

WHERE IS THE ENEMY?

IT is an old story that if you want to unify some people and get them to work together, find them an enemy. An ugly rumor is spreading about, these days: *There is no enemy!* This is a thought essentially subversive to lovers of power and believers in the idea that nothing can be accomplished without organization. For once a man becomes convinced that there is no enemy—no "they" who are "out there," from whom he must be protected, or against whom he must be revenged—he is a man lost to the scheming organizers of the energies of other people.

The departure of the enemy probably was first noticed when Roman Catholic writers grew alarmed at the decline in belief in the Devil. Acceptance of a God who is responsible for what good may be found in the world becomes extremely difficult when responsibility for evil can no longer be fixed. And without the Devil, where will you fix that responsibility? At any rate, other personifications of evil became the engines of historical movements by the midpoint of the nineteenth century.

This new origin for evil created certain problems. So long as the source of evil was a supernatural being like the Devil, there wasn't much hope of putting him down. One could of course become a saint and vanquish the Devil, but he was not personally accessible to an army of the righteous. The Defenders of the Faith could be given jobs to do—for example, make war on other peoples who made the mistake of siding with the Powers of Darkness. *They* could be put down, but there was always the possibility that the demonic energies would find a new embodiment—in fact, their rebirth was practically inevitable. A proper manager of the believers in the True Faith could always count on a new enemy turning up somewhere, and this made the problem of organization a matter of routine.

But with the proposition that evil originates on earth, in human beings, and not in an inexhaustible fount of wickedness like a Fallen Angel, the

managers of men undertook a program which had in it the seeds of its own destruction. This, alas, was a merely mortal program, unprotected from completion by supernatural frustrations. A time would come when the Forces of Righteousness would triumph, and then what?

This was the question it became important to ask about 1950. Human evil seemed as immortal as the supernatural kind. The Nazis had been pretty well mopped up—all of them who hadn't made themselves useful in one way or another—and then, there we were, confronted by the rising authority of another set of Evil Men. The thing was getting tiresome. In fact, more than a few people began to wonder if it wasn't the process of putting down evil which inevitably created it anew. Right now, we are living in the thinning mist of two dying myths—the Capitalist myth that there will be no peace until the last Communist is laid to rest alongside the last Atheist, and the Communist myth that the Millennium will not be possible until the Capitalist exploiters have all been efficiently put away in proper Socialist Siberias and the entire world organized along Marxist lines.

People repeat the slogans of these myths, not because they believe them with any great earnestness, but because they don't know any other slogans to repeat, and how can we live without slogans?

Why do we have to have slogans? Slogan culture is the "intellectual" counterpart of the processes of technology. We have all those elaborate processes set up, integrated with a lot of heavy, steel machinery on which our continued nourishment, in a manner we are used to, depends. You can't change things like that. At least, we tell ourselves that we can't change things like that, and it must be admitted that any radical change will indeed be very difficult. For most people, the difficult is the same as the impossible, and so it follows that slogans seem

essential to people who refuse to distinguish between the difficult and the impossible.

What about the people who make up the slogans? Are they the evil ones? Hardly. They are the people who have taken on the job of holding the whole thing together, and they are just as vulnerable to fear of the unfamiliar as the rest of us. They have to make up slogans—to try to perpetuate the dying myths—as a means of maintaining their authority. Without an enemy, they will have less authority, less organization. With no enemy, you can hardly have a "cause" as a nation. Not to be a nation is a frightening thought. So they have to keep discovering enemies to keep things going. And when you have two great constellations of population, each subjected to a continuous roll of the drums, it is not so hard to believe that there must be *something*, out there, which threatens us. Then there are those satellites buzzing over our heads for impressive theatrical effects. The managers believe in the myths because they have to. What else is there for them to believe in?

Meanwhile, a slow loss of identity is going on at the cultural level, obliging the slogan makers to keep up a continual din. In his January *Progressive* article on "The Mass Man," Sidney Lens writes:

The individual American has quietly but methodically changed into a new type of man.

The salient characteristic of this new man is his desire to escape from the big world around him. According to anthropologist Margaret Mead the new American seeks to "escape into one's own little house and one's own garden and one's own children, and the small bit of life which one can make a success in; and the concentration upon it [becomes a] flight from larger issues."

We interrupt to ask: Who knows what the "larger issues" are, nowadays? Who is defining them?

Lens continues:

Thus the average American who spends thousands of dollars on his son's education will refuse to spend a penny to fight against radioactive fall-out which may thwart his son's future, or upon a political campaign against the Dulles foreign policy which may lead to his son's extermination. The new

American views everything in the narrow light of home and family. He runs away from the big problems—war, peace, depression, social injustice, political corruption.

There is, says Margaret Mead, "a sense that the world's gotten so big and unmanageable that it's very hard for individuals to be able to influence it very much. [There is] also a dread of disaster because this country is conscious of the possibility of total destruction. It's almost as if they were trying to live a 50-year life within ten or fifteen years." The average American today seeks essentially material pleasure—as if he were living just for today, his last moment on earth.

To exploit this craving for escape America spends the fantastic sum of \$10.5 billion a year on advertising and public relations—\$1 of every \$40 of its total national income. Much of this is spent on the most expensive of all media, television.

This is another phase of the sloganization of our culture:

That staggering total of \$10.5 billion worth of propaganda annually has a pervasive effect on American behavior patterns. Americans would say—if asked—that they are unaffected by the nonsense that passes for advertising, but the process is more invidious. The advertiser not only insists on the half-truths or half-lies used in peddling his product, but vetoes any controversy or hard fact of life in the television or radio programs he sponsors because the result might be a bad association with the product. The world of American television, and consequently of the American viewer, is a make-believe world, which is the ideal escape from the real world. The American mass man no longer makes mature judgments in the purchase of commodities. Instead of buying oranges, he is buying a symbol of vitality; instead of buying an automobile he is buying prestige. The American woman doesn't buy cosmetics, she buys hope and surcease of sexual anxiety, itself often the product of the propagandists. Advertising appeals to deep-seated fears or wishes—to the child in man, rather than to his mature self. It entrenches childish attitudes. If it were confined only to the purchase of cosmetics and brassieres this might not be shattering to the nation. But the techniques of motivational selling and the fraudulent symbols that go with it are used also in politics, in "culture," in book-writing, in almost everything of significance in American life.

The escapist mass man seeks no insights into politics; he accepts the synthetic and superficial

politics of the mass media, the partisan press, the radio commentator. He is told that the "enemy" is communism and he accepts this thesis without knowing what communism is (except that it presumably is "atheistic, Godless, materialistic"). He is told that we must have more and better armaments than the Russians, and he accepts the expenditure of \$42 billion a year for armaments even while he is decrying inflation and the "high spending in Washington." The mass man indulging his leisure in escapism forms only child-like rather than mature opinions. As a consequence his leaders are also child-like; they speak the same baby-talk as their constituents because that is the only way to "win votes."

And so you arrive at the disturbing conclusion that we are our own worst enemies. There isn't anybody "out there" to blame for our troubles. Our troubles are all home-made. There is no enemy, no one to blame. You can rant at the Machiavellians who are running this show, but if you do you only accept the thesis of other slogan-makers who are making another kind of propaganda. The fact is that there doesn't seem to be any other way to run the show. The managers all run their shows about the same way. As Silone says, "The structure of the Christian-Democratic Party in Italy is rather similar to that of the Communist Party in Poland, a fact which is confirmed by its efficiency." And he adds: "Perhaps one must always take up the structural features of one's opponents if one really wants to defeat them." Obviously, there is neither victory nor defeat in such instances, only a change of slogan-makers.

It is in circumstances of this sort that people who account themselves sophisticated and intelligent reach that dead end of human action typified in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. They have let the system make them into moral hoboes. They can no longer believe in the system, yet they are unable to believe in anything else. Some of them look desperately around for little pockets of Evil People to agitate about. Anything for a scapegoat!

The truth of the matter is that there's nothing wrong with the system that people who are determined to be independent of systems couldn't cure. The only trouble with the system is that it is

the creation of people who think that they can't do any good unless they get a better system.

The thing to do, now, is to buck the tide Sidney Lens describes. This must be done by individuals. You can't start a mass movement to do away with mass man. You can't form a power elite of Good People to knock over the power elite of the Bad People. What you can do is begin to live with indifference—and some disdain—toward the composite forces which shape the mass mind. You can avoid the mass media—the avenues through which come to you all the stereotypes which determine mass attitudes. You can be deliberately skeptical of every slogan, just because it is a slogan. You can refuse to submit. This is a free country. You don't have to submit. You don't have to live in a tract. You don't have to watch television. You can avoid buying a lot of nationally advertised products, if you find the advertising offensive, and you can write the manufacturer and tell him how you feel about it. A few embattled expressions of disgust will probably start the whole of Madison Avenue quivering, all the way from Forty-second to Fifty-ninth Street. They're that tender. A customers' strike—just an unorganized resistance to nonsense in sales promotion on the part of enough buyers—could start a new current of thinking. There are probably a number of manufacturers who hate with all their hearts what the merchandising experts tell them they have to do to keep up their sales. Give them some excuse to change.

If a few distinguished people would start using their heads in public, instead of endorsing the products of the highest bidder, using one's head might even get popular.

This country—and the rest of the world—is filled with honest craftsmen and workmen. They don't really like the revolting sales techniques, the infantile appeals, the unspeakable condescension of modern merchandising. They'd probably be glad to work for less in a decentralized society where the manufacturing units were small and served limited areas of need. They would, if they could be helped to understand that modern distribution costs about four times the money it takes to make the product. Mass production may have its place, but we pay a

tremendous price for that place—world-wide depressions, and mechanized men with no interest in their work, so that psychologists have to be hired to think up clever ways to give them "incentives"!

It is all of a pattern—mass production, mass distribution, mass minds, and periodical mass destruction on a larger and larger scale.

What is the answer? There is only one answer. Tolstoy gave it many years ago:

One free man says truthfully what he thinks and feels in the midst of thousands of men who by their words and actions are maintaining the exact opposite. It might be supposed that a man who has spoken out his thoughts sincerely would remain a solitary figure, and yet what more often happens is that all the others, or a large proportion of them, have for long past been thinking and feeling exactly the same, only they do not say so freely. And what was yesterday the new opinion of one man, becomes today the public opinion of the majority. And as soon as this opinion becomes established, at once, gradually, imperceptibly, and irresistibly, men begin to alter their conduct. But the free man often says to himself: "What can I do against this whole sea of wickedness and deception which engulfs us? What use is it to express my opinion? What use is it even to formulate it? Better not to think of these obscure and tangled questions. Perhaps these contradictions are the inevitable condition of all the phenomena of life. And what is the use of my struggling alone with all the evil of the world? If anything can be done, it is not by one alone, but only in association with other men."

And abandoning the mighty weapon of thought and the expression of it, which moves the world, every man takes up the weapon of social activity, regardless of the fact that every form of social activity is based on those very principles with which it is laid upon him to struggle; regardless of the fact that when he enters on the social activities existing in the midst of our world, every man is bound at least to some extent to depart from the truth, and to make concessions by which he destroys the whole force of the mighty weapon which has been given him. It is as though a man, in whose hands a sword of extraordinarily keen edge which will cut through anything has been put, should use the blade to knock in nails. . . .

If only free men would not rely on that which has not strength and is never free—on external power, but would believe in what is always powerful

and free—in truth and the expression of it. If only men would boldly and clearly speak out the truth that has already been revealed to them of the brotherhood of all nations and the criminality of exclusive devotion to one's own nation, the dead false public opinion upon which all the power of Governments and all the evil produced by them rests would drop off of itself like dried skin, and make way for the new living public opinion which only waits that dropping off of the old husk that has confined it in order to assert its claims openly and with authority, and to establish new forms of life that are in harmony with the consciences of men.

Men have to understand that what is given out to them for public opinion, what is maintained by complicated, strenuous, and artificial means, is not public opinion, but only the dead relic of public opinion that once existed; above all, they have to believe in themselves, in the fact that what is recognized by them in the very depths of their souls, that what craves expression in everyone is not freely uttered only because it runs counter to the existing social opinion, is the force which will change the world, and that to manifest that force is man's true vocation; . . .

One does not have to go all the way with Tolstoy to recognize the tremendous power in what he says. There may be a rightful place for social activity, *but its scope is limited*. It is an odd circumstance that in the country which shouts "free enterprise" on every street corner, we see an incredible impotence on the part of most men to better themselves—that is, to *use* the freedom they already have. They are waiting for the party—what party?—to do it, to fix things up, to pass a law, or repeal one. And if things are bad, they complain. Americans have the idea that human progress is a nice, well-adjusted, scientifically managed affair that isn't going to cut short anybody's lunch hour or make him work late without time-and-a-half. They yell to high heaven when the AEC with a big stake in the war system shadows some pertinent facts. What did they expect of a government bureau that is sitting on a pile of the highest explosives known to man? A paraphrase of St. Francis? The Sermon on the Mount? The behavior of the AEC is par for the course. It behaves like a bureau of a government of a people who are scared stiff and expecting the worst. What government bureau, watched over by

George Sokolsky and the ghost of Joe McCarthy, would do otherwise? Where do you really *expect* to find courage and moral vision?

When you mine gold you have to dig. Some years you don't find any at all. Some lifetimes you don't learn any truth at all. Why should government bureaus give you purple-carpet access to the little, expedient truths it deals with? Whoever led you to expect that?

We are living in a human wilderness. It has always been a human wilderness. You and I are confused, too. There was something pleasant about the days when only five per cent of the population could read and write. Nowadays, we get upset because the commercial powers that be are able to spell out our barbarism on a television screen. We were just as barbarous in the good old days of illiteracy and bronze war clubs. There just weren't any MR experts to exploit our barbarism and our vulnerable human nature. Things have really changed very little.

We have to keep trying, of course. Our trouble is that we expect things to be easy. We have delusions of grandeur about our system instead of about ourselves. The system is no better than it should be, and never will be. It's going to take some pain, some deprivation, and some primitive endurance of discomfort to get a better life.

You might have to quit reading the papers, to get the time to write a little paper that's worth reading, or that you honestly hope is worth reading. The people who write the papers, these days, don't think much of what they are doing. How can you get any good out of them? There is probably more commercial honesty in the ads.

You may have to get stubborn about a lot of things. You may have to quit your job and go to work for someone you can respect, for less money. Or if you don't quit your job you can at least write a letter to the newspaper as Norman Mailer did, after he gave a Hollywood producer permission to make a movie out of *The Naked and the Dead*, in which he said:

A little later in the evening, for the first and only time in my life, I fainted dead away. Looking back on it, I would suspect the reason was that something honorable had worn out in me, and I knew I was going to sell my book (which I loved so much) to a man who didn't know the difference between the Army and the Marines.

You could stop reading anything which gives evidence that the publishers have no respect for your intelligence as a human being. They're not really interested in your intelligence, you know; they just want your money. You can ask yourself why you do business with such people? What have they got that you really need?

In a free country like ours—a big country with a reasonable quota of people who want to do what is right—you can always find good reading-matter, nourishing food, a house to live in that doesn't look like a furniture-store window, and a job that lets you make something that will do somebody some good. You can find these things if you will take the trouble to look around. And the more people who start looking around, the easier these things will be find.

REVIEW THE VIOLATED

VANCE BOURJAILY, editor of a "new writings" series called *Discovery*, now emerges as a first-rank novelist. Granville Hicks, reviewing *The Violated* for the *Saturday Review*, says this book is "the work of a man of unusual creative power and deeply compassionate insight." "Compassionate" is the word, for Bourjaily, like all good writers, enables the reader to find something of intrinsic value in even the most annoying personalities—and further, makes it possible for us to believe that the admirable aspect of any human being is the *real* man breaking through the shell, and not simply an accidental efflorescence.

The Violated shares a number of qualities with Bourjaily's *The End of My Life*. In the latter book, also concerned with the generation subjected to the dislocations of World War II, Bourjaily showed how the better instincts of brilliant persons were squeezed into near oblivion in the pressures of war. *The Violated* is similarly concerned, though less emphasis is placed upon the corruption of war itself than upon the moral indifference of modern societies to the evil of war. Bourjaily shows how this indifference "violates" all those who are even remotely involved. In *The End of My Life* Bourjaily seems to be advancing a pacifist argument, while in *The Violated* he goes beyond the issue of pacifism to broader questions. The following passage is a soliloquy on the part of the most sensitive of the leading characters:

How can I imagine Eddie in command of men, deploying them into positions where they will shoot back and forth with a real enemy?

And am I, after all I have said about it, going to enlist for pilot's training?

For there is a great mass of things I have felt and have not said.

I do not want to bomb civilians.

Not German ones, much less French ones who might be living near a target.

I don't want to bomb anybody, really, not even a man firing an anti-aircraft gun, trying to shoot me down.

The soldiers are all drafted, on both sides; there are no volunteers for this kind of war, and very few professionals.

I don't want to kill people at all, not even the professionals. I don't want people to try to kill me.

But all these don't wants are little personal quantities on one side of an equation.

On the other side is the feeling that one has to stop the Nazis.

And if I think they have to be stopped, I can't ask others to stop them for me on the ground that a different area of conscience tells me it is wrong to kill and injure people.

So if I should be among those stopping Nazis, I should be among those doing the most damage and I suppose that's a flyer and especially, if Guy is right about where my size would put me, one who flies a bomber and kills civilians.

Even after Pearl Harbor I thought I would wait until the time came and then, as quietly as I could, bothering as few people about it as I could, I would be a conscientious objector.

And go to prison.

Because limited service doesn't make any sense, and if one is willing to do any part of it, one should be willing to do the worst part, the killing.

I don't have a deep political feeling about fascism or anything else if I look into myself honestly, not a feeling deep enough to justify killing to suppress the idea.

It's not the idea I feel must be stopped, then, but any idea which develops to the point where people use it to justify slavery or murder.

Then the war would be about something.

But it isn't. It concerns only the capital punishment of one particularly poisonous group of idea-murderers, and that is what is on the other side of my equation.

What is the good of inspecting one's own confusion?

And suppose I were able to say those things not to Guy or the Kaiser, but to Eddie, crawling along beside him wherever he is crawling.

Eddie would say, crud.

Eddie would say, Grab that rifle Tom and shoot that bastard over there before he shoots you . . .

Or whatever people say in whatever situation Eddie is in.

So?

The characters in whom Bourjaily is interested give a sense of being on a quest which they don't understand, but a quest nonetheless. What they try may be mistaken or neurotically confused, but here is an author who lets you feel the struggle of the individual human will, a welcome contrast to the people about whom Norman Mailer, for instance, writes. There is this explanation for Bourjaily's choice of title: "Violated by their inability to communicate, to love, to comprehend, to create—violated by neurotic commitments to preposterous goals or, more tragically, to no goals at all." But by this the author also implies his conviction that there is that in every human being which *could* love, comprehend, and create. Here, perhaps, is a light on Bourjaily's ability to provide such excellent material in various issues of *Discovery*. As an editor, he sought fiction and poetry which stir and arouse; it is not necessarily a liking for morbidity which leads to the dramatic portrayal of morbid situations. In answering the attack of some critics of *Discovery* who felt that the writers presented revealed no healthy appreciation for the American way of life—"they don't love life in America"—he remarked:

Morbidness, depression and neurosis are the very bones of literature and have been from *Oedipus* through *Hamlet* to *Crime and Punishment*. Fiction which found nothing to criticize about the life of its times would be dead indeed, for such criticizing forms the system of arteries through which even the best-natured fiction runs, and has from Cervantes through Fielding to Mark Twain. And in criticizing this life and these times, we are not only behaving quite properly, we are displaying, as all good novelists must, precisely that courage we are said to lack.

Another way of putting this might be to say that the human mind easily becomes a slave to group opinions and beliefs. Ideas should be liberating forces, but in our culture they have often become precisely the reverse. In the following passage, Tom tries to explain to his complacent brother-in-law why he doesn't take much stock in conventional opinions:

The search began again on Tom's face; finally, finished, he said slowly: "Well. I guess, I guess, in the way you mean, I hate ideas. Political ideas. Religious ideas. All the notions that people can be led to harm one another for. They seem very ugly to

me. Democracy's an ugly idea, the way we've worked it out, with all the emphasis on personal property and majority coercion: mine the property, ours the power. Communism's an ugly idea; ours the property, mine the power. Power. Power and property; possession. Control. I dislike those things, Harrison. And religious ideas, insisting that the power and the property belong to some superstitious image. His. His. I don't see anything but indecency anywhere in the whole complex."

Now he had him going, Harrison thought; he would give another push. "Aren't there any decent ideas at all, then?"

"Perhaps," Tom said. "Perhaps the idea that people might abandon a little power, a little property, for peace. That may be a fine idea."

"One you've served?" Harrison folded his hands across his stomach, and kept his eyes on Tom's face.

"Not as wholeheartedly as I might," Tom said. "Not in the last few years, anyway. Perhaps it's only an excuse but . . . it just hasn't seemed to be one of those ideas whose time has come. I guess we have to smash each other up some more before it does."

Well, how do you evaluate such writing? Does Bourjaily mean to say that our time is one in which man's nobler instincts *must* be violated? Or is he, possibly, offering challenge to the reader by the very acceptance of defeat by his characters? Sometimes, a latent independence awakens when one is told that a desirable end cannot be reached.

In any case, what we miss in Bourjaily and several other writers of comparable stature is the occasional glimpse of what his characters might conceivably *become* in different circumstances. The most impressive tragedy, we should think, dramatizes the contrast between what a man may become—or what he essentially *is*—and the Nemesis which pursues him through the incidents of a story. Unless we know the protagonist's potential it is not likely that we will be deeply stirred by his confusions and sufferings.

COMMENTARY

THE TOLSTOYAN IMPERATIVE

THE big hurdle, for most men, in Tolstoy's proposal that everyone ought to stand firm on his own convictions, regardless of what others say or do, is that this seems to require an unwonted isolation from the common run of mankind—a "heroism," almost, for which there is no immediate reward, and very little company.

The thing that seems important to remember is that the men who do what we regard as "heroic" things never think of themselves as heroes. For them, what they do is a matter of natural inclination, or even taste. Some inner compulsion is at work in their lives, and they can't do anything else.

There is a great difference, emotionally, between doing a thing because you think you "ought" to do it, and doing it because it is natural to do. This is important, since when a man contemplates a certain course of action, his anticipatory feelings about it are usually the controlling factor in whether he decides to do it or not.

Of course, to say that a thing is the "natural" thing to do has some equivocation in it. Sometimes a plan of action may feel natural to one part of a man's nature, but be awkward and artificial to another part. This is one way, we suppose, to formulate the problem of the moral struggle.

There is a tendency to imagine that a heroic action involves gritting one's teeth and manfully going through with some decision that is extremely difficult, or painful. The kind of action Tolstoy is talking about could easily be of another sort. If a man has the habit of clarifying his thinking about what he wants of life, and if he literally *works* on the problem of what he must do to get it, then, with the passage of time, decisions begin to come more easily. Finally, he has no more ambivalence, but simply looks at the situation before him and decides. People

observing him will wonder at his "courage." It isn't so much courage as it is the strength of habits of mind which he has built up over a long period.

But there is the further question of whether freedom can really be won in Tolstoy's way.

No one will deny that Tolstoy is right "in principle," but what about the practical considerations? This "dead, false, public opinion" which Tolstoy says will "drop off of itself"—will this really happen?

It is necessary, here, to ask what the struggle is about. What is the man who challenges "external power" trying to do? Well, first of all, he is trying to establish conditions of freedom. However else he may put it—whether he says he is working for "peace," or some other desirable end such as justice to oppressed minorities—his labors come down to the idea of freedom, since without freedom none of the social goods are worth much of anything.

So, to simplify, we may say that he is working for freedom.

There is only one way to work for freedom, and that is by using whatever freedom we already have to get it. We don't work just for freedom. We always work for *more* freedom.

Freedom is first an attitude, then a principle of action, and finally a condition giving scope to free actions. Its origin is always subjective and it is always enjoyed by individuals. There is no freedom for a large number of men without freedom for them as individuals.

This sort of discussion requires some review of the typical ends of human beings. Some men—artists, craftsmen, writers—are able to achieve their ends all by themselves. That is, they do not need to have the behavior of other men regulated in order to do their work well. At the opposite end of the scale are the administrators—those whose very career depends upon the regulation and coordination of human behavior.

Obviously, the administrator-type of men will have the most difficulty in appreciating the Tolstoyan position. And, let us note, in the mass society of the present, the greatest rewards are paid to successful administrators. Administration—which means, in many cases, *manipulation*—is the central task of a mass society.

It seems obvious that the administrator's role will be reduced to much less importance in a free society. It is true, of course, that a certain genius in administration may contribute to the exercise of freedom; what is needed, no doubt, is a change in the idea of what an administrator is supposed to do, rather than the total elimination of administrators.

What we are really suggesting is that the men of a free society will conceive of the good life less and less in administrative terms and more and more in terms of the excellences which individuals can contribute to the common good. The rest is technology.

Men who look at life in this way would no longer wonder at Tolstoy's ideas, as though he had proposed some strange and revolutionary activity to be undertaken by heroes in solitary desperation. They would find what he said to be simple common sense, inescapably true, and incapable of contradiction.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves RELIGION WITHOUT DOGMA

AN excellent illustration of our last week's contention—that religious devotion and concern can just as well be allied with liberalism as with authoritarianism—is supplied by a pamphlet on religious education issued by the Council of Liberal Churches. The title of this pamphlet is "Our Children's Religion—What Kind Do We Want?" It was prepared to provoke discussion among both laity and clergy. The author, Dr. Merrill E. Bush, Headmaster of the Friends Central School in Philadelphia, was for five years Director of the Department of Adult Education of the American Unitarian Association. Dr. Bush's graduate work in philosophy at Cornell seems to have helped to make him a natural spokesman for the philosophical-tending point of view which both Unitarians and Universalists historically represent.

Dr. Bush begins by remarking that "no Unitarian wants to be told what kind of religious beliefs his children must hold if they are to be 'good' or 'true' Unitarians." Further: "Just as we refuse to accept the imposition of any creedal or doctrinal test for adults who wish to become members of our churches, so we reject any attempt to impose a particular creed or dogma upon our children. Does this mean that it makes no difference what our children come to believe, that one belief is as good as another? To raise this question is to anticipate the answer. It makes a great deal of difference." Dr. Bush believes that the best religion is a religion which "binds men together" in a common understanding of basic ethical principles rather than "binding them fast" to partisan doctrines, and that such religion includes every meaning of the word "liberal." Quoting Rev. Walter Donald Kring on "What It Means to be a Liberal," an article in the *Christian Register*, Dr. Bush adapts certain stipulations for liberalism, as serving cultural progress, working democracy, and any sincere conceptions of deity at one and the same time. According to Dr. Kring, a liberal—

1. is a man whose mind is not made up permanently on all of the answers to the riddle of existence.
2. is one who feels that some truth even in the field of religion is still to be discovered.
3. is one who will question the basic tenets of the church or (of) revealed religion.
4. is one who is not willing to accept any creed as a definite statement of faith and purpose except the creed of truth-seeking.
5. therefore refuses to accept any statement as to the nature of God as definitive. It is only a temporary definition just as is present scientific law only a temporary definition.
6. refuses to accept creeds as authoritative but on the positive side he is not a man without a personal creed. He will seek with all his mind and heart to discover the truths about religion but he will never try to impose his ideas on other people except to make them think.

Dr. Bush blends the quiet humility of the Quaker tradition with the Unitarian urge to pioneer in liberal religious education. As a recently elected member of the Council of Liberal Churches (Unitarian Universalists), he invites rethinking of all church-school programs. He makes it plain that liberal Christians may be much more concerned about the dangers of religious indoctrination than the average public school teacher or administrator. Dr. Bush, for example, looks beyond creeds to the need for development, in both children and adults, of the integrity of individually based belief and conscience. Dr. Bush writes:

As parents we care deeply whether our children grow up to be dogmatic or open minded, authoritarian or liberal, indifferent toward their religious heritage or intelligent in their attachment to that heritage. We do not believe that any group has a monopoly on wisdom, truth or virtue, but we do have our own preferences and convictions. We believe that "revelation is not sealed," that the facts are not all in, even in religion, that new insights come to every culture and to each generation. Each of us has his own personal beliefs—about the nature and existence of God, about the meaning and purpose of human life, about those values in religion which we hold most precious. We should like our children to understand and respect those beliefs, perhaps even to share them. But we hesitate to indoctrinate our own children and

we do not want others imposing their beliefs upon *our* children.

Though one may doubt the value of the word "God" as a symbol which should be taught our children, because of its authoritarian connotations in history, we can find little objection to another citation picked by Dr. Bush from Dr. Kring's definition of the religious liberal. Kring writes that such a man will feel an unwavering conviction "that the power of God works through man to elevate him." So long as "God" is interpreted as a spiritual force *within* man, his *own* highest aspirations, we have ground for believing, with Dr. Kring, "that each person, each individual, is inherently worth while and valuable, deserving of freedom. That reason is to be relied upon. That salvation for mankind lies not by the compulsions of authority, but by the extension of freedom, by the persistent spread of democracy."

Christian apologists have long been arguing that the root of American democracy is Christian theology. But it seems to us that the reverse is actually the case—that it is impossible to have "good" religion unless the habits of mind which contribute to democracy are evident in the area of metaphysical speculation. Jefferson and Madison comprehended that a functioning democracy must be based upon the willingness of each citizen to respect the point of view of his neighbor.

"Faith in democracy" is too often faith in a "system" which is identified by external forms. The faith should rest, instead, upon the recognition that each human being has the integrity of individuality, not bequeathed by God, but inherent in his fundamental being.

The word "orthodoxy" has a Christian sound. Orthodoxy, whether Christian or otherwise, depends upon the acceptance of a predetermined goal—in fact, several of them. Both religion and democracy become dogmas if their votaries assume that a particular formula represents the truth by which they should live, or for which they might be compelled to die. As Dwight Macdonald put it, in his wartime essay, "The Responsibility of Peoples," the "of course" is always ominous in human affairs. When the "Christian," or the "democrat," too easily

assumes that his opinion or his religious conviction is the "proper" conviction, against which all others must be arranged in derogative sequence, he is no true democrat, but a totalitarian-tending defaulter of the faith.

The Unitarians seem to be discovering that the only sustaining faith consists in the conviction that a human being must discover truth for himself. Unless we grant to each man the right to choose his own metaphysics, to build a structure of his own hope in an ultimate destiny of soul, we are poor candidates for upholding the democratic tradition. The democrat is enjoined by the tradition left by the Founders of American Democracy to respect every man's need for self-determination—and every child's. His opinions are valued, not because they are correct, but because they are "individual," and the political guarantees of the Bill of Rights are the manifest of a common agreement to respect all *convictions*, whatever their possible contradiction of whatever tradition seems to be most important to the "majority."

Therefore, men who value the progressive development of true "free-thinking" are bound to appreciate the opinions of such an independent religious thinker as Dr. Bush. Because this man thinks for himself, he is unwilling to allow church-school programs of instruction to proceed without conscientious reevaluation. Dr. Bush is a Christian, but he perceives that the adherence to Christian beliefs, if prefaced by the ominous words, "of course," fails to represent the true position of the prophet of Nazareth. Jesus, like Buddha, personified the determination to rise beyond the orthodoxy of his time. Democratic religion can do no less if it is to justify the full meaning of either religion or democracy.

FRONTIERS

What Price Christianity?

I OFTEN wonder why those of us with comparative leisure, for instance, the housewives, don't take more interest in philosophy *per se*, as apart from orthodox religion. Certainly we have the energy, once the children are in school. But we seem to feel compelled to cut ourselves into pieces of community service or "self-improvement," refusing to examine the *mores* of our society with a critical eye, refusing to train ourselves to think, even though we insist that our children be so trained.

Perhaps it is true that American children mature faster than others until the age of 18 to 21, and then come to a dead stop. Having acquired a pragmatic education, we see no purpose in using our minds for anything but "practical" purposes, *i.e.*, making money and climbing the social scale.

A sop is thrown to the natural spiritual longings by church membership and attendance. Some examine their inmost beliefs; most do not. And the churches are quite indifferent to soul-searching as long as the pews are full.

All this has been written a hundred times before,—but the astonishing thing is that scarcely anyone dares to criticize orthodox religion in the middle years of the twentieth century. Tolerance between the religions is emphasized while the churches themselves are rarely reproved for their failures.

While it is difficult to feel as scornful of the Bible as Thomas Paine in the *Age of Reason*, nevertheless many have been shocked at the brutality and twisted morality of the Old Testament. It makes only too fascinating reading for a child. I remember enjoying the more gruesome wholesale murders, the kind of things that would have been forbidden reading, had they appeared in any other book. Although the Old Testament is also full of ancient folk wisdom in a series of legends, it is strange that so many

Christians of different sects base their whole way of life upon it, either consciously or unconsciously. This is particularly bewildering since on the whole the New Testament contradicts the dogma of the Old.

Jesus did not preach the doctrine of "an eye for an eye," etc. However, here is another paradox: he did say that child shall turn against father, and brother against sister for his sake. Perhaps he was misquoted? Thomas Paine pointed out that the fragments of stories gathered together about Jesus' life and teachings were not officially recognized until 300 years after his death.

It is a truism to say that official Christianity rapidly became so fascinated by the dogma and ritual of the Church that Jesus' teachings were soon lost sight of, as far as the daily life of ordinary people was concerned. This dreary situation continued after the Reformation, in each little quarrelling sect. Our Puritans were among the worst in this respect. Freedom of religion in this country would never have been countenanced by them, if it had not been for such brave fighters as Roger Williams.

During the last three hundred years of "progress," Christianity appears to have made little or no improvement in man's relationship to man. On the contrary, it seems to represent a frightful split between man, his own nature and the universe. Albert Schweitzer, the most eloquent and gifted pleader for Christianity in this age, insists again and again in his writings that Man and Nature are alienated from each other, and that man's finest purpose in life is sacrifice. Not once did I come across a description by him of the beauty of Africa; he felt, apparently, that he couldn't take one minute from his struggle against disease to enjoy what God has done well. Yet he calls in his writings for the same freedom for others that he denies himself! Obviously a saint, representing the best of his religion.

The difficulty is that Christianity is based upon and glorifies suffering, as well as self-

sacrifice. A healthy human being has no desire to be a martyr, so only too often the glorification of suffering comes to mean someone else's suffering, for instance, war.

Eastern religions, odd as they often seem to us, are more preoccupied with peace than Christianity has ever been; and many of them contain the same precepts that are supposed to make Christianity unique. On the other hand, the more sophisticated religions of the East and near East have no interest in a God-Man or Virgin Mother. These latter beliefs can be traced back to the most primitive religions of man, as well as to Greek mythology.

We have made some progress toward humanity to man, even in this atomic age. Race relations and social conscience toward the ill and starving,—these are all improving visibly. However, I firmly believe that no Christian church can take credit for any of the improvement. Lip service to Christianity has increased greatly in the last ten years of creeping conformity, but how many of these frightened people are really religious? Another thing, why should we consider it impossible for a man or woman to be deeply religious outside a church? Paine, Franklin, Jefferson and Lincoln were all independent of churches, since they must have noticed the stultifying effect on man's spirit of organized religion. Thus, they were able to free themselves for great work.

It is my conviction that Christianity, with its emphasis on sin and cruel death, is failing us badly and dangerously, in these terrifying times. A new philosophy is needed: one, not only of humanism, but also of balance and understanding of human nature, toward a better realization of what man can be.

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