

THE WORLD IS NOT A VILLAGE

AMONG the more acute observations of modern sociologists is their emphasis on the fact that people who know one another well are able to solve what problems they have in common much better than those who are united only by the bonds of the social contract. Ideological hates do not prosper within the life of a village. Face-to-face experience of one another, through the years, produces too much common sense in people for them to believe very bad things of one another, or for them to fear one another very much. As Gordon Taylor, the English sociologist, has said:

Members of these groups . . . form assessments of one another, but they go further: each individual establishes positive links of affection or regard for the other members. These links seem to be based largely on shared experience and acceptance of the other individual for what he is, good or bad.

This is the case of social psychology against the large city, where a man can live all his life as a stranger to the rest of the population. He can die of loneliness; he can turn into a criminal; he can become a philanthropist or a grafter, and not one of his next-door "neighbors" need ever know the kind of a man he is. The more closely packed together people live, the less they may understand of human beings, and the more isolated from natural human contact they may be. So, the sociologist proposes, let us divide our cities up into smaller units—into groups small enough for people to know one another. Let us abolish this anonymous mass which, knowing little, fears much, and feeds on suspicions and delusions.

A recent study of anti-Semitism in Germany bears out this diagnosis. In *Hostages of Civilization*, Eva Reichman distinguishes between what she calls "objective" and "subjective" anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism of the first sort, when it occurs, is a kind of personal resentment of the cultural traits of the Jews one knows, while

"subjective" anti-Semitism is an ideological phenomenon—resulting from the creation of scapegoats in the form of a supposed "ideally malevolent" Jew who need not be connected with any individual persons. The importance of the distinction between objective and subjective anti-Semitism becomes clear when it is realized that at the time that the official "subjective" anti-Semitism of the Nazis reached its peak of fury, the German people showed very little "objective" anti-Semitism toward their Jewish neighbors, and the lootings and persecutions were almost never spontaneous.

But the Jews were persecuted, nevertheless, and millions died in concentration camps. So one may argue that, after the world has been divided up into small communities, with all their resulting common sense the people living in these communities will still be vulnerable to terrible abstractions of the sort that overshadowed the immediate knowledge of the Germans that their Jewish neighbors were not malevolent beings. And when one nation fears another nation, how can knowing everyone in the village cure this disease of the mind?

There is a sense, of course, in which a man who knows his village will also know the world. But then, knowing the village will mean knowing human nature, and knowing it consciously, not merely in terms of a shrewd assessment of a few hundred or thousand fellow townsmen. Such a man will have the kind of knowledge of human nature which the militarists cannot take away from him by the simple expedient of circulating a myth about the Russians, or the Japanese, or some other people or race. The thing that makes the Russians or the Japanese or the Nazis a threat to others is their own willingness to accept the myths of Power and Danger; and this results in the counter-assumption that the only safe way to wipe

out the myths of our enemies is by believing in greater, more "democratic" myths of Power and Danger, ourselves, in order to compete with them in the capacity for destructiveness.

If everyone in the world could simultaneously feel that he knows everyone else in the world as well as any villager knows the rest of the village, the problem of war would be solved over-night. This is the miracle that we hope for, and this is the miracle that we shall never get. The world is not a village, and while the order of human understanding that village life produces has many analogies to the world understanding we want, the two orders are nevertheless not the same. The village does not have the problem of Power and Danger haunting its days and nights. The villager never challenges the power outside the village; if he does, he is no longer a villager, but another kind of human being than the ones the sociologists are talking about.

An ideology is a theory of power, and it is a substitute for philosophical religion. People who are afraid of the responsibilities of freedom—who do not understand that there is no real freedom except in the capacity of human beings to stand alone easily become the partisans of ideologies. Through metaphysical religion, a man can unite himself with the principles of life, and go forth unafraid. Submission to an ideology will unite him only with the inert mass, which is ruled by the principle of death—the principle which asserts that the individual man is unfree by nature, that he cannot stand alone.

In the March *Standard*, published by the American Ethical Union, Gideon Chagy analyzes the conception of power which prevails in the scientific ideology, which is the controlling system of ideas, today. He writes:

The powers that scientists can confer to give men health and fabulous comforts, generals "absolute" weapons, politicians vast new audiences to manipulate, dreamers paved highways to Utopia—these have won for scientists public veneration and in recent years they have displaced even bankers as seers of the American people.

Like the bankers, however, many of the scientists are demonstrating that precise, specialized knowledge frequently victimizes its possessors into delusions of wisdom. The bankers once persisted in measuring the vast expanse of general welfare with the foot-rule of private profit and almost suffered total eclipse. Today the men who have won impressive control over nature through quantification seem to be concerned with little else about the atom bomb than the area of its effectiveness and the numbers it can destroy. It is fascinating to ask whether the blockbusters of pre-A-bomb days raised the same issues of conscience in them as does the vastly more lethal hydrogen bomb. In other ethical fields, do their consciences only function when confronted by big lies or big injustices and remain quiescent in the face of, let us say, a lie affecting one individual or an injustice affecting only a small group?

The truth is that men like Drs. Leo Szilard, Hans Bethe, Harrison Brown and Frederic Seitz are providing the public a dangerous distraction from the real issue. They do not act like men who are morally indignant—they raise no moral issues; they act like men who are thoroughly frightened—and guilt-stricken by their own role. The real issue is not, as they would have us believe, the extent of the devastation that can befall us but the quality of the life we want to retain. Since the atomic scientists would have us stay alive at all costs, they naturally believe that the soundest protection against atomic warfare is a public rendered quaking and querulous by nightmarish recitals of the bomb's destructiveness.

As though to confirm the point of Mr. Chagy's article, Harrison Brown said in a public address on March 19: "It has been insinuated by several persons, none of them scientists, that in stating that life on earth can be wiped out, we are exaggerating. If I accomplish nothing else tonight, I want to impress upon you the fact that we are not exaggerating. We are deadly serious."

The Federal Council of Churches, on March 22, made its first formal pronouncement on the H-Bomb. A committee representing 29,000,000 Protestants was unable to agree on whether the bomb should be outlawed, and concluded only that such weapons "shed vivid light on the wickedness of war itself." In its public announcement, the Council's executive committee said: "All of us unite in prayer that it may never be

used." One would think that the dropping of bombs is an "act of God," to be opposed by prayerful appeals to Providence.

The practical meaning of the World Council's prayer is this: "Please God, don't let other people drop the bomb on us, and if anyone is to drop it, let us be the first." Dr. Brown reveals that scientists have been pursuing similar reflections. In his address on March 19, he said he was sure that men could be "sufficiently inflamed to be willing to kill everything if they cannot have their own way." The press report (*New York Times*, March 20) continues:

"Can we doubt for a moment," he asked, "that Hitler in the desperation of defeat would have killed everything had he had it in his power to do so? Can we doubt that the Japanese leaders would have done the same?"

In his reference to the "soul-searching" among scientists, Dr. Brown recalled President Truman's order to proceed with the development of the hydrogen bomb, and added:

"I ask each and every one of you here tonight—how would you feel if you were in our shoes? What would you, as individuals, do?"

This question, supposed to produce "soul-searching" among the common people, can only have the effect of increasing their irrational anxieties, for neither the question nor the context of emphasis in which it is asked gives any hint of the real issue behind the nightmarish armament race of the present. Two things, and two things only, are leading the human race to embrace with neurotic fervor the doom it fears. The first thing is the idea that the greatest power in the universe becomes available in high explosives; the second thing is the idea that death by explosives is the worst possible evil—the corollary being that physical survival is the best possible good. It should be evident that there can be no abatement of fear until human beings free themselves from the dominion of these ideas.

The man whose idea of himself and of human good is such that he cannot be frightened into the emotional state of a cornered animal by the threat

of atomic destruction is the only man who can regard all the world as his village—who can feel friendly and brotherly toward people on the other side of the world, whether or not they are themselves the victims of some terrifying subjective delusion about *him*; whether or not they may attempt to destroy him before there is time or opportunity for them to discover that he neither fears nor hates them.

Such a man, with a single attitude of mind, abolishes the psychological power of explosives and restores to reality the idea of the free human soul as the highest good. Is it too much to say that no writer or philosopher or statesman who neglects this analysis of the world's dilemma does anything more than add to the moral confusion of the times?

Letter from **JAPAN**

TOKYO.—One of the most widely discussed subjects in Japan—but one which the Japanese themselves know only too well they can influence little—is the question of the Japanese peace treaty. Already four and a half years have elapsed since the historic Surrender on the Battleship *Missouri*, marking the end of World War II, yet Japan—and Germany as well—are still technically in a state of war with the Allied Powers. The irony of the situation, reflecting so clearly the inability of the victor nations and late allies to get together on the simplest issues—much less a peace treaty—is not lost on the Japanese people.

The feeling is deep-rooted here that, after all, Japan is but a pawn in the game of Realpolitik being played for all it is worth by the United States and the Soviet Union. Frankly, the Japanese people do not enjoy this role. They could, to be sure, play one party against the other for their own benefit. But Japan has been inexorably drawn into the American sphere—and the present Government in power has left no doubt that one of its main policies is anti-communism and by inference anti-Soviet. The fear of the Russians, first brought into the open with the Russo-Japanese war in 1904-05, was kept very much alive in the subsequent decades, and such sentiment passed from one generation to another dies hard.

This inclination of the Japanese people to feel more kindly toward the United States than to the Soviet Union, however, has not overshadowed the basic feeling that they must in the final analysis fend for themselves. The sessions of the national legislature late last year and early this year have reflected this point of view vividly as heated discussions took place on the form of the peace settlement and the nation's future security. The general sentiment was that the Japanese people desire a peace treaty in which all the nations engaged in military operations against Japan

would participate and that they want assurances of safeguards for Japan's permanent neutrality in any future conflict.

The legislators stressed that they would not want to conclude a peace singly with nations of either the American or the Soviet blocs—although opinion was also advanced that even a separate peace would be preferable to the present status of an occupied nation. At the same time, the question of the nation's future security, of course, is of major importance to the Japanese since they have in their new SCAP-inspired Constitution forever renounced war as a sovereign right of a nation. The feeling predominates that Japan's best bet in remaining clear of any entanglements in the event of a clash between the two worlds or of aggressive designs by a belligerent neighbor is an international agreement guaranteeing and protecting her neutral status. Strong objections were thus raised against the persistent rumors that the United States is seeking military and naval bases in Japan. There is no doubt that such bases would drag Japan into the vortex of the American-Soviet "cold war." This opposition was not restricted to the Communist legislators alone. On the other hand, there are those who believe sincerely that Japan must depend upon the United States for protection in the final showdown.

The consensus on this problem boils down to its idealistic and realistic aspects. In the former case, the Japanese want nothing better than a peace treaty with all nations and a guaranteed recognition of their permanent neutrality. In the latter instance, the Japanese realize that they may have to be satisfied with a piecemeal peace treaty with separate nations and with military protection from the United States and possibly other non-Communist nations.

But there was one significant result of these discussions in the national legislature and elsewhere throughout the nation, and that was to bring out into crystallized form the fact that the Japanese people as a whole in all strata of society—want no part of the next war, if one

should occur. They even viewed with misgivings the statement made by General MacArthur in his New Year message that although Japan has renounced war, she has not given up the inalienable right of self-defense against an invading aggressor. The Prime Minister was questioned repeatedly in the national legislature on this point, which could be interpreted as a step toward the establishment of a defensive force. Strong opposition was expressed by all political parties, although a few legislators happily echoed SCAP's words.

Indeed, there is no doubt that the former warlike Japanese have undergone a remarkable transformation. But it is to be hoped that this change in the Japanese people will be respected and honored by the victor nations so that their new urge for peace and peaceful existence will not be compromised. A start has been made here for a dedication of a people to world peace, but it must be admitted that the forces of retrogression are also at work both from within and without the nation, and they must not be allowed to stage a comeback.

JAPANESE CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW

TO WORDSWORTH

(April 23rd, 1950, will mark the centenary of the death of William Wordsworth.)

DEAR WORDSWORTH,

You were about thirty-two years old when you wrote your great Ode—*Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*. It is an age when one of two things may happen to a man if he has genius: the flame within him may consume him utterly, or it burns itself out and leaves him to his empty years, a fire without a flame. This last was your fate. Your brooding spirit was doomed to remain powerful but undisturbed; you found peace and lost rapture.

Many, like Swift, have discovered the death of their genius. You anticipated that death and the thought was anguish. You were like a man with failing eyesight who feels himself creeping towards blindness.

I see by glimpses now, as age comes on
May scarcely see at all.

You wrote the Ode because you had been trying with all your strength to see what once you had seen.

Turn wheresoe'er I may
By night or day
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

You realised that, almost, you were blind. For the second time a great poet wrote a poem on his blindness.

But your loss was greater than Milton's. For what was it you could no longer see? "There was a time . . ." in your radiant youth when you worshipped among the depths of things, a burning pantheist, when your soul, like Milton's, was a star and dwelt apart, when

The earth, and every common sight
To me did seem
Apparelled in celestial light.

Ah, Wordsworth, what a radiance was there!

You believed, or half-believed, in re-incarnation; that we come trailing our clouds of glory and not in entire forgetfulness of the heaven we have left. Now it has been written of re-incarnation that a man sees and hears only that which he is capable of seeing and hearing according to the place he has reached in his evolution; he that hath eyes to see, let him see. If visions count then you had reached a higher plane than most. You were "an eye among the blind." But, dear Wordsworth, when at last the struggle was over and, disembodied, you met Plato and the rest, did they, one wonders, reproach you for having so finally written that birth is but "a sleep and a *forgetting*"? Has Plato reminded you in these hundred years that what he said was that all knowledge, all real knowledge, is *recollection*?

You go Plato's way up to a point. You say that the soul must enter its prison the body and resume its task of a new life. Soul and body . . . body and soul . . . unquestioning duality in eternal conflict. The eyes of the soul must so blaze with life and light as to pierce their prison walls until we become, as you say "a living soul" and see "into the life of things." But—when the soul's eyes lose their power, when the prison walls quite shut out the light, what then? Oh then, you say, we must be resigned. Nothing—(you are quite definite about that nothing)—*nothing* can bring back the hour

Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;

We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind;
In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be;

* * *

In the years that bring the philosophic mind.

You see, where you differ from Plato is that you made blindness *inevitable*. Plato, on the other hand, insisted that to recollect was to recover, and he who in his lifetime has recovered

the memory of all he has learnt is already a God. How can he recover it? By living "pure from the body."

Poets, it seems, cannot serve God and Mammon. You knew, none knew better, that the earthly freight could enclose the soul like frost, but you said it was inevitable. Perhaps you had read that verse in the Old Testament.

"For the corruptible body is a load upon the soul, and the earthly habitation presseth down the mind that museth upon many things."

Like Shakespeare you understood the dignity of the soul, "centre of this foolish earth," and the insults put upon it by the body. Yours was an age that demanded industry from its poets, rewarding them, sometimes, with what it called "emoluments." (Yours was to be made Stamp Distributor for Westmoreland.) But you grieved that the world was too much with you, that

. Late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:

And then, as often when you were tormented, you turned your gaze to the sea, as Prospero must have done. Did something stir within you out of your mystical past, did you recollect a glory from those trailing clouds of a bygone childhood? Did you think of that time when a hero thought it shameful to lose his genius and live, so that when he felt the death of it within him would take leave of his world and put to sea in a boat that was not seaworthy, the last broken vehicle his journey here required of him, from which his confined spirit might break free at last to join the everlasting and primeval sea whence all ideas are born? Your anguish bursts from you:

Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I standing on this pleasant lea

Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

You sought solitude. "Trees and fields," said Socrates, "won't teach me anything, but men in the cities will."

You loved to recollect in solitude; but it was men in the cities, as well as men in the country, who first inspired you; it was the press of life in England and in revolutionary France that forced your utterance. Did you think that solitude, *of itself*, could be an inspiration? You wrote:

Such a stream
Is human life; and so the Spirit fares
In the best quiet to her course allowed.

"The best quiet . . ." You died a hundred years ago. Do we know to-day what is our best quiet? Dear Wordsworth, shall we ever know?

MARGARET GREIG

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COMMENTARY

LOVE OF COUNTRY

ALL patriots love their country and wish to protect it from evil, and most patriots see most evils as threatening from without. Because of his lifelong opposition to British imperialism, Gandhi is often regarded by those who do not know much about him as this sort of patriot. The truth is that freedom from alien domination, so far as Gandhi was concerned, was not so important as the overcoming of evils which Indians had imposed upon themselves. This becomes strikingly clear from a letter, hitherto unpublished, from Gandhi to C. F. Andrews, his colleague and friend through many years, which was printed in *Harijan* for Jan. 29, on the second anniversary of Gandhi's death.

Written in 1920 or 1921, this letter shows Gandhi's primary concern for the self-reformation of India. It deals with his struggle against the corrupting aspects of the institution of caste, which he began to oppose even in childhood. Apparently, Andrews had reproached Gandhi for his seeming inactivity on behalf of the oppressed castes, Gandhi replying that he had no need to speak or write in English on this question. He said to Andrews:

Do you know that I have purposely adopted a *pariah* girl? There is today at the Ashram a *pariah* family again. You are doing an injustice to me in even allowing yourself to think that for a single moment I may be subordinating the question to any other. . . .

I am dealing with the "sin" itself. I am attacking the sacerdotalism of Hinduism, that Hindus consider it a sin to touch a portion of the human beings because they are born in a particular environment. I am engaged *as a Hindu* in showing that it is not a sin and that it is a sin to consider that *touch* a sin. It is a bigger problem than that of gaining Indian Independence. But I can tackle it better if I gain the latter on the way. It is not impossible that India may free herself from English domination before India has become free of the curse of untouchability. Freedom from English domination

is one of the essentials of Swaraj and the absence of it is blocking the way to all progress. . . .

The truth came to me when I was yet a child. I used to laugh at my dear mother for making me bathe if we brothers touched any *pariah*. . . . It has been a passion of my life to serve the untouchables because I have felt that I cannot remain a Hindu if it was true that untouchability was a part of Hinduism. . . .

Whenever I am in Calcutta the thought of the goats being sacrificed haunts me and makes me uneasy. . . . The *pariah* can voice his own grief. He can petition. He can even rise against Hindus, but the poor dumb goats!

I sometimes writhe in agony when I think of it. All the same, I am qualifying myself for the service of these fellow-creatures of mine who are slaughtered in the name of my Faith. I may not finish the work in this incarnation. I shall be born again to finish that work or someone who has realized my agony will finish it. . . .

There is something extraordinarily stimulating about the vistas of this man's mind, of one who as a matter of course looked forward to labors on behalf of the things he believed in, not only in one life but in the next as well. MANAS often discusses the question of immortality as a philosophical proposition, as a moral inspiration, or as an intuitively-felt need of human beings. But here is a view of immortality which speaks of another life as casually as we would speak of work planned out for tomorrow or for next week. Gandhi's certainty about his future rebirth did not, we may suppose, make him a great man, for millions have believed in this doctrine without becoming great; but it seems certain that his faith in the continuity of existence gave a quality of wholeness to his resolve the feeling that the laws of Nature support rather than oppose the endless reach of human aspiration.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

A perennial problem with which parents are inevitably concerned involves those situations where children come home all battered and bruised, declaring that they had to fight, either in self-defense or to maintain their honor and manhood before the assembled observers. I can understand "self-defense" as seeming to compel fighting, but there must be something false in a child's fighting, as so often is the case, merely to show that he is "not afraid to fight." The child usually sees no alternative, just as most adults see no alternative to a uniform in the event of war. But just because many people do something is not a sufficient reason for doing it oneself. How can one convey this novel thought to children—the thought of *alternatives* to acceding to mass opinions? Children, like adults of course, feel intensely that it is necessary to "make a good impression, that honor and manhood must be maintained at all costs. What other ways to be honorable and manly are there in situations of violent emotion, besides that of engaging in a mere animal-like battle?

WHETHER or not a physical struggle is "a mere animal-like" engagement depends on the degree and quality of activity of the mind in the participants. It is certainly possible for children and, for that matter, adults, to become at times "merely animal." But whenever anyone visualizes a *purpose* to be served through physical force, he is something more than animal, whether the purpose be good or bad.

As may be inferred from the questioner's comments, large numbers of mankind come very close to the "animal" stage *if* they engage in warfare only because everyone else accepts war as inevitable. For the principal distinction between man and animal lies in the fact that most animals are motivated by herd or flock impulses. Man can do better, unless he is hopelessly conditioned by some totalitarian pattern. And, even then, no matter how many "mass-mind" manifestations there are in human affairs, outstanding men will continue to cherish the qualities which make for the courage of individual deviation.

We might say that there are times when every human being will "fight"—that is, times when even the greatest reluctance towards participation in conflict will be minimized before the importance of some sort of conviction of the rightness of determined intervention. But there are many kinds of fighting. Gandhi fought against the British domination of India, and won his war. He employed a highly skilled and trained army of men and women who believed that he was the best commander-in-chief who could be followed. The Satyagrahi who declined to step out of the way of a train, a truck, or a body of marching men was employing physical force, in that he placed himself physically where some kind of challenging contact would be effected. The great distinction in Gandhi's warfare, however, was in its *nonviolence*. No man could serve in Gandhi's army who allowed himself to be angered against the opposition, who lost his emotional control in any way, or who harbored anything in the nature of hate for either immediate or ultimate adversaries. Because of these reasons, Nehru was able, a short time ago, to define the Gandhian revolution as the greatest revolution of all times; the *mind* of man was more thoroughly in control during this struggle than during any other struggle in history.

So, the most important question is not whether a child fights, but why he does and how. Is the reason something which can actually lead toward human growth and learning? Is the reason presumably a defense of principles, or does it stem entirely from the amount of adrenalin poured into the bloodstream when temper snaps? We cannot expect children to accept "non-fighting" as an ideal in itself. They, and we, for that matter, will always feel admiration for the man whose capacity for combat is carefully hidden, because he hopes never to have to use it, yet who is able to be very effective in a combat he cannot avoid. A situation from Kenneth Roberts' novel *Captain Caution*, subsequently incorporated in a motion picture, probably appealed to most of those who read or saw it depicted. The Captain would not fight in

the face of any ordinary provocations, but finally, when the situation seemed to warrant, he stepped up to his challenger and said disarmingly, "I didn't say I couldn't fight. I only said I didn't want to." And then, of course, comes the dramatic finish with the hero triumphant.

There are also those instances which apparently call for physical effort in effecting restraint against *someone else's violence*. Perhaps the child instinctively feels an obligation to develop his capacity for being effective in preventing continuance of cruelty. We need not feel it necessary to create a "non-fighting" ideal for our children. If we do, we shall have a hard time explaining why George Washington was reputed to have once been the bare-knuckle fighting champion of Virginia, and why many of those who have contributed to the welfare of mankind from sincere humanitarian impulses have acquitted themselves well in contests of physical strength.

But no truly great man ever lacks *control* over his body and emotions. The best advice to children, then, is that control is much more important than fighting, a harder ability to achieve, and infinitely more rewarding. If they feel that they are mentally and emotionally in control of a situation, and still feel that it is best to involve themselves, deliberately, in physical struggle, let us not judge them mistaken, but allow them to learn for themselves. Such choices must be as much a matter of the individual adolescent's own prerogative as the selection of a "date."

If we would like an original argument, however, against the tendency among young males to continually practice violence, it might be suggested that anything which is regarded as either exclusively male or female is unsound, and a disadvantage in the ultimate understanding between the sexes. Actually, we are most impressed by someone's "manhood" when he demonstrates his superior ability to do the *difficult* thing. And it is so often more difficult to refrain from fighting than to fight—for instance, when

one is angered, or frightened by the fear of social disapproval for declining. While some youngsters may fight to overcome a strong fear of physical hurt, others will be impelled because they feel a lack of confidence in themselves and feel insecure. The chance of getting temporary social approval by winning a battle sometimes seems worth taking. Some take out home animosities on any they feel they have a chance to whip, and it is this class of "fighter" which makes some fights hard to avoid.

Probably, the best way for anyone to handle a fight situation which is thrust upon him is by resorting to the use of as much reason and logic as possible. These are fiendishly disconcerting weapons when astutely used. The child who really learns how to use his *mind* will never feel completely at a loss when challenged to fight, no matter how large the adversary. Any reasonable person will have to admit the likelihood of many others being physically more adept and stronger than himself. If an argument develops and the child is asked whether he wishes to "fight about it," or is invited "behind the fence," he can attempt to add a mental dimension to the situation by saying, "No, I would not like it, but if you are sure you want to very much I will try to go along, except I wish you would tell me why you want to fight." Such an attitude may not stop blows, but it does insure that the person who insists on fighting at such a point will not emerge altogether the victor, or at least the tang of "victory" will not be sharp and clear.

The worst thing about schoolboy fights is not the coming to blows itself, but rather the high and unnatural premium placed upon it. If a single person, whether adolescent or adult, can indicate that the results of a probable fight do not mean a great deal to him one way or another, so long as he does the best he can with the situation, it will signify that he is neither afraid of losing nor tremendously delighted by the prospect of winning. In which case the enterprise may lose something of its savor for the aggressor.

FRONTIERS

Religion and Psychism

SOME day, some scholarly historian and analyst of religious belief is going to isolate for study the metaphysical and psychic ingredients of the great historical religions, and thus provide ample intellectual justification for private philosophical religion. Little will be left, we think, of the creeds, when this task has been completed. If, for example, it could be made clear that the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity—of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—is closely related to the ancient Gnostic teachings of Emanations from the One, and that geometrical symbols such as the circle, the point and the line have far greater purity in representation of this archaic metaphysical conception than the "Persons" of theology, an extraordinary emancipation of religious thinking from vulgar anthropomorphism should soon result.

The psychic elements in religion are of equal importance. Nothing is so threatening to mechanical dogma as inward psychic experience having to do with matters referred to ineffectually by orthodox doctrine. The living quality in psychic experience pales mere "beliefs" into insignificance, and it is a matter of history that widespread psychic activity always means the upsetting of orthodoxy in religion, and the launching of a host of new sects and cults. Seventeenth-century England was the scene of remarkable psychic turbulence as well as political confusion, and witnessed an almost tropical growth of innovations in religion.

Two doctrines of Christian orthodoxy—that of Miracles and that of Immortality—are essentially "psychic" theories, having to do with the soul. They deal with the powers of the soul and the nature of the soul. The "powers" of the soul, of course, are said to be really God's powers, in the exercise of which the Christian wonder-worker is merely the agent or "medium." Similarly, the nature of the soul is such that it

depends for its eternal life upon the grace of God, and, this being the case, instead of proposing a "science" of immortality, Christian teaching is full of counsels as to how the grace of God may be obtained.

It is quite natural, therefore, that orthodox Christianity has been consistently indifferent or opposed to non-theological psychic research. In past centuries, both the Catholic and Protestant branches of Christianity have done considerable witch-hunting and witch-burning on the theory that anyone manifesting supernatural (psychic) powers in a manner unacceptable to the church is in league with the Devil—and the mandate of Scripture is clear: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." The general modern disbelief in supernormal phenomena may have put an end to *religious* witch-hunting, but there has been no publicly announced change of the theological heart, so far as Roman Catholicism is concerned. And while an Anglican committee, after an investigation of Spiritualism, found "a strong *prima facie* case for survival and for the possibility of spirit communications," adding that "philosophical, ethical and religious considerations may be held to weigh heavily on the same side," the Report in which this statement appeared is said to have been "suppressed" for years, so that even this "exception" bears out the view that, in general, orthodoxy has been content to ignore the possibility of a light from independent investigation on the problem of survival. The believers in Revelation, and in particular its priestly interpreters, of necessity assume that the Lord has revealed all that He intended human beings to know about the soul, and that while Revelation may be argued about and spun out into speculations, it can never be supplemented by new discoveries. To admit that new knowledge of the soul may be gained from experience would tend to make such experience more important than Revelation, and investigators wiser men than priests—consequences too disturbing to be tolerated, even in theory.

The most "wonderful" elements of the Christian tradition are obviously reports of matters that were once regarded as immediate facts of psychic experience. The Bible is filled with extraordinary psychic events—people being raised from the dead, the appearance of Jesus after his crucifixion, and miracles performed by both pagan and Christian thaumaturgists. Fortunately for the security of the churches, these things no longer happen, and dignified clerics have no need of explaining why they, if they are men of God, do not walk on the water, or turn water into wine. Instead, they need only participate in pedantic discussions about things supposed to have happened nearly two thousand years ago. On the question of the "Resurrection of the Body," for example, the Church of England Report on Doctrine simply acknowledges the existence of "special difficulties." The signatories to the Report announce their willingness to employ "partially irreconcilable symbolisms" with respect to the Resurrection, "and to remain otherwise agnostic." As a prominent Protestant authority once said, it is not for us to "lift the veil where God has left it down."

Theologians, then, are literally the last persons to consult on the problem of immortality. They are not interested in discovery, but in the defense of threadbare "beliefs."

But what of workers in psychic research: Have they anything to say on the subject? The Spiritualists may be passed by without much attention for the reason that they, too, have beliefs to defend, and often exhibit bitter antagonism toward anyone who proposes an explanation of psychic phenomena and mediumistic communications different from their own. The non-Spiritualist psychic researchers, interestingly enough, with almost one voice declare that psychic phenomena do not "prove" the immortality of the soul, although they claim the reality of much suggestive evidence for the theory of survival. In a paper on this question, Dr. J. B. Rhine of Duke University rather calls attention to

the need for "a good experimental approach to the problem," and this, he says, must begin with the formulation of the "distinctive things a hypothetical discarnate personality may reasonably be expected to do."

Here, manifestly, is the bed-rock of the problem. Whether or not Dr. Rhine's hope of being able "to set up appropriate conditions designed to evoke and foster spirit manifestations, if possible without waiting for their spontaneous occurrence," will work, and whether or not this sort of pursuit of "departed souls" is even desirable, an attempt to decide what a disembodied soul would most naturally do is certainly the first step to be taken in any such inquiry. Religious teachings offer little assistance in this direction. The curious thing about alleged supernormal phenomena occurring among persons of established religious beliefs is that the "communications" often seem to confirm whatever those beliefs may be. Spiritualists get messages supporting the theories of the Spiritualists, just as, during the Middle Ages, unhappy psychics often believed themselves to be communing with the Foul Fiend. Swedenborg—to consider a "seer" rather than a medium—described the inhabitants of Venus as being dressed like the peasants of Central Europe, while Oliver Lodge's son, Raymond, reported the spirit-land existence as having much in common with the earth-life he had left.

Mere "beliefs," then, as every serious researcher has testified, are a major barrier to significant discovery in psychic investigations, yet not even a plan of research can be formulated until there is at least a theory of what to look for. It might reasonably be asked whether a sensible "soul" would ever be found wasting his or her (or its) time haunting seance circles in the shy hope of communicating some local trivia to cousin Nellie. But, pursuing Dr. Rhine's suggestion, it is quite conceivable that the condition of the soul after death is in some sense a state of gestation—like, perhaps, the state of the embryo before birth—for

if the soul is immortal, then death, which we think of as an ending, must be for the soul another beginning, another birth, involving processes akin to the birth into a body

Mediums, at any rate, seem unable to get in touch with anything but the psychic "old clothes" of those who have died, and if these worn-out garments of personality appear to us to contain wonderful evidence of the soul's survival of death, this is only because we are too easily satisfied with mere fragments of psychic individuality, when we should be looking for the moral meanings that ought to be connected with a life of soul—if immortality is really a thing worth having.

In his paper, "The Question of Spirit Survival," which appeared in the *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research* for April, 1949, Dr. Rhine offers some interesting comments on the possibility that psychic research will fail to "prove" immortality—something that seems likely to be the case. He writes:

Suppose that the most careful and exhaustive studies which the fullest resources at our command can enable us to make will bring us to the conclusion that all the manifestations that have suggested spirit agency can be satisfactorily duplicated through the more fully understood controlled powers of living persons, what shall we say? If we should find normal human personality able to achieve all the things attributed by the more reliable scholarly observers to spirit agency, we shall by that time have so expanded our conception of man's place in the universe and so enriched him in his powers of adjustment to his larger world that few of us except the historians will even think to look back to the original form of the question with which we set out on the research, any more than we ourselves look back on the outgrown theological speculations of remoter times.

This seems a wholly reasonable attitude to take toward the problem, and more constructive, on the whole, than trying to drive a pipe-line through to the after-death world in the hope that accurate reports can be obtained from those who claim to be able to wiggle a projection of themselves through the pipe, one way or the other. If immortality is a fact, it is a fact for us as

well as for the dead. They are no more immortal than we are, and quite possibly less so. Certainly the "spirits" the mediums contact are less alive than we are. This would make immortality a state of consciousness to be realized, rather than something to "prove" by accumulations of "evidence."

In the last analysis, it is hard to see how anyone can disprove the immortality of the soul, and for those who insist upon "proof," there is always the pointed question—not an unfair one—"What sort of evidence for immortality would you accept?" Not even an intelligent conversation can be held on the problem of immortality until this question has been examined with some seriousness.