

## THE NEW POLITICAL CRITICISM

CONSTRUCTIVE political thinking is thinking which finds no enemy—which avoids, that is, the squirrel-cage routine of condemnation and counter-condemnation. The day will come, we believe, when historians will look back upon the period in which men feared one another, and fearing one another, menaced one another with deadly threats, as a kind of adolescence in human history. That day is doubtless still far away, but already there is enough psychological thinking of this sort to indicate that such maturity may be possible.

Is there any hope that the impartial spirit of science will soon affect political attitudes? Ordinarily, we would not have thought so, yet there appeared in 1950 a book by Francis Biddle, *The Fear of Freedom*, which proposes that the good of man lies in maturity, and not in the victory of a particular party and the adoption of its program. Mr. Biddle, it will be remembered, was the wartime Attorney General of the United States. His thorough knowledge of the law contributes accuracy to this volume, which is concerned with the threat to the liberties of the citizens of the United States, but what gives the book its distinctive value is the author's contention that the major human problems of our time are psychological rather than political.

Politics, for Mr. Biddle, is not a contest between the good people and the bad people. To be sure, there are people who are acting badly, who are undermining the freedom of the American people while vociferously claiming to defend it. Mr. Biddle points this out, but his chief contribution is at another level:

Once again the ancient tyranny is being brought back to us in a new form. Power in America rests on public opinion, which at present seems to be approving the slow abandonment of individual freedoms, so gradually achieved, so casually discarded. The struggle for freedom is no longer against an oppressive tyrant of the people. The tyrant is public opinion, the people themselves, who, in fear of an imagined peril to their institutions of freedom,

demand that they be secured by repressions which may ultimately stifle them.

Mr. Biddle traces the failure of nerve in respect to freedom of opinion from the hysteria which followed World War I up to the present day. Reading *Fear of Freedom*, one gains an overpowering sense of the importance of Mr. Biddle's arguments, yet is haunted by the feeling that these arguments, while clearly stated, will convince no one who has not already learned to think in terms of general principles of justice and right. This is not a criticism of the book. On the contrary, the developments and presentation of the meaning of the Bill of Rights, and of the political philosophy of the Founding Fathers, could hardly be improved upon. It comes to this—that freedom can be preserved only in a society whose leaders refuse to give way to hysteria in times of crisis. And since, in the United States, power "rests on public opinion," the public and the shapers of public opinion are the leaders who must not give way to hysteria. Today, the prospect is not especially encouraging.

Yet publication of this book is enormously encouraging. Such books ought to become the foundation for political education throughout the world. In them is the evidence and promise of the maturity we need. In this respect, *Fear of Freedom* is like Plato's *Republic*, which is really a treatise on human nature, and only secondarily concerned with politics. Plato obviously realized that intelligent self-government is impossible without intimate understanding of human nature. Even a tyranny can succeed only by manipulating human nature, for the tyrant maintains power through his knowledge of human weakness. The best parts—the memorable parts—of *Fear of Freedom* concern human nature, as for example:

The human spirit is a strange complex of inconsistencies, of opposing desires and attitudes, of contradictions that defy the application of generalities, and even the diagnosis of reason. In each of us the conflict is endless between our

individual urge to freedom and the opposite longing to avoid the exercise of choice, to be safe, to have others make our decisions—the need for security as against the adventure of liberty. At any particular time the one or the other attitude may be in the ascendancy. . . .

There are two American traditions, each at war with the other, as they are at war in the individual. There are two traditions in all nations, as we so clearly see today. The emergence and duration of one way of life or another marks the maturity or the immaturity of a particular society at any given time. Mature men tend to be tolerant. The immature live, like all children, in a world which they condemn in violent terms if it does not yield to their desires or to the impulses of their uncontrolled will.

A free people has vital need of this analysis. Since freedom is psychological before it is political, no political credo which ignores the nature of man has hope of keeping its promises, unless they are merely totalitarian promises. The totalitarian leader must suppress psychological knowledge, as the secret of his power. As Biddle says:

Dependence and conformity are the end and aim of the totalitarian State. Imposed as a state religion, as humility might be taught as a fundamental tenet of Christianity, they are assumed as characteristics of the human herd, which must remain immature if the theory of control, for the good of the herd, is to be realized. They are essentially inimical to the spirit of the democratic state, which has for its goal the creation of men and women who can stand on their own feet, and make their own decisions. . . .

It seems reasonable to conclude that this sort of thinking would not have been possible before the revolutionary period of European history. The very idea of the "fear of freedom" could hardly have occurred to men who had had little experience of it. The *fight* for freedom both they and we can easily understand—they from direct experience, we from history and tradition. It is only after attaining political freedom, and enjoying its blessings for a while, that men become fearful of freedom—fearing it while giving other explanations of their uneasiness. The men who fear freedom almost always express themselves as though they were engaging in the old fight for freedom, and they are able to gain popular support because history and tradition suggest that

freedom must be won by valiant opposition to the evil men who are its enemies. So the men who fear freedom find enemies everywhere—and if these enemies often seem a harmless sort, every device of innuendo is used to give them as black a character as possible.

The present, then, is a time of psychological testing. The American people are being measured for their love of freedom, for their knowledge of the foundations of democracy—that form of society "which has for its goal the creation of men and women who can stand on their own feet, and make their own decisions." And for guidance in this trial, we have the words of Benjamin Franklin, who, with some others of his day, understood the problem of freedom better than many who lived after him. "They," said Franklin, "that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety."

But if we are entering a cycle of ordeal, there is at least an emerging wisdom to help us along the way. Books like Mr. Biddle's, while unusual, are not unique. The very crisis of the times seems to generate the thinking we need to endure and rise above it. Even while frightened men are slashing away at the principles of freedom, courageous men are writing books like *Fear of Freedom*, addressing forums, and declaring a new faith in man's capacity for maturity. This movement of the human spirit—how else shall we name it?—has been gaining momentum for several years. It is not a political movement, nor an academic movement, nor a religious movement. It cuts across all familiar boundaries and sectors of human enterprise. It proclaims a faith, and the principles to support that faith, and, day by day, it gathers from every field of inquiry the facts and disciplined thinking which may eventually grow into the foundation of a new society.

## *Letter from* **AMERICA**

MIDDLE WEST.—It's cheering news these days to hear about our new changes in Foreign Policy. I wonder how Europeans, Asians and Africans are going to react to these new lofty schemes. Somehow, the idea naïvely exists here that since we have lent them money, they are affectionate and non-critical, which is just like saying that all of us who are in debt are extremely fond of the Finance Company and will never speak against it. To hint that foreigners consider our Foreign Policy with distrust is to bring a storm of disapproval on the hinter's head. As representatives of a Benevolent Democracy, we feel annoyance when people criticize our undemocratic treatment of minorities, Red investigations of UN officials and our tendency to annihilate yellow-skinned races to bring about permanent tranquillity. Nothing bothers the stolid belief that we are loved for ourselves alone, and that other countries enjoy our roughshod, good-humoured-but-stern compulsion.

Before the pageantry of innovation begins, I think there are a couple of questions the foreigner would like to ask of us, because I certainly know that if I were in a foreign country, people there would ask them of me. They would like to know what we plan to do about our American Negro, and they would like to know how much power we are going to allow our State Department to continue with the mechanizations of the FBI investigation of the Red Terror.

The most striking thing about foreigners is the consistency with which they ask these same annoying questions. They never seem to tire of them, as we so often do. Since three quarters of the asking population is going to be, at least tan, they want to know more about our "interesting" colored problem. In fact they are so interested in it, that most tourists visiting America consider it part of the tour to go through the Old South and see it for themselves. What is really our biggest

stumbling block in their listening to our new policies has lately become a tourist attraction, rather than any form of solution.

Hearty American journalists in writing books about these questions airily answer with the good news that great strides are being made. They point out with pride that there were no lynchings in 1952, for the first time in fifty years, so that given a couple of hundred years more, everything should be fine. They say that the South will eventually become educated (despite the educational statistics published regularly), and before you know it, we'll all be living side by side without a care in the world.

We are not going anywhere with a Foreign Policy unless we solve our domestic problems, and we are not going to be believed, no matter how hearty the Ambassadors or Emissaries of Good Will. There are two salient needs which are going to have to be met before many foreigners will listen seriously to us:

1.—A rapid speeding up in the attitude toward the Negro and in allowing him his Civil Rights.

2.—A time-limit established on former alliances with Communistic Organizations. The pressure presently brought to bear is making many former liberals uneasy about forgotten childhood sweethearts, and the cessation of harassing good American citizens will make most thinking strangers believe that at last we're becoming reasonable.

Can anyone truthfully say that these two developments are on the way?

ROVING CORRESPONDENT

## *REVIEW*

### STRINGENT TALK

STRINGFELLOW BARR'S welcome extension of the tract, *Let's Join the Human Race*, is now available through Doubleday as *Citizens of the World*, a book we count among the most challenging and provocative volumes on American foreign policy yet produced. Justice William O. Douglas contributes the Preface, saying of Barr's approach:

His presentation will stir old prejudices; it will provoke many. There is great resistance these days to looking at the world problems primarily as political rather than as military. This volume presents the problems at the political level. That to me is the correct approach. The book contains what the Great Debate of 1952 should have been about.

Barr himself warns that what he is going to say "involves a critical attack on America's present foreign policy. But since this policy is 'our' policy, this book is bound to irritate or anger many Americans." So vigorous are Barr's indictments of U.S. foreign policy that at the outset he feels obliged to show his awareness of the classification in which many readers will place him:

Given the temper of our times, this fact immediately places me with Russians and Communists. Since they and I agree that America has a bad foreign policy, many readers will not bother to find out whether we agree for the same reasons.

I shall therefore be classified by some readers as a pro-Russian or a Communist or a fellow-traveler, or at least a dupe of the Kremlin. I know of no honorable way of avoiding this unpleasant experience. I could of course lie or keep silent. But I happen to believe that the citizen of a self-governing democracy is heavily obligated to speak his mind on matters of public concern, including the foreign policy of his government. Especially when speaking his mind will make him unpopular.

It may reassure you personally if I report that I am not a Communist, have never been one, and have no plans for joining the Communist Party. I disagree with Communists on too many vital matters to make even a good fellow-traveler, although I made up my mind several years ago to avoid becoming what many

of my friends have, alas, become: a fellow-traveler-by-opposition, that is, an anti-Communist ready to dislike anything Communists like or to like anything Communists dislike. For this is to be dominated by the Kremlin.

It now remains for us to demonstrate just how challenging Barr can be. A few sample passages should clearly establish that the author is not overestimating the hostility which many of his statements are bound to provoke. For Dr. Barr contends that the United States is trapped by the policies of capitalistic imperialism, and that we need not only to admit the inevitability of socialized planning in Asia and accept its representative governments—as in the case of Red China—but that we must also seriously consider revising American capitalism:

The ugly fact is that our present economy rests in large measure on our rearmament program. That is why Wall Street is thrown into a panic whenever it fears "peace may break out." The Kremlin talks as if that proves Wall Street is trying to start a war. All the evidence suggests that Wall Street is more afraid of a war than most parts of the country are. But the brokers in Wall Street, whatever their professional defects, know enough to wonder what would happen to our economy if our war preparation stopped short or even tapered off too sharply. And an economic collapse in this country would spell sorrow not only for America but for most of the world.

Non-Communists in Europe know that we share one thing with Nazi Germany from which Communist Russia is free. Our economy is a war economy now, as Hitler's was. To some extent, like him, we are caught. Russia's economy does not depend on war. Because this is a Marxist point, we Americans do not like to hear it. Non-Communists in Europe also hate to think about it—not because it is Marxist, but because it is true.

Here are a few more statements which ought to make Americans sit up—either to scream or to think. Most of the following occur in the second chapter, and certainly serve to get things rolling in Mr. Barr's book:

The government of the United States has awarded itself the leadership of "the free world" . . . . The Korean War was our show. It was we who rounded up the votes in the U.N., and it was we who

with far greater difficulty rounded up token military forces from fellow-members. Early in the discussions an American orator at Lake Success, whose speech was heard on American radios, suffered an interesting slip of the tongue: he spoke of the United States. It is possible that many American listeners failed to detect the slip for the same psychological reasons that caused the American diplomat to make it. Shortly after the Chinese intervened in Korea, the *New York Times* announced unsmilingly, that as soon as Washington had decided what was to be done, it would be done through the United Nations. The statement doubtless struck many American readers as both accurate and natural. . . .

Now that our policy has failed us, we can see clearly enough why: it is purely negative. This is what has left us with that most useless of instruments, a foreign policy that does not appeal to foreigners. It not only does not attract them, it does not even make sense to them. Since it never has made much sense to the American, this is a good time for inventory.

The best way to take stock, since we admit we are the leaders of the free world, would be to have another look at the free world. We have been staring with such breathless horror at the Kremlin for so long that we have forgotten the two billion men and women on this planet who are neither Russian nor American and who are a little skeptical of both Moscow and Washington.

Let's take our eyes off Russia just long enough to listen to these two billion men and women, or even just look at them. They will be hard for us to see. For America today is like a rich suburb surrounded almost entirely by slums, and rich suburbanites always find it hard to put themselves in the place of a man who lives in a slum. Perhaps that is why, when we talk about Asia, we use expressions like "teeming millions"—anonymous, inhuman phrases, phrases that reduce men to statistics, that rob men of their faces. If Asians have no faces, you and I don't have to look in their eyes.

What kind of economic order does Dr. Barr advocate? Actually, his views cannot be conveniently assembled even under the broad title of "Democratic-Socialism," but he does feel that the democratic socialists have a great deal to say to us which we should listen to for our own good.

Our present economy, Barr argues, is doomed to be a surplus economy, *requiring* us to

sell and distribute tremendous amounts of goods abroad. In Europe, Dr. Barr shows, our representatives seem agreeable to some socializing measures, while the very idea of similar proposals at home is held to be subversive. Why? Because the psychology of capitalism is that of a "seller," and that of socialism the psychology of the consumer. We have to stop being capitalists to some degree, Barr thinks, if we are to stop threatening the rest of the world with economic imperialism. And unless we socialize further at home we can't absorb the tremendous crash which would follow the cessation of arms production. By way of a vicious circle, Barr says, arms production goes hand in hand with the policy of forcing open European and Asian markets to receive our surplus consumers' goods:

For several reasons Americans may be more willing to distribute surplus over the planet than they would be to adopt socialism at home. Anybody who has watched closely how the Marshall Plan has operated abroad has been amused at how often its American administrators advised Europeans to take steps which Americans would refuse to take at home for fear of being socialistic. Europeans were sometimes amazed. But our American administrators of the Marshall Plan had to get results for the money the Congress had appropriated, and were in no mood to haggle over political philosophies. If the only way to get a farm population on its feet was to encourage it to form marketing co-ops, then they advised coops, even if co-ops at home were being attacked in the Congress as a socialistic device. After all, the whole Marshall Plan operation leaned toward "planned production." As for their praise of American capitalism and American business competition, they had to reserve much of that for news releases to America, partly because European capitalists were even less inclined than many American capitalists to pay high enough wages to let working people buy the goods produced; and partly because Europeans had read the reports of Congressional committees that had investigated monopoly in American business, and they already knew there was less business competition in America and more price-fixing than we Americans were prepared to admit. In any case, the net result of our experience abroad is that we accept "socialistic" practices there which we simply will not accept at home.

One of the most interesting—because hopeful—chapters in *Citizens of the World* concerns the new state of Israel. Here, Barr feels, many of the pressing economic and political problems of the world are either solved or on the road to solution. And Israel is *both* Socialist and Capitalist, with, however, no capitalist war economy to dictate policy. The people of Israel, according to Barr, "are actually doing what most of the rest of us are talking about when we want to win votes or influence allies."

Those who have read *Let's Join the Human Race* will remember how educative it is to be reminded of the economic conditions obtaining in most Asiatic countries. *Citizens of the World* offers more of the same, and it cannot be repeated too often that Americans suffer a terrible delusion in imagining that the rest of the world can develop economically and politically in such a way as to conveniently dovetail its needs with our own. The Communists, Barr admits, understand the nature of the social revolution which is sweeping the world far better than we do, and, in this connection, he pays them a sort of inverted compliment in his last chapter:

I am delighted that Communist propaganda forces the rest of us to remember the hungry billion every time we try to think of something more pleasant. Of course it would be even more thrilling if we remembered them out of love of our neighbors. But it is something to remember them at all, even if only from fear the Communists will stir them to revolt and end by making them their military allies in a power struggle against America.

Dr. Barr, now serving as President of the Foundation for World Government, is not preaching despair and disaster. He says he is "glad" that he lives in a time of crisis, a time "when real decisions can be made because real issues have emerged that the human mind can grasp, and real problems have been located that human will and human reason can solve." Barr feels, further, that despite the fanaticism of anti-Communism at home and the poor state of our relations with Russia, beginnings of a "great

awakening" may be observed since 1950: "I am grateful," he writes, "for the many Americans who have refused to allow the cold-war fanatics either to flatter their prejudices or to insult their intelligences and have gone on quietly insisting on their own rights of free speech and on the right of men in distant lands to eat. I am grateful for all those Americans who, instead of looking under the bed at night for Communists, or helping to slander their neighbors, have looked into their own hearts to see if evil might be there too and have determined to use their heads on problems that will not yield to guns. I have become slowly convinced that such Americans are far more numerous than either our press or our radio had led me to suspect."

## *COMMENTARY* THE RELATIVISTS

RELATIVISM in history and philosophy, Pragmatism in philosophy and education, and Positivism in physical science—these represent a well-established anti-metaphysical tendency in modern thought which MANAS does its best to oppose. Yet it seems important to recognize that the iconoclasm which has been the primary inspiration of such views played an indispensable role in the preparation of the Western mind for genuinely philosophical attitudes.

For centuries, the West suffered from what may be called a "Revelational" psychology, in which the holding of Correct Opinions was regarded as the highest good. The discussion of the Catharist heresy in this week's *Frontiers* illustrates the practical consequences of this outlook. It is to be noted, however, that the Catharists, too, laid considerable emphasis on the doctrinal side of religion, suggesting that faith in a particular set of opinions was characteristic of the entire period of the Middle Ages, although some opinions honored human integrity, while others were contemptuous of man.

Only with the coming of the Enlightenment did the concept of *independent inquiry* emerge in European history, and then, by reaction to more than a millennium of religious absolutism, the pendulum of thought swung to the other extreme, stopping only at the point represented by modern Relativists, Pragmatists, and Positivists. Abandoning altogether the traditional idea of Truth, the Relativists contended that there are no philosophical "first principles," save their own rejection of all first principles.

Is there a middle ground between insistence upon either Correct Opinion or No Opinion? We think there is, and that it is found by combining the best qualities of both these opposing views. It is possible, we propose, to believe that Truth exists, but that it is discovered only through the direct realizations of experience—the test required

by the pragmatists. Not "Correct Opinions," then, but *impartial inquiry*, is the great thing—an attitude requiring extraordinary discipline to sustain. Conceivably, much of the disorder of the modern world has resulted from the growing pains involved in seeking and trying to maintain the ideal of impartial inquiry.

In any event, the proposal that the West is now struggling toward a higher ideal than it has held in previous centuries seems the only possible answer to the question which concludes this week's Letter from America.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

ACCORDING to several men whom we admire, Justice William O. Douglas and Stringfellow Barr among them, there is now a clear and present danger that the people of the United States will become more isolated from the rest of the world than they ever have been before. Just how the wealthiest and most influential nation can be accused of extreme provincialism is a matter easily explained only if we desert political terms for the terms and dimensions of psychology. For it is common knowledge to the savants of the latter field that wealth and ease may often bring on a feeling of superiority which is one and the same thing with intellectual and moral provincialism. It follows that the Ozark backwoodsman, living forty miles from the nearest country store, in terms of his own range of experience, may not be provincial at all—for his mind *may* be receptive to whatever new knowledge from the outside world happens to come his way—while the denizen of Washington D.C. may be provincial in the extreme. Sophistication is no guarantee of breadth in outlook.

We suspect that a considerable number of people realize that such may be the case, and feel strongly that America has succumbed to "the clear and present danger." People intelligent enough to realize this are also apt to recognize that despair is both personally unnecessary and historically uncalled-for. A part of the reason for provincialism and complacency may be the absence of crucial problems in one's life. Although we all have broad problems as citizens, both internationally and on the domestic scene, these are relatively remote and impersonal, leaving most of us without a sense of serious engagement or participation. We would be more effective, perhaps, as citizens, if we had the *habit* of meeting and entering into problems—a habit which compels open-mindedness and the development of new perspectives.

How does one encourage fresh perspectives, especially among the young? Obviously, by encouraging the perception of cultural contrasts, and reflection upon those contrasts. Our present

attitudes of mind must be constantly seen afresh, our civilization evaluated as if for the first time, and with the viewpoint of those who have not been conditioned by an excess of comfort and convenience to "accept" all things familiar.

Not long ago, a group of 16-year-olds, looking about for an activity which would be both amusing and instructive, hit upon the idea that a way to highlight the peculiarities of our conventional civilization would be to pretend that they were American Indians, and trying to imagine what "White" civilization would look like when viewed through the eyes of this continent's original inhabitants, say, a century ago. (The "century" part was to remind us that most of our present societal characteristics and attitudes have been long developing, and more easily discernible then, perhaps, than now.)

The proposal was this: Imagine yourself an Indian boy born on a remote bit of government-segregated land. You hear many curious things about what the white men do, and the stories are so strange that you decide to find out for yourself. So you begin a solitary pilgrimage, interviewing other Indians as you travel through various regions. The first thing you discover is that white men are hungry for yellow metal, so much so that the matter of its possession often leads to battle or murder. What do the white men do with gold? A city frequenter from your tribe has found the answer, though the answer is more inexplicable, if anything, than the warfare. Yellow metal, it appears, after being fought over, is collected by the winner, and finally hidden away in a building with bars on its windows.

Perhaps this is a religious ritual, having something to do with the strange words which the Mimbreno Apaches of Mangus Colorado have discovered white men intoning almost every cold morning upon awakening. "Los Godammies," the Mimbrenos call the white man, since the latter word is either softly muttered or vigorously shouted all during the day. What later Apache scouts can't figure out, though, is why differing groups of whites, riding together in large numbers in either blue or grey suits, attack and kill each other en masse while both sides occasionally shout the same words.

Among the Indian peoples, those who speak a common language never weaken their strength by internecine warfare, and they speak to their deity only in solitude.

Perhaps the answer to this is locked up in a strange phenomenon you have yourself observed. Whenever you have stealthily approached a white man's camp to pursue your ethnological study at first hand, you have noted huge fires, quite unlike the small ones your people build. The white man, in fact, builds such a large fire that he is forced to back several feet away from its heat. The only reason for this would seem to be a deliberate attempt to make the warming of one's body as difficult as possible, since a very small fire would do the heating much more equably and satisfactorily when a blanket is employed to catch the heat as you squat. This must be it. The white men amuse themselves by being as difficult about everything as they can be; and there is something similar about freezing one side of the body and scorching the other, and the wholesale reduction of numbers in the Godammie tribe by organized forms of killing. The yellow metal craze, too, seems part of a game which the white men play. They obviously have no practical use for the stuff, or it wouldn't be hidden in dark rooms after they are through fighting over it.

Perhaps the strangest thing of all is that the white men are so serious in carrying out the rules of the games they play. So far as you can tell from all you have heard and seen, they show no signs of enjoyment in all these strange customs. They seem to think they are great deities, but they play like little children, apparently without thought concerning the effects of their behavior upon the tribe as a whole. A god should show first concern for the tribe.

Take fighting, now, from another perspective. No man can really be a man unless he knows how to fight and has mastered any possible tendencies towards cowardice. It takes a great deal of training of the body and the mind in order to be a brave warrior. You must learn to master both the body and the emotions; this is also part of the discipline one must accomplish if one is ever to become a great Chief, a wise counsellor and leader of people. But the war chiefs among the whites don't fight,

themselves—they usually have such big stomachs they couldn't fight if they wanted to. The white chiefs must pay other, "poorer" men to do the fighting for them, so how is anyone to know whether or not they are fit to be chiefs in the first place?

An Indian owns only what he puts to constant use, at least so far as the land is concerned. But the whites like to think they "own" large amounts of ground they never work, and around which they build fences to keep others out—even members of their own tribe who might like to graze ponies or cattle. This sort of thing is bound to lead to trouble, and you have heard that it often does. When a tribe "owns" land in common, it helps all persons to feel tribal identity, and also encourages one to treat goods and chattels more as things borrowed than as things possessed.

The white men talk a great deal among themselves, but seem to sit quietly, to think, very seldom. They give their children little time to be by themselves, and to find their inner strength in the aloneness of the wild places. The white men borrow many things the Indians have taught them, but, thinking so seldom, never remember where they learned about corn, about tobacco, and about letting each man in tribal council have his say before an important matter concerning the whole tribe is decided. Yet the Indians *could* teach the white men many things of the spirit, and many things about the great cycles of nature which must be known if one is not to live in dangerous ignorance. From the Mississippi to California, the white men have built wooden houses on the very edges of riverbanks, or below the flood levels of the years of heavy rain, and because of this and other thoughtless practices they sometimes find their families washed away in the storms which the river spirit brings at appropriate times.

Why do the white men seem to love to make things as difficult as possible for themselves, in almost every department of living? In fact, come to think of it, why the white man?

## *FRONTIERS*

### Free-Thinkers of Christendom

AN incurable interest in heretics makes us note with curiosity and approval the publication, as No. 124 in the Watts Thinker's Library, of *The Holy Heretics*, by Edmond Holmes, a small book of 82 pages concerning the fate of the Albigenses of thirteenth-century southern France. (Distributed in the United States by the Eastern News Co., 306 West 11th Street, New York 14, at 65 cents.) The book first appeared in 1925, toward the end of the author's life, and that C. A. Watts of London, publishers of both orthodox and heterodox free-thinkers and rationalists, has reissued it seems a fact of considerable significance. Watts, we suspect, would have been but little interested in Holmes' works back in 1905—the year of the great controversy over Evolution, as a result of the Scopes trial in Tennessee—but more recently an honest rethinking of religion has begun to hold appeal for rationalists as well as for others.

The Albigenses are of interest on their own account, however. Sometimes called the Quakers of the Middle Ages, there seems to be no doubt of the fact that their martyrdom marked the first great turmoil which, a few centuries later, was to end in the Reformation. Almost any sympathetic book on the Albigenses is worth looking into, for the reason that, for more than six hundred years, only their enemies, the Catholic Christians, wrote about them, and because most of the information concerning their beliefs must be extracted from the records of the Holy Office of the Inquisition—hardly an impartial authority.

Enough, however, has been gathered by historians who have taken an interest in this unfortunate sect to show that they held honorable place in a continuous line of independent thinkers in the field of religion. Whatever their vocabulary, their *principles* were consistent with ideas of moral freedom, spiritual evolution, and the dignity of man. They continued the heritage of earlier

Christian heretics, and if their practice is any measure of their claim to teach truth, they had much more of the latter than their orthodox contemporaries. Describing the Albigenses who lived in twelfth-century France, in the pleasant province of Languedoc, Dana Monro relates in his *Middle Ages* that "the leaders of the heretics were admired for their virtuous lives and asceticism." Men sought out the company of the *perfecti*, those among the Albigenses who had taken ascetic vows, in order to gain the protection of the reverence they inspired. Even Catholics sought to be buried in the Albigensian cemeteries, "in order that they might be among the good people"—hoping, perhaps, to get to heaven in this way!

The *doctrines* of the Albigenses, however, were peculiarly offensive to the Catholic authorities. While they varied somewhat, depending upon time and region, these teachings generally maintained that there are two Gods, one the source of all good, the other the source of evil. As Holmes says:

Each of these Gods has had his own revelation: the good God in the New Testament, the bad in the Old. Assuming that the true God is absolutely good, the Catharists [an alternate name of the Albigenses] contended that the God of the old Testament could not be the good God. They went further. They contended that the God of the Old Testament was diametrically opposite to the God of the New, and that as the latter was good, the former must be bad. In support of this contention they appealed to the character of God as presented in the Old Testament, his cruelty, his vindictiveness, his injustice, his destructiveness, his institution of the *lex talionis* and the barbarous rite of circumcision. They also appealed to his dealings with Adam and Eve. When he forbade them to eat the fruit of a certain tree, either he knew that they would eat it, in which case he was tempting them to their ruin; or he did not know, in which case he was not omniscient. That Jehovah was the bad God was one of their fundamental dogmas. It was not the good God, but the bad, who gave the law to Moses, and ordered the goings of the people of Israel. It follows that the Law, not having been given by the good God, is all falsehood and vanity, and leads, not to salvation but to death. It is false, because instead of enjoining universal love, it allows men to hate their enemies.

Hence its abolition by Christ, which alone suffices to prove that it was the work of the bad God.

The souls of men, in the Albigensian faith, belong to the spiritual world of the true God. Christ came, not to die for men, but to help them to save themselves "by unfolding to them their origin and their destiny, and showing them how best to accomplish their work of penitential purgation." This was to be accomplished through purifying cycles of metempsychosis such as were taught in the Orphic mysteries of the Greeks. The moral code involved the renunciation of property, the practice of truth-telling, harmlessness, vegetarianism, and chastity. Depending upon the extent to which they embraced these austerities, the Albigenses were divided into grades, the highest of which was that of the "*perfecti*," who qualified as teachers of the Catharist doctrines.

Inevitably, the contrast between the virtuous lives of the Albigenses and the orthodox Catholics, especially the Catholic clergy, created problems for the Popes. The heretics were condemned in 1119 by Pope Callixtus II and by various Councils later in the twelfth century. Throughout this period the people of southern France flocked into the Albigensian fold. By 1198, when Innocent III ascended the Papal throne, southern France was divided into five Catharist Bishoprics where the dualistic doctrines reigned supreme. Early in the thirteenth century, St. Dominic attempted to convert the Albigenses by wandering barefoot over the countryside, following the example of the ascetic *perfecti*, but after ten years of such efforts he confessed his failure in a final sermon, threatening his hearers with violent measures. When, in 1209, Innocent ordered a crusade against the heretic sect, the Papal legates enlisted the military aid of Simon de Montfort and stormed the city of Béziers, massacring 20,000 inhabitants. The attraction of crusading against the Albigenses was seasoned by papal indulgences which drew champions of orthodoxy from every province of France. The heretics were hunted like animals, murdered, or captured and turned over to the newly founded

order of the Dominicans which, together with the bloody tribunals of the Inquisition, led many of them off to be burned at the stake. The crusades against the Albigenses were peculiarly distinguished by thorough butchery. After taking Marmande, the troops directed by the Catholic Bishops of Béziers and Saintes slaughtered more than five thousand men, women and children. Terror wasted Languedoc for nearly a hundred years, and if, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, the persecution abated, it was, as Holmes remarks, "for want of victims."

The Albigenses have been endlessly reproached by Catholic historians. As recently as 1938, Pius XI declared: "As the terrible sect of Albigenses was overcome by the invocation of Mary, so, we hope, shall then be overcome those who, as Communists of today, remind us of them by their craftiness and violence." This was in advocacy of use of the rosary in prayers against Communism, as the instrument, sacred to Mary, used by St. Dominic during the peaceful period of his attempt to recall the Albigenses from their heretic faith. But Pius said nothing of Innocent's angry reprisals or of the torture and murder to extinction of these gentle and harmless folk who were identified by their orthodox neighbors as "the good people."

Where did the ideas of the Albigenses come from? The scanty historical record suggests that the doctrine of the two principles of Good and Evil of Persian mythology was engrafted on a branch of Gnostic Christianity and was carried from Armenia into Thrace by a group known as the Paulicians (followers of St. Paul), transplanted there in the middle of the eighth century by order of the Byzantine Emperor, Constantine Copronymus. The originals of the Catharist doctrines, it seems plain, sprang up in Bulgaria by means of such enforced movement of populations, becoming known as the Bogomile heresy. From Bulgaria, the teachings spread to Serbia. By the end of the tenth century, we find a Bulgarian Presbyter, Cosmas, explaining that the Bogomiles

were able to stir up unwholesome doubts among the followers of the Eastern Church by raising the question, repeated by puzzled Christians: "Wherefore does God permit the Devil to exercise sway over man?" This question prepared the mind of the faithful for reception of the dualistic heresy—belief in two powers, neither "omnipotent," of Good and Evil.

A remarkably complete account of the religion of the Bogomiles may be found in Arthur J. Evans' *Bosnia and Herzegovina* (London: Longmans, Green, 1877), based upon native Slavonic sources as well as upon records of the Eastern Orthodox Church at Byzantium. It is possible to discern behind the personifications of Bogomile theology the shadowy outline of metaphysical ideas taught by the Neoplatonists, the Gnostics, and the Kabalists. According to the Presbyter, Cosmas, one branch of the Bogomiles held that the uncreate Spirit of the Good had two sons, the elder of whom rebelled and created matter, the younger of whom was Christ who came to enable men to combat the evils of this world. Christ, however, being of a purely spiritual nature, did not really occupy a physical body, but rather an illusionary form—a view, now termed Docetism, widely held among gnostic Christians. Like the later Albigenses, the Bogomiles rejected the worship of Mary; they looked upon the cross as merely a piece of wood, or a symbol of inhumanity; they refused to bow before icons of the saints and ignored church ceremonies, calling the priests blind "pharisees." The bread of the Lord's Supper, they said, was but ordinary bread.

There were no professional priests among the Bogomiles. Basil, a twelfth-century leader, captured by the Emperor Alexius Comnenus through treachery, earned his living as a doctor. Since Basil would not recant, Alexius roasted him alive in punishment for his heretical views. The story of the Bogomiles is as filled with such persecutions as the story of the Albigenses, but the former were more successful in escaping from their oppressors by withdrawing into mountainous

country. From these retreats, Bogomile missionaries were sent to other countries. Arthur Evans gives evidence of the influence "exercised by Bosnia in directing the great Protestant movement in Western Europe." He writes:

Matthew Paris [d. 1259] relates that the Albigenses of Provence and Italy possessed a Pope of their own, who resided in Bosnia. This man created a vicar "*in partibus Galliarum*." The vicar of this Bosnian anti-pope, who resided in Toulouse, granted him some lands at a place called Porlos, and the Albigensian heretics betook themselves to their Bosnian pope to consult him on divers questions of faith. Matthew Paris. . . [is] certainly wrong in converting this Bosnian elder into an anti-pope, and his vicar into a parody of an orthodox bishop, hierarchy of any sort being, . . . alien to the spirit of the Bogomilian as well as to the Albigensian sectaries. Yet it is quite possible that a kind of informal primacy was at this time accorded to the Bosnian Djed, and he may have fulfilled such moderating functions, as interpreter in matters doctrinal, as seem to have devolved, a century before, on the heresiarch Basil. The fact that this vicar had been originally sent by the Illyrian "anti-pope" is a convincing proof of the direct missionary connection between Bosnia and Provence, and the whole incident shows that in the thirteenth century the Western heretics still looked to the Slavonic East for the sources of true belief.

By the close of the twelfth century—the period of Albigensian ascendancy in France—the Bogomilian missionaries had extended the Catharist doctrines from Philippopolis to Bordeaux in, as Evans says, "an unbroken zone through the center of orthodox Europe, from the Black Sea to the Atlantic." But after the Catholics tasted Albigensian blood, a new cycle of persecutions began in the East, this time by Rome. The record of wars, executions and crusades is almost uninterrupted. There is evidence that, in the fifteenth century, there were relations between the Bogomiles and John Huss, the Czech forerunner of the Reformation. A Catholic Bishop complained in 1437 that Bosnia was swarming with Hussites and other heretics. At last, in 1463, the Bogomiles, tiring of the perpetual struggle with the religious tyrants of Christendom, invited

the Turks to come and rule over them. Mahomet II invaded Bosnia, and within a week seventy cities passed into Turkish hands. While the Bogomile movement thus gained a protecting obscurity, and was seldom heard of thereafter, Evans reports that there were at least 2,000 Bogomiles still in existence in the nineteenth century, still jealously guarding their freedom, and seeking refuge from the demands of conformity.

The story of the Albigenses, so well told by Edmond Holmes, is thus but a single chapter in the long story of the Resistance Movement of the free-thinkers of Christianity. Beginning with the persecuted gnostics and Manichaeans, this movement continues throughout European history, now evident, now underground, now briefly triumphant, now savagely suppressed, until the days of victorious revolt under Martin Luther. But with success, the genius of these early puritans seemed to die away.

The Quakers, perhaps, are the true inheritors of the Bogomile tradition, for in the Society of Friends one finds many similarities to the customs of the Bogomiles of a thousand years ago—those men and women of simple life who had no churches, acknowledged no priests, who "worshipped" with neither chancel nor altar, but in a mountain glen, or before a simple table covered with white linen, on which lay a copy of the Gospels.