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WHO WILL PERSEVERE?

A GREAT many—if not all—of the projects which invite the heroic efforts of human beings seem accurately described when you say, at the outset, "This thing is really quite impossible, yet it must be attempted."

Take for example the problem set by a review, in the January/February *Humanist, of Religion in the Public Schools,* a report by a commission of the American Association of Public School Administrators, Washington, D.C. The substance of the report is repeated in the following paragraphs:

> The call, then, is clearly stated, for public schools to reconcile their practices with the magnificent ideal of the First Amendment, so that an informed citizenry may know why it is that in the United States we cannot have a public, multi-denominational religion, and that even a vague non-denominational Christianity may not be established. As Justice Jackson has stated: "The very purpose of a Bill of Rights was to withdraw certain subjects from the vicissitudes of political controversy, to place them beyond the reach of majorities."
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> We, as humanists, however, must appreciate both edges of the Commission's recommendation. It states that although there should be no suggestion that religious convictions or sanctions alone support moral principles or ethical imperatives (the term "moral and spiritual" is not used), we must not think that we can meet the requirement of neutralism by eliminating all references to religion and substituting a non-theist humanism, because the issue is one of context, not content.
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> The report suggests that a balance be struck by introducing into the curriculum, topic by topic, "the reciprocal relation" between religion and other elements of human culture. The teacher's guide must be simply one of good taste, good manners, a concern for the sensitivities involved, and an awareness of the diversity of faiths and affiliations present.
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> The public school, then, is now directed to disengage wholly from churches and religious practices, without being hostile to religion. This can be accomplished through creative accommodations to religious pluralism in seasonal observances, personnel policies, examination schedules, after-school activities, composition of staff, and ceremonial occasions. There must be no cause for children to feel the divisive effect—the "we-they" psychology—of any form of domination of a public facility by one group or a combination of groups in the religious spectrum.
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> The Commission emphasizes that the public school must, through new policies, materials and methods, develop in young people an understanding and appreciation of the Constitution, particularly the clauses which guarantee freedom from the establishment of religion and foster the free exercise of religion. Important to humanists is the fact that the term "religion" is understood here to include "a non-theistic philosophy which serves as a controlling ideal in a person's life." This interpretation was included in the court's Torcaso "notary public" decision of 1962.

It takes no great perspicacity to recognize the substantial meat and controversial bone of this analysis in the suggestion that the public school curriculum be made to include a topic-by-topic study of "the reciprocal relation" between religion and other elements of human culture. But since the problems here implied have already had extensive discussion in "Children . . . and Ourselves" (in review of a California State Board of Education Bulletin and a section in Theodore Brameld's *Education for the Emerging Age*, MANAS, April 8 and April 15, 1964), we shall attempt another approach, requiring notice, at least in outline, of the role of religion in relation to education in the United States.

This role, to say the least, has always been mixed. From the very beginning there has been the primitive view that there is a True Religion, that it can be known and taught, and that it is the business of the schools to teach it. People of this persuasion have never really understood what all the fuss is about. While the impartial vision of the

Founding Fathers got into the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, it failed to enter the schools of the early decades of the Republic. The colonial schools and colleges, controlled largely by Calvinist sects, stubbornly resisted the intellectual and moral freedom of the Deist inspiration behind the American Revolution. Jefferson wrote mournfully to John Adams:

> The advance of liberalism encourages a hope that the human mind will some day get back to the freedom it enjoyed two thousand years ago. This country, which has given to the world the example of physical liberty, owes to it that of moral emancipation also, for as yet it is but nominal for us. The inquisition of public opinion overwhelms in practice the freedom asserted by laws in theory.

"The Bible and figgers is all I want my boys to know," an irate New England farmer declared. The only purpose of higher education, from its beginnings in Colonial days, as a resolution of the Connecticut legislature declared, was "to supply the churches . . . with a learned, pious and orthodox ministry." Schism was literally built into the composition of American culture by the radical difference between the patterns of college education and the enlightened views of men like Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe. While the University of Virginia, founded in 1819 by Jefferson's inspiration, had no official connection with organized Christianity and no chair of divinity, this policy did not become a recognizable "trend" until late in the nineteenth century, when the ideal of the state university as a democratic institution with obligations to *all* the people began to take hold. As late as 1903, some 70 per cent of all American colleges were still controlled by religious denominations.

It is argued, with considerable basis in fact, that the success which has marked the attempt to eliminate sectarian indoctrination from the public schools has come more from the mutual suspicions of the sects than from a high principled acknowledgement of the separation of church and state. There is a sense in which the recent Congressional debates on the Becker amendment showed just this. (The Becker amendment was one of some I75 resolutions to amend the Constitution of the United States following the decision of the Supreme Court, in 1962, that repetition in the schoolroom of a prayer was an unconstitutional establishment of religion in violation of the first amendment.) A summary of the deliberations of Congress concerning this attempt to permit religious indoctrination in the schools brought out the utter impracticality of finding an inoffensive "common denominator" for the some 200 sects in the United States. This summary, by Dennis Farrar, included the following practical comment:

> Even if it were possible to compose a truly nonsectarian prayer, the result would be so diluted and watered down as to be devoid of religious meaning. The search for a "common core" religion in the classroom serves only to degrade religious sensitivity by making God a trivial convenience which must be dispensed with before getting down to the real work of the day. A religious exercise in the public schools is detrimental to education as well as religion. . . .
>
> Our increasingly pluralistic society is today more sensitive to all kinds of real and imagined racial and religious affronts. A religious exercise in the public schools is now apt to act as a divisive, rather than cohesive, force in our society. Although school prayers may not represent a substantial encroachment upon the religious freedom of the nonconformist, their lack of any significant redeeming virtues suggests that they ought not to be suffered longer. The proposed amendments to the Constitution designed to give them new birth should not be adopted.

This was one occasion when minds actually got changed by the disclosures and debates before a Congressional Committee (The House Judiciary Committee). By the end of the hearings, the National Council of Churches, the Baptist Church, the Quakers, the Jewish groups, the Lutherans, Presbyterians, Seventh-Day Adventists, Unitarians, and United Church of Christ were supporting the Supreme Court decision and opposing the idea of amending the Constitution,

while Catholics, Episcopalians, and Methodists were divided among themselves on the question.

So, for the time being, at any rate, there will be no further concerted effort to insert teaching *of* religion into the public school curriculum, the reason being that, even on partisan grounds, it cannot be made to work.

But the entire question is certain to come up again. It is very difficult to abolish the idea that if the Truth exists, it ought to be taught. What, the plain man asks, is so complicated about *that?* There is a kind of instinctive perfectionism in the average American. By dint of patriotic tradition, religio-cultural inheritance, and pervasive echoes concerning the unparalleled excellence of the American Way of Life, he finds it difficult to understand why these matters cannot be settled by application of some hard, common sense. And the young obviously need Moral Guidance. The evidence presented in support of this claim is by no means limited to Mr. Hoover's Uniform Crime Reports and homilies directed to Chambers of Commerce and Rotary Clubs. There are also frequent challenges to the institutions of higher learning, like the following, made in the 1940's, by a Yale undergraduate who wrote to the president of his university asking for some suggestion of where to look in the university curriculum for the basis of a moral life.

> Have we not [the student asked] gleaned from your own professors of natural science, philosophy and ancient history that religions are products of myth and superstition and that men create gods in their own image; that if there is such a thing as the soul, no scientist has ever isolated it in his laboratory?
>
> During your youth you . . . were educated to think that man is superior to animals, that he is a free agent capable of choosing between good and evil. . . . your schooling never caused you to doubt that man possessed certain inalienable rights. . . . you learned that man is distinct from animals, and yet our biology courses now conceive of man merely as one species of mammal. Furthermore, is not your traditional doctrine of free will at odds with the basic assumption of modern science—determinism? A logical inference from every psychology lecture we have ever attended would be that man's least thought and act can be wholly explained in terms of cause and effect; that every choice is dictated by a billion strings of deterministic factors leading back to the dawn of time. . . .
>
> If the implications of modern education are what they appear to be, was not Jesus of Nazareth an ordinary human being whose naïve outpourings reveal a sad ignorance of politics and economics, whose precepts constitute a fanatical repudiation of human nature as your subordinates have taught us to view it? . . .
>
> If men are but animals, why not treat them as such? An animal has no rights. The law among animals is the law of the strong. If man is a slave to determinism, incapable of a free choice, what is the value of the ballot, trial by jury and civil liberties in general? If there is no natural law in the universe, how do you justify those unalienable rights which the Declaration of Independence asserts men to possess? . . .
>
> Isn't it palpably obvious to you that at the root of the trouble lies an apparent contradiction between the implications of our studies and the ideals we are expected to revere?

We don't know what the reply was, if any was offered, but it couldn't have been very reassuring. What *was* there to say?

The objection of this student was to the entire program of what is called "secular education," and there is no easy rebuttal. You could say, perhaps, that the professors are not so "sure" about their mechanistic assumptions as they were in the 1940's; but even so, what are you going to do about it? Have a trial and offer Professor Skinner and his cohorts a dram of hemlock because for a generation they have been giving our youth a morally barren account of the human being? What *ought* they to have taught?

In such encounters, there is only one thing to do. You go to history. You find out *why* science went the way it did. You look at the thought of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. You try to weigh the investment of moral emotion in modern materialism—you don't have to call it Materialism; call it Naturalism, or what you like—and by this means help the questioning

undergraduate to realize that the nineteenth-century greats who gave science its present orientation were really trying to do right by him. You try to make it clear to him that if, today, they appear to have made a mess of things, working out alternative courses would be a way for him to get a *real* education.

He may agree. He may take on the project. But if he is a bright young man, he will point out to you that he is starting something that may take more than one generation to complete. And if he goes into education himself, and is able to preserve his integrity, he will have some bitter things to say about the educational institutions of the mid-century period, which are in obvious conspiracy against him. For example, he might recall to you the Harvard Report on *General Education in a Free Society* (1945), which complacently announced that American culture has three great themes—the Supernaturalism of Christianity, the Rationalism of Hellenic thought, and the Naturalism of science—yet failed to take note of the fact that these themes are in direct contradiction, one with another, and in many relationships are angrily opposed. Great universities, of course, are always trying to raise money to support the good they're doing, so they seldom make a big point of the contradictions in the curriculum. Anyway, we've lately found a solution for the schizoid symptoms of higher education—you accept them openly and change the name of the institution to *multi*versity. No problem.

But great teachers, as distinguished from "great" universities, have a different approach to the content of what is taught. They take the view that a teacher ought to *expose* the unresolved contradictions of the cultural tradition and to focus the minds of his students upon them. This is usually a costly enterprise. It was costly for Boethius, who, as a leading educator of the early middle ages, nonetheless kept on writing his *Consolations of Philosophy* in prison while waiting to be executed by a Gothic emperor who felt that dissenting individuals could not be trusted. It was costly for Abelard, some six hundred years later. Like Boethius, Abelard was too good a man to let the contradictions in his "cultural inheritance" pass unnoticed, so he wrote *Sic et Non*, which brought on *Dies Irae*. It is now costly to Robert M. Hutchins, who continues to insist that it is impossible to transmit the cultural inheritance without making the minds of both teachers and students aware of the contradictions in it, and which in fact represent the unfinished business of both life and education. Dr. Hutchins has little patience with administrators who get upset when students decide that a direct attack on certain contradictions in the social system—a functioning part of the cultural inheritance—is more important than the smooth operation of a state university.

What we are trying to get out into the open, here, is some realistic measure of the burden that is being placed on the shoulders of the public school teachers of the country when they are invited by the report of the American Association of Public School Administrators to preserve the integrity of the First Amendment by showing to their students "the reciprocal relation" between religion and other elements of human culture. How, we might ask, will the individual teacher's "good taste, good manners," and "concern for the sensitivities involved" enable him to do what the entire establishment of higher education has studiously avoided doing for half a century or more?

It can of course be done. Perceptive teachers can do it. They always have. You don't even have to be bitter or belligerent to do it, although it may be a little like planting time bombs in the minds of the young. For example, if you are teaching about the Reformation, you will have to give some attention to the ferment of mysticism which began in Europe a few centuries earlier. You will have to tell about the Albigensian revolt and how it was put down. You will have to give some account of the fires of inspiration lit by the

German Theology, and by Suso and Tauler. You will want to compare the young Luther with the old Luther. The question of what the Powers That Be commonly do about the Inner Light when it begins to shine on the Temporal Authority will have to be looked at. The problem of Rendering Unto Caesar will have to be traced across all the centuries of European history. And this would involve noticing how difficult it is to decide what belongs to Caesar, and why. It also involves coming to terms with the fact that a self-governing people cannot avoid deciding how big and powerful they will allow Caesar to get. It involves some isolation and recognition of the uniformities of this problem, as it appears and reappears, from epoch to epoch. You might even stage a few of the old heresy trials in modern dress—say, Galileo's and Bruno's—and let the students prosecute and defend. The prosecution need not be left without material. A pretty good Establishment case can be made for shutting up Galileo, and it was put, recently, not by a theologian, but with considerable skill by a Logical Positivist.

There is no serious harm in keeping the illustrations of these encounters decently in the past. It can be pointed out to the students that it will remain for them to bring the analysis up to date. But you must also tell them that they will *have* to; every generation equal to its tasks has to; and it is always possible to do it. It can be recalled that the generation of students going to school in Italy when Mazzini was a boy was prevented from reading the "controversial" books of the time, but that this didn't stop them from thinking. They had the Latin classics, which were not banned. The conservative Italian school administrators of the 1820's apparently had forgotten the revolutionary content of the Latin classics, or had never known about it, and permitted them to circulate. It is pretty hard to hide the Rights of Man from Western man. It is much easier, Mazzini found, to leave the Responsibilities of Man unexamined. Doing the right thing with a revolution, he discovered, was even tougher than stirring one up.

Another phase of the "reciprocal relation" could be touched upon in Great Scriptures courses, which would present, not the content of organized religion, but something of the ideas of their original inspiration. Not how men have answered them, but the Great Questions themselves. Courses of this sort already exist in programs for adult education. There is nothing to prevent their use in high schools except parental anxiety and public pressure.

The young people, of course, go home and ask questions. They always have. The better the teacher, the more questions. The wisdom of the parents will be taxed, if not challenged or rejected. It *ought* to be taxed, challenged, or rejected. Unfortunately, the parents are seldom ready for this. The colleges and universities they went to—if they went—did not explain to them the historical necessity of having your wisdom challenged by your children. They did not explain that there is a kind of natural law under which parents who do not challenge their own wisdom always have it challenged by their offspring. These parents, alas, went to schools which instructed them in a plebian traditionalism. They learned how to repeat, although in incredibly mediocre language, Ulysses' speech in *Troilus and Cressida*—

> Oh! when degree is shak'd. . . .

but they didn't learn why, from time to time, it *has* to be shak'd. We don't have an evergreen system of education. People don't regenerate their intellectual foliage from day to day. The leaves may turn pretty colors in the fall, but they nonetheless *all fall off.* Winter comes and the trees are bare. The schools are a failure, people say. It's *treason!* other people say, in books which sell eight million copies in election years.

How'd you like to become a high school teacher and get an opportunity to fix all that?

REVIEW
ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

As a casual thought, before getting into this book, it might be said that anyone who reads *The Scent of Water* by Elizabeth Goudge (Coward-McCann and Crest) and glances around, between chapters, at the raw, unfinished hills of Southern California, is likely to long for experience of the tamed and loved landscape of rural England. What is it like to be at home in a countryside wrought by a thousand years of history—to walk on roads and live in houses that have had beauty and completion for centuries?

The Scent of Water is a triumph of the palimpsest, for yesterday winds into the present in this story, through diaries and memories, and you begin to realize that Miss Goudge, when she looks at a record of the past, sees it only in terms of the human beings who made it, and she brings them back to life by showing that they are almost in very fact ourselves. Her books have delicacy and depth, compassion and strength. A reader might even be a little ashamed to feel such wonder at the rich humanity she gives the humblest of characters. It is there, of course, in every one of us; and when it does not show, or has been starved out, there are rare values which come from insisting that we try to understand why. Perhaps we never really know these things about people, but the quality life gains from strenuous attempts to find them out is something more than mere uncertainty. People who say, "Don't read about Hannibal; he didn't make it," will not enjoy this book.

The blurb says the theme is "a woman's search for fulfillment in a small English village," and that will do for a start. But we haven't any intention of outlining this story, since its substance is entirely in the telling and in the reader's perception that the woman's fulfillment gains its meaning and its realization from the interwoven dramas of fulfillment going on in others. It is the timeless quality of these several dramas—their deeply human appeal—which captures and engrosses the reader. It makes you know that wherever there has been a human being, there has been—almost is—a living present filled with dignity.

The story skips around, salting homely situations with mellow observations, but the latter always come naturally, they always fit. There is a scene in which a girl who, months before, had stolen some tiny, toy-like objects from a neighbor's house, unburdens her conscience. Mary, the main character, has inherited the house and is befriending the girl, Edith. As they walk together, Mary says to Edith:

> "I want to tell you, Edith. Today is the first time I have been in Ash Lane. Well, I've been busy, so perhaps I'm not to be blamed for that, but I am to be blamed that I walked through the door as though I'd done so every day for weeks. I wanted you to think I had. I deceived you and deception is stealing because it takes away the truth. Forgive me, Edith."
>
> Edith was looking away from her. Could a child understand such a very feminine bit of vanity, of compunction? Suddenly Edith jumped up and came to her, flinging herself into her arms and sobbing wildly. She held the child firmly but in utter bewilderment. What had she said to provoke this primordial grief? It seemed vast and hopeless, like Eve's in the Garden when she knew what she had done. She asked no questions but waited, and presently Edith stopped sobbing and was silent.
>
> "What is it, Edith?" she asked at last.
>
> "I stole them," whispered Edith.
>
> "You what?"
>
> "Stole them."
>
> "What did you steal?"
>
> "Queen Mab in her coach and the little blue tea set."
>
> "Tell me about it," said Mary.
>
> "When the old lady was ill I used to go and kneel in the conservatory and look at the little things. I pretended they were mine; especially Queen Mab and the blue glass tea set. And then one day Mother said the old lady had sold her oak chest. And that night I had a nightmare, and the next morning I went to see if the little things were there. They were still there and the window was open." She stopped and began to sob again.
>
> "And so you took Queen Mab and the tea set to keep them safe from being sold like the chest," said Mary. "If I had been you and nine years old, that's

just what I should have done." Edith looked up at her astonished and speechless, her face red and blotchy with her tears, the most bedraggled-looking child Mary had ever seen. "Yes, I should. It was unthinkable that Queen Mab and the tea set should go away to some dusty shop in a town. They'd have died there. . . ."

"Then you don't think I'm awfully wicked?" whispered Edith. "You don't think I'll go to hell?"

Mary laughed. "No, I don't. It's like this, Edith. Why you do a thing is more important than what you do. And so stealing because you love is really better than not stealing because you don't. Not that I am advocating stealing exactly. The question of good and evil is very complicated. Life has been very difficult for us all since Eve ate the apple. Let's wash your face. . . ."

Later, when a friend said to Mary, "You've set that child free in some way. . . . What have you done? Love's not enough," she replied:

"Not without understanding.

"Not even with it. I understand Valerie as well as love her." He spoke roughly and it seemed to Mary as though he were tearing the peace of the place to pieces. "And patience added is not enough. There has to be some sort of violence."

"The kingdom of heaven cometh by violence," quoted Mary. "But Edith, not I, did the violence. To herself. She forced herself to tell me something that was worrying her I hope because she loves me. But you can't force your love to be violent, Paul. You must wait till it breaks through in its own strength."

"One may wait too long," muttered Paul.

The old lady who once owned the house, and left it to Mary, had occasional mental disturbances which frightened her shy neighbors. One of the latter, talking to Mary, asked:

"Do you think she was hurt that I ran away?"

"If she was, it's all over long ago."

"Nothing is ever over," said Jean. "You thread things on your life and think you've finished with them, but you haven't because it's like beads on a string and they come around again. And when something bad you've done to a person comes around again it's horrible, for if the person is dead there's nothing you can do."

"I have thought lately that sometimes there is" said Mary. "When it comes around again, then if it is possible, give what you failed to give before to someone else. You will have made reparation, for we are all one person."

"People only? Or all of us?" Jean's hand, with a gesture calm and serene for such an agitated person, seemed to indicate the birds calling in the wood behind them, the sheep in a high field on the skyline and the cats at home.

"Scientists say we are all of one substance," said Mary. "The Bible says we come from the one God and await the one redemption."

"I'm always full of reverence when I look at my hens," said Jean.

People who read this book will, more than likely, go back and read everything Elizabeth Goudge ever wrote, which is about what we did after reading, some twenty years ago, her *Castle on the Hill.* That is, we read each book as it came out. In most of them you find a theme which appears briefly, in the present book, in this passage:

"A diatribe against war . . ." said Charles. "There are so many. Do they do any good? Is there anything now that can be done about our fate except to rail at it? By the common man, I mean. The VIP's of course are like a bird in a bush mesmerized by a snake, so mesmerized by horror that it just hops nearer and nearer. The common man, that's you and me." He seemed pleased by this and smiled. "But can we do anything?"

"Rail," said Paul. "Scream at the bird from behind."

"Is your book a powerful scream?"

"I hope so. The common man of our generation knows what he is talking about."

"Yes. I don't know as much about it as you do, you know. I wasn't in the war for long. It's time I've been a mess since but then I was a mess before. People talk a lot of ballyhoo about suffering improving you. I should say that what it does is to underline what you were before. It did that to me. And probably, in a different way, for you. No, I can't blame what I am on the war."

"The last one. What about the one before?"

"Good Lord, I can't go back that far. . . ."

One thing more: A wonderful kind of Christianity runs through this book. It almost makes friends with the pagan in you. But then, Miss Goudge is a pretty pagan sort of Christian, to begin with. Her religion includes everybody.

COMMENTARY
RESPONSIBILITY OF READERS

IT is entirely a coincidence that this week's "Children" article makes use of material which appeared in *Redbook* (for September, 1964), giving evidence of honorable exception to the general rule of "bland and uncritical" contents in the big-circulation women's magazines (see Frontiers). *Redbook's* publication of the dialogue between Bertrand Russell and a fourteen-year-old boy is a wholly admirable feature. And we might recall, here, another recent quotation from *Redbook* in these pages—the extracts from Jessamyn West's article, "Violence," in MANAS for Jan. 6. Then, in MANAS for March 6, 1963, "Children" reported on a 12-page "preview" in *Redbook* of Bruno Bettelheim's book, *Dialogues with Mothers.*

Without "researching" the matter, we remember one other instance of worthy publishing by a woman's magazine—the use by *Mademoiselle* (for December, 1961) of a long interview with Robert Pickus, founder of the Turn Toward Peace movement, which was followed, in the College and Career Department of that magazine, by accounts of the major peace organizations with details on their objectives and the kind of volunteer help they seek.

It is not our purpose to diminish the impact or compromise the judgment of Mrs. Kondolf's Frontiers article, which is, we think, quite accurate in its general picture. What these exceptions indicate is the fact that women's magazines *could* be better, and we have no doubt that in many cases the people who work in their editorial departments would make them better, if they were given half a chance. It is an old story—the frustration of the writer and the artist by the commercial framework in which they are obliged to exist. In the final analysis, the responsibility goes back to the general public, which *buys* the mass magazines and in this way confirms the low opinion most publishers hold regarding the intelligence and enduring interests of their readers.

A change for the better will require a collaboration between editors, writers, and readers. The readers will have to deny themselves the superficial euphoria they get from the bland mix of sensory and acquisitive stimulation found in the mass media, and devote their precious reading time to better papers which need more popular support simply to survive or break even. This would be a small "sacrifice" for the reader, compared to what the editors and writers will have to do—refuse to work for magazines which have no purpose except to create a "market" for manufactured goods.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
TWO YOUTHFUL MINDS

IT is not often that we feel justified in quoting from mass media publications, here, but on the other hand it seems unlikely that many MANAS readers acquaint themselves each month with, say, the content of *Redbook*. The September (1964) issue, noticed by pure chance, has some delightful passages recorded during an interview between Lord Bertrand Russell and the son of a writer. The occasion coincided with the lad's fourteenth birthday, and the 92-year-old philosopher showed his own still-surviving youthfulness in the way he responded to the youngster, and in throwing his own past into perspective. As the *Redbook* editors summarize: "Everything from school marks, grandparents and profanity to patriotism, happiness and the Bible was discussed." The interview began:

> *Lord Russell*: Well, young Tom, congratulations on your birthday.
>
> *Tom*: Thank you, sir—you're making it a very unusual birthday. Do you remember what you did on *your* fourteenth birthday?
>
> *Lord Russell*: No. I recall my tenth, however. A dreadful day. I was given one gift, a plain blue sweater. I was told that I wasn't properly grateful. I was scolded severely and reminded that when I was born I was almost named Galahad.
>
> *Tom* [*Laughing*]: That's terrible! [*Pauses*] It sounds like you must have had a very unhappy time when you were young.
>
> *Lord Russell*: Not really, but I think many young people believe they're unhappy at the time. When I was your age I was contemplating suicide, or thought I was. Then one night I had a dream in which I was dying. A family friend was standing at my bedside and in my dream I said, "Well, at any rate, there is one comfort. I shall soon be done with all this." He replied, "When you're a little older you won't talk that sort of nonsense." And I didn't. That was the end of my suicide fantasy. I think it is quite common to young people who feel sorry for themselves, particularly if they are having difficulties at home or at school.
>
> *Tom*: Well, back home the grownups are always talking about how school isn't difficult *enough*. I guess you think so too. Since you're a mathematician, I guess you think we should study more math at school.
>
> *Lord Russell*: No, I rather think that although mathematics and the so-called hard sciences are very important, they are too much in vogue these days. What I'd like to see is a more objective and more thorough study of political and economic systems, and history that's not quite so hysterical. Students are taught the most absurd versions of their country's history!

The conversation thus engagingly begun did not follow any course plotted by the sprightly savant, but grew out of free-wheeling response to the brief remarks of the boy. Tom had been exposed to two forms of educational training, the first eight years spent at a "strict public school." When he reached the ninth grade, he moved to Putney School in Vermont, which he describes as being "sort of progressive." After Lord Russell mentioned his own Spartan upbringing as the grandson of a prime minister, he was asked his opinion of "progressive schools":

> There are some things I admire about progressive schools. I admire the freedom of speech and the freedom to challenge ideas. The fact is, however, that teachers are more important than any kind of method or discipline. Children learn the genuine beliefs of their parents and teachers, not their professed precepts. My own parents believed that intellect, energy, creativity and progress are more important than manners.

Russell was apparently stimulated by Tom's tendency to exhibit (politely) different opinions:

> *Lord Russell*: Since you seem to enjoy abstract thinking, perhaps you'd like to study higher mathematics.
>
> *Tom* [*making a face*]: I don't think so. I'm not even good at *lower* mathematics. I can't seem to really understand it. Last year I had a good math teacher but even he couldn't do much with me. He tried—and I tried. But it was no use.

Lord Russell: Try again. If more people—particularly politicians and social philosophers—knew more about mathematics, there wouldn't be so much trouble in the world. In mathematics there are no absolutes, everything is relative. But the politicians won't have it. [*Tom looks puzzled. Lord Russell sees his confusion and goes on to explain.*] Take patriotism, for example. Your country, right or wrong. Salute the flag, regardless of what it stands for. Silly rot. Lot of dangerous emotionalism. The plain fact is that most nations of this world should in all honesty fly the Jolly Roger.

Tom: *A* person like you, Lord Russell, can get away with saying that.

Lord Russell [*Dryly*]: I don't get away with much. You forget the times I've been carted off to jail.

Tom: I've seen the pictures. You didn't seem to be too upset about it, though. Not the way most people look when they're arrested.

Lord Russell: You must remember, Tom, I intended to get arrested. I wanted the publicity. If I'd merely called a meeting and stood up on a box to explain my views on world peace, the story would have rated a few paragraphs on an inside page and nothing at all on television. But when an elderly member of the House of Lords who is also a reasonably distinguished scientist is arrested, it is front-page news. People begin to ask, "What's it all about?" It's not very pleasant to make an exhibition of oneself, but it's the only way to reach many people. The only way in which we can make the facts known is to find a form of protest which even the hostile press will notice.

Since it is universally known that Lord Russell has been an active obstructionist in protesting the nuclear arming of Britain, Tom mustered the courage to ask whether he looked kindly on the order of life behind the iron curtain:

Tom: Some people say *you're* a Communist, Lord Russell. I wanted to ask you.

Lord Russell [*Laughing*]: No, I'm not a Communist. I was one of the first writers to publish a book pointing out the flaws in communism, both as an economic system and as a way of life. Marx was a muddled thinker and inspired by hatred. The best way to combat it is not war.

What Russell criticizes in England and America—especially in America—is the tendency to question the loyalty of loyal men because they agree or disagree with the foreign policy of their government. If one goes around "saying that everyone who disagrees or criticizes is a Communist," this must, said Russell, be a sign that one's own position is not durably established in reason. Communism can never be popular in Western countries because here, at least, a sufficient number of people have "tasted the luxury of individual freedom." Yet *real* freedom must include an understanding of the need to protect the inviolability of conscience and free thought for every citizen. "There is still a very long way to go," in the United States particularly. Tom then asks: "Have you ever done any traveling in the United States? You don't seem to like it very much." Russell replies with a genuinely cosmopolitan comment:

Oh, yes. I spent many years in your country. I saw in America a sign at a beach club that said, "Gentiles Preferred."

I wanted to write "Christ, keep out" underneath it, but in the end I decided not to. There may no longer be signs like that one around, but I am sure that minority groups—Negroes and Jews—know it exists.

However, I think there are many nice things about your country. You Americans are very kindly in personal relations —much more so than we British. Strangers are made to feel welcome. Also I find American speech very pleasant to listen to—much of your slang is refreshingly expressive. But I wish they would call it American and not English. I don't mind being told that I don't speak American well. I don't.

What I do object to about America is the herd thinking. There is no room for individuals in your country—and yet you are dedicated to saving the world for individualism.

FRONTIERS

Women's Magazines

THE wide diversity of American weekly and monthly publications that flow endlessly off the presses appear to be a peculiarly indigenous phenomenon. So far as we know, in no other country is there such an abundance of publications which play so large a role in the lives of its people. Commercial enterprises of every kind, colleges, labor and religious groups, professional organizations, artists, engineers, scientists, physicists, chemists, actors and actresses, knitters, antique dealers, *ad infinitum*, all advance their particular interest in regularly published periodicals.

Although foreign newspapers shape political opinion no less than our American press does, the influence exerted by magazines abroad and elsewhere is far less that that exerted by American publications. The effect on the social and cultural patterns is enormous.

Leading them all are the women's magazines in America. These magazines have developed a format that is eminently successful in terms of circulation. One magazine alone, among the top women's magazines, boasts a subscription list of over 8,000,000. Even if three readers to one issue is allowed, a relatively modest claim, this publication may easily enjoy an audience of 24,000,000 American readers, not too many less votes than Goldwater received.

Competition among the women's magazines is exceptionally keen and there are several other publications which command subscribers' lists in the millions. Although there is some overlap of readership, it is not too far-fetched to claim that the majority of women in America read one or more women's magazines within the period of a single month.

That they respond to the subtle blandishments contained in these publications is evident. It is equally evident that they fulfill some need in the lives of these women since at least two of America's women's magazines have enjoyed decades of uninterrupted publication. A perusal of these two from their inception is tantamount to witnessing the changes of the household *mores* affecting women in the United States over the past half-century and more.

Compiled essentially with a view to obtaining substantial advertisement revenues and pleasing vast masses of readers, the editors and staffs must be wary to print little that will arouse or offend either advertisers or readers. Since such a dubious responsibility is enjoined upon the publishers, they are cautious to offer reading that is bland and uncritical.

Features must of necessity uphold the sanctity of the home, church and industry. Criticism of social problems is virtually non-existent. Politics is totally eschewed and the church rarely mentioned. An innocuous yet facile writing style permeates magazine after magazine. Where a feature may deal with a serious subject, such as education, the data are refined to the point of being merely pat and palatable.

The women's magazines are slanted toward youthful housewives and great emphasis is placed on home-making and fashion. So splintered is the material, however, that frequently the food editors will present lavish photos and menus for high-calorie count foods in issues where the dangers of obesity are stressed.

Among some of the popular topics on which women's magazines endlessly repeat are health, child-bearing, home-maintenance, suggestions for the purchase of home and other domestic requirements. There appears to be no reasoned continuity in the dissemination of this material. Articles appear sporadically on a variety of themes. Often it is apparent that feature stories stress the purchase and use of various articles such as electrical appliances, rugs or bedroom furniture, for example, in issues where the advertising heavily stresses such items.

Issue after issue of the women's magazines will present material featuring innumerable varieties of household wares, linens, furnishings, rugs and silver, so beguilingly presented they can only (and do) create dissatisfaction in the heart of every reader with her own outmoded household goods. The chief purpose of these magazines appears to be to act as a goad to acquisition on the part of the readers. This is inevitable since the continuous flow of goods that a manufacturing society turns out in a working day is essential to maintain the kind of economy to which these magazines are committed. Even if one submits to the fallacy of a society whose economic health is based on a structure of enforced acquisition of material needs, the inevitable effects of a persistent dissatisfaction fanned by the lavish display of new beautiful objects dear to the heart of every American housewife are incalculably debilitating. These pressures upon the female reader are transferred to her mate. And he responds by assuming greater debt or suffering an early heart attack.

The publishing patterns of these magazines are for the most part similar. In addition to the food-fashion-furnishing formula, they appear to pander to a prurient preoccupation on the part of their readers with the lives of attractive, well-known women. As a consequence, there is hardly a reader of a women's magazine who does not possess quantities of useless information concerning the private lives of Mrs. John F. Kennedy, Princess Grace or Queen Elizabeth, among many. Yet it is doubtful that the merest fraction of readers could identify the brilliant Hannah Arendt.

Thousands of American women are members of the PTA and many thousands more are members of women's clubs of various kinds, yet the influence wielded by their participation in these organizations is minimal. The PTA has done little to upgrade the present educational curriculum (a trend provoked by Russia's early superiority in space), nor has the influence of women made an appreciable dent in the political climate of the nation.

Women's magazines have a magnificent opportunity to help develop a better society. But the motives of the women's magazines are not scaled to any such effort, and if they cannot be accused of specifically delimiting the women's view, they do little to raise the American woman's intellectual horizons.

It is no small matter to be concerned with media which are successful in blanketing the average American household with shallow written data, all the while artfully encouraging artificially induced material needs. They give little space to books. Where novels are published, they are generally abridgements of popular works. The stories appeal to the reading taste of an eight-year-old. Those that are slightly provocative are *non grata* because editors must try to attract a barrage of letters from women who want a "family-type magazine." This phrase can only be equated with dull, superficial, maudlin content.

Criticism unrelated to a larger framework of value would be mere carping. But it seems evident that the benefits of publishing carries with it responsibility. The printed word should be immune to censorship or interference. But this places the onus on the publisher to print material that is calculated to enrich rather than diminish taste. The world we face demands more than a superficial awareness. Worthy media must eschew that superficiality.

Absurdly idealistic as it seems, the condition of The Great Society must posit the idea of the development of each individual, now, not at some future time. War, poverty and ignorance must be eliminated. So long, however, as the written word perpetuates the mediocre and the commonplace, the goals of discerning men and women must remain distant.

The rise of juvenile delinquency in middle-class homes may in part be traced to the superficial well-being women's magazines enjoin

upon their readers as the good life. "Change the appointments of your dining room and be fashionable," they murmur. But this vigilance for social correctness is meaningless and is hardly a value to set before healthy youngsters. New color schemes in the bathrooms are no way to create warm, loving, attractive homes. The beauty of a home grows out of the love and interests parents hold for each other and for their children. Artificially induced standards of æsthetics are misleading. And children can be depended upon to realize this with a clarity adults would do well to keep in mind.

The widespread dissemination of women's magazines in America and their influence upon millions of middle-class families can only continue to debase the concepts of home life because emphasis is placed upon the crass and commonplace. Women's magazines have created a debilitating inroad into the personal lives of millions the insidious effects of which are evident. These effects have been implemented by watered-down religion, a theatre (including movies and television) that has lost direction and a preposterous preoccupation with the ephemera of materialism.

SYLVIA KONDOLF

Woodstock, N.Y.