

THE ROOTS OF CONVICTION

IT is usual for those who count themselves among the free spirits of this world to display a reasoned disregard of the limitations of environment. That is, they "dispute the claim that environment wholly makes the man, contending that when environment does make the man, he can hardly be called a man. There is much to be said for this view, to which we heartily subscribe, but there are also qualifications to be made, and *caveats* to be entered. It seems fair to say, for example, that men may be very largely made by their environment, to the extent that they have not figured out what it really is. And this, in turn, amounts to saying that we need to know what we are, ourselves, in order to distinguish what belongs innately to us from what belongs to the environment.

Environment, on these terms, is an extremely broad idea. A man who lives in a time when minority groups are abused by the national State—whether for grounds of race, color, or religious belief—has one kind of environment which may go far in shaping his ideas of the best way to direct his energies. Consider any minority group—or, not even a minority group, but a group, large or small, which suffers oppressions. This group will ordinarily develop a certain type of leadership—the leadership of resistance to oppression. The definitions of good and evil developed within the group are likely to be closely related to the social situation from which the group suffers. Louis Adamic, in *The Native's Return*, tells of the literature and song of the Balkan peoples who for so many centuries suffered from marauding conquerors. Their ideals—their national ideals, at any rate—grew out of this long cycle of conflict. The literature of the Jews, to take another illustration, reflects ages of persecution and tragedy. Students of the Negro "Problem" in the United States have often

referred to the dangers of "Black Nationalism," and readers of Sinclair Lewis' *Kingsblood Royal* will recognize the psychological attitudes covered by this term. Resistance to tyranny and injustice, in short, generates one type of moral energy and ethical outlook, while another kind of environmental situation would doubtless cause another type of leadership to emerge, with another set of ideals and objectives.

Illustrations of this from history are numerous enough. The newly-formed states of India and Israel are now confronted by another kind of problem, and critics and historians of their progress are finding many opportunities to record the difficulties encountered and compromises indulged by peoples who, when they lacked independence and freedom, won universal praise for their "brave struggle" and "high ideals."

The project of building an independent community of human beings is quite different from mere "resistance" or "revolution." Gandhi understood this—better, probably, than any other Indian—which may account for the fact that he was frequently condemned by men calling themselves "radicals," who claimed that he too often allied himself with the forces of "reaction." But what Gandhi really cared about, as his writings make plain, is the basic character of the Indian people. He maintained that freedom is a quality of the heart and the mind, and one could argue that he strove for the political freedom of India in order that his countrymen might be free to recognize that the attainment of political freedom was not their major task.

One of the most effective criticisms that has been made of the theories of Karl Marx is that they are basically "reactionary" in character—that is, they were conceived in violent emotional reaction against the distortions and economic and

social injustices of the Industrial Revolution, instead of being founded upon a positive social philosophy. This criticism seems not only effective, intellectually, but just, historically, for the Marxists have not done very well as managers of a modern industrialist society. They have understood the problem of human freedom least of all, and while they knew how to stir the emotions of revolt, they failed miserably in the task of reconstruction.

The effects of environment are equally if not dramatically discernible in the thought-patterns of the great middle classes of so complacent and unrevolutionary a country as the United States. It is possible, in America, to live out one's life without ever facing the sort of difficulties and decisions which confronted earlier generations of Americans. Existence here is pleasantly cushioned by the achievements and daring of our forefathers, and by the technological magic of a relatively small number of engineering geniuses. A man who has an inheritance can coast for a while, going through the motions of life without ever really living. And when an entire society is set up for coasting by a race of hardy pioneers, the art of coasting becomes subdivided into numerous specialties, all of which have their own petty prejudices and claims to distinction. But most of all, coasting of any sort generates a tragically unjustifiable self-satisfaction and conceit.

Conceits which have a *cultural* origin, of course, are seldom offensive or noticeable to those who live within the culture. We all know the type, for example, who is proud of his religious unbelief—who reads the Smithsonian Institution Reports every year, haunts the library to study scientific periodicals, and exhibits a mildly contemptuous attitude toward all opinions, and the people who hold them, which do not accept the limitations of "scientific proof." His skepticism and hodgepodge of beliefs about human nature, gained from miscellaneous reading, take the place of religion in his life, and his job takes care of his personal needs. Ordinarily, he

meets with no real crisis, so that he never discovers how empty, really, his existence is of serious thought. He walks through life with the assistance of a number of institutional crutches, with personal kindness, perhaps, supplying the solvent which gives him a degree of functional efficiency as a human being.

So long as we have specialists to solve so many of our problems, it is easy to coast without thinking—to jog along, quoting General MacArthur or Walter Lippmann, Rabbi Liebman or Harry Fosdick, as the case or topic may be. And it will continue to be easy to live without genuine convictions about the nature of things—to piece together the glib agnosticisms of scientific writers, or to quote the anecdotal religion of preachers with "great personalities"—until the day comes when a change in circumstances, a great change, perhaps, compels us to rely upon ourselves. To rely upon ourselves—this is something that we have not done, as a people, for generations. We are of course self-reliant when it comes to mechanics, to transportation, and to winning wars, but these activities, as even some of the preachers keep telling us, are not the most important things in life. And if we had the faintest suspicion that there is a fundamental moral law which governs the affairs of men, we should not need the preachers to tell us, but would know it for ourselves.

What are the psycho-moral abysses of thought which we refuse to cross?

We are unwilling, for one thing, to take seriously the question of whether a human being has a soul-existence within and beyond his bodily existence. We suppose that this question has been settled long ago by the Better Minds. We are very anxious to choose our own wives and husbands. This we call "freedom," but, interestingly enough, there have been great civilizations in the past in which betrothals were always arranged by the parents, yet which left the final truths of religion to the individual to discover for himself.

A man who writes about the idea of the human soul is a little "queer," unless he happens to write about it according to the stereotypes of familiar religion, and then he can be classified and ignored, or classified and admired, depending upon how the reader feels about conventional religion. If there is anything to be learned from past religious history, it is that there is no moral life in dogmatic stereotypes—no more than there is in stereotyped unbelief. Both represent a failure to think.

What makes us suppose we can *afford* not to think along these unpopular lines? Only our environment—our authoritative and protective environment, which deludes us into thinking that a happy, fruitful life need not be troubled by these metaphysical conundrums.

But this environment of ours is headed for a serious crack-up. Anyone can see that. And all the President's atom bombs and all the President's young recruits will not be able to put it together again. It is not, furthermore, really worth putting together again, in the same way, for, psychologically speaking, it is made up of the excuses we make to ourselves for not taking seriously the only things which are really important, and of a tremendous collection of trivial activities which we pretend are more important than anything else.

Everyone feels these things, more or less. But what are we to do about it? We have, it seems to us, to start doing the kind of thinking which we have so scrupulously avoided doing, ever since we became prosperous and self-satisfied.

We cannot live upon revolt—nobody can—and we cannot live upon complacency—it doesn't last. Actually, we have to learn to be pioneers again; to regain the temper of men who regard their environment as a *habitat*, and not as a source of "security." The roots of the good life are the same as the roots of moral conviction, and those roots serve only the human beings who nourish them with honest search and intelligent reflection.

Letter from South Africa

JOHANNESBURG.—Ritual murders, which have always been practiced in the territories under native control in southern Africa, have gravely increased in late years. Such murders are most often reported from Basutoland and Swaziland where a measure of tribal law prevails under British administration and the chiefs still retain limited power and jurisdiction. It is impossible to give any clear or authoritative account of these practices, for little is as yet known and more is hard to discover. It would seem likely that the gradual extinction of wild animals from these areas has in some small degree contributed to the increase, for the murders are committed in the belief that men can magically acquire characteristics and power from drinking "mooti" or medicine made from parts, and in particular the blood, of a victim. In past centuries, therefore, such qualities as strength, courage or ferocity would be sought from the bodies of wild animals. This type of belief is, of course, by no means original. It is common to many primitive peoples, and in it is to be found the principle which underlies all sacrifice, whether of animal or of human bodies, whether for the benefit of man or of the deity he worships.

The main reason for the increase of these murders of late years would appear to lie in the lessening power of the chiefs. In the old days prior to European settlement land was not limited. When a chief's sons grew to manhood they could be promoted to chieftainship without taking lands and revenue from lesser chiefs. Once the boundaries of these territories became fixed and further land was no longer available, fresh chiefs could only be made at the expense in rank, power, land and revenue of all of lower degree. To meet this menace, to influence the overruling power of the white administration, as well as to settle private vendettas, men, yet primitive, will resort to witchcraft. It would appear likely that chiefs are

always behind these murders, and witch doctors closely involved, although the latter have to date been successful in keeping clear of the arm of the law. It would seem that they at least provide the necessary instructions as to the ritual to be followed and the human ingredients which a particular situation requires. The chief has an impending lawsuit against a neighbour and he or his representative needs the gift of the gab to prove his case. The victim for the mooti will have to be garrulous. Often the murder would seem to be for the replenishing of the chief's horn, although little is known of the nature of this and its secrets are closely guarded. Loyalty to the tribe rather than to the person of the chief would at times seem to be involved, for on occasion, after the murder and when the horn has presumably been replenished, accomplices have been known to turn king's evidence against the chiefs whose orders they had been obeying. Usually the murder is carried out by a number of people acting on instructions and without reference to their private feelings, for the victim may be a friend or close relative. The threat for disobedience is to become victim in place of murderer.

By all civilized standards ritual murders are of a most inhuman nature. The bodies of the victims are cruelly mutilated, parts being removed and blood drained prior to death. Such murders are far more common than is usually realised for the fact of them is kept as quiet as possible and only such trials as result receive publicity. One area alone recently had a probable twenty murders in two years. The victims were all Basuto, and in this district no African will walk alone. Even the Europeans, unthreatened personally though they are, can feel the fear and evil which broods over the land. Here is indeed savagery. Perhaps the most appalling fact of all is the number of "enlightened" Africans who have already been convicted. Men on whom the administration depended, men with a university training in some cases, and, in a tragic number of instances, men who claimed to be Christians. The facts show

how strong is the grip of superstition on a man's heart wherever the allegiance of his head may lie, and however fine a veneer of civilization he may have gained. History for the Africans has been sadly telescoped, and they have been denied the time which can alone remove primitive superstitions. It is as well for those who press for equality of Bantu with European to ponder such facts as these.

To call a halt to these murders the ordinary course of justice has at present proved ineffective. The proof of guilt is usually extremely difficult, and only cases certain of convictions can wisely be brought to court. The protective power of the mooti is greatly enhanced when it protects its consumers from the long arm of the white man's law! One thing is sure. The British Administration will do its utmost to ensure justice and protect the innocent, but it is to be hoped that they will not be unnecessarily hampered in their task by well-meaning cries for reprieves from overseas humanitarians who have no conception of what it is to live in a land where death stalks abroad.

SOUTH AFRICAN CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW

CURRENTS IN FICTION

LAST week's discussion of fiction trends involved consideration of a swing towards affirmative philosophy among those hard, tough writers we call Realists. It is possible to extend the observation about more affirmation and more philosophy in present fiction, however, to include writers of many categories.

A current Book-of-the-Month selection, *Blandings' Way*, by Eric Hodgins, is particularly well adapted for supporting such a thesis. Hodgins, we may note, has always endeavored to amuse and entertain. His forte was—or is—sophisticated comedy. He has not, until *Blandings' Way*, shown himself much concerned with depths of either psychology or social drama. However, the endearing J. H. Blandings is not allowed to wander through the pages of Hodgins' latest book doing nothing more than being amusing. Mr. Blandings emerges as something of a tragic figure, involved in a sociological plot. As a sample of Blandings' right to such serious pretensions, we may observe the manner in which Mr. B. talks to himself while trying to reconcile a distaste for advertising with his increasing reputation as an executive in a successful advertising concern. It appears that there are two Mr. Blandings; one stands in the background as judge, before whom the other and more conspicuous Blandings pleads:

. . . there is one more thing about me you should know. It is not just that I am an incompetent, or even that I am a lucky incompetent. It is that I cannot bear to think of the success of my deceits. When somebody listens to Lorbet Neen and nods sagely, it must be that Lorbet takes this agreement with quiet satisfaction. Well, every now and then someone nods sagely when I say something—but this has a very different effect on me: it merely makes me feel overwhelmed with guilt, shame, and alarm. Somebody has taken seriously something I said. I said it with a confidence I did not feel—instantly ready to modify it, take it back, reverse it, or re-explain it in such terms that nobody would know what I was originally talking about. That I should

have caused agreement among a group of grown men to some proposition in which I myself felt no solid faith—this is the worst of all, the hardest to bear. I am paid \$25,000 a year and bonuses—and these rewards belong only to people who are sure of themselves. They are not for the likes of me.

God, thought Mr. Blandings, his thoughts on a long reach, in the whole roll call of business enterprise is there no one else like myself? There are the ruthless and successful, the bitter and successful, the proud and successful. Am I the only example of the *frightened* and successful?

We will note that there is nothing particularly "affirmative" in this passage, however. If we read till the end of the book we will still only be able to say the same thing. In short, no solution is offered for J. H. He goes on seeing both sides of every question, trying "to do good"—but being inexorably drawn back to the quixotry of situations wherein the things he likes to do least bring him his only financial and family security. In the end he is resigned to his dual fate as advertising genius and reluctant exploiter of his fellow man's emotional weaknesses.

Here Hodgins, who is a "sophisticated type," recalls the predominant spirit in which most of the veteran "realists" have written. The mood for Dreiser and Dos Passos, for Hemingway and for Farrell, was certainly the No-Way-Out mood. But now the Realists are more hopeful for the future, it appears, than a BoM author like Hodgins. Why? Realists are "vulgar," and vulgarity and a quality of affirmation hardly seem to belong together. Yet some of those Realists who presently employ that which all of the snobbish and some who aren't snobs call vulgar language seem now to come close to a faith that man may at least sometimes emerge spiritually triumphant over a hostile environment.

Among the many, then, who may have some aesthetic justification for deploring the literary enthronement of crude or vulgar language, there is a need for explaining why these unpleasant Realists are frequently more forceful in an affirmative message than other widely read

authors, including some "Romanticists." We certainly need some cultural theory to account for this literary phenomenon.

It is first to be sought, perhaps, by considering that the "realists" have been rebels against both our status-quo "civilization" and its prevailing "literature." Because the status-quo fellows hate "vulgarity," realists (or "naturalists") use it and defend it, at least by implication. They apparently feel that the unofficial status-quo representatives of the literary fraternity deliberately avoid portraying the actual values of existence at any social level, for this would lead to the asking of all manner of disturbing questions. We have had more than our share of sweetness-and-light, at that.

Certainly the Realists' books may be regarded as being considerably more than stories preoccupied with moral degeneracy or with the reaction of simple anger to a frustrating world. One supposition might be that we are witnessing a gradual cultural regeneration—a regeneration following, as always, a process of destruction, the iconoclasm of the Realist serving as one sort of catalytic agent. For while these Realists first tell us emphatically that this is not the best of all possible worlds, they also often seem to be saying that it is not too late to make it a good one. The "crudity" and "vulgarity" of much modern writing may be an inevitable stage in a regeneration of culture. The rationale would be that when an atrophied culture unconsciously seeks regeneration, it actually moves first toward destruction of what was held respectable by the old, utilizing the language of "the common man," whatever it is. There are no successful total revolutions "from the top down" in literature, any more than there are in politics, unless the idealism at the "top" perceives encouraging reflections of itself everywhere in all strata of thought. If intellectuals decline to admit all men of all types into their confidence—if they determine at the outset to eliminate all expressions indigenous to certain levels of experience, or fail to develop

anything more than disapproval for "common" expressions, because of prejudice against the mores of that level—the Revolution will lose contact with The People. And because this sort of instinctive revolution flows more from common feelings than uncommon ones, contact with the level of The People is the chief source of inspiration for the writer.

The handicap of some of the "Realist's" vocabulary, it may be, is not primarily in utilization of the common man's unvarnished language, but in the tendency to deal *only* with that level of human intercourse. Realists have a rather good excuse, of course; they have the same excuse that the champion of the underdog has always had for proclaiming the virtues of the scorned illiterati. They have also the same excuse that Freud once had for concentrating upon the demolition of the "sex-is-sin" theory of good and evil.

But the most interesting question is, of course, How does vulgarity start? When were its seeds first planted in our culture? There was what we call vulgarity in the ancient world, as no reader of Aristophanes can deny, but without admiring it in the least we can recognize a different quality in antique ribaldry from the note we find in the Restoration Literature: of the time of Charles II, and in most modern "nastiness" as well. Modern vulgarity seems inextricably associated with a reaction to the mechanical asceticism advocated by irrational religion. It is often also a brazen reversal of the standards of "niceness," in which the rebellion has mixed with it a sly spirit of self-indulgence. The false morality and superficial "manners" we have inherited from our Medieval past enabled mere animalism to assume the garb of "manliness," while a paganish rejection of the follies of priestly definitions of morality helped to make vulgarity into an effective if oblique form of ridicule of conventional standards of behavior. When "revolt" becomes the chief virtue, then the culture which chooses this virtue loses all sense of discipline and enters grandly upon a Saturnalia of

"freedom." In literature, this freedom takes the form of vulgarity, and the "bite" of its attack upon convention is usually the ridicule it heaps upon the crumbling moral code of the day. Rabelais, if he has no other value, at least demonstrated this.

To put the matter in another way, a disproportionate view of the relationship of moral man to sensuous man seems to result in the "fascinated loathing" of which the modern novelist Aldous Huxley has been correctly accused. Mr. Huxley's attitude is not dissimilar to many fulminating preachers of a bygone age, even though his medium is entirely different. They, too, wrote excessively about sex, or at least talked about it to their intimates and fulminated "against" sex to their congregations. The liberalization of Western culture since the Middle Ages has sent the pendulum swinging in the opposite direction. The spread of vulgarity has perhaps been, in Western culture, a necessary exorcising of unnecessary loathing. We have learned to regard vulgarity without fear—the first result of which may be to incline us to indulge in it indiscriminately—but the next step should be a mature perception of the diminution of man's respect for himself which vulgarity engenders.

When a realist such as Steinbeck liberally scatters profanation, attributing its expression to men of fine character, he is really saying by implication that people who sound vulgar are not necessarily vulgar. Yet from this we might conclude, too, that most bawdy allusions are verbal froth, which means, in turn, that "vulgarity" may be less truly necessary in artistic portrayals than our Realist-authors surmise.

COMMENTARY **THE NOBLE SAVAGE**

THE "ritual murders" described in this week's Letter from South Africa are like other enormities commonly (and doubtless accurately) ascribed to so-called "primitive" peoples, except that the murders are entirely a "native" custom, and not outrages perpetrated against the white settlers. Our principal reaction to an account of this sort is the quite simple and possibly escapist one of thanking our stars that we are not involved in having to administer "justice" to Bantu tribesmen.

In a situation like that, we would not know how to define "justice." One way to look at the problem would be to assume that the mingling of the two cultures—black and white—has been tragically precocious. The whites had neither the maturity nor sufficient desire to bring better ideas of social morality to the blacks, and the blacks were still in the grip of rigid tribal *mores* which held them incapable of understanding and dealing with the more sophisticated white civilization.

A similar situation prevailed when the white settlers of Arizona came into conflict with the Chiricahua Apaches of Cochise. The whites saw nothing wrong in using guile and deception to trap Indians who thought nothing of burning their captives alive or burying them in the earth up to the neck and letting ants eat away their faces. But the guile and deception practiced by the whites only made the Apaches more cruel, because Cochise, who was a man of his word, did not know how to make peace with liars.

It almost seems that the colonizing activities of the dominant white race have created obscenities which never should have existed. It is certain that the violent mixture of alien cultures is always disastrous, and the disaster lies more in the psychological reactions of both sides than in the excesses in actual behavior. The greed and acquisitiveness of the white men prevent them from being able to introduce a more humane way of life to the primitive peoples whose lands have

been invaded, while the barbarous customs of the natives generate self-righteousness in the whites. The result is either a war of extermination or the reduction of the natives to ignominious submission, with consequent loss of self-respect.

We have no answer to such problems. They are the "White Man's Burden"—a burden which he cannot lay down, because he should never have taken it up.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

WE find ourselves periodically in receipt of questions, both written and oral, as to the disadvantages which girls and women suffer in educational systems clearly favoring the male. These questions range all the way from philosophic ones on "whether it is psychologically valid to consider men and women as equals in an educational sense," to a query put by a girl who is just old enough to be a prospective college student, and who wonders how she can possibly go to college and simultaneously learn a trade which will be permanently useful.

In this connection, we should like to refer again to a book previously mentioned in *MANAS—Educating Our Daughters*, by Lynn White Jr., president of Mills College. We recall this excellent book, partly from an impulse of our own conscience, which twinges a bit when we realize that our philosophic predilections have led us to deny significant differences between the sexes—to insist that "we are all souls," and that the only satisfactory relationship between parents, or between boys and girls, will be that which is based upon recognition of essential equality. Dr. White is convincing in arguing that such sentiments are dangerous generalizations, at least while our educational system is so obviously oriented around the notion of male aristocracy.

It is true that if men and women are actually to be treated "equally" during their educational life, we shall have to demand a form of education radically different from that to which we are accustomed. Dr. White has done a provocative bit of analysis, giving consideration to the whole history of the feminist movement as relevant to the collegiate status quo. The feminists, he shows, tried to prove that they were man's equals on man's own terms—which may have been a huge mistake. White's thesis is succinct:

The older feminism indignantly denied inherent differences in the intellectual and emotional

tendencies of men and women. Only by recognizing and insisting upon the importance of such differences can women save themselves, in their own eyes, of conviction as inferiors.

The climate of opinion in the United States has been such that even to discuss sex differences has been "reactionary"; and besides, no gentleman would do it. Psychologists in particular have shied away from the problem. For example, Professor Terman of Stanford, a scholar of complete scientific integrity, eliminated from the trial runs of his famous intelligence tests the elements in which the largest sex differences consistently showed up, on the ground that they were probably the result of social conditioning and therefore "unfair." Might it not have been logical to work out separate intelligence tests for girls and boys, each of which would show more accurately the abilities of the specific person than a test constructed in terms of a sexually neutral human being—if such a being could be considered human? Clearly, in this instance Terman succumbed to the orthodox "liberal" notion that sex differences in intelligence are not real, or else not significant or else not nice to talk about.

How did we get this "climate of opinion"? Dr. White traces it back to medieval civilization, out of which our modern conception of the university has unfortunately sprung:

Since the clergy of the later Middle Ages were unmarried their education naturally included no discussion of the family and its problems. To be sure, the Church had made marriage a sacrament, and training for the confessional implied a certain familiarity with the operational difficulties which might beset a family. Nevertheless an understandable reaction against the sexual abuses of the Roman Empire, combined—from the eleventh century—with the great practical importance, in a feudal social context, of making sure that ecclesiastical office would be gained by merit rather than by inheritance, led the Latin Church (as distinct from the Greek) to try to enforce celibacy on its priesthood.

Aside from natural science, this clergy was personally concerned with three problems: the individual, the state and the church. As the centuries passed, the influence of the church dwindled, and higher education, apart from science, became focused primarily on the individual and the state. Today all of our humanistic disciplines are profoundly interested in the polarity between these two. . . .

Every self-respecting college has a solemn and eminently reputable course in that hitherto masculine institution, the State. But an astonishing number offer no course in that even more fundamental institution, the Family. . . .

From the standpoint of women, their self-respect and the successful handling of their lives, this is the most disastrous part of the legacy of the priests.

If Dr. White is right, and we think he is, women encounter a host of serious disadvantages in trying to obtain an education. While we would still argue for a fundamental and "metaphysical" equality between men and women, it is an inescapable fact that the function of women in the "healthy organic society" is dissimilar from that of men, if only because of the physiological accomplishments of bearing children. And then there are the psychological accompaniments to physiology. Whatever the true equality is, therefore—and all who have insisted that it exists may yet be essentially correct—that equality must be discovered *after* allowing for significant differences. Further, it seems imperative to revise our whole theory of the education of women so that a significant intellectual phase of development for women may be encouraged *after* the period of childbearing, when energies are naturally freed from absorbing personal responsibilities.

Many worse things could happen than to have mothers attending school contemporaneously with their sons and daughters, nor is it then too late for the majority of women to train themselves for useful and enjoyable work outside of family duties. Dr. White makes strong recommendations for women's "part-time-work" and "part-time" education in the years following the interval of child-bearing and nurture:

The real problem is not that of combining a career with a family, but rather of keeping alive vocational skills and contacts during the child-rearing years so that when the children have left the home and the really liberating effects of our modern technology of housekeeping have made themselves felt, a woman may find a new outlet for her intelligence and energies.

This is the best line of suggestion we can think of to pass along to people of high school and college age. If we believe in basic Equality of the Sexes, we must proceed toward a realization of a condition where such equality can be made operative, by providing proper and equal mechanisms for "finding new outlets for intelligence and energies." Any sort of genuine equality must be equality of opportunity for expansion of female as well as male capacities. What we apparently have been doing in the past is insisting that women imitate men until they finish college, and then either choose between the continuance of the imitation or a lapse into being household appendages. It is at this point that the doctrine of equality needs to find its greatest dynamic and male support, for, presently, many men do not *like* their wives to work, or even to think independent thoughts.

Our final commentary would be that Dr. White's contribution is another reminder of the extraordinary length of time it takes to rid ourselves of the results of medieval theology. Here, too, if we can but see it, is the explanation for that sort of general rebellion against all conventions which characterizes one youthful generation after another. If we become a little more rebellious *ourselves* toward status-quo educational concepts, we may be helping our progeny to be less violently immature in their struggles "against the system."

FRONTIERS

Problems of Religion

A BOOK like *Voyage to Lourdes*, by the late Dr. Alexis Carrel—describing the apparently miraculous cure of a young girl of tuberculous peritonitis—presents the intelligent reader with a difficult dilemma. Either he is to take it seriously, or he must ignore it altogether. *The Reader's Digest* seems to take it seriously, for *Voyage to Lourdes* was reprinted in the September *Digest's* Book Section. It presumably appeared as a strengthener of faith, for, like other large publishing ventures in the United States, the *Digest* shows a consistent concern for the "religious" welfare of its readers. And, as though to confirm the mandate for religious belief offered by this posthumously published manuscript by Dr. Carrel, the *Digest* also printed in the same issue the article by A. J. Cronin, *Why I Believe in God*, which first appeared in the *Woman's Home Companion* for last July.

The "chips," the *Digest* editors apparently believe, are down, and the time has come to recall the wandering minds of the American people back to the faith of their fathers.

Mr. Cronin's piece tells how, as a young doctor fresh from medical school and full of academic atheism, he was brought by the ardors of a general practice in an English colliery town to see that, although "God cannot be proved like a mathematical equation, . . . we cannot escape the notion of a primary creator." His first step of "progress" was in losing the cocksure skepticism he had acquired in the anatomy rooms, working on cadavers. "None of the autopsies," he writes, "showed anything I could identify with an immortal soul." But when he worked among the English miners, felt their profound religious faith, and was associated with others whose lives were monuments of self-sacrifice, because, as they explained, of their "faith in God," his glib denials began to ebb away. Finally, as the result of such

experiences, Cronin gained "the firm uplands of faith."

We all know what Mr. Cronin is talking about when he tells of how he was affected by the religious devotion of the miners. Tolstoy underwent a similar transformation from his contacts with the Russian peasants of his day. It is a fact that simple, hard-working people often exhibit a kind of faith that puts to shame the shallow opinions of articulate and sophisticated intellectuals. But Tolstoy adopted a faith that was quite different from the beliefs of the peasants. He accepted the reality of the *feeling* of religion, yet forged for himself a religious attitude that was entirely his own. He did not imitate the peasants, but learned from them.

Mr. Cronin accounts well enough for the deepening of his feelings in regard to the ultimate nature of things: academic atheism is superficial and is easily brushed aside by the intensities of a vigorously productive existence. But after the new feelings are born, a man whose business it is to use his mind with impartiality and thoroughness has the further obligation of giving rational support to these feelings. Tolstoy faced this problem, too, and while he may not have really solved it, he gave it far closer attention than does Mr. Cronin. The best that Cronin can do is to produce the old "argument from design."

Who [he asks] on a still summer night dare gaze upward at the stars, glittering in infinity, without the overpowering conviction that such a cosmos came to being through something more than blind chance? And our own world, whirling through space in measured rhythm, unfolding its regular progression of the seasons, surely is more than a meaningless ball of matter, thrown off by the sun.

The argument from design is doubtless a good one. It has certainly been used more than any other—but does it prove what Mr. Cronin and countless other apologists for religious orthodoxy use it to prove? Does it prove the existence of a loving Father in Heaven, a kindly deity who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, who counts the falling sparrows, and looks benignly down

upon the widow's furrowed cheek, the orphan's loneliness, and the unhappy sinner's cry for divine assistance? The argument from design, if "design" proves anything, proves that there is an all-pervasive formative intelligence, or innumerable intelligences, throughout Nature, but proves nothing more than this. It does not prove anything about a moral law, nor about Creation, nor about the Atonement and Salvation. It does not even hint that there is a God who answers prayer.

For proofs of the moral power of "God," it is necessary to find similar evidence in the realm of moral phenomena. Physical design may prove physical designers—an entire pantheon of Artificers, if we will—but for the kind of God men worship and pray to, this evidence is without force except in the twisted arguments of casuists. Mr. Cronin seems to suspect this weakness in his article, for he at least notes the common demand for some sort of moral evidence of the existence of God. The stumbling block to belief in God, for many earnest people, he says, lies in the wide prevalence of evil and pain.

How can this Divine being be credible, they ask, in the face of a world afflicted by storm and flood, by famine, pestilence, earthquake and lightning stroke, by dreadful and agonizing diseases, by death in its cruelest forms? Surely, they cry, your God was a most imperfect Architect to produce so ungodly a result!

The point is well made—better made, in fact, than Mr. Cronin's answer, which simply rebukes us for our love of comfort. Life, he counsels us, is not intended to be a round of pleasure. There are lessons to be learned from suffering. We must, therefore, "survive the supreme test of submission to the will of God."

Thus, according to this version of orthodoxy—and we know of no other—it is not simply suffering that we must submit to, but suffering which is also the will of God; and we must not only submit to it, but submit to it without seeking any explanation of why we suffer,

beyond the explanation that it is "God's will." This is indeed a "supreme test," but a supreme test of *what*?

Mr. Cronin constructs a religion to serve a humanity that is without knowledge of good and evil—for only such a humanity could worship a God who is without moral responsibility. And only such a God would require worship without explanation of the most compelling problems of human life. "Whatever we may think," writes Mr. Cronin, "whatever we may do, we are still God's children. He is waiting for us. And it takes only one word of faith to acknowledge him."

Mr. Cronin's faith, it seems to us, is at once too easy and too difficult.

Dr. Carrel's autobiographical fragment presents greater problems. Either you call him a liar or impugn his professional knowledge, or you admit the extraordinary cure of the young girl at Lourdes. We suggest the possibility that a happening of this sort, commonly called "miraculous" or "supernatural," is an event which ought to lead to new definitions of "natural." Scientific opposition to the "supernatural" has its origin in the unwillingness of intelligent human beings to submit to an order in which blind belief plays the supreme role, and human intelligence only a minor part. "Supernatural," as commonly used, does not describe a "wonderful" or "extraordinary" happening, but a happening which is by *definition* beyond human comprehension. It is this which the scientific mind rejects, and quite rightly, it seems to us.

Conceding the rights of the skeptical spirit of science, we have now to make honest concessions to Dr. Carrel. After all, there is the "miracle" of Lourdes, staring us in the face. He tells about the dramatic case of one girl in *Voyage to Lourdes*, and in *Man the Unknown*, he generalizes on "the most important cases of healing" authenticated by the Medical Bureau of Lourdes:

Our present conception of the influence of prayer upon pathological lesions is based upon the observation of patients who have been cured almost

instantaneously of various affections, such as peritoneal tuberculosis, cold abscesses, osteitis, suppurating wounds, lupus, cancer, etc. The process of healing changes little from one individual to another. Often, an acute pain. Then a sudden sensation of being cured. In a few seconds, a few minutes, at the most a few hours, wounds are cicatrized, pathological symptoms disappear, appetite returns. Sometimes functional disorders vanish before the anatomical lesions are repaired. The skeletal deformations of Pott's disease, the cancerous glands, may still persist two or three days after the healing of the main lesions. The miracle is chiefly characterized by an extreme acceleration of the processes of organic repair. There is no doubt that the rate of cicatrization of the anatomical defects is much greater than the normal one. The only condition indispensable to the occurrence of the phenomenon is prayer. But there is no need for the patient himself to pray, or even to have any religious faith. It is sufficient that some one around him be in a state of prayer. Such facts are of profound significance. They show the reality of certain relations, of still unknown nature, between psychological and organic processes. They prove the objective importance of the spiritual activities, which hygienists, physicians, educators, and sociologists have almost always neglected to study. They open to man a new world.

But what is "a state of prayer," and how ought "spiritual activities" to be defined? Suppose we say that, so far as the evidence submitted is concerned, Dr. Carrel's state of prayer is a state of longing to be relieved of physical pain or sickness, and a state of expectation that it will be relieved by extraordinary means. *Sometimes*, as a result of this state, there occurs "an extreme acceleration of the processes of organic repair." This might, as Dr. Carrel seems to have thought, be regarded as a proof of God, provided one has other sound reasons for believing in a personal God who acts upon or through people in a "state of prayer," but it could as easily be evidence, simply, of recondite powers of mind, and of a subtle relationship between the power of feeling and the mutations of matter.

In any event, the writings of both Mr. Cronin and Dr. Carrel are starting points for investigation, and not confirmations of what has become an

insecure and fading "faith" in orthodox Christian tradition. Surely, there are truths behind the thoughts of these contributors to the *Digest* pages, but it seems a pity that these truths should be turned to the service of a religion which has so little respect for the human mind.