

FR. HENRY ATWELL

Toward Tomorrow



Funerals ordinarily aren't news. But five funerals in the past few months indicate we've come to the end of a remarkable era — in the study of the Bible.

Last September when I was in Jerusalem, the funeral Mass was offered for the Dominican Father Roland de Vaux, a Mass attended by Jerusalem's Jewish mayor, Teddy Kollek, and by prelates, scholars and ordinary people of the many religious groups in the Holy City. Father de Vaux, a companion of one biblical scholar, Father Voste, and the pupil of another, Father le Grange, was one of the first to recognize the significance of the scrolls found in caves near the Dead Sea and then himself discovered more and worked with an ecumenical team of scholars to translate them.

The great Protestant scholar, Dr. William F. Albright, archeologist, author, lecturer, linguist, whose discoveries and evaluations of what he discovered began a whole new direction in biblical study, also died in recent months.

Death also has claimed Dr. Nelson Glueck, president of the Hebrew Union College. He too was a noted archeologist in that area of the troubled Middle East now known as Jordan, before Jordan and Israel were torn by endless war. His work clarified numerous obscure points in Scripture and revealed how accurate the ancient authors really were.

Two other Scripture scholars have also passed from their earthly labors — Albrecht Goetze, a specialist in the cuneiform literature, that primitive form of writing with wedges on soft clay, and Gerhard von Rad, widely recognized as the greatest Old Testament theologian in our time.

Although most of the people in the pews — whether in Jewish synagogues or in Protestant or Catholic churches — probably never heard of any of these five men, what these men did has had a decisive impact on just about every student for the rabbinate, ministry and priesthood, and thereby, of course, in the preaching we get in our pulpits and the lessons taught in even the most

rural Sunday School or catechism class.

The great encyclical of Pope Pius XII, "Divino Afflante Spiritu," issued in the early 1940's, certainly owes much to these scholars. That document was but the prelude to most of the theological and liturgical changes which we have heard about or witnessed in the past few years. Scripture, theology, liturgy, after, are related like grandmother, mother and daughter, and the way you understand the first one, Scripture, will most assuredly shape your beliefs and then the way you will pray and worship.

Too many of us, Catholics, Protestants and Jews alike, too often read our Bible as if it were a Walter Cronkite documentary "Inside Eden" or a New York Times round-by-round report of a mis-match fight between a midget and a giant, the lad David and the brute Goliath. This literal reading of the Bible leads to as much misunderstanding of the intended message as if we were to take literally such sports headlines as "Pirates Scalp the Chiefs."

The scholars mentioned in this article showed us that ancient people had their poets and imaginative writers just as we do.

This new, really old, understanding of the Bible can free us from that fruitless scratching through texts to find hidden clues about such subjects as when will the world come to an end, as if Scripture were some massive jigsaw puzzle God jumbled up to tease us and terrify us. Scripture is more like a great musical orchestration, whose notes are meant to be heard together.

This new, really old, understanding of the Bible can set us free to savor the meaning of a passage rather than dissect it to fragments.

The five men I mentioned in this article were pioneers at a time this new direction was highly suspect and very unpopular. I just thought you should hear their names, at least this once, and be glad they lived in these times to point the way for us.

FR. PAUL J. CUDDY

On The Right Side



Recently I went to see the movie, The Godfather. As the story unfolded, anyone could relate to the incongruous but beautifully homely episodes of the domestic life of the Family: The merry wedding feast, the dancing, the food; the motherly and kindly wife of the Godfather; the concern for their families on the part of schizoids; heartlessly efficient criminals who at the same time were concerned and affectionate husbands and fathers. Historically, the Mafia began as a protective society against terrible injustices in Sicily, much as the Irish Sinn Feiners and the IRA did in Ireland. But like so many good things, "power tends to corrupt", and for those of us who acknowledge the power of the Seven Capital Sins within each of us, we see history is full of good men who began with good intentions ending up ruthless and self-seeking. The good man becomes a malefactor.

The movie climaxed in a series of bloody murders, syncopating between scenes from the baptism at which the new Godfather, Michael, was promising for his godson to renounce the devil, his works and his pomps. The balance between the sacred music and sacred rite in the church and the gunfire explosions as sound effects for the ritual of murder scattered throughout the city was powerful. On the way out I was impressed by the silence or the low conversation from the 850 persons who were leaving the theatre. It seemed as if they had been stunned by the violence.

On April 26 I went to Rochester to hear Dr. and Mrs. J.C. Willke's presentation on abortion at the Towne House. The presentation was calm and clear. There was little stress on emotion, but there was a quiet stress on the sacredness of human life, especially of the unborn child. They showed slides of unborn babies that had been destroyed by abortion procedures. I had seen similar pictures at our Chaplains Institute in Washington last October, so was familiar with the awful slides. And I think Americans generally are be-

coming so used to such pictures, that there is less and less emotional reaction or rebellion.

About 1965 Father Joseph Gaynor, now pastor at Elmira Heights, said in a sermon in Clyde: "Recently I read about a ten year old boy whose parents died in a small village in Italy, where there were no TV sets or radios or moving pictures. Relatives in the States sent for the child to give him a home. On the way over movies were shown on the boat of cowboys and Indians fighting. The little orphan was horrified by the violence and carnage. Yet a year later this same child sat unmoved and unconcerned before the TV at his new home, watching all kinds of mayhem and killing. We become accustomed to violence. The danger is that we become unconcerned."

After reading Future Shock by Alvin Toffler and pondering over the manipulative powers exercised by social and scientific technicians I conclude that to remain a believing and faithful Christian we must, under God's grace, have roots deep in the truths unfolded from reason and God's Revelation. Emotion is transient. Apathy easily acquired to. Truth is eternal, and is from God.

Two valuable side results from the Willke lecture were these. First there was manifested the quiet, dogged, difficult work being done by the non-denominational Right to Life groups. Second, the distribution of Handbook on Abortion, The Case for the Unborn. Dr. and Mrs. J. C. Willke (95 — Hiltz Publ. Co., 6304 Hamilton Ave., Cincinnati, O. 45224). Not only is the book clear and readable, but it gives references to other source books, including sound books on sex education. A couple years ago a sardonic layman said: "The Sisters used to teach the children religion, the parents taught them sex. Now Sister teaches sex; and parents are supposed to teach the religion." The fact is that parents should be teaching their children religion and the sacredness of human life, with part of the teaching a sound understanding of sex. These Willke books are highly recommended.

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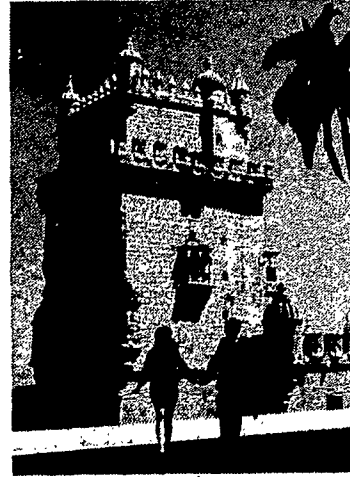
Father Paul J. Cuddy

Father Cuddy is Chaplain of St. James Mercy Hospital and author of the Weekly Courier-Journal Column ON THE RIGHT SIDE.



See Fatima, the ornate Cathedral at Seville, the Cathedral at Toledo, the great monastery at Seville.

See Lisbon, the water color city on the banks of the Tagus — the resorts of Estoril and Cascais — Spain, a world in itself with Andalusia's fascinating Seville, Moorish Cordoba and Grenada — the bright and sunny Costa del Sol, Madrid with its famous Prado Museum.



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