the large and more penetrating backdrop represented by the entire cultural substratum of the preservation of the best ethnic values:

The Finnish attitude toward women was expressed as early as 1912 when the first woman served on the Board and again in 1922 when a woman served as interim president for one year. Female emancipation was in many ways unnecessary since Finnish-American women had always played an important role in church and public life.

The relentless struggle, not only for survival in a foreign land, but survival with dignity, went on in the Finnish home and was expressed in their institutions. Although lack of adequate resources appeared to be a perpetual problem throughout its history, Finnish Christians could be depended upon to consistently deliver the college from fiscal duress at least during anniversary campaigns and at other points as well. Suomi College was born of and continued because of great sacrifice and commitment by church-related Finns. The constant struggle for resources was due to lack of numbers and not lack of stewardship. Already in the days of the Suomi Synod, the membership paid two dollars per capita in college support, a figure seldom reached even in the merged church. However, colleges thrive on wealth and freedom, and both were in meager supply.

The Finns possessed the basic early American agrarian virtues of hard work, honesty, neighborliness, discipline, morality, self-reliance, thrift, diligence, sexual fidelity, pride in accomplishment, faith in education, human warmth, dignity, standards, a sense of duty and responsibility, and the general attitude provided by a kind of "gemeinschaft"—intimacy in the midst of a depersonalized and dehumanized society. Colleges, like people, often thrive on adversity. Adversity was Suomi's lot. The Finnish proverb about Finland, "God has seen so much trou-
ble about our land that He will not forsake us," holds for Suomi College as well.

Through the years Suomi has provided Finnish-Americans with a sense of ethnic identity. According to Rudolph Vecoli, "if personal identity is rooted in one's history, an individual's relationship to the past can be a positive source of ego identity drawing strength from his family and ethnic group. Or, if the relationship is derogatory, it can undermine his sense of worth and self-respect." The college has consistently sought to affirm the culture and heritage as one with a great past and a future to which all Finns can point with pride.

Finns proved to be a diverse group of immigrants: politically, from left to right; ecclesiastically into perhaps a dozen sharply cleaved religious communities; social fractiousness was evidenced in the life of hundreds of separate "halls," often several existing in every Finnish community, and ideologically split as evidenced in the publication of some sixty-five or more newspapers for fewer than 400,000 immigrants. Although Suomi was the most viable single institution of Finnish-America, it is apparent from the above that a united support of a significant majority could not be forthcoming, especially because among early immigrants voluntary support of free institutions was relatively unknown. So sharply pervasive were the political divisions and controversies that typical reaction to the problems were first viewed simply from the party point of view, making a common sense and rational solution an impossibility in a nakedly ideological maze.

Yet Suomi College held "a mirror to the Finnish soul" in that it recognized the significance of human love for learning expressed in its proverbs and epic poetry, respect for the power of language and its evocative hidden meanings, love for freedom and independence ("I wasn't born to be forced"), openness to women as equals, distrust of power and privilege, and a land peopled by heroes who were not military persons but poets, musicians, architects, sculptors, and authors. After even a cursory survey, one comes away with the feeling that Suomi possessed and represented those very values which helped make America great.

The tradition had provided us with unprecedented folklore materials and an understanding that all of God's children are creatures of myths. Myths are not untrue stories, but attempts to transmute reality to provide moral and spiritual meaning to individuals and societies. A society makes sense only insofar as it relates to ends, to telos. And myth relates to one of the ways in which tradition summarized the deepest experiences of the group. Myth seems to tell the story of the sacred encounters, revealing what reality appears to be and how we ought to behave in reference to it. Examine any culture and you find it engaged in acting out its mythology. The full story of mythology is only now gradually being interpreted. Our ancestors had their own rules clothed in values and sensitivity of which science and technology have robbed us. Myths do not attempt to describe reality; that is the work of science. In very fact, as Levi-Strauss states, "myths deal with those qualities of perception rejected by the scientific approach as belonging to the domain of error and illusion and for which science has another type of reality: intelligible reality."

Although Finnish Christianity may outwardly profess the same beliefs as others, the Finnish brand of faith has developed highly distinctive features whose underpinnings and dynamic may well rest on a pre-Christian religious outlook. So a special character of Suomi College has been to keep open our accounts with the traditions of our forefathers in the supernatural substream of myth and dream and the eternal loneliness of the human soul. As a mediator of Finnish Christianity, Suomi College has recognized that religion finally relates to the conscious aloneness of the human being and that a person has no real religion if he is never alone with himself. Finns must internalize that which is eternal in faith. Collective rituals of the social order serve the end of the lonely encounter of the individual with his God.

Suomi's existence in terms of mission points up the fact that there are still people concerned about important matters of life and death and the meaning of reality. The ultimate universal issues are the basic questions that have always haunted men: life, the mystery of existence, the ultimate destiny of one's life. These are the inner dynamics of a particular community. To gain and pass on some understanding of the intellectual universe it is not enough to look at dogma and doctrine, but to get some sort of insight into the passions and fears and hopes that enliven the heart of men, their communities and enterprises.

Hence, in a word, Suomi College's role in American society may be seen as mediating to those interested, the best of both worlds, the old and the new. Insofar as Suomi's past is involved, this may perhaps best be understood in the light of Jose Ortega Gasset's definition of an educated person, as one "who understands and appreciates so deeply the traditions which produced him that he is willing to give himself to making them his own, improving upon them and finally passing them on to others who come after him."
THE NATURE OF CHARLES BURCHFIELD

JOSEPH S. TRAVATO

Dr. Travato is Assistant to the Director, Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, Utica, N.Y. This article was adapted from Dr. Travato’s Introduction to his catalog for the major Burchfield Memorial Retrospective exhibit he organized in 1970, and was presented this February at Valparaiso University as a slide lecture for the opening of an exhibit there of Burchfield’s later paintings (1944-1967).

CHARLES BURCHFIELD was one of America’s most unique artists. None other encompasses in his work the full range of natural events in all the seasons as he did.

He produced virtually an inventory of nature, its weather, light, trees, fields, plants, flowers, the sounds and movements of insects, the swaying of trees, and the sounds of the wind. His work calls attention to all these things—and we respond to them in relation to our ability to respond to their counterparts in nature. Through his vision, invention of graphic symbols, and artistry, he gives us a way of seeing them.

Charles Burchfield’s Nature suggests the idea of oneness—of the artist’s lifelong communion and identification with the wonders of nature. His paintings reflect not only a deep love and reverence for nature but also an uncommon empathy and accord with its sights and
sounds. He responded with equal interest to a wide range of subjects and events—to the awesome clap of thunder, as well as to the sight of the first hepaticas in spring.

Charles Burchfield is one of America's great artists of the twentieth century working in the tradition of Homer and Eakins—a tradition characterized by great individuality. The work of Homer and Eakins is as unique in relation to their nineteenth century contemporaries as Burchfield's is in relation to the artists of his time. Furthermore, his importance increases as the full range of his abundant production unfolds.

Just as Homer has given us an authentic visual record of the feel and mood of the sea, and Eakins a truthful analysis of human character, Burchfield has given us an equally authentic and highly personal record of another aspect of nature—that of the wonders of the seasonal light and moods of woods and fields. Like Homer and Eakins, Burchfield drew his subjects from his observations and reactions to the things immediately about him. These artists sought neither the exotic nor the impressive, but were content—and compelled—to express the endless possibilities of their chosen aspects of nature.

Burchfield's development as an artist in twentieth century America is fascinating. Instead of the usual pattern of influences by European modernism that have shaped most of the American artists of our time, Burchfield was led by the desire to visualize such things as nature's sounds and the recalled emotions of childhood. He was inspired by Chinese painting, rather than the school of Paris; Aubrey Beardsley rather than the impressionists; and Salem, Ohio, rather than Pompeii. His attention was directed to the commonplace environment by Sinclair Lewis's Main Street and Willa Cather's My Antonia, and by Tolstoy and Gorky. His sense of the dramatic was nurtured by Beethoven and Sibelius, and by the elemental landscape.

Burchfield valued his childhood impressions—he called them "childhood moods"—which are recorded in notebooks and in paintings such as The Night Wind, 1918. The artist said, "Most adults spurn the things of their childhood and consider the yearning for such things in a grown man as a weakness. Perhaps it is, but it is still my belief that it is of such stuff that real art is made. As an artist grows older he has to fight disillusionment, and learn to establish the same relation to nature as an adult as he had when a child—it will not be like it, but the ratio of emotion will be the same."

Burchfield's early pictures, such as Luminous Tree, 1917 (inside front cover), convey an openly joyous, unrestrained reaction to nature which is childlike in its freshness of outlook and spontaneous execution. He managed to sustain this freshness of outlook, gained through his youthful rambles in and recordings of Post's Woods and Salem, impressions that enabled him to grow and develop to the very last. Song of the Telegraph, begun on Painter Road by Post's Woods in 1917, was completed in 1952. We note a development of the idea and of technique. This capacity is the source of his originality. The portrayal of childhood emotions as seen in his interpretations of the nature of the world are indicative of the nature of the man.

He drew from the time he could hold a pencil. During his junior year in high school, he recorded all the local wildflowers and blossoming fruit trees with extreme accuracy and detail. While still a student at the Cleveland School of Art, he outlined for himself the pictorial ideas with which he would be concerned for the rest of his life. During this time he set out to develop graphic symbols of nature—light, wind, insect sounds, clouds, and trees which he abstracted from his constant observations. Because his ideas crystallized early, he kept on working in his own way. While thus occupied he was not affected by the developments in Europe introduced to America by the armory.
show, which influenced so many of his contemporaries. Even when he went to study at the National Academy of Design he was seemingly untouched by the contemporary New York art scene. Indeed, he was so homesick for the sights of Salem, Ohio, his childhood home, that he returned there after only two months in New York.

The Salem of today is probably not much different from the Salem of 1916; it is a typical small, midwestern town. We visited there six summers ago and were most graciously received—not only by Louise Burchfield, the artist's sister, but also by the Salem Public Library, which has two handsome paintings, one of which is the famous The Three Trees, which I consider to be a major painting in the class of another heavyweight, July, 1935-43 (inside back cover), done during the same time span. This is a great picture when we consider how much he has made from so little—from such a common subject of two trees and a field. He was truly a poet of the commonplace.

During our visit in Salem, Miss Burchfield took us on a tour of the places where her brother had painted—Post's Woods, Covered Bridge, Three Trees, New Albany, Pine Hollow, Bentley's Woods, and the house where Burchfield's widowed mother lived with her six children during those years.

Across the street is the Carlisle House which is the subject of many paintings. The man who lives in the Carlisle House recalls how disconcerted the neighbors were when the widow and her six children moved on the block—but he added: "They turned out better than most of us on the street." I believe him because Louise herself, before her retirement, was curator at the Cleveland Museum. Louise showed our children many medals for distinguished service of their brother Joe, awarded for service during World War I. She also showed us their brother Fred's fine examples of art work. Tom, the oldest brother, helped to keep the family together when their father died. I could recognize many of Charles' subjects in Salem because of his keen sense of observation and his recording of details in paintings which at first glance seem far from literal renderings.

It was during his Salem days that he was most productive. From 1915 to 1920 he did almost half of his total number of paintings—the best of which are among the most original achievements in American art. Many of these early pictures, for all their originality of expression and sparkling color, are in the nature of sketches, done rapidly on weekend excursions, in the evenings, and even during lunch hours. However, the full realization of the ideas contained in these early works had to await his maturity.

Writers on Burchfield, as well as the artist himself, have divided his work into three periods: the early romantic phase from 1915 to 1920; the middle realist period of the 20s and 30s; and the late period combining the motives and styles of the preceding two. The works of the 1920s and 1930s are characterized by a greater interest in realism—an interest which, according to the artist, had already begun to show itself in earlier work. Burchfield said, "I think my first period would be said to end in 1918—tho of course there is not a clearcut division. But it was early in 1918 that I started painting houses, stores, railroads, etc. There were throw-backs, that year to the earlier mood, but there always will be." Such works as Black Houses, 1918, Freight Cars, 1919, February Thaw, 1920, and Railroad Gantry, 1920, are outstanding examples of this new subject matter. Fuller exploration of such subjects was continued when in 1921 he moved to Buffalo where he discovered exciting material in the city streets.

If the 20s heralded a new direction in his painting, it also marked the beginning of a new life; in Buffalo he began a new job, married, and started raising a family. This was a period of adjustment not only in his personal life, but in his painting as well. Speaking of his influences of that time, the artist said, "It was then that I fell under the charm of the realistic American scene writers of that era, Willa Cather, Zona Gale, and Sinclair Lewis. Their group purpose seemed to be to show the pettiness of American midwestern life. It was an exaggerated point of view, but Willa Cather best expressed the epic grandeur of post-pioneer life. My own viewpoint was somewhat different...I was aiming at realism to be sure, but I painted the old buildings, the towns, the houses for their romantic picturesque qualities. For example, the false fronts fascinated me as being uniquely American."


What could be more typical of midwestern towns than Noonday Heat, 1921, with its false front buildings; Promenade, 1928, a double portrait, as romantically nostalgic as a daguerreotype, of Victorian houses that characterize upstate New York cities and towns of that era. On the basis of such paintings Burchfield, by the late 1920s, achieved notable recognition. At that time his work was handled successively by the Sunwise Turn Bookshop and Montross Gallery.
The realist’s approach was but an interlude, perhaps a necessary one, in his persistent striving for excellence—for the realization of his felt emotions in the presence of nature. The pictures of the 20s and early 30s reveal a deliberate effort on the part of the artist to come to grips with the handling of three-dimensional form and mass—for a richer pictorial effect—a quality not present in the early pictures, for all their fresh-ness of execution and beauty of flat design. He was maturing and more conscious of the tradition of western painting. He was, at the same time, aware of his growing fame and perhaps self-conscious about the consequent responsibility that this brings. But Burchfield was not satisfied with his realist approach of this period; he felt he was relying too heavily upon studio work instead of fresh impressions of nature.

A turning point in Burchfield’s career occurred in 1929. In 1928 Edward W. Root had acquired from the Montross Gallery Burchfield’s Country Blacksmith Shop. Mrs. Root recalled how one day it occurred to her husband that he had met all of the artists whose pictures hung in their dining room except the painter of this picture. A trip to Buffalo to meet the Burchfields was arranged.

She told of their visit to the studio where Burchfield, embarrassed because there was little new work to show, brought out, somewhat apologetically, a portfolio of many early pictures in an attempt to make the visit more worthwhile. Mrs. Root added how puzzled she was at Edward’s undemonstrative reaction to those early pictures. But what must have been going on in his mind—and in his own characteristically quiet way—was soon to reveal itself by the events that followed: Mr. Root introduced the artist and newly discovered pictures to the dealer Frank K. M. Rehn in 1929; the same year, as a result of the sale of work, Burchfield was able to terminate his job with H. M. Birge and Sons to devote himself exclusively to painting; the Museum of Modern Art held an exhibition of his early watercolors in 1930.

In a letter to Mr. and Mrs. Root, dated February 12, 1929, the artist thanks them for their interest:

“It hardly seems possible that it is only a little over a week since I first met you, for it seems as if I have known you a long time. Perhaps it may be your interest and appreciative understanding of those early sketches of mine; that is, while I showed them to you, I re-lived that time over, and as you shared them with me, it definitely linked you up with my past.”

Shortly following the beginning of the artist-dealer relationship with Frank K. M. Rehn, Burchfield said, “He sold enough pictures to convince me that it was safe to quit my job. Of course, we didn’t know what was going to happen next October, you know—1929. It might have swayed us—I don’t know . . . as it turned out, I was much better off during the depression than I would have been at the factory where everybody eventually had their salaries all cut in half. But we got along . . . I wouldn’t have been able to do it if it hadn’t been for the faith and courage of my wife.”

Burchfield’s pictures of the 1930s follow the realist vein that characterized his work of the 1920s, which is noted for its observation of factual data. Rainy Night, 1930, is an exceptionally fine example of this phase—a striking portrayal of buildings on a Buffalo street corner, Broadway and Elliott Street, with lighted windows extending their radiance into the pavement below, as is Pussy Willows, 1936, a superb study of tonal relations of indoor and outdoor reflected light. Speaking of the picture End of the Day, Burchfield said: “At the end of a day of hard labor, the workmen plod wearily uphill in the eerie twilight of winter, and it seems to the superficial eye that they have little to come home to in those stark unpainted houses. But like the houses, they persist and will not give in, and so they attain a rugged dignity that compels our admiration.”

These pictures of the 1920s and 1930s such as Old Houses in Winter, linked him with the regionalist movement of the period, a tie which Burchfield considered a dubious honor. Writing to Mr. and Mrs. Root in 1932, the artist said:

“What do you think of the so-called American Wave? People like yourselves who have always believed in American painting, must feel like chuckling over the sudden discovery that there are artists in America, a little patronage wouldn’t come amiss to many worthwhile artists, tho personally I couldn’t have complained before the Wave—just so they don’t overdo it and I wish they would quit talking about the American Scene. The American Scene is no better or worse than other scenes, and the worthwhile artist doesn’t care about a subject for its national character. I have been spoken of as one of the exponents of ‘American Scenism’ which I consider a libel. The scene itself has never been the main motive that impelled me to paint.”

In the early 1930s he went through a period of self-examination—appraising his work from what he called the “Happy Days of 1916” to that time. He came to the conclusion that he should produce a great many pictures from which a few good ones would result: “Some artists,” he said, “produce their good things slowly and methodically. Mine are best when unprompted, almost subconscious. In my productive years, 1916, 1917, 1918, and 1920, I worked in that manner. Much of
what I did was chaff, yet the things that clicked I think were better for it, they have a vividness and spontaneity that the more careful learned things of my recent years lack."

Early in 1934, Burchfield began to sense a change coming about in his work. He said, "I am I believe entering fully now upon a third period, I don’t know how to describe it: the intense realism of my second period no longer satisfies me, and probably I have done certain subjects for the last time." At this time he began again to think in terms of his early ideas, but another decade of thought and work would elapse before he could express his early motives enriched by the discipline of the 20s and 30s. For example, such works as Village in the Swamps, Ice Glare, 1931-33, Freight Cars Under a Bridge, 1933, Six O’clock, 1936, Old House and Elm Trees have some of the same clarity and sparkle as his early pictures, but with more robust and richer pictorial qualities—a greater distillation of ideas in terse pictorial terms.

In the early 1940s, the artist returned to those early watercolors which he felt were not full realizations of the ideas he wanted to express. The Song of the Peterbird, 1918, was a picture which he picked up again for fuller development in 1944, and which became Sun and Rocks, completed in 1950.

Even while this painting was in process, he began working on a variation inspired by the same subject. Over a period of years, he made many preparatory sketches for it and finally completed it in 1963 as Solitude. A comparison of the initial idea contained in The Song of the Peterbird with Sun and Rocks, illustrates Burchfield’s increased power of expression. The Song of the Peterbird emphasizes the subject, whereas Sun and Rocks emphasizes expressions of ideas. In the early picture, the natural formation of rocks, trees, and sky are depicted objectively; in the late picture, although the natural symbolism, which to Burchfield was of paramount importance, is retained, a lifetime of experience has transformed these elements into pictorial equivalents of great originality and power that are symbolic of natural forces.

Burchfield was a man of many moods. These moods ranged from the lighthearted to the despairing which found parallels in the many moods of nature. His translation of mood into painting was an orderly process of controlled thought by an intelligence that strove to encompass, as he stated it, "... the secrets of life, nature, and the world of the spirit.”

In his late works, the artist gave
free and exuberant rein to the expression of his innermost feelings. Light and mood and movement, the fundamental motives of all his work, link him inexorably with the world about us and at the same time personify the nature of the artist himself. In such paintings as The Tree that Reached the Sky, c. 1947, Orion in Winter, 1962, and Fireflies and Lightning, 1964-65, we are led to see the unseeable—we are led to sharpen our sensibilities to objects and events in nature that ordinarily go unnoticed—the sense of growing things, patterns of heat waves in July, the intricate wonder of a dandelion seedball, light entering the woods, minute creatures that inhabit the earth. In such paintings we are made to see and feel those things as he saw and felt them.

The artist's description of Autumnal Fantasy, 1917-44, is most revealing:

"A morning in late fall. There has been a frost which has edged all the fallen leaves with white, but now the sun comes up warm and bright, sending its proverbial rays into the woods with a flood of light. There is a delicious balance of cool and warm air. Down the trunk of a yellow birch creeps a nuthatch searching for insects in the tree's shaggy bark. He pauses a moment, catches sight of another nuthatch on a fantastic old tree root and utters his penetrating call which echoes and re-echoes throughout the woods. As if disturbed by the vibrations, the leaves, freed by melting frost, begin to flutter down one by one like bits of flame. One, an oak leaf, descends in swirling gyrations and finally lands in a black pool where it floats in the center of the concentric ripples it caused, like a gay little fairy boat. It has carried with it a piece of sunshine which now surrounds it like a golden halo."

This is a story-telling picture. If it weren't for the masterful qualities in it—the little leaf boat smacks of pure corn.

The subjects of his pictures are of the commonest sort, but what he made of them is quite something else.

Whether depicting a lofty pine or a lowly dandelion, in each he emphasized the look and feel of reality rather than the surface appearance. It is this very look and feel of reality about his pictures that is the measure of their power and importance as works of art. These pictures are based on observable facts of nature that are clear to everyone at a glance. But what is not so obvious are the insights revealed and the superb artistry that lie beneath their sur-
face. His best pictures, such as *Great Cloud Shadow*, 1960, are extraordinary for their sound pictorial construction, use of the watercolor medium, and inventive patterns and shapes.

For example, we can all identify with *Midsummer Caprice*, 1945. It is a familiar summer landscape—a field with trees and wildflowers under a cloud-studded summer sky. But how it teems with life—the butterfly and the cicada gayly disporting themselves in the hot summer air; patterns of heat waves drench the scene and we feel the flutter of butterfly wings as well as hear the song of the cicada. Looking at this landscape we feel that if we moved a stone or branch, insects would scurry in all directions. Burchfield conveys a vivid impression, not only of a place, a season, a time of day, but also of the emotions that led him to paint it.

And he does this through sheer imaginative choice and translation of natural elements into graphic equivalents of line, shape, form, and color. The cicada, butterfly, and thistle are magnified many times their natural size and become the main actors in the scene.

Burchfield relied heavily upon his contact with a subject before commencing to paint. And sometimes there was quite a long interval between the conception and execution of a work. For example, the actual painting of *Cicada*, 1944, had to await the alighting of a cicada on his shirt front while going to his studio. The idea for the picture had been brewing in his head for quite some time, but it required this fortuitous incident to enable the artist to go out the next day and to paint this picture.

The motive of changing seasons occupied him throughout his career, examples are: *North Woods Mood*, 1956, and *Oncoming Spring*, 1954.

In the following note to the late Mr. Harold Olmsted, the artist gives further evidence of his reliance on firsthand impressions of nature for the paintings of *Oncoming Spring*—a major example of his mature style.

"The idea of expressing the transi-
tion of the seasons is one that has occupied me all my life. As far back as 1915 when I was still in art school, inspired by Chinese scroll paintings, I made many studies of the transition of weather as well as seasons, day to night and vice versa, etc., to be executed much in the manner of the scrolls. Curiously enough none of these were ever carried out - and following the rapid changes we make when young, I soon turned to other ideas and making pictures in the conventional shapes (if not conventional subject matter!).

"Recently the idea of transition again cropped up in my mind, only now it was more mature. I conceived the notion of encompassing two wholly dissimilar themes in one picture - to reduce each of them to abstract motifs (albeit based on natural forms and experience) and show them interlocking or striving for the mastery. It was an idea not easy to arrive at, and there was a period of five or six years between the first pencil note and the finished picture which you now own. I did not even choose the time when it should happen. External conditions had to be right of course, and the idea had to be completely germinated in my mind, ready to burst forth. You may recall last year at the end of March, the big snowstorm we had, and then the glorious thaw that followed - at nearly the end of it, I went out painting to a woods on the Gowandazoar Valley Road which I call the big woods (where I have painted most of my woods interiors). All at once everything seemed to crystallize, and I said 'I'm going to paint the 'winter to spring transition' today.' Hardly had I set up my easel when a thunderstorm came up. I decided nothing was going to stop my painting, and hurriedly got my huge beach umbrella and my raincoat. I protected my legs with a portfolio (the wind holding it in place). And so I painted with my nose almost on the paper with thunder crashing, boughs breaking and rain falling in torrents - a glorious few hours when I seemed to become part of the elements. When I was done at late afternoon, the picture was complete - it seemed as if it had materialized under its own power - very little touching up was done later, and that only to eliminate the marks left by the clips that held the board to the easel.

"To me the most glorious 'transition' of all is 'Winter to Spring' - so full of hope and promise, like the gates of paradise opening up after the winter of life."

Oncoming Spring, 1954. Watercolor, 30 x 40". Mrs. Harold Olmsted.

April, 1976
PATHOS AND POLEMIC IN MISSOURI: TACIT DIMENSIONS

BACK IN THOSE DAYS WHEN THE MISSOURI Synod was "our beloved Synod," we had a basketball cheer in the preparatory school at Milwaukee which captured much of the uneasy tension between a learned ministry and a Saturday night game. Two upperclassmen cheerleaders, beating their fists in the air, would lead us: "Themistocles, Thermopylae, The Peloponnesian War, X², Y², H²SO⁴; who for, what for, who ya gonna yell for?" And we would all stand up and shout "Concordia!" That this harmless remnant of medieval flyting, this heaving of verbal threats at the antagonist, would become a way of life in that Synod was unthinkable. The antagonism was always directed outwards toward the dark secular world. Yet here we are. Conservatives, moderates, middle-of-the-roaders. "Who ya gonna yell for?" And always at the back of the mind there are the temptations and inducements of reason, sometimes in cynicism (Who cares?), sometimes with detached finality (It's too late, I'm gonna yell). The antagonism was always directed outwards toward the dark secular world. Yet here we are. Conservatives, moderates, middle-of-the-roaders. "Who ya gonna yell for?" And always at the back of the mind there are the temptations and inducements of reason, sometimes in cynicism (Who cares?), sometimes with constraint (Is this how you want to use your juice?), or increasingly with detached finality (It's too late, friend."

Unraveling one's loyalties in the controversy is no easy matter. I think it is difficult, for example, to give an unqualified yes to Seminex's having gone into voluntary symbolic "exile" from the scene of their sufferance in 1974. Like any kind of symbolic political action, that action lent itself to a number of interpretations. At a time when the gaps between most theological faculties and their supporting constituencies had painfully widened, what could have been more unfortunate than to make the gap an uncrossable abyss?

In an age of nostalgia, what could be more poignant than to recall that integral and common past the conservatives strive to uphold and preserve? Who doesn't remember Missouri before World War II, "Missouri has never passed through the higher critical question." How painful to observe that because of the conservatives, it probably never will. What public shame and embarrassment to see the conservatives dealing with issues and persons as they do, exercising power with little knowledge, wreaking havoc through its leadership with a politics of conflict, bludgeoning an excellent educational system with a dull broad axe, committing reckless institutional homicide in the name of truth.

Because there are legitimate objections to any position, middle-of-the-roaders try a cooler tack. But in this controversy it is increasingly difficult not to take a position, unless one wishes to walk away with the antiseptic taste of guilt in his mouth. The absurd caricatures highlight the problem. Are you a "Bible-believer" who doubts? Are you a "Bible-doubter" who believes? Who can escape what Annie Dillard suggests is our common plight in creation: "To chomp and be chomped." One remembers through the basketball cheer Thucydides' ancient and acid observation about the abuses of power in times of revolutionary change. Commenting on the Corycean revolution in his history, suggesting that party faction had made doubt and skepticism the reigning belief, that words had changed their meaning, Thucydides put it together when he said, "meanwhile the citizens who were 'middle-of-the-roaders' perished between the two extremes, either for not joining in the quarrel, or because envy would not suffer them to escape." No one claims to be good in this crisis that is Missouri's. It is too messy not to be nauseated, too important to dismiss because what is written small in this community bodes well or ill for men and women in community everywhere.

One strategy that may help in the tight breathing places is to stand back from the muddy pond for a moment or two, to take our sticks out of the water, and to study our scene and our instruments from altered perspectives. "Know when to stand close, when to stand afar," counseled La Rocheffoucault. "Look at the landscape through your legs," suggested Emerson. In fact I propose that we "demystify" the issues momentarily and key our terms and our analysis to some of the tacit dimensions of the controversy in Missouri.

BY TACIT DIMENSIONS I REFER TO THOSE largely unspoken and sometimes unselfconscious ele-

Warren G. Rubel, Professor of Humanities in Christ College, Valparaiso University, and Editor of Response, received his MDiv (1952) from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and his PhD (1964) from the University of Arkansas.
ments that shape our everyday orientation to the world, especially the way we interpret texts. Often we do not consider how important these tacit dimensions are. Like not being aware that our bodies are in motion until we miss a step, I suggest four important interrelated but distinguishable tacit dimensions to the present struggle: the text and politics, the text and beliefs, the text and the sensorium, the text and cultural context. Of course, by now the issues are so densely interwoven that any attempt to unravel them, much less to tidily identify and name them, appears presumptuous and futile. It may be just as true, however, that if we do not keep picking at the strings in the problem, the controversy will move inevitably to the ominous end that many see already.

My central thesis is this: Awareness of these tacit dimensions should lead "middle-of-the-roaders" to realize how misguided, though well-intentioned, the "conservative" reaction in Missouri has been. If the conservative movement cannot be thwarted, it needs to be blunted by political action as well as theological inquiry. Above all, middle-of-the-roaders need to realize that by not facing the political as well as theological issues in this crisis, they are giving assent to an unfortunate victimizing of many good people, a victimization all the more reprehensible because it is carried on in the name of truth.

THE TEXT AND POLITICS

ONE IRONY OF THE CONFLICT IN MISSOURI

is that if the controversy moves like a river dropping faster and faster to a fall, the river moves between two banks that are on the opposite sides of the same stream. Such has been the general case with "revolutionary" movements in the Western tradition. If one accepts, even provisionally, Northrop Frye's description of a revolutionary movement as either a sacred or secular attempt to answer a broad but basic question, "What must we do to be saved?" then everyone in Missouri shares in a long tradition.1 Conservatives and moderates believe in a unique historical revelation. They give common assent to a Hebraic-Christian heritage. And within that heritage they subscribe to texts which at given historical points describe their response to the faith.

What distinguishes revolutionary movements within larger revolutionary movements, however, are two additional characteristics. Along with the belief that the faith has been handed down at a specific place and a specific time for a specific people goes the "conception of a canon of essential and approved texts, and a clear drawing of lines against the most neighborly of heresies" (p. 281). What was descriptive of early Christianity and what is descriptive of contemporary Zionism, or of forms of political concern in Marxism, also depicts the present crisis in Missouri. It is precisely the attack on "heresy" which helps define a revolutionary movement in a way that an attack on total opposition does not. In no case are the members of either party damned outright as unbelievers. Rather, political loyalties group around approved texts, whether the text be the Missouri Synod's 1973 adopted A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles or Concordia Seminary faculty's "Faithful to Our Calling, Faithful to Our Lord. Each document sums up a position and each generates another spate of issues and documents. And like Esau and Jacob both in and out of the same womb, the sons struggle over birthrights.

The third characteristic of a revolutionary movement even more sharply describes reactionary movements within revolutionary movements. As Frye suggests, the final key character of this kind of doctrine is "resistance to any kind of 'revisionism' or incorporating of other cultural elements into the thought of the revolutionary leadership" (p. 281). There is an earnest return to particular historical sources (in our case to Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, and, specifically, to our immediate past in America in the writings of Dr. C.F.W. Walther and others). The stated "interests" of the anti-revisionists center on keeping the tradition pure. And there is a distinctly anti-liberal tendency, especially if that liberal tendency carries with it the possibility of a cultural accommodation, or, from the point of view of the conservative reactionary, a blurring of distinctions ordinarily associated with traditionally well-defined terms. Insofar as the terms both reflect and create and maintain the continuity and stability of the community, any alteration in the "meaning" and "significance" of the terms endangers the unity and solidarity of the community. Thus the impulse in the revolutionary to revise interpretation of the past to satisfy present needs for change clashes inevitably with the reactionary impulse to stand fast in an unstable present by securing a tight anchor in the past. The conflict over the meaning and significance of terms like "inerrancy," "inspiration," "material and formal principles," are, as we hear so often, signals of a much deeper conflict in matters of tradition and innovation, flexibility or rigidity in institutions, and the like.

Although participants may seek to clarify the issues, what intensifies the problem is that the only way that we can get at the issues is through the forms of communication available to us within the community. And we cannot escape the fact that publications from both moderate and conservative "interests" serve understandable but nevertheless self-justifying ends. Successful "schismatics" need economic support. Successful "conservatives" need to mask oppressive activities under appropriate "constitutional" rhetoric. Although differences between the "chomper" and the "chomped"
seem obvious, serious questions and problems of motive and self-interest merge in such a controversy because much is at stake beside the “truth.”

Insofar as we are in a reactionary-revolutionary struggle, we cannot escape either pathos or the polemic. No selected sliced worms are forgiving the institutional plow. Although the issues may be posed to us as either mainly theological, as the conservatives contend, or political, as the moderates contend, we still face a dilemma. The dilemma suggests that the present conflict before us is a false choice between the theological treason of the moderates and the political demagoguery of the conservatives. No middle-of-the-roader relishes the choice because I think he or she tacitly knows that such is not the case. But neither can a middle-of-the-roader escape the choice because of the human hurt and the large issues at stake in the struggle.

**THE TEXT AND BELIEFS**

**DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN THEOLOGICAL**

and political facets of the controversy, though they may certainly be made in order to help us interpret what is at stake in the crisis, are finally invalid precisely because both merge in a revolutionary movement. In this section I press further an obvious distinction. Newspaper and journal articles, choosing the controversy in Missouri as one of the top ten religious stories of the year for the past several years, refer to our crisis as the battle over the interpretation of the Bible. As Erich Frank observed many years ago, “One may even say that the struggle to ascertain true interpretation epitomizes the whole history of the Christian faith.” That observation is a half-truth, however, when applied to the present crisis. For what complicates the issue in Missouri is the lack of agreement and clarity about the presuppositions or beliefs that condition our approach to the theory and practice of the art of the interpretation of Scripture. And despite disclaimers to the opposite, that is a different matter.

3. See Frye, p. 304: “The crisis is often called a crisis of belief, but it is really a crisis in the understanding of belief.” The key turning point on this very fundamental issue in the present crisis in Missouri occurred in the Fall of 1969, when Dr. Richard Jungkunz, an exegetical scholar, was “dismissed” as Executive Secretary of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR). Under his direction the church had begun to face the hermeneutical problems that had taken a generation to develop. The publication of *A Project in Biblical Hermeneutics*, 1969, though it reflected the intransigence of the opposing positions in Missouri, also indicated the possibility for useful inquiry. Dr. Jungkunz was ostensibly released because “there was no need for a full-time executive.” So ran the reasoning of the chairman of the CTCR at that time, the Rev. Theodore F. Nickel, in a telephone conversation with the writer of this article. Shortly thereafter, Dr. Ralph Bohlman was “hired” as acting executive secretary of the CTCR. By the time Dr. Bohlman left the CTCR to become “acting president” of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, the CTCR had already acquired an “assistant” in the person of the Rev. Samuel F. Naftzgar.

All interpretation depends on a circular relationship between belief and discovery or construing of meaning in a text. When St. Augustine said, “I believe that I may know” (*credo ut intelligam*), he was asserting in that often heard but little-understood maxim what we take to be descriptive of all acts of interpretation. This circularity of relationships is not a trap, or at least it need not be. Our beliefs are “heuristic” helps. They are the maps which guide us into unfamiliar terrain. They are the necessary glasses we put on to read our world. Actually neither of these illustrations is completely accurate because before reading a map we have learned with binary vision to select patterns, to focus and to interpret visual signs without being excessively disturbed by fuzziness on the peripheral edges of our fields of vision, to sort out figures on a ground and, in the case of movies or television, to “see” in three dimensions. In fact, our beliefs and values and strategies, most of them tacitly learned, determine our orientation to the world as well as to the art of interpreting Scripture or any other text. For St. Augustine, who was one of the first Christian thinkers to pay close attention to the question of the problem of interpretation, the “credo” is filled with operational content for the Christian by his interpreting Scripture on the basis of two principles, worship of the Trinity, love of the neighbor.

That beliefs determine the pattern of our interpretation is part of the controversy in Missouri. The reason that the conservatives and the moderates cannot get together about interpretation is that they do not agree about the presuppositions informing the act of interpretation. Not that the conservatives and moderates do not have spokesmen claiming Lutheran principles for their positions. President Jacob A. O. Preus in *It Is Written* works with the same presuppositional belief that Professor Edward A. Schroeder uses in his study of Lutheran Hermeneutics. That is, both begin with references to Luther’s pointing to the Bible’s pointing to Christ, which is a “belief” as a principle for interpretation. Although both agree in principle on a Christ-centered approach to interpreting the Scriptures, they arrive at differing conclusions on the significance of that principle for interpretation. Professor Schroeder concludes that what is striking about Lutheran hermeneutics is that it is “based on theological principles and convictions, namely, that the ultimate Word of God is Promise, and therefore must be present in the written word.” For Professor Schroeder, furthermore, such a principle frees the Christian interpreter to work with humility and assurance in exploring just those intellectual principles or forms of literature pertinent to the interpretation of the written word.

For President J.A.O. Preus the same principle, name-
ly what drives the believer to Christ, leads to an acceptance of the testimony of Scriptures on all historical and scientific truth as "binding" on the believer. That the two men should arrive at radically different conclusions should not surprise us. A manifold of tacitly held assumptions accompanies the stated principles of interpretation. What is frustrating to the participator and observer, especially to the Middle-of-the-roader, and what lends apparent justification to an uncommitted position, is that there seems to be so little possibility of any alteration of positions in the controversy. Furthermore, what exacerbates the pathos and heightens the polemic is that the argument about presuppositions is indirectly about the Holy Scriptures. Carrying the battle into the side arena of presuppositions and making presuppositions a "doctrine" rather than a guiding principle is a disturbing development indeed.

Middle-of-the-roaders may contend that the argument is, after all, academic, of little practical consequence for the life of the Church. Incorrect presuppositions, insofar as they are tied to more complex sets of interests, motivations, expectancies, may generate unexpected favorable results. If God uses broken vessels, there is no reason why he cannot use church bodies with vulnerable sets of hermeneutical presuppositions to bring about the Christian community. Not only that, we know that one may approach Scriptures with correct presuppositions and still not arrive at anything but dull preaching or ineffectual witness.

IN FACT THE MAJOR DISTINCTIONS IN MISSOURI’S CRISIS rest on differing accents about the shape of the belief of these presuppositions. For example, President Preus as an administrator stresses in It Is Written the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture, particularly a doctrine which in his opinion "has been weakened to the point where if it is spoken of at all, it is made to refer largely to the effect it has on the reader or hearer and not to the work of God upon the author which caused him to write what we call scripture" (p. 31). One would expect scholarly exegetes like the professors at Seminex to stress the language of Scripture as the focal matrix from which appropriate principles of interpretation are to be drawn. A local pastor concerned with Sunday’s sermon or pastoral counseling or a layman teaching Sunday School would necessarily be guided by interests in the application of the text to a reader’s or hearer’s needs. The point is that these presuppositions are themselves tacitly assumed and largely unexplored sources of legitimate but unexamined differences among conservatives, moderates, and middle-of-the-roaders.  

If such is the case, wouldn’t the common exploration of presuppositions alert all parties concerned to possible resolutions on the points at issue? Probably not. Our present knowledge of the closed nature of the hermeneutical circle in interpretation suggests that for the conservatives there is only one position on the problem of presuppositions. Furthermore, it is not only that the interpretive system is circular. The circularity tends to reinforce itself by every contact with a fresh topic. In addition, the system will be supported by a series of interrelated implicit beliefs which lend stability to the system and which function as defense mechanisms. Michael Polanyi, building on the work of others, isolates three such implicit beliefs: first, objections can be met one by one; second, success in meeting objections one by one suggests that the circle of believing may expand to include "contradictions"; third, the principle of "suppressed nucleation" keeps any evidence from arising which would suggest alternative concepts for arranging facts and their relationships in new interpretive schemes. By suppressed nucleation Polanyi, using an analogy from botany, "explains" how one seeks to prevent the development of any alternative concept on the basis of new evidence. The closed circumference of a single restricted interpretive orientation can only be broken from the outside by the introduction of a new point of view. Both our need for a stable system of interpretation and the doubt that the breakdown in such a system induces keep us from allowing new seeds to germinate.

I have compressed here in a paragraph what Polanyi summarizes in a number of pages, and that after a lengthy set of prior arguments. Perhaps the point may be made pertinent and clear by Jacob A. O. Preus’ It Is Written as an example. I should emphasize that I use this particular text to demonstrate for the reader the presence in the text of that pattern of circularity and of supporting implicit beliefs that Polanyi and others have distinguished in almost any system of interpretation. There are other reasons for using the text. It is relatively brief. It shows the author’s thorough grasp of the “facts” of Scripture, his basic interest in the productive devotional life of his reader. It illustrates his pastoral concern to offer to his reader a substantive answer to the disturbing crisis of doubt that faces any Christian faced with negative criticism of the Holy Scriptures. Although

5. The controversy in Missouri, as elsewhere about location for a stable and valid, if not certain, norm for interpretation is roughly analogous to the “secular” debate on norms in “theories of interpretation.” For example, E. D. Hirsch, Jr., Validity in Interpretation (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), locates the norm of validity in authorial intention. Monroe C. Beardsley, The Possibilities of Criticism (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1972) locates the norm in the text. Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), accents the “application” of the text to a hearer as norm. Each of these positions, of course, is carefully elaborated in a sustained argument that includes, either through refutation, inclusion, or modification, the contributions and accents of the other theorists. What is painful to see in Missouri is the “theological psychosis” that fails to cope with the ways in which the work of these men and others throws fresh perspective on the hermeneutical problems in Missouri.

meant for a popular audience, the book does not avoid scholarly reference. Moreover, it contains the principle presuppositions and arguments of the conservative position. Thus it clearly demonstrates the author’s advocacy of a particular theological position. Insofar as the author is the chief executive officer of the Missouri Synod, it reflects his “interests” and the way that his leadership necessarily leads to a politics of conflict. But these skirt the main point.

The author’s manifest statement of purpose is “to consider Jesus’ doctrine of Scripture, in order that as Christians we may also acknowledge His Lordship in this important area” (p. 6). The book is a careful demonstration of the way in which premises and conclusions interlock. Belief in Jesus’ Lordship generates the reader’s acceptance of the authority of Scripture. The authority of Scripture generates our belief in Jesus’ Lordship. The author concludes in the language of devotion, “The love of Christ creates love of the Sacred Scripture, and the use of the Scripture produces love for Christ” (p. 73). At this stage it is helpful to identify the circularity in the position and to remind ourselves that there is nothing inherently incorrect in a circular argument if we are conscious that it is circular, that it is an interpretative tool, and that the scope of the circle may be too large or too small, and thus inadequate to the truth or reality we seek to understand. In any case, the author uses his premises as generating principles, working from Jesus’ testimony about the Old Testament through the imparting of His teaching to the Apostles. On the way the author meets each fresh topic in serial order: what Jesus considered to be Scripture, His judgment about the relationship between traditions and the Word of God, Jesus’ holding to the divine origin of Scripture in the temptation account, and so on.

The author’s successful presentation of supporting texts then leads him to draw a larger conceptual generalization that both points back to the material already covered and anticipates subsequent exposition and argument: “Jesus and Scripture speak the same thing; both speak of Christ, His person and His work. When, as we shall see later, all the New Testament writers regarded the Old Testament as primarily Christological, they were only following in the footsteps of our Lord Himself” (pp. 30-31). This generalization in the lengthiest chapter in the study naturally follows the premise and anticipates the conclusion. It is also the appropriate place for us to note how closely It is Written follows Polanyi’s paradigm. This is, the second kind of implicit belief takes over to solidify the coherence of the relationship between isolated facts and groups of relationships, expanding to include “contradictions.” Accordingly, having asserted the identity of Jesus and the Scriptures, the author takes up quickly the “modern” attitudes toward the origin and nature of the Bible which would contradict his particular line of presentation and vitiate any tight identity between Christ and Scripture. These contradictions, which have risen with Rationalism, move in two directions: attacks on Scripture from without by those who do not believe the Scriptures; attacks from within the Christian community by theologians who affirm that because the Bible is the word of men as well as the Word of God, it cannot be free from errors in matter of fact. These “views” or “ideas” or “theories” the author summarizes and dismisses: “The fact remains and must never be forgotten that all these views are only hypotheses” (p. 34). That the author seems unself-conscious about his position being another human hypothesis based on his presuppositions puzzles the mind unless we realize how hermetically sealed off and self-sustaining a specific interpretive point of view can become. But at this point we are concerned with his critique’s following the pattern of the necessary and understandable “defense mechanism” Polanyi describes.

We have not yet accounted for the “suppressed nucleation” that keeps any evidence from arising which would suggest alternative concepts for handling selection of data and thus readjusting one’s beliefs by widening the circle of presuppositional beliefs to absorb “contradictions” rather than to exclude them. A first response suggests that insofar as the circle is rigid and exclusive rather than flexible and inclusive, no conflicting evidence can enter the circle. In reading and rereading much of the conservative material in the crisis one observes the repeated tendency to put the choices before the reader in a fixed rhetorical pattern. That fixed pattern is the dilemma which confronts us in one of two forms—either as a simple “either/or” choice, or as a hypothetical syllogism in the “if/then” form. I cite two key examples from It is Written:

If the New Testament and particularly the words of our Lord Himself are of no value for any information to questions of history, science, or the authorship of the books of the Bible, then all such questions are wholly irrelevant for the study of theology (p. 35).

Now the question we have to ask ourselves, in regard to these historical matters as well as to what the New Testament has to say about other matters of this kind, is: Shall we use the words of Jesus and the New Testament writers or the ever-changing opinions of theologians as normative and supreme (p. 37)?

The advantages of such a form of discourse are obvious. Choices are neatly over-simplified for the speaker and for the listener or reader. The complexity of the problem of interpretation is concealed by “begging the question” in the premises or by using question-begging epithets throughout the statements. Potentially contradictory evidence is reduced to absurdity in the conclusion. Potential conflicts in the audience are suppressed by strongly weighted words that evoke necessary impetu in the reader if he or she should take exception to the
argument. It is a rhetoric of polemics that creates its own pathos in the religious community.7

OUR INTENTION IN THIS RATHER LENGTHY section on the text and beliefs was to show how interpretation itself depends on that relationship and to demonstrate an isolated aspect the form takes in a belief system. A more important question is what difference does it make to the pathos and polemic in Missouri? I think we can answer the question with a hypothetical proposition. If the basic question of revolutionary movements is what must I do to be saved, what makes the present crisis so disconcerting for us all is that the related question is "How can I be certain that I am saved?" If one looks at It Is Written from this perspective, one needs to distinguish sharply between the stated or manifest purpose "to acknowledge Jesus' Lordship in the important area of the doctrine of Scripture" and the latent but perhaps more significant purpose which informs the work, namely, to alleviate the personal doubts that take over when Scripture as authoritative norm is "attacked." As one would expect, the problem of doubt in It Is Written first surfaces in the section on contradictory evidence, particularly when the author picks up the modern views that the Scriptures "instead of being imparted directly by God to chosen men who are moved by Him to write, is the product of the church" (p. 32). "Because of such views," he goes on, "we can have none less than Archbishop Temple saying 'there is no single deed or saying of His of which we can be perfectly sure that He said or did precisely this or that'; and again, 'No single sentence can be quoted as having the authority of a distinct utterance of the All-Holy God'" (p. 32). Further, criticism of Scripture, specifically, demythologization, removes Christ far from us. "We are cast into a sea of uncertainty; we are unsure of anything" (p. 38). Such concerns build to a peroration in the concluding comments where the scholars from within the church in their destructive criticism cut off the branch on which they need to sit. "What have they done? Where is their own and our hope, comfort, help in time of need" (p. 73)28

Again, much has been and much will be written about the substantive issues at stake here. Because we all do our believing and interpreting within a smaller or larger frame of orientation, no matter how rigid or flexible our orientation, we can handle only so much doubt on the human spectrum between false security and hopeless despair. The subjective anguish that the conservative believer faces before threatening contradictory evidence, particularly if the identification is made between the person of Christ and Scriptures, is formidable indeed. That needs for security, authority, and legitimacy should be centered in a written text will be taken up in the next section. What we have attempted to show here in summary fashion is how such an interpretive system establishes its own completeness and coherence. What makes the matter complicated, even a subject for hopelessness, moreover, is that no such interpretive system breaks down from within. It can only be altered or broken down from without. When serious doubts threaten our value system and the interpretive principles undergirding it, we pull back into our protective shell. Fortunately, human growth and development are possible because we can absorb such traumas, enlarge our orientations, let seeds of doubt germinate to become part of a landscape which includes the old but provides us with a more inclusive vision.

THE TEXT AND THE SENSORIUM

7. It is the form of conservative rhetoric that comes closest to political demagoguery. The false dilemma, by playing on the fears and anxieties of the listener, by using ultimate "God-terms" in support of its position, and by operating with a sharp and purportedly obvious sacred-secular distinction, makes it extremely unlikely that the anxious listener will be able to handle more doubt or guilt in a cultural situation characterized by doubt.

8 This kind of identification or "equation" between the certainty of the meaning of a written text from the past, which can never be arrived at, and the certainty of the assurance of faith, which is a gift of grace, reflects the basic weakness in the conservative position. Conservatives apparently presume that to deny the doctrine of inerrancy of the Scriptures, as this has been understood in Missouri's past, is to call into radical doubt the entire "ground" on which certainty of faith rests. Perhaps some conservatives could be led to see (by the history of the contemporary church itself) that to distinguish between the two is not to break down the basic testimony of the church in its deepening belief and understanding of Christ as risen Lord. The distinction does mean a break-up or an altering in our understanding and belief of the relationship between Christ as Lord and the function of language in Scripture. Moreover, if meaning is an affair of human consciousness and not of a text by itself, then the problem of authority and legitimacy with regard to valid textual meaning is as much a matter of the nature of the church as of the Word.

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in the human sensorium. Both McLuhan and Ong advocated a common and by now popular thesis: alterations in the communication media effect the way in which we perceive our world. Because language in a communication system is a form of technology, the interaction of the one upon the other modifies our grasp of what we call reality. Speech effects the social community. Writing effects speech. The printed word has its effects on human story telling, on the way we carry on theological polemics, and so on.

How such modifications may bear on the crisis in Missouri we can see by considering communication technology in a broad historical perspective. If we follow Ong and McLuhan, there are four broad stages. The first stage is the oral-aural phase. This period extends from the beginning of man to the development of the first alphabet, about 2000 B.C. The word—always spoken—apparently carried with it a special sense of personal presence, of power, of interiority, of transience, and of a sacred quality almost unrealizable to us in a later state of civilization. In fact the spoken and heard word in these stages has a tremendous impact on human beings in tribal communities. The nature of authority in this social group, the weight of past authority in rhetorical invention, the relationships between eloquence and wisdom—all shape and are shaped by an oral-aural culture. Not the least of these impacts was that history could only be preserved in memory and speech. It is extremely difficult for us as children of a highly literate culture to understand the significance of the spoken word as an event in a preliterate culture. Perhaps we capture some of the magical residue when we watch children respond to naming and to conceptual and symbolic growth in speech.

The second major stage is the “chirographic” or alphabetic stage. Its significance rests on the alphabet’s representing the actual process of the deactivation of sound. “Writing,” observes McLuhan, “is a visual enclosure of non-visual spaces and senses. It is therefore an abstraction of the visual from the ordinary sense interplay. And whereas speech is an outering (utterance) of all our senses at once, writing abstracts from speech.”

Or to put it another way, the alphabet “quantifies” sound trapping it in visual terms. In the early stages of the alphabet in our western tradition, however, the papyri and scroll and eventual manuscript tradition that grew up around the alphabet still called the senses into play simultaneously (as a sign of the progression, one recalls Eli’s thinking that Hannah was drunk because she prayed silently or St. Augustine’s marveling in The Confessions at St. Ambrose’s reading silently). Manuscript illumination as well as oral interpretation kept the human sensorium engaged in a total interplay of the senses. One still heard what one read. And, of course, tradition was distinguished but never separated from the written word.

With the development of the printing press, we enter a third stage. According to McLuhan and Ong, we eventually experience in this stage sharp visual separation. The written or printed word is isolated from the spoken word. That is to say, until the development of the printing press, the written word was tied to memory and to the perpetuated life of the spoken community in oral-aural ways. With the development of the printing press and with the consequent reproducibility of the printed word, the oral-visual act of reading is “split-up.” The eye pretends to be an ear. And the simultaneity or interplay of all the senses usually associated with earlier oral-visual cultures is lost. The consequences in western culture have been manifold. Within western Christendom this technological development was to have decided impact on Protestantism with its emphasis on sola scriptura, private interpretation of the Bible, and oral preaching; on Roman Catholicism with its distinctions among modes of revelation and communication at the Council of Trent.

The fourth stage is the electronic stage. The voiced or spoken word is once more given renewed vitality. Walter Ong reminds us of the fantastically rapid changes that have taken place as the word has entered into a new stage beyond orality and script and print to a stage characterized by the use of electronics in verbal communication. There have also been quick phases within this electronic stage, from telegraph, to telephone, to radio; from sound picture, to television, to computers, where the word is silenced once again and thought processes completely reorganized by extreme quantification.

IN TERMS OF THE PROBLEM OF INTERPRETATION of the Bible in the Missouri Synod tradition, the insights of these men converge with other critics in a number of ways, all effecting the tacit dimensions of the crisis in Missouri. Here, I isolate only three obvious applications. First, their contributions reinforce and complement the work of the so-called higher critics, form critics, redaction critics, etc., in their focus on the aural-oral forms underlying the written forms which have come down to us in manuscript and book form. From our present vantage point, neither the negative critic, with his carry-over attitude toward Scripture, nor the upright fundamentalist, with his nervous assertions that the Scriptures, like a meteorite, had fallen from the heavens untouched by human hands, were on target. McLuhan summarizes the predicament: “The new homogeneity of the printed page seemed to inspire a subliminal faith in the validity of the printed Bible as bypassing the traditional authority of the Church, on the one hand, and the need for rational critical schol-
lish on the other. It was as if print, uniform and repeatable commodity that it was, had the power of creating a new hypnotic superstition of the book as independent of and uncontaminated by human agency. Nobody who had read manuscripts could achieve this state of mind concerning the nature of the written word. The assumption of homogeneous repeatability derived from the printed page, when extended to all other concerns of life, led gradually to all those forms of production and social organization from which the Western world derives many satisfactions and nearly all of its characteristic traits."

What McLuhan places before us is the possibility that our psychological expectancies for the printed word lead us to attribute to it a certainty and authority which were not attributed to the written word in a manuscript tradition. In other words, when conservatives in Missouri argue categorically that the certainty of their assurance of salvation rests on the triple notion of "inspiration, inerrancy, and authority," and when by "inerrancy" they mean all scriptural references to historical and scientific matters that have come to us in written or now printed form, and when they make subscription to the proposition that right interpretation of the Scriptures depends on unqualified subscription to such a proposition, they display their unfamiliarity, not with the Bible, but with those very tacit dimensions, both cultural and personal, which have led them to certain presumptions about how the Bible shall be interpreted.

To put the problem more concretely, and again by example because the work is such an excellent "representative anecdote" of the conservative position, consider Jacob A. O. Preus' *It Is Written*. He perhaps should have titled the work *It Is Printed*. Although he makes token distinctions between the spoken and the written word, he does not know what to do with the distinctions. He fails to see that the very presuppositions with which he approaches the major problem of the book are based on values and expectations shaped in a print culture. The author of *It Is Written* evades those intermediate questions that one necessarily asks today about language. He ignores distinctions between "mythical" and "logical" uses of language. He blurs the relationships between intention, meaning, and significance in the spoken and written word. He overlooks the cultural history that surrounds anyone's approach to Scripture and places interpretation within a historically limited horizon. He inappropriately translates Biblical insights to the contemporary world, thereby confusing what is permanent and what is contingent in the application of interpretation to human needs.

Second, false distinctions between Scripture and tradition issues have been re-examined. This examination, which has taken place wherever "ecumenical" conversations have taken place, has relieved if not eliminated misunderstandings surrounding our approaches to "Scripture and tradition" problems. The hermeneutical question, which began in earnest with the Reformation controversies on the authority and interpretation of Scripture, has received renewed emphasis in our time because of the work of scholars in these areas.

Third, and perhaps more seriously for us in the Missouri tradition, these studies indicate how imperative it is that church-related or church-supported educational institutions keep students close to the growing edge of what knowledge is available on those questions of interpretation and areas of inquiry which Christians share with everyone else in the world. Not to do so sometimes makes the church an embarrassment in the modern world.

If such a controversy could arise only in a print culture, one might well conclude that if conservatives understood more about the tacit dimensions involved in acts of interpretation, even the three obvious ones we have isolated so far, they would lose their seemingly compulsive need for locating certainty in a belief about a text, even if the text is the Bible itself. This conclusion is unfair to the serious issue that really does underlie conservative concern for the unqualified preservation of that "realistic interpretation" of the Bible, to use Krister Stendahl's apt term, that hardens to a Biblicism in its opposition to the apparent threats of subjective relativism. These concerns are not merely conservative bugaboos. Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method* is a comprehensive attempt, recently translated into English, to rescue interpretation from the fatal subject-object antithesis that purportedly subsumes the higher-critical attitude toward Scripture, reducing it to a mere object of human inquiry.

"Anyone who studies the Bible as literature is damned," quipped W. H. Auden. But the Bible is literature and it is studied as such by saved and damned. The higher critical method, insofar as its attitude or belief shapes its approach to Scriptures, constitutes not only a desacralizing approach to Scripture, it also ultimately locates answers of certainty in individual subjectivity, thus providing the Christian community with no stable norm. So runs the partly true reservation of the conservative. We see the outer limits of this kind of reactionary concern in the statements on *Inspiration* released by the Commission on Theology and Church Relations that the Scriptures cannot be "tested" by human reason or rational inquiry, only "confirmed." Or one sees the point in the peculiar concluding remarks by a Springfield Seminary Professor in his evaluation of the Lutheran-Reformed dialogues: "When Luther compared faith to a mathematical point, he stressed the clarity, the certainty of faith's content. That content is provided not by that by which the Christian believes, his faith itself, but rather by that which he believes, the external Word. And the external Word, Holy Scripture, is clear—above
all, in its proclamation of Him in whom alone there is salvation, Jesus Christ.”13 The last sentence is gratuitous. To out Descartes Descartes in the quest for some objective certainty and to locate that certainty in an “external word” (external to what?) is so much conservative theological obfuscation in the face of the honest doubt and genuine possibilities for love and consecrated inquiry that face the church. That predicament Wolfhart Pannenberg identified some years back: “The hermeneutical difference between our present situation and the biblical texts has come to be like an unsurpassable gulf because of the reaction against the biblical tradition of the secular consciousness shaped by the emancipated Id sciences. Therefore this difficulty can be overcome only if we succeed in bringing modern thought again into a more conscious connection with Christian tradition. To this end, however, it is not sufficient to accommodate Christian tradition to current opinions of the time. Nor is it possible to return our present intellectual world to the level of the first Christian century.”14

Insofar as the struggle in Missouri is a choice between joining this struggle and evading it, the conservatives have opted to withdraw into insularity and parochialism, to cheer against the dark secular world both without and within, to send up the wrong flag for the right reason.15

TEXT AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

IN HIS LITERATURE AND DOGMA (1873), AN essay towards a better comprehension of the Bible, Matthew Arnold contended that because the average Englishman of his time had a “scanty sense of the life of humanity,” he tended to substitute either a false theology or fanciful concerns about the future state of man after death for humane reading of the Bible. Arnold’s answer to this problem was that the Bible be read in the context of culture: “To understand that the language of the Bible is fluid, passing, and literary, not rigid, fixed, and scientific, is the first step towards a right understanding of the Bible. But to take this very first step, some experience of how men have thought and expressed themselves, and some flexibility of spirit, are necessary; and this is culture.”

We need not agree with the eventual substitution of culture for religion to appreciate Arnold’s advocacy of some “flexibility of the spirit” as a sign both of culture and of the perpetual interaction between the Christian faith and culture. Whether that perpetual interaction is creative or destructive is the heart of the matter, for the form of the interaction will vary with the changing circumstances of the church’s situation in the world and the guiding impetus of its leadership. As H. Richard Niebuhr suggested, the forms of interaction follow patterns of rejection, accommodation, synthesis, dualism, transformation of the world of “culture” or various other modifications.16 Moreover, if Niebuhr’s assessment of the main tendency of a “Lutheran” position on this question is on target, then his evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of “dualism” is a slipper that slides comfortably on Missouri’s aching foot.

According to Niebuhr, the strength of the position ordinarily associated with Luther rests on its sensitivity to and insights into the vulnerability and corruptibility of all human aspirations, all earthly institutions, including man’s highest religious and artistic achievements and man’s most distinguished cultural goals. That strength requires relentless surveillance and anguished scrutiny of oneself, of one’s history and motives, and a probing analysis of the institutions one serves.

In its most acute form, the tension between church and culture would require living out a paradoxical relationship between the church, with its concerned claim that it possesses the truth of salvation because it has been possessed by it in Christ, and culture, that entire realm of man’s free use of reason and imagination by which men and women everywhere seek to shape human life into meaningful purpose and order in this world. To live with these tensions would be to preserve the church from substituting a particular historically conditioned understanding of the truth for the truth. Both human intelligence and imagination will unmask such claims to truth. Over against a pluralistic or totalitarian culture or against the threat of cultural relativism, the church stands with its judgment and sacrificial love. The church’s sign of perfect service in this world would be its worship, subsuming in its worship of God all those realms of human aspiration one identifies with imagination and intelligence and craft. Thus flexibility of spirit would preserve the church from a rigid dogmatism. Flexibility of spirit would preserve culture from a kind of secular reductionism.

The problem comes with the “vices” of dualism. Niebuhr uses a single term to describe it—“non-parallel dualism,” which I take to have the following significance. Although Lutherans claim to espouse necessary tensions between the church and culture, faith and reason, Christian vocation and secular calling, “orders” of creation and redemption, Lutherans divide the relationships to alleviate the tensions. Lutherans thus answer the problem of relationships between church and culture by pragmatically rejecting not culture, to which they may give repeated and pious acclamation, but by rejecting the necessity for perpetual interaction and tension between culture and the Christian Faith. Thus as Lutherans we have been characteristically inactive.

15. For a serious attempt to build bridges between the tensions, see Paul G. Bretschcr, After the Purifying (River Forest, Illinois: Lutheran Education Association, 1975).
in politics and the arts as realms of the merely secular. Or we fall into unhealthy oversimplifications—like reason or faith, purity or impurity of doctrine, terms which have little honest bearing on the actual problems of our living out of our faith.

WHY PAUSE BEFORE THIS RELATIONSHIP as a tacit dimension of the present crisis in Missouri? I think that even a brief look at Missouri's history in education will reflect how vulnerable it has been to "non-parallel dualism." At the original heart of Missouri's educational system from the beginning was the hope for interaction between the church and culture. One looks rather wistfully back to early but unfulfilled hopes in the Missouri Synod fathers. Ludwig Fuerbringer cites a letter of September 7, 1839, from Ottomar Fuerbringer, purportedly to his friend Franz Delitzsch in Germany. The elder Fuerbringer thought that the educational system he was to serve was to begin with a gymnasium. But eventually the attempt was to be made to broaden the scope of the educational program to include a University (universitatis literarum atque artium) and a theological seminary (Priesterseminar). One thinks of C.F.W. Walther's vision of general education at the cornerstone laying of the "Collegium and Seminar-Geb!iude" on November 8, 1849, where he spoke with high regard for what he thought was an essential task of the church to serve as friend and cultivator of Kunst and Wissenschaft (arts and sciences). Financial poverty quickly cut off the possibilities for realizing this early hope for the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to carry on its theological education in the lively context of general education. Like most Christian denominations of the nineteenth century, its seminary was built to serve specific ethnic needs and, unlike the European pattern, theological education was separated from a liberal arts context.

However we may look back on our founding fathers' original hopes, Missouri's educational system took an isolated route in its development. Highly-touted as it may have been for its single-purposed goals in teacher and theological education, committed as its faculties have been to a learned and articulate ministry, and consecrated as its teachers have been on the elementary, secondary, college, and professional levels—Missouri's educational system never really coalesced. Its lay people fended pretty much on their own with the founding of Valparaiso University, eventually taking just those risks that need to be taken by the church-related university.

Consequently, Missouri was a denominational and educational enclave (and is becoming one again) until just after World War II. The fortunate irony of such a predicament a generation ago was that it provided students within the system with what Lionel Trilling described as a "double-environment." Missouri's proud and understandable preoccupation with its own immediate past inevitably rubbed against the healthy encroachments of contemporary theological revival in the student's mind. The scene was set for reassessment, even intelligent rebellion, against the very narrowness and constrictions of Missouri's past, including its doctrine of the Word. In the generation after World War II, seminary professors, whose vocation is not only service to past meaning but also critical evaluation of the significance of that meaning for our present grasp of reality, sought to lead the church's future pastoral leaders through the higher critical question. Unfortunately, and it was true of other seminaries as well, theological faculties, particularly exegetes, moved fast and far in their specialties, sometimes without sensitivity to the need for educating the people that the seminaries were called to serve. Furthermore, because of our church body's censorship policy, it was virtually impossible to educate the constituency of change.

Meanwhile the price of ethnic solidarity and stability in our tradition seemed to be denominational insularity and rigidity. For example, not until the 1947 Synodical Convention did the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod act in any consolidated way to unify the thrust of its educational institutions. Its pretheological programs of study did not begin granting a fully accredited bachelor of arts degree until 1962, when Concordia Senior College Fort Wayne was accredited. Thus within a fifteen year period, the church's promising foray into a liberal arts education for its pastors (rather than a pre-professional training for its pastors) has been sharply truncated with the abrupt closing of Concordia Senior College. (I am not arguing that Concordia Senior College should not have been closed. I would argue that its precipitous closing smacks of inexperienced judgment at best and political reprisal at worst.) It is a symbolic as well as literal rejection of quality liberal arts education for its pastors. To put the point in another way, the men who are sitting in judgment on the church's present development, specifically the governing "elite" brought in by the conservatives, although they may be as bright as any younger generation in Missouri has ever been, are not nearly as well-educated. Insofar as past clergy have been trained in only one capacity, they have been trained to incapacities in precisely those issues at stake in the present Missouri crisis. The greatest enemy of the reactionary conservatives is time, not because the moderates will regroup to recover leadership in Missouri, but because time will demonstrate how misguided and dark a period Missouri is going through.

Thus we are left with the painful embarrassment and public shame of the present crisis. Those who have power seem to have little knowledge and less wisdom. Those who have knowledge and vision have been stripped of power. Those who are sympathetic but uninformed beat their heads with their hands but do not act because they are uncertain how to act. The young turn justifiably cynical. The old look forward to retirement or death or the hereafter or to an idyllic and
irrecoverable past. Heads are chopped off one by one in prudent administrative circumspection. Sensitive and capable synodical leaders resign. District Presidents are removed from office. Highly qualified and dedicated college presidents vacate positions under impossible duress. The president of the denomination, now that his leadership of conflict has produced grievous disorder in the church, issues firm and loving appeals for order. The Board of Directors of the Synod soothes the press and the public with words. But there is no peace. W. H. Auden, in one of his last reviews, quoted Lord Acton: “Neither paganism nor Christianity ever produced a profound political historian whose mind was not turned to gloom by the contemplation of the affairs of men,’ for history seems to be dominated by the forces of unreason and by chance.” That such should be the case in Missouri just as it was emerging to be a significant part of American Lutheran Christianity heightens the pathos and saddens the heart at the end of an era.

THAT A VARIETY OF TACIT DIMENSIONS shapes the pathos and polemic of the crisis in Missouri is obvious to all. I am not contending that the controversy is reducible to these dimensions. Rather, our awareness of these tacit dimensions offers us another perspective on the issues and suggests why we have in Missouri ingredients for catastrophe.

Mix together a reactionary political movement with a hermetically sealed interpretive scheme. Add the psychological need to alleviate religious doubt by finding certainty in beliefs in presuppositions about a text. Make the untestable belief in presuppositions about interpretation a doctrine which must be believed. Place the ensuing conflict in a rigid but fragile institutional scene. Pathos and polemic will not only result. They will be the accompanying signs of that cruelest form of religious piety we associate with a church gone awry: to make other human beings victims of oppression in the name of truth.

One looks to see from the conservatives some intelligent weighing of options, a choosing of the best possible means for resolving tensions through guided and sustained inquiry, a searching to avoid error as well as to find truth. But what one has seen is a shabby treatment of the problem of interpretation, a problem that has taken a generation to develop in Missouri.

One looks for “middle-of-the-roaders” to stand up and shout, “This has gone too far! The threat to Missouri is not from the left, where we have been told to take aim. It is over our shoulders to the right.” In any case, “old Missouri,” with its unspoken love and understanding, with its tacit understanding that bridged gaps between the generations and resiliently absorbed those theological differences that could be absorbed without denying our faith in the Scriptures in their testimony to Christ as our risen Lord, is probably not recoverable. Still we can name our predicament.

GYROSCOPE

The gyroscope upon a string reveals the symmetry of natural form. A wraith upon the air, it hovers, barely visible, suspended in the medium of its own motion. Its stillness seems perpetual, or perhaps it is the stillness that is itself perpetual, prolonged beyond the limits of the form, which is already extended beyond itself.

This thing, possessed of some self-induced purity, perplexes the observer. See, it spins upon its pivot, and in turn, arrests all action, itself become the pivot for the circumstance of its continued motion. It is perfect, and no one breathes. It is nearly gone now, moving faster, about to depart, a sphere out of spheres, into some unseen world where mass is not subjected to external torques.

It falters. It was a ruse, this scientific toy, as light glints coldly on wobbling metal. It falls to the floor and is still. Yet its symmetry remains. It is beautiful, this form, for its potential to move within itself. Take the string and wind it, and again, it calls to itself to come away.

How it sings.

NORMAN FINKELSTEIN

The Cresset
This early Shaw play because I was starved for clever, witty, civilized conversation onstage. Of course, one can say a great deal against this Ibsenite play which deals with prostitution as a profitable industry in which the most respectable citizens may often have a share. Shaw, of course, may have outraged his Victorian audiences at the end of the last century by such thought and economic determinism that prostitution is caused by poverty rather than by the lust of loose girls, a conveniently romantic notion. What Shaw really wanted to say he put best in his preface written several years after the play: "I believe that any society which desires to found itself on a high standard of integrity of character in its units should organize itself in such a fashion as to make it possible for all men and all women to maintain themselves in reasonable comfort by their industry without selling their affections and their convictions."

As happens with all older thesis plays, Mrs. Warren's Profession suffers from having succeeded in what it set out to fight for. I suspect that the play may have been included in the repertory of Lincoln Center because of its stress on feminine independence with Mrs. Warren's daughter Vivie being a wonderful creature of the lib movement. For whatever other reason could it have been chosen, since it is in no way the most recommendable of all the Shavian plays. Its dramaturgy is weak, for after Mrs. Warren's confession to her daughter that she had preferred the easier way of existing to a daily twelve-hour-job in a factory for nine shillings a day, the action goes downhill. Or was it that Joseph Papp had a famous actress at his disposal who badly wanted to play the part of Mrs. Warren? If so, he and Ruth Gordon were ill-advised, because she did play Mrs. Warren badly. All her co-players, above all Lynn Redgrave as Vivie, could give so much more to their parts than Miss Gordon, who almost looked like a replacement in this company.

But, after all, it remains a pleasure to have been in the presence of a clever, witty playwright with a cause to fight for. Shaw's language still has its forcefulness and the characterization of his figures illustrate his points well. The truth is that Mrs. Warren's Profession is a period piece. It is still too close to our time to warrant its production, particularly in view of a half dozen other Shavian plays which really need to be revived.

JULES FEIFFER, KNOWN FOR his cartoons—he also wrote a novel and two films—is a witty man, too, probably with too many funny ideas. His plays—I have seen two other plays of his—are full of gimmicks and stage tricks. He is a playwright with a visual mind, writing clever, clipped captions underneath his stage images. He does not write thesis plays, but they all have an unmistakeable message; they are realistic with a touch of zaniness in which sanity is used like a built-in gadget.

Knock Knock is no exception to this Feiffer rule. (I could not find out whether there should be a comma between these two words or not and yet for the purpose of holding your breath—a very important factor in this play for any spectator—the comma, at odd moments, is very important, though missing in the playbill.) I deem it necessary to give my readers bits of the genesis of this play. It was conceived and written in 1971 at Feiffer's house on Martha's Vineyard. Like a painter with no theme in mind letting his colors decide where to go, like unemployed actors avoiding that rusty touch of prolonged idleness would simply improvise acting in a new play, Jules Feiffer began writing a dialogue between two men "with nothing in particular in mind." There are always ur-characters, archetypes floating around a writer's mind. Knock, knock at Cervantes' door, and a dreamer and realist will open new vistas to old avenues. He put two people in a room and had

FOR A LONG TIME I HAVE dreamt up wishing wishes. I strongly believe that wishful dreaming can be a fruitful enterprise when one's dreams are skillfully pushed to the edge of reality. Then all of a sudden a dream may take on shape and finally become the reality of one's dream. It is all a matter of belief. I have thought a great deal of this business of dreaming wishes and having faith while seeing Jules Feiffer's latest play, Knock Knock, on Broadway—which, in the final analysis, is a play about wishes and belief.

While still in Europe I often asked myself which play I would like to see on my return. I came up with George Bernard Shaw's Saint Joan, It seems that Joseph Papp was not quite attuned to my dreams because he had put on Mrs. Warren's Profession instead. I even welcomed

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them talk: Abe, a dreamer and writer of sorts, who strongly believes that anything is possible if you can only believe in it, and Cohn, the realist and unemployed musician, who does the cooking for the two of them. After they had talked fifteen pages long, Feiffer knew that their lives had to change because life is full of "risks, mistakes and errors of judgment, arrant stupidity, built into the system."

What he made happen was to force his two characters to believe. To believe in the irrationality of order, in the non sequitur of time, in miracles of the reality of existence, in the everyday possibility of the absolute collapse of logic. It is a theme Giraudoux could have thought of. But then the play would have had Gallic and not Broadwayesque humor, esprit with poetic finesse and not Feiffer's "You've-got-to-be-surprised-and-laugh" attitude which is a touch of innocent cartoon humor about these goings-on. Food, by the way, plays a great part in this comedy. The people are not drinking excessively as in most stage plays nowadays; there is also no telephone ringing. Only Joan's voices are being heard, and a lot is being eaten. In a New York Times' interview Feiffer admitted, "I saw that all sorts of attitudes about food are reflected in the play. All the feelings we grew up with—food being used as a weapon, as a means of seduction, to show approval and disapproval, and so on. I didn't realize I had put it all in there." It seems that sometimes the subconscious does help write plays. Or did Feiffer overlook that eating comes naturally with the Sancho Panza in Cohn?

You have to believe, also in reincarnation, even on a fairy tale level. Feiffer's Joan had a fascinating career throughout the ages, and, I must admit, her story is the nicest thing that happened to me in this play. She started out as Cinderella. But early, revolted by the thought that a prince would marry her for her shoe-size, she fled, married someone else with whom she had many Portuguese children, got depressed—no wonder, with Portuguese children—attempted suicide, and discovered that she could walk on water and hear voices. This predestined her to become Joan of Arc. A Giraudoux might have done poetic wonders with this wonderful idea. Feiffer-Cohn wrote under this scenic image something in cartoon-style to the effect that she did after all improve her lot; for Cinderella had only Walt Disney to refer to, while Joan had that clever Bernard Shaw championing her. When Joan tries to share her beliefs with Cohn, saying that faith can move mountains, a large rock comes hurtling through the window; another one, registered, to boot, is being delivered by the mailman immediately thereafter, and Joan has to sign for it. Now this is exactly what I mean with cartoon humor.

There is a moment when Cohn wishes Joan of Arc were not Joan, and, since we are shown what wishes can do for and to us, she turns into Cinderella. Her standard breaks apart, leaving a broomstick in her hand. Joan as Cinderella is a total failure, burning the food—oh, for all Joan's voices it is food again!—messing up the whole place, which after a long while towards the finale falls totally apart. Oh no, there is one beguiling final moment when Joan—yes, Cinderella turned into Joan again—going to heaven philosophizes about the irresponsible way of life being the contradictory confusion it is. The one moment worth waiting for.

Also, in a contradictory way, it is a very funny play for which the famous Jules Feiffer found no producer for five years. The producers shying away from this in-sany comedy were as right as Feiffer is now in proving them wrong. I had my private kind of fun with Knock Knock, although I had wished for a more substantial than giddy reason to believe in the illusion of reality as the final reality of illusion. Strange enough, he set out to prove the realists wrong and to give the dreamers their big chance. But with the total mess at the end and the spectators' final wish that they ought to stop wishing onstage, Feiffer defeated himself. Or did he wish to contradict himself? Who knows.

Joan of Arc might have told us. But she had meanwhile gone to heaven because the sky had fallen out of it. In a mood of desperate hilarity I went home and, remembering Cohn and his skillfull cooking, I asked my wife to cook some spaghetti for me (Abe's favorite dish, as it seems). Now that late at night? was her surprised response. I tried to make her understand that it no longer matters since the sky has fallen out of heaven. But she did not understand my wish nor did she bring it closer to fulfillment. So I went to bed musings about Jules Feiffer's notion that food was used as a psychological weapon, "as a means of seduction, to show approval or disapproval, and so on."


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North Woods Mood, 1956. Watercolor, 40 x 33". Sloan Collection, Valparaiso University.