

The Ballad of Aloysius Gonzaga

(After Butler's *Life*)

His father hoped he'd go to war
And when the Saint was only four
From his storehouse the Marquis
Brought him small artillery.

And at five like any soldier
He bore a pike across his shoulder
And showed that he was not afraid
By firing guns in a parade.

But when he learned the soldier talk
He gave his teachers quite a shock.
He suffered agonies it seemed
When they rumored he blasphemed.

From his infancy each day
Aloysius liked to pray
And on his knees (without a cushion)
Said the office with devotion.

He passed up an investiture
From the hand of the emperor
And (so writes Robert Bellarmine)
Never did a mortal sin.

In Florence at the age of nine
His chastity began to shine:
He wouldn't look at girls he'd meet
And never even bared his feet.

His stomach was not very good;
He couldn't eat the things he should.
He stayed at home as per the edicts
Of the African ascetics.

He spent his days in reading curious
Stories of the Saints by Surius,
And also read about this season
Of Jesuit labors with the heathen.

He started in the summer slowly
Teaching boys of Castiglione—
In the winter stayed in churches
And lashed himself with whip and
scourges.

Awake at midnight in his room
He knelt upon the floor of stone:

Three days a week on bread and water
And no heat in the bitter weather.

Extraordinary circumspection
As he prayed without distraction
Led some others at the court
To think he was some kind of sport.

He hoped to be a Jesuit
Which put his father in a fit
(Who thought there was some large
dissembling
To make *him* sacrifice his gambling).

He sent him on a tour of kings,
But Aloysius hated things
And forced his father to decide
Just before the father died:

St. Aloysius in his teens
Became a Jesuit of means;
He was afraid of being proud
And worked as meanly as allowed.

He found a room above the stair
Furnished with a bed, a chair,
A stool on which to set a book,
A single window in the roof.

He liked to meditate upon
The attributes of Three-in-One:
And when he seemed about to see
He fell into an ecstasy.

In a hospice of their own
Jesuits fought the plague in Rome;
On Aloysius' meek request
He washed the sick and made their beds.

He caught the fever and with joy
The saint prepared himself to die.
He was impatient for his call
And prayed propped up against the wall.

A dream he had, made him insist he
Would not live through Corpus Christi.
To be sure he died in June,
At twenty three, though not too soon.

JOHN LOGAN

Not Crowded, Not Lonely

"GOOD JOB," I THOUGHT, smoothing the cover and contents of the latest MODERN AGE (Summer, 1958). "Kirk is finding the writers, free men all. They use words for fuel too long deficient in this shivering world from which decent and civilized drapery has been torn."

Now I do not believe that Dr. Kirk would do deliberately what seems to be the neatest trick of any year: to make of this issue a symbol of an ancient dilemma. It took some time for me to identify the question which is only a suggestion. Rather puzzled, and yet certain that somewhere in the issue there was a curious conflict, I went back over the ground once more, itself a pleasant search. I riffled the pages again, this time from back to front. Finally, or so I believe, I found the key. It was in the last line, on the last page, where a letter was signed "A Reader". It was a fine letter, — literate, orderly, informed, and also angry. "A Reader" had recognized and assembled a good many fractions, parts of a complicated puzzle. In part his fragments resembled garbage, in part shavings from timber once unafraid of any storm. Finally, however, apparently shocked by his reckless honesty, he retreated into anonymity. "Let's you and him fight,"

he seemed to say. Well, all of us have thrown spitballs at authority on occasion and then quickly turned accusing eyes elsewhere.

So I left "A Reader", and returned once more to the front. In the MODERN AGE editorial's first sentence, — and I find this neither tragic nor comic, but simply interesting — there is a quotation from Roy Campbell. Roy Campbell had said, and loudly: "A body that cannot react is a corpse." Now one of these lines, the first line or the last line, is in error. There is an alpha, and also omega. Between one head and one tail lies the body, soul enclosed, of this generation and of the race. Toward some remotest Thule travel we all, some erect, some crouching and some supine. But only one stance is suited to sounding trumpets when nations drowse. The tattered flag of conservatism is not retrieved by command, but by volunteers. It is no man's privilege to examine or order the honor of another. Where the secret police have been seen approaching, or what passes for team-spirit is chiefly product of fear, the flesh can reflect only attitudes which arise within each of us. Choice, peculiar to man, includes swimming against the stream of unthinking water, as well as