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GREAT REFORMERS: ERIGENA

IT'S quite a jump from Plato to the middle of the Dark Ages, historically speaking, but from Plato to Johannes Scotus Erigena is not much of a jump at all. Unlike most of his contemporaries, Erigena believed, with Plato, that a free man's mind is the best guide to truth. Although Erigena wrote on what are usually, called theological subjects, he was no theologian at heart. He wasn't even a priest. He was an Irish philosopher who lived in the ninth century A.D. and one of the few men in all Europe who could understand Greek.

Erigena endears himself to the modern reader, first, by his philosophic daring, and second, by the wake of countless heresies that followed after him. He was born sometime between 800 and 815; little is known of his life except that during the 840's he was at the court of Charles the Bald, who, like his grandfather, Charles the Great, was a patron of learning. Erigena remained in the kingdom of the Franks for many years, serving as head of the palace school. It is said that after the death of Charles the Bald, he came to England at the invitation of Alfred the Great, also a friend to learning, and that he died there, after teaching for some years in the Abbey of Malmesbury.

Like other Irishmen since his time, Erigena was a fearless man who spoke his mind regardless of king or Pope. He was very friendly with Charles the Bald, and there is a story that once, when dining with the king, he had an extra beaker of ale or wine or whatever it was they drank in those days, causing the king—a wit, apparently—to ask him what was the difference between a Scot and a sot. (The Irish were then known as "Scots," and Erigena is often called John the Scot.) "The width of the table," Erigena told the king. The remark seems to have brought him no difficulty. At any rate, Erigena enjoyed the protection of Charles from the wrath of Pope Nicholas I, who naturally disapproved of the Irishman's view that when Holy Writ and Reason come into conflict, Reason is the superior, because Reason needs no Authority but itself. The Pope ordered Charles to send Erigena to Rome to talk. things over, but Erigena stayed in France.

Erigena's philosophical bent for heresy probably began to unfold its blooms when he undertook the first scholarly task given him by Charles. Near Paris, then a little village where the king liked to spend his time, was the famous Abbey of St. Denys, said to have been founded by Dionysius the Areopagite, St. Paul's Athenian convert to Christianity. This Dionysius was also supposed to have written in Greek a number of important works on the Christian Faith, and with becoming piety Charles wanted them put into Latin for the edification of the Franks. Other scholars with not enough Greek had failed completely, so Erigena, rich with the learning of Irish monasteries, was put to work.

This sounds like a wholly righteous proceeding, but Charles labored under several misapprehensions. First, Dionysius did not found the Abbey, as Peter Abelard made clear three hundred years later. Second, he did not write the books attributed to him. They were written by a Syrian monk, probably in the sixth century, who signed Dionysius' name to them to be sure that somebody would read them. Third, they were hardly "Christian" treatises at all, except in the terms used, but were saturated with Neoplatonic metaphysics. The Syrian monk probably attended the lectures of the last great Neoplatonist, Proclus, who lived about the same time, and borrowed the Neoplatonic system entire for the greater glory of the Christian religion. And that is how Johannes Scotus Erigena became a great and

good heretic. For a fearless original thinker, fed on a diet of Neoplatonic metaphysics, could hardly have become anything else.

Particular trouble began for Erigena when Hincmar, Archbishop of Rheims, asked him to lend his pen to settle an unpleasant controversy with a moody monk. This monk, Gottschalk, was a young man who did not want to be a monk at all, but had to because his father made him. So, to get back at the powers that be, he became the kind of a monk that has to be dealt with by the Authorities. He studied Saint Augustine too seriously and became an advocate of the Augustinian doctrine of Predestination. Given Augustine's assumptions, it is a pretty logical doctrine, and this was what worried Hincmar. The argument runs something like this:

If God is all-powerful and all-knowing, and if man is a weak worm and original sinner, created by God, then a sinful man is predestined to be sinful by God, and neither the man nor the Church can do anything about it. He's just God-damned—predestined to sin, predestined to Hell, and if you say he isn't you are saying that he is more important than God—which can't be true, of course.

Answering Hincmar's plea, Erigena wrote a tract, *On Predestination*, in 851. It was not popular, even though it did away with Gottschalk's dangerous doctrine of Predestination. It was not popular especially with Hincmar, because it also did away with Sin and Hell. The eternal fire, Erigena argued, is just a metaphor.

God, or the Reality behind all, he said, is unknowable. The idea of God "predestining" anybody to anything is just an idea that people have—it's in their minds, like other ideas they have, such as "God's will" and "God's love." These ideas are at best symbols, whereas the true nature of God is essential unity. All beings are in and part of that one reality. The good man lives a life consistent with the One, and experiences the delights of the righteous soul. The bad man finds pain in the same elemental reality because he acts contrary to its nature. As Henry Bett explains Erigena's doctrine in his careful study of the Irish scholar's life and work:

> Sin and all its consequences must be regarded as a lapse from reality, as well as a lapse from good. . . . The righteous will delight in the same element, so to speak, as that in which the wicked will suffer, as light delights the healthy eye and pains the eye that is diseased. . . . *(Johannes Scotus Erigena*, Cambridge University Press, 1925.)

These reasonable ideas were promptly condemned at the Synod of Valence in 855, and again, four years later, at the Synod of Langres. Erigena's discussion of the Sacraments was condemned in the eleventh century and in the thirteenth his great work, *The Division of Nature*, was discovered to be full of horrible blasphemies.

What were the principal teachings of this work, which brought him under the Papal ban? Erigena considered the world in terms of a fourfold division. George John Blewitt, in an appreciative account of Erigena's thought (in *The Study of Nature and the Vision of God*), sums up his system in a sentence:

> First, there is Nature as One—Nature as creating, but not created, God as the original source of all things; secondly, the aboriginal causes—Nature as created and creating; thirdly, the effects of these—Nature as created, but not creating; fourthly, Nature as One again, when all processes or emanation from the original One has returned to its source, and God is all in all.

There is, then, first, the outflowing from the One, causing the primeval emanation of creative or evolving powers—Nature as created and creating. These are at first divine abstractions or Platonic Ideas, which, so to say, "thicken" into substantial being, and becoming intelligent forces or agents, shape the universe and bring it into actual existence. For Erigena, "creation" is a process, not an "act." Christ is a principle, the Greek Logos, and neither a man nor the "Son," unless Son be taken in a metaphysical sense. As one Christian critic puts it, in Erigena's works, Christ is only "an ideal Figure, a universal relation

between cause and actuality, and has no significance for a real redemption." And Bett notes the "absence of all historic sense in Erigena's references to Christ." The philosopher uses the Gospel stories as Plato might have used a passage in Homer—to illustrate a metaphysical principle or as the basis for a mystical exposition.

One could say that Erigena sought to build a philosophy on the psychology of the cosmic mind. He was an idealist for whom Mind was the primal power of causation, for the whole as well as for the part, the individual soul. Existence resulted from an unfolding of the universal potentialities of Mind; it was an "outbreathing" of the One into the Many. The soul of man derives directly from God—in Erigena's words, "It is not easy to deny that the creature and the Creator are one"—and the soul imparts its vital motion to the body. Through man, the animal and spiritual creations are linked. Thus man may, by his own choice, become either wholly animal or wholly spiritual. Both the reward of goodness and the penalty of evil are in states of consciousness. Judas suffers the self-made anguish of tormented conscience, while the righteous man returns to the divine condition by successive stages of ascent. And all being accompanies in a forward movement the progression of the purified soul toward divinity.

One recognizes in all this the cycling ring of return of the Orphic religion, the emanation and reabsorption of the Gnostic Christians, and the descent and ascent of souls as taught by Proclus in his grand summation of the Neoplatonic philosophy. Thus Erigena continues the great tradition of philosophic religion, standing as a giant among pygmies of thought, in an age when superstition was the rule, blind belief the order, and any original thinking the extraordinary exception. Regarding it as an independent metaphysical achievement, Bett justly characterizes Erigena's work:

> The most general impression which the system of Erigena leaves upon the mind of the student is that of intellectual vastness. The problem of universal experience is seen in its whole range, reaching from eternity to eternity. The profoundest conceptions of religion and of philosophy are used with an unconstrained freedom, and thought is never checked by anything but the reverence that it owes to itself.

There is no evidence that Erigena ever married or had children, but he left a mighty progeny of ideas. At least four unmistakable lines of influence stem from the great Irish thinker, although, as Bett points out, his condemnation as a heretic usually caused him to be quoted without being named. The bud of the coming flower of European thought and civilization swelled with the sap of Erigena's genius. It is not too much to say of him that among the learned doctors of the Middle Ages, Erigena was one—perhaps the only one—who transmitted the spirit of antique philosophy without sacerdotal taint or perversion.

In the line of the great system-builders of Scholasticism, he profoundly affected Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas. It seems impossible that Aquinas could have achieved the depth and dimension that he did without the inspiration of Erigena. The principal difference between their doctrines was in Erigena's strong pantheistic tendency, as contrasted with the Aristotelian theism of Thomas. The Thomist system, it may be noted, is today the official standard of orthodoxy in the Catholic Church, while Erigena, with whom Aquinas shared the Neoplatonic doctrines, is still a wayward heretic.

Erigena was the forerunner of the intellectual succession which developed into the scientific philosophizing of the Renaissance. Nicholas of Cusa—"the divine Cusanus"—was a close student and a declared follower of Erigena, and Bruno, burned at the stake in 1600 for being a Pythagorean, was a professed disciple of Nicholas. The line of Erigena's influence in Western philosophy exhausts itself only with Hegel, who was the last of the great objective idealists, after whom skepticism and materialism gained ascendancy in Western thought.

The great German mystics also found sustenance in Erigena. Eckhart's ideas of God, of

good and evil, and of the real world of archetypal ideas are plainly those of Erigena. Bett says that many of Eckhart's thoughts are such that "he could scarcely have found them elsewhere," and that "Through Eckhart many of these characteristic doctrines filtered down into the great fourteenth century mystics who followed him—Tauler, Ruysbroeck, and the rest." Thus it is clear that at least some of the inspiration of the Protestant Reformation is owing to Erigena.

As notable is the part of Erigena in contributing to the philosophical beliefs of various heretical sects. His *Division of Nature* was well known to the Albigenses in the South of France during the thirteenth century and in the twelfth century it was being copied and studied in Germany. It seems without doubt that the pantheistic brotherhoods of the Middle Ages were affected by his doctrines, thus assisting in the great moral ferment which, in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, gradually brought to birth a new spirit of freedom in all phases of human life. The pantheistic heresies of Amalric of Bena and David of Dinant are obviously based on Erigena's system. Both were thinkers of importance in the early thirteenth century; both wrote works which were condemned as heretical, and both left a heritage of persecution to their followers. Some of Amalric's disciples were burned to death at Champeaux in 1210, and David's disciples were charged with "immorality," as was so often the case with the advocates of unorthodox opinion.

Seldom in the history of human thought has a single man been so powerful for good—for freedom and originality in thinking—as Johannes Scotus Erigena. His influence upon a thousand years of Europe's intellectual and moral evolution is distinguished from the effect of other medieval figures by the fact that Erigena's example was that of a man who thought for himself. As a result, the succession of his influence, from one generation to the next, was through the fertilization of minds rather than by the repetition of formularies and dogmas. A Platonist himself, Erigena transmitted the Platonic spirit and method of inquiry along with his own conclusions, so that each later contributor gave something of his own original inspiration, renewing the life, rather than preserving the form, of the great Irish reformer's teaching.

Letter from
CENTRAL EUROPE

BLANKSTADT.—We met, seven or eight of us, in a refreshment room next to a bomb-shattered railway station, somewhere in Central Europe. Our train was late.

"Even this is better than in the Russian zone," said one man after a while. "There are districts where railway traffic has ceased altogether—the Bolshevists have taken away the rails." A man in blue overalls sitting next to me groaned. "The Yankees are pretty dull," he remarked, "not to start that preventive war. Don't they see that the Communists invariably support a world-wide turmoil which saps the strength of its opponents without requiring any effort from themselves? Isn't it plain that Communism hopes to weaken the American economy by creating endless confusions, and forcing expensive measures? A few days of modern bombing of Russia and there wouldn't be a thing left of Communism."

A stoutly built fellow looked up from the table. "Do you believe that Communism can be destroyed by smashing the streets of Moscow or some factories in Siberia, or by killing a few hundred thousand civilians? Do you think that workers all over the world would vote conservative from that moment on?"

A lively conversation began. A fourth speaker attacked the Americans. "See how helpless they are, when confronted with European problems! They promised democracy for Spain—and what happened! They guarantee a government in Greece which is regarded by the Greeks and people everywhere else as inefficient and corrupt. And the changing methods of denazification show that they can't decide whether the German nation should be treated as a crowd of vicious criminals or as a heroic people who fought against Bolshevism!"

"But the conditions in Europe are hard for non-Europeans to comprehend," put in another. "Take political parties, for instance. The Anglo-Saxon countries have practically no Marxist parties. And why not? Because they have seas for frontiers and are not continually bothered by belligerent neighbors."

Finally, a man who had belonged to the professional class before the end of the war spoke up. "I am not a politician at all," he said in a modest voice, "but I might have something to say."

Everyone turned to listen.

"I was employed as an engineer at the Gruttner-Werke," he began. "Some of you probably know the name. It was a modern iron and steel plant. I say *was*, because the Allied Military Government has since removed all the first-grade machinery. Including the administrative staff, we were about 30,000 people working for the plant. Mr. Gruttner, a man of 50 years, had inherited from his father a small company and had developed it with great success. One day he asked me to prepare a list of all the employees, classifying them with regard to age, marital status, number of children, and place of residence. Later I was asked to complete the list by finding out which of the employees support Communism, and to distinguish between those who rent lodgings and those who own homes. Six months after, I learned that hundreds of small homes were under construction a few miles from the plant. I found, too, that numerous men spent their free afternoons going to that region to help level the ground; and when, one Sunday, I went to the location myself, I saw many houses already occupied, with children playing happily in the yards, and an elderly couple feeding their rabbits, or some hens scratching the soil.

"One winter morning Mr. Gruttner dropped into my office. 'Now,' he said, 'as we have finished the first ten series of little villas, I'd like to explain why I wanted, those lists.' He told me that he had studied the records carefully, and had established, among other things, that a certain per cent of his employees lived less than a mile from

the plant, others within two miles, some about four miles, and so on. He found that the state of health and performance of the individual worker depended less on the distance than on the means of transportation. He determined, also, that the unmarried men, young or old, living in single rooms within a mile of the plant, did about 20 per cent less work than the married ones, not because they were staying out late, but because of their never-ceasing preoccupation with food, cleaning and laundry problems. He found that families dwelling in the immediate environment of the plant usually had only one child while those in more remote places had two and three. He also discovered that the political extremists were crowded in three-story and taller buildings, while there were practically none living in self-owned, one-family houses.

"'Employing 30,000 workmen,' concluded Mr. Gruttner, 'means responsibility for more than 100,000 people. I decided that small houses rather distant from the place of work and efficient transportation would solve the problem. Single houses are being built for married couples and for bachelors as well, as there is no better encouragement for the latter to get married. As thousands of the men are now voluntary helpers in the construction work, and as the plant production has already noticeably increased, the expense for the company is after all not really high. Modern transportation will be arranged by next spring and there is no reason why in another three or four years the plan will not be wholly realized'."

A bell rang. The train was due in five minutes.

"Although the outbreak of the war interrupted the completion of the project," the engineer continued, "we had no more trouble with political extremists. Even a few months ago, when the Military Government allowed municipal elections, there was scarcely a vote for the Communist Party."

As we walked to the train, there were various comments. "He may not have been a politician, that Mr. Gruttner," said the stoutly built fellow, "but in my opinion he knew more about defeating extremism than any professional politician." I felt that the men endorsed that view unanimously.

CENTRAL EUROPEAN CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW

NOTES ON ART

NOT only because of the suggestions of several readers, but also as an attempt to extract a tentative conclusion from certain of our own wanderings, we are going to devote this week's review to ideas implied by the term "art."

We share with many what seems an instinctive dislike for the incomprehensible (to us) in art—whether modern painting or modern poetry. With some people, this dislike is often associated with a slight embarrassment or guiltiness—perhaps one should *try* to understand and value modern art—while others are loudly contemptuous. Our own feeling is rather one of curiosity: why is it that artists (not all of them, of course) feel justified in devoting their lives to a form of expression which only a small minority can appreciate or enjoy? Why should poets decline to be intelligible?

Have these tendencies anything to do with the vulgar judgment that an interest in the arts is a kind of effeminacy? Is it possible to eliminate the "cult" aspect of the arts from a consideration of what the arts ought really to be and do?

With such questions, much depends upon where you begin. You can start with Tolstoy, and urge that great art should be intuitivelv comprehensible to all natural persons, and that it should be ennobling and inspiring. Tolstoy might have said: "Show it to my 'ideal' peasant—if he finds it unappealing, it's not art." Or Lafcadio Hearn's definition of the highest art may be more acceptable. He believed that "the highest form of art must necessarily be such art as produces upon the beholder the same moral effect that the passion of love produces in a generous lover. Such art would be a revelation of moral beauty. . . . if a work of art, whether sculpture or painting or poem or drama, does not make us feel kindly, more generous, morally better than we were before seeing it, then I should say that, no matter how clever, it does not belong to the highest forms of art."

Hearn is entitled to respectful attention, for he was one of the greatest of literary artists, and among the most self-conscious. A similar view has been applied for ages in the East. In a monograph on Indian art, W. Norman Brown has said: "Sculpture was not meant to be a reminder of a human being or of an apotheosis of man, but of something abstract, spiritual in its reality beyond apprehension by the senses, an ocular reference to universal knowledge that might somehow become comprehensible to humanity." In Indian art, the human body was never realistically portrayed; it was always a symbol "used for visual expression of some abstraction or of some superhuman being with which a human body could never be identical." Something similar might be said, also, of Egyptian art, as to its purpose, its general significance, and its treatment of the human form. Lawrence Binyon's *The Spirit of Man in Asian Art* speaks in these terms of China, and Marco Pallis, in *Peaks and Lamas*, says the same for Tibet.

But what of Western culture? Europe and America are not theocratic civilizations. They are not even religious, except in a formal or nominal sense, and while there have been past epochs productive of great religious art in Europe, it seems neither possible nor desirable to hope for a renewal of religious inspiration in the arts. The discovery of a valid religion for the West must come first; one suspects, also, that this will mean striking out in a new direction, to develop a religion without imagery and external forms—elements which are regarded as the natural materials of religious art,

Is art doomed, then, to be a waif without origins—without, that is, cultural relations or justification? The idea of art being only a picture to hang on the wall, or a coffee pot with sinuous curves, seems almost ridiculous. Frequently modern art is a kind of social criticism, whether intentionally or not. Artists seem to say, "I show

you the sterile world you have given me to live and work in." Cramped, inflexible bodies, haunted faces and other symbols of inner and outer misery declare the artist's disgust for his fellows. Such work, it is true, has the integrity of refusing to try to "please" the custorners. While the art of protest is seldom inspiring, it is at least without hypocrisy. But what do you do with it? Is it something to live with? What part of, a man's life does it amplify and fulfill?

Ever since the moral decline of the Christian religion became unmistakable, freethinking social planners have proposed that art, because of its emotional content, might be substituted for religion. This seems a superficial and short-sighted view. Art is not a philosophical conviction, and while it may illumine and deepen the meaning of philosophical ideas, it can hardly take their place. Discussing this question, Kingsley Martin makes some observations in the *New Statesman and Nation* (Sept. 11) with which we heartily agree:

> . . . great industrialized societies, both capitalist and Communist . . . aim, by methods of scientific propaganda at controlling the lives and thoughts of masses of men. Both tend, by breaking up the old small communities, to uproot and isolate men as individuals and then reorganize them into herds. In herds, cut off from their natural environment, men become far more subject to suggestions. Removed from primary satisfactions, working without joy in work and relying mainly on substitute pleasures, with their mental furniture supplied at second or tenth-hand, gathered together in great industrial agglomerations in which instincts, evolved in small groups, serve as no sort of guide—in such societies it seems a mockery to talk of the masses finding emotional satisfaction in the creative arts.

It is certainly true that the "masses," as presently constituted, show little aptitude for participation in the creative arts. In the United States, to speak for ourselves, no arts at all are practiced to an extent which would justify calling them "popular." In saying this, we do not intend to belittle the efforts of educators who establish community centers where people may draw or paint or make pottery. We mean, simply, that there are no organic channels for artistic expression in the life of the American people: if a little institution has to be, started up to give people a place to go and do "art,"' the culture where this happens can hardly claim a natural interest in the arts.

But this does not explain the will to obscurity among modern artists. On this question, we have found much help in the writings of Ortega y Gasset, the Spanish essayist who, in his *Revolt of the Masses*, accurately described the psychology of totalitarianism years before its destructive energy involved the entire world in war. In *The Dehumanization of Art and Notes on the Novel*, just published in English by the Princeton University Press, Ortega provides the reader with the tools for forming his own theory of artistic expression. The characteristic of modern art, according to Ortega, is its repudiation of the art forms of the past. "It is not an exaggeration to assert that modern paintings and sculptures betray a real loathing of living forms or forms of living beings." In the Renaissance—

> All bodies are welcome, if only life with its dynamic power is felt to throb in them. And from paintings and sculptures organic form flows over into ornament. It is the epoch of the cornucopias whose torrential fecundity threatens to flood all space with round, ripe fruits.
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> Why is it that the round and soft forms of living bodies are repulsive to the present-day artist? Why does he replace them with geometric patterns?

Ortega discusses at some length this break with literal portrayal in the arts, coming to the conclusion that modern art involves an attack on all previous art—an attempt to have nothing to do with tradition. There is, he thinks, a value in this, in the sense that non-representational art requires a different sort of attention from the one who looks at it. A simple "picture" of some natural object or scene may excite admiration because of its fidelity to what has been copied. But art which does not imitate nature demands that the intent of its departure from the literal be inquired into.

Thus the "form" itself, of a work of art, becomes more important than the object remotely pictured or indicated. In such art, the "meaning" is not obvious, and so it fails to attract persons who expect art to provide simple representation.

Making free with Ortega's suggestions, we offer the view that modern art has reached that stage in its evolution when it should become symbolical; when—as in the maturity of other, ancient, cultures—art ceases to be a representation of Nature or "real life," and becomes, instead, "an ocular reference to universal knowledge that might somehow become comprehensible to humanity."

But today, there is no commonly accepted "universal knowledge" to which the artist may refer—no great cultural intuitions which art may intimate and enrich with its subtleties. And while the forms of literal expression are all exhausted, there is neither inspiration for nor appreciation of a transcendental art for this age. So art, instead of embodying the themes of a more inward, common life, has fallen into an anarchy of isolated subjectivisms, each artist with his private vocabulary, his secret code of values, or no-values, each bearing with him his private tragedy and personal frustrations.

The artist, then, is like the rest of the world; he mirrors its confusion, its lack of philosophy, its hunger for companionship and its ignorance of those things in which companionship consists.

A word more about Ortega, who has, we think, the natural faculty of enormously clarifying any subject he discusses. To read Ortega is to find it unnecessary to read many other books, and this is as true of *The Dehumanization of Art* as of his other volumes. The book is small, having only 103 pages; it is exquisitely printed and will be treasured by those who wish light on the subject of modern art and literature. The price is $2.00.

COMMENTARY

EDITORIAL DIALOGUE

FIRST EDITOR: What do you think about this "Letter from Central Europe"?

Second Editor: We'll sound like the *Saturday Evening Post* or the *Reader's Digest.* And right after reviewing the Lyons book on Hoover, too.

First Ed: Well, suppose some people suspect us of being "reactionary" for a few issues. Is that bad?

Second Ed. Some of our public might get confused.

First Ed. You can't cover all we try to cover in eight pages a week without confusing some of the people some of the time, and maybe getting a little confused yourself. Besides, I'm in favor of more confusion on big, generalized issues like the Left versus the Right. There's too much crystal-clear opinion on how to tell the Good People from the Bad People.

Second Ed: I suppose we ought to print it. We have no way of knowing that our Correspondent would be a press agent for the National Association of Manufacturers if he lived over here—

First Ed: There you go, using labels to make a point. What do you know about the NAM?

Second Ed. I know I'll never belong to it. Anyway, the people in Europe seem to be rethinking a lot of things, and some of them may develop a lot more sense on questions of social and economic organization than most of us here have. In Europe, people are pared down.

First Ed: Of course, there's no use pretending the letter doesn't reflect a cheery acceptance of paternalism. But I can't see much difference between Grüttner's kind of paternalism and the ambitious statistical planning that goes on over here. The letter tells about *old-fashioned* paternalism, so we recognize it right away. . . . But there's one point left untouched and I think we have to mention it.

Second Ed: I know. Political "extremism" exists only because big industry fails to build nice houses to increase production. The question of whether or not one man or one company—good, bad or indifferent—ought to be in a position to "arrange things" for 30,000 people never comes up. It's a little unhealthy not to ask about that.

First Ed. Well, let's print the letter. When all. is said and done, we could do with increased production of people like Gruttner. No label I know of. fits him, and the more that is written about people you can't label, the less labelling there'll be.

CORRECTION

Last week (Oct. 13) on page 8 the line belonging at the top of the second column Was misplaced as the next to the last line at the, bottom of the first column-a mistake which effectively confused passages in both the lead article and the review. We are especially sorry that this howler occurred in an issue which, as part of. a new effort to gain more readers for MANAS, was the first one sent to thousands of prospective subscribers.—Editors.

CHILDREN
. . . AND OURSELVES

THE small volume of childhood reminiscences by Lincoln Steffens, *Boy on Horseback*, seems notable for two passages, both of which have implications worth pondering. Steffens' introduction to college was a dismal one, for he failed the entrance examinations at the University of California in Greek, Latin and in "enough other subjects to be put off for a year." His father was alarmed and self-reproachful, thinking that he had chosen the wrong school for his son. "He had"—writes Steffens—"but the right school for me and my kind did not exist."

The boy's upbringing allowed him to concentrate upon the things that most interested him; the task of memorizing events and details in fields which seemed irrelevant to any possible pattern of his own life was singularly unappealing, while—

> School subjects which happened to bear on my outside interests I studied in school and out; I read more than was required, and I read for keeps, too. I know these subjects to this day, just as I remember and love still the men and women, the boys and girls, who let me be friends with them then and so revealed to me some of the depths and the limitations of human nature. On the other hand I can remember few of my teachers and little of the subjects which seemed to me irrelevant to my life.

But somehow young Steffens was ushered into the presence of a remarkable tutor, when visiting San Francisco after a sojourn in Oxford. Nixon, the tutor, made "subjects" come alive for his student. He was much more interested in assisting Steffens to explore his own mind than in laying successful siege to the entrance requirements of the University. Tutors and teachers are frequently genuine educators in this sense, but Nixon seems to have gone a step further. When Steffens asked innumerable questions and demanded immediate answers, Nixon replied in this way:

> "I will answer no questions of yours," he shouted. "Men know no answers to the natural questions of a boy, of a child. We can only underline your questions, make I you I mad yourself to answer them, and add ours to whip, to lash you on to find out yourself—-one or two; and tell. us! That is what youth is for: to answer the questions maturity can't answer." And when I looked disappointed and balked, he would roar at me like a demon.
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> "Go to, boy. The world is yours. Nothing is done .nothing is known. The greatest poem isn't written, the best railroad isn't built yet, the perfect state hasn't been thought of. Everything remains to be done—right, everything."
>
> This said, he said it again and again, and finally, to drive me, he set our private hour from seven till eight o'clock Saturday evenings, so that I could stay on into the night with his group of friends, a maddening lot of cultivated conflicting minds. What they knew was amazing to me, and how they knew it, but what they did not know struck me harder still.
>
> The best that I got out of it all was objectivity. Those men never mentioned themselves; apparently they never thought of themselves. Their interest was in the world outside of themselves. I caught that. No more playacting for me. No more dreaming I was Napoleon or a trapper, a knight, a statesman, or the younger son of a lord. It is possible that I was outgrowing this stage of a boy's growth; the very intensity of my life in subjective imagination may have carried me through it, but whether I would have come out clearly impersonal or not by myself, I don't know. All I am sure of is that their conversations, the attitude and the interest of those picked Englishmen, helped and, I think, established in me the realization that the world was more interesting than I was. Not much to see? No, but I have met men since, statesmen, scholars, business men, workers, and poets, who have never made that discovery. It is the scientific attitude, and some scientists have it—not all; and some others, too.

Perhaps the perception which most aided Steffens' later self-education was his recognition of the supreme importance of learning the causes for one's own characteristic emotions; what one's personal inadequacies are and from what influences and habits they are derived. As a result, Steffens gained the capacity to write very simply, from a broad philosophical view rather than one of

detailed analysis, and when he speaks of education, it is in a manner calculated to reach every parent's understanding. The following example may be reminiscent of earlier discussions in this column relating to "love":

> One of the wrongs suffered by boys is that of being loved before loving. They receive so early and so freely the affection and devotion of their mothers, sisters, and teachers that they do not learn to love; and so, when they grow up and become lovers and husbands, they avenge themselves upon their wives and sweethearts. Never having had to love, they cannot; they don't know how. I for example, was born in an atmosphere of love; my parents loved me. Of course. But they had been loving me so long that I awoke to consciousness that my baby love had no chance.

Boy on Horseback has two other values for both parents and adolescents. First, the book helps to create respect for a free and far-flung imagination; and, second, it makes evident the subtle educational benefits attending opportunities for a child to be alone, to know the thrill of solitary exploration—of discovering for himself widely divergent environments and conditions of life; not to mention the obvious superiority, as Steffens tells it, of a horse over a hot-rod as an early focus for Adventure.

The quoted passages were the cause of our mentioning *Boy on Horseback.* It now comes to mind that honest biography emphasizes the value of self-analysis—a value which merits recognition at the earliest possible age. Steffens has this capacity, and he also writes simply, allowing young people who- may read him to feel that he is still the boy he tells about.

FRONTIERS

RELIGION AND THE PRESS

THIS Department has an honest if intemperate letter from a Catholic who objects to statements made here in MANAS for Sept. 22. Discussing the banning of the *Nation* from the libraries of the public schools of New York City, we had occasion to remark: "Except for the *New Republic, the Nation,* the Masonic press and *the Christian Century,* no well-known publication in the United States ever discusses critically either religion or religious institutions." Because of this sentence, and doubtless because we recommend as worth reading Paul Blanshard's *Nation* articles on the Catholic Church, this correspondent accuses us of "favoring" the *New Republic* and the *Nation.* We are thereupon charged with approving papers which "follow the Communist Party line of hatred, brutality and stupidity and particular virulence against the Catholic Church," and which, despite their championship of "free speech," during the war urged imprisonment of men like Dr. George W. Hartmann, leader of the Peace Now movement.

In justice to the *Nation* and the *New Republic,* it should be said at once that neither of these publications, so far as we recollect, made any such proposal respecting Dr. Hartmann. Dr. Hartmann, it is true, was attacked, but by the New York *Evening Post,* the Boston *Herald,* and by Walter Winchell. It is of some interest that Dr. Hartmann recently recovered damages from these newspapers and from Mr. Winchell: the *Post* paid $1,925 and printed a retraction of its 1944 accusations against Dr. Hartmann; Lloyds of London, which insures Winchell against libel suits, paid $2,500; and a jury verdict obliged the Boston *Herald* to pay Dr. Hartmann $7,000 damages for having accused him of treason and sedition. Dr. Hartmann, a socialist, who is professor of educational psychology at Columbia University, had advocated immediate negotiations for peace during 1944. The result of these libel actions against the papers slandering his character and questioning his loyalty at least establishes more clearly the right of a private citizen to express himself publicly with regard to the foreign policy of the United States, even in times of national stress.

But suppose the *Nation* and the *New Republic* had attacked Dr. Hartmann as savagely as some of their contemporaries: would this make the facts in Paul Blan*shard's Nation* series of no importance? Would it render untrue Paul Lenoir's statement, in the *New Republic* for Sept. 16, 1940, that in Catholic Quebec, "From 1870 to 1915, some dozen or more liberal periodicals were forced out of business by ecclesiastical bans"? Or the fact that a few years ago there was printed in Quebec, with the approval of Cardinal Villeneuve, a book including the infamous forged "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" and the statement that "The worst enemies of Christ are Lucifer and the Jews"?

One need not share the editorial opinions of either the *Nation* and the *New Republic,* whether on the war or on even the Catholic Church, in order to see a value in the reporting of such facts.

We think this correspondent's implication that any criticism of the Catholic Church means a following of the Communist Party line is unsupportable and inherently ridiculous. Nor are the papers mentioned blind admirers of the Kremlin policies, despite their extraordinary patience with some of the excesses of the Soviet regime. We undertake no general argument on behalf of the *New Republic* and *Nation,* having something less than enthusiasm for much of what passes, today, for "liberalism," but we can and do approve their attempts to consider institutional religion in an impartial spirit. Ideological interests may affect the editorial policies of these papers, but they are free, we think, of the pressures arising from the profit motive. We approved them for this, and we approved the *Christian Century* and the Masonic press for the same reason.

We are charged with making no reference to "Christian-hating Communist publications" in our list of papers which discuss religion. But we spoke of "well-known" publications which discuss religion "critically." We are familiar with no communist paper that can be called “well-known," excepting possibly the *Daily Worker,* which is known mostly by hearsay, anyway, and we would hardly characterize conventional communist attacks on religion as "critical." Dogmatic materialism can no more be intelligently critical than dogmatic religion.

The liberal press, the Masonic press and the *Christian Century* affirm belief in the principle of free discussion. We think that they try to practice this principle and that occasional failures in this respect are very different from determined opposition to free discussion.

In contrast, there is the following passage, quoted by Mr. Lenoir from a speech by Cardinal Villeneuve, delivered in Quebec:

> "There are perhaps . . . strangers to our faith . . . listening to me. I tolerate you.... I tolerate you so that you will admire at once the splendor of my religion and the delicacy of my charity ... I tolerate you in order to have your collaboration in the common good, and when such collaboration stops, when you preach poisoned doctrines and spread everywhere poisoned seeds, then I can no longer tolerate you. Such, gentlemen, is Catholic liberalism."

Asked if he were fascist, totalitarian or democrat, the Cardinal replied: "I shall answer you in the very words of Mgr. Bilczewski—'I do not recognize the wild, lying, atheistic democracy which reigns today in almost all the countries of the world'." *(New Republic,* Sept. 23, 1940.)

"My experience," writes our correspondent, "has been that the Catholic Church is about as coercive as the Ten Commandments (of Jews as well as Christians); no less, no more." We suggest a careful reading of Mr. Blanshard, Mr. Lenoir, *and* Monsignor John A. Ryan's *Catholic Principles in Politics,* in order to discover how coercive the Ten Commandments can become, under Catholic interpretation.