



SEMINARIAN

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FROM BEHIND THE STONE

"We stand on the promontory of centuries! ... What is the use of looking behind us, since our task is to smash the mysterious portals of the impossible? Time and Space died yesterday."¹ There is nothing more to be said. There is only the task. There is only LIFE.

The base of the twentieth century promontory is difficult to depict. In fact, the entire base is the attempt to decide precisely what is to be depicted. The nearest we come to making any formulation about what the composition of the past centuries has been is in terms of the question 'What is the ultimate nature of reality?'. The crux of the problem, however, is precisely what do we intend to count as an explication of reality. It is in this context that the course charted by man's existence in the history of the past centuries represents the base of our 20th Century. The resume as such, is bound and contained by the poles of the transcendental and the immanent. The course of reality has woven itself back and forth between these extremes for centuries and centuries.

The two wars in our century have severed the thread of past realities. This cut has not suddenly come upon us, and yet the course of one century in the context of history is sudden. 'Time and Space are dead.' 'Interior reality and exterior reality are finally becoming one.' 'The gulf between reality and idealism is being bridged.' There is no longer a transcendental and immanent. There is no longer the subjective and objective, the intuitive and empirical, the natural and supernatural, the analytic and synthetic, the reality beyond reality, 'this worldly' and 'other worldly', ego and super ego, conscious and sub-conscious, mind and matter, private and public, absolute and relative, heaven and hell,, and on and on through all the themes of the history of reality. What has been, no longer is and man is left in despair.

Protagoras and Sisyphus, they are our leaders. There is nothing but despair where we stand now, just beyond the memorial we planted yesterday. Yesterday we stood on the promontory with Sisyphus and watched the stone roll down the hill of the past centuries. The trip down the hill was short and almost undetected. Today we are behind the stone again. Today the incline is not steep. Today we can only wonder what the verticle will be. We can only wonder what this new sense of reality will be. Will it be a merger of the transcendental and immanent, or will it be a total negation of this way of being? Will the form be pure and abstract, 'as music is pure literature?' Will the form be a perfection of an old norm? Will the form be a religious expression? But, there is only despair. It is too soon to tell. Meanwhile, there is only LIFE.*

P. R. GROVE

1. Paths to the Present, ed. by Eugen Weber (New York, 1960), p.244.

* The new unity we seek is LIFE. Life is being--it simply is. History is the resume of man's aimless wonderings about the ultimate reality of LIFE. Unless he looks quickly, man will miss the obvious again, in a time when it is so bold.

PRG

FOOTNOTES

I wonder if Mary suffered post-natal depression. America certainly does as the tinsel and glitter of indulgence in the yearly contagion of conviviality so quickly (even before the twelfth part-ridge, pear tree et alia have arrived) disappear. And so we experience, all of us, with or without some consonance with the Church, the descent from Gloria to Miserere, the personal experience of Winter.

To talk about these changes of mood, by society, by the Church, and by individuals is not to be cynical or bitter. Their inevitability is a part of life in its glorious sense. No one can laugh all the time (the Chinese used to torture and kill people that way). Nor, on the other hand, is weeping and gnashing of teeth to be the fate of the world or our lives.

When the dry, uninteresting times come, our only peace lies in the patient acceptance of the daily task, the daily round, until a real Lent is experienced and a new Easter can come.

Christmas is only a prelude joy. Of course, some never get beyond it - these people are not quite Christ's. They are shocked by the appearance of slaughtered babes or martyred saints "even after Christ has been in the world for 2000 years!"

But we "ponder these things" in our hearts; when we have born Christ to the world in our sermons and actions, and the world doesn't seem to care, and the Word even says "What have I to do with you"; even then we trust and continue.

Yes, I think that Mary was human enough to know this aspect of sorrow too.

GW

CHOIR NOTES

The Epiphany season will be a busy one for members of the Choir. Last night the Choir performed "The Play of Herod" at Muhlenberg College. This weekend will find them in Newark, New York City, and Long Island. There will be five programs, consisting of anthems and/or the medieval play. On January 23 they will be in concert in Pottstown, on February 3 and 24 they will perform in churches in Philadelphia and environs. Best wishes to Mr. Bornemann and his traveling troupe.

SAINTLESS JEROME

Well, I see another writer has made his debut within the pages of this notoriously fine publication. And, like my brother Sam last year, he has undertaken commentary on the seminary and its community. Welcome, Jerome, although don't expect to be canonized (unless canonization means being shot by a canon).

Such attacks which our brother has launched can not go unanswered, although to keep peace it might be more advisable to play down the issues. Yes, Jerome, you're right, there has been much discussion about your writing. And since you have chosen your own pen name, the problem can center around the issues. Let's look at some of them.

First, on the library system: Indeed there are problems existing in the library and in its cataloguing. To classify the books of theology into clearly discernable areas is an extremely difficult task to put it mildly. We have succeeded in the Mt. Airy system to have developed some order. A little patience is required -- and as has been stated rather clearly before, help is always available.

What was not brought up at this point was the lack of materials in the library; 70,000 volumes most of which are of little use. This too, is being rectified, particularly in the current matching gifts campaign whereby the library is receiving \$6,000 extra each year. The problem is that still more material is needed. A move to Penn would help considerably.

As for the forced giving for a dance not to be attended by all people; this is true of every Student Body function. It is true of every insurance program.

(cont'd on page 3)

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SEBASTIAN (cont'd)

It is true of U.S. citizenship. Those moralists (and these are not necessarily Christian) who insist on "better" uses for \$30.00 must recognize how relative the word is.

On chapel, I agree, it is imperative that the reader be prepared. As for chapel attendance, this is an issue which is an annual one; one which has no proper answer. The fact (assuming your count of December 11th is correct - I don't spend my time in chapel counting people or beads) that half of the chapel goers are Juniors is easy to explain (though not to justify).

First, there are more resident Juniors than upperclassmen. Second, upperclassmen generally use the half hour morning period for socializing at the coffee table, as are an increasing number of Juniors. To you who would commend the Juniors on the chapel attendance now, and criticize the upperclassmen for theirs, I say - wait until you are a senior. Maybe things will improve: I doubt it.

Your observation on room-changing is short, curt, and quite in poor taste. It is one thing to comment on such an interesting phenomena: it is another to treat it as gossip. The changing indeed may be a sign of something, but to determine what in print is pure speculation and is unwarranted.

Finally, your Christmas greetings, while sarcastic, and certainly adequately smashing the opposition at either end of the ecclesiastical pole, gives no really positive Christmas greeting. Or maybe there wasn't any intended.

In short, Jerome, you are doing a good job in pointing out the faults of the seminary. A little constructive criticism would also be helpful. So would some maturity. But alas, we are all children. More on the children next week by my brother Sam.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

It is with not a little sorrow and disappointment that I take to my typewriter to write what follows. It is an observation on the Seminary and on Seminarians. It is not meant to be a judgment (we have enough of that taking place already) but simply an observation -- an observation which is not new to any of us; an observation which apparently can not be overcome, but ought not be ignored.

It is simply to question the honesty of the seminarians. We have had sufficient testimony to the dishonesty of our brothers: failure to pay for goods purchased in the canteen, failure to pay for cookies in the mail room, and now, not for the first time, stealing from individual rooms. I choose to use the terms dishonesty and stealing to point up as strongly as possible the seriousness of these things. Indeed, one can not (theologically) expect seminarians to be perfect. However, one can expect a "better showing".

Lee M. Miller.