The Literary Cavalcade

Sunset for Cynics

By John O'Connor

It would have to be an Arthur Toynbee or a Francis Neilson who might know offhand exactly what stage a civilization is at when any number of its literary men prefer to turn out anthologies and collections of the works of others when they are faced with the opportunity of writing creative work.

The flight from the creative in our day is food for thought—and you will find most of it unpalatable, if not indigestible.

Over the past year we, the reviewers, have been entertained and pleasantly deluged with a series of works on the American past. A few of them were necessary and welcome works of scholarship such as the recent one on the James family and all that it has come to mean in American intellectual life for good or for bad. Nor must one include the latest work of Van Wyck Brooks, for it is marked by the continuity of a great effort.

OTHER WORKS, competent or otherwise have been a series of efforts drenched in a nostalgia for the '20's. Pegler's "era of wonderful nonsense" or about periods when prices were extremely low and milk was five cents a quart if you brought the buttered enamel can.

Regardless of the sincerity of the sweating Ph. Ds who write or compile these books, it is hard to dismiss the alarming fact that nearly all of these works concentrate on the past. Heavily tinged with longing, seldom looking forward, never failing to turn back and recall, all of these works dwell upon the past. And many continually turn to the raw energy of the '20's.

Is this not an escape to yesterday? Does this not signify a false quest for security that cannot be had? Is it not dangerous to contemplate a past many of these people never lived through rather than dare to face the future that is sure to come? Even if one must look backward, should it not be to learn rather than to just sigh?

Why the fascination for a rather tinsel-clad and bolsterous prohibition era? Why the sudden interest of younger writers in the tragically frustrated ability of F. Scott Fitzgerald? Why the plethora of paragraphs for the past year over the prose of Thomas Wolfe? Why not more Wolfes and more complete Fitzgeralds?

THIS MENTAL REGIRA to the past is alarming and annoying. There is no sign of it running out. Anthologies and books on the immediate past are the rage and will probably continue to be as long as the public, like these writers, CARES TO FIND REFUGE FROM REALITY AND THE FUTURE IN THE SECURITY OF THAT WHICH CANNOT BE CHANGED BECAUSE IT IS NO MORE.

The ultimate end of any possible future is death. This is a concept that the true Christian knows and thinks of but not morbidly. It holds no terror for him and if it be by a sudden blast of atomic power or a creeping means known as germ warfare, it does not concern him too much. It is those who look back to the past who most fear the future. They would live forever in the period that gave them their easiest time. It is intellectual 'momism' of the worst sort.

WRITERS SEEK haven in the past, in friendships, in activities, in causes or one sort of the other. My advice to them all is to listen to the feet of the Hound of Heaven pattering persistently behind them. We of the fruitless forties need fresh ideas not the ancient pagan ones about us. We need critics instead of commentators, dramatists instead of script writers, novelists instead of paste-pot-and-scissors experts.

It is not healthy, this flight from Grace, from the future, from reality. And as more and more of our people, Catholic and non-Catholic assume the negative spirit of quietism—especially those who have fallen for the intellectual nonsense of Indian and Chinese philosophy, the closer we are coming to witness the decline of the West here in the west.

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Monsignor Maurice F. Griffin of Cleveland, president of the Catholic Hospital Association, shown as he testified before the House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee which is considering tax exemptions as they relate to non-profit hospitals. In the United States, the Catholic Church operates 1,010 hospitals staffed by 22,000 sisters and brothers and 100,000 lay workers, assisted by 40,000 physicians. More than 3,000,000 persons receive complete hospital care in Catholic institutions annually. Real photo. (NC Photos)

Moscow Line

Believe It — Not

(Moscow Broadcast in Turkish to the Near and Middle East:)

"There is not a single soul who would like to leave Soviet soil to go elsewhere. Contrary wise, there are hundreds of thousands of people throughout the world whose dearest wish is to come to the Soviet Union. Armenians are one of the most recent examples. Armenians who dispersed to all corners of the world to save their lives are now returning, using all means possible, to the Soviet Union. The Soviet people have opened their arms to them and greet them as brothers."

(Moscow Broadcast on Soviet Home Service:)

"We cannot be frightened by the mad howls of the hounds of imperialism. The era of capitalism is nearing its end. The dark forces of all, the world, the capitalistic monopolists of America and Europe, the British conservatives, the right wing socialists, all these Churchills and Blums are incapable of stopping the progressive movement of history. The dawn of communism, brightly and appealingly, is rising before the eyes of the whole of toiling humanity."

(Moscow Broadcast in German to Austria:)

"In the United States there is no real electoral freedom, but a camouflaged gagging of the will of part of the electorate while the other part is used as a spineless tool in the mighty political machine with whose help the monopolists hold their tyrannical sway over the United States. All election campaigns have the character of a commercial stunt organized by a highly paid expert aided by subservient reporters."

Will Publish Plays

New York (NC)—In a move designed to stimulate the publication of first-class plays by Catholic dramatists, the Catholic Theater Conference has entered into an agreement with the Declan X. McMullen Company to publish plays submitted to the Conference's Service Bureau.

Peace Encyclical Text

Vatican City—(NC)—Following is an English translation of the text of the Encyclical by His Holiness Pope Pius XII entitled Optatissima Pax (Most Desired Peace) and published in Italian today.

Venerable Brothers, Salutations and Apostolic Blessing:

The most desired peace, which ought to be "the tranquillity of order" and "tranquillity," after the cruel vicissitudes of a long war, still wavers uncertain, as all note with sadness and trepidation, and keeps the spirits of people as though suspended in anguished anxiety, while on the other hand in not a few nations — already devastated by the world conflict and by the ruins and miseries that have been the dolorous consequence of it — the social classes mutually agitated by a bitter hatred, with innumerable tumults and turbulences, threaten, as all see, to undermine and overturn the very foundations of states.

Before this distressing and miserable spectacle Our soul is oppressed by great bitterness and it seems to Us that the paternal and universal mandate, which We have received from God, moves Us to exhort all peoples to the will to extinguish the secret hatreds and happily renew concord, but also to admonish all those that are Our sons in Christ that they raise to heaven more fervent prayers, that they truly know that what is done without divine propitiation comes out wanting and sterile, according to the sentence of the Psalmist: "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that built it."

IMMENSE ARE the evils to which it is necessary to apply a remedy, a remedy that cannot be longer delayed. For on the one hand the economy in many nations, because of the very great military expenditures and the enormous destruction of war, is in a state of such uncertainty and exhaustion that often it is not in condition to resolve the problems that arise and to provide for those opportune works with which work could be given to such as are, unfortunately, constrained against their will to unfruitful idleness; on the other hand, unfortunately, there are not lacking those who aggravate and fatten on the misery of the proletarian classes, with secret and astute strict order and without justice. The rebuilding of fortunes now dispersed is attempted.

But it is necessary, finally, that all understand that it is not with discord, with tumults, with fraternal massacres that lost goods may be regained or those in danger saved, but only with active concord, with mutual understanding, with peaceful labor.

Those who, with a premeditated plan, thoughtlessly raise up the crowd, exciting it to tumult, to sedition and to offense against the liberty of others, without a doubt do not operate to mitigate the poverty of the people, but rather increase it and provoke extreme ruin, aggravating hatred and interrupting the course of the works of urban life.

In fact the struggle of parties "was and will be for many peoples a calamity greater than war itself, than famine and than epidemics." (A quotation from the Latin historian Livy.)

BUT AT the same time it is incumbent upon all to understand that the social crisis is so great at the present and so dangerous for the future as to make it necessary for each and especially he who has greater goods to put the common welfare before private advantages and profits.

And before everything else it is absolutely urgent to pacify spirits, bring them back to fraternal consensus, to mutual understanding, to reciprocal cooperation, so as to be able to carry out those doctrines and those directive forms that are consentient with Christian teachings and the conditions of the present hour.

Let all remember that the aggregation of evils which we have had to suffer in past years has fallen upon humanity principally because the divine religion of Jesus Christ which is the upholder of mutual charity among citizens, peoples and races, does not regulate, as it should, private, domestic and public life.

If hence by reason of this estrangement from Christ the straight road has been lost, it is necessary to return to Him in public life as in private; if error has dimmed minds, it is necessary to return to that Truth which, being divinely revealed, indicates the way that leads to heaven; if deadly hatred has brought deadly ruin, it is necessary to re-light that Christian love which alone can stamp out so many mortal plagues, overcome so many hostile perils, awaken so much bitter suffering.

AND THUS because the Christmas solemnities are now approaching, which lead us to the contemplation of the Child Jesus Who waill in the manger, of angelic choruses imploring peace for men, We hold it opportune to make an ardent exhortation to all Christians, and especially to those who are in the flower of their age, to visit in goodly numbers the Holy Crib and there pour out their prayers, to seek of the Divine Infant that He may deign to extinguish and remove the torches that are threatening badly shaken to hatred in seditions and tumults.

May He illuminate with His celestial light the minds of those who often, rather than moved by stubborn malice, are deceived by errors cloaked by the specious appearance of true love. May He repress and placate hatred in spirits, compose discord, revive and reinvigorate Christian charity.

TO THOSE who enjoy a great fortune, may He teach a prudent generosity toward the poor; then to those who suffer by reason of their poor and uncomfortable condition, may He, with His example and with His aid, bring spiritual consolations and turn them to desire above all those celestial goods, which are the best goods and which will never become less.

In the present anguish, We put much confidence in the prayers of the innocent babies that the Divine Redeemer particularly receives and loves best. Let them then raise to Him, during the Christmas solemnity, their candid voices, imploring peace, concord, mutual charity.

And let to their fervent prayers be united moreover those exercises of Christian piety and those generous offerings with which Divine Justice, offended by so much guilt, may be placated and at the same time the indigent may receive—in the measure that the means of each permit—opportune aid.

We have complete faith, Venerable Brothers, that with assiduous obligations and diligence, of which We have so many proofs, you will see that Our paternal exhortations are put into practice and obtain happy fruit, and that all, but especially the children, will respond with willing passion to these our invitations that you will make yours.

Comforted by this tender hope, both to you singly and universally and to the flocks confided to your care, We impart with effusion of spirit the Apostolic Benediction, attested by Our paternal benevolence and augur of celestial grace.

Given at Rome, near St. Peter's the 18th day of December of the year 1947, ninth of Our Pontificate.

PIUS P. M. XII.

Priest Cites UNESCO Need For Religion

Mexico City—(NC)—"If the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization persists in ignoring the value of religion in its efforts to obtain national and international peace, the organization will not have the expected results," the Rev. Enrique Herrera Oria, S. J., noted Spanish teacher and author, declared in commenting on the outcome of the second world conference here of UNESCO. The Spanish priest has for some time been touring Latin America to study educational methods and is now visiting Mexico.

While acknowledging the loftiness of UNESCO's aims in working for universal peace, Father Herrera expressed the belief that its methods are inadequate. In evident allusion to the fact that the UNESCO constitution, signed by 44 nations, does not mention God and states that the proper means for peace are education, science and culture, the priest asserted:

"IT SEEMS ridiculous to me to believe the teaching of reading and writing alone will secure peace throughout the world. Reading serves for both good and evil. Without morals reading corrupts the will of men."

An article written for the magazine Todo by the Rev. Jose Cantu Corro, Mexican writer and speaker, expresses the same view. Christianity is the only effective means for obtaining true peace, Father Cantu says. This truth is almost universally acknowledged and UNESCO cannot ignore it, nor can the Christian delegates refrain from giving expression to it, he states.

"Neither lay culture, nor science, nor education, nor democracy can suffice without God to attain and preserve peace throughout the world," the Mexican priest continues. The Catholic Church has for 20 centuries been engaged in a mission of universal peace. He says: why does not UNESCO, which is only two years old, cooperate with this religious institution?

Irish 'Offside' Penalty $1.20

Los Angeles — Charlie Callahan, Notre Dame public relations man, stepped into the Biltmore lobby and signalled a cabbie. "I want to attend Mass," he said. "Take me to the nearest Church."

A few minutes later Callahan found himself atop the steps of St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral. Somebody had made a mistake, but the driver was already disappearing beyond a green traffic light.

Recounting the story later, publicist Callahan declared: "I had to call another taxi. Irish offside—penalty, one dollar and 20 cents!"

Book Benefits Hospital

New York — (NC)—With the publication of "Heavenly Father of Children," a poem in book form by His Eminence Francis Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop of New York, it is announced by Declan X. McMullen, publisher, that the author has turned the rights to the book over to the New York Foundling Hospital.

Information Desk

In What Year Was Our Lord Born?

How Can God Be All-Powerful and Yet Permit Evil?

What Makes Baptism of An Infant Valid?

St. Bernard's Sermons

Q. How does it happen that the date of Christ's birth is placed some years B.C. (before Christ)? What year was Our Lord really born?

A. Let us answer the second question first. Scholars are not agreed as to the exact year Christ was born. It is certain that he was born after the Roman year 747, and before the Roman year 749; translated into the reckoning of our calendar, this would be between 4 and 6 years before the Christian era.

The chronological error which makes Christ born some years before Christ (B. C.) is due to the mistake of those who originated our present calendar. In the year 525, Dionysius Exiguus, a Scythian monk, decided to draw up an exact calendar, which events would be dated according to a Christian viewpoint, before and after Christ. He calculated that Christ was born in the year 753 after the foundation of Rome; he therefore made 753 A. U. C. equal 1 A. D. (the first year of Our Lord).

Unfortunately, Dionysius made a serious mistake in his calculation. Historical documents, which were unknown to him, make it certain that Herod died in April, 750. Herod, however, is represented in the Gospels as being still alive at the birth of Christ. Therefore Christ must have been born before 750, in the Roman computation. Moreover, we know from the Gospels that Herod was in Jerusalem shortly after the birth of the Saviour, and other sources tell us that he left Jerusalem in 749. Therefore 749 (4 B. C.) is the latest date that can be assigned for the birth of Christ. Other considerations would make 747 (6 B. C.) the earliest reasonable date for the greatest event in history.

Q. As I understand Catholic doctrine, it teaches that Jesus Christ is truly God. Is it reasonable to believe that an infant could be God? How can God be but a few days old?

A. Catholic doctrine teaches that one and the same person, who is called "Jesus Christ" by us, has two natures: the divine nature which He has from another Person, from Him Whom Jesus called His Father; and a human nature which He has from another person, whom Jesus recognized as his mother. Thus He (the Person) is both God and man. As man, He was conceived, formed in the [illegible]

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January Book Choices

New York (NC)—The Catholic Children's Book Club has announced its selections for January as follows: Picture Book group: "The Seaweed Hat," by Louis Slobodkin. Intermediate group, "Mr. Twigg's Mistake," by Robert Lawson. Older Boys: "Danger to Windward," by Armstrong Sperry, and Older Girls, "Beacon Cottage Mystery," by Alan Langton.