

# Great U.S. Writers In Search of God



WILLIAM FAULKNER

## Catholic Press Features

New York — Man's search for spiritual salvation — and a Saviour — has obsessed more great American novelists than any other theme in literature.

This is the conclusion of a prominent Catholic theologian, Father Anthony Padovano, as spelled out in "American Culture and the Quest for Christ," a book just published by Sheed & Ward.

Analyzing the major works of such famed novelists as F. Scott Fitzgerald, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway and John Steinbeck, among others, Father Padovano gave extensive attention to each in a lengthy chapter titled, "Salvation Themes in American Literature."

William Faulkner, he stated, "may well be the most profound and the most religious writer our culture has produced."

"On the surface, Faulkner seems to be a writer whose

work is a poetic elaboration of the 'legend' of the South." But, Father Padovano contends, Faulkner's fiction "explored the purpose of man's tenure on earth. His writing raises crucial questions. What is virtue? How do we deal with evil? Can we overcome the betrayal of our past? Will men learn compassion in deprivation and suffering?"

But Faulkner "believes in original sin more passionately than he believes in divine love," Father Padovano observed.

However, what Faulkner's novels do in a unique way is offer "a glimmer of hope" by their setting in modern Christian parables:

"Easter week is . . . the setting for Faulkner's masterpiece, 'The Sound and the Fury,' which begins on Holy Saturday, shifts back to Good Friday and reaches its conclusion on Easter Sunday when Dilsey weeps as a preacher reminds his congregation that Jesus is risen, salvation is possible and that no death comes to those who believe."

The priest contends that Hemingway "tried a different approach to salvation," one of individualism:

"Frederick Henry in 'A Farewell to Arms,' Robert Jordan in 'For Whom the Bell Tolls' and Santiago in 'The Old Man and the Sea' are alone when they face the moment of truth, as alone as the matador must be in the ring, as alone as Jesus was on the cross."

Father Padovano also sees Steinbeck as being more mystical in his writings than his reputation as an "earthy" writer would have us believe.

"When George and Lennie (in 'Of Mice and Men') dream of the day when they can 'live on the fatta the lan,' or when the Joads, in their epic American exodus (in 'The Grapes of Wrath') struggled toward the Promised Land, Steinbeck is really telling us that the human heart will not rest until it comes home," wrote the priest, referring to a spiritual home.

Novelists such as Steinbeck, Faulkner, Fitzgerald, Hemingway and others give "further indication that Americans are involved in the struggle for salvation and that they seek a salvation which transcends secular salvation."

tives in Poland. They themselves separated, the father going to join a Polish army being organized on French soil. In a few months, came Hitler's defeat of France. This sent Tereska and her mother hurrying out of Paris, down to St. Jean-de-Luz, across Spain, and into Portugal.

The father's unit was successfully transferred to Scotland, and Tereska and her mother made their way to England, where the girl joined the Free French. In London, she experienced the relentless air raids and was introduced to a far more sophisticated and far less innocent life than what she had previously known.

In 1944, she married, only to have her husband taken away, first by an assignment with the French elements in the invasion of Europe and, shortly thereafter, by his death at the front. In 1945, Tereska gave birth to their child, in London, and shortly thereafter took this tiny daughter to Paris, where the baby was baptized.

After spending many pages on her own story up to this point (i.e., 1945), the author gives only the briefest indication of the rest of it to date. We do learn that she has since married Meyer Levin, the American novelist.

One is left wondering whether the author is still a practicing Catholic. She speaks of religious doubts during the war years in London. "Little by little I felt less need for formalized religion." It is never indicated that this trend was reversed.

Hers is an interesting personal history which takes one through different places and circles, introduces one to highly individual people, and offers striking contrasts of all sorts. Her father's death she describes on the very last page of the book. It came in 1958, just after he had received Communion, still holding, evidently, that as a complete Catholic he was also a complete Jew.

## Balancing the Books

# Troubled Journey

By Father John S. Kennedy

The parents of Tereska Torres, whose autobiography is entitled "The Converts" (Knopf, \$6.95), were Polish Jews who emigrated to Paris after having been secretly received into the Catholic Church. The author was born in Paris and baptized at the age of one. She counts herself Jewish, Catholic, Polish, and French.

Her parents did not dare tell their respective parents and families of their conversion, for they knew that this would be fiercely resented. And they induced their daughter never to mention it during the visits which the three occasionally made to Poland.

But the fact was discovered by a Jewish journalist who happened to be in a Paris church where Tereska's father, a fairly well-known artist, was assisting at Mass and receiving Communion. He published the news, and it was picked up by Jewish papers in different countries. A family storm followed. And even the Paris home was invaded by acquaintances screaming insults.

Eventually some sort of peace was patched up. But it was hardly to be expected that all would see the force of Tereska's father's contention "that by being a Catholic he was a more complete Jew."

The years of Tereska's childhood and girlhood were before World War II. There were happy times in Paris, where she attended a very proper convent school; in Lectoure and Heas in the Pyrenees, where she spent idyllic vacations; in a chateau near Lyon, where other enchanted summers were passed.

But then the name of Hitler cropped up ominously, and his hatred of all Jews was shrilly sounded. There was a threat of war, but it receded, only to return and prove all too true a year later.

For Tereska's family there was the agony of what might be happening to their close rela-

## WEE PALS

By Morrie Turner



## 'Bud' Collyer Memorial

New York — (RNS) — The American Bible Society marked its 135th year of service to the blind by establishing the "Bud" Collyer Memorial Fund for the Blind in tribute to the noted television and radio star.

The announcement was made at the Society's 154th annual meeting. Clayton "Bud" Collyer,

who died last September, was a dedicated worker for the Society, especially in the field of services to the blind.

Society executives also announced the release of the cassette edition of "Good News for Modern Man," the New Testament in Today's English version, recorded by Mr. Collyer.

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