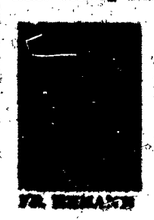
Library Signpost

Cues and Clues

—By Rev. Benedict Ehrmann—

Even the kindest and the most sympathetic among the critics are not very happy about *Franz Werfel's Star of the Unborn.* After reading a hundred pages, I do not find the prospect of the next five hundred very magnetic. Mr. Werfel has always been wordy, and his novels are all long. But here the wordiness is appalling, legions of words for a corporal's guard of ideas. It is a far cry from the precise style of Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene. Granted that his fantasy of life in California one hundred thousand years from now does create some interest in its bizarre mental gymnastics, it is still an unwieldy frame in Werfel's hands for the expression of those ideas on life and history which, as the publisher assures us, he was concerned to pour into his final book. Perhaps the interim between a heart attack and the hour of death is a poor time for the literary communication of ideas. One can excuse a dying man for a certain incoherence and volubility. We shall prefer to remember Mr. Werfel for the serene spiritual beauty of *The Song of Bernadette,* and for the pathos of *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh.*



FR. EHRMANN

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While *David the King,* by Gladys Schmitt, is reported to abound in passages which reflect the nobility of the Bible narrative, the book is considered uneven in its portrait of the great biblical king because it focuses chiefly on his passions and griefs and does not do justice to his ardent communion with God. The book also offends in being unduly explicit about physical love instead of following the modest reticence of the original record. It is too bad that all the study and pains that went into the making of this monumental book did not produce a work which could be praised for re-creating a just portrait of its great [illegible]

* * *

The following current, and better-known, novels are objectionable:

The Arch of Triumph, by Erich Maria Remarque.
The Foxes of Harrow, by Frank Yerby.
Written on the Wind, by Robert Wilder.
Water of the Wide Moon, by Garland Roark.
Memoirs of Hecate County, by Edmund Wilson.
Before the Sun Goes Down, by Elizabeth Metzger Howard.
The Sheltered, by Ann Parry.

* * *

The last novel mentioned has to do with negroes in Harlem. The street is 116th. It is too sad that the author overloads the story with sex. One wants to read about the plight of our dark-skinned brothers and sisters and to have the spotlight relentlessly focussed on the evils that keep them away from a decent and happy life. But this bad taste, and does not serve the purpose, to arouse disgust or to play up to pornographic curiosity. We know such things exist without needing a kind of intellectual rape performed on our imaginations by thrusting them too vividly on our attention.

* * *

There is a current novel (of negroes (also by a negro) which seems to avoid this objection. It is *Mrs. Palmer's Honey,* by Fannie Cook, and I have heard it praised, not as a great book, but as an interesting and likable "slice of life" helping us to understand our negro neighbors better. Exception must be taken to the fact that, at one point, there is no moral compensation for Honey's intention to commit a murder in indignation. The fact that she is prevented is not a sufficient balance. . . . While we are on the subject, it will be good to read Laura Elizabeth Adam's *Hunt Symphony,* Art Kuhl's *Royal Road,* and Father Edward Murphy's *The Tenth Man,* for fine Catholic statements on our relations with the negroes. The first book is especially valuable as an eye-opener to Catholics who are lethargic about the explosive question of race-relations.

* * *

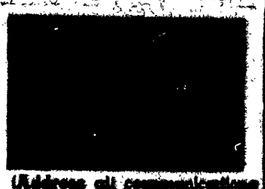
Ann Harrigan is one Catholic who is not lethargic about her duties to social justice. In fact, she is positively mercurial. She is the French woman whom the Baroness de Hueck sent out to Chicago three or so years ago to start Friendship House there, at Bishop Sheil's invitation. There is a brilliant article about her in the May magazine for March, by Lucille Healey. Don't miss it; the title is Harrigan from Brooklyn. Even as a piece of journalism, I rate it a little masterpiece. But even in a poorer article, Ann Harrigan would shine. She is that kind of person. All the Catholics of the country should know about her. Some day I hope to have her come to Rochester to make friends here, even as the Baroness did a few years back. (Yes, the Baroness is still going strong in the work, though married life restricts her activities in it to a certain degree.)

* * *

Why don't you send 50 cents or a dollar some time to Friendship House (34 West 135th St., New York 30, N. Y.), and ask them to put you on the mailing list for **Friendship House News?** If you do, you will be receiving once a month one of the nicest, "prettiest," and most inspiring papers in the country. I would rate **The Catholic Worker** "dear," and **F. H. News** a close second to it. Your little subscription would also be helping the cause.

Novelist

Father K. F. Murphy, M.M., author of the phenomenal best seller, "The Scarlet Lily," will have his second novel based on Mary Magdalene, "Road From Olivet," published in May.



(Address all communications to **Catholic War Veterans, Inc., Public Relations Bureau, 1100 Empire State Bldg., New York 1, N. Y.**)

Q.—A reader asks if it is true that no her son served for only 44 days prior to VJ Day he will not be eligible to receive the educational benefits of the G. I. Bill?

A.—Your son will be eligible, for he will have served 90 days prior to the official end of the war which has not yet been announced. Your adviser evidently assumes that VJ Day officially terminated the War. This is not so. The law requires that a veteran, to take advantage of any of the provisions of the G. I. Bill must have served for 90 days or more after September 16, 1940 and prior to the official termination of hostilities. The veteran must also hold a discharge other than dishonorable.

Q.—A veteran writes that he wishes to make application to the Army board to have his BLUE discharge reviewed. He asks that if an honorable discharge is granted in place of the BLUE discharge, will he be eligible for mustering out pay?

A.—When and if an honorable discharge is issued, you will be eligible for mustering out pay. You should remember however, that you will have to apply for this payment to the Finance Office, War Department, Washington 25, D. C., enclosing at the same a photostatic copy of your honorable discharge and a statement as to the reason for your lateness in making application.

Q.—A letter from a disabled serviceman, now in an Army hospital, states that due to his disability, he will have to take up another line of work. He wishes to know how many years training he is eligible to receive under the provisions of Public Law 16.

A.—Vocational courses will provide for training periods up-wards to four years, no more. You are also privileged to complete this course within 9 years after the war has been officially declared terminated. The amount of pension paid to you while taking this vocational training course will depend on the disability you are allowed by the Veterans' Administration upon your separation from service.

Q.—An officer writes that he has reenlisted for service overseas and that his Father passed on, therefore his Mother is dependent upon him for her chief support. He asks if he can arrange for a family allowance for his mother?

A.—The Serviceman's Dependency Act of 1942, limits the payment of family allowance benefits to enlisted men and women and aviation cadets. As an officer you are not eligible to apply for the allowance for your mother. You can, however, arrange for a Class B allotment which is handled by the Office of Dependency, Newark, New Jersey.

Q.—A former Navy man writes asking where he can apply for a miniature Purple Heart pin to wear in the lapel of his civilian suit.

A.—You may obtain a Purple Heart button by writing to the Chief of Naval Personnel, Washington, 25, D. C., stating you full name, dog tag number, time and place of discharge, your rank at the time of discharge, the time and place of issuance of the Purple Heart to you.

The Literary Cavalcade

'I Chose Freedom'

—By John O'Connor—

"I Chose Freedom" stands as the greatest single piece of evidence as yet to be submitted against the collective crime known as the Soviet Union. It is the damning testimony of an informed, experienced and intelligent man against the brutal dictatorship of that infamous liquidator, sadist and war criminal, Joseph Stalin. It is the eloquent and detailed story of the most extremely sordid chapter in human annals. It is one of the most needed books in our day. (*I Chose Freedom,* by Victor Kravchenko, *Scribners,* $3.)

* * *

This is strong writing. But Victor Kravchenko is no flaccid Hollywood pink, no naive Henry Wallace or Wendell Willkie, no apologist like Edgar Snow, no inadequate observer like Ambassador Davies. He is the Russian-born and Soviet educated son of a veteran of the 1905 revolution. He differs from the dupes and the frauds, the home-grown pinks and the wealthy fellow travelers in this: HE saw it happen. And he saw it happen from a seat close to the Throne.

* * *

By dint of application and sustained study, the young Communist zealot managed to advance himself in the field of factory administration. Surviving innumerable jousts with the always alert secret police, he managed to eventually arrive at a position of power and trust in the inner circle of Soviet bureaucracy. Long sick of the brutality and eternal suspicion of one's fellow-man that marks the increasingly sordid regime, he saw a chance of gaining freedom. He was sent to Washington as a member of the Soviet Purchasing Commission. Two years ago last week he disappeared from his Soviet position and ". . . threw himself on the mercy of American public opinion."

* * *

This act was but the culmination of a series of experiences that numb the reader when they don't disgust him. Victor Kravchenko saw the deliberate starvation of the millions of peasants in the Ukraine in the early thirties. He saw the secret police operate in villages and in factories. He saw the secret camps behind the Urals. He saw a living hell on earth.

* * *

Under Stalin, the system has been so constructed that each person in his heart is afraid to trust his own flesh and blood. Dr. Nicholas Timasheff cited this in **Religion in Soviet Russia** some years ago. But Victor Kravchenko experienced coming to work in the morning to find that his best friend and associate, now a bloody pulp, was on the way to Siberia.

* * *

The methods of the notorious NKVD or Secret Police would make a Himmler pale. They substituted the salt mines and the swamps for the mercifully quick gas chamber or bullet, Kravchenko knows. Once he could call the secret police when one of the factories in his charge needed so many "hend" — and the abject, silent, beaten human beings would be there on the next cattle train. He estimates that there are TEN MILLION or more slaves in Russia.

* * *

He himself spent many months dueling with some of the minor sadists who serve the great Sadist himself. Had it not been for his friend in Moscow plus his own tenacity in arguing a point, he too might have had far worse experiences with the secret police.

* * *

He cites the staged trials of Stalin—although not quite as well as does Leon Trotsky, that veteran revolutionist whose book we'll touch on in the next issue. But staged they were — and men such as Kravchenko, once sold on the possibility of serving the common good, became sick unto death.

The Stalin-Hitler deal, he writes, was entirely a victory for Hitler. Stalin never expected the blow to fall and it was only the sacrifices of the patient Russian people that enabled Russia to do her share. Nor does Kravchenko fail to mention the value of lend-lease, something no Communist has yet done.

* * *

It is interesting to note that he touches on a point — merely in passing, but with some suspicion —that Trotsky develops at great length. That is the knowledge of poison that seems to fascinate Stalin and an inner circle in the Soviet high command. Kravchenko merely mentions the mysterious death of a great friend. . . .

* * *

There will be all sorts of smears applied to this author, just as there were when he announced his renunciation of the mammoth fraud of Moscow. He is resigned to the fact that there may even be attempts on his life, for the arm of the NKVD reaches around the world — and at the end of it is a fistful of gold. But no man has written such a book in our time — and it will be impossible to answer. It gives us the first complete picture of the country we are dealing with and how it is enslaved.

* * *

Meanwhile, what of the man who dominates this ruthless and efficient machine that seems to make no mistakes in the light of its own principles of action? Soviet history is rapidly being rewritten in a light sympathetic to Stalin, alone.

Providentially the brilliant but equally detestable and dangerous Trotsky managed to get most of his biography of Stalin on paper before the NKVD caught up with him in Mexico City.

After some trouble this corner picked up a copy of the long withheld biography of the Soviet dictator. The review will appear here next week.

Information Desk

'Only Begotten Son'

Q. If Jesus Christ is God, and equal to the Father from all eternity, why do Catholics say that He is "the only-begotten Son of God"? To beget means to cause to exist. If Christ existed from all eternity, how could the Father cause Him to exist?

A. The question refers to the Catholic doctrine concerning the Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity is a mystery, a truth which we cannot fully understand. Anything in God will be mysterious to us simply because God is infinite, and our minds are finite. For this reason, our questioner should not expect a full explanation of his difficulty. Here at the Information Desk, we do not attempt to explain mysteries; we do not try, as the colored preacher did, "to unscrew the inscrutable."

With this as a preface, let us give the answer as best we can. In Catholic doctrine, there is one God, one divine nature which is infinitely perfect. Reason itself can teach us this. Revelation goes further, and teaches us that this divine nature is possessed by three persons. Just as you (the person) are truly man because you have a human nature, so each of these three persons is truly God because each of them has the divine nature. You and you alone possess your human nature, and so in your case, there is one man and one human person. But the divine nature is possessed by three persons, and so there is one God but three divine persons.

When these three persons wanted to give man some idea of the relationship they have to each other, they had to use terms that man could understand. And thence came the difficulty. The only language that man speaks is the language of creatures. And so when we speak about God, we have to describe the Creator in terms of creatures. This is the reason why any description we give must necessarily be inadequate. It is like trying to describe color in the language of sound. We can give some description of color in terms of sound; for example: if I told you I bought a "loud" necktie, you would have some idea of what it looked like. But your idea would certainly be imperfect, and if you took me too literally, you might fall into the error of thinking that the necktie actually made noises, because I described it as "loud."

So it is with the language we use in speaking about the divine persons. We have to talk about God in terms of creatures, because they are the only terms we know. Thus we call the first person "the Father" and the second person "the Son" because just as a son has the same nature as his father, so (and in a higher way) the second person has the same nature as the first. The terms "Father" and "Son" give us some idea of the relationship between the first two persons of the Trinity. And carrying out this idea, we say that the second person is "begotten" of the first.

Of course we do not mean that the first person is "Father" in the same way as the earthly fathers we know. There are many differences. An earthly father exists before his son, and that is to be expected, because no earthly father is a father from all eternity. He becomes a father in time. But the first person of the Blessed Trinity, being God, must have been a Father from eternity, and so He did not exist before His Son, but His Son is coeternal with Him; that is why we say that the Son is "begotten before all ages." Another difference lies in the fact that an earthly father is the cause of his son's existence. This too should be expected, for the son is the image of the father, and as the father's existence is caused, so the son's existence is caused. But the second person of the Trinity was not caused to exist by the first person. The Son is the image of His Father, and as the Father's existence is not caused, so the Son's existence is not caused. That is why we say that the Son was "begotten, not made."

We realize that this is a very imperfect answer to the question. That should be expected, for while we are on earth, all our knowledge of God will be imperfect, because it is derived from creatures, presented in the language of creatures, received by creatures.

There is some likeness between creatures and God, and so we can have some knowledge of God from creatures. But there is also a tremendous difference between created things and the Creator, and so our present knowledge of God will necessarily be imperfect.

The long and arduous study of theology can give us more perfect knowledge of God, but even the most brilliant theologian never reaches a point where he can say: "Now I understand God. There is nothing more I can learn about Him."

Will we ever have perfect knowledge of God? We will, if we obtain the Beatific Vision of God in Heaven. Then the soul will see God face to face; we shall know Him as He is in Himself, and not merely as He is imperfectly reflected in creature. As St. Paul said: "We see now through a mirror in an obscure manner, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know even as I have been known." (I Cor. xiii, 12).

Know It?

If you answer all five, you're perfect; three or four, good; if only one or two, not so good.

1. Why do we stand when the Gospel is read at Mass?
2. What sea covers which two cities in the Holy Land that were destroyed for their wickedness by brimstone and fire from heaven?
3. Lady Day, March 25, the anniversary of the day when Mass was said for the first time in the state in 1634, is a legal holiday in Maryland. What is the official designation of this day?
4. Was the fertile Land of Goshen, inhabited by the Jews during a term of captivity, in the country of the Philistines, the Babylonians or the Egyptians?
5. Fill in the missing words in this Gospel passage: "I am the good ..... The good ..... lays down his life for his ..... But the hireling, who is not a ..... whose own the ..... are not, sees the ..... coming and leaves the ..... and flees." (John 10:11).

NUN CONVERTS VILLAGE AFTER PRIESTS FAIL

Maryknoll — (NC) — One Ionian, Sister Jean Theophane of Maryknoll, effected the conversion of a large part of a South China village where the repeated visits of priests had no results, according to a letter from her Superior in Kaying, Kwangsi.

"Across the river from the mission center," the Sister Superior writes, "there is a settlement of baptized Catholics who seemed to have fallen away entirely from the practice of the Faith. Some have been away from the Church for as many as 40 years, and others, born within the past 20 years, have never been baptized or instructed. Repeated efforts by priests and Sisters to bring them back to the Faith brought little or no result. Finally it was decided to send Sister Jean Theophane to live in the village for a month to see what could be done, at least for the children."

Results seemed nothing short of a miracle, according to Bishop Francis X. Ford, Vicar Apostolic of Kaying, the Superior relates. Sister Jean Theophane's untiring zeal brought 49 to Baptism, effected the rectification of a number of marriages, and led many back to the Sacraments. The people were sorry to see the Sister leave, the letter states, and made her promise to return regularly to help them.

750 Tons of Relief Goods Go to Czechs

New York — (NC) — A first shipment of one and one-half million pounds of relief goods (750 tons) from War Relief Services-National Catholic Welfare Conference is already on its way to Czechoslovakia, where two representatives of the U. S. Catholic relief agency have arrived to supervise distribution. The goods will be distributed throughout all of war-stricken Czechoslovakia on the basis of need.

Prague — (NC) — Two representatives of War Relief Services-N.C.W.C. have arrived here to supervise the transportation and distribution of relief shipments from the United States for war sufferers throughout Czechoslovakia.

The representatives, Dr. Henry Amiel and William J. Sullivan, will, in accordance with the long-established policy of War Relief Services-N.C.W.C., work in closest cooperation with indigenous Catholic relief agencies. They were welcomed in Prague by the Rev. Edward Oliva, president of Charitas, leading Catholic welfare organization, which will cooperate in distributing relief goods.

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