

## UNPOPULAR QUESTIONS

THE most critical problems of modern society are in all likelihood those which, for reasons of national policy, or because of "touchy" public opinion, cannot be thoroughly discussed. In other words, they relate to what may be called the "underlying assumptions" of the age.

It is clear enough, for example, that the reluctance of most people to take seriously the idea of non-violence as a means of national defense grows from the underlying assumption that there can be no national security without adequate military armament. Any proposal of non-violent defense must not only demonstrate the effectiveness of this sort of resistance to aggression, but must also deal with the emotional vacuum which is felt by the great majority whenever the possibility of being without an army and without arms is considered. For many people, the thought of a society without a military establishment is practically inconceivable. Even for pacifists, imagining the structure of such a society is difficult. It will probably be necessary for "working models" of such societies to develop in various parts of the world, before much confidence will develop in their practicability.

Another "touchy" area of opinion concerns the role of religion in modern society. It is argued, for example, that "religion" is a national resource of a free or democratic society. In the polemic against Communism, the ultimate condemnation of the collectivist type of social organization is in the charge that Communism is "atheistic" and aggressively opposed to religion. On the one hand, it is urged that democracy preserves freedom of religion, and that this is the highest human "value," while on the other it is said that religion supplies to democracy the moral fibres which make it strong and free.

A certain ideological confusion, however, results from pressing these claims regarding democracy, especially in the United States. For in this country, the idea of religious freedom includes the right to be without any widely accepted faith—indeed, to be without any religious faith at all. This is the direct implication of the First Amendment to the Constitution. When, then, the greatness of American democracy is said to rest upon the "religious foundations" of the American people, it becomes necessary to ignore the fact that some of America's most illustrious citizens have been Deists, Free-thinkers, and Agnostics, and to soft-pedal the fact that the United States is legally a Secular State.

Here, again, "underlying assumptions" are at issue—in this case the underlying assumptions of the political system of the United States. Whence derive the "values" implicit in the American political philosophy? Are they religiously based? Is it "true" to say that the ideal of freedom, as cherished by Americans, can be traced to the religious beliefs of Americans? Do religious beliefs really support and imply America's political traditions or is there some confusion in this claim? Further, do religious beliefs vary in a way that makes some of them deny the importance of political freedom, and some of them affirm it? Is it, finally, possible that the traditional religion of Americans is ambivalent on the subject of freedom, both wanting it and not wanting it?

These questions involve the deepest feelings of human beings. If such questions are to be discussed with any "objectivity," it will be necessary to subdivide them further, in order to isolate the values which make them important, and to be sure that none of these values is lost along the way.

The problem of government is the problem of order and constraint of human behavior. Government comes into contact with religion in terms of two conceptions. One is the idea of The Truth. The other is the idea of the Search for Truth. Among a people who are certain that they possess The Truth, a theocratic government is the only one which makes sense. When the truth is known, the duty of the civil authority is to direct the attention of all the people to that truth. Thus the theocratic system of the Middle Ages. In theory at least, even emperors, kings and princes were subordinate to the rule of religious truth.

In modern times, the encounter of government with religion is on the other basis—that of the Search for Truth. Again, in theory, the function of democratic government in relation to religion is to permit the free search for religious truth, each man for himself, without prejudice or favor.

Does the analysis thus far bring us any closer to understanding the relation of religion to democracy? So far as we can see, it tells us that in a democracy, "true" religion must remain undefined by any public authority.

What, then, of the claim that democracy is founded upon religious belief?

All that can be justified, thus far, is that democracy admits the right of men to find their own religion, which is the same as declaring that the search for religious truth is precious to men and should be protected.

But this right is capable of definition in other terms. People who may be conveniently labelled "humanist" say that the right to find one's own religion can also be spoken of as the right to determine one's own *philosophy*, and that a distinction should be made between religion and philosophy. The political value of freedom, in other words, may have a non-religious origin. In short, for all the political values which religionists trace to their faith, the humanist points to an origin in humanitarian philosophy.

What, then, is the difference between religion and philosophy? Generally speaking, the religionist claims a supernatural source for the faith in which he believes, while the humanist founds his faith upon reason and science, and may even dislike to have his convictions called a "faith."

Further, there is an active controversy between religionists and humanists concerning the influence of their respective positions or traditions on human behavior. The humanists contend that history is filled with evidence of the social and political immoralities for which organized or institutional religion is responsible, and they argue, further, that the irrational aspect of religious belief is stultifying to the human mind and frustrating to intellectual and scientific progress. The religionists, in turn, contend that humanism has a "mere" pragmatic morality to offer to mankind; that it lacks the deep inspiration of religion and can never stir men to whole-hearted commitment to the good life. Further, religionists reproach the humanists more specifically and personally by saying that the "truth" has not reached them, and that they endanger the coming generations with their plausible "rationalist" doctrines which ignore the sovereignty of God. Even if humanists were to achieve "the good life" through their philosophy, this, it is insisted, involves only the externality of things, while neglecting proper relations with the Deity.

A lot depends, in this argument, on what you conceive religion to be. There are dozens of interpretations of the universe, some of them religious, some of them scientific, some of them intellectually primitive, some of them highly complex and mathematical. Some of them offer explicit definition of man's duties and relationships with the Highest, or God; some of them ostensibly deduce ethical principles from the facts of experience. Accordingly, we have a wide variety of choices between faiths or philosophies, and these faiths or philosophies are not simply

differing evaluations of the universe and human experience, they are also *competitive* doctrines which have been shaped by the forces of religious war, polemic, ideological conflict and controversy. An *institutional* religion with millions of followers, for example, is bound to have characteristics which serve the maintenance of the sponsoring institution. And, to some extent, the critic and opponent of institutional religion is likely to develop a point of view which enables him to pursue aggressive argument with maximum effect. The desire to win an argument, then, plays a part in the definition of the "true" philosophy, whether religious or supposedly "scientific."

Modern thought has therefore settled upon certain fairly clear ways of distinguishing between what is religious and what is not. This may be illustrated by an editorial comment in the *Radical Humanist*, an Indian weekly published in Calcutta. The comment is in answer to a reader who contends that Prof. Arnold Toynbee is right in insisting that "democracy presupposes a religious belief." Supporting Toynbee, this reader said that "Democracy as a system of social values presupposes a society governed by the value-aspirations of the people composing it," adding that "the main principles of democracy, as practiced, for instance, in the West have been borrowed from Christianity." Toynbee, in other words, is correct, "provided you use 'religion' in the philosophical sense." To this the editors replied:

We wish to make a distinction between religion and philosophy, even as is done in all systematic thinking. We need not deny that certain values have been emphasized in Christianity, and for that matter in any other system of religious belief, which form a part of the human heritage, and may as well be incorporated in the value-system of a democratic way of life. But such values are not necessarily to be derived from a faith in some transcendent order, which is the essence of all religions. Values are human or they are from the nature of man, and not from any transcendental source.

Now this may be taken as a fair statement of the Humanist position on this issue. In it are the

elements of clarification of the question. The humanist rejects values from a "transcendental" source, affirming that they are "human" or "from the nature of man."

There is a plain judgment about the nature of man in this statement—the judgment that man's nature is not "transcendental."

Why should the humanists object to man having a "transcendental" nature?

There is no conceivable reason why humanists should object to a transcendental element in man's nature, except for the fact that "transcendental," in typical rationalist analysis, tends to mean "supernatural," and supernatural implies a region which is somehow outside the "laws of nature." The "supernatural," speaking historically, has been the special preserve of the religionists, over which they claim authority, and from which they derive justification for the irrational imperialism of dogma. The humanist objection, then, to the "transcendental," is not a proper philosophical objection, but a practical objection, based upon experience of the consequences of supernaturalism.

The humanist objection to transcendentalism may also be claimed to rest on the verdict of science that transcendental "reality" has not been proved to exist. This, however, is really a very slender reed on which to base an argument, for anyone who denies the transcendental must be assumed to know what he is denying, and no sensible scientist would be willing to claim that he knows enough about "reality" to be able to deny "transcendental" reality any existence. The only "safe" position for science is the agnostic position, which was accurately described by T. H. Huxley many years ago. Huxley himself made sufficient reproach to those who deny transcendental reality in the name of science:

The man of science who, forgetting the limits of philosophical inquiry and sliding from these formulae and symbols into what is commonly understood as materialism, seems to me to place himself with the mathematician who should mistake the X's and Y's

with which he solves his problems for real entities—and with the further disadvantage, as compared with the mathematician, that the blunders of the latter are of no practical consequence, while the errors of systematic materialism may paralyze the energies and destroy the beauties of life.

Science, in short, is obliged to be neutral concerning the "transcendental." If, then, there is a transcendentalism which is not subject to the *historical* criticisms of the humanists, the humanist has no valid grounds for objecting to it. Such a transcendentalism is found in the various forms of pantheistic philosophy—Upanishadic, Platonist and Neoplatonist, Spinozistic, and Emersonian.

It seems plain enough that the sources of the "value-aspirations" which lead to adoption and support of the political principles of democracy remain obscure. We *don't know* with any certainty, clarity, or finality where they come from. They well up in human beings and acquire miscellaneous labels from the moralists and encyclopedists of the time, but these labels may be extremely misleading. The intuitive and spontaneous character of these values, in their initial or "primitive" form, may derive from a place in man's nature which knows nothing of the conventional division of human attitudes into "scientific" and "religious." Further, a man's intuitions may place him at continual war with the traditional faith into which he is born, and he may never resolve this conflict, but go through life in magnificent inconsistency, explaining himself in terms that are logically ridiculous.

Certainly the confining, psychologically totalitarian aspect of religious beliefs can never be said to be a support of democracy, but men are often far better than their beliefs, even though they *claim* that all excellencies come from their "religion."

The argument about whether or not democracy must have a "religious" foundation is thus a meaningless and futile one, so long as there is no examination of the meaning of the word

"religious." If by religion be meant an "established" truth, then religion is the enemy of democracy, for democracy is a name for that form of society in which religious or philosophical truth is a wholly private or individual affair. But if, on the other hand, religion means the *search* for truth, then democracy does indeed depend upon the religious spirit.

The trouble arises from the desire of one sort of religious people to be recognized publicly as having *found* religious truth. From this desire comes competition among religious groups and the formulation of over-simplifying creeds which soon make impossible any rational appreciation of religious truth, as well as of the meaning of the search for it. The over-all result is a terrible confusion concerning religion itself, and the production of atheists and materialists by reaction.

There is no way to reduce this confusion except by free discussion of religion. And free discussion of religion is extremely hazardous, since it brings anger, fear, and insecurity, along with a certain amount of light. But there is no other way.

## *REVIEW*

### THE TRIAL OF ARTHUR MILLER

THE conviction of Arthur Miller on "contempt of Congress" charges brought by the House Committee on Un-American Activities has paved the way for a debate of some magnitude. All the liberal journals, at least, feel this to be so, for the issues are basic so far as the relationship between the Individual and the State is concerned.

Like a number of other less celebrated but equally courageous men, Miller simply refused to name writers who had once been Communists: "I could not use the name of another person and bring trouble on him," Miller said. His refusal led to conviction at the hands of a judge who expressed sympathy for his motives but held the action legally indefensible.

Miller was not a surly witness. He talked with complete freedom as to his own former associations with left wing circles now regarded as "dangerous," tried to explain the views he had once held, and was straightforward in presenting his opinions in regard to Congressional investigations, but simply would not name names.

The best statement we have read on the ethical issues posed by the Miller case is John Steinbeck's one-page article in *Esquire* for June. Steinbeck obviously writes out of a deep sense of participation in Miller's situation. Although he has never been a "joiner," and has never been on the carpet in regard to company he once kept, Steinbeck *feels* the same as Miller does and does not hesitate to say so. It is Steinbeck's opinion that the reasoning which underlies Miller's conviction constitutes a "clear and present danger" to America. Steinbeck develops his point:

Actually it is neither virtue nor good judgment on my part that has kept me from joining things. I am simply not a joiner by nature. Outside of the Boy Scouts and the Episcopal choir, I have never had an impulse to belong to things. But suppose I had. And suppose I have admitted my association with one or more of these groups posted as dangerous. As a writer, I must have been interested in everything, have felt it part of my profession to know and understand all kinds of people and groups. Having admitted these associations, I am now asked by the Committee to name individuals I have seen at

meetings of such groups. I hope my reasoning then would go as follows:

The people I knew were not and are not, in my estimation, traitors to the nation. If they were, I would turn them in instantly. If I give names, it is reasonably certain that the persons named will be called up and questioned. In some cases they will lose their jobs, and in any case their reputations and standing in the community will suffer. And remember that these are persons who I honestly believe are innocent of any wrongdoing. Perhaps I do not feel that I have that right; that to name them would not only be disloyal but actually immoral. The Committee then is asking me to commit an immorality in the name of public virtue.

If I agree, I have outraged one of our basic codes of conduct, and if I refuse I am guilty of contempt of Congress, sentenced to prison and fined. One way outrages my sense of decency and the other brands me as a felon. And this brand does not fade out.

Now suppose I have children, a little property, a stake in the community. The threat of the contempt charge jeopardizes everything I love. Suppose, from worry or cowardice, I agree to what is asked. My deep and wounding shame will be with me always.

I cannot be reassured by the past performance of the Committee. I have read daily for a number of years the testimony of admitted liars and perjurers whose charges have been used to destroy the peace and happiness of people I do not know, and many of whom were destroyed without being tried.

Which path am I to choose? Either way I am caught. It may occur to me that a man who is disloyal to his friends could not be expected to be loyal to his country. You can't slice up morals. Our virtues begin at home. They do not change in a courtroom unless the pressure of fear is put upon us.

But if I am caught between two horrors, so is the Congress caught. Law, to survive, must be moral. To force personal immorality on a man, to wound his private virtue, undermines his public virtue. If the Committee frightens me enough, it is even possible that I may make up things to satisfy the questioners. This has been known to happen. A law which is immoral does not survive and a government which condones or fosters immorality is truly in clear and present danger.

Mr. Steinbeck draws a comparison between the tactics employed by the House Un-American Activities Committee and practices once decried by critics of

Nazi Germany and presently decried by critics of Soviet Russia. The men of Congress who decided to "make an example" of Miller have, in effect, made poor examples of themselves:

The men in Congress must be conscious of their terrible choice. Their legal right is clearly established, but should they not think of their moral responsibility also? In their attempts to save the nation from attack, they could well undermine the deep personal morality which is the nation's final defense. The Congress is truly on trial along with Arthur Miller.

Again let me change places with Arthur Miller. I have refused to name people. I am indicted, convicted, sent to prison. If the charge were murder or theft or extortion I would be subject to punishment, because I and all men know that these things are wrong. But if I am imprisoned for something I have been taught from birth is a good thing, then I go to jail with a deep sense of injustice and the rings of that injustice are bound to spread out like an infection. If I am brave enough to suffer for my principle, rather than to save myself by hurting other people I believe to be innocent, it seems to me that the law suffers more than I, and that contempt of the law and of the Congress is a real contempt rather than a legalistic one.

Under the law, Arthur Miller is guilty. But he seems also to be brave. Congress feels that it must press the charge against him, to keep its prerogative alive. But can we not hope that our representatives will inspect their dilemma? Respect for law can be kept high only if the law is respectable. There is a clear and present danger here, not to Arthur Miller, but to our changing and evolving way of life.

If I were in Arthur Miller's shoes, I do not know what I would do, but I could wish, for myself and for my children, that I would be brave enough to fortify and defend my private morality as he has. I feel profoundly that our country is better served by individual courage and morals than by the safe and public patriotism which Dr. Johnson called "the last refuge of scoundrels."

(Since the July 9 decision of the Supreme Court in the Singer case, which was similar to that of Arthur Miller, the matter of Miller's "guilt," taken for granted by Steinbeck, is now open to question. In vindicating Marcus Singer, the Court among other things pointed out that the investigating committee failed to show the relation between its questions to Singer and the

purposes of the investigation, thus making the charge of contempt of Congress invalid. Miller's attorneys have announced their intention to base an appeal for Miller on the Singer decision.)

Richard Rovere throws another light on the "Miller case" in a longer article in the June 17 *New Republic*. It appears clear that the Committee was not really interested in finding out anything about people—both they and Miller were aware of the fact that any names Miller might have named were undoubtedly already known. The Committee, according to Rovere, did not take the task of questioning Miller seriously until he politely declined to answer some of the rambling questions thrown his way. According to Rovere:

Miller and his attorneys have argued that the names of the writers Miller had known were not relevant to the legislation on passports the Committee was supposed to be studying. This would certainly seem to be the case, and one may regret that Judge McLaughlin did not accept this argument and acquit Miller on the strength of it. Nevertheless, the argument really fudges the central issue, which is that the Committee wasn't really investigating passport abuses at all when it called Miller before it. It was only pretending to do so. The rambling talk of its members with Miller was basically frivolous, and the Un-American Activities Committee has almost always lacked seriousness. In this case, as Mary McCarthy has pointed out the most that it wanted from Miller was to have him agree to its procedure of testing the good faith of witnesses by their willingness to produce names. It was on this that Miller was morally justified in his refusal.

It is our opinion that the case of Arthur Miller is likely to do more than any "contempt of Congress" proceeding yet instituted to unite the responsible literati of America in a determination to resist tactics employed by the Committee. Miller is well liked. No suspicious circumstances attend his refusal to implicate others. He is widely regarded as one of the most effective writers of our time. He has proved himself to be patient and reasonable—neither tense, afraid, nor contemptuous—and he may go down in history as the man whose stand let loose such a flood of articulate opinion that the Committee was forced to draw in its horns—or, eventually, steal away quietly in the night.

## *COMMENTARY*

### THE NON-VIOLENT SOCIETY

THIS week's lead article speaks of the difficulty of imagining the structure of a society which relies on non-violence to maintain order. Recently some Americans asked Vinoba Bhave what such a society would be like. Two pages of the May 1 *Economic Review* (organ of the All-India Congress Committee) are devoted to his answer. Vinoba said:

I would like our country to take courage in both its hands and disband the army. We have to develop a real nonviolent strength in the people. The government may then be persuaded to disband the army. Non-violent strength would grow when all the citizens devote some or all of their time to the task of basic production; and, secondly, there should be no desire to exploit another country or people. The nation must rise up to a man in satyagraha when they see injustice. Faith in Satyagraha and work for creating a society of the Free and Equal are primary duties. If this primary condition is fulfilled, the army can be ended immediately with a stroke of the pen.

Vinoba then spoke of non-violence and the law:

A law which has the moral sanction of the people is a non-violent regulation. . . . Statutory legislation defines in clear terms the consensus of public opinion, but the source of authority and sanctity is in the strength of public opinion and not in the written word of the penal code. . . .

It may be asked if there is any place for statutory laws in a Sarvodaya society. It is the duty of mothers to give milk to their little children. But there is no statute enjoining such a duty and there is no punishment for not doing it. And yet mothers never fail to feed their children. Feeding a child is a natural duty. Laws in a Sarvodaya Society would belong to this category. Where Sarvodaya is an ideal there would be statutory laws. But they would have the sanction of public opinion. . . .

Today if a person is found thieving he is produced before a court and is sentenced to two or three years' imprisonment, if the case is proved. They forget that they are actually penalizing his innocent wife and children. In a Sarvodaya Society a thief will be given some work. He may be given a piece of land and given opportunity to till it. Amassing wealth for

oneself is a crime in Sarvodaya. Modern Society does not, however, consider amassing possessions as sinful. If the person does not work on his land and behaves irresponsibly, he will be sent to some saintly person who will help him to live more sanely.

Today, a number of British MP's are seriously discussing the non-violent defense of Britain. In India, the periodical of the major political party gives space to Vinoba to explore the characteristics of a wholly non-violent society. Times are changing.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

### A RELIGION OF NATURE

AT the risk of producing what may appear to be a jumble of material, we should like to explore the possible relations between Delinquency, Discipline, "Materialism," and the inspiration of a Religion of Nature.

A Senate Report on Child Crime, issued in May by the Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency, includes these interesting sentences:

Anti-social attitudes are certainly not class-limited. In fact they may well exist as commonly among people of adequate income who commit more sophisticated and subtle offenses and who are less frequently arrested or convicted for their infractions of the code.

De-emphasis of materialism would be a great accomplishment in the prevention of illegal behavior not only among adult criminal offenders but in the effect that such materialism has on child-rearing. Yet this change seems a highly improbable development in modern society.

Just what the Senate Subcommittee means by "materialism" will take some determining. It seems that what these gentlemen are dutifully regretting is the weakening of the hold of conventional religion upon the minds of the young, while admitting at the same time that religion, as a guarantor of good behavior, is a thing of the past. Many psychologists are in agreement that the basic cause of delinquency—producing what Karen Horney called the "neurotic personality of our time"—derives from moral contradictions between profession and practice in society at large. A recent meeting of the National Education Association also prepared a report on delinquency and discipline, remarking that "contrary to popular belief, most discipline cases are not the result of something wrong with the individual." They would not disappear, says the report, even if we had a psychiatrist for every child. "The real causes can be traced to factors in the structure of the group in which the individual

is living or into which he is thrust. When something is wrong with that group," says the study, "even the most normal individual is likely to produce confused action leading into a behavior problem."

Present societal attitudes, in other words, afford little or no basis for individual integration around concepts of value. Educators who are successful in the field of delinquency seem to have established an atmosphere entirely outside the normal context of competition and acquisition. A recent article in the Bangalore inter-cultural monthly, the *Aryan Path*, summarizes the fabulous achievements of George A. Lyward at Finchden Manor School in England. After describing the transformations which have occurred at Finchden in the lives of many young people, the writer, Geoffrey Brown, a teacher at Sandhurst Military Academy, remarks: "To me it appeared that these things embodied Mr. Lyward's understanding in the context of Finchden of an anciently known spiritual law that life in its fullness involves the paradox of full committal with disinterestedness or non-attachment." This, we should say, describes the sort of "religion" which really does some good, but which needs no formal creedal expression. Neither Lyward, nor A. S. Neal, nor Homer Lane before them—all touched with genius in dealing with "delinquent" boys—can be called a conventionally religious person. They all reflect, however, an "anciently known spiritual law" in their regard for the sanctity of individuality in each child and in their parallel devotion to the principle of reverence for life."

The relation of "nature appreciation" to all this is suggested by an article in the *Bulletin of the Massachusetts Audubon Society*. The writer, Dr. Matthew J. Brennan, of Fitchburg State Teachers College, holds that the lack of a religion of nature connects with many of the problems of youth. He also holds that it is impossible to teach reverence for nature—true conservation—as one is inclined to teach various "science subjects"—for the path to recognition of the essential values in the



religion of nature, or to the establishment of any inspiring values, is development of a capacity to appreciate beauty. As Dr. Brennan puts it, "awareness of beauty in life is the first step." Dr. Brennan continues—his address is dedicated to conservationists—by remarking that "if you stop to analyze your own interest in conservation, you will see that this is true. Probably none of you would be here today, none of you would maintain feeding stations for our winter resident wildlife, none of you would have taken the trouble to learn what kinds of tree, shrub, and flower plantings around your home would provide food and cover attractive to wildlife, none of you would actually care whether there was a program of conservation education for any age if you had not first developed within you an awareness and appreciation of the beauty in the things around you that led you to the development of a philosophy of living which will at least tend to guarantee their availability to future generations." Further:

Conservation is not a subject to be taught to an eight-or-nine-year-old. And herein lies what seems to me to be the greatest challenge which conservation education faces today: the danger that the school administrators and teachers of America may soon decide that conservation is becoming important enough to merit the status of subject and warrant the preparation of a syllabus and source books with which every child can be taught beauty, the "wise use" of resources, the dangers of erosion to the soils of America. I can visualize scores of teachers pouring limitless watering cans full of water over piles of sodded and unsodded soil till Johnny knows the ins and outs of erosion, thus making it unnecessary for him to be taken out to the school yard on a rainy day to see an actual gully being formed, to see the transported soils being deposited at another location, to see the value of the sodded bank around the athletic field.

As an educator I would be considered radical in my ideas and my methods of teaching. Yet, in this great area of conservation education for youth, I would urge extreme caution and patience. We have watched the inherent interest of the American youth in science become stunted and withered for lack of teachers who knew and did not fear the subjects of science. Our present and continually increasing

shortage of scientific personnel gives mute testimony to this tragedy. We must not let it happen in conservation education by forcing a program on untrained and unwilling teachers. There is little argument among educators today that there are some things which are better and more easily learned in the out-of-doors where they occur than in the school classroom. The biological and more especially the ecological, bases of conservation, would certainly be included in these areas. In order for any program of conservation for youth or outdoor education to be successful, we must have teachers who are trained in the field, teachers who are broad in their backgrounds and interests. We must demand that the liberal arts colleges send to our schools geologists who can stop and look up at the song of a Wood Thrush, biologists who are not too occupied with their subject to read the story of the rocks along the trail on which they walk, sociologists who will not be satisfied to teach rural sociology in a city classroom only, scientists who are willing to discuss the social and economic implications of the materials of which they teach. We must include in the curriculum of the teachers colleges, especially those for elementary teachers, courses in the field, courses in outdoor living, native crafts, conservation of resources, field science, and first aid in the outdoors.

So the "materialism" of our time is a psychological attitude, an attitude antithetical to an inward sense of value, which blocks off the child's natural capacity for the appreciation of "beauty in life," rendering it difficult for him to discover the meaning of commitment. If he is placed in the charge of a man like Mr. Lyward, he may absorb some of these essentials from the unusual qualities of a remarkable teacher; but since Lywards are scarce, there is hope that others can learn to school themselves in the rather metaphysical character of nature appreciation, and achieve similar results with the young. The man who has come to terms with the natural world is bound to acquire something of that "disinterestedness or non-attachment" of which Goeffrey Brown speaks.

## *FRONTIERS*

### The Meaning of "Christian"

A READER asks: "Will you please define the word "Christian" for me, as I notice you use the term frequently. . . . I have some difficulty in determining what a Christian is."

According to the dictionary, a Christian is one who "professes or belongs to Christianity," or "the religion based on Christ's teachings." Subordinate meanings, Webster indicates, are "kindly," as characteristic of Christian people; "a human being, as distinguished from one of the lower animals," and, finally, "a decent, civilized, or presentable person."

Manifestly, with this background, we are likely to have some difficulty in making a precise answer. The most useful sort of definition, it seems to us, is one which identifies the Christian in terms that distinguish him from the believers in other religions. Accordingly, a Christian is one who believes that Jesus Christ was and is "the Son of God"; that while there may have been other great religious teachers, Christ is unique in that he is the Son of God; that eternal life or "salvation" depends upon belief in Christ as the Saviour, who died on the cross as atonement for the sins of all men. While goodness and morality are included in Christianity, they do not sum it up. Beyond the qualities of the good life, the Christian must have faith in Jesus Christ as his Saviour. Most Christians believe, further, that the Church is a divinely founded and inspired institution, the practical instrument of both their devotion and their salvation.

This, broadly speaking, is the interpretation placed upon the New Testament by those whose beliefs qualify them to distinctive identification as Christians. Much more, of course, could be added, and is added, by Christians of various persuasions within this general view, and there will no doubt be Christians who feel that the foregoing account of their faith leaves out essential elements; but, as we said, our definition

attempts only to describe the chief beliefs which are *uniquely* Christian.

It is something of an irony that the "uniqueness" of Christianity is in large measure the source of the difficulty that modern Christians have with their faith. As an organized religion, Christianity came into being as a competitor of numerous faiths which sought attention during the decadent days of the declining Roman empire. The principal claim of the early Christians was that their religion had something different, something "better"—it, alone, in fact, was "true." For nearly two thousand years, Christians have labored under the heavy moral burden of possessing the only "true" religion. The psychological artifacts of this claim are all about, embedded even in our language, as the dictionary definitions show. How else could we have formed the habit of naming the human *species* "Christian," as distinct from the lower animals?

Today, the claim to uniqueness has produced a virtual crisis in Christian belief, as was indicated here a few weeks ago (see *Frontiers*, *MANAS*, July 10). In addition to this difficulty is the inability of young ministers who have had the full benefit of modern scholarship to believe what their creeds require them to believe and what their congregations expect them to teach. This, among other problems, is discussed by James B. Moore, a former Protestant minister, in the July *Harper's*. Mr. Moore writes on "Why Young Ministers Are Leaving the Church":

. . . it is when one considers the plight of the ministers who are fitted for their profession that the more serious problems present themselves. One of them is the cleavage between the beliefs of the average churchgoer and his minister. The seminaries educate ministers far beyond the understanding and religious position of the laity. And while this is no doubt unavoidable and even necessary, the result is what amounts to two religions—a clerical religion and a lay religion. This was precisely the case in the "heresy trials" which recently took place in the Lutheran Church. All of these trials involved younger ministers, recently out of seminary, and in each case the young minister's understanding of

Christian truth conflicted with that of his church's laity and his older fellow ministers.

Those churches which demand a literal subscription to such dogmas as the Virgin Birth, the Physical Resurrection of Jesus, the Deity (rather than the divinity) of Jesus, the Bible as the *actual words* of God, and so forth, are in for trouble in the coming years. Any young minister like myself who got out of seminary in the last ten or fifteen years knows this. It makes no difference whether he is a Methodist or a Baptist, a Presbyterian, an Episcopalian, or a Lutheran. A very large number of the ministers of my generation, regardless of denomination, have arrived at personal convictions about the Christian faith—through long wrestling and struggle—which are far more liberal and unorthodox than they would dare to admit in public. . . . To put it bluntly, they no longer believe in the Gospel *as they are expected to preach it*, and no longer believe in the denomination they are expected to support.

Concerned Christians in England have long been facing a problem of this sort. While a "common consent" has permitted ministers of the Church of England to recite the "precise and weighty statements of the creeds" involved in the Thirty-Nine Articles without being expected to believe in them literally, the moral obliquity in this practice has been deplored for many years. There is the problem, for example, of persuading young men of intelligence and integrity to enter the Church. In the *Hibbert Journal* for October, 1938, John Campbell Graham wrote:

It is urged that revision of the Thirty-Nine Articles [of the Anglican faith] would disrupt the Church. The risk must be faced. Those who make this plea have not considered the alternative. The secession of the intelligentsia can have only one result; there will soon be no Church left to disrupt.

In 1946, a bishop of the Church of England advocated a four-million-dollar "sales campaign" to revive the flagging interest of the British in "the teachings of Christ." There was, he said, a great gulf between the Church and ordinary English people. "Half our countrymen," he said, "are worse than heathens in that they believe nothing—not even themselves—after a second World War in one generation." He charged the English clergy with "spiritual anemia," urging the use of movies,

television, and paid advertising to stimulate a renewal of Christian faith. But the question of in what, precisely, this faith consists is by no means clear. In the article cited above, Mr. Graham wrote:

What is it to be a Christian? What doctrine or doctrines do all Christians catholicly believe?

According to Sir W. Moberly, the central affirmations of Christianity are the sovereignty and fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, and the eternal destiny of the human soul. In the view of Seeley two points are of especial importance: (1) that theological agreement is not essential; (2) that personal attachment to Christ is the one essential. It will be observed that no mystical view is here implied as to the personality of Christ. The Anglican formularies, however, embody other conceptions, many of which, according to the Doctrinal Report [of the Archbishops' Commission], may now be interpreted figuratively, or, in plain English, rejected.

But what, in the opinion of the Commission, is the status of the doctrine of the Incarnation? In one place the Report refers to it as "the central truth of the Christian faith"; but in its Note on the Council of Chalcedon [451 A. D.], by which the doctrine was formulated, the Report asserts that "the Church is in no way bound by the metaphysic or the psychology which lie behind the terms employed by the Council." What are we to make of this?

After examination of the doctrine of the Incarnation in a subsequent article (*Hibbert Journal*, January, 1939), Mr. Graham concludes:

The history of Christianity has been described as the history of a hopeless attempt to resolve a contradiction, but it might be more truly described as the history of an obstinate unwillingness to accept any solution that eliminates the contradiction. The theology of the Incarnation exhibits the strange paradox that while the various heresies condemned by the Church have for the most part the merit of being intellectually tenable, the orthodox doctrine is, from a theological point of view (for nothing can be truly theological that is not logical), the greatest heresy of them all.

Actually, if one is serious in an inquiry into the meaning of Christian belief, he can do no better than to pore over the pages of the *Hibbert Journal* for the years 1938 and 1939. Article after

article attacks this question, either directly or indirectly, with vigor, liberality, and scholarship. The critical issue, for example, as Mr. Graham sees it, is the nature of Jesus, which the doctrine of the Incarnation is supposed to declare. Mr. Graham contends that "the chief problem confronting the Church of England, as a branch of what is called 'Catholic' Christianity, is the difficulty of believing its official doctrines." He adds that, in his opinion, "it is upon the solution of this problem that the continued existence of the Church depends." And chief among the difficulties in belief, he finds, *is* the doctrine of the Incarnation.

Jesus Christ, Anglican orthodoxy insists, was "both God and Man." Mr. Graham comments:

"God" and "Man" are . . . universal terms connoting incompatible attributes, and, as such, cannot be predicated of the same subject. The same subject may be a particular of any number of universals provided there is no confliction. We may, for instance, say of a man that he is both a poet and a mathematician, or of a woman that she is both a beauty and a wit, because these pairs of universals imply no contradiction; but we cannot predicate of any subject that it is both a horse and an apple, or both a man and an ape, or both God and Man, because in each of these pairs the universals are inconsistent. Such formulations are not predications, but contradictions; they violate the Principle of Identity, the principle that "things are what they are"; they are, therefore, not only necessarily false, but necessarily incredible.

It is, in short, possible to believe that Jesus was—

(a) A man; *e.g.* the Paulian heresy (Paul of Samosata), or (b) God; *e.g.* the Apollinarian heresy, or (c) part-God and part-man; *e.g.* the Arian heresy. It is not possible to believe that he was "both God and Man." If we think we believe this we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

There will naturally be those who feel that this torturing of definitions and theological hair-splitting is a dreary pursuit which misses the true spirit of Christianity, as no doubt it does. But our problem is to discover, not what is great and true about Christianity, but what is *unique*. And the

uniqueness of Christianity lies in the conception of Jesus Christ, as every definition of the Christian faith we have reference to suggests.

Some may take issue with Mr. Graham's analysis, saying that they find no difficulty in believing that Jesus Christ was *both* God and Man. Why could not the spirit of God have been pre-eminently present in the man Jesus? We see no objection to this, nor in allowing a similar presence to be potential in all men, but such free-wheeling in theology is not permitted by Anglican orthodoxy. As Mr. Graham points out, "God" and "Man" are incompatible universals. The qualities of the one exclude the qualities of the other. Man, in the Christian view, is a "creature," an erring, sinning mortal, while God is the Creator, perfect, all-powerful and all-good. How can anyone be both, without reforming at least one of these definitions, or, what is more likely, both?

Hence Mr. Graham's judgment that the orthodox account of the Incarnation is "the greatest heresy of them all."

If it be asked, "But do such theological questions really *matter*?", a fair reply may be made with another question: "Does being '*Christian*' really matter?" For how is Christianity to be distinguished from other religions, if not by examination of its theology?

It must be admitted that other momentous questions rest upon this issue. The man who is convinced that his religion is the only true one is bound to conceive the great ideal of the brotherhood of man and the hope for world peace in terms of a prior conversion of the world to *his* religion. He will find full justification for a proselytizing and missionary zeal in the presumed uniqueness of his faith. And, as a consequence, all his relations with other peoples of differing faiths will be colored by a desire to persuade them to adopt his beliefs. If he is right, that is one thing; but if he should be wrong, and the others, if not completely "right" in their faith, at least not guilty of similar pretensions, then he becomes a source

of troubling disturbance for all who feel the pressure of his wish to "convert" them. And if, as is the case with the Christian nations of the West, the eagerness to "convert" is coupled with vast economic power and the prestige of advanced industrialism, the situation will be made doubly disastrous by the undeniable, but far from "religious," influence of these factors. All sorts of hypocrisies, hidden resentments, and suppressed resistances are among the phenomena to be expected as a result of missionary activities in such circumstances.

So the question of what "Christian" signifies is by no means a mere "theological" inquiry, nor is its pursuit a fruitless logic-chopping. Profound issues of human motivation depend upon the answer that is returned.