

RELIGION FOR HUMAN NEED

SOMEHOW, Christmas in 1948 seemed a better one than those of other years. On the external side, there was less cheap tinsel in the streets—in Los Angeles, anyway. Retail sales for the season, merchants reported, were "off" some fifteen or twenty per cent. Whatever the cause or causes, it seemed as though a person could think about the Christmas holiday for himself, a little bit, without having a score of perverted meanings of the season blared at his eyes and ears from every direction. You could wonder how much is "real" in the Christmas feeling, and where the feeling comes from. When less of Christmas is done for you, there is more opportunity to do your own.

The "commercialism" of a twentieth-century Christmas is of course an old story, and the source of an old complaint. We are told that Christmas ought to be celebrated with more inwardness and a greater sense of reverence for the occasion—which is, after all, supposed to be the anniversary of the beginning in human history of a religion of absolute renunciation, otherworldly aspiration and self-sacrifice. In the light of even the orthodox significance of Christmas, any sort of buying and selling and private profiting in connection with Christmas would seem to be a further crucifixion of the Christ and an endlessly repeated desecration of his memory. Out of this view might grow the radical criticism that "buying" a present for a loved one, to express the feeling of heart that arises at Christmas time, is the same as arguing that the people who can buy the most for their friends have the biggest hearts—which is manifestly untrue. But it does not necessarily follow that the purchased gift is unworthy. The right feeling can sanctify almost anything. After admitting this, however, it remains to be observed that money and what money will buy play a larger part in Christmas celebration than the love of human beings for one another, else we would have no reason to call our Christmases "commercial."

But the perversion of Christmas into the mainstay of thousands of businesses, large and small, is not something that could take place without the consent and encouragement of a large part of the population. This is an age of stereotypes, and whatever can be stereotyped can be mass-produced and sold. From a greeting card to a grand piano, manufacturing and merchandising are geared to the perpetuation of stereotyped sentiments, and a sudden declaration of independence from conventional gift-giving by any considerable number of people would have devastating effects on the entire national economy; there would doubtless be international repercussions, too. This, from one point of view, would make it practically immoral to go strongly against any convention which affects the flow of goods and services. Let Easter Sunday be abolished, and thousands of milliners would be suddenly thrown out of work, their families subjected to cruel deprivation. Reflections along this line disclose the reason for the alliance between organized religion and organized business—a sure instinct tells them both that they are interdependent, so far as the present order of society is concerned.

These matters have to do with institutional religion and the multiple ties of belief and custom and tradition with the techniques of merchandising. There is, we think, another side to religion, having to do with the spontaneous qualities of the human heart. It is these qualities which seemed to find expression, a little more than usual, during the 1948 Christmas season. Perhaps it was because fewer people gave vent to the cant phrase, "Merry Christmas," and more people showed an unstudied friendliness to one another. It seems, too, that the practice of designing and executing one's own Christmas cards is becoming more popular. This is a small thing, perhaps, but a measure of the mood of an

increasing number of individuals and families. Some day, perhaps, to "buy" a Christmas card to send to a friend will amount to a confession of personal inadequacy.

Another sort of card that is sent at Christmas time bears cynical or bitter commentary on the failures of "Christian" civilization. There is doubtless a kind of irony in blindly pious talk of "peace," these days. We do not find it difficult to share in the contempt for blithe assurance, on cards or elsewhere, that the dominant religion of the Western world has the true formula for "peace on earth, good will to men." We, too, have wondered which of the great nations of the world would succeed in catching and crucifying Jesus again, should he walk the earth today, sternly rebuking the money-changers in the temple.

But to make Christmas into a particular occasion for deriding the obvious failure of Christian civilization seems tactless, if not actually profane. It is better, we think, to say nothing at all at Christmas time, if one cannot say something good. We take this view, not on account of any great reverence for the Christian tradition, but because we are inclined to believe that a natural fact lies behind that tradition. There were great civilizations before Christianity, and there will be others to exist when the cycle of Christendom is no more than a forgotten memory. And as it was in the past, so, we think, will it be in the future: there will always be an interval within the term of each year of our lives when a kind of moral awakening has its natural moment—when fellow-feeling is strongest among human beings.

We have heard men carolling to themselves, alone in the wilderness, around Christmas time. We have felt—and who has not?—the subtle flow of sympathy for other humankind at Christmas time. We have moved through white-mantled forests and felt their wordless consecration to the endless metamorphoses and rebirths of nature. We have seen the overflowing tenderness of mother with child and watched the quickenings of love and gratitude in all manner of men and

women. These things are of the essence of Christmas, when all the natural world lies still, waiting for the hidden alchemy of the season to work its miracle, making all new again. Christmas, we think, is a day of promise, a time for admitting the compact we have made in our hearts—not in a church, nor with the burden of "gifts," but silently, in our own way, and to ourselves.

Sometimes it seems as though it might be a good idea for a person to send out a card of his own, telling why he has decided to ignore the external Christmas—the Christmas of tired shoppers, of harassed postal employees, and of avid, almost avaricious, children and adults. But there are many who are able to embody an internal Christmas in the external one, and why should this iconoclastic doctrine be preached with the aggression of a special printed communication to friends? If matters are as we judge them, and the Christian observance of Christmas has been corrupted beyond repair, these customs will all die away in good time, and new and better ones will take their place. It would be better, perhaps, for a man to invent a special kind of Christmas celebration of his own, and put his best into it. This would withdraw some nourishment from the commercialized stereotypes and give new life to the idea of individual expression—an expression which is faithful to what the individual himself feels about Christmas.

Theoretically, there might be a social loss in this kind of Christmas. There is no denying the moral tone of symbolic acts done in unison. But a unison of action without a unison of understanding can be a terribly destructive force. Men who act together, merely from custom, on religious holidays, will fight together, merely from custom (the custom enforced by conscription), for seven days a week, throughout years.

Should not the unisons of religion be free from the pressures of heritage? A religious heritage may inspire, but it ought never to constrain. The good in religion is nothing if it is

not spontaneous. There was a time when believers in Christianity were burning one another to death because they disagreed on the question of whether or not the body of Christ was literally present in the bread of holy communion. According to our view of religion, such people must have been categorically insane. And today, those who have the temerity to maintain that acceptance of any particular denominational credo plays a decisive part in spiritual welfare seem to us to verge on the sort of delusions which would land a man in an asylum were they expressive of anything but a species of religious belief.

Should religion, then, be conceived entirely in "functional" terms? Is it to have no content, no "teaching," say nothing at all about the nature of things and the moral processes of life?

Without applying any metaphysical tests, it seems to us that the doctrinal side of religion has always to be measured by its functional applications. In other words, does a particular religious idea increase or lessen the individual's moral integrity and self-reliance in human relations? Does it make him more competent to live in a free society? Will he be eager or reluctant to apply rational criteria to the articles of his faith? What will be the ground of his differences with those having other beliefs? How will his theory of "sin" affect his efforts at personal reconstruction? How will he regard other human beings—races with another color of skin, for example? Will he fear death? Will he fear life?

We are not entirely pessimistic as to the future of religion in the United States. It seems to us that there is more spontaneous religion in Americans than the churches take account of, and that in time a free religious spirit will pass the churches by altogether. In the past half-century, much has been accomplished toward equality among the races. It may seem idle to speak of "progress" in race relations when so much more remains to be done, but it is a fact that today, in the United States, there is dawning realization of

the essential justice in racial equality. This realization has not been brought about by the churches, but by a general movement toward idealism in which church attitudes, as such, have been virtually irrelevant. In other fields, such as education, there has been a gradual wearing away of formal materialism and a revival of the spirit of Platonic idealism. Symptomatic of another change, although of uncertain significance, has been the swing of the balance of power from capital in the direction of labor. The future, in this great area of human affairs, has a plasticity which means new freedom from the constraints of the past, if there is leadership to use that freedom wisely.

In a word, there are incalculable possibilities for a new kind of religious inspiration in the modern world. We mean a religious inspiration which takes account, first, of the needs of human beings, and allows no doctrinal consideration to stand in the way of serving those needs. This is by no means a soup-kitchen and medical missionary conception of religious activity. It should be evident that the need for soup kitchens is closely related to the acquisitive economics of our society, and religion, if it is real, and not just another brand of system—building economic reform, will have to afford an effective psychomoral analysis of the acquisitive spirit. It will also have to seek out and to gnaw away at the roots of such customs as those which have made the Christmas season into an appalling travesty of the religious spirit. Such a religion, of course, would avoid like the plague all alliances with business and government. It would recognize as "spiritual" only those free human expressions which are entirely unconnected with any motive but the highest of which man is capable, and it would preserve and promulgate this idea of religion as sacred above all.

We remain convinced that a society in which such a religion could gain adherents would be a society that would never be confronted by the terrible dilemmas which beset our present

civilization. Nor do we think that this religion would develop people given to personal isolationism, without the cement of fraternal unity and a generous concord of behavior. It would, instead, lay the foundation for voluntary cooperation, and for free association on the basis of common truths, although truths which have been independently perceived. For it seems to us impossible that there is no core of objective reality behind the facades of personal and group self-deception—impossible, too, that freethinking seekers for knowledge could fail to understand that reality in much the same terms. The consensus of the morally great throughout history is an impressive fact, forming a legitimate basis, we think, for believing that men *can* agree and live together in peace, without coercion, without enforced rules of irrational tradition, and with their common hopes as guide. It is true that the obstacles in the way of arriving at this ideal are also impressive, and if much be made of them, we have no other reply than Spinoza's, to whose religion, incidentally, we are also greatly attached. At the end of his *Ethics*, he said:

If the way which I have pointed out . . . seems exceedingly hard, it may nevertheless be discovered. Needs must it be hard, since it is so seldom found. How would it be possible, if salvation were ready to our hand, and could without great labor be found, that it should be by almost all men neglected? But all things excellent are as difficult as they are rare.

Letter from SCOTLAND

GLASGOW.—American readers may learn with some surprise that there is a Scottish movement for separation and independence from the British Empire—a movement of considerable strength, complete with a draft of a proposed Scottish Constitution. But there has been absolutely no development of the philosophical angle except in the poetry of MacDiarmid and the occasional essays of other intellectuals, and therein lies the weakness of the movement. Once the Scottish cultural renaissance reaches the schools and begins to permeate the life of the mass of the people, then we can look for a popular drive for self-government, but meantime the Scottish National Party throws up the wrong type who stress the economic issues only, and give a sort of comic-opera effect with their flag-wagging on Bannockburn Day.

The case for Self-Government is, of course, overwhelming, whichever way one looks at it. The steady decline in the standard of life in comparison with England in housing, employment, industry, etc., all show that "out of sight, out of mind" operates for governments as well. The colossal centralisation of business in London has further drained away any initiative and people with ideas, so that no new industries grow naturally in Scotland; and when we do (through the good luck of having the most fog-free transatlantic air terminal at Prestwick) try to build an aviation industry, the government gives all priorities to developing a new London airport. We naturally think a Scottish Parliament would give attention to Scottish aspirations.

Peculiar Scottish problems such as the great depopulated areas in the Highlands still defy solution by the British parliament. Something on the scale of a TVA Project is now required; but only, again, a Scottish Parliament would have time to legislate such a vast undertaking. They are all far too busy in London, arguing with Russia,

Malaya, and so on, to have much time for domestic issues, and that's just what is wrong with the whole world at present—so busy watching what the other fellow is doing that we only half do our own job.

I think we who hold the decentralist view of achieving world order see another way. We start with opposing imperialism in both the *financial* and physical domination of one group by another. We see behind the British Commonwealth facade and want to see an end to the hideous Khaki Empire. We oppose the English control of our own country, so long continued because of the acquiescence of many of our own people who think it "cultured" to educate their sons in English Public Schools and who profit financially from the Union with England.

We would also oppose the Edinburgh Parliament's dictates to the five Scottish regions with their systems of local authorities and we would be on guard against the Parish being ignored by the Local Authorities. In the Parish we can come to our supreme task, the securing of self-government for the individual himself.

Here, in the minds and hearts of struggling, suffering people is the storm centre from which will come the immense swing of human consciousness into the new constellation. The first revolt will come once people realise that they do not in fact govern themselves and that they are creatures of habit, reflexes, beliefs, fears and so on, which determine their reactions to events around them. It is amazing how much dragooning and coercion people put up with on the part of the State—as long as they can preserve the illusion in their own minds that they are still free to choose.

The individual is certainly the battleground of this new era which is opening, because what we most urgently need is a new type of man who will begin to build a saner society, a society which is free of the clutter of utter unessentials such as churches, wars, and all the bloated trimmings of our so-called civilisation.

How, you may ask, are we to create a few of these new heroes to start us off? There's nobody to teach them anything different from what we presently know and believe, so it looks as if we just have to start with ourselves.

If you watch carefully, for a day or two, every thought or feeling that passes through your mind, you will not be long in realising that most of our waking hours are sacrificed to defense, work, social position, religious beliefs and so on—subtle methods adopted to preserve oneself—while creation, which should be our main preoccupation, becomes a crazy by-product of a mind devoted to the negative activity of shielding and protecting.

The great problem of our time is to discover whether it is possible for any large body of people to break with this traditional, defensive mode of thought and to establish mental habits more positive and creative. Unless a few can prove the individual to be capable of action free from fear and protectiveness, then social engineers might as well close up shop and resign themselves to recurrent cycles of war and violence as the culmination of the petty little wars waged by individuals.

SCOTTISH CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW

MEN OF STABLE MIND

THERE were several great historians of the nineteenth century who seemed able to generate for their readers a living sense of the past, and to spread throughout their pages a feeling of intellectual stability and basic orientation. We have in mind such writers as W. E. H. Lecky and H. T. Buckle in England, H. A. Taine in France, and in America, Andrew D. White. There were others, but these will serve as illustrations.

Cleverer and more erudite books on history may be written today, but we confess an inability to read very many of them with interest. Putting them down, we don't remember much of what is in them. They mark no milestones in our education, nor, we suspect, in the education of anyone else. Periodically, to test this feeling of distaste, we have returned in odd half-hours to books like Lecky's *History of European Morals* and his *Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe*, to find our admiration of nineteenth-century thinkers again renewed at the expense of more sophisticated contemporaries. While later historians may discover technical inaccuracies in the works of Lecky, they will not, we think, be able to match Lecky's breadth of mind, nor will his mood of intellectual integrity be often paralleled in books of more recent origin.

For one thing, Lecky seems to regard the intelligence and the will of the individual as causal agents in history. This view of human events tends to pervade his books with a sense of the dignity of man and to lend to his judgments the quality of his own moral conviction. He was no "relativist" in the modern sense, and while he wrote in an impartial spirit, the reader feels that Lecky had not yet heard that the quest for truth was soon to be redefined as the quest for "objectivity." But Lecky, we think, would be unsusceptible to this modern mania, were he alive today. There is a quality in such men which immunizes them from the blandishments of a

supposed "scientific" neutrality toward good and evil. We would expect Lecky to agree with the comment of Bartolomeo Vanzetti on "objectivity." The latter wrote: "It is now customary to speak of objectiveness—as a great thing. Relatively understood, it is a good thing, absolutely it is trash."

Bertrand Russell contributed to the *Nation* for Jan. 9, 1937, an essay which helps considerably to explain the difference between the serious historical studies of the nineteenth century and those of the twentieth.

In former days [says Mr. Russell] men wished to serve God. When Milton wanted to exercise "that one talent which is death to hide," he felt that his soul was bent to serve therewith my maker." Every religiously minded artist was convinced that God's aesthetic judgments coincided with his own; he had therefore a reason, independent of popular applause, for doing what he considered his best, even if his style was out of fashion. The man of science in pursuing truth, even if he came into conflict with current superstition, was still setting forth the wonders of Creation and bringing men's imperfect beliefs more nearly into harmony with God's perfect knowledge. Every serious worker, whether artist, philosopher or astronomer, believed that in following his own convictions he was serving God's purposes. When with the progress of enlightenment this belief began to grow dim, there still remained the True, the Good, and the Beautiful. Non-human standards were still laid up in heaven, even if heaven had no topographical existence.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the True, the Good and the Beautiful preserved their precarious existence in the minds of earnest atheists. But their very earnestness was their undoing, since it made it impossible for them to stop at a halfway house. Pragmatists explained that Truth is what it pays to believe. Historians of morals reduced the Good to a matter of tribal custom. Beauty was abolished by the artists in a revolt against the sugary insipidities of a philistine epoch and in a mood of fury in which satisfaction is to be derived only from what hurts.

And so the world was swept clear not only of God as a person but of God's essence as an ideal to which man owed an ideal allegiance; while the individual, as a result of a crude and uncritical

interpretation of sound doctrines, was left without any inner defense against social pressure.

Mr. Russell continues with an excellent characterization of the present, in contrast to an epoch lighted by devotion to the True, the Good and the Beautiful. It is evident that men like Lecky wrote at a time peculiarly propitious for far-reaching historical vision, when the superstitious elements in religion were already effectively challenged (Lecky being himself a main contributor to this movement), and when the dogmas of unbelief and mechanistic interpretation of human affairs had not yet gained dominant authority. The time was an interval between systems, and therefore an interval of extraordinary intellectual freedom for those who would seize the opportunity.

To catch the spirit of these great educators, one should read the volumes of Lecky already mentioned, and Andrew D. White's *History of the Warfare of Science with Theology*. White's dream of a great university, free from the control of denominational religion and open to both sexes, was realized in 1868 through the generosity of Ezra Cornell. White was the first president of Cornell University. Later, he served the United States as ambassador to Germany and then to Russia. In 1899, he was president of the American delegation to the Hague Peace Conference. It might be said that his *Warfare of Science with Theology* is essential to an understanding of the development of the modern temper, and involves as well a spirit and point of view which the modern temper sadly lacks. The chapters devoted to the struggle of Galileo with the Roman Church are a classic in the history of modern science.

Why are books like these no longer written? For one thing, the human situation has developed many more contradictions and anomalies than were evident in the last half of the nineteenth century. The modern social historian cannot write with the same high confidence in the promise of scientific inquiry and the spread of public

education and democracy. Then, too, the problem of man is no longer regarded as capable of individual solution. Today, deep skepticism of any sort of sustained personal wisdom is linked with the assumption that "reliable knowledge" is always an institutional product—the codified result of many fragmentary researches.

Of writers on history who compare at all in excellence with the great figures of the nineteenth century, we can think of only one who seems equal to this age, as they were equal to theirs—Ortega y Gasset, author of *The Revolt of the Masses* and *Toward a Philosophy of History*, Ortega, it seems, understands his time, in all its spiritual confusion, even as Lecky and White and a few others captured and embodied in their works the best of the striving and moral discrimination of the nineteenth century. For contrast with Ortega, there is John Herman Randall's *Modern Mind in the Making*, a volume done something in the manner of Lecky and White, finished, scholarly, and up-to-date, but a spiritless work compared to its predecessors. The modern "survey" of history is too complacently sure of itself, too much a history and too little a challenging inquiry into the springs of human action. Ortega is no compiler or "surveyor" of the past. He deals in problems, not in scholarly summaries, and has accomplished much toward raising the level of cultural and historical self-consciousness. He is, perhaps, a forerunner of the sort of great historians we may hope for during the next half of the twentieth century.

COMMENTARY OTHER TESTAMENTS

IF one takes seriously the proposal of Mr. Joy Elmer Morgan, editor of the *NEA Journal*, "for free discussion" (see *Frontiers*) of the great religious systems of the world—or rather, a comparative study of their ethical teachings, which would be more to the point—a considerable problem exists with respect to good materials for such study. A text on comparative religions that deals with several religions with equal interest and justice to them all is hardly conceivable. Even if a scholar wanted to be impartial, it would seem necessary for him to feel a genuine conviction about the teachings he describes, and where is the man of learning who could do this for, say, both Christianity and Buddhism; or, to sharpen the point, for Islam and Judaism?

Lacking such teachers, the next best thing would be to provide translations of various scriptures, but there, again, is a problem. Many of the translations of Eastern religious philosophy are wooden images of the original spirit (we say this, of course, on the basis of having compared one translation with another, and not from our own knowledge of the original tongues). So, in order to facilitate a just comparison of religious ideas, we have some recommendations to make in the way of translations, choosing in each case a work which might be compared in importance to the New Testament in Christianity, for moral excellence and beauty of form. Religions which remain unrepresented are those for which we know of no comparable text in English, though suggestions will be welcomed from readers as to works which might fill out the gaps in our list. (We make no mention of the various anthologies of the religious teachings of the world, tending to be impatient of the "anthology" treatment of this subject, and feeling that the bad translations so frequently found in them make honest ignorance a superior state to "knowledge" of other religions that is obtained in this way.)

There is, first, the great scripture of Taoism, the *Tao Te King*. The rendition of Lionel Giles, of the British Museum, seems to possess something of the ineffable charm of the Chinese sage, conveying to the reader the impression of wells of understanding lying beneath the surface of the words. This work was published as one of the *Wisdom of the East* series, by John Murray of London, and is, we believe, available in the United States from the New York bookshop, *Orientalia*.

For Buddhism, we suggest Irving Babbitt's translation of the *Dhammapada* (Oxford University Press). Buddha, like Pythagoras and Jesus, wrote nothing down, but the *Dhammapada* is generally acknowledged to be faithful to the ethics of the great teacher of the East. For those who wish a further view of Buddhism, Sir Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia* is probably the best simple expression of Buddha's teachings, a narrative poem of such excellence that it is worthy to stand with the great scriptures of the world.

Few Eastern works have been so often translated as the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the philosophical heart of the Hindu epic, the *Mahabharata*. Edwin Arnold has done a translation, Annie Besant made one, and there is a version by Dhan Gopal Mukerji. Gandhi compiled a *Gita* with a commentary of his own observations on the text. Recently, another translation by Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan has appeared. We have examined all these translations, but feel that none of them compares with that arranged and edited by William Q. Judge, which is available in several editions in the United States. The *Gita* is a majestic philosophical poem and needs to take form according to the inner content of its verses. The Judge translation, we believe, has qualities appropriate to the meaning of the *Gita*.

A second work of Hindu philosophy that should be known is the Charles Johnston translation of selections from the *Upanishads*, first published years ago by Thomas B. Mosher, of Portland, Maine. (Mr. Johnston was also responsible for an exquisite version of the *Crest*

Jewel of Wisdom, the Indian scripture attributed to Shankara Acharya, a sage accounted by some as the greatest of Hindu metaphysicians.) The *Upanishads* are dialogues between teacher and disciple, and their content is the distilled product of Vedic religion—they are manuals of instruction for the use of the spiritually self-taught. Of sheer philosophical beauty and the gentle mien of wisdom itself, the *Upanishads* seem a summation.

It is hoped that some day there will be a great demand for such books as these. We should like to urge their publication, or at least some of them, upon our printers, but lack assurance that enough copies could be sold to prevent a serious loss. Possibly, the next generation will be more interested in such studies.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

It is yearly becoming more apparent that if the world is to be "saved," it will be saved only through the efforts of those who, in youth, have had opportunity to develop an overpowering passion for truth and for justice. There are so many things to fear in the modern world that unless a man learns to love truth and justice more than his own economic, social or national security, and learns it early in life, he cannot manage to be happy, even in a selfish sense. Feeling that the burden of responsibility for inspiring an abiding concern for truth in children falls upon the shoulders of parents, we recently endeavored to persuade readers who are parents that they themselves will have to stand against the tides of nationalistic prejudice, if they wish their children to avoid being victimized by false doctrine in later years.

But the search for truth is, of course, not limited to disentangling the distortions of international history. Quite apart from whether we are much better than the Germans, Japanese or the Russians is the question of just how well we are doing all by ourselves, without reference to any other people or government. And there are many things about our present society which need to be examined with a thoroughly objective "why." Temporarily disregarding the offenses common to politics, we may turn with profit, for instance, to a consideration of the dominance over the "free press" maintained by modern advertising.

Bread is one of the staples of life, and the handling of the grains involved in its production for public consumption affords an excellent example of the many ways in which the idea of social usefulness is constantly superseded by the profit motive in industrial enterprise. Ralph Borsodi's *Flight From the City*, already given considerable attention in MANAS, will make our point for us adequately. This factual material unearthed by an individual investigator should

afford insight into the sort of thing it may be well for children to know. Mr. Borsodi writes:

White flour, I believe, along with white sugar and white rice, is one of the most harmful products for which we are indebted to the factory system. White flour is only one of the three products into which wheat is converted by our mills. The white flour we consume in bread and pastry; the middlings are bleached and sold to us for breakfast food as Wheatena or Cream of Wheat, and the bran is sold to us in neat packages to cure us of the constipation which the white flour causes. Dr. Kellogg, of the Battle Creek Sanitarium, who first hit on the bright idea of marketing bran for this purpose, has made a fortune out of selling this by-product of modern milling to the deluded American public. Yet as long as they insist upon consuming white flour, the bran is an almost essential purchase. All three of these products are present in whole-wheat flour which costs about 1-1/2 cents a pound. When we buy wheat after it has been split into three parts by our milling industry, we pay about 2 cents per pound for the white flour; about 13 cents per pound for the middlings in the form of breakfast food, and 20 cents per pound for the bran.

What is true of wheat is also true of corn. The home gristmill makes it possible for us to grind our own corn meal at a cost of about 1-1/4 cents per pound. But this is whole corn meal and not the pale ghost of the old-fashioned corn meal of our grandmothers. Yet the desiccated starchy substance which is now sold in our stores as corn meal costs 9 cents per pound. This corn meal is made from the dregs of whole corn after the best part, the germ, has been cut out of it to be chemically treated and turned into glucose and corn syrup. These chemical substances in turn have replaced the honey, the maple sugar, the molasses, and the brown sugar which were consumed in their places years ago, and which it is still possible for each individual family to produce for itself. Industrial production of these foodstuffs, instead of representing progress, has resulted in furnishing us inferior food and at a much higher price. [These are 1920 prices.]

Beginning with a universal ingredient of the American diet, bread, it is easy to multiply illustrations of the abuses of land, foodstuffs and utilities that presently occur in our "superior" economic system.

As to the financial success of American capitalism, it may be well for us to shock ourselves by noting that in 1934, in the city of Detroit, a man, woman, or child was reported to have starved to death approximately every eight hours. This happened during the worst of the depression, in the most grievously affected American metropolis. The great depression, extending into the subsequent years of mass-unemployment—which resisted all counteractive measures of Government—indicated that periodical dislocations may be expected so long as our national economy is principally spurred by the desire for surplus capital.

The world that we bequeath to our children, then, is in no part perfect, nor do we need to accept unquestioningly any traditional method of handling either business or personal affairs on the theory that, after all, "it *has* worked adequately in the past." The child can devote himself to the problem of building a better and happier world only when freed from illusions as to the superiority of familiar institutions. This, of course, need not make him bitter against man himself. He can yet grow to an idealistic faith in man's inherent capacity, and by a parent's philosophic outlook, furthermore, he can be aided to become a *constructive* revolutionary. Unless we seek to suggest to our children a movement in some sort of "revolutionary" direction, we can hardly expect them to avoid falling victim, eventually, to the common neuroses of our civilization.

A few years ago the "progressive" theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr, conceived of a wonderful title for one of his books—*Moral Man and Immoral Society*. Mr. Niebuhr's development of his theme seemed to us plagued by the "original sin" psychology, in apparent contradiction of the first half of his title, but in any case the title is itself an intriguing phrase in connection with the subjects under recent discussion here—and with many subjects yet to be discussed. Recognition of the existence of an almost overpowering number of

destructive social habits as inevitable background for the potentially "moral" child, should at least cause us to consider the validity of the maxim, "forewarned is fore-armed," when we contemplate our children's needs.

FRONTIERS The Only Security

THE *NEA Journal* (Journal of the National Education Association) for December contains a short article by the editor, Mr. Joy Morgan, which seems to us to rank with the best of the discussions of the place of religion in the public schools. Mr. Morgan begins by pointing out that while all systems of government and ethics are rooted in religion, this fact is no mandate for rampant sectarianism in the public schools. The schools, he says, should serve as a common meeting ground for all religions. "The free public school—intended for all, open to all, and good enough for all—must serve all who come, regardless of faith or lack of faith. The public school, then, cannot *indoctrinate* children in the dogma of any religious sect. What can it do?" Mr. Morgan's answer to this question is worthy of repetition in its entirety:

The school can teach *about* religion through ethics and history. Thinking of United Nations and one world as the pattern of the future, let us assume a classroom in which there are children from the home of Buddhist, Christian, Confucian, Hindu, Jewish, and Moslem faiths. The students may study the history and scriptures of all religions as a vital part of world history and search for the elements common to them all. They will find in common the following beliefs and ethical teachings:

- [1] The unity of all life.
- [2] The interdependence and brotherhood of all men.
- [3] Love and service to fellowman, not domination and power over them.
- [4] Nonviolence. No more war or killing.
- [5] Help, not exploitation, of the weak and backward.
- [6] Purity and personal disinterestedness.
- [7] That true riches and happiness are within.
- [8] The worth of the individual.
- [9] The immortality of the soul.
- [10] The union of man with God.

As a result of this free discussion and mutual respect, the students may discover that unity in the

midst of diversity is a prerequisite to world understanding, government, justice, and peace.

As an ethical credo, Mr. Morgan's ten principles or precepts seem to us to make a religion fully as good as any of the particular faiths we know of, and one that would be superior to most or all of them, if his rules were taken as the standard of historical judgment. Without even trying, we can think of one or two powerful religious institutions that have consistently violated not one but several of these principles throughout centuries. It follows that "free discussion" of religion in the schools, if vigorously pursued as both a historical as well as an ethical study, might place quite a strain on his companion requirement of "mutual respect." We suggest this difficulty, not in a captious spirit, but in order to indicate areas where Mr. Morgan's proposal might meet with immediate opposition. The New York City Public School system, for example, has barred the *Nation* from all school libraries on the ground that a series of articles appearing in the *Nation* did not show proper respect for one of the larger Christian denominations.

So there is the question: Can free discussion be reconciled with mutual respect? It seems to us that reconciliation is possible on the condition that the "respect" be held due only to self-evident ethical principles—such as Mr. Morgan lists—and if it be recognized that religious groups unwilling to submit their ideas to free discussion on this basis stand self-exposed as unable to meet the test of the democratic process.

Not many teachers, of course, would wish to develop the implications of Mr. Morgan's proposal to this extent. Ordinarily, there is not much point in a teacher talking himself out of a job except on a basic issue of conscience. While the individual teacher has the obligation of being personally ahead of the system, and of always presenting principles which will lead his pupils beyond the limitations of prevailing prejudice, he is not under the obligation of pressing home those principles to final application in a revolutionary sense—not,

that is, unless he is determined to be a revolutionary teacher, and to pay the price in personal sacrifice which society exacts from the fearless and the morally great. But every teacher could *start* discussions in the right direction.

What might be termed a "free discussion" of some of the ideas of Mr. Morgan's credo is contained in a new Human Affairs pamphlet by another Morgan—Dr. Arthur E.—also an educator. This pamphlet, *The "One True Faith" as a Cause of War* (available for 25 cents from the Henry Regnery Company, Hinsdale, Ill.), represents a new kind of social analysis which traces historical conflicts to the psychological attitudes fostered by sectarian religion. Dr. Morgan writes:

We commonly think of the major causes of misunderstanding and conflict as being external to ourselves. At least we do not see human discord as a natural and inevitable result of our most cherished beliefs and convictions. As to our own sacred faith we see our chief duty to be to maintain it in ourselves, and to influence others to accept it. . . .

One of the chief and most widespread causes of misunderstanding and conflict among individuals, groups, and nations is the habit of uncritically holding, and passing on to our children, doctrines, beliefs, and opinions with which we have been indoctrinated. We see this habit clearly as it appears in Nazis, Communists, Shintoists, and others who impress their doctrines and attitudes on the minds and feelings of their members, and of the younger generation. We see them endeavor to carry such teaching or conditioning to a point where the beliefs come to be held as self evident truths, as the one true faith. In persons thoroughly indoctrinated in this way, doubt as to the truth and rightness of their beliefs comes to be difficult, if not impossible. That is the very result desired by the indoctrinators.

It is not, of course, due merely to sheer perversity that true believers endeavor to impress their teachings on the minds of others in this way. Most people who support dogmatic religion feel a deep security in their beliefs, and they want others to be upheld by the same emotional conviction. That security, for them, becomes the highest good, what threatens it, a universal evil, and on

the basis of these extremes the gamut of their ethical credo is formulated. In time, in a culture pervaded by dogmatic habits of thought in religion, the rational or impartial spirit can attain only a second-class recognition the kind of "rationalism" permitted to the faithful during the Middle Ages, which could never dare to challenge the ultimate definitions of good and evil according to the Christian revelation.

Today, with the decay of literal belief in religious dogma—a decay resulting more from apathy than from conscious prevalence of the rational spirit—the modern world has lost much of the intense religious conviction which characterized the past, but is far from having developed in compensating proportion the habit of critical and impartial thinking. As a consequence, the weaknesses which Dr. Morgan discusses as peculiar to religious or nationalist sectarians are often as common among the irreligious and halfheartedly sceptical people, although not so easily identifiable as the obvious flights from reason of believers in the "One True Faith."

The really vital application of Dr. Morgan's pamphlet, then, lies in the readiness of everyone—not just the believers in traditional religion—to endure that uncomfortable feeling which always arises when a cherished idea is called into question. It might be the Darwinian Theory, it might be Vegetarianism, it might be the validity of the New Deal or the infallibility of Walter Lippmann. This would mean taking a long, second look at our ideas, whatever they are. We have, in other words, to exchange the security of belief—*any* belief—for the security of the impartial spirit of search, which is security of an entirely different sort—the only security which can be guaranteed against any conceivable external attack.