OXFORD, MISS. — What can a Southern Baptist preacher tell his Southern Baptist congregation in Oxford, Mississippi, on the eve? It was the eve in this village — the eve of what may be a final showdown at the University of Mississippi. State and federal governments seemed, on this Sunday, to forever have dared each other until the time of daring was over. Now both must act, and one must win. Troops were gathering and Governor Ross R. Barnett was in his war tent.

The Negro James H. Meredith would or would not enter the university very soon.

And so the Baptist preacher, the Rev. Wayne Coleman, faced his congregation in the First Baptist Church of Oxford. He told them that man's creations change, but God, men, women and children in the never changes. The congregation sat stilled and hushed.

Among them were a couple of Chicago newspapermen come to cover what they thought might be the final dying gasp of the old Confederacy. They had arrived the day before, driving down from the airport at Memphis. It was a splendid early fall day, cool, bright, the old leaves on the old old trees just beginning to glow faintly yellow in the brilliant yellow of sundown.

The landscape was Mississippi — a shack remaining here and there from the old days, here and there a ranch-type house from the new days. The sluggish creeks and rivers cut like yellow mocassins through field and forest. Pastures stretched out far from the road (Mississippi is turning from cash crops to dairying), and only here and there did the travelers see a cotton patch. In one of them, a large yellow cotton picker was being run by a small lonely black man. The field hands who used to pick the cotton had all gone away. So had some of the masters.

Rooms were scarce in Oxford — there are literally hundreds of newspapermen here for the battle — but the Chicagoans finally found rooms in a motel near town. After a dinner of catfish and cornbread, they strolled about Oxford, thinking about William Faulkner. Here was the courthouse (bulky, rectangular, Georgian, white painted bricks, with a Greek portico north and south, and a Southern graven (more)