

Wolfe's *oeuvre* remains severely flawed. Though his books are at times charming and mesmerizing, to read them in sequence is, ultimately, to find them childish and tiresome in the extreme. There will always, perhaps, be those who fervently disagree: in death as in life, Wolfe is notorious for his ability to polarize readers. (Donald tells us of a *Saturday Review of Literature* poll conducted in 1935, in which *Of Time and the River* received the greatest

number of votes for both best and worst novel of the year.) Besides, whatever the course of his literary reputation, one has the feeling that the legend of his life is here to stay, a romantic, compelling, strangely resonant chapter in the annals of American literary folklore. David Herbert Donald, in *Look Homeward*, has chronicled the life behind this legend—in all its craziness, futility, and chaos—with admirable intelligence and equipoise. □

UNDERSTANDING TOSCANINI: HOW HE BECAME AN AMERICAN CULTURE-GOD AND HELPED CREATE A NEW AUDIENCE FOR OLD MUSIC

Joseph Horowitz/Alfred A. Knopf/\$30.00

R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

For over one hundred years or so it has been this Republic's defect not to be 1500 years older, with ancient families of noble lineage, hoary and daunting traditions, and all the ruins seen in lands long inhabited by sophisticated cultures. In Rome there live families that go back to the time of the Caesars and do little else. In Paris there are still streets dating from the Middle Ages. Tourists take pictures of them. In America what past remains preservable goes back only a couple of centuries and has almost no bearing on the present. Nothing can be done about this lamentable defect.

But that does not stop the likes of Joseph Horowitz, a music critic, from being very cross about America's comparative callowness. In *Understanding Toscanini* he has gathered up fascinating pieces of information about the legendary conductor of the New York Philharmonic and the NBC symphony. He has also lugged in illuminating details about the growth of pioneering American orchestras, American audiences, and the amazing evolution of broadcasting, recording, music composition and criticism. But America is not Paris, and Mr. Horowitz cannot get over it. The greenness of America is for many otherwise intelligent minds, both here and over there, a source of schizophrenia, which is a serious mental illness.

Thus the patient writes: "More than Europeans, Americans abhor elitism and apply democratic values with broad strokes. In the realm of music, the nineteenth-century rise of the public concert and commercialization of opera here proceeded without court or state subsidies—a circumstance

favoring both personal enterprise and marketplace exigencies." Alas, this was unfortunate, for the resulting "cult of personality, dragging high culture downward, has for over a century more dramatically articulated the musical scene here than abroad." I am not sure that it has, and Mr. Horowitz does not try to convince me. I wish he had. In fact I wish he had rewritten that sentence. A man of Mr. Horowitz's presumed good taste would have rewritten it as surely as he would have paused to demonstrate the Europeans' superiority at promoting (I dare not say selling) serious music.

All Mr. Horowitz does demonstrate is that media moguls, impresarios, and soap salesmen, along with Toscanini, made large amounts of money by coaxing ordinary Americans into orchestra halls. For over 400 gruesome pages Mr. Horowitz grinds his ax. His book grows out of a *Music Journal* article written nine years ago to provoke Toscanini-lovers. It should have remained an essay. As a book it is incondit: dis-



R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr. is editor-in-chief of *The American Spectator*.

jointed and cruelly repetitive. It contains solecisms such as "the hoi polloi," misinformation such as "Antonino Rocca, and other Italo-American fighters," and arguments that would not persuade a self-professed cat's-paw. At one point, to argue one or another variation of his thesis, which is the old canard about the corrupting process of the dollar, Mr. Horowitz insists that Toscanini, the son of a Parmesan tailor, educated and raised in Italy, is typically American; and he goes on to scorn Toscanini's tireless skirt-chasing. Of course Toscanini's passion for the fair sex was distinctly Mediterranean. Any American of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s who pursued women with Toscanini's ardent inveteracy would have been incarcerated as a sex maniac. Mr. Horowitz, however, disapproves of lechery and so he chalks it up to Toscanini's being so very American.

Reality cannot illuminate Mr. Horowitz's gloomy anti-American thesis or restrain him from undercutting himself. He is angry at Toscanini for his superiority. He is angry at the middle class for its mediocrity. He reproaches Toscanini for playing the masters rather than the moderns. Nonetheless, he offers us no reasons why Toscanini should have, and he is disappointingly coy about identifying the moderns. Finally, he seems to depreciate even the masters, and then only because in past decades middle-class audiences whooped it up for them.

Of course, serious music is indeed in sorrier condition today than it was in Toscanini's time, and bearing in mind that Mr. Horowitz is a respected critic in the field I cannot stifle the suspicion that his impossible standards have something to do with the decline. When Toscanini was in his heyday *Life* magazine claimed that he was as famous as Joe DiMaggio. Was this all that bad? Serious art has nothing like this kind of presence in middle-class America today. Mr. Horowitz cannot establish a connection between Toscanini's career and the decline of serious music in America. To blame the decline on an obviously successful conductor from the past rather than the conductors, composers, critics, and impresarios of the present is an intellectually slovenly exercise in advancing an unproved hypothesis.

Mr. Horowitz obviously appreciates serious music and possesses an enormous amount of knowledge about it. His problem is that he is a party to that camorra of shanty intellectuals who believe that to be serious about art, or for that matter about life, one has to be painful on the subject. Hence, he explains art and life in America by resorting to such gloomy theoreticians as the

late Dwight Macdonald, a radical journalist, and the nonsensical German Marxist, T. W. Adorno, a New Left sage whose work I had thought was interred with his unhappy bones. Both of these charlatans were assiduous promoters of the idea that art must cause painful cerebrations after which the truly enlightened discover that everything, particularly in America, is a scam. The morbidity that afflicts so many of today's shanty intelligentsia, destroying their relish for art and turning *joie de vivre* into endless sneers, can be traced to such lugubrious charlatans as Macdonald and Dr. Adorno.

Actually life is full of wonders. Think of Dr. Adorno's last days. In 1969 *Der Spiegel* caught a glimpse of the old boy at Frankfurt University during a demonstration of "planned tenderness" in which three revolutionary cuties from the "Basisgruppe Soziologie" circled the sixty-five-year-old Professor Adorno while he lectured, "at first waving their bouquets of flowers [!], then kissing him, exposing their breasts, and confronting him with erotic pantomime. Professor Adorno, who had called in the police last semester when 76 student radicals occupied his Institute for Social Research, tried to protect himself with his briefcase . . ." Soon thereafter Dr. Adorno departed for his Marxist happy hunting grounds.

I do not know what provoked these naughty frauleins, but if Dr. Adorno filled lecture halls with the intolerable nonsense that he wrote in his tracts, I cannot fault them for trying to give him a rise. "A successful [art]work," Mr. Horowitz quotes Adorno as having written, "is not one which resolves objective contradictions in spurious harmony, but one which expresses the idea of harmony negatively by embodying the contradictions, pure and uncompromised, in its innermost structure." Had Mr. Horowitz read these words and become a streaker I would understand. That he read them and wrote a book based on the author's insights puts him beyond sympathy.

There are unhappy souls who are incapable of wonder. They have to have it all explained to them, and the more abstruse the theory the more convincing they assume it must be. Modern art has fallen into the paws of theorists, who, like Adorno, are mostly frauds. They may not be able to write a minuet that anyone would listen to tomorrow, but they are fluent in devising theories of aleatoric dissonance bound to take in a man like Mr. Horowitz. The mystery is why Mr. Horowitz needs theory, and why a man so concerned about being taken in by Toscanini's barkers would allow himself to be taken in by the New Left, nearly two decades after it blew up. □

**WILL IT LIBERATE?
QUESTIONS ABOUT LIBERATION THEOLOGY**
Michael Novak/Paulist Press/\$14.95

John R. Dunlap

We give the name of socialism to a political regime in which the ownership of the means of production is removed from individuals and handed over to higher institutions whose concern is the higher good.

—Juan Luis Segundo, S.J.

Capitalism is the exploitation of man by man; socialism is the reverse.—Polish joke

Michael Novak dates the emergence of liberation theology with the second meeting of CELAM (the Latin American Episcopal Conference) at Medellin, Colombia, in 1968. The assembled Catholic bishops issued a document (oddly tinged with Marxian rhetoric) which decried the conditions of the poor in Latin America and called for drastic public policy changes. But it was a few more years before the fire sparked by the Medellin document had spread among clerics throughout the continent.

In 1971 Gustavo Gutierrez, a Peruvian priest commonly taken to be the father of the movement, published his *Theology of Liberation*, a book inspired by "Marxian analysis." The following year, in Santiago, Chile, a group calling themselves "Christians for Socialism," which had been organized under the tutelage of Fidel Castro, met at their first convention "to probe more deeply into the concrete experiences of Christians who are actively involved in the revolution to liberate Latin America." The draft of their charter was sewn with a less-than-concrete jargon familiar to students of modern totalitarianism:

Insofar as operational politics is concerned, the very notion of "revolutionary consciousness" will include as an intrinsic component the notion of power being held by the people—the latter being led by the proletariat—and of effectiveness as an indispensable element in the gradual attainment of power. This entails the elimination of any and every kind of idealism in visualizing the "Christian element," because our focus is concentrated on the historical terrain of the actual revolutionary struggle.

Despite an almost instant condemnation of "Christians for Socialism" by the Chilean bishops, the group's ideas

John R. Dunlap teaches English at Santa Clara University.

continued to spread, flaming up in the writings of the new liberation theologians.

After Gutierrez, the most prominent liberation pioneers included the Uruguayan Juan Luis Segundo (*Theology for Artisans of a New Humanity*), the Argentine Enrique Dussel (*History and Theology of Liberation*), the Brazilian Hugo Assmann (*Theology for a Nomad Church*), the Mexican Jose Miranda (*Communism in the Bible*). In Fr. Segundo's estimation, the various forms of liberation theology have one thing in common: "the view that man, on a political as well as an individual basis, [should] construct the Kingdom of God within history now." But Michael Novak notes a few other items they have in common: a pervasive vagueness and abstraction; an uncritical adoption of Marxian predilections; a primitive notion of "capitalism"; a displacement of empirical issues "from the realm of practical reason to the realm of pure definitional logic."

In *Will It Liberate?*—a tightly organized collection of eleven essays, seven of which are new for this book—Novak frames a series of questions whose effect is to expose these and other obscurities in liberation theology. Novak's principal concession to the liberation theologians is that economic conditions in Latin America are absurd and appalling: the *favelas* and the *barrios* exist, sprawled out from the extravagance of well-heeled landholders and corrupt bureaucracies. For Novak, however, the moral imperative is to discover concrete ways for Latin America "to promote economic activism among its impoverished millions." His method of advancing that imperative is to counter the ideological contentions of the liberationists with empirical observations.

Fr. Gutierrez, for example, declaims against "capitalism," the standard devil-term of the liberation theologians. Yet in his native Peru, the empirical reality (common to Latin America) is that state regulation strangles the economic liberties of the lower "classes." There is no easy access to credit, no easy entrance into closed markets, no easy way to incorporate small businesses, no tax relief for local capital investment. There are more than two million street vendors, artisans, and small manufacturers who must work "informally" (that is, illegally) because they cannot cut through the red tape of the Peruvian government; almost all (95 percent) of Lima's public transportation (buses and taxis) is "informal,"

and 60 percent of Lima's food is distributed "informally." It takes from seven to fourteen years to acquire government authorization to build a home; and to form a legal corporation, the cost in bribes and fees is five times the average worker's annual earnings. That's capitalism?

Against liberation theology, Novak posits in nuanced detail a "creation theology," which acknowledges human wit and inventiveness as the real source of economic value and which promises not to bring the Kingdom of God on earth but "only to press the imperatives of that Kingdom—truth, love, justice, liberty and beauty—into daily life as yeast in stubborn dough." In Novak's theology, Latin America does not need utopian schemes; it needs the painstaking creation of concrete institutions, legal and social, to release the creative energies of the poor.

Novak has taken on an awkward chore: to engage in argument those who, to the extent they take their Marxism seriously, are inclined to reject argument itself as "bourgeois intellectualism." But how seriously do they take their Marxism?

The assumption is often stated or implied among critics of liberation theology that its proponents are motivated first by their Christianity and that "Marxian analysis" is merely a device they use to frame their propositions regarding social matters. John Paul II and Cardinal Ratzinger have

There is a small Catholic college in the mountains of Southern California unlike anything in your experience.

Its students don't read textbooks or take notes on lectures. They delight in vigorous and rational arguments with each other and with their teachers.

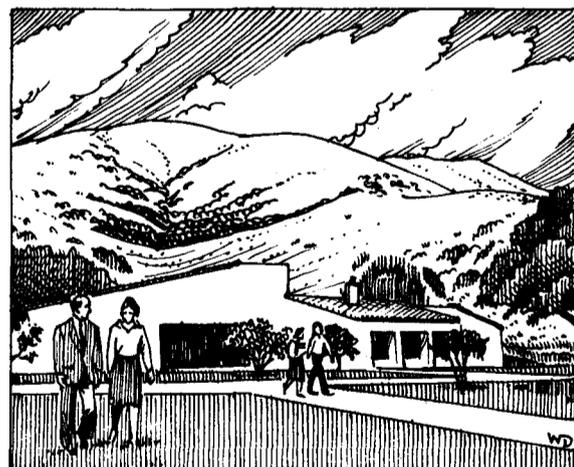
Many of the teachers you know by name. Most of them are dead. Newman, Einstein, Dante, Kant, Aristotle, Homer, and the College patron, St. Thomas Aquinas, are among the permanent faculty.

With the help of their tutors, students at Thomas Aquinas College read the original works of these teachers. Works that are difficult but rewarding. They are the books that made our civilization. They are the best.

Because the students at Thomas Aquinas College study the best, their minds grow free and strong. Like their teachers, they demand the *whys* of life. As they find them, the chilling fog of skepticism lifts. And the Catholic tradition emerges as the solid ground on which the buildings of truth and happiness are erected.

You can be part of this exhilarating community for four years. They may be the four most precious years of your life.

For information or to arrange a visit, CALL TOLL FREE from the U.S. outside California: **1-800-634-9797**. From California and Canada: (805) 525-4417.



Or write: Thomas J. Susanka
Director of Admissions
Box 104

THOMAS AQUINAS COLLEGE
10000 North Ojai Road
Santa Paula, CA 93060

Financial aid program • Bachelor of Arts degree
Fully accredited, Western Association of Schools & Colleges
Coeducational