

## AREAS OF HUMAN FREEDOM

CERTAIN far-reaching difficulties pursue the man who is unable to honor or share in the personal aims which are claimed to be necessary and proper in an acquisitive society. Conventional economic activities often seem to him little more than elaborate forms of presumption and fraud, and even apparently "innocent" doings are blemished by an atmosphere of corruption. If he seeks to make his living in ways that occupy the great majority, he may be haunted by feelings of compromise and hypocrisy. This adds an element of pretense to his already dissatisfying existence, with the result that he must cope with a source of hostility in himself that does not bother other men. Freedom of the sort that he envisions seems far away and unattainable. The ugly realities of the present show little promise of diminishing. Short of accepting complete alienation and throwing his energies into some revolutionary movement, what is such a man to do?

Perhaps the question should be put in another way: What can such a man do while trying to figure out *what kind of a revolutionary movement* should have his support?

Life is filled with compromises of one sort or another, some tolerable, some intolerable. The problem, for all except those who think they have an infallible solution for human difficulties, is to distinguish between the tolerable and the intolerable compromises.

The history of the radical movement in the West is largely a history of such decisions. The pure revolutionaries, for example, felt that the "reformer" groups were weak compromisers with the Capitalist System. Reformers and "Gradualists," on the other hand, could retort that the resort of the revolutionaries to armed violence and "liquidation" of the Class Enemy was a worse compromise with evil. And many historians of the

Russian Revolution have pointed out that the autocratic rule of the Communist Party utterly destroyed the radical dream of a society of free and equal men who live by the principle, "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need."

The twofold problem, then, is this: If you believe in practicing constraint in order to re-arrange society according to a plan which you approve, *how much constraint* will you be able to tolerate, in order to succeed? When does the suppression of human freedom, which constraint involves, become an intolerable compromise? Or, if you do not believe in constraint—constraint, that is, beyond the familiar methods of maintaining order in a democratic society—then to what extent can you be a part of, or have relations with, the existing social, political, and economic institutions of the acquisitive society in which we live?

We should probably leave some *lebensraum* for the anarchists in this formulation, and take account of the fact that they do not care for *any* sort of constraint, which makes the anarchist's problem of naming the tolerable forms of compromise considerably more difficult. Even so, many who are not actual anarchists, yet admit an extensive validity in anarchist thinking, will share with the anarchist his dislike of the constraints now practiced under democratic government—chiefly the constraints in which preparation for and participation in modern war involve every modern State, whatever its form of political organization.

Our approach to the problem, here, will be one that ignores the supposed advantages or necessity of constraint, and will concentrate on what might be called *pluralistic* solutions. It will question how man may attempt to be free while

living in a society which is plagued by a network of customs, institutions, and motives which seems to make freedom very difficult to enjoy.

One obvious course is to participate in some form of community life, involving various kinds of cooperation. There are dozens of such communities in the United States, some of them loosely organized, some of them highly integrated. As the "requirements" of community life grow, certain elements of "freedom" are bound to disappear. There is little room, for example, for "free-thinkers" in strongly religious communal societies. This may of course be a nominal loss of freedom, since a free-thinker is not likely to want to join a religious society, but the loss is there, whether or not it is felt and admitted. A notable feature of the French Communities of Work was the solution of this problem. In these communities, belief in a materialist philosophy is given the same value of a "spiritual interest" as belief in, say, Catholic Christianity.

There will be many thousands of people, however, who are basically dissatisfied with conventional existence, yet who are not attracted by the pattern and *mores* of a modern, "intentional" community. Architects, artists, writers, and many others may not be able to find a suitable place in these communities as now constituted. Further, they may not seek any sort of isolation, but wish to serve and work in the existing society without loss of integrity. The simple solution of seeking out people of like mind is not available to them.

Publishing is an activity which presents this sort of difficulty. It requires relationships with society in general. To attempt to publish only "good" books or magazines and other reading material is virtually the equivalent of establishing a "cause" which must be subsidized. And where is the money to come from to support the cause, unless it be from more conventional forms of profit-taking enterprise? *Somebody* has to supply the funds, and the people with funds, these days, are people who have made money within the

pattern and according to the rules of the present economic system.

There is hardly a difference between taking money from those who have made it through commercial enterprise, in order to use it for some good purpose, and trying to make it, yourself, for some good purpose—if you can!

Well, then, what are the avenues of enterprise open to the individual in our society? You can work for somebody else, or you can go into business for yourself. If you are some sort of "creative" person, you can offer for sale whatever you can do. Whatever you decide to do, you have the problem of emotional attitude toward others with whom your work brings you into contact. Possibly the most oppressive aspect of commercial enterprise is the scaling of all activities to the necessity for sales. The man responsible for producing sales is under a constant compulsion to think about what will persuade people to become "customers." He will probably feel perfectly justified in sabotaging an excellent product in order to make it "sell," reducing its quality to permit a price, or making some harmful substitution to achieve "popular appeal." He will say, "Well, if the people won't buy it, they won't get its value *at all*, so why talk about 'principles' and 'integrity'?" A thousand skilled workmen, perhaps, depend for their jobs on the sales manager's ability to take their product to market and dispose of it there. If he fails, the argument runs, all those people will be out of work. So the product suffers and the sales increase.

The point, here, is not that it is theoretically impossible to distribute the product without reducing its quality. The point is that the general public has been taught to be responsive to certain types of appeal, over a long period of years. No single manufacturer can overcome those habits without serious risk. "I'm a businessman, not a moralist with money to waste on unappreciated quality," he will say. "You have to make what the public will buy."

Somewhere along the line, in acquiring this perspective on modern manufacturing and merchandising, one comes across a rather fascinating fact—that the men who play according to these rules are often extraordinarily efficient. Within the circle of their commitments, they are extremely conscientious workmen and administrators. They win your admiration, requiring you to make a fairly important distinction—the distinction between the personal human qualities of such people and the over-all orientation of their activities in the direction of exploiting human appetites and fears. Often it is much more satisfactory, in some practical situation, to have relations with an acquisitive businessman than it is to deal with an "idealist," who, alas, does not keep his appointments. There is an impressive discipline, sometimes, in the conventional way of doing things. The man who has not complicated his life with dissenting opinions may turn out to be a far better brick-layer or printer or die-maker than the free spirit. It is easy to realize what made Heywood Broun exclaim, many years ago, "The children of light have to be at least half as smart as the children of darkness!"

The very talented person, however, can often arrange his life in a way that leads to relatively little compromise. A ceramic artist, for example, may be able to make beautiful objects and to find outlets in stores that will pay him enough to bring him a comfortable living, while leaving him time for other things. A man or a couple with imagination and capacity can usually find work that is both useful and sufficiently remunerative to support a decent life. Scott and Helen Nearing created a center of extraordinary cultural influence during twenty years of maple-sugar farming on a stony hillside in Vermont. Unlike rebels who are merely "intellectual" critics, the Nearings have been able to live personally constructive lives. They supplied an important food product—a product that would be just as important in an ideal society as it is in ours.

This, in fact, is probably a good criterion to use in selecting a way to make a living. What can I do that will be as valuable today as it would be under the best possible social and cultural conditions?

Housing, good food products, good textiles, building supplies, sanitation, flood control, conservation—all these represent fields of enterprise which will survive any conceivable revolution, and which do not, therefore, represent any essential corruption. Integrity need not be dispensed with in any of these fields, although some ingenuity may be required to preserve it.

Too often, the demand for complete and "uncompromising" revolution springs from an unwillingness or an inability to exercise moral inventiveness and ingenuity. The absolutist of any cause often wants his morality made easy for him, so that he will not have to think, to make those unbearable decisions. He wants to exchange the "total corruption" of the present society for the total virtue of his program. He will accept nothing less, and this licenses with full justification his impatience and contempt for others less "absolute" in their demands. He alone is "pure," although his purity can never be realized except in theory and on paper, or in extreme personal isolation.

The obvious objection to the "ingenuity" theory of integrity is that it easily smooths the path to ingenious compromise. It makes each man the arbiter of his own morality, accountable to no one except himself for what he decides to do. This is fine, from an anarchist point of view, but it is likely to put a strain on the patience of those who invest a portion of their own moral capital in hope of a practical program.

The fact is, however, that such progress as we may expect is bound to come from both approaches—from the integrity-through-ingenuity approach, which is fostered by people who find a place in the interstices of our society, and from the let's-change-the-system approach, which gets its

best results from the inventions of those who combine idealism with socio-political sagacity.

Fundamental to the restoration of integrity is the choice of an activity which permits access to individuals who have the power of decision. This means, for the manufacturer, choice of a product which can support his plant without requiring mass merchandising techniques. If you have to employ the elaborate machinery of national distribution, you cannot deal with individuals, but must meet the requirements of vast institutions like television advertising and mass-circulation magazines. The man who wants to preserve his integrity in business, which means his individuality, should make something which fills a legitimate need or want of people with individuality. This is a smaller "market," but it exists, and it will probably grow.

It might be noted, also, that there are already callings which represent important currents of change and reform in our society. People working in the field of soil reclamation, organic farming, nutrition, and allied areas are people who naturally become sensitive to the abuses which have crept into conventional habits of life and who obtain deep satisfaction from the beneficent nature of what they are doing. The mental health field, also, is a growing-tip of constructive change. The workers in psychiatry, from fully trained psychiatrists to less equipped but sympathetic counselors, enjoy a leverage that did not even exist at all a hundred years ago. Those who bind up the wounds and help to reduce the self-inflicted agonies of the victims of the present order may have a better claim to being pioneers of a better society than those who tinker with laws and theories of political organization. Further, there is clear evidence of a "community" mood in the comradeship of these undertakings. No one can give attention to the work of, say, the Menninger Foundation without noticing this pervasive feeling.

The thing that must be avoided, in any case, is giving in to the "Rousseau Complex"—the claim

that, "I can't be different, the System won't let me." A bad system is just as much the raw material for a good life as a field of broken stones. The stones have to be moved and the field plowed. Either way, the work is there to do.

It is also necessary to avoid using subversive techniques in order to spread the "gospel" of a better life. We doubt, that is, that Socrates or Jesus or Gandhi would agree to speak to the world in between two commercials for Krumbly Krunchies in order to "get the Message across" to all those people who can't be reached in any other way. You meet a lot of people in "public relations" and advertising who casually explain to you that all that the Truth needs is the support of Good Promotion. The channels to reach the public already exist—"made to order," so to speak—and millions can be made to respond to a properly designed "package deal." If the package deal includes the Keys to the Kingdom, that's all the better. You can make a buck and save people's souls at the same time!

It is a question whether any of the mass communication facilities can be used for entirely constructive purposes. They serve, and serve well, in some instances, to convey morally neutral communications such as news, and now and then—we are told—something "really good" is presented on television, but it is difficult to imagine anyone being able to invert institutions which depend upon modern merchandising for their very existence, and to turn them into channels of independent criticism and thinking. The only sort of radio communication which holds real promise for a better society is listener-sponsored radio, with no commercials at all, of which the San Francisco Bay Area station, KPFA, is probably the only existing illustration.

The fact of the matter—and this should never be minimized or concealed—is that the big institutions of an acquisitive society are extremely sensitive to attack on their "way of life." The issue, here, is *power*—power over peoples' minds and the decisions they make—and it would be silly

to suppose that any entrenched group will give up this power without a struggle. The hard core of the exploiting system is there, and it is determined to survive. This is not a matter of "free enterprise," but of the bad, anti-human habit the free enterprise system has acquired over a period of a hundred years or more—the habit of being willing to do *anything* in order to make a sale. The only way to break that habit is to starve it to death, and the way to starve it to death is by refusing to buy anything from people who have the habit. So long as you buy from them, they can't get well.

It is this habit, now almost universal, having pervaded even aspects of the arts and applied sciences, which makes business seem such a "dirty business." It is a habit which systematically turns people into hypocrites. They become courteous to others, not because the others are human beings, but because they are potential "customers." They never say what they think because it may not be good "policy," and interfere with making a sale. People whose minds are close-hauled on the tether of "salesmanship" eventually become actual morons. They can go through all the motions of having intelligence, but they don't really possess any intelligence. Their intelligence has died from lack of use. If they are in the book business, they don't look at a book for what it says, but for whether it will sell. *Nothing* has intrinsic value, for such people. Everything has only a "sales" value.

Oddly enough, they have the same sort of trouble in Russia. Only in Russia the captives of the system bow to a different "ulterior" motive. There the value of an idea or an article lies in its "ideological" significance. Is it in key with the Dialectic? Does it harmonize with the Party Line? Matters which have no political significance in Russia are like things which have no "sales angle" in the United States. You can't "make" anything out of them.

The problem, then, of living with a system you don't admire, but can't escape from entirely, is

not one that can be solved by total withdrawal or by total revolution. If you need help, or want to give it in a special way, you can form a community with some other people, and create a refuge that may some day become a source of strength and regeneration to the world outside. You can study the patterns of the system and start your operations in an area where the controls of the system are either weak or the least offensive. Or you can concentrate your efforts in a subdivision of the system which serves prime human needs and is therefore less likely to suffer from artificialities and meaningless complications.

On the side of optimism, there is this to consider: Integrity and honesty are inherently stronger than hypocrisy and deceit. The man who can make integrity and honesty work for a rich and fruitful life will eventually make people wonder how he does it. No normal person actually enjoys the things the system obliges him to do. He just thinks he has to live that way. To prove that he doesn't may be the most useful thing a man can do, these days.

## *REVIEW*

### PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE

WE continue to be impressed by the "philosophic evaluation" in articles appearing in psychiatric publications. The status quo in politics, education, religion and law has always, of course, received for caustic or even revolutionary criticism, but the temper of the psychiatric standpoint seems to afford an excellent balance between plain speaking and breadth of perspective—no rant-and-rave flavor, but hard-hitting points.

Examples of what we mean by "philosophic evaluation" appear in the November issues of the *Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic* and *Psychiatry*. The *Menninger Bulletin* essay is an article by Manfred Guttmacher, who explains why most psychiatrists do not like to testify in court. Dr. Guttmacher has been attached to the trial courts of Baltimore for twenty-five years, as the Director of the Medical Office. He speaks of himself as having "acquired a great respect for the law," but he cannot help deploring the discrepancies between the legal and the psychiatric approach. He writes:

It may come as a surprise to many practicing lawyers to be told that a large number of psychiatrists are loath to testify in court and that many psychiatrists—and among them are to be found the leaders of the profession—flatly refuse to examine a patient, if they know that this may later involve them in courtroom testimony.

The lawyer should realize that the whole trial process is alien and bewildering to the physician. In general he meets his problems alone. He is accustomed to making his weighty decisions, many of them in reality life and death decisions without the assistance or opinions of others. At times he seeks the counsel of colleagues and often encounters disagreement, but this develops into a free and thorough exchange of opinion, in order to arrive jointly at the truth. That the truth, in legal cases in which medical issues are of paramount importance, should be reached by biased partisans noisily developing certain facts and skillfully concealing

others, by relying on an esoteric and narrowly restrictive procedural formula, and by leaving the final decision to twelve bewildered laymen, is in itself an amazing phenomenon. To be sure after an intensive study of our legal trial methods and a full consideration of the results of our jury system, one might well conclude that it is the best of all systems. But one must admit that as a method of truth finding it is both unique and unscientific.

The courtroom setting, which is so familiar to lawyers, is to most physicians very uncongenial. In many ways it is repulsive to him. He is accustomed to be listened to with respect when his opinion is sought by a colleague or by a patient. He is used to being his own boss; under our American system he takes orders from no man. In the trial situation everything is changed. He is not permitted to question certain witnesses to ascertain historical facts of medical importance because they belong to the other side. In court he is denied the right to express his opinion freely and in his own way, even though he has sworn to "tell the whole truth" as well as "nothing but the truth." He is told when to speak and when to stop talking. He may be required to reach an opinion on a hypothetical statement of facts which he is convinced gives a wholly distorted picture of the case and, yet, he is not permitted to amend it. Instead of having his views received with the respect and deference to which he has been accustomed, he is likely on cross-examination to have them ridiculed, misstated, and twisted into absurdities. His intelligence and his professional competence will in all likelihood be questioned, and often even his integrity will be impugned.

Dr. Guttmacher favors a "neutral expert system" to aid judges and juries. Both in New York County and in Maryland, recommendations have been made to furnish the courts with a panel of well qualified experts. Just as there are trial judges of competence and integrity whose reputations speak for themselves, so there are men of like character among the psychiatrists who would welcome a chance to serve their communities in this way. Dr. Guttmacher continues:

There is a growing demand on the part of physicians for an extended use of systems employing neutral experts. Such systems are now in fairly wide use in criminal trials. Washington recently became the eighth metropolitan center to have psychiatrists

officially attached to the criminal courts. The Briggs law, with its use of neutral psychiatric examiners in most important criminal cases, has gained full acceptance in Massachusetts. In Colorado, anyone entering a plea of insanity is sent to a state hospital for prolonged observation prior to trial. Where such systems are in force and well administered, the sensational battles of experts have become virtually nonexistent. This is healthy for both the criminal law and psychiatry, for all too many newspaper readers get their distorted concepts of both from these lurid affairs.

A book review in the November *Psychiatry* by Dallas Pratt illustrates the revealing light of the psychiatric perspective on religion. The volume under discussion is *Anxiety and Faith* by Charles R. Stinnette, who suggests that religion must take matters up where psychiatry leaves them. Apparently, Stinnette's book is another attempt to bring about a happy marriage between psychiatry and Christianity. For instance, at one point in his treatment he disarmingly suggests that "therapy must include something more than the analysis of the negative aspects of personality. Some view of wholeness, such as that which finds expression in the interpersonal relations with the therapist and gradually in the wider associations of the individual, is the unfailing component of health." Well, all right. But Mr. Stinnette is apparently not prepared to grant that the psychiatric sciences have themselves evolved some of the essential ingredients of "the power of wholeness"—and perhaps more effectively than theology has ever managed. Mr. Pratt comments:

These "wider associations," he [Stinnette] believes, are most creative and regenerative in the Christian community. In several places he speaks of therapy as a preparation for Christ—as creating an "expectancy that is fulfilled only in the Church." This is surely true in some cases, but in his zeal for the Christian solution he sometimes does less than justice to the profound "spiritual" experience (to borrow the theologian's terminology) which therapy itself may be—*must* be, perhaps, if it is to succeed. Therapy at its best is neither a tidying-up of interpersonal relations, as Stinnette sometimes implies, nor merely an attempt to increase knowledge of "the way in which culture and conditioning shape personality." To intimate that therapy touches a

secular aspect of the personality which is somehow different from the spiritual aspect activated in Christian communion is to reintroduce through the back door that very splitting of man's nature which the author, with his just concern for re-establishing the wholeness of man, has been at pains to eject through the front. Clerical writers often want to make a one-way street out of therapy and Christian experience: the traffic moves from the consulting-room to the church. Is it too much to suggest that sometimes a personal religious experience may send a man back to psychiatry for deeper soul-searching than his particular church can provide?

Neither Dr. Guttmacher nor Mr. Pratt write as partisans, but as philosophers, which is a sign of the strength in their outlook. We doubt that Dr. Guttmacher would care to be a trial lawyer in our culture, or that Mr. Pratt has any desire to formally ally himself with the Christian sect, but Guttmacher is not hostile to the profession of law, nor is Pratt against the profession of Christianity. Such men take their place among a growing number who will hasten the achievement of what Erich Fromm has called "the sane society."

## COMMENTARY

### THE GENIUS OF THE WEST

IT is certainly conceivable, as Dallas Pratt suggests (see Review), that "a personal religious experience may send a man back to psychiatry for deeper soul-searching than his particular church can provide." But why, we may wonder, should psychiatry have resources of this kind?

The explanation, we think, lies in the peculiar genius of Western culture, of which modern psychiatry is a notable expression. An earlier manifestation of this genius emerged in the so-called "pragmatic philosophy." The principle of the pragmatic outlook is that knowledge is always functional, that you don't really know what you cannot put to work and experience directly in life. This is an ultimate test of the truth and modern man has an undying debt to the pragmatists for insisting upon it.

In a sense, pragmatism is a philosophical form of old-fashioned Yankee common sense. The Yankee remained unimpressed by signs and wonders. He wondered if it would work. If it worked, he respected it. He cared nothing for rhetorical demonstrations. He needed no leisure-time philosophy. He had no leisure time. He couldn't dally with beliefs that were not practical. The pragmatists turned the Yankee attitude into a theory of truth.

The psychiatrists, as compared with the believers in religion, are Yankees and pragmatists. What theories they have arise from experience instead of theology. When a theory seems too distant from what is revealed by clinical experience, it begins to get a Yankee treatment from the psychiatrists. Over-worked doctors can't afford the luxury of rhetorical or doctrinal religion. Any religion they have is some kind of *working* religion, and for this reason it is likely to be very much an intuitive or personal religion, whatever they call it.

The concepts of psychiatry are dynamic rather than doctrinal. They are attitudinal rather than metaphysical. They supply an actual leverage in a man's life, which explains why a man may

sometimes get more help from psychotherapy than from a church.

But what pragmatism lacked, and what psychiatric practice, also, seems to lack, is a source of values which are more comprehensive than the intuitive ethical perception with which every man is supplied (to some degree, at least), more deeply based than the socio-utilitarian ethics of modern humanitarianism, from which the pragmatists draw their inspiration.

What is wanted, in other words, is a Credo with depth and dimensions equal to the multiple complexities of modern life. This is not something that can be borrowed or "accepted" or believed. It has to be *grown*. In order to be an organic expression of human wisdom, it must flower within the horizons of our experience and this, after all, is the only sort of wisdom that the pragmatists and the psychiatrists are able to recognize.

But before there can be such a credo, there must be a strong sense of need for deep-laid convictions about the meaning of our lives. This feeling of need has already impressed itself upon many who were proudly independent of any requirement of a faith to live by, twenty years ago. And the searchings of doctors of the mind in the texts of ancient philosophy are evidence enough of a similar yearning among some of the psychiatrists. The Yankee criterion, however, remains. The credo must *work*. But what will "work" in relation to the subtler and possibly transcendental operations of the *psyche* may take such seekers far beyond the limits of yesterday's skepticism. Some day, pragmatist, empiricist, psychiatrist, mystic, and metaphysical philosopher may all meet at some far-off destination of common ground.



## CHILDREN ...and Ourselves NOTES IN PASSING

Editor, "Children . . . and Ourselves": It is my impression that most professors of education would say that "Johnny" can read as well as he could, say, thirty years ago. As a result of teaching experience, I conclude that Johnny reads far below what he could easily achieve in that skill. A few acquaintances of thirty years' experience claim Johnny cannot read as well as he could thirty years ago.

The question still remains. Can objective tests show the comparative reading ability of the average school child "now" and "then?" If so, what are the results?

WE doubt that either our correspondent or other MANAS readers would benefit very much by an array of opinions from differing "experts" on this subject. Embattled educationists are always endeavoring to prove the inferiority or superiority of current methods by statistical means, and facts and figures seem to be able to say almost anything, according to who compiles them and how they are interpreted.

Part of the difficulty, we think, resides in the fact that a lot more young people are being educated today in our primary and secondary schools than thirty or forty years ago, causing an inevitable shortage of adequate teachers. In our opinion, it is not so much the method of teaching as it is the pertinacity and "natural" calling of the instructor which determine whether the child will go through desultory motions in the area of reading skills, or actually begin to *read* as a way of finding depth of experience in his own psychological life. There is no doubt about the fact that most of the universities are plagued with ill-taught readers and writers, and that, in addition, greater attention to producing "happy social conditions" for the young during the school hours lessens the amount of drill in language disciplines. But if facility in reading and writing has declined during this period, it may also be that children are now far more facile and

constructively self-assertive in oral discussion. If this be so, one is entitled to reflect that, since the ability to read and the ability to discuss are equally important for communication, many poor readers may blossom out in later years. After all, one must develop zeal for ideas and opinions before reading can yield rich harvest, and we are inclined to think that the efforts to stimulate argument about controversial issues in secondary school classrooms might bear good fruit in this regard.

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A column on the education page of the New York *Herald Tribune* (Dec. 16, 1956) argues that a large part of our failure to achieve effective education stems from plain, old lack of money. Sloan Wilson, education editor (and author of *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*), tells an interesting success story—that of Rollin Baldwin, a young tutor who started a school of his own because he had proved himself a success in tutoring, and realized he might never have matched his achievements while teaching in a public school. Mr. Baldwin came to believe that you just can't teach large classes effectively. When demands for his services as a tutor became considerable, he decided upon a compromise—a school which would spend approximately \$1700 a year on each pupil rather than the average of \$300 spent for each child attending public school. Mr. Wilson comments:

You'd be surprised what the difference buys.

First of all, it buys an average class size of only about nine pupils. It buys top-notch young teachers. And it buys rare ingredients in education: continued enthusiasm, idealism and passionate concern for the individual.

You question whether these things can be bought, class? It's true that most young teachers have them when they begin their careers, but public schools with enormous classes have a deadening effect. It is hard to retain enthusiasm and idealism and passionate concern for the individual when one is responsible for thirty or more pupils.

"At my little school we're fortunate," Mr. Baldwin says. "We have the opportunity to do what every teacher longs to do."

Mr. Wilson crusades to get this perspective across to the taxpayers, because he feels that the results of this kind of education would more than justify an enormously increased budget for educational purposes. While good teachers know that you can't really "buy" education, they also know that a marked improvement in everything the school attempts to do would follow from better financing.

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A reader adds further comment to our discussion of "toy guns," taking issue with the blanket nature of our disapproval. He writes:

Now, I don't think any emphasis should be made on the point of playing such games with toy guns, but neither should an issue be made *not* to play with toy guns. It seems one can be just as concerned with something by avoiding it as one can be by indulging in it. It seems the key to the problem here would be moderation.

For instance, I do think that every individual, child or adult, comes through with his own nature at the last. It may be that a child who is kept away from guns, toy or real, is just as apt to harm or kill, through ignorance, as is the child who has frequent access to toy or real guns, through carelessness.

Let the child make the choice, and if he chooses, let him play with his toy guns and even let him "kill" with them. If his nature is destructive, he may get some of it out of his system, and whether his nature is destructive or not depends a lot on his up-bringing, the understanding of and respect for life that is taught him.

Well, we must admit that psychiatrists who work with severely disturbed children have demonstrated that the acting out of bloody dramas will sometimes relieve the pressure of a deeply imbedded complex or fixation. But a technique which proves to be necessary in an extreme case is not—even in small doses—necessarily a good technique in the upbringing of normal children. In our opinion, the emotionally secure child should learn, and learn early, that destructive tendencies

need to be curbed—and, further, that from their curbing he may derive a justifiable sort of pride. The words, tools and emotional accompaniments of violence are, in a sense, *sub*-human—especially if we define man as a being who is not only an "animal," but also an entity capable of self-discipline. Sooner or later, even the severely disturbed children treated in Bruno Bettelheim's Orthogenic School reach the point of seeing that it is better *not* to act out their hostile or aggressive instincts, and it is precisely when the urge to achieve self-discipline appears that the prospect of a true "cure" obtains. And, incidentally, even for the child who needs psychiatric treatment, might not more direct means of acting out hostility be preferable to the use of toy guns to "kill"? We would rather see a child model a clay figure and decapitate it than be encouraged to revel in his potential power of killing or injuring with a toy provided to him by some manufacturer at a price.

These remarks may sound extreme, but they reply only to the recommendation that we should let the child "kill" with toy guns if he feels like it. Our earlier discussion made it plain that we can sympathize with the fascination guns have for the young, and understand that the symbolic role played by them in childhood play has excusable overtones. But the parent who buys such toys thoughtlessly may be contributing more than he knows to an unnecessary stimulation of destructive or revengeful urges.

## *FRONTIERS*

### A New Definition of a Church

[The Unitarians have a long and honorable history. While, today, they are usually thought of as a broadly liberal denomination—they seem to be rather a free association of altruistically inclined people than a "denomination"—their name is derived from an ancient theological quarrel between those who believed in the theological Trinity and those who maintained that "God exists in one Person only." The latter became known as Unitarians, although it is unlikely that many Unitarians now would embrace the term "Person" in relation to Deity or the deific principle. The article presented here is by a Unitarian Minister, who takes from two MANAS articles statements which provide the foundation for a discussion of an "ideal" church—Editors.]

ARTICLES in the December 12 and 26 issues of MANAS seem to suggest that nothing less than a total redefinition of the church will be needed if churches are to become *religious* institutions.

The first article, "Problems of Human Association," tells us that "A religious association . . . obtains its integrity from common belief. Take away the particular beliefs which give the association its name, and the association loses its identity." On the other hand, the members of a scientific association require a certain amount of disagreement "to cross-fertilize one another's minds and to provoke each other to original discoveries. A dull agreement, at the outset of the examination of any question or problem, would stultify research." Therein is the difference between the religious and the scientific association.

In the "Frontiers" article of the later issue, Dr. Henry Murray is quoted as saying, "Religion, by sitting pat in its citadel of solidified improbabilities, repelled the goose that lays the golden eggs—the creativity in man. . . ."

From these observations emerges the clear suggestion that a new *kind* of church is needed if it is to tap the sources of religious inspiration.

What would characterize this new association? There is a hint in your definition of a learned or scientific society: "It is not identified by the common opinions of the members, but by the *field* which the society determines to investigate."

Another passage, taken from the "Frontiers" article, gives a further suggestion. Certain persons "who themselves possess imaginative power . . . are appalled by any other conception of religion but that which belongs to each man for himself, through his own inspiration, however helped by teachers and nurtured by a sympathetic and culturally rich environment."

We are now prepared to offer a new definition of a church. Like the scientific society, it is identified by the *field* that it investigates—the field of religion (with the understanding that the limits of this field are to be defined by the participants themselves as they go along). It proposes that each man develop his own religious conceptions for himself, the purpose of the church being to make available teachers and a sympathetic and culturally rich environment—the sort of environment that is so tragically lacking in our modern society and which must be consciously constructed if it is to exist.

You raise the question, "What would be 'Christian' about a denomination the members of which decided that the existence of God is a questionable matter, the divinity of Christ subject to debate, and the Vicarious Atonement possibly a debilitating deception?"

The members of our church would certainly raise these questions and many more like them, but I do not believe that they would particularly care whether they were called "Christian" or not. They would be much more concerned with the realism, the depth, the personal meaning, and so forth, of their religion. They would seek inspiration and guidance not only from the Christian tradition, but also from Buddhist, Hindu, and other Eastern sources, as well as from the secular traditions of the West. (The question reminds me of the very similar question whether

Zen Buddhism is "really" Buddhism or not. I doubt that the Zen masters would be much concerned about it.)

Such a religious reorganization has been attempted often enough during the past to permit us to make some rather definite statements about it. I think, for instance, that the members of our church in Quincy had something like this in mind when in 1883 they adopted a statement of purpose that said in part: "We believe . . . that we ought to welcome to our Fellowship all who are of earnest and sincere spirit and humble lovers of the truth . . . and that we ought not to hold theological beliefs as conditions of our membership." Perhaps an analysis of some of the reasons for our failure to translate the ideal more effectively into practice, as well as for our occasional success, will promote further study and experiment.

We have learned, for one thing, of the importance of organization. In the past, there has been a well-founded suspicion of the "institution" which acted only as ice on the wings of aspiring minds. And, of course, the skillful administrator may not be the most inspiring teacher or sensitive counselor. But without proper administration, many of our churches have become amorphous blobs that fragment when any pressure is put upon them. With a sound institutional structure, there can be provision for research, training, and publication on a high level; churches can obtain skilled, full-time leadership when they need it; and other needed benefits are gained without sacrificing the freedom of the individual member.

I mentioned leadership—and here, again, is one of the perennial needs of the free church. Without competent leadership, trained in sensitivity more than in theology, churches have tended either to disintegrate or to follow one or another authoritarian pattern.

For there seems to be a very strong pressure toward lowering the level of achievement of such a religious body. On the one hand, the stereotyped portrait of the church is so well known in our society that one is constantly

expected to conform, to become a typical, sentimental Christian church. On the other hand, there is a strong tendency to turn that portrait on its head in such a way as to become authoritarian in denying (to use your examples) the existence of God, the divinity of Christ, the vicarious atonement. Of course such an orthodoxy-in-reverse is subject to the same criticisms as the more familiar authoritarianisms.

There are other pressures and tendencies, of course. Some of them are: The "lecture hall" church, in which there is little opportunity for sharing ideas among the members and consequently little real religious growth. The "soapbox" church, in which members harangue one another on various pet ideas without real interaction among themselves. The "social club and gossip center" church, which does not rise to meet the more serious problems.

Perhaps the greatest difficulty of all is in finding a sufficient number of persons willing to devote the time, to endure the possibility of misunderstanding from their neighbors, to risk laying open areas of the self that may have been carefully hidden for years—to find such persons in a society in which there are strong pressures and rewards for conformity.

JOHN MORRIS

Quincy, Illinois

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There can be little to add to so clear and constructive an expression. One thing, however, that might be suggested is the importance of a "culturally rich environment" of ideas. With this in mind, MANAS has endeavored to lay great stress on certain classics of religion and philosophy—the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad-Gita* of the Hindus, the *Dhammapada* of the Buddhists, the *Tao te King* of Lao-tse, and the Dialogues of Plato, in particular the *Apology*, the *Crito*, and the *Phaedo*. To these, of course, many more might be added, from both ancient and modern sources. In the series, "Books for Our Time" (see MANAS for Dec. 9, 1953 for list of

titles), MANAS offered for consideration eight books embodying much of the diverse genius and insight of the present age. The purpose, there, was to show the rich intellectual and moral resources of contemporary civilization, in books that not only build upon the wisdom of the past, but also reach out toward the future.

Concerning the reference by Mr. Morris to "orthodoxy-in-reverse," there may be some interest for readers in the fact that, at one time, Unitarians were commonly identified by orthodox Christians as "heathen" who accepted none of the familiar articles of Christian belief. As an encyclopedia of 1900 put it: "It will of course be understood that the Unitarians of all shades of opinion are agreed in rejecting the entire orthodox scheme including the doctrines of the Trinity, the vicarious atonement, the deity of Christ, original sin, and everlasting punishment—as both unscriptural and irrational."

Today, Mr. Morris is concerned lest the rejection of belief in God, the divinity of Christ, and the vicarious atonement be as compulsive and authoritarian as the True Believer's acceptance of these doctrines. This attitude, it seems to us, does not represent a weakening of Unitarian conviction, but is rather indicative of broader lines of interpretation on such subjects. A pantheistic conception of God, for example, is free of practically all of the familiar objections to less philosophic ideas of Deity. And if Christ be regarded in terms of the ancient mystery schools as one who is awakened to the realities of a higher life, then "divine" may be understood as an adjective which is not restricted in application to a single historical individual, but is descriptive of the Christos principle latent in every man. Divinity is thus potential in all mankind. The vicarious atonement is less easy to render in philosophical meaning. It may, however, suggest, the Promethean sort of sacrifice offered by all those who try to bring light to their fellow men, and who are often rewarded as Prometheus was rewarded by Zeus—with the bitter penalties

forced upon those who urge men to see and think for themselves.

One thing more: Ought the "reformed" sort of church proposed by Mr. Morris be known as a "church"? Would some other term, perhaps, better convey the kind of enterprise in fellowship and mutual teaching and learning which he describes? Might not some other name have a more provocative effect on the members of the surrounding community?