

Journal

Father Gillis Says:

If I may be pardoned for one again for referring to a work of my own, I must discuss in a series of some days or ten talks on the Catholic Hour, the subject "Jesus as Hero." I tried to make the point that the Bible is the greatest of all source books not only for religion and ethics, but for poetry and drama.

I left aside, for the time being, the religious and ethical aspects of the Bible, and devoted my attention especially to the dramatic element in the Old and New Testaments. There you have, said I, such material for dramatic development as would challenge Shakespeare. And I surmised that the reason the great playwrights avoided biblical incidents was that they feared to tackle them.

Indeed, there is no need of framing up the Bible for dramatic presentation. The Second Epistle, taken just as they stand, are dramatic enough. They were written artistically, but they are not the less sincere art. They cannot be improved upon. Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" and Shakespeare's last ethical characters and biblical episodes alone. They don't dare tamper with them.

Not nowadays there has sprung up a crop of writers of drama and fiction to whom nothing is sacred. They seem to think they can improve upon what was written under direct divine inspiration. If they would only take a lesson from the Bible, while retaining its dramatic character, we might pardon them. But they seem to have no reverence for the text beyond its own words. They have with them a sense of the "modern" movement. They are in a state of blasphemy here and a big job of charity there; but they try to make it emotional in the current sense, instead of leaving it emotional as it is in the original sense, that is to say astounding, spectacular, heavenly dramatic.

These modernists ruin the Scriptures for no other purpose than to make money and to make a certain kind of "name." They do a

Take the Gospel Or Leave It

"There ought to be a law." The latest example is "King Jesus" by Robert Graves, who had previously scored a success with "Claudius." I see with great satisfaction that he gets retribution from Orville Prescott in the New York Times. That extremely competent critic explains:

"Mr. Graves has devoted himself to an elaborate and occasionally daring explanation of Jesus' life according to an original theory of his own. He has provided new explanations which directly contradict the familiar interpretations of nearly every episode in the Gospel and is particularly insistent on two principal points which profess to offer more reasonable explanations of Jesus' birth and death."

But says Mr. Prescott, quite justly, "Although Mr. Graves is willing at the moment to believe Jesus in world history and the most poignantly dramatic tragedy ever recorded, no emotion and no drama can be found in these pages. There is no believable, or even interesting interpretation of the character of Jesus."

I shall not in this paper give the details of what Robert Graves has done to the Gospel story. Suffice it to say that, not content with the facts as narrated by eyewitnesses, he also tries to give a new version of the birth of Jesus, the baptism, the trial, the crucifixion, the resurrection, the ascension, and the return. Since the last creation is so futile, why could he not have created all that he needed to save and do as little? Why did he take anything at all from the Gospel, since his purpose was to spoil all that he had?

What all such writers do they borrow only to misuse, appropriate only to pervert? Has the Gospel such limitations for them that they cannot have it alone, but are they in the possession of some mysterious spirit which will not permit them to use anything true without making it false, anything beautiful without making it ugly?

Mr. Prescott concludes: "Probably only a few readers will be tempted to take any of his views seriously, particularly since 'King Jesus' is such a hard reading that only the hardy will ever penetrate very far into his interior."

The Yardstick By Rev. Higgins

Every American is an authority on labor legislation. Or at least he thinks he is. Usually he doesn't have much to say about patent legislation or about the complexities of tariff schedules. These are problems for the professionals to solve. But in the field of industrial relations one man's opinion is worth as much as another's.

Perhaps this is a healthy state of affairs — an indication of the maturity of the American electorate. Perhaps it gives the lie to those who have been contending that the average citizen isn't sufficiently interested or sufficiently instructed in the political and economic problems of the moment. On the other hand, however, it may be just a reflection of the tendency of the American press to oversimplify a problem which must appear to all of us in our more sober moments as almost hopelessly complicated.

In any event, there are few Americans, if any, who can afford to pass up an opportunity for further enlightenment on the subject. One such opportunity presents itself in the form of a recent book entitled, "Labor and the Law," by Professor Charles C. Gregory of the University of Chicago Law School. Mr. Gregory writes for the layman with an insistence of legal logic and with a clarity of style that is rare. From his extensive activities as a labor arbitrator and as a member of numerous governmental boards and agencies, the book is well worth reading as if only as a lesson in healthy common sense.

Most of his readers will naturally want to quarrel with Mr. Gregory about some of his opinions and conclusions. That's all to the good. The more debate, the better. But for the moment it may be useful to disregard details and concentrate on one central issue which Mr. Gregory seems to pass off somewhat too lightly.

Towards the end of the book he refers, almost casually, to the likelihood that in the future there will be more and more demands on the part of workers "for a share in the operation of industry as a process in which they are participants and in which they claim to have as much at stake as the shareholders have." He is referring, of course, to the CIO's Industry Council Plan and to similar trade-union proposals, which, as instructed Catholics will recognize, have a great deal in common with the occupational group system of the social encyclopaedia.

Mr. Gregory's personal attitude towards these demands is one of scholarly objectivity, indeed which expresses itself in summary as follows: "If the great bulk of our community insists upon a direct share in shaping the course of their economic destinies, it may shortly become the task of our leaders of industry, as well as of our representatives in government, to devise ways in which this participation may take place on a practicable basis, or if they do not, the unions and their members may eventually show that these matters can be settled at the polls."

Mr. Gregory's attitude is admirable as far as it goes — and perhaps it goes as far as could be expected in a book which is primarily concerned with the details of labor legislation. It is to be hoped, however, that the author will return to the subject at a later time and give us the complete and careful analysis which it deserves. For it becomes increasingly apparent that the details of labor legislation are of steadily increasing importance. The central problem in industrial relations is to find a method of combining the worker to permit peace, responsibility with industry and with government in planning for full production and full employment. Better labor legislation is a necessary adjunct and necessary. In the other problem is such more fundamental and much more important.

A Fundamental Labor Problem

What are we going to do about dirty books, dirty magazines, the printed version of the old-time writing on the backside fence. There are many who hesitate to mention the subject. They are afraid of being considered prudish or Victorian or even "fascists."

But there comes a time when one must face the issue of moral decency, a decency that knows no creedal bonds and knows no artificiality in social city whether he be Catholic, Protestant, a Jew or, incidentally, one of the growing percentage of Americans who have no religion at all.

Something must be done about the overworld figures in some of the so-called "comic" books, the salacious "For ever Ambers," the lurid advertisements of books which are supposed to be "stardling," "sagant," "breath-taking," "daring" and so on at nauseam.

The danger of the "comic" book field has already been recognized by thousands of parents who realize that the sexy drawings in the corner drugstore present a message to morality and are an admitted inducer of some juvenile delinquency.

But there are many adults who pool-pool the danger of such books as "Forever Amber" and the other best-sellers which are very deliberately promoted on the basis of the amount of passion per square inch of each page.

Adults often say that the only people who read these books are "sophisticated adults" who already know "the facts of life." This is an ever-giving statement which is not borne out by facts. Some school teachers have told me of their amazement at the familiarity of their first and second high school students with the kind of salacious "comic" books.

The writer remembers his own shock one day last winter when he sat across the aisle on a bus from two girls, both of them no more than 16, and both of them in the blue-beret and white-collar uniforms of the parochial school, each of whom had a copy of the book.

They chatted away gaily about Amber and giggled. One girl said it learned some things I never knew before.

Do the millions of publishers made of this book justify the fact that even one grammar school girl had her introduction to adult misconduct through the blatantly immoral pages of the book?

The blame lies partly on the parents, of course. Many mothers who would not think of letting a woman of loose morals into their homes because of the bad example which would be given their children will carelessly leave sexy novels around the house where children can read them.

But two wrongs never do make a right and parental carelessness does not justify the publishers who play up such books through frankly and liberally immoral advertisements which, both in drawing and words, resemble the advertisements of "book-tok" burlesque shows.

Under our peculiar perverse aesthetic standards of today, it is considered quite possible for a book to be both highly literary and highly immoral. But even the literary

The March on Albany

By DAN PATRICK

Over the past weekend we had a demonstration, right here in our own state, of the technique by which mob rule is used.

It came when about 72 World War II veterans forced their way into the State Senate Chamber at Albany and demanded that they be allowed to make a special delivery called a special message to the Legislature to appropriate some \$100,000,000 for housing.

The veterans had been part of a demonstration of some 1,000 New York City CIO workers led by Michael J. Walsh, president of the Transport Workers Union and General Secretary of the Great New York CIO Council, which had been held in New York City on Saturday and Sunday.

A demonstration took place on the steps of the Capitol where demonstrators were urged to demand housing and salary increases for teachers and Civil Service employees. Despite the varied objectives of their protest, the outdoor demonstration in the Capitol steps was entirely legal and the demonstrators were within their rights as United States citizens.

They were not exercising citizens' rights which are guaranteed by the Constitution under the "democratic" principle of the right to petition. But the actions of the Senate Chamber were entirely illegal inasmuch as they were not within the rights of United States citizens.

It is noteworthy to record that the demonstrators were not allowed to make a special message to the Legislature to appropriate some \$100,000,000 for housing.

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Churchill Again

By TOM ROGERS

Washington — The widely publicized and difficult Molotov docket in New York a few days ago. Early guard patrolled the corridors; early guards watched his door. The Poliburo is taking no chances on another Kravchenko if they can avoid it.

As the flashlight bulbs popped in unison with the champagne bottles, few were aware of his presence, though it was purely fortuitous that he seemed to float over the meeting in New York. That was the shadow of the man of our time. That was the shadow of the Rt. Honorable Winston Churchill.

The most able speech will be on foreign policy. Watch it carefully. Winston Churchill will be heard from again. Some think in his greatest role.

The reasoning of veterans with FIFTY years experience in London runs thus: Churchill is an outspoken defendant of the Empire. The pariah-pump politicians who were elected by the so-called intellectual regime of the Socialists are just plainly un-equipped for the job.

Lately the Rt. Honorable Winston has been accepting honors from foreign nations without the consent of the War Cabinet.

Books—Good or Bad

standard does not justify many publishers for trying to whittle product, no matter how high its literary quality, or the heads that it is akin to the pre-war French postcard.

The publisher who tries to sell a book solely on the basis that it is "hot stuff" is as much of a menace to public morality as some of the emotionally disturbed and menacing young people who haunt taverns and the streets with mental impressions of the dirty books indelibly written on their minds.

A library of books here detailing should be. We think the publishers should be first given a chance to clean up voluntarily. Compulsory censorship is always a dangerous issue. Religious prejudice often obscures the subject and the dergyman who suggests it is always accused of being an opening wedge through which he can later see communism as an excuse for suppression of political ideas which he does not agree.

We are not at this point talking of political ideologies or religious doctrines. We are speaking of that basic standard of sexual morality which Americans once had and which most of us still maintain in principle, although we often wink at it in fact.

Our books, particularly in these days of mass sales, should respect the common decency which even a schoolboy instinct is necessary for the maintenance of common sense.

The publishers should get together and set up an agency equivalent to the Johnson Office in Hollywood to try to rescue the book publishing business from the depths of filth, suggestion, and sexual promiscuity into which they plunged it in their fight for the Almighty Dollar.

They should see that this is a "Catholic" issue or a "Protestant" issue or a "rabbinical" issue. There is the strong growing indignation that once rose up against the excess of the liquor industry and brought national prohibition.

Prohibition was too extreme. It was wrong in many respects but can any one deny that the industry helped to bring it about through its own disregard for fundamental decency?

Do the book publishers want to run the same risk? The publishers have the opportunity to prevent an out-and-out fight between the moral forces of America and themselves. It is up to them to make use of it. (Reprints from Inside Story, issue, September 28, of the Common Book Club and the Common Journal of the Catholic Calendar.)

Nimitz Asks Prayers

Washington — (AP)—Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, remembering that Navy Day, October 27, comes on a Sunday this year, stated that "it is my earnest hope that our people will remember us of the naval service in a special way on Navy Day Sunday, and that we may have the support of their prayers as we keep the sea."

55% of Pupils On Release Time

On Release Time — The idea of religious education as a part of the public school curriculum is catching on here. Dr. Alfred Tenneson, president of the State Public Council reported here.