VOLUME XVII, NO. 34
AUGUST 19, 1964

THE CLINICAL SOCIETY

WHILE white liberals keep on trying to corner James Baldwin and get him to admit that at least *some* progress has been made toward equal rights for Negroes, and while Baldwin keeps on resisting these plausible claims, holding firmly to a qualitative conception of the good life instead of one that is approached gradually by measurable increments, another man, Bayard Rustin—a Negro leader who is far more than a Negro leader—has been maturing certain far-reaching conclusions. These are set down in the July *Fellowship,* the monthly magazine of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, an organization of Christian pacifists.

Rustin brings to his discussion of the Civil Rights Movement the kind of realistic awareness that is possible for a man who had a shaping part in the Montgomery bus strike, who very largely planned last summer's March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, and who has been a nonviolent activist for peace and racial justice for some thirty years of his life, working through FOR, CORE, and the War Resisters League. While his article is called "Non-Violence on Trial," there is a sense in which his material goes beyond the crucial question of whether the principle of non-violence is going to survive the crisis of the Negro revolution. Non-violence is a means of struggling toward goals to which access is blocked by massive prejudice—barriers which cannot be reduced by rational appeals. But what if, when this means is seen to be not working very well, there is at the same time appalling evidence that the goals themselves have somehow become insubstantial? After all, not only the self-respect and feelings of identity of Negroes are at issue in the rights campaign. There is also the solid core of demand for jobs and economic security. One of Rustin's purposes in writing this article is to show that, actually, *the jobs do not exist.* This is the same as saying that, in the terms under which it originally set out, the Negro Revolution can, if successful, win only a Pyrrhic victory. Nor is there, he points out, encouraging evidence of progress toward even such a victory.

At the outset, Bayard Rustin helps his reader to understand how the Negro *feels* in respect to his struggle and its objectives. He says:

> What one has to remember is that for the American Negro, the 1954 Supreme Court Decision for which the NAACP spent millions of dollars and 50 years of its work in achieving, was a kind of declaration of independence for Negroes. They felt that this principled decision, which was going to affect every act the rest of their lives, meant that something truly significant was happening and that it would happen quickly. But the fact of the matter is that, ten years after the Supreme Court decision (and I do not choose at this moment to go into the reasons for this—they are not all due to segregation and discrimination), the objective reality is that there are now more Negroes in segregated schools than in 1954, there are more Negroes without work than in 1954, and there is more segregated housing in the United States than in 1954. In fact, any one who is familiar with the pattern of housing in the South will know that we never had, prior to 1964, the rigid kind of ghetto-ization that we now have in the North. More recently the pattern of putting Negroes into ghettos in the southern cities has been developing.
>
> Now the move toward violence is not a move from one spiritual platform to another. It is the move which always occurs in a situation where the tactics that have been advocated and used are inadequate for dealing with objective needs. In this particular revolutionary situation, after ten years of vigorous activity, when in no southern city is there a breakthrough, despite the thousands and thousands who have gone to jail, despite bombings of churches and people, despite the millions of dollars tied up in bail and the millions paid in fines—when all of this activity has gone into a situation—when no breakthrough has occurred in the South and in the North Negroes are being increasingly pushed to the wall—always the rank and file raise two fundamental

> questions: One, what about the leadership over these ten years, with the implication that there must be something wrong with it if conditions can get worse and worse as we work harder and harder. And the second question is, what about the basic method, non-violence. Obviously, if things get worse and worse, there must be something wrong with that method. So Malcolm X-ism, the violence which is appearing in most of these civil rights organizations and to some extent its leadership, springs from an evaluation of the past ten years and the frustration which is inevitably coming to the fore in such cases.

Now it is not any American white man's business to try—or even think of trying—to modify or temper the emotional fervor of the Negroes in their demand for equality. They are simply right. They have the mandate of the social compact in the Constitution, they have its confirmation in the Supreme Court Decision, and they have the agreement of every decent citizen who has thought about these questions. It may be said that for the Negroes to turn back in their struggle is as unthinkable as it would have been for Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson and Samuel Adams, and George Washington to turn back from *their* decision to vindicate the truths of the Declaration of Independence of the United States. In 1775 a quite respectable Tory's "Yes but" earned only the contempt of patriots. The Civil Rights movement now has the delayed but finally released momentum of the last act of the American Revolution. According to the American tradition, to ask the Negro to "wait" is to ask him to do something contemptible. The whites might, out of their own weakness, *beg* the Negroes to be patient, but they cannot ask it of them in terms of any commonly acknowledged principle.

There are obvious embarrassments for white people placed in this situation. One escape lies in the claim that, after all, the whites, not the blacks, made the American revolution; it is *ours,* to use as we choose, not theirs, to claim its heritage. But if white men say this, they only confirm all that Baldwin has said about their inability to admit the Negro to a role in American history.

Of course, the argument that the American Revolution was only for white-skinned people is a sick argument made by those who cannot think of anything else to say. They are pushed into making it, just as Negroes are pushed into Black Nationalism and "Negritude" partisanship, by the pressure of events. There is only progress backwards in that direction.

Rustin's next point is that, whatever sophisticated Negro and other critics have to say about the decaying good life of Western society generally, the average Negro is not "revolutionary" in this sense. If he is revolutionary at all, it is only by accident, since the fulfillment of his demands cannot help but involve changes so far-reaching as to be revolutionary in effect. The Negro wants what the white man has, or seems to have; or, more exactly, equal opportunity to get it, without prejudice from law or custom. Bayard Rustin renders this want in terms of the concrete effects of its satisfaction on existing society:

> When a Negro came up against decent housing, when he came up asking for a job in the face of automation, when he came up asking that the schools be really integrated, he was asking not first of all, for integrated schools, but he was asking for quality schools which cannot be had without billions and billions of dollars being poured into them.
>
> He was asking for the revolutionizing of an entire school system of this country, for there cannot be any integration without it. For no white people are ever going to bus their white children into the ghettos of Harlem or Bedford-Stuyvesant, or Southside Chicago. Q.E.D., the only way you can ever get white and Negro students into the same schools is to make schools which are so vastly superior to schools as we know them, that the question of bussing will not be a question.

There is thus a built-in frustration for the Civil Rights Movement in the very circumstances of the changes it seeks. As Rustin says:

> The American Negro, who has thought, up to this point, that the problem was fighting segregation and discrimination, now discovers that it is not only segregation and discrimination that he must fight, but that he must fight basic assumptions and institutions

of this entire society. Now this is most frustrating for a minority, because any minority tends to want to become a part of the society as it exists.

On the matter of jobs for Negroes, and the proposal that, in order to redress the balance for centuries of injustice, Negroes be given preferential treatment, Rustin says:

> Now what in the name of God, with fifty million poor in this country, eight million statistically unemployed, does preferential treatment for Negroes mean?—except with Pitney Bowes and I.B.M. who have such difficulty getting any skilled workers that they're willing to take Negroes. What does it mean? It means that ultimately you are saying: white man move over and give me a job because for three hundred years I have been mistreated. He will say, move where? With automation taking jobs away from white workers as they are, and with Negroes even faster, he has nowhere to move.

The next passage bears the impact of a reality that will have to be faced, somehow or other, by all Americans within the next few years:

> And therefore the civil rights movement cannot demand black jobs and this is a profound frustration for the movement. The movement has to say, white brother, working or not working, and black brother, working or not working, come together, create a political movement (by which I do not mean a political party) for putting all men back to work under the slogan that if the private sector of the economy cannot put men back to work, then you the government must do it. You demand that all men be put back to work, that all men be trained by government, and you cannot talk about training in a vacuum. For if you pick up fifty Negroes and fifty whites in the streets of New York and say you are going to train them now to be medical technicians because they are not prepared to be anything else, a year from now medical technicians will be automated. Then you'll have to pick them all up again and say now we'll train them for something else. This is what makes President Johnson's program an absolute fiasco, except that some of us with some imagination can work under this slogan of the revolution about the poor, to demand what is right. But nobody, but nobody can tell you what to train people for unless it is done within a planned economy, in which you know where automation is to take place, at what rate, and what industries it is going to touch.

We have, in short, a changed environment for our common socio-economic life in the United States. And it has been the unanticipated and basically unwelcome task of the civil rights movement to bring the hard facts of this changed environment to our attention just a few years earlier—ten or maybe fifteen years earlier—than we would have found them out anyway.

What do these facts mean? We leave the argument about their bearing on our national economy to others—to people better instructed in such matters. Here, we should like to examine their implications for what, in the minds of a great many people, has been for a century or more the authentic American Dream.

When you speak of the American Dream, you mean some broad, common embodiment of the longings of the great majority. This Dream comes out and manifests itself again and again. For example, there was the film that was so popular a dozen or so years ago—*How Green Was My Valley* (that the scene was in England is an unimportant detail). There you had the hope for all the Good Things that modest, decent people want come true. The struggle against economic selfishness was put down by a determined union which sought only what was right and just—and got it for The Men. An ideal Brotherhood was preached by a heart-warming, tolerant, Unitarian sort of religion, and it was realized in the film. People lived in their own homes, the fruit of honest labor, and they had pretty little white picket fences to mark off one man's private realm from his neighbor's.

Almost the same pictures are generated in the novels of John Steinbeck. All agree that what good, conscientious Americans have a right to is some kind of staked-out portion of the land which they control as their *homes.* That's what the Joads wanted. That's what Lenny and George talked about whenever they had time to dream. There are dozens of versions of the Dream, of course, but emotionally they all mean about the same thing. The Dream promises a man a chance to

bite off what he can chew; and then he works things out *himself.*

The Dream itself, as dreams go, isn't a bad one. The trouble is that it isn't by any stretch of the imagination a philosophy of life. To work, it needs a particular set of circumstances; and for it to go on working those circumstances must remain fairly static, which circumstances never do. And the losing struggle of good, decent people to make the Dream come true has the effect of deafening them to other and larger considerations. The politicians contribute to this deafening process because they, after all, are not philosophers and educators, but people who are able to believe that they can do some good by manipulating the illusions of the masses. They can't, of course, but they think they can. So the politicians are no help, and when conditions grow serious, their helplessness usually becomes a positive evil. They are stuck with the only theory of progress they know—the manipulation of tired, old illusions. Real educators want to expose the illusions, but the politicians insist on trying to milk them a while longer, and the result is that every demagogue in the country automatically turns against the real educators.

Meanwhile, the agencies of social responsibility and of the common good have been for so long in the hands of time-servers and bureaucrats that the merest suggestion of "social planning" comes as a threat that the citizens can hardly tolerate. What is the average apolitical individual's recollection of social agencies and public functionaries? He may think of his few visits to those inhospitable buildings smelling of stale urine and cleaning compound and wonder how a country run by people who work there can be any good at all. Is he going to trust his children's future to *them?* He thinks of the bored and indifferent clerks in licensing bureaus and permit sections, and the emptiness of political speeches. He turns away in disgust, too often looking, not for truth, which is bound to be difficult, but at what choices remain among ideological slogans. The selection, for a tired and frustrated American hoping to renew his Dream, is not good.

Bayard Rustin's point is that the Negroes are making the threat of change in the common environment more and more obvious by reason of their discovery that the old environment cannot possibly satisfy their demands. As he says:

> I'm trying to explain why Negroes are going to be climbing trains, lying down in front of things, tying up bridges and all sorts of things that seem absolutely senseless. It is out of the frustration that they know that if they do not move, nothing else can. It was the Negro sit-in movement which destroyed McCarthyism on our campuses. Nothing else. McCarthyism would still be there if it weren't for the sit-in movement. The sit-in movement's greatest contribution was not that Negroes got the right to eat in some restaurants, but that they restored political debate to the campuses of this country.
>
> And there are many illustrations in which the trade union movement only moved under the pressure of Phillip Randolph and the Negro American Labor Council. Therefore we are advising Negroes vigorously to continue action on the one hand wherever they can, while on the other we are getting them to see the great need for allies. But it is their movement that will create these allies if they can be created, and nothing less.

Now what seems clear from these general trends, and from the special case, as pictured by Rustin, of the relation of the Negroes to them, is that the American people are slowly entering upon a kind of confrontation for which they have no historical precedent. It is a situation in which the old rule—Decide what you want, or what is Right, and then *go get it*—can hardly be made to work. This is quite different from having to face a "difficult challenge.

The absolute frustration of Righteousness is something new in our experience. For individuals, this can and often does lead to some kind of psychotic break. To take away the righteous goals of a righteous man is usually more than he can stand. His righteousness grows and grows in his own mind until he can think of nothing else.

And then he has to redesign the universe. It's *got* to fit what he is determined to do. To change his intentions is like trying to deny God's Will or bottle up nuclear fission. That's the way he *feels* about it, at any rate.

There is of course another possible development. Righteousness looks at the human situation in terms of good and evil. One may also look at it in terms of sickness and health. Of moral man you demand righteousness. But of a sick man you don't demand anything—not really. You study the conditions under which he might have a chance of getting better—of returning, that is, to the role of a responsible moral agent.

Now how would you apply this view to a social situation in which some kind of sickness is behind the conditions which frustrate righteousness?

This is obviously a completely new idea to introduce into American politics, but it may be the only idea which has enough virtue in it to give pause to the explosive Forces of Righteousness. And something is going to have to slow down the demands of Absolute Righteousness, if we are to avoid widespread psychotic breaks.

We are not, here, making any particular "recommendations," least of all offering any gratuitous pieties to the Negroes. We are suggesting a fact about the socio-economic situation in the United States. We are saying that it can no longer be defined in socio-economic categories. Its reality cannot be comprehended in political terms, any more, because this reality is now *clinical*, or is rapidly becoming so.

The relationships in a political situation are defined by a variety of contractual arrangements. They are described in social compacts and the body of the law. The relationships in a clinical situation belong to another order of human existence: they are therapeutic and educational. In politics, show-downs are settled by reference to the law. In therapy, there is no letter of the law, but only the therapist's intuition of what will contribute to human growth. And in a political situation which has become clinical, the ills of the members of the society can be helped only as everybody contributes what he can as an amateur therapist.

Ultimately, there is very little difference between a therapist and an educator. For this reason we can recognize Gandhi as the great pioneer who spent an entire lifetime trying to figure out how to relate the mood and ends of therapy to political situations in which ordinary political righteousness will simply not work. All Americans may have a similar task ahead.

REVIEW
WORTH NOTING

MANAS readers may recall a prepublication notice several issues ago of *Friends of the Hibakusha,* edited by Virginia Naeve for the World Peace Mission (Alan Swallow, 1964). Now available in both hard cover and paperback, this collection of writings by and about the survivors of the Hiroshima bombing brings under one cover such contributors as Norman Cousins, Bertrand Russell; Earle and Barbara Reynolds, and many others—and includes an essay-review reprinted from MANAS. Mrs. Naeve's *Changeover: The Drive For Peace* was reviewed in MANAS; and she has been a contributor to these pages.

Friends of the Hibakusha is, at best, a marginal publishing venture; Alan Swallow has issued the book at cost and Mrs. Naeve and all the contributors gave their time and efforts. About the *Hibakusha,* the survivors of the first atomic bombing, the book is tied together by a theme of revolution; whether we like it or not, whether we are aware of it or not, the world changed suddenly and irrevocably on August 6, 1945. Reading and feeling through this book leaves one with both the horror and hope that so dramatically intersected after that first explosion; Hiroshima gave negative definition for thinking about any possible future for mankind. That this must not be our common future frames the search for ways to turn the incredibly horrible into the first step toward lasting peace. Mrs. Naeve's preface sums up:

> This book is to show the reactions of Americans to Hiroshima and the reactions of the Japanese to the bomb. It shows some of the more positive actions. At the same time, particularly in the poetry section, it brings death very close. It is a study of the human animal trying its best to surmount an almost impossible man-made obstacle, the atom bomb. It is a book of hope, a hope that life will continue and that more eyes will see, more ears will hear, more hearts will open.

* * *

Publication of a paperback edition of A. S. Neill's Sum*merhill: A Radical Approach to Child Rearing* (Hart, $1.95) should be of interest to readers who have been waiting to buy an inexpensive copy. This reviewer read the book when it first came out in this country in 1960, and can now report that while active American response to Neill's ideas has been modest, the Summerhill Society (5 Beekman St., New York) has only one school almost viable in up-state New York—the ability of Neill's ideas to elicit extreme reactions is no less now than it was when the hardback edition first appeared, accompanied, as it was, by full-page ads in national magazines. I used to play a game then, which with minor variations still works; the trick is to introduce into an essentially self-corroborative and soporific discussion, blatantly and without qualification, some of Neill's standard themes: that children should not be coerced into learning, that the goal of education is to work joyfully and to find happiness, that the best education is that which joins the emotional and intellectual components of learning in an integrated process of total growth and self-actualizing discovery. The results are remarkable and amazingly similar, no matter whom one is engaging—from the corner grocer to a Ph.D. with a high I.Q. and high hopes for tenure. The response is usually hostile and defensive; the old nostrums and perversions incorporated in "how to raise children as it has always been done" come rolling back—in either the simple vernacular or the more stilted polysyllabic prose of academe. Parents and potential parents seem almost unanimously dedicated to getting vengeance for their miserable childhoods out of their real and potential children.

If you are not tempted to play this game, simply read the book and listen. You will discover a hostility to Neill's ideas so extreme that it precludes even a modest understanding of what he has done at his school in England or what his ideas indicate: a complete revaluation of all processes of education from the first moments of life. Not incidentally, psychologists would do well

to study the reactions to Neill's ideas; he is one of the first—if not academic and if primitive—exponents of self-actualization. He proved in the lives of his students and himself that the theories of psychologists like Rogers, Maslow, and Fromm (who introduces the book) have a basis in fact; that they are demonstrably therapeutic under certain conditions.

* * *

MANAS continues to search for good books concerned with an understanding of mythology. Until recently, this reviewer had not seen a basic (encyclopedic) work to rival the classic *Mythology* of Thomas Bulfinch, while keeping in mind the distinction between basic works and the more speculative and interpretative volumes such as those by Joseph Campbell and the three-volume *Patterns of Myth* edited by Alan Watts (George Braziller, 1963). But now a two-volume paperback edition of Robert Graves' *The Greek Myths* (Penguin Books) offers the reader a more complete and up-to-date study of the mythology of the Greeks than is to be found elsewhere. Each mythic event and description of mythological personality is annotated with recent archeological findings and is related to associated myths, as well as to historical data: and the psychological and ritual connotations are described and briefly discussed. The result is exciting reading, coincident with the first adequate revision of the Greek myths since Smith's *Dictionary of Classical Mythology and Biography*, first published in 1844. *The Greek Myths* is as readable as Bulfinch and has enough footnotes and references to satisfy the most exacting scholar. Graves' book has been available for some time now—initial publication was in 1955—but the high quality of the paperback edition and the continuing interest of MANAS readers in mythology makes it worth noting now.

WILLIAM MATHES

San Francisco, California

COMMENTARY
A LIFE OF DARING

THERE are moments in history when nothing less than a spirit of daring will prepare human beings for the experiences which lie ahead. The people of the United States have ample precedent for understanding this; their land was settled and its wildernesses encompassed by men and women who had daily encounters with the unknown. The resourcefulness they developed in three or four generations was not, we may think, lost after the continent had been turned into the vast "neighborhood" of America; instead, the talents of the pioneers became the genius of the technological revolution. Exploration and mastery continued, but in the controlled environment of the laboratory and the shop; and it was increasingly carried on by experts—a special breed of men, ingenious, tireless, who had hardly any life except in meeting the challenges of their own kind of creative urge.

These forms of adventure, you might say, are now carefully institutionalized. Instead of a trail-blazing Daniel Boone, you have a Highway Commission and a corps of freeway engineers. Instead of a Thomas Edison who sits up all night in a home-made laboratory, you have teams of research specialists working under scientific administrators in air-conditioned offices, and every day these bright young men buzz in shiny Volkswagens to their nine-to-five jobs and then back to their cleverly disguised tract homes complete with continental bars, ranch-type barbecue pits, and individualized swimming pools. The whole environment is scientifically rationalized and implemented to produce both maximum security and maximum "creativity."

But what about the daring? Obviously, it will have to be born all over again. And it will have to be a new kind. The encounter, today, is with a new kind of wilderness—*manmade*. Instead of having to invent the flivver to give everybody a low-cost automobile, we have to invent ways of looking at the realities of American life so that we'll *want* to figure how to provide work and adequate income for everyone. The problem is not in *how* to do it, but in *wanting* to do it, instead of getting only a feeling of interruption and distraction—instead of brushing these massive human needs aside, as though it were "un-American" to show an interest in them.

The daring will come, we suppose, when it gets home to us that the forces of the human wilderness are now shaping the major issues of our lives. But how long can we wait? Bayard Rustin is going to need some sleep, one of these days, and it is already an absolute disgrace for the American community to heap so much responsibility on one man, or a handful of men, just because they have the daring to bear it.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

NOTES IN PASSING

APPARENTLY, we have missed seeing the challenging statements of Samuel B. Gould until he departed from California. A short while ago he left the headship of the Santa Barbara campus of the University of California to become president of New York's educational television station, WNDT, and we now have evidence of inability at both places to "adjust" to the status quo in institutional thinking, manifesting, instead, the same pioneering spirit that enabled him to perpetuate Arthur Morgan's "toughness" at Antioch College—where Gould also served as president. A story which appeared in the New York *Herald Tribune* (Nov. 3, 1963) affords a summary of his educational perspective:

> The men and women from the testing and research centers and the schools sat back after luncheon at the Hotel Roosevelt last week expecting to hear a characteristic, non-revolutionary after-dinner speech on "Dilemmas in Education: The Basis for Revolution."
>
> They didn't get anything like that from Samuel B. Gould, president of New York's educational television station WNDT. He gave them a startling, blistering comprehensive attack on American education, and, in passing, on American life.
>
> America, Dr. Gould told the conference of the Educational Records Bureau, prepares its students neither for independent thought, life nor for peace.

Some direct quotations read as follows:

> In and of itself, this materialistic motivation would not be so bad if it did not so completely dominate the educational scene through high school and the undergraduate college years. . . . With such an emphasis, the process of preparing coming generations so that they will think and move constructively toward a warless world becomes difficult, if not impossible.
>
> The fact is that a very large portion of our scientific effort is directed toward defense either directly or indirectly, and there seems to be no way to change the pattern. . . . We are becoming more and more willing to accept the type of answers only the electronic computers can offer us. There is serious doubt as to whether these answers will provide a warless world for ourselves or our descendants.
>
> We have always kept our youth in a state of adolescence far too long for their own good. . . . We keep them in a sort of advanced nursery where they are expected to play games of make-believe and perpetrate social activities that border on the childish and inane.

In conclusion, Dr. Gould made three general proposals, as summarized by the *Herald Tribune:*

> Offer a "far more all-encompassing historical approach that would include the significant facts about and implications of the great movements of history, not just in the West but world-wide."
>
> Improve, by making more exact and scientific, the social sciences—"the study of man himself as an individual."
>
> Teach ethics directly: ". . . education in America approaches the problem of ethics only tangentially."
>
> It will be difficult, Dr. Gould said, to put these proposals into effect or to change educational motivations.
>
> "Tradition points in the other direction, as many of us realize," he said, "for education has long since adopted the pattern of following the desires and demands of the people rather than that of leading with boldness and courage and persuasiveness."

* * *

We have previously quoted from Walcott H. Beatty (San Francisco State College) on the philosophical problems of curriculum development. His description of "the function of the teacher," not then used, fits well here:

> A teacher is like an explorer off for uncharted areas. He has explored before and has some knowledge of the general conditions which he must face. He can build a stock of supplies (knowledge of his subject matter) and develop skills at using these supplies. They may be the same supplies he has used in the past and used successfully. However, he will not know exactly what he needs or how it should be used until he takes his first steps into the new territory. It is tempting to develop the analogy further, but let us talk in curriculum and teaching terms instead. Each new group of children is

> genuinely uncharted territory. They are like other children, and yet each is unique and combines with other children to form a unique group. Curriculum materials are selected on the basis that they are judged as helping children to relate to the world in which they are living, and yet each child's perception of the world is different enough so that no one set of facts and no one organized way of presenting ideas will be equally successful with all children. The teacher must be flexible and skilled at picking up the clues that guide him in helping each child find the meaning in the material. Blaming the child and giving him information that he is not being successful does not help him find how the material relates to himself; it merely decreases his motivation to try to find meaning in the material.

* * *

The Los Angeles *Times* for May 2 reported a statement on the Civil Rights movement, put forth by a Protestant group calling itself the American Council of Christian Churches of California, which said: "The religious civil rights propaganda is built upon the false doctrine of 'the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man' and the erroneous equating of Christian brotherhood with integration of the races." Since the influential *Christian Century* printed a strong editorial embodying an opposite view, and since numerous Christian spokesmen have defended the Supreme Court interpretation of the Bill of Rights, it is hardly necessary to point out that such a statement by this California "American Council of Churches" is not widely representative of Christian opinion. As a sample of another outlook on the American Council's demand for prayers in the schools, we quote from a reader's letter to the *Times:*

> Rather than institute a school prayer that would inevitably precipitate further encroachment by rival religions on a local level it would be far wiser to have a course encompassing a comparative study of all the great religions of mankind in all our public schools.
>
> I view with alarm the attempts of certain segments of our population to put religion in our public schools and thereby through congressional fiat, force religious conformity upon us all. The daily prayer would only be the beginning; an opening gambit, so to speak.
>
> As a Jeffersonian self-determinist, I highly resent these rapacious efforts to abrogate one of my basic American rights: the privilege of arriving voluntarily, by way of intensive research, much thought and determined judgment at a decision to support or reject any one or all of the multitudinous church dogmas.
>
> I further resent the ready tendency of some believers to equate belief in a personal deity, in an anthropomorphic conception of God, as a necessary adjunct to patriotism for one's country.

FRONTIERS

Mayer's Moral Universe

MILTON MAYER, man and American, is practically unclassifiable, and this makes his latest collection of essays, *What Can a Man Do?* (University of Chicago Press, $5.00), an unclassifiable book. As a writer, Milton Mayer is something like Henry Miller. If you've read Miller, you know that he doesn't even get going until his subject-matter is arranged so that it fits with grace and laconic humor into the Miller Universe—which is some universe indeed.

So with Mayer. Mayer has his universe, too—a very different one from Miller's—and since this review is about Mayer's book, we'll say no more about Miller, except that both Miller and Mayer are Americans, and both have large quantities of American individuality, independence, and unpredictability; and both are using their lives and extensive talents to prove that being a man—and, one hopes, an American—means giving your humanity priority over your nationality.

Mayer is a moralist and his universe is a moral universe. In this book there are essays on what it means to be a Christian, nowadays, in Czechoslovakia, and on what a man can do to preserve the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights in San Francisco. It is not easy to be a moralist during the middle years of the twentieth century. While there are plenty of "moral issues," and moral evils to be against, the problem is to pick an area and to practice your principles there with some consistency, and at the same time be understood. Being understood is important to Mayer, for Mayer is a writer, and for a man who has picked a field of operations with so many unpopular causes in it, Mayer is a great success at being understood. He arranges his material and then his lucid irony starts to flow.

Mayer is one of the signs of health in the society of the United States. Those who believe in health for America should cherish him and support his works. He is evidence that an authentic radical is apt to crop up anywhere in the country, from any background of circumstances. A sick society is a place where right and wrong are marked with infallible political labels. Mayer is a professional exposer of phony labels and a professor of undoctrinaire morals—a doctor for a morally sick society. Because he began life as a reporter on a Chicago newspaper, he knows the grain of American life from the bottom up. Because he has read the Great Books (over and over again), having worked for the University of Chicago when Robert M. Hutchins was President, as Mr. Hutchins' assistant, he knows the living moral tradition of Western Civilization from the top down. Put these two lines of experience together in a man of talent and principle and you get a Mayer—a man who never lets you forget what the facts of life are, and what principle is for: to do something with toward bettering the facts.

Mayer is a systematic thinker, which means, in this case, that he has a system, strictly his own, for making his points. He arranges his material so that the hypocrisy, the cant, and the false pieties of Western civilization will collapse like a house of cards when he lowers the boom. That is what Mayer's articles are—filled with little houses of cards, one after another, on which he lowers the boom, one after the other. It isn't just a game, however, because the cards are real; a lot of people hold those cards and think they are winning with them. Mayer knows that you can't win anything worth having with those cards, and being a man who has read the Great Books, he is able to explain why.

White is white and black is black, we always say. Not so, says Mayer. In an article which first appeared in *Harper's* for August, 1960, he examines the life of Christians in Eastern Europe. His title is "Christ Under Communism." As you get into the article, you see that Mayer is back at his old stand as a reporter, getting out the facts, looking at the moral reality in the lives of these people. You start out by thinking that it is hard

for Poles and Czechs to be Christian, under Godless Communism, while it is easy for us Americans, but Mayer converts you to a contrary view. The Christian life, according to Mayer, is filled with hard decisions. So, he argues, the Christian way comes easier to people who are unable to avoid hard decisions.

If you take Mayer seriously, and you ought to, the blacks and the whites people accept from the ideologists begin to turn gray, and if you don't want to feel lost, or without any principles, you have to get new whites that won't turn gray when compared with the facts of human life. This is by no means easy, and you may end by wishing Milton Mayer would just keep still. He writes:

> The most persistent impression that an American brings back from a visit to the churches of Eastern Europe is that of Christians who live in a world much more like Christ's than his own; a world where a Christian has to make hard decisions and knows it. "It is an interesting time to be alive," my Polish friend (a Protestant pastor) went on, "a very dangerous time, but very interesting." I remember his words and ask myself: How would an American Christian live dangerously in our time? He would have to go out of his way and "look for trouble." The Christian under communism doesn't have to go out of his way. Not that he's any holier than thou. He doesn't make his hard decisions any more eagerly—or any better—than he would here. But when he makes them badly he has a harder time not knowing it. There are timeservers, of course; men who entered the church without vocation and study the bishop instead of the Bible. And trimmers, there as everywhere. There was an old theologian who insisted on telling me how free the press is and a young church official who party-lined me on the Summit Conference; but on both occasions their colleagues sat through their monologues in granite silence.

How does Mayer get to go to such places? Well, Mayer—born, as they say, a Jew—had the peculiar fortune of a good education. Somehow, along the way, he lost his feeling for the distinctions which divide the high religions one from another. He can't tell Hillel from Jesus. So he is also a Christian, which is pretty confusing for most Jews and Christians. Anyway, Mayer, who is really a philosopher, belongs to any church where the timeless ethics of all the great religions are acknowledged, and he seems to find himself most at home working with the Quakers. He has other employers, such as *Harper's Magazine*, the *Progressive*, and the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and with such generally esteemed sponsors he manages to get around. He has spent, for example, several years in Prague, teaching on the theological faculty of Comenius University, and occasionally preaching from Protestant pulpits around the countryside. This means that he is probably the only non-Communist American who has lived in Czechoslovakia for a considerable time. (He hasn't been there lately because of a hassle with the State Department about his passport—he won't sign a statement denying he is a Communist—and there is a chapter about this in the book.) Mayer's observation of life behind the Iron Curtain is rich in material for people who try to think in moral instead of ideological terms:

> What we saw were Christians living lives unimaginable to the American churchgoer who lives (or thinks he lives) as he pleases and bestirs himself about the flooring for the Sunday school gym. Their world—which never was like ours—began breaking up in 1914. Now they live in a new one. This new world requires the Christian church to collaborate in building an order professing both atheist materialism *and* the reform of social conditions that the church supported for centuries.

Well, you can see what is coming. Mayer is no atheist; for polemical and doubtless other purposes he makes a remarkably good Christian; but he is the embarrassing kind of Christian who can quote Thomas Aquinas to devastating effect. Aquinas, according to Mayer, said that "getting to know God is like getting to know a country—you have got to live there." Mayer's gloss on Aquinas is that "Maps and guide books and treatises, sermons, interviews, tours, and translations are not enough." According to Mayer, you don't avoid atheism by signing some kind of loyalty oath. Mayer is against loyalty oaths. He continues:

> The Marxists have brought home to the Christians of Eastern Europe the reality of their condition. They are beginning to find out what they can—and must—do in the world and what they can't do. In Czechoslovakia I talked to a man who had just been discharged as the principal of a school for handicapped children; in the fall he would have to go back to the classroom as an ordinary teacher again. Had this happened, I asked, solely because of his religion? "Oh, yes," he said. "Our school authorities thought an outspoken Christian should not have the direction of a school in a Marxist state. I said I agreed. And I do agree. I feel that the authorities are acknowledging my own view that Marxist communism and the social gospel are the two real competitors in the world. Would a Communist be allowed to be a school principal in a Christian country like America?" In an East German town there was an old pastor whose daughter, just because she was his, was not admitted to the field of university study for which she had prepared herself. He said: "We are fewer now, but at last we know who we are and what we are here for. We begin to see what is meant by *the living Christ.* Now we are invincible."

These East European Christians are learning to remember elements of their religion which most American Christians have entirely forgotten. They see all around the social reforms which they and their brethren had left undone for lo these many centuries. Now the "profane reformation" is upon them. Mayer quotes Josef Hromadka, dean of the Comenius Theological Faculty:

> "I am not a Communist, I am a Christian. But I know that it is we Christians, alone, who are responsible for Communism. We had a burden to discharge in the world, and Jesus Christ left us no room to wonder what it was. We failed. We 'said, and did not.' And now another power has arisen to take up this burden. Remember that the Communists once were Christians. If they do not believe in a just God, whose fault is it?"

We shouldn't stop quoting at this point, for the matter now grows complicated. These Eastern Christians are torn by their honest recognition of the better material life of their people. And certain formerly insoluble problems of crime and juvenile delinquency are breaking up into manageable proportions. A Hungarian pastor explained this to Mayer, going on:

> "I don't mean," and he smiled, "that the Communist party has found out how to eliminate original sin. These things exist, of course, but they have been checked with great success But—" he paused, and went on: "—we pay a price for this."
>
> "I know," I said.
>
> "Let me speak of our children. We see them being taken away from their Christian faith. The pressure on them is very great, in the schools, in the press, over the radio, over television now; in the Pioneers and the after-school recreation programs and summer camps. We see we are losing them, many of them, and in the end, without Christ—" He paused again, and went on: "At the same time we see them growing up clean and enthusiastic. Their lives are crowded with constructive activities. They are wholesome children—excuse me, I don't say more wholesome than yours in America—but more wholesome than we were in Hungary a generation ago. You must understand that as parents and pastors we are very happy about this. But—in the center of their being—"
>
> I nodded, and he said, in the quiet room:
>
> "You see the dilemma, Brother Mayer?"

Mayer saw: "All over Eastern Europe one hears the same agonized words from churchmen: 'The atheists had to come to teach us the social gospel'."

What are these churches doing to "fight communism"? This is what many Americans want to know about, and Mayer can give them little consolation. The Christians in these countries are recovering their fundamental self-respect, and this does not, apparently, mean opposing the State. Churches may fight for their lives, but they do not fight tyranny, as such. "The Catholic excommunication of Communists rests on atheism, not on tyranny." There is, however, another side to the story:

> By 1921 there was not a single church left in the Soviet Union. Religion had been exterminated, with the League of the Militant Godless as the Party's spearhead. Today the League is dead and the exterminated church is alive. Its destruction failed as nothing else the Communists have ever undertaken. The hard fact of coexistence has been forced on the Party—whose hope, I suppose, like that of all

> coexisters is to coexist the enemy to death. The lesson of the mother country is not lost on the daughters: there are too many people in these anciently religious lands whom the church can reach in a way that the state can not, so there is no hot war against the church anywhere now. Shrines and cemeteries are undesecrated (although hoodlumism, including anti-Semitic hoodlumism, can still be found, there, as here, by looking for it). Whoever wants badly enough to be a Christian is a Christian and survives.
>
> Who are they?" I said to the pastor of a crowded congregation on a Sunday morning. "Some," he said, "come because they have always come. Some because their wives or sweethearts come, but fewer of these now. Some only because—this is always strange, isn't it?—they want their children to come. All these you know in your own country—nominal Christians. But their proportion falls. Certainly more than half who come in the larger towns now know exactly what they want, and they know the price. There are very few actual opportunists left, except," with a smile, "among us pork-choppers, as you call us. Nobody can come to church any more because it is a good place to make social or business contacts. Not even a funeral director, much less a dentist or an insurance salesman, and," with another smile, "not a candidate for public office, oh, no."

Well, that is Mayer at work. You probably haven't had the time to spend three or four years in Eastern Europe, learning to understand the human beings there. Mayer has taken—or given—the time, and his understanding is deep. There are many other essays in *What Can a Man Do.?*—on a wide range of subjects—all of them good. We recommend this book.