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GREAT QUESTIONS: VII

SINCE so much depends upon what man means when he uses the word "soul," and since, with the decline of dogmatic materialism and the increase of interest in religious issues, the idea of soul is gaining new prominence, the matter of what, precisely, this word conveys, or ought to convey, is a question of growing importance. From general usage, it is plain that "soul" has become one of the "all-or-nothing" words. With one writer or speaker, reference to the soul may indicate the acceptance of far-reaching moral compulsions; with another, it may mean simply that he speaks in an intellectually vague or even frivolous mood.

Probably the most widely accepted usage is that which intends "soul" to represent the more elevated or "cultured" side of human pursuits, including the arts, the sentiments, and the sensibilities. "Recent psychology," as Webster's tersely notes, "for the most part, dispenses with the concept of the soul as an entity or explanatory principle."

"Recent psychology," however, is very recent indeed, and is far from persuading the great mass of mankind that the idea of soul should be abandoned. And even some psychologists who were active during the period of the rejection of soul took another view. One of these, William McDougall, wrote in the first number of the *Journal of Parapsychology* (March, 1937):

> What are the relations of mind to matter? Are mental processes always and everywhere intimately and utterly dependent upon material or physical organizations? Do the volitions, the strivings, the desires, the joys and sorrows, the judgments and beliefs of men make any difference to the historical course of the events of our world, as the mass of men at all times have believed? Or does the truth lie with those few philosophers and scientists who, with or without some more or less plausible theory in support of their view, confidently reject well-nigh universal beliefs telling us that the physical is co-extensive with the mental and that the powers and potentialities of mind may be defined by the laws of the physical sciences?

The prevailing idea of soul, across many centuries, has been in terms of an "explanatory principle." In Webster's succinct definition, the soul is "conceived as the essence, substance, animating principle, or actuating cause of life, or of the individual life, especially of life manifested in physical activities; the vehicle of individual existence, separate in nature from the body and usually held to be separable in existence." For those to whom the idea of soul is already quite acceptable, and hardly needing, any defense, to pursue the question further may seem unnecessary. Why not stop with Webster's affirmation that the soul is the moral agent acting from within the body, and that it is this soul which is the real human being? The proper answer to this question, we think, is that you cannot even stay with Webster without going further. The idea that the soul *is* the responsible being calls up a number of other great questions for solution—unless, that is, one is content to rest with an undeveloped conception of the soul as a mere article of faith.

If, for example, the soul has an existence independent of the body, what is its actual *relationship* to the body, which relationship obviously must exist? Has the soul any sort of "anatomy" or metaphysical "physiology," or is it no more than a bare abstraction incapable of further analysis? If the soul is a free agent, *how* free is it? What of the forces of conditioning the sociologists tell us about? If our religion speaks of freedom and moral responsibility, and our science instructs in determinism and social responsibility, how are we to relate these two great groups of causes in human behavior? Is the soul created or is it self-born—*sui generis?* Is the

life of the soul static or dynamic? Is there evolution of soul, or merely salvation? Are the needs of the soul and of the body in conflict—essential conflict—or have they a natural harmony? Is soul a universal principle, or do only humans "have" souls? And what about the immortality of the soul? If a man dies, shall he live again?

While no one religious tradition offers complete answers to these questions, there is a notable similarity of common beliefs about the soul. In the words of a recent writer on this subject, "Apart from the refinements of philosophers and theologians, we find the popular beliefs of all races and of all ages surprisingly alike. Wherever we turn—to Bantu Africa, to the Indians of North America, to the pages of Homer and Dante, or to the folklore of China and Italy and Scotland—everywhere we find the soul regarded as a kind of airy, filmy double of the body." This is clearly the *doppelgänger* of Western psychic speculation, the "shade" of the ancient Greeks, the *ka* of the ancient Egyptians, the "astral body" of the Paracelsians, and the *orenda* of the American Indians. It may even be related to the "electrical architect" of the modern students of morphobiology! This conception of the soul as a luminous simulacrum of the body survived in modern thought until about the time of Descartes. For example, a French mystic of the seventeenth century believed "that the body which the soul parts with at death is only of the nature of an outer bark or envelope, beneath which is a real body of subtle matter to which the soul is imperishably united." It was, he thought, "these subtle bodies made visible which appeared to the favored disciples who beheld Moses and Elias discussing with Jesus at the Transfiguration."

While vulgar opinion among the ancient Greeks distinguished between the physical body and the *psyche*—upon death the *psyche* speeding to Hades for a shadowy existence, "destitute even of the attribute of self-consciousness—there is in Homer a hint of another kind of soul than the shade. In the eleventh book of the *Odyssey,* Odysseus speaks of seeing the shade of Hercules in the Underworld—but this appearance he declares

> . . . a mere shadowy counterfeit
> (He, the true form, among the gods of ease,
> Wed to fair-ankled Hebe, still doth sit,
> Feasting). While round him the dead pahntoms flit. . .

Plotinus makes of this passage an occasion for discoursing upon the soul. The Shade of Hercules in Hades, he points out, remembers only events of life on earth, and is lacking in moral judgment. What, Plotinus asks, would the other Hercules say—the *real* soul of Hercules, freed of the mundane influences now embodied by the Shade? And beyond even the bliss of Olympian existence is the Intelligible World where the valor of Hercules will seem to him "trifling . . . when he has risen over Hercules him self by the force manifested in those struggles which are characteristic of veritable sages." (*Fourth Ennead,* Book III, 27-32.)

In Western thought, when we arrive among the Platonists, there is a distinct transition from the "filmy double" idea of the soul to the conception of soul as a moral agent, concerned with "those struggles which are characteristic of veritable sages." Plato and the Neoplatonists made of the soul a warrior of the fight between good and evil, and a quester after knowledge and certainty. This idea of the soul is found pre-eminently in the Platonic myths—in the *Phaedrus,* the *Timaeus,* and the tenth book of the *Republic.* Plotinus, discussing the soul, undertakes to refute some of the same doctrines of materialism which were to dominate human thought some seventeen hundred years later. Objecting to the Aristotelian theory that the *entelechy,* or soul of the body, is dependent upon the body for its existence, Plotinus shows that were soul and body but different aspects of the same thing, there could be perception, but no intellection. For if, he says, the body and the soul are really one, "there is an end to the resistance offered by reason to the desires; the total (of body and Entelechy-soul) must have

one uniform experience throughout, and be aware of no internal contradiction."

This is the classical criticism of all forms of materialistic and monistic psychology. If mind is but a function of body, exhibiting only responses to physical stimuli, there can be no such thing as thought, proper. A mind that is merely the reflex of bodily activity can have no thoughts *about* the body, because such thought is not independent, but entirely determined by the body itself. It is impossible for the Behaviorist to meet this argument except by declaring himself independent of the laws he has himself asserted. Unless this is the case, he can tell us only things which are the result of his own, unique, bodily stimuli. As Plotinus puts it, "The very upholders of the entelechy are thus compelled to introduce another soul, the Intellect, to which they ascribe immortality." This is Aristotle's "Creative Reason." Plotinus concludes this discussion with a clear distinction between the Aristotelian Entelechy-Soul and the Immortal Individuality of the Platonists:

> The substantial existence of the soul then, does not depend upon serving as Form to anything; it is an Essence which does not come into being by finding a seat in body; it exists before it becomes also the soul of some particular, for example, of a living being, whose body by this doctrine would be the author of its soul.
>
> What, then, is the soul's Being? If it is neither body nor a state nor experience of body, but it is act and creation; if it holds much and gives much, and is an existence outside of body; of what order and character must it be?
>
> Clearly it is what we describe as Veritable Essence. The other order, the entire corporeal kind, is process, it appears and it perishes; in reality it never possesses acing, but is merely protected, in so far as it has the capacity, by participating in what authentically is.

Neoplatonic ideas of the relation between the soul and the body are quite clear, at least metaphysically. The soul, say both Plotinus and Proclus, acquires its material envelope by progressive steps of descent from its heavenly origin; conversely, death is a process of release from the weight of these earthly vehicles or "bodies." As Proclus puts it, in Proposition 209 of his *Elements of Theology:*

> The vehicle of every particular soul descends by the addition of vestures increasingly material; and ascends in company with the soul through divestment of all that is material and recovery of its proper form, after the analogy of the soul which makes use of it: for the soul descends by the acquisition of the irrational principles of life; and ascends by putting off those faculties tending to temporal process with which it was invested in its descent, and becoming clean and bare of all such faculties as serve the use of the process. (Dodds translation, Oxford, 1933.)

The Platonic soul is thus a striver after perfection, an adventurer and a potential hero, like Hercules of old. The "Christian" soul is a sinner and a suppliant, a creature dependent upon the will and grace of an outside power. For the Greeks, and for the intellectual ancestors of Greek philosophy and mysticism, further East, the pursuit of knowledge about the soul was a form of *science,* involving the strictest of discipline and practical striving. But a science of soul could survive the religious imperialism of medieval Christianity even less than a science of matter. A Galileo might be forgiven, but a Bruno, who tried to revive the Greek teachings concerning the soul, was made to perish at the stake.

The forefathers of modern materialism were more careful in their formulations. They allowed the Church full latitude in the realm of irrational dogma, but meanwhile they pressed the authority and governance of the laws of matter further and further into the region of psychological phenomena—until, finally, with the success of Darwinism and the intellectual defeat of practically all the religious dogmas which had pretended to "scientific" knowledge, the soul could be denied altogether without disturbing in the slightest any scientific doctrine or idea.

It was at this point in the history of modern thought that "soul" became a term of mere poetic license—a noun denoting the freedom of fancy or the nuance of mood.

Today, the temper of modern thought is considerably different. We look with wonder at the simple harmonious lives of peoples who have not experienced our harrowing adventure with dogmatic theology and who have escaped, also, the materialistic reaction. We find such peoples enjoying an enviable serenity of spirit, despite the inroads upon their lives of Western civilization. We are somewhat awed by the great philosophical traditions of the Orient, where respect for life is a central theme, and where the spirit of inward devotion has never died away. Our doctors of the mind work out from clinical experience formulas for psychological recovery which are very like the axioms of ancient philosophers of soul. Meanwhile, even the greatest of our scientists begin to think in the terms of ancient pantheism—Albert Einstein, for one, and Erwin Schroedinger, for another. And that latest branch of psychological science, Parapsychology, or psychic research, avoids overt expression of metaphysical ideas only by practicing great self-denial—out of respect, of course, for the conventions of present-day scientific literature.

While these broad developments are unfolding, the biologists, without even a casual interest in metaphysics, seem to be building up, step by step, a new version of the Aristotelian "entelechy," or organizing principle or "body-soul."

Somewhere, in some paper or article, it was Dr. Julian Huxley, we think, who described a remnant tribe of South American savages among whom an odd custom was observed. These natives would run for hours along a jungle trail, then pause, all together, squatting on their haunches for a considerable time. A curious anthropologist, visiting among them, asked for an explanation. "We are waiting," they said, "for our souls to catch up with our bodies."

Just conceivably, the entire Western world, without exactly knowing it, is now engaged in such a period of waiting. It seems evident that a bold, new philosophy of soul will not be entertained for years to come; yet, on the other hand, the obstacles to substantial moral philosophy have today no more "body" than the shades encountered in Hades by Odysseus. Both theological dogma and scientific materialism are but habits of mind, capable only of recalling the past. They are shells of yesterday's conviction, without either stature or dignity for *thinking* men. Still, the processes of change in mass attitudes are exceedingly slow. Another war, perhaps, might accelerate the disillusionment and spur large numbers of people to begin a fresh search for moral certainty; but another war would also reduce the greater part of the world to conditions of barest survival, with consequent return to a primitive level of existence.

We have not, simply, to revive the philosophical ideas of the ancients, although that, if we could do it, would be an extraordinary achievement—but, also, to regain the depth and profundity of ancient thought without losing the breadth and scope of modern experience. In Plotinus, for example, we have the sense of a man who lived and thought with the idea of the soul as primary reality always before him. Think of a man who looks upon his fellows, not as rivals, dependents, superiors, competitors, allies, or enemies, but as *intelligences*, all upon a common journey of soul evolution. Whatever the institutions of his time, and whatever ideas they reflected. Plotinus created his own environment of values and ideals. Closer to our own time, there were the Emersons, the Thoreaus, and Alcotts.; and more recently a Gandhi. All of these, we may say, lived by, thought and practiced a philosophy of soul.

This moving conviction can, apparently, become the light in a man's life. It can scale his judgments, animate his human relationships, and raise by all these modes of living the level of the lives of other men.

Letter from ENGLAND

LONDON.—There has recently been published here a biography that has had a notable success, It is *Leslie Stephen*, by Noel Annan. Of course a good biography, with a good subject, may always hope for a generous reception; but in this case the subject is a man whose name is now known and remembered only by the elderly. And today interest in him centers mainly upon his role of iconoclast in an era of orthodoxy and intellectual self-satisfaction. For Stephen was an Agnostic. There were, of course, other Agnostics in those piping times when the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England were regarded as final and absolute. There was, for example, Charles Bradlaugh, the English counterpart of Bob Ingersoll, and others, such as Voysey, too. Stephen, like Voysey, entered the Church of England, being ordained soon after graduating at Cambridge. He became a Fellow of his College, and a tutor. But when he came to that point where he could no longer believe, he left the Church and became, if not its opponent, then most certainly a deadly critic. This biography took me to another half-forgotten book by Stephen himself in which he tells of the intellectual difficulties that induced him to forego the life of ease and cultural opportunities that belong to an university appointment and the easy money of a beneficed parson.

He wrote: "The difficulty which finally upset me was commonplace and prosaic enough. I had to take part in services where the story of the flood or of Joshua's staying the sun to massacre the Amorites were solemnly read as if they were authentic and edifying narratives—as true as the stories of the Lisbon earthquake or the battle of Waterloo, besides being creditable to the morality of Jehovah. . . . Divines, since that day, have discovered that it is possible to give up the history without dropping a belief in revelation. I could not then, as I cannot now, take that view." He proceeds to refer to the terrible calamity loss of faith in the absolute truth of the Scriptures was considered to be, adding: "I have no such story to tell. In truth, I did not feet that the solid ground was giving way beneath my feet, but rather that I was being relieved of a cumbrous burden."

The significance of the present-day widespread interest in Stephen, I think, is due to the intellectual sympathy he arouses today. Were a masterpiece of biography to be produced with Paley as its subject it could never have more than a curiosity interest for those intrigued by the spectacle of the successful fraud. (For Paley, whose *Evidence of Christianity* every undergraduate of Oxford and Cambridge had to master, "lifted" the major part of that dreary work from a contemporary German theologian and writer.) But that is an aside.

Today that (Church which Stephen left on the grounds that it propagated dogmas not only dubious but repellent to any intellectually honest man, is entering upon a phase of its history which can fairly be described as a steady decline. There are, I think, two explanations of this failure—one that becomes at every moment of national crisis, more and more apparent. First, that its priesthood is not a vocation, but a profession like any other—medicine, the Law and so on—in contrast to the Catholic Church, which draws on all strata of society for its priesthood; secondly, because the Church has, with a few exceptions (Inge and Barnes, for example), firmly refused to bring outworn and no-longer-tenable dogmas into line with modern knowledge and modern philosophy. The first factor, by introducing professionalism, has expelled the spiritual force of the man with a vocation, of the dedicated man, in the sense that Albert Schweitzer may be regarded as dedicated. The second factor has driven from the Church a very large body of men and women who can no longer believe its Creed or subscribe to its dogmas.

The Church of England is a State institution. It is exceedingly wealthy and the owner, through

the Ecclesiastical Board, of about one-fifth of the land of England. The beneficed parson enters into a sinecure from which he can be ejected only for the grossest immorality. He has security of tenure, a certain income (sometimes too large, sometimes too small). In Law he has only to perform the Statutory services, or to delegate a substitute to carry out this duty, in order to fulfil the minimal require meets of his office. As readers of Trollope will recall nobody thought it curious or immoral that one of the high dignitaries of Barchester Cathedral should reside permanently in pleasant Italy.

Throughout the country the churches are empty or nearly so. And so the Church is apt to denounce the laity as godless and to lament the decline of religion. Actually, this revulsion from the absurdities, the contradictions and obscurities of orthodox Church teaching indeed, of the central Christian Dogmas altogether, is nothing new. It is merely an historical trend which has become more pronounced with the advance of education and the new view of man of the Universe in which he finds himself for some brief moment of Eternity. Only in one way, in this writer's view, could the Church redeem itself. First, then, by an act of self-immolation, that is, by the surrender of its wealth. Secondly, by an intellectually-honest restatement of its teaching. There is no chance that it will take either of these steps.

It is some time now since M. Loisy characterized the Acts of the Apostles as little better than a forgery, and a longer time still since numerous scholars drew attention to the parallels of Orphism and Christianity, but the official Church remains where it was when Leslie Stephen elected to leave it and devote himself to the truth as he saw it. In his *Agnostic's Apology* your correspondent found more intellectual sustenance as a youth than he derived as a boy from the dreary services and meaningless liturgy which darkened his Sundays and piled up theological rubbish in his mind that had, at some pains, later to be destroyed.

The success of the present biography may, it seems, be taken as an omen and a good one, too.

ENGLISH CORESPONDENT

REVIEW
SEMANTICS AND SANITY

STUART CHASE, addressing himself to the problem of "Language and Loyalty" in the October *Progressive,* a worthy plea for recognition of the immediate usefulness of word-study in untangling the contemporary political schizophrenia. Mr. Chase illustrates his point convincingly at the beginning of his article:

> With the highly publicized investigations into the loyalty of Americans, the term "guilt-by-association" is becoming increasingly familiar. Unfortunately, not everybody understands what it means. I have seen letters in the newspapers from angry gentlemen declaring that of course a person is known by the company he keeps, and only agents of Moscow would question the validity of guilt-by-association.
>
> The angry letter-writers have a point. A man is known by the groups he frequents, and if they are second-story men, we are quite justified in locking the windows. But they miss the real point. I therefore propose a change in the phrasing. A more accurate term would be "guilty-by-*verbal*-association," for the trouble is primarily word trouble, not physical association. Here is a specific and notorious example, put in the form of a syllogism to sharpen the logic:
>
> *Communists are in favor of government housing.*
> *Sen. Taft is in favor of government housing.* (His bill finally passed, you remember.)
> *Therefore, Senator Taft is a Communist.*
>
> This argument was actually used by embittered members of the real estate lobby. It is, you see, entirely a matter of words, and has nothing to do with physical association.
>
> The device is an old one. After Benjamin Franklin discovered the principle of the lightning rod, there was much heated argument whether sharp points or round knobs were better conductors. Franklin favored points, but George III belonged to the knob school. The King urged Royal Society in London to rescind its resolution in favor of points, on the ground that Franklin was a leader be insurgent American colonists and so a traitor!
>
> *Franklin favors pointed lightning rods.*
> *Franklin is a rebel and a traitor.*
> *Therefore, it is treasonable to argue for pointed lightning rods.*

By the use of similar syllogistic devices Chase is able to prove that Senator McCarthy is a Communist, that Stalin is a Catholic and that the Pope is a Stalinist. (If such treatments amuse and delight you as much as they do us, you are invited to procure and enjoy further details in the October *Progressive*). But Chase is trying to do much more than amuse us—he is attempting to awaken us to our appallingly sloppy habits of critical analysis. Chase is a devoted semanticist, his popular *Tyranny of Words* having for many years made it clear to the layman that it is better to use no language at all than to use it inadequately.

Many have doubtless felt that "semantics," as defined by leading exponents such as Hayakawa, in *Language in Action,* and subsequently by Wendell Johnson's *People in Quandaries,* is a science much too dull and complicated, if it be a science at all. Sometimes the semanticists, too, seem to be excessively wordy, as one may verify by a perusal of the *Journal of General Semantics.* Other critics feel that the extreme care shown by semanticists to avoid the vagueness of "imponderables" has led them to also avoid most of the issues which most vitally concern men—issues involving "ultimate principles," ethical values, etc. Mystics and religionists, we think, have ground, too, for objecting to the theme that nothing is worth talking about unless it is "precise." But, when all these partially derogatory remarks have been made, there is still a considerable residue of value in what the semanticists have been contending, especially in relation to understanding the meaning of "scientific method."

Johnson's *People in Quandaries* emphasizes this point:

> We may say, in briefest summary, that the method of science consists in (a) asking cleat answerable questions in order to direct one's (b) observations, which are made in a calm and unprejudiced manner, and which are then (c) repotted as accurately as possible and in such a way as to

answer the questions that were asked to begin with, after which (d) any pertinent beliefs or assumptions that were held before the observations were made are revised in light of the observations made and the answers obtained. Then more questions are asked in accordance with the newly revised notions, further observations are made, new answers are arrived at, beliefs and assumptions are again revised, after which the whole process starts over again. In fact, it never stops. Science as method is continuous. All its conclusions are held subject to the further revision that new observations may require. It is a method of keeping one's information, beliefs, and theories up to date. It is, above all, a method of "changing one's mind"—sufficiently often. . . . *The language of science is the better part of the method of science.* Just so, *the language of sanity is the better part of sanity.* . . .

Science *as method* in this general sense need not be confined to laboratories. It is not something that can be used only by men in white coats, wearing goatees, squinting at test tubes, and speaking six-syllable words in a strange dialect. It may be thought of simply as organized common sense. It is the method whereby ordinary individuals in their daily lives may forestall shock and disappointment, avoid or resolve serious conflicts, increase their efficiency and zest for living—in short, live sanely.

Calling it common sense might be a mistake. It is simple sense, but it may not be very common. It tends to be very obvious—once stated or demonstrated. It is so obvious that one has to be extremely careful not to ignore it. Scarcely anything is more difficult to learn than something that is obvious. It is very much like trying to learn nothing at all, and it requires tremendous alertness to learn nothing. For example, most people, according to experienced swimming teachers, find it very difficult to learn how to float—apparently because there is nothing to learn. You don't do anything in order to float. What you have to learn is to do nothing that would keep you from floating. . . . Most of us seem not to realize the extent to which we learn misinformation and adopt unsound theories. A bright child can be trained to act quite stupidly. . . . The psychiatrist, Dr. Adolf Meyer, of Johns Hopkins University, has said that what ails most people is not that they are ignorant but that they know too much that isn't so. For such people, the better part of further learning is forgetting, and forgetting of well-learned misinformation and inefficiency is not easy as a rule.

The view of "true science as method" is the semantic view. And, when we come to think of it, it is easy to see that most of the difficulties and all violent divergences of' the world very largely result from methods of thought and social action, which are the *proven essence* of whatever beliefs actually exist, and which are sometimes quite different from professed beliefs.

Totalitarianism is a violent method for the application of the doctrine of environmental determinism. Roman Catholicism, in its most reactionary aspects, is also a method employing violence. The exploitations of Capitalism, too, are matters of "violent" method. Conversely, the socially progressive forces are characterized by their methods, and these are characteristically "non-violent," or persuasive. Now, while each segment of persons or opinions involves formal content of thought, as well as the method chosen for its promulgation, the area of method is where intelligent discussion and debate may most logically be able to take place—*if we can agree on the necessity for a consciously formulated science of desirable method.*

Each method of political or religious promulgation, of course, has its own form of implicit metaphysics in terms of the principles invoked, and this metaphysics is bound to be *related* to the content of belief. Yet "methodology" can nonetheless be profitably discussed and argued in terms of the immediate social context, as well as in terms of "ultimates." For such discussion the study of semantics can indeed be useful.

COMMENTARY
THE REAL ISSUE

A REALLY crucial consideration, it seems to us, is the relationship—possibly an interdependent relationship—between the idea of the soul discussed in this week's lead article and the problem of civil liberties dealt with in Frontiers. Modern liberalism of the *Nation* and *New Republic* school ignores this relationship entirely, and as a result the penetration of its analyses and criticism suffers accordingly.

This is equivalent to proposing that the foundation of freedom lies in the idea of self. The psychiatrists, although they do not as a rule employ the libertarian vocabulary, have been saying this, or something like it, for several years now; and while the psychiatric conception of "the soul" is empirical rather than metaphysical, this psychiatric version of the self is by no means in conflict with philosophical ideas of a very ancient origin on the subject.

Quite possibly—and we should like to propose it as a probability—a genuine renaissance of liberal thought will come only as a result of the inspiration of intensive thinking about the human soul, with consequent development of a new moral psychology, which will, in turn, be amplified in terms of its social implications into a new political credo.

It may be noted, at this point, that the Founding Fathers of the United States were nearly all representatives of the Deist tradition. Free-thinking religion was a vital force in all their declarations—including the Declaration of Independence. Deism was a religion of individual responsibility and individual moral authority, and its advocates, inheritors of age-old metaphysical ideas which had come to them through later thinkers of a Stoic and Platonic cast of mind, were determined to put their convictions into practice. Thomas Paine, for example, wrote in *The Age of Reason:*

> . . . My own mind is my own church.
>
> All national institutions of churches, whether Jewish, Christian, or Turkish, appear to me no other than human inventions set up to terrify and enslave mankind, and monopolize power and profit. . . . Infidelity does not consist in believing or in disbelieving; it consists in professing to believe what [one] does not believe.

It was the moral vigor of men like Paine which brought the United States and its principles of freedom to birth A similar moral vigor, founded on principles as profound or even profounder, will be needed for the rebirth of the love of freedom, and for the rebirth of the moral discipline that is needed to transform that devotion into institutions which honor freedom above all.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

THE debate on religious education in the public schools continues to be a warm one, occasionally publicized by such episodes as Vashti McCollum's defiance of the released time" religious instruction, or the opposition in the California State Legislature to tax exemption for private religious schools. But there is another phase of the subject, having to do with the casual, even sometimes unwitting, indoctrination in Christian belief which filters into American instruction of the young.

If your kindergarten-aged child has never brought home from school the solemn information that "Jesus loves us," you are likely, at some time, to share this experience with some other parents, unless your community runs out of kindergartners before the law of averages asserts itself. For, despite the Constitutional safeguards against official preference for any particular religious creed, many teachers have obviously felt it their clear duty to uphold Christian tenets, either by insinuation or by matter-of-fact asides in the course of the school day. While a teacher's "Jesus loves us" hardly appears to be dangerously "theocratic," thoughtful agnostics and students of comparative religion will point out that this formula infuses school life with an atmosphere of special pleading for a special theology.

So far as we know, only a few anti-religious fanatics would object to the legend of Jesus, portrayed as a great, good, and knowing man. The ethics of the Sermon on the Mount are universal, and if studied may lead to a better comprehension of the ideals behind all the humanitarian formulations of creed in history. To say that Jesus "loved everybody," similarly, cannot be amiss, for even if the Prophet of Nazareth be considered as only a legend, he would still legitimately symbolize the power of a man to conquer hate and fear in himself and to illumine his life with compassion.

Yet "Jesus *loves us"* is quite a different matter, having reference to the presumed existence of Jesus as a *super*-natural being, existing in a separate world of his own, and enjoying separate and miraculous powers. If Jesus was a man, however "superhuman" a man, then that inward power which made the Christ great can make us great also. But if he is something other than man, a unique creation, or the *only* "son of God," his greatness and compassion serve only to emphasize our own inferiority and innate insufficiency.

We wonder if the many sincere kindergarten and primary school teachers who think they are giving the best they know to the children, via simple repetition of Christian teaching, can ever understand why agnostics take offense. It may even be necessary for such agnostics occasionally to pretend that they are Buddhists or Mohammedans or Confucianists, in order to make clear the fact that there are many different approaches to religious and ethical verity, and that the Christian approach is by no means the only one which can be regarded as inspiring. "Jesus loves us" unmistakably implies an ex elusively Christian, even a partisan, doctrine, while belief in the existence of Jesus as a Great Teacher of humanity may easily become, and has often become, common ground for Buddhists, Mohammedans, Hindus, Tibetans *and* Christians.

One of the first Christian (Catholic) travelers to Tibet recounted in detail the reception of his own religious pronouncements, uttered in hope of conversion. He found the Tibetans quite willing to accept the reality of various forms of truth in the new religion, and quite willing to respect the objects of Western religious veneration. The Tibetans had no difficulty in moving their own religious traditions over a bit to make room for others, recognizing in them all the presence of universal symbolism. But the travelling Abbé Huc saw in this friendly hospitality only an opportunity to press his own claims more strenuously, thinking that "conversion" of the Tibetans to the arbitrary

insistence of his own Church would be easy. The Tibetans, of course, refused to succumb, finding it difficult of comprehension that anyone should actually believe that *his* truth was the only truth.

Many of the dark-skinned peoples of the East seem to have a far better understanding of the principle implied in the American Constitution in respect to religion than have those of our well-meaning elementary teachers who reflect naïvely partisan Sunday-School backgrounds. Of course, it is not the occasional use of a Bible story, nor its dramatization in such recent motion picture extravaganzas as *Samson and Delilah* and *David and Bathsheba* which will irk the agnostic, but merely the surrounding atmosphere of attitude and belief. Any story, just as any legend or symbol, can have deep psychological meaning, but if it is related to some doctrinal absolute—if it involves supplication or blind subservience to an external power—we have immediately entered the area of sectarianism.

Lack of sophistication in respect to a number of the world's great religions—such as could be accomplished by impartial and appreciative comparison—has caused most of us to accept innumerable "Christian" provincialisms. The habit of provincial thinking, in turn, may have serious political consequences. An implicit theocracy is not essentially different from an explicit totalitarianism. The process of turning clichés of political faith into militant righteousness should be familiar enough to us, today, while the documented history of past religious wars provides justification for a wholesome distrust of blind dogmas of any kind.

Though public school teachers may play but a small part in perpetuating religious factionalism, we suggest that all agnostic parents look for ways in which they can courteously draw this point to the attention of the public schools. Of one thing we are positive: we cannot trust the reports of teachers as to the reactions of their pupils to opportunity for "religion in the schools" unless those teachers have proved themselves free of any type of religious bias in their conduct as public servants.

For our PTA suggestion of the year, we submit the topic of "Religion and Religions in Relation to our Children," for at least a ten-week seminar. From an educational point of view, no religious beliefs can be taken for granted,—certainly not our own, which we usually tend to accept categorically, nor those of others, which we tend as categorically to reject. Excellent background reading for such discussion would be Eric Fromm's *Psychoanalysis and Religion,* and Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces,* the latter suggesting the possibility of a common ground upon which *all* beliefs may be given respectful attention, but none erected as imperative fact.

FRONTIERS

Training in Principles

A RECENT decision by the Supreme Court of Westchester County, New York, illustrates the sort of problem which confronts the judicial system of the United States, as a result of the anti-communist hysteria which has swept the land. In this case, the Court ruled that the so-called "Peekskill riot ordinances," passed by Courtlandt, N.Y., are either partially or wholly unconstitutional.

Doubtless, the town fathers of Cortlandt are puzzled by the decision of Justice Robert Doscher. It may be assumed that they felt they were giving expression to "true Americanism" in making laws designed to prevent a repetition of events such as the notorious Peekskill Riots, which occurred on the two occasions in 1949 when Paul Robeson, noted singer and outspoken sympathizer with the Soviet cause, was to perform there.

The first of the ordinances adopted by the town council, shortly after the riots, required that application for a permit to hold a parade, demonstration or public gathering be made seven days before the scheduled date of the event. The second ordinance—a "prohibitory ordinance"—forbade acts which would disturb the public peace by causing consternation and alarm.

Regarding the face value of these measures, and without considering their implications, a citizen might easily be persuaded that they could hardly fail to serve the public good. Justice Doscher, however, accepted the arguments of the American Civil Liberties Union that the ordinances are unconstitutional. The first ordinance he held to be illegal on the ground that it set no standards for the issuance of a permit, noting that "the grant of such uncontrolled discretion invades constitutional rights." In outlawing the prohibitory feature of the second ordinance, the Justice observed: "It is almost impossible to envisage where the heritage of protest ends and the violation of this ordinance begins." He thought that it might be made to apply to a "group of citizens standing on a street corner and deciding to breach the provisions of a burdensome tax ordinance." "Such dragnets," the Justice declared, "must be declared void."

What has to be realized, in reflecting upon this decision, is that it ought not to be taken as an approval of "consternation and alarm," or a favorable attitude toward assemblies which seek to break down the processes of law enforcement. Rather the decision was reached out of a high regard for the right of citizens to take steps of protest against the exercise of excessively unjust authority. Every repressive measure in the form of law has within it the potentialities of tyrannical authority. As Woodrow Wilson once observed:

> The history of liberty is the history of the limitation of governmental power, not the increase of it. When we resist concentration of power we are resisting the powers of teeth, because concentration of power is what always precedes the destruction of our liberties.

The duty of a judge on the bench, then, in the United States, is not to approve laws because they have been passed "for a good purpose," but to weigh each measure that comes before him in terms of its full implications.

The maintenance of enlightened public opinion in this area of public affairs is a continuous and continuously difficult task. Fortunately, there are jurists in all parts of the country who are thoroughly aware of the importance of public education on the subject of liberty, and who are willing to speak their minds. In Los Angeles, for example, Chief Judge Leon Yankwich of the federal district Court recently addressed a Bill of Rights Week audience in his courtroom with these words:

> The test of the rule of law is the manner in which we, as judges, see that it is applied to those who come in conflict with the law. If we live up to this spirit, then our profession of faith in Americanism will not be merely an empty gesture, repeated on national holidays or to satisfy those who think that it is enough to profess belief, but a living,

working philosophy. *For the test of our loyalty to American principles must be the way in which in our daily lives we personify them.*

In this way, we pay real homage to those who gave us the Bill of Rights and lay a foundation for its further unfoldment and adaptation to a richer, better America.

Lincoln, addressing the Congress, in 1861, in the early days of the Civil War, asked the question: "Is there, in all republics, this inherent and fatal weakness?"

The answer is No. The Bill of Rights does not stand in the way of protection against real danger. But *we should not undermine its broad guarantees by resorting to totalitarian methods, impelled by illusory fears.* Surrender of liberty is not a necessary price to pay for our attempt to preserve it.

It takes a certain courage to ask a question like Lincoln's—to look at the "republican" form of government in a questioning mood, as though to say, "Perhaps, if this fatal weakness *does* exist, we should exchange our form of government for another." To do this amounts to declaring that governments are made by men, not men by governments. It is to say, further, by implication, that the best possible government is that government which not only permits, but *facilitates,* questioning of this sort.

But if a government so "conceived in liberty" loses its savor and begins to seem burdensome in operation—what then?

When this happens, we can either look for the "fatal and inherent weakness" in ourselves, or we can weaken correspondingly the principles of our government so that they will support our new "ideal"—the ideal of timid security behind the barricade of unquestioned authority. Worst of all would be to choose the latter course, while imagining that we defend thc high principles cherished by men like Abraham Lincoln.