

## QUESTIONS—NOT FOR EXPERTS

WHEN a physicist like Dr. Robert A. Millikan speaks on atomic energy, the man in the street may be expected to accept his statements as reliable. And when a leading educator like Dr. Robert M. Hutchins of the University of Chicago—where the atomic bomb was developed—writes about the same subject, it is reasonable to believe him too. But when two such authorities disagree concerning the promise of atomic energy, how does the man in the street decide which one is right?

In the *American Magazine* for December, 1947, Dr. Hutchins declared that atomic energy is the industrial magician of the future. In a peaceful world, he predicted, atomic power will work endless transformations. It is difficult to exaggerate the picture glowingly presented by the Chicago educator, who assures his readers of solid scientific support for the claim that atomic energy can provide "ease of living beyond our brightest dreams." Now, he says, "we truly hold in our hands the power to shape our own destiny, to choose our own fate."

Dr. Millikan, however, speaking in Los Angeles on October 1, stated that the discovery of atomic fission has only "negligible industrial applications." Its major benefit, he said, will be in "the fact that, if the race is sane, the atomic bomb threat will necessitate an effective organization for peace." Known supplies of uranium, according to Dr. Millikan, will last only forty-five years, and both uranium and thorium, the only "atomic sources," are too rare and thus too costly. "As a long-range source of power, atomic fission is out."

You would think, offhand, that men like Dr. Hutchins and Dr. Millikan, who live in the same country, read the same scientific journals and know the same technical experts, would at least

get together on the question of what atomic energy can do for the human race, other than blow it to bits. After all, nuclear physics is something more than guesswork. The bomb *did* go off. We are not asking agreement on whether or not a society fully equipped with atomic-energy gadgets would be a good thing, or whether the bomb is competent to frighten people into peaceful ways of life. These are matters of opinion—the opinions, respectively, of Dr. Hutchins and Dr. Millikan. We are asking for agreement on the facts. If atomic energy has "negligible industrial applications," why did Dr. Hutchins write an article insisting that an atomically-powered utopia is just around the corner? And if there is foundation for Dr. Hutchins' optimism, why did Dr. Millikan say, "As a long-range source of power, atomic fission is out"? Of course, it may not be of such vital importance to know the answer to these questions. Both Dr. Hutchins and Dr. Millikan are men of good will; both, in this case, are speaking as moralists, and not as scientists or administrators of scientific institutions. They just happened to base their expressions on different texts. Does it matter?

From one point of view, it does not, it seems to us, matter very much. But the incident is instructive. It illustrates, we think, the proposition that human decisions, the most momentous ones even more than others, are largely determined by moral outlook, and that "facts" are usually employed to make the decisions seem plausible, or as we say today, "scientific."

Quite possibly, the important moral decisions of human beings are confused rather than illuminated by what are called "scientific facts." One could claim that science figures so largely in contemporary debates only because of the generally accepted authority of scientific research, just as, several hundred years ago, citations from

Scripture and from the Fathers of the early Church were regarded as the best support for any sort of argument. Of course, common sense will have to admit that an argument based on natural law ought to be more reliable than quotations from some ancient theology, but if the meaning of the laws of nature is subject to more than one scientific interpretation, the problem is essentially the same. In such case, there is the further possibility that the implications of science are unclear with respect to the major moral problems of the human race.

There is considerable evidence for this idea. Take for example the time-honored controversy over heredity and environment. Ever since modern psychology laid claim to being a science, and even before that, educators have disagreed on which of these forces is dominant in the shaping of human beings. The most recent episode in the debate occurs in the *Scientific Monthly* for October, where two educational psychologists, Davis and Havighurst, declare for Environment, and are flatly contradicted by another authority. They had argued (in the *April Scientific Monthly*) that environment is by far the most important factor, saying that mental tests which take no account of differences in the cultural background of children may work serious injustices against students in the public schools. They make the assumption—"the safest assumption," they say, "that can be made"—that "there are no innate differences of intelligence between socioeconomic groups in the United States today."

Mr. Arthur Otis disagrees. He calls this assumption "almost gratuitous." Complaining that Davis and Havighurst present no evidence, he asserts:

It certainly has been proved beyond question that intelligence is inherited; that is, on the whole, the children of parents of lesser intelligence tend to be themselves of lesser intelligence. This fact, coupled with the fact that parents in the lower socioeconomic groups tend to be of lesser intelligence, means that *children* in the lower socioeconomic groups tend to be of lesser intelligence.

He also accuses Davis and Havighurst of neglecting "the different uses to which intelligence tests are put." They, in turn, rejoin that their whole article is about the misuse of intelligence tests:

If [they say] a boy of high innate learning ability but of experience inadequate to score high on a certain test gets a low score, he may be put into a class from which not much is expected, or he may be shunted into a curriculum that will prevent his entering college, or his parents may be advised that he is not "college material."

Were space available we could cite various studies, some supporting Otis, some on the side of Davis and Havighurst. The evidence is often contradictory, and so the controversy will undoubtedly continue, one side hinting that those who believe in heredity are giving aid and comfort to the fascist view, the other accusing the defenders of environment of ignoring scientific facts. As a sample of the argument of the environmentalists, there is this passage by Paul Witty in *Progressive Education* for December, 1936:

. . . it is clear that a rather large number of American teachers (academically qualified, accepted, and officially labelled "psychologists") have erected a formidable bulwark of class superiority from a miscellany of false premises and scientific fallacies. The result is not only scientifically indefensible; it may prove socially disastrous.

Only one conclusion is plain from the enormous volume of debate on this subject. It is that in most cases the moral attitude of the writer supplies the energy of the discussion. The data are admittedly inconclusive. Either some crucial factor is missing in all this research, or, as one impartial reviewer suggested, "the human being is so complex as practically to defy analysis." Meanwhile, each side continues to argue its case with the special fervor and disdain for its opponents that alleged "scientific" evidence so often seems to permit.

With or without scientific help, the argument about what makes intelligent men intelligent is

not, we think, any further along than Plato's investigation in the *Apology* of what makes virtuous men virtuous. The controversy over intelligence testing has added a large amount of reading matter to the books which the prospective teacher is expected to wade through before qualifying for his degree, but little or nothing to his knowledge of human beings.

A third region of uncertainty lies in the political field. Here, again, the problem only *seems* to be one of the determination of the facts. The question, "Can Foreign Policy Be Democratic?" was the subject of a recent symposium conducted by the Foundation for Foreign Affairs (appearing in the Foundation's publication, *American Perspective*, and reprinted as a pamphlet). Views were contributed by several political scientists and commentators, among them Bertrand Russell, Nathaniel Peffer, C. Hartley Grattan, Mulford Q. Sibley and Max Kampelman.

The authors, with the possible exception of Mr. Russell, might have written more freely on the question, "How Democratic *Ought* Foreign Policy to Be?" for that manifestly was what they thought about most in composing their contributions. Mr. Russell sets the problem:

Before the late war, the vital questions were personal: What would Hitler do? What would the Japanese military authorities do? Now the vital question is: What will Stalin or Molotov do? Such questions are personal. Often the great forces are so evenly balanced that a whim may decide the issue. It is quite possible that, if the Russian mobilization in 1914 had been postponed for forty-eight hours, the first World War would never have taken place. The mobilization occurred by the orders of the War Minister, against the wishes of the Tsar, and might easily not have taken place when it did. Where such chances can decide great issues, it is absolutely necessary, if the democracies are not to be at a disadvantage in dealing with dictatorships, that the executive should have considerable license to take sudden decisions. I do not think, however, that such decisions are justifiable unless there is good reason to believe that public opinion will subsequently approve of them. And in a democracy there must be means by

which subsequent disapproval can be in some degree effective.

The remaining writers focus on the question obviously pertinent for Americans to consider: the way in which the United States entered World War II. Nathaniel Peffer says:

When Franklin Roosevelt, for example, ordered the freezing of Japanese assets in July, 1941, he made war with Japan a certainty. He may have been right and he may have been wrong—this writer for one thinks he had no alternative—but the fact is that it was *his* decision, and the American people and their representatives in Congress learned of it only after the fact, that is, when the consequences had already set in and in practical politics were irreversible. . . . It is clear from the evidence in the memoirs that have already appeared that President Roosevelt would have gone further much earlier than he did had he not been restrained by public opinion.

The American contributors all make use of Thomas A. Bailey's *The Man in the Street*, a recent study of public opinion in relation to American foreign policy. Prof. Bailey quite candidly admits—rather, he asserts—that President Roosevelt "repeatedly deceived the American people during the period before Pearl Harbor." It seemed that "he would have to trick them into acting for their best interests, or what he conceived their best interests." These are not sly digs at the war President, but the form taken by the admiration of this writer. To have dealt honestly with the people, Prof. Bailey thinks, would have been "foolhardy rather than courageous" on the part of the President. This is said on the basis of the general proposition that "our statesmen are forced to deceive them [the shortsighted masses] into an awareness of their long-run interests."

The point is, that for these experts on foreign affairs, the question of the *facts* of American foreign policy before the war is not at issue, except, perhaps, as to the measure of the "deception" that was involved. What they are really debating is the question, "How much honesty is desirable on the part of a policy-making public official in a democratic society?" And this

question, in turn, reduces to the moral problem of whether it is "right" for executives to lie for security reasons. We do not see how collections of facts can have much to do with solving this problem. It depends, instead, upon what you think human beings are, essentially, and what they are about, individually and socially, in their common life. How can experts on foreign policy or public opinion decide such questions for anyone else?

Mr. Grattan thinks that Prof. Bailey's approval of President Roosevelt might be vindicated if there were facts to support him—if, that is "he can establish that the President really did know what the best interests of the people were"; but this would mean building on "unprovable assumptions," such as the claim that "participation of the United States in World War II was necessary, right, and inevitable, and that the fruits of participation are good." This suggestion seems plausible, but it still leaves without an answer the moral problem. As Mulford Sibley says: "What possible logic is there in using methods to preserve democracy which by their very nature destroy the democratic process?"

So, to return to the basic consideration, we think that unless and until the primary moral issues of life are clarified and distinguished from questions of fact, people will continue to be bewildered by the conflicting opinions of experts, whether they be experts in physics, education, or foreign affairs. And we can hardly blame the experts for our confusion. It is not only the expert who very often believes he has competence to make decisions involving moral issues for others; most of us have the habit, inherited from past centuries, of expecting the experts to make up our minds. Generations ago, it was the priest who announced what was right and what was wrong for men to do, and now it is preponderantly the scientist and the politician. It is of course a "radical" doctrine to assert that *no* man, wise or fool, trained or unskilled, has the right to make a

moral decision for another, but this, in principle, is the doctrine which we are prepared to defend.

## *Letter from* **SWITZERLAND**

GENEVA.—Some months ago, M. Celio, President of the Helvetic Confederation, suggested that Switzerland might now consider the reinstatement of the Society of Jesus, which has long been banned from the country because of its various intrigues. While the Roman Catholic Church was left free of restriction, the activities of the Jesuits were pronounced undesirable. The idea of readmitting them has come up for governmental discussion from time to time. The situation was well summed up on Oct. 8 by a representative of the Conseil Fédéral who maintained that M. Celio expressed only his personal opinion, not that of either the Federal Government or of the majority of the Swiss people. Therefore, he said, the subject deserved no further consideration, since the ruling against the Jesuits in no way interfered with the freedom of conscience of Catholics or with their educational enterprises.



Switzerland recently found her way to accept the Marshall Plan without infringing on her traditional neutrality. There has been a long drawn-out campaign here to discredit this Plan, the argument being that its acceptance would threaten the free institutions and the commercial rights of Switzerland. Genève heard wild rumours from France. (The small Canton de Genève lies at the end of the lac Léman, almost surrounded by France.) It was said that the French people were trembling with the fear that the Marshall Plan would bring them into the hands of the United States, now ready to go to war. The U.S.A., they were told, would invade France, conscript the French populace, sending all who protested into forced labour camps, and many Swiss were disturbed by this propaganda. The Helvetic Confederation, however, has defended the Marshall Plan. It recently announced a new convention and bilateral accord with the United

States, recording the opinion that the Marshall Plan is intended for the good of Europe. It was further emphasized that Switzerland could not isolate herself from the economic cooperation which alone could save her and others from the financial crisis which threatens to engulf the whole of Europe. At the same time a demand for a referendum on the Marshall Plan was overwhelmingly overthrown by a vote of 109 to 8.



Swiss radio listeners recently heard a public debate sponsored by the Recontres Internationales de Geneve on "The Independence of the Artist." One of the speakers, the well-known English writer, Mr. Charles Morgan, spoke of the importance of free artistic expression. To believe that art should serve the State is, he said, an error. The State should rather serve art. Any restraint imposed by the State on religion, on art, or on literature, is actually evil and constitutes one of the greatest menaces of our days. No editor, he said, should be permitted to dictate to a writer what he should and what he should not write. Art is the balance established between vision—which is an inner experience—and action, which expresses itself outwardly. Communication between men is established through creation. The source of the highest inspiration leading to creation is not of this world. It springs from the fathomless depths of spirit which is reflected in man and in the universe. Europe can be reborn only if collectivism is replaced by real freedom. That freedom is found only when spirit radiates unhampered through the flesh.



Finally, a closer relationship has been established between India and Switzerland. The two countries will seek an exchange of students, doctors and professors, as well as an increase of business relations. Greater activities are afoot among the Cooperatives, which are establishing centers of education with free discussions, lectures and literature. One such center has been opened at Chexbres near Lausanne. Meanwhile, the

Oxford Movement is coming to the fore with its militarily organized centers spreading especially among army groups—a kind of reaction to the Soviet tendencies. And among pacifists there is a demand that freedom of conscience be honoured in the case of compulsory military service. They protest against the law which stigmatises conscientious objectors as deserters and imprisons them.

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Such are a few of the many crosscurrents moving beneath the apparently placid surface of the life of Switzerland. The unrest of Europe beats against her frontiers and seeps in through every crack. More than a fortress of brick and mortar is required, in our days, to keep the head level, and the feelings calm.

SWITZERLAND CORRESPONDENT

## *REVIEW*

### BOOK OF THE MONTH

A LONG novel—*The Running of the Tide* by Esther Forbes (632 pages) —presents the question of whether the many hours required for its absorption can be justified by a proportionate benefit. And also, in consideration of 632 BoM pages, the whole matter of the use of leisure time by the American public becomes involved. There is certainly no doubt in this reviewer's mind that BoM members *could* devote their energies to many things more significant than religiously reading the BoM choices every month. But the matter does not end here. We must face the fact that in many communities only a tiny minority will read carefully, according to their own selection, books conducive to the growth of the mind, while the majority read either book-club selections or nothing at all save magazine stories—these latter being even more stereotyped than the book-club selections. It seems possible that many people who dislike any serious reading, perhaps as a result of the compulsive techniques of high school and university, may finally, through the "reading made easy" program of the book clubs, arrive at the opinion that time spent quietly with a book may be both enjoyable and instructive. On the other hand, one who starts to read in this fashion may only fall into the habit of using novels for emotional pabulum. And it is a very questionable thing, in psychiatric terms, to seek emotional sustenance at secondhand. The man or woman whose "inner life" revolves around the psychic impact of fiction may be cherishing premonitory schizoid tendencies.

Yet there are hundreds of thousands—millions—of people who have slight individual psychological resources —people who, save in the company of other people, are both restless and fearful of being alone. It seems to us that if the novel reader determines to *think* about what he is reading, to measure and to accept or reject the values implicit in the various situations depicted,

he may develop a little of the capacity for enjoyable aloneness, if not simultaneously attaching himself to reading as one does to a narcotic.

*The Running of the Tide* seems a good novel—one that might serve such a purpose for the reader. It carries something of a childhood-type of inspiration in those portions which tell of sea adventure—symbolic, as the author herself feels, of the fact that all significant human lives are an endless quest for some sort of adventure. Miss Forbes' work sounds historically authentic and the story—as is the case with all vivid writers—helps to give to us, in the present, a sense of significant-history-being-made, now, in our own lives. The principal moral of the book lies in the tragedy enacted by two brothers, the younger of whom worships the elder and contrives by self-sacrifice to save him from the consequences of his own actions. The younger brother succeeds, and yet he really fails, for by helping a man to escape meeting his own destiny face to face one sets the stage for weakness and loss of character. Peter gains for his brother, Dash Inman, all of the things that Dash wished, but because Dash is a man of *some* integrity, he becomes dissatisfied with himself—he has allowed too much sacrifice on his behalf—nor can he love more than he resents the poor consumptive brother who did so much suffering for him. Peter Inman, personally less impressive, becomes the stronger of the two, since his role of protector compels him to step out of his familiar character. In Miss Forbes' novel, we see clearly how debilitating it can be for anyone to assume he has only a single role to play in life and to fear happenings that might bring about a change. The author's psychological observations are usually good. The questionable things which Salem society allowed to pass without notice are set up in contrast to those things which caused the greatest scandal, and the hidden mechanisms of social disapproval are carefully examined.

In this book, the implication is plainly that most communities tend to be vindictive toward

people whose behavior varies from "the expected." And this occurs regardless of the moral quality behind the offending actions. Peter, to save a coming marriage for his brother, claims paternity of an illegitimate child, not his own. Hitherto known as quiet and "bookish," Peter is now regarded as insidiously bad—all the people who had formed prior estimates of him are personally affronted because Peter did something which dared to contradict that estimate, and these good citizens of Salem see to it that he suffers accordingly. But most doors were shut upon him only when he began to treat the child as an actual human being, instead of evidence of his Sin, taking it for walks, bringing it presents, and being seen with it in public. This was too much. Parental responsibility, it seems, was a proper virtue in Salem only when all the gods of respectability had been appeased. Salem "morality" fares so ill at Miss Forbes' hands that one suspects her of being a rebel against a great many things which "society" does to people in the name of maintaining "decent standards." Yet she does not overbalance her case; the people who persecute Peter are not complete ogres, nor does the entire population look down long, self-righteous noses at him.

Miss Forbes does not quite manage to avoid giving the currently popular impression of "frustration" when she takes leave of her characters. While life does not become thoroughly sour for any of them, they do seem to move from brightly inspired youth to a second-rate old age. We found ourselves wishing that at least one character would reach for the stars, and keep on reaching. But life is a little too much for every one of them.

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### PERIODICAL NOTES

*Organic Gardening* for September is devoted to the life of the late Albert Howard, founder of the movement of that name. Its original inspiration came in India where, as a botanist

appointed in 1905 to a research station at Pusa, near Calcutta, he studied the methods of Indian farmers, reaching the conclusion that food grown on humus-rich soil is health-giving and disease-resisting. Transferred to Indore in 1924, he used a large experimental farm to develop the compost-making techniques now identified with Organic Gardening.

Of similar interest is the story of Carroll Churchill, an engineer who has revived the old American craft of hand-weaving. His achievement, although on a much smaller scale, is curiously linked with that of Albert Howard, for Mr. Churchill became interested in hand-weaving as a missionary in India in 1901. Applying his technical knowledge to the improvement of Indian hand-loom, he helped the weavers to quadruple their production. Years later, while teaching physics at Berea College after the first World War, he began helping the hand-weavers of the countryside in the same way. The firm of The Churchill Weavers, now doing a business of half a million dollars a year with only hand-loom, was the result. (*Satevepost*, Feb. 21, 1948.)



## *COMMENTARY*

### **EQUALITY AND EXCELLENCE**

THE idea of the equality of all men before the law has grown in popularity through recent centuries until, today, it is a virtual dogma of social justice. It is less commonly realized, however, that equality before the law, although an ultimate principle of social organization, is not an ultimate principle for individuals, but only a starting point. Man, being more than a political unit, needs more than a political philosophy. Quite possibly the equalitarian dogma, misapplied, can become as tyrannical as any of those other dogmas to which it was opposed in the eighteenth century.

In those days, the doctrine of human equality was championed against spurious definitions of human excellence. One kind of excellence was claimed for men of noble blood, entitling them to political authority and material privilege; another was claimed for priests of religion, securing psychological and moral empire for their sacerdotal institution. The revolutionary epoch denounced and rejected both these definitions of excellence, mainly because of their historical consequences, and in the course of time the equalitarian idea took the place of both in all thinking concerned with the rights of man. An incidental effect of this substitution was the limitation of the idea of human excellence to a political meaning, while status, in the political structure, was both given and taken away by popular choice—according to democratic procedure.

The medieval theory of human excellence was all-embracing. It dealt, although falsely, we may say, with the whole man. Its replacement by a theory which is *only* political in meaning may be one deep-seated cause of the totalitarian reaction of the twentieth century. Conceivably, the void left in the realm of human ideals by the political reforms of the eighteenth century has been usurped by a distorted equalitarianism that holds suspect any serious discussion of human

excellence. The common man is in danger of remaining only common, and thinking human virtue consists in this.

We need, today, a new Confucius to write great books about the Superior Man. The kind of superiority that concerned Confucius had no direct relation to politics. It had to do with the final aims of human life, which are non-political. If we can evolve no engrossing and inspiring idea of human excellence, our impoverished equalitarianism may be superseded by another cycle of medieval authority, more vicious, because atavistic, than the last.

## CHILDREN ... AND OURSELVES

A TELEPHONE call a few days ago informed us of the unexpected death of a young parent. A wife and two children, aged five and six, survive the father. It was natural for a member of the family to say, "What do you *do*? What can the children be told? They want to understand what has happened . . ."

We all might share some feeling of helplessness under such circumstances, and share also, perhaps, a portion of that universal sympathy which apparently resides in every human heart.

Those of us who speak blithely of educational programs and theories—do we realize that unless we can be of some true help to the understanding of a child at such a time, we are not, can never be, "educators"? It amounts to this: However impossible we may think an answer to the question "What is Death?" we are going to utter words to a child which will have a profound effect, and we are going to show to the child, by our own mental and emotional state when confronted by death, the summation of our attitude toward the whole of life. Our words and our attitude either suggest a basic faith that nothing real ever perishes, or they will promote the fear that nothing important can be counted upon to endure.

To enliven the hope that the *man* does not die, simply because the body ceases to function, is not necessarily to betray our regard for "fact." There is no evidence that an observed earthly embodiment of a human consciousness is its only appearance. We are not constrained to imply to the child that the bodily existence known to our present physical senses is the only conceivable one. True, we may not *know* in a scientific, provable manner that the "soul" of man survives the death of the body, yet neither do we know, in a scientific provable manner, that it does not. And our task with the child, here as always, is not to

force a certain view on him, but to open before his mind the widest range of possible alternatives, from which he may ultimately form his own philosophy of life.

It is possible, too, that the centuries-long tendency of the world away from "supernaturalism" is but the special bias of an epoch—in particular, a reaction against illogical supernaturalisms. If we search the whole span of time encompassed by history we cannot fail to note that the instinctive, or, if you will, "intuitive," feeling of the majority of mankind has been that some form of personal immortality *must* be true. Upon that sort of faith, apparently spontaneous for a natural state of mind, have all religions built their foundation. And it is likely that after the last religion has drawn its final creedal breath, this faith will continue. Today, we say we may have confidence only in our brain-intellects, that our exclusive trust must be placed upon the weighing, measuring, descriptive faculties of the human mind. But "intuitions" and faiths cannot be lightly put aside. They, too, are the stuff of which man is made; nor can we accurately summarize the total human being without respectful reference to them. Nature herself indicates no preference for one set of man's faculties at the expense of another, and in fact it has usually been the philosophically inclined dreamers and idealists, the poets and artists, who have supplied our moral and intellectual inspirations. The mere fact that the majority of men have refused to believe that this mortal life is all, too, gives us continued pause for thought. What right have we to pass negative judgment upon what appears to be a time-honoured conclusion of man's consciousness, simply because we favor the laboratory more than the seminary?

So perhaps we are not obliged, whatever our scientific training, to prepare the child for believing the worst. We do not know that "the worst" is true, but will be ourselves inclined to so believe, only if we have come to pay life the cringing compliment of regarding it with horror. A final end is always horror for a mind naturally

disposed to think in terms of continuity and purpose. The notion of a final end is the negation of life itself.

The underlying mystery of "death" pervades every aspect of what we call *life*. The way in which we view death has much to do with our capacity to love, our social usefulness, and our much-sought calmness and stability. If a man fears death, either for himself directly or because he cannot face the thought of having a loved person taken from him, he will live a tremulous life bereft of deep and sustaining inspirations. The supreme fear which humans must conquer is, after all, fear of death. If we fear the destruction of the body, we will tend in some degree to be hypochondriac, to worry also about what others may do to us, and to hate and dislike those others according to the varying intensities of our own fears.

The child comes into a world where the harshest dictum of all, laid down by the example of the adult world, is "Thou shalt fear." In this world, death is regarded as pure horror, a nightmare sequence, which unfolds with the crushing of all that is cherished. But the child need not inherit morbidity and distrust of life. He comes with an opening mind and heart, ready for anything *if he can only understand*. It is as natural for the child to feel that there are no impenetrable mysteries as it is "normal" for cynical adults to suppose that there are no meaningful answers to the eternal philosophical and religious questions.

What can we "tell" the child? Shall we say, "There are many opinions about what happens when the body dies, according to what church you go to. You may choose whichever of these you wish, when you are old enough"? The child is not interested in what any particular religion has to say. He wishes to know what *you* think, as a person loved and trusted. He is not interested in a religion, for he is unconsciously preparing to form his own. His mind needs from us, not channeling, but the additional depth and perspective which can

be suggested by our wider experience of human possibility.

The only clear analogy to death is the sleep which we enter each night of our lives. Here the body is dormant, the consciousness of the mind removed from its familiar daily orbits. Communication with one asleep is impossible, yet will not be impossible when earthly contacts are resumed on the day which follows. So used are we to regarding the internal self of man as an appendage of the body: are we sure that it is not the body itself which is incidental, a temporary habitation which circumscribes the activities of "soul" only so long as that body is serving as a vehicle of expression?

Children do not require guarantees that all is for the best in this "best of all possible worlds." They do require the companionship of those who have not yet decided against holding a faith in life's ultimate meaning and purpose for the individual. Children have not yet drawn up any final conclusions, nor will they for some time to come. A substantial *hope* is what they wish to have, always; this hope and expectation is, for them, the necessary breath of life. To say that death need not mean a final end for their parent, nor even to their own sharing of happiness and sorrow with that parent, is only to avoid an unnecessary break of faith in the endless miracles of life's opportunities, miracles which may, for all we know, transcend death.

An Englishman whom we account a philosopher—one of the few in our time—speculated in this manner upon our way of entering life and our way of leaving it: "The universe is wide, and life here or elsewhere might be regarded as a self-prescription, a venture willed by the soul for some end and through some prompting of its own, to enlarge its experience, learn more of the universe, recover lost friends, or resume a task begun but not fulfilled. The time has not come to close any of the avenues of thought into the mysteries surrounding us . . . ."

## *FRONTIERS* MILESTONES

BY a four-to-three decision, the California Supreme Court last month set aside the 76-year-old law prohibiting marriage between Caucasians and persons of Negro, Mongolian or Malayan blood. The court held that the right to marry means the right to marry the person of one's choice. "Marriage," said judge Traynor in the majority opinion, "is something more than a civil contract subject to regulations by the state. It is a fundamental right of free men." The ruling resulted from the refusal of the Los Angeles county clerk to issue a marriage license to a young woman of Mexican ancestry and a Negro graduate of Los Angeles City College. The court ordered the county clerk to issue the license. As similar restrictions prevail in twenty-nine other states, the California ruling is hailed as "pioneering the way toward racial democracy."

The decision will probably evoke familiar outcries in regions where mixed marriages are condemned as an attack on white womanhood and the purity of the Anglo-Saxon blood stream. But since when have laws barring interracial marriage been a deterrent to the mingling of black and white lines of heredity? And if, every year, several thousands of persons with Negro blood are able to pass as whites, the relatively few active advocates of racial equality are hardly responsible. As to the sanctity of white womanhood—what about the sanctity of black womanhood? When Negro women are as ardently defended as white women—although few self-respecting women, white or black, we think, would care to be objects of so much rhetorical "reverence"—the question can then be considered without the neurotic "chivalry" of the white-supremacy addict to confuse the issue. Meanwhile, it is enough to point out that several of America's most distinguished citizens have come from mixed blood lines—a fact which one may admit without becoming an enthusiastic advocate of mixed marriages. It should be self-evident that the question of whether marriages between members of different races are generally "desirable" has not the slightest

bearing on the right of such persons to marry as they choose. Mixed marriages, like other marriages, may sometimes be very good, sometimes very bad. Their desirability, in any event, is a matter for the personal decision of those doing the marrying.

The current attempt of the state of Oklahoma to caricature the meaning of the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States in the case of Ada Sipuel brings to the fore another issue of racial equality. Miss Sipuel is a young Negro who applied for admission to the University of Oklahoma Law School in 1946. Rejected as a student, she took her case to the Supreme Court, which ruled (last January) that, in accordance with the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution, Oklahoma must provide its Negro citizens with educational opportunities equal to those afforded white citizens. But instead of admitting Miss Sipuel to the State University Law School, Oklahoma set up the Langston School of Law, with quarters in the state capitol, complete with a small faculty, a catalogue and a portable blackboard. Negro law students, apparently, were to have a school all to themselves, although, so far, Miss Sipuel is the only candidate! The legality of this device was tried in an Oklahoma Federal District Court last May, the judge deciding that the two law schools were "substantially equal." As numerous differences between them were amply pointed out by Miss Sipuel's attorneys, the case will undoubtedly be carried to a higher court, to reach again, finally, the Supreme Court.

This Oklahoma episode in the drive for racial equality is well described in the *Nation* for Sept. 18 by Harriet Bunn, who says that the less prejudiced listeners at the trial were impressed by "the dignity and force of the colored lawyers" acting for Miss Sipuel on behalf of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Her attorneys included such men as William Robert Ming, graduate of the University of Chicago Law School and at present on its faculty, and Thurgood Marshall of Howard University. Among those called as witnesses was Dean Redfield, anthropologist of Chicago University, who testified, "There is no recognizable difference between Negroes and white students as to their inherent intellectual capacity, and

there is strong evidence tending to the conclusion that such differences do not exist."

A minor irony developed from the questions asked concerning Miss Sipuel's ancestry. It seems that before American Indians were declared "white," there was considerable intermarriage between Negroes and Indians in Oklahoma. The young woman was not certain about her Indian blood, but announced that she was part Irish. Both she and her mother, the *Nation* writer relates, were about the same shade as the tanned ranchers in the courtroom, and lighter than the Indians.

While attorneys for Oklahoma attempted to eliminate any direct discussion of the state policy of segregation, this was the obvious issue at stake. University professors from other parts of the country where Negroes attend the same colleges as whites—from New York, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, California and Massachusetts—came to testify that the Langston School of Law could not compare with the law school of Oklahoma University. A poll showed that 80 per cent of the law students attending Oklahoma University favored admitting Miss Sipuel.

The fact that the patients of a Negro dentist practicing in Oklahoma are 75 per cent white is a relevant detail picked up in private conversation by Miss Bunn at the trial. The rise of Negroes in the professions, generally, will probably do more to establish practical racial equality in the United States than any other single factor. In Los Angeles, as in other cities, there are numerous Negro nurses in the public hospitals and a few Negro doctors who care for patients of all colors. While the attentions of a Negro doctor may come as a shock to prejudice-ridden whites, this reversal of the usual relationship of psychological status may turn out to be a much-needed if occasionally bitter-tasting medicine for some of our social ills. The recognition gained by Negroes who rise in the civil service underlines the importance of maintaining strict observance of the democratic principle in all forms of government employment. While legislation is not the same social process and will not accomplish the same result as education, just administration of the law often has a profoundly educational effect.

Progress of another sort is indicated by publication of several remarkable books by Negroes, during the past half-century. James Weldon Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man* was a pioneer volume which opened the minds of many to the psychological sufferings and difficult problems of adjustment faced by Negroes in the United States. Richard Wright's more recent *Black Boy*, the story of his own youth, belongs with the finest autobiographical writing of this generation. Then there is Walter White's just published *A Man Called White*, largely devoted to the legal battles fought by the NAACP, of which he is secretary. Mr. White is a man who, as one reviewer remarked, happens to have "a couple of African chromosomes." Appearing entirely Caucasian, Mr. White voluntarily allied himself with the Negro cause and has devoted most of his life to the struggle for racial justice. Some of the more discouraging obstacles to this objective are illustrated by an incident, described by Mr. White, similar to Miss Sipuel's case. A young North Carolina Negro, after winning in court the right to enter the pharmacy school of the State University, was nevertheless denied admission on the technical ground that he could not produce a transcript of his academic record in the North Carolina College for Negroes. It was found that the President of the Negro college would not supply the transcript because he feared that the State Legislature would cut off appropriations for his school if he seemed to assist an attack on the policy of segregation.

As a final recommendation, we suggest careful reading of *Hemmed In*, a ten-cent pamphlet issued by the American Council on Race Relations, 32 West Randolph Street, Chicago 1, Illinois. While restrictive covenants can no longer be enforced by state law, since the Supreme Court decision earlier this year, real estate purchase contracts still contain clauses promising restriction to the buyers of homes. The simple logic and unemotional common sense of this pamphlet should be of value to all persons with a concern for racial justice in the United States.