

## THE KINSHIP OF MAN

HUMAN Brotherhood as a conscious social ideal became a power in history about two hundred years ago, and has been increasing and spreading its influence ever since. Other things have been spreading, too, but the longing for human brotherhood, if not the will to practice it as we might wish, is an omnipresent fact. And there are countless evidences of progress. For example, last year Britain finally repealed its hated Poor Law, which for centuries caused poverty to be regarded as a crime. The Presbyterians of the United States, with a similar regard for human welfare—although in the next world rather than this—ten years ago voted out of their confession of faith the section declaring that, "By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestined unto everlasting life and others foreordained to everlasting death."

In Britain's new social legislation, the word "destitute" nowhere appears as defining the necessary condition of those to be given public assistance. This humiliating requirement of the old Poor Law has been eliminated and an entirely different principle, that of human right, established as the basis for aid. The change is fundamental, embodying a new attitude of man toward man—which is a fact quite independent of the practical provisions of the Act.

Revision of their Church Code by the Presbyterians is rather a new attitude of men toward their God, Who, as a result, becomes more like a just man than an inscrutable tyrant. Humane men demand a humane God. A God that would foreordain a definite number of his "creatures" to eternal damnation is, after all, far worse than a social system which reduces an indefinite number of men to destitution, and will help them only while they remain in that condition. The Poor Relief Act of Queen Elizabeth and the Institutes of John Calvin belong to approximately the same

period of the past, and neither was infallible in its judgment of human nature. It is time they were changed.

One by one, the distinctions of race, creed and sex are being removed from the laws of modern nations. Brown-skinned Hindus may now become citizens of the United States; Chinese, too. Increasingly, men are respected because of their common humanity, not because of their condition, color, or belief. We are slowly vindicating the instinct which uses the word "humane" with the meaning of "kindly" and "sympathetic," as though we knew that these are the essential qualities of human beings. Believers in brotherhood must also believe that man is basically good, despite much evidence to the contrary.

But while conviction grows of the goodness and innate dignity of man, the obstacles to human brotherhood have likewise become greater. There seems to be a strange power of opposition within the flow of progress itself, which unceasingly erects barriers to our ideals. We cultivate humane attitudes on one front of the human struggle, and then, behind our backs, a seething wall of hate and prejudice arises to frustrate our hopes for the future, and even to threaten what we have already achieved.

This is the dialectical process the Marxists talk about, which may be illustrated in some of the consequences of Russia's revolutionary struggle. The Soviet Constitution, on paper, is perhaps the most liberal in the world, and even in practice as it applies, say, to the rights of women or to racial minorities. These are historic achievements, yet read Vladimir Tchémavin's *I Speak for the Silent Prisoners of the Soviets* for the other side of the picture—for the fate of those in Russia who now have no rights at all, and not even hope.

The oppressions of individuals in Russia are objective and horrible. We lately finished fighting a great war because of our abhorrence and fear of such oppressions, and now we talk of fighting another for much the same reasons. We justify such talk and the feeling behind it because the method chosen by the Russians for their kind of progress seems inevitably to threaten our kind of progress. And so we fear, become angry, and prepare for war.

Yet, at the same time, we long for brotherhood. We speak also of the humane culture we want for our children, and our children's children. Already, it seems to be slipping away. Our life has become harsh, mechanical, with a kind of drunken mood pervading personal and public affairs. Looking about, we discover that the qualities that we have described for a century or more as the essence of civilized living are somehow diminished or absent from our lives. The words of a modern psychiatrist, writing in the January *Atlantic*, may help us to understand what is wrong:

During the war the psychiatrist found his job in combat at odds with his civilian experience. Whereas in civilian life he attempted to understand and correct the abnormal reactions of persons to normal situations, in military life he has to understand and modify men's normal reactions to an abnormal situation. One might seriously ask if the condition of the world does not now place many of us in a continually abnormal situation to which we are reacting normally, even though such behavior by all previous standards appears pathological. In such a turbulent world, one wonders just what a normal reaction is.

Here, in the United States, the oppressions we suffer are subjective but equally horrible. We are coarsened by one war, fearful of another, and although we still believe that, in familiar human relationships, good will is the best solvent, and trust is the foundation of confidence, we seem incapable of believing that these things apply to the great impersonal relationships of nations, races, and large-scale organizations. We feel compelled to adopt policies of intimidation,

suspicion and braggadocio in the areas of mass or collective action. And we are doing this at precisely the time in history when we can least afford it—for the pattern of human life today is being determined by these massive impersonal relationships.

Our psychologists and educators tell us that fear is a destructive emotion; that children who behave from fear will very likely grow into abnormal or neurotic adults. Studies of criminal behavior reveal the same lesson: we *know* that rehabilitation, not punishment, reduces crime. We know, also, from personal experience as well as from the new knowledge of psychology, that a sense of "belonging," of "participation," is essential to constructive human life, and yet, in a hundred different ways, we violate these truths by supporting the group exclusions of party, culture and nation. We speak in terms of "brotherhood," but we provoke enmity and suspicion, or we allow others to do it for us.

On December 11 of last year, Bertrand Russell, sometimes called the world's greatest logician, addressed the London members of the Student Movement for World Government on the absolute necessity of unified world rule. "The need," he said, "for a single authority, controlling all the armed forces of the world, is so incomparably more urgent than anything else today, that I would even counsel America to submit to Russia, if I thought there was the slightest chance of its doing so—but there is not."

This prospect, needless to say, will be even more fantastic to Americans who hear of it, than to Mr. Russell who spoke of it. The voluntary submission of Russia to an outside authority being equally out of the question, Mr. Russell ends his discussion of World Government with a "realistic" conclusion:

The Russians will have to be induced to come in by fear. However distasteful that prospect is, we shall be engaged on a wild goose chase if we do not face up to it. It may be necessary to be ruthless in the pursuit of peace.

A bold man, Mr. Russell—who wants to frighten 180,000,000 people into a peaceful frame of mind. He should know that the Russians are already sufficiently aroused to the possibility of outside control—they fear it, but with a fear that makes them angry and aggressive, not timid and submissive. This accounts for much of their explosive diplomacy and their self-justifying explanations of the policies so disliked by other nations. The rest is accounted for by the doctrine of the Class Struggle, which claims that a socialist nation cannot survive in a capitalist world—that either world revolution or world reaction must finally triumph.

(This is the world revolution, let us remember, that was to be on behalf of the humane life for all men—to bring about the classless society.)

It is too late, now, to do anything about the Russians. We can't change them by frightening them, at any rate. The Nazi armies killed about one in every ten men among the Russians, and still they fought on and drove the Nazis back. These are the people Mr. Russell would "induce" with fear. What we have to do is overcome fear, not create it. And the Russians, like everyone else, are going to have to overcome their fears, and to stop hating en masse, for themselves. All we can do is give them a chance.

On our own account, we can give some attention to the kind of thinking which, in the course of a century, establishes these terrible fronts of hate and distrust. For that is the kind of thinking we have got to stop. We may have another war, to pay for the thinking, the fearing and hating, we are doing today. But there will be a sort of "peace" after that war, too. We had better begin, right now, to make up our minds.

## NETHERLANDS LETTER

THE HAGUE.—Here in the Netherlands we are apt to think that never before have times been so critical, people suffered so much, or difficulties been so insurmountable. But is this actually so? Or does it only seem thus because we live in the present and are therefore more conscious of what is happening today? It would certainly appear as if modern times are more difficult for more people than the years before the war. Most of us remember those years and can compare them to the present. Some may long to go back to past conditions, while others envisage a world different from anything that existed before. Regardless of what we hope for, none of us is satisfied with present circumstances, and though we may feel powerless to change them—though we feel we are going down-hill and that nothing is going to stop us—we occasionally have a vague idea that things might be better if people were more of one mind and will. Words like the above have been said a thousand times or more. But they are idle, and will remain so until they are acted upon. Is this not true?

The peoples of Europe are exhausted after the Second World War. If, in spite of this, they are still dancing, they are but performing a St. Vitus dance, aware of the crazy movements they make and unable to control them. Once, before the last war, H. G. Wells compared humanity to sufferers from this disease.

The majority of the people feel powerless to improve conditions, and show this feeling by being apathetic; by not thinking things through; by being pessimistic; by paying attention only to the present, without considering the future in terms of common, not just individual, betterment.

And how understandable this is! The immediate demands are so exacting, so exhausting, that the average individual is too tired, his mind too much concerned with material things to be able to think constructively: to relate and to extract meaning from what is happening. They must be strong minds and well-founded convictions to survive the storm of post-war daily life!

Is this a Netherlands or a European—or a World Letter? Are these difficulties only characteristic of the European peoples or are they to be found all over the world? In any event, they seem more concentrated, more obvious, in first war- and now "peace"-ridden, divided Europe, than elsewhere.

Yet if the majority of peoples feel incapable of solving problems which trouble us all, there are, as always, islands of activity where small minorities busy themselves in endeavoring to slow down if not to stop the "*Untergang des Abendlandes*." The popular view is that minorities are not worth while considering just because they are minorities. But movements in history, whether "good" or "bad," started as activities of minorities. And, perhaps, if we can be objective, we will learn from the bad as well as from the good movements, that if they succeeded in what they set out to do, it was because they kept on, and stuck to what they believed in. Does not our impatience often make us confuse purpose and results? . . . And so, in Europe today, as before, we find people who have not lost courage; who believe in ideals and who are willing to work for them. The folk school movement, for instance, has followers not only in Denmark, but in other countries as well. So has the cooperative movement. Also, since the war, European Federalists have grown in number. They held a promising Congress in Montreux last summer. The Federalists feel, as do more people than ever before, that what Europe needs is unity—not a superimposed uniformity, but a Unity which grows naturally from the common understanding that "divided we fall." Uniformity suggests only "organisation," but Unity includes organisation as an instrument for the betterment of all, an instrument controlled by the discipline of understanding minds. For this Unity, modern Europe has a mortal need.

NETHERLANDS CORRESPONDENT

## REVIEW

### CURRENT BOOK-OF-THE-MONTH

It is the understandable habit of most reviewers of fiction to regard their task as aesthetic specialization. They have their "department," and other specialists do the worrying about politics and social matters. Yet we feel a strong suspicion that: (a) most works of contemporary fiction can *not* be divorced from the prevailing movement of ideas in politics, science, religion, philosophy and education, and (b) that all of the many people who manage to resist reading the Book-of-the-Month selections nevertheless are continually exposed in other ways to the major contentions and points of view of popular authors, through "cultural media" ranging all the way from university courses to comic strip serials. "Book-of-the-Month" selections are certainly indicative of our taste in reading, and offer us, therefore, another means for evaluating ourselves.

*Raintree County*, by Ross Lockridge, Jr., the current selection, is probably as difficult a book for the type of analysis we should like to attempt as we might hope not to encounter for a year or more. *Raintree County* has "everything"—and this is not meant entirely as a compliment. It is, simultaneously, impressionistic, erotic, "historical," and obviously in the current trend of novels which indicate a certain preoccupation with psychoanalysis. Its message is sometimes one of austerity, sometimes one of sensuality. Nearly every kind of development characteristic of fashionable novel-writing is provided by Mr. Lockridge. And partially because of this the total effect seems imitative rather than creative, although Mr. Lockridge achieves a real distinction in his ability to write of each type of human character, from the bigot to the insane, with human understanding and sympathy. Disturbing things happen, but they are never quite morbid. Also, Mr. Lockridge does endeavor to inform us of a few things: (1) that Christianity interferes unnecessarily in the lives of human beings; (2) that

one loses the capacity to appreciate beauty by going too far in the development of sensualism; but that one is a fool if he does not go far enough; (3) that no matter what the debunkers say, Abraham Lincoln was a great man; (4) that poetic frustration must be standard equipment if one is to live colorfully; (5) that the South was morally corrupt and that it was necessary for the institution of slavery to perish in Armageddon.

Mr. Lockridge has employed the familiar flashback technique with such enthusiasm that the more than one thousand pages of *Raintree County* probably exhibit more variations of this device than have been utilized by any other popular author. Whether by design or by accident, the method assists in creating the impression that the leading characters move in a mental swirl of conflicting impulses and desires, caught in the toils of passions and involvements they can never adequately control. Lockridge's leading character never attains clarity of vision except momentarily in regard to some specific event. Once again the Book-of-the-Month reader is assured that life is a kaleidoscope wherein almost anything can happen to you and wherein almost everything has an equally ephemeral significance. He is not, we fear, impelled to undertake the lonely and difficult road toward clarification of his own objectives, nor toward a strengthening of social purpose. He will, of course, decide—and this is typical—that he would like to know as many fascinating women as did the poetically inclined John Shawnessy, but hope that he would have been able to do something a little more spectacular with his opportunities than did the leading character.

This book is not quite worthless, since Mr. Lockridge is a man capable of acute observation, but it fails to reveal clarity of intent. If you read *Raintree County*, you will have read approximately fifty thousand other modern American novels, and, in our opinion, be none the wiser. The most that can come from any novel, perhaps, is a breath of inspiration. Although Mr. Lockridge apparently admires the ancient Greeks

for their share of this quality, he seems unable to generate it himself.

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### New Views of Personal Morality

Recent publication of John MacPartland's *Sex in Our Changing World* indicates the increasing interest of sociologists in new viewpoints on personal morality. According to the Kinsey Report issuing from the University of Indiana (noted in MANAS for January 28), the alteration is hardly noticeable in terms of actual behavior, but is of considerable magnitude in respect to professed ideals. Both the Kinsey Report and Mr. MacPartland's book demonstrate clearly that the majority of Americans no longer feel it necessary to proclaim their adherence to traditional morality.

This trend cannot be explained simply by reference to the recent war. Although the existence of a large conscript army tends to encourage amoral and casual attitudes toward relations between the sexes, the Kinsey ten-year survey shows that for at least that many years, more and more people have been openly laughing at those mores which once linked a conception of "virtue" with restricted amatory behavior. Many of the radical political groups have incorporated in their doctrines a version of "free love" which they believe will create a more honest and happy society. The new doctrines of the psychoanalyst, Wilhelm Reich, have been a rallying-point for numerous socialists and anarchists who contend that the best way to improve the social order is by restoring a concept of the "natural man." Reich argues that all sexual repressions are socially and politically as well as psychologically harmful. The general public, most of whom have never heard of Wilhelm Reich and are also uninterested in the doings and sayings of socialists and anarchists, has nonetheless been gravitating in a similar direction. The average man, apparently, will in time come to desert all former notions of personal virtue *unless* he finds better reasons for retaining them than have yet been offered by either traditional

Christianity or modern science and medicine (including psychotherapy).

The majority of modern writers seem inclined to regard this trend as simply an interesting statistic. Yet the real question is, will men derive more significance from their lives by moving from fenced-in Christian morality to a brave new world where no restrictions are practiced or expected? Further, are we sure that all the frustrations of the modern man can be traced to the imposition of restrictive disciplines? Or, does he require a basis for *self-discipline*, simply not yet knowing where to find one that possesses enough rational meaning to win voluntary agreement?

## COMMENTARY

### THEORIES OF REFORM

THERE are two basic theories of human betterment, opposed at their extremes, but mixed in various proportions, in all the gradations between. The first is the theory of self-reform, proposed by a long series of religious and philosophical teachers. Historically, Gautama Buddha was the earliest of these, Jesus an illustrious representative, with Tolstoy and Gandhi more recent members of the same school.

The second theory involves reform of others first; then, perhaps, of ourselves, for after the others are changed, self-reform will be easier. We hardly need point out that the second theory is the more popular of the two.

There is plenty of evidence to show that the first class of reformers frequently makes enemies of the second class. Men who want to change other men regard those who advocate self-reform as "reactionaries," and accuse them of being "apologists of the status quo." It is charged, apparently with justification, that the self-reformers "never get anything done." They are not responsible for the eight-hour day nor for old-age benefits and unemployment insurance. There is nothing about taxes in their platform and they are not sufficiently indignant about the Taft-Hartley Bill. In 1941, many of them seemed rather indifferent to the prospect of Hitler's panzer units overrunning the Western world.

But is the man who can't, or won't, hate other men, and is extremely reluctant to coërcé them—for any reason—of necessity an ineffectual dreamer? Is such a man capable of something more than Sweetness and Light? Can he, in short, fully recognize the evil that is in the world and work intelligently against it, without antagonizing or opposing any man?

Probably not. Buddha had his enemies, and, as everyone knows, so did Christ. So the question is rather, how can the enmities excited by a good

man, a man intelligently devoted to the welfare of his fellows, be held to a minimum—or, more properly, to those which are unavoidable? This is the real question to ask, and the really difficult question. All other questions, which evade this one, are simplifying deceptions.

The kind of man we have in mind will make enemies, but he will never *be* an enemy, actually, in thought or in act. He will evoke opposition from the evil and weakness in other men, never from the good in them. He may misunderstand, but he will never hate.

Most men, of course, are partly "good" and partly "bad." The good in ourselves is set against the bad in others, and the good in others against the bad in ourselves. Both are so busy opposing the bad that they fail to see the good, finally coming to deny its existence. And that is war.

There have been a few reformers like the man we speak of. John Reuchlin, the Father of the Reformation, was one. We are willing to defend the career of Thomas Paine as representing another. In modern times, there was Clarence Darrow. These three—a teamed scholar, a fiery patriot, and a humanitarian lawyer—were great men who left a swath of decency behind them, and they hated nobody. Reuchlin fought for understanding in religion and for toleration among men—there was anti-semitism in his day, too. Paine stood for freedom and for principle, and when he opposed the execution of the French King Louis, the Jacobins wanted to execute *him* as a counter-revolutionary. Darrow loved not only black men and poor men; he loved weak, foolish and drunken men, rich men with twisted minds, old men with broken hearts, and violent men with angry and derisive spirits. He simply loved men—something that very few were able to understand.

We don't know what makes men like Reuchlin, Paine, and Darrow. All we know is that we need more of them—men with faith in knowledge, in principles, and with love for man. Perhaps we can say that knowledge without love

of man is barren; that love without principles is sentimentality; and that principles without knowledge are the partisan weapons of bigots, and always lead to hate. If we check these three ingredients of a good life, one with another, we shall not go far wrong.

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### READING AND WRITING

Anyone who read the *Satevepost* (Dec. 17) story on how the new "truth serum" can obtain confessions from psychopathic criminals ("normal" ones, too), and then happened to see in the papers how a veteran of combat on Bougainville, under prosecution in Baltimore for stealing a radio, was proved innocent with the help of the same magic injection, may be interested in pursuing this subject further. The veteran, it seems, instead of lifting a radio from a store, thought he was bringing ammunition to fighting comrades. A shot of sodium pentothal caused him to act out the battle scene of the Bougainville drama at a psychiatrist's suggestion, showing he was no thief, but one of the many thousands of GI's still suffering from combat neurosis. Turning to *Men Under Stress* by Grinker and Spiegel, two Army psychiatrists who developed the use of hypnotic drugs for treatment of battle-shocked flyers of the African campaign, one finds an absorbing account of how sodium pentothal speeds up psychoanalytical therapy. But other things hold the attention, too, in this book. Speaking of the African front, the authors say: "It seemed overseas as if the content of the neurotic reaction was nearly always the same—free anxiety predominating, guilt and depression in the background." Two other specialists quoted insist that "subtle personality changes and an irrational sense of guilt" are invariably present in war neuroses. In some cases, the men felt they had let their outfits down, or caused the death of a pal. For others, the guilt was in the aggression of war itself. According to Grinker and Spiegel, "Our Air Forces are fortunate in that combat is impersonal and a battle of machines. But strafing

of troops and bombing of factories and cities evoke serious internal repercussions. Some men, who can endure little in the way of direct expression of hostility, succumb early and become psychiatric casualties; others have higher thresholds." . . . The language of Psychiatry, like combat in the air, is largely "impersonal," tending to hide the intense tragedy of the lives of these men. Psychiatrists, when they plan to write books, should first read Walt Whitman on the Civil War. Whitman had no "truth serum," but he did have human compassion—which has healed more minds than any "technique" of modern psychotherapy.

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A note for the gloomy historian, present or future, is the fact that as of Jan. 1, 1948, more than two and one half million prisoners of war were still in custody—two and a half years after the war's end. Russia had 1,712,000 POW's (half Japanese); France, 383,000; England, 257,000; and Yugoslavia, Poland and Czechoslovakia a total of 150,000. Except for America, comments *Time* (Jan. 5), the captor nations holding these men—who constitute a "major economic asset"—have not been eager to send them home. France plans repatriation of her prisoners by December, England, by next summer. Last year Socialist Ernest Bevin excused the British Labor Government's part in this revival of ancient barbarism—making "slaves" of men captured in war—by saying that the POW's were better fed in England than they would be at home in Germany. Yes, Bevin said it, not Churchill! . . . On the same subject, but in a different relation and place, a letter in the *New Statesman and Nation* (Dec. 20) reports that African natives working in South African mines can have no unions, despite the Industrial Conciliation Act, because under the terms of the Act an African worker is not an "employee"—therefore his union is illegal. Same old South!

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A pleasant contrast to most race relations news these days is the Phi Beta Kappa *Key Reporter's* announcement that seven American college presidents have united to organize the College Scholarship Fund for Negro Students, to encourage and enable negro youth to attend college. The United States has 968 non-segregated colleges. One of the Fund's activities will be to list all scholarship opportunities and advise negro high school students of available financial assistance. Students will be informed of colleges wanting negroes represented in their student bodies—apparently there are several such institutions. The Fund will also help negro graduates to find employment. Chairmanship of the Fund by Harry J. Carman, Columbia dean (Columbia University, New York) and the 165 college presidents serving on its Advisory Board give evidence that we have come a long way—in some parts of the United States—since the days of John Brown and William Lloyd Garrison. When educational leaders who shape public opinion take this position, racial equality becomes more than a distant dream. . . . Also from the *Key Reporter*: The Catholic Parent Association of St. Louis, formed to keep negro children out of white parochial schools, quickly disbanded when Archbishop Joseph E. Ritter threatened its most aggressive members with excommunication. No negroes in your schools, no place for you in Heaven—it's as simple as that. (South African labor press please copy.)

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Explaining the unpredictability of American Congressional action on the Marshall Plan, the Washington correspondent of the *New Statesman and Nation* recently gave his readers some sage analysis:

America's instinct and prejudices are against economic controls at home and complicated responsibilities abroad. If left to itself today there are signs that the United States would plunge joyously into a business boom, no matter what the consequences, withdraw from Europe, and chiefly

concern itself with Britain by giving it infuriatingly condescending advice.

Which is just about the fact. . . . There's more:

The stereotype of Uncle Sam to a suspicious Europe is of a hard-fisted Shylock, intent on taking a mortgage on the world's movable goods, with a string tied to every dollar. A much more realistic, if more confusing picture, is of an anxious and bothered Average Citizen—frightened rather than confident through possession of the atomic bomb, boiling mad over the constant pummeling of the Russians (whom he tried hard to love right up to, and during, the San Francisco conference), and now, at home, every day approaching with greater discomfort and worry the high-piled sumptuous array on the glittering counters of butcher and grocer, where the prices constantly move higher.

It's nice to be understood. The reason given to the be-rationed and long-suffering British for America's distaste for economic controls is equally accurate: It "goes to the root of American civilization—its vast, prodigal, lawless, unregimented high-spirited independence which does not brook restraints readily." There is a final irony in this writer's view of what might happen to the Marshall Plan, should Russia's policy change: "It is one of the grimmest post-war paradoxes that if Russia should suddenly turn mild and conciliatory, America's instinct for conciliation might correspondingly assert itself, and the amount of Marshall Plan aid would thereby proportionately diminish." What then is the Humanitarian Line—irritate Russia?

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

If a child be regarded as an embryonic moral agent, we are in need of considering that his capacity to develop a mental sense of justice will be violated and frustrated by every instance in which either parents or school authorities assert superior force to make arbitrary decisions *for* the child. Actually, the child can be encouraged to make all choices himself. This does not mean letting every impulse carry wherever it will, but rather that the most constructive educational work of parents may be done through helping the child to see clearly the alternatives before him.

Every childish deviation from the parent's norm of behavior can be seriously investigated for hidden worth. If the parent, after such honest investigation, becomes "certain" that the tendency under examination renders the child less creative or competent, only then does the practical problem of restrictive methods emerge. A point which needs to be asserted, however, is that parents should not proceed to the "practical" until they are sure it is going to be practical. Of course, there will be numerous times, also, when a question arises which cannot be waived: by what method will the parent aid the child to discard habits that will be barriers to full expression in later life?

It should be apparent that elimination of undesirable tendencies—which hinder fullness of life for the child—depend upon, first, the child's voluntary desire to practice restraint, and, second, upon development of what Plato called "a sense of justice." Restraints voluntarily adopted, in order to maintain proper balance between one's life and the life of others, grow from a sense of justice, of proportion, and not from "conditioning." And, as Plato said, justice must be learned by its practice, it is only suggested by observation.

One of the great psychological blights hanging over the heads of most children is the fear of the parents that *their* child may turn out to be a "failure." Ideally—and actually, in the best interests of the child—parents should strive for sufficient

impartiality to be in one sense indifferent to their child's "success" or "failure." This is not to suggest that the parent is without unique responsibility of a sort. All that a child thinks and does in later life will be profoundly influenced by the psychological atmosphere of his home, by the precepts and example of his parents. Until the child comes to full possession of physical, emotional, and mental faculties, parental responsibility is indeed great. The parent finds in his or her charge another human being who is, temporarily, completely helpless. The parents' responsibility should become that of seeking an ideal human relationship with the child, not in some pre-ordained form, but simply as a human relationship.

With each new child, of course, parents have an opportunity not otherwise afforded—a situation in which they can completely revolutionize any modes of thinking or conduct of their own which they may suspect of inadequacy. It can be inspiring to realize that of all the situations made possible by the interaction of human beings upon the earth, the birth of a child alone presents opportunities for a completely new beginning in the way such relationships may be formed, and in the determination of the principles upon which they shall continue. This inspiration is entirely different from the variety of feeling suffused in the words, "Isn't it wonderful—this is *our* child!"

An abstract analysis as this, thus briefly presented, should not be without its practical value, for the tensions of many parent-child relationships stem from the fact that before the child has even been allowed to express the rudiments of a distinct and individual personality, a rather rigid mold for the conditioning of the child has already been devised by parents. This is excused by the fact that the parents are "responsible" for the child. From a philosophical standpoint, as before intimated, this is simply not true. What the parent is actually responsible *to* is the whole problem of human relationships. The child needs to be treated on a basis of principle, unclouded by any possessive concerns.

## *FRONTIERS* What is "Conversion"?

A SHORT but depressing account (in the January *Partisan Review*) of the staunch Christian orthodoxy of T. S. Eliot, one who for a generation has been the ideal of youthful poets, raises the question: What makes men of undoubted mental capacity—men who should be leaders instead of followers—seek in their later years the haven of organized religion?

The case of Eliot is perhaps easier to understand than some others. His verses are pale—almost pallid—studies in nuance, in delicate perception, which delight the esthetic sense but never move the heart. He had no major cry to his fellow men. Freely admitting the poet's genius for conveying the disillusionments of a sophisticated and sensitive man, it is not unjust to say that he passed naturally into the staid portals of the Church of England, where he now serves dutifully on its committees, helps to edit its news letters and generally makes available to the Faith the rare qualities of his critical intelligence, although, on behalf of the Church, it must operate within circumscribed limits.

In the same general epoch, Heywood Broun, one of the best and most consistently liberal journalists America has produced, became, in the closing years of his life, a member of the Roman Catholic Church. After a lifetime of opposing the reactionary institutions of this civilization, Broun embraced the parent of them all, and, so far as we know—unlike Claire Boothe Luce—he composed no lengthy apologetic to explain his strange decision. There have of course been others like him.

What psychological necessity is behind the conversions of such men? Setting aside the proposition that they finally found The Truth, and letting go, also, the matter of personalities, this question is worth investigation.

The explanation most frequently heard is that those who spend their most productive years with no religious faith at all are overtaken by fear of death, which makes them seek the promise of "metaphysical" security afforded by religion. But is

this explanation adequate? It is hard to believe that a man of personal integrity would deliberately contradict most of his own past simply from fear. Something more than this seems to be involved—some positive need of the human spirit, a reflective summing up, that somehow has been lacking.

The problem consists in the conversion to institutional religion of men of unusual intelligence—men whose logical powers have often been directly opposed to the dogmas which seem to win them over in the end. Champions of organized religion make much of such conversions, which indeed represent a triumph for their institutions. That triumph increases in direct proportion to the vigor with which the new convert formerly attacked the sort of belief he now accepts with faltering humility and childlike hope. And it is, perhaps, in this word "childlike" that we may find a clue.

Natural childhood has a wholeness of outlook seldom found in adult life. No child is normally a sceptic. He comes into an environment where trust and confidence are the most active elements of his existence. The foundation of the child's present sense of security and of his future hopes is his parents and all that they represent. The process of "growing up" is the process of finding another foundation for his life. Adolescence seems to be a major transition in this process, beginning with the luminous idealism of awakening youth, and gaining stability from the dawning sense of human potency by which ideals are realized. Manhood should find the new foundation developed, in principle, at least.

But actually, the growing up of most people is inhibited by a number of opposing influences. One is the purely biological interpretation which parents unthinkingly give to the noticeable changes in their adolescent children—changes which often intrude upon the lives of the parents merely as "problems"—and the resulting supposition that only physiological "adjustments" need to be considered. Another is the negative bent of modern intellectuality—its over-developed critical faculty and its neglect of affirmative thinking. In all too many cases, by the time a man is twenty-five, a fission has been accomplished in his childhood "wholeness," making him little more than half a man, really. His creative

potentialities tend to be exhausted at the physical level, while his beliefs, without the nourishment of original thinking, remain in the form of passive acceptance of tradition. This kind of credulity is natural to the child, but in adults it represents a condition of arrested development. Meanwhile, critical abilities come to be exercised almost exclusively as means of checking on the conformity or non-conformity of new to old ideas.

One whose natural critical intelligence is exceptional often rejects the "orthodoxy" of his time, but, having nothing to put in its place, he becomes simply an articulate agnostic or iconoclast who makes a career, more or less effective, of attacking the status quo. The intensity with which he pursues this activity may create for him a sense of personal "wholeness," and this is especially true if he has humanitarian motives.

A career of social criticism, however, while it may be engrossing, can never take the place of a symmetrical foundation for wholeness of adult life. For this, it appears, another kind of "adjustment" is necessary. To avoid sentimental emotionalism in age, one must in youth begin to understand the sentiments. It might be argued, further, that a man who hopes to reject successfully the irrationalities of religious forms, has first to come to terms with the actual content of Religion itself.

A man may laugh at popery and ritual, he may feel contempt for Fundamentalist antics and Bible-pounding sectarianism; he may even offer an effective critique of the escapist elements in modern mysticism; but what he can not do is mock at the essentially spiritual conception of an ultimate reality—an idea rooted in the religious instinct of all men. He can not do this and remain a whole being. Nor dare he ignore the conception of moral law, independent of theological embellishments; and he passes by the basic question of what his life is about—Has it any meaning beyond merely physical existence?—at the peril of his psychic health. We would go further and say that men who remain confirmed materialists throughout their lives—materialists, that is, in their moral behavior as well as avowed philosophy—have really matured a common cultural psychosis and are not "normal" men at all,

but casualties of the moral anarchy of our civilization.

The religious institutions of such a civilization can never contain men of either intellectual or moral vigor. From Emerson to John Haynes Holmes, such men have always separated themselves from the religious orthodoxies of their time to preach and practice the religion they felt was possible for free men to believe in. The religious institutions of a society like ours are characteristically adapted to the simple faith of children and the fear and longing for security of the old. The man who makes his own religious synthesis needs no "institution" to codify his convictions. His conscience is his "God," and his "father confessor" as well.

The emotionalism usually connected with "conversion" confirms this analysis by revealing the weakness of merely critical intellectuality—all the logical judgments of dogma, all the historical criticism, are forgotten in the alchemy of the new-found faith. True religion, on the other hand, whatever it may be, must certainly involve an ever-increasing intellectual and moral stability. It is, as Spinoza said, an "excellent thing," and like all excellent things, "as difficult as it is rare." In any event, truth is not to be discovered by a sort of emotional rebound from agnostic attitudes. Of that we may be sure.