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THE UNCHARTED SEA

WITH certain unmistakable apprehensions, we undertake another article on Mysticism—or rather, on the problems connected with an approach to mysticism. The difficulties of an approach to mysticism are fairly obvious. On whom will you rely as a guide? How do you identify the "authorities" or "experts" in mysticism? Or is this question itself evidence of misconception? Is the man who seeks a "teacher" of mystical perception like a man who wants to see, and who goes around asking people about *how* to see, when what he ought to do is open his eyes?

The letters received from readers of recent MANAS articles on "Salvation" and the subject of mysticism form impressive evidence of a serious current of inquiry in these directions. Some of these readers have already acquired more or less firm opinions on how to pursue the quest. Others manifest no more than an open-minded wondering. But in all cases the interest is serious and seems likely to spread.

It is natural, of course, to look about for information on the subject. But the writer on mysticism—of whom there are many—is in a very different position from the writer on some scientific subject. A scientist can discuss an experimental conclusion and the means he used to reach it without any sort of "claim" to special status. The scientific method is responsible for his achievement. He may, of course, have been especially brilliant in his use of that method, and gain respect in this way, but once his facts are public, the experiment can be repeated by others.

Why not apply the same principle to mystical inquiry? Well, we suppose that this is what ought to be done, and eventually will be done. The difficulty, however, is this. In science you use standardized instruments and the data of science are open to public examination. In mysticism, on the other hand, each investigator's instrument is different and unique to himself. Further, however wonderful his discoveries, he can never "show" them to another in the same way that a scientist can exhibit what he has found out. The mystic's discovery can not be made into a "public" truth. To be sure, a man who becomes "wise" will doubtless reflect his wisdom in his words and his behavior. But human wisdom, unlike conclusions about matter and its motions, is almost impossible to "pin down."

Suppose you were to attempt to compile a book which contains the highest "human wisdom"—what would you put in the book? Would you put in it what *you* think is wisdom, or would you find yourself planning the volume in terms of what the conventions of our time declare to be wisdom?

The conventions may, of course, be a necessary and useful guide at the beginning. But they are certainly not final authorities. And the fact of the matter is that very few people are ready to take any given point of view or familiar expression of "wisdom" as really authoritative. So we may say that the nature of wisdom is conventionally established, but that it is not *really* established at all. Judgment on what is wisdom is still very much of a private affair.

There come, then, to MANAS these letters which propose particular avenues and disciplines of mystical inquiry. Our reaction to these suggestions cannot be described as "skeptical." Mysticism, it seems to us, or something which the word "mysticism" stands for (or perhaps conceals from view), represents a tremendously important aspect of human life. How might it be spoken of? Well, if a man could *know* with the same certainty that he *loves*—if a sympathy could at the same

time lend accurate definition to the object or being for whom sympathy is felt—then we might be able to claim a triumph of mystical perception.

But even this is misleading, since a facet of the unlimited or incommensurable can never be excluded from thought about mysticism, and how can there be "definition" where something "unlimited" is involved?

Possibly, in order to discuss mysticism at all, it is necessary to acquire some new conceptions of the process of definition. For example, the precision of scientific definition is obtained by carefully eliminating any factor which has an incommensurable value. But if, in Mysticism, "by definition" incommensurable values must be included, then we shall have to learn to live with incommensurables if there is to be anything intelligible said on the subject. We might argue, then, that particular knowledge, gained through mysticism, is knowledge about the particular ways in which the finite and the infinite may be said to meet. But how can the finite and the infinite "meet" at all? How can that which is without measure have any sort of "relationship" with anything measurable? Even to propose such a relationship seems a somewhat sneaky way of trying to measure the immeasurable!

This, then, so far as we can see, is the essential hazard of the "study" of mysticism. We shall be forever tempted to lay a foot-rule along the walls of infinity and fix our petty labels on formless and intangible Reality.

But do the finite and the infinite somehow "meet," despite our "logical" difficulty? Do they meet in man? That they do seems to be the proposition which the mystic asserts, and the reason why his proposition cannot be proved is that it is non-logical. But if it is non-logical, is it also *anti-rational?*

Having arrived at this "razor's edge," we leave the question in a necessarily unsettled form. The important thing is to avoid all the "too easy" parallels that can be drawn between scientific and mystical inquiry.

Turning to letters from readers, one correspondent suggests that a distinction be made between "untutored" mysticism and deliberate pursuit of what, for lack of a better term, may be called "spiritual knowledge." Our reader writes:

> "To what," MANAS asks, "shall we assign the decline of interest in mystical experience, or inspiration, if not to the prestige of the scientific method, with its logical credo of objectivity?"
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> Perhaps more directly to the limitations of the mystical process itself. For the mystic does not know *how* he does what he does. He does not understand any precise means whereby he may repeat at any given time the experience he earlier enjoyed. He may never repeat it during his lifetime. Or he may understand that a certain combination of "religious" fervor, self-abnegation, and so on, seems correlative to his transcendental experiences, and seek to recreate the combination—with success or lack of it.
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> Small wonder, really, that such a process would find little favor in an era which has discovered rationality, in a time in which the scientific method became the accepted measure of reality. An experiment, once successfully performed, could be endlessly repeated, and the results anticipated. The beneficial aspects of this method cannot be deemed undesirable or inconsiderable, even though the immediate effect has been to circumscribe the extent of reality in some minds to the area that has thus far come under scientific observation.
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> At this point, the orders of phenomena dealt with by the mystic and the scientist are so diverse that there may seem to be little correlation between them. But science has moved rapidly and cannot long defer the realization that the universe is a lot more "non-objective" than most scientists would prefer to believe. When one considers the almost infinitely immaterial nature of matter as now being studied, and the whole question of matter-energy convertibility, one wonders how shortly one may hear from the physical scientist (and not from the Hindu sage) an observation concerning the "illusory" nature of physical manifestation.

We interrupt this comment to suggest that the developments here described are responsible for the "new" interest in mysticism. The general trend of our entire culture, and not only in the progress

of physics and the other sciences, is toward a fresh awareness of subjective reality. The new physics has been described as "neo-Pythagorean"—an apt adjective, since structure in physics is now entirely a matter of mathematical relationships and can be conceived of in no other way. Quite possibly, mathematics is a way-station in modern thought between physics and metaphysics. In biology, studies of morphogenesis have brought investigators very close to an electro-magnetic conception of all organic processes, and have pressed leaders in research into wondering if *mind* is not the root-principle in nature behind all form. In psychology, experiments in telepathy and other forms of ESP have built a firm foundation under speculations about the subjective reality in man, recalling even former agnostics to serious thoughts about human immortality. Psychotherapy, in its turn, has been drawn to a natural preoccupation with the idea of self. The idea of the self is known to be a clinical force, even if not recognized as a metaphysical necessity.

But if the man of our time finds himself responding in a private, individual way to these cultural tropisms in the sciences, or, perhaps, to some deeper yearning, what shall he do?

Our correspondent continues:

> It seems unlikely that the scientist will do much immediately to explain the mystic to himself or to reinstate any sort of general approbation for the mystic way. Nor does the mystic way seem as much in consonance with contemporary mental processes as it did with the processes that characterized the earlier Age of Faith. In an era in which a renewed desire for valid religious experience is in evidence, where can one profitably turn?

Naturally, answers are afforded to this question. In a couple of months' time, MANAS probably receives a dozen or so of letters with specific recommendations as to philosophies of mysticism, practices to be undertaken, ethical conceptions to be dwelt upon, and heights to be reached. Some of these communications came from India, occasionally embodying a positively frightening certainty regarding the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Others come from individuals and groups in the United States or in Europe. We hesitate either to select what seem the "best" suggestions or to print them all in a grand "democracy" of ideas on what to do. It is not that there seems to be "nothing to them." On the contrary, these suggestions all reflect something of the great tradition of inner search. But what seems to us more important than the "results" which such suggestions offer or imply is the need for general philosophic orientation before rushing into any sort of psychological disciplines which have mystical vision or illumination as their end. There can be no doubt about the results. People do enter areas of rich subjective experience by these means. Some of them do end as "saints" of one sort or another. And others wind up in the hands of psychiatrists. The literature of religious phenomena and psychic adventurings makes these things very plain.

But what is not plain is that a sense of balance, of philosophic comprehension, attends these experiences. For example, there is a great rage, today, for Zen Buddhism, as though the disciplines afforded in the Zen tradition would bring its modern devotees into immediate touch with the garment-hem of Cause. But if this is possible, then why don't the disciples of Zen compose new Sermons on the Mount, new *Phædos,* and write a *Mahabharata* for our time? If they have the wisdom, where is its fruit? So with the other avenues to illumination. There ought to be, it seems to us, a direct relation between mystical illumination and philosophic grandeur. Plotinus was a mystic we can respect, since he was able to write the *Enneads.* And Sankaracharya left the wonder of his *Crest-Jewel of Wisdom.* Few of the latter-day mystics, the compilers of "ways" and the anatomists of subjective experience, can offer such demonstrations. We do not, on the other hand, write in a stand-offish, "show us," attitude. It simply seems that our age is not "ripe" for anything like a practical "science" of mysticism—not, at least, on any "popular" scale. And the

published, these days, is the popular. Yet a questioning of mystical thinking is certainly in order. The conception of the universe which emerges from the works of mystical philosophers has much in common with the inspiration that may be found in the great myths of antiquity. Poetic writing of a certain order ranks with the highest philosophy, since it seems capable of generating in its readers something *corresponding* to mystical perception, although without the transport and the shutting out of the material universe. J. A. Stewart, writing of the myths of Plato, has this to say:

> . . . the Platonic Myth is not illustrative—it is not Allegory rendering pictorially results already obtained by argument. Of this the experienced reader of Plato is well aware. He feels when the brisk debate is silenced for a while, and Socrates or another great interlocutor opens his mouth in Myth, that the movement of the Philosophic Drama is not arrested, but is being sustained, at a crisis, on another plane. The Myth bursts in upon the Dialogue with a revelation of something new and strange; the narrow, matter-of-fact, workaday experience, which the argumentative conversation puts in evidence, is suddenly flooded, as it were, and transfused by the inrush of vast experience, as from another world—"Put off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

What we are arguing for, here, is the serious possibility of inward perception, rather than some theory of inward development. Whatever perceptions are possible to men, their meaning, and therefore their validity, depend upon an understanding of how they fit into the total field of human experience. This understanding is a philosophical consideration, less pretentious, perhaps, than the hoped-for visions of the mystic, but the necessary frame of *all* perceptions, by means of which we interpret experience to ourselves.

REVIEW
CANADIAN INSTITUTE ON PUBLIC AFFAIRS

FROM Canada comes a sixty-page report of the results of a week-end conference held last February by the Canadian Institute of Public Affairs, planned and carried out in cooperation with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. The opening session of the Institute presented a debate between Dr. George Gallup, Director of the American Institute of Public Opinion, and J. B. Priestley, British author, playwright, and critic. Mr. Priestley challenged Dr. Gallup's contention that our present mass media constructively inform the public, and, through advertising, help people "to discover what they need and want" in the way of consumer goods. In Mr. Priestley's opinion, mass media, bought and paid for by powerful political or other interests, "make people desire something they really don't need or want"—and everything from political candidates to higher-horsepowered, hardtop convertibles. Dr. Gallup seemed convinced that advertising has very little to do with making up the mind of the average American in respect to political issues, and he argued that the consumer is "singularly immune to blandishments" designed to influence his choice of purchases—that he "makes up his own mind." Priestley disagreed:

> In this society people are manipulated by the mass media; production is continually heightened by new needs created by advertising.
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> In the field of voting, the mass media manipulate people by inducing fear, and even men of authority are being hoodwinked by their own propaganda. This could bring about world tragedy. It has already brought about a dearth of political ideas. Manipulation of the masses is resulting in a clear loss of individuality, character, and the normal zest for living; and should be brought to a halt by all possible means.

Mr. Priestley was the first of the Institute speakers who expressed concern over the increasing conformity in opinion and taste. Prof. Rollo May, practicing psychoanalyst and author of *Man in Search of Himself*, enlarged on this trend in his lecture, "Mass Promotion and the Individual." Very much in the style of criticism inaugurated at last year's Institute by Erich Fromm, Dr. May minced no words in castigating the prostitution of psychological understanding to serve ignoble ends. He said:

> In all fields, including the fields of psychology and analysis and psychiatry, the tendency is to treat human beings as mechanical objects, tape-recorders, something to be calculated and controlled . . . in all fields this is growing. It is certainly present, not only in my own field, but in the fields that you have represented here. . . advertising, public-relations and similar professions. In our field we regard it as an evil, and we are fighting as hard as we can against it. The quarrel I have with my friends in the advertising and public-relations fields is that they capitalize on this tendency. They seem to believe in it, and I would want to propose in the remarks that I make to you today, that not only are the implications and possible results of this treating human beings as mechanical objects, to be directed and controlled, exceedingly serious; but that we must make a shift of value, in the very basis of our society, to preserve us from moving forward in this direction of the robot man, and reattain individual integrity.
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> May I warn you, at the outset, that I believe that we are in real danger of developing a race of robot men. The mass man . . . the man made in the image of the machine. . . is, in my judgment, emerging more and more in the inner self-image of countless people in our age. We psychologists have the rare privilege of seeing what goes on below the surface of human beings, and there we find often the attitudes that have not yet come into action in large groups of people, but do predict what is going to come into action in five or ten years thereafter. In my judgment, the most significant thing about the modern person in Western culture, is that he is progressively losing his feeling of importance as a person. He is beginning to feel inwardly powerless, futile, and to look upon himself as an object to be directed and controlled by the forces around him. We saw this most dramatically, of course, in recent years as we faced the catastrophe of the atom bomb. Most individuals felt that their fate was being determined, not by themselves, but by the experts in the laboratories; and that after the expert physicists invented their terrifically powerful bombs, our fate from then on was sealed in the secret diplomatic councils of the world. It is not surprising

> that people, then, in our age of anxiety, began to huddle together, psychologically and emotionally and spiritually, like dumb frightened spectators, convinced only of their own insignificance, and powerlessness, and their own feeling that whatever they decided would have no influence on the final result.

Dr. May proposed that the discovery of inner creativity, the source of the highest human happiness, "comes as much from our times of solitude as it does from our times of communication with our fellows. If there is no capacity to be alone . . . no capacity to listen to oneself . . . then we will not have achieved the depth which we need to speak from the center of our selves. I have no argument against mass communication at all. I only believe, however, that if it is a substitute for the capacity for inner solitude it has done us a disservice . . . or we have used it for purposes of disservice. Mass communication, in itself, should never be permitted to becloud the fact that what is most meaningful for a person must be related to his own courage to be alone and experience creative solitude." He continues:

> We find that David Riesman was largely right when he held, in his significant book, *The Lonely Crowd*, that modern man has become outer-directed; that modern man goes through life as though he had radar antennae attached to his head to catch signals from everybody else around him as to what he should think, what he should do, and even what he should feel. Now the truth is, of course, that all the people around him also have psychological radar antennae, trying to catch from *him* signals as to what they should do and think and feel: the upshot of it all, of course, is that we tend to live in a collective emptiness. What you gain from living in this harmonistic, inwardly empty, more and more mechanical frame of reference in our society is that you are protected from anxiety. If you are never different from those around you, you will never be singled out for attack. You will never be called to question before floodlights, TVs, and investigating committees. You will find that it is a protective colouring, like a herd of animals, and does protect you from anxiety.

During the question period, Dr. May dealt with the question of whether there may be considerable danger in having everyone "try to find himself." Can there be too much thinking about "psychology," especially at a time when many people have lost their belief in God? Dr. May insists that the trouble is not that we are too concerned about ourselves; it is simply that we have not been concerned about ourselves in the right way: "The man who can really forget himself is the man who has established a real relatedness with himself. Kierkegaard rightly interprets the commandment 'Love thy neighbor as thyself,' love your neighbor as you are able to love your neighbor, because you love yourself. I think that in our society there is so much self-concern, so much worry about I, because of an expression of precisely the lack of inner relatedness. If you really discover inner relatedness, then you can be in a group without having to push your opinion forward. Self-love is the opposite to self-centeredness and selfishness."

The most interesting thing about these and similar comments is that they were made in the presence of numerous advertising executives, business administration experts and public relations people. That these men should invite the opinions of such critics as Mr. Priestley and Dr. May speaks well for the temper of the Canadian business community. Copies of the Canadian Institute's Third Annual Report ($1.00) may be secured from the Canadian Institute on Public Affairs, 244 St. George St., Toronto, Ont., Canada.

COMMENTARY
QUEST FOR FREEDOM

AMONG the letters referred to in this week's lead article is one which well illustrates the temper of the questioning which is described. The following is by a practicing scientist who has achieved eminence in his field.

I have been looking for some basis on which to rest my belief in the individual and "original causes" within the individual. For a time I was willing to take "original causes" for granted. The unknowns in any analysis of human beings are so great, and at first it seemed from reading Julian Huxley, Haldane and Muller on evolution that they supported me in this, but I began to have doubts the more I read. Then Seidenberg's book [*Post-Historic Man*] with his ideas about instinct and intelligence and the trend toward organization decreased my too-easy dismissal of historical determinism. In spite of the fact that Huxley, Haldane and Muller would emphatically disagree with Seidenberg, I think the latter really gives the logical conclusions of the formers' reliance on reason and organization.

I am not much interested in philosophy as an intellectual exercise but I am interested in it as a way of life. From my college days I have been disturbed over the contradictions between beliefs and actions. Some discrepancies and inconsistencies should be expected because they are inevitable, but both past and current history reveal too wide a gap between beliefs and behavior, to say nothing of glaring contradictions. The actions of many intellectuals as well as of others who profess belief in individuality belie that belief. Organization is taking over in all fields and there is no denying that, apart from organization, the individual is becoming increasingly ineffective in practical life or what most people regard as practical.

To me, freedom is a matter of the spirit within individuals—and it is not easy to define spirit other than to say it is a combination of the mind and emotions; and, so far as I know, no one has satisfactorily defined mind mechanistically in terms of brain alone. Freedom of the spirit is the conscious sense of making decisions—choosing between various alternatives. I don't wish to get into a discussion of free will other than to say that the need to choose is a matter of experience and cannot be ignored as part of reality for individuals. The spirit or psychology of organization differs from that of individuals, as all admit. Individuals and even one individual may alter the choice of organization and alter the spirit behind such choice, but I am inclined to believe that this occurs to a diminishing extent. Certainly there is little evidence that individuals today can increasingly influence organization in respect to the values that make for freedom of the individual spirit, because organization always waters down those values.

As I am naturally a skeptic, it does not come easy for me to find an acceptable faith in mystical religion. My objection to war was founded much more on skepticism of war and what it could accomplish than on any religious faith. Yet, on the basis of "statistical probabilities," I suppose there must have been some motivating force other than skepticism behind my action. . . . To me, philosophically, the logic of science alone is organization or possibly annihilation through nuclear fission!

I am not damning science or the scientific method, nor am I suggesting that we return to the spinning wheel. However, something more than the objective knowledge of science is needed, if we are to preserve the greatest possible freedom. I doubt that the intelligence of a purely humanistic philosophy can do this. . . .

Now all of this may be elementary for those who are genuine mystics, but my interest in mystical religion is too recent for me to be sure of it myself. Contradictions between belief and action seem to be no less prominent among peoples who profess a mystical religion than among those who don't, but I am not sure that this applies to individuals with a genuine mystical faith. In any case such a faith seems to make for individual creativity and to make for what you have called "original causes" within individuals.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

NOT TOUGH ENOUGH

AFTER reading *Look's* June 11 survey of current educational trends in elementary schools, and after due appreciation of all the modern school offers, we fell to ruminating once more on the feeling that there is still a "missing ingredient" in the life of the average school child.

It must be granted that children of our primary schools are, in most respects, quite happy with their teachers, their playmates, and their classrooms. Perhaps more than ever before, the child of today just plain *likes* to start off to school in the morning, and seldom watches the clock. In other words, the modern school is an agreeable place whose atmosphere combines something of purposive instruction with the better elements of a picnic and a trip to Disneyland!

There is nothing wrong with this, especially since extreme departures from basic instruction are rapidly being corrected. The three R's are receiving more attention than they did a few years ago, and Johnny will be a better reader than he might have been had he gone to school during the 1930's. And though the critics of modern education seem to overlook this point, the majority of today's parents are more concerned with having their children "have a good time" at school than they are with the three R's, anyway. If the schools were really to stop "bothering" with music and hygiene, safety and citizenship, there would be plenty of protests. Many parents are so frenetically "trying to get the most out of life" themselves, they don't seem to have the time to help their children in these areas. So the modern school is a community to which the child likes to belong, and it frequently supplies more of the ingredients of emotional stability than his home environment. Actually, the child may spend more time with his teacher than he does with his parents, especially since the advent of TV; unless "spending time" be defined as simply existing in the confines of the same room or house.

What the children *are* missing, in our opinion, is something that the schools would find great difficulty in providing, since it is not easy to supply anyone with instructive hardship. But it is nonetheless true that an agreeable atmosphere does not satisfy all the basic requirements of human growth, and it is also true that almost every person, young or old, feels the lack of adequate challenge. Advocates of rigorous scholastic disciplines forget that no school can successfully employ these methods unless the homes from which their children come are similarly ordered—ordered around conceptions of duty, responsibility and perseverance rather than around sampling all the pleasures which easy money and short working hours make available. Maybe you can find a parent now and again who is a "striver," despite the opportunities for easy living, but the difference between the present and past times when people who were not "strivers" by nature *had* to exert themselves, hardly needs pointing out. And when a young man discovers the intangible emoluments which accrue from hard or dangerous work well done, he has taken a step toward genuine maturity. The trouble, today, is that so few of our youths get even a brief taste of this sort of thing, save, possibly, in the area of athletic competition. And beneficial though athletics may be, even the most strenuous participation is not quite "real life."

Some interesting comments on the psychological consequences of "making life too easy" for children appeared in an article in the Bombay *Aryan Path* for April. Elizabeth Cross remarks that parents often forget that children need to "fight for" and earn what they want. She writes:

> Too often I discover parents and teachers preventing children from living through their normal, natural stages. Sometimes, in fact often, life is made too easy for them; they have playthings that are merely entertainers and give no scope for discovery, and creation which comes after the earlier destructive

> phase. Often the children are kept "retarded" and helpless, not allowed to attempt to dress or feed themselves, and then "sent out to play" when they would willingly stay and help in the home. Children want to grow up; they are ready for all kinds of jobs. They do not want easy things, they admire skill and are ready to endure hardships in a worthwhile cause. Intellectual children manage well enough because the standard of scholarship for the professions is still reasonably high and so they have plenty of hard work to keep them busy. It is the practical and artistic child who is so often left idle—the child who in previous times would have been apprenticed and made to work hard from a really early age. Think how hard, and yet how satisfying, it was for a boy of twelve to manage a team of plough horses, to learn the skill of harnessing them, to groom them and to have such great creatures obey him. Now it is the rarest thing in the world for any boy to be allowed such skilled work, or any genuine hard work at all. Our labour laws are so elaborate and careful that it is only the most determined boy who can get himself a holiday job . . . there are so many forms to fill in. It is really easier to get into mischief . . .
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> Life today in so-called peace time lacks urgency, lacks the normal fight against weather, dirt, poverty and all the ills that flesh expects to be heir to. It seems very sad that we humans are so idiotic as to prefer earthquakes, floods, fire and general excitement to a nice, quiet life in a suburb. . . but it's pretty clear that we do . . . else why do respectable people love crime novels and less respectable ones provide the material for them?

A merely agreeable life, after a few years, can become a very dull one, and Miss Cross uses this to explain why crime is by no means confined to the "underprivileged." Perhaps the most telling example used by Miss Cross in support of her argument is the following:

> A small boy came back from a holiday with two very quiet aunts and gave the verdict, "I didn't *like* it there. No other kids. No fighting . . . no fun!" He then went on to describe the one part of the holiday that was enjoyable, when the river burst its banks and he went with the farm men to help rescue the animals. He was, it appeared, of real use, and stayed out, wet and cold, all night, and part of the next day with nothing to eat. That, it appeared, was fun.

As Miss Cross puts it, "we regard hardship as an evil—even discomfort is something to be avoided. Let there be feather beds for all is the cry; welfare, guidance, organizers, voluntary workers, electricity laid on, meals on wheels, homes for bad boys and girls, homes for good old ladies and good old men, bedside lamps for soldiers, buses for school children and music while you work or don't work.

Just how does one go about providing a satisfactory battleground for youth in need of challenge? There is no single answer, certainly, to this question, but we can agree that every child should have to earn what he gets by working in the home—and we should suggest, also, work to maintain and improve the school. To contribute some form of labor towards the attainment of a toy or a bicycle takes the child an important step in the needed direction. Some schools are doing their best to provide a bit of the atmosphere described by Miss Cross, not only maintaining "summer work" camps but by operating mountain camps twelve months out of the year. This is becoming more and more a practice in the greater Los Angeles area, where the children who trek to the mountains in the winter are apt to have a taste of Miss Cross's sort of adventure. One *can* manage to get snowed in, or at least experience flood conditions and work on camp drainage problems out of sheer necessity. The extension of the student camping program indicates that more teachers every year are trying to identify "basic education" with adventure and constructive challenge. Then there are the folk schools, and the Friends Service Committee Work Camps recently discussed here, both offering opportunities for self-support through various forms of labor, and also giving an introduction to social problems through programs designed to improve race relations in outlying communities.

We recently received information about an independent summer program of the Friends type, evolved in Emmaus, Pennsylvania. Robert Luitweiler, the originator of the Woolmandale Educational Program, has a forty-eight acre farm where young adults from eighteen to twenty-five

are invited to combine seminars with work. The work is "real" because it offers much of the means of subsistence and allows attendance of young people who can't afford the low tuition fees. Following is a note on the program:

> This summer we will begin our first two months' course with an informal program and a small group of students, about ten. Most of our faculty will be visiting speakers who have found real purpose in life and can speak from experience. Each will spend several days with us, tell of their inner search and of their work, and share in our life and discussion. They will represent many fields of work including:
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> 1. Racial integration—housing, education, etc.
> 2. Cooperative movement—consumers, producers.
> 3. Craftsmen who have made it a way of life.
> 4. Labor education and the labor movement.
> 5. United Nations, mostly on colonial problems.
> 6. Africans and Asians who are close to the independence struggles.
> 7. Scientists concerned with science's use and misuse.

More information can be obtained by writing Mr. Luitweiler, Woolmandale, Star Route, Coopersburg, Pennsylvania, USA.

FRONTIERS

Crisis in Christian Belief

MORE than fifteen years ago, Dr. E. A. Burtt, professor of philosophy at Cornell University, set the fundamental problem of modern Christians—of Christians *as* Christians—in a review of Reinhold Niebuhr's *Nature and Destiny of Man,* in the Autumn, 1941, *Humanist.* Prof. Burtt, who is, or was at that time, a Quaker, writes with full appreciation of the religious spirit, yet raises questions which fairminded Christians have not been able to ignore. It is not, of course, that thoughtful Christians have taken to heart the particular issue of the *Humanist* which has Dr. Burtt's article in it, but that what he says and the questions he implies are "in the air." Much the same sort of questioning, for example, is found in *Addressed to Christians,* by Prof. Floyd H. Ross (Harper, 1950), and in the writings of other Christian thinkers who have had intimate contact with other world religions.

In his *Humanist* article, Dr. Burtt said:

> Confident of the ultimacy of his religion of universal love, the believer in the special revelation of Christianity unwittingly substitutes a local and historical doctrine about love for love itself. In the presence of a Buddhist who finds salvation in Amitabha, he cannot allow that such an experience is on a par with his meeting the divine in Christ, and be ready to pool in friendly mutuality the distinctive greatness in each of these exalting transactions, his impulse to love without qualification is rendered subordinate to his devotion to the particular religious tradition he has inherited. And because of this primary commitment the Jesus in whom Christ was historically revealed is idealized beyond all that the evidence of the gospels can possibly justify, with consequent injustice to other great religious founders.

This, clearly, is the central problem. However, since Dr. Burtt has a book by Reinhold Niebuhr under review, he pursues the matter further:

> And the champion of such a special revelation falls into self-deception. Uneasily aware that no group pretension of this kind can be valid, he zealously seeks escape from this condemning consciousness. Here is the explanation of the irrationalism accepted by the leaders of Neo-orthodoxy. Being keen thinkers and cogent reasoners, they cannot avoid a lurking realization that the norm of reason is impartiality and therefore that no form of individual or group egotism can be rationally defended. Hence they must affirm that ultimate truth is irrational, discontinuous with the normal operation of man's cognitive faculties. This is self-deception, however, because they are surely aware, at times, that whenever anything is said about God, Christ, revelation, or anything else the canons of human reason must be obeyed, under penalty of collapse into meaninglessness and total failure to communicate any idea. The rejection of reason cannot be quite sincere; it is a protective device needed to cover the anxious sense that the claims involved in the theory of special revelation are intrinsically incapable of justification. . . .

Dr. Burtt now offers what seems to him the ideal in religion, in contrast to the Christian practice:

> In religion, the security that would be legitimate can only be gradually won through hospitality to all experiences that might be spiritually significant—readiness to find a revelation of the divine anywhere, that supports the quest for enduring human good. But to seek security in this way requires an emotional postponement that is difficult, an openness of mind and flexibility of spirit toward those outside one's inherited tradition that are as yet very rare qualities.
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> Impatient of these difficulties, man grasps at the premature and delusive security of concentrating the whole energy of his devotion on some lovable historical figure, marking the culmination of a selected sequence of events in the past, and fanatically claims that here, in this obviously special and local scene the fullness of the Eternal and the Absolute are disclosed.

A little less than two years ago, another Quaker, Douglas Steere, writing in the *Christian Century* for Aug. 3, 1955, spoke of the "crisis" produced by thoughts of this sort among the members of the Society of Friends. But while acknowledging the crisis, Mr. Steere spoke of it as being also a "major opportunity." He said:

> What was once the Chinese wall of physical distance, 1anguage and cultural isolation which

> enabled each of the great world religions to live a life of comparative security within its own borders, has now all but disappeared. In this new situation the Quaker form of the Christian religion finds itself queried by the deepest levels of Buddhism, of Hinduism, and even in rare cases of Islam. These religions ask Quakerism whether it is universal and inclusive and therefore able to respect their worship and practice. In the course of the last year a Zen Buddhist abbot and a Hindu swami both put such questions to me.

These remarks by Douglas Steere were apropos of the activities of still another Quaker, Horace Alexander, in India. At the suggestion of Gandhi, Mr. Alexander was instrumental in the formation of a Quaker group known as the Fellowship of the Friends of Truth, which undertook publication of the *FFT Quarterly,* a journal devoted to the Gandhian conception of an inter-religious body which would welcome Christians and non-Christians alike. Mr. Steere regards the ideal of the Fellowship of Friends of Truth as a missionary conception of value to Christians generally, as well as to the members of the Society of Friends. And what is doubtless a question of some disturbance to many Quakers is for him rather a challenge. He concludes:

> What ultimately happens to the Society of Friends as a denominational body does not matter much. What happens to the world as the result of daring to irradiate it with the universal reconciling love of Christ is in the end all that does matter.

The character of the "disturbance" is plain from a passage in an article by a contributor to the *FFT Quarterly,* Vivian Worthington, who speaks of the possibility, "now stirring in the minds of Friends, that the time may be ripe for a big expansion, but which is likely to be in the non-Christian world rather than in the Christian." Further, "If such an expansion is likely to occur as a result of the opening of membership to non-Christians, what would be the effect on the Society of Friends? Would it manage to retain its identity and its discipline?"

That Quakers are able to think such thoughts, and more, to publish them, is impressive evidence of the philosophic security which is possible among Friends. It comes, no doubt, from reliance on the fundamental Quaker conviction that there is "that of God in man," and this means, of course, in *all* men, with the clear implication of deep truth in all great religions. As Vivian Worthington says, "it is actually the uniqueness of Quakerism that *believing* is held subordinate to *seeking.* Friends are *seekers* rather than *believers;* and though it may be reasonable to put a limit to the area of search, nevertheless, I think, few Friends would put other religions on the other side of the barrier."

Now, from India, comes to the *Christian Century* (June 12) an article entitled, "The Hindus and Christian Evangelism," in which the comparison of Christianity with other religions is given an extraordinary "twist." The writer, Paul David Devanandan, is an Indian Christian who has for many years been associated with the YMCA movement in Asia and who taught world Christianity last year at Union Theological Seminary.

In the past, the question of the right of Christians to seek converts in non-Christian lands has been regarded as a political issue. Freedom of religion is taken to mean freedom to seek converts, and since the Indian constitution assures freedom of religion, there is no legal obstacle to Christian missionary endeavor in India. But there does exist, says Mr. Devanandan, an objection to Christian proselytizing in India on "specifically religious grounds." Indians, he points out, are not ungrateful for the contributions of missionaries in the fields of education, medical relief, and other phases of social service, but they question the entire enterprise of "conversion" to Christianity. Mr. Devanandan explains:

> Modern Hindu apologetics rests on the reiterated claim that Hinduism is *sanatana* dharma—that it is not any single system of thought and practice, but rather an all-embracing total religious understanding which includes, at its "lower" levels the beliefs and practices prevailing among simple folk (described by students of religion as "primitive animism") as well

> as the "higher" outreaches of developed philosophical speculation, finally leading to mystic apprehension of the oneness of all being.
>
> Such a *sanatana dharma*, Hindu religious thinkers maintain, embraces the essential concept of Christianity, though not, of course, Christianity as a historical phenomenon. Therefore, Christianity and Hinduism are not alternatives which call for a choice; what is called for is recognition of the fact that Christianity is really part of Hinduism. Hence the easy possessiveness with which many modern exponents of Hinduism acclaim Christian beliefs and practices, presumptuous and irresponsible as it seems to Christians, is in their own eyes an indication of superior virtue.

In the light of these views, Indian protest against Christian efforts to gather "unsophisticated village folk and tribal groups" into the fold becomes understandable. Religious awakening is not a matter of exchange of one faith for another, but of inward awakening and development. The Hindus believe that there is ample latitude for growth within the resources of their ancestral religion, and that when such groups are "converted," a kind of exploitation of their religious simplicity has taken place.

Another phase of objection to Christianity by Hindus grows from their fundamental view of religion. Mr. Devanandan writes:

> Religion is regarded as a matter of spiritual experience. Consequently in none of its forms has Hinduism ever developed the idea of a community of believers. . . . The conception of the church is a rock of offense to the Hindu. Starting from the theological presuppositions of the *sanatana dharma*, it is undoubtedly difficult to go on to establish the claims of a church as necessary to spiritual growth. There can indeed, according to the Hindu view, be *a* sharing of spiritual experience by which individuals may profit, a comparing of spiritual notes, as it were. . . . But the idea of the church is deeply incongruous, and therefore repugnant, to the Hindu believer.
>
> The reason is obvious. As Hinduism sees it, religious maturity comes through individual achievement in self-discipline; others can help the individual only through inspiring example or wise counsel. The idea of a transforming community is alien to the genius of Hinduism because of its basic belief about the nature of God as the eternal Brahman and the nature of man as essentially that of Brahman itself. There can therefore be no such community as the church claims to be—a community where there is an inflow and outflow of personal influence which transforms because the real bond of fellowship therein is provided by the Holy Spirit, who draws the members of the church together in communion with God as revealed in Jesus Christ.
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> From the Hindu point of view, while there can be some such thing as "enlightenment," there can be no such thing as "conversion." Spiritual enlightenment is the result of steady, persistent, self-disciplined inquiry into the nature of truth. Progress toward enlightenment is registered in terms of deeper understanding of the nature of true being, and enlightenment is realized through disciplined living in mystic union with the Absolute.

This article by an Indian Christian seems a remarkably just comparison of Hinduism with Christianity, being almost completely devoid of rhetorical enthusiasm for either faith, and isolating for examination the particular principles by which the differences between the two may be identified without emotional confusion. Since the writer obviously has a clear grasp of Indian religion, he throws much light on Indian attitudes; at the same time, he shifts the issue of Christian missionary labors in India—and elsewhere—to the moral ground of whether it is right to attempt to pervert believers in other religions—whether Hinduism or some other—to Christianity. The question of missionary undertaking was once a problem of overcoming practical obstacles and "heathen" prejudices. It is now a *moral* problem for the missionary. How can he justify his claim to offer a "superior" religion to the one believed in by the objects of his attention? The presentation of this issue to Christians, in a general and friendly way by the Quakers, and in what amounts to an outspoken challenge by the Indian Christian writer for the *Christian Century*, surely defines the central problem and the coming crisis in Christian belief.