

## APOLOGY FOR "UNNATURAL" MAN

ROUSSEAU may not have been the first to celebrate the virtues of the "natural" man, but the contrast he drew between the noble savage, the child of Nature, and the corrupted and debilitated people of the cities—of "civilization"—is one that has increasingly captured the critical imagination since Rousseau's time. Today, the idea of a "natural" life no longer circulates only among moralists and communitarians, but is finding expression among ordinary folk. The pressure of alienation from healthful and wholesome life processes is becoming a positive presence, a kind of cultural neurosis which insinuates its miasma into all the crannies of existence—a veritable psycho-moral smog.

In consequence, the ideal of the natural man becomes ever more attractive; and, as a natural life grows increasingly unobtainable—ever more mysterious. We are not really sure, any more, what a natural life would be, except in glamorously mythic definition. We have a vague feeling about the deep satisfactions which we believe a natural life would produce, if we could but live it, and from these feelings we project hypothetical situations, activities, and environments which we idealize as holding the potentialities of a truly natural life.

We treasure what we can learn of the fragments of "Golden Age" cultures which still survive—sadly battered and mutilated by successive waves of cultural invasion from Western atomistic societies, but still retaining evidence of a harmony we revere without being able to understand. Such peoples have preserved a bond with life that upholds them. Call it animism, earth-panteism, a fraternity of blood, sap, soil, water, and sun—call it anything you like, we still must admit that naming it is not possessing it.

We admire these peoples, as owners of a kind of magic we are unable to practice, and yet, almost without meaning to, we destroy them. They are vulnerable to our slick, mass-produced individualism. Remove them from their ancestral pattern and they wilt and die, like flowers plucked and left to lie in the noon-day sun. What we call civilization is for them the hot breath of a lethal sirocco. We bring industrial dilutions to their handicrafts, exchange harsh anilines for their vegetable dyes, show contempt for their traditional observations and mock their taboos. Before long their lives are a tattered, scarecrow mixture of the old and the new, and what was once quaint and beautiful is now only technically flawed, without either wholeness or charm. They find themselves incapable of the studied hypocrisies of Western morality, and so they tend to go to pieces at the level of interpersonal relations, also, becoming shattered victims of people who are more resourceful at adapting themselves to an alienated life.

But how shall we define the "natural" man? It would be easy to cite dozens of descriptive accounts of natural ways of life, but the common denominator of all naturalness at the human level seems to lie in the idea that human activities mirror more universal processes of life. Work, for the natural man, is "work" in two senses. It is work in a practical sense, to produce the goods necessary for food, clothing and shelter, but it is also work in the alchemical sense. The weaver of rugs celebrates the cosmic process in the pattern he makes his threads display. When the Indian silversmith hammers an image of the thunderbird in metal, it is an act of devotion to the forces in nature for which the thunderbird stands. When the earth is opened by the peasant, and seed is sown, an act of love takes place. Existence is both practical and symbolic, and fulfillments are

here and now. There is no ulterior motive, no end apart from the varied metabolisms which are served and completed from day to day.

In the case of the Hopi Indians, there is a sense of the collaboration of man with nature, and of high responsibility. The Hopis believe that they have a part in the working of the natural order of things—that their lives are in a sense "governors" of the processes of nature. If a Hopi fails in his integrity, the world of great nature will falter to an equivalent degree. The Hopis, in short, assume the responsibilities of Atlas, and they bear this burden with appropriate dignity. It is not too much to say of them, as Jesus said, that they are about their Father's business, so that a Hopi endeavors to make of himself something more than an "ordinary" man, since he has accepted of life more than ordinary responsibilities.

In general, however, these "natural" ways of life are incorporated in traditional forms of behavior and belief. They survive so long as the traditions survive. It is difficult to imagine a natural man of this sort as a *separate* individual. The traditional natural man is what he is only in his community, just as a bee is a bee only when it is a member of the hive, or a link in the swarm.

But even as we revel in the thought of these natural perfections, we rebel against them. The history of the West is the history of revolt against tradition. It is true that we have had the provocation of corrupt traditions and the cynical misuse of the offices of traditional authority to help us along. But this decay may even have been a part of a natural process of the release of Western mankind from tradition, an inevitable part of the death of an order. In any event, and from whatever cause, the West became the matrix for the birth of a new kind of man—the individualist. Where others had believed what their forefathers believed, the individualist would think new thoughts, spin new systems. Where others were content with the hearths which had warmed and fed untold generations, he would seek a new land. He became a separate identity, an independent

force, often an egotistical force. It might be said that if egotism had not existed, it would have been necessary to invent it, in order to rationalize the unleashed energies of these Western rebels against tradition.

There were premonitory symptoms of this new spirit of independence even during the Middle Ages. The entire period of scholastic philosophy gives evidence of the determination of the mind to become an independent authority. The learned doctors might declare the superiority of revelation to the deliveries of reason, but this was a kind of insurance policy they took out to guard against failures in their venturing. They insisted upon *reasoning* about the nature of things, all the same, and obviously found greater satisfaction in conclusions so arrived at than in what they felt obliged to *believe* because it was a supernatural disclosure. The momentum of medieval rationalizing burst its bonds with the dawn of natural science, and then the lid was off. With the break-up of theological authority, speculation became the prerogative of every thinker, and dozens of pretentious intellectual constructions took the place of orthodox belief. Science, finally, began to operate as a check upon the exuberance of the metaphysical imagination, but by this time the age of faith was really over, and all the cultural connections of man with nature, in the pantheistic sense, were broken, except for the private intuitions of the poets and men like the transcendentalists.

With the rise of technology, the freedom from tradition became a riot of conquest and acquisition. The settling of the New World by a composite population of saints and sinners, ne'er-do-wells, adventurers, bondsmen, and a handful of idealists seems to have launched the spirit of individualism upon a separate and somewhat corporate career. Here, in the United States, were formulated the first great documents of Independence, declaring the right of each individual to be independent of every dogma, and imposing only those rules of conformity necessary

to preserve similar rights for others. The Constitution, from the Old World point of view, was a charter for a nation of anarchists, a social contract which celebrated the principle of freedom instead of the requirements of tradition.

From that time to this, the United States has had a colorful, ribald history of incredible material achievements and incredible excesses. The country is a paradise of Coney Island wonders, a dizzy Disneyland of the stupendous. There is nothing that we cannot do. Are we threatened by defeat? By luck we have gained an Einstein who calls the President's attention to the destructive potentialities of the atom bomb. Are we becoming irreligious? We have a Billie Graham to preach to the common folk, a Norman Vincent Peale to reach the climbing middle classes, and urge them to climb still higher, and all manner of imported yogis and technicians of the tired psyche to service the sophisticated segment of the population, easing their ennui.

But in addition, and better than this, we have produced a vast romantic literature celebrating the conquest of the New World, and we have had a Herman Melville to dramatize individualism as a splendid and awful mania. Meanwhile, as all this was going on, the American continent became host to dozens of utopian experiments. Pick any social theory you like—it's been tried in America. We've had the best of the anarchists—Henry David Thoreau; the best of the poets—Walt Whitman; and the best or worst of the gangsters—Al Capone. We've had more of everything, too. More alcoholism, more crime, more mental illness. Neuroticism is almost a professional necessity in the arts in the United States. Nervous tension? We invented the expression. And we've invented at least a score of chemical specifics to take away nervous tension, and then some to give it back to you when you need to feel "ten feet tall."

The revolutionary movements of the West have shared the same wild fury. Read the Communist Manifesto for evidence of the readiness of Western man to rip, tear, and despoil

the acquisitive structures of individualism, and thus to make all things new—without the slightest suspicion that this may be quite impossible. Marxism is the angry man's theory of natural law, the dialectic his moral justification for liquidating the class enemy.

When you look back at the past three hundred years, even with all its mistakes, you are bound to admit an incredible bravery on the part of Western man. He was ready to pit his intelligence against the universe, to print the signature of his imaginings on the pith and marrow of the natural world. And if you say that only an overweening arrogance made this performance possible, you must add that the theologies he rejected—the perverted supernaturalism which had displaced the traditional philosophies and organic doctrines of antiquity—were more than enough to alienate the free spirit from the world as it was explained to him; just as, in the twentieth century, a Europe wracked by interminable wars and revolutions drove its best thinkers to the bleak consolation of Existentialism, turning them into stoic islands of rational intelligence in an absurd universe.

And yet, while this process of alienation was in its early stages, European poets felt in their hearts the negation of a higher life. Wordsworth mused:

The world is too much with us; late and  
soon,  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our  
Powers:  
Little we see in Nature that is ours;  
We have given our hearts away, a sordid  
boon!  
This Sea that bares her bosom to the  
moon;  
The winds that will be howling at all hours,  
And are up-gathered now like sleeping  
flowers;  
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;  
It moves us not.—Great God! I'd rather be  
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;  
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,  
Have glimpses that would make me less  
forlorn;

Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;  
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed  
horn.

Then Oscar Wilde, more luridly personal, but with the same perception, mourned:

To drift with every passion till my soul  
Is a stringed lute on which all winds can play.  
Is it for this that I have given away  
Mine ancient wisdom and austere control?  
Methinks my life is a twice-written scroll  
Scrawled over on some boyish holiday  
With idle songs for pipe and virelay,  
Which do but mar the secret of the whole.  
Surely there was a time I might have trod  
The sunlit heights, and from life's dissonance  
Struck one clear chord to reach the ears of God:  
Is that time dead? lo! with a little rod  
I did but touch the honey of romance  
And must I lose a soul's inheritance?

It is in the twentieth century that we have become more widely sickened of the image of ourselves reflected in the world about us. It is in the twentieth century that we realize that freedom is both a lovely and a horrible thing—that when we gain it in one form, we lose it in another, until whole peoples, frightened by the burdens of decision, have sought to renew a feeling of archaic security by mechanical and ideological imitations of the organic societies of the past.

But this, too, fails. Even while we grudgingly admit that certain fragmentary truths are present in the communist and fascist theories—truths that have suffered from neglect in the free, democratic societies—we are bound to recognize that the evils of individualism cannot be erased by turning our back on the dream of freedom. *Our individualism cannot be renounced.* Henry Miller put it well when he said, "It is the creative nature of man which has refused to let him lapse back into that unconscious unity with life which characterized the animal world from which he made his escape."

So, from the impact of tremendous historical experiences, we are slowly coming around to the view that our lives are our own, and not the offprint of circumstances; that no matter how we

"arrange" our environment, it is still only a stage setting through which we move, before which we play out a drama of the soul. There are endless sequences in this drama, and in each one which can be identified as a "scene," which has the coherence of *an attitude toward life*, we find a version of unity expressed in symbolic terms. These symbolic terms are the institutions which we cannot live without—"that deal," as Laurens van der Post observed, "with those aspects of life which cannot be explained rationally"—which establish for us working relationships with the universe around us. This was the role of the Mysteries in the culture of ancient Greece. In the Mysteries were depicted the meanings which the Greeks assigned to the struggles in life; and from them they learned courage and reverence and devotion to the duties which lay before them. Plutarch's account of the life of Numa is of great interest in this connection, since it tells how Numa devised institutions which he felt would serve the turbulent nature of the Romans who had asked him to rule over them. The school of Pythagoras, again, was another such institution, designed to develop attitudes which would uphold and support the moral qualities of community life.

In contrast to this, we may think of the Buddha sitting beneath the Bo Tree, experiencing subjectively, within the space of twenty-four hours, all the horrors and joys, and all the meanings of human existence. By becoming Buddha, Gotama absorbed within himself the function of external institutions. He became free of all traditions, all cultural patterns, all institutional supports, seeing directly what other men could not understand except as symbolically embodied in tradition. In this sense, he was both the perfect individual and the universal man.

By becoming human, we leave the unconscious unity of primeval chaos, seeking to know ourselves. As we climb the ladder of psycho-intellectual evolution, we become more and more "individual," and thus lose contact at the intuitive level with the rest of life. Condemned to

separateness, we adopt channels of mystic communication with the unity we have left behind—and which, we dream, is also within and beyond us. So, surely, have arisen all the ancient theologies, all the half-truths of the past, for how can any theology be more than a half-truth? Then, at some point in our career, the umbilicus is broken or cut. It is then time for us to learn to be altogether ourselves. But still the old theologies beckon, promising unity without the discipline of a personal focus, promising "forgiveness" for our outlawry and our laziness. And so begins the rivalry, bitter and unending, between the wisdom of the heart and the glamor of psychic compromise; between the synthesis of self-consciousness, rich in perception of the subtle connections of all living things, and the gross intoxications of a return to the dark bosom of chaos. We suffer sore temptation from the illicit unity which comes from a submergence of individuality.

So we stand, these days, at some sort of cross-roads, unmanned by our indecision, yet unable to turn back without a loss of all we have gained. We have been unnatural men, yet for the most natural of reasons. By the ordeal of our past, we are just beginning to understand what it means to be human.

## *REVIEW*

### CHRIST AND SOCRATES

OUR first acquaintance with the works of Edith Hamilton was through *The Greek Way*, and since our review of this book, more than one subscriber has thanked us for calling attention to an author so well worth knowing. Miss Hamilton is indeed a remarkable woman: in 1948, her eighty-first year, she published a volume of similar inspiration—*Witness to the Truth*. Again we shall offer examples of the themes Miss Hamilton develops so well, although not being quite sure whether we are reviewing a book or praising an author's life work. In any case, we again invite readers to add Miss Hamilton to the list of authors they intend never to forget.

John Mason Brown, in a collection of essays also published in 1948 (in a review of *Witness to the Truth*), shows how far one can go in praising a writer, without losing philosophical balance. As Miss Hamilton treats Socrates and Christ, so does Mr. Brown treat Miss Hamilton:

Among all the orders with which the land teems, there are many larger but none more devoted than that happily unorganized band of men and women whose eyes brighten at the merest mention of Edith Hamilton. Ours (let me proudly confess that I am, and have long been, a member) is a small club, far smaller than it should be. Even so, it has its virtues.

We do not meet except by chance, and then conversationally, in the most unlikely places. We pay no dues. We have no officers, no committees, and no known list of members. No good works are required of us since Miss Hamilton has performed them for us by writing them. Our membership is self-elected and open to all. We discriminate only against those indiscriminating enough not to have read Edith Hamilton's books. Upon such mortals we squander our pity. We realize they have been discriminating against themselves.

Let a reader of *The Greek Way*, for example, encounter anywhere, at any time, a person hitherto unmet, and let one of them admit his admiration for it, however casually, and, more than ceasing to be strangers, the two are certain to become friends. Why

not? Between them there is a bond; a union of tastes; a confession of shared ideals. They sense this instantly and rejoice in it.

Whereupon, without more ado, they generally proceed to hold a typical meeting of an Edith Hamilton club. Her name is the only sorority pin, fraternal grip, or party card necessary. It can fall like a gavel on the oddest assembly, calling it to order at least in a distant corner of a noisy room. I know whereof I write. I have taken part in far too many such impromptu sessions in one American town after another not to discover how binding a fraternity the Hamiltonians are.

The reasons for this, though compelling, are simple enough.

She is a popularizer but no vulgarizer; a liaison officer between the finest that has been and the finest that is. She speaks to the layman without condescension or cajolery. Her style is Doric in its simplicity, its strength, its beauty. Neither the curse of classroom nor the arid snobbery of many of culture's rarefied custodians is hers. Although a scholar, she is not a pedant. She writes from the heart as well as the head. Her learning and her living are linked. Large as is her erudition, her wisdom is larger. The elevation of her thinking is equaled only by the altitude of her spirit.

In many respects she is one of the last Greeks of the Great Age.

*Witness to the Truth* is a book about Christ and Christianity, but from the Socratic standpoint. Miss Hamilton has fully as much to say about Socrates as about Jesus. Mr. Brown's judgment that Miss Hamilton may be considered "one of the last Greeks of the Great Age" is beautifully justified by her ability to combine art with philosophy and to give beauty and depth to a simple theme. She finds both Socrates and Christ affirmations of the potential of humanity at large. It was because *they* saw "more" in Man than others did that they were what they were, and it is this sharing of high expectations which makes Socrates and Christ brothers.

We recall reading about a year ago an article by Reinhold Niebuhr, entitled "Christ vs Socrates," in which that determined Christian theologian argued that when people think of

Christ as simply another "good man"—as Socrates undoubtedly was—the whole point of Christianity is missed. But Niebuhr, we suspect, is really more enamored of St. Augustine than of Jesus, and interprets Christianity accordingly. Miss Hamilton, in turn, feels that this is the surest way to miss the heart of the message of Jesus. She explains in the simplest of words:

"For this cause I came into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."

The words are in the Gospel of John, spoken by Christ to Pilate. Christ's witness to the truth was himself. He had no system of thought which could be considered apart from himself. It is clear that he took no care to pass on to future generations accurate statements of what he knew. He never wrote anything down. He seemed intent only on reaching the men he met day by day, and he said little to them by way of explanation. He left behind him what one man and another remembered of his sayings; in the Gospel of John he is quoted as saying that the Holy Spirit would bring to the remembrance of his disciples all that he had said to them but he himself left only the record of his own life. It would seem beyond doubt that he believed the truth he knew could be expressed in no other way.

Socrates too never tried to put the truth he had found into words. He thought as Christ did that it was impossible to tell men what it was and then expect them to know it. He too had no ordered philosophy or theology and he too never wrote a word down. Like Christ he lived his truth and died for it. A life can be more lasting than systems of thought. Socrates has outlasted two millenniums.

He was a witness to all that is contained in the word goodness, to its reality and its power. It was said of a great English scientist, "He made it easy for people to believe in goodness." This Socrates did as few since the beginning of history. No one who knew him could doubt that, as he said, "Goodness has a most real and actual existence." He left the memory of a life which conquered through it, which was never defeated though he was imprisoned and put to death, and which has been kept in men's memories among the things that are eternal. During the four hundred years between his death and Christ's the Greek and the Roman world turned to him to learn how to live, and ever since men have seen through him the changelessness of the truth, the enduring verity of what he lived by.

In *Witness to the Truth*, Miss Hamilton asks all professed Christians to recall that Christ, himself, "never spoke a word to exalt suffering or to bid men seek it, though that is the path the Church soon took, but without any shadow of authority from him." There are profoundly impressive symbolic interpretations of suffering to be found, both East and West, but Christ, like Socrates and Buddha, provided something beyond doctrine, and this is what Miss Hamilton wishes to make clear. Further, those who are chiefly affected by the "miracles" attributed to Christ, or who torture themselves and others on the assumption that because Christ died on the cross there is something intrinsically noble about suffering—or who switched, as did St. Augustine, from Christ's teaching of the Essential Nobility of man to the doctrine of Original Sin—have missed the point. Miss Hamilton continues, again resorting to the example of Socrates to reveal Christ to the Christians:

Of Christ's followers, which of them all was like him, who never held up suffering as a good, who said of himself that he "came eating and drinking," who declared that men would be judged not by their beliefs, but "Ye shall know them by their fruits," and whose own judgment was, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more"? That disposition was conspicuous by its absence from the Christian world.

Four hundred years before Christ there lived a man who showed it. He was a Greek, the Athenian Socrates. Of all men anywhere, at any time, he came closest to the pattern Christ held up. His temper of mind was like Christ's. With an extraordinary elevation he combined a soberness and moderation very rare in the lives of the saints. In him as in Christ there was a complete absence of ecstasies and transports. He showed in himself what he urged men to seek. He put before them a new life: they were to be servants of the truth and so of God. Looking at him they understood what that meant. He realized it for them; he was the ideal he held up to them.

Even of old the Christian world, so bitterly antagonistic to any ideas not specifically contained in their creeds and dogmas, made an exception in Socrates' case. They recognized his likeness to Christ. He was the example that a soul could be

Christlike not through grace, but by nature. Erasmus said, "Holy Socrates, pray for us."

To know him is a help to knowing Christ, and it is not hard to know him.

The conquest of self, for Miss Hamilton as for Christ and Socrates, is in part a joyous adventuring of the spirit. The failings of others are viewed not with grimness, but with sympathy and wise compassion. So, if we are to have "religion in the schools," one could think of no better plan than to make Miss Hamilton's *Witness to the Truth* a primer for all considerations of Christianity. At the same time, her *Greek Way* and her *Mythology*, now fortunately available in pocket editions, should be on every teacher's desk. John Mason Brown, we think, had the right of it when he remarked that "Miss Hamilton is a citizen of two worlds—the antique and the modern—and is equally at home with the best of both. Greatness neither frightens her nor embarrasses her. She runs to it rather than away from it. With it she is as much at home as most of us are with the typical, the third-rate, or trash."

## *COMMENTARY*

### INSTITUTION FOR FREEDOM

ALTHOUGH they are not usually thought of in this way, conventions can serve originality and self-reliance as well as the habits of conformity. There is the custom or convention, in the training of a Brahmin youth of India, to send him to spend a night in the jungle, unarmed, without any near-by aid. There he must learn courage. He must sit quietly, perhaps in the posture of contemplation, while the wild creatures of the jungle move about him. He is told that if he is unafraid, he will not be harmed.

Then there is the similar custom which prevailed among some of the tribes of American Indians, requiring the youth who was ready to become a "brave" to go far away from his village, and to fast alone in silence for several days—until, at last, he would have a dream or vision that gave a meaning to his life.

Something of the same idea is preserved by the Quakers in their doctrine of the Inner Light. By becoming quiet in mind, by eliminating his awareness of the trivial and the personal, the Quaker prepares himself for an insight of the soul.

These are all traditional responses to the need of the individual to find his own way. They suggest that a man is not really a man until he is able to stand being entirely on his own, with no other means of relating himself to the rest of life except the means he is able to find in himself.

It seems odd that this idea should have been carefully preserved by ancient traditional cultures, but practically lost by the individualistic societies of the West, except for people like the Quakers. You would think that the ordeals which the youth of traditional societies had to undertake in order to gain or to "prove" their individuality would have been the one thing which the individualistic societies would have retained and given great prominence in the pattern of the new culture. Instead, the ways of nurturing the young which have become typical of Western civilization seem

maliciously determined to erase the idea of the individual. A secret or personal sense of meaning is feared as "unscientific" or "queer," and a careful indoctrination proceeds to cast all youth in the same mold.

Then, to replace the challenge of growing into manhood, we have only the need for the youth to find himself a place in the economic system. Often parents feel that they are "good" parents only when they ease the path of their youngsters into remunerative jobs. They pride themselves on giving their sons and daughters the "training" that will help them to slide into positions bearing prestige and social status with a minimum of strain. Now and then you meet a father who believes in tossing his son out into the world for a few years of "experience," before taking him into the firm, but this is usually prompted by a pragmatic sort of wisdom and has little to do with the need of the individual to "find himself" in a philosophical sense.

No wonder Western society finds itself threatened by "collectivism," with anxious critics seeing the shadow of "creeping socialism" behind every political idea which varies at all from the oversimplified fantasies of "pure" Free Enterprise! Why should people who have suffered a psychological conspiracy against their individuality care about maintaining the social forms of the competitive struggle? They have no notion of the meaning of struggle in human life and can hardly honor the empty rhetoric of "Free Enterprise" in days when technology and the requirements of military organization have turned even economic freedom into little more than a memory.

Somewhere, a beginning must be made to restore to the West an authentic conception of individuality. While we can hardly expect to institute rites of "initiation" in modern times, it ought to be possible to establish the idea of awakening to manhood and responsibility as a distinct function of educational institutions, which are the closest thing we have in a secular society

to the arrangements of ancient theocracies or religio-social tribal customs.

Part of the role of this institutional program would be to free the minds of the young of the anti-individualistic pressure originating in the conventional idea of "scientific" knowledge. We need education in science, but even more we need education in being human, so that, among other things, we can make a new start in the proper use of scientific knowledge.

Some day, perhaps, human beings will be able to seek out this sort of self-knowledge spontaneously, regardless of their cultural environment, led by some kind of super-organic instinct. Then not only geniuses will insist upon an immediate contact with life, and the meanings of life, without institutional assistance, but everyone. Until that time, however, we need to help one another to move in this direction.

## CHILDREN and Ourselves

### NOTES IN PASSING

FROM *Time* for Aug. 27 comes another report of one of those unusual people who seem able to rehabilitate "wayward youths," untroubled by the complexities of any particular theory. Finchden Manor, a school for maladjusted boys some twenty-five miles southwest of Canterbury, England, is run by a "casual administrator," George A. Lyward. Lyward's approach is accurately conveyed by the following conversation, taken from the *London Times*:

"What is the curriculum?" was asked.

"There is none," replied George A. Lyward.

"But . . . can you tell me what the boys are doing at this particular moment?"

"I have a rough idea. I can tell you that three are in London. Two . . . are playing croquet. One has just been given £20 to start breeding budgerigars (parakeets). Another is thinking of making a telescope, but won't get a penny till he shows that he means it. And one has run away."

"Run away?"

"I think he'll come back," said G. A. Lyward.

A lot of them do. At Finchden Manor there are no special semesters or ordinary holidays—in fact, no fixed hours at all. The boys cook and serve themselves and, all in all, get what Lyward calls "respite." "Some young people," he remarked, "needed complete respite from lessons as such, in schools as such, so that they could be shepherded back from the ways . . . by which they have escaped for a while their real challenge."

Most of the boys come to Finchden complete with some psychiatrist's prognosis, but Lyward is not impressed. In his opinion, no one can really tell what you have to work with in an emotionally maladjusted adolescent until the strains which have been oppressing him have been removed. Usually the boy needs the opportunity to return to

the simplicity of childhood. The *Time* article summarizes:

For all this variety of trouble, most of the boys seemed to have one thing in common. Their lives, Lyward learned, had been "usurped." Usually they had been pressured into trying to be something they thought they could never be. As a result, they either rebelled or became abnormally submissive. By removing all these pressures, Finchden was also able to remove the neurotic defenses the boys had built up. Though nearly adults, and above average in intelligence, they usually went through a stage of returning to childhood. But that was part of their cure. "They're small," G. A. Lyward once explained, "or they've been made to feel small, and they've wanted to feel big. They're really little boys, and here that's what they become . . . Why not let them have back their childhood?"

This seems good common sense, suggesting application of the same therapy to disturbed adult lives. Certainly in a competitive business world, and among teachers and professional men, environment encourages the building of tense defenses. The mature person who rides through such pressures serenely is usually one who has retained the simplicity of childhood—he automatically compensates for the strain and confusion incident to most livelihoods by relaxing into joyful appreciation of "the little things." Constructive hobbies probably play something of this role for many, and the "do-it-yourself" movement also assists. But Lyward's experience in dealing with severely disturbed children suggests that severely disturbed adults may need a much more complete break, for a while, with whatever sort of tension they are living under—or even with the community in which they live. The man unencumbered by pressing family responsibilities, who has sense enough to "head for the woods" for a protracted period of time now and again, is fortunate indeed. Then, if he *cannot* be happy with himself in the midst of simple surroundings, he probably needs more time to complete the rest cure. He needs to gear himself to another scale of values than that of competitive living, so that he may return with new

insights and with some capacity for holding on to the spirit of relaxation.

Here we return to a proposal made by Arthur Morgan—that every professional man would do well to train himself for a secondary occupation, and one in which he can take some pleasure. Then, when the political aspects of his employment grate upon his sense of justice, when he can no longer maintain his integrity and maintain his work, he should give up his work. Having something to turn to, moreover, probably makes him more effective in dealing with the awkward situations which so often develop in spheres of managerial responsibility. The same could be said of teachers and professors who feel their integrity to be endangered by "loyalty oaths." The man who is willing to quit at any time, or as Robert Hutchins once said, is "in a perpetual mood of resignation," can conduct himself much more serenely during stress and strain. An opponent of loyalty oaths will probably be more persuasive in discussion with his colleagues, or even in protest to the Board of Regents, if he does not feel that his entire livelihood is threatened.

We have encountered some "intellectuals" who choose to spend part of the year—the summertime in the case of teachers and professors—working for the Department of Agriculture's Forest Service. This may stem from a sound instinct for acquiring a completely contrasting environment, living at a different and, in some instances, more primitive pace. Creative writers who spend part of their year doing manual labor are also apt to reap psychological benefits. By this means they may acquire a broader understanding and sympathy for the diversity of human nature.

Then, finally, there is renewal of childhood afforded by the presence of young children. Adults who know how to enter the child's world make possible a double benefit—the child learns that the adult is not so awesome and different as he may appear, and the adult returns to the "world

of wonder" of the young. Loss of the capacity to wonder often makes grown-ups crotchety.

A footnote to the idea of regaining the child's "world of wonder" comes by way of an article by Rachel Carson, condensed in the *Reader's Digest* for September. Mrs. Carson, apparently, believes that nature communion can begin in infancy. She relates this incident:

One stormy autumn night when my nephew Roger was about 20 months old I wrapped him in a blanket and carried him to the beach in the rainy darkness. Out there, just at the edge of where-we-couldn't-see, big waves were thundering in, dimly seen white shapes that boomed and shouted and threw great handfuls of froth at us. Together we laughed for pure joy—he a baby meeting for the first time the wild tumult of Oceanus, I with the salt of half a lifetime of sea love in me. . . .

A child's world is fresh and new and beautiful, full of wonder and excitement. For most of us that clear-eyed vision is dimmed or lost before we reach adulthood. If I had influence with the good fairy who is supposed to preside over the christening of all children I should ask that her gift to each child be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life, an unfailing antidote against the boredom and disenchantments of later years, the sterile preoccupation with things that are artificial, the alienation from the sources of our strength.

If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder he needs the companionship of an adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in.

## *FRONTIERS*

### Dilemma for Christians

THE MANAS article for August 22, "Toward Individuality," quoted from *Harper's* (August) some paragraphs by Elinor Goulding Smith on the pressures of religious conformity felt by the agnostic parent. Mrs. Smith's point was that her constitutional right to have no religion is interfered with in dozens of ways. The title of her article was, "Won't Somebody *Tolerate Me?*" She found from experience that people who wear some sort of religious "label" seldom have difficulty in receiving respect for their beliefs. Only those who reject *all* labels—who endeavor to follow ethical principles without being identified with any group—feel the full weight of community pressure.

A number of *Harper's* readers responded with sympathy to Mrs. Smith's appeal. Most interesting, however, are the comments of clergymen. A Congregationalist minister wrote (in *Harper's* for October):

Elinor Goulding Smith presents us with a whopper of a dilemma. "Religionwise," she wants to be let alone, and her children with her. . . .

She is right that the majority should not force upon her and her children concepts abhorrent to them simply because it *is* the majority. Nor do the "right" people (those who adhere to "the one true faith") have the right to impose religious concepts on others. But there are obstacles to the complete independence Mrs. Smith desires.

(1) We are a people founded upon religious principles. Even those Mrs. Smith says she teaches her children have come to effective realization only in concert with religious sanctions which have made sterile ethical ideas into motivations with power.

(2) It is the nature of Christianity to proselytize. Christians are specifically instructed to convert others. . . . "Your religion is my business" is admittedly a ticklish motto and has involved Christians in numberless tactless tactics and many indignant protests less kindly than Mrs. Smith's. But the church cannot surrender this mission without emasculation. . . .

Another "Reverend" admits that Mrs. Smith's claim of "freedom of religion" for agnostics should "weigh heavily on the consciences of all religious people," but adds:

However, her desire to remove all mention of religion from TV, schools, and even ordinary conversation seems a bit farfetched. This is asking for a basic reconstitution of our whole Judeo-Christian culture. . . . Such an abandonment would lead to conditions of which no American, Mrs. Smith included, could possibly approve. . . .

Two things seem apparent from these comments. First, they assume that the United States is properly described as a "Christian" country, despite the First Amendment to the Constitution; second, they imply that the difficulties and embarrassments experienced by free-thinkers are a practical consequence of the agnostic position, which will just have to be borne by those who choose to differ from the majority. In other words, the generosity of allowing that Mrs. Smith enjoys the protection of the First Amendment exhausts the resources of tolerant and well-meaning Christians in respect to her problem.

The weakness of these replies, it seems to us, gives evidence of a basic psychological conflict in American culture. Legally, the United States is a secular State. Even though "In God We Trust" has just recently been made the "motto" of the country, there can be little doubt of the absolute neutrality of basic constitutional law on the subject of religion. Yet Christianity is admitted to be by nature a proselytizing religion. It follows, therefore, that many devoted Christians will deem it their duty to use whatever means they can to give Christianity authority and status, even if this means violating either the spirit or the letter of the Constitution.

This is an unpleasant situation, for Christians as for others, since it leads to equivocation on the meaning of freedom of religion. The ardent Christian wants freedom and he wants to proselytize. If you object that proselytizing often leads to actions that infringe on the freedom of others, you are likely to be told that lobbying is a

well-known right in the United States, wholly consistent with the democratic tradition. Why, after all, should true believers examine very closely the methods of expediency in the spread of the Gospel? Is it not in the service of God?

We can hardly expect Christians to do much about clearing up the moral confusion on these issues, since clarity, so far as we can see, would require a careful reconsideration of proselytizing fervor. It would be necessary to get out into the open such questions as whether Christianity is the *only* way to truth and salvation, or simply *one* way, among others—the one, perhaps, liked best by Christians. If the latter view should be adopted, Christianity would soon lose its character of a proselytizing religion. Christians, we fear, suspect this consequence of clarity and prefer that the question remain fuzzy.

But what would a non-proselytizing Christianity be like? It would be a Christianity which admits the possibility of saving truth in *other* religions. Many people who have grown up in the Christian tradition have, of course, already adopted this view, but it is a tacit rather than an explicit conclusion.

Spokesmen for Christianity are not likely to make such an admission. The second clerical correspondent quoted quails at the thought of "a basic reconstruction of our whole Judeo-Christian culture," as threatening an unthinkable fate. The other correspondent plainly believes that "ethical ideas" are *sterile* without religious sanctions to support them. He would probably call "history" to witness for this claim. Yet where is the justification for this assumption of the exclusive power of religion, in particular the Christian religion?

We shall probably be told that men are not moved to great and noble actions by the pallid abstractions of ethics; that metaphysics may order conceptions of duty, but that the galvanic presence of the Holy Spirit is needed as a transforming power in men's lives.

There is something to this. More than the persuasion of logical deductions is involved in the heroism of moral and religious reformers. At least, we can say that a mysterious potency is present in the lives of great men. But is there a justification for claiming a *supernatural* origin of this influence? Spinoza was a hero of a sort, yet you could hardly call him a supernaturalist. Actually, any good history of Pantheism will supply numerous examples of nonsupernatural ethical inspiration which bear internal evidence of "motivation with power."

It is worth inquiring, in this connection, why so much of religious inspiration has been *partisan*. Possibly the partisanship is directly connected with the supernaturalism of the inspiration. It is well known, at any rate, that partisan emotions are the easiest to arouse in most people, which would help to explain why history seems to support the claim that "religious sanctions" are needed to animate ethical thinking. What is seldom noted is the fact that the emotional drive of supernatural religion also *corrupts* the impartial excellence of ethical thinking.

Well, these disjointed musings do not help us very much in the preservation of religious freedom, except, perhaps, as they suggest that there is a great difference between religion as the ideal pursuit of impartial truth, and religion as practiced in the sects and creeds of existing society.