

WHOM SHALL WE BLAME?

NEEDLESS to say, Ferdinand Lundberg, author of *The Treason of the People* (Harper), seeks no public office. In fact, by writing this book, he has probably made himself secure from any sort of political ambition in the foreseeable future, for Mr. Lundberg, it seems, is attempting to inaugurate a new fashion in political criticism. Instead of the capitalists, the communists, or the politicians, it is the people themselves whom he finds responsible for what happens to them.

This book, we suspect, could hardly have been written twenty years ago; it certainly could not have been published then. (While books may exist which contain similar criticisms, there is a rollingly popular flavor in *The Treason of the People*, and it is this which could not have been duplicated twenty years ago, in respect to the author's thesis.) To be brief, Mr. Lundberg contends that the government of the United States is an oligarchy rather than a democracy ("democracy" in the familiar meaning of a government of the people, by the people, for the people). Mr. Lundberg further contends that this is the people's own fault—a view with which it is difficult to disagree.

There is so much of candor in this book that its influence seems assured. Lundberg says things which no politician would ever say, and which those who have nurtured secret resentment against certain phases of the democratic myth will delight in funding in print. If *The Treason of the People* should be, however, a symptom of broad, impending change in the mood of political philosophy in the West, there is need to distinguish between the courage to face facts as they are, and the gloom of disillusionment which may follow several generations of self-deception. For the courage is good, and can lead to more instead of less democracy, while the gloom is bad, opening the way to depression, impotence, and, finally, complete loss of freedom. By "democracy," here, we mean democracy as Lyman Bryson has defined it—

. . . a way of regulating all experience so as to involve and expand and educate human character, to preserve man's ability to think for himself and to act with his friends, to keep the restrictions that are created by the needs of common action to the

minimum in order to keep thought individual and free; above all, to give men a chance to learn the value of their own free thinking by testing it out in the action that will produce direct results and pass upon hypothesis the judgment of experience. Collective ways may be efficient; they are not democratic.

In fact, a book like *The Treason of the People* ought to be read balanced on one knee, with Bryson's *The Next America* balanced on the other, for while Lundberg's book is clearly written, closely argued, and packed with supporting facts, it lacks the driving inspiration of Bryson's appeal. Not that Mr. Lundberg is lacking in High Ideals. He offers a number of excellent quotations from John Dewey, indicating how democracy *ought* to function, but these passages do not seem to be enough to cope with the sheer weight of failure that this book reports. A *Nation* reviewer sums it up rather accurately, we think, when he says:

This is a curious book in which the author makes his case by contrasting the principles enunciated by democratic theorists with the actual behavior of Americans. The specific facts are those normally compiled by anti-democrats to prove the futility of democratic politics. Yet, Mr. Lundberg writes as an avowed democrat and averts conservative criticism by making explicit his hostility to statism, communism, or socialism. In a sense this is a nihilist tract for, although it is focused on American politics, as presented it is an indictment of human beings.

The facts assembled by Lundberg may prove useful for a realistic study of the social problems of the twentieth century. What troubles us, however, is that in method of approach and style of criticism, the book is very like other books of a generation ago which found the root of evil in the "employer class," or in the "vested interests." It is better than these books, of course, since the "class" explanation of human problems makes a scapegoat of a single segment of society, thus vastly oversimplifying what is wrong. Instead of doing this, Mr. Lundberg simply recites from the record. He has, in short, no *theory* of what is wrong, save that the people are selfish and will not do their duty. In fairness, however, it should be added

that *The Treason of the People* includes chapters on institutions which he finds contributing to anti-democratic attitudes. He has much more sympathy for politicians active on the political "firing line" than for those who claim responsibility for the cultural and moral matters. Writing on the relation between religion and politics, he sums up a rather long chapter devoted to this subject:

The incompatibility of all orthodox religion with democracy is manifested most strongly and perhaps most successfully in the sphere of cultural expression, particularly in the media of mass communication but also with respect to the school system. Owing to the aggregate strength of their obedient communicants, the orthodox clergy are able to determine on the basis of their own self-serving criteria much of what should be excluded from popular view in newspapers, mass periodicals, radio, film and television and much of what should be excluded from the classroom.

There is a fundamental difference between the democratic prescription for cultural expression and development and the prescription of orthodox religions. Religious orthodoxy believes in repressing all expression that does not meet with its approval, holding that the chief solutions to human problems have already been revealed by a transcendental power. According to the democratic idea, on the other hand, all expression should be free (as possibly valuable), within the bounds of ordinary decency and the requirements of order, and whatever violates demonstrable order should be rejected only through convincing criticism. According to the democratic idea, the way to meet any unwelcome expression is to show wherein it is false, misleading, mischief-making, unworthy or in poor taste. According to religious orthodoxy, the way to handle it is to forbid its becoming public or, if it does, to see that those who are responsible are punished—by jailing if that can be arranged, by economic disablement if jailing is impossible or at least by public obloquy. . . . The fundamental attitude of the orthodox clergy, at its best, is paternalistic. They are as authoritative fathers and their lay followers are as children; they are as shepherds and their flocks are as sheep, to use their own metaphor. This very conception, it is evident, is the opposite of democratic. It cannot be denied, to be sure, that many people are as children or as sheep; but it is the premise of the democratic idea, provided expression is free, that they may be transformed into mature adult citizens and independent-minded, free reasoning, unsheep-like individuals.

In general, however, Mr. Lundberg finds the people failing their government and themselves on seven counts. (1) They often fail to vote at election-time (European democracies have a better record of turn-out at elections); (2) they dodge jury duty; (3) they often seek to evade payment of taxes; (4) they are casual toward the support of law-enforcement officers; (5) they neglect their obligation to deal equally with all men, regardless of color or race or religion; (6) they become soldiers for national defense unwillingly; (7) they do not inform themselves adequately concerning national affairs, and hence are unable to discharge their duty as citizens.

The sort of statistical evidence gathered by Mr. Lundberg includes such material as the fact that voluntary expenditures of the people for alcoholic beverages and tobacco amounted, in a recent year, to 86.6 billion, whereas in the same year the total expenditures, both governmental and private, relating to all forms of education, including libraries, came to only \$3.98 billion. Mr. Lundberg observes that "voluntary personal spending is greatly in favor of the frivolous, the inane and the trashy, and adverse to the serious, the enlightening and the spiritually, morally, intellectually or even physically sustaining." This, he suggests, indicates "that the American destiny is to a very considerable extent in the hands of [an] infantile electorate, which fritters away a large part of its substance while humanly serious projects are delayed or starved."

What, then, holds American society together? This is the sort of a question which tends to make admirers of the American scene lapse into Whitmanesque mysticism, although Whitman, were he among us today, would hardly recognize the community of free and adventurous spirits he celebrated. Lundberg does have a suggestion, however, which he offers along with a more precise account of the nature of American government:

Although political scientists classify parliamentary governments as democratic—that is, as government by the many—the underlying facts invariably indicate that government is actually, through voluntary abstention of the people, in the hands of an oligarchy whom it would be inadvisable to style an aristocracy because in no known instance is it composed of "the best." Natural aristocrats,

however, are to be found within the parliamentary oligarchies. This is not to be denied.

This, then, may be said of the American system: that it is a system which does not of itself frustrate the emergence of excellence. It affords at least the mechanism for excellent men to rise to positions of trust and responsibility; and if they do not, the explanation lies with the people's unwillingness to *use* the system to their own best advantage.

In thinking of these things, one recalls such excellent studies of the American form of government as Judge Florence E. Allen's *This Constitution of Ours*, and Charles A. Beard's *The Republic*. The Founding Fathers have indeed provided Americans with the political forms within which the substance of freedom may be realized, and it is these forms which go a long way toward holding American society together. In the role of critic, on the other hand, Mr. Lundberg shows us the measure of wasted opportunity in respect to the promise of the American Republic.

We said that Lundberg gives a "measure" of the failure of the people, but is this really the case? A measure is possible only when some sort of criterion is available, but who among us is able to say what might have been? The *Nation* reviewer feels that Lundberg overlooks the extent to which the prevailing motives of capitalist acquisitiveness have shaped the temper and encouraged the irresponsibility of the people. This is not altogether just, since at the end of the book Lundberg declares:

There must be a further general attack, perhaps by educators but also by publicists, upon the idea that material acquisition is the end and aim of the good life; for it is not. The so-called successful as well as the unsuccessful are ground to pieces, dehumanized and made ill, by the excesses to which the acquisitive drive is carried in contemporary life.

Mr. Lundberg makes standard humanist proposals as to motives to replace the acquisitive drive "to know, to learn, to understand, to enjoy on levels higher than the physical appetites, to create, to reflect, to think, to loaf, to fraternize"—yet he can hardly supply any inner compulsion to these interests. Why, one may ask, are they lacking? How might they have been introduced in more persuasive ways? If we are to have a "measure" of our "treason," we need something like an answer to this question.

By education, some will say. But only a few weeks ago, in another *Collier's* report on the controversy over education, Howard Whitman described school board meetings in which the "Satisfactory—Unsatisfactory" style of marking children's report cards was condemned by parents as hiding the realities of "competition"—said to be the mainspring of American culture from the coming generation. One father went so far as to contend that the report cards which stress "effort" rather than some objective measure of achievement, while not exactly "communist," would contribute to an attitude hospitable to communist or socialist ideas. There may be sound arguments for objective standards by which to measure the work of children attending the public schools, but this one, surely, is not among them!

The fact is that we do not have any way of telling what might have been, in respect to the practice of American democracy, because we do not have any theory of the long-term rate of human development, other than the eternally voiced hopes of great reformers and devotees of the general good. Nor do we understand very much about the production of "natural aristocrats," save that they occur. Thus, we do not know whether to be terribly discouraged by Mr. Lundberg's report, or astonished that America has accomplished so much, in spite of the indifference of so many of her citizens.

What we can learn, perhaps, from this book is that a self-governing society must be willing to take honest stock of itself, and to avoid the delusion that good government may be conducted without men of integrity, so long as we intone self-congratulatory slogans to ourselves. And whatever we may think of Mr. Lundberg's indictment, one thing is clear: we need to address ourselves to the mystery of those whom he calls the "natural aristocrats." Such men, so far as we can see, have been responsible for the patterns of idealism by which men are sustained through periods of slack morale and social disintegration—times like the present; and if anyone has given these men better identification than Plato, in the idea of "Philosopher-Kings," we should like to hear about it.

REVIEW

THE NEW PACIFISM

REVIEWERS and essayists occasionally observe that the termination of World War II apparently brought no large-scale "renunciations" of war to recall the aftermath of revulsions following World War I. Small wonder, one may say, since hostilities never have quite ceased since 1945, and since the United States has been officially committed to continual military preparedness. However, there may be other and more encouraging reasons for the change.

Consider, first of all, that a strong emotional reaction seldom brings either mental or moral stability; thus the "wholesale" character of the pacifism of the 20's and early 30's provides one clue to its weakness. True renunciation of war has never been, and probably will never be, accomplished by groups who take pledges or subscribe to pacifist political platforms. A decision to part company with one's society to the extent of refusing armed service is never substantial unless made by each individual for himself, and, even then, many of the issues may remain far from clear to him. But if pacifism is popular, if government policy itself finds expression in conventional pacifist clichés—as in the 20's—none of the real issues emerge. Today, however, in an atmosphere ringing with military threats, some of the issues are becoming clear. The main point we have in mind is that present criticisms of war are *not* in accord with national policy, but in opposition to it, at least by implication. The writer of today who believes that equal-minded arbitration with the Soviets is a proper course speaks a rather unpopular piece, and may even be chased by Senator McCarthy's bloodhounds. Therefore, both courage and integrity mark the efforts of those who find the international situation demanding a change in American attitudes.

The *Saturday Review* for Aug. 28 contains three articles, two of them reviews, indicative of

what we have elected to call "the new pacifism." So far as we know, except for Bertrand Russell, neither the writers of the books involved nor their reviewers were ever conscientious objectors to war, or consciously concerned with the production of pacifist propaganda. None the less; and perhaps partly because of this fact, the arguments these men proffer in regard to war-policy are peculiarly effective. Take for example what Gordon Harrison says about Liddell Hart's latest work, *Strategy*. (Hart is a distinguished military scholar, an ex-captain from World War I, a *London Times* military correspondent, military adviser to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, and consultant to the British Cabinet.) Here is the gist of *Strategy*, as summarized by Mr. Harrison:

The object of strategy, Captain Liddell Hart argues, is to achieve national aims at the lowest possible cost. The perfect strategy therefore is one which brings victory without any bloodshed at all. In descending order, representing increasingly a failure of strategy—or, indeed, of intelligence—are the increasingly massive battles in which armies or nations have sought decision by the frontal opposition of brute force. A battle or war is decisive when the victor emerges relatively so much better off than the defeated that he can control the peace. The object of war, in short, is radically to alter the balance of power between the contending forces in order that the policy of one may prevail. Since the direct trial of strength generally enfeebles both sides, its usual consequence is either to postpone decision or award it by default to a third power capable of profiting from the weakness of the principals. The climactic big war or big battle, emotionally regarded as a "showdown," thus becomes mere bloody prelude to a truce in which both sides try to recoup their strength or to a period of drift in which power is reshuffled and new hostile alignments formed. Two world wars have strikingly illustrated the indecisiveness of efforts to crush the enemy. The first brought victory at such physical and moral cost as to leave the democracies helpless to preserve the peace. The second by creating a vacuum in Europe and Asia opened the way for Communist imperialism.

As Mr. Harrison ventures, this book "bristles with challenge to the mind," and Hart establishes himself as "a writer whose value is quite as much his power to compel argument as to command assent." Now, certainly, little subtlety is needed to

conclude from Liddell Hart's thesis that the policy of trying to intimidate others by atomic weapons is a poor one, and that *any* armament race will most probably be disastrous.

The next current work reviewed is Sir John Slessor's *Strategy for the West*, and while this author believes that we should "seek peace through strength," and that the threat of adequate atomic-armament will bring an end to "total shooting war," he is also firm in his conviction that "*no war can avoid creating conditions more unfavorable than those to be corrected.*" Is Sir John a pacifist? In view of his recent position—until last year Chief of the Air Staff in Great Britain—we can hardly assume that he belongs emotionally with the signers of the old Oxford Peace Pledge. But, discussing his claim that no war can possibly be worth its price, the reviewer, Lindsay Rogers, remarks that Slessor "hopes that the Americans have learned this lesson of the last ten years. It was a lesson that should have been learned after the conclusion of the war in 1918. In any event, his view is that the Soviet Union has studied the lesson."

Finally, Bertrand Russell contributes an article entitled, "A Prescription for the World." Taking up the cause of World Federation, Russell reviews the familiar arguments for global government, but devotes the bulk of his space to the psychological prerequisites of a world order. He writes:

There are many preliminary steps to be taken before anything of the sort becomes possible. Somehow or other world war has to be averted while these preliminary steps are being taken. How is this to be achieved?

The first step is to secure a diminution of mutual suspicion. I do not believe that either side at present desires to initiate a great war. Americans have declared repeatedly that they will not go to war except to repel aggression, and there is reason to think that the Soviet Government also is unwilling to embark upon aggressive war. But the American Government feels no confidence in the pacific intentions of the Soviet Government, and the Soviet Government feels no confidence in the pacific intentions of the

American Government. If the tension is to be eased it is necessary, not only that neither side should intend aggressive war, but that each side should be persuaded that the other does not intend it. Each side is aware that a surprise attack in the style of Pearl Harbor could inflict appalling damage within a few hours. Military authorities in the United States do not conceal this fact, though I doubt whether it is generally realized in America. Malenkov himself has stated that a world war could only bring universal disaster. Nevertheless, on each side of the Iron Curtain there exists a vivid fear of a treacherous attack from the other side.

Since defense seems scarcely possible in the present state of military technique, the only counter-measures that either side can think of consist of an increase in offensive weapons and in the destructive power of sudden attack. Such measures inevitably increase mutual suspicion, and mutual suspicion makes the preservation of peace more difficult. Paradoxically, whatever increases the fear of war promotes measures and states of mind that make war more likely. Neither side dares to appear conciliatory for fear of being thought to show fear. Any sensible compromise which does not concede all that one party wants is condemned by that party as appeasement. The two sides are in the position of duelists in former times, neither of whom wished to be killed, but neither of whom could take the first step towards a reconciliation for fear of being thought a coward. We recognize nowadays that such behavior was folly on the part of individuals, but on the part of great nations it is still thought to show statesmanship.

It is Russell's opinion that "nothing can be done about hydrogen and atom bombs until the diplomatic tension between East and West has been greatly diminished." How, then, is this to be accomplished? Apart from the necessary reevaluation he has recommended, Russell believes that we must immediately decide to respect the peace-making efforts of neutrals—particularly India. MANAS readers will note in Russell's subsequent remarks a substantiation of Edmond Taylor's prediction in *Richer By Asia*, that India's role in world diplomacy will become of considerably more importance than that of either Russia or the United States. In Russell's words:

I think that this deadlock can best be resolved by the help of neutrals. Neutrals have several

advantages. In the first place they can approach Communist governments in a way that is impossible for those whom these governments regard as enemies. In dealing with Communist countries, it is only the governments that count because there is not, as in the West, any possibility of appealing to public opinion. Any improvement in the behavior of Communist countries is only possible if their governments are convinced; and arguments, however valid, are not likely to convince those governments if presented from a hostile quarter. We have seen, both in Korea and in Indochina, that India is capable of bringing about compromise agreements which but for the inter-position of a neutral intermediary could scarcely have been arrived at. I think that India, if possible in conjunction with other neutrals, can bring about further and even more important approaches to mutual understanding. I should like to see India and other neutrals undertaking an investigation of the probable destructiveness of a world war, not from the old-fashioned point of view of who would be likely to win, but from the only point of view appropriate to modern conditions, namely, of the total ruin of all the belligerents and probably of the neutrals also. I should like them to invite agreement with such a report from Communist and non-Communist powers simultaneously. I should wish them, if they could do so sincerely, to assure each side of the sincerity of the other in subscribing to such a report. The report should make it clear that it would be suicidal for either side to engage in aggressive war. Since this is true and can be made obvious, it is not too much to hope that each side could agree, not only in words, but with complete conviction. I think that in this way the nightmare terror of total war at any moment could be very much diminished, and if once this were achieved further steps would become much less difficult.

So, taking these three essays together, one cannot help but feel that the *Saturday Review* has provided some valuable contributions to what used to be called the "cause of pacifism." And perhaps such writers as those quoted will do more to bring about a change in Western attitudes than the efforts of formally labelled pacifists.

COMMENTARY

THE SHARPENING DILEMMA

SOME readers of Ferdinand Lundberg's *The Treason of the People* (see lead article) are likely to experience discomfort at the idea that the United States is not really a democracy, according to functional definition, but an oligarchy. So much of the modern Westerner's feeling of righteousness grows from his belief in "democracy" that to hear that we do not really have it could easily be a source of emotional disturbance.

Actually, however, to suppose that belief in democracy is the same as having it may be as misleading as the parallel supposition that because we claim to "believe" in religion we are therefore possessed of religious truth. Mr. Lundberg's criticism of our democracy should be as welcome as Mr. Miller's criticism of our religiosity (see *Frontiers*):

. . . serious consideration of the processes of government in an impartial spirit will show, I am sure, that no government that continued to exist as a going proposition, above the level of a town government, was ever anything but an oligarchy, with some natural aristocrats present by accident. What the future will bring forth I do not pretend to predict; perhaps true democracy will somewhere, somehow, someday, be established. But for this to happen a majority must be converted to the democratic philosophy.

Readers are referred to Mr. Lundberg's book and his sources for the facts of how modern oligarchies operate. Meanwhile, we should like to suggest that the chief enemy of democratic processes is the struggle for power. So long as the resources of the national state are held in constant readiness to meet and inflict the devastations of modern war, so long will the hope of genuine democracy remain an unrealizable dream. For war and readiness for war require strong centralized authority, maintained by virtually military discipline, and this adds to the ordinary drive to power manifested by political

leaders the incommensurable absolute of "military necessity."

The reluctance to face this dilemma is natural enough. Since, with the advent of atomic weapons, there can no longer be any such thing as *defensive* war—but only the sudden aggression intended to paralyze the foe we fear—to compromise on the war issue by saying that *we* engage in wars only for defense has practically lost its meaning. The dilemma, therefore, has become so sharply drawn as to be almost intolerable, and is for this reason widely ignored.

So far as we can see, the burden of this week's *Review* article is that the only intelligent comment on current world affairs is now coming from people who recognize this issue.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

No, friend Glaucon, I have no special instructions to give you regarding the teaching of your children, before I die. For all teaching is but part of a great free discourse; without the opportunity for open conversation, there is little that men can learn from one another. And that opportunity alone, availed of by men who prize it, makes learning possible.

It may be well, however, to speak of the true nature of the issue between myself and the Five Hundred. I am vain enough, Glaucon, not to wish my life forfeit to an unimportant argument, and perhaps you will some day be able to make the terms of this debate clear to your progeny. The whole matter revolves around a difference of opinion about differences of opinion. The Five Hundred are clearly not in favor of variety in thought and speech. It is their will that One Opinion should prevail concerning both religion and politics. But I say to you, Glaucon, as I said to them during the Loyalty Investigation, that it is literally impossible for only one opinion to exist in regard to anything, since men establish their true mental manhood with the mark of individual thought. Of course, one opinion may indeed appear to *prevail* for a time, by the use of force and fear, but this in no wise obliterates the differing ideas in men's minds; all that happens in such case is that dishonesty and hypocrisy are encouraged, a premium being paid for them by the State itself.

Come, Glaucon, let us go back to the beginning—to "Fundamentals," as some say. It is, for instance, fundamental that man be described as the sole possessor of conscious mind, and thus inevitable that he be even more concerned with the development and reputation of his mind than with the development and reputation of his body. Yet "reputation" itself so frequently becomes traitor to what it is supposed to honor. You have heard Thrasymachus loudly proclaim his satisfaction with popularity alone, and announce a willingness to trade actual proficiency of thought for the reputation of its possession. There is, I think, a tragic confusion here. The mind is clearly meant to lead the body, and to be its servant, so that if men deny the mind its true opinions in order to win more of wealth or acclaim, they need not bother to exist at all.

The person who fears to announce his thoughts, especially when they touch upon matters affecting the common good, will stop having thoughts after a time—for he will fear each one as it begins to emerge, saying "Is this a *safe* thought? Dare I let it develop, or will its implications place me in jeopardy?"

Soon, by the men of fear, sanctuary is sought in the prescribed belief—the belief that only one righteous opinion exists on any subject. From this it is but a short step to a deliberate campaign for the ending of Discourse; in fact, it is necessary to contrive a denial that such a thing as free discourse exists, for to admit the existence of Discourse would be to admit diversity of opinion has a natural part in human life. Surely you see, Glaucon, that if diversity of ideas is not functional and educational it can only be heretical—which is what the Five Hundred have concluded.

Of course, some will say only that Socrates has a different definition of heresy from that of the good men of the Council, but saying it does not make it so, and the truth is that Socrates does not believe in heresy of any kind. No man can be forced to abandon his opinions. Each one is the all-powerful creator of his own universe of thoughts and values, and while both ambition and fear, impressed upon him by his surroundings, may lead him to relinquish the thoughts of his true and highest self, it is also possible to withstand such demands of the social psyche. Perhaps, Glaucon, if I can "prove" nothing else to the citizens of Athens, I can at least demonstrate that one may cleave to his original thought, providing it still seem a good one, whatever they may do.

I am not much of a historian, Glaucon, as you know, yet I often suspect that the understanding of the past is a delicate, subtle matter, involving knowledge of beliefs and attitudes as well as of battles. For, consider, do not all battles come about because of differing beliefs and attitudes, so that these must be regarded as the first causes of strife? And if this be granted, must one not also grant that whenever two cities or two states exist side by side *without* fighting daily battles, this is because they have decided to accept the differing ideas and habits of those who live behind other walls? Now this must be true, Glaucon, for individuals as with cities. When men meet, and sense the fact that there is a difference of mind between them, just as there is a difference of body, they either

resent or accept the situation. If they accept, at least some tolerance is shown, while, at the best, diversities of viewpoint are welcomed as something from which new things may be learned.

Let us consider for a moment the nature of friendship, about which so much is written. It is my opinion, Glaucon, that the friendships most highly prized are those growing out of appreciation of *difference*. Even children are not for long favorably impressed by playmates who simply agree with them in everything, who follow them around, echoing every word and desire. Perhaps many children sense that the person worth knowing is the person who dares to be different, whose individuality is so strong that his ideas are also strong—and capable of inspiring us. We need not wish to duplicate the thoughts of such strong minds—may, indeed, if we possess a measure of strength ourselves, be inspired in quite another direction. But the sparks are struck; we can and do use the source of flame.

Many, like you, Glaucon, have wondered why I do not dislike Thrasymachus, whose ideas are so very different from my own. But, Glaucon, it is not a matter of liking or disliking—it is a matter of recognizing that even those opinions to which we are opposed have value in general education. In the case of Thrasymachus, his taking or holding a position in debate makes it possible for others to consider the merit of his arguments—arguments which, at least in part, they may possibly approve. There would be little point in having me represent the position of Thrasymachus, pointing out the while all the errors I find in his pronouncements. We need Thrasymachus to state his own position, so that its full flavor can be appreciated by those who listen.

Thrasymachus was no threat to us, for in the realm of ideas no decisions can be forced, and Thrasymachus cannot make up our minds. But if we had decided to ostracize Thrasymachus, fearing that he would gather around him many who believe as he does—in force rather than in reason—then, Glaucon, we would have begun to be in trouble. For then we would have allowed him to dictate our own actions, through fear. Similarly, Glaucon—though I doubt that the Five Hundred will see this point—I am no threat to them until they decide to punish me for holding ideas they do not approve, and asking questions they regard

as wicked. But when they take steps to banish me, or when they kill me, I have become a very real threat indeed, though entirely without design. Because of me they have declared against education, and in favor of force; the outcome of this must eventually be a general suffering from the forces set in motion, and while I do not relish serving, however indirectly, as a rod for the punishment of the Five Hundred, and my fellow Athenians whom they represent, there will be the mark of unerring natural law on the final result. For in the name of "security measures" they have sacrificed security. The only promise that a state—or a friendship—will endure resides in the capacity to comprehend differences of opinion and synthesize them in the process called education. Otherwise, Glaucon, every varying opinion becomes a cause for fear, hatred and battles—an endless series of which no man and no society can withstand.

This, then, is the "instruction" I leave you for your children, though it is not exclusively my own, nor is it in any sense "secret." Let the children grow wise in the sort of knowledge that comprehends differences of opinion. Shield them not from arguments, but rather let them learn to *live* with them, so that they may exist amongst differences with grace, eventually, also, with sagacity.

FRONTIERS

Progress in Religious Thinking

A REFRESHING phase of the new interest in religion is the distinction that is being made between religion and religiosity. Offhand, we can think of three modern writers who have pressed the importance of this distinction within a year or two. The idea is an almost constant theme in *Time and Eternity* by W. T. Stace, the Princeton professor who surprised the scholarly world by following his famous "defense" of materialism (printed in the *Atlantic Monthly*) with this book on the philosophy of religion. Then there is Arnold Kiamiat, who writes at some length in his new book, *The Ethics of Civilization*, on the difference between spirit and the *things* of the spirit, pointing out that the mere mechanics of religion, its forms, rites, and sanctified expressions, should never be confused with religion itself. Finally, there is E. V. Walter, quoted here last week, who shows how conservative politics habitually exploits the repressive authority of religious convention, while carefully avoiding authentic religious inspiration.

Now comes an extremely practical application of this distinction, made by William Lee Miller, a teacher in the Department of Religion and Biblical Literature at Smith College. Writing in the *Reporter* for Aug. 17, on "Piety along the Potomac," Mr. Miller speaks as a clergyman who reminds the Washington politicians that, only a few years ago, they were reproving preachers for dabbling in politics. Now the shoe is on the other foot, for politicians are dabbling in religion. There can be little doubt that "dabbling" is the correct word. Miller quotes Mrs. Agnes Meyer, wife of the publisher of the *Washington Post*, who recently told a Unitarian group in Boston about the sudden access of piety in Washington: "If you don't bring God into every cabinet meeting, political convention, or other assembly," she said, "it is bad public relations."

Mr. Miller surveys the new trend with both skill and wit. In broad summary, this is the evidence:

We have had opening prayers, Bible breakfasts, special church services, prayer groups, a "Back to God" crusade, and campaign speeches on "spiritual values"; now we have added a postage stamp, a proposed Constitutional amendment, and a change in the Pledge of Allegiance. The Pledge, which has served well enough in times more pious than ours, and which was written in its original godless form by a minister, has now had its rhythm upset but its anti-Communist spirituality improved by the insertion of the phrase "under God." The Postmaster General has held a dedication ceremony, at which the President and the Secretary of State explained about spiritual values and such, to launch a new red, white, and blue eight-cent postage stamp bearing the motto "In God We Trust." A bill has been introduced directing the post office to cancel mail with the slogan "Pray for Peace." (The devout, in place of daily devotions, can just read what is struck and stamped all over the letters in their mail.) Senator Flanders has introduced a proposal to amend the Constitution to say that "this nation devoutly recognizes the authority and law of Jesus Christ, Saviour and Ruler of nations, through whom are bestowed the blessings of Almighty God."

Not the least of the symptoms of the new fad reported by Mr. Miller was the float known as "God's Float" which rolled in solemn grandeur along with floats symbolizing less elevated principalities and powers in the 1953 Inaugural Parade. At the last minute, someone discovered that the parade would lack evidence that this is a nation whose people "believe in God," so carpenters rushed to create a religious float to lead the procession. Afterward, the *Episcopal Church News* irreverently remarked:

Remember the float representing religion in President Eisenhower's inaugural parade? Standing for all religions, it had the symbols of none, and it looked like nothing whatsoever in Heaven above, or in the earth beneath, except possibly an oversized model of a deformed molar left over from some dental exhibit.

Apart from the amusing aspects of this new Washington piety, Mr. Miller's chief contribution

is in showing that religion is rapidly becoming a political and patriotic *utility*.

He draws a pertinent contrast between a leading Protestant layman whose outlook is deeply religious, yet who, in a recent political campaign, allowed no mention to be made of his faith, and another candidate for office who ran on a plank promising that he would "speak for God from the Senate floor." It was the latter, unhappily, who became the "Chaplain of the Republican Party" during the 1952 campaign.

God indulges in not only party alliances; He is now a national resource of the United States. Mr. Miller quotes recent utterances of both the President and the Vice-President:

Mr. Nixon called free worship our greatest defense against enemies from without"; Mr. Eisenhower on a radio-TV program launching the crusade called faith "our surest strength, our greatest resource." In his remarks on the Pledge he said, "We shall constantly strengthen those spiritual weapons which forever will be our country's most powerful resource, in peace or in war." This reduction of religion to a national "resource," "advantage," "strength," and weapon, especially useful for anti-Communist purposes, received perhaps its perfect expression from the perfect folk hero for the devotees of such an outlook, J. Edgar Hoover, when he wrote, "Since Communists are anti-God, encourage your child to be active in the church."

Perhaps we should say, in passing, that choice of these quotations is not intended to reflect in particular upon the President, who is, so far as we can see, an earnest man honestly engaged in doing what he thinks to be his duty in behalf of the people of the United States. Doubtless his political advisors have urged upon him the responsibility of "setting an example" in spiritual matters. A man in public life, unless he be a very unusual man indeed, is likely to agree that "religion is good for the people," and to exhibit, at least, the sort of inoffensive piety which the American public has come to expect of its elected officials. The truth of the relationship between Mr. Eisenhower and religion seems to have been

captured a year or so ago by Elmer Davis, when he wrote:

The greatest demonstration of the religious character of this administration came on July Fourth, which the President told us all to spend as a day of penance and prayer. Then he himself caught four fish in the morning, played eighteen holes of golf in the afternoon, and spent the evening at the bridge table.

What troubles Mr. Miller is the far-reaching element of self-deception in this wave of official piety. The repetition of slogan-like declarations of faith may mislead both Congressmen and children into thinking that they know something about "religion," when the fact is that the echoing of these formulas can do little more than create an uncritical and wholly unjustified self-righteousness. As Miller says:

These all may, in fact, do more harm than good, by persuading us that we have done something when we have not. To say confidently, "In God We Trust" may obscure the fact that we don't. . . . Our coins and stamps and floats now proudly assert "In God We Trust," while an even more compulsively anxious security system intimidates government employees, teachers, Army officers, scientists, and citizens generally, censors books, almost closes our borders to immigrants, warps our politics, and proclaims to the world with spectacular clarity that we do not even trust our brother, whom we have seen. . . .

He says further:

Since this is official religion in a land without an official religion, it cannot be very deep. . . . The content of official religion is bound to be thin; the commitment to it is also apt, now and then, to be hollow. Where everybody professionally believes something, then for some the belief may be a . . . bit more professional than real. . . . There is nothing upsetting, nothing which exposes how it really is with us, nothing which makes demands on us, in this religion of official declaration. It is self-contained, extraneous, and peripheral, a "reminder" of a religious heritage, a brief nostalgic return to a mood but not the meaning of a pious past, an old hymn at a prayer breakfast before we return to work with which it has nothing to do. Therefore what is affirmed may stand in ironic contrast to the unexamined context in which it is affirmed.

Occasionally a MANAS reader will ask why so many of our articles speak in slighting terms of "orthodoxy" and "convention." Do not these established institutions, it is questioned, serve a useful purpose, and what is to be gained by belittling them? Mr. Miller's analysis, it seems to us, provides a clear answer. Conventions and orthodoxies have an undeniable tendency to ignore matters of the greatest possible importance. Made up of many "little things"—of petty habits of assent, of a thousand minor and seemingly unimportant partisanship—they eventually grow into impenetrable prejudices and confident assumptions of right. The child who is allowed to grow to physical maturity without ever having opportunity to realize that there are genuine religious mysteries in human life that strenuous effort, and not bland acceptance, is required to penetrate them—is a child whose psychic and moral development has been thwarted by monolithic convention. The democratic nation which, in the name of national piety, denies the right of searching questions into the character of the *status quo*, and regards even a fair comparison of various political and religious faiths as deviously unpatriotic, is a nation which has become vulnerable to the inroads of theocracy and counter-revolution.

In contrast to these days of fearful conformity, and the exploitation of religious orthodoxy as a "national resource," the personal integrity of the Founding Fathers stands out like a shining light. Despite pious efforts of the clergy to remold them into images of orthodoxy, men like George Washington and Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine set an example which modern politicians would do well to follow. For reasons of his own, George Washington refused to take communion in the Christ Episcopal Church of Alexandria, Virginia, where he was a vestryman. When a Philadelphia minister found fault with Washington's behavior, Washington stayed away from church entirely on communion Sundays. This was, apparently, a "rite" whose significance Washington was unable to believe in, and he

would not take part in it. Paine's views of religious orthodoxy are not, alas, as well known to Americans as they ought to be—nor when they are, is there much realization of the deep philosophical inquiry into the nature of things conducted by this great American. Jefferson, with his usual common sense, wrote the following advice to a nephew at school:

Question with boldness even the existence of a God; because, if there be one, he must more approve the homage of reason than blindfold fear. . . . Do not be frightened from this inquiry by any fear of consequences. If it end in a belief that there is no God, you will find incitement to virtue in the comfort and pleasantness you feel in its exercise and in the love of others it will procure for you.

As much as anyone, it was Jefferson who built into law the precedents establishing religious freedom in the United States—a freedom now held to be a great "resource" of this land. It should be worth noting, therefore, what religious freedom meant to him. In a letter written in 1816, to Mrs. Samuel Harrison Smith, Jefferson replied to questions put by this lady regarding a rumor that his views on Christianity had "changed":

. . . I have ever thought religion a concern purely between our God and our consciences for which we were accountable to him, and not to the priests. I never told my own religion nor scrutinized that of another. I never attempted to make a convert, nor wished to change another's creed. I have ever judged of the religion of others by their lives; and by this test, my dear Madam, I have been satisfied yours must be an excellent one, to have produced a life of such exemplary virtue and correctness, for it is in our lives and not from our words, that our religion must be read. By the same test the world must judge me.

But this does not satisfy the priesthood, they must have a positive, a declared assent to all their interested absurdities. My opinion is that there would never have been an infidel, if there had never been a priest. The artificial structure they have built on the purest of all moral systems for the purpose of deriving from it pence and power revolts those who think for themselves and who read in that system what is really there. These, therefore, they brand with such nicknames as their enmity chooses gratuitously to impute. I have left the world in silence, to judge of

causes from their effects: and I am consoled in this course, my dear friend, when I perceive the candor with which I am judged by your justice and discernment; and that, notwithstanding the slander of the Saints, my fellow citizens have thought me worthy of trust. The imputations of irreligion having spent their force, they think an imputation of change might now be turned to account as a bolster for their duperies. I shall leave them as heretofore to grope in the dark.

But Jefferson did not leave his friends in the dark. In a letter to John Adams, he spoke of Jesus as the author of "the outlines of a system of the most sublime morality which has ever fallen from the lips of man," adding, "The establishment of the innocent and genuine character of this benevolent moralist, and the rescuing it from the imputation of imposture, which has resulted from artificial systems, invented by ultra-Christian sects, unauthorized by a single word ever uttered by him, is a most desirable object." If, in their eager support of religion, our modern politicians would repeat after Jefferson the final counsels he gave to his nephew in these matters, it might be said of them that they were enriching the moral resources of the people. This is what he said:

. . . I repeat, you must lay aside all prejudice on both sides, and neither believe nor reject anything, because any other persons, or descriptions of persons, have rejected or believed it. Your own reason is the only oracle given you by heaven, and you are answerable, not for the rightness, but uprightness of the decision.