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RELIGION AND HISTORY

THE bewilderments which contemporary Christianity imposes on the modern world have recently had some notice in these pages—that is, certain of its more obvious dilemmas have been examined. One question, however, keeps on turning up, crying out for some kind of answer. Why is it so difficult to say just what Christianity is? Why are the Christians themselves so puzzled by this question?

If it were possible to start out by stating the Right Answers, and to show how they apply, this investigation would be easy, but right answers to these questions would have to develop from precise statements about the nature of religion itself, and the Christian religion in particular. So, failing in this, it becomes necessary to approach the subject obliquely. This we may do by asking some more questions.

For a text at the start, a sentence from John Campbell Graham's *Hibbert Journal* (October, 1938) article will be useful:

> Where Christianity appeals to history Christianity must abide by the verdict of history, and there is no doubt about the verdict of history . . . ..

Why should Christians go to history for help? They go to history because the major beliefs of Christians have been made to rest upon supposed historical events, and anyone who has a belief wants to strengthen its foundations. So the Christians have gone to history to strengthen the foundations of their beliefs. What did they find?

Thousands of books have been written on this subject, but a paragraph by another writer, Ray Knight, in the same issue of the *Hibbert Journal*, gives the gist:

> The facts are as fatal to the Higher Criticism as to the orthodox belief. The churches tell us that many of these early Christians were privileged to know the most extraordinary man who ever trod the earth, wonder-working, victorious over death, the very God incarnate, but instead of falling prostrate before so tremendous a personality, instead of recording every deed, word, and gesture with jealous reverence, they who were charged to carry his message to the world spend their time in wrangling over policies and metaphysics without so much as a mention of their Master's teaching. Page after page is filled with reminiscences of Jewish history, but none recalls the history of Jesus; all turn for guidance to the Hebrew prophets, none cares a farthing for what Jesus taught. Old-fashioned Christianity is plainly out of court; does that fare any better which substitutes a supremely gifted mystic for the son of God, one who made so profound an impression on his followers that they came to regard him as divine—and forthwith forgot all that he told them? "The one immeasurably great man who was strong enough to think himself the spiritual ruler of mankind and bend all history to his purposes" is a figment of the letter-worshipper's imagination, unwarranted by a shred of contemporary evidence. Son of God or unexampled genius, the Galilean prophet is ignored by his disciples in all save name and mythic history. Not that which Jesus did and said but that which the Christ experiences, Virgin Birth, Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension, is the whole original belief.

It is plain that going to history for support gave Christian theologians insoluble problems. The central theological doctrine of the Christian religion is the doctrine of the Incarnation, which affirms the coming to and the existence on earth at a certain time and a certain place of one who was born in a certain way, who lived for a certain number of years, who died on the cross, and who was the Son of God. The traditional Christian Revelation and traditional Christian theology depend upon the factual foundation of this doctrine. But history does not support it.

Accordingly, both the doctrine of the Incarnation and the doctrine of the Trinity—due to the obscurity of its Second Person, the only one for which historicity is claimed —suffered damage which could not be repaired. Trouble with the

Incarnation and the Trinity is of course nothing new for Christian theologians, but what was new, as a result of Biblical criticism, was the confrontation of doctrine by science, not on the home grounds of theology, which is reasonably safe, but on the grounds of the scientific study of *history*, which for doctrine is not safe at all.

Another passage by John Campbell Graham *(Hibbert Journal*, January, 1939) sums up the situation in which this encounter between doctrine and history brought the final blow:

> The history of Christianity has been described as the history of a hopeless attempt to resolve a contradiction, but it might be more truly described as the history of an obstinate refusal to accept any solution that eliminates the contradiction. The theology of the Incarnation exhibits the strange paradox that while the various heresies condemned by the Church have for the most part the merit of being intellectually tenable, the orthodox doctrine is, from a theological point of view (for nothing can be truly theological that is not logical), the greatest heresy of them all.

We have now got to the place where it becomes possible to consider why young ministers have so much trouble in deciding what they believe and what they are able to preach to their congregations. A minister is a man who is supposed to be something of a theologian. This means that he has an obligation to be logical, at least in relation to theological questions. And when the minister is young, fresh from theological studies, he is likely to have an alert mind that is busy examining the assumptions of his faith and their relation to what are presumed to be the facts of history as revealed by modern Biblical scholarship.

Often, he finds the facts of history disastrous to his faith. Often, he is obliged to admit, as Donald Fraser (MANAS, July 1) admitted, that when it comes to what Doctrine says is the sole ground of salvation, it has lost all meaning for him. What has he to substitute for this lost meaning?

Well, he can work out some personal synthesis between the moral overtones of Christian doctrine and the deliveries of scholarship, and preach this synthesis to his congregation, which will hardly know the difference, unless he presses upon them too enthusiastically the conclusions of historical studies. If he does the latter, he will have trouble, for, as Fraser remarks, "a minister in the pastorale finds almost no support in trying to present the results of modern Biblical scholarship."

So this, in general, is the situation in the Protestant Christian churches of today, so far as doctrinal questions are concerned.

We can easily stipulate that ours is not an age in which theology is of much interest to the average church-goer, but if church-goers are no longer interested in or sympathetic to Bible criticism, what *are* they interested in?

It should be advantageous, here, to skip all the familiar jibes about church congregations. We know what they are and that there is a lot of truth in them, but we also know, or ought to know, that *all* the truth about church congregations is not in them.

In every human being who is not pathologically a materialist there is a deep, intuitive yearning for knowledge about the meaning of his life and its relation to everything else. This we might call the "religious instinct," for lack of a better term. The religious instinct is not "against" scholarship or criticism, nor is it opposed to science. It is simply not fed by these activities. Religious expression may possibly be corrected by criticism and science, but it can never be *directed* by them. Criticism and science are analytical; they deal with the parts of things; religion is essentially concerned with wholes.

The fact is that going to church represents to the churchgoer some kind of touch with whole meanings; that is his best reason for going to church. Whether or not his hope of finding whole

meanings in church is a vain one, that is why he goes.

It is fair to say, then, that somewhere, somehow, hidden beneath the dogmas and the creeds, and standing, perhaps, above the theological conflicts and inconsistencies, there is, or has been, in Christianity a core of meaning which touches the human heart and moves it to intuitive response. If this element could be given pure definition, then we should have pure religion; but at present, very likely, all that will win common assent is the ideal that some such primordial reality or truth exists in every great religion, and that strenuous search is involved in finding it out.

If we can accept this as an explanation of the valid aspect of the Christian's faithfulness to his religion, then we have an explanation, also, of his indifference to matters of Biblical criticism and the inroads made by historical studies upon the body of Christian doctrine. He never understood the importance of the historical claims of Christianity; his belief was not founded upon these claims; so that now, when the claims are shaken, his faith is relatively untouched. He never participated in the inconsistencies of theology, so why should he suffer when they are exposed? In short, his religious expression was never much more than rudimentary, so far as intellectual comprehension of it is concerned, so that questions which try the conscience of his minister are only peripheral for him. He is loyal to his intuitions of meaning.

On this basis it is possible to understand and respect the "wholeness" aspect of the Fundamentalist's convictions. The Fundamentalist makes no distinction between history and allegory, between fact and myth. His emotional needs shape all his definitions of "reality." He practices what Barth preaches: "If the philosophy and the science of the past three hundred years seem to conflict with the Word, let the philosophy and science go." Kierkegaard called this a "crucifixion of the intellect," and so it is for Barth, but it is not this for the Fundamentalist. You have to have an intellect before it can be crucified. The Fundamentalist has the kind of religion which is possible only for people who have never encountered a fundamental problem of religion — reconciliation of man's inner world of feeling with the outer world of fact. The Fundamentalist is a one-world man.

Here we come bang up against the old problem of the Grand Inquisitor—the priest who justified the crucifixion of the intellect on the part of those who know better, in order to leave the one-world beliefs of the Fundamentalist undisturbed; and more, the priest who insisted upon enforcing those beliefs on everyone, regardless of the different capacities for understanding among human beings. The Grand Inquisitor is the great apologist of Proletarian Religion— one faith, one church, and one interpretation of the saving truth.

The Protestant Reformation was supposed to rid religion of the Grand Inquisitor. But here, again, official Christianity gets into trouble. Protestants imagine that eliminating one-worldism in religion can be a historical achievement. They think that a denial of the authority of the Pope will free them from regimentation of belief. They think that Martin Luther and John Calvin could do it for them. The idea that Luther could give freedom only to Luther is unmeaning to believers in historical religion. Actually, the Reformation only weakened the image of the Grand Inquisitor—weakened and multiplied it. The historical religion of Christianity began with Jesus and the Prophets before Jesus, and then to it were added the Reformers who came after Jesus who explained what was meant by his coming.

It is still a historical religion, continually at war with what takes place in history, since what takes place in history is only *seeming*—a seeming past and a seeming present, both subject to endless relativities of meaning uncovered by science and scholarship.

In pondering these questions, it is useful to read a book like *The First Christian* by A. Powell

Davies, subtitled "A Study of St. Paul and Christian Origins." (Hardback edition by Farrar, Straus & Cudahy; paperback by Mentor.) This book is fascinating for its extraordinary mixture of religious and non-religious material. Mr. Davies shows on every page, with clear textual analysis and painstaking scholarship, how silly it is to take the books of the Bible seriously as documents of history. They are filled with childish contradictions, distortions, special pleading, and plain falsifications. As a religion based upon historical happenings, Christianity is sheer nonsense, since nobody *knows* what those happenings were.

This is a book about the psychology of religion and the sociology of religion, and only incidentally a book about religion. Mr. Davies shows either how the authors of the New Testament concealed and mixed up the facts, or that they didn't have any facts. But why a book about this? *Why so many books about this?* What are these writers trying to prove? There are lots of other mixed-up historians to write about, but nobody bothers. They aren't worth writing about. What makes these early Christian "historians" worth writing about? Only the delusion that religious truth can be contained in history. It seems that historical acts of emancipation from the delusion must at the same time testify to its importance and cling to its fragments with a kind of sentimental attachment—after all, it was *our* delusion.

We are now able to suggest that the reason why it is so difficult to define Christianity is that the great mass of Christian beliefs is suspended in uneasy transition between emotional Fundamentalist acceptance of mixed-up and fabricated history, and rationalist-modified do-goodism with a Christian coloring. (The cold heartlessness of this description should be qualified by recognition that in all phases of religious activity there is an inward, often inarticulate, intuitive element which gives every kind of religion its moral life and feeling of validity.)

And we are able to say that Christians are puzzled by having to consider this question because they have never given it any real thought, and are only now beginning to seek for the universal meaning of religion.

This sort of thinking among Christians has had its pioneers, one of whom, Col. T. B. Luard, has presented his conclusions so clearly that a statement by him may be taken as representative of the best of such expressions. In an article, "Why I Do Not Go To Church," in the *Hibbert Journal* for April, 1937, he said:

> The researches of competent authorities into the origins of Christian tradition have reached a point where thinking people must take cognizance of them. I am one of many Christians who find themselves unable to accept the worship of Jesus as a satisfying and reasonable expression of Christian faith. It is now evident that the whole fabric of Catholic doctrine is based, not on history, but on inner experience interpreted in the light of the eschatological and mystical beliefs of the Hellenistic age. . . . It is becoming increasingly clear that when the elements of myth and magic, of astrology and number symbolism are traced to their sources, and fundamental fallacies in cosmology laid to rest, when the mists of Gnostic phantasy have cleared, when the framework of Messianism has been broken and the ecclesiastical superstructure removed—in a word, when the local and transitory elements of historical contingency have been taken into account—certain genuine intuitions, certain recurring experiences are revealed as the sources of Christianity. And these experiences, each with a long history of evolution from obscure origins in the remote past, are glimpses into the nature of the real, gleams of spiritual consciousness that found expression in the faith of pagans, Jews and Christians alike—and nowhere so coherently as in the religion of Plotinus—though only in Christianity did it take shape in an organised body strong enough to hold its own in the dark centuries that followed. "The peoples that walked in darkness saw a great Light"—that "true Light which lighteth every man coming into the world"; and whether it appeared as the Messianic call to brotherly love in anticipation of the Kingdom of God near at hand, or as the Hellenic vision of the One Who is the source,

> goal and fulfillment of those who strive after goodness, truth and beauty in the eternal world of spirit "Yonder"; as the pagan Mystery of death and sin and a new birth into righteousness, the Hermetic ascent of the soul on its upward Way to its eternal Home, or as the Pauline discovery that in a world of change the letter is death, but free spirit creative; was it not the same growing Light of faith—a consciousness, slowly becoming articulate, of a part in the universal Life that transcends the life of the body? For this diverse experience was more than vision. Followed up into life it led to a sense of new vitality and power which, whether it was described as "the grace of God" or "the god within," as "gnosis" or being "in Christ," was surely the same initiation into the life of the spirit, the same incipient realisation of the eternal Creator Self Incarnate in the universe, the Way, the Truth and the Life.

There are dozens of ways to put this general conclusion about the meaning of religion and the origin of Christianity. But few have put it any better than Col. Luard.

Letter from ENGLAND

LONDON.—The recent decision of Cambridge University to abolish both Latin and Greek as obligatory subjects for its entrance examinations; and Oxford's current indecision on the same issue, are significant pointers to major changes in the whole academic set-up of the country. For centuries after their foundation these two Universities were the sole custodians of culture, save for the Four Inns of Court, that in Tudor days had precedence over the two Universities as centres of culture and education. During that long pre-modern-scientific era, an education at university standard meant the acquisition of the two Classical languages, and some general knowledge of the ancient Greek civilisation. During the nineteenth century, however, the increase of general literacy led to a demand for more universities, and then came into existence the so-called "Red Brick" universities throughout the Provinces. These led somewhat the older universities in their appreciation of, and attitude towards, a changing world. They taught more science and technical subjects, less of the Humanities.

The present trend has come of the recent rapid advance in applied science and technology, and these advances have forced the hand of the older Universities, not so much by converting them, but for reasons quite other. An University, like any other institution, can exist only by balancing its books, and both Oxford and Cambridge for some considerable time have been confronted by a certain decision. They could either carry on along traditional lines, drawing adequate incomes from their extensive extra-mural properties—mainly very fine farmlands, and so on; or accept the munificent gifts of the great leaders of industry, to which always were tied terms which completely ousted the Humanities and drove the curricula off their traditional courses and in the direction of technical education and applied science.

Take the case of Oxford, for example. The whole set-up there has been largely influenced by the gifts of Lord Nuffield, formerly Wm. Morris, a most remarkable and wise man. Nuffield started in an Oxford back street as a repairer of cycles and lived to become the multi-millionaire president of a mammoth motor manufacturing concern. Nuffield College, at Oxford, built and endowed by him, is not interested in the Humanities, but in applied science and technology. Another example. Churchill College, which is to come into being shortly at Cambridge, is to be the counterpart of Nuffield College, Oxford. So much for the trend at these ancient seats of the Humanities, now bringing them into line with the somewhat looked-down-on "Red Brick" newcomers. Today when glancing through a high-class Sunday newspaper, such as the *Liberal Observer*, one sees whole pages of advertisements put out by the great industries which must have, to compete and exist, large recruitments of technically trained men with University science degrees.

But one never sees an advertisement for a Classical scholar. What, then, can be done to keep alive the spirit of the Humanities in the face of the blizzard blowing up from the changing world of the H-bomb, Cybernetics and similar applied science?

Just before sitting down to write this letter I had a long talk with Dr. Scott Williamson, the widow of the man who, with her, founded and ran the Peckham Health Centre, a sociological-medical experiment that perished (with so much more of value) in the fires of World War II. She is now engaged on a book begun by her late husband that is likely to arouse a good deal of controversy. But here I am concerned with her suggestion, which seemed to me sound, that we have now reached a point where our ancient civilization will be robbed of much of its intrinsic cultural values unless we now decide to reconsider

just what we want from, and mean by, "An University." If men electing to continue their educations to university standards can see no prospect of a career unless they elect for science or technology, then few will elect for the Humanities. What, then, is the answer? It was suggested to me by this very brilliant woman, whose lectures at Harvard and Johns Hopkins are still, I believe, remembered as outstanding contributions to her subject, that we must now split the functions at present combined in our Universities by separating them, assigning science and technology to Technical Colleges, probably somewhat on the lines of M.I.T., and the Humanities to Universities, throwing the weight of their curricula into cultural channels. This seemed to your correspondent the only sane and practical answer to a problem that now presses heavily and makes a radical reorganization of England's centres of higher education imperative.

ENGLISH CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW
"OLD ARMY FADES AWAY"

ACCORDING to William S. White, *Harper's* Washington correspondent, the present shift in the command of the United States Army from General Maxwell Taylor to General Lyman Lemnitzer clearly marks the end of a period of military history—and the beginning of something quite different. Lemnitzer, explains White, is "essentially an intellectual . . . a kind of professor of the new art of war." The new army, it appears to the experts, will serve in only a modified manner as a kind of "guard force"; primarily, its officers must integrate and facilitate the civilian development of ever newer and more frightening weapons. The staff officers of the days to come—they will probably keep their titles, at least for a while—are apt to be mathematicians and physicists and experts in IBM manipulations.

Even if "The End of the Old Army" brings a slower decline than predicted, there can be little doubt that a transition is proceeding, with numerous psychological accompaniments. Taylor, whom White calls the "last romantic general," was a legitimate warrior. He parachuted into Normandy on D-Day, turned back the last Communist offensive in Korea as commander of the Eighth Army—and, even more romantically, once slipped clandestinely into Nazi-occupied Rome to plan out the American invasion of Italy. He knew war in the old sense, and he had to know men, for his selection of personnel for an assault turned on his evaluation of their particular capacities and states of mind. While, in the years of Taylor's ascendancy, few "dog-faces" would idealize a leader in the manner which the whole South once idealized Robert E. Lee, both Taylor and his troops felt themselves to be personal comrades of a sort. On this point Mr. White writes:

> This kind of warfare and this kind of organization for war are gone forever. Now the only kind of warfare that is possible is warfare with brain but without heart, without hatred and without love—something like a glacial bookish competition in a laboratory that never knows either sun or rain. It is not simply that men like U. S. Grant and Robert E. Lee would be anachronistic to the new warfare; men of our own generation are anachronistic, too. The Old Army was made up of generalists and, curiously, of a staggering number of individualists. It valued peace more than any other service—and more than nearly any civilian—because it really understood what war was. It could not understand what war would become after its time.

The psychologists and sociologists can spend a lot of time and use a lot of paper analyzing the traditional response to a battle situation. But however apt their summations, the real effect of any future war will be determined by the hundreds of thousands of male adults throughout the world who—for their personal good or for ill—will never have faced the crucible of training and physical conflict. Some of Mr. White's most interesting passages concern the nostalgia that will be felt for the "Old Army":

> Anyone who speaks of "tolerance" (the genuine, unpatronizing article) can speak truer if he has served in or with the Old Army in combat. For the outstanding quality of combat on the ground, where death and life come in understandable forms, is its peculiar mixture of two things: duty and then charity—a special, almost tender, regard for the poor SOB at one's side. I assert, at risk of seeming a chauvinist if not actually a warmonger (old style), that the fineness in men found its greatest growth in this unlikely soil.
>
> This is why middle-aged chaps have long bored their wives and their friends by insisting upon going to things like division reunions. They have remembered a time when they were taken out of themselves—when they were able to act upon a stage where there was no profit-and-loss, no pushing for preferment or pay raise. And in those remote days a soldier did not drop unknowable weapons through the intermediary of an unknowable machine upon unknown women and children.

The officers of the Old Army, whatever their limitations, were often genuinely absorbed in the task of "training men." They weren't trained well, so unwieldy had the massed battalions employed in modern war become, but some kind of human

link was present in the instruction. To serve in the ranks was seldom if ever pleasant, but being in the ranks under fire often brought a catharsis which the ex-soldier will never forget:

> No honest infantry officer would try to tell a recruit that his life was going to be good, or even very lasting. But these officers (and nearly all I ever knew were honest and good men) were trying as best they could to prepare their men for what it was really going to be like.
>
> And once these ragtag, down-in-the-dumps, sad-sack outfits got overseas and eventually learned combat, an awkward gallantry—a strange unselfishness and sometimes even a touch of glory—moved across them like a wind in the cottonwoods. Each hopeless and futureless rifleman developed a certain gentleness toward his companions. So, too, did a raw, unlettered *noblesse oblige* grow up among the officers—and never mind all that old nonsense about the cruelties of the "military caste system."
>
> From service as an assault war correspondent with many units and many men—on the English Channel the night before D Day; in Mons, Liége, Paris, Rotgen, Aachen—I acquired memories that are now ready to be put away for good with the no longer relevant recollections of so many others.

The question, of course, is whether or not there can be any "psychological equivalents" of the World-War-II experience for the generations to come. Are some of the Beat Generation beat because they sense that all of the traditional experiences are just about used up? Does too much surgical perfection in warfare, like surgical perfection in other things, lead to the feeling that one will live all his days in a carefully calculated antiseptic bath? Death, of course, may still come, and fiendishly, as the tag-end of nuclear explosions, but no one can react in any way except with resignation or despair.

Last week's "Frontiers" quoted extensively from Simon Raven's article in the May *Encounter* dealing with the psychology of England's officer class. Mr. Raven noted the transformation being planned for both armies of men and armies of missiles, but also expressed his conviction that the essential attitude relating soldier to officer would simply find a new expression. Taken together, White's and Raven's articles afford a basis for a great deal of discussion. Granting that the class attitudes of the commissioned men diminish under the equalizing effect of combat, without the combat—and Mr. White assures us that the experience is practically gone forever—what will happen to that "quasi-moral imperative" which permits the leaders to lead without any personal awareness of men whose actions they control?

COMMENTARY
THE DECLINE OF MORAL EXPERIENCE

THIS week's and last week's Review articles—paired by suggestion of the writer—both deal with the transformation of the military institution. The article last week reported the British attempt to refurbish the basis for the moral superiority of the officer class, in which a new sort of mystique has taken the place of the idea that rigorous *training* imparts the necessary qualities. Now, going to Sandhurst or Warminster is supposed to have some kind of charismatic effect upon the prospective officers, rewriting the contents of their genes to the formula for "unique qualities of character which entitle them to assume overlord status for all time." This quite Prussian development is in puzzling contrast to the rapid democratization of Britain, now going on, and must be assumed to be a last desperate effort on the part of the Military Mind to preserve its sacrosanct authority.

This week's Review is concerned more factually with the probable disappearance, in the near future, of the last vestiges of moral experience as a part of military life in the United States. It is not that there will be no more war—but that the framework of the military life is dissolving into a branch of technology. The rules of being a good soldier will eventually have no more relevance than the rules of being a good cowboy, and will be found only in paperback romances of an earlier epoch.

The departure from the scene of entire regions of human action and moral experience seems to be a characteristic of our time. The arena of vigorous "free enterprise" is already a pallid memory, celebrated by spokesmen who insist upon ignoring that the substantial rewards of modern industry do not go to the men who organize production, but to the men who organize and manipulate corporate structures, and who make all their major decisions with an eye to their next tax report. The "creative" people of our time are not engaged in primary activities, but in secondary activities which are now of primary importance. Advertising and selling, for example, have replaced quality of product as the key to success. It is not that quality is no longer important, but that the uniformity of manufacturing techniques has made mass-produced products almost equal in quality, regardless of the manufacturer. This is the case, at any rate, in respect to automobiles, which are all very good, these days, by conventional standards.

Wherever you turn, you encounter a Big System in which everything is managed for you. Human relations, on this basis, become a series of peripheral contacts between the representatives of systems, and conflict and triumph are sluggish affairs which move along in time with the whir and click of IBM machines.

This is not, it seems to us, a matter calling for angry indictment of the Machiavellian managers of the system. They don't know any better, are not capable of anything better, or they would long ago have found better things to do. And the last thing that we can expect is that *they* will lead us out of the wilderness. Two things are likely to happen—will, we might say, undoubtedly happen. Sooner or later there is bound to be a great moral collapse. A world which denies entry to a life of genuine moral engagement is a world which can produce little more than disgust and boredom. If there were not so much energy and bustling busyness in the world, one might predict a slow decline of Western civilization into what Spengler named a Fellaheen culture—passive submission to endless monotony. But there is too much explosiveness, both in the people and in what they are doing, for this sort of dry rot to set in. Further, this is a period in which countless people are engaged in an urgent if silent search for *meaning.* If they do not find it—and they will not find it in the Big Systems—they will set about devising new forms of human expression. This is the second thing that is likely to happen.

It should be evident that the chief obstacle to a rebirth of originality and free activity—to a life of genuine challenge—is the all-consuming and universally "organizing" presence of war as the primary condition of our society. War has destroyed economic freedom through the tax structure its uncontrollable costs impose. War is destroying political freedom through the fear and anxiety it provokes. War is destroying free intellectual life by making itself the chief topic of discussion, to the point of obsession, and this madness compels even the sane to occupy themselves with little else, so engrossed they must be in opposing it.

It is war, or the things which make for war, which has drained the moral vitality away from other issues and human concerns. The loss, therefore, of moral content in the military institution itself, may be of great significance, as the beginning of a process of demoralization which, in time, may lead human beings to reject war entirely. If, in such circumstances, they do not, we can only conclude that they are human beings no longer, but have become something else.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
TWO GENERATIONS IN COLLEGE

THE *Nation* for May 16 is largely devoted to a "Campus Report," the third of a series begun in March, 1957, under the heading of "The Careful Young Men." An editorial note explains the *Nation's* intent in securing material for "Campus Report No. 3" from articulate students as well as from professors and administrators. Serious causes for concern include "a failure of communication between student and faculty, the growth of administrative bureaucracies, and the need to study faculty performance before deciding where the silence has fallen."

Of course we are aware that "the present generation— youth in college and just graduated—has been called apathetic, silent, conformist, indifferent, confused." But "whatever validity these labels may have, they are still labels: descriptive but not diagnostic." So, says the *Nation,* "this has been turned over to a small group of teachers and students who take the epithets for granted and seek the reasons."

The students who have the most to say, quite understandably, feel that the "silent generation" is silent because it has been conditioned to be just this by both teaching and administrative precedent. A young Texan, Robb K. Burlage, until a few months ago editor of *The Daily Texan,* states his case:

> Is the so-called "silent generation" of students simply emulating the apathy—or the caution—of their teachers?
>
> It is the university administration's job, it seems to me, to create that kind of campus atmosphere in which the faculty feels encouraged to challenge, to debate, to reach conclusions which do not necessarily coincide with "popular" conclusions. (As *The Daily Texan* put it recently: "The administration cannot hand out . . . courage with the monthly pay checks, but it can provide elbowroom for its exercise.") More than this, it is the administration's job, having encouraged independence of thought within the academic family, to defend that independence against the outside world, and to lead in teaching the public that a university's prime responsibility is not to *reflect* public opinion, but to help in *creating* it.

A useful discussion in "Campus Report No. 3" is contributed by Edward D. Eddy, Jr., vice president and provost of the University of New Hampshire. Dr. Eddy is the author of *The College Influence on Student Character,* a study published in March by the American Council of Education. He brings to bear the fruit of a fairly leisurely tour of colleges and universities, during which Dr. Eddy and his colleagues lived with the students in dormitories, found their way into bull sessions, and interviewed members of the faculty and staff on each campus. The intent in the present article is to indicate the extent to which the student complaints regarding faculty apathy are warranted, but to parallel this with observation of a peculiar ethical neutrality on the part of most students. Of the latter, Dr. Eddy provides a typical illustration:

> We asked a student to describe the ideal person. His initial answer reflected, for the most part, society's current admiration of the well-adjusted person who gets along with anybody. But to this was quickly added praise for the person who reasons for himself. The man of character, according to the student, is one who does not accept too readily the point of view of others and yet has the knack of understanding and working with all who cross his path. Obviously, the student's desire for individual thought is gravely threatened and compounded by his equally strong desire for social acceptance.

In other words, the student can appreciate variety of opinion, but it is an appreciation without much fruit. Why? Dr. Eddy continues:

> While respecting and honoring the adult who has explicit convictions, the student prefers to hide his own in the shelter of the group.
>
> Over and over again, students claim to value far more highly the faculty member who has convictions and is willing to make them known. They agree that often they first recognize the importance of taking a stand only after they have actually observed a person who is honestly and carefully committed. They sense immediately and are suspicious of any teacher who

tries to hide under a facade of assumed objectivity. One student concluded, "We're called the silent generation, but can you really blame us? We've studied under those who often make a fetish of silence."

A Harvard student committee recently summarized basic student conclusions about student apathy:

> Students frequently receive the impression that this non-committed objective stance is the only one that is scholarly and scientific. Hence they may think that they should try to maintain it all of the time, even when commitment is in order. . . . If suspended judgment is connected with a scholarly approach, students may remain suspended until they leave the academic community, and then revert to earlier social norms or unthinkingly adopt new ones offered them by the society they enter.

Here we are reminded of what Diana Trilling says of the professional "Beat Generation" in the Spring *Partisan Review*. According to Mrs. Trilling, the "beat" youths are just about as far away from being radical or revolutionary —or even challenging—as most of the rest of us, because, for one thing, they have no conviction that protest and rebellion are worthwhile. Mrs. Trilling writes:

> Similarly docile to culture, the "beat" also contrives a fate by predicting a fate. Like the respectable established intellectual—or the organization man, or the suburban matron— against whom he makes his play of protest, he conceives of himself as incapable of exerting any substantive influence against the forces that condition him. He is made by society he cannot make society. He can only stay alive as best he can for as long as is permitted him. Is it any wonder, then, that *Time* and *Life* write as they do about the "beats"—with such a conspicuous show of superiority, and no hint of fear? These periodicals know what genuine, dangerous protest looks like, and it doesn't look like Ginsberg and Kerouac. Clearly, there is no more menace in *Howl* or *On The Road* than there is in the Scarsdale PTA. In the common assumption of effectlessness, in the apparent will to rest with a social determination over which the individual spirit and intelligence cannot and perhaps even should not try to triumph, there merge any number of the disparate elements of our present culture—from the liberal intellectual journals to Luce to the Harvard Law School, from Ginsberg to the suburban matron.

Dr. Eddy suggests another aspect of the tangled picture —the noticeable lack of challenge in university life today. At the University of Washington, two hundred student leaders sent these sentiments to the University president:

> Although the university is constantly making attempts to improve its standards, we believe that it has failed to challenge its students sufficiently. In many senses, it is too easy for thousands of students to "get by" and never learn to become critical, analytical thinkers or to achieve an understanding of the world around them. Students on all levels of attainment feel that they have not worked to the limits of their ability and time.
>
> The university must raise its standards. In some cases this means simply requiring more work; in many more it means emphasizing an improved quality of work and an intelligent, analytical approach to the subject matter. Students must extend themselves to achieve a deep and meaningful understanding of material. But this is possible only if the faculty seeks to help us by challenging us more fully.

FRONTIERS

Commonplace of Our Age

FEW books in recent months have provoked more discussion than Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World Revisited*, already reviewed in MANAS (May 20.) Of the many reviews we have read there have been a few which tend to consider some of the dire prophecies of the Brave New World as alarmist and exaggerated. Typical of such comment is a discussion by L. J. Rather in the *Nation* of Feb. 28. Mr. Rather belongs to the Stanford University School of Medicine, and it is probably safe to assume that he is well informed on the subject of pharmacology, and that his remarks on Huxley's view of the possibility of control of people through the use of "happiness" drugs deserves our serious attention. Freely acknowledging that considerable experimentation is being performed with the many drugs that have been found to cause marked effects upon the qualities of consciousness, Mr. Rather notes that the results, while definitive, are nevertheless unpredictable. He points out:

> A kind of uncertainty principle of the mind seems to have revealed itself in these experiments with drugs. Who knows whether lysergic acid will induce a state of exaltation or terror? The more subtle the action of a drug on man, the more its effect seems to depend on his whole life setting, his cultural milieu, his changing desires, fears and hopes. . . . The manipulator appears in a less sinister light and bears a resemblance to the stock character in an old Mack Sennett comedy trying to plug a leaky wall. He carefully closes two leaks with the palm of his hands only to be hit full in the face by a new stream. Huxley's "final revolution" is likely to be betrayed by the creatures who were going to perpetrate it on themselves . . .

While Mr. Rather seems to accept the mere presence of the manipulator with some complacency, he is reassured that no matter how much we may try to tinker with the human nervous system, the best that our chemical geniuses can do will never be enough to hold the human species long in bondage. It is indeed comforting to think that maybe we are not quite the pushovers that Mr. Huxley portrays.

Yet, in *This Week* magazine for May 17, we find an article, "A General Predicts War Without Death," which consists mostly of a description of the possible uses in warfare of the new "psychochemical" drugs. There are evidently fewer reservations in the mind of its author, Major General William M. Creasy, U.S. Army, Ret., about the effectiveness of these drugs. That the drugs have been discovered and are being developed as weapons by the Chemical Corps is a known fact. A great deal is known about how they work.

Although conceding that the Russians probably know more about the mass effects of the psychochemicals than we do, yet fearing to tell the reader too much of the facts because the Russians might learn something by reading the article, Gen. Creasy nevertheless manages to make his point—that the drugs are now developed to the stage where serious consideration can be given to their use as a military weapon, capable of rendering docile entire urban populations and armed forces, and enabling a conquering invader to take over land and people with a minimum destruction of lives and property.

(Readers are urged to examine the Creasy article, if they have not seen it, for numerous other implications of great interest.)

However, all this seems somewhat beside the point. It appears that the true import of the Huxley book has escaped Mr. Rather's consideration. In one place in his article Mr. Rather attributes the concern over these drugs to Huxley's "mechanistic determinism" which views human beings as essentially simple and predictable—"conscious automata" —but isn't the shoe on the other foot? Isn't Mr. Rather taking an altogether too simplified view of Huxley's book and the warning implicit in it? The important thing Huxley illustrates is that serious and diabolical plans for the control of people have become a commonplace of our age, and that

enormous energy is being directed toward the invention of new, more irresistible ways of destroying human freedom. *Brave New World Revisited* is a fantasy arising logically out of the solid facts of contemporary behavior and attitude.

If it seems too fantastic, reflect on the thirty years that have passed since the first *Brave New World* appeared. The details are irrelevant. The attitudes, the acceptance as Good, or at least tolerable, of so many things that a generation ago would have won nothing but abhorrence, have become such familiar items of our cultural baggage that it is difficult to realize how much we've changed.

Whatever may be the case as to the effectiveness and predictability of the "happiness" drugs, we have stepped over the threshold of restraint and are preparing ourselves to use them "if necessary." Progress in the fields of chemistry and physiology, as in nuclear physics, can be turned to destructive ends, and unfortunately in our times, the more destructive the ends, the more rapid the progress. Is there any reason to believe that the capriciousness of results in the use of psychochemicals on humans cannot be controlled, given more experimentation and study, and perhaps, more importantly, the impetus of military necessity or national security?

Nor should the pressures of modern life themselves be overlooked for their possible role in the ultimate drugging of the human race. Isn't the widespread incidence of alcoholism, addiction to narcotics, the use of tranquilizers, parlor hypnotism, or even TV-itis, symptomatic of the increased pressure of living and of the need for relief by deliberate alteration or distraction of consciousness? The temptation to surrender, to give up the fight for a better life, is terribly strong today. When the world gets too tough, too painful or sordid, why not turn it into a paradise by swallowing a pill?

We might guess at how many people are today just "minding their own business" because the world is too complicated and the problems seem beyond the range of their effective action. Life is too short and one can stand only so much pain and disappointment, so to heck with it. To such a population, poised for the retreat into hedonism, is wholesale brain poisoning so unthinkable?

Effective propaganda, calculated to make "happiness" pills respectable, could in time rationalize their general use. Today, of course, we are shocked by the mere idea. Shocked as we were fourteen years age when the Bomb snuffed out 100,000 lives in Hiroshima. Yet today we complacently accept the manufacture of megaton weapons with destructive powers that dwarf the Hiroshima bomb, and *we permit ourselves the notion that we would use these bombs on other human beings.*

If the Western nations can rationalize the Bomb by declaring it a defensive weapon that will be used only for the protection of the Good, the True, and the Beautiful, is it inconceivable that the Enemy in the World of Tomorrow might turn out to be Conflict, Despair, the Tendency-to-Rise-Up-and-Raise-Hell?—and since these Evils tend to disturb the Equilibrium, let us do away with them: Be a Good Citizen, take your Happiness Pill every day!