
THE OPEN FORUM



WHAT ARE THE BASIC ASSETS?

SIR: Mr. George Jean Nathan, writing in the December *MERCURY*, correctly refutes Thomas Weatherly's contention that, to be a theatrical success, a fledgling actress must possess "physical allure definitely above the average."

It is regrettable that recently a trend has set in wherein theatrical people supposedly "in the know" discourage youngsters simply because they lack one of the so-called basic assets necessary for achievement in the theatre.

Helen Hayes, writing several months ago in the New York Sunday *Times* drama section, concluded that not only is allure a requirement, but that height above five foot three is still another "must." Miss Hayes, one of the first ladies of the theatre, barely reaches five feet herself.

Although an "oomph" girl may be able to carry a million-dollar Hollywood turkey, I doubt that she can enrapture a more sophisticated Broadway audience in the course of a more exacting three-hour performance.

HARVEY GREENFIELD

Cambridge, Mass.

BROOKLYN BRIDGE

SIR: In the October 1948 *MERCURY* the article on "Brooklyn, the 49th State," by Jack Gaver and Dave Stanley, refers to the "opening of the Brooklyn Bridge in 1893."

I feel certain that it was opened in 1883. I was only a young boy at the time. The parade went down Broadway, and President Chester A. Arthur was riding in an open carriage, on his way downtown to dedicate the Bridge. I walked over the Bridge, the next day, after the opening.

THOMAS A. WILEY

New York City

SIR: Of course the opening date was 1883. We've lost our carbon copy of the original manuscript, so that we have no way of knowing whether it was due to an error of ours in typing or to a printer's typo.

Mr. Wiley may not recall it, but if he saw President Arthur he probably also saw his successor in the White House at the same time, for Grover Cleveland, then Governor of New York, was also in the parade. And if Mr. Wiley crossed the bridge within the first 24 hours of its opening he was one of 250,000 who did so.

JACK GAVER and DAVE STANLEY

New York City

CRITICAL DISSENT

SIR: In the October "Soap Box" Mr. Frank O. Lowndes registers his disgust with certain literary critics' choices — from among contemporary critics — of literary immortals. He cites Hergesheimer, Cabell and Firbank as examples of such choices in the past. None of these three is, of course, popular now, and in the cases of Cabell and Firbank doubtless justifiably so.

I defy Mr. Lowndes, however, to find the major novels and short stories of Joseph Hergesheimer juvenile, silly, hollow or dreary in any sense of these (Mr. Lowndes') words. In *Java Head*, *The Three Black Pennys*, *Balisand* and *Wild Oranges* America has literature of a superior and enduring quality no matter what the vicissitudes of popular taste. . . .

R. H. WOODFORD

Buckhamton, W. Va.

MAKING OUT A CASE FOR MEN

SIR: Edith M. Stern's lament for "the miserable male," in the November issue of THE AMERICAN MERCURY, filled me with suppressed laughter. The laughter couldn't very well be boisterous, although it is said that laughing at oneself is highly medicinal. I laughed at myself, a miserable, male biped, and I also laughed at Miss Stern's humorous effort to be scathing. She has taken the most prized attributes of maleness for a one-way ride: as witness her acrimonious comments on his virility, good looks and intelligence. Man, she implies, is slowly, but irrevocably, assuming the characteristics of femaleness. What a horrifying augury of things to come! . . .

In fairness, however, it would be unwise to disagree with many of Miss Stern's animadversions. Their factual basis has been heroically provided by anthropologists and sociologists. She is right. Man does deserve chastisement. He has sinned grievously, and often. But, on the other hand, he has frequently, and without bitterness, laid down his life in defense of the honor and well-being of his women-folk. He has also passed laws, with and without her prompting, which guarantee her eventual emancipation from male dominance. Already, in the upper strata of society, at least, women are reputedly the custodians of the biggest moneybags in the U. S. Who awarded them that custodianship?

EDWIN F. DUDER

New York City

LITERARY CRITICISM

SIR: Mr. J. Donald Adams of the New York *Times* and Mr. George Sokolsky of the New York *Sun*, and occasionally others, have written in part upon the topic of recent and current writing and publishing; but none, for the same reason as yours, would print documented statements, honestly placing the blame upon the Book and Magazine Publishers.

I recently wrote to Mr. Sokolsky, citing un-American writing in *Avon Fantasy Magazine*, Issue Six, calling Colonial Americans illiterates, degenerates and primitives. However, he declined to reply to me, much less further expose that magazine.

I have also recently written Mr. Adams reproaching him for excusing, in the August MERCURY [see "Reporting Vs. the Art of Fiction"], for Fraternal Reasons, the Publishers who *paid* Editors to *accept* un-American stuff.

And when an "Adams" can overlook un-American Sinclair, Maurois, Santayana, Ehrenbourg, Adamic, Rand, Aldanov, Davies, Kingdon and Kravchenko, and "knock" Farrell, Dreiser & Lewis, and you *publish* that *rubbish*, then, something smells bad.

You say you'd "like" a *documented* appraisal of NAM, but you decline a *documented* exposé of un-American publishers. *That* is gross hypocrisy!

Of course you can *not* commit yourselves, on *That!!* You sneaking, un-American RAT!!

HOBART ADAMS DALLEY

New York City

IN DEFENSE OF POETS

SIR: In the December MERCURY you write [in the "Soap Box"], "Strangely enough, the United Nations has failed to make much impression upon American poets. During the past two years we have received less than a dozen verses, in praise of, or in denunciation of, the UN."

You may be interested to know that the largest prize offered in the Arlene Carter Poetry Contest, 1948 — on the subject of

World Harmony — was won by Goldie Capers Smith for her sonnet, "Invocation for the Security Council." This contest is held each year by the Poetry Society of Texas. The sonnet will soon be published in the *Yearbook* of the Poetry Society of Texas. Mrs. Smith wrote her sonnet after attending a session of the UN.

MARY V. LEECH

Tulsa, Okla.

MORE ON WHAT JESUS LOOKED LIKE

SIR: As I read Alan Devoe's article, "Jesus and Little Lord Fauntleroy," in your November issue, I wondered why the author so completely failed to suggest that Jesus probably dressed like other Jews of his time, and wore the same sort of beard as his fellow-Hebrews. I wondered why the portrait, which the author so sharply criticizes, gives Jesus the appearance of a blond Nordic — with a facial expression rarely found among the Jewish people.

Could it be that the Church, which so extensively uses this portrait, has deliberately chosen to soft-pedal the fact that Jesus was a Jew? . . . I suggest that Mr. Devoe's idea be carried out. Such a revised portrait as he advocates would do much to promote religious tolerance; or at least, it would soften blows frequently hurled at the people from whom Jesus came.

SOL BLUMROSEN

Detroit, Mich.

SIR: Here's an item for Alan Devoe, who says he is against the neurotic art that pictures the Son of God as a sort of early-day Lord Fauntleroy.

I attended Sunday School just one time. It was a Mormon Sunday School, and the lesson for that day was: Be not merely good — be good for something. The man teacher, using Jesus as an example, told us how the holy child was apprenticed in His father's carpenter shop, and how, by long and hard and conscientious labor, He finally became the best carpenter in all the country round

about. "Why, boys and girls, it was no trick at all for the Master to take a plane in His strong, skillful hands and curl off a six-foot shaving."

So when, like Devoe, I get fed up with Nazarene art I turn again to this boyhood picture, and watch a bearded man at a sunlit bench, His brow glistening with sweat and his brawny forearms powdered with sawdust, as He shapes a rough timber into something that will be beautiful and straight and true.

TOM HUGHES

Banning, Cal.

WYOMING

SIR: Lest your readers get a wrong, one-sided picture of Wyoming from the brief note in the "Soap Box" for December, I humbly submit this letter.

I don't think that "Horatio," your correspondent, contacted many people in Wyoming because of his hasty conclusions as to the intelligence and literacy of the people.

Let me quote from the *World Book Encyclopedia*, Volume 18: "The success of the state educational system is demonstrated by the fact that Wyoming has one of the highest literacy rates in the U. S. The Selective Service Commission reported to Congress in 1943 that, of one million men rejected for military service in World War II because of illiteracy, not one was from Wyoming." Also: "Library service is available to 99 per cent of the people of Wyoming."

Personally, I know of T. S. Eliot, and I'm thoroughly acquainted with the works of Thomas Mann, with the *Saturday Review of Literature*, the New York Times Book Review Section, and many other books and magazines that "Horatio" might consider indispensable.

If "Horatio" ever drops around Evanston (one of the "major cities" of Wyoming), I wish he would call on me. I'd like to meet him, and if he has some good books I'll probably buy some.

FRANK HAROLD WIRIG

Evanston, Wyo.

SIR: "Horatio," in the December *MERCURY*, has worked himself into quite a dither. This character wants to cede Wyoming to Canada, or just to give it away. Let me tell you what he is mad about. Not one person in Wyoming, he says, has he met who has heard of T. S. Eliot or read *The Magic Mountain*. Moreover, the demand for the *Nation*, the *Saturday Review of Literature* and the *Yale Review* is practically nil. And Mercy! Not one Wyomingite subscribes to an English paper!

Perhaps "Horatio," who seems to be some sort of traveling book-salesman, finds it hard to make a living among a sturdy people who have the independence to make their own selection when it comes to recreation, entertainment or education. I suggest that he add a few comic books to his list. They're not so bad as the clucking against them would indicate.

Before he cedes the state to Canada because of cultural deficiencies may I suggest that he consider the value of its irrigated farms, its cattle, sheep, coal, oil, silver, gold, iron, copper and bentonite; to say nothing of potential waterpower.

And let him stroll through the University of Wyoming at Laramie; he may run across a few natives who can read and write.

Of course he is only kidding.

VICTOR GEOFFRION

Forest Hills, N. Y.

SIR: Believe it or not, Horatio, I, a Wyomingite, read your letter in the December issue of the *MERCURY*, in which you suggested that Wyoming be ceded to Canada in exchange for Toronto or Quebec, or just given away free, because you have never met a fellow-citizen of mine who had read *The Magic Mountain*, the *Nation*, the *Saturday Review of Literature* or the *Yale Review*.

It must be baffling to you why a barbarian Wyomingite happens to subscribe to this fine magazine, but it's the truth, and I didn't mistake it for a comic book either. I read the *MERCURY* because I enjoy its fine range of information, and not to make a favorable impression on people. . . .

Your range of observations and analysis is remarkable for one person. I'm sure you should stop trying to sell books and open up a one-man public opinion poll. But until you do, you read what you like and let us in Wyoming read what we like, such as the Holy Bible.

BILL K. PATE

Sheridan, Wyo.

SOME FACTS ABOUT BOB JONES UNIVERSITY

SIR: My attention has been called to an article by Mr. William Hines which appeared in the December 1948 issue of *THE AMERICAN MERCURY*, the title of which is "The Fresh-Water Colleges." I note with interest Mr. Hines' statement concerning Bob Jones University, of which I am the founder, though, by the way, I did not, as Mr. Hines says, name the institution for myself. I hope Mr. Hines in his present position as Assistant Chief of News in the Department of the Army will be more accurate in his releases concerning the Army than he is concerning the institution of which I happen to be the founder.

Many of your readers know that I am not what is generally known as an itinerant tent evangelist. I have conducted very few religious services in tents. I have, however, been out in the evangelistic field for a great many years; and my work has taken me to all the states and to many foreign countries. It so happens that I have preached to more people face to face than any other living man and, therefore, have a pretty good idea of what is going on throughout the religious world.

In my wide experience, I have found that there is an idea in the minds of a great many people, and it seems to be in the mind of Mr. Hines, that a man cannot believe in what is usually called the "old-time religion" unless he has dirty fingernails, a greasy nose, baggy pants, and refuses to shine his shoes. I have found many thousands of young people in the best families in many parts of the world who are conservative in their religious

views and who are also greatly interested in the fine arts. They wish, however, to pursue their studies in the fine arts in a Christian atmosphere rather than a bohemian atmosphere; so I decided to found a conservative Christian school with high academic standards and offer music, speech and art without any additional cost above academic tuition. As far as I know, we are the only liberal arts educational institution in America that does this.

We have matriculated this year more than 2700 young people that come from practically every state and 25 foreign countries. Bob Jones University, when it was Bob Jones College and located in Cleveland, Tennessee, had every year more students from New York and Massachusetts than it had from Tennessee. We have this year 233 students from Pennsylvania and 227 students from Michigan and 77 from California and 199 from Illinois. So when you say that Bob Jones University is a "hillbilly" school and imply that it has a special appeal to just mountaineers of the South, you cause a smile to come over the faces of our cultured students and other friends who know the cultural emphasis of this Christian institution.

You might be interested to know that in our institution we have no "hillbilly" music and no jazz of any kind. Our emphasis is on classical music. In our speech department, the only plays that we give are Shakespearean plays.

You might be interested to know that among the approximately one hundred members of our Board of Trustees are a governor, a former governor, one United States Senator, one former United States Senator, two well known Congressmen, two state Superintendents of Education, a former state Superintendent of Education, a prominent Canadian minister of the Gospel, a prominent well known Premier of a Canadian province, and a number of representative ministers and laymen in all sections of America.

This is the second time your AMERICAN MERCURY has spoken contemptuously of our

educational institution, though the first time you did not use the name of the school. Now, if you would like to know something about the cultural emphasis of the institution, and if you have a fair-minded reporter connected with your staff, you might send him down here and get first-hand information about the type institution that Mr. Hines calls a "hillbilly" school.

Mr. Hines, who speaks of Bob Jones University as a "hillbilly" institution, ought to attend some of the operas and dramatic programs in our auditorium, which is probably one of the best-equipped and most attractive auditoriums on any university campus in America. He should be here next week when our students present *Il Trovatore* with five well-known singers, three of whom are Metropolitan Opera stars, taking the leads.

BOB JONES

Greenville, S. C.

SIR: In kindly forwarding me a copy of the letter reproduced above, Dr. Jones included a private communiqué in which he took me additionally to task, and for good measure stuffed into the envelope a spate of literature apparently designed to convince me that Bob Jones University is the Koh-i-noor in the nation's educational diadem. I regret that Dr. Jones should have spent \$.33 for postage with so little result.

Many and detailed are Dr. Jones' denunciations of me and my statements. But they remain denunciations, and not refutations. Let us examine them one by one.

(1) That Dr. Jones did not name the college after himself. This is not in line with the information I have obtained from several independent sources.

(2) That "itinerant tent preacher" is an inaccurate description of Dr. Jones. In the letter above he says he has conducted *very few* services in tents. But how many medals of honor does a man have to earn before he qualifies as a hero, or how many two-dollar bills a woman before she is labeled a prostitute? That Dr. Jones (by his own admission) has preached in tents and that he

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has spread the Word in almost all states would seem to justify both the adjective "itinerant" and the descriptive term "tent preacher."

(3) That I appear to believe that Fundamentalists as a group are unwashed and unlettered. It would be neither justifiable nor stylish for me to admit to a belief so smacking of religious intolerance. It does seem to be a fact, nevertheless, that Fundamentalism is more often met in rural than in urban districts.

(4) The implication that I favor a "bohemian" atmosphere for college undergraduates. This was not implied in my article; most fresh-water colleges (most emphatically including Guilford) are about as bohemian as ham hocks and turnip greens.

(5) That 2700 students now attend BJU and that they come from nearly every state. This serves to bolster my point that many prewar small colleges have grown far beyond their optimum size. Is there not the possibility in BJU's phenomenal growth that many students are there because they were unable to gain admittance to the Harvards and the Columbias — yes, and the Guilfords — of the nation? I note between Dr. Jones' figures and mine an increase of 35 per cent in the student body. Where did the vitally needed additional staff and faculty come from? Out from under tarpaulin, undoubtedly.

(6) That it is of interest (and presumably of significance) that some prominent men are on the BJU Board of Trustees. This is hardly more surprising than that virtually every educational institution in the country has its Front Man (or Men) — like E. R. Stettinius, Jr., "rector" of the University of Virginia.

(7) That **THE AMERICAN MERCURY** has spoken contemptuously of BJU on two occasions. Solely because I should like to read the other reference, would it be possible to get an exact citation?

(8) That I lack fair-mindedness. My first contact with the Bob Jones College-University was early in my tenure as a feature writer for the Chattanooga (Tenn.) *Times*. What with the feudin' Tomlinsons, the Church of God and the generally high level

of uproariousness in Cleveland I had repeated additional opportunity to form unemotional opinions of the then Bob Jones College. In preparing the December article I went to considerable pains to check with informed persons for the continuing validity of my views and the facts at my disposal. If by "fair-minded" Dr. Jones means someone who will agree with his statement (in his letter to me) that "it is a school that probably puts more emphasis on culture than any other educational institution in America," perhaps the editors of THE AMERICAN MERCURY had better find such a person and put him on the next train to Greenville, S. C.

WILLIAM HINES

Arlington, Va.

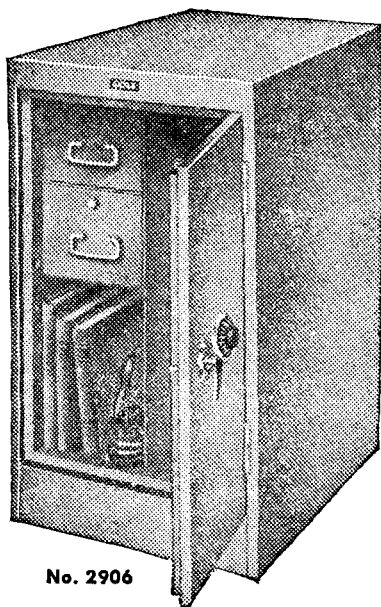
SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

SIR: In the December MERCURY Irving Brant [see "Church and State in America"] says that the United States Supreme Court ruled the teaching of religious classes in the public schools of Springfield, Illinois, unconstitutional. Actually, the case arose in the public schools of Champaign, Illinois, not Springfield. Mrs. Vashti McCollum, the plaintiff in the case, lived in Champaign and her husband taught at the University of Illinois. The case reached the Illinois Supreme Court, which meets at Springfield, the state capital.

The state Supreme Court upheld the teaching of religion in the public schools of Champaign. It did this in spite of Article VIII, Section 3, of the Illinois Constitution, which states that no "school district shall ever make any appropriation or pay from any public fund whatever anything in aid of any church or sectarian purpose or to help support or sustain any school controlled by any church or sectarian denomination whatever." How the honorable judges of the Illinois Supreme Court could read constitutionality into the Champaign practice, by means of the article just quoted, is quite a puzzle.

LYOYD L. HARGIS

Mount Pulaski, Ill.



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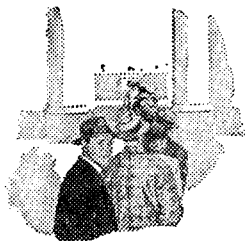
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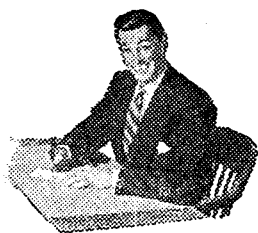
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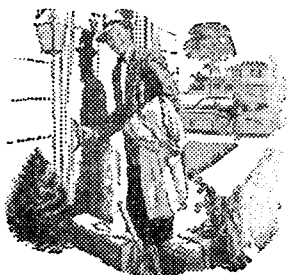


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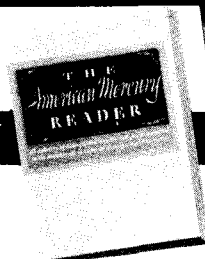
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