

The newly confirmed may call
for Baptismal certificates
at 107 Cavanaugh, Fr. Fagan.

University of Notre Dame
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Deceased: Abbot Alcuin
Deitsch, O.S.B. . Sp. Ints.2.
(Jim Aoki Fund now at \$107.)

Ring The Bell For Experience?

That much-abused word, "experience," is oftentimes appealed to as an escapist norm by which the uninitiate try to justify what is otherwise unjustifiable. It should be hard for anyone who has the beginning of reason to laugh with anyone who laughs at God, to condone what the Church condemns as violations of the Ten Commandments, to criticize the Index of Forbidden Books as an arbitrary restriction on human freedom.

Because undiscriminating underclassmen are suckers for best sellers and are apt to judge books by their garish jackets or by the publicity they receive, not by the principles they involve, the Bulletin suggests that neophyte literators consult competent English professors, who, unlike professors at secular universities, have here a moral environment and tradition which is Catholic, both in spirit and in practice.

Some years ago a former editor of the Bulletin received a letter from a student in a (European) State University. It read in part: "The Professor of English Literature at this University has been giving a course in modern authors. Since this course is supposed to be of university calibre, the professor feels that criticism of the authors should enter largely into his treatment. Up to the present his policy has been to criticise not only the literary merits of the writers but also their moral and immoral tendencies, because, claims the professor, the two forms of criticism cannot be dissociated. . .

"Some students, however, have taken issue with this belief and maintain that the class in English Literature should not be made a class in Moral Theology. That is the rub. Our Professor would like to have your opinion on this matter. Is he to continue his policy of pointing out and condemning immoral tendencies in certain present-day writers or is he to criticize solely literary achievement?"

The answer to that inquiry went something like this. . . Happy the class whose professor knows that literature and life cannot be separated, that the laws of life include the laws of literature! It is a point of view all too uncommon nowadays. . . The passion for free speech, free press, free thought, has been carried to absurd lengths; as a result, we have suffered serious damage to our individual and social life. Morals have been corrupted, loyalties undermined, culture retarded.

What would you think of a professor of medicine, continues the reply, who would expose his pupils to contagious diseases without any warning against the contagion, with no prophylaxis against the exposure? Should a professor of chemistry turn his laboratory section over to experimentation with explosives without informing his charges of the nature of the materials he furnishes them? Civil laws are explicit in requiring pharmacists to mark poisons with distinctive labels.

Is the soul less important than the body? Is the undermining of morals a minor thing compared with the loss of an eye. Our Lord warned: "Be not afraid of them that kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. . . Fear ye him who after he hath killed hath power to cast into Hell."

Professors of English Literature in these days have a serious obligation before God. Youth is impressionable. Young minds are easily soiled. AND GOD GIVES US ONLY ONE MIND. The late Father Cavanaugh, former president of Notre Dame, once said: "You cannot read an author for his style without absorbing some of his philosophy." He is also the one who quipped: "Best sellers are too often the best smellers."

The Index and the general decree which forbids books dangerous to faith and morals show us that the Church knows what harm comes of indiscriminate reading. A class in English Literature of today that ignores the principles of Moral Theology entails a responsibility which we would not care to face at the Last Judgment. . . And there is a Last Judgment!