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Library Signpost

By Rev. Benedict Ehmann

The publishers of Graham Greene's The Labyrinthine Ways have just done something rather unusual in the American publishing business; they have reissued that story with its original title, The Power and the Glory.

When it was first issued over here, another novel (one by Phyllis Bentley) was just being sent off the press having the same title; and so the publishers of the Greene novel decided to change its title to The Labyrinthine Ways.

Some years ago I received a note from a lady informing me that, if she found this book in the public library she would make it her business to find out why it was there, and that, far from disgracing the shelves of a Catholic library, its proper place was the incinerator. It was a most indignant note, though not for that reason undeserving of an answer.

Just the other day another correspondent wrote to ask for some information about the novel under its new title. In closing her note, the lady said: "It was a very moving book. When I finished tears were flowing freely, and I seemed to be drained of all emotion within. I wonder who are the really great on this earth—who the weak, and who the strong."

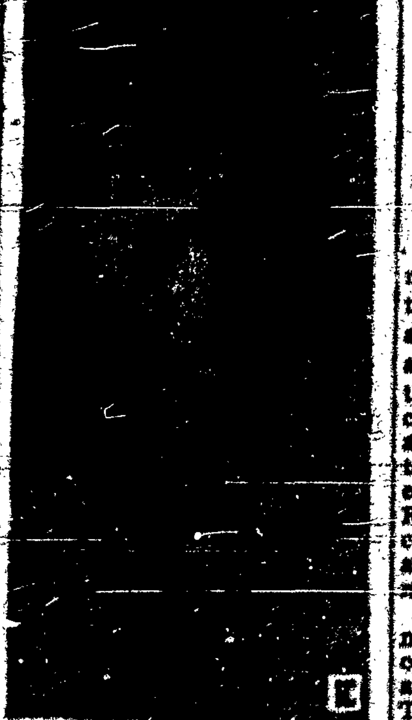
The second lady got the point of Greene's haunting story; the other did not, with the result that its indelicacies (its indecencies, if she wants me to call them that) stuck out as brazenly meaningless, gratuitously included for the evil-minded. The second lady made no reference to these. I am of the opinion that, gauging them against the background of the book's profound purpose, she saw them as meaningful, illustrating the depths of evil through which "the power and the glory" of God's merciful grace have to make their way into the perverse and wayward hearts of men.

This surely is literature's profoundest theme. You see it in Dante's Divine Comedy, in the Confessions of St. Augustine, in the novels of the Russian Dostoievski (especially Crime and Punishment, The Brothers Karamazov, and The Idiot). Just two years ago, C. S. Lewis rang a most unusual change on it with the fascinating Screwtape Letters. But hitting closest to the home of His was Greene's novel The Labyrinthine Ways (now reissued as The Power and the Glory).

It tells of a Mexican priest, the last surviving member of the clergy in a Mexican state where persecution has been fierce. He is a strange hero, because there is nothing heroic about him. The hero is really divine grace working through one of the feeblest of priests. Yet with his deplorable weaknesses, there is some heroism about him. At least he stayed behind, when the others had fled or conformed to the government order to get married.

Harried, hunted, scurrying through the jungle and the drab ... so keenly; in the light of it I ask you to read her words again. But, mind you, it is not a book for the suggestible, or the sentimental, or the superficial readers; to such it will seem but drivel and garbage. Mr. Greene was not writing for them, but for the strong who will catch his purpose and be drawn to their knees praising God for the light which this powerful parable of the conflict between good and evil throws upon the mysterious ways of divine love and mercy.

One of First



A Negro Catholic of Josephine, Kentucky, in the Diocese of Covington, Pvt. Robert H. Brooks (above), is said to be the first Armored Forces casualty in World War II and one of the first enlisted men to die in the war. The 25-year-old soldier was killed on the battlefield near Fort Stotsenburg, in the Philippines on December 8, 1941. The main parade ground at Fort Knox was named in his honor, Brooks Field. A Chicago Victory Housing Project and several other places in the country have been named for him. (NC Photos)

villages, he could have reached the border and safety. But he stays that he may give his poor people "the power and glory" of God in word and sacrament. And all the while he is being tracked down relentlessly by a young Communist lieutenant to whom it is gall and wormwood that there should be even one priest still carrying on his "superstitious" work in the perfect Communist state. There is hardly anything in literature to compare with the drama of this agonizing hunt and flight under the scorching Mexican sun.

The plot is perfectly laid out. Every paragraph, every sentence is a perfect piece. Not a word is superfluous. The symbols of the swamp and jungle, the vultures, the ... , the mosquitoes, the rifle and revolver, are all images of terror perfectly chosen. It is Scripture's "noonday devil," face unmasked, lurking at every turn, and wrestling naked against the work of God. And all that God has on His side to fight back is the poor, weak and sinning priest, ready again and again to quit, but somehow chained to his danger by the impulsion of his priesthood.

At last the noose closes. He is betrayed by a faked sick call to a wounded gringo. Half suspecting the trap, he goes, and is caught by his pursuer. One of the most powerful of the score of gripping scenes is the dialogue between the priest and the lieutenant on the way back to trial and execution: it is Koestler's The Yogi and the Commissar in a Catholic frame. The last staccato of the bullets reveals, not the officer, but the priest (and God), as the winner.

The greatness of this Catholic novel lies, not only in the perfection and sheer drama of its story, but in the sure and confident power with which it probes the mystery of divine grace. The fugitive priest in the jungle labyrinth is a type of the fugitive souls pursued by the Hound of Heaven, and God chooses the weak things of this world to confound the terrible strength of the devil. That surely is the point which my second correspondent

Literary Cavalcade

By John O'Connor

A little "Peglerizing" is due a number of book publishing firms that are operating in commercial and educational circles. They are as vicious as block-booking in the movies. They are as cleverly conceived as a chain-store operation. They are as sincere as a tap-dancer's smile. They are as concerned with culture as Babe Ruth was concerned with the color of a pitcher's eyes. They are cultural parasites; they are moral running sores.

A comparatively new plan commonly used by a number of book companies has come to be known as the "fifteen for one" plan. This scheme provides that a free set of books is given to a school if fifteen sets (the number varies with the company that is operating in the area) are purchased in the community or in the parish.

The salesman usually goes first to the school. He presents his proposition and tries to enlist the support of the school principal in gaining access to the homes in the area. He may even obtain a written endorsement for his set, a list of names of the children attending the school, the names and addresses of parents.

While sales methods differ the salesman through this method is able to appeal first to the customer's interest and his loyalty to the school, whereas his objective is to make a sale. He usually promises that the names of the pupils whose parents "cooperate" or "are loyal to the school" will appear on the fly leaf of the set which is presented to the school.

The dangers of such a plan or plans are obvious. For one thing, since the set of books in question is offered to the school as a gift, the school authorities are not apt to investigate its standing as carefully as if they were purchasing it.

Thus a school may, in some cases, acquire a set of books which is not suited to its needs. The parents who have fallen for the oleous sincerity of a commission-conscious salesman may well purchase a set of books that are not adapted to the needs of their children.

If the books are without merit, the head of the school loses prestige as an educational adviser to which his position entitles him.

Nor do the people of the community or parish get a chance to see other sets of books and judge as to the comparative merits of the various sets, for the salesman of companies which do not use these plans and who sell books on their merits find it impossible to compete with the salesmen who assume to be placing the welfare of the school first.

A man may be a high-pressure salesman without being technically dishonest in his sales presentation. But since when must a superior, clerical or lay, alert to the book field and the publishing houses, need to sign for set of books which offer with their higher price a "consultation charge" and an "annual supplement" . . . ? Buyers — and sellers — would do well to consult the Code of Fair Trade Practices adopted by the Subscription Books Publishers on September 3, 1940, and learn to label a fraud when they see one.

Some of these various trade practices which are generally judged to be unfair to competition and to consumer alike are:

1. The "marked-up" contract. The book value is less than the contract states. The balance is charged off to various consultation fees, etc.

2. Making false statements about a competing publisher.

3. Stating the work is "completely revised" when it is not. I recall one publisher, appealing to schools, who simply had a new cover printed for an eighth grade text — and sold it in second year high-schools.

4. Using the term "foundation" or "university" in the appeal or sales approach. A publishing firm that hides behind the term "foundation" must have something to hide.

5. Representing that work is being sold at a special price when the work is regularly sold at that price.

6. Representing work as a text when it is not. Stating it is for one level in school, when it is not.

7. Bribery. School officials have been paid in order that the salesman obtain access to the area. Some prefer to gloss over it with the phrase "advisory board."

The library is the heart of the school. The school is the future of the country. It must be protected from many of the predatory practices and rotten rackets that are creeping under the foundations of American education, Catholic and public schools alike. I did not intend to bring this up until a later date, but the dirt in the corner was annoying me, and I thought it time to use the broom.

Holy Childhood Association
Rev. John S. Randall, Director

(Twenty-second of the winning essays on mission topics is the following by an Eighth Grade girl of St. Patrick's School, Seneca Falls.)

MARTYRS OF UGANDA
By Mary Ann Bolich

Uganda, a tiny country in the midst of the vast jungles of Africa, represents the high-water mark of the Church in native Africa. One well-remembered event in the history of Christianity in Uganda is the religious persecution in which fifteen of her young native boys were martyred for their faith.

The sons of some of the chieftains of Uganda had to serve as pages to King Mwanga who indulged in Mohammedan practices. Joseph Mukasa, a Catholic, and chamberlain of the King's palace, had in his charge these young boys whom he instructed in the faith. He also protected the boys whenever the evil King called for them. Because of this, Mukasa was beheaded and burned.

A few days later the angry King sent for the boys and told them that they had to obey. But with Charles Lwanga as their leader, they would not, because his conduct contradicted Christian teachings.

Six months later, with the consent of the chieftains, who were the boys' fathers, the King sentenced the pages to death. They were bound and led to Namugongo, a village forty miles away, for execution. The journey took many days, and upon their arrival a huge fire was built. Even in the midst of the fire these young boys still remained faithful. Other martyrs perished in the months that followed.

The scattered ashes of the young martyrs brought a great blessing upon their country. Twenty-two martyrs of Uganda were canonized by Pope Benedict XV in 1918. Because of the many conversions there, Uganda is called the "pearl of the African Missions."

Playwriting Fellowship Established by College

River Forest, Ill. — (NC) — Creation of a graduate fellowship in playwriting, "to assist a playwright who would find stimulus and incentive in a year's residence on or near a college campus," has been announced at Rosary College here.

To be known as the Dinneen Playwriting Fellowship and carrying a $1,500 stipend, the award commemorates the work of the late Rev. F. G. Dinneen, S. J., founder of the Loyola Community Theater in Chicago.

False Liberalism Hit At Firemen's Event

New York — (NC) — Modern "liberalism," which means emancipation of man from the moral law, the natural law and the Divine order, was scored by the Most Rev. J. Francis A. McIntyre, Auxiliary Bishop of New York, at the annual Communion breakfast of the Holy Name Society of the New York Fire Department. The breakfast, which was preceded by corporate Communion in St. Patrick's Cathedral, was attended by 1,150 members and guests.

"Liberalism once meant broad education," said Bishop McIntyre, but the modern "liberal" is typified by the kind of man who would park his car in front of a fire house, blocking egress of the fire department, and contend it was his right to do so as a citizen and taxpayer.

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