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REVELATION IN WOOD AND STONE

MAN may be, as Protagoras long ago declared, the measure of all things, and learned debate as to what Protagoras meant may continue long into the future, but if we reverse and slightly change the apothegm to read, "The things man makes are the measure of man," we have a far less arguable proposition. It is even conceivable that the revelations man addresses to himself, if we will take the trouble to study them, are more important than revelations from the sky. There is, for example, the Gargantuan growth which spreads across the countryside by budding and subdivision called a "city." No city, however rationalized by city-planners or beautified by devoted park commissioners, can hide the character of its inhabitants. Its great monuments may display more psychological ugliness, more frozen disregard of the humanity of man, than the worst of its slums. Its fine shops and boulevards may reveal more poverty of soul than a twisting, "unimproved" country lane which gained accidental being from the homesteads of a handful of early settlers.

A popular essayist, it may have been Heywood Broun, once remarked that future archaeologists, when in some distant epoch they excavate the ruins of New York City, will exclaim upon finding the remains of Rockefeller Center, "The Greeks were here!" This was a tribute to the architect, Raymond Hood, who designed Rockefeller Center. But what of other things the archaeologists will find—the enormous rubbish heaps, the great rock pile known as the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, reputed to have cost something like $20,000,000, standing a few blocks from nearby Harlem, where whole families were often crowded into a single room?

The great cities of the industrial West proclaim the slavery of man to the "economic" laws and ideology which dominate nearly all other phases of modern civilization. They reveal the almost immeasurable abyss which separates the very rich from the very poor. They expose the inordinate pride we take in our possessions, and the zeal with which we pursue acquisitive objects. The stores, and not the churches, are the real scene of our "religious festivals." Our tallest buildings, unlike the Tower of Babel, which at least had the splendid if foolish aim of reaching heaven, are little more than monuments erected to celebrate commercial success. In a variety of ways, the character of the modern city also illustrates the impotence of money, however plentiful, to accomplish the high aims of housing reforms when undertaken on a mass scale. Practically the first thing a housing project must do is blot out the individuality of both the past and the future. We have in mind a recent "slum clearance" project which involved the elimination of a number of dwellings on a California hillside. One of these homes, perched upon a small ledge near the top of the hill, was surrounded by a garden which an old bachelor had developed through some twenty devoted years of grading and terracing. Money played practically no part in this extraordinary achievement of adaptation. Little plateaus of rich soil bore heavy harvests of vegetables, and flowers and shrubs grew out of narrow shelves made by criss-crossing retaining walls. On this spot, and on others similarly nurtured, a public housing authority will erect neat and clean apartment houses, row on row, but the "homes" will be all the same, or almost the same, and the aspect of the development will be that of a barracks. These homes perhaps will be more "sanitary" than the old, ramshackle dwellings; perhaps, under the circumstances, they will be "better" for the people to live in. But this criticism is directed, not at the housing project, but at the "circumstances" which make this actual

erasure and prohibition of individual ingenuity a practical necessity.

A modern sociologist recently called attention to this aspect of public housing in an article in *Mental Hygiene* (July, 1951). Writing on "The Housing of Psyche," Prof. N. J. Demerath observed:

> Physically substandard buildings may well house socially and psychologically superior communities. And the emotional rewards of close-knit, primary group life in the physical slum may more than offset its structural and sanitary inadequacies. How many socially rich communities have been destroyed in the course of urban development and slum clearance, never to be replaced, we have no way of knowing. We have no standards by which we can distinguish areas of good and bad mental health, social-psychological superiority and inferiority. Yet if we are not to wreck more than we build, if we are to make housing better serve the public interest, whether we be health officers, planners, or trousers, we can no longer neglect mental-health matters.

Why, it may be asked, must we build housing projects in the form of barracks? One reason is this: In the laws providing federal funds for such purposes, the number of dollars expended by the government agency for land must be matched in some proportion by a corresponding number of units or "homes." If the land is high in cost, the buildings also must be "high," to get the required number of units on the land. The housing authorities, manifestly, did not ask for this provision; the tax-payers, through their elected representatives, asked for it.

Actually, the middle-class tax-payers who find fault with costly housing projects may be in greater need of help than "the poor" for whom public housing is designed. As Prof. Demerath remarks:

> On the other hand, the physically superior dwelling area may be a social-psychological slum. I think all of us could identify middle-class dwelling areas, particularly in Suburbia, that are not very happy places to live in. Such areas need therapy or preventive medicine no less than those handled by the housing authority or the city health office. We should also recognize that housing standards pointed to mental health are not frivolous luxuries, but just as fundamental and respectably "minimum" as the usual "safe, sanitary, decent" standards. Indeed, decency, it seems to me, is largely social psychological, and to no small extent synonymous with the state of mental health, whether of the person, the household, or the community.

Such views, whether Prof. Demerath will admit it or not, are an invitation to the architect to become a practical revolutionary—for how is he to affect or change the psychological attitudes of Suburbia? More than likely, he enjoys the country-club life himself, if he happens to be one of the few architects who are "prosperous," and will be disinclined to add psychiatry to his already overburdened eclecticism.

There have been, however, a few architects who have thought in these terms. Louis Sullivan, whose *Kindergarten Chats* was reviewed in these pages (MANAS, Aug. 11, 1948), found time from his professional duties to develop a genuine philosophy of architecture. Speaking of a typical Chicago office building of the early years of this century, he wrote: "It is all the the's, ands, if's, buts; it is all connectives that connect nothing; qualificatives that qualify nothing; propositions that propose nothing; conjunctions that conjoin nothing; exclamations that exclaim nothing." And Frank Lloyd Wright, who acknowledged Sullivan as his teacher, spoke of the aimless forms with which we have surrounded ourselves:

> Here in this great melting pot of all the breaking-down or cast-off cultures of this world, we have allowed the arrogance of science to deprive us of genuine culture. We inherit and preserve the cultural lag.
>
> The aesthetic sense, unhealthy, neglected, or betrayed, has come down to a raising of the cup with the little finger delicately lifted or of, say, the easel picture or some poetic pose or eclecticism in manners or architecture.

Houses are built, tracts are developed, without the slightest feeling for the natural environment. Nature is something we do away with, or ignore. As Wright has said of building in California: "The people got busy with steam

shovels, tearing down the hills to get to the top in order to blot out the top with a house." The rolling country of Southern California is cut and gashed to make highways and building sites, with little or no regard for the natural contours of the landscape. This neglect, indeed, contempt, for nature is not unique to the bourgeois hordes. As Joseph Wood Krutch noted recently in a New York *Times Book Review* article, a feeling for nature is almost entirely lacking from modern literature. He asks:

> Is there any "Love of Nature"—as distinguished from intellectual approval of the processes of biology—in Shaw? Does T. S. Eliot find much gladness in contemplating Her? Does James Joyce's apostrophe to a river count; and is Hemingway's enthusiasm for the slaughter of animals really a modern expression of that devotion to blood sports which, undoubtedly, is a rather incongruous aspect of the English race's "Love of Nature"? In America Robert Frost is almost the only poet universally recognized as of major importance in whom the loving contemplation of the natural world seems the central activity from which the poetry springs.

Our great public buildings, despite their massive grandeur, are too remote from the feelings of the people. One can easily understand the critical jargon of some of the modern architects, who call these monstrous, monolithic structures "fascist" in mood and implication. They suggest, not service of the people, but impenetrable barriers and vast, impersonal authority.

What is to be done about all this? What *can* be done? What might be proposed for the city of Los Angeles, for example, where, in rented apartments, the average term of tenant occupancy is about six weeks? With a population as rootless as this, can anything be said about home-building?

A beginning may be made by individuals, who can insist upon designing as much of their own homes as they can, and building as much of them as they can. It is possible to take greater pride in a compost heap than in a garbage disposal unit—that supreme symbol of our victory *against* nature, which denies the soil the mere refuse that is all it asks for replenishment of its fertility.

Years ago, whole wheat flour was advocated by only a handful of cranks. Today, in many Suburbias, only one or two families in a block remain to purchase bread made from white, refined flour. The rest, in varying degree, are trying to go back to more natural diet. The success of the organic gardening movement is further evidence of how far such reform movements can get in fifty years.

People *can* change even their architectural environment, by discovering its importance and its implications. Part of the change, of course, will have to involve progressive independence of outside services and authorities, for only by doing things for themselves can people reverse the broad, general tendency to an impersonal, *mass* society in which simple individuality is symptomatic of heresy and deviation—in short, an unwillingness to "participate" in the tasteless uniformities of the totalitarian age. Perhaps one step that could be taken by architects themselves would be for more of them to become builders—and impart some of their hopes and idealism to the building trades. To put it very simply, not enough dreaming and vision go into the conventionally constructed home or public structure. How can any community have beauty and charm, how can children love their homes and schools, how can the town or city convey a warm, friendly atmosphere, so long as everything that is built has only a commercial motive behind it?

Arthur Morgan once defined democracy as a community in which every man does his own "dirty work." We should like to add that, in a democracy, instead of hiring it done, a man ought to do his own creative work—or, as we said before, as much of it as he can.

Letter from
ENGLAND

LONDON.—No one who has studied the immense influence of men like Chateaubriand, Lamartine, Victor Hugo, and Michelet in France, or the Lake poets in England, can have any doubts about the importance of *romantisme* in any consideration of political thought. A work on political thought in France by Mr. J. P. Mayer (London: Routledge, 1949) summarises this "subjectivity" as contrasted with the period of Enlightenment and classicism of the eighteenth century:

> It set intuition, imagination, fantasy, against reason, rational abstraction, and the poetical grammar of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Romanticism implied also a change of personal attitude . . . the subjectivity of the Romantics bore witness to the final victory of the individual who had become aware of himself as an historic force.

Here is no world of political mythology—the mass beliefs and political religions represented by such "isms" as Communism and Fascism, or by the counting of heads, irrespective of what they may contain. Awareness, at the least, betokens a spiritual and intellectual movement, not confined to literature, but manifesting itself in social thought and man's general outlook.

Interest attaches, therefore, to a radio talk given here recently by Dr. H. G. Schenk, Lecturer in European Economic and Social History, Oxford University, on "The Romantic Movement in Europe." He reminded his audience that the state of knowledge in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century was already facing a serious crisis owing to excessive specialism. But romantic efforts at a reintegration were made. Dr. Schenk cited in this connection Novalis' plan for an encyclopedia which, unlike the *Grande Encyclopedie* of the eighteenth-century *philosophes,* would include religious and metaphysical problems, and also Coleridge's repeated attempts to bring all knowledge into harmony. In a reference to the French Revolution, Dr. Schenk gives reasons for the disenchantment that characterized the reaction of romanticism to that episode in European history. The new set of rulers proved no better men than those they overthrew; power was seen to be a corrupting influence; and there was failure to bring in an age of federalism and decentralism. As for the Industrial Revolution of the following century, Dr. Schenk mentions that Robert Southey, in his *Colloquies on the Progress and Prospect of Society* (1829), anticipated much of Ruskin's and William Morris's later efforts to redeem the deformity of the mechanized world. In contrast to Marxism, the romantic movement "struck at the very root of capitalism in a far more uncompromising way," protesting, as it did, against the materialism with which the new social philosophy was imbued, as well as against the repercussions of urbanized life. The Romantics had an astonishing presentiment of things to come. As Dr. Schenk pointed out: "It is not generally realised that forebodings of an impending collapse of our civilization were shared by romantic thinkers rooted in such different backgrounds as, for example, the German Hölderlin, the half-Scot Byron, the Frenchman La Mennais, the Polish *emigre* Krasinski, and the Italian Leopardi." Their warnings fell on deaf ears.

Henri Bergson, in one of his lesser-known works, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion,* used a significant phrase, "progress by oscillation." He thought we might expect, after the ever-increasing complexity of life, a return to simplicity. In his view, the history of ideas bears witness to these two opposite developments of what he called our primordial tendency: "Out of Socratic thought, pursued in two different directions which in Socrates were complementary, came the Cyrenaic and the Cynic doctrines: the one insisted that we should demand from life the greatest possible number of satisfactions, the other that we should learn to do without them. They developed into Epicureanism and Stoicism with their two opposing tendencies, laxity and tension. . . ." Similarly, we may suppose the two

developments of classicism and romanticism follow each other in the world of literature, unqualified by purely philosophical considerations, with a transitional margin, it may be thought (such as we are in now), where chaotic experiment and confused fear are the dominant tendencies. A return to the romantic ideal (some observers see signs of it) has its own danger in the drift to pessimism and *Weltschmerz,* arising out of a feeling of frustration in face of an antipathetic total environment, and in the attempt to equate literature with traditional theology after the manner of such writers as Mr. T. S. Eliot.

Of one thing we may be sure. The world of today is tired of theories—of art or anything else. It is true that living as we do in the midst of a common civilization, and having passed through two world wars in which propaganda was an essential weapon, we are more aware of the enchantment of words, and all the more conscious, therefore, of its dangers. What is important is that we should be clear as to the kind of knowledge of reality that can be gained from literature, romantic or classical, whilst recognizing that the amount of pleasure given by a work of art is always an essential element in it.

ENGLISH CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW
"VATICAN AND KREMLIN"

PAUL BLANSHARD'S *Communism, Democracy and Catholic Power,* a sequel to *American Freedom and Catholic Power,* is largely an extension of his earlier analysis of the Catholic Church as a potent political force. But the analogies drawn between political Catholicism and world Communism in his latest book constitute a unique sort of psychological contribution. While a number of writers have briefly called attention to the close structural parallel between the Church as an organized system of power and the totalitarian states, Blanshard has dealt very extensively with this interesting comparison.

The first chapter of *Communism, Democracy, and Catholic Power* sets the framework for subsequent investigation by referring to the trend in State Department policy toward formal alignment with the Vatican against Communism. Mr. Blanshard thinks this is an unfortunate alliance, and in his usual capable and scholarly fashion produces a great mass of evidence to support his argument. But while the proposal of an "ambassador" from a secular state to the seat of a partisan religious orthodoxy is seriously questionable, and while, as Blanshard thinks, such alliances may do democracy more harm than good, we are more interested, here, in the parallel psychological attitudes represented by two strong world contestants for control of public opinion—the Vatican and the Kremlin.

The parallel begins at the respective sources of thought control, with the sacrosanct moral authority of the "Head," whether of Church or State. Mr. Blanshard calls both the Catholic and the Communist myths results of the "devices of deification" and suggests that the Kremlin, by erecting its own "trinity," has played on the same psychic forces, in much the same manner, as has the Catholic hierarchy:

> In the Holy Trinity of the Kremlin theology, Marx stands for God, Lenin for Christ, and Stalin for the Holy Ghost. Engels is a demi-god, not quite up to those three. The existence of this trinitarian deity is never specifically acknowledged in Soviet literature, but it is a definite and important part of world Communism. Stalin, as the surviving member of the Communist Trinity, is treated as the Living God.

The next parallel is suggested by the fact that neither the Kremlin nor the Vatican wishes to allow any autonomous power in the name of its ideology, or theology, the Vatican being "as much afraid of national Churches as the Kremlin is afraid of national Communist movements." In familiar political terms, both Stalinism and Catholicism are reactionary, and have this reputation throughout Europe. And what are the psychological forces which give power to reactionary movements? One is a sense of guilt, and another, closely allied, is the belief in the unimportance or unworthiness of one's own thoughts. Mr. Blanshard explores further similarities, first commenting on Catholic monasticism, whose representatives "deliberately make life uncomfortable for themselves on the theory that discomfort itself is a holy penance like that of the Hindu fakirs who sleep on beds of nails. . . ."

> The renunciation [Blanshard continues] of freedom of thought and freedom of speech is considered a virtue; the subject mind is exalted as a good thing in itself; the thwarted personality is considered holy. . . . Meanwhile, in the Communist system of power, there is a similar exploitation of the sense of guilt in behalf of the authoritarian state, and a similar, but much more severe, development of the techniques of punishment. Perhaps the Russian mind has been inured to self torture by centuries of subjection to the old Orthodox Church. In any case, the Soviet state has carried over into modern Communism a great part of the doctrinal baggage of the Orthodox theory of sin. The first law of Communist discipline is that rebellion against the authority of the Stalinist machine is not merely mistake but a mortal sin—a mortal sin against the Soviet Fatherland and the Holy Communist Faith. The cultivation of the sense of guilt is one of the basic devices of Party discipline. Any comrade who rebels even slightly against Kremlin orders must be made to feel that he is a traitor to the working class. Psychic torture begins even before physical torture. . . .

> Ignatius Loyola, whom I have already quoted, set the tone for Catholic religious discipline when he taught his Jesuits the virtue of "absolute annihilation of our own judgment. We must, if anything appears to our eyes white, which the Church declares to be black, also declare it to be black."

As Anthony Eden once pointed out, "the non-conformist" is the only man who will "spontaneously reject all doctrines of infallibility. To him, democracy is a necessary form of human dignity." Now we come to what we take to be the most important and suggestive paragraph in Mr. Blanshard's book:

> Aside from its reputation and its unfortunate associations, the Vatican also has the fatal defect of leaving its followers unprepared to meet the forces of Communism with free intelligence. Habitual, uncritical obedience to superior authority disqualifies men as fighters against Communism because it incapacitates their minds. The Vatican has cultivated in millions of men that authoritarian mind which leans for support on received dogma. That is the type of mind on which Stalin rests his vast domain, and it is not an accident that in many parts of Europe the passage of men from Catholicism to Communism has been so effortless. When the largest Communist party outside of the Soviet Union develops in the home country of the Vatican, and captures the devotion of millions of "Catholics," the moral cannot be ignored.

Both Catholics and Stalinist Communists tend to be "conformists" from powerful habitude. Thus, while the Vatican is gaining popularity in "democratic" lands for its strong anti-Communist crusade—and is meanwhile supporting Fascist powers such as Spain by world-wide propaganda—the rank and file of followers can be depended upon to remain "anti-Communist" only so long as the same alignment of power persists.

On the other side of the picture is the undeniable fact that America—whose claims of devotion to pure democratic principles are unimpressive to free-thinking Europeans and Asiatics—will probably be judged, as Blanshard puts it, "in terms of the morality of our worst ally, and some of the allies of the Vatican are completely Fascists":

> The Vatican itself, for example, has been for generations the greatest landholder in several European nations where land reform is the first requirement of social justice, and in such nations we cannot afford to take sides with the landlord. Already our reputation in Europe is shockingly reactionary. We are known as an enemy of Socialism, and for the European masses Socialism is almost synonymous with social welfare. Whether we like it or not, we should be honest enough to admit what every trained observer of European politics knows—that free enterprise has already been partially dethroned in Europe and that Communism cannot be defeated on that Continent without the aid of the middle-of-the-road Socialist movement.
>
> When we support political Catholicism in Europe, no matter how sincerely, we identify ourselves with political reaction, and we cannot afford this kind of identification. It is not an accident that the two remaining fascist powers in Europe today are the leading Catholic powers and that their dictators continue to operate on fascist principles without excommunication.

The careful reading of *Communism, Democracy and Catholic Power* in its entirety is a precautionary necessity, if one is inclined to attempt any defensive generalizations to the effect that "after all, Catholicism is only a religion and deals with symbols of men's transcendental beliefs." As Blanshard shows, Catholicism has never been "just a religion," for the inevitable reason that an authoritarian view on religious knowledge at once involves external authority in respect to human conduct. Control of human conduct requires machinery, machinery requires wealth, property and prestige, and therefore Catholicism has always been primarily a *political* force, however internationally "moral" its published designs. The Pope, for instance, has never been chosen because of an outstanding capacity to preach to the multitudes, but rather has advanced in the same manner as do ambitious men in the field of diplomacy. The Pope is an administrator, not a teacher.

In the final analysis, then, it is impossible for the Church to advance towards the ideals of democracy without destroying its very nature and tradition. *Appearances* of liberality are often

revealed to be the results of expedient political maneuvering. As Blanshard points out:

> The Roman system of power is essentially a man's world, as well as a priest's world. Catholic Religious women do most of the routine work of teaching, nursing, and social service in the Church, but all the central agencies of power in the Vatican are without exception male. Even when a woman is made into a saint at St. Peter's, the long procession of dignitaries, headed by the Pope on his portable throne, contains not a single representative of the sanctified sex. There was a strange touch of irony in the fact that when the Catholic party of Italy won the 1948 election from a powerful left-wing bloc, the margin of victory was partly supplied by cloistered nuns who were directed by the Vatican to leave their cloisters for the first time to cast their votes against the Kremlin. Communism, by threatening to destroy the Vatican, gave Catholic women a new standing as citizens in the Italian commonwealth which they had never possessed under male domination in their own religious commonwealth.

It is difficult for Mr. Blanshard to write, or for anyone else to approve of Mr. Blanshard's works, without appearing to be "anti-Catholic." But the issue here is certainly not whether one should approve or disapprove of individual Catholics as people, but rather, whether the present state of the world necessitates a more profoundly critical evaluation of psychological forces and their social results, *inclusive* of their religious embodiments, than has ever been attempted in public.

Mr. Blanshard ought to find enthusiastic support—and probably does—from Dr. Brock Chisholm, Director General of the World Health Organization, for Dr. Chisholm feels that just such an investigation must precede any improvement in prospects for world peace. The "final" struggle between the authoritarians and the proponents of free, individual conscience, will not be waged by the "Americans" and "Russians," nor between what are now called "Democrats" and "Communists," nor even between Catholics and the Psychiatrists. All these labels could easily fall away without altering the inevitability of conflict between all those who seek refuge in authoritarian ways of thought and those others who have sought another kind of refuge in the "insecurity" of freedom.

COMMENTARY
AN "UNUSUAL" RECORD

MAJOR HARGREAVES (see Frontiers) thinks that the United Nations, like its predecessors in international organization, promises little in the way of peace. Judging from the present mood of the participating world powers, it is difficult to disagree. The UN sessions do, however, provide a field of activity for the new republics of Asia which have recently come into being. While the present is a difficult period for a new "republic" to be born into—extraordinary partisan pressures being applied to these countries almost from their natal hour—membership in the UN has nevertheless afforded their statesmen scope for expression of their ideals and practice of their principles. We have in mind the Republic of Indonesia, which has had to steer a perilous course since its admission to membership in September, 1950.

A writer in *International Conciliation* (November, 1951), after reviewing Indonesia's voting record since admission, concludes that it "seems to indicate an attempt to carry out high moral standards in a fashion which is fairly unusual in official international gatherings. . . . the Indonesian delegation seems to have pursued fairly well its basic purposes—peaceful settlement of disputes, efforts to negotiate differences among the great powers and support for colonial peoples."

The quality of Indonesian statesmanship is beyond dispute. Doubters are invited to read Robert Payne's *Revolt of Asia* and Soetan Sjahrin's *Out of Exile*. And for those who imagine that "neutrality" bespeaks "communist sympathies," there is the strong action of the Republican governments taken to suppress a communist revolt at Madiun, in East Java, in September, 1948, a time when open warfare with Dutch forces was at its height.

The participation of Indonesia and of similar countries in parliamentary procedures of the UN at least reveals to the older and more "prosperous" democracies that principled intelligence in international affairs is the prerogative of free men everywhere—a fact which Western colonialism kept hidden for generations. A further service of the UN is to bring to former colonial peoples at least a token of the Western ideal of equality, however battered and tarnished by the mistakes of imperialism. One of the finest things about the UN is its broad spectrum of race, color, and creed. No other international body has had such inclusive representation, and this may be the real advance gained by the United Nations.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

SOMEWHAT unfortunately, but quite inevitably, both adults and children are most reflective *after* strongly desired events have taken place. The enthusiasms which guide us toward what we hope will be fulfillment and happiness proverbially distract our gaze from the qualifications and imperfections that later become evident.

From the standpoint of mental evolution, therefore, the night *after* Christmas has certain advantages over "the night before Christmas." The excitement is over, and a bit of apathetic weariness is apt to set in. The debris of standardized giving and conventional ornamentation—wrapping paper, string and withered pine needles—is somewhat symbolic, too, of the aftermath of so many human ventures and endeavors. Yet this obvious fact need not be altogether depressing, since, as an instance of psychological law, it may serve as a point of departure for reflection upon our common susceptibility to emotional oscillation. Even children, especially those who have passed through a kind of juvenile Bacchanalia at Christmas, must to some degree be aware of this process at work within themselves. The toy which has been dreamed of for long months, has, by the night after Christmas, been copiously used and, as happens with all things we do to death through infatuation, it loses its savor. It is not an easy thing to remember that the greatest happiness comes from *not* desiring any specific thing too greatly, *not* counting upon any rewards or emoluments as the supreme ecstasy, and thus to have reserve energies and capacities for appreciation to make the most of whatever unforeseen comes our way. There may be even an opportunity in the aftermath of Christmas for some discerning relative or parent to tell the child that he was saving his gift for the time when it might be best used and appreciated—a time weeks or months away. By so doing, at least there would be an opportunity to associate the spirit of giving with the thought of others' needs rather than with simply another holiday occasion. We are impressed by one parent's break with the conventional Christmas—at least on paper—accomplished by writing a note to her child for Christmas Day:

> Dear Small Son:
>
> I would be happy to have felt you needed some special present at this time of enjoyment we call the Christmas Season, but, whatever I think of seems to be something you will need more and be able to better use later in the year.
>
> I know I am a funny mother, but please try to be patient with me. After all, I must do things the way I think best, just as you must, all your life, yourself.
>
> For my Christmas present to you I write here this promise to try my hardest and best to "give" you the things you most need during all of the coming year.
>
> My hope about this strange, probably disappointing "present" is that it will help you to think that the real Christmas is in people's hearts, and not in the presents.

Such an unusual offering, even on one occasion, would doubtless disappoint most children, and the proposal will probably make most parents cringe at the thought of inflicting such disappointment. How this procedure would work out in the long run could only be determined in individual instances and according to the nature of the relationship between parent and child. The principles involved, however, are worth everyone's attention and it should be borne in mind that an attempt to promote them does not mean that what is enjoyable in the Christmas season would be automatically discarded. It is only that, while custom tends to demand that we produce the most expensive gifts for those within our own family circle, our greatest gift might be the adoption of a more inspiring attitude toward the Christmas season.

In the adult world, there is a close correlation between greediness and insecurity. People who are not sure of themselves, but *are* sure that they

are discontented, are most likely to clutch at the straws of material possessions—those inadequate substitutes for the feeling of security. The man who is thoroughly self-reliant is more apt to be spontaneously generous. Those who, without pride, feel they have something to *give* to the world, as human beings, are usually the ones who are most willing to share whatever wealth or property comes their way. It follows that intensive preoccupation with possessions is one of the first manifestations of a lack of inner security.

One of the finest things we have seen written on the psychological meaning of "giving" appeared last March in *This Week,* to which Louise Redfield Peattie contributed a short essay entitled "Open Your Fingers." Mrs. Peattie's full realization of the meaning of possessiveness came to her in a trying way, following the death of her little girl, but she indicates that experiences which seem unrelieved tragedies may contain truths we hunger for:

> To have and to hold is human instinct, and there is nothing we hold so dear as the lives and the loves of those close to us. But to have and to *clutch* is the surest way to lose what we most treasure. Early my flower-wise husband taught our baby girl how to carry a blossom, gently, holding it by the stem, and for hours she would enjoy its delicate shape and fragrance, bringing it to her small nose, putting her tiny finger down its corolla. Her little friend, given a flower too, would soon crumple it to nothing in her ardent fist.
>
> Perhaps, like that, I loved our Celia too possessively. Certainly, a fortnight after her sudden death in France, my aching grip was still tight upon nothingness. Then walking those Provençal hills, I met a wise-eyed old peasant woman with a tiny girl who came tumbling toward me and fell laughing at my feet. As I picked her up and restored her to her grandmother I said, out of a grief-torn heart, that up to a few days ago I too had had such a sunny little curlyhead. She looked at me with level smiling gaze, and answered calmly in her country tongue, "Ah, Madame, the little children—they do not belong to us."
>
> And then and there I began to open my fingers. And as they relaxed, I found them filled with treasures laid in them because the palms were open to receive.

Mrs. Peattie concludes with a brief reminder of the way in which we tend to disregard the profound wisdom of the old lady from Provençal:

> Look around you at the friends and the families you know. Here is a marriage near destruction from the stranglehold one mate keeps on the other. There is a son or daughter in rebellion against a parent's grip of possession. Then let your own hand fall relaxed. Only a saint is capable of complete resignation. But anybody can learn to open his fingers from too tight a clutch.

FRONTIERS
Why War?

WHILE almost endless books and articles, and even encyclopedias, have been compiled on the causes of war, the question, "Why War?" is still wide open for solution. Either the discussions to date have missed the mark entirely, or they are (1) too simple, or (2) too complex. Probably Plato came as close to a solution as anyone, in Book II of the *Republic,* where he makes Socrates propose that the simple, agricultural community, with "plain living and high thinking," is the best guarantor of peace, while the luxury-loving, industrialized societies become prone to war through their need for "expansion."

Something like this thesis was developed by Major J. F. C. Fuller in *Ordnance* for September-October, 1950 (quoted in MANAS, Jan. 10, I951), although General Fuller breaks the proposition down to "food"—"to live man must eat, and if he cannot eat he will fight for food." In an industrial society, Fuller contended, the competitive struggle for food takes the form of commercial and industrial rivalry, and from this he concludes that war is practically unavoidable.

Another military authority, also a Britisher, Major Reginald Hargreaves, discusses "This Thing Called War" in the August, 1951 U. S. *Naval Institute Proceedings.* Like General Fuller, Major Hargreaves goes back to Plato for his basic explanation, and like General Fuller, again, he seems to conclude that war is inevitable. However, his remarks along the way confirm the impression that one may expect greater candor on this subject from a thoughtful soldier than from almost anyone else.

Major Hargreaves, who has been a student of history since the end of World War I, starts out by disposing of the popular delusion that there is a difference, causally or morally, between what we euphemistically call "peace" and the more active forms of aggression involving "the bullet, the shell, the bomb, and the torpedo." He quotes Clausewitz approvingly to the effect that "What we mean by war extends with indeterminate limits in every direction." Among the measures of war which do not involve actual combat are propaganda, infiltration of hostile agents, economic sanctions, manipulation of the money-market, tariff legislation, and various other means to interfere with or destroy the trade of a rival power. Throughout this discussion, one detects a strong sympathy on the part of this writer with Major Allenby's dictum: "Soldiers don't make war; politicians make war, soldiers end it," which certainly remains true so long as politicians, and not soldiers, determine the policies of the nations. After showing by numerous illustrations from history that war grows out of the aggressively acquisitive "peacetime" policies, Major Hargreaves reaches the core of his argument:

> The real root of the matter, of course, is greed, sheer unadulterated greed—now euphemised in the speciously self-justificatory term, "ascending standard of living." Consistently, mankind has refused to adopt the Platonic recommendation to "Simplify your wants the better to ensure happiness." As civilisation moves on—it can scarcely be said that it progresses—the tendency, indeed, is all the other way. Given an inch, man's immediate demand is for an ell; . . . The luxuries of yesterday become the commonplace necessities of today. . . .
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> We have the word of the less sensational economists that the world can still cater to all mankind's essential needs. They can be assured, we are told, without creating more friction than is required to save us from relapsing into that condition of apathetic stagnation—leading to absolute moribundity—which the absence of all healthy but reasonably controlled competition would inevitably entail. The scramble starts when we come to the question of what used to be regarded as surpluses; that surplusage which the ever-rising tide of covetousness demands shall be put at the disposal of a rocketing greediness of appetite—"ascending standard of living," if the sophistry be preferred—which tirelessly echoes *Oliver Twist's* insistent demand for "More."
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> "Plain living and high thinking" is just a tasteless joke to a world-generation brought up to insist on larger and plummier cakes and bigger and more sumptuously appointed circuses—without any

> particular regard to who is to pay for them, or any notable concern for the deadlier and ever more destructive wars which are the outcome of the feverish effort to provide them.

Major Hargreaves' disgust with the identification of non-military forms of aggression with "peace" is matched by his feeling in regard to international organizations having the ostensible purpose of establishing world peace. From the Greek Amphictyonic Council to the League of Nations, the record is one of ignominious failure. Of the League of Nations, he writes:

> Manchuria was soon mocking its lofty pretensions and underlining its powerlessness and utter want of moral courage; Abyssinia exposed it for the rickety whited sepulchre it was; Munich dealt it a hurt that was mortal. And so, despite the pompous fifteen million dollar edifice that housed it, with the roar of Hitler's aeroplanes and tanks thrusting forward into Poland, it sank once and for all—a bitter memory—beneath the unregarding waters of Geneva's lake.
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> Its successor in this wan parade of organized impotence, strangled by the noose of the Veto knotted tightly about its throat, can move in no direction save at the gravest risk of committing inglorious *felo-de-se.*

Major Hargreaves seems to think that these attempts to organize for peace are no more than hypocritically embellished futilities:

> For the plain fact of the matter is that were world morality on sufficiently high a level to abide by the dictates of such messianic Aulic Councils, then there would be no necessity for such foundations to exist. Obviously, they would be redundant; since the need of legislating people into "goodness" would have passed with their acquisition of the habit of exemplary behavior.

Accordingly, "human nature being what it is," Major Hargreaves agrees with Thucydides that wars are likely to continue, and he leaves with us as his best practical advice "the Cromwellian injunction to keep our powder dry.

Major Hargreaves would have it that the faltering efforts of the nations to organize for peace give greater evidence of hypocrisy—either hypocrisy or quackery, or both—than of anything else, and from the record, it is difficult to disagree. Yet war, today, even as nearly all the world prepares for it, is almost frantically feared and hated by the common peoples of the world. Is the trouble simply that all these millions, or billions, are "greedy"? This seems unlikely, for, as food supply experts tell us, a good half of these people seldom get enough to eat, and greedy people, in ordinary parlance, are those who want *more* than enough. At any rate, the "greediness" theory, at this juncture of history, ought to be applied only to those nations or peoples who at least have actual opportunity to be greedy.

What, then, makes comfortably-fixed people greedy? They are the ones who enable Major Hargreaves to declare: "The world, having rejected Plato's austere but admirable recommendation to cut its wants, would appear to have resigned itself to yet another Platonic apothegm, that 'Only the dead have seen the end of war'."

To put it very simply, these people—including ourselves and most of our neighbors—suffer from the delusion that to give up anything we have will inevitably decrease our happiness and our stature. We have, in short, the wrong ends in life. But if anyone tries to tell us this, we look up aggrievedly and exclaim: "What's wrong with having all the things we like? Why are you against vacuum cleaners and deep-freezers and television? You can't go back to the spinning wheel or the horse and buggy! Science is here to stay."

The only possible rejoinder is a subtle one, proposing that the real trouble has nothing to do with these things, but lies in our failure to want other things which are far more important. Possibly the whole attack on the question of war *has* missed the point. Major Hargreaves takes us back one step to the active motives for war. Don't attack war as war, he says, but attack it as greed. Perhaps we should also say, Don't attack greed as greed, but as a riotous emotion which fills a void

in human life, and is overcome only by filling the void with something better.

Certainly, moralizing at people to stop them from being greedy will get us nowhere. The preachers have been doing this for nearly two thousand years, with no perceptible result. People are greedy because they don't know what else to do with their energies and appetites. But if they had something to live for besides acquisition, something to strive for besides power and self-esteem, the "greed" might not be a problem at all. So, the question leads us back to the nature of man, a metaphysical problem, and the sort of fulfillments which are most naturally elevating and inspiring to human beings. From this point of view, traditional religion, with its low estimate of man, its dogmas of human weakness and dependence on some outside power, has been a major cause of war throughout the centuries.