Flannery O'Connor is one of the few Catholic writers of fiction in the post-war period, who manage to fuse a thorough orthodoxy with the greatest possible independence and sophistication as an artist. Her stories show that the Church — which as an institution she rarely used in her work — was so supreme in her mind as to be invisible. In her native Georgia, she saw protestant fundamentalism run wild and also saw worship, heresy and nihilism within the Bible Belt. A devout Catholic herself, she defines her subject of essays and stories as the "action of grace in territory held largely by the devil" (M.M., p. 118), and she also says that "Drama usually bases itself on the bedrock of originalism, whether the writer thinks in theological terms or not (M.M., p. 167). This definition and belief shapes her first novel, Wise Blood, a tale of young revivalist preacher converted to the Church without Christ. This negation in his case becomes the voice of twisted divine love. This is also the theme of Miss O'Connor's second novel, The Violent Bear It Away. She develops in the ritual of baptism a metaphor of the human struggle against salvation.

Religion (Protestantism) remains important and uppermost in her characters. Both her novels and several
of her stories explore the violence which appears to be the natural outgrowth of the fierce, self-denying, hell-fearing Protestantism. Miss O'Connor consistently uses the religious allusions in her stories. The first deadly sin of Pride is used almost throughout her work. The pervasiveness of her faith, her desire for a Christ-centered world obliged Miss O'Connor to seek inner and spiritual progress.

II

About Miss O'Connor's work, Caroline Gordon has said, "... If her work endures -- and I think it will -- the theology in her work will be the basis of critical appreciation to come." There is no doubt that Miss O'Connor was deeply aware of the sacredness of reality. She knew that the world was "charged with grandeur of God" and she renewed her spirit by direct contact with the natural world. In this respect she followed Conrad's ideas when she has quoted in her essay that "his aim as a fiction writer was to render the highest possible justice to the visible universe.... He was interested in rendering justice to the visible universe because it suggested an invisible one ...." (E.D., p. 80). Sister Kathleen Feeley in Voice of the Peacock says about Miss O'Connor "Her reverence for matter goes deeper than that. She embraced Christian concept of the intrinsic sacredness of matter." This basic belief has,
however, been clouded by many heresies which taught that matter is of itself evil and must be sanctified by men. In this connection it may be mentioned that Manichaeism separates spirit and matter. To the Manicheans all material things are evil. They seek pure spirit and try to approach the infinite directly without any mediation of matter. But Miss O'Connor found Conrad's artistic aim in the holiness of matter. She says, "The fact is that the materials of the fiction writer are the humblest. Fiction is about everything human and we are made out of dust, and if you scorn getting your self dirty, then you shouldn't try to write fiction." (H.L., p. 58).

Miss O'Connor believed not only in the holiness of matter but she also had conviction of the prime importance of truth. The concept of holiness of matter which underlies her fiction is one example of the theological basis of her work. Jerry L. Bryant in his book The Good Decision says, "Probably the most unlikely of our contemporary novelist to be identified as contemporary and linked with the philosophical background of modern Western thought is Flannery O'Connor. A Southern Catholic fundamentalist, she has claimed to be innocent of all theory, and has asserted her unconditional belief in the liberal truth of the old Christian principles of Redemption, Sin, Grace and the Resurrection of Jesus. Even so, the values she affirms in her Christianity - a religion which is by no means all hearts
and flowers - reflect the emphasis upon irrationality and its location in the individual which characterizes many of our thinkers."³

On the other hand critics like Irving Howe and Josephine Hendin lay more emphasis on Miss O'Connor's art than on religion. Miss Hendin says that O'Connor told more than religious tales and, "In the final analysis when the problem of religious dimension of O'Connor's fictional world is faced honestly, solutions will range from uneasy acceptance of her literary implications of her belief to rejection of her art where belief is too pronounced."⁴ But Carter Martin in his The True Country explains properly Miss O'Connor's sacramental view of reality through which Grace and matter are joined and says that she links the rural landscape to the eternal landscape, "The True Country."⁵

It is Miss O'Connor's particular genius to make us believe that there are Christian mysteries in ordinary everyday matter. In "Church and the Fiction Writer" she contends that fiction should reinforce our sense of the supernatural by grounding it in concrete observable reality. She speaks about what is when she says, "the writer learns perhaps more quickly than the reader, to be humble in the face of what is." (Em., p. 146). In "writing short stories" she says that "The first and most obvious characteristic of fiction is that it deals with reality that can be seen, heard, smelt, tasted and touched." (Em., p. 91). Thus her
belief in the intrinsic holiness of matter sharpened her perception to such a degree that she was able at times to bring forth holiness from the core of the matter.

Miss O'Conner sought a more than worldly knowledge not by knowing the world badly, but by knowing it well, by seeing more of it than we usually permit ourselves to see. David Eggerschweiler discusses in this connection Miss O'Conner's "anagogical vision", the ability "to see different levels of reality in one image or in one situation", and says, "For the anagogical writer, however, especially the writer whose religious faith is centered on the Incarnation, the natural and the supernatural contain each other; the different levels of meaning are intrinsic to the image." About this vision Miss O'Conner says "the Catholic sacramental view of life is one that sustains and supports at every turn the vision that the story teller must have if he is going to write fiction of any faith." In contrast to Miss Hendin's views, David Eggerschweiler is of the opinion that "one can hardly ignore the overt religious metaphors that suggest sacramental vision." On the other hand Irving Howe who shares the same view with Miss Hendin says about the stories in Every Thing That Rises Must Converge that "except for an occasional phrase which serves partly as a rhetorical signal that more than ordinary verisimilitude is at stake, there are no unavoidable pressures to consider these stories in a strictly religious sense. They stand
securely as renderings and criticisms of human experience. But Preston M. Browning rightly feels that "both the critics miss the point of Flannery O'Connor's basic understanding of man and transcendent reality of which she believes his life to be a part."9

In The Sacred and the Profane, Mircea Eliade explains about the holiness of matter as "manifestation" of something of a wholly different order, a reality that does not belong to our world in objects that are integral part of our natural 'profane' world. Manifestations of sacred in nature is defined by Eliade as hierophany. For Miss O'Connor this hierophany is a special manifestation of the luminous quality in the matter which can become for the perceiver a source of supernatural Grace and the measure of men. Openness to that source of Grace is the measure of his truthful perception of reality. This theological realism comes from her devout Christian vision - Miss O'Connor's acknowledged Roman Catholic faith - from both sides of her family as she was born with a long tradition of Catholic identification on both the sides.

Miss O'Connor was a devoted student of the Bible, and works like Jean Levie's The Bible: Bowl of God in Words of Men and Bruce Venter's 'The Conscience of Israel: Pro-exilic Prophets and Prophecy' both of which she read, marked and reviewed for the Georgia Catholic Newspaper, could have helped her focus her preoccupation with the power
of language that reading the Bible was already beginning
to shape. Her faith commitment is total. She says in
'The Fiction Writer and His Country' "For I am no disbeliever
in spiritual purpose and no vague believer. I see from the
stand point of Christian Orthodoxy. This means that for
me the meaning of life is centred in our Redemption by
Christ and what I see in the world I see in its relation to
that." (K.M., p. 32). Miss O'Connor describes the writer's
function in religious terminology: the key words are
"vocation" "Prophecy" and "judgement" and the writer's proper
role is that of a prophet because ".... whatever his initial
gift is, it comes from God; and no matter how minor a gift
it is, he will not be willing to destroy it by trying to use
it outside its proper limits." (K.M., p. 27).

Sister Kathleen Feeley in her study Flannery O'Connor:
Voice of the Peacock makes extensive use of annotated
and underlined passages in Miss O'Connor's books in the
O'Connor library and indicates the range of this reading:
Works by such classical theologians as Augustine and Aquinas,
numerous studies of Old Testament history and theology,
books on the Christian imagination and Christian symbolism,
writing of mystics such as St. Theresa. Annotations suggest
that she read with appreciation, Mircea Eliade's The Sacred
and the Profane and Patterns in Comparative Religion as well
as Carl Jung's Modern Man in Search of a Soul. Flannery
O'Connor also read Jesuit theologian Teilhard de Chardin's
works and she felt an immediate kinship with him. Her enthusiasm for his writings was quite uninhibited. Between 1930 and 1963 she reviewed about seven books by or about him for the bulletin The Georje Diocesan Weekly. About this kinship Preston Browning says that Miss O'Connor "Found in Teilhard's thought much that was congenial to her own and, despite a fundamental difference in their conceptions of the nature of evil, it seems indisputable that a good deal of inspiration for the stories in Everything That Rises Must Converge derives from the Jesuit Paleontologist - philosopher, from whose The Phenomenon of Man she borrowed the line which became the volume's title." In The Divine Milieu, Teilhard de Chardin describes the soul's progress towards the final leap out of itself which delivers it from its own bondage into full union with the divine (Omega Point). Robert Fitzgerald in his Introduction to Flannary O'Connor's Everything That Rises Must Converge says that "Teilhard's Vision of the "Omega Point" virtually at the end of the time or at any rate of a time-span rightly conceivable by paleontologist or geologist alone, has appealed to people to whom it may seem to offer one more path past the crucifixion." The idea of death as a manifestation of Grace, which is central to a number of Miss O'Connor's works is also fully explained in The Divine Milieu and so is the transforming power of death which too is often found in Miss O'Connor's stories. In this connection Martha Stephens in her book The Question of Flannary O'Connor says "O'Connor
clearly had a great natural gift for the story-telling art — the better one knows her work, the more one comes to respect her ability. But she was also a highly doctrinal writer with a marked evangelical strain, and like all such writers — like D.H. Lawrence, for instance, and in France her fellow Catholics François Mauriac and Georges Bernanos — she poses so personal, so goading a challenge to a reader's perceptions of life that coming to terms with her as an artist is difficult."14 Martha Stephens further remarks: "To say that Miss O'Connor was a devout Catholic hardly begins to suggest how formidable the distance is between her view of life and the prevailing view of modern readers. To find so bleak, so austere and rigid, so other worldly a Christian view of life as hers, one is forced back into the distant past of English religious literature — into the dark side of Medieval Christian thought with its constant injunction to renunciation of the world."15 About Miss O'Connor's works, Miss Stephens says "Let us beware, they urge, it is not with us as it was with the evil ones in the time of Lot, for they too — in the words of Saint Luke — "did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builted; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all."16 Thus the message and the warning in Miss O'Connor's stories is clear. Her characters suffer terrible blows. Mrs Hay, Mrs Cope, Rayber, Shepard, Julien, Asbury think they possess qualities superior to those of others and can achieve something, but
eventually Miss O'Connor brings destruction to their pride through some violence or force. No doubt she calls that force an act of grace, because it provides such a shock to the characters' ego that they are forced to see themselves as they really are. It is at this point that Martha Stephens finds certain radical differences between Teilhard's and Miss O'Connor's thoughts. In order to indicate the distance between them, Martha Stephens quotes Teilhard's inscription for The Divine Milieu: Sic Deus Dilexit Mundum and gives the meaning - for those who love the world and says "Had Miss O'Connor ever used such a line we can assume she would have used it mockingly and contemptuously, with the caustic irony of such titles as "A Good Man is Hard to Find", "The Comforts of Home" .......... clearly for O'Connor ... those who love the world -- one is tempted to say not too much, but at all -- are always to be held in contempt."

Martha Stephens further explains that "What Teilhard, on the other hand, wants to impress most deeply on his reader -- and in fact he takes half of the Divine Milieu to do so -- is that one need not, in fact must not, renounce the world to find God. For God is in and of the world, and all human endeavour -- the extending, for instance, of the frontiers of human knowledge -- is sanctified and justified and fully intended by the divine purpose for the universe." The Divine Milieu is in fact addressed especially to those "wavering" who have come to feel that their instinctive love for life as they know
it on earth separates them irrevocably from true Christianity, and Martha Stephens finds it contrary to the doctrine of Miss O'Connor's fiction. She says, "For what is oppressive about the O'Connor work as a whole, what is sometimes intolerable, is her stubborn refusal to see any good, any beauty or dignity or meaning in ordinary human life on earth."

No doubt Preston Browning and Martha Stephens find difference in the conception of the nature of evil in both these Catholic writers, but it may be stated that not only was Miss O'Connor keenly aware of her odd situation as a Roman Catholic in the South, but she was also aware of her position as a believer in an age when belief was frequently dismissed as superstition. It was her preoccupation with the spiritual condition of modern men that led her to write this violent and ironic fiction. She aimed at puncturing the swollen self-estimates which her people habitually entertain. Through the acid of her art, she etched in vivid outline the nature of Man's obligation towards God and the consequences of its denial. Miss Dorothy Walters rightly says in this connection that "Her abiding concern - the ever present demon which haunts her pages at every turn - is the desperate need of man to open himself to the visitation of the holy spirit: to let his dead conscience be stirred to life and so re-establish the bond by which flesh is recognised as but the sanctuary of the sacred energy. Thus because she perceives Grace as the central need of human experience and
Redemption as the essential aim of life itself, she also insists on the reality of sin and the inevitability of judgment."20 Thus, according to Miss O'Connor it is not God who has turned his back on the world, it is man who avoids God.

III

Living in the Protestant South was, rather, a distinct advantage for her. A Catholic writer who is a Southerner has ready to hand the material of a culture which, as she often observed, is still "Christ-haunted" if no longer "Christ-Centered." In her lecture "The Catholic Novelist in the Protestant South," she noted in this regard that "The Catholic novelist in the South is forced to follow the spirit in too strange places and to recognize it in many forms not totally congenial to him" (p. 206). She saw in the strange practices of Southern Protestantism a kinship with the religious fervour of biblical faith. Preston Browning gives his views about Southern Protestantism and says "Here was a form of Christianity still capable of begetting fearless prophets and dedicated evangelists, men and women in whom conviction burned as fiercely as it had in Amos and Jeremiah, Paul and Stephen. And when compared with conformism, the aimless pleasure seeking, and the spiritual complacency which in her view characterized the general tenor of American
life, the inclining commitment to Christ of fundamentalist Christianity seemed far to outweigh the excesses to which it was prone. 21

In a letter to her friend John Hawkes in Sept., 1959, Miss O'Conner explains about the people of South and their religion and says, ".... for me this is always the conflict between an attraction for the Holy and the disbelief in it that we breathe in with the air of times. It is hard to believe always but more so in the world we live in now. There are some of us who have to pay for our faith every step of the way and who have to work out dramatically what it would be like without it and if being without it would be ultimately possible or not." She further says "The religion of the South is a do-it-yourself religion, something which I as a Catholic find painful and touching and grimly comic. It's full of unconscious pride that lands them (the people of the region) in all sorts of ridiculous religious predicaments. They have nothing to correct their practical heresies and so they work them out dramatically. If this were merely comic to me, it would be no good, but I accept the same fundamental doctrines of sin and redemption and judgement that they do." 22 For her the rural South in its dramatic religion still possessed the "attraction for the Holy".

Thus we find in her two novels as well as in her short stories a kind of religion she had studied rather closely. Robert Cole in his book Elementary O'Conner's South
speaks about this religion as "backwoods fanaticism that can be passionately idiosyncratic, constantly centrifugal with respect to any kind of institutional Christianity, let alone hierarchical, solidly established Church Universal. Often that religion is a blood religion, unafraid to articulate the triumphant violence in human beings, indeed anxious to be heir to that violence. "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I come not to send peace, but a sword." (Matthew 10:34)." Thus she saw the theatrical side of their emotionally intense God-possessed souls day in and day out, and not only on Sundays; she saw them at every place, and not only in the Churches, and she could hear the powerful voice of the evangelists from the rural South. It is clear, therefore, that the depth of Miss O'Connor's faith and the biblical obsession of her region provided the general foundation for her preference for a fictional world graced with theological values. She placed importance on the relationship between the story and the ultimate reality. Miss O'Connor is no doubt a Christian writer, thus her comic portrayals of Southerners are governed by the stern purity of a rigidly Christian view.

IV

Hazel Notes of her first novel Miss Blood is essentially a tragic figure. The people of Taulkinham are
ludicrous because they have rejected grace. Dorothy Walters says "Hazel's tragedy arises out of his predicament as a man committed to belief (or non-belief in certain stages of life) who is condemned to move through an uncommitted world. But there is ever present in the reader's mind the recollection of Hazel's grandfather and of Hazel's rejected vocation of preacher. These hover always over the present action, placing Hazel in perspective as one who is a (temporarily) "lost soul" by virtue of the fact that he has a soul to lose." 24 The journey of his experience, sin, atonement, redemption is totally serious although the description verges on the ludicrous. Hazel Notes as he is first presented is slightly ridiculous in his glare-blue suit with a price tag still on it and his wide-brimmed black preacher's hat pulled down on his brow. Although the price tag of $11.98 portrays Hazel as a ridiculous figure, but it shows that he is oblivious to external details of appearance, his focus is inward. In addition, Mrs. Hitchcock's compulsion to look into Hazel's eyes suggests a significant aspect of the latter's personality: his charisma - a spiritual magnetism that his eyes reveal.

Vision is the central motif in Misc Blood. Hazel looks out at the world through a fog, yet everyone notices his eyes: "his eyes were what held her attention longest. Their settings were so deep that they seemed to her, almost like passages leading somewhere and she leaned half way across the space that separated the two seats, trying to see into them" (W.B., pp. 10-11). Dorothy Walters finds spiritual symbolism
in the name Hazel Notes and says, "Hazel suggests the hue of his eyes (the color of June shells) and Notes recalls to us the biblical injunction, "first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then thou shalt see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." This casting out the beam is what Hazel does in a most literal fashion when he like Oedipus serves as priest and penitent, divine executioner and human victim, exacting fierce retribution for the guilt of an unholy life. Dorothy Walters sees the meaning of the act of blinding as dying into life - the rejection of claims of the body for the demands of the spirit, the cleansing of his outward vision so that he may be prepared for the interior illumination. 25

ZNAC BLOOD is the story of a prophet's education. This prophet, Hazel Notes, had known by the time he was twelve that like his grandfather he too would follow the preacher's calling, but he returns from the army to found the Church without Christ. His atheism is simply an inverted piety because no one fails to recognize him for a preacher. Hazel is driven to this extreme nihilism by a haunting and half-acknowledged fear that there is one truth, but not the one he preaches, namely the truth of original sin. No matter how adamant may be his insistence that fall and Redemption are meaningless, he cannot fully escape the knowledge hidden in his blood. In rejecting the truth of original sin, Hazel expresses the ignorance and indifference of the people of
Taulkinham. No one is touched or excited over Hazel's
blasphemy or his denial of Jesus and Salvation. Everyone
is busy in self-interest and material gain. Salesmen and
fake prophets like Asa Hawks compete for the attention of
prospective customers. Asa Hawks, a blind evangelist
preaches Jesus, but Hawks is neither blind nor religious,
as Hazel discovers one night while holding a match under his
eyes. The one man whose secret he had to discover, the one
witness for Christ turns out to be a fraud. At this point
Hazel begins to make that fraudulent identity a real one in
his own life. Hoover Shoots, alias Carrie Jay Holy is another
fake religious man who wants to make money with Hazel's help
and his "Church without Christ." He even substitutes another
prophet named Solace Layfield, dressed exactly like Hazel and
driving another 'rat-coloured car'. When Hazel in a fit of
anger over this fraud, runs his car over Layfield and murders
him, he is not only reclaiming his identity stolen from
him, but he is also reclaiming a delinquent prophet for the
Lord. Richard H. Rupp in his Celebration in Post Her
American Fiction discusses this point and says, "Hazel is a
catalyst for religious indifference. As comic as the novel
is, Christ is at its center. The real object is freedom,
as Flannery O'Connor notes in her foreword to the 1962
paper-back edition: Freedom is "a mystery and one which a
novel even a comic novel can only be asked to deepen." Asa
Hawks responds to Hazel with flight, his daughter with curses,
Enoch Emery by choosing gorillahood, Solace Layfield by choosing Christ. None of them can retain indifference."

In fact, after Hazel, Hawks is the most spiritually aware person. He knows that Hazel is intended for some reality other than the gross sensuality and cheap commercialism which pass for life in that city, and his despair is his failure to reach that reality. Preston Browning says about him, "Hawks caught in a mesh of defiance and despair is sinister, demonic. It is he the small time Lucifer (his first name may be derived from Azazel) who represents the real temptation for Hazel to compromise his integrity. When Hazel learns the preacher's true history he appears ready to acknowledge the failure of his belief in nothing and to adopt evil as his truth." Hazel is ultimately brought to acceptance of salvation only after the failure of one last attempt to find a city suitable for the establishment of the Church without Christ. After blinding himself, Hazel's path is one of total rejection of selfhood, so that he prepares a perfect gift for God.

Dorothy Walters talks about Hazel's penance in her book, "Hazel is following ancient patterns of salvation which his soul intuitively discovers according to his need. All the patterns given in various myths are followed by him. The anchorites who fled to the desert, the solitaries who systematically emptied, the martyrs who suffered in the extreme to testify to their belief - these various patterns
are adopted by Hazel who is determined to expunge his impurities through superhuman efforts so that he may adequately redeem himself before the God he has so deeply betrayed." Some readers may object that Hazel is too extreme and insufficiently motivated. But Hazel is guilty of blasphemy, murder and sexual impurity. His rigorous fundamentalist puritan heritage would insist upon an extreme act of expiation if he is to be saved from ever-lasting damnation. According to Dorothy Walters Hazel is a divine paradox, the Christian despite himself.

The last chapter of the novel is narrated from Mrs Flood's point of view. After his self-blinding Hazel's own eyes are closed and his utterances become fewer and fewer. But Mrs Flood is seen "leaning forward staring into his face as if she expected to see something she hadn't seen before." (W.B., p. 213) "watching his face had become a habit with her; she wanted to penetrate the darkness behind it and see for herself what was there." (W.B., p. 225). In the first chapter it was Mrs Hitchcock who found herself constantly looking into Hazel's eyes "trying to see into them."

Mrs Flood sees in the depth of his blind eyes a pin point of light like some kind of a star. Miles Crvell in his Invisible Parade says "the metaphor culminates in the last line of the book taking Hazel from the initial ride on the literal train to a symbolic passage through a tunnel and concluding with his figurative apotheosis, when he is at last
associated with the 'pin point of light' at the end of the
tunnel, the star of Bethlehem."30

About Mrs Flood Miles Orvell is of the opinion
that she is blocked at the entrance. But many other critics
have argued this point and said that although there is no
hint that she will move beyond as Hazel has done, yet she
has been brought to the threshold of mystery. Preston
Browning, too, is of this opinion and rightly says that Mrs
Flood experiences changes under the influence of grim self-
mortification. A woman addicted to creative comforts and
totally at home in ordinary and everyday, Mrs Flood is moved
by Hazel's example from seemingly imperturbable complacency
to an anxious desire to know his secret, hence following the
'Pin point of light' she has been granted a spiritual
awakening.31 About Miss Blood Richard H. Rupp says that
"Miss O'Connor's comic irony inverts celebration in Miss
Blood. Yet the elements of celebration are present in the
ritual blinding. But the communal context of that act is
etherial, like the direction of the novel itself. The sacrifice
has the elements, if not the form, of sacrament."32 Preston
Browning remarks about this book that Miss Blood is organised
around a nexus of opposites: sin/innocence; animality/spirituality;
commitment to nothing/commitment to evil; the deity of
coincidentia oppositorum/the god of debased theism;
spiritual sight/spiritual blindness. The tension generated by
these opposites functions to bring the protagonist Hazel Notes
ever closer to a revelatory moment when the scabs fall from
his eyes and he achieves the vision of a mystic or saint." An
enormous amount of attention has been devoted to the
religious symbolism in the novel, and in the author's note
provided by Miss O'Connor for the second edition of Miss Blood,
she herself gives the hint of her intentions: Hazel Notes
is a "Christian Melora Lui." She challenges her readers by
pointing out that they might admire the character Hazel for
trying to rid himself of certain (Christian) obsessions,
but she admires him for not being able to do so. Hence in
the struggle of Hazel Notes, novel's religious element has
clearly been emphasized.

V

In her second novel The Violent Bear It Away, Miss
O'Connor has dealt more directly than any of her other
fictions with the theme of prophesying. Critics like Stuart L.
Burns and Stanley Edgar Hyman have concentrated largely on
the theme of prophesying in this novel. Hyman compares the
struggle of the fourteen-year-old Tarwater to avoid his
calling to that of Moses and Jonah and proposes that in
Tarwater's final acceptance of his burden to be "both vessel
and instrument of divine purpose" it becomes clear that divine
purpose is not answerable to human reason. In a symposium
on Modern Fiction, Miss O'Connor had given her view-points
about theology in her stories, and said, "St. Cyril of Jerusalem in instructing his catechism wrote: 'The dragon sits by the side of the road, watching those who pass. Beware lest he devour you. We go to the Father of souls, but it is necessary to pass by the dragon.' No matter what form the dragon may take, it is of this mysterious passage past him, or into his jaws, that stories of any depth will always be concerned to tell." (I.B., p. 35). In this connection Stuart L. Burns in his essay "Apostasis in Failure" says that "The structural pattern of The Violent Bear It Away enlarges upon the concept of journey "to the Father of Souls" and the theme of the novel is concerned with the question of whether this journey toward self-realization and religious fulfillment is successful or not, whether the protagonist Tarwater passes the dragon or falls into its jaws."35 There are, thus, recurrent references to the religious concept of rebirth - references to the communion sacrament, to the sacrament of Baptism and to the actual resurrection of the body.

Tarwater is a reluctant prophet, but he does in time come to feel that it is his inexorable destiny to trudge "into the distance in the bleeding, stinking red shadow of Jesus", (The Violent, p. 91) and his ultimate realization that there is no escaping his fate. The story does suggest that the divine purpose will have its way with man even though man's reason or his will would have it otherwise. But Preston Browning sees in the novel two more or less parallel
lines of action which occasionally touch each other and which do at least decisively intersect, in one of the major climaxes of the story — the baptismal drowning of the idiot child Bishop in chapter nine. There is on one hand the struggle which takes place within Tarwater to throw off the influence of his great-uncle Mason Tarwater, a wild-eyed half mad backwoods prophet of the Lord. In this effort Tarwater is added by a friendly stranger who appears in various disguises, real and fancied, and who is actually both Tarwater's alter ego and the devil. On the other hand, Tarwater's uncle Rayber the School teacher also attempts to seduce the boy away from his mission and Tarwater tries to oppose him, too. Thus "Here in the confrontation between the fiercely independent primitive uncouth boy and the superficially educated and stubbornly determined rationalist Rayber; we may discern a fundamental clash between two radically opposed modes of sensibility, between two different views of the world; and the collision between the two makes for a sacred line of action." 

Stages of Tarwater's journey are like the stations of the cross. Old Tarwater and Rayber are the opposed moral forces of the novel and Tarwater has to choose which to follow. Thus Tarwater is placed in conflict with two very strong influences: that of the great-uncle's fiery demand that he baptize the idiot son of his uncle Rayber; and that of Rayber himself, the "rationalist", who believes that we are
born only once and we achieve only ourselves. Tarwater, on the other hand, is anxious to remain free of both of them. In this tussle Tarwater's reactions to Rayber are so violent that he actually baptizes the child, and his feelings about Mason Tarwater are so stringent that he drowns the child. But Tarwater is both doomed and free because after baptismal drowning of Bishop, he tries to justify his action and says, "The words just came out of themselves but it don't mean nothing. You can't be born again." (The Violent, p. 309).

Frederick J. Hoffman, in his book 'The Art of Southern Fiction: A Study of Some Modern Novelists,' remarks about Tarwater's behaviour, "there is something terribly confused in Tarwater's explanation. He is in the grip of these alien influences, yet he powerfully wishes to resist them. He is alternately under the eye of the old man and within the "box" (the mind) of Rayber. The acts committed are therefore both profane and solemnly virtuous." Miss O'Connor proves that the urge to religious action is present in all men: even in Rayber, who makes a fetish of proving his evangelically obsessed uncle mad; even in the idiot boy who rides to his baptism on Tarwater's back.

Miss O'Connor has used in this novel her knowledge of the prophets of Old Testament. In this connection Stanley Edgar Hyman also remarks on the analogy in the novel with Bible Prophets: "The old man compared their situation to that of Elijah and Elisha; persecuted by Rayber the old man is
simultaneously Jonah, Ezekiel, Daniel; he was at that moment all of them - the swallowed, the lowered, the enclosed; arriving at Rayber's house young Tarwater is similarly transformed: "His whole body felt hollow ........ borne swiftly through the night and set down in the place of his mission." Thus slowly, relentlessly through denial and burning, murder and rape Tarwater hears his call and responds to it.

Flannery O'Connor's theological basis is evident from the quotation from Saint Matthew, used as an epigram of this novel "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away." Stanley Edgar Hyman interprets this epigram and says "This has been widely misinterpreted. The Authorized Version translates the last clause "and the violent take it by force", and the New English Bible reads, "and violent men are seizing it." Its clear meaning is that the violent are enemies of the Kingdom, capturing it from the righteous, as a sign of the imminent coming of the Messiah, the Christ. In this sense Tarwaters are mad fanatics carrying away the Kingdom from its lukewarm heirs, and Rayber is an equally mad fanatic preaching secular salvation." It is in this extreme sense that young Tarwater is an allegory of the Church, which must lose the world to save it. Miss O'Connor has given the mystery of identity of Baptism and death in this novel. Richard R. Rupp says that "Drawing on Pauline
theology, she shows that the essential violence in every life is death of the self that accompanies baptism." Thus Richard H. Rupp suggests that the physical self must be destroyed to get proper Baptism. The earlier Baptisms of Rayber in the woods and young Tarwater in the nursery were only hostile actions, but Bishop's Baptism in death is the proper and theological Baptism.

A number of critics have remarked that the heroes of Miss O'Connor - Hazel Note and Tarwater - do not possess any free will. Both the heroes are destined to accept their vocation. John R. May in his book The Pruning Hand says "The baptism drowning is, as I have tried to demonstrate elsewhere, the compulsive effect of the seed's deep impregnation of Tarwater (The seed planted by old Tarwater); by no means a free act on his part, and therefore, no signal of his personal acceptance of the prophet's role, the baptism-drowning is an abiding reminder to Tarwater that grace can seize even one's demented efforts to deny it." But Miss O'Connor herself discusses this point and says about Nissa Blood that it was written by an author congenitally innocent of theory, but one with certain pre-occupations. For the reader, "Hazel Note's integrity lies in his trying with such vigour to get rid of the ragged figure who moves from tree to tree in the back of his mind. For the author his integrity lies in his not being able to" (E.M., pp. 114-115). About Tarwater she says that he is "certainly free and meant
to be; if he appears to have a compulsion to be a prophet, I can only insist that in his compulsion there is the mystery of God's will for him and that it is not a compulsion in the clinical sense." (H.J., p. 116) In this connection it can be pointed out although The Violent Bear It Away is no doubt a religious novel and thoroughly parabolic, Tarwater's journey out of "the stinking shadow of Jesus" and back into it again takes place through hard personal decisions and actions and not through visions or miracles. Sallie McFague Teselle says about the novel, "It insists on hiddenness, ironic distance and personal decision in the experience of coming to belief."  

Irving Malin claims "she must believe as a Christian in free will and spiritual design. But as a writer she reinforces the grotesquerie of existence." He suggests that "while consciously she believed in the goodness of creation and freedom of man, her fiction reveals that she unconsciously believed the opposite." But David Eggenschwiler says that "To the Christian Humanist since God is the ground of man's being, the center of his essential self; He is the "Center of Centres". When one works from this point of view and explores the psychological correspondences, one finds new meaning in the basic Christian belief that man's freedom is obtained in accepting the will of God, his bondage in rebellion." Thus the same definition can easily be applied to heroes like Hazel Hottes and Tarwater.
Preston Browning remarks about Miss O'Connor's life and works and says that this rare coincidence of apparently opposing forces and motifs in her life and work has often made her a puzzling figure, violent crime and "attraction for Holy" are held in tension and out of this tension grew Miss O'Connor's extraordinary creating power and unique vision. A glance at her stories serves to establish the centrality of this yoking of opposites in Miss O'Connor's works. Her novels and her short stories are an effort to recover the idea of the 'Holy' in an age of disbelief. She perceived in contemporary man the loss of the 'Holy' thus she set her characters on a journey to ultimately rediscover that 'Holy'.

Her first published story "The Geranium" in 1946 which was part of her thesis for the Master's Degree deals with the same vision and mystery - transplantation and dislocation theme and ultimate reunion with that great Mystery. This story has been rewritten as "Judgement Day" and discussed in the Chapter "Revelation and Redemption". Comparing the two stories, one comes to realize the fact that although "The Geranium" lacks the maturity and polish of the latter story, yet it proves that Miss O'Connor committed herself as a writer of Christian themes. In her uncollected early stories like 'Wild Cat' and 'The Turkey' (also titled 'The Captive') one can easily discern the emergence of
revelatory communication.

"Wild Cat" is a story about an old blind man who is compensated by the visions through sound and odour. But he is not perfect although he does make claims to infallibility. In the beginning of the story the young hunters, who respect him as well as make fun of him, ask him to recognize them through the sense of smell. He is proud to do so but names three out four correctly. However, at the end when same question is put to him he refuses to give a definite answer and says "I knows what I knows boy" (G.S., p. 32). This change has been brought about by learning the lesson of humility and by shedding off the sin of pride regarding his knowledge. The instrument in this case for revelation is the wild cat whom he smells during the night and thus smells death. He is sure that the wild cat has returned for more than animal blood - his blood. But he is in error about the estimate of the wild cat's nearness. Thus while going through the lonely and dark passage of the night of fear, old Gabriel admits his ignorance and realizes that he must wait upon the Lord. John R. R. Ray finds some similarity in the character of old Gabriel and that of Mason Tarwater and says that "This humility is later on developed by O'Connor in her characterization of Mason Tarwater."47

"The Turkey" explores the development of religious awareness in a young boy. The wounded wild bird triggers the boy Buller's first serious thoughts about God's revelation of
Himself to man. Though Sister M. Bernetta Quinn sees
cynicism in this story rather than hope or faith, but she
agrees that Miss O'Connor "plants seeds of recovery which
will germinate with adulthood." Ruller playing in the
woods spies a wild turkey and while he pursues it, the
bird escapes. However, he finds it, and then loses it
again near his home just as he thinks of making a present
of his capture to his parents. Ruller like all Miss
O'Connor's characters feels no need for Salvation, so when
he loses the turkey the first time his disappointment
makes him curse and blaspheme, but finding the turkey again
renders his thoughts of God as benevolent, and he takes it
to be a sign of Divine Providence and feels very proud
of the prize that he would receive from his parents.
However, when he loses it again to some country kids he
experiences the agony of loss. John R. May says about
this process: "The finding-losing-finding-losing rhythm
although cyclic as a pattern of movement provokes youthful
theological response from Ruller that is definitely
linear and progressively more profound as he reflects pro-
maturely upon the experience of the transcendent in the
events of his life." However, Sister M. Bernetta Quinn
says that "On the contrary, his belief in God is endangered
by what has happened, by this unexpected blow which seems
to him to obliterate Divine Mercy." But she further
adds "though Ruller is left on the other side of this
threshold, Miss O'Connor leaves us expectant that he will.
cross it."

"The Train" the last of the six stories of Miss O'Connor's Master's thesis, became the first chapter of Miss Blood. The story is about death with coffin imagery. The confinement of mortality as well as the fleeting nature of human existence is the thematic centre of this story. The last of the previously uncollected stories "Why Do the Heathens Rage?" asks a query to which John F. May has given a very befitting answer. "The heathens rage because they try contrary to Jesus' warning (Matt 5:24), to serve two masters, God and Mammon, and as a result serve only the latter well." Miss O'Connor's heathens also rage in vain since they have chosen the wrong master. Thus we see an apparent religious element in her earlier fiction, and her art was building towards the revelatory power of the Mystery which became the dramatic centre of the stories of the two collections. Then she finished the Miss. for the first collection of short stories, A Good Man Is Hard to Find, she wrote to Robert Fitzgerald that those were "nine stories about Original Sin..." (Introduction xxii).

VII

Miss O'Connor's stories are full of such people who deny the 'Holy' in their lives because they fail to acknowledge their sin. They reject Christianity because of a belief in their capability to find new Jesus compatible
with their own needs. Hudga Hopewell in "Good Country People" is one of them. She demonstrates a spiritual corruption, but finally accepts truth through recognition and acknowledgment of her error. Having taken Ph.D. in Philosophy, Hudga Hopewell has arrived at an intellectual position similar to that of Hazel, Rayber, and Sheppard, which fuses atheism and nihilism. She lives with her mother in the country because of her weak heart and artificial leg. She changes the name from Joy to Hudga to suit her body and thus lets her artificial leg shape her identity. Joy-Hudga has turned from the physical world, and her contempt for the natural world is so great that she sees through to nothing to a world of abstractions. "If science is right" she underlines in a book "then one thing stands firm, science wishes to know nothing of nothing. Such is after all the strictly scientific approach to Nothing." (C, p. 277).

Carter Martin says about Hudga that "Her artificial leg symbolizes her spiritual incompleteness and seeing nothing in this fashion is a kind of salvation." In the course of action such characters of Miss O'Connor are all given an opportunity to recognize their self-deception. Hudga too recognizes this self-deception in an encounter with pure evil in the figure of a Bible salesman. Sister Kathleen Pecky remarks about Joy-Hudga and the Bible salesman, "Both the girl Joy-Hudga and the Bible salesman
have perverted their true selves, and each is revealed in his falsity after the word of God is perverted during a seduction scene – itself a perversion of love.”

Bulga associates the Bible salesmen with “Good country people” and feels triumphant in seducing him. But by agreeing to show the salesman her wooden leg she surrenders her soul to him as if affirming faith with the good country people. However, she is shocked to find him a hardened cynical believer in nothing and asks in a dazed manner “Ain’t you just good country people” (C. S., p. 290). In the presence of pure evil her nihilism is worthless.

Gilbert H. Muller comments about the story that “This story is a ruthless depiction of an individual chained in body and soul and the one who is subjected to extreme alienation due to belief in nothing.” But Sister Kathleen Feeley rightly gives her views that “There emerges the strong possibility that having lost her false life she will see herself “without a leg to stand on” and would hobble toward “home.” By her physical deformity Bulga is no doubt different, but she is open to the possibility of discovering truth.

Miss O’Connor’s story “A Late Encounter with the Enemy” though considered as a typical example of satire on Southerners is not without theological implication – the false pride of the old general is humbled. Sixty-two year old Sally Poker Sash’s grandfather General George Poker
Sash is no general at all. In fact he does not even remember whether he was a private or a captain. However, he is presented as the General at a movie premier and thus wallows in that false dignity. Finally, he is struck down by his pride. He is supposed to have fought many wars, but on the graduation of Sally Peck Sash the graduation oratory becomes a real war for him. By the time the graduation ceremony begins the General has already started his encounter with death which he cannot survive. John R. Hay says that "The words become inexorable bullets of judgement from an invisible enemy - history - that should actually have been George Peck Sash's true friend." 56

Sister Kathleen Feeley says about the General that although it has not been mentioned in the story "This lack of awareness of Southern history in which he has played a part, evidently precludes for him an awareness of larger history of Salvation which lies behind it." 57

Discussing this story, Dorothy Walters rightly says "For Flannery O'Connor the many mysteries inherent in the fusion of human and divine, natural and sacramental, converge in the "Central Christian Mystery " the paradox that life "has for all its horror been found by God to be worth dying for." 58 The role of Miss O'Connor's Catholic faith in her work is well known, and the large critical bibliography dealing with her work frequently focuses on that role. Her two essays "The Fiction Writer and His Country" and "The Church and Fiction Writer"
give forth her personal beliefs as a writer through which reader can analyze her views in Christian concerns.

VIII

In many of Miss O'Connor's stories the idea that you are what you seem is quite predominant to her characters. Outward manifestation -- appearance and action -- is symbol of inward quality. Miss O'Connor's "Revelation" appearing in her second volume Everything That Rises Must Converge is one such story. The story is based on class consciousness and ultimate justice. It is the purest example of the expanding vision of the communion of saints. The story reveals the rebirth of a woman, and Miss O'Connor's insistence on true charity. Mrs Turpin the leading character is the snub and complacent woman who needs to see the light of charity. The agent of that light is a Wellesley girl with grace on her face. When Mrs Turpin and her husband enter the doctor's waiting room, Mrs Turpin immediately sizes up the other patients, and she types the people sitting about the room. Satisfied that she has put everybody in the proper place she mentally reviews her calculation of various social classes - coloured people, white trash, home owners, home and land-owners to which she and her husband belonged. But while defining these classes she always gets confused and does not know what to do with common people with a
lot of money or the people with good breeding who have lost their wealth and also the rich blacks. The Wellesley girl cannot listen to her pious platitudes. Finally, enraged at Mrs Turpin, she hits her over the eyes from across the room with her physiology text and tells her "go back to hell where you come from you old wart hog." (C.E., p. 300).

In view of all her virtues Mrs Turpin cannot understand how Jesus could let a lunatic girl publicly prophecy to her. Completely off-balance and obsessed by the incident, she tries to get rid of her irritation by hosing down the pig parlour. She even challenges God Himself and then sees the vision. About the vision, Shannon Burns says "Unlike Julian's mother, Mrs McIntyre or Mrs Hay, she is granted a sight of O'Connor's added dimension. The narrowness of her work ethic is blasted by this vision and her class structure dissolves." 59 Richard H. Nupp comments about the vision "When she does see, the sight is the communion of saints. In that vision of swinging bridge to heaven, the lame enter first - the Negroes, the white trash, the battalions of freaks and lunatics. Last of all come the people like herself; 'even the virtues are burned away'." 60 She ultimately realizes what has appeared to her throughout life to be virtue is really selfishness. She finally sees the Mystery and accepts new vision of Reality.
Josephine Hendin, on the other hand, does not see any concept of theology in Miss O'Connor's works and says that "O'Connor's work has so often been seen as merely polemic, is largely due to such statements about her own belief and the willingness of the critics to accept her statements." She further remarks that "O'Connor's assertions of Christian orthodoxy do not accurately describe her art. They are belied by the human experience in her work." Thus Mrs Hendin comments on Mrs Turpin after she sees the vision: "Perhaps Mrs Turpin is both saved and from hell because damnation and redemption are so alike. As she has her vision of heaven, she groans pig-like until, with her small unblinking eyes, she stands immobilized by the hog pen. The sight of heaven destroys her faith in her spiritual qualities and forcing her back into her body, makes her acknowledge that she is a pig." But in spite of Mrs Hendin's severe views, she agrees that all Miss O'Connor's characters - freaks, lunatics and even the kindly and respectable - O'Connor's particular bêtes noires - go to heaven. But John R. May gives a very befitting interpretation of the story and says: "The story apart from expressing Jesus' teaching that first shall be last and last first interprets as well as the folly of our own human tendency to determine reality's order, to consider ourselves superior to others, and to impose our ways on others. Through the shared experiences of Mrs Turpin's ordeal the story forces us to accept the fact that the Word must
interpret us and not we the Word."

Miss O'Connor believed very strongly in the principle of evil. As a writer she admitted that she repeatedly incorporated devil so that he would be readily recognizable. Carter W. Martin says "Just as Milton's Satan may be mistakenly taken as a heroic figure if one fails to trace his character to its ultimate degeneration, so might Flannery O'Connor's devils be misinterpreted when considered out of their thematic context." However, Miss O'Connor did believe in Christian dualism, and Rufus the young boy in "The Lame Shall Enter First" has been given the devil's role. He is in fact the voice of judgement; and through Rufus Sheppard the do-gooder of the story could have achieved proper salvation had he accepted his inadequacy.

Sheppard, the city recreation Director attempts to adopt and reform Rufus Johnson, an orphaned delinquent with an IQ of 140. The story is a struggle between Sheppard and Rufus and it represents the same pattern as Rayber - Bishop - Tarwater. Sheppard who is a rational like Rayber urges Rufus to see the rational side of the world of science through education, books and telescope. He tries to please and convert Rufus to his secularism by buying new cloths and orthopedic shoes for his club foot. In the process Sheppard neglects his son Norton who is inconsolable over the death of his mother a year previous.
Sheppard instead of giving him consolation attempts to impose his rational views on his son. But Norton is only interested in seeing his mother in heaven beyond the stars. He spends his nights in the attic with a telescope, searching the heavens in vain, and Rufus Johnson, raised by his fundamentalist grandfather and nurtured on the Bible, seizes on Norton's need to instruct him in the ways of Lord. Although he has deliberately opted for evil and enjoys deluding Sheppard, yet he is gentle with Norton and slowly leads him to an understanding of the spiritual world that his mother is in heaven. Norton thus becomes more and more absorbed in the spiritual world and finally hangs himself to reach the space in search of his mother in heaven. Richard H. Rupp says about the story "Johnson approaches Sheppard and Norton in different ways. Norton, the innocent seeks love: thus Johnson preaches Christ to him - Sheppard clings to naive assumptions of invincible natural goodness: thus Johnson preaches sin to him."  

In his struggle with Sheppard, Johnson refutes Sheppard's clinical diagnosis of his vagrant and evil ways and challenges him "I lie and steal because I am good at it! My feet don't have a thing to do with it! The lame shall enter first! The halt'll be gathered together. When I get ready to be saved, Jesus will save me, not that lying stinking atheist, not that..." (C. W., p. 48). This brutal rejection awakens Sheppard. "He had ignored his own
child to feed his vision of himself. He saw the clear-eyed Devil, the sinner of hearts, leering at him from the eyes of Johnson. His image of himself shrivelled until everything was black before him. He sat there paralysed, aghast" (C.R., p. 461). Too late Sheppard realizes his error. Sister Kathleen Feeley says "The story develops in complex unity three variations of meaning of scriptural dictum "The truth shall make you free.""  

The title of the story comes from the prophet Isaiah and suggests that those who acknowledge that they are spiritually maimed will merit first claim to the Grace of Redemption. The story abounds in theological elements. Rufus Johnson destroys Sheppard's humanistic self-deceptions by insisting on his own evil and on Redemption through Christ alone. Sheppard thinks that mischief is merely a compensation for lameness whereas Rufus Johnson knows that genuine Salvation has nothing to do with orthopedic shoes. John R. May finds Sheppard's dealing thrice with police as symbolic of Peter's denial of Jesus.  

He further comments "Rufus' exclamations - "the lame shall enter first!" and "The lame 'll carry off the prey! " imitate the triumphant note of the gospel beatitudes, condemning Sheppard for his clinical positivism that denies the mysteries of freedom and evil in the world, while reminding us once again that "Jesus thou art everything off balance."

Richard H. Rupp sees mystery of finite and infinite in Norton's death and says "Norton like, Mrs May in "Greenleaf"
and the little boy in "The River", plunges into the mystery of death in an act of wonder, an act of faith. Never before has Miss O'Connor so juxtaposed the finite and the infinite."

A number of stories from *Everything That Rises Must Converge* have been discussed in other chapters also, but the two stories discussed in this chapter show that this volume is a collection of stories about enlargement of vision. The characters share in rising action of the title, towards convergence with Christ at the Summit of Time.

IX

Miss O'Connor's works prove the point that her role as a novelist has been a prophetic one. Each of her stories in some way carries a Christian point of view. The range of the Christian themes is extensive and the means of expressing them diverse though the technique employed by her is sometimes misleading. Herself a devout Catholic, she has portrayed protestant characters and settings; her grotesque characters often are more religious than normal people; and her sense of universal charity and compassion is expressed in stories notable for humorous satire and irony. Miles Orvell says "Her best works reveal a constantly felt tension between the pull of reality and the pull of reality, between surface and depth, between fact and mystery." It is, therefore, seen that the mystery of
this rhythm of human life is for O'Connor the mystery of Christianity.

The Reviews Miss O'Connor wrote from 1955-63 for the weekly Journal of the Catholic Diocese of Georgia give a distinct picture of her underlying viewpoint, and in her stories one can hardly ignore the overt metaphors that suggest sacramental vision (the sun, the peacock) or the revelation to her characters of the underlying Mystery in the world. A religious writer like Miss O'Connor uses symbols and allegory to see more of the situation because for an allegorical writer the natural and the supernatural contain each other. She wrote about the aim of fiction "The longer you look at one subject, the more of the world you see in it, and it's well to remember that the serious fiction writer always writes about the whole world, no matter how limited his particular scene." (Ibid., p. 77).

At other place she says that "The artist penetrates the concrete world in order to find at its depth the image of its source, the image of ultimate reality" (Ibid., p. 157). This respect for wholeness provided her with many of her important themes of Original Sin - Grace and freedom. With her artistic vision she wrote about wholeness as well as incompleteness, divine as well as grotesque, good as well as evil.

This use of grotesque, which basically involves judgement and describes deficiency in human beings, seems
to be largely responsible for the charges that Miss O'Conor was of the devil's party without realizing it. (John Hawkes, Irving Howe and many other critics). But in her frequently quoted statement Miss O'Conor says that "to be able to recognize a freak, you have to have some conception of the whole man." (M.M., p. 44). David Eggenschwiler says, "It suggests that she based her conception of the man who is not whole, even though he may be a man of many parts, upon the commonly modern conception of estrangement, estrangement from God, and from man's essential self which is the image of God." And we find that all her stories contain this theme of estrangement from God, revelation of Mystery through some shock and finally Salvation. "Our Salvation" she writes "is a drama played out with the devil" (M.M., p. 160). Comparing her stories to plays Howard D. Pearce equates inner revelation to "tragic recognition" and remarks about Miss O'Connor's novels, "Both novels turn on recognitions that, though explicable, cannot be quite verbalized except in symbolic terms. It is thematically appropriate that things learned remain to some extent mysterious, for protagonist like Hazel & Tarwater have been engaged in a tragic struggle to see their own truth and find their way separate from God. In their willfulness they create the conditions of a tragic reversal, and in submitting to God they must not only realize the mystery, they must grow outward toward it. They do not comprehend it, they leap into it."75

In a recent article Jacquelin Singh gives the following analysis of Miss O'Connor and her works. Mrs Singh considers Miss O'Connor a Prophet, not in the sense of telling fortune but of seeing the truth and says: It was part
of her stance as a writer "with Christian concerns" who had a vision to share. The impatient energy that powered the vision and the insistence on our partaking it remind us of qualities of temperament E.M. Forster ascribes to the visionary writer, or "prophet" as he calls him. Such a novelist, he says, is one who trains his eyes on the distant horizon (where we are not even looking) while stubbing his toe on an obstacle underfoot, a breaker of rules, a thrower around of furniture in the halls of fiction, but above all, a bard possessed by a song of almost unbearable portent and beauty. It was a term Forster used sparingly. No doubt Miss O'Connor was also such a novelist and a prophet.
Notes and References


7. Ibid., p. 12.


15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., p. 5

17. Ibid., p. 8

18. Ibid., pp. 8-9.

19. Ibid., pp. 9-10.
20. Walters, Flannery O'Connor, p. 35.
23. Cole, Flannery O'Connor's South, p. 64.
25. Ibid., p. 45.
26. Ibid., p. 46.
27. Rupp, Celebration In Post-War American Fiction, p. 84.
32. Rupp, Celebration In Post-War American Fiction, p. 84.
34. Hymen, Flannery O'Connor, p. 25.
36. Browning, Flannery O'Connor, pp. 75-76.
37. Ibid., p. 76.
40. Ibid., p. 24.
41. Rupp, Celebration In Post-War American Fiction, p. 85.
42. May, The Pruning Sword, p. 147.


46. Browning, Flannery O'Connor, p. 11.


58. Walters, Flannery O'Connor, p. 89.


60. Rupp, Celebration in Post-War American Fiction, p. 96.


62. Ibid., p. 130.

63. Ibid.


66. Rupp, *Celebration In Post-War American Fiction*, p. 88


69. Ibid., p. 112

70. Rupp, *Celebration In Post-War American Fiction*, p. 89.


