

ORACLE

The free-thinking unfanfapaperiodical.

"I thank thee, Lord,
that I am not as other men."

Number One -- February, 1948.

APA

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ORACLE, the free-thinking unfanfapaperiodical of which this is the first issue, is dedicated to the purpose of spreading happiness over all the Earth, wherever the mailings of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association may find their way. ORACLE is a Saturnine publication from C. B. Stevenson of 521 E. Monroe, Phoenix, Ariz., and is intended to appear at more or less quarterly intervals. This is for FAPA only and is therefore priceless -- the public be damned! I make free herein to address by their first names or nicknames some persons with whom I have had no previous communication. Complaints at this practice will be met with suitable apologies; for those minded to retaliate, I answer to Burton, Burt, Steve, Stevie, or practically any tag not positively insulting. ("Fan" is.)

Pronunciamento.

It seems that I'm obliged to kick in with at least eight pages of some sort of stuff if I'm to remain in FAPA. This suits me well enough; I didn't come in for a free ride, and my silence so far has been a matter of circumstances. The Spring 47 mailing was almost due at the time I joined and I didn't consider trying to contribute to it; I had no duplicating equipment at that time anyhow. When it actually did appear, something over two months late (and this was my first definite information that FAPA was still alive and active and that I was officially a member of it), the following deadline was too near at hand to make it practicable for me to attempt to publish anything on my newly acquired and still unfamiliar duplicator. (I was new to FAPA then, you see, and I had a quaint idea that a deadline was a time when all publications had to be in so that they could be mailed out during the next few days.) When the Summer 47 mailing actually did appear, some two months after the constitutional date, it seemed rather probable from the proposals up for vote and what had been said about them that the Fall 47 mailing would be scheduled for November. And but for the hyper-efficiency of our Mr. Burbee and his colleagues it would have been, in which case I'd have tried to have something in it. As it is, I'm coming through only on the fourth mailing of my membership and my contribution for the year probably won't total much above the eight-page minimum. If that fact moves you to any jeremiads after you've inspected this sample, it would be fitting to address them to the past and present FAPA administrations.

Since I don't know what, if anything, this publication may develop into, or whether it may at any time be supplanted by another with a different title and possibly a different slant, any statements I make about it now must be extremely tentative. I think I shall carry on in FAPA for awhile at least, either with this or some other publication, on a small scale and probably on a regular quarterly basis. I'm not overwhelmingly impressed with the current FAPA-as-a-whole, nor am I much in sympathy with its prevailing geist, but I'm enough interested in what a few members have to say to want to retain membership for the present. And as long as I'm interested enough to read any sizable part of the mailings I'll have things to say, in reply or on my own initiative, likely to the extent of well over eight pages per annum. That would be the case even if there were no minimum activity requirement. It seems too early for any definite judgment on the organization anyhow, since it is pronouncedly in a state of transition. Possibly there will be a constant turnover of membership so long as this activity requirement is maintained. That seems both desirable and fair; 4500 words or so a year isn't a colossal contribution from anyone at all interested.

It is fairly safe to predict that my FAPA publications will be generally informal and quasi-impromptu. Further, I make no secret of the fact that I don't expect to labor very strenuously at FAPA publishing. I see nothing unethical about that; in any case my contributions could hardly be less weighty than those of a number of other members. Amateur publishing is a lot of work and trouble, and any such publication can be justified only to the extent that one feels he is getting recompensed for it in one way or another. I have plenty of

interests already not to need new ways of killing time, and will put into FAPA only about what it seems worth to me.

I've read fantasy, science fiction in particular, for a good many years off and on, but more and more critically as time goes on. I still get a fair amount of entertainment out of the better s-f; as much as anything else, though, I read it these days for its sociological content, and somewhat for the technological ideas and the assorted quasi-scientific speculations and philosophical excursions some of its authors indulge in. It is these sorts of things I am primarily interested in discussing in FAPA, but in the present-day FAPA they seem to have only a limited and rather dubious place. I suppose I'll have to conform somewhat by devoting some occasional space to the trivialities that seem to be the principal desideratum in FAPA-today, but of course I'll do it on my own terms. I am not interested in winning any popularity contests.

For all my long interest in the fantasy field I am not a fan, in the generic sense in which fanry quite properly uses the term, and the prospects of my ever becoming one seem to be slightly less than nil. It is just conceivable that had I come into contact with the fan world in my younger and less critical days, I might have been taken in to some extent, for a time at least. On the other hand, I assay high in contrariness, and it is at least equally probable that the contact would have served to cure me speedily of what few fannish leanings I had-- even as has been the case since I came into contact with fanry a year and a half ago.

FAPA appealed to me as a lovely idea when I first learned of it; here, I fancied, was an arrangement almost ideally suited to serve some of those functions which most of the fan magazines of general circulation so signally default-- to provide a medium for such serious high-toned intelligent discussions of subjects pertaining to fantasy as might be expected of a choice, upper-crust, crème de la crème collection of the finest of the fine minds which are continually being assumed by the readers of s-f to be possessed by the readers of s-f. The sort of thing that sometimes appears in Brass Tacks in its better and more serious moments (and of which there were traces in Ackerman's VoM and occasionally in the letter columns of Elsner's publications)-- but with the franker, more personal, more thorough and elaborate treatment impracticable in a pro magazine but which would be quite natural and feasible in an APA set-up.

So I get in and what do I find instead? Mainly I find large gobs of fannism on every hand-- considerable of it fannism at its most drivish. I find this fine nobly-conceived organization dominated by fans, constituted and maintained so as to consist almost exclusively of fans, permeated by and concerned almost exclusively with fannish preoccupations. I find that the small element of the sort of stuff I was looking for actually present in FAPA-today (a large part of it contained in Speer's publications, Stanley's and Davis's contributions, Rothman's stuff and occasional items from a few others) viewed with reserve or disapproval by the common herd as too pretentious, high-hat, or cerebral-- while an idea apparently is current that FAPA stuff ought to be a slightly less formal variety of the same preposterous chaff that largely fills the general circulation fan magazines, only even more trivial and worthless because in FAPA your circulation is assured no matter how bad you get. (Up to the point where most of the membership deserts to escape the deluge of inanity.) And I find these

worthies I've named and others of comparable caliber largely dissipating their talents in answering or discussing the amorphous mess of guff with which they are surrounded, or in otherwise catering to the FAPAgeist. (Rothman, however, in a splendid display of mind over matter, largely succeeds in ignoring his environment; when he does feel it necessary to address the membership-at-large he talks in something that sounds like Basic English or primer-style. And Davis seems to vacillate between noble restraint and frank impatience.) I further find these same fine intellects thoroughly oriented into fannish orbits and indoctrinated with the religion of the Brotherhood of Fans, complacent about FAPA's fannish constituency -- and yet somehow vaguely worried about the present low state of the Association and wondering futilely just why FAPA's erstwhile better brains are contributing nothing or deserting in droves.

The difficulty is simple and readily found, mon petits: the set-up simply rebuffs the sort of minds that could produce the stuff you want. Fans, and those with the type of mentality to be attracted to fannism, by reason of the psychological limitations that make them fans or potential fans, are generally not outstandingly capable of high-level neural functioning -- particularly in regard to subjects connected with fantasy and s-f; their attitudes and orientations toward these areas of discourse are too rigidly channeled to permit very judicious or discriminating discussion.

A tight little self-satisfied microcosm with narrow in-pressing horizons.

This much I will concede: Even as now constituted FAPA should offer almost enough to anyone seriously interested in discussing matters relating to fantasy to warrant the requisite minimum of participation on a casual and unenthusiastic level, if one's circumstances permit such participation; just about that and no more. Not because very much of it is of much worth but simply because it is the only thing of the sort around, and because it is the only thing that might conceivably develop into an association such as is to be desired, dim as the prospect seems. (Possibly we'd better ignore the distressing question whether there are enough FAPAns around who are interested in Higher Things to make any such salvage possible.) That's why I'm here. Also there are minor unlooked-for recompenses; some of FAPA's better stuff is that which has almost nothing to do with fantasy. And for those with slightly morbid inclinations, some of the fans are psychologically interesting because of their fannism.

I don't mean at all that I'm interested only in the writings of those FAPAns enumerated; I simply picked out those examples as contributors since my arrival of stuff most characteristic of what I hoped for in FAPA -- which is not quite the only sort of stuff that is both good and fitting. There are several others I regard highly, and only a handful have definitely established themselves with me as unlikely ever to have anything to say worth listening to. But so very few of any real stature among so many.

I suppose I'd better make one point clear. I am also a member of the Vanguard Amateur Press Association, and a considerably more enthusiastic Vanguardif than FAPAn. And there has been in some quarters a quite unaccountable tendency to institute comparisons between the two groups, to suggest that they are somehow in competition with each other -- even one fantastic suggestion for combining the two groups, despite their radically different character and function as wholes. There is a slight zone of overlapping interests between one small ele-

ment of FAPA and some of Vanguard -- just sufficient to make it possible for those with interests centering on that common ground to publish bi-APA-ly stuff that will not as a whole be too glaringly out of place in either group, provided the bi-APAn writes practically all of it himself or takes it in from other bi-APAn writers.

All right. For the record, I'm not proposing that FAPA be transformed into another Vanguard, even a Vanguard centering (unlike the existing one) around fantasy. I am not, in fact, making any definite proposals at all. I simply observe that FAPA is in an unhealthy condition, and diagnose its ailment as a consequence of a too close association with fanry, without prescribing for that ailment. I would hope that if any constitutional changes are made (and they might not be at all necessary), some practical alternative to Vanguard's authoritarian system of selecting members can be worked out. (Though for Vanguard's quite different purposes I don't see any such alternative.) All I care to suggest at present is that FAPA's braintrust (what's left of it) is looking in the wrong place for the sort of membership material it wants, and that there might be some point in actively going after likely prospects rather than complacently sitting back and waiting for them to bull their way through FAPA's almost impregnable defence of obscurity. I would also suggest consideration of the point that FAPA's present "credential" requirements for admittance can be at least as effective in keeping out desirables as undesirables -- more so, from the empirical evidence.

I'm inclined to the theory that fans are born rather than made -- or to be more accurate, I suspect that the necessary uncritical and aristotelian orientations are almost invariably acquired very early in life. I don't contend that fannism is necessarily incurable, but I think it more promising to concentrate on those who have never been seriously infected with it. Fortunately there are such, and some of them even manage to find their way into FAPA. Let us hope for more such individuals -- with strong enough stomachs to manage to stay in once they get in.

You'll be happy to hear that I shall probably have more to say in the future about this quaint phenomenon of fannism. There are quite a number of more elevating and worthwhile subjects around, but one can't wholly ignore one's environment, particularly so odorous a one. And I must confess a certain clinical interest in the reactions of the hive to my proddings, a motivation I presumably share to some extent with Messrs. Burbee and Laney.

Happy buzzing, little ones; you may be putting up with me for a long time to come.

Fannism will ruin you, young man. Repent while there is yet time.

filler

"... Children, like the patients /schizophrenics/, love to make up a sort of neoplastic language of their own, having meanings known only to themselves or their immediate circle. . . ."

---William A. White, requoted from Science and Sanity.

^{T H E}
/ This space is reserved for a title which
I haven't as yet thought of. What follows
is comments on the recent FAPA mailings,
the last first, because I don't know how
much time I'll have for the earlier ones.7
E L

41st FAPA mailing, Fall 1947. Physically a pretty hefty mailing, considering its abruptness -- and after all, bulk is what counts in FAPA, isn't it?

PLENUM 7: A lovely job of reporting, so far as one can judge who wasn't there. Hell, a lovely job anyway, even if someone should disagree with its facts or opinions. Not commentable, but appreciated anyhow.

HORIZONS 32: Your opinions on the science fiction magazines are far more discriminating and thoughtful than some other, similarly titled ones that appeared earlier, Harry. /-/ I've been inclined to rate Startling several notches lower than TWS, partly because I have a decided prejudice in favor of short stories rather than long ones, but mainly because Startling has long catered more to juveniles and bang-bang hack-lovers. The distinction has not been sharp or absolutely consistent, though, and I don't know whether it is going to be maintained at all. But even yet, of course, a really first-rate story is a distinct rarity in either; reasonably good entertainment seems to be the highest goal. /-/ "Jerry Was a Man" is obviously more in the Anson MacDonald than the Robert Heinlein tradition. /-/ H. Kuttner is an excellent demonstration of the unfortunate results of science fiction and fantasy being so largely limited to pulps with low word-rates; most of his stuff including that for aSF seems to have its potentialities seriously impaired by careless high-speed writing. /-/ Williamson's "With Folded Hands" I took as a satire on the premises of Asimov's robot series, paralleling Asimov's "Blind Alley" take-off on Leinster's anti-bureaucrat fiction. I've been wondering if Asimov would retaliate. /-/ I disliked "Fury"'s last line and found the story weaker than some O'Donnell novelettes. /-/ I don't think I ever possessed a copy of Fantastic Adventures, and if I had it isn't likely I'd have read it. Yeah, R. S. Shaver is something of a female-worshipper; and a sex-mystic even as some writers of far more literary standing.

It must be a couple of years since I read the Fisher book. No especial comments on the review. It might have been to the point to mention, for the sake of anyone who didn't know it, that this is the second of a Fisher series (four, so far) on the development of man.

"Exposition" is most welcome, and I like Warner better than any other contributor to Horizons since I've been around. Suppose you can get more such stuff from him, Harry?

FRAPPÉ: I remarked on the review of the Benson book once, but I've decided I was being inconsistently prejudiced; some mystics write well and interestingly, however little I can sympathize with their attitudes, premises, and patterns of thought. I now think I'd like to read this book if it ever comes my way.

Your untempered honesty, with obvious lack of malice, in the com-

ments on FAPA stuff is devastating, Virginia, and was a large factor in deciding me to touch (however briefly) on everything in a mailing at least this once, rather than merely the publications that are worth it. (I have some doubt that you'll appreciate this statement, though; I suspect you're more interested than I am in keeping on amicable terms with the membership in general.) This is the sort of thing (your criticism, I mean) that FAPA so very much needs; the process is likely to try the patience of any capable critic if carried on very long, though. Or so I'd think. I don't know that I'm going to attempt complete reviews more than this once; I don't think my pro-social principles are quite strong enough to sustain my will to such altruistic, self-sacrificing endeavor for mailing after mailing -- and I don't think I have the patience to wrestle repeatedly with the task of being pointed and frank without getting brutal. If I even succeed this once. But like I say, you may not find my applause wholly gratifying. /-/ I can't think how you could ever have got such a poor impression of Speer. Even considering his typically fan weakness (maybe a matter of fan ethics) for taking utter trivialities from utterly trivial people as fit subjects for protracted serious discussion.

But my dear woman, doncha know Jenkin's "Murder of the U. S. A." was first serialized in Argosy as "Atoms over America"? Check you on Chandler's "Giant Killer" (for all its cribbed opening) -- but some of ABC's other stuff is GOSmithishly hack. About this one, we shall see.

TANGENTS was good enough reading, but I find nothing to say about it.

FAN-DANGO 4,3: Laney on Armstrong's jazz is interesting not only as such but for psychological reasons. F. Towner exhibits his thalamic responses to the hot and blue with perhaps even fewer inhibitions than he ever showed toward fantasy-fannish events, to demonstrate that the fannish orientation is not an isolated phenomenon restricted to the fantasy field.

"Thoughts While Band-Sawing" will prove a puzzling title to those who come in too late for the opening explanation. /-/ I'll try to get to the subject of the "muckraking" later -- maybe not even in this mailing.

HALF-LENGTH ARTICLES 1: Well, dammit, it was funny. And the ethics of this publication of Burbee's account are slightly too involved for me to pass judgment on. /-/ I wonder at times just what might result if Burbee were to turn his talents to other types of writing than those he elects to concentrate on. Straight fiction, for instance, or serious non-fiction of some sorts. But then I suppose he wouldn't be Burbee.

GRULZAK 2 doesn't as a whole seem to come quite up to the Kennedy standard but still has its moments. /-/ "The Ultimate Fan" illustrates why I don't like fan fiction.

Nothing else especially comment-worthy until we come to the book reviews, which are quite good indeed. /-/ The usual Kennedy cartoons, hand-lettered heads, and well organized make-up add eye-appeal.

PHANTEUR 4: Somehow I look for better stuff from DBT than this.

Some of the stuff under the clumsy, pompous heading "The PHANTEUR Opines--" is passably readable, though far from penetrating. Of course it may conceivably have been slanted at the FAPAgeist.

The Willison item expounds the obvious not quite so poorly as I

had thought on a first reading. I suppose its good intentions are perhaps sufficient to compensate for its occasional naïvetés. /-/ Is there any evidence that Negroes can stand heat any better than similarly-acclimated members of other races? Or is this special "ability" simply the result of necessity?

FANOMENA is somewhat informative for non-attendees, but not one of the more distinguished convention reports. /-/ "The Eugenic Fan" is a piece of (apparently) professional-jealousy-inspired nonsense no better than the usual fan fiction and no better than might be expected of Keller; as would-be satire-farce it misses Smith's real and serious weaknesses. Poor stuff, but still not the worst thing Keller emitted at the convention.

MOONSHINE 8: I feel slightly more kindly disposed toward this issue than toward previous Moffat items, largely, I suppose, because the duplicating this time is merely sloppy rather than impossible. /-/ The fantasy sequence in "The Music" was fair stuff of its sort; I thought the frame ill-conceived. About the rest of the contents it may be more charitable to maintain silence.

ATOTE: Nice covers. For the life of me, I can't see what this highly personal diary is doing in FAPA; it tells nothing that could conceivably be of interest to anyone other than a close relative or extremely intimate personal friend.

GLOM 9: First-page cartoon cute; WAPW reviews interesting. (Boucher, that is.) The rest this time fails to hit me.

FLYPAPER 1 is, I'm afraid, just what might be expected under such a title. I can see no justification for it.

ELMURMURS: Hum. /-/ The Major Disaster Plan would doubtless be invaluable to anyone planning to write a story that involved such events. I'm not, and found it of only minor interest.

SLITHY TOVES 2: Ghus's opinions and other remarks are often of considerable interest and worth, and his syntactical carelessness and orthographical vagaries are only lightly jarring notes.

The versification on the back page goes not too badly through the five quatrains, but sadly degenerates from there on.

FANTASY AMATEUR: It seems to me it was slightly presumptuous of the candidate for office of Official Editor to set a deadline in advance of his election and with a proposition up for vote that would alter the official mailing date. Especially to set his rather arbitrary deadline so very close to the previous actual mailing date and with almost no advance notice. But it may have been for the best in this case, as a drastic gesture to contrast with the recent FAPA tradition of slipshod inefficient performance of official duties. Anyhow I have no particular personal objections; I'd have tried to have something in a November mailing, but I'm not all broken up about the omission. And of course anyone who needed activity credit in the 41st mailing could have post-mailed, I guess.

REQUIEM: I suspect it would be wiser to say nothing at all about this; in any case I don't propose to pass moral judgment on

the Rights and Wrongs of the squabble, as seems to be expected of the FAPA membership by some of the participants. /-/ From here, judging purely by what has appeared in print and without any inside information, it seems reasonable to suppose that Burbee did as stated write his narrative with no conscious intent of publishing it. Burbee is not exactly a shrinking violet, and he has not heretofore exhibited any bashfulness or trepidation about publishing, by his own efforts and without any abetment, any and all such things as he has wanted to publish. I'd take it that this is the sort of thing, often unfortunate in some respects, that can happen when several persons get their heads together in a spirit of devilishness; it took the combined mutual moral support of three of them to get it published in that virtually unexpurgated form.

The frank tone of the Perdues' reply and their forthright admission of the general factuality of the Burbee account go far to promote a sympathetic tolerance toward them-- in my case almost sufficient to outweigh a long-standing and no-doubt aristotelian prejudice against drinkers of sweet wine. Their personal affairs are obviously not for anyone but themselves to judge-- insofar as they remain personal and do not affect FAPA's business; within those limits their defensive statements are superfluous and would be even if there had been anything actually unnormal about their ménage, other than the unusual publicity it got.

SNIX 1,2: Oh I'd rather not say it.

But I guess I will, after all. /-/ I couldn't make out whether the cover was a BEM, a space battle, or a surrealistic treatment of a moving eggbeater from the inside looking up.

Ackerman: I think Roark Bradford was the original author of "Green Pastures", and am positive Sherwood Anderson couldn't have had anything to do with it. Sherwood Anderson was a noted American short story writer (Winesburg, Ohio)-- highly regarded in some quarters. (Story put out a special commemorative issue shortly after his death.) Some of his stuff is rather fantastic-- outlandish, that is-- but I'm not aware that any of it is fantasy.

I don't know; maybe it's just me. When I go through this publication conscientiously trying to be tolerant, I find quite passable spots in it. Mainly it just seems to need more discriminating selection and pruning. /-/ One thing tickled me: "COLLECTING: It takes time, but why not take a phone book and call up strangers and see if you can find anyone who has any. You'd be surprised what some of the conversations will lead to." Of course I have a pretty nasty mind. /-/ And the exhaustive indexes and tabulations would presumably be of real interest and value to completist collectors.

SPARX 1,5: Surprisingly good, this-- surprisingly because such titles are usually grounds for grave suspicion. Cover photos interesting insofar as they could be made out, though clearer identification on the group picture would have been helpful.

Carter makes sense with the same conclusion Rothman derived on the importance of professionals in putting a convention over.

Tim Orrok's story is virtually professional in style-- actually, better written than considerable professionally published stuff. Lacking a plot or any conflict or startling idea or decided action, it probably wouldn't be considered even momentarily by any pro mag. They could do worse, though, and frequently do.

The book review of "Venus Equilateral" seems adequate; there is,

after all, no good reason for exacting criticism and analysis of stuff most of your readers must already be familiar with anyhow. /-/ I liked "Lost Art", the anonymous omitted story, better than most of the rest of the VE series -- for what that's worth.

Vincent Williams' "The Little Flower" is also definitely superior to most fan fiction, though not phenomenally original.

The interlineations are not inspired.

WILD HAIR 1: I fully appreciate the boys' noble intentions with this, but honesty compels me to remark that it is about as inconsequential as the last couple issues of Shangri-L'Affaires. Editorials the best part. The drawings are quite competent and mostly well conceived; best, I think, is the Buddha-ish grotesque on the ifc.

I like Burbee's fan fiction far less than some of his other stuff. In fact I like it hardly better than I like fan fiction in general, which is to say I like it not at all. /-/ A point or two in the Hyperfan thing raised (or rather renewed) interesting questions in my mind, though. Always look on the slimy side of life; that's me. Or maybe it's just the influence of recent LA publishing trends.

On Laney's FAPA pronouncement, my feelings are mixed. FAPA undeniably needs more publicity. I don't feel that either Startling or Amazing is an ideal medium for it, and was at first inclined to oppose our being reviewed in either. But on further consideration, I think both have possibilities, if the presentation is managed right -- not for directly recruiting members but for informing people that there is such a thing as FAPA, so that persons of taste who develop an at least temporary interest in the fantasy amateur publishing field won't be scared out of it completely by the first few cruddy general circulation fan magazines they encounter -- possibly, as heretofore, without ever even hearing of FAPA.

I didn't get the point of the six-men-in-one-pair-of-shoes cartoon on a first perusal. Bright boy, that Rotsler.

SYNAPSE 's first issue seems sub-par ^{Speer}. Though possibly it isn't considered so much an outright first issue as a combined and retitled continuation of previous Speer publications.

If I were you I wouldn't worry too much about the exhaustive mailing reviews, Jack; I do feel it something of a misdirection of effort in spots, but you almost invariably manage to be vastly more interesting and significant than nine-tenths of the original stuff was, and if it satisfies some inner urge ----

I was amazed at the mildness of Speer's references to the conduct of the election and the issuance of the 41st mailing. I suppose any thorough discussion on that would await this 42nd mailing, though, as a matter of ethics.

I'm even more astonished at the mildness of Speer's doubts about the absolute, literal historicity of the Bible. If, however, they derive solely from his own examination and he has hardly broached the critical literature of the subject, I suppose they are remarkable enough even for a speer; the fantastic amount of misinformation current and readily accepted even in the most intelligent circles about that collection of writings (particularly among those who have read extensively in it) is a depressing commentary on the gullibility of the human race. /-/ For any who may be interested in counteracting their childhood conditioning sufficiently to approach the book with at least a faint approximation of the objectivity they could muster toward nearly any other such anthology, Salomon Reinach is probably about the best antidote readily available. The reading of only a few pages in

Orpheus (subtitled A History of Religions) at the beginning of the section "Christian Origins" should be sufficient to demonstrate the book's merit in this (and other) respect(s). Reinach is no impassioned, fire-breathing iconoclast; his personal sympathies seem to rest mainly with the Modernist movement in (or perhaps one should say "from within") the Catholic church. He is pretty caustic about the methodology of such works as Renan's Life of Jesus. But he is, deeply and sincerely and impressively, a scholar, and it is obvious that he takes great pains to subordinate any personal prejudices he may have to the probable facts according to the most reliable evidence. He is, moreover, essentially a historian of religions rather than a Biblical critic, and there is thus no trace of the mystic theologian about him. /-/
Orpheus is a long-standing enthusiasm of mine, and I find it almost impossible ever to mention the book without at least mildly raving about it; it seems to have been unaccountably neglected in this country, for it is not only a superbly informative thing for a single reading and an invaluable reference, but an authentic work of literature. To be as factual as possible about it, though: I can't conceive how Speer, or any open- and alert-minded adult, could fail to find it fascinating. (And one's specific interest or lack of interest in the subject of religions as such would hardly matter; for better or worse, the religions are forces to reckon with in the world-today -- and this book is revealing, psychologically and sociologically.) The very young and the frivolous-minded, however, could conceivably find it dull, partly because of its vocabulary; it is a translation from the French, and like many scrupulous translations, uses a number of words rare in original English writing. /-/ (Please excuse the public didacticism and the awkward third-person usage, Jack; having got started in that style I found no convenient point to break away from it. And I've assumed rather arbitrarily that you haven't read Orpheus, simply because your remarks failed to reflect any such reading and it isn't the sort of thing one easily forgets.)

Just what on earth was "(quasi) stefnic" about "Rathnaka"? /-/
"MAPAs" = Mundane APAs? /-/ "I should transpose the and and and per se and in 'Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde & Others'." suggests that the Speer style sheet should be revised, or followed less closely. "And per se and" looks Steinish enough even without being juxtaposed to a couple more "ands" with no setting off by quotes or italicization -- which probably accounts for the popularity of the corruption "ampersand". /-/
Well, I never try to avoid splitting verb phrases, but in informal writing I don't avoid split infinitives either at the cost of concise or logical construction. I'm more progressive with grammar -- syntax, at least -- than spelling.

"Thru a Glass Darkly" was rather catchy.

The green seems microscopically more legible on second sheets than on white -- this time, at least -- but I don't see why if you feel a need for another color in addition to standard purple you don't use the so-called red, which gives far better visibility than green. /-/
Aren't second sheets enough more absorptive than regulation ditto impression stock to create technical complications? I wonder particularly how the durability of identical masters would compare on long runs with the two impression papers.

The By-Law I don't support, for reasons already largely developed.

end 41st mailing

Six pages is far too much space to give to a FAPA mailing just on straight reviewing; it might be justified if it included a protracted serious discussion of some important intellectual issue. Well of course I did throw in an impromptu book review almost a page long. Anyhow I'll try to be curter on the 40th mailing and the one thing from the 39th mailing I still want to mention. Without ado:

ICHOR 1: This is either the third or fourth copy of this thing I have received in various ways, and since it's now more than a year and a half old I don't feel particularly disposed to talk about it. The prose is generally worse than the verse, though.

ICHOR 2: The cover is competent; is it supposed to go with that irritating Harvey Gross "Sonnet"? I don't seem to get the point of the nude's strained attitude. /-/ I'm afraid I share Mr. Burbee's opinion of Sidney Johnston's verse; to be explicit I call it corny. /-/ I find much of this stuff painfully feeble and the quasi-cute or -clever particularly distasteful. Most of the Dale Hart stuff I like no better than the general run of this, if as well: "Poem For The Man Who Could Not Recognize Death" I thought about the best Hart, and I have no particular comments on that. /-/ Robert-Peter Aby's two contributions rate just slightly above average as this goes.

Specific comments on a few things of exceptional interest: In "Pierrot's Patter" the triolet form seems to have been imposed on the embryo of the thing with violence. The triolet is not among the more difficult of the French forms, but to carry off the repetition without seeming repetitious wants a certain skill or sound intuition; the lines repeated need to tie in to those preceding or following so as to give a different shade of meaning or emphasis to each repetition. In this case they bred simple monotony, with the final repetition distinctly anti-climactic. Of course there may sometimes be occasion for deliberate repetitiveness, but I see no point in it here. From what little I've seen of Ebey's verse I imagine he has sufficient ability; in this case it wasn't applied. /-/ I may completely miss the intent of "Renunciation" through lack of study or for other reasons, but I kept thinking of Michelism as I read it. Actually, it doesn't seem to be that specific; for all that is explicit in it it could almost as readily fit Lowndes' more recent ideas -- or rather, attitudes and philosophical premises. Which leads me to wonder whether it is the content or the technique of it with which Lowndes is "no longer in sympathy". As an afterthought it occurs to me that he just might have been talking about fannism here, though that I greatly doubt. Likely this is one of those cases where the context of origin is necessary to full understanding. /-/ Ebey's "Cezanne on Cezanne" accomplished well all it attempted; I like. /-/ "The Mighty Fort" suggests a promising but perhaps unseasoned talent, with a feel for tone that may need careful restraint to avoid over-obtrusive patterns. I judge that this represented no extravagant amount of effort. The title irresistibly suggests "Ein Feste Burg"; parallel intentional, Redd?

I can't write poetry; it isn't there.

LEN'S DEN: There may be some conceivable excuse for such consistently atrocious duplicating, but I can't think of it.

PLENUM 6: Actually, though, that almost bothersome now-my-little-children lucidity may in some degree be a perfectly natural element of Rothman's style. It does have a decided charm, if one

could ever dispel the suspicion that the man is talking down to a not-very-bright audience.

Well, Milton, if we're going to drag such unspeakable infirmities right out into the open light, I may as well remark that Republicanism is not necessarily an incurable ailment, even though it may in a sense be hereditary. I outgrew a severe case of it, strictly by power of mind.

The discussion of energy and fields is most enjoyable.

HORIZONS 31 I have already discussed. For the benefit of those who weren't in that audience: As a member of both groups, I disapproved the merger proposal. In fact I thought it highly ridiculous, and still do. /-/ The rest was good.

ATOTE 4,4; I think I like EEE better when he tries to be funny.

GLOM 8: I suppose Rick Sneary's highly original orthography, in his stuff that gets published unemended, does unduly divert attention from what he is saying. It seems a shame though to lose all that color just for the sake of convention. He appears to be one of the most completely un-self-conscious persons ever to come within my ken.

The Ackerman part in this is not for me.

MATTERS OF OPINION 21: There seems to be no point in discussing the election harangue now, and I'll save for later what I have to say about the election itself.

I could wish for the self-discipline to remain silent for now on the politico-economic argument; I simply can't take time and space here to develop my own views adequately, and my limited specific comments would almost certainly give some mistaken impressions. Broadly though, I am hardly more in sympathy with Speer's straight New Deal party line apologetics than with Stanley's rather conventional capitalist ideas, possibly less so, since Stanley in admitting he doesn't know quite all the answers evinces an opener mind than Speer. I suppose it may be emotionally satisfying to espouse a complete, ready-made creed handed down from above, but such an abdication of intellectual function doesn't make for a very workable approach to the real problems of existence. (There now, I've tagged myself as a Conservative or something equally nasty; didn't I say I ought to keep still?) In short, I just don't like orthodoxy of any brand. /-/ Anyhow, I think drastic financial reform must precede any sound and effective economic reform, and the prospects for that don't seem overly promising at the moment.

SUSTAINING PROGRAM?: One thing I neglected to say in discussing Synapse 1 is that this extreme departmentalization (to which I also am somewhat inclined) makes for a painless and almost automatic production of large volumes of stuff, but it can also lead, unless one maintains constant vigilance, to the inclusion of things one's better judgement might disallow-- though probably no more so than assembling a publication out of assorted little oddments with no plan or organization. In the few Speer FAPAPublications I've seen the Mailing Remarks and Keeping Up With Campbell have been consistently good, Man Sagt almost equally so; Items From My Scrapbooks rates fair; Rejected! and Last Stop To Limbo rather inferior-- and I don't have awfully high expectations of Catching Up With Crud. I'm

refraining from offering judgement on the two kinds of Quotes because I'm prejudiced at the start against reprinting; as such they are probably adequate. I don't mean that these things censured are bad as FAPA stuff goes, but simply that you can do better. /-/ But then I keep forgetting that the object of FAPA publishing is to fill as much space as possible irregardless of results.

Myself, ever since I reached the age of critical reason there have been other things I was more urgently interested in reading than the Bible, save for Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs -- and I don't trust my earlier impressions too strongly. I personally find the Songs one of the most fascinating collections of verse extant, but I can't say just how far this may be a matter of perverse delight at finding something so thoroughly and unmistakably secular in a Divinely Inspired or Dictated anthology of Sacred Writings, and of the puzzle value of their wonderfully scrambled and adulterated present form. The same considerations apply to Ecclesiastes. Some day I'd like to go through the Bible with archaeological purpose. /-/ Conjunctural "like" is with me a conscious colloquialism, all right in informal contexts. /-/ In the defence of van Vogt, you seem to be indiscriminately mixing up habit and intuition, which I think have very little to do with each other. /-/ Is it "Kraft-Ebbing" or Krafft-Ebing?

Rothman's note on the dated ideas of science dilettantes reminds me to inquire if others find EESmith's science as newtonian as I do.

HAROLD W. CHENEY, JR.: Oh I haven't the heart for any overall comments. /-/ The story was a rather yawnsome variant on a theme by Fredric Brown of a few years back. Could happen, of course, but the treatment makes it so-whattish.

I suspect the real motivation of the remarks about the impossibility of valid reasoned prophecy is revealed in the clause: "It is a veil that human eyes were not meant to pierce." That is, HWC feels that such prophesying would be an undue trespass on the private and exclusive prerogatives of the divinity he recognizes, and all the rest is rationalization of that article of faith.

Breezy cuteness is acceptable in small doses, but too much gets tiresome.

MOLECULE: Oh, why bother?

SLITHY TOVES 1: Is the verse supposed to be taken seriously? /-/ How much of the stuff about "psychosomatics" is supposed to be authoritative, and how much of it is purely personal theory?

Why not have some friend with abilities in that line proofread your dummy? The consistent misspellings are bound to prejudice the reception of your stuff in some quarters.

MICRON 2: The interior drawings are able indeed, particularly the one on page three. /-/ The fiction, I'm afraid, is tasteless and juvenile beyond any excuse.

A PATIENT'S MEMOIRS: This scatological atrocity is the sort of thing that gives one furiously to reconsider his ideas about free speech.

BURLINGS & ELMURMURINGS: I like none of the how-it-began's as such, and only the Perdue takeoff on the saccha-

rine sentimental romance of The Moon Pool otherwise. /-/ The revelations about Al Ashley are often wonderful, but I think they go better one at a time.

FAN-DANGO 14: On the Bomb-Dodging, I still think it more realistic to hope to head off any wholesale blasting, slender as that hope may be, than to hope for a livable post-War-III situation.

The Open Letter to Miss Jonne Evans meets my hearty approval. I should be somewhat more concerned over the danger of the tykes' being sucked into fanry than that of their having their impressionable minds warped by overexposure to fantasy.

What has happened to the Laney Memoirs project?

THE UNSPEAKABLE THING 3: I much liked Rathnaka; I didn't expect to, because my only previous encounter with the amateur writings of Burton Crane left a distinctly bad taste in my mouth. /-/ This was highly competent in technique, and the verse-form was well-chosen.

"BOFF PERRY: What does Crane have against Rick Sneary? Does spelling make the man or what?

Perhaps not, but it certainly can unmake him in a literary society.--BC "

Who are you calling a literary society? ---cbs.

At first I thought Laney was talking about the other kind of naturalIPI machine, but I guess this predated his Purification Crusade.

I suppose the uncompromising (even to the point of being rather compromising) candor of a few FAPAns reportage has spoiled me for things like Hwesson's somewhat pollyannaish travelogue.

The mutual-admiration-society effect of the Jolly Good Fellows thing was a little too much for my queasy stomach. I didn't quite urp, but it was a near thing. If this is characteristic of ay-jay affection, I'll take vinegar and brickbats.

The Burton Crane review of Mr. Adam was highly revealing (of the reviewer), I thought.

Warner's article was informative. I thought the incest angle had been played down in the FFM version of "The Twenty-Fifth Hour".

I'm not too favorably impressed with this publication as a whole, though I recognize that it represents considerable work. There is too much gush and sweetness-and-light from Helen Wesson, while Burton Crane's pose of olympian litterateur stiffly condescending to notice the antics of cavorting babes and mortals seems to fit him rather ill. /-/ With some qualifications this is good as to format and other physical qualities. Pity a little more discrimination couldn't have been exercised on the contents.

LIGHT 33: Seems as if there ought to be something worth talking about in all this, but damned if I can find it. /-/ The Rothman ad was fairly amusing. /-/ Hurter's letter this time seemed rather muddled; usually I like his stuff. /-/ The dreadfully sloppy make-up is pretty hard to take.

GET THEM OUT ON TIME: I didn't vote because the somewhat ambiguous
FANTASY AMATEUR: and self-contradictory 5th article of our ex-
BALLOT: constitution seemed to say I wasn't qualified,
FAPA CORRESPONDENT: not having had anything in FAPA mailings during the preceding twelvemonth. (No, it doesn't

make exceptions for new members.) Something Art Widner said seems to suggest that he had a different interpretation of this. Which leads me to wonder whether anyone voted legally in the last election, and therefore whether there is such a thing as 'The Fantasy Amateur Press Association any more.

end 40th mailing.

howaboutputtingyourfinelegalmindstoworkonthatquestionmessrslaney&speer?

From the 39th mailing we select Mr. Rothman's fine publication Plenum to honor with a few words.

I really don't know just what I'm going to say about it, Milty, but I feel that a struggling young publisher deserves some encouraging words for such a well-meant effort. /-/ Well I've already said probably more than I'd better say about the subject of the editorial. I suspect that the color of some of these colorful characters you mention is more attractive from the distance of a few decades or centuries than at close range. And there may seem to be fewer geniuses these days because there are more geniuses these days (vide Saint K) and the individual ones don't stand out so. Besides, more is expected of geniuses as time goes on; the ever-growing accumulation of previous geniuses and their works gives the late-comers more to outclass. /-/ You maybe didn't mean it that way, but the cartoon strikingly suggested Koestler's Modern Neanderthaler to me.

The mathematics article is much appreciated here. /-/ For the temperature problem used to introduce negative integers, I think a less arbitrary example might well be substituted, a natural example in which minus quantities are actually necessary and unavoidable. In this case, the need could be neatly avoided by setting your metrical zero at absolute zero, as in the Kelvin scale. /-/ There were a few points in this where the logic troubled me at a casual first reading, but then I'm unusually dense about all math except pure algebra.

Annual Selection

ASF's ten best of 1947:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Sturgeon, "Maturity" | I really don't know why I bother with this; tradition, I guess. |
| 2. Leinster, "Propagandist" | These things fizzled out toward the end with monotonous regularity. |
| 3. O'Donnell, "Fury" | Any year George Smith can make my first ten there is something wrong. |
| 4. Sturgeon, "Thunder and Roses" | Stinker of any year: Hubbard's |
| 5. Phillips, "An Enemy of Knowledge" | "The End Is Not Yet". Held over: |
| 6. Russell, "Hobbyist" | E. E. Smith's "Children of the |
| 7. Simak, "Aesop" | Lens." |
| 8. Williamson, "With Folded Hands" | |
| 9. Smith, "The Undamned" | |
| 10. Padgett, "Tomorrow & Tomorrow" | |

Covers

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| 1. May (Rogers) | Alejandro's touted Sept. symbolic cover well-conceived but too grotesquely drawn for me. |
| 2. Dec. (Alejandro) | |
| 3. Feb. (Sniffen) | |

After All

I am conscious of a certain intemperateness in the way I've said some things herein, particularly in the first four pages, and while I'm not inclined to any major recantation, it appears that some clarification and tempering of a few remarks might not be amiss.

I don't mean to paint fans all black, as onetime fans who have recovered their vision tend to; having never become emotionally involved with fannism I have no occasion for any such violent personal reaction. Nor do I lump fans in a homogenous class and ignore individual differences. Further, I recognize that at least a slight abnormal interest in fantasy as such or in the obvious correlative subjects may be needed to furnish sufficient motive for sustained active participation in FAPA.

Nevertheless --- The fannish orientation even at best makes for a rather distorted personal scale of values, and fans in aggregation tend in some ways to reenforce and accentuate their mutual aberrations and to rationalize and codify their obsessions, with unwholesome effects. For my part, I am resolved to avoid concessions to the insidious leveling tendency of the FAPAgeist, even at the cost of seeming impatient or rude at times. As an added push toward bluntness I have a feeling that the space and attention I give to comments on a particular feature or publication ought to be gauged somewhat by its actual worth, or its interest to me. This may be an unreasonable prejudice, though; I can see some justification in such a group as FAPA for thorough and extended criticism of intra-APA views with which one disagrees, regardless of source or circumstance, since fans tend to give such special weight to the utterances of other fans. And of course these elaborate replies, from those who have the patience for them, can be of greater benefit to the addressees as well as to others of the audience -- besides increasing the weight of the mailings.

I was unduly rough on the general circulation fan magazines, of course. Some few of them have been consistently good, and others have had some good stuff along with a lot of chaff. And most of the really poor ones I know only by hearsay; even at my virgin intercourse with fanry something told me it would pay to be choosy. I think the point I had in mind will stand, though; these publications rarely contain much of the sort of serious free discussion many of us would consider FAPA's most essential feature, and persons with interests centering on that sort of thing (and therefore worthy FAPA prospects) could easily have investigated the fanworld via the subpub route, found those productions of only casual interest, and drifted out again, without ever learning anything about FAPA -- as things have been managed heretofore.

In speaking of the FAPA set-up and its possibilities, I wasn't concerned with the intent of its founders or early members; that I know almost nothing about. There seems to be no good reason to feel bound by any considerations other than the logic of circumstances and the will of current members. Naturally, my ideas about it are influenced by my own tastes in writing and reading matter.