

to hold. Consider the following speech from *She Stoops to Conquer*. Young Marlow's traveling companion is blaming him for their having lost the road:

And all, Marlow, from that unaccountable reserve of yours, that would not let us inquire more frequently on the way.

The comma is necessitated by the presence of *your*, and it throws a fittingly ironical stress on *reserve*. But to use *which* in place of *that* would give the speech a smugly informative tone that would be quite out of key. The speaker is not informing Marlow of something that he knows only too well; he is characterizing his friend's "unaccountable reserve" by pointing to its deplorable result.

One would rarely, if ever, need to use a comma'd *that* clause. It is fairly often justifiable, however, to use a *which* clause that is not preceded by a comma—to use what I would call a "running *which*." A running-*which* clause may be to some extent distinguishing, but its dominant purpose is to inform or assert. This construction is most effective when the clause has an assertive, emotional tone, as in the following sentence from the Gettysburg address:

It is rather for us, the living, to rededicate ourselves here to the unfinished work which those who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced.

A comma before *which* would not violate grammar, but it would slow down the impulsive movement which now sweeps through the sentence, and it would make the *which* clause sound rather dryly informative. To substitute *that* for *which* would inflict more subtle damage, by making the clause appear to be purely distinguishing—as if its purpose were merely to distinguish this unfinished work from some other unfinished work. The clause does of course do that, in a way, but its distinguishing function is of minor importance, for every intelligent reader knows at once what Lincoln meant by "the unfinished work." The main purpose of the clause was not to distinguish, nor was it merely to give us dry information; it was to pay a feeling tribute to the Union soldiers who had fought at Gettysburg. Its tone is emotional, or assertive, and it may be taken as a classic example of the assertive running-*which* clause.

The practice of St. Matthew in using the relative pronouns—or rather the practice of the translators who made the King James Version of the Bible—differed widely from that of the Fowlers, especially where the antecedent was personal. In a recent skimming of some dozens of pages, I nowhere found *who* used as a relative pronoun, though I did find one *whom* (II Kings 25:22). The translators most commonly used *that*, as in "Who is he that is born King of the Jews?" To use *that* with a personal antecedent, at least in a distinguishing clause, is still permissible, but even those who like the sentence just quoted as much as I do would not want always to use *that* to the exclusion of *who*. And it would not be even permissible now to use *which* with a personal antecedent, as is sometimes done in the Bible. In Chapter 7 of St.

Luke, for example, we find "they which are gorgeously appareled," and "a woman in the city, which was a sinner." In two successive verses of St. Matthew himself, we find "unto him which hath" and "unto every one that hath." (Matthew 26: 28, 29).

With impersonal antecedents, the practice of the translators was not strikingly different from that of modern writers except in one respect: the translators apparently never used the compound relative *what*. The same sentence that contains the words "unto every one that hath" ends with the words "even that which he hath," whereas we would now write "even what he has." But the translators often used a *which* not coupled with *that* in a way that the Fowlers would not have approved, and I think they do so in the quoted sentence about the star (Matthew 2:2). The relative clause "which they saw in the east," placed as it is between paired commas, would appear to be giving us, parenthetically, a bit of new information. The fact it conveys, however, is not news, for we had recently been told (Matthew 2:2) that the wise men had "seen his star in the east." The clause is not informing but distinguishing; its purpose is to distinguish one bright particular star from all the lesser stars. It therefore should have begun with *that*; and there was no reason for putting commas around it.

If *which* were replaced by *that*, and three needless commas removed, the sentence would in my opinion be more logical and no less beautiful:

And lo, the star that they saw in the east went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

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## Note on a New Literary Phenomenon

Americans are not a nation of readers; at least not readers of books. The American Institute of Public Opinion, reporting in 1954 on American habits and tastes, asked the question: Do you happen to be reading any book or books at the present time? Of the thousands queried, only 21 percent could or did answer affirmatively. But if few Americans read books they are at least definite concerning the kind of book they want them to be.

Publishers consider that any title that sells more than 100,000 copies in a year is a "best seller." By this standard the best-selling best seller in America today is a novel entitled *Not as a Stranger* written by the late Morton Thompson. This novel has been in print 2 years, and, while it is now down to seventh place on the *New York Times'* best-seller list, it remained No. 1 for more than 18 months. It has been through several editions, has been reprinted in a pocketbook edition, and is currently being made into a motion picture. It is estimated that some 5 million people have now read or are reading this book and

that it will remain on best-seller lists for at least another 2 years. The amazing fact about all this is that *Not as a Stranger* is not a love story, not an adventure study, not a murder mystery, not a popular psychology, not a comedy, not even a heart-thrilling historical novel. It is a thick book of more than 1000 pages about science and some of the men and women who devote their lives to science. It is a book about medicine, biology, physiology, and chemistry; about research and teaching and studying; about general practitioners, specialists, laboratory technicians, nurses, biologists, chemists, and physicists. It is concerned with the extent to which science compels idealism to compromise with reality and with whether, in a universe of pain and pretense, of atoms and absurdity, of fear and folly, there can be any place for a rational faith. It is not a "summer-afternoon-in-a-hammock" kind of book. It is big, vital, and provocative, carefully and accurately written, and its great popularity is the best evidence of the high place of scientific thought and activity in the literate man's present world.

Only a few places below it on best-seller lists is a factual book entitled *The World of Albert Schweitzer*. More than 100,000 people have each paid \$5 to own this unusual collection of photographs and text about a most unusual man. He is not a young, handsome man, not a movie star, not a great sports figure; he is not the head of a nation, a titan in industry, or an eccentric multimillionaire. He is a man of science who is considered one of the greatest human beings of this century.

The Book-of-the-Month Club choices go monthly to more than a quarter of a million subscribers, thereby automatically insuring best-sellerdom to such choices. Its March 1955 selection is *Conquest of Man* by Paul Hermann, a German scholar. No novel, no informal, lightweight divertissement, this is a 455-page, \$6 account of early discovery and exploration across the world. It is a book of archeology; it is history; it is science. The board of the Book-of-the-Month chooses its titles with at least half an eye to pleasing its vast membership. The choice of a lengthy book on archeology is strong evidence, again, of the mounting interest in things scientific on the part of the general reader.

Laura Fermi's *Atoms in the Family*, a biography of her late distinguished husband, Enrico Fermi, was chosen for condensation in *Omnibook* (March 1955). This roughly more than doubles the number of people who have already read it. Mrs. Fermi's account of the scientific achievements of her late husband is not at all technical or abstruse. This, however, does not lessen the significance of the fact that a biography of a nuclear physicist is being read by as many people as read a very good novel.

The only reason, apparently, that more science books, factual or fictional, are not on best-seller lists is that few such books have, as yet, been written. From the sales figures of the few mentioned here and from remembrance of such other best sellers as *The Sea Around Us*, *Annapurna*, *The Silent World*, and the

like, it is obvious that books dealing with science or scientists or scientific data appeal not only to men of science themselves but to the general reader as well. The so-called "layman" is becoming more and more interested in such books. Writing them should prove not only challenging but rewarding to men of science. A genuine service would thus be rendered to a public eager to understand science and increasingly dependent upon that understanding almost for its very life.

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## Do Ye unto Others

*The editors of Science make wide use of referees, sending nearly every paper that is submitted to at least one expert, and sometimes to two or three, in the appropriate field. In the following letter, one reader has set down his suggestions as to how these referees can most helpfully perform the sometimes arduous and annoying but always important task of reviewing manuscripts—a task for which they cannot be publicly thanked, but one for which the editors are constantly grateful, and by which the readers are regularly benefited.*

Refereeing a paper is a job that will interrupt your interesting work, occupy your valuable time, and bring you little or no credit or thanks. You might even be enthusiastically condemned. Why, then, should you bother to do it? Or, why should you bother to do it well?

Selfishly, you should appreciate this unique opportunity to become acquainted with some of the current work several months before it is published. At least a small part of it may be directly stimulating and helpful to you in your own thinking. Also, you should realize that others will be asked to give their valuable time to your own papers. Besides, is it not pleasant to have someone imply that your opinion is worth having?

Unselfishly, you should recognize that here is a chance to render worth-while assistance to progress in your field of interest. You may be able to provide real and valuable help to the author—help from which everyone may eventually profit. You are certainly placed in a position where you can aid the editors in their arduous and relatively thankless task of making the publication of greatest possible value.

Refereeing a paper is not just a chore, however, and not just an opportunity. It carries with it also a serious responsibility. Remember that as referee you are actually in a position of public trust. Not only the editor and the author, but also the public, are counting on you for a fair, thoughtful, and competent evaluation of the paper. Here are some suggestions that may be helpful.

The first point in thoughtfulness is to be reasonably prompt. It is all right to procrastinate in your own work, if you can get away with it, but please do not hold up the progress of science and frustrate someone else by sitting on his paper needlessly long.