

Sermon Cards

# Eastern Thought Meets Western

By Rev. James M. Gillis, C.S.P.

Quite recently in this column I ventured to make some reflections upon the strange preference of Mr. Boake Carter for the Old Testament instead of the New. I made the point—or tried to make it—that the pre-Christian part of the Bible taken by itself without the part which was written after the birth of Our Lord is woefully incomplete. Just as Shakespeare would be to a man who had read only Titus Andronicus or Coriolanus or Measure for Measure, and had never heard of Macbeth or Othello or Hamlet.

Even that comparison would be lame. For after all the more imperfect works of Shakespeare could be read and to a degree enjoyed apart from the absolute masterpieces. Even the historical works of the great bard are not a sequel one to another. You can read one and not the next in chronological order. You would lose something but not everything. With the Bible the case is different. The Old Testament is a truncated thing without the New. Revelation before Christ is meaningless without the Revelation in Christ and after Christ. In other words the Bible is all of a piece.

Well as I was thinking of that fact, there came to my mind the similar fact that the greatest of all non-revealed non-Biblical works, the Summa Theologiae of St. Thomas Aquinas, is like the Bible, a magnificent synthesis. Its parts are so intimately and beautifully welded together that you cannot have one part without all three. Or if you do, you have an imperfect incomplete work. They say that Dante is "St. Thomas in verse." But can you imagine Dante's Inferno and Purgatorio without the Paradiso? Not unless you are one of those curiously illogical persons who think that this life of ours on earth is complete and needs no other. This life without the other would be a tragic jest. Anatole France said "The universe is mad." It would be, if this world were all there is and there were no other.

But there is another sense in which the stupendous masterpiece of St. Thomas is a synthesis. For

the working out of this fact, I suggest Oswald Yarn's little 125-page book on St. Thomas Aquinas. Oswald Yarn happens to be my favorite exponent of Thomism. Clear as crystal, interesting, illuminating. A man who can fascinate the ordinary reader with Scholastic philosophy in a form which Father Vann of the English Dominicans does just that.

In the second chapter of that small volume, he describes "the material" upon which St. Thomas had to work. If you wish to know why we call St. Thomas a man of vast genius, consider this: he had an enormous mass of philosophical thought, gathered from all corners of the world, and from all sorts of philosophers. To sit down before that overwhelming mass of heterogeneous intellectual material with the idea of whittling it into shape and consistency would appal any scholar. The job didn't fear St. Thomas. There was Eastern thought and Western thought. There was the logic of Aristotle and the mysticism of Plato. Both had come from Greece by way of North Africa into the Italian peninsula. In their journey the Greek philosophers had picked up many Mohammedan elements. Also there had seeped into Africa and Europe from India a very considerable percentage of Hinduism. Also Buddhism. Father Vann says that St. Thomas in his attempt to answer the riddle of life and of the universe, not only had to know and to master all these conflicting ideas (but however always in entirely conflicting) but also had to see and evaluate them, in some instances correct them; but he had to weave them together in a "universal theological-philosophical synthesis."

In the Western world alone there had been developing systems of thought in the four centuries preceding St. Thomas. These systems were not all consistent. There were not only systems; there were trends and tendencies. Father Vann mentions some of them: "the humanist spirit, the love of poetry and art and all created beauty. The quest for reason and logic and philosophy and the sciences, the elaboration of law (natural law, civil law, the law of nations), concern for the finite and particular and fleeting as well as for the infinite and the imperishable." And Father Vann asks, "Could these two so divergent outlooks have been united? The answer is the Summa Theologiae."

Such is our intellectual heritage as Catholics. The wonder of it is, and the shame that we don't all become acquainted with it. (Copyright, 1942, M. W. C.)

Library Signpost

# Catholic Stagers, Please Note

By Rev. Benedict Elmson

Here is a dare for parish, high school, and sodality theatre groups. Why not begin this year to put on plays with a real punch? Let's shove for the duration these dime-a-dozen plays which we've been trotting out on our parish and school stages like old nags these many moons—plays which are about as silly and puerile as Horatio Alger stage. What other plays are there, do you ask, which are not too hard to put on? Just wait. I'll show you in a moment. But what about entertainment value? You'll find double and triple entertainment value in the real kind of plays.

William Saroyan has been giving the American theatre world a good shaking up of late years. Some think he's crazy with his new ideas. But others, more judicious can see through his antics, to something fresh and stimulating beneath. Our parish, high school and sodality stagers could stand a little injection of Saroyan. I don't mean to produce his plays but to catch his spirit of the theatre, his air for what the stage really can do. If Saroyan were only a Catholic (perhaps he is) or if some Catholic were as original and venturesome as Saroyan we'd have an instrument for propagating truth and beauty comparable in power to the Catholic school and the Catholic press.

Frequently this season I shall devote this column to information about plays for Catholic stagers. Maybe no one will listen. Maybe one person will catch on.

Are you still listening? Here is a sample of the possibilities. **AS LOVE KNOWS HOW**... One-act drama by F. H. Drinkwater. For advanced amateur groups setting Elizabethan persecution; cast 12 men and 3 boys one stage set reception room of medieval castle production time 40 minutes source Fitzgerald Publishing Corp. 11 East 38th St. N. Y. C. in Gabriel's Ave, a collection of 14 religious plays cost \$1.60 a copy. The plot Outhbert Mayne, a seminary priest, is arrested and sentenced to be hanged because of his fidelity to his faith at the time when Protestantism has become the official religion of England. His friends urge him to escape but he believes that whatever fate holds for him has been ordained by God and that his suffering will eloquently portray his emulation of Christ. He is condemned as a traitor when he refuses to acknowledge the Queen of England as head of the church and goes to his death exhorting the people to seek the unity of the true Catholic faith.

This is the kind of information and advice I shall give in this column as we go along in the fall and winter. I am indebted for it to the painstaking work done by the National Service Bureau of the now disbanded Federal Theatre Project of the WPA.

Now for the rest of today's lesson just consider the following list of Catholic plays (not all by Catholic authors) which have been produced on the professional stage in recent years:

- Barry's **THE JOYOUS SEASON** produced in New York by Arthur Hopkins with Lillian Gish in the lead.
- Bach's **WITHIN THESE WALLS** produced in Chicago by the Federal Theatre.
- Claudel's **TIDINGS BROUGHT TO MARY** produced in New York by the Theatre Guild.
- Doherty's **FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE** produced in New York by Delos Chappell.
- Drinkwater's **A MAN'S HOUSE** produced at the Malvern Festival in England by Sir Barry Jackson.
- Eliot's **MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL** produced in New York by the Federal Theatre.
- Goodrich's and Palmer's **CAPONSAACCHI** produced in New York by Walter Hampden.

- Emmet Lavery's **THE MONSIEUR** produced in Vienna, Budapest and Chicago.
- Marquis' **THE DARK HOUR** produced in New York by Don Marquis.
- Murray's **AUTUMN FIRE** produced in Dublin by the Abbey Theatre.
- Sierra's **CRADLE SONG** produced in New York by Eva Whillans.
- Sierra's **KINGDOM OF GOD** produced in New York with Ethel Barrymore in the lead.
- Sierra's **HOLY NIGHT** produced in New York by the Federal Theatre.

And this week in New York Eddie Dowling is opening his season with a revival of G. K. Chesterton's **MAGIC**, with William Saroyan's **HELLO, OUT THERE** as a curtain raiser.

It's only when one realizes the real calibre of our Catholic dramatic literature that one becomes impatient with what is usually done in parish and school halls. Ever since the Red Revolution, the Soviet comrades have been using the stage as a powerful lever of propaganda. You may chafe that up to the Russian love of drama and color. But don't we love drama and color, too? Why are we content to get all our drama and color (such as it is) from Hollywood films and to feel hardly a flicker at the far more wonderful drama of Christ and His Church and His Saints, and at the far more fascinating color which He has given to life with its lovely, humorous, whimsical and gracious unfoldings. In Catholic drama, our hearts expand in laughter and tears to the wonder of God's treasures; our eyes are opened a little clearer, and long after the curtain has dropped and the stage is dark, the curtain is still up in our souls and a bright warm light still burning there. (Note: overlooked last week was acknowledgment to the MacMillan Company of New York City for the poem by Eileen Duggan used in this column.)

## FIVE and TEN Years Ago--

—in the files of the CATHOLIC COURIER

From Sept. 30, 1932, Edition  
Francis J. Sheed, widely known founder of the Catholic publishing firm of Sheed and Ward, and Master of the Catholic Evidence Guild, London, was announced as speaker for the Second Annual Convention of Rochester Diocesan Council, National Council of Catholic Women.

From Sept. 30, 1937, Edition  
While in Berlin the leaders of Germany and Italy were issuing a denunciation of Communism, His Holiness, Pope Pius XI unexpectedly gave to the world a message warning vigorously against both Communism and a cult of the state which, under guise of combating Communism seeks to revive paganism. The Encyclical pointed out the power and efficacy of the Rosary in combatting heresies.

"The youth of our day are going to follow some leader. It is up to you to see that that leader carries a cross." This was the challenge laid down by the Most Rev. James E. Kearney, Bishop-designate of Rochester, in an address to the National Council of Catholic Women delegates at Washington, D. C. convention.

Celebration of Solemn High Mass by the Very Rev. Hugo Aubry S.V.D., provincial of the North American Province, Society of the Divine Word, opened St. Michael's Mission House at Hemlock Lake, on the Feast of St. Michael.

"The Church adapts herself to all regimes that safeguard liberty and do not violate conscience."—Joseph Cardinal Van Roey.

No man can save himself from moral destruction amid the license of modern life unless he continuously practices mortification and self-denial of the senses.

# What—No Arithmetic?

"No arithmetic?" gasped the boy's father. "Do you expect me to send my son to a school that eliminates the basic principles of mathematics, a knowledge needed in every walk of life?"

A school with no arithmetic! What nonsense! Yet it is more nonsense than a school that teaches nothing of God, our first beginning and our last end. — of Jesus, our Redeemer and the great out of all teachers — of the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount — of love of neighbor for the sake of God — of obedience to our civil rulers because their power comes from God?

To the Catholic the elimination of religious teaching is more than nonsense. It is tragic. For religion is the only solid basis for morality — religious instruction for the young, religious training for the adult. Home teaching or an hour in Sunday school cannot suffice. God and His will must be an integral part of the child's daily life.

It is because Catholics believe this so firmly, that while paying their full share of the support of the public schools, they are also buying land, erecting buildings and educating with their own money more than 3,000,000 people this year in parochial schools. And this Catholic devotion to its academic standing, its teaching ability and its intellectual growth, stretches far beyond the public school education today.

The United States of America founded its religious principles. All our schools up to 1880 were essentially religious. George Washington said: "Reason and ex-

perience furnish us to expect that natural morality can proceed in exclusion of religious principles" and this sentiment has been echoed by nearly every President since. Who can they say that the Catholic School, the nursery of Faith and citizenship skills, is un-American? — (Catholic Information Society, Northbrook, Pa.)

## Feast Days

- Sunday, Oct. 1 — ST. PETER'S OF APOSTLES
- Monday, Oct. 2 — ST. PETER'S OF APOSTLES
- Tuesday, Oct. 3 — ST. PETER'S OF APOSTLES
- Wednesday, Oct. 4 — ST. PETER'S OF APOSTLES
- Thursday, Oct. 5 — ST. PETER'S OF APOSTLES
- Friday, Oct. 6 — ST. PETER'S OF APOSTLES
- Saturday, Oct. 7 — ST. PETER'S OF APOSTLES

## Spiritual Thoughts

"God walks among the just and is known." — St. Thomas.  
We all stand in one need of God, turning ourselves to God's will.

## EDITORIALS

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to find them, to turn them over to those who are conducting the Drive in our communities. Don't leave it for the man next door, make it your personal task to add to the total.

Our war industries need every scrap of metal that can be turned in. The need is urgent, so urgent that many of our steel mills, so essential for war production, will have to shut down unless we help them by furnishing needed scrap metal.

## DEATH OF MR. JOHN L. KEENAN

The passing from life of Mr. John L. Keenan during last week brought to an end a career that means much for the civic and religious life of this diocese. Mr. Keenan by his native ability and energetic spirit had made for himself a name in the business world. Worldly success did not dull his interest in the Church and her activities. He was ready to give himself wholeheartedly to any cause of charity or religion that was proposed to his attention. He was a charter member of the Board of the Rochester Catholic Charities, and for many years has served as its Vice-President. Just a few months ago, he presided at the Silver Jubilee Banquet of the society, reviewing its accomplishments over a period of twenty-five years.

Mr. Keenan had the abiding respect of all that knew him. He was a faithful servant of his community and of his Church. His Bishop has had occasion to know and to appreciate the fine service he gave as an individual and as an official to the Church in the diocese and to value the fine example he gave as a Catholic and as a citizen in his community. May he rest in peace!

## THEY MADE LIGHT OF IT

The parable of the Marriage Feast was proposed by Christ to the chief priests of the Temple and to the Pharisees. They were leaders in Jewish religious circles. Christ had come as the Messiah, the anointed Redeemer, to build the Kingdom of Heaven, His Church, on earth. To the Jewish people had gone out the first invitation to join that Kingdom. Their neglect of Christ's invitation is pictured clearly in the contempt shown by those invited to the marriage feast. Repeated appeals, renewed gifts of grace, found so many unwilling to accept the invitation. The matter was urgent, efforts were made to secure their acceptance, punishment was visited on those who treated the servants shamefully and killed them. The only statement of the attitude of those invited, should be of concern to men of our day. "They made light of the invitation."

"They made light of it," treated it as of little or no importance. To how many in the world today is the same attitude toward religion to be attributed? Religion is calling them, the Church of God is situated for the salvation of all men is beckoning to them, their conscience is urging them to seek out God and His truth, and they make light of it! They treat the matter as of no importance!

There is a serious and weighty obligation on all men to answer the question of why they are here, where did they come from, what is expected of them. To make light of this obligation places men of today in the same class as those Romans of old, whom Paul called execrable because they did not follow the testimony of their own senses to the fact that God had created them and the things about them.

The parable of the Marriage Feast ended with an indication of the punishment awaiting those who make light of Christ's invitation. To turn away from God, to spurn His invitation, is to invite that punishment indicated by the command of the King: "Cast them