VOLUME V, NO. 41
OCTOBER 8, 1952

OUTWARD AND INWARD RELIGION

LAST August, speaking before the sessions of the First International Congress on Humanism and Ethical Culture, Julian Huxley declared that what the world needs is a new religion. This statement may be regarded as something of an event, although it will surprise no one familiar with the direction of the eminent biologist's thinking during recent years. Dr. Huxley seems to be the sort of man who helps to make cultural progress possible, for he represents a spirit of inquiry which is free from allegiance to doctrinaire positions. He has been in the past an effective critic of orthodox religion, but always, we think, a just one. Today, with the exhaustion of the world's moral resources, he recognizes the hunger for fresh inspiration:

> The world is undoubtedly in need of a new religion. . . . The prerequisite today is that any such religion shall appeal potentially to all mankind, and that its intellectual and rational side shall not be incompatible with scientific knowledge but, on the contrary, be based on it. . . .
>
> There is at the moment a well-marked revival of Christianity; but this, with its supernatural theology, cannot satisfy the humanist, while its claims to the possession of absolute truth and the special features of its theology are bound to put it into conflict with other traditional religions, and to invalidate its claims to be a universal system.

Apparently, Dr. Huxley regards Communism as a competitor along with supernaturalist faiths, for he continues:

> Communism, on the other hand . . . is dogmatic; it is totalitarian and subordinates the individual to the state; in its present form, at least, it cannot do without the idea of an enemy—the bourgeoisie, capitalism, idealism, and now internationalism—and so vitiates its own potential universality. . . .
>
> If we take a comprehensive view, the developed individual human personality emerges as the highest product of evolution. . . . Only in promoting the development and dignity of individuals shall we find a criterion of further advance, or be accomplishing our destiny in a satisfactory way.

Here, at any rate, are important criteria for a new religion. But why, let us ask, must we have any religion, and why must it be "new" ?

Much depends, of course, on how religion is defined. If it be regarded as man's attempt to interpret to himself the meaning of his relationship to nature and his fellow humans, and his effort to establish certain ideals for his life and to live by them, then manifestly man will always have religion of some sort. And if this be taken as a working account of the meaning of religion, the need for a "new" one is equally manifest. Current religious doctrines on the relationship between man and nature, or between man and a "higher power" are far too easily accepted without being understood; and, not being understood, they are far too easily perverted. What ought to be "new" in whatever religion we devise is the complete absence of any sort of religious "authority." Further, since almost the entire vocabulary of Western religion is authoritarian in origin and implication, a new religious vocabulary is also needed.

The one thing that ought to be regarded as the supreme blasphemy in religion is the religious cliché, yet, for the vast body of believers, orthodox religion is made up of very little else. The experimental, scientific spirit is more important in religion than anywhere else in life, for a man's ultimate convictions determine what his life shall become. Is it not strange, then, that there is less insistence upon the empirical in religion than in other pursuits, and less critical concern for the convictions which are inherited or adopted? It *would* be strange, if religious beliefs really deserved the name of convictions. For the most part, they do not. Passive assent is the typical response of most church members to their creed,

with little or no attention to the violent contradictions between proclaimed belief and habitual conduct.

If authority in religion can be abandoned, then the clichés, the formularies, and the rituals can also be set aside, and with this accomplished, the way will be open for individual religious discovery. In a search of this sort, however, there is no need to ignore the counsel of philosophers and great religious teachers, so long as the philosophers and teachers we hearken to are those who, at the outset, have warned that ultimate truth—supposing it may be possessed—is verbally incommunicable.

If there is any great lesson to be learned from history—religious history—it is this one. Doctrines we may have in abundance; metaphysics to stretch the mind, disciplines to clear the emotions, and principles for practical guidance: all these may be welcomed, so long as they are recognized to be no more than means preparatory to self-discovery.

What might self-discovery in religion amount to? Here we embark on a more or less uncharted sea, for a culture which has depended largely upon supernatural revelation for its religious ideas has little familiarity with and no training at all in the processes of self-discovery. "Mysticism" covers the technical aspect of this "department" of religion, yet mysticism, like the various orthodoxies with which it has been connected, is itself afflicted by clichés and conventional references to the substitute symbols of religion. Among contemporaries, or near-contemporaries, Walt Whitman would be, we think, a better instructor in self-discovery for Western man—and possibly for Eastern man, too—than any of the traditional figures of mystical investigation. For it is *discovery*, not piety, that we are after.

The reminiscent mood, the vagrant intuition, a strange moral uneasiness—these are some of the aspects of inner experience that will bear watching. The self-discoverer becomes a master of constructive introspection. The human mind is a veritable theater whose stage is never without a performance. Poets and artists, we suspect, are closer by far than any priest who ever lived to the methods, if not the content, of self-discovery. The difference, perhaps, is that the artist explores the inner wealth of imagery, while the seeker for ethical or religious truth has to penetrate more deeply into the roots of consciousness. To be attentive to one's inner being, as the artist is attentive to the harmonies of sound, color, or word—this is a habit which requires extraordinary cultivation. The man who wants firsthand experience in religion cannot afford to be casual toward his own psychic life. He will avoid intoxicants, not because they are "immoral," but because they have a deadening or silencing effect upon the subtle communications of the spirit. He will be distrustful of the grosser emotions, not for any abstract pursuit of an ascetic ideal of someone else's definition, but because emotional tempests have a way of swallowing up the subtleties of feeling. Above all, he will seek his own way.

Where shall we go, to whom shall we apply, for instruction in the art of self-discovery? The world is not rich in instructions of this sort, and those we do possess have been too often covered over with deadly commentary and misinterpretation. For refreshing suggestion, however, we would turn to Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia*, to renew acquaintance with the account of the enlightenment of Gautama Buddha. Then, if the Buddha looms as too heroic a figure, we would read Tolstoy's *My Confession*, and Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. We would avoid all sectarian versions of this enterprise, and distrust all cultist approaches, at least until we felt wholly secure against the blandishments of any sort of "conversion." Finally, we would read again the passages in Richard Byrd's *Alone* concerned with his sense of participating in the universal rhythm of nature, and perhaps review Edward Bellamy's "Religion of Solidarity," included as a chapter in Arthur Morgan's papercovered treatise, *The Philosophy of Edward Bellamy* (King's Crown Press, 1945). All these inquirers, so far as we can

see, have trod independent paths of religious self-discovery. If, later, they sought alliances that may be termed "sectarian," we need not follow them this far—nor, for that matter, follow them at all, save for our effort to gain some impression of what the impact of discovery may mean to a fellow human being.

Then there are the explorations of the mind. If we undertake to trace the steps of discoverers in this realm, we need, perhaps, to visit their reflections in an unprejudiced spirit. For if, for example, we read Herder's *God: Some Conversations* (New York: Veritas Press), or turn the pages of Macneile Dixon's *Human Situation* with a view to determining how close these thinkers come to *our* truth, we commit a minor profanation of the spirit of self-discovery. To say about such men, "Well, if he could only see what *we* see and know," is to reveal the petty stature of our minds and betray an ignorance of what it means to know a thing for oneself. For these men, whatever their limitations, wear no borrowed garb. They are inheritors of a great philosophical tradition, it is true, but with them it is a *living* tradition, to which they have contributed a portion of their lives. Can we claim as much ?

How do such men come by their discoveries? This is the substance of our inquiry. We cannot all go to the South Pole with Richard Byrd, nor climb a Himalaya with Francis Younghusband. Bellamy's vision of human equality and fraternity was a transcendental gift vouchsafed to very few. How shall we conjure such intensity of feeling, such depth of perception, as may blaze a porthole through the coarse rind of our lives to gain a comparable light? We speak of these men as philosophers—lovers of truth. The philosopher never wishes to convert, but only to disclose what light he can. Socrates never oppresses his opponent with claims of private information concerning the ways of the deity, or the inner workings of the universe. Socrates may annoy his opponent with inexorables of reason—or with sheer nimbleness of mind—but he has no interest except in assisting in the birth—he called himself a midwife—of ideas in the minds of other men. The greatness of Socrates lies in his wisdom concerning the nature of man, not in extensive information concerning the nature of the universe. He understands as well as any, and better than most, the way in which human beings grow into inward knowledge and security. He as much as says that the universe must be the sort of universe which is consistent with the high dignity of man, and, except for the myths, he lets it go at that. But supposing Socrates—or Plato—r*eally knew* something about the nature of the universe: even then, according to our theory, he would still have contained his knowledge in the obscurity of the myths, realizing that a well-constructed myth incites the mind to discoveries of its own, while declarations of doctrine are usually transformed into dogmas.

Aristotle declared man to be a rational animal, while Socrates intimated that he is an immortal soul. Both, perhaps, are right, yet each truth, if it is a truth, needs the support of the other. And Socrates was as wise in only intimating the idea of immortality as Aristotle was correct in *declaring* man's rational nature. Conceivably, there is a sense in which the truth about the soul becomes true only by self-discovery. Too much forthrightness, then, on the part of a self-discovered man—the ancient Indians spoke of such as "twice-born"—concerning the nature of his findings would in itself constitute a kind of delusion at the outset, and almost certainly be stretched into dark shadows of belief by eager enthusiasts who mistake doctrines—even quite "logical" doctrines—for knowledge. Here, perhaps, we have an explanation for the fact that most of those who have been accounted great saviors, teachers, and founders of religion, left no written record of their teachings. The scriptures of most of the world's religions are the work of followers and disciples.

Yet religious or philosophic reality is surely more complex than this silence indicates. If the

body has an anatomy, the world a geology, and the planets and stars an order that may be precisely defined in mathematics, then the soul can hardly be without some sort of natural history of its own. Logically, we are brought up hard against the dilemma of religious discovery: to *know* is something more than to be struck by a species of divine lightning; it must involve an immediate experience of the laws, forces, and processes in the life of the soul. And then, having gained this understanding, shall the sage live a life withdrawn from his fellows, never attempting to break out of the secrecy imposed by the hard conditions of his achievement ?

This problem may supply a clue to the role of symbols in the establishment of culture. The symbol is happily equivocal, incapable of insisting upon a single interpretation. A symbol is a cornucopia of meaning, a provocative to inventive minds. For those of us who try to be naturalists in religion, it seems a reasonable possibility that symbols are to consciousness what the fulcrum is to physics—the turning point of movement. If, as Karl Jung claims to have discovered, certain symbols have been characteristic of the inner, psychic life of human beings for many centuries, then why not conclude that such symbols are part of the very fabric of inner existence—actual *elements* of psychic substance? That they are adopted by the "twice-born" to make a language for communication with the intuitive aspect of other men ?

Years ago, a scholar who interested himself in the phenomena of extra-sensory perception proposed that we may have been shaping our questions about them in reverse. Let us stop wondering, he said, why such things as telepathy occur at all, and wonder, rather, why they do not occur *all the time.?* Is there some impervious psychic shell which surrounds the average man, cutting him off from the subtle waves of thought transference? By a parity of reasoning, may there not be a heavy curtain of blindness which bars to our sight the realities behind religious ideas—a curtain erected more by the pretensions of religious orthodoxy than by anything else? If we could tear away that curtain—each man tear away his own—we might discover a riot of significances. Those momentary impressions which come before the mind's eye, and depart, unwelcomed, like saddened troupes of rejected performers; those still-born impulses to say what is in our hearts; our timid withdrawals from what seem extravagances of the imagination; the flutter of the mind beyond the limits of contemporary notions of the possible: perhaps, in shunning all such intimations, we cast ourselves as bowed and shackled inhabitants of Plato's cave, who take the flickering shadows on the wall as the whole of reality.

We need commit ourselves to nothing but a wealth of possibilities in order to undertake the voyage of self-discovery. We can have rigors and disciplines to our heart's content, so long as all negative finalities are left behind, and all exclusive absolutes marked for rejection. The habit of denial is a habit born of centuries of frustration of the spirit of discovery. Abandon the cause of the frustrations, and the denials are no longer necessary to protect our freedom.

The age of outward, explicit religion has been marked by the most hideous of crimes, the most unspeakable betrayals of human dignity. Brother has been set against brother, race against race, and man against nature. The most terrible lie of all is the sacerdotal lie, the most lethal poison the consecrated poison which attacks man's self-respect, but lets him live as a moral weakling, the game of every demagogue, whether of Church, State, or Market. The ominous breakdown of our civilization may be, in reality, no more than the collapse of external religion, and the painful birth-throes of a new order of moral conviction—the conviction based upon self-discovery.

Letter from MEXICO

MEXICO CITY.—One of the most significant although unheralded achievements of Mexico is her racial democracy. Racial tensions, felt so poignantly by minorities in the United States, are conspicuously absent in Mexico.

Mexico is not self-conscious about this—she came to it naturally. There are statues to Cuauhtémoc, the Aztec Chief, but none to Cortez, the conqueror, in Mexico.

The contemporary Mexican is the child of an Indian mother and an Iberian father. Over a period of 400 years, the amalgamation has produced a new race. Twenty million—85 per cent of the population—out of 25 million Mexicans are *mestizo*, or Indo-Iberian, while another three million are unmixed Indian.

The racial policies of the two great colonial powers who wrested this continent from the autochthonous races differed strikingly in method and psychology: the Anglo-Saxon exterminated while the Spaniard assimilated the indigenous population.

The distinct racial psychology of Mexicans as contrasted to that of Anglo-Saxons—whose racial complex dominates the United States—is revealed in the following disconnected events:

When a delegation of Boy Scouts from the United States brought an American Indian to an International Jamboree in France, the Original American was characteristically displayed in feathers as an Indian. But the Tarabumara Indian among the Mexican Olympic swimmers who competed in Berlin was not pointed out as an Indian. His teammates simply took him for granted—as a Mexican.

The late Moises Saenz, gifted Mexican intellectual and first director of the Inter-American Indian Institute, left innumerable writings that offer fresh perspectives on the significance of the autochthonous races of America:

> The Indian [he said] is as responsible for the social and political phenomena of Mexico as for her cultural outlook.
>
> The Indian soul is immortal, in a sense no doubt different from the theological, but perhaps more real. Despite all the vicissitudes of history, despite exploitations, repressions and failure, the Indian soul—emotion, sensibility, attitude—continues alive in America and has been poured into the mestizo mould. . . .
>
> Mexico is a country of mestizos, and partially of Indians on the march. It constitutes a fine example of what a preponderantly Indian population can contribute to the political and cultural life of America.
>
> As a cultural type, the mestizo represents a fusion, a species in the process of formation, often crude, to be sure, but whose personality is rapidly acquiring characteristics of its own.
>
> In music, the plastic arts and poetry, the mestizo expresses himself as a new cultural type, which is neither Indian nor Spanish but essentially American. The mestizo is consciously loyal to his double tradition and conscious of the cultural implications of his dual origin.
>
> If the tide of migration which has brought to America large contingents of the white race were to stop, the process of inter-breeding in America and of the incorporation of the Indian would be accelerated. This would be tantamount, literally, to the Indianization of Indo-America.

Mexico's Declaration of Independence, formulated in 1821, foreshadowed a period of struggle culminating in the presidency of Benito Juárez, a pure Indian. Juárez' Laws of Reform are to this day a "model of foresight." In separating Church and State, suppressing ecclesiastical privileges, and nationalizing church lands, he destroyed the sources of the temporal power of the Church and checked open clerical influence in politics.

The Mexican Revolution of 1910 gave the nation its collectivist characteristics, which, says Saenz, are derived from Mexico's indigenous communal tradition. The revolutionary struggle to overthrow the oppression of native Spaniard, Church, and foreigner was directed and manned by mestizos, and brought hope of a life of freedom and opportunity to the marginal Indian, peasant and mestizo populations. This movement reached its apex under Lázaro Cárdenas. In power and influence, the mestizo dominates Mexican national affairs today.

The variegation of her racial formation helps to explain why in Mexico one is a Mexican; his racial derivation is not denoted.

MEXICO CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW
PSYCHOANALYTIC REVELATIONS

IT is something of a cause for puzzlement that the popular reading market has not long since been flooded by personal accounts of psychoanalytic treatment. In many respects, ours is an "age of psychiatry," and a considerable portion of the population is familiar with the usual clinical terminology. However, a recent Pocket Book edition of John Knight's *The Story of My Psychoanalysis* (original edition by McGraw-Hill) supplies some explanation as to why psychiatry is difficult to exploit in "True Story" versions.

In the first place, as "John Knight" reveals, psychoanalysis is not a spectacular process. The many amateur Freudians, it seems, are woefully superficial in their attempts to explain away each psychic difficulty by glib reference to some problem of infantile sex repression. The scientist-author—who for obvious reasons writes under the pseudonym of "John Knight"—describes several lurid experiences in his own life, but is careful to report that his analyst showed very little interest in the details of erotic behavior. The long months of analytical probing for the causes of an apparently incurable stomach ulcer become, finally, a search for correctives of the patient's unbalanced attitudes of mind toward other human beings in general. Knight's psychic malformations were cast in the molds usually referred to as "hostility" and "insecurity," and the abnormal tensions responsible for the ulcer were caused by his failure to recognize the necessity for self-reliance.

Mr. Knight's story is a wonderful advertisement for psychoanalysis, at least as conducted by a thoroughly competent practitioner, but two things must be borne in mind. First, Knight's "Dr. Maxwell" is above all things a natural teacher. He is not interested in a quick, superficial "cure," and even less concerned with his own erudition and brilliance. He possesses the inexhaustible patience which must play its part in any worth-while instruction. Dr. Maxwell's method is not altogether unlike that of Socrates, who insisted that no man can be *taught* anything, save in the sense that he may be helped to clarify some of his confused perceptions. Further, Knight's case was made to order for psychoanalytical treatment. His nervous tensions were incurable on the basis of the best medical advice available, and, finally, he was not one easily given to seeking sympathy and instruction from others. Therefore, the final step of psychoanalysis—that of curing a tendency to depend upon the analyst—was rendered comparatively easy.

We often wonder if the greatest limitation of non-institutional psychotherapy is not that those most in need of this kind of assistance are unlikely to ever darken the door of an expert's office. On the other hand, innumerable wealthy patients with the leisure to develop abnormal self-pre-occupations will tend to beat a path to the same portal. If the underlying desire is to magnify the importance of one's own psychological maladies, the task of the psychiatrist is made doubly difficult. There is no easy way to dam or transform the torrents of self-pity or self-condemnation which are characteristic of cases of arrested psychological development. And, for the latter, the final "breaking of transfer" amounts to a major accomplishment. As Knight's "Dr. Maxwell" points out, some patients attempt all sorts of pretexts for continuing their dependence on the analyst. And in these instances, the often used analogy of priest-confessor becomes applicable, unless the analyst has sufficient strength of character to resist both the patient and the agreeable emoluments that come with him.

Although, in Knight's case, Dr. Maxwell does not assign primary significance to the area of sex, regarding difficulties experienced here as effects rather than causes of the patient's basic trouble, he insists upon analyzing Knight's early contact with narrow-minded religious interpretation:

> "I have no quarrel with a religious belief that brings strength to the individual," Doctor Maxwell

> said. "A genuine spiritual outlook based on the Golden Rule is not far removed from what we hope to achieve in psychoanalysis. But your parents' religion was one of weakness and dependence, of seeking a security at the expense of good human relationships."

The portion of the book concerned with Knight's religious conditioning should be of considerable interest to social psychologists, for the analysis of his transfer of divisive attitudes from the religious to the personal and societal fields is well illustrated and provocative. John Knight came of an orthodox Jewish family, and parental insistence upon rigid religious observances caused great tension in a youth temperamentally inclined to America's spirit of "free inquiry"—the pattern of frustration endlessly repeated with children whose parents are determined to bring them up in a religiously authoritarian manner. Knight was "repelled" and "terrified" by the synagogue and "mumbled incoherently the ancient prayers which had to be recited or chanted."

The denial of the rational approach is clearly always an invitation to dangerous consequences. Although Knight, when he grew older, came to understand the historical significance of the strange religious customs he was forced to follow as a child, the pain and repulsion with which these were first associated caused what the psychoanalyst termed "over-reaction" to all normal forms of social authority. Knight sums the matter up:

To live safely and comfortably among despots, one must become a tyrant or a slave. There is no satisfactory, peaceful middle ground. I could not accept my father's despotic character, and adopt his personality and attitudes, nor was I constituted to live a slave's life. So until I could escape Middletown at the age of sixteen to enter college, I lived for years in an unhappy and rebellious state. Torn and tortured by my father's tyranny, I compromised like a prisoner who ploddingly follows a daily routine but secretly works at excavating the tunnel which will lead him to freedom.

A book like *The Story of My Psychoanalysis* makes one wonder if the cures often obtained by these means do not demonstrate that no psychic illness can be overcome by formula. For while the amateur psychologist reduces the contributions of Freud, Jung, Adler, etc., to glib patterns, the actual fact is that the true psychotherapist is as much or more concerned than anyone else with disregard of patterns.

The most admirable features of this doctor's methods are, to our mind, summed up by Mr. Knight:

> What is the room like? How is the session conducted? Is it like a séance?
>
> The room is not darkened. There is no atmosphere created by lights or music. The analyst listens to the words, thoughts, moods, and fantasies which his patient brings up during a period which averages about forty minutes. Doctor Maxwell seemed to remember everything that I told him. Occasionally, later on in the analysis, he wrote down notes after ascertaining that I would not resent it. Some psychoanalysts work entirely from memory. Others feel that they can do a better job for the patient by taking notes. These can be used later as reference material, and are important in such an extended treatment which may last eighteen months to five years.
>
> Many people seem to think that to be effective, the analyst must become deeply involved in his patients' lives and emotions. Just the opposite happens, if I can judge from Doctor Maxwell's handling of the situation. He very gently but determinedly withstood all my attempts to involve him in my life, whether it was merely through the loan of a book or an offer of a ride home when we had finished my hour at the end of the day. He never revealed his political beliefs to me, even though occasionally in my associations I talked at length about politics and political leaders.

Yet whenever one deals with the mysterious inner nature of the human being, it is safe to assume that no one man is completely competent to be the instructor of another. Though the best psychoanalysts have tried to avoid rash generalizations on human behavior, and susceptibility to special "mind-sets," there are

some general assumptions which apparently often occur and which need to be questioned. Dr. Maxwell, for instance, traced Knight's "hostility complexes" to some primitive, innate lust for killing. There is much talk about the "hidden primitive self," with the conclusion that Knight's realization of the actual presence of a "killer" within him made it easier to understand some of his disquieting emotions. But is there a "killer" instinct lodged in each human being? We wonder how far such an assumption departs from the old theological insistence upon man's original sinfulness.

Mr. Knight begins and ends his story with quotations from Leo Tolstoy, yet his acceptance of the "killer instinct" explanation of his hostile tendencies is hardly a Tolstoyan idea. Surely Tolstoy would have denied that there are *any such specifically defined primal instincts*, although he stresses the common heritage of emotions and ideas as forming a substratum for the conscious realization of universal human brotherhood. As Tolstoy wrote:

> One of the most widespread superstitions is that every man has his own special, definite qualities; that a man is kind, cruel, wise, stupid, energetic, apathetic, etc. Men are not like that. . . . Men are like rivers: the water is the same in each, and alike in all; but every river is narrow here, is more rapid there, here slower, there broader, now clear, now cold, now dull, now warm. It is the same with men. Every man carries in himself the germs of every human quality, and sometimes one manifests itself, sometimes another, and the man often becomes unlike himself, while still remaining the same man.

COMMENTARY
THE WRITER'S CALLING

THIS journal is much concerned with the works of writers—writers of fiction along with others—so much so that some may feel that our interests are more in line with thinking than with doing, more attracted to literature than to life. There is a sense in which we admit the charge, for while doing and living are practically inescapable, thinking may be ignored almost entirely. Further, it is our observation that writers, as a class, are far more aware of moral issues than other men. Despite the justice of Archibald MacLeish's criticism of writers, it remains a fact that they see and are aroused by injustice. Some of the finest passages in modern novels are concerned with man's inhumanity to man, not in the pompous terms of political pronouncements, but with the swift, immediate insight of a single human being.

Simply because of their insights, their imagination, and their sensibilities, writers are more vulnerable than their fellows who engage in more prosaic pursuits. A man who sees more is by that seeing a more responsible human being. His "freedom" is curtailed by inner, moral compulsions. What is "good business" for a business man may be a mortal compromise for a man who deals in ideas. A business man trades in goods; he either makes them or buys and sells them. Ideas, however, are not commodities. Simply for the writer to be obliged to *sell* the works of his mind, as though they were mere "merchandise," is a kind of initial degradation. Ideas ought not to be for sale. They should be free. We suspect that they cannot remain free when they are sold. Something of the commercial flavor will remain where it has no place, and does not really belong.

A writer who thinks about his writing as a business man thinks about his business is a contradiction in terms. A writer can write well and be paid, of course, but the writing should not be done *for* money, but because the writer feels that he must set down what he has to say. We suspect that what is worth reading, beyond material complied simply as information, has all been written by men who did not write for money. We have no solution, however, for the economic problems of writers, just as we have no solution for the economic problems of journals like MANAS. It's tough, that's all.

The only compensation that a real writer has is in his perceptive and articulate intelligence. He preserves this intelligence by his devotion to justice. Sometimes, when his devotion is great, and his intelligence broad, he is recognized and honored by the men of his time, and permitted to live comfortably. This, at any rate, might be expected of civilized people. And when the people are not civilized, real writers, like real teachers, pay the price of seeing and understanding too much.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

IT is a pleasure to be asked by a subscriber for comment on a recent *Harper's* article which evaluates "the God-idea" in relation to the early education of children. The pleasure is derived from the fact that our frequent treatment of this subject could be considered as running it into the ground, but apparently at least one reader feels, with us, that some crucial issues are involved, and that it is difficult if not impossible to give too much attention to the psychology of religion.

The article, "What Shall We Tell the Children?", proposes that insistent teaching about the existence of God does not easily combine with the development of genuine self-respect and self-reliance. This is not to imply that the writer, Priscilla Robertson, equates "atheism" with nobility of character. She has no militant anti-God doctrine of her own. "I don't tell my children that there is no God; I simply do not tell them that there is one."

Elsewhere Mrs. Robertson shows that her own upbringing by an agnostic parent left her with a balanced sympathy for all honestly held beliefs and opinions. This attitude raises what seems an enormously important question: Does belief in God as a powerful, extra-cosmic being, tend, historically, to unite men or divide them? What kind of faith, agnostic or revelational, produces the greatest tolerance, and which the least? Agnosticism, we think, has much the better record of the two, for implicit in the faith of the agnostic is the assumption that no one—including oneself—has the right to claim aggressively that another's knowledge is false or inadequate. A belief in an extra-cosmic God, and in revelation beyond "merely human" powers of comprehension, is of necessity static, and no static belief promotes tolerance. If one presumes to have the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth—and, more important, some exclusive means of contact with the source from which all this is revealed—no impetus is provided for sympathetic evaluation of other beliefs and opinions. Opinions and beliefs outside the ambit of one's own mental reservations can only be judged, *a priori*, in a derogatory fashion. Hence the spawning of innumerable delusions—that is, the propagandizing of oneself into believing that one's own distorted impressions of essential religion are its actual description.

Of course, there are many kinds of belief in deity, not all of them static beliefs. The agnostic, for one, may not be an atheist. His agnosticism may simply express an honest doubt that he knows how to describe a deific principle adequately, even though he may *feel* that some kind of "spiritual principle" is embodied in the totality of nature. Of all the beliefs in deity, those of the pantheist persuasion seem to do men the most good and the least harm, partially, perhaps, because they seem to encourage the best features of agnosticism.

Mrs. Robertson gives personal testimony in this fashion:

> Among my acquaintances I would guess that roughly half have definite faith in a supreme being and half do not. After studying them for a number of years I cannot say that the freethinkers as a group lack any quality that the devout possess. There are neurotics in both groups, and likewise examples of enormous courage, compassion, and honesty. Judging by my observation of the people I know, I should say that religious faith does not make people live happier or die easier, or accept the deaths of their beloved ones with more equanimity. Many irreligious people have indeed drifted away from their moorings because they did not want to think about spiritual affairs; this group compares with those Christians who remain so closely anchored that they never put out to sea. And, in the lower depths, devout men have run inquisitions in the past just as impious men run slave labor camps today.

It is impossible to convey the full value of Mrs. Robertson's discussion without producing it entire, for it is both packed and organic. Those interested should procure a copy of the August *Harper's* and read the article for themselves.

We should like to add, here, however, some correlative material both humorous and instructive, found in Maxwell Anderson's *Barefoot in Athens*, a play based upon the life and trial of Socrates. Socrates, because he not only refuses to be a

dogmatist, but also challenges the psychological effects of dogmatism, is charged with the corruption of youth. He then professes his inability to understand how the future citizens of Athens can be expected to develop self-reliance and adequate deliberative faculties without early learning the processes of evaluative thought—as applied to everything under the sun, including religion. Anytas, an accuser, demands to know whether Socrates accepts the Athenian state religion, its literal and litanous definitions of the deities, and Socrates counters with another question:

Socrates: From whom did you learn about the gods on Olympus?

Anytas: From Homer, atheist!

Socrates: And from whom did Homer learn about them?

Anytas: From whom—Men of Athens, you hear him! He asks where Homer learned about the gods!

Socrates: But that's a very natural question, friend Anytas. Homer was a poet, and he wrote gloriously, as only a great poet can write. But were not the gods he wrote about the gods as he imagined them? And when he heard about them from others were they not somewhat different? Does not a great poet transmute what comes to him as bare fact and shadowy legend into a coherent and moving story?

Anytas: Do you believe the gods of Olympus to be sure and solid and real?

Socrates: As sure and solid and real as anything in this world! (Anytas pauses. Meletos leaps up, speaks to Anytas.)

Meletos: And that stops you, I think! (To Socrates) Only how sure and real is this world? Answer me! I ask it again. How real is this world?

Socrates: Of different degrees of reality, Meletos. Sometimes it seems to me that the gods in the pages of Homer are vividly alive, and that by comparison they are shadowy and indistinct on Mount Olympus. Sometimes it seems to me that your figure and mine, speaking here, are shadowy and indistinct, and will be quickly forgotten, while the scene of this trial, remembered and written down, say by young Plato there, who is always writing things down, may come vividly alive and remain so for a long time. Which then would be the more real, Meletos, the vivid scene written down or the shadowy one that actually takes place and then drifts away from men's minds and is lost (Socrates pauses. Meletos pauses.)

Anytas: (To Meletos) And now I hope you're satisfied now that he's sunk us all together in this bog of reality and unreality—

Meletos: *You* didn't do so well with him, either!

Anytas: Why must you leap in and interrupt?

Socrates: It's the business of the young to interrupt their elders, Anytas. You and I are not so young any more, and we must expect to be interrupted from now on.

Mrs. Robertson, like Socrates, fails to see why the failure to accept a dogmatic religion leaves us "sunk in a bog of reality and unreality." If one wishes to pretend that man has no business in trying to distinguish reality from unreality, leaving this task to the Authorities, the freethinker may wish him good speed, but is forced to part company with him.

Then, too, there is the argument against the teaching of an orthodox God, as developed in beautiful simplicity, with careful logic and with clinical corroboration, by Erich Fromm. The psychiatrist argues that while a non-authoritarian God may serve as a symbol for man's feeling of being somehow linked to his fellows by a spiritual identity, an *authoritarian* God leaves the individual without any concept of his own potential nobility and goodness: all the nobility and goodness belongs to God, and the only way in which we can contact that part of ourselves which we have projected into God is by following the mandates likely to promote forgiveness for our sinful inferiority. This, in turn, develops a concentration upon our weakness, and makes the practice of morality a negative rather than a positive matter—which is always a losing game for both children . . . and ourselves.

FRONTIERS

Appetite for Difficulty

I COME back to my cabin in the woods, and find the forest inexorably creeping in upon me. Young trees and brush spring up in the open land. But for persistent clearing them out, the forest would soon be back at my door step. The wild creatures explore every nook and corner for food. Almost every fruit tree and garden plant is appropriated by rabbit, ground hog, bird or insect. My plant and animal environment constantly reminds me of the tremendous aggressive energy with which life presses for a chance to survive, to grow, to multiply.

It is the same with men. Sometimes, as in pioneering America, the momentum of great effort to master the wilderness not only does master the wilderness, but carries people beyond immediate pressure for survival to a condition of relative security and affluence. Then, with the relief from economic stress, there tends to be a softening of character. We even have theories that economic competition can be dispensed with. Such theories are due in part to softness and shrinking from competition.

There can be no long-time survival without toughness and aggressiveness. If one has not made himself at home with hardship, scarcely anything is more important to him than to make its acquaintance. An appetite for difficulty can make attractive and interesting a type of experience which is necessary for survival. He who rests on his oars, no matter how secure he may seem, is on his way out.

Some men have appetite for difficulty. Arctic explorers and athletes show it. A big business man may keep on striving long after all his humanly necessary wants have been met. The politician, the artist—many a man in many circumstances keeps going for the same reason.

A soft person usually is a negligible person, though a man may be soft in some respects and tough in others. Herd-mindedness, which often is a bar to social accomplishment, often is softness which does not dare to stand against the mass. A college community is an excellent place to learn to stand for one's convictions against pressure.

It does not follow that quiet and contemplation are not good for those who can live best that way. Civilized culture is extremely varied, with room and need for many kinds of excellence. One who has deliberately achieved detachment from the prevailing rush and hurry, and has gained quiet and leisure in which a significant life may develop, has himself acquired a rare kind of toughness to withstand social pressure. Such power is not the fruit either of timidity and laziness or of drifting with the current.

Civilized culture will not try to escape competition, but will try to make it serve the highest values. Brute force is always in the offing, ready to take control if civilized culture weakens. Whoever through softness shrinks from competition surrenders culture to brute force. (We would include in brute force the cunning of the fox as well as the crushing power of the python—all that is not subordinated to cultural and ethical discipline.)

Elimination of war is desirable because war is essentially wasteful. It will be eliminated aggressively or not at all. Soft people will not eliminate war, they will only succumb to it. Periods of softness have destroyed civilized cultures by making culture susceptible to brute force. The competition for which there can be no relaxation is that between civilized culture and brute force.

How can civilized culture prevail over brute force without using brute force? First, by eliminating in itself arbitrariness, selfishness, privilege, and all injustice. Brute force feeds on those qualities, and in their absence does not develop strength to challenge civilized culture. Second, civilized culture overcomes brute force by nonparticipation in arbitrariness, injustice and

violence wherever they are found in other societies. If America should refuse to participate in or to profit by exploitation, injustice or privilege over the world, it would find that to be a heroic undertaking. The rubber we use, the tea and coffee we drink, the tin which is so necessary, and a hundred other products we import from the cheapest market are produced by holding millions of men in economic servitude and poverty. If we should buy only where economic and social justice prevailed, and where political and social thralldom was eliminated, we should experience much going without, and would pay more for the food, luxuries and raw materials we import. Such action would win the respect and admiration of decent people the world over, and would starve brute force to a point where its aggressive power would be small.

What is the chance of our taking such a course, even to the extent of suffering the terrific hardship of going without the morning cup of coffee? We now profit greatly in our economy by buying the "cheap" products of oppressed and exploited labor. The regimes which control this labor, and sell us the products, are of the kinds which rely ultimately on brute force to maintain their power. Rebellion of the oppressed produces another form of brute force, a form which America is concerned about just now. We could go far to eliminate both the brute force of the exploiter and the brute force of red revolt by refusing to share in the products and profits of exploitation.

These cases illustrate the fact that there are possible ways of successfully competing with brute force without using it, providing we have the necessary sustained alertness and aggressiveness. However, it takes much less aggressiveness to spend scores of billions of dollars for military preparation and for war itself.

Brute force or arbitrary power—they are essentially the same—does not spring suddenly into being. A stable, civilized culture keeps them in check by maintaining a regime of fairness and justice which does not give them food and exercise on which to grow strong. Timidity, softness, and indifference provide sustenance on which arbitrary power and brute force feed and grow strong. No social formula in the form of a constitution will keep power and force in subordination to civilized culture. Only toughness, vigor and aggressiveness in that culture will do it. In a relatively opulent country like America, where there is a tendency to softness, the development of toughness of fiber and an appetite for difficulty are essential. They will find plenty of exercise in aggressively participating in the competition between humane living and arbitrary power and brute force.

Yellow Springs, Ohio ARTHUR E. MORGAN