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GREAT QUESTIONS: II

THERE is something extremely unsatisfying about the current discussions of "God." A philosopher would tell us, we suppose, that a discussion of God is bound to be unsatisfactory for the simple reason that "God" is an undiscussable subject. But the fact that, after several generations of recess from theological inquiry, the American people are beginning to show a renewed interest in the Deity, suggests that here, at least, is something worth discussing, if the proper approach can be found.

Assuming that the term, "God," does indeed stand for some sort of Ultimate Reality, the mood of the present interest seems to be largely sentimental, or, at any rate, carefully undisciplined. Howard Whitman's article, "A Reporter in Search of God," in *Collier's* for March 31, is a good illustration of this mood. Hinting at some slight personal interest of his own in the inquiry, Mr. Whitman pursued his search, not exactly for "God," but for what other people were thinking and saying on the subject, across the continent. The consensus, he reports, is that "only God" can save the world, now. And so, as he puts it:

> Churches are filling up. They are dusting off pews they haven't used for years. Memberships are zooming. Many, like the Oak Park Christian Church in Kansas City, Missouri, have had to hold duplicate services to accommodate the crowds. Evangelists, from Billy Graham to pretty Kathryn Kublman, are packing 'em in. People are gobbling up religious books as though they were spiritual headache tablets. And one earthy metropolitan newspaper featured the story of Jesus in the very same big, black type it customarily reserves for dope rings, murders and Hollywood divorces.

This is the tempo of Mr. Whitman's *Collier's* article, although there are enough serious questions raised—raised, but by no means settled—to make it worth reading. The discussion moves from the explanation of *why* people are returning to the churches to a review of what people think God is, or is "like." Definitions range all the way from one by a housewife who admitted to praying to something like "an old man with a white beard sitting on the edge of a cloud," to the minister who said that God is the Supreme Intelligence—"a spiritual reality, an intelligent personality, best described as infinite wisdom, love and power." The difficulty with belief in a personal God, the minister explained, is that the scientists "will look up into the sky with their telescopes and report back that your 'person' isn't there." This point seems well made. Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, of the Cleveland Temple, offered the most philosophical definition:

> "God is the thinking and creating Mind of the Universe. He is the source of all its laws, physical and spiritual. The universe is a manifestation of God. . . .
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> "Perhaps Maimonides was right—Maimonides said it is impossible to describe God, that one can only say, 'God exists'."

The next problem taken up is the one which John Milton set out to solve in *Paradise Lost*—to "justify the ways of God to men." Here, the questions come thick and fast: "Why does God let people kill one another?" How shall we explain the tragedies which overtake good and even saintly men? Mr. Whitman put questions of this sort to several theologians. The first question, on why men do evil to each other, is easily settled by the assertion that man has free will—that God doesn't "make" men do either good or evil. But what about the involuntary sufferings of human beings? God, according to the theory developed thus far, may not make men *do* anything, but "He" certainly does things *to* them, by allowing the disasters and tragedies of life to take place.

The answers now resort to the claim that man's purpose and God's purpose may be quite different. A Congregationalist Minister said:

> The essence of faith is the belief that God has a purpose in human life. Our lives, as individuals, can be used to live out that purpose. But we musn't become preoccupied with life itself, as if our sole objective were to save our physical lives. It is easy to fall into that trap in these days of atomic fear.

Thinking that death, whether by atom bomb or by fatal disease, is the worst that can happen to us is indeed a trap, but in giving an "ethical" answer to what is in fact a "metaphysical" question, the Congregationalist avoids the basic issue of nearly all these questions about what God "does" and why he does it. The basic issue is *Justice.* If the justice of divine behavior is obscure, how shall we become convinced that God is just? Or is the justice of God to be taken on faith, along with other irrational mysteries? How *apparently* unjust may God's actions get before we begin to question them?

Practically every dogmatic religion in the world has foundered on this issue. Mr. Whitman offers no historical background on the subject, but merely leaves the reader with the impression that anyone who has difficulty with this problem cannot be a very proper person. But actually, any serious discussion of the God-idea must start out by recognizing that not one, but three, important considerations are involved: the idea of God, the idea of Man, and the idea of Justice. In each of these ideas, the factor of *intelligence* is present—intelligence and power and morality. Morality involves a special kind of power, the power of choice, and without morality there can be no question of justice.

Therefore, if there is to be any sort of religious faith or belief at all, man must have *some* power of choice. And if man has *some* power of choice, then in the instant of his exercise of that choice, he is at least equal to any conceivable "God," because the power to choose, to will, cannot be *derived* power—it must be original and self-existent. Thus it can be argued that when a man really chooses for himself, he is himself the same as God, or a God. And it follows that God, at that instant, is not omnipotent, so long as he is regarded as a separate or personal being. When he is exercising his free will, man is manifesting the divine power.

Thus, if we can assume that wherever any being is exercising his power of choice, the Godlike reality in the Universe is present and active, we have succeeded in doing away with the separation between man and God and abolished the idea of God as an omnipotent personal being. In this case, however, we create new problems. Men do not always choose to do good. Judging from the present world, or the world at almost any period of history, human beings have a strong propensity to do evil. This, we say, can hardly be called "godlike." And it does not help us out of the problem to say that God differs from man in that he is all-good, while human beings are of mixed morality. The evil is still to be accounted for, and the best that any theologian has been able to offer to get us out of this difficulty is to invent a personal devil to account for the evil in the world. So, you can have an outside God and an outside Devil, and preserve a measure of logic; or you can have both good and evil originating from within man. Quite possibly, good and evil within man will be easier to account for than an outside God and Devil, especially when the God is supposed to be not only all-wise, but also all-powerful, and all good. In such a discussion, somewhere, someone is bound to say that true religion is impossible without elements of mystery—that a cold, rational analysis will always obliterate the spirit of religious perception. This is undoubtedly true, but let us be sure to have our mysteries in the right places. Let us have no *unnecessary* mysteries. If we make mysteries of matters that ought to be clearly accessible to our "God-given" reason, we waste our talents and offend against the possibilities of human development or evolution. And, surely, this would be a serious religious failure. The

Buddhists, for example, have mysteries a plenty, but they have no *theoretical* mysteries about undeserved suffering, which is the principal problem of Christian piety. The Christian is obliged to say that the will of God is beyond comprehension, whereas the Buddhist or even some Platonists will explain simply that the soul suffers from some ill done by him in some antecedent state, whether in a former life on earth—according to the theory of the reincarnationists—or in some other existence where the laws of moral cause and effect apply. The saving postulate, in this case, is that of absolute moral justice, as distinguished from inscrutable divine purpose. The postulate involves the assumption of pre-existence, but this assumption does not seem to be a seriously unreasonable one, and it has been made by hundreds of millions of humans, past and present.

The Buddhist God is not really a "God" at all, but rather a conception of moral order which they term the law of Karma. The Buddhist—at any rate, the special sort of Buddhist we are invoking to help with this discussion—would not be troubled by the "nature" of God or feel obliged to "justify" the apparent cruelties of life. He would regard the totality of life in the same terms that the physicist looks at the laws of physical nature. It is "good" to understand the law, to "obey" it, or use it constructively; it is evil to misunderstand or ignore the law, and to suffer the consequences of one's folly or ignorance. Growth, according to this view, would mean forever learning more of how the law works. It is fair, we think, to call this a "scientific" approach to the question of morality or religion.

It seems evident that what a man thinks about God determines what he thinks of himself, and, vice versa, what he thinks of himself determines what he thinks about God. And his self-respect, his sense of justice, and love of his fellow men will all play a part in affecting these conclusions.

This is not to suggest that there is no point in musing about an all-pervasive reality which some mystics have called "God," which Herbert Spencer termed "The Absolute," and others have referred to by similar abstract designations. Conceivably, from what is sometimes called the "spiritual" point of view, the more abstract an idea is, the more real—because more universal—it becomes. If it is difficult to gain a *feeling* of reality about an abstract conception, the fault may lie with our habits of thinking and feeling, instead of with the idea. It is worth while to recognize that we know, in fact, as little about ourselves as we do about "God," and that the solution of one problem may be quite impossible without the solution of the other.

Letter from **South Africa**

JOHANNESBURG.—The dawn of a new year and, indeed, of a new half century, brings to South Africa little cause for optimism. Smuts, her Colossus, has been taken from her, and there would appear to be little leadership left with the necessary strength to rally opposition to the present government's policy of putting back the clock of progress.

The air is full of the government's determination to place the coloured voters on a separate electoral roll, a step possibly toward their disfranchisement, and the intention of the Nationalist extremists to see South Africa become a republic is both recognized and feared by many who are powerless to deflect the present government's policies. It must be remembered that although at the last general election the government obtained a small majority with the aid of the Afrikaner party, the majority of votes were polled by the United Party under Smuts. The fact that they are not backed by the majority of the voting public accounts for the necessity the Nationalists feel to dig themselves in against a possible future parliamentary defeat. It is therefore understandable, though not on that count excusable, that many key jobs in the civil services are going to those known to be loyal to the Nationalist cause. It has always been the tradition, ostensibly at any rate, that the civil service should be kept free from political intrigue and bias. The infiltration of politics into civil service, particularly into education, is therefore a serious threat to the democratic tradition of the country, as well as providing the Nationalists with a strangle hold on the country's life-line of education.

The hand of the present government has been vastly strengthened in the last year by the inclusion in the House of Assembly of members from the Nationalist-minded South West Africa. This inclusion reduces the power of Mr. Havenga and the relatively moderate Afrikaner party whose support was previously indispensable to the government, and the consequent Nationalist independence may enable Dr. Malan's party to introduce measures of a more extreme nature.

In the meantime the anti-European feeling among non-Europeans is hardening into an African nationalism no longer prepared to co-operate with Europeans. Many Africans are coming to feel the need to develop and organise themselves without European help, since they recognise that the Europeans are unlikely ever willingly to allow them an adequate share in the control and government of the country. The promises of the Nationalists that with the application of *apartheid*, non-Europeans will have self-determination within their own areas only increases their cynicism. They know perfectly well that, even within these areas, Europeans will always insist on ultimate control for reasons of their own safety, in view of the proximity of non-European to European areas, and the numerical majority of non-Europeans. They are also well aware that full apartheid is impractical and unlikely ever to be implemented at all except to their disadvantage. Europeans and non-Europeans are already so inextricably interwoven into the economic pattern that complete segregation would involve the country in economic disaster for all.

Communism is a term brandished as a bogey whip by the government for their own ends with a full awareness of the instant sympathy that such a threat commands in democratic countries overseas, but many of those most actively engaged in work among Africans often state that the movement to which the government chooses to give this menacing name is a nationalist rather than a communist movement. It is doubtful that many Africans have any clear understanding of the term "communism," while there can be no doubt that an increasing number have some understanding of what they mean by the term "Africa for the Africans." It is understandable that a government which so vaunts its own racial rights should wish to avoid using the term of "nationalism" for racial aspirations which carry interests running counter to their own.

The prospects for increasing peace and prosperity for the peoples of South Africa do not appear rosy at this turn of the half-century, but there are streaks of sunlight over the darkened landscape. A sense of social responsibility towards the non-Europeans would seem to be increasing, although at present too slowly to show likelihood of overtaking the reactionary forces. South Africa is more sensitive to overseas opinion than often appears. True, when this opinion is superficial and ill-informed it tends to make her adhere the more obstinately to her present policies, but when sympathetic and backed by sincere and painstaking attempts to appraise her situation and problems fairly, overseas opinion carries considerable weight. The ability of South Africa to adopt policies which run counter to the tide of world conceptions of human rights and freedom is less certain than many Nationalists would like to think.

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REVIEW
THE SPORT OF KINGS

WHEN a reviewer has travelled through 474 pages of book he is strongly disposed to favor the theory that what he has read merits reviewing. Here, however, certain complications present themselves. The intent of MANAS in furnishing commentary on Book-of-the-Month selections, for instance, is to attempt philosophical rather than literary evaluation. Entertaining reading may be cleverly summarized or even brilliantly placed from a literary standpoint, without providing anything of psychological or philosophical significance. And *Jenkins' Ear,* present BoM choice, is chiefly entertaining reading, designed to delight especially those who appreciate urbanity in discourse. But there are also things which may be said about the general perspective of the authors.

Odell Shepard, co-author of *Jenkins' Ear* with his novelist son, Willard, should, we think, be mentioned appreciatively whenever occasion permits. For his *Pedlar's Progress*—the life story of Bronson Alcott—presents one of the most engaging and worthily beautiful characters of the nineteenth-century Concord philosophers. Lovers of Emerson and Alcott are usually persuaded that in Shepard they have found a fellow enthusiast whose love has perhaps been better demonstrated than their own. No man could so sensitively make alive the thoughts and aspirations of the Transcendentalists, and especially A1cott's, without feeling some strong sympathies with their majestic outlooks. Further, Shepard was obviously persuaded of the importance of recalling to modern educators the thoughts and methods of Bronson Alcott. Shepard, in other words, stands as a good example of a "transcendentalist" himself. His perspectives are long-range, and his mood that mixture of unpretentious humanitarianism and reflectiveness preserved only with great difficulty in a century which has so obviously forgotten to save any time for quiet thinking.

With this background in mind, we are able to better appreciate *Jenkins' Ear,* which is rich with subtleties and provocative implications behind its mask of the amiable raconteur. The title refers to one of the typically senseless wars of which insatiable history never seems to have its fill. In 1739, the usual group of ambitious and unscrupulous Englishmen pined for a pretext to find sudden fortune, and their schemes were assisted, again as usual, by the fact that the Royal Treasury needed padding. A war with Spain looked good, with the gold and jewels of the New World riding across the Atlantic in Spanish galleons. The Honorable Master Jenkins enters the picture when he providentially managed, at just the right—or wrong—time, to turn up in London with a severed ear, which he claimed a Spanish Captain had removed from his person after illegally boarding his vessel and abusing him in various other ways. (We must remember that 1739 was a little early for perfected propaganda machines, able to function with precision when a war is desired. Political efficiency now guarantees wars made to order, whether or no severed ears are lying around, crying piteously of the bestiality of the prospective enemy.) The war-mongers called upon every true Englishman to avenge The Ear, and war was soon declared, with Admirals Vernon and Anson dispatched to ravage Spanish possessions in South America.

Like all other wars, too, this one spread far and wide; even Indians of the Lower Mississippi were brought to listen to Master Jenkins' tale of woe as reason for their rising up in righteous indignation to attack the Seminoles, who had in turn been propagandized by Spain. The Creeks, however, apparently decided against going along for this particular ride, though perhaps not for the best of all possible reasons. The Shepards make the decision of the "peace-loving" Creeks an occasion for political commentary, and the following is a fair example of the tone of social and political allusion which manages to instruct readers of *Jenkins' Ear,* while also amusing them:

> The war season was close at hand, the quivers were full, and the scalping-knives whetted. The braves had been suitably barbered and painted and otherwise bedizened for slaughter passive or active. All that was lacking was a *casus belli* which the peace-party, the White-sticks so called, deemed sufficient.
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> Creek politics are not hard to understand if one keeps in mind the situation here in England when a raucous group of Young Whigs and the whole baying pack of the Tories were assailing my father's policy of peace. On the one hand there is always the party of older, wiser, and better established men who already have enough scalps in their possession to assure them of political power and social respect for the rest of their lives. Almost invariably their vote is for peace, if only because they know that every fresh scalp brought in by a younger man reduces in some degree their own preeminence. For scalps newly taken they feel an abhorrence not wholly unlike that of an English gentleman for "new money." Their notion seems to be, indeed, that scalp-taking is a brutal business which ought from henceforth to be prohibited, and that everyone should be contented with the trophies he has already acquired.
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> Now this attitude, enlightened as it seems to us, is deeply resented by those who have comparatively few scalps, or, in cases of extreme destitution, none. Asserting that the motives of the peace-keepers are wholly selfish, they do not scruple to revile them in public speech, Adair told us, with a ferocity that goes beyond even William Pitt in his fire-eatingest days. Not content with invective, they beat war-drums all night round the fire in the great square of Coosa, keeping everyone else awake. They plaster themselves with vermillion, brandish tomahawks and knives in public, dance dreadful dances, gnaw their own flesh, and try to paint everything red. Also they hold long councils wherein they magnify into an intolerable insult whatever discourtesy, real or imagined, has ever been shown by any one toward any Creek.

Thus nationalism is a childish affair, and whether the time is the eighteenth or twentieth century matters little. The suggestion is that whatever men do as orthodox political operators is bound to be pretty bad. The Shepards allow Jenkins' war no glory at all—in fact in the end even The Ear itself turns out to have been removed from another owner, and a dead Spaniard at that. But there is nevertheless much that is affirmative in spirit in the book, whenever men rise above politics. The narrative turns to the unsuccessful attempt of Bonnie Prince Charlie to regain the English throne for the displaced Stuart family of Scotland, and in the few persons whose chivalry made this war, at least in part, a struggle of heroic self-sacrifice, we see the better side of those turbulent times. Wars or no wars, a real man's a man for all that, capable of being better than ambitions, hatred and greed. The Shepards' idealism shows itself strongly here, for in telling the story of Bonnie Prince Charlie they construct the details of a second plan to take the throne back from Hanoverians and lead their readers to a dramatic climax, in which Charles Stuart calls off an attempt that would have succeeded, simply because he was finally convinced that the new bloodshed would be too much like that surrounding Jenkins—wasteful of the best men and a seed for the perpetuation of intrigue and violence.

Perhaps the intent is to let us feel that some of the best wars have been those which have never been fought. The war of Jenkins' Ear was, of course, inevitable, because the men who caused it were never deterred by thought of blood or suffering. But the Prince who refused a kingdom because he did not want other men to pay its price, became, at this point of his life the noblest. Whether or not Bonnie Prince Charlie was capable of such decision is beside the point. The Shepards want the reader to understand that men, being truly capable of broad and noble views, must logically, at least *sometimes* be more moved by enlightened idealism than by avarice.

To keep the story straight—if indeed any reader is expected to keep straight any tale involving so many shifting scenes—the literal scene of action is nothing more romantic than the quiet home of Horace Walpole, to which Charles Stuart comes in disguise to win new allegiances and to find a convenient base of operations for the projected assassination of King George. Walpole,

the middle-aged dilettante son of famous Sir Robert, chronicles the stories told to him by guests who assemble to reconstruct, from personal experience, the cost of Jenkins' War as part of a week's diversion. The tone of writing derives from Walpole's urbanity—"urbanity" being definitely the right word, for the book is a masterpiece in devotion to this quality. And we are encouraged to surmise that there is some value in both cultural pursuits and good manners, if their embodiment be an honest man rather than a seeker after social preferment. Walpole is berated by the leader of the new revolt, whom we are privileged to assume is the aforementioned Charles Stuart, for his indifference to the death of the chivalric spirit: "a busy indolence is eating away the best of your years. More and more you convince yourself that England's degradation is none of your concern. Less and less do you protest against infamies which you cannot fail to see." The charge is partially true—Walpole admits it—but he is able to surprise both himself and his critic by the level thinking he produces in moments of crisis.

Well, enough for *Jenkins' Ear*. The clearest moral in the classical sense is probably that if anyone shows you presumed evidence of mayhem and requests that you advance to the attack, be sure that you take a little time to retire to your private study for reflection on the evidence. It may be a stolen ear, or, then again, it may simply have been dug out of a graveyard. We need to beware of political slogans designed to convince that someone, or some nation, is in dire need of chastisement!

COMMENTARY
PROFESSING

INDIVIDUALLY, we find it the reverse of reassuring to hear people declare their honesty, their high purposes, or their modestly-shining motives. Perhaps a vestigial organ of some primitive sagacity makes us aware that sentiments which require copious declamation are less than absolutely sincere. We generally prefer to deduce for ourselves the character of a conversation, the overtones of an action, the mood of a letter. In affairs of state, also, we carry over something of the same preference for unselfconscious heroism and valor. In the conduct of a war, we should like to be able to leave our "aims" to speak for themselves—or is it that our aims do speak, and we are rushing into podium, pulpit and print in order to drown them out?

In a national campaign, we should prefer our candidates to air their views, instead of describing their "remarkable" records—or do we fear to be reminded that occasionally, once in a *great* while, a candidate comes before us with no particular views at all, except of himself and his political supporters? Seriously, many faithful and devout communicants wish to, and do, "attend a church of their choice every Sunday"—but, church-goer or not, who fails to sense a perverse irony in being *urged* to do so by "choice"?

Is our language losing its meaning? Or are we collectively losing consciousness? Or is nobody listening to what anyone else says? At any rate, nobody seems to care particularly what is said or heard. We read the big news of the front page in much the same way we read the comics on the back page: from both we expect sheer fantasy, attached to just enough familiar detail so that we can appreciate the terror, the excitement, the danger (never, any more, the humor) of the situation. Suffering is implicit, and also injustice; heroism and a kind of hopeless gallantry are often discernible; both pathos and tragedy can be read out of contemporary news.

But what have all, or any, of these to do with war "aims"? They are, every one, implicit in many other, and more usual, situations than the drastic *mise-en-scène* of battle and official death. If our motives were as shining in their natural lustre as some of the deeds of individual soldiers; if our national purposes were as disinterested as those of a common draftee whose heart is far above his heartless war-duty; if we as a nation were honest, as death is honest, would not our life as a nation save us the need of *professing* our great ideals?

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

YOUNG people are not supposed to be particularly interested in religion, and yet, contrariwise, as parents have observed, the young often place considerably more concentration on whatever questions they do ask about metaphysical or cosmological puzzles than the parents themselves. Adults have usually drifted to the conclusion that they have no idle time for speculating on "the beginning of things" or what kind of immortality, if any, is the most likely for human beings, but it should not be forgotten that these questions may sometimes be absorbing and fascinating to the young. Children *do* find most religious rituals and ministerial commonplaces boring. But this may be because they are still alive to the real issues of religion, while the clichés of orthodoxy merely represent a sort of second-hand and second-rate compromise with such issues. We shall proceed from this assumption, at any rate, and will therefore welcome suggestions from readers on improving parental assistance to the child who asks "why" on ultimate questions.

Just now we can refer approvingly to a book entitled *Their Search for God—Ways of Worship in the Orient*, by Florence Mary Fitch (Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, New York, 1947-8), which serves to broaden the base of speculations about religion. The religion most worthwhile, it seems clear, is that developed through independent thought, and since, in order to think independently in spite of a culture oriented around a single religious tradition, a knowledge of other beliefs and religious psychologies is invaluable in freeing the mind from stereotypes, any sympathetic portrayal of Eastern religion is of particular value for the people of the West.

Ways of Worship in the Orient is a succinct treatment of the religion of the Hindus, the Japanese, and of the religious traditions of Confucius, Laotze and Buddha. Excellent photographs are interspersed with the large-print, 154-page text, and serve to create an atmosphere of dignity and beauty for other peoples' methods of worship. The author's own words summarize the intent and promise of the book:

> The deepest significance of any religion is found by those who have grown up in it and lived it. Yet whoever studies a religion other than his own with an open mind will find his horizon widened and will discover new values. The universal truths of religion ought to draw people together. "The broad-minded see the kernel of truth in all faiths, the narrow-minded see only the differences."
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> This book seeks to present what is most distinctive and valued in Hinduism in India, Confucianism and Taoism in China, Shinto in Japan, and then Buddhism, which, beginning in India, has spread eastward through Asia and beyond it.
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> Those who know most about religion recognize that no people, no country, no age has a monopoly of faith, truth, and goodness. The simple, deep desires of all people are the same; the fundamental religious truths are universal and therefore the more compelling.
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> To link the small individual life with the larger life of humanity gives man dignity and value. In every faith, some have found that for which all search, unity between the worlds of the seen and the unseen, meaning for human life as part of the One Life, and God who is in all and above all. The world of the spirit is man's true home.

The publishers of *Ways of Worship in the Orient* quite naturally make the claim that this volume can serve equally well for adults and young people. We think this is true, and that parents will find here a number of suggestions appropriate for encouraging cosmopolitanism in family outlook toward moral and cultural differences.

Appropriately, one of the oldest religions—Hinduism—receives first attention, and a sympathy is developed even for the original philosophic origin of that most regrettable aspect of Hinduism we know as the caste system. Further,

> Caste is forgotten when any man relinquishes the worldly life and becomes a holy beggar, giving up home and possessions and devoting himself entirely

> to God and the life of the spirit. He may have been of any caste and is received by any, for "in Brahman, there are no distinctions." "The wise see the same in all—whether it be a Brahmin, endowed with learning and humility, or a cow or an elephant or a dog or an outcaste."
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> Brahmins have no monopoly of religion. "Though not a Brahmin, you may live like one," is the high ideal which many a father and mother hold before a child. The foremost religious leaders through all the centuries have not come from the Brahmin class, and they do not today. Gandhi is a Vaisya, of the merchant caste.

The author also provides an interpretation of the Hindu's conception of deity, which is certainly more suitable to philosophy, and more beautiful, than those to which we are most accustomed in Christian lands. The goal is to become, *consciously,* identified with that Universal Spirit which exists in the "life breath" of all lesser creatures as in man. All life is sacred, and "he who cannot make alive may not slay" is the rule:

> The westerner is overwhelmed by the many gods of Hinduism and the mass of details in the representation of them. Ignorant people in India think of them as the gods who preside over different clans or localities or who protect from different misfortunes. The intelligent Hindu regards them all as attempts to express various aspects or activities of the Infinite, who is so great that no image can be like Him, no words can describe Him. Whatever is said about Him is only part of the truth. It is not even correct to call the Infinite "Him," for that seems to say that He is Father and not Mother, whereas He is both.

We are also provided with a brief but clear definition of a doctrine which extends through the entire Orient in some form or another, that of "Karma." The Hindus hold that man's accumulations of desires, thoughts and deeds are carried with him from birth to death, until, in *some* life, man transforms these forces and influences and thus becomes free from their attractive power to circumstances of like nature. In other words, through being reborn again and again we are given the privilege—or face the necessity—of rewarding or punishing ourselves.

It is probably impossible for any volume so brief to do justice to all the philosophical aspects of Eastern religions, and it is often necessary to question *Ways of Worship in the Orient* on the ground of oversimplification. The most philosophical of Indian treatises, that part of the *Mahabharata* known as the *Bhagavad-Gita,* is, for instance, interpreted only as a legend of a great battle, and the reader is allowed to assume that military virtues are the subject of this scripture. This, as many students of philosophy will know, is not the case. The *Bhagavad-Gita* is indeed a philosophy of *action* rather than passivity, but the battle is meant to suggest the symbolic struggle between the creative, spiritual powers within each man and the impacted inertia of habits which need to be transcended if further advance is to be made.

Finally, we suppose that it is in serving the cause of brotherhood among all truly ethical religions, both Eastern and Western, that this book merits greatest recognition.

FRONTIERS

Of Bugs and Men

THE question of what, exactly, causes infectious disease keeps on being asked with such frequency that it seems likely that some great mistake has been made by medical science on this subject; or, at least, that important natural processes in connection with infection are not understood. At any rate, this is the view of infectious disease taken by the growing and increasingly articulate fraternity of unorthodox healers—the chiropractors, naturopaths, radionists, and others of related conviction. While some may say that these practitioners lack the discipline and time-honored authority of "regular" or allopathic medicine, and that their claims and teachings sometimes smack of "cultist" proclamations, their soberer and often more cultivated brethren of medical orthodoxy represent the lethargy of science as well as its security. It was these latter, and not the experimentalists and innovators of medicine who jeered at and persecuted Paracelsus, who ridiculed Harvey, who learnedly denied Anton Mesmer's extraordinary discoveries, and who have blocked and barred almost every dramatic advance in healing which did not come through the approved academic channels of medical research.

The difficulty, of course, is that medicine is in some measure a specialty. How is the layman to distinguish between the charlatan, or even the earnest but misguided enthusiast, and the true discoverer? Hence we have boards to license physicians, food and drug laws to protect the public from false claims, and watchdogs of professional privilege to guard the prestige of the orthodox practitioner and to prevent his authority from being shared by those who have not been trained to share his beliefs.

Most people, therefore, regard freedom of opinion in matters of health as a somewhat dangerous prerogative to exercise. Laymen who have their own ideas about how to get well and stay well are usually condemned by spokesmen of orthodox medicine, simply for daring to deviate from established opinion. And even doctors who disagree with their colleagues are likely to experience some sort of professional ostracism. A recent illustratration of this occurred in the case of Dr. Anthony Shupis, of Torrington, Conn., who in 1948 found the doors of the local hospital closed to him because of his publicly expressed disbelief in the value of inoculations. Dr. Shupis, the director of the hospital announced, "had somewhat radical views regarding . . . immunization procedures . . . against whooping cough, diphtheria, typhoid or smallpox." Accordingly, it was decided that "anyone having such views opposed to the approved procedure would have no place on the staff of the hospital. . . . " Dr. Shupis is but one of many physicians who have felt the heavy hand of orthodoxy raised against them for their independent opinions. In his case, he came to oppose vaccination after administering shots for thirty-eight months as a captain in the U. S. Army Medical Corps, during which time he had extensive opportunity to study the effects of wholesale immunization.

The literature of medical dissent is a rich field of inquiry. Some of it, like much of the literature of medical conformity, is not worth reading, but it has its classics of which no serious student of health should be ignorant. One of these is E. Douglas-Hume's *Béchamp or Pasteur?*—an inquiry into the validity of the germ theory of disease, in the form of a special study of scientific history. The reader of this literature soon realizes that, wherever truth and justice may lie, orthodox medical opinion is almost never infallible, and on controversial issues is as likely to be wrong as right. In the matter of infections caused by germs, for example, it is well known that the recognized indicated treatments rest upon the assumption that bacteria are specific agents of disease. Once a microbe is identified, and a specific immunizing substance developed, the basic requirements of the germ theory are satisfied. This assumption was lucidly described some years ago by Dr. W. H.

Manwaring, professor of bacteriology and experimental pathology, Stanford University, in *Science* (May 25, 1934):

> During the first fifty years after the initial discoveries by Koch, Lister and Pasteur, the basic generalizations of post-Darwinian biology, as taught and understood by the average college student, formed the unquestioned axioms from which bacteriologists deduced many of their most important technical methods. Methods for the specific diagnosis of human and veterinary infections, for their specific prophylaxis and specific therapy were all either direct or indirect applications of Mendelian logic. No method was suggested, for example, that was contrary to the accepted law that each and every disease germ must arise from a preexisting microbe of at least approximately the same type or species. Spontaneous generation was unthinkable. Environmental synthesis of infectious units was never conceived. Transmutation of pre-existing microbes into wholly new species or genera was beyond belief. Even the possibility of the environmental induction or ongrafting of a single new hereditary character in bacterial cells never entered into the practical clinical mind.

This was the orthodox view. Starting in about 1929, however, the reliability of the prevailing bacteriological credo began to be questioned. A dozen research laboratories, Dr. Manwaring relates, were finding evidence of the instability of bacterial strains. If Darwinian evolution and Mendelian genetics ruled the lives of the larger animals and plants, the microbes paid greater allegiance to Lamarck. Pedigreed strains, known to descend from a single cell, were observed to dissociate into entirely new species. As Manwaring put it:

> It is as though in higher biological science rats should mutate into mice, gophers and guinea pigs, or primroses, daisies and nasturtiums should appear among hybrid sweet peas.
>
> Both "reversible" and "non-reversible" new races, species and genera or families were afterwards grown from scores of clinically important bacteria, the terms denoting the relative stability of the new variants. Certain of the new races reverted in the first sub-culture to their original parent type. Others have already been cultivated for three years on routine culture mediums without showing a demonstrable tendency to revert.

These "mutations" were induced by changing the diet of the microbes or by imposing special physical conditions such as unfavorable surface tension, reduced barometric pressure, or dilute chemical or biological antiseptics. The virulence of germs of infection was greatly altered by these means, also, while proper feeding of acid-fast tubercle bacilli would produce at will typhoid bacilli, pneumococci, diphtheria bacilli, and, added Dr. Manwaring, "a host of other unconventional species or genera." Finally, it was shown that two unrelated species of bacteria could be made to mutate into what appeared to be a single new species—a kind of "convergent evolution." "It is as though, under appropriate environmental conditions, crows and robins should each mutate into bluejays, or pines and cedars metamorphose into redwoods." Dr. Manwaring concludes this interesting account with the observation: "About the only conventional law of genetics and organic evolution that is not definitely challenged by current bacteriologists is the nineteenth century denial of the possibility of spontaneous generation of bacterial cells."

But even the doctrine of spontaneous generation has been revived in recent years. Dr. Wendell M. Stanley, of the Rockefeller Foundation for Medical Research, after reporting how inert crystals could be transformed into the self-reproducing virus of the plant cancer, tobacco mosaic, declared that heterogenesis (spontaneous generation) must now be considered a possibility in nature.

In short, the "classical" germ theory of disease seems slated for considerable revision, and with it, conventional methods of the treatment of infectious disease. If readers are ready to concede this much, they are ready, also, for a perusal of a rather small but remarkable book, *Bacteria, Inc.*, by Cash Asher, published at $2.50 by Bruce Humphries, of Boston. Clearly and dramatically written, it is basically a book against vaccination.

It unfolds a strange tale about the 1947 "epidemic" of smallpox in New York City, revealing that most likely the small *Cimex Lectularius, or* common bedbug, was the cause of the single fatality from the disease. While the bedbug in question was held to be "harmless" by laboratory authorities, Mr. Asher recites the long experience of Dr. Charles A. R. Campbell, of San Antonio, Texas, in fighting the smallpox plague. Campbell believed that the smallpox virus is carried by bedbugs and his efforts to wipe out the disease by eliminating bedbugs from the Pest House at San Antonio were so successful that he convinced the Bexar County Medical Society of his conclusions.

In addition to this, Mr. Asher assembles the views of a number of bacteriologists and medical doctors on the subject of vaccination. If only one or two of these statements be taken seriously, the result is likely to be unsettling to the mind of the reader schooled in the dogmas of organized medicine. He quotes, for example, from Dr. Harrison S. Martland, chief medical examiner for Essex County, N.Y., as follows:

> Deaths from brain and spinal cord diseases (poliomyelitis, encephalitis, and meningitis) resulting from vaccinations and other immunizations sometimes are attributed to other causes because doctors are not sufficiently alerted to the connection between immunizations and the deaths, or don't want to recognize the deaths.

While he added that when any virus infection of the brain or spinal cord develops within eight to fourteen days of vaccination, "the physician should suspect it is due to vaccination," Dr. Alexei D. Speransky, after ten years of laboratory study of the relationship of the nervous system to disease, said that post-vaccinal diseases might occur long after the vaccination had been forgotten. "It is conceivable," he added, "that by these methods we may be crippling humanity."

A break with medical orthodoxy is a serious step for anyone not personally well-informed and possessing considerable confidence in the correctness of his views. What is of use in such books as *Bacteria, Inc., is* the invitation to a new kind of learning. No single reviewer, lay or specialist, could possibly confirm or deny all that will be found in Mr. Asher's book, but no reader should be able to set it down without wanting to do some thinking for himself. And facts of the sort Mr. Asher has collected are piling up, day by day. Perhaps the real importance of the book has to do with the great need for natural immunity to disease, whatever the part played by germs in infection.